

Thoughts on "Why don't you choose your own conception of God?"

Let's review the scene just before this quote appears. Bill is by now quite drunk, having been drinking during the course of this several hour-long conversation w/ Ebby. Ebby Thacher has gotten involved with the Oxford Groups, a Christian Fellowship who use a lot of religious terminology. And – like many newcomers, *he's on fire!* He's been talking a lot about God – and Bill doesn't like it at all.

So – they're arguing back and forth and Bill essentially says "*don't give me any more of that religious crap. I believe in some Spirit of Nature or whatever, but not any of that other stuff.*"

But Bill must feel somewhat torn because Ebby was two-months sober. So here was living proof of some greater Spiritual Power working in his life – whether Bill liked it or not. Ebby was undeniable proof of what he was claiming.

So, after all this debating, Ebby must've gotten pretty frustrated and worn out. And according to what Bill wrote on page 12:2, that exasperation gave birth to a concept that has altered the lives of *millions*.

But – **DID EBBY ACTUALLY SAY THIS? Probably not!**

Think about it. Bill was a salesman and promoter. In fact, in the early days, when someone with some sobriety spoke at an open meeting often attended by many newcomers, it was known as a "pitch." And – as Bill states in the original manuscript of "How It Works", the book was carefully "*designed to sell (certain) pertinent ideas.*" (manuscript page 27). The point that Bill was trying to sell us something must be kept in mind.

When interviewed later, Ebby said he had no recollection of making that suggestion to Bill. That such a proposal would have represented a **MAJOR** deviation from the Oxford Group message of belief in and reliance on Christ, a philosophy into which Ebby had been staunchly indoctrinated during the previous few months.

As for Bill's own recollections, we must remember that he was by his own admission, teetering on the edge of alcoholic insanity. Therefore, not the most reliable of narrators.

Between Ebby's visit and the time the book was written, Bill had formulated some clear-cut ideas of what alcoholics would and would not sign onto. The Akronites were having tremendous success with a very Christian approach and seemed content to maintain their ties with the Oxford Fellowship. Wilson, the visionary, knew better, and was committed to a non-Christian book and a more open-ended, "choose for yourself" spirituality. This being very reminiscent of what he was taught by the man who raised him, maternal Grandfather Gardner Griffith ("*his contempt of some church folk...and his denial of the preacher's right to tell him how he must listen*" pg. 10:1). His "quest" to sell these ideas was aided by the burgeoning membership in Cleveland, where "sobriety czar" Clarence Snyder strongly supported the split from the Protestant Oxford Group, and a less dogmatic tone for the book.

So the "mind-blowing gate-widening" suggestion, "*Why don't you choose your own conception of God*" almost certainly came entirely from the **mind** of Bill Wilson, and not the **mouth** of Ebby Thacher.

As further proof, consider the fact that page twelve's paragraphs one, two, three and four **were included not in the original manuscripts of the book!**

There is a spiritual power

I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized. He was on a different footing. His roots grasped a new soil.

gust #1

Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans, when we want Him enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

at Howard

The real significance of my experience in the Cathedral burst upon me. For a brief moment, I had needed and wanted God. There had been a humble willingness to have Him with me -- and He came. But soon the sense of His presence had been blotted out by worldly clamors, mostly those within myself. And so it had been ever since. How blind I had been.

Had a minor desire to be backed up

At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens. I have not had a drink since.

There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found friend take them away, root and branch.

My school mate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.

~~FAITH~~

I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure.

My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of ~~life~~ living which answered all my problems. Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and requirements. were the essential re-

Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all.

These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound.

For a moment I was alarmed, and called my friend, the doctor, to ask if I were still sane. He listened in wonder as I talked.

Finally he shook his head saying, "Something has happened to you I don't understand. But you had better hang on to it. Anything is better than the way you were." The good doctor now sees many men who have such experiences. He knows they are real.

While I lay in the hospital the thought came that there were thousands of hope-

Insert #1

Rats grabbed us Despite the knowing example
 of my father there were in me
 the vestiges of my old prejudices.
 The word God still surrounded a
 cert' antip. When the thought
 was expressed that there might be
 a God ^{with} me this idea was
 interrupted. I didn't like the
 idea. I could go for such concepts
 as the Ent, Universal M, or
 spirit of nature but I rejected the
 thought of a God of the manner
 however knowing this way might be
 there since talked with scores of men
 who felt the same way.

My father says what there seemed
 a novel idea. He said, "Why do
you chase your own ear of God"

That state but in hand.
It melted the very intellectual
mountain in whose shade I
had lived & showed for
warm eyes. I stood in
the sun ^{at} last.

~~It was only a matter of
being willing to bet in a
per after than myself. nothing
more was my of me to make
my bet. I saw that growth could
stand for it ^{possibly} on a point of
Crisp ^{unlike} I ^{with} ^{and}
what I saw in me for
what I do it? of us I stand!~~