

PREFACE

THIS IS the fourth edition of the book “Alcoholics Anonymous.” The first edition appeared in April 1939, and in the following sixteen years, more than 300,000 copies went into circulation. The second edition, published in 1955, reached a total of more than 1,150,500 copies. The third edition, which came off press in 1976, achieved a circulation of approximately 19,550,000 in all formats.

Because this book has become the basic text for our Society and has helped such large numbers of alcoholic men and women to recovery, there exists strong sentiment against any radical changes being made in it. Therefore, the first portion of this volume, describing the A.A. recovery program, has been left largely untouched in the course of revisions made for the second, third, and fourth editions. The section called “The Doctor’s Opinion” has been kept intact, just as it was originally written in 1939 by the late Dr. William D. Silkworth, our Society’s great medical benefactor.

The second edition added the appendices, the Twelve Traditions, and the directions for getting in touch with A.A. But the chief change was in the section of personal stories, which was expanded to reflect the Fellowship’s growth. “Bill’s Story,” “Doctor Bob’s Nightmare,” and one other personal history from the first edition were retained intact; three were edited and one of these was retitled; new versions of two sto-

ries were written, with new titles; thirty completely new stories were added; and the story section was divided into three parts, under the same headings that are used now.

In the third edition, Part I (“Pioneers of A.A.”) was left unchanged. Nine of the stories in Part II (“They Stopped in Time”) were carried over from the second edition; eight new stories were added. In Part III (“They Lost Nearly All”), eight stories were retained; five new ones were added.

This fourth edition includes the Twelve Concepts for World Service and revises the three sections of personal stories as follows. One new story has been added to Part I, and two that originally appeared in Part III have been repositioned there; six stories have been deleted. Six of the stories in Part II have been carried over, eleven new ones have been added, and eleven taken out. Part III now includes twelve new stories; eight were removed (in addition to the two that were transferred to Part I).

All changes made over the years in the Big Book (A.A. members’ fond nickname for this volume) have had the same purpose: to represent the current membership of Alcoholics Anonymous more accurately, and thereby to reach more alcoholics. If you have a drinking problem, we hope that you may pause in reading one of the forty-two personal stories and think: “Yes, that happened to me”; or, more important, “Yes, I’ve felt like that”; or, most important, “Yes, I believe this program can work for me too.”