

A remarkable academic tour de force by Michael St George, "Survival of a Fitting Quotation" was published in March 2005 and that the "contempt prior to investigation" quotation should be attributed to William Paley and not Herbert Spencer.

A little background on how the erroneous attribution found its way into the Big Book:

The member who introduced the attribution to the Big Book was Ray C. His Big Book story is "An Artist's Concept" and he began his story using a quotation that he mistakenly believed came from Herbert Spencer. The quotation said: "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance - that principle is contempt prior to investigation."

Ray said the quotation was descriptive of the mental attitudes of many alcoholics when the subject of religion, as a cure, is first brought to their attention. He said "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" (re brief biography of Ray C by Nancy O for more detail).

Ray, a recognized artist, was asked to design the dust jacket for the 1st edition Big Book. He submitted various designs for consideration including one in an Art Deco style. The dust jacket chosen for the 1st edition was red and yellow with the words "Alcoholics Anonymous" printed across the top in large white script. It became known as the "circus color" dust jacket because of its loud colors. The unused Art Deco dust jacket is in the Stepping Stones Foundation archives.

Ray C's story was not included in the 2nd edition Big Book. However, the quotation, erroneously attributed to Herbert Spencer, was added to Appendix II "Spiritual Experience" in the 1st printing of the 2nd edition Big Book in 1955. The background for the quotation appearing in the appendix is also interesting.

In March 1941, the wording of Step 12 was changed in the 2nd printing of the 1st edition Big Book. The term "spiritual experience" was changed to "spiritual awakening" and the term "as the result of these steps" was changed to "as the result of those steps."

Appendix II, "Spiritual Experience" was added to the 1st edition Big Book in its 2nd printing. This was done because many members thought they had to have a sudden and spectacular spiritual experience similar

to the one Bill had in Towns Hospital. The appendix emphasized that most spiritual experiences were of the type that the psychologist William James called the "educational variety" (note: this is yet another attribution that cannot be verified by a written work where James actually used the specific term "educational variety").

The so-called "Herbert Spencer quote" was added to Appendix II in the publication of the 2nd edition Big Book in 1955. It is not an accurate attribution. No written work by Spencer contains the quote. Current research attributes the quote to the English clergyman, author and college lecturer by the name of William Paley who lived from 1743 to 1805. Paley trained for the Anglican priesthood and was appointed a fellow and tutor of his college in 1766 and rose through the ranks of the Anglican Church.

Paley wrote several books on philosophy and Christianity, which proved extremely influential. His 1794 book "A View of the Evidence of Christianity" was required reading at Cambridge University until the 20th century.

Herbert Spencer (who lived from 1820 to 1903) was a great rival of his fellow Englishman Charles Darwin who is credited with the theory of evolution. It was Spencer, not Darwin, who popularized the term "evolution" and it was also Spencer who coined the term, "survival of the fittest." Spencer, however, did not author the quotation attributed to him in the Big Book.