

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**

Send replies & comments to: aaminorityopinion@gmail.com

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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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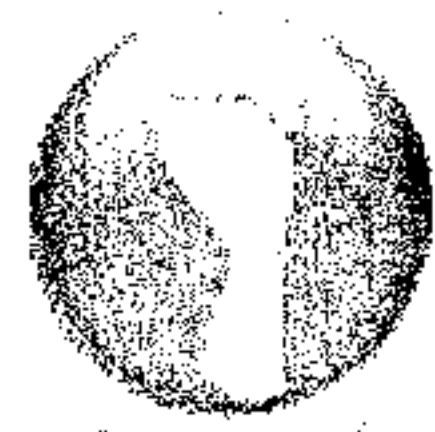
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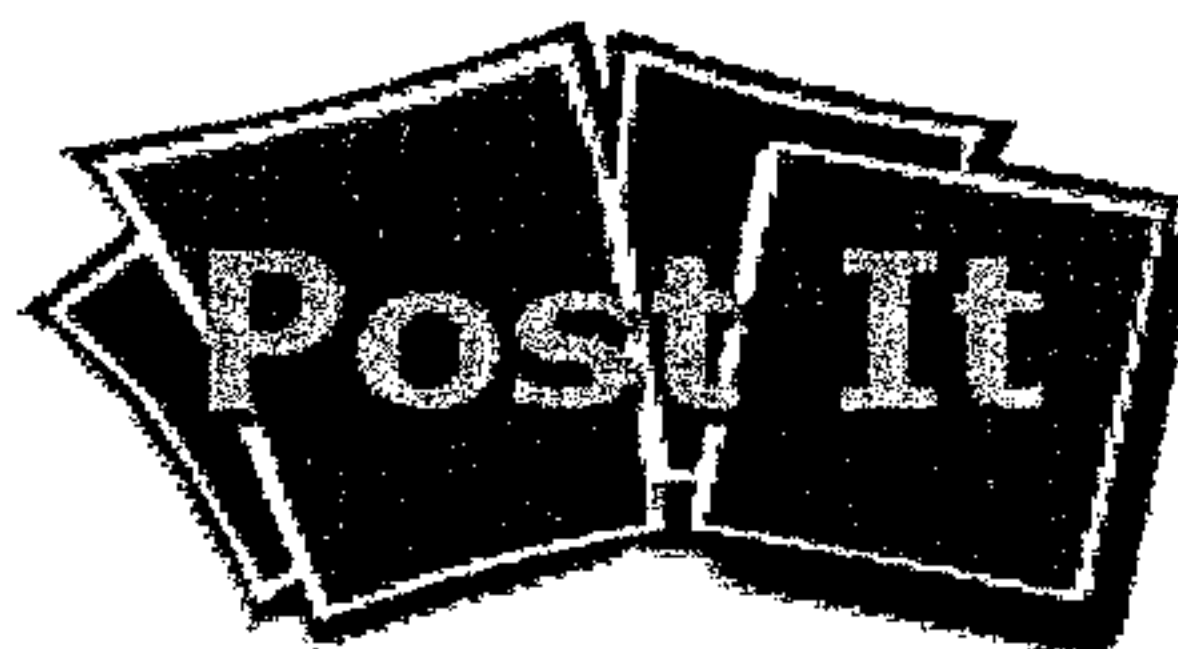
PHOTOS



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

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Forums > 12 Step Programs > AA

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

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txsuperman ●
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07/07/2009 1:48 PM

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What Happened?

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 [redacted] 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.

[redacted], 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: [redacted]
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

CONFIDENTIAL: This is background for the 60th General Service Conference, and as such may be a confidential A.A. document. Distribution is limited to A.A. members. Placement of this material in a location accessible to the public, including aspects of the Internet, such as Web sites available to the public, may breach the confidentiality of the material and the anonymity of members, since it may contain members' full names and addresses.

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

CONFIDENTIAL: This is background for the 60th General Service Conference, and as such may be a confidential A.A. document. Distribution is limited to A.A. members. Placement of this material in a location accessible to the public, including aspects of the Internet, such as Web sites available to the public, may breach the confidentiality of the material and the anonymity of members, since it may contain members' full names and addresses.

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":

