



## Rebellion Dogs Blog

### The 'God' Word & this April's General Service Conference

March 2017

In 2009 an African American president was inaugurated in the USA and I mistakenly, naïvely felt America has forever-changed for the better. “It’s only going to improve from here,” I told myself.

I don’t share this error to cast doubt on my ability to observe trends and make predictions. I learned something in 2017 from that previous mistake. Constant vigilance is a civic duty; it’s good AA stewardship, too. We aren’t entitled to better times ahead.

Vigilance will be a theme today along with a timely call-to-action. But just as we ought not get too complacent, we should think about balance, too. I was reminded of Rule-62 on Facebook, this week. The point was made that when any of us lose one of our senses, another or all other senses become enhanced and/or take over. For instance, when I lose my sense of humor, I develop a heightened sense of self-importance. Rule-62 is from a story in Tradition Four in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.<sup>1</sup> The rule is, “Don’t take yourself too damn seriously.”

I have a secret to share today. It’s a secret about my sobriety. But enough about me – more on my secrets later...

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There's been quite a bit of talk around the coffee pot about the UK's new leaflet #3267, "The 'God' Word: Agnostic and Atheist Members in AA." There happens to be a Catch-22 in the road of Canadians and Americans wanting to acquire this British pamphlet. I'll explain how it works, if you haven't come across it, yourself. My group asked me to snag 50 copies for a hospitality suite at an upcoming regional conference since I reported that the hold up over North Americans getting orders fulfilled from the UK is over, according to AA World Service in New York.

Well... not quite.

Some history... In anticipation of Austin's Secular International AA conference I tried to get 100 "The 'God' Word" pamphlets. The UK took my order, then refunded my money. I called them and they explained that selling leaflets to Canadians was a violation of their licensing agreement with AA World Services. The UK referred me to GSO in New York, who told me, "Oh no, because we don't print or hold a copyright for "The 'God' Word" here (GSO for USA/Canada), the UK order desk selling to you is not in contravention of the licensing agreement. "Go back to Great Britain," I was told.

Knowing this was never going to smooth out quickly, a UK member (thank you, Laurie) – whose last name will remain anonymous incase he's guilty of trafficking contraband literature – ordered the 100 copies of the literature shipped to his home. He shipped it to me; I distributed them among the Toronto area agnostic meetings and brought the rest to Austin in November 2016. The cost of shipping was more than the literature.

There were numerous emails back and forth from August 2016 until February, 2017. Here's a couple of short notes, just to give you a feel for the journey. This first one from AAWS was very promising:

Thank you for your query.

I have been in touch with G.S.O. U.K. regarding the U.K.-originated pamphlet "The God Word" and we have agreed that **they may distribute this item to all who seek it from the U.S. and elsewhere.**

It is not an A.A.W.S., Inc.-copyrighted item nor A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature, so its distribution does not need to conform to our copyright, licensing, and distribution practice: distributing items via local structures for that nation's fellowship.

To uphold the principles of Unity and self-support, we encourage folks to purchase literature at the local level via local structures, whenever possible.

As you may know, we license our A.A.W.S., Inc.-copyrighted material to A.A. General Service Boards around the world.

These copyright agreements necessitate set processes – that *in this case do not apply to this pamphlet*.

With all best A.A. wishes,

Director of Publishing, AA World Services Inc.

I was assured it was all worked out. I ordered again. Now the UK's position was not exactly what I was anticipating...

Hello Joe,

Thank-you for your enquiry about 'The God Word'. While we can sell to the US/Canada, unfortunately we have found that the costs are prohibitive and require additional paperwork which becomes logistically unsustainable.

We understand that GSO US/Canada is considering obtaining a licence to print, which would help resolve the problem.

However, the leaflet is available from the AA GB website as a pdf file at this link:

<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Document-Library#>

“I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that I am responsible... unless it’s logistically unsustainable.” I do hope you understand, ol’ chap but the Yanks in New York are going to license, print and distribute the leaflet (pamphlet) for the demand in the USA and Canada. Cheerio, mate.

The UK did respond promptly. The undertaking of the USA/Canada GSO to license and print “The ‘God’ Word sounds routine. If you think that having the UK pamphlet available in North America is like flicking a switch and enjoying the light, let’s talk... I have some concerns.

### **Some General Service Conference History for context**

Here’s a little AA history that, on one hand, sets a precedent for this kind of thing and, on the other hand, may create a hard time for ease of access to this new literature in our AA future...

Flashback APRIL 1980, General Service Conference, New York, USA...

1980: General Service Conference advisory action, “The pamphlet from Great Britain entitled, “A Newcomer Asks” be adopted and adapted.”

What’s an *advisory action*? The phrase has that *conference-approved* ring to it – two words that are as often misunderstood as understood. Well here’s Uncle Bill explaining “advisory action” on page S81 of *The A.A. Service Manual*<sup>ii</sup>:

“While no one can speak for A.A. officially, the Conference [through its Advisory Actions] comes close to being A.A.’s voice. It cannot be an A.A. authority, but it can bring into free discussion problems and trends and dangers that seem to affect Fellowship harmony, purpose, and effectiveness.”

AA World Services and the General Service work for us (all year long). What do they do? Well, there is basic administration of AA. New initiatives happen through advisory actions. Groups in the USA and Canada – through our delegate – communicate to AA’s annual business meeting (The General Service Conference). Recommendations from the floor or from our committees (P.I., Cooperation with the professional community, treatment, corrections,

accessibility, archives, literature, treasury, etc.) get brought to the conference members for a vote. Votes in the affirmative become actionable – they become advisory actions.

There are other General Service Offices in different regions in the International AA world. Literature that comes from the United Kingdom, shares our universal AA tenets but also reflects domestic, cultural nuances. The USA is the most religious developed country on Earth. The UK is a secular society. In adopting “A Newcomer Asks”, the USA and Canada inherited some UK candor regarding membership diversity in our devotion to, or indifference to, a sobriety-granting higher power. If you’re a long-time follower of Rebellion Dogs, or you are familiar with AA literature, this will ring a bell. “A Newcomer Asks” states:

***Is A.A. a religious organization?***

No. Nor is it allied with any religious organization.

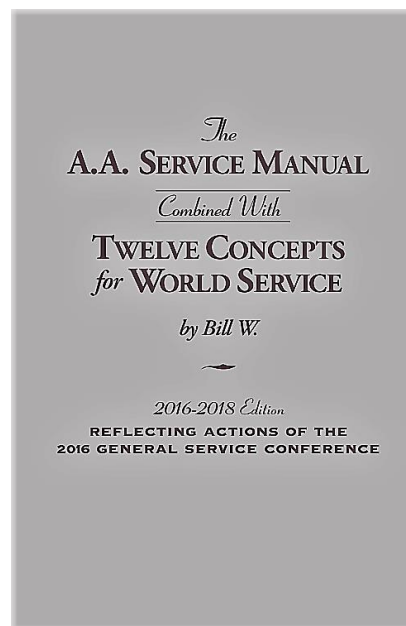
***There’s a lot of talk about God, though, isn’t there?***

The majority of A.A. members believe that we have found the solution to our drinking problem not through individual willpower, but through a power greater than ourselves. However, everyone defines this power as he or she wishes. Many people call it God, others think it is the A.A. group, still others don’t believe in it at all. There is room in A.A. for people of all shades of belief and nonbelief.

This unabashed portrayal of AA, is an AA in three camps:

- a) those of us who do believe in supernatural intervention,
- b) those who believe in the power of example (a nonreligious power) and
- c) those who don’t buy into the higher power idea at all.

Assuming this represented AA fairly in 1980 on both sides of the Atlantic, this with-or-without-God portrayal of AA recovery is a natural evolution from our



78-year-old warning in the words of cofounder Bob S. who figuratively pointed a finger at the reader and said, if you don't get the God thing, that's intellectual pride, you won't make it and I pity you.<sup>iii</sup>

"A Newcomer Asks" states, "still others don't believe in it (the higher power thing) at all.

Our 1939 phonograph sings an older refrain such as in the tune, "How It Works"

...

"Remember that we deal with alcohol, cunning, baffling, powerful!  
Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power –  
that One is God. May you find Him now"?<sup>iv</sup>

Who wanted this progressive UK language for USA/Canada AA from "A Newcomer Asks" in 1980?

I can speculate that it was AA's 1980 public relations people who would have been confronting a skeptical professional world. This inclusive language softened charges that AA is religious or outdated.

As an aside, imagine if the motivation for the new language was from our AA groups; this could have been a modernized "How It Works." Instead of so many meetings starting with, "But there is One who has all power – that One is God. May you find Him now!" we would be saying, "Our suggested Steps talk of "God as you understand Him"; some members attribute the group as their higher power. Still others don't believe in higher power at all. There is room in A.A. for belief and nonbelief. These Steps are suggestions, only. Step One..."

This variation to "How It Works" would sound alright to me; how about you? Just a thought...

If some of us find the "god/no-god, whatever works for you," language liberating, isn't that fantastic? "A Newcomer Asks" makes AA just as secular-normative as we are faith-based-normative. Whatever the motivation back in 1980, in very subtle but affirming ways, Conference initiatives continued to modernize the atheist language in AA.

In 1983, in our pamphlet “This Is A.A.” the first of two modernizations of our verbiage would declare: “There are a number of self-proclaimed atheist and agnostics among us.” I don’t recall exactly what was said originally in the 1955 pamphlet. It might have been along the lines of. “Some members even think that they are atheists or agnostics,” as if holding no supernatural worldview is a state of denial from the truth of a universe governed by Yahweh.

This progressive trend continued through 2001. “This Is A.A.” improved again, changed the condescending “even a few self-proclaimed atheists and agnostics,” to “There are also atheists and agnostics among us.” Doesn’t that just sound like non-theists are rights bearing equals, according to our peers?

In 2010 the General Service Conference affirmed, “The trustees’ Committee on Literature develop literature which focuses on spirituality that includes storied from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous and bring a draft or progress report to the 2011 Conference Committee on Literature.”

AA atheist successes; how affirming is that?

But, is there another group of AA’s, perhaps, who would see this secular deviation as threatening instead of liberating?

“Secularphobia” is a modern word. But, wherever there has been a dependence on supernatural forces, intolerance--either a little or a lot—has always been present. Widening our gateway in AA has always been well-intentioned but we keep one eye on possible threats, too. What would the four-horsemen of an AA apocalypse look like? Our founders warned that we ought not be complacent and that danger is more likely going to come from self-destructive forces as opposed to forces outside of AA.




Perceived “others” have always tested us as that potential threat: women, African Americans, dually-addicted, LGBTQ members and atheists have all faced ridicule and hostility from those who speak of gratitude for the gift of AA

so freely given to them. “Widen our gateway yes, but AA was never intended to be all things to everyone; when does radical inclusivity turn into being watered-down AA?”

The 2010 advisory action, celebrating secular AA, was too much “widening our gateway” for some. This action to affirm, “successful atheists” was repudiated in the *White Paper on Non-believers*, an anti-atheist warning from a 40-year-sober anonymous member. The author called for action from fellow god-fearing members to stop this atheist/agnostic pamphlet and reverse our tolerance of nonbelievers.

Just as Russians are being investigated as an outside force tampering with the 2016 US election, This *White Paper* had an influence peddling role at Toronto Intergroup in 2011. A non-intergroup AA member named Bryan W obtained access to the Toronto email list. This White Paper – or the *Mein Kampf* of AA fear-mongering as some have labeled it – was circulated to Toronto Intergroup reps. The paper warned email recipients that agnostic members reading agnostic interpretations of AA’s Twelve Steps in agnostic meetings could spell and end of AA as we know it. Better we sacrifice the still-suffering heathen and save our god-fearing children’s children.

In this same era, of this *White Paper*, something else happened to the secular-normative “A Newcomer Asks” in the USA. In AA’s advisory actions, we find this curious amendment:



“THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER IS TO SET FORTH IN DETAIL THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF THESE DANGEROUS DEVIATIONS AND TO ENCOURAGE A COURSE OF ACTION FOR ELIMINATING THEM AND RETURNING OUR FELLOWSHIP TO THE PURE SPIRITUAL OASIS THAT HAS NOURISHED SUFFERING ALCOHOLICS FOR 75 YEARS. WE WOULD ALL BE REMISS IN OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IF WE FAIL AT THIS CRUCIAL JUNCTURE.”

*The White Paper on Non-Believers (Anonymous)*

In 2009 It was recommended that: “A sentence encouraging newcomers to obtain and study the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, be added to the pamphlet, ‘A Newcomer Asks’.”



So, the UK leaflet “A Newcomer Asks” that USA and Canada acquired stated:

***What advice do you give to new members?***

1. Stay away from the first drink
2. Attend AA meetings regularly
3. Seek out the people in AA who have successfully stayed sober for some time
4. Try to put into practice the AA Programme of recovery

There are four pretty good ideas. Any two or three of them could work. All four are worth trying. GSO pamphlet p24 “A Newcomer Asks” post-2009, now reads:

***What advice do you give to new members?***

- (a) Stay away from the first drink;
- (b) Attend A.A. meetings regularly;
- (c) Seek out the people in A.A. who have successfully stayed sober for some time;
- (d) Try to put into practice the A.A. program of recovery;
- (e) Obtain and study the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

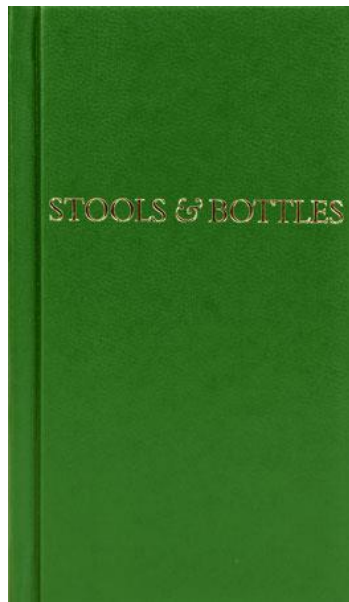
Two questions come to mind and perhaps we can reflect on them. My first question would be, “Why mention the Big Book and refer to it as a study guide; don’t we mention The Big Book in AA enough already?”

And the second question is, “If our 1980 advisory action was to adopt and amend the British pamphlet, why did we not add this crucial deficiency – if it is indeed a crucial deficiency – in 1980? “Why was it so urgent in 2009 and not even considered in 1980?” What was different?

Well, at the top of the blog, I tempted you to stay tuned for a secret about my own sobriety. I will share it with you now.

I came to AA in the 1970s and got clean and sober for good in 1976. No one advised me to “obtain and study the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.” So, my secret – which will seem strange to you if you’re introduction to AA was in the mid-1990s or later – is this:

I never read the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.



Well I did; but not until I was nine years sober and had completed the Twelve Steps.

When I was new, I read pamphlets, *Living Sober* and *Came to Believe* and I tried a couple of daily reflection books. Back in the day, books like [Stools and Bottles<sup>v</sup>](#) and [The Little Red Book<sup>vi</sup>](#) were popularly shared among AAs in my neck of the woods. These aren't top choices for new-atheists but back in the day we were forgiving of religious language and none of us found it to be contagious. Theists were just trying to help in their own language. Later, when I was sober for a while and curious about AA, I was reading, *Pass It On* and *AA Comes of Age*. These books got me interested in the Big

Book from a historical reference. And, long after I applied the Twelve Steps to my life, I did find the first 164 pages + the stories + the appendices, historically valuable.

In AA in the 1970s – certainly in Montreal where I got sober and Calgary where I moved in 1979 – there were no Big Book meetings, that I recall. I was young and wrestles and I went to lots of meetings. I worked the Steps, but not with the text *Alcoholics Anonymous* as my step-by-step guide. Some members presumably warmed up to the Big Book but I didn't hear much about it. did, I assume; but there were Hazelden study guides and sponsees asking sponsors and other AA friends, "What did you do with Step \_\_ (insert 1 through 12)?"

AA, in my formative-years, was an oral tradition and while there was plenty of books and booklets to read to help me work or skip or combine Steps, the program of AA was a very personal process.

In 1980, GSO didn't add the "study the Big Book" passage because, in 1980, that wasn't the predominant AA culture. We were not a one-book, one-solution society; not in all corners of AA, not in 1980. So, when did Big Book fanaticism start?

### **The History of *Alcoholics Anonymous* and Big Book fanaticism**

Today, the Big Book is ubiquitous. For a fellowship of two million, we are closing in on 40 million copies of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in print. It wasn't a best-seller in the early days but it sells one million copies a year now – so what happened?

The Big Book sold 20,000+ copies per year in the 50s and 60s – that's not shabby. The millionth cumulative copy wasn't sold until after Bill W's death – 1973. So, it took 34 years after the first printing to sell the first million. Back then, every year, AA membership was growing. Big Book sales were gradual. The Third Edition came out in 1976, in 1980, AA sold a record 370,00 of that Third Edition that year. By 1990, it was typical to sell one million Big Books every year.

So, if you got sober post-1990, it would be easy to perceive that, "AA is the Big Book – the Big Book is AA". You may not be able to imagine an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting without the text by the same name. By the 1990s, "Big Book Study" meetings and weekend were popular. This, in part, goes back to the legend of Joe and Charlie.

From TheFix.com:

Charlie got sober in 1970 and started studying the Big Book seriously with Joe in 1973. For Charlie, it was all about the steps: "Remember, we recover by the steps we take, not the meetings we make!" ...When Charlie died from a massive heart attack in 2011 at the age of 82, he'd been sober 41 years. Exactly half of his life.

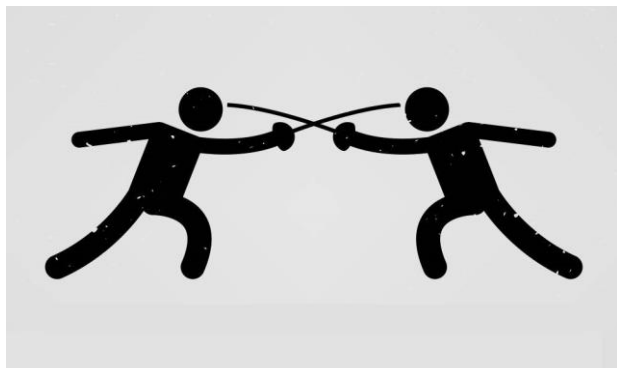
In 1962, at the age of 34, Joe McQ woke up in the psych ward at the Arkansas State Hospital. ... Determined to stay sober, he sought out AA meetings when he was released, but racism was alive and well, and Little Rock, Arkansas, was no exception. The local AA group agreed to let him attend meetings as long as he didn't a) get there early, b) stick around afterwards, or c) drink their coffee. "Little Rock was no place for a black man to be looking for help in 1962," Joe said when talking about early sobriety. ... The isolation from fellowship meant the Big Book was his primary source of recovery information, and it spurred him to organize new AA groups on his own.<sup>vii</sup>

Back in the 70s, meeting secretaries would read news and notes from GSO and we'd hear about loners – members who lived in isolated areas who got and stayed sober with literature and pen-pals. Joe M depended on literature the way an AA loner would. Going back to our beginnings, before we had a book or a name for our organization, there was an idea that the message of hope for alcoholics could be conveyed in a book. That's true, I think. I see evidence today that some of us get sober on literature. I would speculate that if Joe M of Little Rock was observing an AA group that read from *The Little Red Book* and he was given a copy, that book, along with his sincere desire to stop drinking, would have worked for him as well as the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* did. For some of us, it's meetings, the program, literature, all-of-the-above and none-of-the-above. Sobriety in AA is a pathless land.

I don't have a relationship with the Big Book the way some do because it wasn't the play book for my sobriety. I appreciate those who sincerely credit the Book or "being booked" to getting sober. My first trip through the Big Book for recovery purposes was in aid of someone else's sobriety. I always make the sponsee take the lead. "So, you want to take the Step? How do you propose to do that?"

In this case, my sponsee wanted to do an AA inventory and the rest of the Twelve Steps – just like they say in the book. So, he taught me. I have zero issues with someone who zealously attributes the Big Book for saving their life. What I have less appreciation for is rigid insistence the "The Big Book way" is AA's official and only legitimate AA experience.

Joe and Charlie, as the phenomena built, were moderating "The Big Book Comes Alive" weekends to 800 people at a time. Many came back and brought their friends. Joe and Charlie weren't cult leader but the cult of Joe and Charlie emerged. It may have led the ground work for what we know today as muckers or the Back-to-Basics theme of AA.



“Five AA Myths that Critics and Zealots Share” @ [The Fix](#).<sup>viii</sup> is more accurately, one myth and five reality-checks that debunk a shared myth held by Big Book thumpers and Big Book bashers. The myth is that AA is *a program*.

Everything that defines AA, from the Traditions to the Preamble, describes *a fellowship*, not *a program*. When people criticize AA, it is par for the course to attack The Steps. When zealots gush about AA, what they mean by “AA” is often The Steps, as described in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This idea of AA and program as synonymous is widely held but erroneous, all the same.

Many AAs with contented long-term sobriety have dismissed the Steps and stayed sober. They are AA’s story, too. No-Steppers are joined by some-Steppers who got started, lost their enthusiasm but not their sobriety. Still more have taken an inventory in some fashion, made amends in some fashion, self-reflect, admit a need for help with their alcoholism, help other alcoholics here and there, but the Steps were not and are not a formal or formulaic process.

So, I am not from a generation of AA members that credits my sobriety to the 1939 book.

Going back to “A Newcomer Asks” the pamphlet was complete and meaningful as it was in 1980. The General Service class of 2009 thought it was missing something crucial. Maybe that was their experience – “How can newcomers get sober without the AA step-by-step plan of recovery?” they balked, “What an order!”

I don’t see the insertion of *get the Big Book, study the Big Book, or else*, as a conspiracy by Big Book militants reacting to how secular (AKA diabolical) the pamphlet, “A Newcomer Asks” appears. Our more enthusiastic *inclusionists* might see the inserted Big Book rhetoric as contaminating a perfectly peaceful chat with a potential AA member. Is there a growing uniformity-over-unity fundamentalist movement? Is anything secular or secular-normative seen as a threat. Was the inclusion of “you better read and re-read the Big Book and don’t

balk about the 200 usages of the word, 'God' in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*" an attempt to reverse the secular-friendly literature which is "A Newcomer Asks"?

I don't smell an anti-atheist conspiracy. I understand the class of 2009 – mostly delegates who got sober between 1980 and 1995. They would have the widely-held view that AA is a book-based society and the Big Book is the instruction book for sobriety. Many of them were raised in a million Big Book per year world.

To be clear, I don't share the notion that the Twelve Steps, as outlined in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is a superior way of getting and staying sober than an à la carte approach or relying on the AA fellowship (not the program). Work or don't work the Steps; add other self-reflection/self-improvement activity or therapy to your AA sobriety. AA, for me, isn't a board game where the rules are that we all travel one square after the other, ending at Twelve and being recovered as a result of these Steps.

If fundamentalist AAs had a clearly better record than all other approaches to AA, I would want that improved outcome for myself and I would recommend it to others. There is no evidence that secular AA is superior to faith-based AA, either. There is no regimen, with or without the Steps that holds a clear advantage over all others.

While I don't agree with, I respect the rights of, those who believe a book changed their lives. Sing the praises of Big Book study. All of us – starting with me – would do well to quell our zealotry and avoid depicting our narrative as the official AA, as it was intended by those who came before us.

The USA/Canada Conference saw fit to urge "A Newcomer Asks" readers to get and study a Big Book in 2009. Autonomous and having its own needs and culture, the UK General Service Conference did not follow suit and add the Big Book pitch in their version of "A Newcomer Asks." For Brits, one day at a time, reach out for help, work an (undefined) *programme* is direction enough for any newcomer who is asking.

This brings me back to "The 'God' Word," – remember, that's what I started talking about in the first place – let's cover how the new agnostic/atheist leaflet came to be for AAs in the United Kingdom, and a hurdle that my fellow North

American members might want to prepare for, if we want easy access to leaflet #3267.

### **UK – not the USA or Canada, eh!**

Printing “The ‘God’ Word” is an obvious choice for members in the United Kingdom. A collection of stories from members that depend on a personal and right-sized relationship with the natural world makes sense in the UK. People of the United Kingdom are a more secular society than the religious USA where AA came from. To underscore this point, just in time for Christmas, a December 23, 2016 newspaper article started out:

Forget believing in Santa – the tumultuous events of 2016 appear to have left Britons unable to believe in God.

A YouGov poll for [the Times](#) has shown a four-point decline in the percentage of people who believe in a higher power, from 32 per cent in February last year to 28 per cent now.

The drop suggests a far sharper decrease than in previous years, the Times says. Britons' belief in God has long been in decline, but at a rate of about one per cent a year...<sup>ix</sup>

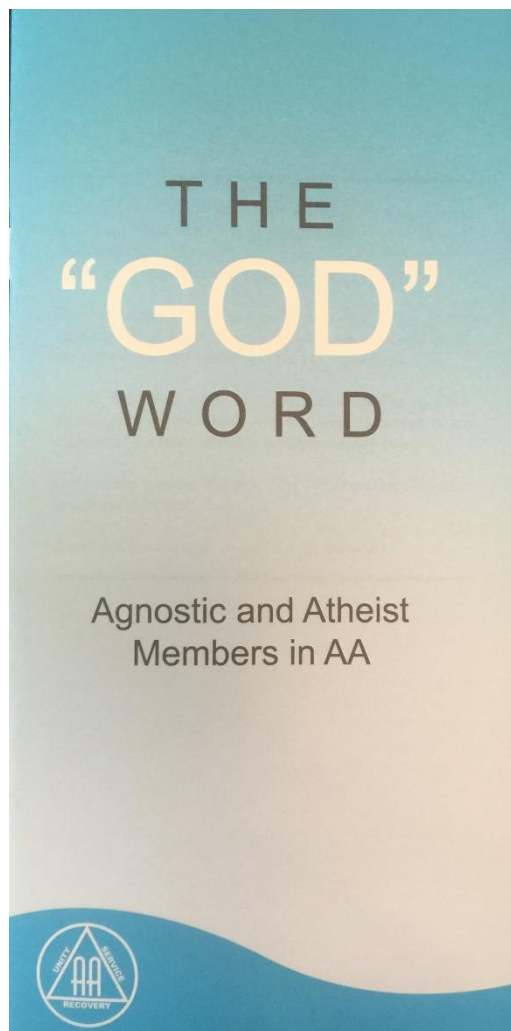
Less than three out of 10 Brits believe in a higher power. That's about opposite to USA numbers. Of Americans, 74% are certain there is a higher power (Pew Research 2014)<sup>x</sup>

And what about Canada? Well, why did the Canadian cross the road?

To get to the middle. And true to our form, we're in the middle; two-thirds of Canadians believe in a higher power. The importance of religious practice is waning with us hockey-playin' fur traders and true to our heritage and influences, we're somewhere between our UK and US cousins in spiritual beliefs and practices.<sup>xi</sup>

While I don't know the entire course of events in the UK, someone presented the idea, a group assembled to collect stories, create a draft, then approval was sought and granted by the delegates and other stakeholders at the UK General Service Conference. Good for them; good for all of us. And this is an obvious course of events in a population whereby less than 30% believe in an intervening deity.

While the adoption by the USA/Canada General Service Conference of “A Newcomer Asks” may have been routine, will it be the same matter-of-fact approval for heathen stories of godless AAs? Or will this accommodation be too much for “our more religious USA/Canada Conference?”



Future results can't be assumed based on past record. But, the Conference in New York already said “No” to a made in the USA collection of stories by atheists and agnostics. As has been documented on [aaAgnostica.org](http://aaAgnostica.org), Rebellion Dogs and other AA gathering-places over the last few years, AA member or Area attempts to produce *AA in the words of our non-theistic members* has been presented and rejected a dozen times from 1976 to 2014. The rejection of the 2010 initiative for atheist AA stories in 2011 and 2012 spawned the consolation prize: “Many Paths to Spirituality (2014)”<sup>xii</sup>

So, if you're waiting at home until after the April General Service Conference, when your homegroup will stock up on the new [“The ‘God’ Word: Atheists and Agnostics in AA”](#) USA/Canada version – maybe you're right. But just in case it's not that simple... do you know who your delegate is?

If you have a home group, it's in a district. Your district is part of one of ninety-three

Areas in Canada and the USA.<sup>xiii</sup> My group, Beyond Belief Agnostics & Freethinkers Group is part of District 10 in Area 83. Our last chance to talk to our delegate – who votes at the Conference – will be the last weekend of March at our bi-annual Area Assembly. I wrote her a letter, already. I told her my personal story of how much trouble the current Catch-22 causes in replenishing our stock of “The ‘God’ Word” pamphlets. I told her how much the pamphlet means to newcomers and long-timers alike. I told her, that if it comes up this April at the



67<sup>th</sup> meeting of the General Service Conference of AA, it would mean a great deal to members in her Area if she votes in the affirmative.

[Click here for "The 'God' Word."](#) **You can send your delegate a PDF-copy** and maybe a personal, heartfelt story about how you think this literature is vital in carrying AA's message. If you're going to your Area Assembly, download the PDF pamphlet to your phone and show others, too.

The General Service Conference is April 23 - 29.<sup>xiv</sup> In AA, we don't always get our way; but we always get our say.

A friend of mine whose been sober longer than me, looks at all that's going on in AA today, secular AA, AA's gathering on the internet and the recent peaceful settlement between Toronto Intergroup and secular AA. He said to me, "Despite the best efforts of extremists on both sides, AA may now be healthier than it has been for years."

That made me smile. It's true, the struggle is the journey; struggles and triumphs certainly are the adventures of life.

But back in 2009, when I was looking at the political and social progress of an African American family moving into the White House, I complacently thought, "It's only getting better from here." This is, I think a good time to be in recovery. I will learn from my earlier complacency and I will stay engaged. We all have a say; why wouldn't we use it for good?

Thanks for letting me have my say. Peace.

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/en\\_tradition4.pdf](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_tradition4.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/en\\_bm-31.pdf](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bm-31.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> “If you think you are an atheist, an agnostic or a skeptic, or have any other form of intellectual pride that is keeping you from accepting what is in this book, I feel sorry for you.” *Alcoholics Anonymous*, “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare” pg. 181

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid pg. 59

<sup>v</sup> [http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2023710.Stools\\_and\\_Bottles](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2023710.Stools_and_Bottles)

<sup>vi</sup> [http://www.hazelden.org/OA\\_HTML/ibeCCptmDspRte.jsp?item=3831&sitex=10020:22372:US](http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCptmDspRte.jsp?item=3831&sitex=10020:22372:US)

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.thefix.com/content/joe-charlie-other-two-old-drunks>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.thefix.com/five-aa-myths-critics-and-zealots-share>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.theweek.co.uk/80065/belief-in-god-plunges-after-torrid-year>

<sup>x</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/04/americans-faith-in-god-may-be-eroding/>

<sup>xi</sup> <http://news.nationalpost.com/holy-post/religion-not-important-to-most-canadians-although-majority-believe-in-god-poll>

<sup>xii</sup> [http://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/p-84\\_manypathstospirituality.pdf](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-84_manypathstospirituality.pdf)

<sup>xiii</sup> [http://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/list-of-general-service-conference-area-web-sites-uscanada](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/list-of-general-service-conference-area-web-sites-uscanada)

<sup>xiv</sup> [http://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_US/aa-general-service-board-calendars](http://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/aa-general-service-board-calendars)