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THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

By Bill A.

A.A.'s FIRST quarter-century is now history. Our next twenty-five years lie in prospect before us. How, then, can we make the most of this new grant of time?

Perhaps our very first realization should be that we can't stand still. Now that our basic principles seem established, now that our functioning is fairly effective and widespread, it would be temptingly easy to settle down as merely one more useful agency on the world scene. We could conclude that "AA is fine, just the way it is."

Yet how many of us, for example, would presume to declare, "Well, I'm sober and I'm happy. What more can I want, or do? I'm fine the way I am." We know that the price of such self-satisfaction is an inevitable backslide, punctuated at some point by a very rude awakening. We have to grow or else deteriorate. For us, the "status quo" can only be for today, never for tomorrow. Change we must; we cannot stand still.

Just how, then, can AA go on changing for the better? Does this mean that we are to tinker with our basic principles? Should we try to amend our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions? Here the answer would seem to be "no." Those twenty-four principles have first liberated us, have then held us in unity, and have enabled us to function and to grow as AA members, and as a whole. Of course

perfect truth is surely something better understood by God than by any of us. Nevertheless we have come to believe that AA's recovery Steps and Traditions do represent the approximate truths which we need for our particular purpose. The more we practice them, the more we like them. So there is little doubt that AA principles continue to be advocated in the form they stand now.

So then, if our basics are so firmly fixed as all this, what is there left to change or to improve? The answer will immediately occur to us. While we need not alter our truths, *we can surely improve their application to ourselves, to AA as a whole, and to our relation with the world around us.* We can constantly step up "the practice of these principles in all our affairs."

As we now enter upon the next great phase of AA's life, let us therefore re-dedicate ourselves to an ever greater responsibility for our general welfare. Let us continue to take our inventory as a fellowship, searching out our flaws and confessing them freely. Let us devote ourselves to the repair of all faulty relations that may exist, whether within or without.

And above all, let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found—a new life of freedom under God.