

THE VINE

In thinking about the word “vine,” I wondered what the actual definition is. So I looked on the Internet, and found several links to an app called “Vine,” which is a way people can share 6- or 7-second videos for others to see. I was saddened to see this because it was yet another indication of how we are losing the sacredness of so many of our words. Take the word “awesome,” for example. The original intent of the word relates to a true feeling or experience of awe. Now it is just another word for trying to convince others that we are excited or happy about something. It has nothing to do with a true sense of awe.

The same is now true of “vine.” What used to mean a woody-stemmed plant with off-shooting branches now means another mindless connection to cyberspace. Rather than using the word in the context of its rich connections to the earth, we are in the nebulous world of cyberspace where we never have to get our hands dirty, where we never get to touch or feel the essence of a thing, where nothing is really real. It is sad how many people have replaced Jesus, the true Vine, who offers us connections to the heaven worlds and all its clouds of witnesses, with cyber-Jesus, the electronic vine which offers us millions of connections to the “clouds” of the Internet.

How many reading this sharing have ever touched the woody stem of a grape vine, or stood near, or walked in a vineyard, or picked grapes? The people of Jesus’ day knew all these experiences, so they fully understood what Jesus meant when He spoke of the vine. The essence of the vine was part of their natural life experience. We today can understand intellectually what Jesus is saying, but do we have that down-to-earth, heart-and-soul connection with His words? And even if we can unite with, or at least intuit the physical-nature essence of Jesus as the Vine, can we go deep enough into His meaning to grasp the spiritual essence of this True Vine?

Let us turn to the subject at hand by considering these words of Jesus:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. -St. John 15:1-2



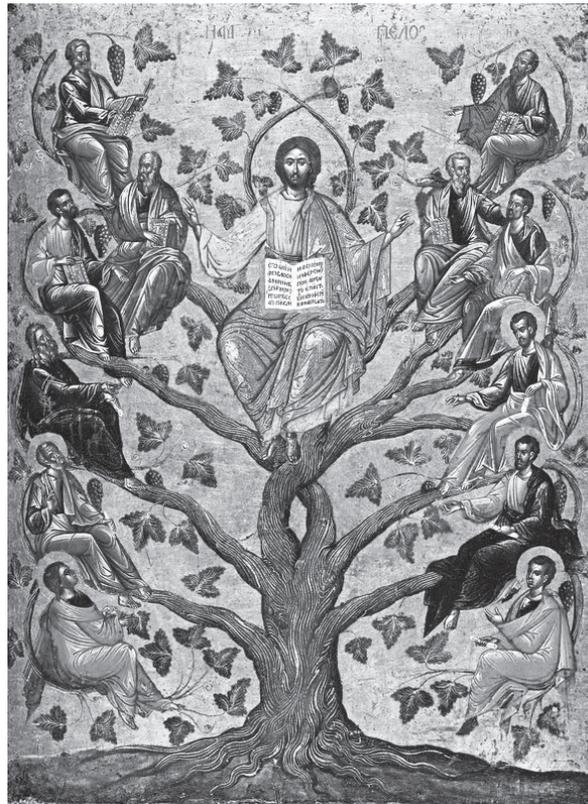
Look closely at what Jesus is saying here. He is the *true* Vine. Why did He say *true* vine and not just *vine*? Are there other vines out there somewhere? Well, yes. In the Gospel of Matthew we read: “*For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many*” (St. Matthew 24:5). And in Mark’s Gospel the words are even stronger: “*For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things*” (St. Mark 13:22-23). Yes, there are other vines vying for our affections, for our attention, for our commitment and dedication – not the least of which is now an Internet manifestation. The Antichrist uses these and many other “vines” to draw our attention away from Jesus. Those who seek the true Vine, Jesus, must do so with total faith in a Savior they cannot see, hear, or touch. “*Faith,*” writes St. Paul, “*is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1). For most people today, faith seems to be a dependence upon things they can see and touch; so the true Vine, Jesus, is beyond their comprehension. We need to trust that God through Christ Jesus is there when we cannot see Him; trust that God is there when we cannot hear Him; trust that God is there guiding and strengthening us when we are wondering how we are going to make it through a difficult initiation. Ann Ree tried to wean us away from the false securities of this world. She tried to teach us that our only true security is God. “*My happiness is not dependent upon any person, place, condition or thing. God is my happiness*” (ARC).

Look at the example of our beloved Teacher. Her heart condition was such that she often did not know if she could physically attend a Conclave or holy-day event, or even a Unit Meeting or Family Chapel service. She had to depend totally on God for her strength, for her physical and spiritual sustenance. There are some among us who know what it is like to be unable to count on our own strength or health, and we find ourselves having to totally trust in God to help us. If it is His Will that we be able to serve in this way or that, so be it; and if it is His Will that we not be able to serve in this way or that, so be it. How often did we see Ann Ree brought over to a Unit meeting in her wheel chair looking very weak? Yet once she started speaking, we all could see that she was a branch firmly connected to the true Vine, the Vine that gave her the strength, the stamina, and the words to speak that sustained not only herself, but all who were in the room listening to her. And that Vine, through her, has stretched out over the years to touch and sustain all who hear her voice on the tapes and DVDs to this day.

Back to Jesus' words, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*" A husbandman is a caretaker of the soil, one who tends to the plants: watering, feeding, trimming, weeding, and protecting. Think of the heavenly Father planting Jesus into this earth when our solar system was being formed and shaped. "*Before Abraham was,*" stated Christ Jesus, "*I am*" (St. John 8:58). The first half of this eternity system might be likened to the period of germination, where the Father's seed was preparing itself to break out into the world. Then Jesus was born, the Father's seed sprouted, and in a few short years (30, to be exact), Jesus the Vine was ready to blossom forth through His ministry. So the heavenly Father (husbandman) watered His plant with the "Miracle Gro" of His Spirit, and Jesus became Christ Jesus as His formal ministry began.

As is true with the branch attached to any vine, the branch

is totally dependent upon the root vine or stem. The branch and stem work together. Thus Jesus said, "*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*" (St. John 5:17). He also affirmed the Father's Will in His life: "*I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him*" (St. John 8:28-29). The nourishment of a plant or vine is the essence of God contained in the seed. The nourishment of the True Vine of Jesus is the Will of the heavenly Father giving life and vitality to Jesus' presence in the world.



Christ the True Vine, 16th century Greek icon

So the first thing we learn of the true Vine is that He is totally about "*the Father's business*" (St. Luke 2:49) and totally connected to the Father. "*I and my Father are one*" (St. John 10:30), proclaimed Jesus. I can envision our Father (what Ann Ree calls "*Conditioned God*") working with the creative forces of the Universe (what Ann Ree calls "*Absolute God*"), planting, forming and shaping the Son of Man as a Vine, nurturing that Vine, and then connecting it to the myriad branches of souls who make up the human element of this eternity system. Thus Jesus could say, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do*

nothing" (St. John 15:5). How true it is, therefore, that our life is dependent upon the Vine.

We might consider the vine as an archetypal master image for plant life in this earth. Visualize, if you will, a flowering plant, such as a rose. Where is the rose blossom located on the plant? It is always along one of the plant's branches. The flower is not on the stem, but on the branches. Look at a tree, such as an apple tree. Where do we find the apples growing? On the trunk? No. On the branches, often near the end of the branches. Look at vegetable plants, such as a tomato plant. Where do the tomatoes grow? Not on the stem, but on branches shooting out from the stem. I have learned

much about life in the plant from watching our own tomato plants grow. The first tomatoes will appear on branches fairly near the stem. As more and more tomatoes appear on more and more branches, they are farther and farther out on the branch. The tomato plant, which at first was so lush and full with leaves, loses its lushness as the branches lengthen. There are now less leaves near the stem, because the plant is putting all its strength into the producing of the fruit.

We once kept a tomato plant growing for over a year. It was nothing but a straggly, homely-looking stem, looking more dead than alive, with branches extending out in two directions to a total length of 25 feet, and only near the end of the branches was there any sign of life: a few leaves and a tomato. How bedraggled that poor tomato plant looked. Yet that lone tomato was totally dependent upon the vine or stem for its life. And the tomato plant was sacrificing all to make sure the tomato had what it needed to fully develop. I have seen plants that were dying for lack of water. The plant looked very wilted, except that at the end of the plant was a flower or a fruit that the plant was trying to keep alive. I was witnessing the willingness of the plant to sacrifice its life for the sake of its child.

Jesus, the True Vine, did the same for all souls in the world. He gave up His life willingly that we might fulfill our purpose in life as given of God. We must understand, however, that this sacrifice is an aeonic event. It is not a one-time event that occurred over 2,000 years ago. The sacrifice of Jesus is an ongoing process that will carry all souls forward unto the end of this eternity system.

But did not Jesus say, *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”* (St. John 15:1-2)? He also said, *“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire”* (St. Matthew 7:19). *“Our God,”* writes St. Paul, *“is a consuming fire”* (Hebrews 12:29). If the non-bearing branches are thrown into the fire or destroyed, wouldn't this mean that not all souls are going to make it? I think not. Jesus said, *“And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day”* (St. John 6:39). Through the use of parables, Jesus described Himself as that caring shepherd who would leave the 99 sheep to find the one that was lost, or as that diligent woman who would sweep her house clean until she found the silver coin she had lost (St. Luke 15:4-10). Yes,

non-productive branches will be cut off from the vine, even as sinful souls will be cut off from the True Vine. However, the vine always grows new branches, giving the cut-off ones the opportunity to try again and again, until they are able to produce good fruit.

God becomes a fire in us that consumes our sins, leaving only the essence of our good. I am reminded of the words in the Living Body Command Mantram: *“Quicken the Spirit's fire within my heart's flame”* (ARC). We are inviting the Spirit of God to be quickened in us, which means we are asking for the consuming fire of God to become the blazing flame that will bring health and wholeness to our whole being. Maybe that is why the very next line in the mantram is this: *“Cleanse out and remove all soilings of lust, passion, and unrest”* (ARC).

I want to go back, for a moment, to something I said earlier: It was mentioned that the flower or the fruit does not grow on the stem or trunk of a plant, but on the branches. As I re-read this statement during the writing of this talk, all of a sudden it hit me that we, all the souls in this world, are bearing the fruit for Jesus. Jesus is the Vine, the stem. We are the branches. All the fruit grows on the branches, which means that without us, there would be no fruit. Does this mean we can be filled with boasting or pride? Absolutely not! Pride goeth before a fall. When we think too much of ourselves and our own esteem, the branch that is us falls off the vine, and we wither and die. We are all one. Trunk and branches need each other to produce the flower, the fruit. And both trunk and branch are dependent upon God, Who breathes life into everything. When we bear fruit for God, it is not we who are given the credit, it is God Who is glorified.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.
-St. John 15:9

In my research, I came across this mantram by Ann Ree:

*Lord, let me remember:
Thou art the vine of my life,
and Thy Love for me
is my enduring Providence.*

As I read these words, I realized the obvious: that God

is all around us. It has already been mentioned that it is God through the Father Who planted the seed into our eternity system that brought forth the Jesus Vine. But what does every vine and plant seek? What does every vine move toward? The light of the sun. And what does the Jesus Vine seek? To return to God from whence He came. But we also know that Jesus was already in God when He came into this world. God is on both ends of the vine, and God is throughout the vine.

Let us think of the true Vine as related to the *prototypes*. In the Tabernacle in the Wilderness Meditation given to us by Ann Ree, Station Three is the Twelve Shewbread. Jesus, the Vine, is the thirteenth Prototype beyond the twelve, He is our connection to Hierarchy.

Station Three relates to the Twelve Shewbread, the Spleen. One visualizes his entry into Aaron's Lodge, where he must become aware of his conscience. Here, he unites with the memory of past lives through the Twelve-Prototypal Shewbread Experience. He acknowledges himself to be one of twelve Zodiacal Prototypes with Hierarchy potential.

-Ann Ree Colton

We must first visualize our oneness with one prototype – that of the present life. Then we must acknowledge that there are eleven other prototypes which we have experienced and will yet again experience over countless lives. While one interpretation of Jesus as the Vine is that He is the Vine for all souls in the world, there is another, more personal, interpretation related to the prototypes. In this other interpretation, Christ Jesus is, as it were, our own “personal” Vine, and each life we live is a new branch on that vine. Each branch (or life) has many sub-branches, relating to the many and varied aspects of any given life. Some of those sub-branches represent our sins and faults. These sub-branches are cut off and removed, as Jesus said. If a whole life was very negative and dark, that whole branch might also be cut off. But our soul remains intact, and

moves forward to other lives, other branches where we will bear more fruit for God. This is another way to understand Jesus' words that He would not lose one soul. The day will come when our expression of each of the twelve prototypes will be so pure that all the prototypes will become one in us, and we will unite with the thirteenth aspect beyond the twelve, we will be “like” Jesus.

There is one more facet of the Vine I would like to share before bringing this sharing to an end with a testimony. It relates to the *vortice-pools* as revealed by Ann Ree in her Archetype of World Worship. The Archetype of World Worship depicts Jesus as the Vine holding together all the vortice-pools, He being the thirteenth beyond the twelve.

The Archetypal Thread or Arche-thread is the correlating thread between man and God, and is the means through which Jesus, using the Love Principle, makes entry into each vortice-pool of worship. “I am the true vine” (St. John 15:1).

-Ann Ree Colton

Ann Ree describes the worship vortice-pools in this way:

The thirteen vortice-pools of worship, projected from the “vine” or Arche-thread, represent the various ways men seek to find God. In each vortice-pool of worship, men of similar nature, by the law of attraction, seek to outpicture personal and impersonal attributes of God.

-Ann Ree Colton

Each vortice-pool branches off from the central vine, which existed before each vortice-pool (indicated by the beginning of the vine at the top of the chart) and exists after the fulfillment of the vortice-pools (indicated by end of the vine at the bottom of the chart). Christ Jesus said, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Revelation 22:13). It is one thing to see Christ Jesus

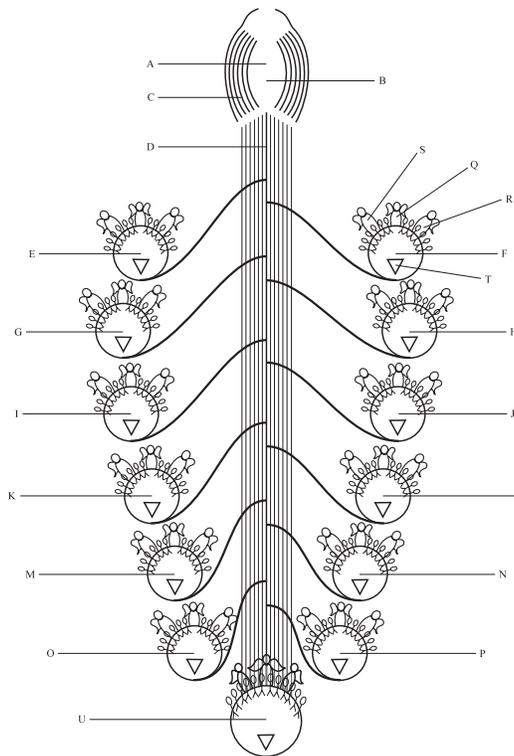


Chart: *The Archetype of World Worship* by Ann Ree Colton

as our own Vine, but it is quite another to understand Him as that One who holds this entire eternity system together. By the conclusion of this eternity system there will be only one scintillating jewel, with twelve facets shining forth out into the Universe.

By way of testimony, while working on this talk a memory came into my mind of an incident that occurred on June 4, 2015. I do not believe I have shared this before. I will read what I wrote in my journal.

This morning I was outside in the Chapel parking lot near the carport to speak the Living Body Command Mantram. As I began speaking I looked up into the sky and felt a strong connection to the etheric body of the earth. I felt as if I was speaking the mantram not just for myself but for the earth itself. Each phrase of the mantram seemed to go down through my feet into the earth. I half expected an earthquake or a tremor. I realized anew that we are all connected, all one. I also thought of the etheric body of the earth as being Jesus' etheric body, as Ann Ree has taught. Thus, I was somehow touching the etheric body of Jesus, made more real perhaps because I take the Continuum Sacrament daily.

Jesus said He is the True Vine. At the time of the crucifixion His etheric body became the etheric body of the earth, as Ann Ree writes:

The living charismatic substance in the blood of Jesus – directed by His cosmos soul – poured into the earth, increasing in dimension and circumference until the earth minerals, the earth fire, the earth atmosphere were saturated. The blood of Jesus expanded into a rosy, pink-like hue – taking command of the etheric body of the earth; encasing the substances, the growths, the cells of all things of the earth.
-Ann Ree Colton

I think what I was experiencing that day was my connection as a branch of the Vine through Jesus, and since the earth itself is now that Vine, I was experiencing my connection with the earth. To be connected to the Vine of Christ is not just a religious concept, not just a spiritual reality, but also a physical/etheric reality. I am not just one with all other souls

because I am connected to the True Vine, I am also one with the earth itself. Think of it: as we read in the first book of the Bible, our physical bodies were formed out of the dust of the earth, our souls entered through the breath or Spirit of God, and thus we are one not only with each other as human beings, but as children of the earth. We are one with the earth.

A realization came at the same time as my memory of my Living Body experience. The words of Jesus came into my mind: *“Behold, I make all things new (Revelation 21:5).* I was thinking of some very pleasant times I have shared with my grandchildren, and I was thinking, Wouldn't it be nice if that could last forever. Then I realized that as wonderful as certain experiences are, life goes on, things change and grow, nothing remains the same. And this changing changelessness is the most wonderful thing of all because we always have the opportunity to become *more* in God. Being attached to the Vine of Christ Jesus means we are tied in to the constancy of change. Have you ever seen a branch of any plant that did not grow and change? Of course not. To be connected to the true Vine means we are connected to the changing changelessness of God.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
-2 Corinthians 5:17

I close with three simple statements by Ann Ree about the vine.

I am a flowing vine, flourishing in my roots, giving off my flower and fruits.

My prayers are vine stations of upward reaching, that I may flower under the hand of the Gardener of Love.

I am with the True Vine, a perfect fruit manifesting perfection in timing to the good and just law.

-Ann Ree Colton

