

2023 Conference Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community

ITEM D: Consider retiring the pamphlet “A Member’s-Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous”

Background notes:

The committee discussed the pamphlet “A Member’s-Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous” and noted some concerns on the relevancy and usefulness of this pamphlet as a C.P.C. tool to communicate to professionals about A.A. The committee noted that some of the text could be offensive to those of varying abilities and may lead to an appearance of A.A. aligning with a specific religious doctrine. The committee **agreed to forward** a suggestion to the 2023 Conference committee on C.P.C. to discuss retiring this pamphlet.

Background:

1. Advisory Actions on retired pamphlets
2. Excerpts from the “Member’s Eye View” pamphlet

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2023 Conference Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community

Advisory Actions on retired or discontinued pamphlets

Background:

1963 Advisory Action

It was recommended that: The pamphlet "Correctional Officials Evaluate A.A." be discontinued and a new pamphlet be created outlining specific information about the formation and function of groups in institutions, including material pertaining to county jails, orientation programs, training programs for the young, open door groups, women's groups, etc. One page of Warden's comments was considered to be sufficient. The draft of the pamphlet to be reviewed by interested penologists as well as the Conference Literature Committee. The Committee further requested that information for the pamphlet be sought from Delegates and Institutions Committees.

1980 Advisory Action

It was recommended that: "A.A. in Your Community" be discontinued since this pamphlet is so much like "A Brief Guide" and "A.A at a Glance"; it was found to be unnecessary to have two pamphlets so much alike.

1981 Advisory Action

It was recommended that: The leaflet "Alcoholics Anonymous in Your Community" be reinstated as General Service Conference-approved literature and put back into distribution as soon as possible.

2006 Advisory Action

It was recommended that: The pamphlet "Letter to A Woman Alcoholic" be discontinued.

2017 Advisory Action

It was recommended that: The pamphlet "Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W." be retired.

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Excerpts from the “Member’s Eye View” pamphlet:
<https://www.aa.org/members-eye-view-alcoholics-anonymous>

It occurred to me not long ago that whenever I am sitting in an A.A. meeting, I am never aware that I am sitting next to another white man, another Catholic, another American, or a Frenchman, Mexican, Jew, Moslem, or Hindu, black man or brown.(p. 25)

This coming Sunday, in the churches of many of us, there will be read that portion of the Gospel of Matthew which recounts the time when John the Baptist was languishing in the prison of Herod, and, hearing of the works of his cousin Jesus, he sent two of his disciples to say to Him, “Art thou He who is to come, or shall we look for another?” And Christ did as He so often did. He did not answer them directly, but wanted John to decide for himself. And so He said to the disciples: “Go and report to John what you have heard and what you have seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the poor have the gospel preached to them.” Back in my childhood catechism days, I was taught that the “poor” in this instance did not mean only the poor in a material sense, but also meant the “poor in spirit,” those who burned with an inner hunger and an inner thirst; and that the word “gospel” meant quite literally “the good news.”(p.26)

The house that A.A. helps a man build for himself is different for each occupant, because each occupant is his own architect.(p.20)

“If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the pit?” And in 1935 was the answer, strangely enough, “No”? But perhaps what occurred that evening was not a contradiction of Christ’s maxim. Perhaps one who was a little less blind, one who was at last able to discern vague shapes and forms, described what he saw to one who still lived in total darkness.(p. 10)

Much more important than what was said that evening was who was saying it. Long before the average alcoholic walks through the doors of his first A.A. meeting, he has sought help from others or help has been offered to him, in some instances even forced upon him.(p.10)

I am personally convinced that the basic search of every human being, from the cradle to the grave, is to find at least one other human being before whom he can stand completely naked, stripped of all pretense or defense, and trust that person

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not to hurt him, because that other person has stripped himself naked, too. This lifelong search can begin to end with the first A.A. encounter. (p.11)

There is a widely held belief in A.A. that if a newcomer will simply continue to attend meetings, "Something will finally rub off on you." And the implication, of course, is that the something which rubs off will be this so-called miracle of A.A. Now, there is no doubt in my mind that many people in A.A. accept this statement quite literally. I have observed them over the years. They faithfully attend meetings, faithfully waiting for "something to rub off." The funny part about it is that "something" is rubbing off on them. Death. They sit there — week after month after year — while mental, spiritual, and physical rigor mortis slowly sets in. (p.14)

First, does it come as a surprise to you, as it did to me, that there is nothing physical in this program — no leafy, green vegetables, no vitamins, no daily calisthenics? I think this is because, from the very beginning, the alcoholic in A.A. has believed that the physical aspects of our disease would have little import if they were not accompanied by an equally progressive spiritual deterioration. If the major thing we had to worry about was the physical allergy to alcohol, then I believe A.A. would never have happened, because it would never have been needed. At various times I have been strongly allergic to various foods: to strawberries, but I have never had to join Strawberries Anonymous; to pork, but I didn't have to change my religion to abstain from it. (pp.15-16)

I have often wondered what the course of mankind might have been if the Ten Commandments had been presented in this same manner, rather than as blunt commandments negatively expressed: "We honored our father and our mother." "We remembered to keep holy the Sabbath." "We honored the name of the Lord our God and took it not in vain." "We bore no false witness against our neighbor." (p.16)

A.A. will probably always number among its ranks those who, in their fear and their anger, would make of A.A. a kind of spiritual ghetto, a sort of co-ed monastery; where alcoholics hide and lick their wounds, coining childish and defensive words like "normsie" and "alky," and pointing accusing fingers at the tigers "out there." (pp.24-25)

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