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What About  
Women <sup>A.D.</sup>  
Who Drink  
Too Much?

by  
Katherine Neuhaus Haffner

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

## MY DAUGHTER IS A SISTER

Here is a pamphlet about a vocation to religious life which is NOT written for the express purpose of increasing the number of such vocations, yet it very well might do more for fostering such vocations than many other booklets written primarily for that purpose.

In MY DAUGHTER IS A SISTER, Katherine Neuhaus Haffner, author of the popular Catholic novel CLAY IN THE SAND, gives a very human account of her own daughter becoming a Sister. She gives her own and her husband's reactions and feelings from the day her daughter burst into the house after school and said, "Mother, I want to go now! People say 'wait,' but nobody tells me what I am to wait for!"

The author recounts well the varying reactions of many friends to this news about her daughter entering religious life. These reactions spanned the entire gamut — from the sublime to the ridiculous — and because they were lived through, mulled over, and reflected upon by the author, the end result is a valuable commentary on the attitude of modern Catholics towards religious vocations.

But there is much more. There are accounts of the life that is led by candidates for the Sisterhood, accounts given by way of excerpts from her daughter's very frank letters. Perhaps most striking is the analysis of what goes on in the mind of a mother when for the first time she sees her daughter in a Sister's garb.

Whether you have or haven't a religious vocation, whether you are or are not the parent of a child who has thus been blessed, YOU can profit much from this pamphlet. In addition, it's very entertaining reading.

— 64 pp., 20¢.

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**WHAT ABOUT WOMEN  
WHO DRINK TOO MUCH?**



WHAT ABOUT  
*women*  
WHO *drink*  
*too much?*

*Katherine Neuhaus Haffner*

FRANCISCAN PRINTERY  
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1956

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## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	7
Chapter One	
Out of Darkness .....	9
Chapter Two	
Who — Me? .....	18
Chapter Three	
Younger Groups .....	26
Chapter Four	
A Catholic Looks at Alcoholics Anonymous ..	38
Chapter Five	
To the Family of the Woman Alcoholic .....	47
Acknowledgments .....	60



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## INTRODUCTION

*Why do some women drink too much?*

*Do they like to drink? Do they really enjoy the taste of liquor?*

*Do they like the effect alcohol produces?*

*Do they drink to become socially acceptable? to make themselves as "good" as other people? or as witty? or as uninhibited?*

*Do they drink because their lot in life is too hard? because they are frustrated? feel inadequate to cope with life? because they "can't take it"?*

*Do they drink because their husbands do not understand them?*

*Do they drink to escape responsibilities?*



*Do they drink simply because they do not have the will power to stop?*

*Do they drink because they are lonely? afraid? neurotics? sick personalities?*

*Or do they drink out of pure meanness and cussedness and simply because they want to?*

\* \* \*

*In this pamphlet we shall endeavor to find answers for these and other questions, and show how many women alcoholics have solved their drinking problems and have been brought back to a rational pattern of living.*



# I

## OUT OF DARKNESS

On March 31, 1956, Dr. R. E. McGill, Administrator of the Huey P. Long Charity Hospital, Pineville, Louisiana, told the National Committee on Alcoholism in New York City that 70 million Americans drink alcoholic beverages, "mostly social drinkers," and that one out of every 16 of these social drinkers will turn into an alcoholic within the next 10 or 15 years.

Dr. McGill said there are more than four million alcoholics in the United States (in January the Yale University Center of Alcohol Studies reported 4,589,000 known alcoholics in the United States), including 600,000 women.

The rate of reported alcoholism (hospital and court records) among women has risen alarmingly in the last 15 years. Why? Is it because all forms of alcoholic beverages are easier to obtain? Is it because social drinking in women is encouraged and no longer frowned upon as it was a few years ago? Because cocktail parties are becoming increasingly more popular and the cocktail before dinner an accepted custom? Or is it because in this age of tension more women now than formerly have a limited capacity for enduring stress?

The United States Public Health Service has declared that alcoholism is the nation's fourth major health problem, ranking immediately below heart disease, cancer, and tuberculosis. If all the illnesses and deaths indirectly caused by alcohol could be definitely tallied, no doubt alcoholism would be moved still higher on the listing.

In this country the chronic alcoholics, or those who drink from compulsion once they have taken the first drink, those whose only hope of "cure" is total abstinence, have brought about a social problem which should be of interest to everyone.

It is estimated that 15 percent of our problem drinkers, of those with uncontrolled drinking habits, are women.

It is not our purpose to cite the evils of intemperance; we all know the degradation, the harm to body and soul, the divorces, neglected children, broken homes, confinements to mental institutions, the slavish addiction to sedatives which often accompanies the prolonged use of alcohol, the sleeping pill menace which frequently leads to accidental deaths or suicides. No one needs to be told that a picture of a drunken mother is not pretty.

If 15 percent of our problem drinkers are women, then a condition exists today which did not exist a few decades ago. How did this come about? Why is the number of women victims of alcohol increasing at such an alarming rate?

We know that alcoholism is a symptom of underlying personality defects, and we know that prevention starts with understanding. Through a study we have been making of women alcoholics, of the things former problem drinkers have told us, we have been able to draw some conclusions. The women we talked with have been rehabilitated through Alcoholics Anonymous, an informal society of ex-problem drinkers who aim to help other problem drinkers recover their health. Alcohol had damaged them physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In overcoming their weakness, in learning that each day they must serve Him in humility, they came closer to God.

The women of whom we speak acknowledge that others have conquered alcohol by other means, some self-devised, others through the help of understanding clergymen, doctors, and friends; but, for them, AA was their last hope, all other methods having failed. To them, AA

is a way of life. They feel that the outstanding success of AA (now numbering above 150,000 members while starting in 1935 with two) can be attributed to the fact that no one understands an alcoholic as does another alcoholic; thus they have an insight into the new member's drinking problem, can "build a transmission line into him," and give him the beginning of hope. The only qualification for membership is a sincere desire to stop drinking. The sufferer must want help.

The members of Alcoholics Anonymous employ group therapy, and their approach to the treatment of alcoholism is based upon their own experiences as former drinkers, coupled with what they have been able to learn from medicine and psychiatry, and upon moral principles common to all men who believe in God. They have wrought personality changes in persons that have enabled them to meet the problems of each day and to adjust themselves to each situation as it arises, the while learning to control alcohol instead of allowing alcohol to control them.

We learned some beautiful lessons in humility from the meetings of a group which we attended, lessons that alcoholic and non-alcoholic alike could profit by in solving the many complicated problems with which we are surrounded in this age of rash, intense living. These are people devoted to a serious purpose, but they laugh and have fun and are happy.

The address of the central group of AA is: The Alcoholic Foundation, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex,

New York 17, New York. In other cities and towns, the addresses are listed in telephone directories and the classified pages of the daily newspapers. The Foundation sends out a great deal of interesting literature covering all phases of this subject. They answer confidential inquiries promptly.

Women who were at the meetings we attended gave unlimited individual time later to interviews. They are so happy with the changes brought about within themselves that they were eager to tell their stories in the hope of helping others. Each said that before AA showed her otherwise, she sustained the belief that no one's problem was as difficult as hers, or quite like hers, that she was alone in her misery.

**A** number of these women were reared in homes where liquor was never permitted, others where it was always available. None had parents who habitually drank to excess. (A taste for liquor is not inherited, anyway, although some authorities agree that both heredity and environment can be responsible for deviant personality traits which might predispose to addiction when the individual is unable to reconcile himself to his environment.)

The women alcoholics agreed that liquor is now easy to obtain, yet even though it were not, they would have gone to any extremes to secure it once they became addicted to its use. Some of them began drinking as teenagers, just for the excitement and because all the other young people were doing it; others never drank until they were in their forties when either marriage or health prob-

lems or money worries became apparently insurmountable. A number liked the taste of alcohol; many never did. Some had a desire for alcohol when they were young; others went through Prohibition and the speakeasy era of the "Twenties" with no drinking problems, only to become addicts in later life. Some started as social drinkers, some were periodic drinkers; they all progressed to drinking alone. They have known frightful nightmares, blackouts (Where have I been? How did I get home?) — desolation.

Ill health often played a part. Some drank because of ill health; then, of course, drink lessened their desire for nutritious food, which fact further undermined their health; this carried them on a merry-go-round with no beginning or no end.

All of these women were filled with self-pity, feelings of inferiority and frustration whether they had much money or little. One woman — with every material comfort: a Cadillac, furs, jewels, checking account of her own, charge accounts at the best stores, maids to care for her children — was obsessed with her lack of education and of her mother's drab life. She felt she must grasp all she could from life — and as fast as she could.

Most of those we talked with were women with time on their hands who failed to employ this time to constructive ends. A considerable number of them were lonely and had husbands who traveled a great deal in connection with their work. A few moved often and were never able to put roots down in any one place.



None of them had more than three children; the majority had none (sometimes through no fault of their own) or only one child or two children.

These women's attempts to decrease self-consciousness by acquiring more "things" and by using drink as a crutch to hold up deficient personalities only led to disaster. They all agreed that adverse circumstances (the menopause in a few instances), as well as bad companions (which sometimes came with material success), precipitated their addiction; but the underlying cause was always within themselves, their faulty thinking, and their inability to make a searching moral inventory which results in rooting out self-pity, to be able to accept their own limitations and pray with meaning, "Thy will be done." These attempts to dull consciousness result in many other women of our precarious times going in for excessive entertainments, mad addiction to spectator sports, gambling, and the interminable seeking after luxuries which are now deemed necessities.

These women victims of alcohol thought liquor a stimulant when in reality it is a depressant; its narcotic action upon their consciousness during their drinking periods made them unaware of their difficulties so they could escape from reality; it did not solve their problems but made them forget them for the time being. Then the alcohol created new and greater problems.

Some of the women interviewed were Protestants, some Catholics. However, the one outstanding feature they had in common was a great fear of God, although they

seemed to have forgotten, or perhaps never grasped, the lesson of His infinite love. While it is true that some of them escaped suicide through their fear of hell, their religion was all on the negative side instead of the active, positive force it later became when they learned how to pray. They marked God's justice, yet forgot that He tempers justice with mercy. They were women filled with a colossal pride — "The mostest of the bestest."

When they learned to pray with humility, to place their lives in God's hands, to accept responsibility for their own faults instead of blaming others for them as they had formerly done, they advanced in grace. They had the common experience wherein Alcoholics Anonymous helped them to put the religion of their choice into practical use in their own lives. They experienced personality changes that were astounding. They are now untiring in their efforts to help other alcoholics; they maintain their sobriety by doing so; they are helping themselves while helping others. They see the folly of their former efforts to build themselves up by tearing others down. They are active church members and do much welfare work. They are most tolerant of all human failings. They have learned compassion.

These women want us to tell others that they feel that women especially should exercise great care about letting any tendencies toward alcohol engulf them, for they feel that women have a more difficult time "coming back" than men do once liquor becomes their master. They think the reason for this is that while society is inclined

to be somewhat tolerant of the male drunk, women are put on a pedestal and so feel the disgrace of drunkenness more keenly; as a result they put off searching for outside help or admitting their weakness until they become public charges because of blackouts, smashed cars, fires started from cigarettes while in a stupor, etc. Women drink more furtively than men, more in secret. They think they are hiding their habit and are afraid to acknowledge it to anyone, but chances are people know about it anyway, so they should seek help early.

AA means different things to different women. One said their serenity prayer had meant her salvation: "God grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, courage to change things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." All of them concur in that the part of the program which teaches them to live "one day at a time" is invaluable. They find that anyone can fight the battles of just one day. They now accept each new day as a precious gift from God, an opportunity for serving others and, in so doing, serving Him. "Give us this day our daily bread" has taken on a new meaning.

Along about 40 B.C., Horace, the Roman poet, wrote: "Dare to be wise; begin! He who postpones the hour of living rightly is like the rustic who waits for the river to run out before he crosses. Still glides the river — and will ever glide."



## 2

### WHO — ME?

“Who? — me? — me an alcoholic?!” you exclaim.

“How dare you! I’m just a social drinker. I do have fun and get pretty high at parties. But I am young, and if you don’t have any fun when you’re young . . .

“Oh, there were a couple of other times, but they don’t count. Once when we were having a party here

at the house and everyone was so late, I got tired waiting for them and I was all ready and everything, so I went into the kitchen and had a quick one before they got here. There was only one other time, and that was when we were invited to the Andersons' to a cocktail party — you know how snooty they are — and I wasn't sure my dress was just right so I made me a highball — no — two — one before I got dressed and another just before we started for their house — but what's that — two drinks — a couple of drinks never hurt anybody. And you know something? They did the trick too. By the time we got to the Andersons' I felt as though I was as good as everyone else there — them and their fancy houses — and I didn't care what I had on.

“That's the only time I drink — at parties. And Jim's always there to see me home. Well, on weekends, too; but Jim works hard, and we like to relax and enjoy ourselves over the weekends. What's the harm in that? With your own husband, I mean? Oh, once I did have to fix me a drink before I could get going on Monday morning — before I could get the boys off to school — but that was because there was a holiday on Friday and the weekend lasted three days. But not ordinarily. Me, an alcoholic? You're out of your mind! Everybody drinks!”

Yes, but SOME PEOPLE CAN DRINK AND SOME PEOPLE CAN'T DRINK.

Let me tell you a story. Let me tell you about Irene.

Irene was 52 years of age when she told us her story,

a pert woman with a quick smile and that ready Irish wit that captivates everyone immediately. This alcoholic has a husband, cooperative with her AA work, and two married sons. She had kept her sobriety for three years before this interview. Her outlook on life reflects the peace of mind and soul which are hers since AA has been able to root out the self-pity and muddled thinking which formerly obsessed her.

Irene said, "No one understands or can talk to an alcoholic as can another alcoholic. That is why Alcoholics Anonymous are successful many times where others have failed."

Irene's apprenticeship in drinking began when she was a girl. Her parents always had liquor in the house; she drank at Christmas and at parties. She had a desire for alcohol from the first. Then she was never satisfied but drank before the parties.

She married and had two sons. She passed through the menopause (32), and her drinking was more extensive at that time; she began getting bottles and drinking alone, meanwhile still being able to do her own housework. Her drinking through the years was periodic. She was always able to abstain during Lent.

Her sons, while still in high school, became alarmed and begged her to stop drinking. Both of her sons were in the war; one, a pilot; the other, a paratrooper. Her pride in them mingled with pity for herself.

One of the boys, who had done some studying on the subject, said to her, "Mother, you're an alcoholic."

She disliked having this tag applied to herself, yet was very close to this son, and would pay more attention to him than to others. However, she continued as before.

By this time she was beginning to have blackouts — could not remember where she had been or what she had done. This caused her an awful fear, and she drank oftener to drown the fear.

The war was over; the boys returned safe. She drank to rejoice. She used anything now for an excuse to drink; she drank when everything was going badly, or when everything was going well. She went to any extremes to get liquor.

The climax (bottom, as AA's call it) came one day some three years before she told me her story. She was living in an apartment house in a big city. The apartment caught fire from her cigarette while she was in a stupor. The sofa on which she was lying burned completely, yet the crucifix hanging above it remained intact through the flames. She came to in a hospital with no recollection of what had happened.

Her home was broken up by this time, her relationship with her husband seemed impaired beyond hope of reclamation. She moved to another city to live with a married son. He wished her to enter a sanitarium, but was unsuccessful in his attempts to find a hospital in the vicinity that would accept her. "No alcoholics." "Sorry, no alcoholics."

Irene could not drink while staying with this son. She was miserable — home gone — pride hurt — talked to a

priest — remained in her room all the time — would see no one. She felt injured, completely frustrated, hopeless. A man was consulted, an old family friend who formerly drank to excess but was known to have quit, a member of AA.

Irene was extremely nervous and did not get much out of her first meeting; she attended six or eight meetings before the program meant anything to her. Then she was finally able to take a searching self-inventory; this was the real beginning of her grasp of the program.

In October she was still living with her son. It was nearly Christmas before she or her husband felt that a home together could be attempted again with any hope of success.

She rented an apartment and made ready for Christmas. Her landlady gave her a bottle of wine for a Christmas present. She did not throw it out. She did not drink it. She kept it in the refrigerator and looked at it occasionally. She finally gave it away.

This was three years ago. Irene, now a clear-eyed, happy woman, has been able to help reclaim other alcoholics. She says AA assisted her in putting her own faith to a practical use in her own life. Moreover, it has made her more tolerant of all human failings. She gives thanks to God every day that she found AA before it was too late.

Whenever she sees or hears of another in the throes of drunkenness — the anguish — the despondency — she does what she can to help, thinking all the while, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."



**Well, who is an alcoholic? And how much is too much?**

How do you know you are not an alcoholic? There are alcoholics who, in the eyes of others, are persons who have nothing to live for; there are alcoholics who have everything to live for. Some persons drink who like the taste of liquor, others to whom the taste and smell of liquor is repugnant. **The only person who can be absolutely certain he will never become an alcoholic is the person who has never taken nor will ever take a drink of an alcoholic beverage.**

The Johns Hopkins University Hospital has compiled a list of 35 guide questions to help in deciding whether a patient is an alcoholic or not. Alcoholics Anonymous add five more. For the benefit of women who might suspicion that they are alcoholics, who should never take the first drink since that drink sets up a chain of physical and mental reactions which render them unable to stop at one or two drinks, render them incapable of "drinking like other people," we list here some of the 40 questions which we think particularly applicable to women:

*Do you require a drink the next morning?*

*Do you prefer to drink alone?*

*Is drink harming your family in any way?  
Your reputation?*

*Making you careless of your family's welfare?  
Making your home life unhappy?*

*Do you crave a drink at a definite time daily?*

*Has drinking made you irritable?*

*Have you thought less of your husband since drinking?*

*Has drinking changed your personality?*

*Does drinking cause you bodily complaints?*

*Does drinking make you restless?*

*Has drinking made you more impulsive?*

*Have you less self-control since drinking?*

*Has your initiative or ambition decreased since drinking?*

*Do you drink to obtain social ease? (In shy, timid, self-conscious individuals.)*

*Do you drink to relieve a marked feeling of inadequacy?*

*Has drinking made you more sensitive?*

*Are you harder to get along with since drinking?*

*Is drink affecting your peace of mind?*

*Have you ever felt "remorse" after drinking?*

Alcoholics Anonymous say that if you have answered YES to any ONE of these questions, there is a definite warning that you MAY be an alcoholic.

If you have answered YES to any TWO of the questions, the chances are that you are an alcoholic.

If you have answered YES to THREE or more of the test questions, there is not much doubt about it.

No one in Alcoholics Anonymous attempts to tell another person whether or not he or she is an alcoholic. This the person must decide by and for himself, and the test questions are to help the person decide whether or not he has drifted from "social drinking" into pathological drinking. The person must answer the question for himself or herself truthfully because it is possible — although quite unlikely — that you may fool someone else. And there is little help in AA — or anywhere else — for the person who lies to himself.

There is no "cure" for an alcoholic — only total abstinence — and Alcoholics Anonymous can show the alcoholic how to abstain and be contented in doing so.

And alcohol never solved any problems. Two women have equally shiftless husbands. One wife drinks to "solve" her problems. The other wife encourages her husband to be more ambitious; if this fails, she either goes out to work herself or accepts him as he is and makes the best of it. The two women had identical problems, the same sort of husbands; it was the women who were different.

Get in touch with AA if you have a drinking problem. It costs nothing and your anonymity is respected. What can you lose? You may save your life!



### 3

## YOUNGER GROUPS

**T**here is an active movement in Alcoholics Anonymous now that did not exist a few years ago. Younger persons are becoming active in AA. This is a hopeful sign and points up that AA is growing in the right direction. These young people have been intelligent enough to see

where their lives were heading and have embraced the program before they "hit bottom" with the resultant broken families, lost health, jails, and possible eventual commitment to insane asylums. These young people are spared "that last ten or fifteen years of literal hell" that most of the older AA's have gone through.

How is this accomplished when Step One requires an alcoholic to admit that his or her life has become unmanageable? Simply by the older alcoholics "raising the bottom" as they call it, telling the younger person their own drinking histories and showing them that long before they realized it, their drinking was out of control. The young person is able to profit by the older one's experience. It does not take an older alcoholic long to recognize the potential young alcoholic.

**Alcoholics Anonymous** states: "To be gravely affected, one does not necessarily have to drink a long time nor take the quantities some of us have. This is particularly true of women. Potential female alcoholics often turn into the real thing and are gone beyond recall in a few years."

The smart ones, instead of being insulted by being called alcoholics, are turning to AA and the help it can give before they have messed up their lives perhaps beyond reclamation.

**H**ow much suffering it would have saved Phyllis A. and her family had she learned about and joined Alcoholics Anonymous years before. She would have been spared much had she had a way of recognizing the causes of her

troubles in her twenties as she came to realize them in her forties.

This is what Phyllis told us, "It was such a blessed relief to discover I was an alcoholic; I thought I was insane."

Vivacious is the word for Phyllis. This pretty, blonde, slender woman talks a mile a minute, and has something to say with every word. She admitted to 47 years gladly, while four years before she looked without hope toward the next five years.

She has a cooperative husband, three children, every material comfort. Phyllis is a practical Catholic. She had, at the time of this interview, been an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous for four years without setbacks.

Phyllis' childhood was spent in near-poverty with a mother and stepfather who pulled separate ways. She was an outsider in her own home, could not bring her friends there, and felt something was wrong with her that her stepfather did not like her. She went to work at 14.

At 17, she began drinking beer with other young people in speakeasies in the big city where she lived. She always got sick afterwards but felt superior while drinking. She had 23 jobs before she was married. She was crazy for clothes, ever wanting to build herself up, to be admired. The first Easter after she started to work she bought five hats.

She married at 24 a man ambitious to succeed in the business world, settled down, had two children, and did not drink. Then they moved, and she met drinking people through her husband's business. They joined a swank

country club and attended their first wild party there. She drank soft drinks. When her husband urged her to drink something stronger, she told him that she did not care to, that drinking did her no good, that she had had all the drinking she cared for as a teen-ager. She was the only sober one at the party; and, as she watched the revolting behavior of the others, she thought, "If these are our best people . . ." Yet she felt inferior because of her lack of education, and was afraid to meet people.

She went to another party. When the antics of the other women became more disgusting than the time before, Phyllis took a cab home alone. Her husband was furious and called her a wet blanket. He said the least she could do was try to be congenial with his friends.

So at the next party she drank with the others and had a wonderful time.

One of the men said, "Say, when you get a couple of drinks in you, you're some fun."

Her husband did not like this. Everyone gave her a big rush — she always got on well socially while drinking.

They traveled about much, moved 31 times in their married life.

Someone invariably would say, "Where did you go to college?"

Her lack of education and early social advantages became an obsession.

When her husband was out of town, she was given to self-pity although she had a new Cadillac of her own, a maid, her own checking account, could come and go

as she pleased. Her children were no worry, for she felt she had competent help.

Phyllis played bridge till 3 a.m. with women, shopped for new clothes, buying her summer things when the cruise selections came out in January. She had furs and she had jewels.

She also always had her mother's drab life before her, and felt she must get — get — get. There followed blackouts. Smashed cars. "How did I get home?" Guilt. Fright. Hospitals. Remorse. Resolutions. She lied to her doctor who told her to take two or three drinks before dinner to quiet her nerves. She prayed, "My women companions are to blame for my drinking. Do something about them."

Then she was pregnant. She did no drinking while awaiting the baby. She was physically ill the whole time. She wanted the baby, but was angry because her conscience would not let her drink while carrying it. It took six days for delivery of the baby. The sedation reacted unfavorably because she was an alcoholic. Had the doctor known this, he would not have been helpless.

She was happy with the baby. Then when it was two months old, Phyllis' husband said it was time they celebrated, that they had been tied down so many months now. They did just that — celebrated for two more years. Now she was drinking in the mornings.

They left one big city for another. Phyllis always thought new friends and a new environment would help her to stop drinking.



Her physical health was bad. At 43 she found herself looking bleakly toward the next five years when she would quite likely be a grandmother — and life would be over.

Her confused thinking always drove her to drinking. She was jealous of her husband's affection for their children. She felt like a parasite with an indulgent husband and servants to do everything for her. She lived for drink now; drank all night while her husband was out of town, yet had a terrible fear of losing her faith; it took two or three drinks to get her to church on Sundays. She had always been able to abstain from liquor during Lent. This Lent she decided to give up candy — which she never touched anyway.

She was on the way to the stove to open the gas jets once, when the fear of hell stopped her. She had no one to talk to; she had consulted four priests and five doctors. She always lied to the doctors.

One night her daughter, who was 16, came downstairs and found her drunk and had to get her father to help her mother to bed. Strangely enough, Phyllis had been able to keep her plight from her daughter until this time — at least she thought so — feigning a more dignified sickness when she had hangovers. Now she was filled with an overwhelming remorse.

For some time Phyllis had been having the most frightening kind of nightmares such as giant spiders weaving her tighter and tighter into a web. She had always had a great respect for Catholic Sisters, their holiness, the sacrifices they made in comparison with her own way of

life. She dreamed of a Nun standing over her bed pointing an accusing finger at her and saying, "I told you so." Once she awoke with a scream and found herself in a cold sweat after she had in a dream seen herself in her own casket in her favorite and most beautiful dress. She had a lily in her hand. Then someone reached into the coffin, took the lily from her hand and replaced it with a bottle of gin. She drank herself into a state of oblivion. Then it happened that the amount of liquor she was accustomed to had no effect — it did not "do anything" for her any more.

Not long after her daughter had had to put her to bed, her husband told her that he had invited his boss for the weekend. This was to be a very important weekend for him in a business way. He cautioned Phyllis to be careful. She promised.

She said, "Tonight is going to be different."

But that night was not different. It never was. She held out until noon on the day the guest was to arrive. Her nerves were ragged so she had a cocktail, promising herself that that would be the only one. She had not learned that it was not possible for her to stop at one, that she could not take the first drink.

Years before when she and her husband had made one of their frequent moves to a different city and fell in with an older crowd — more conservative drinkers than she was accustomed to — she met an older woman who suggested to Phyllis that she might be an alcoholic, that perhaps she should not drink at all. This made Phyllis

furious that anyone should even suggest that she was an alcoholic.

She told her new friend, "That's just nonsense. I can take liquor or leave it."

This woman's admonition did have the effect, however, of slowing Phyllis down for a time, and her husband congratulated her and told her he was so happy that she had finally "learned to drink like a lady."

So on this particular occasion when her husband's employer was invited for a dinner in the evening, she had been drinking since noon. She drank all evening with the men, then all night after the men had retired.

The next evening her husband told her to get into the car. Without speaking he drove out into the country and parked the car.

"This is the end," he told her. "I've had it. This is it. Either you stop drinking, or I will give you a divorce and a settlement."

Her first thought was of how much money he would give her. Would she have enough to satisfy her drinking needs? She was married to the bottle; it was her lover, her master, her life. She says THIS WAS HER LOW — when she wondered about nothing except would she have enough money to drink on.

She did not answer her husband. She thought back to her wedding day, to her childhood in a broken home, to her children. She cried. But the familiar weapon missed its mark.

"Crocodile tears," her husband said. "It is too late

to cry. Either you do something about your drinking or I will!"

Her husband said he would require an answer on his return to town in five days. She begged him not to leave, but he said he must. She asked him to take her with him. He said that was impossible, that his time would be so much taken up with business conferences that he would not have any time left for her. She knew this sounded reasonable, but she felt the real reason he would not allow her to accompany him was that he felt he could not trust her, felt that he would be ashamed of her.

So he left town, alone, to be gone for five days, exacting a promise from Phyllis beforehand that she would have her decision about a divorce ready upon his return. During the time he was gone she had more of the terrifying nightmares.

When her husband returned and brought up the subject of her drinking, she said, "I refuse to talk about it," yet knew it was the end.

He left again the following morning. She drove him to the station. This was 9 a.m. She pulled up in front of her house. She was crying and afraid to go in. She knew that if she did she would take a drink.

She went to church, the only place she knew of where she would not drink. She knelt before a statue of the Blessed Virgin for a long time. Then she remembered a Nun teacher having said years before, "If God does not help you, ask his Holy Mother; Jesus will refuse Mary nothing."

She prayed aloud, "Mary, O Mary, do something for me today. It's got to be today or I am lost forever. This is my fault, all my fault, yet I am helpless by myself."

She went home crying. She reached for the telephone book. She would call someone, anyone; she could not be alone that day. Her glance was arrested by two large A's on the first page. She did not know what AA stood for nor whom she was calling. A man's voice said, "Don't leave your phone. This is Alcoholics Anonymous . . . Someone will be there in a few minutes."

She sat by the phone repeating, "Thank you, Mary; thank you, Mary."

In a very short while, a car pulled up. There was an attractive girl in her early twenties in the driver's seat. Phyllis thought they must have sent the wrong person — how could anyone so fresh and pretty know anything about problems such as Phyllis had — however, this girl's story coincided with her own. The girl left a copy of the book **Alcoholics Anonymous**, and said she would take Phyllis to a meeting. Phyllis got something out of the book immediately; it showed her that she was not insane but an alcoholic, and taught her what an alcoholic is.

Her first meeting changed her entire outlook on life. A girl college graduate arose with a story that was a revelation to Phyllis who had not supposed that anyone with a good education could possibly have been an alcoholic. A man who had had a slip told his story of remorse. At this first meeting Phyllis realized that she was as good as anyone else — no better — but as good.

The compulsion to drink was still overwhelming at first, but at last she had something with which to fight it. She learned that after the physical craving to drink is gone, then the compulsion is purely mental, that the reason why an alcoholic cannot just stop the drinking habit is that he or she must substitute something for it, must replace the bad habit with a good habit. That is why the "dry drunk" does not last.

Now she found good in other persons where before she tore others down in an effort to build herself up. The divorce talk was forgotten at home. Her husband's faults and his frequent absence from home on business became bearable. Her appearance changed for the better to a degree where her pastor meeting her in the church foyer one day did not recognize her. Since then she has been able to give him a better insight into the psychosomatic illness which alcoholism is, and the problems concerning it, a subject most of us do not understand enough about.

Phyllis is neither a "wet blanket" nor a killjoy. Although she does not — dares not — drink, she attends parties with her husband where alcoholic beverages are served, and she serves them in her own home to guests who care for them.

It may have been "too late to cry" for Phyllis, but it was not too late for AA to do something about her. She has been doing a tremendous amount of Twelfth Step Work for years, putting herself out in any way to help other alcoholics — no inconvenience is too great. She gives and gives.

She has learned to live one day at a time. "Anyone can fight the battles of just one day. It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities — YESTERDAY and TOMORROW — that we break down."

"Give us this day our daily bread . . ."



## 4

### A CATHOLIC LOOKS AT ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**W**hat is Alcoholics Anonymous? AA is not, as is sometimes supposed, just another temperance movement, a new, fanatical reform crusade. It is a society, operating in groups, that is founded upon spiritual principles, and these principles closely parallel Catholic teaching, as we shall see presently.

This society is made up of ex-problem drinkers whose sole aim is to help other problem drinkers recover their



health and maintain their sobriety. It is a selfish program in that the ex-drinker is helping himself to remain dry at the same time he is assisting the new man or woman to do likewise; and, since what he is doing is fundamentally for himself, it keeps him away from self-righteous attitudes that often beset "reformers."

While members of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that alcoholism is a disease (and who can deny that an alcoholic is sick physically, emotionally, and spiritually), an illness in that it is an obsession of the mind coupled with an "allergy" of the body, this does not mean that they believe the uncontrolled drinker should be relieved of his individual responsibility in this matter.

They have no initiation fees, no dues, nothing to "sell," no gimmicks. While every nuance of opinion is found among them with regard to politics, prohibition, religion, they take no position, as a group, upon any controversial questions. There are no officers; this work rotates among the members. The only requirement for membership is a sincere desire to stop drinking.

At their meetings one comes in contact with doctors and plumbers, lawyers and carpenters, businessmen and housewives — all with one objective. When we consider that their membership numbers more than 150,000 recovered alcoholics (1955), while starting in 1935 with two, we must conclude that their methods are proving effective.

A Catholic member of AA should be a better Catholic as a result of his affiliation with this society, and vice versa.

**T**he Twelve Steps which members of Alcoholics Anonymous have taken as their program for recovery are spiritually sound and would do credit to anyone schooled in theology; yet, strangely enough, they were drawn up by men with relatively meager religious backgrounds. Let's take a look at these Twelve Steps which constitute a successful way of life for alcoholics:

1. **They admitted they were powerless over alcohol — that their lives had become unmanageable.** Catholics are taught their great need of God and their utter dependence upon Him, that they cannot do everything by themselves.
2. **They came to believe that a Power greater than themselves could restore them to sanity.** "I believe in God, the Father Almighty . . ."
3. **They made a decision to turn their wills and their lives over to the care of God as they understood Him.** ". . . Thy will be done, on earth . . ."
4. **They made a searching and fearless moral inventory of themselves.** Examination of conscience.
5. **They admitted to God, to themselves, and to another human being the exact nature of their wrongs.** Confession.
6. **They were entirely ready to have God remove all of these defects of character.** The disposition of the will toward allowing grace to flow into the soul.

7. They humbly asked Him to remove their shortcomings. Even as every humble Catholic.
8. They made a list of all persons they had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. Further examination of conscience and a readiness to restore all things to their rightful owners.
9. They made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. A Catholic must do likewise after he makes a good confession; he must make restitution when he has robbed another, be it material goods or his neighbor's good name, and is required to rectify this harm whenever possible.
10. They continued to take personal inventory, and when they were wrong, promptly admitted it. Catholics are urged to make a daily examination of conscience that they may progress toward spiritual perfection.
11. They sought through prayer and meditation to improve their conscious contact with God as they understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for them and the power to carry that out. "Thy will be my will — show me the way, O Lord . . ."
12. Having had a spiritual experience as a result of these steps, they tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all their affairs. None of that "Sunday morning Catholic" idea here, then "business as usual" the remainder of the week. Propagation of the faith. "Faith without works is dead."

None of the members claims perfect adherence to these principles. They are not saints. This prescribed course is a guide to progress, and the members claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Since we see such conformity of these Twelve Steps with Catholic teaching, one might well ask: "Why does a Catholic alcoholic need AA?"

For one thing, Catholics believe that faith is a gift; yet this gift is not meted out to each individual in the same proportions. A somnolent or arrested faith can become active through AA.

We also know that we have not all learned how to pray, nor do we all know when our prayers are answered. Sometimes victims of alcohol drift into this vice through social drinking that seems harmless (and is harmless for some), then find themselves enslaved by a phenomenon of craving to such a degree that they are too mentally confused to pray. Free will fails to function through long periods of disuse or abuse by alcohol. Alcoholics are not alone in that they pray to get out of trouble, storm heaven with prayers; then, as soon as the crisis passes, their prayers cease or, at best, lose fervor. Many another also gives lip service to God, yet does not try to search for God's will in relation to his own life. AA opens many eyes to this faulty practice. Pride is the enemy of alcoholics; it is likewise the enemy of many a Catholic.

Some Catholic alcoholics that we know of have joined Inquiry Classes (group instruction in the Catholic Religion)

after they went into AA. They have found that these instructions, which are given at regular intervals by priests in many parishes, even though they are meant primarily for non-Catholics, are very helpful in bringing out many things they have forgotten about their faith or whose significance they were too young to realize. The classes have been instrumental in aiding them to a more active and fervent participation in their faith.

Does a Catholic alcoholic need AA? In one diocese that we know of, the Bishop has appointed a priest to do nothing but study this problem and the work of Alcoholics Anonymous with a view toward aiding Catholic victims and giving their families some insight into this problem so that they are in a position to help and not hinder the sufferer's advancement toward recovery.

Numerous Catholic victims of alcohol are brought to AA through the influence of Sisters and priests who have seen the efficacy of the program in others with whom they have come in contact.

\* \* \*

AA groups are listed in the telephone directories and the classified pages of the daily newspapers in most communities. The address of the central group is: The Alcoholic Foundation, P. O. Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, New York.

AA has been able to bring Catholic alcoholics back to practical membership in the Church when other methods have often failed because alcoholics understand each other;

there is a natural kinship among these sufferers. They can make another see where he is wrong, why he is wrong, and help him on his way back to the loving arms of Jesus Christ — who also carried a cross.

One of the Alcoholics Anonymous publications contains the Peace Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, although the name of the author is not given:



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace!  
Where there is hatred — let me sow love,  
Where there is injury — pardon,  
Where there is doubt — faith,  
Where there is despair — hope,  
Where there is darkness — light,  
Where there is sadness — joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled — as to console,  
To be understood — as to understand,  
To be loved — as to love,

for

It is in giving — that we receive,  
It is in pardoning — that we are pardoned,  
It is in dying — that we are born to eternal life.

In the book **Alcoholics Anonymous**, the AA handbook, sometimes called the alcoholic's "bible," a recovered alcoholic tells how to banish resentment. We repeat it here because it works whether you are an alcoholic or anyone else who is holding something against someone:

"If you have a resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the persons or the thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free. Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don't really want it for them, and your prayers are only words and you don't mean it, go ahead and do it anyway. Do it every day for two weeks and you will find you have come to mean it and want it for them, and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love."





## 5

### TO THE FAMILY OF THE WOMAN ALCOHOLIC

There is a comparatively new movement in Alcoholics Anonymous called Al-Anon Family Groups with headquarters at P. O. Box 1475, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, New York.

The members of these groups are families and friends of alcoholics. Since there is a great deal, both before and

after the victim of alcohol joins AA, that relatives and friends can do to assist the alcoholic (incidentally, helping themselves at the same time), they band together in order to solve better their common problems. Any two or three relatives constitute a sufficient number to start a Family Group if there is not one already organized in the neighborhood.

The purposes of the Family Groups are "to welcome and give comfort to the families of alcoholics, to give understanding and encouragement to the alcoholic in the home, to grow spiritually through living by the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous."

The older members of the group have learned from painful experience — the hard way — what to do and what to avoid in dealing with an alcoholic in the family if there is to be a successful readjustment.

Most family meetings are conducted like AA meetings, with emphasis placed on spiritual growth without criticism of the alcoholic partners. Most groups take up one of the Twelve Steps at each meeting, members discussing the application of the step to themselves.

The members of these groups learn that some alcoholics are much sicker emotionally than others, and consequently not all alcoholics make progress at the same pace. They learn why nagging the alcoholic never does any good. They learn how to take a personal inventory of their own faults and make a sincere effort to correct them, thus actively contributing to the unfortunate victim's recovery. The family learns that "Easy does it" applies to them as well as their alcoholic daughter or wife. By

learning as much about alcoholism as they can and reading the AA handbook, they are more willing to cooperate with the alcoholic in her AA work and are more gracious about the AA member's closed meetings and Twelfth Step Work.

Almost everyone whose alcoholic history covers a considerable period of time has lost his or her friends and has no social life. Man is a social being. Sometimes when the person stops drinking, it is not wise to renew the old acquaintances, for many of these people drink to excess. It takes time to build a new life, to make new friends, and re-establish contact with the worthwhile old friends.

One of the reasons why Alcoholics Anonymous is successful is that it provides friendship and the society of others with a common problem, and it helps to bridge the gap between the breaking off of undesirable associations and the formation of the right kind of new ones. The family of the alcoholic often finds itself in the same situation as the victim in that it is almost friendless too. Having an alcoholic in the family, with the embarrassment, the excuses and broken social engagements, the unpleasantness which makes others uneasy and loathe to associate with either the alcoholic or his family, makes for loneliness — and loneliness is a terrible thing. So the Family Groups fill a pressing need here.

The Family Groups teach their members to have more tolerance and more patience in avoiding the petty daily irritations which follow as a result of perhaps years of strained nerves. They learn not to expect too much too

soon, that the alcoholic is not to be wrapped in cotton wool and coddled, neither can he or she be expected immediately to be the same person as before alcohol got in its insidious work. He or she will never be the same person — but can be a better person. The families learn to solve many personal problems resulting from distorted relationships for which drinking has been directly or indirectly responsible.

We are thinking of Louise M. (we call her Louise because that is not her name), and how much more pleasant her life would be if her husband could swallow his pride and enthusiastically become a member of a Family Group and learn all he could about her problem and her work. He would be happier and so would Louise. Hers is a case in point.

When we talked with Louise, she was in her early fifties — married, childless, a refined woman, impeccably groomed. Her home is tastefully furnished, beautifully kept. Although it would cause distress and embarrassment in her home should it be discovered that she had done so, she gave generously of her time to interviews, because she is eager to carry a message to other alcoholics and to those whose lives are closely associated with alcoholics.

Louise's drinking problem assumed serious proportions two years before she talked with us. She drank for one reason — escape. She attended church (Lutheran) regularly, but could not put what she believed to a useful end in solving her personal difficulties.

Louise was brought up in a very strict home. All

drinking was taboo there. Her father, the dominant figure in the home, was horrified when anyone made a public spectacle of himself. Louise thinks this early conditioning restrained her from any public drinking later, even when the compulsion was strongest.

Louise married at 18, went through the "Roaring Twenties" with bathtub gin and home brew causing her no concern at all. It was she who saw the others safely home after parties. Although she drank socially during the Prohibition era, she and her husband having met people who had an unlimited supply of creme de menthe, gin, whisky, beer, etc. under a trap door at their summer cottage, she had no drinking problem.

She had wanted children, so when she suffered a miscarriage at 22 which left her incapable of having children of her own, this was a real blow. She wished to adopt a child, but her husband could not agree to this. He was generous, however, in paying for expensive treatment for her so that they might have a child of their own. When these efforts failed, he said they would wait until they had been married ten years. Then he said they were too old to adopt children.

Louise was ever lonely, her husband traveling a good deal in connection with his work. She had nothing constructive to do to pass her time.

When the depression wiped out their savings, she could not face up to the fact that they were the "poor relations," even though she realized it was through no fault of their own. Then she had much sickness, including

three years in a wheelchair. She felt she had no one in whom to confide, least of all her husband with whom she was experiencing some marriage problems which he refused to admit were problems. She drank some then.

Louise had an introverted personality, was self-centered, self-pitying, sensitive, a neurotic (which she thinks all alcoholics are), refused to face reality; she could not accept the fact that she could not have as splendid a house and as much money as she felt her family position entitled her to.

She gradually drank more and more, always in private, while her husband was out of town. When she told him of the seriousness of her problem, he dismissed it lightly, saying that a drink or two was good to quiet her nerves. He drank moderately himself. He refused to believe, or at least to admit, that she drank the quantities she said she did. He "solved" her drinking problem the same way he solved their marriage difficulties — by rejecting the idea that she had a problem.

In her desolation she considered suicide, yet fear of hell held her back. She had heard of Alcoholics Anonymous and called them in desperation. Even at this stage, pride was hard to conquer; it caused her abject misery to leave her beautifully appointed home to attend meetings in a hall downtown amid surroundings which were not so beautifully appointed.

Her husband is prejudiced against AA; will not attend a meeting with her; allows no AA literature about the house for fear someone will see it; will not read the literature himself. He does not refuse to allow her to at-

tend meetings, yet makes it so inconvenient for her to do so that she must put forth great effort to be active in the AA Twelve Step Program, which she knows she must do to maintain her sobriety.

Louise says her negative thinking got her into all her trouble. One AA member put it this way: "My stinking thinking got me into this stinking drinking."

She says that, for her, the AA program has helped her put the religion and ideals she always had into practical use in her own life. She says AA is a way of life. She still has many problems and feels that she could not keep her sobriety without the serenity AA gives her. AA means different things to different persons, but to Louise, the composure their serenity prayer has given her has meant the most: "God grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, courage to change things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Whenever a family has a member who is an alcoholic, be the drinking habit of long duration or recently acquired, that family has a serious problem. This problem is not the alcoholic's alone; by its very nature it involves other members of the family. No matter how distasteful or unwelcome this problem is, or how much the family feels it does not deserve it — it is a family affair. And although many alcoholics have recovered through Alcoholics Anonymous with comparatively little cooperation from their families, the situation is eased by study of all aspects of alcoholism by other members of the family.

It often happens that after a problem drinker has

joined AA, the family refuses to cooperate in the matter of the alcoholic's regular attendance at meetings and in the irregularity and often time-consuming project of Twelfth Step Work, because the family's pride still suffers; perhaps the husband of the middle-aged woman or the mother of a young woman cannot understand how a wife or daughter can stop drinking through the influence of someone or something else when she could not (would not, they think) do it for them.

The family which does not understand that she must engage in these other activities to maintain her sobriety may be jealous of something that takes her away from them. It has been such a short while that they have once again enjoyed her sober company, and they feel they are entitled to her exclusive attentions. The Al-Anon Family Groups, which are a natural outgrowth of the Alcoholic Anonymous movement itself, are of much assistance in promoting understanding in this regard.

It would not be difficult for anyone even slightly acquainted with the problems of alcoholism to see what membership in a Family Group could mean to the husband and bewildered children of an alcoholic like Eleanor B.

When we interviewed Eleanor, she was about 40 years of age with a husband and two children, a boy and a girl in their late teens. A lady, poised and gracious, she is attractive in dress and personality. Her enthusiasm for AA work is contagious.

This woman does not go about telling everyone she meets that she is a member of Alcoholics Anonymous;



but, when someone remarks, as people frequently do, on the astonishing change in her (since she stopped trying to quit drinking on her own power and now relies on God and other people for help), she always says that AA is responsible. She has been on the AA program for 19 months now with no setbacks.

Eleanor had done some casual drinking with her husband. He is much older than she; due to this disparity, they encountered some trouble in their marriage about five years before, and she began drinking not so casually — at home and alone. She became frightened when she realized this drinking was getting out of control. She thought church work would be the answer. She is a Protestant. She has a good voice, likes to sing, and soon became leader of the church choir. She stayed on a “dry drunk” for 14 months, during which time she went about with a long face and experienced constant jitters and depression. Then some personal problems came along; she got drunk again; the pastor and members of the congregation told her she was a disgrace to the church and put her out. Now she took to really serious drinking. She knew she was ruining her life, yet seemed powerless of her own volition to do anything about it.

She had heard of AA. She knew a man in her neighborhood who had been rehabilitated through AA, yet she felt she could not confide in him. She called AA and started to go to meetings, after which this same man assisted her greatly. She made a **decision** to stop drinking — to stay dry one day at a time. She had made innumerable resolutions before but never a decision — she thinks

there is a vast difference. A resolution says, "I'll quit drinking tomorrow." A decision says, "I've had my last drink."

Eleanor thinks personalities are very important in AA work, that, as in other fields, everyone is not congenial with everyone else; that if an alcoholic will continue to attend meetings, there will be someone whose personality will click with hers, whose help to the new member will be of more value because of this. Thus a natural sponsor will fall to her. Then when the depressing times come, and the compulsion to drink becomes overpowering, it is this sponsor who can talk her out of succumbing.

Eleanor's husband is most cooperative, allows her use of the car, and urges her to do all the AA work she can find time for; he recognizes that this helps her maintain her sobriety.

AA has given Eleanor a serenity that she never had when she stayed "dry drunk" by herself, that is, before AA helped her change her way of life and the thinking that preceded it, before she learned that staying sober can be a joy.

She gives unstintingly of her time to AA work in meetings and out (she drove 30 miles in very inclement weather to give us this story); uses her money in helping other alcoholics to become rehabilitated. She has gone back to church; she has advanced in humility. She spends a considerable amount of time in welfare work; since her own re-education, she cannot do enough for those less fortunate than she.

Eleanor feels that women alcoholics have a greater

problem in breaking off their old associations than do men. Most women who have not "made" the AA program, who have continual lapses, try to add the new AA way of life to their old routines. A woman who thinks she can stick to cokes while she plays bridge three or four afternoons a week with friends who serve and drink alcoholic beverages is wrong. It just won't work!

She thinks women definitely have a harder time "coming back" than men do for the reason that people put women on a pedestal. Then when a woman (who is just as human as a man) falls, it is much harder for her to rise. For this reason, it is more difficult to get women into AA; they feel the disgrace of drinking more keenly.

Eleanor is glad she is an alcoholic. She says the self-inventory and honesty to look into her own faults, life, and motives was the hardest of the Twelve Steps for her to take. Yet she is glad she is an alcoholic, because if you are something, you have something to work on when you want to change. There is no "cure" for an alcoholic, only total abstinence. There is no cure for a diabetic, either, but insulin helps him to stay alive and live a useful life. AA is the alcoholic's insulin.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CAN'T QUIT SMOKING WHO TELL OTHER PEOPLE TO QUIT DRINKING.

Seldom does an alcoholic set out to get drunk.

If you are the husband or parent of a woman alcoholic, don't let it injure your pride that she won't stop drinking for you — maybe she can't. Instead of begging her

to stop if she loves you, or reproaching her — and there is nothing you can say to her, anyway, that she has not said to herself a thousand times — do something constructive about trying to understand this complex problem. Do go to your public library and get a copy of the AA handbook **Alcoholics Anonymous** and read it. It will be a revelation to you. This book should be on the “must read” list likewise for every employer. Call the AA number listed in your telephone book, the classified pages of your daily newspaper, or write the central office, Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing, Inc., Post Office Box 459, Grand Central Annex, New York 17, New York. They will send you literature about the subject of alcoholism and will reveal your identity to no one.

**T**o the long-suffering husband of a woman who has reached the nadir of alcoholic despair, has been confined to a mental institution and is now ready for release, we wish to impart the information gained in talking with several of these patients. Mental patients wonder and sometimes do not know whether their families want them to come home. This is true especially when a long history of alcoholism is involved, and the patient's illness has caused the family hardship, embarrassment, or much unpleasantness.

One of the greatest helps a family can give a returning alcoholic is not a renewed faith in herself, but the reassurance shown by its attitude toward her that the family has faith in her ability to readjust, that the family believes she will do her best from now on. This is particularly difficult

in the face of a long line of broken promises to give up alcohol, where the husband, of necessity, has had to be both father and mother to the children. He is no longer accustomed to depend on the wife for anything by this time, so it is difficult for him to accord her respect and allow her to return to her proper position as heart of the family — a position she forfeited when she espoused alcoholism. This can be the case where the husband has had the good fortune of having a kindly grandmother, or an aunt, or even good outside paid help to assist him with the home and the children and where the home has been running with some degree of smoothness; he is afraid to trade the present tranquillity for the possible chaos of an earlier time.

So it is hard for the husband to believe in this latest good resolution of the returning wife, be she returning from a mental institution, a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, or just a meeting with herself wherein she has sworn off once more. It is difficult for him to expect her to do the right thing — yet not to expect too much — and never to remind her of her past transgressions.

But if he has charity enough in his heart and enough selflessness left to consider her before himself and to put the welfare of the family and the marriage itself before his personal inclinations, he will do it. "Seventy times seven." He will accept her return with good grace — this one time more — will be her helper, not her jailer; and oftentimes this will pay off for him in a manner far exceeding his expectations or even his hopes.

It has happened before. It can happen again. If he cannot do it for her sake or even for his own sake, let him do it for God's sake. God will not be outdone in generosity in a case such as this — or in any other.

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by LYNN ALEXANDER

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