

James A. Blatt
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REACTION #6

I am a person in recovery from drugs including alcohol. I have found lasting sobriety (clean time) through application of a 12 step philosophy of living. In this way of life, I apply what 12 step programming calls spiritual principles, such as *practicing* acceptance, tolerance, courage, willingness, brotherly love, dependence (on God), service, faith, humility, integrity, self-discipline, autonomy, responsibility, trust and purpose. According to Carl Jung in The Undiscovered Self, such spiritual principles are “objective values” ordained by society as goods to live by. They are goods that produce goods. Alexander Schmemann says no different.

The 12 step philosophy of recovery embodies what western atheism, or possibly more strictly construed civil religion, calls spiritual living, not dogmatic worship. It appears to me from the first Chapter of Alexander Schmemann’s For the Life of the World that Schmemann preaches an orthodox way of life in which ‘we are all priests’ who need to carry the good news to another (of such a way of living as according to the above principles) and to ourselves be role models of living that way.

In order to practice what we preach we need to be trained in upright living. Addicts and alcoholics who start using from their legal infancy into adulthood almost invariably need to re-parent themselves to adapt and fit into society in a way they never learned to in the first place. Assuming a new world view, ‘smash[ing] the delusion’ as Bill Wilson calls it on p. 97 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, ‘that we can drink [or use] like other people’ is the first half of the first step for an addicted person. It appears, according to Schmemann, for the normal non-addicted person, a Christian way of life is about coming to believe that Jesus died for the life of the world and we ought to emulate him and his legacy whenever possible in thought and deed which I speculate in Schmemann’s view will nix absolute reliance on formal dogmatic worship for salvation.