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Temperance Cultures

Concern about Alcohol Problems in Nordic and English-speaking Cultures

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INTRODUCTION

This book deals with “problems.” Historians and sociologists studying the history of ideas often take as their starting point the observation that objective conditions by themselves are not sufficient to produce a definition of something as a social or public problem (Mills 1959). Even in modern societies, many undesirable, unhealthy or dangerous behaviours and conditions exist for long periods of time without becoming the focus of social movements or government action. In the US, air and water pollution, automobile design, and hand-gun murders, to choose only three examples, long generated no public interest or outcry. One cannot explain from objective conditions, from the existence of real-life problems and suffering, why in America men and women who had an alcoholic parent have organized themselves into a sizeable self-help movement (called “Adult Children of Alcoholics”), or why, say, those who grew up with a parent who battered them have not. One cannot explain from objective conditions why there are no groups called “Adult Children of the Mentally Ill” or “Adult Children of the Poor.”

There is no doubt that alcohol is a powerful consciousness-altering substance that is easily and frequently misused; yet only some societies in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries organized large ongoing temperance movements concerned with the dangers and evils of alcoholic drink – with alcohol problems. In fact, only some of the societies that experienced considerable amounts of drunkenness developed major movements focused on alcohol problems. Even today only some societies retain a strong concern with alcohol problems and alcohol misuse (or abuse).

This chapter results from an effort to determine those societies (such as the US, UK, and Finland) that developed large, ongoing temperance movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and those (such as Italy, France, and Belgium) that did not. Unfortunately, there are no cross-cultural studies of temperance movements to turn to; the field of comparative temperance studies does not yet exist. However, the recent growth of the field of social history, and of scholarly interest in temperance movements, and the rich supply of primary temperance documents, make it possible to identify (with some certainty) those places that did have major movements concerned with alcohol problems.

This chapter first reports some results of a search for a kind of “historical taxonomy” of temperance. *The term temperance cultures is used here to refer to those societies which, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had large, enduring temperance movements.* There were nine of these temperance cultures: the English-speaking cultures of the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand; and the northern Scandinavian or Nordic societies of Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland. Some of the temperance cultures still have active versions of the old temperance organizations. In temperance cultures, the movement's concerns about the dangers of alcoholic drink – about alcohol problems – extended far beyond formal membership and achieved widespread acceptance and legitimacy in the larger society.

Having identified these Nordic and English-speaking societies as the temperance cultures, the question is: can we determine anything distinctive about them all, as compared with non-temperance cultures, that might help explain why they developed major temperance movements? This is a huge topic.

As Eriksen (1990) points out, much research in recent years, especially in Europe, has tended to focus on political and economic factors contributing to temperance. To some extent, temperance was associated almost everywhere with economic change, industrialization, and social protest. In temperance cultures, significant numbers of large employers and wealthy merchants, as well as much of the middle class, tended to support temperance. In some places there was also considerable working class participation, especially from the “labour aristocracy.” Temperance was also involved in national, regional, and ethnic conflicts. There may have been something common about the political economy of societies as diverse as the UK, Finland, Australia, the US, and Sweden that distinguishes them from non-temperance cultures. But there may not have been. It is just not possible at this early stage of historical and sociological scholarship to determine what, if anything, is unique about the political economy of temperance cultures. In this chapter, therefore, we look at other issues.

We will discuss two factors that do strongly correlate with temperance activity. First, people in temperance cultures drank a considerable portion of their alcohol in distilled liquor (mainly vodka, gin, rum, or whiskey). Second, all the temperance cultures were predominantly Protestant societies.

The first section develops the taxonomy of temperance activity and discusses the differences between temperance and non-temperance cultures. That basic historical classification is probably the most important finding reported in this chapter. The second section discusses whether drunkenness and disruption can account for temperance activity. It then explores the relationship of temperance movements to Protestantism as a culture and focuses on the importance of self-restraint as an issue for Protestantism and for temperance movements.

The final section extends the discussion about temperance cultures into the present. It offers a rough test of the (perhaps intuitive) hypothesis that the societies which had large temperance movements in the past also retain the strongest concern with alcohol misuse, abuse, and alcohol problems. It does this by comparing the membership figures for Alcoholics Anonymous in a number of Western countries. It finds that the strongest centres of Alcoholics Anonymous membership in Western societies are among the temperance cultures.

This chapter outlines some in progress findings and conclusions, from my own research and from that of other historians and social scientists, in the hope of contributing to a growing international conversation about the history and sociology of movements and ideas about alcohol problems. It is not the final word.

TEMPERANCE CULTURES

In Western societies, only Nordic and English-speaking cultures developed large, ongoing, extremely popular temperance movements in the nineteenth century and the first third or so of the twentieth century. Table 2.1 lists 24 Western cultures; 15 of them were *not* temperance cultures. A more complete list would include Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union's western republics (such as the Ukraine) identified individually. In other words, there are even more non-temperance cultures than the table indicates. (See the entries for different countries in Cherrington's remarkable five volume *Encyclopedia of the Liquor Problem* (1924-30);¹ For individual societies also see: Gusfield 1988; Blocker 1989; Paulson 1973; Levine 1984; Harrison 1971; Malcolm 1986; Bengtsson 1938; Eriksen 1990; Room 1988, 1989, 1990; de Lint 1981; Sulkunen 1986; Vogt 1981; Alasutari 1990; Roberts 1984; Prestwich 1988; Smith and Christian 1984).

Temperance cultures, it is important to note, are not the heaviest drinkers. In fact, temperance nations today consume significantly less pure alcohol *per capita* than most non-temperance societies (See Table 2.1). However, temperance cultures do have a distinctive drinking pattern. People in temperance cultures drink a substantial portion of their alcohol in distilled liquors, or did so during the formative periods of their temperance crusade. In recent decades, spirits consumption has declined among some of these countries. Nonetheless,

most temperance cultures still consume a significant portion of their alcohol in hard liquors. In 1974, for example, the US consumed 41 per cent of its alcohol in distilled liquor, Canada 35 percent, Finland, Norway and Sweden all averaged between 43 and 51 per cent. Iceland, which leads the world in *per capita* membership in Alcoholics Anonymous, consumed a remarkable 72 per cent of its alcohol in distilled drinks. See Table 2.1 for complete figures. The UK today has a much lower level of spirits consumption, about 20 per cent; Australia and New Zealand are even lower. However, in the nineteenth century when the temperance campaign was stronger in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, spirits consumption was much higher (Room 1988; Harrison 1971; Cherrington 1924-30).

TABLE 2.1 *Apparent consumption of alcohol for the population age 15 years and over in 24 Western countries, in litres per capita for 1974 and 1984*

	Litres per capita absolute alcohol from all drinks		Per cent spirits of all alcohol		Per cent wine of all alcohol	Per cent beer of all alcohol	AA groups per million persons
	1974	1984	1974	1984	1974	1974	1986
1. Iceland*	4.9	5.5	72.7	54.5	11.0	16.1	high [†]
2. Norway*	5.5	5.2	43.0	32.6	10.2	46.7	16.8
3. Sweden*	6.9	6.4	47.4	41.6	16.2	36.2	11.1
4. Finland*	7.6	8.2	51.7	44.9	10.9	37.3	103.4
5. Poland	8.0	8.2	67.2	67.0	15.7	16.9	0.4
6. Ireland	8.3	9.7	30.0	22.6	5.2	64.6	136.0
7. United Kingdom*	10.1	9.2	19.8	21.7	14.7	65.3	39.5
8. United States*	10.4	10.2	41.1	35.2	12.0	46.8	123.5
9. Netherlands	10.6	11.0	34.0	27.2	22.2	43.0	124
10. Canada*	10.7	10.2	35.6	33.3	11.2	53.1	163.9
11. Denmark	10.9	12.9	20.2	14.7	19.1	60.5	0.6
12. Soviet Union	11.8 [‡]	11.5	62.3	67.8	28.1	8.9	0
13. Czechoslovakia	11.2	13.5	30.8	31.8	19.0	49.2	0
14. Hungary	12.3	14.6	30.9	43.1	45.0	21.9	0
15. New Zealand*	12.6	11.0	14.5	22.7	14.9	70.4	75.9
16. Spain	12.8	15.0	25.2	26.0	73.0	1.7	4.6
17. Australia*	13.2	12.5	13.3	12.8	18.0	68.6	59.6
18. Italy	13.5	15.1	9.2	10.5	84.7	5.7	2.4
19. Switzerland	13.9	13.9	20.4	18.7	44.0	35.4	23.1
20. Austria	14.0	14.3	22.5	13.2	33.5	43.9	0
21. Belgium	14.3	13.3	16.0	18.0	19.4	64.5	54.8
22. West Germany	14.8	14.3	23.2	19.5	19.9	56.8	30.1
23. France	22.4	18.2	19.6	11.7	66.3	13.9	4.6
24. Portugal	23.4	17.8	3.2	6.1	88.7	7.8	0.6

* Indicates a temperance culture.

Sources:

For 1974: Adapted and computed from Mark Keller and Carol Gurlioli (1976). *Statistics on consumption of alcohol and on alcoholism. Journal of Studies on Alcohol* p. 10.

For 1984: Adapted and computed from Marc Eliany (1989). *Alcohol in Canada*. Minister of Supply and Services, Canada.

For AA figures: Klaus Mäkelä. Social and cultural preconditions of AA and factors associated with the strength of AA. Presented at Kettil Bruun Society for Social and Epidemiological Research on Alcohol, Budapest, 3-8 June, 1990.

[†] Mäkelä did not compute a AA per million persons figure for Iceland. However it is by far the country with the highest per capita AA membership in the world.

[‡] Includes estimated home-made drinks.

The other common characteristic of temperance cultures is that they were all predominately Protestant societies. Temperance cultures are places where Protestantism historically shaped psychology and culture, and where the dominant or state religion has been a version of Protestantism.

Non-temperance cultures, places that did not develop large temperance movements, typically lacked either a Protestant tradition, or a pattern of distilled liquor drinking, or both. Of the two factors, Protestantism appears to have been more important for the development of temperance movements. Small versions of classic temperance movements did develop among Protestants in Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, and Germany. On the other hand, even small-scale enduring temperance organizations did not develop to nearly the same extent in non-Protestant societies – even those with high levels of hard-liquor consumption such as Russia and Poland (Eriksen 1990; de Lint 1981; Roberts 1984; Smith and Christian 1984; Cherrington 1924-30).

Occasionally the non-Protestant, hard-liquor drinking societies have developed anti-drunkenness campaigns, usually led by an economic, political, or religious elite. These anti-drunkenness crusades have tended to be sporadic and isolated affairs; they have aimed at mobilizing the population for economic, political, or religious reform, but have soon exhausted themselves and generally left behind no developed organization or ongoing movement. Recently, for example, the Soviet Union under Gorbachev's direction launched the most dramatic and large scale elite-sponsored, anti-drunkenness campaign ever attempted in a non-Protestant country (Partanen 1987). That crusade, which was primarily an effort to instill a new, more disciplined work ethic, quickly collapsed like earlier ones in the face of an indifferent-to-hostile public reaction.

The most famous nineteenth century temperance crusade in a non-Protestant culture was that of Father Mathew in Ireland in the 1840s. As Malcolm (1986) makes clear in her recent excellent study of Irish temperance, *Ireland Free, Ireland Sober*, Father Mathew's crusade was the sole important moment of Catholic temperance in nineteenth century Ireland, and it left behind little in the way of ongoing organization or movement. Malcolm reports that Irish temperance began, with impetus from American temperance reformers, as the work of evangelical Protestants in Ulster and then of Quakers in Dublin. She traces the meteoric rise and fall of Father Mathew's campaign in the 1840s. Irish Protestants, on the other hand, did organize large successful temperance organizations. Yet, despite all their efforts, and despite Father Mathew's fame, in the nineteenth century Irish Catholics could not by and large be persuaded to take up the temperance cause. It was only after 70 years of sustained Protestant temperance proselytizing, and the work of another skilled Irish Catholic temperance organizer, that the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association was established. It seems reasonable to conclude that,

were it not for British and Irish Protestant temperance groups, temperance would have had even less impact on Ireland. (Also see the brief discussion of Irish temperance in Cherrington 1926.)

At the far non-temperance end of the spectrum are the predominately Catholic wine-drinking societies. There was little if any temperance activity in wine-drinking cultures such as Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Romania, and Austria. People in wine-drinking cultures do not commonly hold negative views of alcohol even though they consume two to four times more pure alcohol *per capita* than do the spirit drinking Nordic countries (roughly 12-18 litres of pure alcohol *per capita* for wine cultures vs 5-8 litres in the Nordic Countries (see Table 2.1). Men and women in wine cultures still regard alcohol chiefly as a food and rarely focus on it as a significant cause of economic or social problems. In wine cultures, alcoholic drink does not have strong negative symbolic meanings – indeed, wine is overwhelmingly imbued with positive symbolic meaning. (Lolli *et al.* 1958; Sadoun *et al.* 1965).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was certainly temperance activity outside of the English-speaking and Nordic countries. As noted above, Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany all had active temperance movements and organizations. There were some people in those countries who regarded alcohol in much the same way as many people did in the Nordic and English-speaking countries. Alcohol policy was debated in legislatures and by political parties, especially by Social Democrats. The key difference between these non-temperance countries and the temperance cultures is that in the latter societies the anti-alcohol movements had much greater legitimacy, influence, and popular acceptance – they were more mainstream. In the Nordic and English-speaking cultures a much larger percentage of the population came to accept the basic ideas or message of temperance (and more of the upperclasses or elites did as well). This quantitative difference constituted, over time, a real qualitative difference between temperance and non-temperance cultures.

All temperance movements had high and low periods. In the Nordic and English-speaking cultures, organizations held on during the low times; in the non-temperance cultures they tended to disappear. Thus in the 1920s, when Cherrington wrote his *Encyclopedia of the Alcohol Problem*, he celebrated the triumph or potential triumph of prohibitionism in a number of Nordic and English-speaking countries. However, when writing about Germany he was forced to wonder where the once active organizations and movements had gone.

LIQUOR, PROTESTANTISM, SELF-CONTROL, AND TEMPERANCE

Spirit drinking and disruption

Distilled liquor makes drunkenness easier and more likely. It seems relatively clear, therefore, why hard-liquor drinking, especially when coupled with a pattern of drinking to drunkenness, is correlated with temperance activity. In all the original temperance cultures, gin, vodka, rum, or whisky produced the drunkenness that anti-drink campaigns took as their original enemy (Rorabaugh 1979; Harrison 1971; Eriksen 1990; Sulkunen 1986; Room 1988; Alasuutari 1990). The public drunkard – staggering, vomiting, and dishevelled – offered the visible evidence of the evils of alcohol that temperance crusades drew upon in their ideology and imagery (Lender and Karnchanapee 1977; Levine 1978, 1980, 1983).

Several readers of an earlier version of this chapter suggested that the disruptions that spirit-drinking caused might have been sufficient to explain the presence of temperance movements. For example, in a perceptive and helpful set of comments, Klaus Mäkelä accepted this chapter's general argument about the taxonomy of temperance cultures in the Nordic and English-speaking cultures. Mäkelä also proposed that temperance activity was caused by a kind of drinking which actually did pose “an objective threat to social order.” Let us term this “the disruption hypothesis.”

Despite its intuitive appeal (especially from within a temperance culture), for both empirical and conceptual reasons, the disruption hypothesis cannot by itself explain the rise of temperance movements. First of all, a drinking pattern that included getting very drunk on hard liquor (vodka) did not produce large scale temperance movements in Russia and Poland. The Russians and Poles were certainly not more moderate drinkers, for example, than Swedes or Norwegians. And there is no evidence that the social disruption caused by spirit drinking was greater among Swedes and Norwegians than among Russians and Poles. The absence of the Russians and Poles from the ranks of the cultures that developed large, enduring temperance movements means that the personal and social disruptions caused by drunkenness from hard liquor did not, by themselves, produce the movements.

Second, the disruption hypothesis does not address the enormous shift in morals and perception necessary for the rise of anti-drink consciousness. Massive public drunkenness had been common for several thousand years without generating much moral opprobrium. In the US, heavy spirit-drinking leading to drunkenness existed for a hundred years before a temperance movement arose. As a number of writers have observed (Tyrell 1979; Levine 1978, 1983; Alasuutari 1990), the temperance movement was part of a much larger cultural transformation in values. These changes included, for example: the condemnation of torture and the rise of

“humane” punishment and prisons (Foucault 1977); the rejection of the idea that insanity reduced people to animals, and the embrace of the idea of mental disease (Foucault 1965); new attitudes about the special character of children and childhood (Aries 1962); a new attention to and loquaciousness about sexuality (Foucault 1978) – and, in addition to many other shifts, the increased legitimacy of democratic values.

Even if we accept as scientifically true everything that nineteenth century temperance advocates said about the dangers of alcohol and the disruptions it caused, we still need to explain what enabled so many people in the nineteenth century to finally *see* the “truth” about alcohol. In short, a recognition that spirits drinking easily led to drunkenness does not eliminate the need for a social or cultural explanation of the new perceptions about drink, and of the new moral standards about drunkenness.

In his rich and insightful study, *Drink, Temperance and the Working class in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (1984), James Roberts points out that even when Germans drank spirits they tended to consume small amounts all day long; they drank it with food and as a high calorie but less bulky substitute for potatoes and bread. Despite such a relatively undisruptive drinking style, Germany developed a moderate-sized, influential temperance movement. This Protestant dominated temperance movement in Germany was larger and more mainstream than the temperance movement in Russia. And the German temperance reformers worried about drunken disorder even though, compared to Russians, they did not see that much of it (Smith and Christian 1984; Cherrington 1924-30).

Similarly, in Protestant Switzerland, despite a tradition of beer and wine drinking without much drunkenness, the temperance movement endures to this day. For example, in 1986 at a public health conference on alcohol and drugs in Vienna, the author met two Swiss ladies who were active members of a Women's Christian Temperance Union chapter. Indeed, the connection between Protestantism and temperance is so strong that it is unusual to find a Protestant culture without at least some small classic temperance activity.

PROTESTANTISM, TEMPERANCE AND SELF-CONTROL

There is no doubt that a number of different factors contributed to the making of large-scale temperance movements. The beginning of this chapter observed that a type of industrial or capitalist political-economy, a stage of economic development, or perhaps even a kind of family pattern, may have contributed to the rise of large temperance movements. However, without excluding other factors, I would like to briefly suggest the outlines of an argument about why the correlation between temperance activity and Protestantism should not be viewed as a coincidence.

In the last forty years, religion has not served as a major focus for social scientific inquiry, but in the early twentieth century the situation was rather different. At that time a number of social scientists – notably Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Sigmund Freud – viewed religion as a major social and cultural variable necessary for understanding fundamental areas of individual and social life. Weber and Durkheim are especially relevant for our discussion because they focused on Protestantism and understood it in a broadly cultural or strongly anthropological sense. Clifford Geertz has captured this perspective well in his notion (and discussion) of “Religion as a Cultural System” (Geertz 1973). Viewed in this way, Protestantism is not merely a set of theological beliefs, but rather a social psychology, a system of sacred and secular symbols, a pattern of social and institutional relationships and expectations – it is norms, values, institutions and, to some extent, personality.

In his classic study *Suicide*, Durkheim maintained that the different rates of suicide among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews – with the Protestants having the highest – was not a coincidence but followed from real social and cultural differences among the groups. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber made much the same sociological point about the strong relationship between ascetic Protestantism and early capitalist activity.

Both sociologists focused on the question of self-regulation and control. According to Durkheim, the “religious individualism” of Protestantism produced a culture in which norms emphasized self-sufficiency and self-control, and in which people actually were less regulated by other people. According to Weber, the “worldly asceticism” of Protestantism produced a psychology which stressed the importance of self-regulation and self-restraint.

Weber and Durkheim saw this emphasis on self-control, over more external or collective forms of control, as characteristic of modernizing societies in general and of Protestant ones in particular. Weber stressed the affinity between Protestantism and modern capitalism; both Protestantism and early capitalist business demanded that the individual subject himself, said Weber, “to the supremacy of a purposeful will, to bring his actions under constant self-control.” Durkheim argued that Protestant and modern cultures freed people from external restraints producing “egoism,” and they weakened the moral influence of other people producing “anomie.” Both tendencies increased the concern with self-regulation.

In a similar vein, I want to suggest that temperance movements successfully appealed to and mobilized people in modern, Protestant cultures because the movements found an ideological and organizational way of addressing this central concern with self-discipline and regulation. In the Nordic and English-speaking cultures – indeed, in any place where temperance movements developed – alcohol was defined as dangerous, as a problem, in terms of its perceived ability to destroy individual self-control. Alcohol became a focus for concerns and anxieties (both real and imaginary) about individual self-control.

The name of the movement provides a major clue to understanding its appeal. Historians and journalists have sometimes been confused by the name of the nineteenth century anti-alcohol movement because they believed that “temperance” was the wrong name for what (in America) was largely a crusade for total abstinence. But temperance movement advocates always insisted that it was the perfect name because *temperance means self-control*. From the early nineteenth century on, they argued that alcohol was dangerous and destructive precisely because it destroyed drinkers' ability to regulate their own behaviour. The whole temperance crusade was built upon a now 200-year-old reinterpretation of the effect of alcohol that centered on its capacity to weaken and destroy self-control and self-discipline (Levine 1978, 1983).

According to temperance speakers and writers, alcohol weakened the “higher” and moral portions of the brain and personality and, they asserted, it took very little alcohol to do this. Although wine drinkers in Italy and other Catholic countries did not tend to view alcohol as a dangerous stimulant to aggressive or violent behaviour, Protestant spirit drinkers, and even some Protestants in beer cultures, did view alcohol in this way.

Temperance supporters in the nineteenth century also maintained that alcohol eventually enslaved most drinkers – that it was an inherently addicting drug (the way people often think of heroin today). Even though Catholic wine drinkers (for example, in Italy and France) consumed more alcohol more often than Protestant spirit drinkers (in Norway and Sweden) – and as a result still have substantially higher rates of liver cirrhosis – it was the Protestants who focused on the “addicting” character of alcohol and talked about long term use producing a “disease of the will.” The wine drinkers have higher mortality from heavy use, but the Protestant spirit drinkers talk much more about addiction.

Since the nineteenth century, temperance movements have focused on alcohol as the enemy of self-control. In line with the arguments of Weber and Durkheim, I have suggested that substantial public concern about alcohol addiction and intoxication in the nine temperance cultures should be understood partly as a result of Protestantism's institutional, conceptual, and psychological emphasis on the issues of individual autonomy and self-control. People in these Protestant cultures found alcohol to be such a compelling social issue in large part because the temperance campaign interpreted alcohol's effects so as to focus individual and collective attention onto questions of self-control and self-discipline. *Self-control is the key social-psychological problem addressed both by classic temperance movements and by contemporary alcohol problem movements.*

The concern with self-control is of course not limited to temperance movements or Protestant cultures. As Weber, Freud, Elias and many other scholars have observed, self-control is a central psychological problem with which all modern peoples and societies must struggle. The weakening of traditional forms of regulation and control (and the increase in freedom of all sorts) require that all modern peoples must continually deal with the problem of self-regulation.

However, some cultures, notably Protestantism, further emphasized individual moral responsibility for personal behaviour. All modern cultures to some extent now see alcohol as raising problems of self-restraint. However, some Western cultures have made much more of it, emphasized it more, and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, supported large ongoing movements and ideologies concerned with alcohol as a special, important problem of self-regulation. These are all Protestant cultures which traditionally drank a substantial portion of their alcohol in distilled liquor. These are the temperance cultures.

One last point: most Protestant spirit-drinking societies developed large temperance movements. But not all of them did, as Sidel Erikson (1990) has recently pointed out in a superb piece of historical sociology. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Danes consumed great quantities of distilled liquor. They had plenty of drunkenness, disruption, Protestantism, and industrial dislocation. But, compared to Sweden, they had relatively little temperance movement activity. Why? Eriksen's answer is that Sweden and Denmark had different kinds of Protestantism. Or, more precisely, Sweden developed a Christian revival movement strongly influenced by "Anglo-American revivalism" whereas the Danish revivalist movement of the same period was pietistic and Lutheran.

Eriksen traces the roots of Swedish temperance directly to Anglo-American Bible societies and to Methodist and Baptist missionary organizations. These are also precisely the groups that provided the backbone of temperance support in the US, and, along with other dissenting groups like Presbyterians and Quakers, in Canada, Australia, and the UK. Denmark's Lutheran pietists, on the other hand, generally opposed the temperance campaign. During the nineteenth century, Methodist and Baptist missionaries made little headway in Denmark, and therefore so did temperance. Only after 1901, writes Eriksen, "did the Methodist inspired currents in Inner Mission gain ground, leading to the creation of the Christian temperance associations, the Blue Cross, with several local affiliates around the countryside. Yet the organization was hardly accepted by all Inner Mission circles, and it never succeeded in influencing public opinion."

It is impossible to do justice here to the detail of Eriksen's analysis which closely follows the development of Swedish and Danish religious revivals and temperance movements. It also distinguishes, in good Weberian fashion, between the world view of Lutheran Pietism and that of Anglo-American revivalists highlighting the characteristics which made the latter so keen on temperance, and the former opposed to it. Erikson's paper became available just as this chapter was going to press. Any further exploration of the social sources of concern with alcohol problems in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and of the character of temperance cultures, must now begin with Eriksen's argument about the very strong relationship between temperance sentiment and what she terms "Anglo-American Protestantism."

In conclusion, Eriksen's research suggests that we might conceptualize religious proclivity or openness for temperance along a continuum: Roman Catholics and the various forms of Orthodox and Eastern religious cultures would be at one end; pietistic Lutheran cultures would occupy a more middle position; and the dissenting churches of Anglo-American Protestantism would tend to make the strongest temperance supporters.

THE SPREAD AND LIMITS OF TEMPERANCE CULTURE

Since the early 1800s, the US has been at the forefront of temperance crusades. In the nineteenth century, American temperance ideas spread to the British and Nordic countries where groups like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Good Templars developed active chapters. The prohibition movement was strongest in America, which was the only Western country, other than Finland, to institute complete national alcohol prohibition.

The main American export of the last fifty years has been Alcoholics Anonymous and the disease concept of alcoholism. In the 1930s, two middle class men from New England created Alcoholics Anonymous by combining elements from evangelical Christianity with themes from twentieth century psychology and psychoanalysis, and with some of the basic elements of nineteenth century temperance thought and organizations (Kurtz 1979). In so doing they created what is surely the most important American alcohol organization of the twentieth century, and a distinctive, new movement concerned with alcohol problems (Denzin 1987).

In part, American ideas have been so influential because its alcohol movements and efforts have been comparatively well organized and well funded. In addition, Alcoholics Anonymous (like nineteenth century temperance) has a strong missionary element which it carries over from its evangelical Christian roots. AA teaches recovering alcoholics that their sobriety depends upon bringing the message of AA to others through "Twelfth Step work." Finally, in the period since the Second World War, the enormous economic, political, and military powers of the US have also increased the international influence of American culture on many issues including views of alcohol and drugs.

In the last ten or fifteen years the US has witnessed a resurgence of public concern with drinking, and a growing variety of popular new alcohol organizations and movements, that many observers have rightly termed new temperance or neo-temperance. Chief among the developments has been the spread of the philosophy of AA and the appearance and rapid growth of related groups notably Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACoA). Perhaps the other most important alcohol problem organization has been MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) and its spin-off SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving). Though not as obviously linked to classic temperance concerns, MADD has in fact organized around a theme central to earlier temperance

crusades: the defence of women, children, and the family from dangerous, drunken men (Reinarman 1988; Levine 1980; Epstein 1981). Francis Willard, the long time head of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, would certainly have approved of Adult Children of Alcoholics, and of MADD and SADD.

One motivation for developing the taxonomy of temperance and non-temperance cultures presented in this paper was to use it in making sense of current movements and activities concerned with alcohol problems. In America, at least, current alcohol movements draw upon themes and images that have been central to earlier temperance organizations. My informal hypothesis, from over fifteen years observing the alcohol field, has been that in recent years popular and scientific concern with alcohol problems has been strongest among the English-speaking and Nordic countries. For example, it is those nations that send most of the scientists and researchers to international collaborative studies on alcohol problems and policy. However, it is difficult to statistically test the idea that societies which had large temperance movements in the past have retained the strongest concern with alcohol problems and misuse. Some of the more recent American new temperance groups such as MADD or ACoA have not spread very much outside of the US.

Alcoholics Anonymous, on the other hand, has established itself in other countries. Indeed, AA today is described in the American mass media as a world-wide movement with meetings and members in many countries. AA membership reports, a limited amount of other formal research, and a substantial amount of anecdotal data suggest that AA and the larger alcoholism movement have grown steadily in the US and in other temperance cultures (Leach and Norris 1977; Mäkelä 1990). AA membership data, collected and computed by Mäkelä, allows us to compare AA membership in 24 of the Western cultures we have been discussing in this paper.

There is good reason to view with skepticism claims about the universal appeal of American movements and ideologies. Leach and Norris (1977) found that the number of AA groups per million people in Canada and Australia about equaled (or at times even exceeded) that of the US from 1945 to 1970. In the UK, however, the number of AA groups *per capita* remained much lower than in the other English-speaking regions. AA membership has also grown substantially in the Nordic countries, especially Finland. Yet even in Finland, Alcoholics Anonymous is still only one of several available forms of treatment, and it accounts for only a minority of such efforts. Most Finns with drinking problems still turn to the national health-care system, to the network of A-Clinics which use a variety of psychotherapeutic approaches, and to the indigenous Finnish self-help movement called A-Guilds (Alasuutari 1990). This is the opposite of the situation in the US where the philosophy of AA – of the twelve-step movement – dominates in-patient and out-patient treatment, therapeutic communities, and nearly all drug self-help groups. Further, alcoholism treatment in most European countries, both temperance and

non-temperance, allows for moderate drinking – a notion which is still utterly heretical in the US today (Miller 1986). Psychiatrists and other alcohol and drug treatment professionals throughout Europe also generally eschew the disease concept of alcoholism and, following the *British Journal of Addiction* and the World Health Organization, talk about “alcohol dependence” (Edwards and Lader 1990).

Table 2.1 combines data from three sources to produce a profile of consumption patterns and AA membership in 24 Western nations. The total consumption of absolute (pure) alcohol for 1974 and 1984, along with the percentage of distilled spirits consumed for those two years, are the consumption figures of most relevance for the issues raised by this chapter. The percentages of pure alcohol in wine and beer are also listed for 1974 (they were not available for 1984). The temperance cultures are indicated by asterisks.

In the far right hand column the table shows the number of AA groups per million persons as computed by Mäkelä (1990). Since there is no formal membership in AA, all membership figures should be taken as rough approximations.

Most of the non-temperance cultures show negligible AA activity. This includes: France, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Denmark, and Poland. AA activity is also not very high in the temperance cultures of Sweden and Norway; Miller (1986) discusses some of the reasons for that.

Ireland and the Netherlands, both non-temperance countries, have a relatively high number of AA groups per million. Each one deserves special study as the story of the growth and spread of AA in each place is probably different.² Ireland has the highest rate of groups per million of any Western non-temperance culture. This may be due to several factors especially the impact in the early twentieth century of the Irish Protestant temperance tradition, and, perhaps, the influence of Irish-Americans who by all accounts seem to be the American Catholics most involved in AA in the US.

Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium are the remaining non-temperance cultures with some AA activity. Here too, each situation deserves study. Germany and Belgium have large numbers of military and corporate personnel from other temperance cultures, especially from the US, Canada, and the UK. That certainly accounts for some of the membership, perhaps for a lot of it. Switzerland (like Germany) has always had a small but steady temperance activity and AA membership there is in accord with that pattern.

The hypotheses drawn from this chapter would suggest that native German and Swiss AA participation draws heavily, or primarily, from Protestants. Some evidence for that is also suggested by the case of Austria, an overwhelmingly Catholic country, with the same language as Germany and much of Switzerland; but Austria reports no AA groups at all.

The number of AA groups per million is a useful way of making some rough comparisons, but it distorts the general pattern of AA membership in the West. If we use the actual membership figures that Mäkelä presents we get a rather different picture.

There are about 781,700 AA members in all of the Western societies; 719,200 of them are in the temperance cultures – about 92 per cent. Of the temperance cultures, 704,845 are in English-speaking cultures – about 90 per cent. In the West, AA remains overwhelmingly a movement of the US, Canada, UK, and Australia. Indeed AA membership in the US and Canada totals 655,700 or 83.8 per cent of all AA membership in the West. And the US alone accounts for 585,800 persons or about 75 per cent of all AA membership in the West.

This general pattern of overall AA membership – predominately American, and overwhelmingly from other English-speaking cultures and some Nordic cultures – is in accord with the general argument of this chapter, and with the last one hundred and fifty years of temperance activity in the West.³

CONCLUSION

Prediction in the alcohol field is a tricky business and, as Griffith Edwards has suggested, is therefore usually best left to people with head scarfs and crystal balls. However, both Durkheim and Weber argued that all modern societies would become more like the Protestant cultures they had studied and would develop a heightened sense of individual autonomy and responsibility. It does not seem to be going out on too long a limb to suggest that, as in the nineteenth century, Americans will to some extent successfully spread their conceptions and organizations to other societies; and that there will be in Europe some tendency toward what might be termed the “Americanization” of alcohol issues. As a result, AA membership will likely grow in many countries over the next few decades. In the last few years, AA membership is reported to have increased substantially in Poland. However, it remains to be seen whether in Poland that process will continue and become institutionalized, or whether, like Father Mathew's crusade in the nineteenth century, it will peak and then fade.

Despite all the modernizing and homogenizing tendencies, it is likely that among Western countries the overall distribution and pattern of AA membership won't change very much in the next few decades. In the West, AA will remain primarily a temperance culture phenomenon, and more generally a Protestant one. Indeed, it does not seem likely that neo-temperance organizations or campaigns, stressing the dangerous character of alcohol, will find anywhere near the receptivity or popularity in *most* non-temperance Western cultures that they have found in the English-speaking and Nordic temperance cultures. It is unthinkable, for example, that any of the Mediterranean wine-drinking cultures would adopt measures like that of

New York City and other localities which require any establishment selling beer, wine or spirits to display a sign warning pregnant women not to drink any alcoholic beverages. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and Adult Children of Alcoholics will likewise never find much appeal in the non-temperance wine-drinking or beer-drinking societies (nor perhaps anywhere outside of the US).

This is not to say that “objectively” non-temperance cultures will not experience relatively high levels of measurable “alcohol problems.” Rather, the arguments presented in this chapter suggest that in the first third of the twenty-first century, as in the last third of the twentieth, the temperance cultures will continue to be the Western societies most interested in and concerned about alcohol problems. And that fact (or paradox) will remain, for some of us, a fascinating one to explore.⁴

ENDNOTES

1. Cherrington was a life-long leader in the temperance and prohibitionist movements. He tended to report any temperance activity he could find, and his *Encyclopedia of The Alcohol Problem* should be read as the work of an inveterate movement booster. Nonetheless, Cherrington's *Encyclopedia* is an invaluable work and the best single source on the character of temperance in different countries.

2 Mäkelä, in a personal communication, points out that perhaps the Netherlands should be grouped with the temperance cultures because of its relatively influential twentieth century temperance movement (de Lint 1981). Holland was also spirit-drinking and predominately Protestant. It is certainly the closest borderline case. Its high AA activity is therefore at least partially consistent with its relatively strong temperance tradition.

3. This chapter has focused on Western societies because the classic temperance movements were Western movements, and because those societies share some broad cultural, economic, and political characteristics. Outside of the Western societies, AA activity is very limited. There is very little AA activity in either Africa or Asia. Mäkelä reports 5611 AA members in all of Africa, and 6570 in Asia. That means that Finland, with 9000 AA members has, by itself, more than either continent. And Australia, with 17 000 members has more than both continents combined.

The one place in the world where AA has apparently taken hold recently is in parts of Latin America, mainly in Mexico and in some Central American and Caribbean countries. Certainly people from the US (and probably also from Protestant evangelical groups) have played important roles in stimulating AA in Mexico and Central America (as they did, for example, in Sweden). Some of this activity is being researched by an international group (the International Collaborative Study of Alcoholics Anonymous); this study should form a fascinating part of the story of the diffusion of temperance ideas and of concern about alcohol problems.

4. Some of the general findings of this chapter are in accord with the results of an interesting and innovative study by Simpura *et al.* (1990). The study involved asking people in Finland, Denmark, and West Germany to complete stories of everyday life. Many stories mentioned alcohol. The authors summarize their findings this way:

“On the surface, the material of this study seemed to repeat the stereotypical images of hedonistic Danes, heavy-drinking Finns, and ritualistic Germans. Going deeper it seemed that drinking has greatest expressive power in Finland, where references to drinking are more frequent and they are used effectively as sacral markers in the process of events described. In Denmark and Germany, drinking is more self-evident and is less remarkably used as a carrier of specific cultural meanings.”

This is what we would expect to find as the differences between a temperance culture and two non-temperance cultures.

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