

I Am Responsible. When Anyone, Anywhere Reaches Out For Help, I Want The Hand Of A.A. Always To Be There. And For That, I Am Responsible !

When I was drinking it was my way or the highway, and it seems we have brought that attitude with us into the fellowship of AA: It's our way or the highway! If you want recovery, you'll get it on our terms. If you can't handle it on our terms, go back out and do some more drinking until you're ready to do what we tell you.

Of course you're always free to go seek help elsewhere. Just don't count on us, unless you're willing to do it our way.

So The Hand of AA – is that the hand of one alcoholic talking with another, the hand of a fellowship where we may finally feel that we have come home, or is it the hand of conditional love from a fellowship which does not practice what it preaches?

We, every one of us, have to ask ourself: Who am I willing to let die, just so I can be righteous in my belief?

There are many thousands of sober agnostics or atheists in AA, and many of them have endured the god talk through a decade, or two, three, four decades. I have surely sat through more than 4000 meetings myself, and had to listen to stuff I did not believe in all through those 4000 meetings, just so I could be allowed to stay sober.

I was even told to “fake it till you make it”. Luckily I realized in time that if I faked it it would only take me back to the bottle. I had faked it all my life. Luckily I made it anyway.

And I'm here to tell about it, and to help my non-believer brothers and sisters in AA trust what they (don't) believe in, and move

on to live happy sober lives in spite of all that is being preached to them.

As Bill Wilson puts it:
“Though three hundred thousand did recover in the last twenty-five years, maybe half a million more have walked into our midst, and then out again. No doubt some were too sick to make even a start. Others couldn't or wouldn't admit their alcoholism. Still others couldn't face up to their underlying personality defects. Numbers departed for still other reasons. Yet we can't well content ourselves with the view that all these recovery failures were entirely the fault of the newcomers themselves.”

The Dilemma of No Faith AA Grapevine , April 1961

Are we there to help the next suffering alcoholic, or is our main purpose to serve a god – without genuine consideration for the next suffering alcoholic?
It's time we make up our minds.

Either the next suffering alcoholic is everything or else he is nothing. He either is or he isn't. What was our choice to be? (p. 53)

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Some thoughts about

AA in the 21st Century

A couple of days ago it was two years since I had my big surgery. I had cancer, and they took two thirds of my liver out. When the doctor came in I asked him: “Could you please do the surgery exactly the way they did it in 1939?”

Right – I really did, right?

Would you jeopardize your life like that? So why would you do that with recovery where your life is equally on the line, even if perhaps not quite so urgently for some of us?

Bill Wilson was 3 years sober when he wrote the big book. Let me be perfectly clear: For someone who didn't already have a big fellowship to lean on, and for being 3 years sober in 1938 he did good. Let's just give him all the credit we can: He did amazingly good.

But he **was** three years sober.

If you who are reading this are three years sober - congratulations! Those first 3 years in many ways are a bigger achievement for you, and for us, than the next 25 years were for me who is 28 years sober. On the other hand – those of us who have been sober for well over a decade, when we look back, one of the first things that come to mind is probably “Yeah, when I was 3 years sober I thought I knew everything!”

And so it was with Bill Wilson.

Though when he wrote the Big Book he was able to be humble enough to write “We realize we know only a little”. Only later was he to realize how little he had indeed known. But he had set a fellowship in motion which had taken on a life of its own. By 1955 there were perhaps 150,000 members, many of whom would cling to every word in the Big Book, and he had to resign himself to that.

In a February 6, 1961 letter he writes: “As time passes, our book literature has a tendency to get more and more frozen, a tendency for conversion into something like Dogma, a human trait I am afraid we can do little about. We may as well face the fact that A.A. will always have its fundamentalists, its absolutists and its relativists.”

We now have some people with 20, 30, 40 years sober who insist on living their life according to the writings of this 3 year sober guy, all the while later in life he cautiously tried to moderate his stance:

“In AA's first years I all but ruined the whole undertaking with this sort of unconscious arrogance. God as I understood Him had to be for everybody. Sometimes my aggression was subtle and sometimes it was crude. But either way it



The Emperor has no Clothes!

was damaging - perhaps fatally so - to numbers of non-believers.”

The Dilemma of No Faith AA Grapevine , April 1961

So we can't help but ask:

How relevant is Bill Wilson's original 1938 message here almost 80 years later? What makes the AA message so special, that 80 years later there is nothing, absolutely nothing in it that needs to be changed? (other than a few gender specific embarrassments about what the little woman at home should do, and such)

I know there are people who try to live their lives by every word of it. This is not hard to understand. We live in a predominantly Christian culture where many base their lives on writings nearly two thousand years old. To them it must feel like the Big Book was written yesterday.

However, the number of Americans who do not identify with any religion is growing. And the general population is growing. This all adds up to that while in actual numbers AA is shrinking only slightly, in its share of the general population, drinking or not, it is shrinking considerably.

One third of Americans under 30 have no religious affiliation, There are 13 million people who consider themselves atheists or agnostics, about 6% of the population.

I know that is a small enough minority to where if the majority wants to play righteous and dominate them, it's a piece of cake. AA has done it for a long time now. Those unbelievers can be ignored, both inside and outside of AA, if one wants to badly enough.

But what happened to our responsibility statement?