

Minority Opinion Appeal To AA Fellowship

**Presented to the Fellowship by
the Mt. Rainier AA Group Conscience**

Mount Rainier Group established January 1976

**33rd & Bunker Hill Road
Mt. Rainier, Maryland 20712**

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Minority Opinion Appeal to AA Fellowship

Executive Summary

This “Minority Opinion Appeal” to the entire Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous began with a small group of AA members who were united in their ***opposition to development of literature*** by AA World Services, approved during the 60th General Service Conference in 2010, ***that will focus on spirituality and include stories from atheists and agnostics who are “successfully sober” in Alcoholics Anonymous***. We believe the majority is in considerable error, that this misguided decision is so grave that it could affect AA as a whole, and consequently it is our duty to attempt to see that our minority position is represented at the 61st General Service Conference to be held in 2011.

In essence, this is a Position Paper which begins with a short appeal followed by rebuttals to background documents the Literature Committee cited when it moved to develop the Conference Approved literature on this topic. The rebuttals to the background documents cite existing Conference Approved Literature in an attempt to outline the minority’s position on this matter. As part of the minority’s “background” material we quote, in the Appeal itself, one non-conference approved article written by an AA member. The entire article is attached after the appeal and before the rebuttals. For each of the background documents we rebut, we include the entire document, as it was submitted to the General Service Office (GSO), along with the GSO’s correspondence related to the document.

In Summary, the minority’s position is:

- The program of Alcoholics Anonymous is outlined in the Big Book which is our society’s basic text. This book gives clear cut directions on how to practice AA’s Twelve Steps which are described, in the Foreword to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, as ***“a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.”***
- Practicing the Twelve Steps enables alcoholics to develop faith in a Higher Power (or God of one’s understanding) that is sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism.
- Consequently, any literature which attempts to describe *current* atheists or agnostics as being “successfully sober” in AA would be deceptive, misleading, and harmful to ***real alcoholics*** attempting to find the power necessary to solve their problem. Such a position is fundamentally opposed to the authentic program of recovery detailed in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. AA is a program designed to change us, not for us to change the program.
- The proposed literature is a frothy appeal, without any weight or depth, and not grounded in a power greater than ourselves. Much of our existing conference approved literature is geared toward helping non-believers develop enough faith, in something greater than themselves, to succeed with the program of recovery as it is outlined in the Big Book. Consequently, as the Trustees Literature Committee has concluded in each of the previous six attempts from 1976 to 2006, there is no “need” for additional literature on this subject.

Minority Opinion Appeal to AA Fellowship

For Consideration by District Committee for Area 13

Background:

During the 59th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, which was held at the Crowne Plaza Times Square, New York during 26 April – 2 May 2009, the delegate from Northern California Coastal - CNCA 06 Delegate Panel 59) introduced floor action which stated:

“we develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous.”

The 59th General Service Conference voted to commit that floor action to committee, so the 2010 Conference Literature Committee (with limited time to read the voluminous background material on the subject) recommended that:

“... the trustee’s Committee on Literature develop literature which focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous, and bring a draft or progress report to the 2011 Conference Committee on Literature.”

When this information was brought up at a Regional Panel Discussion on Literature in Area 29, Maryland, a small consensus formed that opposed the development of such literature. **This Appeal to the entire fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous NOT to produce such literature is in the spirit of Concept V:**

“Throughout our world service structure, a traditional ‘Right of Appeal’ ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.”

The AA Service Manual Combined With Twelve Concepts for World Service, by Bill W., 2009-2010 Edition states on page 22 (Concept V) the following:

“In the light of the principal of the “Right of Appeal,” all minorities – whether in our staffs, committees, corporate boards or among the Trustees – should be encouraged to file minority reports whenever they feel a majority to be in considerable error. And when a minority considers an issue to be such a grave one that a mistaken decision could seriously affect AA as a whole, it should then charge itself with the actual duty of presenting a minority report to Conference.”

It is our contention that:

- Our basic text Alcoholics Anonymous ©1939, the series of essays written in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions © 1952, and a body of other Conference Approved literature adequately covers this topic.
- We believe what is really needed is a deeper understanding of our existing literature and history. Per the Third Tradition, It is clear that AA members, recovered or not, should welcome everyone; including non believers and those with radically different belief systems than the majority of the members in the group. The personal story entitled “The Vicious Cycle,” written by one of AA’s original first 100 member’s *, makes it abundantly clear that this issue was resolved within AA before 1940. Creating Conference Approved Literature focused on this issue will only confuse newcomers and resurrect a controversial issue that was resolved long ago.
- Any attempts to provide information approved by AAWS about how individuals or groups of people have stayed “successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous” without relying upon a Power greater than themselves, or God *as we understood him*, is in direct opposition to the AA message as it is laid out in the first 164 pages of the big book, and, therefore, threatens the integrity of our **“common solution” (Big Book, pg. 17)** thereby taking us away from our **“... primary purpose (which is to carry (our) message to the alcoholic who still suffers”**
(Tradition V)
- We agree with the Delegate from Panel 58, Area 41 Nebraska (see the background document #6 from the 60th G.S.C.), that production of such literature is “not conducive to unity”, is divisive, and will dilute the AA message which, per the jacket (paper cover) of the third edition, is the first 164 pages of the Big Book.
- We are filing this minority report because we feel the majority opinion, reflected through the trustee’s Committee on Literature’s decision to “develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous, is in considerable error. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS MISGUIDED DECISION IS SO GRAVE HAT IT COULD AFFECT AA AS A WHOLE. Consequently, we feel it is our duty to see that this minority opinion makes it to the 2011 General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous when the draft of the proposed literature, or progress report, is introduced.

* Jim B., from Washington DC, is the Author of the “Vicious Cycle” and was also one of the first 100 members that vetted the Big Book. He is credited with having the phrase “*as we understood Him*” added after the word “God” in Steps 3 and 11. His story is also told in the “Third Tradition” in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. In that story they call him ED. It is the story of how the issue of non-believers in AA was dealt with when formulating the Third Tradition – *The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.*

Minority Position:

Tradition Nine states:

“A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”

In “Tradition Nine” of the Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions (which is Conference Approved) Bill Wilson writes that Alcoholics Anonymous is able to have the least possible organization because of the fact that:

“Unless each AA member follows to the best of his ability our suggested Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant. His drunkenness and dissolution are not penalties inflicted by people in authority; they result from his personal disobedience to spiritual principles.

The same stern threat applies to the group itself. Unless there is approximate conformity to AA’s Twelve Traditions, the group, too, can deteriorate and die. So we of AA do obey spiritual principles, first because we must, and ultimately because we love the kind of life such obedience brings. Great suffering and great love are AA’s disciplinarians; we need no others.”
(Twelve & Twelve page 174)

In his article, posted on recoveryrealm.com 7 July 2009, entitled ***“What happened to AA’s success rate???”*** AA member, Cliff B., makes the following pertinent observations *:

- “30 & 40 years ago, we were keeping (sober) 75% or more of the alcoholics who came to us for help. Today, we aren’t keeping even 5%. What happened?”
- Many newcomers who arrive at AA today have been told by treatment centers and the court system, often before they arrive at an AA meeting, things that are contrary to the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Rather than educate these newcomers, recovered AA members have permitted newcomers to convince old-timers that they have a better idea.
- Over the years newcomers have become more confused with the diversity of information that has been presented to them such as
 - Just go to meetings and don’t drink
 - Go to 90 meetings in 90 days
 - Don’t rush into taking the Steps just take your time... Easy Does It!

* Cliff’s opinions are his own and are not “Conference Approved,” but this minority agrees with his position. The entire article is included in the Background Material to this appeal and can also be viewed at:
<http://www.recoveryrealm.com/Forums/tabid/126/forumid/12/postid/10604/view/topic/Default.aspx>

- Old timers have failed in their responsibility to the newcomer to remind them of a vital truth, “Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program.” We have permitted untreated alcoholics and non-alcoholics to sit in our meetings and lay out their problems, ideas and opinions. * We have gone from, “Rarely have we seen a person fail” to “Seldom do we see a person recover.”

The “majority” (while no doubt well intentioned) that is moving forward with creation of literature which is supposed to explain how atheists and agnostics can be “successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous” are the victims of this trend Cliff B aptly describes. Unfortunately; those of us who have found the common solution (big book pg. 17), through reliance on our Higher Powers, may very well be in the minority after decades of the AA message being diluted. It appears, to us, that the inmates may be on the verge of taking over the insane asylum!

We implore those of you who have been entrusted with representing the Group Conscience of Alcoholics Anonymous at our 61st General Service Conference in 2011, to read the following rebuttals we have prepared to some of the arguments made on behalf of creating such literature. We also hope you bear in mind Tradition Two which states:

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.”

* As a minority we recognize and appreciate the right of individual AA groups to welcome and invite newcomers to “lay out their problems, ideas and opinions” during meetings, but we agree with Cliff that it is the responsibility of Recovered AA members to explain how the 12 Step Program of Recovery, outlined in the Big Book, can and will, if practiced, help change for the better these newcomer’s problems, ideas, and opinions.

The attached documents are rebuttals to background documents from the 60th General Service Conference which supported *the creation of Conference-approved literature which focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in AA.*

These rebuttals cite conference approved literature, and some non conference approved literature, to demonstrate how this proposed new literature is unnecessary and potentially harmful to our First Legacy - the program of recovery, our Second Legacy – unity inside the fellowship of AA and amongst its service workers, and our Third Legacy – world service to carry the message to alcoholics worldwide.

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Bill V. Logo



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FORUMS



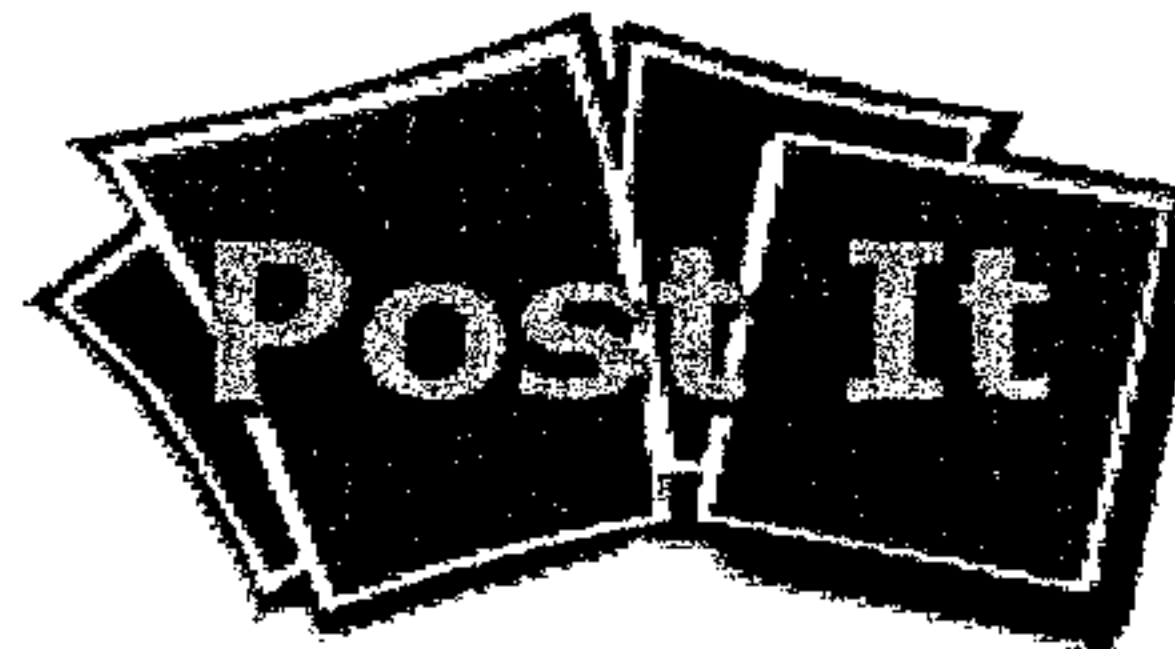
PHOTOS



When I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I noticed footprints in the sand...



MESSAGE FORUMS



Recovery REALM and its MEETINGS are in the **EASTERN Time ZONE**

Recovery REALM Time is NOW...

4:18:37 PM

Meeting COUNT DOWN Clock

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Forums > 12 Step Programs > AA

Subject: What happened to AA's success rate???

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Author	Messages	Oldest First
txsuperman ●  Junior REALMite Posts: 20	07/07/2009 1:48 PM <hr/> What Happened?	Quote Reply Alert

by Cliff B.

That question is being asked by a lot of alcoholics lately. What happened to our high success rate? 30 & 40 years ago, we were keeping 75% or more of the alcoholics who came to us for help. Today, we aren't keeping even 5%. What happened?

What happened to that wonderful A.A. Group that was around for 20, 30 or 40 years? There used to be 50, 75, 100 or more at every meeting. It is now a matter of history; gone! More and more groups are folding every day. What happened?

We hear a lot of ideas, opinions and excuses as to what happened but things are not improving. They continue to get worse. What is happening?

Bill W. wrote,

"In the years ahead A.A. will, of course, make mistakes. Experience has taught us that we need have no fear of doing this, **providing that we always remain willing to admit our faults and to correct them promptly.** Our growth as individuals has depended upon this healthy process of trial and error. So will our growth as a fellowship.

Let us always remember that any society of men and women that cannot freely correct its own faults must surely fall into decay if not into collapse. Such is the universal penalty for the failure to go on growing. Just as each A.A. must continue to take his moral inventory and act upon it, so must our whole Society if we are to survive and if we are to serve usefully and well." (A.A. Comes of Age, pg 231)

With so very few finding lasting sobriety and the continued demise of AA groups, it is obvious that we have not remained willing to admit our faults and to correct them promptly.

Seems to me that the Delegate of the Northeast Ohio Area, Bob Bacon, identified our mistakes and our faults when he talked to a group of AA's in 1976. He said, in essence, we are no longer showing the newcomer that we have a solution for alcoholism. We are not telling them about the Big Book and how very important that Book is to our long term sobriety. We are not telling them about our Traditions and how very important they are to the individual groups and to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. Rather, we are using our meeting time for drunkalogs, a discussion of our problems, ideas and opinions or "my day" or "my way".

Having been around for a few years, and reflecting on what Bob Bacon had to say, **it would appear that we have permitted newcomers to convince the old-timers that they had a better idea.** They had just spent 30 or more days in a treatment facility where they had been impressed with the need to talk about their problems in Group Therapy Sessions.

They had been told that it didn't make any difference what their real problem was, A.A. had the "best program".

They were told that they should go to an A.A. meeting every day for the 1st 90 days out of treatment.

They were told that they shouldn't make any major decisions for the 1st year of their sobriety.

And what they were told goes on and on, most of which are contrary to the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous!

Apparently, what they were told sounded pretty good to the A.A. members who were here when the TC clients started showing up at our meetings. And a lot of the A.A. members liked the idea of the treatment centers because the centers provided a place where they could drop off a serious drinker, if he/she had insurance. That eliminated some of the inconveniences we had been plagued with before; having to pour orange juice and honey or a shot of booze down a vibrating alky to help them "de-tox".

When A.A. was very successful, the folks who did the talking in meetings were recovered alcoholics. The suffering and untreated alcoholics listened. After hearing what it takes to recover, the newcomer was faced with a decision; "Are you going to take the Steps and recover or are you going to get back out there and finish the job?". If they said they "were willing to go to any length", they were given a sponsor, a Big Book and began the process of recovery by taking the Steps and experiencing the Promises that result from that course of action. This process kept the newcomer involved in working with others and continued the growth of our Fellowship. Our growth rate was approximately 7% and the number of sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous doubled every 10 years.

With the advent of the rapid growth of the Treatment Industry, the acceptance of our success with alcoholics by the judicial system and endorsement of physicians, psychiatrist, psychologist, etc. all kinds of people were pouring into A.A. at a rate greater than we had ever dreamed possible. Almost without realizing what was happening, our meetings began changing from ones that focused on recovery from alcoholism to "discussion or participation" types of meetings that invited everyone to talk about whatever was on their mind. The meetings evolved from a program of spiritual development to the group therapy type of meeting where we heard more and more about "our problems" and less and less about the Program of Recovery by the Big Book and the preservation of our Fellowship by adhering to our Traditions.

What has been the result of all this? Well, never have we had so many coming to us for help. But never have we had such a slow growth rate which has now started to decline. For the first time in our history, Alcoholics Anonymous is losing members faster than they are coming in and our success rate is unbelievably low. (Statistics from the Inter-Group Office of some major cities indicate less than 5% of those expressing a desire to stop drinking are successful for more than 5 years; a far cry from the 75% reported by Bill W. in the Forward to Second Edition). The change in the content of our meetings is proving to be death-traps for the newcomer and in turn, death-traps for the groups that depend on the "discussion or participation" type meetings.

Why is this? The answer is very simple. When meetings were opened so that untreated alcoholics & non-alcoholics were given the opportunity to express their ideas, their opinions, air their problems and tell how they were told to do it where they came from, the confused newcomer became more confused with the diversity of information that was being presented. More and more they were encouraged to "just go to meetings and don't drink" or worse yet, "go to 90 meetings in 90 days". The newcomer no longer was told to take the Steps or get back out there and finish the job. In fact, they are often told, "Don't rush into taking the Steps. Take your time." The alcoholics who participated in the writing of the Big Book didn't wait. They took the Steps in the first few days following their last drink.

Thank God, there are those in our Fellowship, like Joe & Charlie, Wally, etc., who have recognized the problem and have started doing something about it. They are placing the focus back on the Big Book.

There have always been a few groups that would not yield to the group therapy trend. They stayed firm to their commitment to try to carry a single message to the suffering alcoholic. That is to tell the newcomer that "we have had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps and if you want to recover, we will see that you have a sponsor who has recovered and will lead you along the path the 1st 100 laid down for us".

Recovered alcoholics have begun founding groups that have a single purpose and inform the newcomer that until they have taken the steps and recovered, they will not be permitted to say anything in meetings.

They will listen to recovered alcoholics, they will take the Steps, they will recover and then they will try to pass their experience and knowledge on to the ones who are seeking the kind of help we provide in Alcoholics Anonymous. As this movement spreads, as it is beginning to, Alcoholics Anonymous will again be very successful in doing the one thing God intended for us to do and that is to help the suffering alcoholic recover, if he has decided he wants what we have and is willing to go to any length to recover, to take and apply our Twelve Steps to our lives and protect our Fellowship by honoring our Twelve Traditions.

There is a tendency to want to place the blame for our predicament on the treatment industry and professionals. They do what they do and it has nothing to do with what we in Alcoholics Anonymous do. That is their business. That is not where to place the blame and also is in violation of our Tenth Tradition. The real problem is that the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, who were here when the "clients" began coming to our Fellowship did not help the "clients" understand that our Program had been firmly established since April 1939. And that the guidelines for the preservation and growth of our Fellowship were adopted in 1950. That they must get rid of their new "old ideas" and start practicing the Twelve Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous as it was given to us. That until they had taken the Steps and recovered, they had nothing to say that needed to be heard except by their sponsor. But that didn't happen.

To the contrary, the old timers failed in their responsibility to the newcomer to remind them of a vital truth, "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program." We have permitted untreated alcoholics and non-alcoholics to sit in our meetings and lay out their problems, ideas and opinions. **We have gone from, "Rarely have we seen a person fail" to "Seldom do we see a person recover".**

We now know what the problem is and we know what the solution is. Unfortunately, we have not been prompt to correct the faults and mistakes which have been created by what would appear to be large doses of apathy and complacency. The problem we are trying to live with is needlessly killing alcoholics.

The Solution? The Power, greater than ourselves, that we find through our Twelve Steps promises recovery for those who are willing to follow the clear-cut directions in the Big Book.

Do you want to be a part of the problem or a part of the solution? Simple, but not easy; A price has to be paid.

Sent: Monday, August 10, 2009 10:52 AM

To:

Subject: RE: Important: New Pamphlet for Atheists

Literature

AGENDA ITEM C
Background Doc. 1

Dear

Warm greetings from your General Service Office. My name is I am an alcoholic and I currently have the pleasure of serving on the Literature Desk. I am glad for this opportunity to be in touch.

, thanks for your thoughtful email and idea for a new pamphlet. I will be happy to keep your sharing in our files for any future discussions on the subject.

In the meantime, all of us here send our gratitude and best wishes.

Sincerely,

General Service Conference

From: I

Sent: Tuesday, August 04, 2009 11:42 PM

To: Literature

Subject: Important: New Pamphlet for Atheists

Dear AA,

I have a very good idea for a pamphlet I don't think you have thought of yet. It should be called something like "AA for the Complete and Total Atheist".

My dad has been an alcoholic for thirty years, and the main excuse he gives for avoiding AA is his atheism. I know his real excuses are much deeper than this, but this convenient loophole has kept him from approaching AA with anything but scorn all these years. To mention AA to an atheist is to frame one's self as a bible-thumping and sentimental religious fanatic.

I don't think things like "As We Understood Him" will cut it for hardcore atheists--too sympathetic to God and the supernatural. The fact is, some atheists seem to believe they are far smarter than religiously- or agnostically-inclined folks (whom they see as misguided suckers), and this sense of superiority provides endless eye-rolling and bitterness whenever a "higher power" is mentioned in any context. AA is to them a snakes' nest of religious piety and superstition, and only regarded with haughty disdain.

I go to Al-Anon (I'm not an atheist though, so the HP is not that much of a struggle for me). I have seen how various and multifaceted the interpretation of the "religious" aspect is, and I know it is addressed in the literature. But it needs to be framed

in a wholly non-supernatural way to make sense to the non-believer who cannot accept AA as appropriate for an intelligent person. Atheism is a philosophy that is reasonable and must be respected; it must be made evident how it can fit within the philosophy of AA. Atheism is an important force in the post-modern world and needs its own special category within AA literature.

Since the goal of AA is to reach all people, including atheists, it is imperative to break through their wall of resistance by addressing them directly.

Please consider this seriously; I am afraid my father is going to suffer horribly all his life, or soon die (as might countless other atheist alcoholics), if he can't snap out of it and give AA a chance. That is one thing he will never do unless the "higher power" idea is presented to him in terms an atheist can truly appreciate. Try to get Christopher Hitchens to write it!

I hope you will take this e-mail very seriously and forward it to the appropriate Minister of Pamphlets.

Please write to me and let me know that this was received.

Thank you very much,

Rebuttals to AA Member's 4 August 2009 Email to the GSO Literature Committee

- The AA Member states in her email to the Literature Committee that her Dad is an atheist who *"has been an alcoholic for thirty years"* and approaches AA with scorn. She suggests that the Literature Committee produce a pamphlet that is *"framed in a wholly non-supernatural way to make sense to the non-believer who cannot accept AA as appropriate for an intelligent person."* She recommends that the Atheist Christopher Hitchens write it and suggests the name of the pamphlet could be *"AA for the Complete and Total Atheist."*

Our first thought is that she has missed the spiritual concept of ***"Live and Let Live"*** which is one of the mottoes cited at the end of the chapter "The Family Afterward."

(Big Book page 135)

In addition to encouraging her to continue attending meetings of Al-Anon, we believe the following excerpts from the Big Book will help her deal with her father's obstinacy and closed mindedness.

"We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself."

(Big Book page 31)

"..be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic.."

(BB page 92)

"If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we alcoholics have much in common and that you would like, in any case, to be friendly. Let it go at that."

(Big Book page 95)

- In her email she also states: *"I don't think things like 'As We Understand Him' will cut it for hardcore atheists... The fact is, some atheists seem to believe they are far smarter than religiously- or agnostically – inclined folks... AA is to them a snakes' nest of religious piety and superstition, and only regarded with haughty disdain... I know it (the 'religious aspect' of AA) is addressed in the literature. But it needs to be framed in a wholly non-supernatural way to make sense to the non believer who cannot accept AA as appropriate for an intelligent person."*

We believe the following excerpts from the Big Book explain why her Dad ,and other atheists, might feel this way:

"Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things make us bristle with antagonism. This sort of thinking had to be abandoned. Though some of us resisted, we found no great difficulty in casting aside such feelings. Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect alcohol was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process; we hope no one else will prejudiced for as long as some of us were." (BB page 48)

"If you think you are an atheist, an agnostic, a skeptic, or have any other form of intellectual pride which keeps you from accepting what is in this book, I feel sorry for you. If you still think you are strong enough to beat the game alone, that is your affair. But if you really and truly want to quit drinking liquor for good and all, and sincerely feel that you must have some help, we know that we have an answer for you. It never fails, if you go about it with one half the zeal you have been in the habit of showing when you were getting another drink.

Your Heavenly Father will never let you down!"

(Big Book - Last two paragraphs of The Doctor's Nightmare)

- She makes the statement that *"Atheism is a philosophy that is reasonable and must be respected; it must be made evident how it can fit within the philosophy of AA."*

"I was not an atheist. Few people really are, for that means blind faith in the strange proposition that this universe originated in a cipher and aimlessly rushes nowhere."

(Big Book page 10)

How "reasonable" is it to believe that the universe originated in a cipher and aimlessly rushes nowhere?

Bill Wilson says on page 10 of the Big Book the following about himself:

"With ministers, and the world's religious, I parted right there. When they talked of a God personal to me, who was love, superhuman strength and direction, I became irritated and my mind snapped shut against such a theory."

(Big Book page 10)

On page 12 Bill says the following:

"My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, "Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"

That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last.

It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!

Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view."

(Big Book page 12)

Finally, on page 13 Bill states:

"I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense."

(Big Book page 13)

It is impossible to make "evident how it (atheism) can fit within the philosophy of AA" since part of the essential psychic change necessary to recover from alcoholism involves "common sense (becoming) uncommon sense."

- She says *"Since the goal of AA is to reach all people, including atheists, it is imperative to break through their wall of resistance by addressing them directly."*

AA Preamble

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism."

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Tradition Five Long Form: "Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose – that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

We do not see the goal of Alcoholics Anonymous as being to reach all people, including atheists.

- She is afraid her father won't accept the program

"If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, WE HAD BUT TWO ALTERNATIVES: ONE WAS TO GO ON TO THE BITTER END, BLOTTING OUT THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR INTOLERABLE SITUATION AS BEST WE COULD; AND THE OTHER, TO ACCEPT SPIRITUAL HELP."
(Big Book page 25)

"In the preceding chapters you have learned something of alcoholism. We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the nonalcoholic. If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an ILLNESS WHICH ONLY A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE WILL CONQUER."

To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he is an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. TO BE DOOMED TO AN ALCOHOLIC DEATH OR TO LIVE ON A SPIRITUAL BASIS ARE NOT ALWAYS EASY ALTERNATIVES TO FACE."

But it isn't so difficult. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true alcoholics. But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life - or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like HALF OF US THOUGHT WE WERE ATHEISTS OR AGNOSTICS. Our experience shows that YOU NEED NOT BE DISCONCERTED.

IF A MERE CODE OF MORALS OR A BETTER PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE WERE SUFFICIENT TO OVERCOME ALCOHOLISM, MANY OF US WOULD HAVE RECOVERED LONG AGO. BUT WE FOUND THAT SUCH CODES AND PHILOSOPHIES DID NOT SAVE US, NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE TRIED. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there. Our HUMAN RESOURCES, AS MARSHALLED BY THE WILL, WERE NOT SUFFICIENT; THEY FAILED UTTERLY.

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. WE HAD TO FIND A POWER BY WHICH WE COULD LIVE, AND IT HAD TO BE A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? (Big Book pages 44 – 45)

"Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT GOD. HERE DIFFICULTY ARISES WITH AGNOSTICS. Many times we talk to a new man and watch his hope rise as we discuss his alcoholic problems and explain our fellowship. But his face falls when we speak of spiritual matters, especially when we mention God, for we have re-opened a subject which our man thought he had neatly evaded or entirely ignored." (Big Book pages 45)

"Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. AS SOON AS WE ADMITTED THE POSSIBLE EXISTENCE OF A CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE, A SPIRIT OF THE UNIVERSE UNDERLYING THE TOTALITY OF THINGS, WE BEGAN TO BE POSSESSED OF A NEW SENSE OF POWER AND DIRECTION, PROVIDED WE TOOK OTHER SIMPLE STEPS. We found that GOD DOES NOT MAKE TOO HARD TERMS WITH THOSE WHO SEEK HIM. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men." (Big Book page 46)

The Trustees Literature Committee.

October 15, 2009

Dear Committee members:

I am soon to celebrate my 20th anniversary in AA and during that time have been active in General Service for 17 plus years. I spent eight years at the area level. During that time I spent six of those years as an Area Officer and two as the Area Archives Committee Chair. I say this only to establish that I have been and continue to be an active member of AA. I currently serve as my districts PI/CPC Chair and our Areas newsletter editor.

As a not shy agnostic I have attracted a significant number of potential members of AA who have come to me for sponsorship. I can't help but think that I have played that role in many cases because of my somewhat well known agnostic stance. I have also watched many people leave AA because they were not able to reconcile themselves with the "God" concept that is put forth in many of our areas meetings.

It has been apparent to me that for much our membership the God our (your) understanding can be any of the Judeo Christian formats of your choice. Fran P.'s eloquent portrayal of our Fellowships need for literature addressing of people who have found a different spiritual path in AA says much to address the question.

I am well versed in many spiritual belief systems and have found a personal place of comfort within my own step process. My atheist wife who just happens to be twenty one year's sober has also found her personal spirituality. However, it is not within my household in which the problem lies. The problem is in the many people who feel unwelcomed in the rooms of AA because of our Judeo Christian slant.

The majority of the meetings in my area (and I am well traveled) close with the "Lord's Prayer". I have found it difficult to explain to non believers why we start meetings with our Traditions stating that we do not affiliate and then proceed to close our meetings with an affiliating prayer. I submit that this does not serve an organization that encourages people to get honest with themselves and others.

While I continue to service sponsor people within the Fellowship I have found myself shying away from being a recovery sponsor. This in no small part has to do with my inability to say that we are a Fellowship that is not affiliated.

My now deceased first sponsor was our panel 39 Delegate and he was always quick to point out that "our friends recommend us". Many of our friends within the government are no longer able to recommend us because we have been declared, by our friends, to be a religion. As my districts PI/CPC Chair I have encounter people within our State government that have told me that I can't be invited to speak to their staff because of separation of church and state issues. This is not an outside issue; this is our friends telling us we have crossed a line.

I urge us to have the courage to talk about the difference between spirituality and religion. When we are done I hope we have the courage to create a piece of literature that will help us be more honest with whom we are, versus whom we may well be becoming.

Thank you for your time,

District 03 Area 06
Page 17 of 56

International Convention
Alcoholics Anonymous
July 1 - 4, 2010
San Antonio, Texas, USA



Una vision para ti
A Vision for You
La Vie Qui Vous Attend

October 26, 2009

Dear

Thank you for your letter to the trustees' Literature Committee, where you express encouragement for a wider discussion about the differences between spirituality and religion. My name is . I am an alcoholic and I currently have the pleasure of serving on the Literature desk. I am glad for this opportunity to be in touch.

As you may know, the 2009 General Service Conference re committed to the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature an agenda item related to the subject of spirituality and A.A. The agenda item will be part of the agenda of the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature. The recommendation reads:

"Moved that we develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous."

As the item will be considered by the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature, no action is currently being taken or material being developed by the trustees' Literature Committee. I have, nevertheless, shared your letter with the chair of the trustees' Literature Committee,

As the subject will be under consideration at the next Conference, we may include your letter as background material for the Conference Committee on Literature, which may be widely distributed. Please let me know if you object to the letter being distributed.

In the meantime, your friends at the General Service Office join me in sending you warm wishes for one day at a time, the A.A. way.

In fellowship,

Rebuttals to AA Member's 15 Oct 2009 Letter to the Trustees Literature Committee

- The AA Member states that AA should be, "honest with whom we [AA] are vs. who we may well be becoming."

The indication is that AA is becoming an organization/fellowship that is changing in some way precluding agnostics or atheists from membership, and that some sort of discussion between the differences between *spirituality* and *religion* needs to occur.

The text of our Third Tradition in the General Service Conference approved book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions clearly indicates that anyone can be an AA member when they say they are, there is no requirement for AA membership. The Tradition also sites a member named Jim that can be traced to a story in the big book named the *Viscous Cycle*. At one time Jim was an outspoken atheist, spoke freely of it, and called other members to task on this topic. Jim, as all other humans who are independent of their individual characteristics and beliefs, was and still is welcome to be an AA member because he said he was. Any AA member who would attempt to prevent someone from joining AA, or welcoming anyone that has a desire to attend AA, is misinformed about our traditions.

We would like to note that while anyone can be a member of AA, such membership is not the same as what is required for a "real alcoholic, as defined on pages 20-22, to recover from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. As stated on page 25, nearly none of us liked this process, but the common solution laid out in the Big Book has requirements for it to be successful. Specifically, on page 60, the Big Book states:

"The first requirement (for taking Step Three) is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success."

Therefore, the recovery process (our first legacy) as laid out in the Big Book clearly has requirements to be successful. However, membership in our fellowship (our second legacy) has absolutely no requirements. All are welcome.

- He proposes that *“our friends within the government are no longer able to recommend us because we have been declared, by our friends, to be a religion.”* He goes on to say he *“can’t be invited to speak to their (government) staff because of separation of church and state issues.”* He says that *“our (government) friends (are) telling us we have crossed a line”* and he states that *“this is not an outside issue.”* He *“urge(s) us to have the courage to talk about the difference between spirituality and religion.”*

Webster's **definition of *religion*** is:

1. a : the state of a religious <a nun in her 20th year of religion>
b: (1) : the service and worship of God or the supernatural
(2) : commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance
2. a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices
3. archaic : scrupulous conformity : conscientiousness
4. a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith

Webster's **definition of *Spiritual*** is:

1. of, relating to, consisting of, or affecting the spirit
2. a: of or relating to sacred matters
b: ecclesiastical rather than lay or temporal <spiritual authority> <lords spiritual>
3. concerned with religions values
4. related or joined in spirit <our spiritual home> <his spiritual heir>
5. a: of or relating to supernatural beings or phenomena
b: of, relating to, or involving spiritualism: spiritualistic

Webster's definition of *Spirituality* is:

1. something that in ecclesiastical law belongs to the church or to a cleric as such
2. clergy
3. sensitivity or attachment to religious values
4. the quality or state of being spiritual

We don't think creating a pamphlet or pushing spirituality, as defined by Webster, is the intent of Gary or the majority who want to create this literature. If their goal is to make AA wide open for those of any religious persuasion or belief, or non-belief, the Third Tradition already covers this quite well. What we think should really be discussed is our third tradition, making sure all members know that all are welcome in our fellowship. Debating the opinions most have about religion and spirituality would be divisive and futile, especially when considering the definitions from Webster (above).

From our beginning AA members have had the not only the "courage" to talk about the difference between spirituality and religion, but also the courage to write about the topic as evidenced by Appendices II and V in the Big Book:

Big Book Appendix II – SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.

Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous. In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-consciousness" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook.

Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a

Power greater than themselves.

Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it "God-consciousness."

Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable."

Big Book Appendix V – THE RELIGIOUS VIEW ON AA

Clergymen of practically every denomination have given AA their blessing.

Edward Dowling, S.J., of the Queen's Work staff says, "Alcoholics Anonymous is natural; it is natural at the point where nature comes closest to the supernatural, namely in humiliations and in consequent humility. There is something spiritual about an art museum or a symphony, and the Catholic Church approves of our use of them. There is something spiritual about AA too, and Catholic participation in it almost invariably results in poor Catholics becoming better Catholics."

The Episcopal magazine, The Living Church, observes editorially: "The basis of the technique of Alcoholics Anonymous is the truly Christian principle that a man cannot help himself except by helping others. The AA plan is described by the members themselves as 'self-insurance.' This Self-insurance has resulted in the restoration of physical, mental and spiritual health and self-respect to hundreds of men and women who would be hopelessly down and out without its unique but effective therapy."

Speaking at a dinner given by John D. Rockefeller Jr. to introduce Alcoholics Anonymous to some of his friends, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick remarked:

'I think that psychologically speaking there is a point of advantage in the approach that is being made in this movement that cannot be duplicated. I suspect that if it is wisely handled – and it seems to be in wise and prudent hands – there are doors of opportunity ahead of this project that may surpass our capacities to imagine.'

The Chapter "We Agnostics" discusses the importance of discussing spiritual things:

"Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things made us bristle with antagonism. This sort of thinking had to be abandoned. Though some of us resisted, we found no great difficulty in casting aside such feelings. Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions. In this respect alcohol was a great persuader. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness. Sometimes this was a tedious process..." (Big Book page 48)

Regarding AA groups saying the Lord's Prayer, we suggest each group conscience should determine if their group should say the prayer and we point to Tradition Four: ***"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole."***

To:
 Alcoholics Anonymous,
 Trustees Literature Committee

Literature
 AGENDA ITEM C
 Background Doc. 3

10-01-09

From:

Member of A.A.

Greetings. I am writing because I am responsible, when anyone, any where, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A., always, to be there. My sobriety date, so far today, is 10-9-88. That which I discovered in Step 2 is not a god. I continue to broaden my Spirit with Step 11. We must have "a program for living that allows for of limitless expansion" says the Big Book, Page 275. Being a member of A.A., with the privilege of serving in General Service, is the most important to my life. I write to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers (in and outside these meetings).

There is a need to create literature reaching out to alcoholics with diverse Spiritual views to push the door open for the non-Christians reaching out for help, reaching out for sobriety.

Because the Big Book says:

Page 25 – "He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves." So what's the use of doing the Steps?

Page 28 – "Many who once were in this class {agnostic} are now among our members." So until you're not agnostic don't call yourself a member?

Page 47 – "When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God." Unfortunately, 6 sentences later, the book changes its mind, calling "our own conception" "limited" and "inadequate".

Page 49 – "...we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word..." these words are in ignorance to the definitions of those two words.

Page 49 – calls people who don't "believe" bad names: "perverse" "contentious" "vain" "on a dubious path" "cynical"

Page 51 – "When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith." Many Americans have been to church or synagogue drunk. We come to A.A. for sobriety, not religion.

Page 52 – last two paragraphs

Page 56 & 57

Page 62 – 2nd half of page continuing to 4 lines into page 63. Why do the Steps?

Page 88 – "So we let God discipline us...."

Page 24 of 56

Page 95 – “If he is to find God....”

Certain sentences on **Pages 116, 117, 120, 121, 128, 133, 158,**
Page 161 -. {“....united under one God....”}.

1995 interpretation of Conference action pertaining to drafting of the 4TH edition agreeing to no change in the 1st 164 pages, and other sections, of the Big Book will make sure that the Big Book will never be updated.

“Came To Believe” has 70 inclusions about how God was found and 6 of Joy and Spiritual Awakening.

I have served on my District PI & CPC Committees for 4 years {so far today} and the first question is “If you’re not a religious/ Christian program why do your meeting end with the Christian Lord’s Prayer” {Mathew 6 verses 9-13}. At that point we go back to the Traditions and discuss Group autonomy.

This is why I am writing. Let’s push the doors open wider.

From: Literature
Sent: Thursday, October 29, 2009 10:08 AM
To:
Subject: Your 10-26-09 Fax
Attachments: 10.26.09 - Ltr from e Spirituality and AA.pdf

Dear

Thank you for your letter to the trustees' Literature Committee, where you express the need to create literature reaching out to alcoholics with diverse spiritual views. My name is I am an alcoholic and I currently have the pleasure of serving on the Literature desk. I am glad for this opportunity to be in touch.

As you may know, the 2009 General Service Conference referred to the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature an agenda item related to the subject of spirituality and A.A. The agenda item will be part of the agenda of the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature. The recommendation reads:

“Moved that we develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous.”

As the item will be considered by the 2010 Conference Committee on Literature, no action is currently being taken or material being developed by the trustees' Literature Committee. I will, nevertheless, share your letter with the chair of the trustees' Literature Committee,

As the subject will be under consideration at the next Conference, we may include your letter as background material for the Conference Committee on Literature, which may be widely distributed. Please let me know if you object to the letter being distributed.

In the meantime, your friends at the General Service Office join me in sending you our best wishes.

In fellowship,

General Service Office

Rebuttals to AA Member's 1 October 2009 Letter to GSO Literature Committee

The AA Member reports that she has been sober since October 1988, ***"That which (she) discovered in Step 2 is not god, and she continues to broaden (her) Spirit with Step 11."*** She tells us what she has not "discovered" but doesn't tell us what she has discovered. She must have discovered something or it would be very difficult for her to broaden her "Spirit" utilizing prayer and meditation to improve her conscious contact with (*whatever she believes*) praying only for knowledge of the will (*of whatever it is she believes in*) and the power to carry it out. The absurdity of this statement confirms the absurdity of trying to work the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous as a non-believer in some sort of Higher Power... it is impossible.

Next she quotes page 275 of the Big Book, but does not identify which story or which edition she drew the quote from, saying only "we must have '***a program of living that allows for limitless expansion***'."

Finally, she makes the following unequivocal statement: ***"There is a need to create literature reaching out to alcoholics with diverse Spiritual views to push the door open for the non-Christians reaching out for help, reaching out for sobriety because..."*** and then she goes on to cite a number of quotes and pages from the Big Book that all discuss the importance of relying on some sort of Higher Power or God to help one stay sober. Finally, she sarcastically chimes in with questions or comments such as:

- Page 25 – ***"He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves."*** She follows this quote with the question: ***"So what's the use of doing the Steps?"***

Our answer to her is that the Steps are the means by which we develop and maintain a working relationship with our Higher Powers - a relationship which gives us the power necessary to stay sober one day at a time.

- Page 28 – *“Many who once were in this class (agnostic) are now among our members.”* She follows this quote with the question: *“So until you’re not agnostic don’t call yourself a member?”* To make her point, however, she omits the very next sentence:

Surprisingly enough, we find such convictions no great obstacle to a spiritual experience.”
(Pages 28-29)

Our answer to her is that the whole purpose of Big Book is to outline the Authentic Program of Action that worked for the original 100 AA members. Page 45 summarizes what the book is about.

“Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?

Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God. Here difficulty arises with agnostics. Many times we talk to a new man and watch his hope rise as we discuss his alcoholic problems and explain our fellowship. But his face falls when we speak of spiritual matters, especially when we mention God, for we have re-opened a subject which our man thought he had neatly evaded or entirely ignored.” (Big Book page 45)

- Page 47 – *“When therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God.”* She follows this with the statement: *“Unfortunately, 6 sentence later, the book changes its mind, calling ‘our conception’ ‘limited’ and ‘inadequate’.”*

“When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. (1) This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. (2) Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. (3) At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him.

(4) Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. (5) That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere.

(6) So we used our own conception, however limited it was.

We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. "Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built." (Big Book page 47)

Our answer to her is that you are really stretching to make your point here. The word "inadequate" does not even appear on page 47 of the Big Book, and the word "limited," as it is used in the 6th sentence after the line she quotes, is not used in the context of the Book "changing it's mind" about arriving at one's own conception of God!

- Page 49 – *"... we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word..."* She follows this with the statement: *"these words are in ignorance to the definitions of those two words."*

Here are the definitions of "agnostic" and "atheist" taken from Webster's online:

<http://www.merriam-webster.com>

¹ag·nos·tic

noun \ag-'näs-tik, əg-\

1: a person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown and probably unknowable; *broadly* : one who is not committed to believing in either the existence or the nonexistence of God or a god

2: a person unwilling to commit to an opinion about something <political *agnostics*>

— **ag·nos·ti·cism** \-tə-,si-zəm\ *noun*

¹atheist

noun \ag-'näs-tik, əg-\

1: one who believes that there is no deity

We do not see where the definitions of the words agnostic and atheist contradict the statement she quotes that atheists and agnostics believe that (their) human intelligence was the last word.

- Page 51 – ***“When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith.”*** She then goes on to say: *“Many Americans have been to church or synagogue drunk. We come to AA for sobriety, not religion.”*

Our response to her is that one can have faith, whether he/she is a member of a religious organization or not, and still be an alcoholic. The following quote from pages 93-94 addresses this issue:

“Your prospect may belong to a religious denomination. His religious education and training may be far superior to yours. In that case he is going to wonder how you can add anything to what he already knows. But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked and why yours seem to work so well. He may be an example of the truth that faith alone is insufficient. To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action. Let him see that you are not there to instruct him in religion. Admit that he probably knows more about it than you do, but call to his attention the fact that however deep his faith and knowledge, he could not have applied it or he would not drink. Perhaps your story will help him see where he has failed to practice the very precepts he knows so well. We represent no particular faith or denomination. We are dealing only with general principles common to most denominations.” (Big Book pages 93-94)

After citing a number of pages in the Big Book that she apparently feels are intolerant of atheists, agnostics, non believers, and those who are not part of the Judeo Christian ethos; she quotes the following phrase from page 161: ***“... united under one God...”***

“Outsiders became interested. One man and his wife placed their large home at the disposal of this strangely assorted crowd. ... Many a man, yet dazed from his hospital experience, has stepped over the threshold of that home into freedom. Many an alcoholic who entered there came away with an answer. ... (Big Book page 160)

But life among Alcoholics Anonymous is more than attending gatherings and visiting hospitals. Cleaning up old scrapes, helping to settle family differences, explaining the disinherited son to his irate parents, lending money and securing jobs for each other, when justified - these are everyday occurrences. No one is too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially - if he means business. Social distinctions, petty rivalries and jealousies - these are laughed out of countenance. Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united under one God, with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others, the things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to them. How could they?” (Big Book page 161)

When one looks at this phrase, in context, one sees that they are referring to the group of folks who got sober in this unnamed home that a man and his wife placed at the disposal of this "assorted crowd" ... probably referring to Dr. Bob and his wife and their home in Akron Ohio.

No doubt to the consternation of non believers and those who are seeking to find unorthodox Higher Powers, on page 28 of the Big Book the following is written:

"The distinguished American psychologist, William James, in his book" Varieties of Religious Experience, "indicates a multitude of ways in which men have discovered God. We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters.

We think it no concern of ours what religious bodies our members identify themselves with as individuals. This should be an entirely personal affair which each one decides for himself in the light of past associations, or his present choice. Not all of us join religious bodies, but most of us favor such memberships." (Big Book page 28)

The implication is that *all* of the original 100 AA member's definition of "God, as (they understood) him" included the belief in a "living Creator with whom (they) could form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as (they) became willing and honest enough to try." If this be the case, then that would preclude agnostics and atheists from the original membership of AA. Thanks to the Third Tradition, however, which was formally incorporated into the program as part of our Second Legacy in the 1950's... the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. One does not have to have faith in anything or, for that matter, even be an alcoholic to be a member of AA.

We of this minority, however, believe that it is impossible to truly recover from alcoholism without relying on and developing faith in some sort of Higher Power.

She cites the fact that the 1995 "interpretation" of Conference Action will make sure that the Big Book will never be updated and then laments the fact that the Conference Approved book Came To Believe has "70 inclusions about how God was found and 6 of Joy and Spiritual Awakening."

AA's quarterly bulletin from the US/Canada General Service Office – Box 459 Vol 47, No 5/October-November 2001 says the following in an article entitled "*The Conference-Approval Process*":

"The 1995 Conference.... Laid to rest any fears that the first 164 pages might be change, by passing an Advisory Action which stipulated that 'the first 164 pages of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, the Preface, the Forewords, the Doctor's Opinion, Dr. Bob's Nightmare, and the Appendices remain as is.' (Underlining a strong consensus throughout the Fellowship, this action was affirmed by the 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000 Conferences.)"

Apparently She, and others, are not happy with this decision. Perhaps the reason they are pushing for Conference Approved literature designed for non believers is because, in light of the consensus to preserve the program as it was originally laid out, their best hope of re-writing the program is to create new literature that contradicts the literature that we currently have?

Our suggestion to those who don't want to take the suggestions as they are outlined in the Conference Approved Literature that we currently have is – instead of attempting to change the AA program to suit non believers who can't accept the AA premise of finding a power greater than yourself which will solve your problem, that they check out S.O.S. Secular Organizations for Sobriety at www.sossobriety.org

There they can learn about secular and humanistic alternatives to AA such as:

- Rational Recovery www.rational.org
- Smart Recovery www.smartrecovery.org
- LifeRing Secular Recovery (LSR) www.lifering.org
- Women For Sobriety www.womenforsobriety.org

Our position, as a minority that is opposed to the creation of Conference Approved literature that we feel will radically alter the AA message as it exists today, is aptly described on page 95 of the Big Book:

"Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection. Show him how they worked with you. Offer him friendship and fellowship. Tell him that if he wants to get well you will do anything to help.

If he is not interested in your solution, if he expects you to act only as a banker for his financial difficulties or a nurse for his sprees, you may have to drop him until he changes his mind. This he may do after he gets hurt some more.

If he is sincerely interested and wants to see you again, ask him to read this book in the interval. After doing that, he must decide for himself whether he wants to go on. He should not be pushed or prodded by you, his wife, or his friends. If he is to find God, the desire must come from within.

If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on

*God; we merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we
alcoholics have much in common and that you would like, in any case, to be friendly.
Let it go at that."*

(Big Book page 95)

CONFIDENTIAL: 60th General Service Conference Background
CALIFORNIA NORTHERN COASTAL AREA 06
GENERAL SERVICE

Literature
AGENDA ITEM C
Background Doc. 4

January 2, 2010

General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115

Dear

Greetings to you, and best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year!

I am writing this letter to explain why I introduced a floor action at last year's Conference. That floor action stated that "we develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous." The 59th General Service Conference voted to commit that floor action to committee. As a result, this year's Conference Literature Committee will discuss that floor action as an agenda item.

If including this letter in the background material would be helpful, please feel free to do so.

Last year's Conference discussed a similar agenda item. That agenda item asked that we "discuss whether there is a need to develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on the topics of spirituality, and agnostics or atheists/nonbelievers in A.A."

This issue was discussed quite heavily in the Northern California Coastal (CNCA 06) area prior to last year's Conference. At our Pre-Conference Assembly, we ran out of time due to the number of people that wanted to discuss this item at the microphone; we had to cut discussion short on this topic as a result. More than 2/3 of the GSRs that spoke at the mike were in favor of developing such literature, reflecting substantial unanimity among the groups in our area that sent GSRs to our Assembly.

Some of the comments heard at the microphone included the following.

- Although we may not be exclusionary in our stance towards atheists, agnostics, and non-theists, we are not as inclusionary as we can or should be.
- Such literature may help to modify group behavior, like reciting the Lord's Prayer at the end of meetings or chanting, which may cause the newcomer to perceive us as a religious rather than a spiritual entity.
- Young people in particular may not be attracted to AA because of a perception that we are not inclusive towards those with alternative beliefs.
- This literature could help in keeping the newcomer around long enough to get the miracle.

Page 34 of 56

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- Although the topic of spirituality is addressed in our existing literature, references to it are scattered throughout many books and pamphlets; it is not addressed cohesively anywhere. The chapter "We Agnostics" in the Big Book really addresses how alcoholics become believers rather than how they can stay sober while maintaining their own belief system.
- Some requested that we be sure to include all belief systems in any new literature and not just those of atheism and agnosticism.
- There is a 20-year history of expressed need shown in the background material for this topic.
- Minority opinions reflected that this topic is already well-addressed in our literature. They also felt that this might lead to disunity rather than inclusion. Some were fearful that this might lead to the loss of a vital strength in our Fellowship, that of our reliance on a Higher Power.

I personally spoke to several sober atheists and agnostics as part of my education on this topic. I was touched that most of them said they almost didn't make it as a result of their perceptions of our program. They felt that literature on this topic might have helped them in their early days. They also talked about an ongoing feeling of being excluded, that members are often intolerant to those who maintain an atheist or agnostic belief system.

The recommendation that came out of the Conference Literature Committee last year asked "the trustee's Committee on Literature to develop a questionnaire to gather input from the Fellowship on whether there is a need to develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on the topics of spirituality, and agnostics or atheists/nonbelievers in A.A...." As Conference discussion was taking place on this recommendation, I thought about the history of expressed need that had been demonstrated in the background material on this topic. This thought was also expressed by others on the Conference floor.

It occurred to me that if we passed the Committee's recommendation, that nothing would happen until this year's Conference and that we might again take no definitive action. If we failed to pass the recommendation from the Conference Literature Committee, nothing would happen at all. I felt compelled by the strength and depth of feeling on this topic in the groups of Alcoholics Anonymous in our area to ensure that the Conference more actively addresses this issue. I brought the floor action to the floor of the Conference because of that expression of need heard from our groups. I should be very clear that I was not driven by an Area Assembly motion, but rather made a personal decision as Delegate based on the information given me by the groups in our area.

I should also note that this floor action has a somewhat different slant than other agenda topics previously presented regarding this issue. This motion asks us to develop literature on spirituality. It should cover a wide range of spiritual experience and beliefs. In addition, it will include stories from atheists and agnostics who are sober following the steps and principles of our program, sharing with others their experience of how they did that.

I truly look forward to next year's Conference and seeing you and all of the other friends I have made. I look forward to hearing the results of committee discussion on this agenda topic. Thank you.

Sincerely,

CNCA 06 Delegate Panel 59

cc: Conference Coordinator

Literature

From:

Sent: Tuesday, January 05, 2010 4:04 PM

To: Literature

Cc:

Subject: Re: ltr Jan 2 AgendaTopic on Spirituality

Thank you very much for letting me know that the letter arrived. Please feel free to include the letter in the background material.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can help with.

Thank you for everything you do.

Take care,

-----Original Message-----

From: Literature

Sent: Jan 5, 2010 11:38 AM

To: '

Cc: Conference

Subject: ltr Jan 2 AgendaTopic on Spirituality

Dear

I hope that this email finds you well. Thank you for your January 2, 2010 letter related to the Conference Committee on Literature agenda item asking that; *"We develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous"*.

We may include the letter as background for the Conference Committee on Literature, which may be widely distributed. Please let me know if you object to the information being distributed.

In the meantime, all your friends here at GSO send our gratitude and very best wishes.

In fellowship,

General Service Office

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Rebuttal to CNCA 06 Delegate's 2 January 2010 Letter to GSO

- The Delegate reports that although all the GSR's who wanted to speak at the mike, regarding this subject, at a Pre Conference Assembly didn't get the chance because they ran out of time. Of the GSR's who did get the opportunity to speak, he estimated that 2/3rds were in favor of developing the proposed literature.

We wonder if they polled the GSR's at the this Assembly and, if so, why he didn't report the results of the poll.

- The Delegate outlines the following comments heard at the microphone:

- *"... we are not as inclusionary as we can or should be."*

Our response comes from Tradition Three (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 139)

"The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking... you can declare yourself in; nobody can keep you out."

How more inclusive can we get?

- *"Such literature may help to modify group behavior, like reciting the Lord's Prayer at the end of meetings or chanting, which may cause the newcomer to perceive us as a religious rather than a spiritual entity."*

Regarding "modifying group behavior" we submit the following from Tradition Two

(12 Steps and 12 Traditions, page 132):

"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

"... (A.A.) has no president having authority to govern it, no treasurer who can compel the payment of any dues, no board of directors who can cast an erring member into outer darkness... indeed no A.A. can give another a directive and enforce obedience... the sole authority in A.A. is a loving God as he may express Himself in the group conscience."

Technically speaking, when one looks at one of the four definitions of "religion" listed by Webster's Dictionary – *"a cause, principal, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith"*; AA is a religion. In practice, however, we believe it is more of a spiritual *entity* than a religious entity since each member has the right to form his own conception of God or a Higher Power.

- *“Young people in particular may not be attracted to AA because of a perception that we are not inclusive towards those with alternative beliefs”*

The rapid growth of young people in AA over the past few decades dispels this myth completely... young people can and do accept the spiritual principles of the program and consequently enjoy many years of continuous sobriety

- *“This literature could help in keeping the newcomer around long enough to get the miracle.”*

We point to the Foreword to the Fourth Edition of the Big Book which says:

“We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics PRECISELY HOW WE HAVE RECOVERED is the main purpose of this book. For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary.

Other pages in the Big Book are also instructive:

“If you are an alcoholic who wants to get over it, you may already be asking – ‘What do I have to do?’

It is the purpose of this book (Alcoholics Anonymous) to answer such questions specifically. We shall tell you what we have done.” (BB page 20)

“We suggest you draw the book (Alcoholics Anonymous) to the attention of the doctor who is to attend your patient during treatment. If the book is read the moment the patient is able, while acutely depressed, realization of his condition may come to him.” (BB page 144)

The literature that could and often does (when it is presented to newcomers as soon as they arrive) keep the newcomer around long enough to “get the miracle” is the Big Book

- *“The chapter ‘We Agnostics’ in the Big Book really addresses how alcoholics become believers rather than how they can stay sober while maintaining their own belief system.”*

Here the Doctor's Opinion is instructive:

“Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They are restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks-drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the

phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and UNLESS THIS PERSON CAN EXPERIENCE AN ENTIRE PSYCHIC CHANGE THERE IS VERY LITTLE HOPE OF HIS RECOVERY" (THE DOCTOR'S OPINION)

The AA Program of Recovery is not based on "maintaining one's belief system... rather it is predicated on experiencing an entire psychic change or, in other words, having a "Spiritual Awakening" as a result of practicing spiritual principals outline in the 12 Steps.

- "Some (GSR's) requested that we be sure to include all belief systems in any new literature and not just those of atheism and agnosticism."

We, of the minority, subscribe to the theory outlined on page 28 of the Big Book:

"The distinguished American psychologist, William James, in his book" Varieties of Religious Experience, "indicates a multitude of ways in which men have discovered God. We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters.

WE THINK IT NO CONCERN OF OURS WHAT RELIGIOUS BODIES OUR MEMBERS IDENTIFY THEMSELVES with as individuals. THIS SHOULD BE AN ENTIRELY PERSONAL AFFAIR WHICH EACH ONE DECIDES FOR HIMSELF IN THE LIGHT OF PAST ASSOCIATIONS, or his present choice. Not all of us join religious bodies, but most of us favor such memberships." (BB page 28)

The proposal that AA produce literature that includes different belief systems is contrary to the sentiment, based on early AA experience, described on page 50 of the Big Book:

"In our personal stories you will find a wide variation in the way each teller approaches and conceives of the Power which is greater than himself. WHETHER WE AGREE WITH A PARTICULAR APPROACH OR CONCEPTION SEEMS TO MAKE LITTLE DIFFERENCE. Experience has taught us that these are matters about which, for our purpose, we need not be worried. THEY ARE QUESTIONS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL TO SETTLE FOR HIMSELF.

On one proposition, however, these men and women are strikingly agreed. Every one of them has gained access to, and believes in, a Power greater than himself. This Power has in each case accomplished the miraculous, the humanly impossible." (Big Book page 50)

Highlighting different believe systems is not going to help confused newcomers recover. The three pertinent ideas do help newcomers:

“Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.***
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.***
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.”*** (Big Book page 60)

After chronicling (in six bullet points) some of the remarks made at the microphone by the GSR's who supported the proposed literature, and making the statement that there is a 20 year history of “expressed need” shown in the background material for this topic, David devotes one bullet point to minority opinions expressed:

- Topic is already well-addressed in our literature
- Might lead to disunity rather than inclusion
- Fear that this might lead to the loss of a vital strength in our Fellowship, that of our reliance on a Higher Power

As a minority to the decision to move forward with the creation of such literature, we agree with these minority opinions and wonder why David didn't rebut them in some way to explain why he made the decision to institute the floor action in spite of, what we consider to be, very legitimate arguments against creation of such literature.

- The Delegate goes on to say that there is a “need” for this type of literature because “... most of them (sober atheists and agnostics) said they almost didn't make it as a result of their perceptions of our program.”

The fact that they did “make it” is proof positive that there is no need for such literature

Step Two (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 31) makes the following observation regarding the “outstanding characteristic” of many alcoholics:

“As psychiatrists have often observed, defiance is the outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic. So it's not strange that lots of us have had our day at defying God Himself.”

Appendix II – Spiritual Experience states the following:

“Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. WILLINGNESS,

HONESTY AND OPEN MINDEDNESS ARE THE ESSENTIALS OF RECOVERY. BUT THESE ARE INDISPENSABLE."

"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation."
HERBERT SPENCER

(Appendix II - Spiritual Experience)

If newcomers, whether they be atheist/agnostic or not, allow their perceptions, or misperceptions, of the program to prevent them from trying the program then they lack the willingness, honesty and open mindedness that are the "essentials of recovery."

- The delegate from California who brought the floor action, very honestly states: *"I brought the floor action to the floor of the Conference because of that expression of need heard from our groups. I should be very clear that I was not driven by an Area Assembly motion, but rather made a personal decision as Delegate based on the information given me by the groups in our area."*

The fact that a single delegate brought the floor action based on his "Right of Decision" (enumerated in Concept III) should be taken into consideration and weighed against the many that are numbered in the minority.

Literature

AGENDA ITEM C
Background Doc. 5

January 3, 2010

Dear

Warmest greetings from Area 51 North Carolina. I hope that this note finds you well. As you well know, last year at the 59th GSC the Conference Committee on Literature was charged with discussing whether there is a need to develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on the topics of spirituality, and agnostics or atheists/nonbelievers in Alcoholics Anonymous. A number of factors, including the 59th background material pertaining to this topic, the actual debate at Conference, and the fact that a similar item will now be on the agenda for the 60th Literature Committee to consider compelled me to try to learn more. I thus sought perspectives related to the upcoming agenda item, *"We develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous"*, and have tried to better understand the factors and experiences driving these views.

I have learned a lot over this last year. Below is a summary of points that I have found myself considering after listening to many, many voices on this topic—shared with me via e-mail, round table discussions, and an Area Assembly sharing session, in addition to some recollections from Conference. Below that are the discussions pro and con that were transcribed or notes that came to me in written form. One can see that the vast majority of those sharing support the development of the pamphlet. I really have learned a great deal from the many sober believers and non-believers who took the time to share with me—as such, I thought that this material might be considered as an addition to the background material for the 60th agenda item addressing the pamphlet. If I am able to convey these perspectives with any justice, perhaps the inclusion will be of some small benefit.

In the best AA way, I have found that the passion surrounding these perspectives on all sides often is fueled by a deep love for Alcoholics Anonymous, a desire to make it available to all who need it, and the desperation for us to preserve the AA we know, value, love, and need.

In love and service, while dancing in the Sunlight of the Spirit,

Area 51, Panel 59

Major Points

- * It is perhaps quite critical to understand that the agenda item that was proposed for the 59th General Service Conference did not fail in 2009. The Conference did not vote on the agenda item as it was proposed—we did not vote in favor of or in opposition to the development of a pamphlet on spirituality. Rather, we voted on the recommendation that emerged from the Conference Committee on Literature related to this agenda item, which was to gather more sharing from the fellowship on this. I personally was surprised by this recommendation, because the background material

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reflected sharing on this matter had been gathered at length. I know that I was not alone in this surprise. I did not vote in favor of the recommendation because at that time I did not feel that additional sharing was needed or would be fruitful. I heard others support the recommendation, however, in hope that pamphlet development would move forward if the discussion was continued. Due to the recommendation that was brought forward, the vote could in no way reflect the conscience of the Conference about the actual development of a pamphlet. Not surprisingly, the vote about gathering more sharing was close to evenly split and failed. In contrast, the vote to refer the development of a pamphlet back to the 2010 Literature Committee passed by a very clear majority, indicating that many felt that continued deliberation about the development of the pamphlet was warranted.

- ★ Our 3rd tradition states that the only requirement for membership in Alcoholics Anonymous is a desire to stop drinking. It does not state that you must have a desire and a belief in a deity based God. Interestingly, during this last year, both a reverend and an atheist clearly pointed this out. I wonder how many people we can harm if we inaudibly start adding requirements to the 3rd tradition.
- ★ Surprisingly, there are a few people that think that pamphlets directed toward any minority, whether defined by race, gender, belief or otherwise, are divisive and stand against our principles of unity and our 3rd tradition, which places us all on equal footing, regardless of age, sex, education, race, and so on. My hope is that these few might come to appreciate these pamphlets actually support our principles of unity and equality by demonstrating that AA can work for diverse people. They are designed for people who might not easily see that people like them (defined by whatever feature) can recover in AA too. The pamphlets quickly convey for example, that indeed, young people, African Americans, American Indians, and women can stay sober in AA, which is not readily apparent in all groups. The proposed pamphlet would share that people with different belief systems have stayed successfully sober in AA...and based on my conversations, this is indeed the case.
- ★ Bill Wilson, in "The Dilemma of No Faith" (AA Grapevine, April 1961), wrote: "...are bedeviled by the dire conviction that if every they go near AA they will be pressured to conform to some particular brand of faith or theology. They just don't realize that faith is never a necessity for AA membership; that sobriety can be achieved with an easily acceptable minimum of it; and that our concepts of a higher power and God as we understand Him afford everyone a nearly unlimited choice of spiritual belief and action. How to transmit this good news is one of our most challenging problems in communication, for which there may be no fast or sweeping answer. Perhaps our public information services could begin to emphasize this all-important aspect of AA more heavily. And within our own ranks we might well develop a more sympathetic awareness of the acute plight of these really isolated and desperate sufferers. In their aid we can settle for no less than the best possible attitude and the most ingenious action that we can muster." Once again, I stand in awe of Bill Wilson's keen perception, leadership vision, and brilliance in writing. Here we stand, nearly 50 years later, still needing a sympathetic awareness of these isolated and desperate sufferers, awaiting our most ingenious action to convey our nearly unlimited choice of spiritual belief and action.

- * One quiet agnostic shared with me that she was terrified, as many of us are, when she came to AA. In the beginning, she didn't talk much, and was too overwhelmed to search the literature to better understand all the talk about a Higher Power. She thought a pamphlet would be invaluable, because during these early meetings she used to pick up pamphlets before scurrying out. How helpful it might have been had she picked up a pamphlet saying that people who had questions about God, like her, could and did stay sober in AA. She said, "it makes the door wider".
- * Some courts can no longer refer people to AA because it is viewed as a religious organization rather than a spiritual one. While we have literature speaking to this issue, many feel it is not sufficiently available or clear for courts, jails, or even newcomers to easily locate or understand.
- * There have been a few people in the Area that have spoken in opposition to the pamphlet. Interestingly, almost all have expressed their opposition in private, primarily via email. Sentiments include concern that such a pamphlet would actually *encourage* agnosticism/atheism, as well as worry over how AA is changing and that such a pamphlet would contribute to this change. Some spoke of "AA being watered down" and talked about hearing about all sorts of problems to the point where recovery from alcoholism seems lost. I understand these concerns about AA changing—I have been in meetings where my heart sank as I listened to leads or sharing primarily involving drugs, relationships, or other outside issues. I nonetheless fail to understand how making the success of people who believe in alternative (non-deity) based Higher Powers threatens AA or takes us away from our primary purpose or our method of recovery through the 12 steps. Agnostics and atheists are amongst us and stay sober amongst us. Letting people know of their existence does not change us: they are here, they are successful. It would not promote nonbelief, but instead would implicitly teach the principles of tolerance and freedom that characterize Alcoholics Anonymous.
- * Fundamental to solving the "lack of power dilemma" is a need to develop a belief in a power greater than ourselves, a God of *our own understanding*. Acknowledgement that atheists and agnostics stay sober in AA in no way compromises our principles or suggests that a Higher Power is optional. Nowhere in our literature does it make clear that this Higher Power must be deity based, and throughout our writings there is an emphasis on the critical and fundamental freedom to choose our own belief. This is such a private matter that it is usually one of the things about each other that we do not know: we can go years knowing each other and while we share our most sordid stories, we usually do not know each other's age, occupation, or the nature of each others beliefs. It is just none of anyone's business but our own.
- * I had a revealing discussion with another delegate, who strongly opposed the development of the pamphlet. I discovered that our differences boiled down to definitions, which struck me as somewhat tragic. Of course, we should never dismiss principles that are vital to us as a society, but we should be cautious to not lose the still suffering alcoholic to rhetoric--ever. This delegate greatly valued our ability to chose our own Higher Powers and even embraced the use of nontraditional non-deity based Higher Powers (eg, groups). However, he believed that the member by

definition ceases to be an atheist or agnostic the moment he comes to believe in a higher power, no matter what that higher power may be. Thus, from his view, an atheist or agnostic could not have any higher power, because if he or she did, they would no longer be atheist or agnostic. However, it is my understanding from the many atheists and agnostics that I have spoken to that many do have nontraditional Higher Powers, like the Group or the Big Book—as these are “greater than themselves”, but they still consider themselves atheist or agnostic because they do not believe in a supreme deity. Thus, at least in this case, rejection of the idea that the 12 steps can be reconciled with agnosticism or atheism seems to be based on erroneous definitions and assumptions.

- ★ While a separate issue, the fact that some atheist and agnostic groups use an altered 12 steps may be impacting views about the pamphlet, as this has been raised in several forums. The alteration of the steps is perceived by most as quite threatening to the preservation of Alcoholics Anonymous. Changes to the steps for different conditions do occur with GSO permission and a clear indication that the steps are no longer AA. It seems that many are unaware that the steps are under Conference Charter and GSB By-law protection from alteration; it would behoove us to make it more explicitly known that the assent of $\frac{3}{4}$ of existing groups is needed to alter the steps, traditions, and Concept XII in AA, so vital are they to our existence. These groups might cease using altered steps and representing themselves as AA if they knew the potential harm to AA they were allowing--really, who wants to damage the program that has given us life? I have also wondered too, if there would be less promulgation of such “versions” if we communicated a culture of openness and equality. It strikes me that our fear and inability to make the door wider by succinctly sharing their successes and our openness contributes to the challenges of these alcoholics, and may also contribute to a climate that encourages potentially dangerous solutions.
- ★ Indeed, we should celebrate the progress in tolerances that are evident in the rooms of AA. But really, there is no room for rules or fear that keeps alcoholics from AA. It is nothing short of tragic that any alcoholic live an alcoholic life or die because of intolerance in AA. It is not our place to define how people work the 12 steps, but only that the 12 steps are AA. We must allow people freedom to find a power greater than themselves of their understanding. To implicate the necessity of a Deity based Higher Power in order to work the 12 steps restricts the very freedom that is so precious to us. If there were evidence that agnostics and atheists could not stay sober-- that might be convincing, but instead, the evidence suggests that they do stay sober with their Higher Powers. This is critical: the people of whom we speak are staying sober amongst us. What is at stake here are the lives that might be spared by their knowing of those already amongst us.
- ★ I am terribly invested in AA remaining what it is, for the still suffering alcoholic to come. I have no fear that such a pamphlet would change who we are. I have five children, and I hope that they believe in God when they grow up. But if they don't, and they are alcoholic, I desperately hope and pray that they find *and are welcomed* into the folds of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Literature

From: Literature
Sent: Tuesday, January 05, 2010 11:13 AM
To:
Subject: RE: Spirituality sharing

Hi

I hope that this email finds you well. Thanks for your letter and sharing on the Conference agenda item asking that; *"We develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous"*.

We may include the letter and sharing as background for the Conference Committee on Literature, which may be widely distributed. Please let me know if you object to the information being distributed.

In the meantime, all your friends here at GSO send our gratitude and very best wishes.

In fellowship,

General Service Office

From: Deborah A [mailto:]
Sent: Monday, January 04, 2010 12:17 AM
To: Literature
Subject: Spirituality sharing

Dear

Warm greetings from Area 51 North Carolina! Please see the attached letter, containing sharing on the upcoming agenda item: *"We develop Conference-approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous"*.

Wishing you only the very best for 2010! I look forward to seeing you at the board meeting soon.

In love and service, while dancing in the Sunlight of the Spirit,

Area 51, Panel 59

Rebuttals to Area 51 Delegate's 3 Jan 2010 Letter to the GSO Literature Committee

Prior to outlining her major points, the Delegate says: *"In the best AA way, I have found that the passion surrounding these perspectives on all sides often is fueled by a deep love for Alcoholics Anonymous, a desire to make it available to all who need it, and the desperation for us to preserve the AA we know, value, love, and need."*

The Delegate's sentiments are the minority's sentiments exactly... especially the part about ***"... desperation for us to preserve the AA we know, value, love, and need."***

THE DELEGATE'S MAJOR POINTS:

- She says she did not vote in favor of the recommendation from the Conference Committee on Literature to *"gather more sharing form the fellowship on this (topic)"* because she *"... did not feel that additional sharing was needed or would be fruitful"* and consequently it failed by a slim margin, but that a *"clear majority... felt that continued deliberation about the development of the pamphlet was warranted."*

As a minority we are happy that there was a clear majority that voted in favor of "continued deliberation" and hope this Minority Opinion Appeal to the Fellowship dispels Deborah's feeling that gathering more sharing on the topic would not be "fruitful."

- She brings up the Third Tradition (the only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking) and asks the following rhetorical Question: *"I wonder how many people we can harm if we **inaudibly** start adding requirements to the 3rd tradition?"*

As a minority we agree that we should follow the spirit of the Traditions to the letter, but we wonder how Deborah can conclude that by not producing literature we are "inaudibly" starting to add requirements for membership. It is an oxymoron to say that we are adding membership requirements by not producing literature. If one were to take this logic to its extreme, we would have to produce literature for every class of person in the world to not "inaudibly" be adding requirements to the Third Tradition.

We feel the following excerpt from "Tradition Three" taken from page 141 of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions is instructive:

"... troublesome people were to become our principal teachers of patience and tolerance... (Our society includes) every conceivable kind of character, and cut(s) across every barrier of race, creed, politics, and language with ease..."

Why did AA finally drop all its membership regulations? Why did we leave it to each newcomer to decide himself whether he was an alcoholic and whether he should join us? Why did we dare to say, contrary to the experience of society and government everywhere,

that we would neither punish nor deprive any AA of membership, that we must never compel anyone to pay anything, believe anything, or conform to anything?

The answer, now seen in Tradition Three, was simplicity itself. At last experience taught us that to take away any alcoholic's full chance was sometimes to pronounce his death sentence, and often to condemn him to endless misery. Who dared to be judge, jury, and executioner of his own sick brother?" (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 141)

As a minority the last thing we want to do is pronounce death sentences on anyone because we "inaudibly" *add* membership requirements by not producing literature for "every conceivable kind of character."

- She references pamphlets directed toward minorities "*defined by race, gender, belief...*" and argues that "*the proposed pamphlet* (actually the proposal is for "literature" so it could be expanded to include books as well) *would share that people with different belief systems have stayed successfully sober in AA...*"

This minority is taking *no position* on whether current pamphlets that have already been produced for minority groups are divisive or not. We believe the personal stories in the fourth edition of the Big Book, plus the collection of the 56 stories that were originally in the first three editions (but did not appear in the fourth edition) compiled in the Conference Approved book Experience, Strength And Hope © 2003 adequately outlines how people with different belief systems have stayed sober "successfully" in AA.

Our concern is with AA producing Conference Approved literature that focuses on how people with no belief system, in anything outside themselves (ie. Atheists and Agnostics), will impact folks who are coming to AA to find a solution to their alcoholic problem and eventually recover. Those of us in the minority have found a common solution which entails belief in a power greater than ourselves. We are afraid production of literature that supports the notion that one can recover without developing such a belief system will threaten many newcomer's chances for recovery, since it will create a third alternative to the two described on page 25 of the Big Book:

"If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help."

(Big Book, page 25)

- She quotes Bill Wilson's "The Dilemma of No Faith" AA Grapevine article (April 1961) where Bill makes the following statements:
 - *"... faith is never a necessity for AA membership..."*
 - *"... sobriety can be achieved with an easily acceptable minimum of it..."*
 - *"... our concepts of a higher power and God as we understand Him afford everyone a nearly unlimited choice of spiritual belief and action."*
 - *How to transmit this good news is one of our most challenging problems in communication... perhaps our public information services could begin to emphasize this all-important aspect of AA more heavily. And within our own ranks we might well develop a more sympathetic awareness of the acute plight of these really isolated and desperate sufferers. In their aid we can settle for no less than the best possible attitude and the most ingenious action that we can muster."*

After citing these quotes she concludes by saying *"Here we stand, nearly 50 years later, still needing a sympathetic awareness of these isolated and desperate sufferers, awaiting our most ingenious action to convey our nearly unlimited choice of spiritual belief and action."*

The phrase "God As We Understand Him," is in the leading sentence of Bill Wilson's Grapevine article from 1961, "The Dilemma of No Faith". Here is the first paragraph of the article in its entirety:

The Dilemma of No Faith
by Bill Wilson, AA Grapevine, April 1961

The phrase "God As We Understand Him" is perhaps the most important expression to be found in our whole AA vocabulary. Within the compass of these five significant words there can be included every kind and degree of faith, together with the positive assurance that each of us may choose his own. Scarcely less valuable to us are those supplemental expressions - "A Higher Power" and "A Power Greater Than Ourselves." For all who deny, or seriously doubt a deity, these frame an open door over whose threshold the unbeliever can take his first easy step into a reality hitherto unknown to him - the realm of faith.

We are in total agreement Bill's positions outlined in this Grapevine article; however, instead of enhancing AA's public information services, we suggest a grassroots effort should be undertaken to educate existing AA members on our existing literature and how we should treat all newcomers. For instance; we should emphasize through good sponsorship, workshops, grapevine articles, and newsletters, that all are welcome in AA and that pushing religion or any conception of God on anyone is not part of who we are and what we do.

Our current literature, including pages 90-100 of the Big Book and the pamphlet on Sponsorship make it emphatically clear that we should not argue religious matters – our existing body of literature makes it crystal clear that it is imperative that we never argue such matters with newcomers. Pages 144-145 of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions make the point that even if an atheist newcomer wants to "browbeat" us about all of this "God nonsense" we should use this as a chance to practice patience and tolerance.

As a minority we believe production of more literature is not the answer. We believe welcoming agnostics and atheists will not be a problem if current members practice patience and tolerance, follow the clear cut directions outlined in Chapter 7 of the Big Book "Working with Others," adhere to the Third Tradition, and take the suggestions outlined in the pamphlet on sponsorship.

- She says that one "*quiet agnostic*" shared with her "... *that she was terrified... when she came into AA... was too overwhelmed to search the literature to better understand all the talk about a Higher Power. She thought a pamphlet (for atheists and agnostics) would be invaluable... saying that people who had questions about God, like her, could and did stay sober in AA. She said, 'it makes the door wider'.*"

AAWS produced a Conference Approved pamphlet © 1984 entitled "**THIS IS A.A. An Introduction To The A.A. Recovery Program.**" In the second section of this pamphlet entitled "Who we are," on page 8 is written the following:

"All the great faiths are represented in our Fellowship, and many religious leaders have encouraged our growth. There are also atheists and agnostics among us. Belief in, or adherence to, a formal creed is not a condition of membership."

Additionally, per background document # 10, specifically pages 66 - 69, there are multiple references to folks being welcome in AA that have questions about faith and about God. Specifically, the following pamphlets contain multiple references to the questions of faith: ***44 Questions; Young People and AA; AA for the Woman; Questions and Answers on Sponsorship; AA and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic; Is there an Alcoholic in your life?; A Newcomer Asks.***

On the other hand, it is a shame that a recovered AA member did not take the time to speak with this woman in a friendly manner and explain that she was not required to believe in anything to be an AA member. However, if she is a powerless/real alcoholic as defined on pages 21-23 and 44 of the Big Book, she may be suffering from a disease that only a spiritual experience will conquer. If that be the case, the Program of Recovery in the Big Book, our common solution, is designed to solve this problem (Big Book, page 45).

- She says "Some courts can no longer refer people to AA because it is viewed as a religious organization rather than a spiritual one. While we have literature speaking to this issue, many feel it is not sufficiently available or clear for courts, jails, or even newcomers to easily locate or understand."

Regarding the "feeling" that the literature we have is not "sufficiently available", "clear," "easy to locate or understand" - we currently have 60 pamphlets that can be viewed online. All the major Conference Approved books can be viewed online. Our literature is clear and easy to understand for anyone who wants to understand it. One more pamphlet or piece of literature is not going to change this "feeling."

Anyone who has looked up the words religious and spiritual in a dictionary can see that any *State* based court system that is supposed to be separated from *religion* would have trouble referring convicted criminals here. There is no argument here. We are not apologizing for the message of hope and recovery that has helped millions of real alcoholics recover from a hopeless state of body and mind. It is no concern of AA whether anyone refers folks to us. ***"Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films."*** Tradition Eleven

"If he is to find God, the desire must come from within" (Big Book, page 95). Court referral or no court referral, if an alcoholic wants help we are here for that alcoholic.

- She says she *"... fail(s) to understand how making the success of people who believe in alternative (non-deity) based Higher Powers threatens AA or takes us away from our primary purpose or our method of recovery through the 12 steps. Agnostics and atheists are amongst us and stay sober amongst us. Letting people know of their existence does not change us; they are here, they are successful..."*

AAWS let people know of the existence of atheists and agnostics in AA in 1984 when it produced the pamphlet **THIS ISS A.A. An Introduction To The A.A. Recovery Program** which states (on page 8): ***"There are also atheist and agnostics among us."*** Also, when the Big Book was published in 1939 an entire chapter was devoted to agnostics – Chapter 4 ***We Agnostics***. We are not here to impede anyone's "success." What we believe impedes any alcoholic's success is "contempt prior to investigation" when it comes to spiritual matters.

- She makes the erroneous statement: *"Nowhere (in) our literature does it make clear that this Higher Power must be deity based..."*

First, we should define the word "deity" from www.merriam-webster.com the definition of Deity is:

1. a: the rank or essential nature or god : DIVINITY
b: *capitalized* : GOD 1, SUPREME BEING
2. A god or goddess <the *deities of ancient Greece*>
3. One exalted or revered as supremely good or powerful

The idea of a "deity" based Higher Power is throughout the Big Book with lines like:

Page 28: *If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try.*

Page 53: *"...When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't."*

Page 56: *"...This man recounts that he tumbled out of bed to his knees. In a few seconds he was overwhelmed by a conviction of the Presence of God. It poured over and through him with the certainty and majesty of a great tide at flood. The barriers he had built through the years were swept away. He stood in the Presence of Infinite Power and Love. He had stepped from bridge to shore. For the first time, he lived in conscious companionship with his Creator...."*

Page 59: *"... there is One who has all power – that One is God. May you find Him now!"*

Page 68: *"We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves."*

Page 133: *"God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists, and practitioners of various kinds."*

Page 161: *"Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united under one God..."*

- She argues that the 12 steps can be reconciled with agnosticism or atheism since many atheist and agnostics she spoke with have nontraditional Higher Powers like the Group or the Big Book.

“Step Two” of the Twelve Step and Twelve Traditions says:

“... AA's tread innumerable paths in their quest for faith. ... Many a man... has begun to solve the problem by the method of substitution. You can, if you wish, make AA itself your 'higher power.' ... You will find many members who have crossed the threshold just this way. All of them will tell you that, once across, their faith broadened and deepened. Relieved of the alcohol obsession, their lives unaccountably transformed, they came to believe in a Higher Power, and most of them began to talk of God.”

(Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pages 27-28)

As a minority we do not see where the 12 Steps can be reconciled with agnosticism or atheism. Perhaps if it were only a 2 Step program consisting of Steps One and Two one could reconcile it. But Step two is the means by which we get to Step Three which requires ***“that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success (Big Book, page 60).”*** The word “God” as it is used in Steps 3, 5, 6, and 11 is unambiguous. Reconciling the AA Program with Agnosticism and Atheism is impossible.

- After discussing how some atheist and agnostic groups “use an altered 12 steps” and how most (including her) view this as threatening to the preservation of Alcoholics Anonymous, She implies that producing literature that allows agnostics and atheist to “share their successes” will reduce, somehow, the likelihood that agnostic and atheistic groups will alter the Steps.

In our view, her argument is nonsensical and difficult to follow.

- She says *"it is nothing short of tragic that any alcoholic live an alcoholic life or die because of intolerance in AA. It is not our place to define how people work the 12 steps, but only that the 12 steps are AA. ... What is at stake here are the lives that might be spared by their (we assume newcomers) knowing of (atheists and agnostics) already amongst us."*

How about the lives of real alcoholics lost because they were given a false third alternative?

"If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help."

(Big Book, page 25)

"Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason - ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor - becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.

But what about the real alcoholic? He may start off as a moderate drinker; he may or may not become a continuous hard drinker; but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink." (Big Book, pages 20-21)

"The alcoholic may say to himself in the most casual way, "It won't burn me this time, so here's how!" Or perhaps he doesn't think at all. How often have some of us begun to drink in this nonchalant way, and after the third or fourth, pounded on the bar and said to ourselves, "For God's sake, how did I ever get started again?" Only to have that thought supplanted by "Well, I'll stop with the sixth drink." Or "What's the use anyhow?"

When this sort of thinking is fully established in an individual with alcoholic tendencies, he has probably placed himself beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die or go permanently insane".

(Big Book, page 24)

As a minority we would like to ask the majority the rhetorical question **How many real alcoholics should we sacrifice in order to pander to atheist and agnostics who are "successfully sober" in alcoholics anonymous?** The fact is that if you are a "real alcoholic", and therefore "beyond human aid," it is impossible to be successfully sober in AA as an atheist and agnostic unless you are not a real alcoholic but rather a heavy drinker who can stop or moderate given a sufficiently strong reason.

Postscript

A close examination of Background Document #7: **“1976-2006 Some history and actions pertaining to A.A. literature”** reveals that at least six attempts to produce literature for non-believers failed:

- In response to requests from atheists and agnostics the 1989 Trustees' Literature Committee created a subcommittee to ascertain if there was a need for *“... a publication that might give non believers a sense of spiritual and philosophical freedom and emphasis on human values while stressing the inclusive nature of A.A.”* The 1989 Conference Literature Committee **did not see sufficient need to take action.**
- The 1990 Trustees' Literature Committee recommended that the Conference Literature Committee consider concepts for a pamphlet that *“would explain the multidimensional and expansive association which has always been linked to the phrase ‘Power Greater Than Ourselves’.”* The 1990 Conference Literature Committee **did not approve the idea because they concluded there was not sufficient need at this time.**
- The 1996 Trustee's Literature Committee forwarded a request for a pamphlet directed to the concerns of the non-believer (atheist and/or agnostic) to the 1996 Conference Literature Committee which **considered the request and made no recommendations.**
- The 2000 Trustee's Literature Committee formed a subcommittee to create a pamphlet for the non believer entitled “Spiritual Variety” pamphlet. ***The subcommittee looked at all references to religion/spirituality in recovery pamphlets and were delighted with the quantity and diversity of spiritual experience in these pamphlets. They considered adding a uniform statement to some recovery literature and concluded that a new statement would not be helpful as it might appear to be an official policy statement.*** The 2001 Conference Literature committee discussed the Trustee's Literature committee's proposal for a new pamphlet that includes a variety of spiritual experience and **took no action.**
- The 2003 Trustee's Literature Committee **agreed to take no action** on the request to develop a pamphlet “concerning A.A., religion and spirituality.”
- The 2006 Conference Literature Committee considered developing a pamphlet concerning Alcoholics Anonymous, religion and spirituality. After a thorough discussion, the committee **felt that there are already numerous references on this subject in the existing A.A. Conference-approved literature, and took no action.”**

Let us always remember that **“... we (alcoholics) have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.”**
(Big Book page 64)