

Foreword to the First Edition of the Russian Translation

(Please note that this edition appeared in 1989, prior to the collapse of communism. Translated by Lena N.)

The book "Alcoholics Anonymous" is the basic text which outlines the principles of the world-wide known program of recovery of alcoholism. It has been translated into many languages and is being distributed widely helping fight alcoholism everywhere for alcoholism does not recognize state borders.

Some Soviet readers are already familiar with the program of Fellowship of AA from the publications which appeared in recent years in the Soviet Union. Some people already work the program in Moscow, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and several other cities of the Soviet Union.

This translation is offered to those who want to familiarize themselves with the essence of the program using the primary source. In offering this translation the publishers relied on the enormous experience accumulated by the fellowship during several decades. They were also guided by the wisdom contained in the famous Russian proverb: "Let's not reinvent the bicycle."

This does not mean, however, that the authors claim monopoly on the truth. Every Soviet reader shall note that this book was written in the United States more than fifty years ago. This is evidenced by its language, its manner of presentation and the portrayed facts of American reality of that time.

Nevertheless, it is unfair to conclude that the book is outdated. To the present day it is offering real help to people from various countries regardless of their skin color, religious beliefs, social status and other differences. And this is not surprising because the program of recovery outlined in this book is based on what is now considered in the Soviet Union and other countries as the orientation toward values common to all mankind: love of people, strife to mutual aid, kindness and self-realization.

The program is based on these and other intransient values that are eternal because they had demonstrated their practical significance, survived thousands of years and are currently helping survive the humanity. All of this, apparently, will be well understood by the readers brought up on the culture of Pushkin and Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Vernadsky.

It is in reliance on this point of view that one shall consider what the program of AA refers to as the spiritual side, spirituality and other not so common for a Soviet reader terms as God, Higher Power, etc.

The program of AA would have never achieved such a world-wide recognition if it was to reduce these universal principles to a particular religious content. Because the notion of spirituality adopted by the Book is very broad it is easily accepted by Catholics, Buddhists, atheists or Muslims. As the authors of the Book repeatedly emphasize, everyone is free to understand "It," that helps him, in his own way. It is only important that the reader came to feel "It" that is bigger than him, came to believe in the possibility of acquiring spiritual support, and admitted that only faith, hope and love can save him when all other means have failed.

Dogmatism is foreign to the program of AA. Every group and every person search for their spiritual support on their own. The experience of other people with all of its variety and richness can only serve as a common reference point in each particular circumstance. Yet, this book serves as a fairly reliable guide because it is a product of the collective creative work of many people. The authors did not care at all whether their written work would please anybody. Their primary goal was to attempt to offer practical help to people finding themselves at times hopeless.

The anonymity of the authors did not render the book impersonal. It is addressed to every reader, for his benefit and his good.

Translation of the "Preface to the First Edition of the Russian Translation." ©1989 AAWS - NYC.

Arkie Koehl -- 4/6/92

The book "Alcoholics Anonymous" is the basic text setting forth the principles of a world famous program for overcoming alcoholism. It has been translated into many languages and distributed widely, to help in the struggle against alcoholism everywhere, since alcoholism knows no political borders.

Some Soviet readers are already familiar with the program of the society of Alcoholics Anonymous through publications appearing in recent years in the Soviet Union. Some are already working the program in Moscow, Leningrad and a number of other cities of the union republics.

This translation is meant for anyone who would like to familiarize himself with the essence of the program utilizing the original source material. In making it available, the publishers relied on the vast experience accumulated by the society over many decades. They were also guided by the wisdom embodied in the famous Russian proverb: "There's no need to invent the bicycle."

This is not to say, however, that the authors claim a monopoly on the truth. Soviet readers should bear in mind that this book was written in the U.S.A. over 50 years ago. This is evident from the language, narrative style and the realities of American life of that time reflected in it.

Nevertheless, it can in no way be said that this book has become outdated. Even today it renders real aid to people of various countries of the world, irrespective of color, faith, social status or other differences. And that's not surprising, since the program of recovery

outlined in it is based on what is recognized in the Soviet Union and other countries of the world as an orientation toward the common human values of love of one's fellow man, a striving to help one another, kindness and self-improvement.

The program is grounded in these and other immutable values, which are eternal because they have demonstrated their practical significance, survived over the course of millenia, and are now helping the whole of mankind to survive as well. Obviously, this is well understood by the reader schooled in the culture of Pushkin and Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Vernadsky.

This point of view should be one's guide in approaching what in the program of A.A. ("Alcoholics Anonymous") are referred to as spirituality, the spiritual aspect, and other terms like God, Higher Power, etc., to which the Soviet reader is not always accustomed.

The A.A. program would never have achieved such worldwide recognition if it had set these universal concepts within an established religious framework. As long as the interpretation of spirituality in this book is much broader, it can be easily grasped by Catholics, Bhuddists, atheists or Muslims. As the authors repeatedly underscore, everyone is free to work out for himself whatever helps him. The only thing that's important is for a person to feel that that "something" is more powerful than himself, for him to trust in the possibility of finding a spiritual support, and for him to recognize that only faith, hope and love will be able to save him, when all other means are powerless.

Dogmatism is alien to the A.A. program. Each individual and each group seeks out its spiritual support on its own. The experience of others, with all its variety and fruitfulness, can serve as but a general guideline within specific conditions. Nevertheless, this book appears to be a reasonably dependable guide, because it is the end product of the collective creation of many people. The last thing they were concerned with was to please anyone with what they had written. Their main goal was to try to render practical help to people who sometimes find themselves in a no-way-out situation.

The anonymity of the book's authors did not render the book impersonal. It is addressed straightforwardly to the reader, for his aid and for his good.