

Wine and Religion

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Wine, more than any other food or beverage, is associated with religious experience and celebratory rituals.

In ancient religions wine was often represented as the blood of the god(s). Wine drinking was originally a religious ritual. Wine is mentioned 521 times in the Bible. Anglican and Catholic churches use alcoholic wine for communion.

The world owes many famous wines and liqueurs to monasteries. They developed the beverages for religious reasons. The many services and celebrations held in the monastery demanded a plentiful supply of wine. To be self supporting, the monks planted their own vineyards, and the wine making became part of their daily lives. The monks became a really experts in this art. The quality of their product was no doubt not the result of accident, but was scientifically achieved by experimentation. On all occasions, however, the monks were prompted by the sincere desire to glorify God who - in the words of the ancient Hebrew blessing still used in Jewish homes - had 'created the fruit of the vine [1].

Wine has always been an important aspect of the Jewish religion. Wine, for Jews, must be kosher, which means it must not be touched by a "Gentile" and must contain only kosher ingredients. In ancient times, wine was used by idolaters in rituals. In the Jewish culture, wine has importance because of the role it plays in almost every holiday and religious service. Wine is introduced to Jewish children at a young age, and becomes normalized as part of life. It has reason, because Jewish population of the United States has fewer drinking problems than many other cultural and religious groups.

Islam takes a totally different approach to wine, as noted in the Koran, "Satan seeks to stir up enmity and hatred among you by

means of wine and gambling, and to keep you from remembrance of Allah and from your prayers. Will you not abstain from them?” (The Koran, Sura 5:91). In Islam wine is power of destruction and one must not overindulge in it. Today, the general idea is that the Koran prohibits the imbibing of alcohol. However, not all cultures follow these rules, as is the case in Iran, which ranks sixth in the world for production of wine. Wine is not so important in Islam, but is occasionally noted in certain situations.

Christianity takes roots from Judaism; the main importance of wine comes from the use of wine in Jesus’ last supper, which was actually a Jewish Seder. In this manner, wine represents a covenant with God through the blood of Jesus, represented by the wine. This is actually where many religious debates take place among the sects of Christianity, whether or not the wine is a representation of or actually turns into Jesus’ blood during communion. Wine is important in the Christian religion, to a similar extent as in the Jewish religion. It is difficult to summarize the importance of wine in Christianity; however, it is easy to note that among different groups it takes on differing levels of importance. In either case, wine has less social acceptability within the Christian religion than it does in the Jewish religion.

The use of wine in religious ceremonies is common to many cultures and regions. While wine has been of social significance for a long time, its religious significance has been around for a much longer period of time. Wine’s incorporation into religious ceremonies and rituals has made it very important, in both positive and negative manners.

Bibliography:

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