

# AN ARTIST'S CONCEPT



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***"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which can not fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance-that principle is contempt prior to investigation.***

**--HERBERT SPENCER"**

**THE above quotation is descriptive of the mental attitudes of many alcoholics when the subject of religion, as a cure, is first brought to their attention. It is only when a man has tried everything else, when in utter desperation and terrific need he turns to something bigger than**

**himself, that he gets a glimpse of the way out. It is then that contempt is replaced by hope, and hope by fulfillment.**

**In this personal story I have endeavored to relate something of my experience in the search for spiritual help rather than a description of the neurotic drinking that made the search necessary. After all, the pattern of most alcoholic experiences fits a pretty general mold. Experiences differ because of circumstances, environment, and temperament, but the after effects, both physical and mental, are almost identical. It makes but little difference how or why a man becomes an alcoholic once this disease manifests itself. The preventive measures adopted for alcoholic tendencies in the future**

**will have to be found in a more progressive program of mental hygiene and medical research than is now obtainable. It is important that at present we believe there is only one sure pathway to recovery for any alcoholic.**

**In my own case I was not entirely ignorant of the causes that led me into excessive drinking. In a desperate effort to eliminate these causes, to find a means to better mental and physical health, I investigated the alcoholic problem from every angle. Medicine, psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis absorbed my interest and supplied me with a great deal of general and specific information. It led me in the end, however, to the fact that for me here was a mental and physical disease that science**

had placed in the category of "incurables." Briefly, all that this study and research ever did for me was to show something about WHY I drank. It substantiated a fact I had known all along, that my drinking was symptomatic. It did point out a road to better mental health but it demanded something of me in return that I did not have to give. It asked of me a *power* of self-will but it did not take into consideration that this self-will was already drugged with poison-that it was very sick. Intuitively I also knew that a person constrained to temperance by the domination of will is no more *cured* of his vice than if he were locked up in prison. I knew that somehow, some way, the mental stream, the emotions, must be purified before the right pathwa y could be followed.

**It was about this time that I began "flirting" with religion as a possible way out. I approached the subject in a wary, none too reverent, attitude. I believed in an omnipotent God or Deity, but the orthodox approach through the church, with its dogma and ritual, left me unmoved. The more I struggled to gain an intelligent grasp upon spiritual development, the more confused I became. On the other hand a purely materialistic viewpoint that postulated a "mechanical order of things" seemed too negative even to entertain. As an artist I had spent too much time communing with nature-trying to place upon canvas or paper my emotional feelings, not to know that a tremendous spiritual power was back of the universe. There was, however, so much that seemed illogical or sentimental**

**about religion in general-so many doubts assailed me, so many problems to be confronted-yet there was within myself a strong and urgent desire for spiritual satisfaction. The occasional periods in which I felt a spiritual emotion, I immediately examined with all the ardor of the inveterate analyst. Was this emotion just a form of religious ecstasy? Was it fear? Was it just blind belief or had I tapped something?**

**"Most men," wrote Thoreau, "lead lives of quiet desperation." It was the articulation of this despair that led to my drinking in the beginning. Religion, so far, had only added to my desperation. I drank more than ever.**

**A seed had been planted, however, and a short time afterward I met the**

**man who has for the past five years devoted a great deal of time and energy to helping alcoholics. Looking back on that meeting, the simplicity of his talk with me is amazing. He told me very little but what I already knew, in part, but what he did have to say was bereft of all fancy spiritual phraseology-it was simple Christianity imparted with Divine Power. The next day I met over twenty men who had achieved a mental rebirth from alcoholism. Here again it was not so much what these men told me in regard to their experiences that was impressive, as it was a sense or feeling that an invisible influence was at work. What was it this man had and these other men exemplified without their knowing? They were human everyday sort of people. They certainly were not pious. They had no "holier**

than thou" attitude. They were not reformers, and their concepts of religion in some cases were almost inarticulate. But they had *something!* Was it just their sincerity that was magnetic? Yes, they certainly were sincere, but much more than that emanated from them. Was it their great and terrible need, now being fulfilled, that made me feel a vibratory force that was new and strange? Now I was getting closer and suddenly, it seemed to me, I had the answer. These men were but instruments. Of themselves they were nothing.

Here at last was a demonstration of spiritual law at work. Here was spiritual law working through human lives just as definitely and with the same phenomena expressed in the physical laws that govern the



**material world.**

**These men were like lamps supplied with current from a huge spiritual dynamo and controlled by the rheostat of their souls. They burned dim, bright, or brilliant, depending upon the degree and progress of their contact. And this contact could only be maintained just so long as they obeyed that spiritual law.**

**These men were thinking straight- therefore their actions corresponded to their thoughts. They had given themselves, *their minds*, over to a higher power for *direction*. Here, it seemed to me, in the one word "Thought"-was the crux of the whole spiritual quest. That "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" and so is his health, his environment, his failure, or his success in life.**

**How foolish I had been in my quest for spiritual help. How selfish and egotistical I had been to think that I could approach God *intellectually*. In the very struggle to obtain faith I had lost it. I had given to the term faith a religious significance only. I had failed to see that faith was "our common everyday manner of thinking." That good and evil were but end results of certain uniform and reliable spiritual laws. Obviously, my own thinking had been decidedly wrong. Normal most of the time, it was abnormal at the wrong times. Like everyone's thinking, it was a mixture of good and bad, but mainly it was uncontrolled.**

**I had been sticking my chin out and getting socked by spiritual law until I was punch drunk. If one could**

**become humble, if he could become "*as a little child*" before this powerful spiritual thought force, the pathway could be discovered.**

**The day I made my first efforts in this direction an entire new world opened up for me. Drinking as a vicious habit was washed completely out of my consciousness. I have never even been tempted to take a drink since. As a matter of fact there are so many other things within myself that need correction that the drink habit looks silly in comparison. Please do not assume that all this is but an exposition of spiritual pride. A chart of my spiritual progress would look like the "graph" of a business that had been hit by everything but an earthquake. But there has been progress. It has cured me of a vicious habit. Where my life had**

**been full of mental turmoil there is now an ever increasing depth of calmness. Where there was a hit or miss attitude toward living there is now new direction and force.**

**The approaches of man to God are many and varied. My conception of God as Universal Mind is after all but one man's approach to and concept of the Supreme Being. To me it makes sense, opens up a fascinating field of endeavor and is a challenge, the acceptance of which can make of life the "Adventure Magnificent."**

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