

Schematic Outline of the first 103 pages of the Big Book

I. The Doctor's Opinion

- A. First letter (xxiii–xxiv): You may rely absolutely on anything they say about themselves.
- B. The authors summarize the second letter (xxiv–xxv)—[T]he body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. . . . In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.
- C. Second letter (xxv–xxx): [T]hey cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people

II. Chapter 1: Bill's Story

- A. Alcohol is the high part of life (1–5)
- B. Alcohol becomes a necessity (5–7)
- C. The kind doctor explains the physical craving and the mental obsession; but self-knowledge doesn't work (7)
- D. Bill reaches the bottom—Bill's Step 1 (8)
- E. Ebby tells Bill about the religious solution and expands it to create the spiritual solution, open to all—Bill's Step 2 (9–12)
- F. Bill takes Steps 3 through 9 (13)
- G. Bill has a spiritual experience (14)
- H. Bill works Steps 10 through 12 (14–16)

III. Chapter 2: There is a Solution

- A. We have solved the drink problem and are united by a common solution (the Twelve Steps) (17)
- B. Alcoholism is an illness which has not been solved by professionals but alcoholics can be reached through fellow-suffers (18–19)
- C. This book is our attempt to provide the solution to all your problems by telling you what we did (19–20)
- D. The summary of the alcoholic problem:
 - 1. The physical craving overwhelms the alcoholic; once he starts drinking, he cannot stop (21–22)
 - 2. The mental obsession tells him that he does not have the physical reaction, so that he can go back to drinking even when sober: Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body. (22–25)
- E. There is a solution—deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. (25–26) (And note footnotes leading us to the Appendix on "Spiritual Experience", 569–570.)
- F. Rowland Hazzard's encounter with Dr. Jung—spiritual experiences, or huge emotional displacements and rearrangements are necessary, but cannot usually be reached through religion for the true alcoholic (26–28)
- G. This book contains clear-cut directions . . . showing how we recovered. (28–29)

IV. Chapter 3: More about Alcoholism

- A. The mental obsession in general: The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. (30)
- B. We must smash the delusion that we will ever become physically normal—the craving will always hit us if we drink alcohol (30–32)
 - 1. The man of thirty—his falling victim first, to the mental obsession, and then, to the physical craving, after twenty-five years of sobriety (32–33)
- C. Will-power is not sufficient for the alcoholic; we'll give examples so you can see whether you are an alcoholic (33–35)

1. Jim—the car salesman who had a bad day; who had knowledge about himself but gave it all up for the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk! (35–37)
 2. The jay-walker, who knows the danger but can't stop (37–39)
 3. Fred—the accountant who had a good day; who had self-knowledge and knew the problem, but decided that it would be nice to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. (39–42)
- D. Summary: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power. (43)

V. Chapter 4: We Agnostics

- A. We need a spiritual experience to conquer the illness; although this may appear to pose difficulties for the agnostic or atheist, don't worry (44)
- B. Will-power isn't enough; we don't have enough power to overcome alcoholism: We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power? Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. (44–46)
- C. All we need is willingness to believe (46–48)
- D. Why believe in a Power greater than yourself? (48)
 1. Practically speaking, we believe in theories if they are grounded in fact—if they explain facts
 - a. Our theory is that a spiritual experience solves our problem; and
 - b. The fact is that we have solved our problem: the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of [our] lives (48–51)
 2. Practically speaking, a willingness to change our belief system leads to being able to do things that are thought to be impossible (Galileo, the Wright brothers, our experience) (51–52)
 3. Clearly self-sufficiency and logic don't work as a theory (52–53)
- E. The choice is clear: God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be? We are squarely confronted with the question of faith. (53)
 1. Faith is necessary to reach our solution (53)
 2. We already have some faith—in our reasoning, our ability to think (53–54)
 3. We are already worshippers, worshipping people, money, ourselves, the sunset, the sea, a flower; loving others (54)
 4. Everything really important to us has nothing to do with reason—it is all faith (54–55)
- F. Deep down inside us is God; it may be obscured but the idea of God is there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. (55)
- G. Fitz's story: "Our Southern Friend"—Who are you to say there is no God? (55–57)

VI. Chapter 5: How It Works

- A. Our path works if we are honest; the way is hard and requires complete dedication; but you can draw on God's power to help you; and half measures will avail you nothing (58–59)
- B. The Twelve Steps (59–60)
- C. If we are convinced that we are alcoholic, that human power cannot relieve us, and that God can, then we're ready to take Step 3 (60)
- D. Step 3
 1. Turn our *will* over to God: any life run on self-will can hardly be a success; we're like actors in a play who want to be the directors; we are selfish in that we want *our* way, whether it's for the worst or the best of reasons (60–62)
 2. Turn our *life* over to God: decide that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. (62–63)
 3. The promises as we take the steps—to have a new Employer (63)

4. The Step 3 prayer—to be taken with an understanding person (63)
- E. Step 4—the beginning of our inventory—the fact-finding (searching) and fact-facing (fearless) examination of what is blocking us from the sunlight of the spirit; being convinced that our selfishness (self-centredness, self-pity, self-delusion, fear) is at the heart of our problem, we considered its common manifestations (63–64)
1. Resentment—the Past did not go my way (64–67)—see form for details
 2. Fear—the Future won't go my way (67–68)—see form for details
 3. Sex Conduct—those relationships in which physical attraction was mixed in are the examples in our past by which we try to shape a sane and sound ideal for all relationships (68–70)—see form for details
 4. If we have written all this down, we have made an inventory of [our] grosser handicaps (71)

VII. Chapter 6: Into Action

A. Step 5

1. Why we need to do Step 5
 - a. We need objectivity to make certain that we know what has been blocking us from God (72)
 - b. We have to be honest with another person (72–74)
2. That person must be able to keep a confidence, understand and approve of what we're doing, and won't change our plan (74–76)
3. Action of Step 5
 - a. We must explain to that person why this is so important to us (75)
 - b. We tell that person every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past (75)
 - c. If we've been thorough, there are promises (75)
 - d. We then go home and meditate, asking God whether we have omitted anything (75)

B. Step 6

1. Are we ready to have God remove those things which are blocking us from God? (76)

C. Step 7

1. The Step 7 prayer

D. Steps 8 and 9

1. We have a list and we must remove those things which have blocked us by sweeping away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. We have to do this (76–77)
2. Direct Amends
 - a. Making the amends when there is no harm done
 - (1) Eyeball to eyeball (77–78)
 - (2) Restitution (example of money) (78)
 - (3) Taking consequences for our past actions (example of criminal offence) (78–79)
 - b. Making the amends when harm may be done
 - (1) Restitution (example of unpaid alimony and harm to new family) (79)
 - (2) Taking consequences for our past actions (example of denial of loan and harm to partner and family) (80)
 - (3) Eyeball to eyeball (example of infidelity and harm to the person to whom we make amends) (80–82)
3. Living Amends—the period of reconstruction, where saying sorry isn't enough (82–83)
4. Amends we cannot make; it's okay so long as we're ready to make them (83)
5. The promises halfway through Step 9 (83–84)

- E. Step 10
 - 1. The continuation of the inventory process—Steps 4 through 9—whenever needed (84)
 - 2. The promises at the end of Step 9 and the beginning of Step 10—Sanity is reached at last! We are neutral to alcohol—we no longer have the mental obsession (84–85)

- F. Step 11
 - 1. Retiring at night—reviewing our day and doing an inventory process (Steps 4 through 9) in our meditation (86)
 - 2. Awakening in the morning—previewing our day and asking God to free us from self-will (86–87)
 - 3. As we go through the day—reminding ourselves we’re no longer in charge (87–88)

VIII. Chapter 7: Working with Others

- A. Step 12: carrying the message
- B. Find a prospect, find out all you can, and see if he wants to see you (89–91)
- C. First meeting
 - 1. Talk generally, lead into drinking stories, qualify (91)
 - 2. Describe self as an alcoholic, describe the physical craving and the mental obsession, and the hopelessness (91–92)
 - 3. Offer your solution, and explain the spiritual aspect of it (92–94)
 - 4. Outline the programme of action (94)
 - 5. Give him a copy of the Big Book and encourage him to read it, but don’t spend much more time with him, and don’t push him (94–96)

- D. Second meeting
 - 1. If he wants to go through the Twelve Steps, sponsor him, offer to be with him in Step 3 and to hear his Step 5 (96)

- E. Sponsorship
 - 1. Help him, but not at your expense and not in a way that makes him dependent upon you (96–98)
 - 2. Help his family, if you can (98–100)
- F. Our freedom—what we can do—how we can be near alcohol with no problem, so long as we are spiritually fit (100–102)
- G. Our job description: to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others (102–103)