Introduction

Numerous reform movements to improve society sprang up in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century. The temperance movement attracted reformers who identified excessive drinking as the principal cause of domestic violence, poverty, and the general breakdown of morality. This broadside by John W. Barber, “The Drunkard’s Progress, or the Direct Road to Poverty, Wretchedness & Ruin,” was published in 1826 to be displayed in homes, shops, and public spaces to remind people about the dangers of drinking.

Inspired by the cautionary engravings “A Harlot’s Progress” and “A Rake’s Progress” by the English artist William Hogarth (1697–1764), “The Drunkard’s Progress” shows four scenes of an alcoholic’s path to ruin: “The Morning Dram,” “The Grog Shop,” “The Confirmed Drunkard,” and “Concluding Scene.” Each scene is paired with a Bible verse and a description of the damage accompanying escalating levels of vice, from “The Beginning of Sorrow, Neglect of Business” through “Poverty, Wretchedness, . . . Beggary, Pauperism, Death” as the home is auctioned off and the family is driven to the alms house.

Questions for Discussion

Read the introduction and study the broadside. Then answer the following questions based on the text and images and your knowledge of American history.

1. What is the tone and purpose of the broadside?
2. How do the Biblical passages at the top of each panel relate to the images?
3. What is the outcome of drinking as depicted in each of the four illustrations? Analyze the panels and be specific in your response.
4. Compare panels 1 (“The Morning Dram”) and 3 (“The Confirmed Drunkard”). What changes take place within the drunkard’s home?
5. Study “The Grog Shop” panel. In what ways are the denizens of the shop manifesting the behaviors in the caption?
6. Write a one-sentence summary of the action in each of the four panels.
Temperance movement cartoon: “The Drunkard’s Progress,” 1826

John W. Barber, “The Drunkard’s Progress, or the Direct Road to Poverty, Wretchedness & Ruin,” New Haven, Conn., September 9, 1826 (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06025)
Temperance movement cartoon: “The Drunkard's Progress,” 1826

*Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow Strong Drink . . . . Isa. 5C. 11v.*

The Morning Dram.

The Beginning of Sorrow, Neglect of Business, Idleness, Languor, Loss of Appetite, Dulness and Heaviness, a love of Strong Drink increasing.
Temperance movement cartoon: “The Drunkard’s Progress,” 1826

*Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle Strong Drink* . . . Isaiah 5:22v.

**The Grog Shop.**

*Bad Company, Profaneness, Cursing and Swearing, Quarreling & Fighting, Gambling, Obscenity, Ridicule and Hatred of Religion, The Gate of Hell.*
Temperance movement cartoon: “The Drunkard’s Progress,” 1826

Who hath wo? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions?

Who hath wounds without cause? . . . They that tarry long at the wine. Prov 23

The Confirmed Drunkard.

Beastly Intoxication, Loss of Character,
Loss of Natural Affection, Family Suffering, Brutality, Misery, Disease,
Mortgages, Sheriffs, Writs &c.
Temperance movement cartoon: “The Drunkard’s Progress,” 1826

*The Drunkard shall come to poverty.* Proverbs 23 Chap 21

*The wages of Sin is Death.* Romans 6. Chap. 22 v.

CONCLUDING SCENE.

*Poverty, Wretchedness, a Curse and Burden upon Society, Want, Beggary, Pauperism, Death.*