

EDITORIAL

On the 2nd Tradition

By Bill

"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience."

Sooner or later, every A.A. comes to depend upon a Power greater than himself. He finds that the God of his understanding is not only a source of strength, He is also a source of *positive direction*. Realizing that some fraction of that infinite resource is now available, his life takes on an entirely different complexion. He experiences a new inner security together with such a sense of destiny and purpose as he had never known before. As each day passes, our A.A. reviews his mistakes and vicissitudes. He learns from daily experience what his remaining character defects are and becomes ever more willing that they be removed. In this fashion he improves his conscious contact with God.

Every A.A. group follows this same cycle of development. We are coming to realize that each group, as well as each individual, is a special entity, not quite like any other. Though A.A. groups are basically the same, each group does have its own special atmosphere its own peculiar state of development. We believe that every A.A. group has a conscience. It is the collective conscience of its own membership. Daily experience informs and instructs this conscience. The group begins to recognize its own defects of character and, one by one, these are removed or lessened. As this process continues, the group becomes better able to receive right direction for its own affairs. Trial and error produce group experience, and out of corrected experience comes custom. When a customary way of doing things is definitely proved to be best, then that custom forms into A.A. Tradition. The Greater Power is then working through a clear group conscience.

We humbly hope and believe that our growing A.A. Tradition will prove to be the will of God for us.

Many people are coming to think that Alcoholics Anonymous is, to some extent, a new form of human society. In our discussion of the 1st Tradition, it was emphasized that we have, in A.A., no coercive human authority. Because each A.A., of necessity, has a sensitive and responsive conscience, and because alcohol will discipline him severely if he backslides, we are finding we have little need for man-made rules or regulations. Despite the fact that we do veer off at times on tangents, we are becoming more able to depend absolutely on the long-term stability of the A.A. group itself. With respect to its own affairs, the collective conscience of the group will, given time, almost surely demonstrate its perfect dependability. The group conscience will, in the end, prove a far more infallible guide for group affairs than the decision of any individual member, however good or wise he may be. This is a striking and almost unbelievable fact about Alcoholics Anonymous. Hence we can safely dispense, with those exhortations and punishments seemingly so necessary to other societies. And we need not depend overmuch on inspired leaders. Because our active leadership of service can be truly rotating, we enjoy a kind of democracy rarely possible elsewhere. In this respect we may be, to a large degree, unique.

Therefore we of Alcoholics Anonymous are certain that there is but one ultimate authority, "a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience."

