

COURSE GRADE COVER SHEET

Complete student information portion, make copies, and submit one form with each course.
(In the event you are not able to make copies, please hand-write this page with each course.)

I have read the frequently asked questions on the back of this page: ☒ Yes ☐ No.

Student Number (Same as Inmate Number) 180161

Student Name: Eric St. George

Student Address: c/o CCF--180161; PO Box 600

City: Cañon City State: CO Zip Code: 81215

Unit Number: Fox Name of Prison: Centennial

Degree you are working toward: Masters of Ministry & Christian Counseling

My records indicate this is my 5th course. (paper 3 of 3)

Course Number & Title: or Name of Book From the Bible: C00623 Counseling for Crisis and Addiction

Book Title: Alcoholics Anonymous

Author: Bill Wilson & Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith

Begin/End Date of Enclosed Course: Jan 1 / Jun 30 2024

Please note that if you are turning in a course that involves textbooks you need to turn in a complete course that normally has three books.

To Be Completed By Student:

Do you need us to send you your next course? ☐ YES ☒ NO

(This question applies only to those working on books of the Bible)

If no, what books will you use for your next course?

Please give us the name and ID number of a few people that are interested in receiving information on attending our college. Thanks and God Bless You!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



International Christian College and Seminary
P.O. Box 530212 • Debary, Florida 32753-0212
www.iccscampus.org



Q: Can you send me another grade coversheet?

A: You can handwrite your grade cover page.

Q: How long does it take to grade my work?

A: We normally send correspondence out once per month. However, you do not need to wait on us to grade your work to continue your courses. If you are doing books from the Bible, we can e-mail them to your loved ones and they can print and send them to you. Just ask them to e-mail us.

Q: Can I do my courses in pencil?

A: Yes, but only if you have access to nothing else.

Q: Should I staple or paperclip my work?

A: If you do it is ok. However, we prefer that you do not use staples or paperclips because we scan your work and it takes time to remove them from the papers.

Q: What course will books from the Bible substitute for?

A: We use the books from the Bible as foundation courses. You need 20 courses to graduate. We will determine which courses they will substitute for as you get closer to graduating.

Q: Is there a way I can contact you other than by mail?

A: If you are a federal inmate in good standing you can send me an invitation on Corrlinks and I will accept. If you are a state inmate you can have your loved ones forward an e-mail to me and I will respond. My e-mail is drmccorkle@icccampus.org. You, your family or friends are welcome to call me. My cell number is (407) 760-5616. The office number is (877) 391-3741 ext. 700. As long as I do not have to pay, I will accept all calls. If for any reason you do not reach me on your first attempt, please keep trying. I will pick up.

Q: How do I know if books I have available are acceptable to use as substitutions?

A: As you know, we have a list of suggested books for your degree. However, we can customize some of your future courses to assist you in obtaining your goal. Everyone knows what they need help with. Please pray about it and once you have identified an area where you would like to improve, look in your chapel library or psychology department for a combination of books that are 900 pages. Once you find the books give me the name of the book, the author and the page numbers and I will enter these as a custom course for you.

Q: Is there a time limit for each course?

A: No, you can work at your own pace.

Q: Can I send in my work if my tuition is not current?

A: Please do not send in your work if your tuition is not current. If your tuition is not current your student file is flagged on hold in our system and we are unable to grade any work until the tuition is current. If the college does not receive a payment within 90 days the student file is permanently closed.

Q: I have been writing sponsor letters but have not obtained a sponsor.

A: Some students have to write 50-100 letters before they received a positive response. It depends on your letters. You need to pray and write each one individually from your heart. Also, ask family and friends to help find sponsors.

Q: Will I receive feedback from the graders/readers?

A: Courses are graded by graduate students. They jot down notes for me to read about each of your papers. They normally put down opinions that are highlighted to advise that this is interesting. Unless they point out a problem on the paper, I will accept it as-is. If they provide a problem, I return the paper with their notes asking you to re-do and re-submit. In the past I would write down some comments and students would brag to other students in their dorm making them feel inferior. For that reason, I normally just keep to the basic comments. I know some of you put a lot in your papers and deserve complete feedback. You can call me from your chaplain's or unit manager's office and I will be glad to discuss your papers in full detail.

Q: Can you send back my original work?

A: When we receive your work, your courses and correspondence are scanned into your student records. If you want your original work sent back to you, you must send us a self-addressed, stamped brown envelope with as many stamps as you used to send your original work to us, clearly stating that you want all of your work returned. Once your tuition is paid, if you want a copy of your work, we will email it to you upon your release or you can have your sponsor send a request and we will email it to them.

Q: How long can I use the Books from the Bible?

A: You can use books/questions from the Bible up to your Bachelor's Degree.

Q: Tell me again about your accreditation

A: We are accredited by the International Theological Accountability Association (ITAA) and are recognized by the Department of Education in Florida. ICCS has been privileged to work with several regionally accredited colleges and universities that do accept some ICCS course transfer credits into their programs. This offers our students the option of benefitting from their ICCS training when pursuing a formal degree at various academic institutions.

There are different kinds of accreditation. Governmental Accreditation and non-governmental accreditation. Governmental accreditation is requested in order to receive student aid money. We, along with Rhema Bible College and many more, choose non-governmental accreditation. With governmental accreditation, we would not be able to offer higher degrees unless the student took some courses on campus. That would make our prison program ineffective to you and many others.

Q: How many credits are each course?

A: Three (3) credits or one (1) course is equivalent to 45 contact hours, 60 credits or 20 courses is equivalent to 900 contact hours.

A contact hour is a measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students. A semester credit hour is normally granted for satisfactory completion of one 50-minute session (contact hour) of classroom instruction per week for a semester of not less than fifteen weeks.

Q: Do I have to start with my Associate's degree or can I go directly to my Doctorate degree?

A: If you have college credits, we need to see the official transcripts and we will enroll you in the appropriate degree program. If you have no college credits you need to start with the Associate's degree. The undergraduate degrees (Associate's and Bachelor's) each require 60 credits or 20 courses to graduate. For graduate degrees, the Master's requires 48 credits or 16 courses plus a Master's thesis and the Doctorate requires 36 credits or 12 courses plus a dissertation paper to graduate.

Q: Will you write a letter to the Parole board for me?

A: Yes. If you are a student in good standing with us, we will gladly help with Parole and Letters to the court. You must have a hearing date. If the date is near, I suggest you have your family or friends get in contact with us so we can have the rough draft approved and we can obtain the name and address of who you want it addressed to. Otherwise, you can write to us with the information.

Q: How can I help ICCS?

A: Help us spread the word about our college by sharing the school's flyer wherever you can i.e. your prison chapel, library or common area. You can also support us through prayer and by recommending us to your friends who are interested in pursuing a theological degree. To go a step further, consider "paying it forward" by sponsoring a new student.

Q: Why is my coursework postmarked from Austin, Texas?

A: Our grading center is in Austin, Texas. All of your correspondence is to be sent to:

International Christian College and Seminary
P.O. Box 530212
DeBary, FL 32753

Q: Can I continue my degree when I am released?

A: Yes. You are welcome to continue upon your release. We will keep your tuition at the same price for the first two years. You will have an option of taking your classes online or textbooks or a combination of the two. It will be your choice.

Q: What is the cost for my next degree?

A: We offer men and women in prison an 85% discount from our normal tuition. Our current tuition is \$9,497.00 (It continues to go up each year). We offer it to inmates at \$1,425. If you pre-pay you receive an additional discount and only pay \$997. Please note that the rate you will be paying is \$22.00 per credit hour. The standard community college charges between \$150 - \$300 per credit hour. There is no additional discount.

COUNSELING FOR CRISIS AND ADDICTION
C00623
(paper 3 of 3)

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Text Read: Alcoholics Anonymous 4th ed. (2001), 35th printing (2016)
ISBN: 978-1-893007-17-8, 575 pages in 4 parts, 11 chapters, 42 stories
Authors Bill W(ilson) and Dr. Bob (Robert Holbrook Smith)

CONTENTS: Preface; Foreword to First Edition; Forward to Second Edition; Foreword to Third Edition; Foreword to Fourth Edition. The Doctor's Opinion.
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(ch 4) We Agnostics (ch 5) How it Works (ch 6) Into Action (ch 7) Working with Others
(ch 8) To Wives (ch 9) The Family Afterward (ch 10) To Employers
(ch 11) A Vision for You PERSONAL STORIES, Part I: Pioneers of A.A. (story i) Doctor Bob's Nightmare (story #1) Alcoholic Anonymous Number Three (story #2) Gratitude in Action (story #3) Women Suffer Too (story #4) Our Southern Friend (story #5) The Vicious Cycle (story #6) Jim's Story (story #7) The Man Who Mastered Fear (story #8) He Sold Himself Short (story #9) The Keys of the Kingdom Part II: They Stopped in Time (story #1) The Missing Link (story #2) Fear of Fear (story #3) The Housewife Who Drank at Home (story #4) Physician, Heal Thyself! (story #5) My Chance to Live (story #6) Student of Life (story #7) Crossing the River of Denial (story #8) Because I'm an Alcoholic (story #9) It Might Have Been Worse (story #10) Tightrope (story #11) Flooded with Feeling (story #12) Winner Takes All (story #13) ME and Alcoholic? (story #14) The Perpetual Quest (story #15) A Drunk, Like You (story #16) Acceptance Was the Answer (story #17) Window of Opportunity Part III: They Lost Nearly All (story #1) My Bottle, My Resentments, and Me (story #2) He Lived Only to Drink (story #3) Safe Haven (story #4) Listening to the Wind (story #5) Twice Gifted (story #6) Building a New Life (story #7) On the Move (story #8) A Vision of Recovery (story #9) Gutter Bravado (story #10) Empty on the Inside (story #11) Grounded (story #12) Another Chance (story #13) A Late Start (story #14) Freedom from Bondage (story #15) A.A. Taught Him To Handle Sobriety APPENDICES: I. The A.A. Tradition II. Spiritual Experience III. The Medical View of A.A. IV. The Lasker Award V. The Religious View on A.A. VI. How to Get in Touch With A.A. VII. Twelve Concepts (short form)

WHY THIS TEXT WAS CHOSEN FOR USE IN THIS COURSE

Any discussion about addiction will cover alcoholism. For most addicts,

alcohol is truly the gateway drug. Being legal, plentiful, socially acceptable and available almost everywhere, for nearly everyone their first experience of having their mind & body altered is with alcohol. For a vast majority of people, before seeking something stronger, they will abuse alcohol until they have exhausted their ability to use alcohol. Even for those who escalate to illicit drugs or abuse of pharmaceuticals, alcohol abuse often runs parallel to their other addictions. It is impossible to talk about addiction without Alcoholics Anonymous being a part of the discussion. AA, with its renowned twelve steps and group meetings is a part of the national culture. Its form has been repeated for every form of addiction, with twelve-step programs for narcotics, gambling, sex, and likely every other addiction people suffer. Indeed, the naming conventions _____ Anonymous and _____-aholics are used and are clichés.

Alcoholics call their core text "The Big Book" and is eponymously named for their groups, the foundation, and the program. Alcoholics Anonymous the text is the "Bible" of Alcoholics Anonymous. As a potential counselor to alcoholics and addicts of all types, a familiarity with the "Big Book" seems reasonable if not necessary. As a student of Christian Counseling, being familiar with the Alcoholics Anonymous twelve steps is important. It is common knowledge -- a fact everyone would know even if not an alcoholic or even a drinker -- that one of the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous is to surrender to God or a Higher Power. This step is well depicted in TV and in movies. Being that as I write this paper I am imprisoned in a correctional facility, I am surrounded by alcoholics and addicts. The "Big Book" is readily available, second only to the Bible for the number of copies that can be found lying about. I was able to procure the copy of the Book that I've read from the chaplain's library, amid a shelf filled with copies of it.

Counseling for crisis will be helped by being familiar with the Alcoholics Anonymous text. To be sure, alcoholism and addiction regularly results in crisis, and vice versa crises in life ofte lead people to use intoxicating substances in a misguided attempt to cope. The Big Book contains personal accounts written by AA members. Being familiar with these accounts will benefit the prospective counselor by allowing him to relate to a potential client.

The idea to use the AA Big Book initially came from another text used for this class. While reading "The Change Agent" by Damon West, he repeatedly referenced AA, he used the term "The Big Book" to refer to the AA Book, he spoke about involvement in AA and NA groups, made mention of having a "sponsor" as part of his Parole Plan. He pointed out how when he spoke before the parole board,

the parole panel asked him about his AA attendance and specifically questioned him about how he practiced the Twelve Steps. If a member of a Texas parole board panel has familiarized herself with the AA system, it makes sense that I too should do so as a student of Christian Counseling, a student of Psychology, an active litigator in legal actions, and as a prisoner in a correctional facility.

In the other book I used for this class, Mental Health First Aid USA, at the end of the chapter on substance abuse disorders there is referral information for AA, NA, al-anon and alateen. AA is synonymous with addiction, counseling for substance abuse is fully intertwined with AA and the AA model; familiarity with their Big Book, its plan, its contents and the culture of its followers is a must in any study of counseling for addiction.

HISTORY

The Big Book (as I'll continue to refer to Alcoholics Anonymous, the book, in order to distinguish from AA the program for recovery and AA the foundation) was first published in 1939. New editions were published in 1955, 1976, and 2001. The two co-founders are named "Bill W." and "Dr. Bob." Neither of their surnames are given anywhere in the book, because they are anonymous. Dr. Bob is Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith and Bill W is Bill Wilson. I know this from other sources outside of the text. The Book tells us that the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous is June 10th, 1935, the first day of Dr. Bob's permanent sobriety.

There are references to Prohibition in the Book, even referring to the Eighteenth Amendment specifically. I find it very interesting to consider that for the first AA members, their drinking careers occurred during that period. The 18th Amendment ushered in Prohibition, banning "the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors," was ratified on January 16, 1919 and took effect on January 16 of 1920. See U.S.Const. Amend. XVIII, the National Prohibition Act 41 Stat. 305 also known as the Volstead Act, also NATIONAL PROHIBITION CASES 253 US 350 (June 7, 1920). The 21st Amendment "repealed the eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States," was ratified on December 5, 1933, and took effect immediately. See U.S.Const. Amend. XXI, and Massey v. US, 291 US 608 (Mar 12, 1934) ("Repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment rendered the National Prohibition Act unconstitutional and inoperative, even to pre-existing offenses.) The same period of time that was Prohibition was also the "Roaring Twenties," which were punctuated by Black Friday in 1929 that began the Great Depression. To consider that Alcoholics Anonymous was forged in this crucible is poignant. Drinking was foremost in the minds of the people of the

time, the teetotaler movement was simultaneously taking a victory lap for prohibition and disgusted with the flapper culture of speakeasies and of the Roaring Twenties. And, the giant crisis of the Great Depression surely had an effect on drinking behavior. In Dr. Bob's story he talks about "when beer first came back" which is a reference to prohibition but doesn't say so because it was written contemporaneously to that time when a reader would not have required that context whereas today's reader may gloss right over the words without recognizing the significance. (I am a history buff, and a conscientious reader) The world's foremost program for alcoholism recovery was born in the era that was Prohibition and the aftermath of that failed experiment. I find this coincidence very interesting.

Alcoholics Anonymous was founded in Akron, OH. When Dr. Bob was having a bout of drinking, he was introduced to Bill W., who Dr. Bob doesn't name in his story but we infer as these are the two co-founders. It is confirmed to have been Bill in a footnote in another chapter. After meeting with Bill, there is another spate of drinking that results in Dr. Bob being taken into a friend's home for a period of convalescence. Bill returns, gives Dr. Bob a couple of drinks that evening to steady him, and a bottle of beer in the morning to quell his delirium tremens. That beer was Dr. Bob's last drink ever, June 10, 1935.

Alcoholics Anonymous considers itself to have medical credibility, looking at alcoholism under what we today call the "disease model." I'll include here "The Doctor's Opinion" in its entirety:

To whom it may concern:

I have specialized in the treatment of alcoholism for many years.

In late 1934 I attended a patient who, though he had been a competent businessman of good earning capacity, was an alcoholic of a type I had come to regard as hopeless.

In the course of his third treatment he acquired certain ideas concerning a possible means of recovery. As part of his rehabilitation he commenced to present his conceptions to other alcoholics, impressing upon them that they must do likewise with still others. This has become the basis of a rapidly growing fellowship of these men and their families. This man and over one hundred others appear to have recovered.

I personally know scores of cases who were of the type with whom other methods had failed completely.

These facts appear to be of extreme medical importance; because of the extraordinary possibilities of rapid growth inherent in this group they may mark a new epoch in the annals of alcoholism. These men may well have a remedy for thousands of such situations.

You may rely absolutely on anything they say about themselves.

Very truly yours,
William D. Silkworth, M.D.

In a subsequent, much longer statement, Dr. Silkworth goes on to identify

himself as a psychiatrist who manages a hospital for the treatment of alcoholics. He describes alcoholism as a form of "allergy" to alcohol. He says that "these allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all," in contrast to the "average temperate drinker." Dr. Silkworth has become a highly regarded "patron saint and medical benefactor" of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Co-founder Dr. Bob passed away, sober, in 1950. Bill W. passed away, sober, on January 24, 1971. In 2016, at the time of my copy of the Big Book's publication there are 117,700 groups in approximately 180 countries around the world. The Big Book has been translated into 70 languages. There are an estimated 2.2MM members worldwide.

THE TWELVE STEPS

The most broadly known aspect of AA is its famous twelve steps. That there are twelve steps, the phrase "twelve-step program" is synonymous with AA and addiction recovery. The Book does not begin with these twelve steps, appearing on pp. 59-60 of my 4th ed. copy, but I'm going to introduce them early in my summary because of their public familiarity. The text reads: "Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

- (1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable.
- (2) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- (3) Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- (4) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- (5) Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- (6) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character
- (7) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- (8) Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- (9) Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- (10) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- (11) Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
- (12) Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Steps one and two, admitting to being an alcoholic and believing in a higher power, are elaborated upon. The text states that these "pertinent ideas" are clear:

- (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.

Moving to Step Three means being convinced of these three ideas. The founders point to selfishness as the root of troubles in accepting their powerlessness over alcohol and need of a higher power. The alcoholic wants to think he has the will to control alcohol -- which he does not. The Big Book offers a prayer for completing Step Three: "God, I offer myself to Thee -- to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to thouse I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life. May I do Thy will always!" The book recommends that this step be done with another person.

The next step involves taking inventory of oneself. In The Book there is an example inventory that has three columns: "I'm resentful at:," "The Cause," and "Affects my:." This table lists four people and cause for resentment and the parts of the person's life that are affected. The list includes his wife's nagging and divided romantic attention, his co-worker's advances on his wife, troubles with his boss and neighbor. These troubles affect his "self-esteem" and "pride," his "sense of security," and his "sexual relations." I was very struck by the very frank discussion of the man's sex relations and how this was affected by his alcohol abuse. The author says that resentment is the "number one offender" that "destroys more alcoholics than anything else." But, the paragraph about sex really grabbed my attention for its frankness and measured approach that avoids condescending adherence to either an over-pious or overly freewheeling stance. I'll duplicate its introduction here: "Now about sex. Many of us needed an overhauling there. But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes -- absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation. Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance everywhere. One school would allow men no flavor for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about

them?"

The handling of the subject that was honest without any of the prudish, puritanical and sanctimonious treatment one might expect, and simultaneously was not so permissive or laissez faire as to allow the matter to escape review. Alcohol and sex have a close relationship. Alcohol is known to lower inhibitions, and sex is undoubtedly a behavior in which the uninhibited choose to engage. Another reason I found these words so fascinating is because of their temporal proximity to more Victorian-era sexual mores. Written in the 1930's, in an era where ideas on sex were far more governed by Christian ideals, the Book read like something that could be contemporary to today. This is reminiscent of the wisdom found in Ecclesiastes 1:9-10, "...there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, 'Look! This is something new?' It was here already long ago; it was here before our time." There is nothing new about sex, and there is nothing new about alcohol and sex being intertwined, and there is nothing new about troubles related to sex. "God alone can judge our sex situation," says the Book. This seems like a good place to land, all things considered.

"More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor." "Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it." Or, "[p]erhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person." These statements append to Step Five how it is necessary to not only admit one's wrongs to oneself and to God, but to another person. This action makes sense as a means to make the admission real and as a tool to be held to account. The Book says that as to the fifth step that demands that these "wrongs" must be admitted; "Psychologists are inclined to agree with us." This is true today as it was when the Book was written, these twelve steps continue to be held in regard by professionals as being valid and effective. "We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past." This sounds like a difficult, but healthy process, from which anyone could benefit whether that are an alcoholic or not. That Catholics engage in Confession as a sacrament has merit when seen from this perspective; this was obliquely implied in the quote above.

The Book includes this prayer to effect Step Six and Seven, which I quote here in its entirety: "My creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant

me strength, as I go out from here, to do your Bidding. Amen."

Steps Eight and Nine are refined by specifying commonplace harms and explaining how to make amends for those harms. "Most alcoholics owe money."

This sounds accurate, addicts need money to feed their addictions. Making amends means repaying one's debts. "Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense..." or maybe one "...has a warrant out for our arrest." Addressing any outstanding legal matters is a form of amends. Another example given is "...admitting his faults and asking forgiveness." "Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised." On this subject of sexual infidelity in a marriage, the Book suggests that if one's wife does not know, the details may be more of a harm. Also, to drag the other woman in may not be fair to her. The proper course is a case-by-case determination.

Step Ten simply advises that the previous steps are a continuous process, not a one-and-done affair. "Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. 'How can I best serve Thee -- Thy will (not mine) be done.'"

The Eleventh Step, like the tenth before it, has the idea of maintenance work being necessary for recovery. Prayer and meditation are the necessary tools for keeping in contact with God and to harness God's power to effect His will -- recovery from alcohol. The Book is very open as to the concept of God, referring the reader to his "priest, minister or rabbi" for suggestions. While there is an implied preference for the God of Abraham as the god of choice when selecting a higher power, the Book does not adhere to any one faith, but to God as one understands Him.

The Book devotes all of Chapter 7 "Working with Others" to expounding on the Twelfth Step. This step is about helping other alcoholics in their recoveries. "Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill." But, ... "Don't start out as an evangelist or reformer." And, ... "We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution. Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new alcoholic looks for this spirit among us and is immensely relieved when he finds we are not witch burners. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it." Here, like with the discussion

of sex earlier, I personally was taken aback by an unexpected frankness and a perspective that was not the puritanical and sanctimonious viewpoint I had wrongly anticipated. We are all familiar with the widespread stereotype of the reformed drinker that demonizes alcohol and who takes up the teetotaler mantle that all drinking is evil and prohibition is the only right stance on drinking. Here, the Big Book talks about recovered alcoholics keeping booze in their own homes in order to serve to guests and for the potential need to nurse a hangover of another alcoholic that is seeking help. The position of the book makes it clear that for the alcoholic, drinking does not work because he has an illness whose only cure is a spiritual revelation followed by abstinence, but alcohol is not in itself an evil.

The twelfth step is about helping other alcoholics, and the subtext is that helping others is how one helps himself. To the alcoholic newly seeking help, nobody will understand his experiences quite like another alcoholic. Only another alcoholic will "speak an alcoholic's language." An alcoholic will be infinitely more willing to accept advise and counsel from a fellow alcoholic. We see this premise everywhere: one doesn't take financial advice from a poor person, diet advice from an obese person, or marriage advice from a bachelor. Personal experience is valued. This just makes sense, if I were an alcoholic and I were looking to get sober, I'd want to hear how a recovered alcoholic did it himself. All the while, being a sobriety mentor, which in AA are called "sponsors," is an ideal means to keep oneself from "falling off the wagon." Helping others is a constant reminder of reasons to stay sober, and it is another way to be held accountable. A sponsor will feel the obligation to keep himself sober in order to continue to be a positive role model for his fellow alcoholic.

WE AGNOSTICS

There can be zero debate on the subject of God's influence on the Alcoholics Anonymous recovery program. Of the twelve steps, numbers 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 11 -- half -- explicitly invoke God and His Power. The efficacy of the AA model relies entirely on the Power of God. The following quote comes from a source outside the text, and gives a view into the Christian evangelical roots of AA:

"Swiss psychologist Carl Jung was well aware of the importance of a jolt-healing experience to ensure lasting sobriety. The story goes that a wealthy American alcoholic named Rowland H (his last name isn't

known) went to Switzerland to go into analysis with Jung to cure his alcoholism, but to no avail. After a year, Jung told Rowland that he couldn't help him, that his only salvation was a vital spiritual experience. That's a hard prescription to fill! But that's exactly what happened. Rowland returned to America, joined a philosophical evangelical organization called the Oxford Groups founded on 'right living,' had his spiritual experience, and did indeed stop drinking. Rowland told his friend Ebby Thatcher all about it, and Ebby joined and also stopped drinking. Then Ebby told his friend Bill Wilson, and later Bill Wilson had his famous spiritual awakening in his room at the Charles B. Towns Hospital in New York, stopped drinking, and went on to start Alcoholics Anonymous. The rest is AA history. Quoting: Sylvia Cary's Jolted Sober: Getting to the Moment of Clarity in the Recovery from Addiction (1989), Rx: A Moment of Clarity. [In Interest of C.T., 582 So.2d 1245, 1247 (Fla. App. 1991)]

There is no doubt that the AA program is based on invoking the Power of God to effect change, recovery from alcoholism.

The chapter titled "We Agnostics" was expected to answer my question, "What about those who do not believe in God?" From the verbiage of the steps themselves, the god that the alcoholic submits himself to need not necessarily be the God of Christianity. The Book specifically speaks of seeking out a Rabbi if one chooses, for assistance. The God of Judaism is the God of Abraham, the same God as worshipped in Christianity. By extension, the God of Islam, called Allah, is still the same God as the God worshipped in Judaism and Christianity, and as such is the God considered in AA. This covers the vast majority of Earth; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam make up the most prevalent faiths in the world. The steps talk about God as we understood Him, which gives plenty of latitude for those world faiths. It is reasonable to believe that the direct language of the steps leave sufficient space even for believers of non-Abrahamic faiths and even non-Monotheistic faiths -- falling into the God "as we understood Him" space. What does one do if he does not believe in a deity? The text says "half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics." Half is a substantial proportion. The Book expands that "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..." "...the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive..." "When... the perfectly logical assumption is suggested that underneath the material world and life as we see it, there is an All Powerful, Guiding, Creative Intelligence, right there our perverse streak comes to the surface and we laboriously set out to convince ourselves it isn't so." "...we agnostics and atheists chose to believe that our human intelligence was the last word, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of it all.

Rather vain of us, wasn't it?" "Who are you to say there is no God?"

The overwhelming language of this chapter leads the reader to the message that if the alcoholic falls into the category of agnostic or atheist, it is time to reevaluate your belief system. To deny God is an act of hubris, and "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 [to recovery.]" By this reader's reckoning, this language means that the agnostic will need to allay his doubts and become a believer; the atheist is out in the cold with no route to recovery.

A footnote in this chapter refers the reader to Appendix II, titled "Spiritual Experience." In the appendix in relevant part reads: "...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." There may be a more protracted journey to recovery not reliant on a spontaneous "spiritual awakening" for some. And for those who already possess "God-consciousness" the experience may be discovery of an "inner resource" of God's Power. Where does this leave our putative atheist? "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." *<italics in original>*

While the upshot of the text is that agnostics and atheists very much need to find God, the Book allows in "Spiritual Experience" for those who are adamant about their unbelief to recover so long as they are honest and keep an open mind. It will be interesting to research overseas AA group cultures to learn if in predominantly atheist nations if the steps are different.

TO WIVES

This chapter's title is footnoted, and that footnote reads: "Written in 1939, when there were few women in AA, this chapter assumes that the alcoholic in the home is likely to be the husband. But many of the suggestions given here may be adapted to help the person who lives with a woman alcoholic -- wheter she is still drinking or is recovering in AA." Since this Book was written, everything about traditional family structure has been turned on its head. In 2024, the very presumption of this chapter to be written to a heteronormative married couple

would be called "offensive" in the woke popular media. Today, marriages may exist between same-sex pairs, and the very fact of gender is questioned. Notwithstanding, as a student of Sociology, the existence of a silent majority of traditional nuclear families is a known fact. As a student of Psychology, the existence of differences in the minds and psyches of the biological sexes is an empirically evidenced known fact. As a student of Theology, the narrative of God's creation as given in Genesis of man and woman is a known fact.

Having read the chapter, it would not be sufficient to retitle it to reflect today's topsy-turvy world due to the language of the chapter's adherence to traditional gender norms and roles. Even still, much of the content translates and remains relevant, as the footnote suggests.

"Sometimes there were other women. How heartbreaking was this discovery; how cruel to be told they understood our men as we did not!" Infidelity is universal, and infidelity is universally wounding. Infidelity ends relationships; the consequences in a marriage where children are a consideration may outweigh the hurt and demand a forgiveness and reconciliation. This is a bitter pill to consider swallowing. The Book reminds "wives" that alcoholism is a sickness. "...our husbands thought we were so inhospitable. 'Joykiller, nag, wet blanket' -- that's what they said. Next day they would be themselves again and we would forgive and try to forget." Regardless of the partners, where one is out partying and the other is holding down the homestead, the relationship is in jeopardy and the risk of the alcoholic partner calling the other a kill-joy and a nag exists.

"We women carry with us a picture of the ideal man, the sort of chap we would like our husbands to be. It is the most natural thing in the world, once his liquor problem is solved, to feel that he will now measure up to that cherished vision. The chances are he will not for, like yourself, he is just beginning his development. Be patient." Patience is a universal. The recovery process is an arduous one, and above all else the alcoholic will require patience from a partner. The "Women Suffer Too" story lends support to a suspicion that I had that, for women, if she is an alcoholic it is likely that her husband is alcoholic too. No doubt that counter examples exist, but the tendency for alcoholics to date and marry seems reasonable. Where there is a one-sided alcoholic relationship, it seems that it would be more likely the husband were the spouse that was out drinking without his wife versus a wife out drinking without her husband.

The chapter that follows "To Wives," entitled "The Family Afterwards," continues with similar themes. "Drinking isolates most homes from the outside world. Father

may have laid aside for years all normal activities -- clubs, civic duties, sports. When he renews interest in such things, a feeling of jealousy may arise. The family may feel they hold a mortgage on dad, so big that no equity should be left for outsiders." The message here translates to all relations, it could equally apply to a parent, a sibling, or a friend, as it does to a partner or child. Once an alcoholic begins recovery, it is unreasonable to demand all of the time and attention you've been denied by him. A recovering alcoholic must be free to live his own life. Here again the differences of the 1930's contemporary to the Book and the current culture of today lie in stark contrast. Today we all suffer in an epidemic of isolation. The COVID pandemic laid bare what had already been a growing concern in society -- people are alone. Problem drinking was well reported throughout the COVID lockdowns, and participation in community life was at a zero. The inversely proportional relationship between community involvement and alcoholic abuse is well known. A recovering alcoholic needs to have activity outside the home (that isn't going to bars) in order to be healthy. Indeed, we all need social activity outside of the home in order to be healthy. The human is a social animal. This is a substantial reason for why churches are centers of fellowship for their parishoners -- declining church attendance being another coal-mine canary for decaying societal and mental health. In the story "Gratitude In Action" and others, we learn that members call AA "the Fellowship." (capitalized in original) AA groups serve as socialization for people in recovery as much as they are therapy. This subject of isolation in our culture today is beyond the scope of the Alcoholics Anonymous Book, but it is one that demands my attention in this course of study and that will be explored later.

More on patience, the Book reads: "A body badly burned by alcohol does not often recover overnight nor do twisted thinking and depression vanish in a twinkling." The recovery process takes time, and the alcoholic needs time and understanding in order to get healthy. This is the upshot of these chapters of the book.

TO EMPLOYERS

Much of this chapter gives examples of the kinds of troubles that arise when an employee drinks. Alcoholism and gainful employment do not well mix. As a former employer myself, I recall the difficulties of employees with substance abuse issues. I could be patient and reasonable, but I couldn't tolerate when an employee's drinking or drugging interfered with business or my customers' experiences. The Book says: "It boils right down to this: No man should be fired just because he is alcoholic. If he wants to stop, he should be afforded a real chance. If he cannot

or does not want to stop, he should be discharged."

The speaker in the "To Employers" chapter concludes by saying: "Today I own a little company, there are two [recovered] alcoholic employees, who produce as much as five normal salesmen. But why not? They have a new attitude, and they have been saved from a living death. I have enjoyed every moment spent in getting them straightened out." I have personally not shared the same fortune with my second-chance employees in the past. I can imagine the productivity and loyalty that could come from such an employee despite not having had the experience.

The choice of words "living death" to describe alcoholism got my attention. These are words I've found in literature, applied to imprisonment. Namely, in Jack London's White Fang, in Victor Hugo's Les Miserables, and in Alexandre Dumas' Count of Monte Cristo do the authors call prison a "living death." This is revealing to me as to the underlying nature of alcoholism, and all addictions; they are an imprisonment, a deprivation from freedom.

A VISION FOR YOU

"For most normal folks, drinking means conviviality, companionship and colorful imagination." Who would wish to give that up?! "...am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum, like some righteous people I see?" The chapter is devoted to working out how to live as a sober person. The chapter is both optimistic as to the positive experiences to come, and grateful for the negative experiences that will be avoided. This is the last chapter of the original book before the personal stories. This part concludes with:

"Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us."

CONCLUSION: To conclude this Book's summary, I offer a few choice quotes from the stories that make up the bulk of Alcoholics Anonymous. "When I look back now, I think I stopped maturing at fifteen when I started to get drunk with the older guys." Building a New Life. "Alcohol suddenly made me into what I had always wanted to be." Gratitude in Action. "'Doc, I think I'm an alcoholic,' 'Yes... you are.' '... the line between a heavy drinker and an alcoholic is not always clear.' ME an Alcoholic? The stories offered a richly detailed view into alcoholic real life. Having read the text, I believe myself better informed on alcoholism and its cure.