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Around the Tables...

Why Bother With the Big Book?

AROUND THE TABLES just the other night, a guy said to me, "You're hung-up on the Big Book. There are other books and other ways to work the program. Remember, those guys who wrote the Big Book didn't have much sobriety when they wrote it."

The first part of this statement, I considered a compliment. The last part perplexed me, because I had been thinking how wonderful it was that the Big Book had been put together at all by the pioneers, during what must have been trying and terrifying times. I had just reread *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, which is poignant, to say the least.

So I am hung-up on the Big Book. Honesty compels me to admit it. For me, the Big Book is a tool to be used, and so I keep my copy in A-number-one shape through reading

and rereading it. Since using the Big Book makes each day joyous for me, I'll stay hung-up, thank you.

The Big Book needs no defense. Its obvious merit is conclusive. One of the most ironic twists of the alcoholic mind is demonstrated night after night by some members' underrating of the Big Book. Just buying a copy of it isn't the key to sobriety. Yet I have heard again and again at meetings remarks like "Never have read it" or "Read it once when I first came in" or "Why bother with the Big Book?" or "It's not relevant today." Whether the remarks focus on the short-term sobriety of the authors or on the book's nonrelevancy, the criticism seems to advocate "half measures" that might lead someone back to the horror chamber.

Though I am not a biblical scholar, I think I am safe in saying that Moses came down with the Ten Commandments some goodly number of years before Ezekiel started writing. But Ezekiel doesn't say Moses was all wrong when he transmitted the Commandments. Ezekiel doesn't say, "Don't read Exodus — you know, Moses only had a few years of recovery when he wrote down the Commandments." Nothing of the sort; Ezekiel reaffirms Moses, because what Moses wrote down was good for all ages. I believe the Big Book was divinely inspired and that it is a book for all ages.

Some time in the late 1930's, Bill W. wrote the portion of the Big Book including (on page 85) these words: "It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest

on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." That statement is as true today as it was then. Reading the Big Book and using it as a guide for spiritual progress has freed me to develop and grow.

Yeah, I'm hung-up on the Big Book. But then, I'm hung-up on the "Twelve and Twelve," the Grapevine, *As Bill Sees It*, my wife, my son, my home, my clients, and you. And I think I have found a dandy, peachy-keen way of life just because some clowns with only a couple of years' sobriety decided to write a book. Thank God they didn't wait!