

CONCEPTS

Volume XLII, No. 4

Northern Illinois Area, LTD. Area 20 Service Letter

Winter 2019

The Shared Gift

A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message. else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

<<< >>>

Faith is more than our greatest gift; its sharing with others in our greatest responsibility. May we of A.A. continually see the wisdom and the willingness by which we may well fulfill the immense trust which the Giver of all perfect gifts has placed in our hands.

The excerpt from *As Bill Sees It...P.13*, and the excerpt from the A.A. Service Manual, P.5 are reprinted with permission from A.A. World Services, Inc.



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I Was Thinking...

Concept I reads: Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.

What does this mean?

First of all let's figure out "who" or "what" is the collective conscience of our whole fellowship. If you look at the diagram on page S16 of the A.A. Service Manual you will notice that the "group" is at the top of the organizational chart. Therefore the "whole fellowship" is the sum of all the groups. So then, what is the "collective conscience?" That has to be defined as what the groups think, I believe. On any matter or topic, through discussion, debate, reflection, minority opinion the group comes to an opinion on that matter. That is the group's conscience. Then the groups get together, through their GSR's and discuss, debate, reflect, offer minority opinion and come up with the conscience of all those groups. This "collective conscience" then gets transmitted down the organization to the Area, the General Service Conference, and ultimately the General Service Board. Therefore, the GSR is the vital link between the "whole fellowship" and the General Service Board.

In other words: Final responsibility for A.A. world services should always reside [with the GSRs].

One definition for responsibility is: the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or of having control over someone. "a true leader takes responsibility

for their team and helps them achieve goals." Therefore, the GSR has the duty to deal with finding the conscience of the group they represent and bring that to the Area Assembly. Now they can delegate that responsibility to their District's DCM if they choose, but then they are giving that DCM the ability to not communicate their group's conscience as stated. The DCM will also be listening to the other GSRs group's consciences and the result might be a different opinion on the matter. If the group is to be truly represented the GSR must come to the Area Assembly and not leave it to the DCM.

This is where ultimate authority comes in. One definition of authority is: the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. "he had absolute authority over his subordinates." That is where authority becomes the responsibility of the whole fellowship - groups - GSRs. Ultimately, the GSR, on behalf of his group, has the authority to make sure that the decisions that were made, at the group, at the District or at the Assembly, are carried out, and, to take actions if they were not.

Therefore, we can restate the Concept as follows:

Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside with the GSR, acting on behalf of his/her group. GSR's, you are responsible for what happens in A.A. And, You have the authority to make sure that what happens is what your group wants to happen.

Anyway, I was thinking.

Robert S.

Primary Purpose

Hello NIA 20,

I received an e-mail this week that had the following at the very end of it:

“The more A.A. sticks to its primary purpose, the greater will be its helpful

influence everywhere.” *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, page 109

I must admit that in my earlier years of sobriety I brought everything to the tables. I didn’t always bring solutions, but I sure did bring my problems. I didn’t know any better.

However, reading this again: “The more A.A. sticks to its primary purpose, the greater will be its helpful influence everywhere.” *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, page 109

makes me so aware that you and I have a great responsibility to bring recovery to the tables. Especially for the newcomer who doesn’t know any better, just like I was in the beginning. I was always complaining. And no one told me to stop. So, I just kept complaining. I have some time in the program now and I finally caught on that I bring my problems to my sponsor who I can talk with about the solution to my problems by working the STEPS. At the meetings I bring solutions to help others know that the STEPS do work if you work them.

I have started to re-read *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* again. I am trying to prepare myself for my trip to the

Conference next spring and when I saw this quote I felt that I was on the right track.

We really are a lucky group of people. Who would have thought that our biggest problem would some day save another person from their biggest problem?

Marilyn F.

Service Above Self in A.A.

I don’t know when I found being of service to others to be the joy it is today, but I can tell you it wasn’t when I was drinking.

Long before my problem drinking became active alcoholism, my actions and behaviors were not those which usually resulted in any great altruistic benefit to others. There might have been good intentions along the way. It might have even looked like help and assistance offered out of kindness at different times. Yet even at an early age, the evidence of my selfishness was unmistakable. I learned the art of using people and situations to get my own way, and how to use dishonesty to my own advantage. I found ways to manipulate and deceive, mislead and circumvent – anything and everything, all to serve *me* better. When I added alcohol and other substances, these behaviors grew out of control. My life became a pursuit of my own selfish self-interests, without much thought to the effect or impact this was having on others around me.

Sobriety, good sponsorship, and working the 12 steps were my introduction to a world that didn't revolve around me. For the first time in a long time I stepped out of myself and began finding small ways to be of service to others. It was subtle at first. Little things, like simply showing up early or staying late at a meeting were opportunities to actually do something that could help someone else, directly or indirectly. Setting up chairs, making coffee, cleaning ashtrays, greeting at the front door, putting out literature. These simple activities took me out of myself. They gave me a sense of purpose. By taking an interest in what was taking place around me instead of what was always taking place inside me, I felt like I was a part of something instead of being apart from everything.

My first sponsor suggested that I never turn down an opportunity to be of service; that these were divinely assigned moments to give back what was so freely given to us. And she was right. When I got my first sober car after getting my driver's license back, that same sponsor suggested "better get a BIG car." When I asked her why a big car, she laughed and said, "because of all those women you are now going to be driving to meetings!" And she wasn't kidding. She meant that it was time for me to start taking women who were without a car or driver's license to meetings just as women had once done for me. And so that's exactly what I did. And when I complained about one or two women I was taking to a weekly meeting that I was not particularly fond of, she would remind me that God

didn't bless me with sobriety, a driver's license and a BIG car just so I could drive women I liked to meetings. And as usual, she wasn't wrong.

I began to sponsor others, chair meetings, and became a GSR of my home group. Being a GSR was one of my favorite service commitments because I enjoyed sharing information from my group with the District, and information from the District and the Area back with my group. I was fortunate to belong to a home group that appreciated service in action and respected the work of the GSR. This experience helped broaden my understanding of General Service and showed me there was so much more to Alcoholics Anonymous than just the meetings I was attending in area where I lived. As a GSR, I attended Assemblies and Conferences across our Area where I would meet passionate, service-minded people from all over Northern Illinois. Over time I've held a variety of positions in my groups, District and Area. Each one has taught me something immeasurably valuable.

There were other service opportunities. If asked, I would give a lead at a meeting or speak from the podium. In early sobriety I became involved in working with detox patients at a local treatment center and bringing a weekly meeting to their inpatient residents, something I still enjoy taking part in today. I'm active in personal service both in and outside of Alcoholics Anonymous and have reached a balance now that works well for me. I have grown with each service commitment I have been given and am

amazed by how much service has expanded my world today. “Service Above Self” is a traditional Rotarian motto, but it also means that service must truly come from your heart. I learned this to be true only by serving others through sobriety in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and for that, I am very thankful.

Lisa S.

GSR Boot Camp

District 21 Boot Camp seeks to develop informed, engaged GSRs to participate in “boring,” but vital service work

Boot Camp. In the military it’s basic training. My former employer used the term to describe an intense week-long course to learn the concepts of a new or complex corporate program such as Lean Six Sigma. And it’s the same term the District 21 Operating Committee used in 2018 to describe a “crash course” on what General Service Representatives are supposed to do. Perhaps if more members had an understanding of those responsibilities there would be more engagement at the District level.

As a former GSR myself, I understood the need. When I was elected I had no idea what those responsibilities included. Sure someone handed me the NIA 20 handbook, but who looks at that? So, when it came time to organize our Boot Camp this year (and since I am a good alcoholic who likes to control things) I volunteered to plan the event.

To prepare, I began looking at the literature—the *A.A. Service Manual* and several pamphlets including the *A. A. Group*, the *General Service Representative*, *Circles of Love and Service* and the NIA 20 handbook. Reading through the literature was eye opening for this alcoholic. The service work Bill Wilson writes about goes beyond chairing meetings and extending your hand to the newcomer. The service work Bill talks about is to ensure the survival of Alcoholics Anonymous for the future. This is often considered the “boring,” business aspect of A. A. But it is vital and it starts with the GSR.

To emphasize the importance of the GSR’s role, each participant on this year’s Boot Camp was given a packet of Conference-approved literature. In addition to the pamphlets described above, it included *the 12 Concepts Illustrated* and *The A. A. Group* as well as a copy of the current NIA 20 handbook, copies of Bill’s *A.A.’S Legacy of Service* (pages S1 through S12 of the Service Manual) and a copy of the PowerPoint that was the backbone of this year’s presentation. Pens and highlighters were handed out too, for any ambitious GSR who wanted to take notes.

The Boot Camp was structured to be interactive and participatory. A PowerPoint presentation included excerpts from the pamphlets and the NIA 20 handbook; attendees volunteered to read passages aloud; and questions were encouraged in order to make it as interactive as possible. Experienced Trusted Servants were available to help answer questions. At the end of that part of the presentation, two members gave a brief overview of their service experience—Carmela R., NIA Alternate Chair and Sean O., a former GSR from the District.

Because the Boot Camp was held in place of our regular District meeting, and to entice people to attend, the District provided free food. There were about 20 people in attendance including two from other Districts, about the same as last year. Feedback was positive and one person asked for a digital copy of the PowerPoint; and GSRs learned a few things.

GSR Boot Camp in District 21 has become an annual event. After all, without informed, engaged GSRs the future of A. A. is questionable.

Sarah B.,
District 21 Secretary

2020 NIA Spring Conference and Assembly

AA: A FOUNDATION for LIFE

Conference Hosted by Northern Illinois Area 20 Districts 21 & 28

<p>March 20th—22nd Chicago Marriott Schaumburg 50 N Martingale Rd, Schaumburg, IL 60173</p> <p>Rooms: \$99.00 Per Night (Plus Tax) For Reservations call 1-800-228-9290 and mention NIA Spring Conference <i>Reservations must be made by 2/28/20</i></p>	<p>MARCH 2020</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>SUN</th> <th>MON</th> <th>TUE</th> <th>WED</th> <th>THUR</th> <th>FRI</th> <th>SAT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT																																											<p>Assembly March 21st 8:00 am Registration Assembly is Free</p>
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Conference: \$26.00 (No Fee for Assembly)
Ice Cream Social: \$13.00 **Box Lunch: \$15.00**
Banquet: \$43.00




Register Online at: niaspringconference.com

Speakers **Alcathon** **panels** **Banquet** **Fellowship** **Archives** **DANCE** **Literature**

Guest Speakers

Friday: **Zach F., Buffalo, N.Y.** Saturday: **Jenny L., Dallas, Texas** Sunday: **Brenda B., GSO Staff**

 Special Needs Contacts: Bob A. 847-612-0549 or Wesley G. 847-708-0870
 For accessibility needs please let us know by Feb 12, 2020
 

For Information Contact: Kevin K. 847-691-1455 or Tom G. 224-628-0361

Early NIA Groups by Current District

The Alcoholic Foundation published United States Directories every six months during the 1940s. The 1941-1951 Directories listed information provided relating to the number of members in each group, the group contribution amounts, a secretary or other contact name, and a postal address (more often than telephone numbers). An AA group's listing was usually published a few months after the start of its meetings.

Beginning with the 1942 Directory, the Chicago chapter of groups listed an estimated 450 members and was the only recorded site of AA meetings in Illinois. The Sterling Group and the Rockford chapter, the first meetings in the northern section of Illinois, were both included in the Directory published in June 1943. The following table is derived from the Listing of AA Groups with the Alcoholic Foundation for the period 1943-1951. It contains both the earliest groups formed in what became identified as Northern Illinois (Area 20) in 1952 and those groups that, when formed, originally associated with Chicago (Area 19), but later were incorporated into Northern Illinois.

<u>Current District</u>	<u>Formed by</u>	<u>City/Town</u>	<u>Group</u>
10	1950*	Round Lake	
11	1950*	Cary	
	1946*	Crystal Lake	
	1948*	Burton's Bridge	
	1948*	Woodstock	
	1949*	McHenry	
12	1951*	No. Chicago	Great Lakes Tues Night Grp
	1946*	Waukegan	Monday Night
	1951*		Monday Night
	1951*		Wednesday Night
	1951*		Friday Night
	1951*		Saturday Night
21	**	Palatine	Palatine Groups
22	1946*	Elgin	Group #1
	1950*		Fox Valley Alano Club
28	1948*	Barrington	
40	1947*	Glen Ellyn	Glen Ellyn West Group
	**	Warrenville	Warrenville Group
	1955**	Wheaton	DuPage Beginners Grp
	**	Wheaton	Wheaton South Group
	**	Wheaton	Wheaton #2 Group
	**	Addison	Hillside Group
	1959**	Lombard	Lombard Friday Group

41	1944*	Villa Park	Brandywine Group Villa Park Beginners Group
	**		
42	1952**	Hinsdale	
	1959**	Naperville	Naperville Group
51	1948*	Joliet	Steel City Group
	1949*	Kankakee	Triple K Group
61	1948*	Batavia	Batavia Group
	1950*		Depot Group
	1947	St. Charles	Firehouse Group
64	1946*	Aurora	Group #1
	1951*		Downtown Group
	1951*		Tower Group
70	1951*	Loves Park	
	1943	Rockford	Central Group
	1950*		Blackhawk Group
	1950*		West Side Group
71	1949	DeKalb	
	**	Sandwich	Sandwich Group
72	5/19/48	Freeport	48 Club Group
73	1950*	Dixon	
	1948*	Mt. Morris/Oregon	Ridge Runners
	1943	Sterling	
80	1951*	Princeton	Princeton Group
	1948*	Ottawa	
90	1948*	Rock Island	
	1948	Moline	Alano Group
91	1949*	Galesburg	Knox County Group
	1951*	Monmouth	Red Barn Group

The year of the formation of these groups (*) is based on the first year it appeared in the United States Directory published by the Alcoholic Foundation. These groups (**) are referenced in the Members' Service Directory of Chicago and Suburban Intergroups dated September 1961. They were later incorporated into Northern Illinois.

More precise information concerning the date of formation and name of the groups listed is, for the most part, currently unavailable. If you have any information concerning these or other early groups in Northern Illinois (Area 20), please contact the Archivist so that it can be included.

Ray M.
NIA Archivist

2020 Events

Jan 11 Winter Committee Meeting & Service Orientation Workshop - Hosted by District 43 @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church - 40W605 IL Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

Jan 25 Hinckley Big Book - 23rd Annual Anniversary Pork Chop Dinner @ Hinckley First United Methodist Church 801 N Sycamore St, Hinckley, IL 60520

Feb 14-16 Conference of Delegates Past & Present - Novi, MI (Detroit)

Mar 20-22 NIA Spring Conference & Assembly - @ Chicago Marriott Schaumburg

Apr 4 Pre-General Service Conference Workshop @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church - 40W605 IL Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

Apr 18 Area 87 (Montreal) Big Book Conference @ TBD

Apr 19 69th General Service Conference @ Rye Brook, NY

May 16 Spring Committee Meeting @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church - 40W605 IL Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

Jun 13 Summer Assembly - Hosted by District 52, Kankakee, IL

Jul 2-5 2020 International Convention "Love and Tolerance is Our Code" @ Detroit, MI

Aug 8 Summer Committee Meeting @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church - 40W605 IL Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

Aug 14-16 47th Annual Illinois State Conference - Hosted by Area 19, Chicago

Sep 11-13 Bridging the Gap Weekend Workshop - Rock Island, IL

Sep 19 Summer Assembly - Hosted by District 22, Elgin, IL

Oct 17 Fall Committee Meeting - Hosted by District 40 @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church - 40W605 IL Route 38, Elburn, IL 60119

Oct 24 Big Book Conference - Hosted by District 10 & 12, Grayslake, IL

Nov 13-15 National Correction Conference @ Schaumburg Hyatt

Dec 12 Winter Assembly - TBD

For more information or directions to the events, please check the NIA website for details.

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Comments, suggestions, subscription requests, and experience, strength and hope, should be directed to the editor: Concepts@aa-nia.org

All A.A. members are encouraged to see Concepts on-line at: <http://www.aa-nia.org>

"CONCEPTS" is a confidential document. It should be used and distributed within the Fellowship.

DUE DATE FOR THE SPRING ISSUE OF THE

CONCEPTS NEWSLETTER

IS FEBRUARY 15TH, 2019



Humility for Today

by Bill W.

AA Grapevine, June 1961

There can be no absolute humility for us humans. At best, we can only glimpse the meaning and splendor of such a perfect ideal. As the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" says: "We are not saints. . .we claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." Only God Himself can manifest in the Absolute; we human beings must needs live and grow in the domain of the relative. We seek humility for today.

Therefore our practical question is this: "Just what do we mean by 'humility for today' and how do we know when we have found it?"

We scarcely need be reminded that excessive guilt or rebellion leads to spiritual poverty. But it was a very long time before we knew we could go even more broke on spiritual pride. When we early AAs got our first glimmer of how spiritually prideful we could be, we coined this expression: "Don't try to get too damned good by Thursday!" That old-time admonition may look like another of those handy alibis that can excuse us from trying for our best. Yet a closer view reveals just the contrary. This is our AA way of warning against pride-blindness, and the imaginary perfections that we do not possess. Now that we no longer patronize bars and bordellos; now that we bring home the pay checks; now that we are so very active in AA; and now that people congratulate us on these signs of progress--well, we naturally proceed to congratulate ourselves. Yet we may not be within hailing distance of humility. Meaning well, yet doing badly, how often have I said or thought, "I am right and you are wrong," "My plan is correct and yours is faulty," "Thank God your sins are not my sins," "You are hurting AA and I'm going to stop you cold," "I have God's guidance, so He is on my side." And so on, indefinitely.

The alarming thing about such pride-blindness is the ease with which it is justified. But we need not look far to see that this deceptive brand of self-justification is a universal destroyer of harmony and of love. It sets man against man, nation against nation. By it, every form of folly and violence can be made to look right, and even respectable. Of course it is not for us to condemn. We need only investigate ourselves.

How, then, can we do more and more about reducing our guilt, rebellion and pride?

When I inventory such defects, I like to draw a picture and tell myself a story. My picture is that of a Highway to Humility, and my story is an allegory. On one side of my Highway, I see a great bog. The Highway's edge borders a shallow marsh which finally shelves down into that muddy morass of guilt and rebellion in which I have so often floundered. Self-destruction lies in wait out there, and I know this. But the country on the other side of the road looks fine. I see inviting glades, and beyond them great mountains. The countless trails leading into this pleasant land look safe. It will be easy, I think, to find one's way back.

Together with numbers of friends, I decide to take a brief detour. We pick our path and happily plunge along it. Elatedly, somebody soon says, "Maybe we'll find gold on top of that mountain." Then to our amazement we do strike gold--not nuggets in the streams, but fully minted coins. The heads of these coins each declare, "This is pure gold--twenty-four carats." Surely, we think, this is the reward for our patient plodding back there in the everlasting brightness of the Highway.

Soon, though, we begin to notice the words on the tails of our coins, and we have strange forebodings: Some pieces carry rather attractive inscriptions. "I am Power," "I am Acclaim," "I am Wealth," "I am Righteousness," they say. But others seem very strange. For example: "I am The Master Race," "I am The Benefactor," "I am Good Causes," "I am God." This is very puzzling. Nevertheless we pocket them. But next come real shockers. They read: "I'm Pride," "I'm Anger," "I'm Aggression," "I'm Revenge," "I'm Disunity," "I'm Chaos." Then we turn up a single coin--just one--which declares: "I am the Devil himself." Some of us are horrified and we cry, "This is fool's gold, and this is a fool's paradise--let's clear out of here!"

But many would not return with us. They said, "Let's stay here and sort over those damned coins. We'll pick only the ones that carry the lucky inscriptions. For instance, those that say, 'Power' and 'Glory' and 'Righteousness.' You fellows are going to be sorry you didn't stick around." Not strangely, it was years before this part of our original company returned to the Highway.

They told us the story of those who had sworn never to return. They had said, "This money is real gold, and don't tell us any different. We're going to pile up all we can. Sure, we don't like those fool mottoes. But there's plenty of firewood here. We'll just melt all this stuff down into good solid gold bricks." Then our late arrivals added: "This is how the gold of Pride claimed our brothers. They were already quarreling over their bricks when we left. Some were hurt and a few were dying. They had begun to destroy each other."

This symbolic picture graphically tells me that I may attain "humility for today" only to the extent that I am able to avoid the bog of guilt and rebellion, and that fair but deceiving land which is strewn with the coin of Pride. This is how I can find and stay on the Road to Humility which lies in between. Therefore a constant inventory which can reveal when I am off the road is always in order.

Of course, our first attempts at such inventories are apt to prove very unrealistic. I used to be a champ at unrealistic self-appraisal. I wanted to look only at the part of my life which seemed good. Then I would greatly exaggerate whatever virtues I supposed I had attained. Next I would congratulate myself on the grand job I was doing. So my unconscious self-deception never failed to turn my few good assets into serious liabilities. This astonishing process was always a pleasant one. Naturally this generated a terrible hankering for still more "accomplishments," and still more approval. I was falling straight back into the pattern of my drinking days. Here were the same old goals--power, fame, and applause. Besides, I had the best alibi known--the spiritual alibi. The fact that I really did have a spiritual objective always made this utter nonsense seem perfectly right. I couldn't tell a good coin from a bad one; it was spiritual gold-bricking at its worst. I shall forever regret the damage I did to people around me. Indeed, I still tremble when I realize what I might have done to AA and to its future.

In those days I wasn't much bothered about the areas of life in which I was standing still. There was always the alibi: "After all," I said to myself, "I'm far too busy with much more important matters." That was my near perfect prescription for comfort and complacency.

But sometimes I would simply have to look at certain situations where, on the face of them, I was doing very badly. Right away, a rousing rebellion would set in. Then the search for excuses would become frantic. "These," I would exclaim, "are really a good man's faults." When that pet gadget finally broke apart, I would think, "Well, if those people would only treat me right, I wouldn't have to behave the way I do." Next in order was this: "God well knows that I do have awful compulsions. I just can't get over this one. So He will have to release me." At last came the time when I would shout, "This, I positively will not do; I won't even try." Of course my conflicts went right on mounting because I was simply loaded with excuses and refusals.

When these troubles had finally exhausted me enough, there was yet another escape. I would commence to wallow in the bog of guilt. Here pride and rebellion would give way to depression. Though the variations were many, my main theme always was, "How god-awful I am." Just as I had exaggerated my modest attainments by pride, so now I would exaggerate my defects through guilt. I would race about, confessing all (and a great deal more!) to whoever would listen. Believe it or not, I took that to be great humility on my part, and I counted this as my sole remaining asset and consolation!

During those bouts with guilt, there was never a decent regret for the harms I had done, nor was there any serious thought of making such restitution as I could. The idea of asking God's forgiveness, let alone any forgiveness of myself, never occurred to me. Of course my really big liability--spiritual pride and arrogance--was not examined at all. I had shut out the light by which I might have seen it.

Today I think I can trace a clear linkage between my guilt and my pride. Both of them were certainly attention-getters. In pride I could say, "Look at me, I am wonderful." In guilt I would moan, "I'm awful."

Therefore guilt is really the reverse side of the coin of pride. Guilt aims at self-destruction and Pride aims at the destruction of others.

This is why I see humility for today as that safe and secure stance midway between these violent emotional extremes. It is a quiet place where I can keep enough perspective, and enough balance to take my next small step up the clearly marked road that points toward eternal values.

Many of us have experienced far greater emotional gyrations than I. Others have experienced less. But all of us still have them at times. Yet I think we need not regret these conflicts. They seem to be a necessary part of growing up, emotionally and spiritually. They are the raw material out of which much of our progress has to be made.

Does anyone ask if AA is but a retching pit of pain and conflict? The answer is "Certainly not." In great measure, we AAs have really found peace. However haltingly, we have managed to attain an increasing humility whose dividends have been serenity and legitimate joy. We do not detour as much or as far as we once did.

At the outset of this meditation, it was thought that absolute ideals are far beyond our attainment, or even our comprehension; that we would be sadly lacking in humility if we really felt that we could achieve anything like absolute perfection in this brief span of earthly existence. Such a presumption would certainly be the acme of spiritual pride.

Reasoning thus, many people will have no truck at all with absolute spiritual values. Perfectionists, they say, are either full of conceit because they fancy they have reached some impossible goal, or else they are swamped in self-condemnation because they have not done so.

Yet I think that we should not hold this view. It is not the fault of great ideals that they are sometimes misused and so become shallow excuses for guilt, rebellion and pride. On the contrary, we cannot grow very much unless we constantly try to envision what the eternal spiritual values are. As Step Eleven of AA's recovery program says, we "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." This surely means that we ought to look toward God's Perfection as our guide rather than as a goal to be reached in any foreseeable time.

I'm sure, for instance, that I ought to seek out the finest definition of humility that is possible for me to envision. This definition doesn't have to be absolutely perfect--I am only asked to try. Suppose I choose one like this: "Perfect humility would be a state of complete freedom from myself, freedom from all the claims that my defects of character now lay so heavily upon me. Perfect humility would be a full willingness, in all times and places, to find and do the will of God."

When I meditate upon such a vision, I need not be dismayed because I shall never attain it, nor need I swell with presumption that one of these days its virtues shall all be mine.

I only need to dwell on the vision itself, letting it grow and ever more fill my heart. This done, I can compare it with my last-taken personal inventory. Then I get a sane and healthy idea of where I actually stand on the Highway to Humility. I see that my journey toward God has scarce begun. As I thus get down to my right size and stature, my self-concern and importance become amusing. Then faith grows that I do have a place on this Highway; that I can advance upon it with deepening peace and confidence. Once more I know that God is good; that I need fear no evil. This is a great gift, this knowledge that I do have a destiny.

As I continue to contemplate God's Perfection, I discover still another joy. As a child, hearing my first symphony, I was lifted up into its indescribable harmony, though I knew little of how or whence it came. So today, when I listen for God's Music of the Spheres, I can now and again hear those divine chords by which I am told that the Great Composer loves me--and that I love Him.

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Hinckley Big Book Study Group

23rd Anniversary

Pork Chop Dinner

Saturday, January 25th, 2020

Hinckley First United Methodist Church

801 N Sycamore St, Hinckley, IL 60520

AA Speaker-Larry T.- Seal Beach Ca.

Fellowship - 4pm / Serving - 4:30 pm / Kickoff - 6:00
pm

This is a free event that is run entirely on donations!

Taping by AMOT

For information, or to volunteer, contact:

Scott 630 917 3757 or Kay 815 970 2704

