

## **Came to Believe... "In all our affairs"**

### **"No man is an Island"**

I was spiritually bankrupt long before A.A. entered my life and long before alcoholism took over like a parasite under my skin. I had nothing, no faith at all to cling to. I had no faith in man, because along with my drinking I had lost faith in myself. I trusted no one, for others were but a mere reflection of my own self, and I could not trust me.

I got sober in A.A., and, like a miracle, the warm flood of reality I had feared for so long flowed over me, and I was no longer afraid. I began to wonder why. Along with sobriety, something new had come into my life.

I began to have concern for others. This word "concern", along with its sister consideration, was an alien thing to me. I had believed myself capable of falling in love; I had thought myself a loving mother, but these emotions, I now perceive, had been reflections of my own self-interest. Nothing penetrated beyond myself. I began in early sobriety, to feel compassion for other drunks, then for my children, then for my ex-husband. This compassion, a feeling accompanied later by love, opened up the door to a huge fortress within me which had been forever locked.

Now this was the strange thing; I was not, in sobriety, returning to my former state. I was not resuming a "well" state which I had left when I began to drink alcoholically. I was becoming, as I had heard it put once, "Weller than well." In probing (via the Fourth Step) into my own personality, I found a new substance inside me. It had never been there before, even in childhood. Either a stone or an empty hole had been where it should have grown.

Now something was taking root. I began to feel for others, to be able, for very brief moments, to put myself in their shoes. New worlds opened up. I began to understand the world about me. I was not the centre of the universe. (What a calamity it seemed to discover that!) I was part of a gigantic, wonderful mystery. I could not probe it with a childlike curiosity. I am still circling about it. I shall never, nor shall any of us, discover the secrets of lives and deaths, as something spiritual beyond our understanding.

I began to watch my children. They were small, important people. I realized I had never treated them while I was drinking as anything more than little machines I had created, as if I had erected part of a Meccano set and been proud of it. I saw them begin to blossom as my treatment of them changed. I reached out a hand to help someone, sometimes even only by listening, and I felt a strange contentment at being able to help – an incredible discovery for me!

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I learned my own version of what spirituality is. It does not mean I have to be like the saints who claimed to have direct advice and visions from God. It means I have to be concerned with my fellowman; through this alone can I receive the grace of God, my Higher Power, for, in the words of John Donne, so long before A.A., "NO man is an island."

I began to feel a safety in my new spiritual feelings, until I was shaken up one night by an A.A. friend who said, "All right, so you can apply the Third Step and a spiritual belief in God to your personal life, but how can you accept the terrible calamities which happen around us every day?"

I was faced again, perilously, with the questions of my religious but non spiritual childhood – how can I accept a belief in a God who allows such monstrous crimes against man as the black scenes at Buchenwald, Dachau, and Hiroshima? I began to think frighteningly of death and suffering, not my own, but all humanity's. I began to question my new beliefs too much – I began to panic. I began to read beyond A.A.'s literature for answers.

Fortunately for me, before I had read too much about the subject of spiritual beliefs (an area which was only leading me to confusion), I realized I was asking for too much too soon. Wisely, I left the philosophy books to minds more capable than mine. I could not risk further mental confusion. I returned to the teachings of A.A., which had already saved me from a life of torment.