The Secular and Biblical Perspectives on The Effects. Cause. and Remedies of ALCOHOLISM

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INTRODUCTION

Webster's dictionary defines alcoholism ass the "continued excessive or compulsive use of alcoholic drink," or, "the poisoning by alcohol." Stated another way, alcoholism consists of a repetitive intake of alcoholic beverages to an extent that it causes repeated or continued harm to the drinker.

The purpose of this paper is to compare the effects, cause, and remedies of alcoholism from both the secular and Biblical points of view.

I. The Effects of Alcoholism

A. Acute Alcoholism

Severe intoxication on repeated occasions is known to have a multitude of effects upon the body. Included in these effects are: extensive imbalance in the body chemistry, acute hepatitis, nausea, headaches, gastritis, thirst because of the shift of water from cellular to extra-cellular spaces, a generalized residual malaise, physical and/or mental incompetence, temporary dissociated, and euphoria. Furthermore, the irritating effects of alcohol can result in damage to the tissue of the mouth, esophagus, stomach, all increasing susceptibility to cancer. The liver will suffer too, as well as the heart muscles. Note, however, that most common problems are associated with diseases caused by defects of nutrition.

B. The Effects of Alcohol upon the Brain

Alcohol is a drug which affects the central nervous system, and belongs in a class with barbiturates, minor tranquilizers, and general anesthetics. It is commonly classified as a depressant. It also has a biphasic affect upon the brain.

Although initial doses can serve as an excitant or stimulant for some functions, as concentration increases, the effect goes from depression to sedation, stupor, and coma. Note that the disorders of the brain and nervous system and possibly many other symptons are caused largely by dietary deficiencies. Why? Alcohol provides a large number of calories -- but these are "empty" calories (refined sugar), which are devoid of vitamins and other essential microelements of nutrition, including as well minerals and amino acids. This also explains why so many alcoholics are fat.

In heavy bouts of drinking, the alcoholic neglects normal eating habits. This leads to eventual digestive difficulties. He is thus no longer able to absorb enough essential food elements.

The excitement phase. This phase in the drinking habit has the following effects: exhilaration, loss of social restraint, changes of mood, uncontrolled emotional displays. This excitement phase results from an indirect effect of alcohol in suppressing the function of the inhibitory brain center. Thus, the stimulating effect is really a suppression of the inhibitory function. Included with these effects is a loss of mental accuracy. The physical effects from this include slurred speech, unsteady gait, disturbed sensory perceptions and an inability to make fine discriminations.

Note that the most important immediate actions of alcohol are upon the highest functions of the brain: thinking, learning, remembering, and making judgments.

C. Long-term Problems Associated with Alcohol

The post-intoxication state can be more severe that the intoxication state. Amongst the problems that can arise are: tremulousness, loss of appetite, inability to retain food, sweating, restlessnest, sleep disturbances, epileptiform seizures, abnormal changes in body chemistry, especially in electrolyte balance. In extreme cases, the following may occur:

- 1. Delirium Tremens: a gross trembling of the whole body sometimes with seizures, mental clouding, disorientation, and hallucinations, both visual, and auditory.
- 2. Acute Alcoholic Hallucinates
- 3. Wernicke's Diseases resulting from an acute deficiency of thiamine (Vitamin si), marked by clouding of consciousness and paralysis of the optic nerve.
- 4. Korsakoff's Syndromes Loss of recent memory with a tendency to make up for the defect by confabulation.

5. Jollife's Encephalopathy: resulting from an acute complete deficiency of nicotinic acid and marked by delirium, together with rigidities of the extrimities, and sucking and grasping reflexes.

- 6. Poluneuropathy: a degenerative disease of the nervous system -- including the tenderness of calf muscles.
- 7. Hepatitis: Inflamation of the liver.
- 8. Pancreatitis: Inflamation of the pancreas.
- 9. Zieve's Syndrome: A combination of jaundice with hemolytic anemia, hyperlipemia, and hepatic tenderness.

D. Pathological Intoxication.

This common effect happens to some individuals where, after downing a small amount of drink, the person breaks into a maniacal fury, smashing furniture, and attacking people.

E. Chronic Diseases

- 1. Nutritional deficiencies. Vitamin B1 deficiency is the most common -- which causes a degeneration of the nervous system with permanent nerve damage in extreme cases, and Beriberi heart disease.
 - a. Pellagra : a deficiency of nicotinic acid
 - b. Scurvy: Absorbic acid deficiency.
 - c. Hypochronic Microcytic anemia: iron deficiency.
 - d. Anemia: Vitamin 312 deficiency.
- 2. Open sores, Often, this is found on alcoholic degenerates who usually drink the cheapest form of alcohol. Sores result from a combination of multiple nutritional deficiencies and poor hygiene.
- 3. Cirrhosis of the liver. This is often preceded by a fatt enlargement of the organ. This is caused by a nutritional deficiency.

II. Causes of Alcoholism

The many theories of the cause of alcoholism lies chiefly upon the limited perspectives of the "specialists" in particular disciplines and professions. Thus, alcoholism has been thought to be caused by defects of: heredity, nutrition, disorders of the endocrine function, latent homosexuality, economic misery or affluence, bad social influences, or sinful gluttony. Note the following amongst the most prevalent.

A. Herdity - The Disease View

1. The Genetic Cause: This theory suggests that alcoholism may have a genetic or constitutional underlying factor -not a fateful heredity, but a predisposition that renders some people more vulnerable to alcoholism than others.

- 2. Genetic Vulnerability: This theory suggests that genetic vulnerability is specific, not to alcoholism, but more generally to neurosis, or an affective disorder that may manifest itself in alcoholism. That is, alcoholism represents a "choice of symptoms" and thus be for some individuals, a "useful" sickness.
- 3. Genetic Immunity: This theory suggests that the genetic factor may impose, not vulnerability, but on the contrary immunity to alcoholism. This means that some people are unable to adapt to drinking or a level sufficient to gain peculiar rewards that dispose a person to the development of an alcoholic pattern.

B. Etiological View.

This view suspects that factors in infancy or early childhood, such as lack of parental care, love, overindulgence, or inconsistency in rearing practices -- may lay the foundation of a vulnerable person.

As an example of this, a dependant personality in adolescence, (marked by a dependence-independence conflict), may manifest an insecure self-sex image. A need to overcompensate emerges shown in a defiant exhibitionist deviance. Such a person may find effective assuagement and reward in alcohol, and learn to rely on intoxication as a mechanism for coping with problems. The eventual outcome may be alcoholism. Note that this concepts takes into account not only possible genetic, pharmacological, psychological and social factors, but also the socio-cultural context.

III. Remedies to Alcoholism

A. Physiological Remedies

1. Chemical Fences

This mode of treatment uses a disulfiram (Tetraethylthiuram disulfide). The usual techniques is to administer half a gram in tablet form daily for a few days. Then, under the control of a physician, the patient is given a small test drink of an alcoholic beverage. The presence of the disulfiram in the drinker's body causes a violent reaction of hot flushing, nausea, vomiting, a sudden sharp drop in blood pressure, pounding of the heart, and even a feeling of impending death. Similar reaction can be solicited with the use of citrated calcium cyanamide, Coprinus stramentarius, anti-diabetic drugs, and Lycopodium selago.

CON: Necessitates will-power to take the Dill. Often, the desire for alcohol exceeds that of taking the pill.

2. Aversion

This method creates a conditioned reflex of aversion to alcohol by repeatedly giving the patient a precisely timed injection of an emetic drug just before a drink of his favorite beverage, resulting in nausea and vomiting before the absorption of the alcohol. The consequent association of vomiting with drinking causes an aversion to the taste, smell and even sight of alcoholic beverages. Modified methods include associating drinking with temporary interruption of breathing by injecting a paralyzing drug.

CON:

a. Such behavior does not last indefinitely. It only reinforces a behavior periodically.b. Alcoholics can dodge the injection.

3. Nutrition / Hormones. Drugs

This theory, genetotrophic in scope, is held by those who trace the problem of alcoholism to a

geneti-cally determined need for extraordinary amounts of one or more vitamins. Accordingly, alcoholics are treated with massive doses of multivitamins. A modified theory suggests that alcoholism is causes by some defect of the endoctrine system, and thus recommend treatment by means of injection of adrenal steroids and adrenocorticotropic hormones.

- 4. Other Physical/Drug Therapies
 - a. Intravenous injections of alcohol
 - b. Apomorphine
 - c. Injections of autoserum and alcoholized serum
 - d. Brain surgery
 - e. Carbon-dioxide inhalation
 - f. Oxygen by injection
 - g. Nicotinic acid
 - h. Nicotinamide-adenine dinucleotide
 - i. Lysergide -- LSD
 - j. Strychnine
 - k. Antihistaminic agents

CON:

- a. None have proven to be more effective than others.
- b. Controlled studies are difficult to carry out, thus inhibiting accurate testing of results.
- c. Often, treatments are accompanied by side-effects having psychotherapeutic and social rehabilitative effects.

B. Other Therapies

1. <u>Psychological Therapies</u>

Psychotherapy in alcoholism encompasses the entire range of modalities applied in treating the psychoneuroses and character disorders, including individual and group techniques. The method of the psychological technique consists of gaining the patients recognition and acceptance of his actual condition, which alcoholics often resist. Such acceptance is often followed by a therapeutic-rehabilitative regimen. The various programs include: instructional lectures, discussions, analytic exploration, psychodrama, hypnosis, psychodramatic confrontation, and marathon sessions and drugs. The "total push" method bombards the alcoholic with all the methods hoping that something will work.

2. Alcoholics Anonymous

AA is a patient-centered self help .program, founded in 1934 by two alcoholics. Members strive to follow the "12 Steps" -- a non-sectarian spiritual program. The central point is: reliance upon God -- or "Higher Power" as each individual understands that concept and the value of help to other alcoholics.

Although AA has had much success in dealing with alcoholism, the following are some of the problems as seen from a Christian point of view.

- a. AA is religious, but not Christian in orientation, thereby giving a false hope as a remedy to alcoholism.
- b. AA glorifies the sin of Alcoholism.
- c. AA does not follow a set of "absolutes."

- 3. Other Therapy Groups (San Fernando Valley)
 - a. Care Unit
 - b. Raleigh Hills
 - c. The Moorings (KBRT advertized)
 - d. Adolescent Adult Substance Abuse Program
 - e. Alcoholism Recovery Unit
 - f. Alpha-Alcoholism Treatment Center
 - g. Beverly Glen Hospital
 - h. PMC Treatment Systems Inc.
 - i. Right On
 - j. Salvation Army
 - k. Schick Hospitals
 - l. And many other general hospitals

THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

I. The Biblical Doctrine of "Drunkenness."

A. The Effects of Drunkenness 1. Physically -- Drunkenness causes: a. An unsteady gait (walk) (Psalm 107:27) b. Staggering (Is. 19:14) c. Filthiness (Is. 28:8) d. Vomiting (Is. 19:14; 28:8) e. Singing (Psalm 69:12) f. Rage (Prov. 20:1) g. Babbling (Prov. 23:29) h. Wounds (Prov. 23:29) i. Redness of eyes (Prov. 23:29) j. Sickness (Prov. 23:34-351 Hosea 715) k. Numbness (Prov. 23:34-35) 1. Inflammation (Is. 5:11) m. Blurry vision (Is. 28:7) n. Spuing (Jer. 25:7) o. Falling (Jer. 25:7) p. Passing out (Jer. 25:7) 2. Mentally a. Confusion of the mind (Is. 28:7) b. Contentions -- arguing (Prov. 23:29) c. Error (Is. 28:7) d. Removal of understanding (Hosea 4:11) e. Neglect of duties (Prov. 31:4,5) f. Lack of wisdom (Prov. 20:2) g. Confusion (Prov. 23:34-35) h. Stumbling in judgment (Is. 28:7) i. Irrational behavior -- the selling of children for more wine (Joel 3:3)

3. Emotionally

a. Sorrow (Prov. 23:29)

- b. Howling (Hosea 7:5)
 c. Inflamation -- anger (Is. 5:11)
 d. Quarrels (Prey. 20:1; 23:19-35)
 e. Brawling (Prov. 20:1; 23:19-35)
 f. Woe (Prov. 23:29-32)
 g. Mocking (Prov. 20:1)
 h. Confusion (Prov. 23:34-35)
 i. Darkened joy (Is. 24:11)
- j. Fading of beauty (is. 28:2)
- k. Deception concerning security (Is. 56:12)
- 1. A taking away of the heart (Hos.4:11)

4. Spiritually

- a. Pride (Is. 5:22; 28:1)
- b. The drunkard to think he is a hero (Is. 5:22)
- c. Deception (Prov. 20:1)
- d. A removal of wisdom (Prov. 20:2)
- e. Sexual Lust (Prov. 23:33)
- f. The heart to utter perverse things (Prov. 23:33)
- g. A forgetting of the Law (Prov. 3135)
- h. Perversion of justice (Prov. 31:5)
- i. A disregard for the work of the Lord (Is. 5:21)
- j. Rebellion against God (Hos. 7:5)
- k. Condemnation -- ie: it condemns (Amos 2:8)
- 1. It is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:21)

B. The Time of Drunkenness

- 1. Early in the morning (Is. 5:11)
- 2. Late in the evening (Is. 5:11)
- 3. At night (1 Thess. 5 :7)
- 4. Lengthily (1 Sam. 1:14; Prov. 23:30)

C. The Attitude Toward Drinking

- 1. It is loved (Pray. 21:17)
- 2. It is sought (Prov. 23:30)
- 3. It is looked upon (Prov. 23:31)
- 4. It is followed (Is. 5:11)
- 5. It is cried for in the streets (Is. 24:11)
- 6. It is fetched (Is. 56:12)

D. The Nature of Strong Drink

- 1. It bites like a serpents (Prov. 23:32)
- 2. It stings like an adder (Prov. 23:32)
- 3. It is bitter (Is. 24:9)
- 4. It overcomes (Is. 28:2)
- 5. It swallows up the drinker (Is. 28:7)
- 6. It fills the drinker (Is. 56:12)
- 7. It overcharges the heart (Luke 21:34)

- E. Effects When Drink is Removed from the Drunkard
 - 1. Weeping (Joel 1:5)
 - 2. Howling (Joel 1:5)

F. Social Associations with Drinking

- 1. Common amongst all classes
- Especially common amongst the rich and nobility (1 Sam. 25:36; 2 Sam 13:28; 1 Kings 16:9; 20:16)

G. Cases of Drunkenness / Drunkards

- 1. Noah (Gen. 9:21)
- 2. Lot (Gen. 19:33,35)
- 3, Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 43:34)
- 4. Nabal (1 Sam. 25:36)
- 5. Uriah (2 Sam. 11:13)
- 6. Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28)
- 7. Elah, King of Israel (1 Kings 16:9)
- 8. Ben-Hadad, King of Syria (1 Kings 20:16)
- 9. His 32 allied kings (1 Kings 20:16)
- 10. Kings of Israel (Hosea 7:5)
- 11. Ahasuerus (Esther 1:10)

H. Things Associated with Drunkenness

- 1. Gluttony (Deut. 21:20; Prov. 23:21)
- 2. Disobedience (Deut 21:20)
- 3. Stubborness (Deut. 21:20)
- 4. Evil (Deut. 21:20)
- 5. Feasts (Is, 5:12)
- 6. Pride (Is. 28 1)
- 7. Uncleanness (Is. 28:3)
- 8. Whoredom (Hos. 4:11)

I. Abstainers from Strong Drink

- 1. Priests while on duty in the sanctuary (Lev. 10:9)
- 2. Nazarites during period of vow (Num. 6:3,4; Amos 2:12)
- 3. Kings (Prey. 3114)
- 4. Princes (Prov. 31:4)
- 5. Prophets (Is. 28:7)
- 6. John the Baptist (Luke 1:15)
- 7. Anyone wishing to filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
- 8. Any Christian not wishing to make a brother stumble (Rom. 14:21)
- 9. Aged women (Titus 2:3)
- J. Those Who Should Drink
 - 1. Those who are ready to perish (Prey. 31 6)
 - 2. Those who are heavy of heart (Prov. 31:6)
 - 3. Those who want to forget their poverty (Prey. 31:7)
 - 4. Those who want to remember their misery no more (Prey. 31:7)

K. Injunctions Against Drunkenness

- 1. Put away thine wine from thee! (1 Sam. 1:14)
- 2. Don't look at it I (Prov. 23131)
- 3. Woe to those who drink! (Is 5:22)
- 4. Don't give your neighbor strong drink! (Hab. 2:15)
- 5. Take heed against allowing your heart to be overcharged with drunkenness! (Like 21:34)
- 6. Let us not walk in drunkenness! (Rom. 13:13)
- 7. Do not be drunk with wine! (Eph. 5:18)

L. Punishment for Drunkenness

- 1. Death (Deut. 21:21)
- 2. Hell (Gal. 5:21)
- M. <u>Recommended uses of wine</u> For medicinal purposes (1 Tim. 5:23)
- N. Drink Used Figuratively
 - Job 12:25; Is 28:8; 19:14; 51:17, 21-23; 63:6; Jer. 25:15,16, 27, 28; 51:7-9; 23:9; Lam.3:15; Ez.23:31-34; 39:19; Hab 2:15,

II The Heart of The Problem

A. <u>Is Alcoholism a Disease</u>

According to the foregoing study, it is clear that the prevalent secular view considers alcoholism to be a disease. The responsibility for the alcoholic's condition is infrequently placed upon the alcoholic himself, but rather upon his "disease": such as his hereditary condition of certain genetic disorders, or his hormonal balance, nutritional deficiency, and the such. A medical cure is sought for his treatment. But is such a cure possible?

B. The Problem

Herein lies the great inconsistency with the foregoing view. If alcoholism were a diseases, physicians would be able to prescribe drugs that would curs the disease. However, no product (as seen earlier in this paper) has done the job.

It is a commonly accepted medical fact that diabetes is a disease -- a disorder of the pituitary glands characterized by inadequate secretion of insulin. Diabetes is curable by the injection of extra insulin to compensate for the lack of insulin in the body. Diabetes, therefore, is remediable through medicine.

C. The Difference

The question to ask, then, is the following one: If both alcoholism and diabetes are diseases, why are they treated differently? Why is not possible to treat alcoholism like other diseases are treated? The only common denominator between the two is the <u>responsibility</u> factor. Just as the diabetic must <u>choose</u> whether or not he will take insulin on a regular basis or not -- preventing potential death -- so the alcoholic must <u>choose</u> whether or not he will stop drinking preventing his potential death. The prevention of alcoholism boils down to one issue -- the will.

D Is There Any Kind Heredity of Factor in Alcoholism?

Statistics show that the rate of alcoholism amongst the offspring of alcoholics is ten (10) times higher that of non-alcoholics. If is possible, this author believes, that some hereditary

elements might be passed on from one generation to another. However, this is no different than having hereditary heart disease or lung disease. Whether or not heredity plays a factor in one's propensity toward the consumption of alcohol, the issue still remains the same. It is the responsibility of the alcoholic to control his drinking. The alcoholic by no means has a unique disease. The reason diabetics die is because they don't diet, and don't take proper medication. The reason alcoholics die is because they don't stop drinking.

E. Is the Alcoholic Resnonsible for His Condition?

1. NO:

Those who hold to the disease view usually relieve the alcoholic of his responsibility. Thus, more often than not, the alcoholic is pitied for his condition.

2. Yes

- a. The Bible recognizes that all men are sinners (Rom. 3:23). The manifestation of that sin can be expressed in many ways, including excessive consumption of alcohol. For that sin and its expression, men are responsible. Why?
- b. Note that the mere drinking of alcohol is not necessarily condemned in the Bible only drunkenness. It is only those who violate their limitation that are counted as drunkards.
- c. The injunctions against drunkenness by God (see earlier), make it clear that drunkenness is a human choice. The mere fact that men are warned against drunkenness suggests human responsibility.
- d. The harsh punishment of drunkenness in the Bible: stoning (Deut. 21:21) and Hell (Gal. 5:21), suggests its strong relation to sin and personal responsibility. Does God send lepers to hell because they are lepers? Does God send diabetics to hell because they diabetics? God only sends those lepers and diabetics to hell who have rejected Jesus Christ. Does God send alcoholics to hell because they are alcoholics? God does send alcoholics to hell because alcoholism is not a medical problem, but a sin problem. DeaL ing with the sin problem deals with the consequences-- alcoholism. Embracing Christ as Lord and Savior guarantees Heaven for the drunkard, and his change of behavior.
- 3. <u>The Only Cure for the Alcoholic</u>

The only way to deal with anyone who is violating his or her limitations, and using their failure of remaining within those limitations as an excuse for sinful behavior, is through a confrontation of responsibility. True salvation involves two fundamental elements: repentance and the embracing of Jesus Christ as Savior. Consequently, the only true cure to alcoholism is to "repent and, believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).

CONCLUSION

It has been noted in this paper that alcohol is a poison. It has effected the behavior of men and women all throughout history -- those who have not wished to curtail their drinking. After comparing the effects, cause, and remedies for alcoholism, it was concluded in this paper that the only permanent and effective means of curing alcoholism is by calling it what it is -- sin -and by "repenting and believing in the Gospel."

APPENDIX

Statistics on Alcoholism

- 1. Alcoholics are seven (7) times more liable to fatal accidents than non-drinkers are.
- 2. Alcoholics are thirty (30) times more liable to poisoning.
- 3. Alcoholics are sixteen (16) times more liable to death from a fall.
- 4. Alcoholics are 4.5 times more liable to death in in a motor- vehicle accident.
- 5. The average life span of an alcoholic is reduced by years.
- 6. 77% of all adult men are drinkers.
- 7. 60% of all adult women are drinkers.
- 8. 57% of adolescent boys are drinkers.
- 9. 43% of adolescent girls are drinkers.
- 10. Beer is the preferred drink amongst teenagers.
- 11. In 1970 there were 5,400,000 alcoholics in the US.
 - -- 4,500,000 of those were men.
 - -- 900,000 of those were women
 - -- 7.3% of all men were alcoholics
 - -- 1.3% of all women were alcoholics
- 12. In the 60's, the "Pre-alcoholic" population was at 4,000,0.00.
- 13. Combining the alcoholic and "pre-alcoholic population together, the total was 9,400,000 problem drinkers.
- 14. The suicide rate of alcoholics is 2.5 times greater than normal.
- 15. The mortality rate of alcoholics is 2.5 times higher.
- 16. Divorce rates in families with an alcoholic are 4 to 12 times higher than the average.
- 17. The rate of alcoholism in offspring of alcoholics is 10 times higher than normal
- 18. Alcoholics miss work 2.5 times more often than normal.
- 19. Alcoholics collected 3 times more sick pay than normal.
- 20. The proportion of alcoholics among crime convictions is at 22-43%.
- 21. Alcohol is involved in 1/3 of the 50,000 road-accident fatalities in the US.
- 22. Alcohol is involved in at least 500,000 injuries to persons.
- 23. Alcohol is involved in //(t, .of property damage.
- 24. The national economic loss of the US due to alcoholism is \$10 billion
- 25. The total sales of liquor in the US is \$ 19,031,000.

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Meetings

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