do men run after it . . . the drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystical consciousness."³

Abundant material from cultural anthropology, as well as from the history of religions, points to the affinity between alcohol and religion in many cultures. Horton noted that, if one asks a native in a primitive or semiprimitive society why he values alcohol, he will probably say it is because his ancestors found it good or because it was given to his people by the gods.⁴ Jellinek has described the symbolic aspects of alcoholic beverages and has pointed out that many ancient cultures regarded wine as the "stream of life.”⁵ In the Greek pantheon, Dionysus, god of wine, also was related to the afterlife. An immensely popular deity, he was believed to suffer, die and rise again from the dead.⁶ Goodenough has pointed out that certain Jewish gravestones of the Hellenistic period bear carvings of drunken men, apparently serving as meaningful symbols of death—transcending experiences.⁷ The use of wine in the Christian tradition—viz., in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in some Protestant groups and in the Roman Catholic Mass—is another illustration of the link between alcohol and religion.⁸

Moving from the symbolic and ritual uses of alcohol to its addictive use, the clinical evidence is suggestive. The prominence of the fear of death in the symptomatology of a number of early-stage alcoholics with whom I have counseled has seemed impressive. For example, a single woman in her early forties who was still able to hold a responsible job, but was becoming concerned about her rapidly increasing dependence on alcohol, sought help. Her discussion of her childhood included reference to a persistent fear of being outside under the stars at night. Closer examination of this and subsequent fears disclosed a common underlying theme—an intense fear of dying. Both neurotic and existential elements seemed to be present.

The striving for a kind of pseudo—mystical experience through alcohol has been evident in a number of alcoholics counseled at various stages in their addiction. One man in his early 30's phrased it this way: "When I reached a certain point in a drunk, I felt as though I were on the edge of a beautiful land. I kept drinking to try to find it. I never made it, but I had to keep trying.”

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⁸ I am not suggesting that the link between alcohol and religion is a direct causal factor in producing alcoholism. There is some evidence that the ritual uses of alcohol may actually deter the development of alcoholism in certain cultures (among orthodox Jews, for example). The fact that the use of alcohol is often related to religious festivals and practices attests to its value as a religious symbol. The same properties which make it a valuable religious symbol for many people also lend it to use as a substitute for religion by o—a, including alcoholics.