

# Our Primary Purpose Forum

## The Voice of the Alcoholics Anonymous Minority Opinion

Edition 1

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Issue 1

### Editorial Statement and Introduction

Welcome to the return of Our Primary Purpose Forum. The aim of the OPPF newsletter is to provide communication and information by and for the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and provide a voice for the Minority Opinion to be heard. We are members of Alcoholics Anonymous who are concerned with the direction our fellowship is headed. It is our hope that together we can work to restore the fellowship and its simple program of recovery to its spiritual effectiveness in helping alcoholics to recover and also return to the principle of AA as a fellowship of men and women working together in autonomous Groups, one drunk to another.

We are concerned about many issues from singleness of purpose in our groups to the actions of our incorporated entities in New York. Such issues include the lawsuits against AA members, groups, and even whole service structures. We feel that the fellowship is not being adequately informed about many issues and that we can no longer depend on the selective information put out from our NY Headquarters. This newsletter is an attempt to inform ourselves. Much has already been accomplished through websites that have information, facts, and documents not readily available to the fellowship, even to those in general service. We will provide links to websites that are addressing our concerns for the fellowship. Any AA member that shares our concerns may join us in our service. We will try to include in our newsletter as many submissions as possible or at least try to reflect various views with the articles or letters that

are printed. Feel free to contact us if you feel your concerns have not been addressed in a few issues. There are websites and on-line groups that offer a voice to all AA members and their concerns. It is our hope that OPPF members will download and print the newsletter for their groups, meeting halls, their GSR's, or their AA friends.

The first few monthly editions will be on the internet only for download at some chosen Minority Opinion websites, but eventually we will also be able to mail the newsletter. Many AA members don't have a computer and we don't want any member to feel excluded.

I wish to dedicate this first edition to the late Jim Hastie who was the first editor of OPPF and was a real voice of the minority opinion in AA. This newsletter is for use inside AA only, but many of the sites on which it will be posted can be accessed from outside AA. It will be up to each member if they want to use their full name or just their first name.

Dennis M. Co-editor

### **The Seventh Tradition**

The topic of this edition will be the Seventh Tradition. Because this is such a vast subject it may take two issues, depending on the responses. In the U.S./Canada Conference section the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition is not upheld throughout AA from the groups to the New York Corporate Headquarters. Just in the U.S.

there are over 100 Corporations that have enough assets required to file a tax form in Alcoholics Anonymous and this is excluding convention committees and Alano Clubs. If the fellowship doesn't understand the spirit of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition in their groups and intergroups how could they expect the NY Headquarters to abide by it?

Some years ago the Challenge of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition was placed in the Service Manual under "How GSO Is Supported," Where it stayed for a decade until it was removed without a Conference action. There is a file about this for those that are interested. There is a lot of information to wade through, but it is important, as the spirit of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition affects all of AA today in so many ways. <http://gsowatch.aamo.info/aaws/7th-challenge.pdf>

From the Service Manual:

### ***How G.S.O. Is Supported***

*According to our Seventh Tradition every A.A. group ought to be fully self - supporting. That includes such pooled services as G.S.O.*

*All activities at G.S.O. are lumped into two categories for the purpose of reporting expenses: service and publishing expense. In the past, A.A. groups contributed enough to cover about two - thirds of the service expense. The remainder was covered by publishing income, which was in excess of that required for publishing expense.*

*So, in 1986, the General Service Board asked for a special effort to inform the Fellowship of the dangers inherent in this situation, particularly that a substantial fraction of the publishing income now comes from outside sources. The effort was begun to inform the groups about this growing problem. The challenge was to make G.S.O.'s service work self-supporting through contributions of the membership and to sell literature at cost to everyone.*

In 1976, when the Third Edition was published, money from outside sales was 30 %. In 1991 this grew to 65% and has continued to grow ever since. With more dependence on book sales, both in and

outside of AA, the power of the AA purse becomes greatly weakened. As the AA purse becomes less important to pay for the bills at our New York Office, the group's power over actions of our trusted servants become weaker. Already they are taking major actions that affect AA as a whole without any discussion at the Conference. This means important issues, such as the lawsuits, are not discussed. What little discussion has taken place has always been less than truthful or factual. In many instances they have actually lied about the facts in the major cases of litigation against AA members and groups.

The incorporated entities in our NY office have also prevented any of the sued AA members from presenting their side to the Conference. This is not only against the spirit of AA principles but hardly fair and just, since they were and are pursuing punitive punishment against members of our AA family in the name of AA.

For those that will read the full paper on the challenge of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition you will note that some small effort was made to increase group donations and move toward the plan to make GSO self-supporting from group donations. To have the attitude that if the group donations are enough then we will trust God a little more and become more dependant on the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition to me this is like telling God; "I will have faith that you will take care of me if you will prove that you will first." One of the problems is there is far too much money spent that may not be Gods will. I am not pretending to know what God's will is for our fellowship, but the loving God of my understanding most likely would not want a corporation suing a member in a fellowship that He created. And for what crime? Giving away free Big Books that contain His message for drunks? I think God would want to keep the free Big Books and get rid of the meetings in fancy hotels and the teams of lawyers.

What seems strange to me is the two most major lawsuits supported by AAWS Inc. are against two entities, one a group and the other a service structure, which have achieved the above challenge of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition and printed the Big Books with group donations. The books are either sold at cost or

distributed free with group donations. This indicates to me that something else is going on with our incorporated servants in New York. That is exactly what they are, incorporated servants, which I have a difficult time finding in the Traditions. Either their fear of not having enough money is so great that they view AA entities that have achieved the challenge of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition as a threat to their lack of faith or else it is not about money at all but something like power and control. Regardless of what their motivation is the fellowship has had very little voice in the matter, which is also not in the principles of a spiritual fellowship of the supposedly inverted triangle.

### **The Grapevine Incorporated**

This lack of faith in the principle of God taking care of our needs through the spirit of the Seventh Tradition seems to be the standard of any AA incorporated entity and not just an exception here and there. This lack of faith from our NY incorporated entities has trickled down throughout AA and even into some large groups. But there are some General Service Areas that have recognized the danger to our primary spiritual aim and have voiced their objections to this growing problem.

One such group is Area 35 in Northern Minnesota. This letter was sent to the outgoing and incoming chair of the Grapevine with copies to their Regional Trustee and Elaine McDonald, the President of the GSB on June 1, 2003. I am leaving out the name of the Delegate because I don't have his permission to use his name in this publication. The letter reads in part:

*We in Area 35 have many deep concerns about the selling of Grapevine Subscriptions by non A.A. organizations. This violates tradition six, which states; "While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied." We also feel there will be a breaking of anonymity when member's names and addresses are given to an outside entity for a Grapevine subscription. At our Area Committee meeting June 1, 2003 our area*

*unanimously recommended I send a letter requesting that the selling of Grapevine subscriptions by non-A.A. entities cease as soon as possible and we kindly ask that you respond in writing before our next committee meeting August 3, 2003.*

The letter went on to mention Concept VII and also to mention that there are Groups in this Area ready to use the power of the purse. Although outside sales have diminished the power of the purse with AAWS as mentioned previously, the Grapevine is more dependant on A.A. members to buy their products so it has more of an effect. Although they depend on subscriptions and other sales and not on group donations they can't afford to have the fellowship feel negative about their business. I think it is sad that money is more of a primary motivator with our NY entities than our spiritual principles.

The Grapevine Conference met six times after separately following a joint meeting with the A.A. Grapevine Corporate Board at the Crown Plaza Hotel. (How many subscriptions were needed to pay for that meeting place?) The following agenda item passed, which stated in part:

*In order to emphasize the importance of the Grapevine as a Twelfth-Step tool, the committee unanimously recommended that the first paragraph of the description of the Grapevine representative on page 9 of the pamphlet "The A.A. Grapevine: Our Meeting in Print" be revised to read as follows: "Grapevine representatives (GvRs) perform a service for A.A. members, bringing them a vital tool of recovery – the international journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. GvRs are engaged in practical, hands-on work. Their basic job is to make the magazine available to the group, to encourage AAs to read it, subscribe to it, and use it in Twelfth-Step work."*

I am not clear on this but it seems we are moving away from "Our Meeting in Print" to "the International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous." I could no longer find Grapevine subscriptions on the

Hazelden website, but they do continue to sell other Grapevine products like the “Best of the Grapevine” which I guess is our past meetings in print. I am hoping that some past Delegates or current ones will update us on this issue. We have copies of these letters and the webpages of Hazelden with the subscription ads, which I hope we can upload somewhere as soon as I learn how.

### **A.A. Conventions and Roundups**

This is another area that is a concern to some members regarding the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition. Convention Committees are set up that do fund raising events for the Convention in many cases. Some just carry the money over from Convention to Convention. Many have had the money stolen by someone on the Committee that has not completed their Steps, so the Committees felt they needed to raise money for the money missing. This has happened several times over the years in my County. But the main concern is how well these events keep the spirit of our A.A. Traditions.

Are there separate Traditions for these events? Do these events constitute an AA meeting or an AA Group? Are they considered a service gathering? How do they fit into the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous? Is registration and money paid for the events at a convention or round-up representative of dues or fees? Are people that are not members of Alcoholics Anonymous, such as those from the public or other 12-Step programs, an outside donation? Is the sale of products such as tee-shirts and coffee-mugs produced from private-profit companies considered an A.A. business?

Most people I know who attend these events go to have a good time. Are there some separate A.A. principles for events set up primarily to have a good time or raise money? Some groups give any extra cash to the local Central Offices or other A.A. entities. Is this considered Group donations? These events lead to a host of confusing questions that seem to go forever unanswered. I am not against AA members gathering to have a good time, but they don't have to call it AA.

There are only a couple ways to go if these events are to be within our spiritual principles. One is to hold the Convention and all the events there for free with expenses paid for by the voluntary contributions of the groups. The National Convention of Section Mexico is done this way and there is no reason why other places of AA can't do the same.

The second is to simply not call it AA and keep the event and those that financially support it separate from AA. Events like the AA meetings there, including the speaker meetings, can be free with a 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition taken and rent paid to the entity organizing the event, much like an Alano Club, church, or institution that holds an open meeting. They could call it something like a 'sobriety convention' or anything other than Alcoholics Anonymous. This includes Area and Intergroup names.

I hope this has served as a topic of interest and discussion.

Dennis M. Co-Editor

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### **Religious AA Roots and the Seventh Tradition**

Alcoholics Anonymous<sup>TM</sup> was reportedly said to be First Century Christianity<sup>i</sup>. However the report about the meeting of 1937 is already tainted with character defects such as grandiosity, pride and a strong drive for money and power. Or why would Bill pride himself of having his ass meaningfully placed into the same chair that Rockefeller's ass just vacated?

It is true that AA's origins are the Oxford Groups<sup>ii</sup>, an evangelical Christian movement. Dr. Bob's big Bible is still proudly displayed at the Akron meeting place today, although the two meetings I attended there during the late 90's were disappointingly average AA psycho-babble events, transmitting little or no spiritual experience. Unless we consider and try to understand those Bible roots and compare them with AA of today, we can't do self examination and straighten our spiritual path.

Well, first of all, our purpose is to help others to escape misery and be healed by enabling them to tap the same source of divine power that saved our lives. This has an interesting parallel in the New Testament, where Jesus directs his newly acquired disciples to spread the word, heal people and cast out evil spirits.<sup>iii</sup> They are not duly educated professionals; but laymen with a purpose, as we are.

When it comes to obsessive alcoholism as in my case professionalism fails. At least my Frankfurt counselor admitted defeat after some expensive sessions, much like Carl G. Jung declared his powerlessness in Roland Hazard's case, who later became Ebby Thatcher's sponsor who in turn recruited Wilson and other hopeless cases.

How could such laymen be effective? Because they were directed to obey a singleness of purpose: *Do not go among the Gentiles, or into any town of Samaria, but go to the wandering sheep of the house of Israel.* For my taste this translates well into the AA purpose "still suffering alcoholics only", ignore the strong drinkers and other "chemically challenged" people.

Now, what's our message to carry? *The kingdom of heaven is near.* Look, we already found much of heaven on earth, a Fourth Dimension, a Realm of Spirit<sup>iv</sup> called recovery. It is possible. But you can't reach it

- a) By means of your own power or
- b) By means of any man's or group's power,
- c) But God can and will let you in, if sought.

This is the only condition: a willingness to believe<sup>v</sup>. We have to drop those who don't seek God and His direction and care. It's a waste of time. Jesus puts this into harsh drastic words: *"And whoever will not take you in, or give ear to your words, when you go out from that house or that town, put off its dust from your feet."*

What else is reported by my brother in name, Matthew, whom I love dearly? He writes that Jesus gives his disciples a strange but universal poverty guideline, which I saw partly followed by monks in France, but fully followed by monks in Thailand, though they quote other scriptures as their source.

Nevertheless they followed it. Let's keep in mind there is only one God and one truth and one spirituality, no matter how pink, blue or orange the outside envelope may look. He says: *Freely it has been given to you, freely give<sup>vi</sup>. Take no gold or silver or copper in your pockets. Take no bag for your journey and do not take two coats or shoes or a stick: for the workman has a right to his food.*

What else is this than the secret of freedom from material and financial bondage?! You can't loose what you don't have. So simple, but a major relief when really practiced. No possessions, no intellectual property, no prudent reserve – none of this crap. AA of today suffers from sheer disobedience and ignorance to this guideline.

We will be supplied with all we need to carry out God's will. This is a promise – both in the Bible<sup>vii</sup> and in the big book<sup>viii</sup>. I've been living up to this principle for more than 15 years now and I was never disappointed. And this is not really a principle of "self-support" but of "God-support". So, in my view, wherever conference approved literature talks about "AA is self-supporting" it is spreading a lie and dilutes the spiritual power of our program.

*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon<sup>ix</sup>.*

Corporate AA of today has made its decision. What is yours?

Matthew, Germany

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<sup>i</sup> AA comes of Age pg 148

"The historic evening in December, 1937, finally arrived. We had supper and presently found ourselves in Mr. Rockefeller Jr.'s private board room. **My chair at the great table felt warm, and it was explained that Mr. Rockefeller himself had just vacated it. This made the chair feel even warmer;** we were certainly getting close now!

[...] As we told our several tales of alcoholic misery and release, we could see that a very deep impression was being made. When we were through, Mr. Scott, who chaired the meeting at the head of the table, exclaimed, **"Why, this is first-century Christianity!"** (emphasis added)

<sup>ii</sup> AA comes of Age pg 39 Sam's appearance before us was further evidence that many a channel had been used by Providence to create Alcoholics Anonymous. [...]

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But the important thing is this: the early A.A. got its ideas of self-examination, acknowledgment of character defects, restitution for harm done, and working with others straight from the Oxford Groups and directly from Sam Shoemaker, their former leader in America, and from nowhere else.

iii **Matthew 10: 5** These twelve Jesus sent out and gave them orders, saying, Do not go among the Gentiles, or into any town of Samaria, 6 But go to the wandering sheep of the house of Israel, 7 And, on your way, say, The kingdom of heaven is near. 8 Make well those who are ill, give life to the dead, make lepers clean, send evil spirits out of men; freely it has been given to you, freely give. 9 Take no gold or silver or copper in your pockets; 10 Take no bag for your journey and do not take two coats or shoes or a stick: for the workman has a right to his food. 11 And into whatever town or small place you go, make search there for someone who is respected, and make his house your resting-place till you go away. 12 And when you go in, say, May peace be on this house. 13 And if the house is good enough, let your peace come on it: but if not, let your peace come back to you. 14 And whoever will not take you in, or give ear to your words, when you go out from that house or that town, put off its dust from your feet. 15 Truly I say to you, It will be better for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of God's judging than for that town. 16 See, I send you out as sheep among wolves. Be then as wise as snakes, and as gentle as doves. 17 But be on the watch against men: for they will give you up to the Sanhedrins, and in their Synagogues they will give you blows; 18 And you will come before rulers and kings because of me, for a witness to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when you are given up into their hands, do not be troubled about what to say or how to say it: for in that hour what you are to say will be given to you; 20 Because it is not you who say the words, but the Spirit of your Father in you.

iv Big book pg 25, pg 46

v Mark 9:24

vi TWELVE STEPS and TWELVE TRADITIONS,

- chapter about Step 12

This is Twelfth Step work in the very best sense of the word. "**Freely ye have received; freely give . . .**" is the core of this part of Step Twelve.

- Chapter about Tradition Two

John Doe, a good A.A., moves -- let us say -- to Middletown, U.S.A. Alone now, he reflects that he may not be able to stay sober, or even alive, unless he passes on to other alcoholics what was **so freely given** him. He feels a spiritual and ethical compulsion, because hundreds may be suffering within reach of his help.

- Chapter about Tradition Eight

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS will never have a professional class. We have gained some understanding of the ancient words "**Freely ye have received, freely give.**"

vii Matthew 6:31-34

viii big book pg 63

We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well.

ix Matthew 6:24

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In the next issue we hope to have a page for our trusted servants in General Service to discuss topics or Conference agenda items.

Please send any comments, letters or articles to:

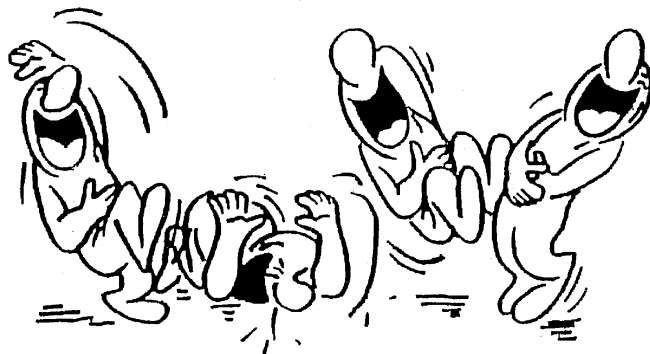
[oppf@aamo.info](mailto:oppf@aamo.info) <http://aamo.info/oppf>

For those who are involved in General Service feel free to send in any comment or concern you have regarding General Service topics and they will be forwarded to our General Service editors.

The OPPF will eventually be supported by voluntary contributions, but, as of now, we have no place to send them. For the time being, we will just be on-line. As mentioned in the editorial, feel free to download and print the newsletter for your home groups or AA friends.

Thanks for allowing me to be of service,

Dennis M. Co-editor



**GOD CAN'T DO WHAT?**