

انجمن معتادان گمنام

**Narcotics Anonymous (NA)**



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انجمن معتادان گمنام (NA) Narcotics Anonymous

مؤلف: دکتر احمد جعفری

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## بررسی وضعیت اعتیاد در ایران

یکی از دلایل مهم افزایش تعداد معتادان در کشور، فعالیت گسترده گروهی بین‌المللی تحت نام "انجمن معتادان گمنام" (**Narcotics Anonymous, NA**) در داخل کشور می‌باشد. این گروه اکثر معتادان کشور را تحت آموزشی شرک‌آلود موسوم به "دوازده قدم" قرار می‌دهد که این امر منجر به لغزش دایمی افراد و بازگشت آنان به چرخه اعتیاد می‌باشد. در این کتاب عملکرد **NA** و آموزه‌های "دوازده قدم" مورد بررسی قرار می‌گیرد.

براساس آمار ارائه شده توسط خودشان، در حال حاضر "انجمن معتادان گمنام" توسط ۲۱۷ کمیته شهری، در طول هفته ۱۸۱۳۱ جلسه را برگزار می‌کنند.

انجمن **NA** ایران، یکی از فعال‌ترین انجمن‌های **NA** در سطح جهان می‌باشد. با توجه به تعداد ۱۸۱۳۱ جلسه که در کشور ۷۷ میلیونی ایران تشکیل می‌شود، در کشور چین با ۱/۳ میلیارد جمعیت، تنها ۲ جلسه برگزار می‌شود.

چندی قبل شورای منطقه ایران **NA**، به منظور دریافت مجوز فعالیت ملی، کمیته‌ای را جهت پیگیری این موضوع ایجاد و اختیارات لازم را جهت بررسی و چگونگی انجام آن واگذار نمود و در تاریخ ۹۲/۱۰/۲۲ پروانه فعالیت ملی از وزارت کشور برای **NA** در ایران صادر گردید.

## بررسی انجمن معتادان گمنام

تاریخچه این انجمن به سال ۱۹۳۵ میلادی و به کشور آمریکا برمی‌گردد. در این سال انجمنی با نام "الکلی‌های گمنام" (**AA**) تاسیس شد که در رابطه با ترک اعتیاد الکلی فعالیت می‌کرد. با بهره‌گیری از تجارب انجمن "الکلی‌های گمنام" (**AA**)، "انجمن معتادان گمنام" (**NA**) در سال ۱۹۵۳ فعالیت خود را به‌طور رسمی آغاز کرد.

سابقه **NA** در ایران به سال ۱۳۶۹ برمی‌گردد که بنابر اطلاعاتی که در جزوه‌های اطلاع‌رسانی **NA** ذکر شده: "دو برادر که خود در آمریکا موفق به ترک مصرف موادمخدر شده بودند، این سیستم را به ایران انتقال دادند". جلسات انجمن به مدت ۱ سال در مرکز بازپروری قرچک برگزار شد ولی به دلایلی فعالیت آن مرکز متوقف گردید؛ تا

اینکه دوباره در سال ۱۳۷۲ انجمن حرکت خود را از سر گرفت و در حال حاضر حمایت سازمان بهزیستی از برگزاری جلسات این انجمن، باعث تداوم آن می‌شود.

اصول برنامه ترک در NA بر پایه ۱۲ مرحله به نام "۱۲ قدم" متمرکز شده است که توسط اعضای قدیمی تر و با سابقه بیشتر در زمینه ترک مواد موسوم به "راهنماها" به تازه واردین آموزش داده می‌شود.

گردهمایی اعضای انجمن طی برگزاری جلساتی غیررسمی در محل‌هایی که به وسیله اعضا اجاره می‌شود، صورت می‌گیرد. جلسات به دو دسته تقسیم می‌شوند: "باز" که ورود به آن برای عموم آزاد است و "بسته" که مختص معتادان است. در این جلسات، اعضای انجمن درباره تجربیاتشان در طی مدت قطع مصرف با هم صحبت می‌کنند. در این جلسات یک معتاد خود را معرفی کرده و سپس از تجارب خود می‌گوید: به عنوان مثال، هنگامی که مهلت صحبت به معتادی به نام اکبر می‌رسد او خود را این طور معرفی می‌کند:

سلام؛ من اکبر هستم؛ یک معتاد. افراد حاضر در جلسه در پاسخ به وی یکصدا می‌گویند: سلام اکبر!

اکبر می‌گوید: من سه هفته است که پاکم! و سپس وی تجربیات خود را در طی این سه هفته قطع مصرف، با سایرین در میان می‌گذارد و بعد نوبت به شیرین و سمیرا می‌رسد که آنان نیز ضمن معرفی خود با همان روش شروع به گفتن می‌کنند.....!!

انجمن معتادان گمنام و یا NA، در بهار ۱۳۸۴ آمار درصد ترکیبی به این شرح را در رابطه با عملکردش منتشر کرده است:

کمتر از یک سال ۶۰ درصد

۳ - ۱ سال ۲۸ درصد

۵ - ۳ سال ۱۱/۱ درصد

بیش از ۵ سال ۸/۷ درصد

براساس این آمار، در حدود ۸/۷ درصد اعضا موفق شده‌اند که تا ۵ سال پاک بمانند، که این آمار بالاتر از مقادیری است که کارشناسان در امریکا ارائه کرده‌اند. بر اساس آمار اتخاذ شده در امریکا درصد افرادی که با طی دوره دوازده قدم موفق به ترک اعتیاد شده‌اند (تا ۸ سال پاک مانده‌اند) حدود ۵ درصد برآورد گردیده است.

نکته قابل تامل در این آمارها آن است که درصدهای ارائه شده مربوط به افرادی است که دوره های NA را طی کرده و سپس لغزش نموده اند. بر مبنای آمار ارائه شده در امریکا، افرادی که دوره را تمام می کنند، حدوداً ۵ درصد افرادی هستند که در دوره ثبت نام می کنند. بنابراین برطبق این آمارها، تعداد افرادی که در دوره های AA که معادل NA است ثبت نام نموده و پاک می مانند (تا ۸ سال مواد مصرف نمی کنند) معادل پنج درصد از پنج درصد و یا یک نفر در ۴۰۰ نفر می باشد.

بنابراین از هر ۴۰۰ نفر که به سیستم NA وارد می شوند، یک نفر خارج شده و ۳۹۹ نفر دیگر در چرخه باقی می مانند (در مرحله پاک شدن و لغزش کردن و غیره) و این دلیل عمده افزایش شدید تعداد معتادان در کشور می باشد.

کارشناس امریکائی آقای اورنج (A. Orange) در مقاله ای تحت عنوان: بررسی تاثیر دوره ۱۲ قدم، این روش را بسیار ناکارآمد معرفی کرده و عنوان نموده است که اگر شخصی با استفاده از روشهای "سرخود" اقدام به ترک اعتیاد کند، شانس موفقیتش مساوی و یا حتی بیشتر از فردی است که توسط این روش اقدام به ترک می نماید.

یکی از دلایل مهم عدم موفقیت در سیستم NA این است که مسئولان NA در اعتقادات خود، پارادوکس غریب و اغوا کننده ای را مورد طرح قرار می دهند. آنها معتقدند که بهبودی معتادان به اصطلاح بیمار با استفاده از رشد معنوی انجام می شود و سپس ادعا می کنند که این رشد بدون آموزه های دینی القا می شود، که این ادعا برخلاف گفته کلیه پیامبران الهی بوده و همان طور که بعداً اشاره خواهد شد، شعاری اغوا کننده است که توسط یک کشیش مرتد مسیحی بنام فرانک باچمن ابداع شده است.

در ایده ثولوژی NA که توسط شخصی بنام بیل ویلسون در امریکا تدوین شده و افراد عضو به عنوان آموزه هایی مقدس و الهی به آن نگاه می کنند، گرایشهای روحانی و معنوی کاملاً شخصی هستند و هر کس برای خودش تصمیم می گیرد که خدا و یا به اصطلاح NA، قدرت برتر، چه معنایی می دهد که این مطلب شرک آلود و مغایر با آموزه های پیامبران الهی می باشد.

بنا به تعریف انجمن معتادان گمنام، خدا و یا قدرت برتری که در اینجا از آن نام برده می شود، می تواند هر چیزی باشد. داستانهای زیادی در نوشته های اعضای این انجمن وجود دارد که آنها یک فنجان چای، یک خرس عروسکی، دستگیره در، موتورسیکلت و یا حتی یک تکه سنگ را به خدایی انتخاب کرده اند. بنا بر پیشنهاد انجمن

AA در امریکا، شما می توانید حتی گروهی که در آن عضو هستید را به خدایی برگزینید. آنها حتی لغت GOD را به "Group Of Drunks" و یا "یک گروه الکلی" تعبیر می کنند. گروه دیگری از این انجمن موسوم به CA که مربوط به معتادان کوکائین گمنام است، سه حرف لغت GOD (به معنی خدا) را به لغات اول جمله "Group Of Drug addicts" تعبیر می کنند که یعنی خدا همان گروه معتادی است که ما در آن عضو هستیم!

دلیل قرار دادن چنین فرضی در تعالیم NA این است که آقای بیل ویلسون که به عنوان مرشدی روحانی در تشکیلات NA از او یاد می شود، نه تنها شخص متعبد و خداپرستی نبوده، بلکه کلاه برداری ورشکسته در بازار سهام امریکا بوده که با کمک تبلیغات و سوء استفاده از برخی افراد ساده لوح، توانسته یک دین شبه الهی را برای خود به ثبت رسانده و خود را به عنوان پیامبر آن منصوب نماید. داستانهای زن باره گی و فساد اخلاقی این پیامبر قلبی، که حتی از نزدیکترین افرادی که با وی در ایجاد انجمن نقش داشته اند نیز کلاه برداری کرده، در کتابها و مقالات مختلف مندرج می باشد که علاقمندان می توانند با یک جستجوی ساده اینترنتی از آن اطلاع پیدا کنند.

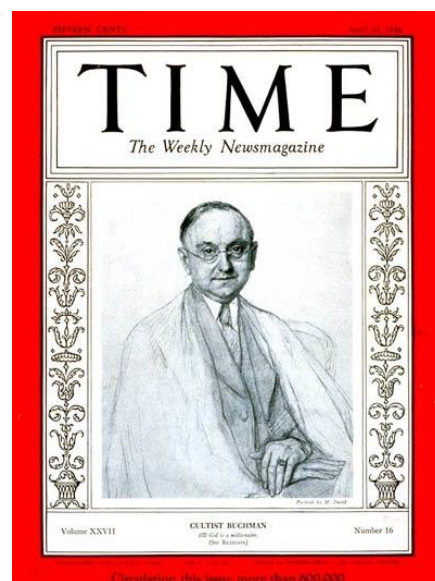
نکته قابل توجه در اثبات عدم کارآئی آموزه های NA این است که بیل ویلسون که بنیانگذار این مکتب در ارتباط با ترک اعتیاد الکل بوده، نتوانسته حتی خود را پاک نگه دارد! و برطبق نوشته های کتاب سرگذشت وی که مولف آن خانم سوزان چیور می باشد، وی دیوانه وار در آخرین ماه های عمرش، بخاطر امتناع از دادن مشروب، به پرستاران بیمارستانی که در آن بستری بوده حمله می کرده است.

در دوازده قدم بیل ویلسون که در آموزه های NA به عنوان قدمهایی موثر و الهی در نظر گرفته می شود، هیچ گونه تقدسی وجود ندارد و برطبق نوشته های همسر ایشان، خانم لوئیس ویلسون، در کتاب خاطرات لوئیس، بیل ویلسون دوازده قدم معروف را شخصا در رختخواب خود در منزل، از روی شش اصل گروه آکسفورد، که خود عضو آن بوده اقتباس و کپی کرده است. به عبارتی دوازده قدم NA همان شش اصل گروه آکسفورد است که بعضی از آنها به دو و یا چند اصل تقسیم شده است.

آقای بیل ویلسون در مورد اینکه او چرا این شش اصل را به دوازده قدم تبدیل کرده است اعلام می کند که او این کار را کرده است تا این مستها نتوانند از چارچوبی که او برایشان تعیین کرده بیرون بولند. برای بیرون لولیدن، آقای بیل ویلسون لغت wiggle را بکار برده که این لغت در زبان انگلیسی برای افراد کلک و کلاهبردار و یا کرم و انگل استفاده می شود. به هر حال این نشان دهنده نحوه تفکر آقای ویلسون راجع به هم مسلکان عزیز خودش بوده است.



Dr. Frank Buchman and Mae West discussing the philosophy of Moral Rearmament - - 19 August 1939



در مورد گروه آکسفورد، لازم به ذکر است که این گروه انجمنی از مسیحیان انحرافی بوده که توسط یک کشیش مرتد وابسته به کلیسای لوتران بنام فرانک باچمن که دارای اعتقادات فاشیستی بوده، و حتی آدولف هیتلر و هنریش هیملر قصاب را تجلیل کرده، تاسیس شده بوده است. فرانک باچمن در سال ۱۹۳۶ با ذکر جمله "خدا یک میلیونر است" خود را به شهرت رساند. وی اعلام کرد که انسان در مقابل گناه قدرتی ندارد و لذا نباید از این امر احساس شرمساری کند. به گفته کارشناسان، با این شعار، فرانک باچمن دینی مناسب برای افراد بدکار و گانگستر (crooks) تاسیس نمود و خودش را به عنوان پیامبر آنان منصوب کرد. تصاویری از فرانک باچمن مؤسس گروه آکسفورد، در ذیل نمایش داده شده است.

در ذیل شش اصل گروه آکسفورد با دوازده قدم انجمن معتادان گمنام مورد مقایسه قرار گرفته اند:

### شش اصل گروه آکسفورد (فرانک باچمن)

۱. ما اقرار کردیم در مقابل گناه (شیطان!) عاجز بوده ایم و اداره زندگی از کنترلمان خارج گردید.
۲. ما یک طرازنامه بی باکانه و جستجو گرانه (لیست گناهان و بدکاری ها!) از خود تهیه کردیم.
۳. ما لیست طرازنامه (لیست گناهان و بدکاری ها!) را به خود، به خدا (خدایی موسوم به قدرت برتر که از گناهان شما آگاه نیست و شما بایستی وی را مطلع نمایید!)، و یک انسان دیگر (بدکاری به نام راهنما که بعداً از شما سوء استفاده خواهد کرد!) اقرار کردیم.
۴. ما لیستی از کلیه افرادی که به آنها خسارت زده بودیم تهیه کردیم.
۵. ما در هر جا که امکان داشت از آنها جبران خسارت کردیم.
۶. ما از طریق دعا و مراقبه (به روش فرانک باچمن و بدون تبعیت از شریعت خاصی!) از خداوند می خواهیم که این درخواستها را به اجرا در آورد. (به عبارتی با این کار توپ را در زمین خدای فرضی خودمان می اندازیم و خودمان به گناه مشغول می شویم!)

### قدمهای دوازده گانه انجمن معتادان گمنام

۱. ما اقرار کردیم در مقابل مواد مخدر عاجز بوده ایم و اداره زندگی از کنترلمان خارج گردید.
۲. ما از او خواستیم که سلامت عقل را بما باز گرداند.
۳. ما زندگیمان را به دست خداوند بدان گونه که او را درک می کردیم سپردیم.
۴. ما یک طرازنامه بی باکانه و جستجو گرانه از خود تهیه کردیم.
۵. ما لیست طرازنامه را به خود، به خدا، و یک انسان دیگر اقرار کردیم.
۶. لیست کلیه نواقص شخصیتی خود را تهیه کردیم و از خدا خواستیم آنها را برطرف کند.



۷. ما کمبود های اخلاقی را یافتیم و از خداوند برای بدست آوردن آن کمک خواستیم.

۸. ما لیستی از کلیه افرادی که به آنها خسارت زده بودیم تهیه کردیم .

۹. ما در هر جا که امکان داشت از آنها جبران خسارت کردیم مگر در مواردیکه به آنها و خود لطمه بخورد .

۱۰. ما یک طرازنامه روزانه از خود تهیه کردیم و هرگاه در اشتباه بودیم سریعاً بدان اقرار کردیم.

۱۱. ما از طریق دعا و مراقبه خواهان رابطه آگاهانه با خدا شدیم.

۱۲. با بیداری حاصل از برداشتن این قدمها ما کوشیدیم این پیام را به تمام معتادان برسانیم .

بر طبق شش اصل ابداعی فرانک باچمن که دوازده قدم از آن استخراج شده، ارتکاب گناه امری طبیعی و ذاتی است و در دنیا هر کسی مرتکب آن می شود. باچمن معتقد بوده که انسان در مورد ارتکاب گناه قدرتی ندارد و تنها با تفویض همه امور به قدرتی فرضی که او نام خدا را برآن گذاشته (بیل ویلسون اسم قدرت برتر را برآن می گذارد)، تکلیف از انسان ساقط می شود.

این خدایی که آقایان باچمن و ویلسون از آن نام می برند، در حقیقت همان خدای فرضی است که بت پرستان و مشرکین به آن معتقد بوده اند، و برطبق نظر این افراد، شما با انداختن توپ در زمین خدای ساخته ذهن خودتان می توانید به آرامشی کاذب دست پیدا کنید. البته آرامشی کوتاه مدت و پوشالی که با اولین هجوم شیطان نفس بر شما به انتها می رسد.

در تفکر فرانک باچمن به عنوان اولین اصل سیستم NA، قابلیت هایی که خداوند به انسان تفویض نموده نادیده گرفته شده و این گروه به اعضا القا می کند که آنان نمی توانند با اعتیاد مبارزه کنند چون اعتیاد از آنان قوی تر است و هرچقدر با آن مبارزه کنند قوی تر می شود!

این موضوع مهم، یعنی صرف نظر کردن از قابلیت های الهی انسان در مبارزه با شیطان نفس و اعتیاد، باعث شده که نرخ لغزش در افراد NA نسبت به افرادی که با روشهای دیگر در حال ترک می باشند و حتی نسبت به افرادی که بطور سرخود اقدام به ترک مواد مخدر می کنند، به نحو شگفت آور و خطرناکی افزایش یابد.

آماری که نمایانگر خطر وارده از طرف سیستم NA به معتادان بی گناه می باشد (و مولفین گزارش حاضر با توجه به این آمارها خود را مکلف شرعی به نقد روش NA و پیشنهاد سیستم جایگزین

دیده اند) ، واقعیت هایی است که نشان می دهد این روش دارای بالاترین درصد لغزش منجر به مرگ در بین کلیه روشهای ترک اعتیاد می باشد. بنابراین افرادی که با استفاده از ایده ثولوژی شرک آلود فرانک باچمن که اساس کار این گروه است اقدام به ترک مواد مخدر می کنند، شانس نجاتشان به مراتب کمتر از افرادی است که حتی بدون مراجعه به هیچ متخصصی و سرخود اقدام به ترک می نمایند.

دلیل عمده لغزش های مرگ آور در آموزشهای NA این است که این آموزه ها، علیرغم تبلیغاتی که در مورد آنها می شود، بر استراتژی و یا موتور محرکه بسیار نامناسبی استوار هستند که بسیار شرک آلود بوده و خداوند در آموزه های خود، که توسط کتابهای آسمانی و رسولان الهی نازل فرموده، کاملاً عکس آنها را اعلام کرده است. این آموزه ها عزت نفس انسان را از بین برده و به وی تلقین می کند که در مقابل مواد مخدر (و یا شیطان نفس) قدرت مقابله ندارد و هرچقدر سعی در مبارزه بکند، این شیطان قوی تر خواهد شد. به همین دلیل است که هنگامی که شخص حتی بعد از سال های متمادی که از مواد مخدر به دور بوده است، در اولین باری که در معرض مواد قرار می گیرد، در صدد مبارزه بر نیامده و خود را تسلیم مواد نموده و این تسلیم و یا لغزش احتمالاً وی را به مرگ می کشاند. موارد زیادی که افراد پاکی بالا (افرادی که سالها از مواد پاک بوده اند) لغزش های منجر به مرگ داشته اند، در بین اعضای NA امری شناخته شده می باشد. به عنوان مثال چهار نفر از افرادی که از بنیانگذاران انجمن در اراک بوده اند، پس از سالها پاکی در یک جلسه با یکدیگر لغزش کرده و سه نفر از آنان کشته می شوند.

براساس مقاله *The Heresy of the Twelve Steps* ، مشارکت در آموزه های دوازده قدم، نوعی تن دادن به ولایت شیطان می باشد. برخی از این مقاله در ذیل نمایش داده شده است.

Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!  
The Big Book, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 100.

I can't help but notice that the last time I heard about that particular bargain, the Higher Power's name was not spelled "G-O-D", it was spelled "S-A-T-A-N" or "D-E-V-I-L". You were supposed to sell your soul to the Big Horned Creature with the cloven feet in a Faustian trade for getting your list of wishes granted, and then you ended up being a sycophant slave of that Scaly Creature, doing His Will forever after, and living in His "new and wonderful world" that features faulty air conditioning...



تحقیقات انجام شده موید صحت

مطالب مقاله فوق الذکر می باشد. بنابر دلایل زیر پذیرفتن دوازده قدم NA باعث پذیرفتن شرک و گناه کاری در افراد می گردد که این به نوعی تن دادن به ولایت شیطان می باشد. افرادی که تحت این آموزه ها قرار می گیرند شانس برای ایجاد تقوای الهی و رها شدن از بند اعتیاد نداشته و تا آخر عمر خود در مثلث "گناه - وسوسه - افسردگی" گرفتار خواهند بود.

موارد دیگری نیز شیطانی بودن انجمن جهانی NA را مورد تایید قرار می دهد. به عنوان مثال علامت "مثلث در دایره" که از نمادهای NA می باشد یکی از معروف ترین نمادهای شیطان پرستان است. در ذیل برخی از مدال های NA که نشانگر این علائم هستند نشان داده شده است. دو نفری که در مدال وسطی نشان داده شده اند بیل ویلسون و دکتر باب می باشند که از موسسین این انجمن هستند و در ایران به عنوان اولیای خداوند (که با الهامات الهی موفق به تدوین دوازده قدم شده اند) معرفی شده اند. در ذیل یکی از تصاویر بیل ویلسون که قداست این شخص را به نمایش می گذارد نمایش داده شده است.



جدا از موارد مطرح شده، برخی از اشکالات اصلی آموزه های دوازده قدم NA به شرح زیر قابل طرح می باشند:

۱. در قدم یک از دوازده قدم، NA به انسان القا می کند که او در برابر اعتیاد و یا گناه عاجز و ناتوان است و به عبارتی قدرتی در مقابله با شیطان ندارد و هرچقدر سعی در مبارزه با شیطان کند شیطان قوی تر می شود! این مورد کاملاً مخالف گفته قرآن است. آیه ۳۰ سوره شورا می فرماید: "وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ" یعنی: "هر مصیبتی که گریبانگیرتان شود از دستاورد خودتان است". مطمئناً این گفته خداوند در صورتی صادق است که انسان در مقابل اعتیاد و ارتکاب گناه قدرت داشته باشد، اگر خداوند چنین قدرتی را به بشر ندهد، چگونه او را مواخذه خواهد کرد؟

در آیه ۷۶ سوره نساء، خداوند می فرماید که مبارزه با شیطان و اولیای او کار مشکلی نیست (به شرطی که با دستورات اسلام با وی مبارزه کنی) و حيله آنان ضعیف می باشد. در این آیه آمده است: "فَقَاتِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا" که یعنی: "با اولیای شیطان بجنگید، قطعاً نیرنگ شیطان ضعیف است".

۲. این دوره ها با القای احساس گناه کاری و اعتراف کردن های متمادی و تحقیر افراد، با گذاشتن عنوان معتاد در جلو اسم آنان، عزت نفس افراد که در اسلام به عنوان خلیفه الله و جانشین خداوند مورد تاکید است را از انسان عزل نموده و با دادن احساس شرمساری و سرکوب احساسات، و همچنین القای احساس کاذب موفقیت، مسیری کاملاً مغایر با تعلیمات عالی الهی را طی می کند که این امر مهمترین عامل لغزش مرگ آور و کشاندن مردم به افسردگی و یا خودکشی می باشد.

بر خلاف تصورات القاء شده در NA، براساس تعالیم الهی، فردی که از گناه و عمل ناصواب خود توبه می کند، نه تنها ذلیل و تحقیر شده نیست، بلکه مشابه فرزند عزیزی است که از زندان شیطان گریخته و به آغوش مادر عزیز خود باز گشته است. بنابراین هر چقدر که این فرد بیشتر زخم خورده و بیشتر مورد آسیب شیطان قرار گرفته باشد، تامادامی که آغوش مادر را ترک نکنند، در نزد او از ارزش بالاتری برخوردار است. برای افرادی که از گناهان توبه کرده و به نزد خداوند باز می گردند، قرآن صراحتاً اعلام می کند که خداوند مهربان این افراد را عزیز می شمارد و بدی های آنان را به خوبی تبدیل می کند. آیه ۷۰ سوره فرقان آمده است: "إِنَّمَا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا" یعنی: "مردم در راه ضلالت و گمراهی هستند مگر کسانی که توبه کنند و ایمان بیاورند و عمل صالح کنند، پس بدی های آنان را خداوند به خوبی تبدیل می کند و خداوند بسیار بخشنده و مهربان است".

۳. قدم دوم از دوازده قدم، انسان را به خدایی بی قدرت که زاییده ذهن خودش است معتقد می کند که این مقدمه شرک می باشد. واگذار کردن خود به موجود مبهمی بنام قدرت برتر، مشکلات انسان را برطرف نمی کند. تحقیقات نشان می دهد که قاتلان و جنایتکاران، اکثراً به چنین قدرت برتری معتقد بوده اند. حتی اصغر قاتل که از جنایتکاران بزرگ تاریخ بوده نیز خدایی برای خود داشته و در موقعی که می خواسته اند وی را اعدام کنند چهارگوسفند نذر کرده که آن خدا وی را از اعدام نجات دهد. خوشبختانه خدای اصغر قاتل قدرتی نداشته که وی را از مجازات نجات بدهد. افرادی که بمب به خودشان می بندند و منفجر می کنند نیز به خدا معتقدند و ایمان آنها به خدایشان نیز در حدی است که خودشان را بخاطر او به کشتن می دهند. عشقی که خیلی از جنایتکاران و افراد بدکار به خدای فرضی خودشان دارند بخاطر آن است که آن خدا آنها را تایید می کند و توجیهاات آنان برای گناه کاری را می پذیرد و به قول NA، از لغزشهای آنان چشم پوشی می کند.

در آیه ۱۱۶ سوره انعام آمده است: "وَإِنْ تُطِيعُ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ" که یعنی: "اگر اکثر مردمی که در کره زمین زندگی می کنند را پیروی کنی ترا از راه خدا دور می کنند. آنها جز از ظن و گمان خودشان پیروی نمی کنند و چیزی جز اندیشه باطل و دروغ در دست ندارند". بنابراین طبق ایده نولوژی NA یکسری فلسفه های من در آوردی را سر هم کردن و به منیت ها و خودخواهی ها جامه الهی پوشاندن، انسان را به خدای واقعی متصل نمی کند.

۴. قدم هفتم از دوازده قدم NA، از انسان می خواهد که خودش کنار بنشیند و اصلاح تمام ضعفهای شخصیتی و کمبود های معنویش را به خدایی که خودش برای خود ساخته واگذار نماید. پر واضح است که با چنین خدایی انسان هیچ شانس برای کنترل نفس و یا ترک گناه و مواد مخدر را ندارد، بنابراین در قدمهای NA، اگر معتاد از دفعات ممتد لغزش جان سالم بدر ببرد، نهایتاً خواهید فهمید که خدای مجازی او هیچ کاری برایش انجام نخواهد داد و این نهایتاً خود او است که بایستی با مجاهدت، مسئولیت مبارزه با هوا و هوس و نفس شیطانی را به عهده بگیرد.

۵. در تعالیم NA افرادی که تنها برای مدتی مواد را کنار گذاشته اند، به عنوان راهنما نقش مرشد و راهنما را برای افراد بازی می کنند و افراد برای کارهای زندگیشان از این افراد که بعضاً به شدت گرفتار مسایل روحی و شخصیتی بوده و افرادی بدکار و به دور از تقوا می باشند راه کار طلب می کنند. موارد زیادی که راه کارهای این گونه راهنمایان خانواده ها و زندگی ها را بر باد داده است قابل ذکر می باشند.

۶. برطبق قدمهای سوم و چهارم از دوازده قدم ابداعی NA، شخص معتاد بایستی یک طرازنامه بی باکانه و جستجو گرانه از خود تهیه نموده و به یک شخص دیگر که همان راهنمای او می باشد اقرار نماید.

با توجه به این دو قدم، فرد معتاد به راحتی گناه ها و رازهایی از زندگی خود را با راهنمایی که بعضاً ممکن است از جنس مخالف باشد در میان می گذارد که سوء استفاده از آنان می تواند برای ادامه زندگی وی به شدت زیان آور باشد. اگرچه راهنمایان پذیرفته اند که این رازها را محرمانه نگاه دارند و گمنامی تازه وارد را حفظ کنند، ولی چون این راهنمایان خود از افراد تازه رهایی یافته با مشکلات شخصیتی و اخلاقی متفاوتی بوده و ممکن است خود در زمانی که راهنمایی شخص معتاد را به عهده دارند، و یا در زمان های بعدی، دچار لغزش شده و بعضاً به کارتن خوابی روی آورند، هیچ گونه تضمینی در ارتباط با عدم سوء استفاده از اطلاعات محرمانه ای که شخص معتاد بنا بر شرایط خاص روحی به راهنمایان خود منتقل می کند وجود ندارد.

۷. یکی از موارد منفی دیگر در عملکرد NA برگزاری برخی جلسات به صورت مختلط می باشد که این مورد سرآغاز دوستی های دو جنس مخالف، تحت تاثیرات نامناسب روحی ناشی از مصرف مواد مخدر را فراهم می آورد که این امر ممکن است به ارتباطات جنسی نامناسب و از سرگیری مصرف شدیدتر مواد مخدر و انحرافات وحشتناک تر اخلاقی و اجتماعی افراد منجر شود.

۸. همان طور که گفته شد، در آموزه های NA گرایشهای روحانی و معنوی کاملاً شخصی بوده و هیچکدام از برنامه های این انجمن مذهبی نمی باشد. در این برنامه ها برداشت هر فرد از معنویت و تصورش در مورد خدا بستگی به درک و سلیقه شخصی اش داشته و بعبارت دیگر هر کس برای خودش تصمیم می گیرد که قدرت برترو یا خدا چه معنایی می دهد. بخاطر همین موضوع و بنابر عدم تعریف دیدگاه های الهی در تعریف معنویت، و تکیه به تعبیر این مفاهیم توسط حاضران در جلسات NA، افراد در دوران ترک به راحتی تحت تاثیر تلقینات افراد راهنمای خود، که از افراد جدید التکر و بعضاً بدون آموزشهای اخلاقی و اعتقادی مناسب می باشند، قرار گرفته و دستورالعملی خود ساخته و قابل مذاکره را بعنوان راهنمای معنویت خود انتخاب می کنند که این امر بدون شک آنان را از راه ایمان و اخلاق الهی خارج نموده و به راه ضلالت و گمراهی هدایت خواهد کرد. خبرنگار یکی از روزنامه ها در گزارشی از فعالیتهای یکی از موسسات NA در غرب تهران، در مشاهدات عینی خود از برگزاری کلاسهای ترک اعتیاد در این موسسه می نویسد:

"شیوه برگزاری این کلاسها بطور کامل مطابق با شیوه غربی و به روش اعتراف نزد پدر روحانی در کلیساها است به طوریکه برخی از افراد حاضر در جلسه از تجربیات کثیف جنسی و ارتباط با محارم سخن به میان

می آوردند. آنان بی پروا نحوه آشنایی و کشیده شدن به دامن اعتیاد را بیان می کردند که خود نوعی آموزش و قباحته زدایی برای کسانی بود که میزان آلودگی کمتری داشتند. یکی از شرکت کنندگان در این کلاسها می گوید: تا به حال توزیع کنندگان شیشه در محل خودمان را می شناختم اما حالا با اغلب آنها در سراسر تهران ارتباط دارم و دلیل آن شرکت در این کلاسها است". خبرنگار این روزنامه در توصیف فضای فیزیکی این انجمن نوشته است: "نمازخانه فاقد مهر بود و بیشتر محلی برای تمرکز ذهنی قرار داده شده بود و افرادی هم که در آن راز و نیاز می کردند لزوماً رو به قبله نایستاده بودند".

۹. اعتراف در جلو جمع که در دین اسلام حرام می باشد و از اصول جلسات NA می باشد باعث ترویج و تشدید گناه شده و قبح گناه را از بین می برد. هنگامی که شخصی گناه خود را در جمع بیان می کند نفس اماره دیگران آن گناه را فراگیری کرده و به صورتی شدیدتر به مورد اجرا گذاشته و ذکر مجدد گناه تشدید شده باعث تقویت و تشدید گناه می شود. یکی از افراد وابسته به NA می گوید: "من تا در جلسات شرکت نکرده بودم نمی دانستم که می شود برای گرفتن مواد انسان بچه اش را به گرو بگذارد."

۱۰. جلوه دادن آقای بیل ویلسون که بنیانگذار NA بوده است، به عنوان یک مسیحی مقدس از عواملی است که خیلی از جوانان وابسته به NA در ایران صلیب به خود آویزان نموده و به مسیحیت گرایش پیدا می کنند.

علاوه بر آن شعار اصلی NA (خداوند آرامشی عطا فرما تا بپذیرم آنچه را که نمی توانم تغییر دهم، شهامتی که تغییر دهم آنچه را که می توانم و دانشی که تفاوت این دو را بدانم) که هر روز توسط اعضا خوانده می شود نیز شعاری مسیحی است که توسط یک کشیش امریکائی بنام راینهولد نیهر ابداع شده است.

حقیقت آن است که آقای بیل ویلسون طبق برخی نوشته ها در تمام مدت زندگیش بجز مدت چند ماه موفق به ترک اعتیاد نشده و سر آخر نیز از همین اعتیاد داد فانی را وداع گفته است. او در حالی که خود از بالاترین لذتهای نامشروع جنسی و مالی بهره گیری می کرده برای دیگران موعظه نموده و آنان را تشویق به وقف خود برای دیگران می کرده است. عکسی از این مرشد معنوی در حالی که صلیبی در پشت سر دارد در قبل نشان داده شد!

۱۱. فسادهای جنسی آقای بیل ویلسون به حدی بوده که برخی از افراد در مقالات خود، دوازده قدم تقلیدی آقای ویلسون را پلکانی برای انجام مطامع پلید وی قلمداد نموده و با اضافه کردن یک قدم دیگر به دوازده قدم، قدم سیزدهم را قدمی دانسته اند که این شخص و برخی از شاگردان خلفش طعمه های بی پناه خود را



به رختخواب کشانده و می کشانند. دختر خوانده یکی از معشوقه های آقای بیل ویلسون، در نوشته های خود آورده است که در انجمن AA، اعضاء ساعتها کارشناسانه بحث می کرده اند که آیا خوردن یک آسپیرین برای رفع سردرد یک لغزش حساب می شود و یا نه، ولی بدون هیچ گونه بحث و یا نگرانی، بسیاری از رابطه های جنسی نامشروع را برقرار می کرده اند که از هر اعتیادی بدتر بوده است. نکته جالب این است که بر اساس گفته این خانم، افراد بظاهر معتقد به معنویت این انجمن، در اینگونه رابطه ها، از خدای ساختگی خودشان نیز مدد می گرفته اند و به عنوان مثال برای شروع یک رابطه نامشروع، طرف می گفته: دلیل اینکه با من تماس گرفتی این بود که من از قدرت برتر خواستم که به من زنگ بزنی!

۱۲. یکی از نکات جالب در مورد NA این است که افرادی که توسط این سیستم در حال ترک می باشند، علیرغم لغزشهای متعدد، نسبت به این انجمن متعصب بوده و اعلام می کنند که این گروه بزرگترین شکل معنوی جهان است و تحت هیچ عنوان آنها قادر نبوده اند که بدون کمک این انجمن اعتیاد خود را ترک کنند. این موضوع امری نادرست و القاء شده از طرف این انجمن به اعضاء می باشد که در اینجا با مثالی عدم صحت آن اثبات می شود. تصور کنید که شما با یکی از افراد NA صحبت کرده و سئوالات زیر را از وی می پرسید:

سؤال: شما چند وقت است که ترک کرده اید؟

جواب: یکسال

سؤال: آیا این اولین باری است که ترک کرده اید؟

جواب: خیر، من چند بار قبلا ترک کرده ولی همیشه لغزیده بودم.

سؤال: آیا در تمام این چندبار لغزش عضو سیستم NA بودید؟

جواب: بله.

سؤال: خوب به نظر شما دفعه آخری که نلغزیدید چه چیزی متفاوت با دفعات قبل بود؟

جواب: دفعه آخر من از اعتیاد جانم به لبم آمده بود و دیگر نمی خواستم که یک معتاد باشم.

سؤال: خوب به عبارتی برنامه NA در دفعات قبل در مورد شما موفقیت آمیز عمل نکرده ولی در بار آخر موفقیت آمیز بوده است.

جواب: نه، در دفعات قبل تقصیر برنامه NA نبوده که من لغزیده ام، تقصیر خود من بوده که این برنامه را درست انجام نداده ام!

همان طور که می بینید، اصرار این فرد به اینکه برنامه NA کارکرد خوبی داشته و این او بوده که با عدم انجام دستورات لغزش کرده، دقیقا نشان دهنده آن است که این برنامه در هر بار با شکست مواجه بوده و او تا مادامی که به برنامه NA تکیه کرده نتیجه ای نگرفته است، ولی در هنگامی که از ترک اعتیاد توسط این برنامه ناامید و از لغزشهای متمادی جان به لب شده، در کار ترک اعتیاد موفق گردیده است. به عبارت دیگر این او بوده که با خواست خود برای ترک، باعث موفقیت برنامه NA شده و این برنامه NA نبوده که وی را موفق کرده است.

۱۳. اصول ترک در روش NA بر اساس شرطی کردن ذهن فرد مصرف کننده می باشد که برمبنای آزمایش سگ پاولوف می باشد. ایوان پاولوف که یک زیست شناس روسی در اواخر قرن نوزدهم بود، در هر وعده غذا که به سگش می داد، همزمان زنگی را به صدا در می آورد. او ابزاری به معده سگ ارتباط داد که هنگام گرسنگی و تحریک اشتهای سگ، ترشحات معده حیوان را به بیرون هدایت می کرد. بعد از مدتی همزمان شدن صدای زنگ و دریافت غذا توسط سگ، پاولوف دیگر به سگ خود غذایی نداد و فقط زنگ را برای او به صدا در آورد، ولی ملاحظه کرد که بازهم از معده سگ ترشحاتی که هنگام دیدن غذا ترشح می شد به بیرون ریخت. امروزه روان شناسان از همین قابلیت که مشابه حیوانات در انسان نیز موجود است و به نام "عکس العمل شرطی" Conditional Response موسوم است استفاده کرده و ذهن او را فریب می دهند. به عنوان مثال در هنگامی که تبلیغ نوشابه پپسی را می کنند، تصاویری از سواحل سرسبز هاوایی را به مخاطب نشان داده و آهنگ های شعف انگیز مایکل جکسون و غیره را پخش می کنند. پس از مدتی، هروقت مخاطب قوطی نوشابه پپسی را ببیند، در ذهنش سواحل هاوایی و آهنگ مایکل جکسون تداعی می شود. به همین دلیل است که مردم نوشابه ای که جز صدمه زدن به دندان و ناراحتی معده برایشان فایده ای ندارد را به خاطر شرطی شدن ذهن با قیمتی هنگفت خریداری کرده و با شوق و علاقه مصرف می کنند.

روشهای ترک اعتیاد مشابه NA که با استفاده از شرطی کردن ذهن عمل می کنند، برای اعضای خود لغزش را امری عادی و طبیعی جلوه می دهند (مثلا در NA می گویند لغزش مال مرد است!) و لذا افرادی که این روشها را دنبال می کنند در مدت کوتاهی به تعداد دفعات زیاد دچار لغزش می شوند. هنگامی که با لغزش های متمادی زندگی شخص از بین رفته و به کارتون خوابی و بدبختی کشیده شد، ذهن او شرطی شده و به محض فکر کردن در مورد مواد مخدر، خانواده متلاشی شده، زن طلاق گرفته، بچه بی سرپرست، و کارتون

خوابی در ذهنش تداعی می شود. در این روشها اگرچه به علت تداعی بدبختی ها با مواد مخدر، ممکن است شخص به طور موقت مواد مصرف نکند، ولی به دنبال لذت جویی و گناه رفته و یا به افسردگی دچار می شود.

۱۴. از موارد قابل ذکر دیگر در مورد ضعف تعالیم NA این است که در جلسات آنها، افرادی که تنها به مدت شش ماه و یا کمتر مواد را کنار گذاشته اند، برای افراد تازه وارد سخنرانی کرده و به آنان می گویند که ترک مواد مخدر یک بیماری روحی است و نیاز به یک معالجه روحی دارد که علاج قطعی آن شرکت در جلسات دوازده قدم NA می باشد. القای این امر توسط این افراد بی تجربه که بعضا خودشان نیز این دوره را طی نکرده اند، با چنان جامعیتی انجام می شود که انگار این افراد با تجربه حاصل از شش ماه ترک خود می توانند تمام مردم دنیا را از بلای اعتیاد نجات بدهند.

۱۵. بسیاری از افرادی که به عنوان افراد قدیمی، مثلا با دو و یا سه سال ترک در جلسات NA شرکت می کنند اعلام می کنند که دوره NA به آنان زندگی تازه ای داده است. این امر کاملا درست است، چون زندگی جدید آنان این است که به عنوان افراد قدیمی و پیش کسوت در جلسات NA شرکت کنند و به افراد جدید و بی گناه اعلام کنند که تنها راه نجات آنها شرکت در جلسات NA می باشد!

۱۶. در مقاله آقای اورنج، از محققین ترک مواد مخدر در امریکا، ایشان می گوید که اگر دوره NA در ترک اعتیاد موفق است، چگونه افرادی که تنها دو و یا سه سال لغزش نداشته اند را مانند پرנסها و شخصیتهای بزرگ از یک کمپ به کمپ دیگر می برند و آنها را مانند مشاهیر بزرگ به نمایش می گذارد؟ به گفته ایشان، در امریکا بسیاری از این پیش کسوتان خود دچار لغزش می شوند ولی برای آنکه از مقام شامخ پیش کسوتی محروم نشوند، این امر را از دیگران پنهان می کنند.

۱۷. در رابطه با ایجاد پایه های اعتقادات شرک آمیز این گروه، بیل ویلسون در صفحه ۲۷ کتاب "دوازده قدم و دوازده سنت" می نویسد:

"من بایست به سرعت اطمینان حاصل کنم که برای اعضای AA انتخاب های زیادی در رابطه با خدا وجود دارد... بنابراین شما اگر می خواهید می توانید انجمن AA را به عنوان قدرت برتر انتخاب کنید. این انجمن، گروهی از افراد است که مسائل زیادی را در رابطه با افراد الکلی حل کرده است و بنابراین استحقاق چنین مقامی را دارد. در این رابطه آنها قدرتی بالاتر از شما هستند که شما مطمئنا می توانید به آنها ایمان بیاورید. حتی این کمترین اعتقاد نیز برای شما کافی خواهد بود."

این پیشنهاد از طرف انجمن NA حتی اعتراض شدید مسیحیان را نیز برانگیخته است، چون آنان علاقه ای ندارند که بجای "پدر، پسر، و روح القدس"، گروهی از افراد معتاد را به خدایی انتخاب کنند.

بیل ویلسون در صفحه ۹۳ "کتاب بزرگ" (The Big Book) در مورد نحوه کار کردن با دیگران و جذب افراد جدید به این انجمن می گوید:

"اگر متقاضی عضویت به خدا اعتقاد ندارد و یا کلاً منکر وجود خدا است، به او تاکید کنید که در مورد انتخاب خدا، او می تواند به هر قدرتی که برای خودش توجیه پذیر است معتقد باشد. تنها اصلی که لازمست این است که آن قدرت از او قوی تر باشد و او با اعتقاد به آن قدرت زندگی کند."

بنابراین همان طور که ملاحظه می شود، در اعتقادات این گروه بت پرستی و یا شیطان پرستی نیز کاملاً پذیرفته می باشد. بطوری که بیل ویلسون می نویسد، چنین ایده شرک آمیزی برای رهائی از قیود وجدان و تسلیم شدن به شیطان نفس، توسط دوستش ابی تاچر به او القاء شده بوده است او در صفحه ۱۲ کتاب بزرگ می نویسد:

"علیرغم دوستم ابی تاچر، هنوز در من رگه هایی از اعتقادات فئاتیک گذشته وجود داشت و لغت خدا در من تعبیراتی مخالف با خواسته های خودم را القا می کرد. دوستم به من ایده جدیدی را پیشنهاد کرد که به نظرم مناسب آمد. او به من گفت: "چرا خدائی را به سلیقه خودت انتخاب نمی کنی؟ این ایده من را تکان داد و کوه یخ معنویتی که سالها در سایه آن زندگی کرده بودم و از ترس آن لرزیده بودم را آب کرد...."

همان طور که گفته شد، انجمن NA القاء می کند که هر کس می تواند برای خودش خدائی به سلیقه خودش داشته باشد که کلیه رفتارهای گناه آلود و شرک آمیز او را تایید کند. در صفحه ۲۹۷ کتاب "امید برای امروز" که توسط بخش خانواده انجمن AA چاپ شده، آمده است:

"خدایی که خانواده من به آن اعتقاد داشتند برای من خیلی کوچک بود. من آن خدا را اخراج کرده و خدای جدیدی را برای خودم استخدام کردم. این خدا درون من زندگی می کند، من را دوست دارد و برایم اهمیت قائل است و من را به هر صورتی که هستم قبول می کند."

بنابر نوشته های مقاله "شرک آمیز بودن ایده دوازده قدم"، بیل ویلسون با انتخاب خدائی که انسان را به هر صورتی که هست قبول می کند، در حقیقت شیطان را به عنوان قدرت برتر برای خود و اعضاء انجمن انتخاب

کرده است. بیل ویلسون در صفحه ۱۳ کتاب بزرگ مشکل بودن واگذاری خود به این قدرت برتر را به این نحو بیان می کند:

"در بیمارستان دوستم ابی تاچر به من قول داد که وقتی که کارها مطابق پیشنهاد او انجام شوند، من وارد یک رابطه جدیدی با خالق خودم می شوم و من اصولی را تجربه خواهم کرد که همه مسائل من را حل خواهد کرد. این مورد به ظاهر ساده ولی در باطن پذیرشش برای من مشکل بود و من می بایست برای انجام آن تمام اعتقادات خودمحرانه خود را رها کرده و همه کارها را به " پدر نور " واگذار می کردم."

در این مقاله آمده است که " پدر نور " در اصطلاح لاتین همان " لوسیفر " می باشد که از نام های ابلیس و یا شیطان می باشد. و با این پذیرش، شخص پذیرنده روح خود را در عوض ترک مواد (که آن نیز بطور موقتی می باشد) با لوسیفر معامله خواهد کرد. به گفته این مقاله این پذیرش باعث برداشتن کلیه مذهب و الهی از اعتقادات انسان شده و دهها گناه بدتر از اعتیاد را برای پذیرنده به ارمغان آورده و وی را به مراتب پایین دوزخ گسیل خواهد داشت. در رابطه با چنین معامله ای، مرد شماره سه AA، آقای بیل دوتسون در صفحه ۱۵۹ کتاب بزرگ خطاب به بیل ویلسون و دکتر باب که ایده اعتقاد به خدای جدید را به او پیشنهاد کرده بودند می نویسد: "نحوه ای که شما این مورد قدرت برتر را عنوان کرده اید برای من قابل قبول است و من آماده هستم که شرایط معامله را بپذیرم."

نویسنده مقاله ای که ذکر شد، معامله ای که در اینجا صحبت آن می رود را شبیه به معامله دکتر فاستوس (دکتری شیطان پرست که در معامله ای روح افراد را به شیطان تفویض نموده و برای آنان اقتدار کسب می کرد) می داند.

۱۸. همان طور که گفته شد قدم دوم از دوازده قدم، انسان را به خدایی بی قدرت که زاییده ذهن خودش است معتقد می کند که این مقدمه شرک می باشد. این خدای تعریف شده توسط فرانک باچمن به حدی از امور انسان ناآگاه است که شخص بایستی گناهان خود را به او اعتراف نماید! خدایی که در قرآن تعریف شده کاملاً با خدای تعریفی NA متفاوت می باشد. در آیه ۷ سوره مبارکه طه آیه ۷ آمده است: " فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى " که یعنی: خداوند سرّ و اخفی را می داند. موقعی که این آیه نازل شد، صحابه به پیامبر اسلام (ص) گفتند یا رسول الله سرّ آن چیزی است که انسان پنهان کرده و خودش می داند، اخفی چه چیزی است؟ پیامبر فرمودند اخفی چیزی است که انسان پنهان کرده و خودش هم نمی داند!

به گفته قرآن، تنها اعتقاد به خدایی به نام قدرت برتر، انسان را موحد و خداپرست نمی کند. حضرت رسول اکرم (ص) می فرمایند: " همانا شرک نامحسوستر از راه رفتن مورچه در تاریکی شب بر روی سنگ سیاه می باشد ". این مثال زیبا به سادگی مشکل بودن قضاوت در مورد شرک را بیان می کند و نشان می دهد که انسان ممکن است به سادگی به شرک آلوده شود. پیامبر اسلام (ص) در دعای خود می فرمایند: "خداوندا از شرک خفی به تو پناه می برم".

در آموزه های NA بسیاری از افراد با فرض کردن قدرت برتری که بدون رعایت شریعت و دستوراتی که خداوند تکلیف کرده به خواسته های انسان جواب می دهد، به شرک خفی و پنهانی دچار شده و مورد اغوای شیطان قرار می گیرند!

چنین اشخاصی در هنگام مراقبه و گوش دادن به ندای دل، خود را اسیر توهمات نموده و شیطان نفس خود را به جای خدا گرفته و به خواسته های او عمل می کنند! که این دلیل عمده لغزشهای مرگبار در افراد تحت آموزه های NA می باشد.

تنها افرادی می توانند به ندای دل خود عمل کنند که وجودشان الهی بوده و شیطان نفس را به بند کشیده باشند. بنابراین انسان تا مادامی که نفس خود را نشناسد و آن را مهار نکند، حتی تفاوت مابین خیر و شر را نیز درک نکرده و به خاطر اغوای شیطان، ممکن است بسیاری از کارهایی که به دید او الهی می آیند را انجام دهد که در پشت آنها مطامع شیطان نهفته باشد. به گفته قرآن، شیطان همواره در صدد اغوای انسانها می باشد. اغوا کردن یعنی پنهان کردن اعمال شیطانی در پشت ظاهری الهی. بنابراین شیطان، انسان را به سمت خدایی فرضی راهنمایی می کند که خود در پشت آن پنهان می باشد. در آیه ۴۰ سوره یوسف آمده است:

" مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءَ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مِمَّا أُنزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ " که به این معنی است: " آنچه که شما برای خود خدا فرض می کنید و به آن می پردازید، چیزی نیست به جز اسمایی بی معنی که شما و پدرانتان برای خود فرض کرده اید و خدا دلیلی بر [حقانیت] آنها نازل نکرده است فرمان جز برای خدا نیست دستور داده که جز او را نپرستید این است دین درست ولی بیشتر مردم نمی دانند".

آیه ۱۰۶ سوره یوسف در مورد ایمان به خدای ساختگی که همان شرک می باشد می فرماید: " وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ ". که یعنی: " اکثر مردم به خدا ایمان نمی آورند مگر آن که مشرک شوند ".

از این آیه استنباط می شود که به تعبیر خداوند و بنابر گفته قرآن، اکثر مردم مشرک هستند ولی فکر می کنند که مؤمن هستند!

۱۹. افرادی که ناآگاهانه NA را تایید و یا حمایت می کنند بایستی آگاه باشند که این امر مورد تایید خداوند نخواهد بود چون این امر باعث دعوت مردم به شرک و گناه می باشد. خداوند متعال در قرآن، بالاترین تهدیدها را نسبت به کسانی کرده است که مشرک شده و مردم را به شرک دعوت می کنند. او در آیه ۴۸ سوره نساء صراحتاً اعلام می کند که هر جرمی را می بخشد، بجز شرک که گناهی نابخشودنی است!

در این آیه آمده است: " إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا " که یعنی: " مسلماً خدا این را که به او شرک ورزیده شود نمی بخشاید و غیر از آن را برای هر که بخواهد می بخشاید و هر کس به خدا شرک ورزد به یقین گناهی بزرگ برافته است ".

## پیوست

برخی از منابع مورد استفاده  
در کتاب حاضر



# **The Oxford Group Movement The Forerunner of AA**

" . . . Many a channel had been used by Providence to create Alcoholics Anonymous. And none had been more vitally needed than the one opened through Sam Shoemaker and his Oxford Group associates . . . the early A.A. got its ideas of self-examination, acknowledgment of character defects, restitution for harm done, and working with others straight from the Oxford Groups and directly from Sam Shoemaker, their former leader in America, and from nowhere else. . . . A.A. owes a debt of timeless gratitude for all that God sent us through Sam and his friends in the days of A.A.'s infancy."

—Bill Wilson in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, pp. 39—40

In order to understand Alcoholics Anonymous, it's first necessary to understand the movement which gave birth to AA: The Oxford Group Movement, also known as the Oxford Groups, Buchmanism, and, in its later days, Moral Re-Armament (MRA). The importance of the Oxford Group Movement to the structure, practices, and, especially, the ideology of Alcoholics Anonymous cannot be overstated. The two founders of AA, Bill Wilson and Dr. Robert Smith, were enthusiastic members of the Oxford Groups; the early AA-to-be groups in both Akron and New York operated as part of the Oxford Groups; and both Bill Wilson and "Dr. Bob" believed that the principles of the Oxford Groups were the key to overcoming alcoholism. Thus, AA's bible, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the so-called Big Book, in large part reads like a piece of Oxford Group Movement literature, and the 12 steps, the cornerstone of AA ideology, are for all intents and purposes a codification of Oxford Group principles.

The Oxford Group Movement was very much the creature of its founder, Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman. He was born on June 4, 1878 in Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, of conservative, apparently prosperous, Lutheran parents. He attended Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania and graduated in 1899. Following his studies at Muhlenberg, he entered Mount Airy Seminary (Pennsylvania) and graduated in 1902 as an ordained Lutheran minister.

Buchman's first parish was in Overbrook, now a section of Philadelphia, where shortly after his appointment he opened a small hospice for young men. The hospice apparently prospered, because in June 1905 the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States called upon him to open a larger hospice for young men in Philadelphia. He proceeded to do so, but the enterprise was plagued by financial problems. In 1908 Buchman became embroiled in a dispute with the Ministerium's Finance Committee and resigned his position in a huff.

Shortly after resigning, he went to an evangelical conference in Keswick, England. While there he had a "conversion experience" complete with "a poignant vision of the Crucified" while listening to a Salvation Army speaker at a local chapel. Following this experience, he wrote letters of apology to the six members of the Ministerium with whom he had quarreled. (In Oxford Group/Moral Re-Armament literature, much is made of the fact that he received not a single reply. But according to the superintendent of the Ministerium, Dr. J.F. Ohl, world-traveler

Buchman didn't bother to put a return address on his letters.<sup>i)</sup> He also "shared" his experience with the family with which he was staying, thus making his first convert, their son.

After returning from England, he applied for and was given a position as YMCA secretary at State College, Pennsylvania effective as of July 1, 1909. At that time the "Y" was more than a series of health clubs; it was an active evangelical association with considerable influence on American college campuses. Buchman built a reputation at State College for conducting well-attended Bible classes and evangelical crusades, and for building up the membership of the YMCA. According to one report, he inflated "Y" membership figures by handing out "free" Bibles to incoming freshmen and then later billing them for "Y" dues.<sup>ii</sup> He also instituted the practice of the "Morning Watch" (later called "Quiet Time") in which devotees spent time reading the Bible, praying, and "listening to God."

In 1915 he resigned to go traveling once again, this time to the Far East with evangelist Sherwood Eddy. Upon his return in 1916, he was appointed Extension Lecturer in Personal Evangelism at the Hartford (Connecticut) Seminary. At first, he lived in the students' dormitory—a rather odd thing for a man of 38 to do—but he was asked to move out after students complained of his intrusive methods. He also began to rely on "guidance" (from God) to run his daily life, and encouraged students to do the same. In this way he developed a reputation for being unreliable—"God" would "guide" him to miss appointments, etc.—and students were supposedly "guided" to do things such as booking steamship passage to Europe without having the funds to pay for it.<sup>iii</sup> One former Buchmanite (at a different college) later recalled, "I put my trust in guidance and failed my examinations."<sup>iv</sup> Buchman also gained a reputation for dwelling on the importance of sexual sin in his dealings with students.

To make matters worse, he was having trouble with members of the faculty at Hartford. Buchman was an evangelical fundamentalist who emphasized emotional experience, and he regarded the classes of his colleagues as not "vital." They returned the contempt by regarding Buchman as a simpleton.

So, it seems probable that this was not an especially happy period in Buchman's life; and he must have been at least somewhat relieved when he received the "guidance" to resign his position. In 1922 he quit his job at Hartford in order to devote himself to "personal evangelism" and to living off the largesse of wealthy backers, activities which he would pursue for the rest of his life. Buchman remained unrepentant about his lavish lifestyle, and that of his close associates, to the end of his days. On many occasions he made remarks similar to one quoted in *Time* in 1936: "Why shouldn't we stay in 'posh' hotels? Isn't God a millionaire?"<sup>v</sup>

While in Hartford, Buchman had much free time, and thus the opportunity to travel. In Kuling, China in 1918 he organized his first "houseparty," a type of gathering which was to become a Buchmanite trademark. Houseparties were in some ways a form of religious retreat and were, at least for their first decade or so, gatherings of no more than a few dozen people in spacious private homes or, more often, expensive inns or hotels. Participants were normally invited to attend through friends or acquaintances already involved with Buchman's movement.

That atmosphere at houseparties was always informal, and activities ranged from Bible study and "quiet times" to bridge playing and golf. There were also voluntary general meetings in which attendees "shared," confessing their "sins" and offering witness to the "change" in their lives caused by adherence to Buchman's principles. A noteworthy feature of houseparties was the upscale economic status of their attendees, and the frequent well-advertised presence of prominent individuals. It was the norm for Buchman and his cohorts to go to great lengths to attract the rich and famous, and, when they were hooked, to shamelessly exploit their names, a tendency which would become more pronounced in the coming years.

While still at Hartford Seminary, Buchman began to hold houseparties at Ivy League colleges in the U.S. and at Oxford and Cambridge in England. This was entirely in keeping with Buchman's background as a YMCA secretary at State College and as a lecturer at Hartford Seminary. Through the mid-1920s, the focus of his ministry would be evangelical work at colleges such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Bryn Mawr. Throughout this period—and indeed throughout his entire life—Buchman retained his obsession with sex. One Harvard graduate is reported to have said, "He started asking me intimate questions about sex before I'd been alone with him for five minutes. I left in a hurry."<sup>vi</sup>

Strangely, some Oxford Group/MRA literature almost *brags* about Buchman's obsession with sex. Perhaps the best examples of this are found in *Frank Buchman's Secret*, a hagiography by Peter Howard (Buchman's successor as head of MRA) published a few months after Buchman's death in 1961. In describing one of Buchman's "soul surgery" victories, Howard records the following revealing scene:

Buchman said, "You have a very unhappy home."

The atheist answered, "Yes, I have. I hate my father. I always have since I was a boy."

Buchman then said, "You are in the grip of an impure habit which you cannot bring yourself to talk about with anyone."

The atheist answered, "That is a lie." There was silence.

Buchman said, "I must go." . . .

"No, don't go."

Buchman then said, "Well, I'll stay on one condition—that you and I listen to God together."

The atheist made a surprising reply. He said, ". . . I told you a lie a few minutes ago. I am in the grip of that habit."

Buchman said, "I know."<sup>vii</sup>

In a later chapter, Howard records another instance of Buchman's "soul surgery":

[Buchman] literally shook with the strength of his feelings. "I may have the wrong details," he said, "but I have the right girl, the right diagnosis and the right cure. You are the girl, the diagnosis is that you are sex mad, the cure is Jesus Christ."<sup>viii</sup>

In 1924, Buchman's sexual obsession and the obtrusive zeal of some of his converts caused Princeton University's president to ban him. As was usual in his campus crusades, Buchman's followers engaged in high-pressure attempts to get fellow students to "change," followed dubious "guidance" religiously—with predictable social and academic results—thought nothing of invading other students' privacy, and engaged in inappropriate "sharing," much of it of a sexual nature. One chronicler reports that a Buchmanite took "the young and rather innocent daughter" of a Princeton professor out on a date, and proceeded to "share" with her a confession of his sexual sins in fulsome detail.<sup>ix</sup>

Such incidents did little to increase Frank Buchman's popularity with either students or faculty. Buchman himself, though, seems to have precipitated his own banishment by telling John Hibden, Princeton's president, that 85 percent of Princeton undergraduates were either "sexually perverted or [self-]abusive."<sup>x</sup> Hibden evidently didn't appreciate this assessment of his students, and soon declared Buchman *persona non grata* at Princeton.<sup>xi</sup> While this undoubtedly annoyed Buchman, it certainly didn't deter him from pursuing his "good work" at other colleges. But by the mid-'20s, the influence of the Buchman movement had peaked on American campuses, and Buchmanism quickly faded into obscurity at virtually every institution where it had taken root.

Throughout what could be termed the "collegiate" period of the Oxford Group Movement, Buchman's program was remarkably consistent. It consisted of "personal evangelism" with emphases upon: 1) both public and private confession of sin, especially sexual sin; 2) reception of divine "guidance" during "quiet times"; 3) complete surrender to this "guidance"; 4) the living of a "guided" life in which every aspect of one's actions, down to the choice of dinner entree, was controlled by God; 5) the practice of the Buchmanite "four absolutes"—purity, honesty, love, and unselfishness; 6) making restitution to those one has harmed; and 7) carrying "the message" to those still "defeated."

The "message" was delivered one-to-one by individual Buchmanite "life changers," also known as "soul surgeons," or en masse by "traveling teams" which ranged in size from about half-a-dozen to several dozen persons. These teams would spread the word on campuses through individual contacts and through the ever-popular houseparties. A notable feature of the Buchmanite movement at this stage was that it was directed at the "up-and-out" on prestigious campuses, and that its primary aim was to convert "key men"—football stars and other athletes, student body officers, and the sons of the prominent, the powerful, and the very rich.

During this period, four other key features of Buchmanism became prominent: its emphasis on nonprofessionalism; its antipathy toward formal organization; its complete disregard of social, political, and economic causes of individual social problems; and its virulent anti-intellectualism. The emphasis on nonprofessionalism was implicit in the concept of divine "guidance" available to all who would listen, and the accompanying command that all "guided" individuals should "change" others. The antipathy to formal organization was also implicit in the concept of

"guidance." (If individuals are being directly controlled by God, what need do they have for formal organization?) In practice this led to dictatorial control of the movement by Buchman and a small clique surrounding him. The neglect of political, social, and economic factors as causes of individual and social problems was due to Buchman's belief that "guidance" in itself was sufficient to solve all problems, and to the implicit Buchmanite belief in social inequality—that there is nothing inherently wrong with coercion, domination and submission, with some giving orders and others taking them, and with an unequal distribution of wealth and income. And the antiintellectualism of Buchman's message likewise stemmed from his fixation on "guidance" as a cure-all. Anything that could call "guidance" into doubt was inherently undesirable; thus logic, careful consideration of facts, and a questioning attitude were deadly enemies to the Oxford Group Movement. A Group axiom expresses this attitude succinctly: "Doubt stifles and makes abortive our attempt to act upon God's Guidance."<sup>xii</sup> A former Buchmanite recalled that when he was a member of the Groups, "thinking seemed to me atheism."<sup>xiii</sup>

Following the collapse of his campus movement in the U.S., Buchman moved his base of operations to England and conducted evangelical crusades at Oxford and Cambridge. It was through recruits garnered in these crusades that the group acquired its name. While the Buchman movement never attracted more than a small minority of students at Oxford, a traveling team consisting largely of Oxford students went to South Africa in 1929 where it was dubbed "the Oxford Group" by the press, and shortly after that Buchman and his minions began to refer to themselves as the "Oxford Group Movement." Whether this was "absolutely honest" is open to question: Buchman had never studied at Oxford University; he held no position there; and his movement had no official connection with the university and very limited influence among its students.

Nonetheless, the use of the Oxford name was very advantageous to the Buchmanites, suggesting as it did connection with a venerable and respected institution. Another advantage was that the centenary of the Oxford Movement—John Henry Newman's attempt to Catholicize the Anglican Church—was to be celebrated in 1933, and the names Oxford Movement and Oxford Group Movement would inevitably become confused in the public mind, much to the benefit of the Oxford Group Movement. The Buchmanites used the name "Oxford Group Movement" for a decade, and dropped it only in the opening days of World War II for all but certain legal purposes.<sup>xiv</sup>

Concurrent with the transfer of his base of operations to England, Buchman began to shift the focus of his movement on both sides of the Atlantic from well-to-do students to their parents. In the early 1930s, the Buchman movement began to hold mass meetings which, like the much smaller meetings of the 1920s, were called "houseparties." For several years the Buchmanites held an annual houseparty in Oxford. Attendance in 1930 was 700; by 1935 it had risen to 10,000. In 1936, a houseparty in Birmingham, England attracted 15,000 persons. The smaller 1920s-style houseparties were, however, also a prominent feature of the Oxford Group Movement throughout the 1930s.

A feature common to both types of houseparty was the ostentatious use of the names of the rich and famous. One friendly observer noted, "No feature of the Oxford Group Movement so strikes the casual observer . . . as its studious attention to position, title, and social prestige. No

meeting is properly launched without its quota of patrons of rank and social standing."<sup>xv</sup> In the U.S., prominent—and trumpeted—supporters included Russell Firestone, Mrs. Thomas Edison, Admiral Byrd, Mr. And Ms. Cleveland Dodge, Mrs. Harry Guggenheim, and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford. As this list suggests, money, power, and prestige were what mattered to Buchman and his followers, not politics (as long as the powerful and prestigious didn't hold "communist" views). If politics had mattered to the Buchmanites, it's highly unlikely that they would have publicized their association with the prominent, vocal anti-semitic and Nazi sympathizer, Henry Ford.<sup>xvi</sup>

Another notable feature of the Oxford Group Movement in this period (and indeed throughout its history) was its routine and extreme exaggeration of its own importance and influence. The Groupers' estimation of their influence in South Africa is illustrative. During the years following 1929, when Buchman accompanied the "team" (and the Buchman movement acquired the name "Oxford Group" ), "traveling teams" visited South Africa many times. In his estimate of the Buchmanites' influence, Deputy Prime Minister J.H. Hofmeyr, who had fallen under Buchman's sway, stated that Buchman's 1929 visit had "started a major and continuing influence for racial reconciliation throughout the whole country, white and black, Dutch and British."<sup>xvii</sup> Similar estimations appeared after every "traveling team" visit.

The South Africans, curiously, didn't seem to notice the effect of the Buchmanites. Writing in the South African religious newspaper, *The Church Times*, on September 14, 1934, the Cape Town correspondent stated: "The English Newspapers continually bring us news of the wonders which the Group Movement is effecting in South Africa. To it they ascribe the formation of the coalition Government, and the melting away of the barriers between Dutch and English, European and native, Indian and Bantu; . . . It is curious that in South Africa we should know so little of these wonders. It seems clear to us that the coalition Government came into being through sheer weariness of strife; certainly it was never attributed here to the influence of the Groups. And the Groups have long since ceased to attract any attention to speak of."<sup>xviii</sup>

Undeterred by facts, Oxford Group Movement/Moral Re-Armament (MRA) spokesmen continued to give glowing accounts of their effectiveness in healing racial divisions in South Africa over the coming years. In 1955, South African delegates attended a Moral Re-Armament World Assembly in Washington, D.C. The Allentown *Morning Call*, Buchman's hometown newspaper, reported: "Speakers from South Africa said MRA was replacing racial supremacy and bloody revolution with ?a new dimension of racial unity."<sup>xix</sup> As late as 1960, Frank Buchman wrote in his birthday message, "A Hurricane of Common Sense," that "White and black leadership in South Africa want their Cabinet and the whole country to see this movie [the MRA film, *The Crowning Experience*]. They say it holds the secret that alone can cure the racial divisions that are tearing South Africa apart, dividing her from other countries, and undermining her economic life."<sup>xx</sup> This was written when the apartheid system had already been in place for over a decade, and less than a year before the Sharpeville massacre. Yet Buchman makes no demand that the apartheid system be dismantled; in fact, he makes no criticism of it at all. In his view it was enough that the South Africans see his MRA film.

Such political naïvete was nothing new to Buchman. In 1936, at the height of his movement's prestige and influence, he stated in an interview published in the August 26, 1936 *New York World Telegram*:

I thank heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who built a front line of defence against the anti-Christ of Communism . . .

Of course I don't condone everything the Nazis do. Anti-semitism? Bad, naturally. I suppose Hitler sees a Karl Marx in every Jew.

But think what it would mean to the world if Hitler surrendered to the control of God. Or Mussolini. Or any dictator. Through such a man God could control a nation overnight and solve every last, bewildering problem . . . Human problems aren't economic. They're moral and they can't be solved by immoral measures. They could be solved within a God-controlled democracy, or perhaps I should say a theocracy, and they could be solved through a God-controlled Fascist dictatorship.<sup>xxi</sup>

It's worth noting that Bill Wilson and his fellow AAs-to-be *must* have known about this interview, which caused a public furor, yet they continued to work as part of the Oxford Groups for more than another year in New York and another three years in Akron.

It's also worth noting that AA, in its official "Conference-approved" biography of Bill Wilson, *Pass It On*, treats this matter in what can only be described as a dishonest manner. This is all the more surprising and disappointing in that the book's dust jacket proclaims, "Every word is documented, every source checked."

In the section of *Pass It On* dealing with Buchman's remarks, the anonymous author states:

In August [1936], the *New York World Telegram* published an article about Buchman, charging that he was pro-Nazi. The newspaper quoted Buchman as saying: "Thank Heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler who built a front-line defense against the Anti-Christ of Communism. Think what it would mean to the world if Hitler surrendered to God. Through such a man, God could control a nation and solve every problem. Human problems aren't economic, they're moral, and they can't be solved by immoral measures."

While most discussion of the incident, even by Buchman's critics, have since vindicated him, the article brought the group into public controversy.<sup>xxii</sup>

There are several remarkable features in this passage. The first is that the *World Telegram* piece is referred to as an "article" when in fact it was an *interview* in which Buchman's comments comprised well over half the text, with almost all of the remaining text consisting of descriptive passages, transitions between Buchman's statements, and uncontroversial background information on Buchman and the Oxford Group Movement. There is a tremendous difference between an "article" in which Buchman was "charged" with being pro-Nazi and an *interview* in which he himself clearly expressed pro-Nazi opinions, a fact which undoubtedly was not lost on the author of AA's official Wilson biography.

Another remarkable feature of the passage just quoted from *Pass It On* is that Buchman's statements are carefully edited to put his best possible face forward. The anonymous AA author took fragments separated by hundreds of words and patched them together as if they were a single statement, while dropping a number of words within the fragments. For example, by dropping the word "But" before the words "think what it would mean . . .," the author made the fragments appear to fit together snugly—thus hiding the fact that the "statement" is a patchwork.

In normal literary practice, it's considered proper to separate patched-together fragments with ellipses if the intervening material doesn't alter the meaning of the quoted material. If the intervening material does alter the meaning, as it does in the "statement" cited in *Pass It On*, it's considered unethical to quote it even with ellipses, and blatantly dishonest to quote it as if it were a single unitary statement. It should also be noted that the author of *Pass It On* quoted Buchman's "statement" in such a way as to leave the impression that it was the *only* such "statement" in the "article."

Perhaps most remarkably, the anonymous AA author concludes that, "most discussions of the incident, even by Buchman's critics, have since vindicated him." One remarkable aspect of this statement is its deliberate fuzziness. What was Buchman "vindicated" of? Of making pro-Nazi statements? Of being pro-Nazi? Our AA author leaves that crucial matter unresolved.

Further, I've done my best to read *all* of the widely circulated criticisms of Buchman's remarks, and *none* "vindicate" him of making pro-Nazi statements. I should also point out that Buchman never denied that he made the statements quoted in the *World Telegram*, and that he never repudiated them.<sup>xiii</sup> (Since he believed that he was "guided" to make the remarks, if he had repudiated them it would have been a tacit admission that the "guidance" he received was in error; and that would have brought down his whole ideological house of cards, built as it was on the infallibility of "guidance.")

As for "vindicating" Buchman of being pro-Nazi, several of his critics pointed out that Buchman was a political simpleton who believed—as Buchman himself stated in the *World Telegram* interview—that the world's problems could be solved through "a God-controlled democracy," a "theocracy," or a "God-controlled Fascist dictatorship." It must be admitted, though, that in the *World Telegram* interview, Buchman showed decided enthusiasm for the latter option.

As *The Christian Century* pointed out two weeks after Buchman's remarks were published:

Indeed the worst thing about a religion which undertakes to be purely individualistic and to concern itself not at all as to the way in which the corporate life of society is organized is that it cannot succeed in that undertaking—it is forced to take a political position, and its utter lack of understanding of political realities predetermines what that position shall be.

Such a religion enters the social arena inevitably on the side of reaction. God works through individuals it [Buchmanism] argues. The way to make institutions good is to make the individuals who run them good. The fewer these individuals are, the simpler the operation. The only way to make a good government is to convert the governors, and if there could be but one



governor dictating the policies of the nation under God's guidance, the ideal type of state would have been achieved. Individualism in religion thus leads by the straightest of roads to fascism in politics.<sup>[xxiv](#)</sup>

If this is "vindication" of Frank Buchman, it's vindication of a very strange sort.

Another "incident" is also revealing of Buchman's attitude toward the Nazis. At the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Buchman offered to introduce British MP Kenneth Lindsay to Heinrich Himmler, who Buchman referred to as "a great lad."<sup>[xxv](#)</sup> At the time, that "great lad" was the head of the Gestapo. It should be remembered, however, that Buchman always took great pains to ingratiate himself with "key men" of all political persuasions (except Communists). It seems probable that in this incident Buchman was revealing no special love for Himmler, but was simply being his normal, oily self.

Not quite two years after the *World Telegram* interview, Buchman launched his "Moral Rearmament" campaign in Britain on May 28, 1938 in a speech in London. The implication of the slogan "Moral Rearmament" seemed to be that if the people of Britain relied on "guidance" they had no need to physically rearm to fend off Hitler. Three weeks before the Munich conference, Buchman coined the slogan "Guns or Guidance" and—remembering that the influence of Buchman's movement was strongest among rich Tories, that is, members of the ruling class—one can only speculate on the possible contribution of Buchman's Moral Rearmament/ Guns or Guidance campaign to Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.

(Remarkably, in the years since World War II, Moral Re-Armament has attempted to paint Buchman as an advocate of preparedness. The lead sentence in an article posted on MRA's official web site baldly states: "Throughout the 1930s [sic], Frank Buchman continued to arouse the European democracies to the danger of totalitarianism of Left and Right, and to fight strenuously for the concept of true democracy."<sup>[xxvi](#)</sup> And in *Moral Re-Armament: What Is It?*, the authors assert that "Buchman's efforts in the 1930s led in many European countries to . . . [an] awakening to the realities of the aims of both Hitler and Stalin . . ."<sup>[xxvii](#)</sup> How this jibes with Buchman's "Guns or Guidance" campaign and his enthusiasm for "a theocracy . . . [or] a God-controlled Fascist dictatorship," they don't explain.)

Within three years of Buchman's launching the Moral Re-Armament campaign, the Buchmanites had abandoned the name Oxford Group Movement for all but certain legal purposes, and they began calling themselves Moral Re-Armament, or MRA. Coincidentally with the adoption of the MRA name, the Buchmanites shifted their emphasis from "personal evangelism" to mass propaganda through full-page newspaper advertisements, worldwide radio broadcasts, mass distribution of Buchmanite books and pamphlets, and the holding of huge public rallies. This shift in emphasis did little to reverse the declining fortunes of the movement, which had been on a downhill slide since the time of Buchman's "thank heaven for Hitler" remarks in 1936.

A contributing factor to the decline of Buchmanism was the fact that in both the U.S. and Britain during World War II, several dozen Oxford Group members attempted to obtain exemptions from the draft on the grounds that they were "lay evangelists" and that their work

was essential to national morale. *None* of these "lay evangelists" were pacifists or conscientious objectors; they actually favored the war, but had been "guided" not to take part in it because of the importance of their "work." Their "work" consisted of the production of heavy-handed MRA morality plays with titles such as "You Can Defend America." The authorities were impressed by neither their arguments nor their "chicken hawk" attitude, and the Buchmanite "lay evangelists" were soon sporting khaki and crewcuts and marching in lock-step with other conscripts.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The "Moral Rearmament" campaign, the attempts at draft evasion by MRA members, and Buchman's 1936 interview in which he thanked heaven for Hitler contributed to marked public disenchantment with Buchman and his Groups. A good indication of the decline in interest can be found in the number of articles on the Groups listed in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. From first mention with only three articles in the January 1929 to June 1932 volume, the total quickly rises to 38 in the July 1932 to June 1935 volume, nosedives to 12 in the following volume, and ultimately bottoms out at zero in the July 1943 to June 1945 volume.<sup>xxix</sup>

Following the war, Buchman's fortunes revived somewhat, and wealthy backers bought luxurious hotels for his movement at Mackinac Island, Michigan and Caux, Switzerland. This isn't surprising. Buchman's doctrine of individual responsibility for all personal and social ills posed absolutely no threat to the wealth of his backers, allowed them to feel virtuous while retaining their privileges, and even showed some prospects of further domesticating the labor movement.

That was a difficult task given the corrupt, hierarchical, and visionless nature of most American and British unions, but the Buchmanites felt themselves up to the job. From the mid-1930s on, one finds numerous Oxford Groups/MRA claims of successful interventions in labor struggles. The scenarios outlined by MRA were often drearily the same: one of the parties in a dispute, often a labor "leader," was "changed" by the Buchmanites, realized his wrongs, confessed them to someone on the management side who was so touched by the confession that he confessed his wrongs to the original wrongdoer, and the conflict was peacefully resolved; and wages, working conditions, and productivity all improved sharply.

Needless to say, these scenarios were usually pure fantasy. In *The Mystery of Moral Rearmament*, Tom Driberg cites numerous examples of MRA's false claims. One example is a claim made at the January 16, 1952 MRA "Assembly of the Americas" in Miami, Florida, where a British delegate, "Bill Birmingham, Union Secretary of the Mosley Common Pit, Lancashire," stated that because of MRA activity at the mine "production had increased from 11½ to 15 tons per man per shift," while wages had increased from 37 to 52 shillings per day. According to figures from Lord Robens, chairman of the National Coal Board (which oversees all mine operations in Britain), production had actually increased from 2110 *pounds* per man in 1947 to 2190 pounds per man in 1952, while wages increased from 27 shillings 6 pence to 38 shillings per day.<sup>xxx</sup>

But fallacious claims of successful interventions in labor disputes were nothing new to the Buchmanites. More than a decade before the Miami Assembly, even *Time* magazine had seen fit on two occasions to make snide comments about Oxford Group Movement/MRA false claims in the labor dispute field.<sup>xxxi</sup> And MRA's outrageous claims in this area have persisted to the present

day. In the previously cited article posted on MRA's web site, one finds the claim that "One group of men, for instance, tackled unemployment [in Denmark in the late '30s] which was running at over 20 per cent. It was reduced eventually to 4.7 per cent."<sup>xxxii</sup> How and when MRA accomplished this amazing feat is not revealed. Perhaps MRA's success occurred during World War II, when Adolf Hitler "tackled [Danish] unemployment" and drastically reduced it through forced labor.

Despite the exaggerated and often wholly unrealistic claims made by MRA, Buchman's movement did have some influence in the upper echelons of the labor bureaucracy. MRA publicly bragged of this influence: "Illustrations of the effectiveness of this ideology in industry could be taken from all around the world. One of the 'five giants of American labor' lay dying. [MRA never identifies the "giant."] He said to a Senator, 'Tell America that when Frank Buchman changed John Riffe [Executive Vice-President of the CIO], he saved American industry 500 million dollars."<sup>xxxiii</sup> In April 1953, 13 years after he fell under Buchman's influence, Riffe listed his aims for American labor. One of them sounded as if it could just as easily have been issued by a leader of a Nazi or Soviet official trade union: "With the united strength of labor and industry to back the government in a foreign policy that will win all nations."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

MRA's focus on labor was but one part of its post-war strategy to present Moral Re-Armament as the *only* alternative to Communism. In *Ideology and Co-Existence*—a Moral Re-Armament pamphlet distributed by the millions in 1959 in the U.S. and Britain—its anonymous MRA author states: "There are two ideologies bidding for the world today. One is Moral Re-Armament . . . ; the other is Communism . . ."<sup>xxxv</sup> This is a rather grandiose selfassessment, but hardly a surprising one from an organization whose members and leadership believed that it was guided by God.

One ideological prong of MRA's post-war strategy was its emphasis on influencing organized labor; the other two prongs were a McCarthyite brand of anti-Communism and crude homophobia. The Buchmanites could not conceive of anyone disagreeing with them, much less attacking them, unless he or she were under Communist influence or otherwise morally tainted—a fact abundantly obvious from reading their literature of the period. One 1950s MRA book states: "Moral Re-Armament cannot be honestly opposed on intellectual grounds because it is basic truth . . . Opposition to Moral Re-Armament has special significance. It always comes from the morally defeated."<sup>xxxvi</sup> Like many other MRA pronouncements, this statement is very arrogant, but hardly surprising. MRA believed (like many deranged murderers—"God told me to do it") that it had a direct line to the Almighty, and hence The Truth; and who but someone morally tainted would oppose God's chosen spokesmen? This is the cardinal article of faith in every religious fanatic's creed: s/he has The Truth, and anyone who criticizes that Truth, or its bearer, *must* be immoral.

MRA really did believe that there was a Communist under every bed (and a "pervert" in it). In *Ideology and Co-Existence*, we read that "Chiang Kai-Shek was sold out and the mainland and Manchuria lost to Red China . . . Men, later found to be giving the Communist Party line, were successful with their deceptions and achieved the change of direction in American policy [which led to the "loss" of China]."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

An even clearer echo of McCarthy—but in reference to homosexuals, "security risks," in MRA terms—can be found in a book written by Peter Howard, Buchman's successor as head of MRA, which was published a few years after *Ideology and Co-Existence*: "At one point, 264 homosexuals were reported to have been purged from the American State Department. Many of them moved from Washington to New York and took jobs in the United Nations . . ." <sup>xxxviii</sup> This startling information appears in a chapter titled "Queens and Queers." It's very reminiscent of Joe McCarthy's famous speech in Wheeling, West Virginia on February 9, 1950, in which he said: "I have here in my hand a list of 205—a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who are, nevertheless, still working and shaping policy in the State Department." (Despite repeated challenges, McCarthy, of course, never produced the "list.") Another example of Buchmanite homophobia can be found in a 1963 advertisement in the *New York Times* in which Moral Re-Armament attacked "sexual deviants in high places who protect potential spies." <sup>xxxixl</sup>

MRA's attacks on homosexuals were not always purely venomous; at times they were also ludicrous. A 1954 Moral Re-Armament tract instructs readers on how to spot homosexuals:

There are many who wear suede shoes who are not homosexual, but in Europe and America the majority of homosexuals do. They favor green as a color in clothes and decorations. Men are given to an excessive display and use of the handkerchief. They tend to let the hair grow long, use scent and are frequently affected in speech, mincing in gait and feminine in mannerisms. They are often very gifted in the arts. They tend to exhibitionism. They can be cruel and vindictive, for sadism usually has a homosexual root. They are often given to moods.

. . . There is an unnecessary touching of hands, arms and shoulders. In the homosexual the elbow grip is a well-known sign. <sup>xli</sup>

Moral Re-Armament's virulent homophobia and obsession with homosexuality seem odd at first glance, but they make sense when one realizes that Frank Buchman was quite probably a "closeted" homosexual, perpetually at war with his own desires. Thus, in all likelihood, his own inner battle (against homosexual inclinations, or "perversion," as he often called it) ultimately became MRA's battle.

Buchman certainly exhibited many signs of being a "closet case": 1) he never married; 2) it was never even hinted in any of the numerous books and magazine articles written about him and his movement that he had sexual relations with women; 3) he was obsessed with sexual "sin," specifically self-"abuse" and "perversion"; 4) from the time he was ordained in his early 20s until he was nearly 50, his primary concern was working with young men; 5) he apparently relished discussing intimate sexual matters with young men; and 6) he was markedly homophobic, which is often a defense mechanism used by "closet cases" to conceal their true desires from both themselves and others.

As well, I've uncovered some slight direct evidence that Buchman was indeed homosexual: shortly after publication of the first edition of this book, the son of a member of Buchman's inner circle told me that among that circle "Buchman's homosexuality was taken for granted." <sup>xlii</sup> This

all makes Buchman's and MRA's obsession with "purity" and "perversion" much easier to understand.

Frank Buchman died in Freudenstadt, Germany on August 6, 1961, and his long-time disciple, Peter Howard, took the reins of Moral Re-Armament. MRA continued much as it had under Buchman for the next few years, but the loss of its guru was a blow from which it never recovered. Howard died suddenly in 1965 without designating a successor, and the organization quickly shriveled.

The leadership vacuum and the unsavory reputation Moral Re-Armament had acquired through its red-baiting and gay-baiting evidently combined to nearly put an end to MRA. By 1970 the organization had effectively ceased to exist in the U.S.<sup>xliii</sup>; and by 1972 it was in serious decline in Britain. At that point, its reputation was so tarnished that the liberal Protestant weekly, *The Christian Century*, reported that MRA, through its actions, had acquired "a sinister mafia image, and to be identified with it in any way remains a serious liability for anyone seeking public support."<sup>xliv</sup> At present, Moral Re-Armament continues to exist in both Britain and the U.S., but only as a shadow of its former self. (A few MRA books have been published over the last quarter century, and MRA currently publishes a slick, expensively produced monthly magazine, *For a Change*; as well, MRA maintains offices in Washington and London, retains its conference/hotel complex in Caux, Switzerland, and has added conference centers in India and Zimbabwe. But MRA has been out of the public spotlight for decades, and its membership is undoubtedly but a small fraction of what it was during its heyday in the 1930s.)

In the U.S., Moral Re-Armament lived on in the form of Sing Out!/Up with People!, the cloyingly wholesome kiddie vocal group cum traveling pep rally, whose "message" was, and is, taken straight from MRA. For well over a quarter century, Up with People! performances have been inflicted upon many millions of high school students (including the author on one dreary afternoon in the late 1960s).

Sing Out! was founded in 1965 by MRA member J. Blanton Belk, at Peter Howard's behest, and for its first two years was sponsored by MRA and the Reader's Digest Foundation. It retained its original name for roughly two years before becoming Up with People! in 1967. Sing Out!/Up with People! was almost certainly intended to be MRA's "antidote to hippies and peaceniks," as the *Dallas Times Herald* put it in 1967. The group's formal ties with Moral Re-Armament were, however, short-lived, probably because its association with MRA created fundraising difficulties.

Following its incorporation in 1968, Up with People! became organizationally independent of Moral Re-Armament, though MRA's influence was, and still remains, obvious. One former cast member from Sing Out!'s early days told me that boys and girls were forbidden to sit together on buses because of "purity" concerns, and that he distinctly remembers one assembly for male cast members, the specific purpose of which was to warn them against taking warm showers lest they become aroused and engage in self-"abuse." Another area where MRA's influence is evident is in Up with People!'s inflated self-concept. In 1967, Calvin Trillin archly commented, "Any place that ?Up with People!' has visited tends to sound like a battleground in the struggle . . . the show always seems to have arrived in a foreign country ?just weeks after

violent demonstrations'; the names of Negro urban areas are normally preceded by 'the streets of,' so that cast members talk of having sung in 'the streets of Watts.'"<sup>xlv</sup>

In 1990, Up with People!'s annual budget was \$19 million, much of it contributed by corporations such as General Electric, Coca-Cola, and Volvo. Members of the cast and their sponsors (often Rotary Clubs or the like) kicked in the rest. In 1990, cast members were expected to pay \$9,200 for the privilege of being in the group for one year, though more than 30 percent of them received financial help from the organization.<sup>xlvi</sup> In all likelihood, Up with People! will be around for some time, as the messages in its songs are music to corporate ears.

Today, Frank Buchman, the Oxford Group Movement, and Moral Re-Armament are nearly forgotten. Probably not one person in a hundred under the age of 50 would recognize Buchman's name or the names Oxford Group Movement or Moral Re-Armament; and probably not one in a thousand could provide even the meagerest information about Buchman or his groups. But the influence of Frank Buchman and his minions lingers on. His doctrines are almost certainly more widely adhered to and more influential now than they ever were during his lifetime—even if not one person in a thousand knows their origin.

<sup>i</sup>1. *The Mystery of Moral Re-Armament*, by Tom Driberg. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965. Quoted on p. 37.

<sup>ii</sup>2. *The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance*, by Walter Houston Clark. New York: Bookman Associates, 1951, p. 41. The source given for this information is an unnamed alumnus.

<sup>iii</sup>3. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>iv</sup>4. "Report on Buchmanism," *Time*, Jan. 4, 1943, p. 68.

<sup>v</sup>5. *Time*, April 20, 1936, p. 37.

<sup>vi</sup>6. Driberg, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>vii</sup>7. *Frank Buchman's Secret*, by Peter Howard. New York: Doubleday, 1961, p. 12.

<sup>viii</sup>8. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>ix</sup>9. *The Confusion of Tongues*, by Charles W. Ferguson. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1940, p. 16.

<sup>x</sup>10. *Ibid.*

<sup>xi</sup>11. Writers sympathetic to Buchman, the Oxford Group Movement, and Alcoholics Anonymous have put a different interpretation on these events. A good example is provided by Bill Pittman in *A.A. The Way It Began* (Seattle: Glen Abbey Books, 1988). In his carefully sanitized chapter on the Oxford Groups, Pittman omits mention of Buchman's comments to Hibden but notes that Buchman "claimed that the problem at Princeton was that most of the criticism of the Group's frankness on sexual matters came from a group of sexual perverts." (pp. 118—119) And he lets the matter rest with that.

<sup>xii</sup>12. *Saints Run Mad*, by Marjorie Harrison. London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1934. Quoted on page 39.

[xii](#)13. "Report on Buchmanism," *Time*, January 4, 1943, p. 68.

[xiii](#)14. *On the Tail of a Comet: The Life of Frank Buchman*, by Garth Lean. Colorado Springs, Colorado: Helmers & Howard, 1988, pp. 261-263.

[xiv](#)15. "Apostle to the Twentieth Century," by Henry P. Van Dusen, *The Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1934, p. 13.

[xv](#)16. During World War I, Ford published a series of viciously anti-semitic articles in *The Dearborn Independent*, a Michigan newspaper that he owned. He later published these articles in book form as *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*. In the early 1920s, this book was published in Germany under the title, *The Eternal Jew*. It reportedly had a major influence on Adolf Hitler, and he almost certainly plagiarized parts of it in *Mein Kampf*. The admiration was mutual. Following Hitler's assumption of power, Ford sent Hitler 50,000 Deutsch Marks every year on Hitler's birthday. Ford's anti-semitic views were well known during the period that the Buchmanites bragged of Ford's support of their movement. For more information on Ford's Nazi connections, see *Who Financed Hitler?*, by James and Suzanne Pool. New York: Dial Press, 1978.

[xvi](#)17. Driberg, op. cit., p. 174.

[xvii](#)18. Quoted in *The Groups Movement*, by the Most Rev. John A. Richardson. Milwaukee: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1935, pp. 23-24.

[xviii](#)19. Quoted in Driberg, op. cit., p. 175.

[xix](#)20. Ibid.

[xx](#)21. Quoted in Driberg, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

[22](#). *Pass It On*. New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 1988, pp. 170-171.

[xxi](#)23. Half a century later, MRA writer Garth Lean, in *On the Tail of a Comet* (op. cit., p. 240), denied that Buchman had said "Thank God for Hitler." (It should be noted that this is not the wording in the *World Telegram* interview, nor, to the best of my knowledge, is Buchman's statement quoted in this form in any source except Lean's book.) Lean quotes a fellow MRA member, Garrett Stearly, who was supposedly present at the interview, as stating that Buchman "said that Germany needed a new Christian spirit, yet one had to face the fact that Hitler had been a bulwark against Communism there—and you could at least thank heaven for that," a remark which Stearly regarded as "no eulogy of Hitler at all." Given the nature of journalism, it is certainly possible that the phrasing of Buchman's statement was that quoted by Stearly rather than that quoted in the *World Telegram* interview. In either case, however, it's quite clear that Buchman was happy that Hitler's rise to power had created a "front-line of defense" or a "bulwark" against Communism.

[24](#). In his defense of Buchman, Lean makes no denial that Buchman waxed enthusiastic over the possibilities of a "God-controlled Fascist dictator." Indeed, it would be very surprising if Buchman didn't harbor such sentiments. The main thrust of Buchmanism was to persuade "key men" to place themselves under "God-control," so that they could carry out "God's will"; and there is virtually no one in a more "key" position than a fascist dictator.

[xxii](#)24. "A God-Guided Dictator," *The Christian Century*, September 9, 1936, p. 1183.

[xxiii](#)25. Driberg, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

[xxiv](#)26. In the site's "Discovering MRA" section: "Arousing Europe to the gathering storm," <http://www.mra.org.uk/discovering/06arouse.html>

[xxv](#)27. Op. cit., p. 55.

[xxvi](#)28. For a fuller description of these events see Driberg, op. cit., pp. 105-111. See also Clark, op. cit., p. 81; *Drawing Room Conversion: A Sociological Account of the Oxford Group Movement*, by Allan W. Eister. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1950, pp. 62-63; "Less Buchmanism," *Time*, November 24, 1941, pp. 59-60; and "Buchman's Kampf," *Time* January 18, 1943, pp. 65-66.

[xxvii](#)29. The actual numbers are Jan. 1929—June 1932, 3 articles; July 1932—June 1935, 38 articles; July 1935—June 1937, 12 articles; July 1937—June 1939, 12 articles; July 1939—June 1941, 5 articles; July 1941—June 1943, 5 articles; July 1943—June 1945, zero articles.

[xxviii](#)30. Driberg, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

[xxix](#)31. See *Time*, November 24, 1941, p. 59, and July 31, 1939, p. 34.

[xxx](#)32. "Arousing Europe to the gathering storm," op. cit., p. 2.

[xxxi](#)33. *Ideology and Co-Existence*. Moral Re-Armament, 1959, p. 14.

[xxxii](#)34. Ibid.

[xxxiii](#)35. Ibid., p. 1.

[xxxiv](#)36. *Remaking Men*, by Paul Campbell and Peter Howard. New York: Arrowhead Books, 1954, p. 66.

[xxxv](#)37. Op. cit., p. 23.

[xxxvi](#)38. *Britain and the Beast*, by Peter Howard. London: Heinemann, 1963, p. 47.

[xxxvii](#)39. Quoted by Calvin Trillin in *The New Yorker*, December 16, 1967, p. 134.

[xxxviii](#)40. In a choice bit of irony, at roughly the same time that MRA was conducting its red-baiting/gay-baiting campaign against homosexual "security risks," the Communist Party had a policy of expelling gay members because it too considered them "security risks." Harry Hay, a longtime Communist and founder of the first American gay rights group, the Mattachine Society, states: "About the fall of 1951 I decided that organizing the Mattachine was a call to me deeper than the innermost reaches of spirit, a vision-quest more important than life. I went to the Communist Party and discussed this "total call" upon me, recommending to them my expulsion. They rejected 'expulsion,' and, in honor of my eighteen years as a member and ten years as a teacher and cultural innovator dropped me as a 'security risk but as a life-long friend of the people.'" Quoted in *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.*, by Jonathan Ned Katz. New York: Meridian, 1992, p. 413.

[xxxix](#)41. Campbell and Howard, op. cit., pp. 60-62.

[xl](#)42. Unfortunately, I cannot disclose my source for this information. Shortly after publication of the first edition of this book, I lost touch with him. I've made several attempts to find him during



preparation of this expanded edition, without success; but I'm convinced that he was telling me the truth about this matter.

[xli](#)43. See "Moral Re-Armament RIP" in *National Review*, October 20, 1970, p. 1099.

[xlii](#)44. "When the White Begins to Fade," *The Christian Century*, June 28, 1972, p. 704.

[xliii](#)45. Trillin, op. cit., p. 132.

[xliv](#)46. "1960s Troupe Celebrates 25 Years of Enthusiasm," by Dirk Johnson. *New York Times*, July 29, 1990, p. 18, section 1.

## The Religious Roots of the Twelve Steps

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Every twelve-step meeting begins with several people reading several standard texts, the articles of faith of the group. One of these articles of faith is of course the Twelve Steps. They are prefaced by a statement like "This is how we achieved sobriety." It implies that the original members of AA looked long and hard for something, anything, that would work to save alcoholics from self-destruction, and that these Twelve Steps were what finally worked. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Actually, Bill Wilson just sat down, in December, 1938, and wrote up twelve commandments for the new religious group that he and Doctor Bob had started. Those commandments were simply a repackaged version of Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman's religious philosophy, which was then going by the name of The Oxford Group, or the Oxford Group Movement. Bill W. and Doctor Bob had been members of that group until they were asked to leave, and take their alcoholics with them, because they were spending too much time with the alcoholics, and not enough time following the dictates of the cult leader, Frank Buchman. Still, Bill and Bob believed in the religious tenets of Buchmanism, so they just formed their own independent group, with exactly the same religious beliefs as before. Bill Wilson had been ambushed by his friend Ebby Thatcher at a very vulnerable moment, when he was detoxing in a hospital, December, 1934, and converted to believing in Buchman's cult. The conversion worked so well that Wilson continued to believe in Buchmanism even after he was kicked out of it.

The practices of the Oxford Group were:

- 1) Admission of personal defeat (you have been defeated by sin).
- 2) Taking of personal inventory.
- 3) Confession of one's defects to another person.
- 4) Making restitution to those one has harmed.
- 5) Helping others selflessly.
- 6) Praying to God for the power to put these precepts into practice.

There was also one more very important requirement, not listed in these six steps, "Go recruit more members."

These were also the original six steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, before the group even had that name. Some of the very early AA members mention these original six steps in the "Big Book", *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

In December, 1938, while writing the Big Book, Bill W. simply rewrote the Buchmanism steps and practices, very verbosely, adding enough words to change the six or seven steps into twelve. Bill's wife, Lois, describes the process this way:

By this time Bill was ready to start the fifth chapter, "How It Works." He was not feeling well, but the writing had to go on, so he took pad and pencil to bed with him. How could he bring the program alive so that those at a distance, reading the book, could apply it to themselves and perhaps get well? He had to be very explicit. The six Oxford Group principles that the Fellowship had been using were not definite enough. He must broaden and deepen their implications. He relaxed and asked for guidance.

When he finished writing and reread what he had put down, he was quite pleased. Twelve principles had developed -- the Twelve Steps.

-- Page 113, *Lois Remembers*, Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc. 1991. ISBN 0-910034-23-0

Then Bill presented the Twelve Steps to the other early AA members, who promptly freaked out and screamed bloody murder. They clearly foresaw that this dogmatic religiosity was going to drive away many of the very alcoholics whom the program was supposed to help.

So Bill Wilson toned down the language somewhat: The word "God" in step 2 was replaced by "a Power greater than ourselves". The phrase "as we understood Him" was added after the word "God" in steps 3 and 11. In step 7, the "on our knees" phrase was deleted from "Humbly, on our knees, asked Him to remove our shortcomings." But the rest of the steps were left pretty much unchanged, except for this one giant concession: the Twelve Steps were preceded by a statement saying that they are only a suggestion. (The true believers laugh, and say, "Yeh, it's only a suggestion. But you will die if you don't take the suggestion.")

That partial editing produced a funny progression: In Step 2, we only have to believe in a nice, vague, "Power greater than ourselves." But then they pull a quick bait-and-switch stunt on us, and in Step 3, it's suddenly "God", a define-it-yourself "God, as we understood Him", into whose care we must give our wills and our lives. So it has to be some kind of a God capable of taking control of our wills and our lives, and also a God stupid enough to waste his time doing so... And then, in Step 5, it's just plain old "God", with no qualifiers at all. Then we are told that it's a God that we should confess to, and pray to, and then we are told what to pray for. That's a religion, not a quit-drinking program.

These are the Steps that came out of that process:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Nowhere in the Twelve Steps does it say that you should quit drinking, or help anyone else to quit drinking. Nowhere do the words, "sobriety", "recovery", "abstinence", "quit drinking" or "health" appear in the Twelve Steps. The Twelve Steps are not a formula for curing alcoholism. They are twelve steps for exploiting alcoholics' troubles. They are twelve steps for starting a new evangelical proselytizing cult religion, just like Frank Buchman's steps were. The commandment in Step 12, which is repeated in Tradition 5, is to "carry the message" to alcoholics. What message? The message that Bill Wilson's version of Dr. Frank Buchman's religion is the answer to alcoholism. Bill Wilson believed that "the only radical remedy ... for dipsomania is religiomania." (Meaning: the only cure for alcoholism is religious fanaticism.) That suggestion came from Carl Jung, the famous Swiss psychiatrist, and when Carl said "mania", he meant "mania", as in maniac. So the Twelve Steps really were deliberately meant to start a new religion, right from the very start, and to turn the followers into religious fanatics, or religious maniacs. Bill Wilson says, religious fanaticism *is the only answer* for alcoholism.

But what if you disagree with that message? What if you would prefer to keep the religious beliefs you already have? What if you choose to not believe in the Twelve Steps, and, since they are only a suggestion, you freely choose to not do them?

Well, you can still join AA, because the only official requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking, but you won't really be a full-fledged member. The hard-core true believers have a deprecating name for such members: "One-steppers". People who only practice the first step, admitting that they have lost control of their drinking. People who want to quit drinking, and regain control of their lives, but without becoming religious fanatics, and without all of the neurotic wallowing in guilt and grovelling before God that the other eleven steps entail. The true

believers will tell you that you can't do that: you have to practice all twelve steps all of the time, or you will relapse.

When people do quit without the Twelve Steps, and without even attending AA meetings, the AA true believers will say that those people are not really "in recovery"; they are only "abstaining." What's the difference? Some counselors have lists of such differences, like working on all of the problems and issues that led one to drink in the first place, versus just abstaining from drinking by will power alone. Also: recovery involves major lifestyle changes, and abstinence doesn't; recovery involves developing a support group or system, abstinence doesn't. Recovery requires working on yourself and fixing what is broken; abstinence doesn't. But the AA true believers don't even ask about such differences, they just automatically proclaim that anyone who doesn't drink, and who also doesn't attend AA meetings, is just abstaining, while someone who is attending AA meetings is of course "in recovery," whether they are actually working on any other issues or not.

And the hard-core fanatics will proclaim that the abstainer is of course a "dry drunk." "Dry drunk" is yet another imaginary disease invented by Alcoholics Anonymous. The term originally referred to a rather rare condition that some people have during the first months of recovery: they stumble around in an uncoordinated manner as if they are drunk, even though they are 100% sober. But AA has turned it into a slur, which is supposed to mean that someone is thinking like a drunk man, even though he is sober. And supposedly, all sober men who won't do the Twelve Steps will suffer from that condition, and will also become bitterly unhappy as well...

If the AA member relapses, while the so-called "abstainer" doesn't, the AA fanatics will just blame their fellow AA member for "defects of character", and "constitutional incapability to be honest with himself", and for not practicing the Twelve Steps properly, while they simply ignore the nonmember abstainer, or proclaim that "He'll still relapse, it's just a matter of time." Under no conditions will the AA fanatics question the effectiveness of the Twelve Steps for quitting drinking.

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To understand the Twelve Steps, or any of the rest of the Alcoholics Anonymous dogma, you have to understand the teachings of Frank Buchman, sometimes called Buchmanism, and the beliefs of his religious group, which was variously, over the years, named First Century Christian Fellowship, or The Oxford Group Movement, or Moral Re-Armament. Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman was born June 4, 1878, in Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, USA, and died August 6, 1961, in Freudenstadt, Germany. He was quite an interesting nut. He was ordained as a Lutheran minister, June 1908. He then opened his own church in Philadelphia, which did well, but after a few years, he got into a squabble over money with his trustee committee, and in a huff, he resigned and got on a boat for Europe. He ending up at a large religious convention in Keswick, England, where he felt that he had a spiritual transformation. Feeling an urge to share this experience, he went to nearby Oxford University and formed an evangelical group there among the student leaders and athletes. Later the movement spread, and groups formed over the next twenty years in England, Scotland, Holland, India, South Africa, China, Egypt, Switzerland, and North and South America.



He left England to travel in China for a while. It was in China that he started his custom of having house parties. He would gather around himself whatever rich or influential people he could get, and hold informal church services, in a rich person's home or a large hotel suite, that were more like an open house than a church service. People would come and go as they pleased, and would hang out with Frank, as he was called (never Dr. Buchman or Rev. Buchman), or hang out in some other room, as they liked, playing cards or music sometimes. In the middle of all of this, Buchman developed and expounded his beliefs. And then, in the early nineteen-twenties, Buchman took his style of meetings to American campuses.

An important feature of the Buchmanism meetings was confession and "sharing." The Buchmanites were really big on public confession, and were always openly confessing everything they had done. And converts would "share" the message that their lives had been much improved by following Frank's guidance and principles.

This brings up another characteristic of Buchmanism: meetings, meetings, meetings. The Buchmanites were always forming groups and having lots of meetings, just like AA would do later. A slang term that others used for Buchmanism was "groupism," the religion of those people who just believed in groups and meetings.

Frank Buchman always maintained that converts should remain in their own church. New people may be converted to believing in Buchmanism, but they were supposed to continue as members of their original church. That seemingly generous attitude had the side effect of making everyone, no matter what their religion, fair game for conversion to Buchmanism, and the original church couldn't even complain about losing a member.

One of the peculiar features of Buchmanism was "guidance sessions." People would sit quietly, and God would speak to them, they believed. So the members of Buchman's groups were always receiving messages from God to do this or that... When people seriously believe that their own random thoughts are the Words of God, then they can become convinced of anything they wish. This can lead to just about any kind of insane behavior you could imagine, of course.

Curiously, none of the believers ever got any guidance that conflicted with any of Frank's guidance. You would think that some conflicts or collisions would be inevitable, because anybody could think anything, but apparently, God managed to keep his followers from making any mistakes. Convenient. Actually, Buchman implemented a system of checks for the regular followers: they had to submit their received guidances to the other members and the elders for approval. The other members, or, preferably, the elders, would interpret and approve the guidance, or not approve it. If it seriously conflicted with Buchman's guidance, then such mistaken guidance must have come from The Evil One, not God. In that way, no follower could get a message from God like, "Frank Buchman is crazy. Quit this stupid cult right now."

Buchmanites believe in a God who micro-manages the world. He has a grand plan for everything, right down to the germs. Everything is subject to the will of God, even the tiniest of details, like whether you choose to drink coffee or tea with lunch today. A follower who has properly Surrendered to Guidance will intuitively make the choice that pleases God. And God, in turn, will make things turn out right for those followers who please Him. To hear Buchmanites tell it, God is constantly kept busy pulling millions of puppet strings, to make events go the way He wants.

Another important concept in Buchmanism is the idea that everyone has been "defeated by sin", and is "insane". Only Frank Buchman and his arrogant followers were sane; everyone else in the world was insane and in need of Frank's guidance.

This shines a whole new light on the first two steps of AA. In Step 1, when people admit that they are powerless over alcohol, and that their lives have become unmanageable, that is really just the Buchmanist defeated-by-sin confession, only slightly edited. The second Step, "We came to believe that only God ('a Power greater than ourselves') could restore us to sanity" is actually referring to Frank Buchman's idea of insanity, the one caused by sin, not some temporary insanity caused by drinking too much alcohol. If you think about it for a minute, it makes sense. You don't really need a miracle or God to get you out of the temporary insanity caused by drinking too much alcohol; a few days or weeks of sobering up will usually do it. You only need the Big Miracle to totally transform you, and remove all sin from your life.

Now some of the current faithful may disagree, and say that they saw themselves as insane in the Second Step because they were suicidally drinking impossible quantities of alcohol, and couldn't stop. That may be; sometimes words just mean what we want them to mean. But plenty of the old faithful will tell you that the insanity refers to living a life of sin, and that sanity is living according to God's Will, rather than one's own.

Buchman's program consisted of "personal evangelism" with emphasis on:

- 1) both public and private confession of sin;
- 2) reception of divine "guidance" during "quiet times";
- 3) complete surrender to this "guidance";
- 4) the living of a "guided" life in which every aspect of one's actions was controlled by God;
- 5) the practice of the Buchmanite Four Absolutes -- Absolute Purity, Absolute Honesty, Absolute Love, and Absolute Unselfishness;
- 6) making restitution to those one has harmed;
- and 7) carrying "the message" to those "still defeated" by sin.

More Buchmanism: "The Five C's". These steps are the procedures for recruiting more members. The most important duty of members was to win more souls for the Group. The five C's are Confidence, Confession, Conviction, Conversion, and Conservation. What they mean is: First, get the prospect's Confidence, utilizing whatever mindgames are required. Then, Confess something to him in order to manipulate his mind, and get him to Confess something in return. Then get him to Convict himself of sin and feel guilty. Then, to escape from the guilt, he must experience Conversion: he must surrender himself to God (really, to the Group). Last, Conservation means he has to go out and recruit more members.

A very disturbing feature of these procedures is the idea that it is okay to deceive the prospective new member in order to get his confidence. The recruiting member should twist the truth, mask details, present only facts which will appeal to the prospect, "confess" or "share" stories -- true or untrue -- telling how Buchmanism saved the recruiter from misery, and tell half-truths in order to entice the prospect into joining. It's all okay, because it is all done in the service of God. The truth is, deceptive recruiting is a standard practice of most all evil cults. So is the rationalization that the end justifies the means.

You will notice that Frank Buchman just loved lists of steps, or step-like things. The Twelve Steps and The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous are just another couple of iterations of the same old list-making routine. Frank had The Five C's, The Four Absolutes, The Five Procedures of the Sane, and The Six Steps or The Seven Steps.

As a matter of fact, we can very easily translate the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous backwards into Buchmanism steps, like this:

- 1) We admitted that we had been defeated by sin, and were powerless over it.
- 2) We came to believe that only God could restore us to sanity.
- 3) We surrendered our wills and our lives to the control of God.
- 4) We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5) We confessed our sins to another person and to God.
- 6) and 7) We humbly, on our knees, begged God to remove our sins.
- 8) We made a list of persons we had harmed.
- 9) We made direct amends to them.
- 10) Repeat steps 4 through 7 endlessly.
- 11) We prayed for Guidance and the power to do God's Will.
- 12) We recruited more members by carrying the message to those who were still defeated by sin, and also swore to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

Notice the similarity between those steps, and the practices of the Oxford Group:

- 1) Admission of personal defeat by sin.
- 2) Taking of personal inventory.
- 3) Confession of one's defects to another person.
- 4) Making restitution to those one has harmed.
- 5) Helping others selflessly.
- 6) Praying to God for the power to put these precepts into practice.

Also, the AA steps 2 and 3 are covered by the Buchmanism concept of Guidance. The adherent is supposed to surrender to Guidance, which is the same thing as surrendering to God, which is the same thing as surrendering to God-control, which, according to Buchmanism, will restore one to sanity.

And AA Step 12 is the same as Buchmanism's "Conservation" or "Continuance": go recruit more members. It is also the same as Buchman's earlier seventh step, carrying "the message" to those "still defeated" by sin.

Through the mid-nineteen-twenties, Buchman pursued his campus crusade at colleges such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Bryn Mawr. Buchman established a pattern that he would continue for life, targeting "key people" for conversion, and then exploiting their names for more publicity, and for attracting more "key people." "Key people" were people like football stars, student body presidents, and famous rich men's sons. Buchman also established another pattern for life: He displayed an unhealthy obsession with sex. One Harvard graduate is reported to have said, "He started asking me intimate questions about sex before I'd been alone with him for five minutes. I left in a hurry."

Princeton University President John Hibben banned Frank Buchman and his campus crusade from Princeton in December 1923 because of Buchman's sexual obsession, his offensive and arrogant behavior, and the obtrusive zeal, invasion of privacy, and inappropriate confessions of sexual matters of some of his converts. It didn't help any that one of Buchman's converts took the innocent daughter of a Professor out on a date, and then gave her a full confession of every intimate detail of his sex life.

Buchman attempted to pursue his "good work" at other campuses, but Buchmanism quickly faded into obscurity at virtually every institution where it had taken root. Following the collapse of his campus movement in the US, Buchman moved his base of operations to England, and conducted evangelical operations at Oxford and Cambridge. It was through recruits garnered at Oxford that his group was to get its new name: "The Oxford Group Movement." Buchman's group never attracted more than a very tiny minority of the students at Oxford, but apparently Buchman liked the prestigious sound of the name, and pretty soon, all of the Buchmanites, anywhere in the world, were claiming to be part of "The Oxford Group".

Buchman switched the emphasis of his house meetings from the students to their parents, preferably rich parents, on both sides of the Atlantic. Whenever Buchman got a rich and famous adherent, he would exploit the name for all it was worth, in order to attract more rich and famous people. In this way, Buchman habitually exaggerated the scope and importance of his movement. He always tried to connect with the "key people", the rich, the famous, and the powerful, in any country. In Germany, it was the Nazis.

In an interview published August 26, 1936 in the *New York World Telegram*, Frank Buchman stated:

I thank Heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who built a front line of defense against the anti-Christ of Communism...



Of course I don't condone everything the Nazis do. Anti-Semitism? Bad, naturally. I suppose Hitler sees a Karl Marx in every Jew.

But think what it would mean to the world if Hitler surrendered to the control of God. Or Mussolini. Or any dictator. Through such a man God could control a nation overnight and solve every last, bewildering problem... Human problems aren't economic. They're moral and they can't be solved by immoral measures. They could be solved within a God-controlled democracy, or perhaps I should say a theocracy, and they could be solved through a God-controlled Fascist dictatorship.

At the 1936 Olympics, Buchman offered to introduce British Member of Parliament Kenneth Lindsay to Heinrich Himmler, whom Buchman referred to as "a great lad." That "great lad" was the head of the Gestapo, and he was a thoroughly nasty fellow who got his jollies by terrorizing and killing people.



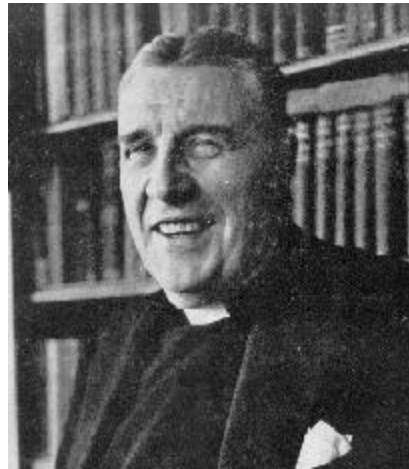
Frank Buchman was basically so "politically naive" (read: unrealistic and crazy) that he thought that an ideal world government would consist of a bunch of Christian Fascist dictators running all of the countries of the world. God would give the orders to the dictators, and then the dictators would give the orders to all of the people. Hence, we would have one world under God, easily, overnight, and Frank Buchman would be somewhere up there at the top, hanging out with the dictators and giving them advice and guidance. So Frank Buchman continued to visit Berlin and hang out with the highest-ranking Nazis, imagining that they would soon be on their knees, begging God to fix their moral shortcomings and defects of character...

Frank Buchman never recanted, or took back any of what he said, or even hinted that it was a mistake. He felt that he had spoken and acted under the guidance of God, so there was no way he could or would take it back or amend it.

By 1938, with war with Hitler looming, Frank Buchman and the Oxford Group Movement was so thoroughly unpopular that they renamed the organization to "Moral Re-Armament." There was at least a hint in the naming that the USA and Great Britain did not need to re-arm with guns; that everything would be okay if they just got straight with God, and then God would take care of the situation with Hitler.

But World War Two happened anyway, in spite of Frank Buchman's best intentions. Once it came, Buchman and Moral Re-Armament were not opposed to it. Quite the contrary, they were very "patriotic", and all for it, just as long as somebody else served in the military services.

Some of the Moral Re-Armament members tried to dodge the draft, claiming that they were "lay evangelists" and essential on the home front, for such patriotic tasks as managing Moral Re-Armament, and writing morality plays like "You Can Defend America." (I love that -- not "We Can Defend America", but "**You** Can Defend America." "You do the logging through the mud, and the fighting and the dying, and we will cheer you on.") Buchman maintained that "A true patriot gives his life to bring his nation under God's control." The draft board wasn't at all impressed with the arguments of the Moral Re-Armament guys, and they all soon found themselves drafted, shorn, and marching in uniform right alongside their less religious neighbors. All except Frank Buchman, that is; he was far too old to draft.



Another crisis was brewing: Buchman was losing his old friend Sam Shoemaker, a fellow evangelical minister. The two of them had been working closely together ever since meeting way back in the early days, in 1918, in China. But Shoemaker was increasingly finding that he could not follow Buchman's lead any longer. He was alienated by the new direction which MRA was taking, which seemed more and more to dissociate it from the Christian churches and a New Testament orientation. (And Shoemaker was right -- go re-read all of those Buchmanism principles and tenets again, and you will not see the words "Jesus" or "Christ" anywhere.) Also, there was a problem with power politics, the gradual take-over of the facilities of Shoemaker's church, Calvary House in New York, by MRA. Through 1940 and 1941, Shoemaker tried to resolve these issues with Buchman, but seem to have been ignored. Finally, in the closing months of 1941, Calvary Church asked MRA to vacate the premises of Calvary House. And that was that. But Sam Shoemaker stays in the story of AA: he is the same minister as Bill Wilson mentions repeatedly in the Big Book. He was essentially Bill's minister, and the two grew closer together for both having left, willingly or unwillingly, Buchman's organization.

After the war, the Moral Re-Armament group was not very popular, to put it mildly. Both the American and the British people had long memories, and Buchman's admiration of Hitler, and the

group's attempts at draft-dodging, didn't sit well. The group was reduced to being a mere shell of its former self. Still, it hung on for a good while longer.

There were always still a few more rich arch-conservatives willing to make donations here and there, to keep Frank Buchman going for a little while longer. What particularly pleased rich ultra-conservatives was Buchman's preaching that labor's demands for higher wages were merely sinful greed; that if the workers would quit wasting their pay, then they wouldn't need raises. What the workers really needed to do was get down on their knees and confess their sins to God. Ebenezer Scrooge would have loved Frank Buchman.

That brings up yet another characteristic of Buchmanism: Frank believed that *all* social problems were due to sin. The cure for all social problems was to surrender to God, and start living a God-controlled life. Remember his remarks while praising Hitler: "Human problems aren't economic. They're moral and they can't be solved by immoral measures." Buchman regarded any attempts to fix the world through any means other than praying and surrendering to God as "immoral measures." Thus, to Frank Buchman, the civil rights movement, the labor movement, and women's suffrage were all "immoral."

As usual, Frank Buchman exaggerated and lied about his accomplishments. He loved to tell rich industrialists that he had saved some other industrialist millions of dollars by converting some labor leader, and the labor leader had gotten down on his knees and cried to God and confessed all of his sins and shortcomings to the business executive, who was so touched that he had gotten down on his knees, and confessed his sins. Then, the two of them successfully negotiated a fair labor contract. The only problem with that story is that it never happened. Still, Frank Buchman's preaching about labor's demands for higher wages being sin was music to big business' ears, and Frank got his donations.

Frank Buchman and his Moral Re-Armament group were viciously homophobic. A 1954 Moral Re-Armament tract tells readers how to spot homosexuals:

There are many who wear suede shoes who are not homosexual, but in Europe and America the majority of homosexuals do. They favor green as a color in clothes and decorations. Men are given to an excessive display and use of the handkerchief. They tend to let the hair grow long, use scent and are frequently affected in speech, mincing in gait and feminine in mannerisms. They are often very gifted in the arts. They tend to exhibitionism. They can be cruel and vindictive, for sadism usually has a homosexual root. They are often given to moods.

...There is an unnecessary touching of hands, arms and shoulders. In the homosexual the elbow grip is a well-known sign.

-- from *Remaking Men* by Paul Campbell and Peter Howard, 1954, pp. 60-62.



The son of one of Frank Buchman's disciples reported that among the inner circle, it was an open secret that Frank was a homosexual. The evidence supports this: Buchman never married, never had any romantic relationship with a woman, and there was never, ever, in his entire life, even the slightest hint of any scandal involving a woman. This is not true of boys. (Remember his banishment from Princeton.) While collecting converts, Frank seems to have preferred young men. He would listen to their confessions, especially confessions of a sexual nature, tirelessly, while young women's sins do not seem to have particularly interested him. (He had his inventory of standard scathing denunciations of any woman who had sex, but listening to their confessions and saving their souls didn't seem to have the same appeal as boys'.) Frank's vicious homophobia was probably just a cover, to convince other people that he wasn't a homosexual, and also a way for him to deny his own feelings.

When Frank Buchman died in 1961, in Freudenstadt, Germany, one of his disciples, Peter Howard, took over the Moral Re-Armament organization, but he only lived a few more years himself. The organization has since languished, but still exists. Moral Re-Armament still maintains national offices in Washington, D.C., and London, and owns a large convention hall and estate in Caux, Switzerland. You can find them on the Internet at <http://www.caux.ch/> <http://www.mra-usa.org/> and <http://www.mra.org.uk/>

Most people have never heard of Frank Buchman or The Oxford Group or Moral Re-Armament, that they know of. But they might remember one thing: a squeaky-clean song-and-dance show called "Sing Out!" or "Up with People!" That show was the product of two members of Moral Re-

Armament, who offered it as a "moral" alternative to the anti-war Hippies of the sixties and seventies. The show featured lots of mindless fluff and patriotic flag-waving, done by beautiful young people who were so well-shorn and properly dressed that they were ready for employment at Disneyland or on the Lawrence Welk show. The "Sing Out!" show was produced under the auspices of Moral Re-Armament, but that became a problem when corporate sponsors like General Electric did not wish to be associated with such a weird religion, so the producers renamed the show to "Up with People!", and hid any links to Moral Re-Armament.

The show's producers still managed to put their moral stamp on it: On the bus, young men and women were not allowed to sit together, for reasons of "purity." The young men were given lectures, advising against hot showers, lest the warm water arouse them to abuse themselves. And any Hippie who suggested that perhaps a good way to celebrate the wonderfulness of people would be to not drop bombs on them was escorted from the premises for being a trouble-maker.

One last interesting note: those young people in "Up with People!" worked hard at singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. You would think they deserved to get paid for their work; they put on a large number of shows all across the country each year, and sold a lot of tickets, and even appeared on national TV in 1967. Did they get paid? No. Well, so they volunteered, and just got room and board, right? No, not even close. They were actually expected to pay \$9200 per year for the privilege of working for free. (Although, in 1990, the last year of the show, about one-third of the cast did get some kind of financial aid.) It just seems to be another cult rule: rob your own people first. They are easier to hit up than strangers on the street.

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This whole sordid pathetic tragic mess was the humble manger into which Alcoholics Anonymous was born. Bill Wilson did not accidentally join the Oxford Group. Rather, his old friend and drinking buddy, Ebby Thatcher, who, in 1934, was one of the enthusiastic new converts to Buchmanism, and sober, was actively recruiting, and he was out to get Wilson to join the cult. Ebby set him up and then ambushed him. Ebby set him up, by first getting him to a meeting where he was prompted to "give himself to God", and then by sending him to New York's Towns Hospital, where Ebby could ambush Wilson while he was at his weakest, sick and detoxing and tripping on delirium tremens, several hallucinogens, including belladonna and henbane, and morphine, barbiturates, and megavitamins. And the conversion worked. Bill Wilson was so completely taken in that he was a true believer for the rest of his life, even after the Oxford Group asked Bill W. and Doctor Bob to leave, because they were spending all of their time with alcoholics. (And, ironically, Ebby, the cosmic messenger who saved Bill Wilson, would relapse and die drunk.)

Ken Ragge, in his book *More Revealed*, describes Bill Wilson's conversion this way:

At Towns [Hospital], he was given the standard treatment, barbiturates and several hallucinogens, including belladonna and henbane, until "the face becomes flushed, the throat dry, and the pupils of the eyes dilated."

After several days, Ebby came to see him. While there is no record of what was said, it is recorded that after Ebby left, "Bill [Wilson] slid into very deep melancholy. He was filled with guilt and remorse over the way he had treated Lois [his wife]..." Evidently, Ebby had done something to provoke it and, knowing the five C's, it is easy to put together what happened.

Ebby was sent to Wilson in a Guidance session. He won Wilson's "Confidence" through "humble confession," eliciting a confession from Wilson. Apparently, Wilson confessed to something he had tremendous guilt over; the way he had treated Lois. Ebby was able to use this to give Wilson a "vision of the hideousness of his own personal guilt."

Now the time of "Conversion" was upon Wilson. In what appears to have been a drug- and stress-induced hallucinatory breakdown, Wilson found "the programme of His Kingdom." From that day forward, Bill Wilson never drank again.

See the chapter [\*The Funny Spirituality of AA\*](#) for more detailed descriptions of Bill's hallucinogenic trip.

The rest of the story is pretty well-known, and has been covered from both sides in many books. Bill met Doctor Bob, who was also a member of the Oxford Group, and the two of them took a liking to each other. Together, they set out to convert other alcoholics. They built their "bunch of anonymous alcoholics" group within Frank Buchman's Oxford Group for the first three years or so, until Frank's other disciples tired of them. The alcoholics weren't rich (except for a young Firestone heir), they weren't famous, they couldn't be manipulated through guilt induction, they mainly wanted to just recruit more alcoholics, and the other Oxford Group members didn't like them. The Oxford Group told them to take a hike in 1937. So Bill and Bob set up their own independent organization, with the same religious beliefs, customs, and practices as before, except that now Bill W. and Doctor Bob provided the leadership, not Frank Buchman.

When Bill W. published the manual for the organization, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (popularly known as "The Big Book"), he carefully hid most of the connections to Frank Buchman and The Oxford Group, because the Catholic Church was unhappy with Buchmanism, and there was a very good chance that the Church would ban it. Bill didn't want to lose all of the Catholics. So Bill W. also renamed confession to "sharing" throughout the program, so as to not offend the Catholic Church. Likewise, Bill declared AA a "spiritual program", rather than a religion, for the same reason.

Also, there was that Hitler-admiration thing that Frank had going, and the Oxford Group was increasingly being criticized for arrogance due to the Oxford Group's belief that they alone were sane and getting direct messages from God, and also for undercutting churches, hypocrisy, self-congratulatory sanctimoniousness, and an inability to tolerate criticism. So Bill W. thought it best to not mention that AA ever knew Frank Buchman...

In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Bill Wilson proudly bragged about connections to William James and his book *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and to Carl Jung, and claimed that they

were the philosophical parents of AA. But William James and Carl Jung really only contributed one single line, one single idea, each. Bill W. got the idea of spiritual experiences in times of great stress, pain, and despair from *Varieties*. And Bill W. got the idea of substituting religious mania for alcoholism from Carl Jung. But that's it.

Poor old Frank Buchman got very little credit, just two tiny mentions for the Oxford Group, even though he contributed almost **everything else**. So it goes. Such is life in the evangelist's game.

The references are in the introduction:

Six months earlier, the broker had been relieved of his drink obsession by a sudden spiritual experience, following a meeting with an alcoholic friend who had been in contact with the Oxford Groups of that day.

And:

Though he could not accept all the tenets of the Oxford Groups, he was convinced of the need for moral inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution to those harmed, helpfulness to others, and the necessity of belief in and dependence upon God.

That is hardly a ringing endorsement. That is like pointing to your mother, and saying, "Yes, I met her, and talked to her, more than once, but I couldn't agree with her about everything."

So, anyway, Frank Buchman is dead and gone, and the whole Buchmanism/Oxford Group/Moral Re-Armament religious organization is dead and gone, and it's all history, right? No, unfortunately, that isn't quite true. Buchmanism lives on in Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and the whole host of other twelve-step programs, and it is far, far more popular and more powerful now than it ever was when Frank Buchman was alive. I seem to recall that Shakespeare, in the play *Julius Caesar*, had Mark Antony say something like, "The good that we do is oft interred with our bones, but the evil that we do lives on after us." That surely is true of Frank Buchman.

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For more information on Frank Buchman, and his connection to Alcoholics Anonymous, as well as the many other problems with AA, read the first chapters of the following two excellent books:

*Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?* by Charles Bufe, 1998.

See Sharp Press, PO Box 1731, Tucson AZ 85702-1731

ISBN 1-884365-12-4 362.29286 B929a 1998

(This is the second edition; it has noticeably more information than the first edition.)

*More Revealed: A Critical Analysis of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps* by Ken Ragge, 1992.

ALERT! Publishing, P.O. Box 50233, Henderson, Nevada 89016-0233

The first chapter of *More Revealed*, which specifically covers Frank Buchman and the earliest

days of AA, is available free on the Internet at  
<http://www.morerevealed.com/mr/table-of-contents.html>

For the standard party line about everything, see "The Big Book", really:  
*Alcoholics Anonymous*, Third Edition, published by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.  
Note that the earlier editions of the AA book are available for free on the Internet. It seems that somebody was too sober to remember to renew the copyrights...  
<http://www.recovery.org/aa/download/BB-plus.html>  
<http://www.recovery.org/aa/bigbook/www/>

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If you want a laugh, or want to barf, depending on your inner constitution, try this book: *On the Tail of a Comet, The Life of Frank Buchman*, by Garth Lean, 1985, Helmers & Howard, Colorado Springs, CO 80933. ISBN 0-939443-07-4. This book is a total whitewash, and a complete glorification of Buchman. Rarely will you find such a piece of total garbage, 590 pages of it. The back cover reads in part, "This is also the story of a controversial Christian statesman who was once denounced as a secret Nazi agent subsidized by Goebbels, while being suspected of operating a super-spy network for British intelligence." Then it gets worse inside the covers. If you were to believe half of the stuff in this book, you would have Frank cruising the world, talking to nothing but heads of state, and miraculously solving all of their problems.

For instance, according to this book, Buchman single-handedly solved the perplexing massive unemployment problem that cursed Denmark in 1939, by asking people whether it was God's will for a fifth of the work force to be unemployed. "No," was the answer. "Then go home and tackle it," Frank said. The result was a national campaign, and overnight, new jobs were created and the whole country went back to work. They had just been waiting for Frank Buchman to come and tell them what to do... (Pages 267-8.)

The photographs in the book show Buchman with a long list of heads of state, and other high-ranking officials. But someone forgot to include any good photographs of Hitler, Himmler, or Goebbels... The author rewrote the history before World War II, so that rather than praising Hitler, Buchman warns the USA and Britain of the coming dangers in the chapters, "Awakening Democracy" and "America Has No Sense of Danger."

And Buchman and his group weren't kicked out of Princeton in 1923, this author says. Princeton President Hibben publicly stated that, in December 1923, he had forbidden Buchman to return to the campus, but Buchman and his friends insist that they were not aware of this, and remember only that Hibben had expressed "great confidence in Sam [Shoemaker] and the young men working with him" whom he knew to be products of Buchman's work.

Then, some very strange logic follows: Enemies of Buchman at Princeton, whom the book hints were "practicing homosexuals", allegedly prepared a pamphlet called "The Cannonball" and showed proofs of it to President Hibben, and threatened to publish it unless the President denounced Buchman. This book does not say what the pamphlet contained, or why the President should care if it were published, or how the President of Princeton could be blackmailed



by the anti-Buchmanite forces. Nevertheless, the story says, Hibben responded by getting an understanding from Sam Shoemaker that Buchman would not be invited back to Princeton.

Buchman says that he had merely received a Guidance from God, in the spring of 1924, that he should "Clear out of Princeton completely." (Pages 103-5.) It seems that, even if Buchman could not understand that he had been banished from Princeton, God could understand it.

In 1958, Buchman and gang visited Japan, where they say they found that the Japanese cabinet was hopelessly corrupt, taking bribes and keeping mistresses. So one of the local Buchmanites, in three days, wrote a play exposing this evil, and they publicly performed it. When the Prime Minister allegedly found out about it, and investigated, and found it all to be true, he supposedly said to the Buchmanites: "You are the only people who love our country enough to tell me the truth. Go on talking to me like this. The door is always open to you." (Pages 508-9.) If you can believe that any politician would be delighted to have the misconduct of his cabinet so publicly, scandalously, exposed, and if you can believe that any Japanese Prime Minister would welcome such a public, humiliating, loss of face, then I own a major interest in a big bridge in Brooklyn that I'll sell to you cheap... At times, this book is so stupid that it insults the reader's intelligence.

If you are interested in any scholarly research, you will find the book to be maddening, because very little of anything can be verified. Most of the footnotes read like, "Buchman to unknown Yale student, 19 August 1920." (Question: if Buchman is dead, and the student is unknown, and probably dead too, how does anyone even know that such a conversation ever took place? What is the real source of the information?) Another footnote: "Buchman to mother, 19 March 1924." And: "Lady Hardinge in talks with author and others." And, naturally, it is the most questionable and controversial points that have the flimsiest of footnotes.

There are a few items of interest buried in there, however, like this:

*What is Moral Re-Armament?*

It's not an institution,  
It's not a point of view,  
It starts a revolution  
By starting one in you!

I could swear I heard something like that in an AA meeting.

It is very interesting to see the roots of AA and NA in Buchmanism. For instance, on pages 150 and 151, we read about a fellow named Jim Driberg who had a drinking problem, and The Oxford Group had dried him out. But there was something about the Oxford Group that put him off, so he wrote a letter explaining that he could no longer work with the group. The Buchmanites' conclusion: "His elder brother John attributed the sudden move to the mental factor which has now and then sent Jim off on absurd tangents." In other words, he's crazy. "Alas, Jim Driberg could not make it alone. As Tom, his brother, relates in *Ruling Passions*, he soon turned back to the bottle and to massive borrowing." You are crazy if you quit the group and stop practicing Buchmanism, and you will never make it alone. These seeds of AA are all there.

Yes, all there, even the failure rate and the nasty habit of repeated relapses. Another famous drunk whom the Oxford Group supposedly dried out was Harvey Firestone, the prodigal son of the famous tire manufacturer. The father was so grateful that he sponsored Dr. Buchman and team of 60 in Akron, Ohio, for a ten-day campaign, which established an on-going functioning group in Akron, which ended up being the famous group that Doctor Bob of AA fame joined. But, much to the embarrassment of the Oxford Group, after they had publicized the new-found sobriety of Harvey Firestone for all it was worth -- the family doctor called it a "medical miracle" -- and had staked some of their reputation on it, Harvey relapsed repeatedly, publicly, spectacularly, in all of the wrong high-society places. (Ah, but this book doesn't mention that last part...)

Speaking of AA, it gets only a tiny mention. Literally, two and a half pages, 151 to 153. Bill W., Doctor Bob, and the anonymous alcoholics group are all dismissed with a cavalier wave of the hand, and an attitude of, "Oh, yeh. That's also another one of the minor great things that we did, but we've done much better than that." Bill and Bob got their original charter in the Oxford Group with the words, "You look after drunken men. We'll try to look after a drunken world." That was just a little condescending: "You play with some drunks while we save the world." Still, the Buchmanites claim AA and all of its clones as just some more of the many organizations that have benefited from Frank Buchman's brilliant morality.

If your sponsor wants your ego deflated, check this: This book details how Frank Buchman would regularly attack those around him, finding faults in them, and constantly deflating their egos whenever they felt any self-confidence or pride in their work. Then they would confess that they had needed such guidance, because they had been slipping into self-seeking. Why, it's just a regular good old sado-masochistic lovefest:

One day there was something wrong with Buchman's stomach. [Dr.] Campbell gave him his diagnosis.

"You don't know anything about stomachs, do you?" asked Buchman. Campbell, who had studied stomachs in one of the best hospitals in America, was outraged.

Two days later, Buchman said, "I don't think we'll call you 'doctor' any more."

"Just single sentences, but what sentences for a proud young doctor," says Campbell. He was deeply hurt. He seemed suddenly to be able to do nothing right in Buchman's eyes. He said to Barrett, "Doctors are meant to be helpful. I seem to be making Frank worse. I think I'd better go home."

"What do you want from him?" asked Barrett.

"To be appreciated from time to time. Not always under criticism. To be able to tell my family I am doing something worthwhile."

"Would going back to Canada cure that lust for appreciation?" asked Barrett.

Campbell saw the point and decided that he would do whatever God wanted, however he was treated by Buchman or anyone else.

(Page 462.)

In fact, Frank Buchman seems to have written a new book, "How To Win Friends and Influence People By Putting Them Down":

Buchman held a meeting each morning. They were wholly unpredictable. One day he arrived with a peach in one hand. "Every woman should be like this," he said. "But some of you are like this," and he opened his other hand to disclose a prune. He felt that some of the women in his

team had become dry in spirit because they had not given God unconditional control of their lives, and were therefore not free personalities. "It meant fearlessly tackling some of us dominating American women," one of them said later. "But it was done so delicately, with such hope."

(Page 293.)

You know, I just had this funny, perverse thought. I just couldn't help but wonder what would have happened if Frank Buchman had ever encountered a real woman, a woman who would look him straight in the eye, and say, "Go to Hell, you stupid asshole," when he pulled a stunt like that... Then, if she were really mean, she would pick up a banana and a limp noodle, and say, "Every man should be like this, but you..."

I mentioned earlier how Buchman considered any do-good social movements (other than his own) as immoral. We have another example here, describing the conversion of Ted Sloan, a well-known East London militant:

He went in to the meeting and, as he later said, "got a basinful." He came to realize that his agitations on behalf of the unemployed and homeless, his fights for meals and boots for the school-children, essential activities which had sometimes landed him in jail, had inadvertently taken a wrong turning. "I'd always said that I loved my class and family... But I saw that the main thing I'd done was to teach them to hate. I'd said I was an idealist, but I'd made materialists out of them," he said.

(Page 263.)

Campaigning for school-children to have meals and boots is wrong, because it makes "materialists" out of them? Those Buchmanite guys were really something else. I can see his point about it being wrong to teach people to hate -- don't do that -- but abandoning the unemployed, the homeless, and the children because we don't want to make materialists out of them? This is literally throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Once again, Ebenezer Scrooge would be pleased. This gets to sounding so much like something out of a Charles Dickens novel that it is uncanny.

Many people hated the Buchmanists, and strongly criticized them for all of their faults. This book minimizes such controversy, but does not ignore it totally. They have a very interesting explanation for the criticism:

Malcolm Muggeridge writes that for a long time he was puzzled by "the extraordinary hostility which Buchman's Christian evangelism caused" in Britain. "Yes, he's an American," he says, "but so is Billy Graham, for instance, and I've never heard people denigrating Billy in quite such vicious terms as they did Buchman and MRA.

"An experience I had some years ago shed light on the conundrum. I had been elected by the students of Edinburgh University to be their Rector, and when I went to Edinburgh to be installed I had a wonderful reception. Then some months later I was asked by the Students' Union to put in a request to the governing body of the University that contraceptives should be made freely available by the University Medical Unit. I refused to do this, whereupon I was subjected to abuse, to the point that I found it

necessary to resign. In a farewell sermon in St. Giles' Cathedral, I explained why I had done what I had, and received some private thanks, but none publicly. The conclusion I came to was that in a libertine society any attack on libertinism is anathema..."

(Pages 270-271.)

Oh? Really, Malcolm? You were so thoroughly hated that you were forced to resign, just because you would not give out free contraceptives? Why am I having trouble believing that?

And, by implication, Frank Buchman and MRA were likewise viciously hated just because they wouldn't approve of people's immoral activities? So the people who disliked Buchman were all just a bunch of libertine sinners? The Hitler-worshipping, the weird religion, the deceptive recruiting practices, and the homophobia had nothing to do with it? And the smug self-righteousness and arrogant sanctimoniousness had nothing to do with it? And the Buchmanite's insistence that only they had a hot-line to God, and that everyone else was insane, had nothing to do with it?

The book says, "Why was he opposed? For the same reason as Jesus and His disciples were opposed." (Page 270.) Yeh, right.

Jesus had a name for people like Frank Buchman, who do evil while wrapping themselves in the Bible: "wolves in sheep's clothing."

Those Buchmanites were so insane and so weird and so evil that sometimes it becomes difficult to believe that this is all for real. Someone out there must be wondering if I am making all of this up. I can only say, "I wish, because if my imagination were really that good, and that wild and crazy and demented, then I could make a whole lot of money as a Hollywood script writer." How about a new slasher horror movie, "The Vampire Vicar"? "The Meeting Monster"? "The Group Godzilla"? "The Buchmanites from Brazil"? Oops! That one's been used. "An American Werewolf in London"? Nope, that's been done too. Oh well, enough of Buchman. Let's go on to something else equally depressing.

# The Heresy of the Twelve Steps

by [A. Orange](#)

"Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy name do many mighty works?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from me that work iniquity.'"

Matthew 7:22-23

Christian churches would call the Twelve Steps heretical, if they would bother to read them carefully. Theologically, there are all kinds of things wrong with them.

Possibly the greatest heresy in the A.A. dogma is this bit of idolatry: In the Alcoholics Anonymous program, you can use anything for your "God" or "Higher Power". A.A. has lots of stories of people using a bedpan, a teacup, a doorknob, a stone, a teddy bear, a mountain, a motorcycle, or "*Good Orderly Direction*" for their "Higher Power". You can pray to any Golden Calf, stone idol, or Higher-Powered item of Household Hardware that you like. [You can even use your local A.A. group itself as your 'God'](#) if you wish. One of the more ridiculous [word redefinitions](#) that A.A. offers us is, you can make the word "G.O.D." mean "**Group Of Drunks**".

*Another 12-Step organization, , even twists this into "G.O.D. = a **Group Of Drug addicts**".<sup>6</sup>*

A.A. founder Bill Wilson wrote:

"I must quickly assure you that A.A.'s tread innumerable paths in their quest for faith. ... You can, if you wish, make A.A. itself your 'higher power.' Here's a very large group who have solved their alcohol problem. In this respect they are certainly a power greater than you, who have not even come close to a solution. Surely you can have faith in them. Even this minimum of faith will be enough."

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, page 27.

Most Christians are more accustomed to the idea of The Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost. Not very many of them will enjoy praying to a group of drunkards, and *Seeking and Doing the Will of Drunkards*. And I can't imagine Moslems, Buddhists,

Hindus, Jews, or Native Americans being too happy with such a "Higher Power", either.

In addition, the Twelve Steps talk about "God *as we understood Him*". Members are allegedly free to define God however they imagine or understand "Him" to be. Bill Wilson told A.A. recruiters to

Stress the spiritual feature freely. If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that *he does not have to agree with your conception of God*. He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him. The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles., William G. Wilson, Chapter 7, *Working With Others*, page 93.

What is that deceptive double-talk?

- Atheists, who do not believe in the existence of a God, don't have to agree with the recruiter's conception of God, but they must believe in a spiritual "Higher Power", which, by definition, atheists don't.
- How could an atheist possibly have a "conception" of a God who will deliver miracles on demand when by definition he does not believe in the existence of any such thing?
- And the atheists certainly won't be willing to believe in what they don't believe, so Bill's "main thing" isn't going to work for them.

And what about,

"He can choose any conception [of God or 'Higher Power' that] he likes, provided it makes sense to him."

Oh really?

- What if the prospective recruit is insane — a wet-brained nutcase who thinks that worshipping Satan as his Higher Power will solve all of his problems? Will the A.A. 12-Step program still work for him?
- What if the newcomer is a pagan who wants to worship Wotan, Thor, and Loki?
- What if the prospect is a Neo-Nazi who wants to use Adolf Hitler as his *Higher Power*?

Such examples are of course absurd, but so is the statement that you can use any kind of a "God" or "Higher Power" you want, and that He will nevertheless perform a miracle for you — save you from death by alcoholism.

Bill Wilson emphatically repeated that doctrine in the *Big Book*:

Despite the living example of my friend [a sober Ebby Thacher] there remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn't like the idea. ...

My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, "*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*"

That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last.

*It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!*

Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

*Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 1, "*Bill's Story*", Page 12.

That is obviously insane: "*It's only necessary that I believe whatever I wish to believe, to get what I want. My new delusion will care about me.*"

By the way, there was no "icy intellectual mountain" in Bill Wilson's life. That was just a phony act he put on to make his religious conversion seem much more miraculous. All of Bill Wilson's stories about being an intellectual, or an atheist, or a scientist, were complete fabrications, and totally untrue — a complete reversal of reality. The truth is, Bill Wilson was actually just a superstitious unintellectual flunk-out who put on airs of having been all kinds of things that he never was, like a stock broker or a scientist or an intellectual or a holy man.

The A.A. auxiliary for the other family members, "Al-Anon", also teaches that we can choose any "God" we want. Al-Anon propaganda even goes so far as to say that we can hire and fire "Gods" as the mood strikes us:

The concept of "God as we understood Him" was hard to grasp. My family believed there is only one way to view God. My parents used religion to keep me in line. ...

I realized the God of my parents had come in a very small box, not expansive enough for me. I fired that God and hired a new one. My new Higher Power is much bigger than the old one. He doesn't live in a box. He lives in me and around me. He loves me, cares for me, and accepts me just

as I am — a work of art in progress.

*Hope for Today*, published by Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., page 297.

*But I am curious. When you "hire" a "God", what do you pay Him with?  
What wages do "gods" find acceptable?  
Gold? Silver? Souls? First-born sons?*

Who says that everybody is qualified to "hire" the God of their choice?

Who says that everybody's understanding of God is correct?

Who says that just anybody's crazy beliefs are okay?

Considering how different various people's opinions of God and religion are, they cannot all be correct. The Golden Calf, the stone idol, the bedpan, Doorknob Almighty, the Higher-Powered motorcycle as God, or "G.O.D. = Group Of Drunks" or "G.O.D. = Group Of Drug addicts" -- those "conceptions" of God cannot all be correct.

*That is the heresy that the Catholic Church calls "indifferentism" — the declaration that all religions and Gods are just as good, and it doesn't matter which one you choose.<sup>7</sup>*

(Yes, Doorknob Almighty, Baal Bedpan, [Beelzebub](#), [Lucifer](#), [Satan](#), or Jesus; it doesn't matter which "Higher Power" you choose, just as long as you believe in one, right?)

But who decides which versions of God are acceptable to an A.A. 12-Step program? The sponsors? Where did they get their theological training? What seminary did they attend?

Bill Wilson's goal was ostensibly to be ecumenical, universal and all-embracing, to avoid religious conflict, but his solution to the problem was hardly sound theology. Something that tries to be everything to everybody ends up being nothing to anybody.

*And that is the error that the Catholic Church calls "syncretism" — uniting conflicting religious beliefs so as to reduce them to a common denominator that is acceptable to all.<sup>8</sup>*

In addition, Bill soon contradicted himself. Just any old conception of "God" or "Higher Power" will not do at all. The A.A. God cannot be just any spiritual "Power greater than yourself". The Alcoholics Anonymous "God" *must* be a meddling, micro-managing, order-dictating, prayer-answering, message-sending, wish-granting, miracle-delivering authoritarian power, or else the Twelve Steps will not work.



If your personal version of "God" or "Higher Power" doesn't meddle and deliver miracles on demand, then

- You won't get any power over alcohol, and your unmanageable life won't get managed in Step One, and
- you won't get restored to sanity in Step Two, and
- God won't take care of your will and your life for you in Step Three, and
- your many "defects of character" and "moral shortcomings" won't get removed in Step Seven, and
- "God" or "Higher Power" won't talk to you in Step Eleven, and give you secret messages and work orders and the "sure power" to carry them out...

I talked to a friend last night who has struggled with the God thing for years and doesn't get it, but can't get out of their spell. Someone suggested that he get a cat and make the cat his higher power. I can't make this stuff up.  
== "sobeyondthat", May 14 2006

The A.A. story about your relationship with God is also rather curious. The way that Bill Wilson tells the story, you must surrender yourself utterly to your Higher Power (Who is supposed to be God, but Who might be a bedpan, or a *Group Of Drunks*, or something else), and be His slave, and do His bidding every day forever after. In return, He will do some magic tricks for you and take away your desire to drink alcohol, and also grant a few other wishes, starting with restoring you to "sanity" and taking care of your will and your life for you, and then removing all of your "defects of character" and "moral shortcomings".

We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, *as we understood Him*: "God, I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.

A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 63.

Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 100.

I can't help but notice that the last time I heard about that particular bargain, the Higher Power's name was not spelled "G-O-D", it was spelled "S-A-T-A-N" or "D-E-V-I-L". You were supposed to sell your soul to the Big Horned Creature with the cloven feet in a Faustian trade for getting your list of wishes granted, and then you ended up being a sycophant slave of that Scaly Creature, doing His Will forever after, and living in His *"new and wonderful world"* that features faulty air conditioning...

"Yes, Satan, I will surrender myself to you utterly. I will worship you and love you and give you my soul, and be your grovelling servant for all of eternity, in trade for you granting me this list of wishes right now — starting with the wish that you make me quit drinking. ...And then you have to take care of my mind, my will, and my life for me, and restore me to sanity, and remove all of my 'defects of character'..."

One thing that the preachers told me about that Evil One is that he is very clever and lies a lot. They say that Old Beelzebub, the Lord of the Netherworld, isn't above claiming to be, and appearing to be, God or the Angel of Light or some other Higher Power, while he bargains with you...

And a church that starts off by instructing you to lie and deceive — "Fake it 'till you make it" — "Act as if" — "Don't tell the newcomers..." — "...lure the reader in..." — "Don't raise such issues, no matter what your own convictions are." — "Dole out the Buchmanism 'by teaspoons, not buckets'..." — is highly suspect. Did Jesus tell you to lie to the newcomers, and tell them that the program never fails, to get them to join the church? Was it Jesus or Satan who was called "The Great Deceiver"?

"Yes Higher Power, I will lie for you, and practice deceptive recruiting for you, and tell the newcomers that God is 'a Group Of Drunks'..."

So I can't help but wonder, if you sell your soul to — *"turn your will and your life over to"* — Bill Wilson's vague Higher Power, or his "God as we understood Him", who can be anything from a doorknob to a bedpan to a "Group Of Drunks" to a "god", well, just who or what are you really dealing with and giving your soul to?

*"Come on, hurry up. Sign the contract. Abandon yourself to me utterly. And would you quit looking at my feet?"*

Just a thought...

*Come to think of it, if "God" can be a "Group Of Drunks" in Alcoholics Anonymous, and "God" can be a "Group Of Drug addicts" in Cocaine Anonymous, why can't "God" can be a "Group Of Devils"?*

Speaking of dealing, some of the early A.A. members seem to have thought that the "spiritual" program was a business deal, too. A.A. number three, Bill Dotson, is quoted in the *Big Book* chapter *A Vision For You* as saying this to Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob:

"The way you fellows put this spiritual stuff makes sense. I'm ready to do business. I guess the old folks were right after all."

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 11, *A Vision For You*, page 159.

*"Yes, I'll do business with you, Higher Power. I'll sell you my soul, and surrender to you utterly, and be your grovelling servant for all of Eternity, in trade for you making me quit drinking right now. It makes sense to me..."*

Bill Wilson repeated the "deal" description of the A.A. program again while reminiscing about how he wrote the *Big Book* and the Twelve Steps:

Well, we finally got to the point where we really had to say what this book was all about and how this deal works. As I told you this had been a six-step program then.

...

The idea came to me, well, we need a definite statement of concrete principles that these drunks can't wiggle out of. There can't be any wiggling out of this deal at all and this six-step program had two big gaps which people wiggled out of.

-- Bill Wilson, Transcribed from tape, Fort Worth, 1954.

Was on <http://www.aa.com/more%2012steps.htm>

*"Yeh, don't you just hate it when they manage to wiggle out of the contract after you've made a deal for their souls? I mean, there you are, you've got a signed contract, you bought the guy's soul fair and square, it's a done deal, and then the damned fool manages to wiggle out of the contract at the last minute, just because of some darned nitpicking little legal technicality. It's really enough to frost your ass, even in Hell. Damn that Daniel Webster anyhow... And damn those Yankees, too, especially that floozy Lola..."*

If you sell your soul to the Devil, do you have to get a receipt for tax purposes?

== Mark Russell (Special on PBS, 28 April 2004)

Speaking of selling your soul to the Devil, Bill Wilson also wrote this about [his belladonna experience in Towns' Hospital in December of 1934](#):

At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens. ...

My schoolmate [Ebby Thacher] visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people whom I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment.

[i.e., Bill confessed his sins to Ebby. Then Ebby told Bill Wilson about the Oxford Group cult religion practices.]

My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. ...

Simple, but not easy; a price has to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Lights who presides over us all.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William Wilson, Chapter 1, *Bill's Story*, pages 13-14.

That sounds okay, and even spiritual, until you remember that the Angel of Light is Lucifer.

An Al-Anon book of daily meditations even teaches the wives and children of alcoholics how to surrender and live lives that are "truly powerless":

Steps One, Two and Three opened doors to profound and meaningful changes. The effects of being raised in an alcoholic family seemed as fixed in me as my eye color. Two traits come to mind — turning to emotionally unavailable people for support, and engaging in self-doubt and self-hate. With the help of my sponsor, I now see that these and other traits, not other people, are the source of my anguish.

That insight, however, was only the beginning. The real freedom came when I finally admitted I couldn't get better on my own, which lifted my denial. My powerlessness filled my lungs, brushed my skin, beat in tandem with my heart. **I stood at the edge of acceptance, took a step, and free-fell into Step One.** I realized that if only I could remember I was truly powerless over these effects and not try to pretend otherwise, I would be fine. Why? Because of Step Two. A Power greater than myself can help me. What that Power is and how it can help me doesn't matter. It is only important that I can place my restless hope in this Power. In Step Three I then surrender my thoughts, feelings, actions, needs — my whole life — to the care of this Power. ...

**"The more I feel my smallness and powerlessness, the more I grow in spirituality."**

*Having Had A Spiritual Awakening...*, p. 159

quote from *Hope for Today*, page 233, published by Al-Anon Family Groups.

Isn't it rather odd how that authoress claims that it doesn't matter who or what your "Higher Power" or "God" is, or how it might help you: *"What that Power is and how it can help me doesn't matter."*

Talk about intensely anti-intellectual stupidity --

*"Don't bother your pretty little head with worrying about precisely which entity you just surrendered your mind, your life, and your soul to... It doesn't matter. One "Higher*



*Power" is just as good as another. Just give up your mind and free-fall into Step One."*

Also notice the broken logic:

*"Why? Because of Step Two. A Power greater than myself can help me."*

That is just so much bull droppings. Step Two does not say that a "Higher Power" *CAN* help you and *WILL* help you. Step Two says:

**2. [We] Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

Just because you *believe* that some unnamed ghost or demon or miscellaneous "Higher Power" *could* make you sane doesn't guarantee that he really *can* do it and that he *actually will* do it. The authoress pulled a quick switch there, and substituted her own beliefs and wishful thinking for facts. She also switched the declared action of Step Two from "restore us to sanity" to "help me".

Besides, Step Two is just a crazy piece of heretical nonsense that Frank Buchman made up and Bill Wilson copied. It doesn't prove anything, and it certainly doesn't obligate any spiritual being to do anything for anybody.



One of the biggest heresies in the Twelve Steps is the demand for a miracle in Step Seven:

**[We] "Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings."**

No matter how humbly we ask for it, and no matter whether we do it on our knees, like the original version of Step Seven said, it is still a *demand* for a miracle, not just a polite request. We have made absolutely no preparations for taking care of ourselves and solving our own problems ourselves should God decide not to grant us that miracle. There is no Alcoholics Anonymous "Plan B."

Bill Wilson became even more demanding in his so-called "Seventh Step Prayer" — Bill wanted *every defect removed*, and he wanted strength too, and Bill didn't even say please or thank you:

When ready, we say something like this, "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen." We have then completed *Step Seven*.

*The Big Book*, William G. Wilson, page 76.

Well, Bill might have been done with Step 7, but was God done? Is God going to grant Bill's demands and make Bill into a strong, defect-free slave?

God has to do it, or He will blow the whole 12-Step program. Step Seven is the heart of the entire A.A. self-improvement routine: You just wait for God to fix you. Literally. The rest of the steps involve making lists of all of your faults, wrongs, sins, defects of character, and moral shortcomings, and making more lists of all of the people you have harmed, and making amends, and wallowing in guilt, confessing your sins, and admitting that you are powerless and insane, but no other step actually deals with fixing yourself.

What if God says, "No. You made your bed, now you lie in it..."?  
"Besides, what have you done for Me lately? Go fix yourself."

If God doesn't fix you, then you are screwed.

If God won't fulfill Bill Wilson's demands, and work Bill's Steps like Bill Wilson says, then your goose is cooked and you are in trouble.

*'But let's not think about that. Let's all just "come to believe" that God will fix us and make us quit drinking just because we humbly "pray" that He do it.'*

And He will, Bill Wilson says:

We will seldom be interested in liquor.

...

We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given to us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it.

...

We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does

not exist for us.

The *Big Book*, William G. Wilson, pages 84-85.

According to Bill Wilson, recovery from alcoholism is effortless. *"It just comes."* We don't have to do a thing. Our problems are magically solved *"without any thought or effort on our part."*

That is obviously completely delusional nonsense.

*(No effort? Don't we have to go to a life-long series of A.A. meetings, and "Work The Steps" constantly, and "Seek And Do God's Will" every day? That's a lot of effort.)*

Remember,

- we declared in Step One that we were powerless over alcohol,
- and in Step Two, we declared that we were insane,
- and in Step Three we gave away our wills,
- so in Step Seven we demand a miracle — we demand that God actually change us, and take away the desire to drink, or else we will drink ourselves to death.

That is very much like this temptation of Christ in Matthew 4.5:

Then the Devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the Holy City, set him on the highest point of the Temple, and said to him, "If you are God's Son, throw yourself down, for the scripture says,

'God will give orders to his angels about you;  
they will hold you up with their hands,  
so that not even your feet will be hurt on the stones.'

Jesus answered, "But the scripture also says, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

(Also see Luke 4.9.)

You do not throw yourself off of a precipice, demanding that God save you before you hit bottom and go "splat!", and you don't demand that God keep you from drinking, or else you will kill yourself on booze.

But the pro-A.A. literature still insists that we should do that. We find something very similar passed off as a wonderful "leap of faith" in the book *Power Recovery, The Twelve Steps for a New Generation*, by James Wiley:



### *A Leap of Faith*

"I heard a noise in the kitchen, and turned to see my two-year-old son on top of the kitchen counter, teetering at the edge," said Mike G. "My heart almost stopped. 'Daddy!' he called, and stretched out his arms and leaped into space. I lunged forward and caught him in my arms. Later I thought: 'He had no fear of falling. He never doubted for an instant that I would catch him. How wonderful!' I thought, 'A true leap of faith. If only I could make such a leap of faith to my God.'"

You, like Mike's little boy, may have the courage to go ahead and make that leap of faith. But even if you still have doubts, go ahead and risk it. "If you don't believe it, do it anyway," said Bill T.

*Power Recovery, The Twelve Steps for a New Generation*, by James Wiley, page 46.

What insidious nonsense. The Bible just specifically told us not to play games like that.

Worse yet, according to the standard A.A. dogma, we can have any God or home-made "god" we wish. Our "Higher Power" can be any "Power greater than ourselves", or any "God as we understood Him". Our new God can even be a bedpan or a Golden Calf or our new "Group Of Drunks".

Then, according to Mr. Wiley, we are supposed to believe that our personal made-up version of God is totally real and correct and all-powerful, and we are supposed to believe it so fervently that we will make a "Leap of Faith" and jump off of a spiritual cliff, betting our lives and our souls that our home-made god will catch us before we hit bottom and die.

And then they pass off that suicidally moronic behavior as wonderful "faith". Faith in what?

- Faith in our own imagination?
- Faith in our own delusions of grandeur?
- Faith in our superstitions?
- Faith in a Golden Calf?

How is any of that compatible with the teachings of Jesus Christ? (Or compatible with the teachings of Mohammed, or Buddha, or Seneca, or Confucius, or Soloman or Moses?)

Just because we wish something were true doesn't make it true.

Just because we make ourselves believe that something is true doesn't make it true.

Note how similar that demand for a "Leap of Faith" is to Bill Wilson's demand that we abandon reason, human intelligence, and logic, and just have faith in his religious proclamations. See [Bill Wilson's delusional trip to La-La-Land](#) in the web page on religious faith for more on that subject.

Also remember [the Al-Anon propaganda](#) that teaches wives and children of alcoholics to be "powerless" and "*stand at the edge of acceptance, and take a step, and free-fall into Step One*", which they claim will be just fine because some vague "Higher Power" might help you: "*What that Power is and how it can help me doesn't matter...*"

Speaking of demanding miracles, if we get nit-picking about it, six of the twelve steps actually demand miracles from God:

- Step One says that we are powerless over alcohol, so God must control our drinking for us, or else we will die. And Step One also says that our lives are unmanageable (meaning: we cannot manage our own lives), so by implication, [God must manage our lives for us](#).
- Step Two says that we are insane, and that only God can restore us to sanity, so we are demanding that God do that for us, too.
- Step Three says that we are turning our wills and our lives over to the care of God, so God has to work for us and take care of us from then on, or it blows the whole 12-Step game.
- Step Seven demands that God remove all of our "defects of character" and "moral shortcomings". And Bill Wilson also wrote in the *Big Book* that [God will also remove our desire for drink](#) — "*That is the miracle of it. ... We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.*"
- Then, in Step Eleven, we pray for God to make us understand Him better, and to give us our work orders for the day, and then to give us the power to carry out those orders. One of the fundamental beliefs of both Buchmanism and A.A. is that God will reveal himself to us if we truly seek Him, so He had better do it.

- And finally, in Step Twelve God is supposed to give us a "spiritual experience" or a "spiritual awakening" as our reward for having done the preceding eleven steps.

And should God refuse to do any of those tasks for us, then it sort of ruins the whole Twelve-Step program. If God won't play along, and *Work The Steps*, and do what we wish, then how can the Twelve-Step program possibly work?

The simple undeniable answer is, ***"It can't."***

The whole Alcoholics Anonymous program depends on God micro-managing both our lives and the world around us, and granting our wishes and making everything turn out okay just the way that Frank Buchman and Bill Wilson said that He would [if we followed their instructions.](#)

And we are supposed to believe that we are incapable of doing any of that stuff for ourselves, and God must do *all of it* for us. We are supposed to believe that we are completely powerless, helpless, insane, and unable to manage our own lives, and that only by having God make good little robots or puppets out of us can we live good lives.

The A.A. slogan is: "I pray to God every day that I never get the idea that I can run my own life."

And the other slogan is, "Let Go and Let God."

The very idea that you can give up on your life and become a puppet who is controlled by God and taken care of by God is heretical. There is nothing in standard Christianity or in the Bible that says that you can do that. Nor is there any such doctrine in Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, or any of the world's other great religions.

It is also heretical to declare that the ideal Christian life consists of being a mindless slave of God. I am reminded of a criticism of Frank Buchman's doctrine of "Guidance by God" that Marjorie Harrison wrote. This is where the Alcoholics Anonymous theology came from:

The Bishop of London, speaking on the Group some time ago, said: "God has given us intelligence and reason to be the lamps to guide us."

The Group by its interpretation of Divine Guidance advocates the dowsing of these lamps.

To return to the simile of a father and his children. The Group teaches the child to regard his father not as a guide and defence generally and a

ready help in time of trouble, but someone to whom the child turns for actual direction in everything he does. Father, shall I play with my train or my bricks? Father, shall I build a house or a bridge? Father, shall I use red bricks or blue? Father, shall I knock it down? Father, shall I build it up? Father this and father that, until a father might well wonder whether his child is a half-wit, instead of a reasonable being.

Why should we storm the courts of Heaven to know whether we shall buy cigarettes or take the 10.45 or the 11 o'clock train to town, or as a critic has said: "render God responsible for our neckties or whether we choose to eat beef or mutton at luncheon."

Believe me, these instances are no exaggeration. Dr. Buchman acknowledges that he asks for guidance for the expenditure on postage. *Saints Run Mad; A Criticism of the "Oxford" Group Movement*, Marjorie Harrison (1934), page 55.

Frank Buchman's and Bill Wilson's teachings directly conflicted with St. Paul's teachings in his letter to the Romans:

All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery, but you have received the spirit of sonship.

*The Reader's Digest Bible*, page 668.

Also see Romans 8:14-15.

It's interesting to see how cleverly both Buchmanism and Alcoholics Anonymous hide their demanding nature. The A.A. true believer will insist that he doesn't make demands of God, that in fact he does just the opposite — that he devotes his whole life seeking and doing the will of God. He says that he wants to be a perfect servant of God. But the entire A.A. program makes constant demands of God, interrupted only by Step Eleven's offer to do some work for God in return. The A.A. program is entirely based on the superstitious idea that God will become our servant and take care of us and give us what we want:

I have no other explanation for the many good things that have happened to me since I have been in A.A. — they came to me from a Greater Power.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, *Rum, Radio, and Rebellion*, page 367.

That reminds me of [a criticism of Frank Buchman's doctrines](#) before World War II:

"I count it blasphemy for Dr. Buchman, or anybody else, to pretend to testify to what God has done for him while humanity is at this moment perishing."

Rev. John Haynes Holmes, quoted in *The New York Times*, July 16, 1934, page 9.

In fact, A.A. has it exactly backwards: Many Christian believers will do something like give up drinking alcohol for Lent. They do not say, "God: you must take away my desire to drink or else I will drink myself into a stupor every night of Lent." No, they say, "I can control my actions. I will voluntarily give up the pleasure of drinking alcohol for Lent, to show my devotion to God."

And to say that ordinary people can control their drinking, and give it up for Lent, but alcoholics cannot, is baloney, and a cop-out. It is just *spiritual laziness*, demanding that God fix what the alcoholic could fix by himself.

And the alcoholics most assuredly can fix their problems themselves — there are millions of them doing it, including me, and doing it without the insanity of the A.A. Twelve Steps. (Admittedly, it's hard. Nobody said it would be easy. But there is an infinite difference between "hard" and "impossible.") In fact, more people recover from alcoholism without A.A. and the Twelve Steps than do it with them, several times over. The Harvard Medical School says that 80% of the people who successfully quit drinking for a year or more do it *alone*, without *any* therapy program or support group. A.A. won't tell you that; that's one of the biggest dirty little secrets that A.A. has — that A.A. is actually unnecessary. A.A. dogma says, "Nobody can do it alone." The truth is, the vast majority of the people who recover do it that way.

As a matter of fact, the former President of the United States, George W. Bush, says that he just quit drinking when the consequences of heavy drinking and doping got to be too much. He says he didn't use A.A.. And this time, I believe him. Guess where George B. would be today, if he had had a sponsor who said, "George, don't let anything get in front of your recovery. Just keep coming to the meetings, and doing The Steps, and don't let some outside interest like politics interfere with

**your recovery.**" He'd still be sitting in a church basement in Texas, talking to the walls about how unhappy he is.

Question: Shouldn't the A.A. faithful be calling George W. Bush a "dry drunk"? He quit drinking without doing the Twelve Steps, and that is the A.A. formula for becoming a bitterly unhappy **dry drunk** who is a seething cauldron of anger, resentments, and uncontrolled aggressiveness. So what do the A.A. enthusiasts have to say about that?

The Bible has more to say about miracles on demand: Matthew 12.38:

Then some teachers of the law and some Pharisees spoke up. "Teacher," they said, "we want to see you perform a miracle."

"How evil and godless are the people of this day!" Jesus exclaimed. "You ask me for a miracle? No!"

And Matthew 16:1 says:

The Pharisees and Sadducees came and, to test him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He said to them in reply, "In the evening you say, 'Tomorrow will be fair, for the sky is red'; and, in the morning, 'Today will be stormy, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times. An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." Then he left them and went away.

Jesus just didn't like people demanding miracles and signs, did he?



Another problem with Bill Wilson's understanding of miracles is his declarations that God's miracles wear off after 24 hours, and that alcoholics must beg God for another miracle every day:

We are not cured of alcoholism. What we have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we

must carry the vision of God's will into all of our daily activities.

The *Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, page 85.

When Jesus Christ healed people and made the blind see and the cripples walk, Jesus didn't say that the healing would only last for one day and then it would wear off, so all of those people had to "*Keep Coming Back!*" for another treatment every day...

Jesus also never said that the healings would be revoked if people didn't "*Seek and Do the Will of God*" every day.

Jesus also never said that the healings would be revoked if people didn't go to a meeting at the Temple at least once a week.

Jesus never told Lazarus that he would go back to being dead if he didn't please God all of the time.

And Jesus never said that you can't quit drinking unless you "carry the vision of God's will into all of your daily activities."

(Besides which, just what is "the vision of God's will"? That is just another one of Bill Wilson's grandiose platitudes.)



While we are talking about people praying for miracles, we shouldn't overlook Christ's admonition of those who pray in public (like at A.A. meetings and A.A. conventions):

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to the Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Matthew 6:5 to 6:6



"Lemme get this. You're going to church to pray that God will make Frank call you... Right?"

"Right."

"I don't believe this. Y'know, you're turning God into a telephone operator."

— The movie *Saturday Night Fever*

And those of us who try to be sane and reasonable in our religious beliefs get really tired of the moronic, superstitious, childish *Santa Claus spirituality* of the the A.A. true believers who think that they can get whatever they want just by praying for it — *"Just incant the name of your favorite Higher Power three times, loudly, and then read your Christmas wish list out loud, and Santa Claus will soon bring you all of the goodies."*

And lest you have any doubts, Bill Wilson wrote in the *Big Book*:

Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.

*The Big Book*, pages 85-86.

It works — it really does.

*The Big Book*, page 88.

Bill Wilson wrote on page 87, "**We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends**", but the giddy believers who are getting the goodies ignore that, and happily brag at meetings about all of the wonderful stuff that God has given them lately, like this...

I have no other explanation for the many good things that have happened to me since I have been in A.A. — they came to me from a Greater Power.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, *Rum, Radio, and Rebellion*, page 367.



(Those good things couldn't have been caused by quitting drinking? They couldn't have been caused by no longer constantly shooting yourself in the foot by always being drunk at the wrong times? They couldn't possibly have been caused by being clear-headed, healthy, and able to work and get stuff done — just for a change?)

And then the enthusiastic believers pray for even more goodies, as if God is their Divine Butler, on call day and night, always eager to solve all of their problems for them.

Oh Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes  
Benz?

My friends all drive Porsches, I must  
make amends.

Worked hard all my lifetime, no help from  
my friends.

So oh Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes  
Benz?

Oh Lord won't you buy me a color TV?

Dialing for dollars is trying to find me.

I wait for delivery each day until three.

So oh Lord won't you buy me a color TV?

Oh Lord, won't you buy me a night on the  
town?

I'm counting on you Lord, please don't let  
me down.

Prove that you love me and buy the next  
round.

Oh Lord, won't you buy me a night on the  
town?

*Mercedes Benz, Janis Joplin*

Unbelievable as it may seem, some 12-Step pundits see no problem with the Santa-

Claus praying. The following religious advice comes from the sages of Al-Anon, in their official publication:

Many times at our own, as well as at AA meetings, I have heard people talk of "gimme prayers" as if they were worthless. Speaking only for myself, I believe they could not be more wrong because I cannot think God considers any prayer worthless.

Just as most children creep before they walk, and walk before they run, so we progress spiritually from "gimme" prayers to selfless ones where we ask only to know God's Will and to follow it. No one says the child is wasting his time creeping — he's just learning, just as we have to learn to pray.

Furthermore, I cannot see that it is wrong to ask for material help, when the Lord's Prayer itself contains our plea for daily bread. I believe we get beyond the point of asking for purely material things just as some of our members are able to [thank God for their having married an alcoholic and thus learning about our program](#).

*Al-Anon's favorite forum editorials, pages 63-64.*

- Al-Anon actually says that Al-Anon is so wonderful that it was worth it to marry an alcoholic and go through Hell just so that you would be forced to join Bill Wilson's version of Frank Buchman's fascist cult religion. You should be grateful to alcohol for having messed up your family's lives.
- And greedily praying for all of the things on your wish list is just good practice in praying, they say. You are allegedly just getting used to praying, and learning to be a passive dependent and learning to expect some "Higher Power" to give you everything you want...

**That is some grossly heretical superstitious nonsense, of course.**

It is totally [narcissistic](#) for someone to expect Big Daddy, *Big God*, or "Higher Power" to take care of her and grant all of her wishes, as if she were a little child and God was the stern but loving parent who will bring gifts to His child when she is good.

- As Dr. Charlotte Kasl pointed out in [her book](#), *Many Roads, One Journey: Moving Beyond the 12 Steps*, that is a descent into infantile narcissism, where people regress to being helpless ("powerless") babies who lay in their beds and wait for their all-powerful ("Higher Power") Mommies and Daddies to grant all of their wishes and satisfy their every demand just because they cry.

- It is an attempt to return to infancy, where the baby lays helplessly on his backside and waits for Big Mommy and Big Daddy to satisfy all of his desires (and screams if they are slow about it).

*"Let Go and Let God."*

Time to grow up and learn to stand on your own two feet, and not expect Santa Clause to bring the goodies.

Incidentally, Jesus Christ never taught people to live passive lives of "Let Go and Let God." Jesus never told people to sit on their duffs and wait for God to do things for them. Jesus always talked about people *doing things for themselves*, and actively doing good.

"Let Go and Let God" is just another bit of A.A. heresy.

We are God's eyes in this world; it is our duty to see what needs to be done.

We are God's hands in this world; it is our duty to do what needs to be done.

"Let Go and Let God" will guarantee that God's work doesn't get done in this world.

One of the most extreme examples of that goofy philosophy is taught by Al-Anon, the wives' and families' auxiliary:

"I will realize that, even in doing nothing about my problems, I am actively practicing the Al-Anon idea."

*One Day at a Time in Al-Anon, page 143.*

- And Al-Anon says: "God never considers any prayer to be worthless."

Oh really? Not even if it is Adolf Hitler, praying for all of the Jews to die?<sup>1</sup>

"Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."

*Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler, Ralph Mannheim, ed., New York: Mariner Books, 1999, page 65.

I find it amusing that the Hazelden Foundation 12-step religious propaganda says that Al-Anon is all wrong and is practicing black magic:

The wrong kinds of prayer can be a form of black magic, for when we seek to use a supernatural force to help us achieve our goals, it ceases to be supernatural and becomes superhuman. To make God into a servant is to place him under our superhuman power. Yet is this not exactly what we have long been taught to do? To get down on our knees and pray for God to go to work for us?

*The 12 Steps to Happiness*, Joe Klaas, The Hazelden Foundation, Center City, MN, 1982, page 140.

And, as usual, I am left with the question:

"What does any of this theological argument have to do with quitting drinking?"



Speaking of "Letting go and letting God", and the Al-Anon idea of "doing nothing about my problems", A.A. also does nothing to help anyone else with their problems.

Jesus Christ repeatedly instructed people to feed the hungry, clothe the naked children, and help the poor. Buddha and Mohammed taught similar things. But Bill Wilson taught the exact opposite. Bill said that we must not be of service to other people, not even to alcoholics:

The minute we put our work on a service plane, the alcoholic commences to rely upon our assistance rather than upon God.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *Working With Others*, page 98.

So Bill Wilson taught that we should not help the poor or the alcoholics, and we should not perform any services for them. Bill said that they must learn to rely on God.

And A.A. lives by those instructions today. Alcoholics Anonymous *never* engages in any kind of charity work or social work to help the poor or the homeless, even though many of those people are poor and homeless because they are alcoholics.

The *only* way that A.A. wants to "help" anyone is to convert them to the 12-Step religion:

Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. ...

Your wife may sometimes say she is neglected.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William Wilson, Chapter 7, *Working With Others*, page 97.

- "Helping other alcoholics" means recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, Chapter 9, page 129.)
- "Acting the Good Samaritan every day" means recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, Chapter 7, *Working With Others*, page 97.)
- "Unselfish, constructive action" means recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, Chapter 7, *Working With Others*, page 93.)
- "Placing the welfare of others ahead of your own" means recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, Chapter 7, *Working With Others*, page 94.)
- "Carrying the message to other alcoholics" — Step Twelve — means recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, Chapter 5, page 60.)
- "The path of spiritual progress" means doing Alcoholics Anonymous activities, including recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, Chapter 7, *Working With Others*, page 100.)
- "Doing 12th-Step work" means recruiting for Alcoholics Anonymous. (A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd & 4th Editions, Chapter 5, page 60.)

That isn't quite what Jesus had in mind when He instructed us to help others.



Bill Wilson wrote:

"God ought to be able to do **anything**."

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 11, *A Vision For You*, page 158.

I have to comment:

Yes, God can do anything.

But where, true believers, does it say that *God will do anything for you?*

**When did God become *your* slave?**

When did God become like Aladdin's Genie who has to grant you three wishes when you rub his lamp?

Countless millions of other people on this planet are suffering and dying from all kinds of things, particularly starvation and diseases, and God won't do just any old special favor for them. God lets them die. Sixty thousand people die of starvation every day on this planet, and most of them are children. That's just how it is. Millions of people are dying of AIDS in Africa. It's beyond being an epidemic — entire regions of Africa are being depopulated. Those people are far too poor to be able to afford drugs like AZT; their entire countries are too poor; it's totally out of the question; so they die without medicines. And God just lets them die, in spite of their prayers.

But somehow, you 12-Steppers think that you are so special that you rate God's favors when they don't? What makes you think you are so special?

- Drinking and drugging too much?
- Brain damage?
- Having white skin?
- Imagining that only you and your group are doing the Will of God, and everyone else in the world isn't?

Inquiring minds want to know.

And mind you, that is not a criticism of God. It is a criticism of the stupidity of people. In the rather hokey movie *Oh God!* where George Burns played God, he had at least one great line, in which God said simply, **"I don't do cheap magic tricks."**

That one simple line answers so much. Isn't it enough that the Lord created the entire physical Universe in a blindingly brilliant flash of light? Must the Lord also hang around this backwater planet and do cheap magic tricks to amuse the local yokels?

If you can accept the idea that the Lord simply does not do cheap magic tricks, then you can accept the idea that God doesn't play Santa Claus, and God doesn't deliver miracles on demand. You can understand how the Lord did not rescue Job in the Old Testament of the Bible, and God did not save the Jews in Auschwitz, and God did not save the starving children in Bangladesh or Biafra or Ethiopia, and God did not save the World Trade Center, and God will not save the Africans with AIDS. That's a tough one to accept, but that's just the way it is.

But if you do come to terms with that idea, the idea that God is not Santa Claus and does not grant wishes like a Genie who just popped out of a bottle, then it really

blows a big hole in the theology of Alcoholics Anonymous. All of the people in meetings yammering about how their Higher Power is giving them a bunch of wonderful things becomes ludicrous. All of this talk about getting the goodies becomes childish nonsense and wishful thinking:

- "Expect A Miracle"
- We "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity" *The Big Book*, 3rd & 4th editions, William G. Wilson, page 59.
- "We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings" *The Big Book*, 3rd & 4th editions, William G. Wilson, page 59.
- "Let Go And Let God."
- "We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves." *The Big Book*, 3rd & 4th editions, William G. Wilson, page 84.

This is also childish nonsense and wishful thinking:

I have no other explanation for the many good things that have happened to me since I have been in A.A. — they came to me from a Greater Power.

*The Big Book Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd Edition, page 367.

And so is this:

We will seldom be interested in liquor. ...

We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given to us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. ...

We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us.

*The Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 3, *More About Alcoholism*, pages 84-85.

Sobriety is given to us "*without any thought or effort on our part*"?

Not even going to A.A. meetings and doing Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps?

(That is also one of those grandiose promises that never gets fulfilled. [Cults make lots of them.](#))

This is more childish nonsense and wishful thinking:

Of course, the often disputed question of whether God can — and will, under certain conditions — remove defects of character will be answered with a prompt affirmative by almost any A.A. member. To him, this proposition will be no theory at all; it will be just about the largest fact in his life. He will usually offer his proof in a statement like this:

"Sure, I was beaten, absolutely licked. My own willpower just wouldn't work on alcohol. Change of scene, the best efforts of family, friends, doctors,

and clergymen got no place with my alcoholism. I simply couldn't stop drinking, and no human being could seem to do the job for me. But when I became willing to clean house and then asked a Higher Power, God as I understood Him, to give me release, my obsession to drink vanished. It was lifted right out of me..."

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, page 63.

Alcohol must be really wonderful stuff for it to make God care about us so much.

God doesn't seem to care about the starving children in Bangladesh or Biafra or Ethiopia;

and God doesn't care about people dying in wars in Chechnya, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, or Africa;

and God doesn't care about people getting sick from AIDS or tuberculosis or Ebola,

but God sure does seem to care a lot if some white Americans get sick from drinking too much alcohol.

All praise be to the alcohol that makes God care about us so much.

People who imagine that God will grant all of their wishes and solve all of their problems and take away all of their difficulties do not understand the story of Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane in his last night of freedom. There, Jesus prayed and asked, *TWICE*, to be spared from the agony of death by crucifixion. The answer was "No." God did not grant that wish.

Nevertheless, the A.A. true believers imagine that they will get all of their wishes granted by "Higher Power" just because they "work the steps" and pray for stuff. As if they rate getting their wishes granted more than Jesus did.

It is just like Bill Wilson babbling in his Third Step Prayer,

"Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life."

A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 63.

And Bill also quoted another A.A. true believer as declaring:



Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 3, page 42.

It sounds like Santa Claus is coming to town.



Imagine someone going to confession, and saying to the priest, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been six months since my last confession. I've done all kinds of things since then, but none of them is my fault. I am powerless over everything, and I have no control over my actions. I turned my will and my life over to the care of God quite some time ago, and now God controls everything, and anything I do wrong is God's fault. If I do something good, it is because God makes me do it, so I can't accept any praise. If I do something bad, it is because God makes me do it, so I can't accept any blame."

The priest isn't going to accept that cop-out for a minute.

And what if that person continues with his confession, "I have been defeated by sin, and have no power over it. That is why I gave my will and my life to God, so that He can do something about it. God is the only hope I have of not being destroyed by sin. So all I can do is *Let Go and Let God*."

The priest isn't going to accept that one either. The priest will tell that person to get off of his lazy ass, and quit feeling sorry for himself, and get to work at fixing himself and battling sin. And the last thing the priest will say is, "Nobody is powerless. You can resist temptation, so do it."

The priest is right, and he clearly sees what could come of this nonsense: Imagine a horny teenager who says, "I am powerless over my sexual urges. I am driven to have sex all of the time. I can't keep my hands off of the girls. So I joined Sexaholics Anonymous, and turned my will and my life over to the care of God, and humbly asked Him to remove my shortcomings. [Long-comings?] Well, He hasn't gotten around to doing it yet, so I just can't help but gleefully jump on all of the pretty girls, day and

night, night and day, until God gets around to fixing me. It isn't my fault. It's all God's fault, because He isn't doing His job."

Logically, the kid has a point, if we believe in the Twelve-Step bull droppings:

- Step one says, "We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol." (Or, "powerless over our sexual urges.")
- Step two says, "We came to believe that only a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."
- Step three says we "turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God".
- Step seven says, "We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings."

So there it is: You are powerless and insane, so, like some hopelessly drunk person, you hand over the car keys to a friend and let him drive; you let God take the steering wheel of your life and do the driving. God gets the credit or blame for what happens next.

Now, your friend is responsible for whether the car crashes or not.

Now, God is responsible for whether your life crashes or not.

You don't have to do a thing anymore.

"Let Go and Let God" is a very popular A.A. slogan.

All Christian religions emphasize the idea that you are responsible for your own actions. And so do Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism (more properly called Vedantic religions). And so do Native American religions. I just can't think of another religion, anywhere in this world, besides Alcoholics Anonymous (and its parent, [Buchmanism, a.k.a. The Oxford Group Movement](#), a.k.a. Moral Re-Armament), that pushes the idea of you not controlling yourself, of you not controlling your drinking, of you not being responsible for your own actions, of you being powerless over any temptation or vice, and of you not ever being able to change that.

In truth, even A.A. is confused on this issue:

- Step one clearly, unequivocally, declares that we are powerless over alcohol.
- Step two clearly, unequivocally, says that we believe that only "a Power greater than ourselves" (God) can restore us to sanity.
- Step three clearly, unequivocally, says that we are turning our wills and our lives over to the care of God.

A.A. members surrender control of their wills and their lives to God, because, they say, they have already tried running their own lives, and have failed, and will die unless God takes over and runs the show. And when a member does something good,

the standard line is to say, "But I can't take any credit for that, God gets the credit, because that is Who is running the show now."

As an insurance against "big-shot-ism", we can often check ourselves by remembering that we are today sober only by the grace of God and that any success we may be having is far more His success than ours.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, Page 92.

When someone stays sober for a year or more, all of the members celebrate and thank and praise God for performing that Miracle. But when an A.A. member does something bad, like relapse, the member gets the blame. Suddenly everybody forgets about God, and whether He was running the show.

That is not logically consistent, to put it mildly. I can just see Mr. Spock of Startrek saying, "That is not logical. Whatever the causal agent is, it is responsible for both its meritorious actions and its reprehensible actions. And the most likely causal agent is the A.A. member himself."

The A.A. theologians try to dodge the inconsistency by declaring that some people have really turned their lives over to God, and some people haven't. Some are holding back a little, and keeping a little of their ego still "inflated". And when those people do their own will, rather than the Will of God, then that is when they get into trouble.

That is a rather depressing view of the human race. People's wishes are always bad? Anyone who does what he wishes to do will always do evil? Is it evil to wish that your child gets to eat? Is it evil to willfully insist that your family and friends not suffer harm?

(That is what is called a [Gnostic heresy](#) — and it is also *Manichaeism* — the doctrine that all goodness is in Heaven, and this material world and all of the people in it are all evil — matter and flesh are in the realm of darkness — this world, the Earth, is the realm of Satan. Buchmanism is loaded with that particular heresy.)

Common sense tells us that the vast majority of Americans are not members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Neither have the vast majority of Americans surrendered their wills and their lives to God, in the style of A.A.. Most people still have their own egos, their own wills, and their own desires. Nevertheless, most people do good things every day. Most people do almost nothing but good, every day. Thus, the inherent true nature of people must be mostly good. Certainly not all good, not angelic, but more good than bad. No matter how bad the world looks some days,

people are still far more good than bad. Our world would self-destruct if that were not so.

Undoubtedly, there have to be some A.A. members who have not turned their wills or their lives over to God; lots of them, actually. They may have thought about it, but not quite gotten around to doing it. Or they may have discovered the truth: that it is *extremely* difficult to do, almost impossible to really do. That *the only people who have really shed their egos and their desires and totally surrendered to God are saints, real genuine saints*, and those things are as rare as hen's teeth. So rare, in fact, that we are fortunate if there is just one present on this planet at any given time.

What strikes me as one of the most tragic parts of this whole twelve-step routine is the millions of people around the world who are wasting their time pretending that they have turned over their wills and their lives to the care of God, or wasting their time, and going through all kinds of frustration, trying to hand over their wills, and finding out that the darned things won't go away, that they are tied to the owner as if with a rubber band, and just snap back. And that the harder you try to get rid of your will or your desires, the more strongly they just come back to you.

This stuff is really old hat. Us Hippies were talking about it back in the sixties, and it was thousands of years old then. One of the popular Zen stories tells of a student who had been working for ten years to gradually rid himself of all desires. He went to his Zen master and asked,

"But Master, how do I get rid of my last desire — the desire to be rid of all desires?"

And the old Zen master smiled and answered, "Now you really do have a problem, don't you?"

Alas, neither Frank Buchman nor Bill Wilson knew much about Buddhism or Hinduism, or ego loss, or human psychology, or Zen, or the whole process of really surrendering to God, or infinity, or eternity, or your Higher Power, or whatever you want to call it. And neither Buchman nor Wilson had a clue about the reality that even if you succeed in that surrendering process, that it is just temporary, and you will return to normal reality again all too soon, like in just a few minutes; that only a few rare souls can stay out there for any length of time at all. (Bill Wilson should have known, because [his own drug-induced religious experience](#) only lasted for a few minutes, and then Bill returned to [normal insanity](#).)

The rest of us mere mortals are still stuck with our wills, our lives, our egos, and our desires. Now we might have a moment of inspiration, and do something good while divinely inspired, or we might just have a good moment and do something good without God forcing us to do it... Thus it becomes basically impossible to tell

whether the good things an A.A. member does are due to his or her own inner goodness, and good wishes, or due to God's goodness.

It is just goofy logic then to insist that all of the good actions of A.A. members are done by God, and all of the bad actions are done by the members themselves. But if we dump that brain-damaged logic, then we blow a huge hole in the A.A. theological edifice. The whole game is based on surrendering control of your life to God, and becoming a good little robot, or a good little puppet on a string. And being good, and staying sober, is considered to be evidence that you have surrendered to God, and God is keeping you out of trouble. And the more years of sobriety you have, the closer you are to God. Obviously.

But alas, that logic breaks down again when old-timers relapse. I have just recently listened to the stories of a guy who had 9 years of sobriety and then relapsed, and a woman who had 18 years off of drugs and then relapsed. Tragic. Sad. But even more tragic was their inability to even understand what happened in their lives.

The guy only said, "I just got stupid for a while."

The woman said, "It's so wonderful. Now that I have gone out and used and come back, I know that I don't ever have to relapse again." And everybody cheered and clapped.

I couldn't help but wonder, "Did you know that you had to relapse before the last time? Were you saying to yourself, '*Even though I have 18 years of success, I know that I will have to relapse at least once more, just for the Hell of it.*' Huh? I don't think so."

They just didn't have a clue about what had really happened, or wouldn't admit to having a clue. If that is true, then they are sitting ducks for another relapse, because they won't know how to prevent the next one any more than they did the last one.

A.A. and N.A. dogma says that you just cannot stay clean and sober for that long without working the Twelve Steps and getting God's help. (If you could, then who needs the Twelve Steps or N.A. or A.A.?) Anyone with 9 or 18 years of sobriety has obviously long since "*worked the Steps*", many, many times over, and has turned his or her will and life over to the care of God. Obviously, long ago, according to standard dogma. So where did the will to relapse suddenly come from? How can someone without a will of his own suddenly get the will to relapse? Inquiring minds want to know.

Our friend Spock would say, "That is not logical. Something without any will cannot wish to get a will. If we assume that a rock is an inanimate object without a will of its own, then we can see that a rock cannot suddenly wish to learn calculus, or wish to take a drink, or wish to get a free will of its own. On the other hand, when a human suddenly wishes to take a drink, and does so, after 9 years of not drinking, then we must assume that the human has a will of his own, and had one even before the desire to drink came along."

Apparently, some of the A.A. faithful are capable of thinking along these same lines, but they seem to burn out a few critical brain cells at just the moment when they almost hit on the truth. This text is from a pro-A.A. web site that wishes to teach us to do the 12 steps:

*STEP 3: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. To turn my will and our life over?? This sounded like some kind of brainwashing to me. Was A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous) some kind of cult? It turned out that A.A. is not a cult. I have the right to take my will back any time I want.*

[http://www.healthyplace.com/Communities/Addictions/rawpsych/recovery/chapter\\_8.htm](http://www.healthyplace.com/Communities/Addictions/rawpsych/recovery/chapter_8.htm)

This guy just doesn't seem to be able to understand what "will" means. You can't willfully take your will back if you have no will. And you can't "want" to take your will back if you have no will. In this context, "want" and "will" are the same thing. And to say that you have the "right" to take your will back is some kind of a joke. It is like saying that you have the "right" to defy gravity. If you don't have the physical ability to levitate, then the right to do it is useless.

(And yes, of course it's a cult, and they do brainwashing. Your first impression was correct.)

[One can only wonder whether the oldtimers were playing mind games with the newcomer. The new guy worries about whether he has joined a cult, so the oldtimers tell him, "Don't worry. You have the right to take back your will and your mind any time you want."]

In truth, your will is a part of your mind, and you cannot just give your will away as if it was a coin or a token. And you *really* can't be giving it away, and then taking it back, repeatedly, in some kind of a neurotic dance.

Perhaps you saw the beautiful movie *Awakenings*, starring Robin Williams. There, Robin Williams played the role of a doctor who worked in a mental hospital with chronic post-encephalitic patients who looked and acted like total zombies who had no will of their own. They were basically catatonic, and sat motionless all day long,

unless the doctor stimulated them and got them to do something. They would do whatever the doctor made them do, or urged them to do, but they had little or no will of their own. That part of their mind was almost a total blank. I have never seen anyone at an A.A. meeting who looked like that, and I doubt if anyone else has, either. The people at A.A. meetings all have a will of their own. There isn't a mindless zombie in the bunch.

*(I know, I know, it's a perfect setup for a horrible joke, but I'm going to resist the temptation.*

*See? I'm not powerless over jokes.)*

Even if you decide that you have no will of your own, even if you decide that you have been defeated, and surrender to someone else, and swear that you have no will of your own left, and have no desire except to do the dictates of your master, then that is *still* your will. Your will is now to be a sycophant, or a slave, or a passive dependent, and to just get ordered around.

But, just for the sake of argument, let's continue with the crazy idea that you can give your will away.

Logically, to take it one step further, if the man with 9 years of sobriety had really turned his will over to God, then God must have given it back. And the same is true of the woman with 18 years off of drugs. So you give your will to God, and He turns around and gives it right back to you, and also sticks you with all of your usual problems again? That isn't how the A.A. true believers like to tell the story...

Then, to really flog this dead horse one more time, we can ask, "Why did God choose to give that guy his will back, after 9 years of taking care of him? Of course God knew what would happen. As soon as God decided to give that guy his will back, his fate was sealed. His relapse was as inevitable as the rising and setting of the sun. So that was a really mean thing to do, giving the guy his will back... Why would God do that? It couldn't be because God was unhappy with something he had done, because he had not done anything. God had his will, and ran his life for him, and made him do whatever he did. Until, suddenly, God didn't feel like controlling him any more. Why not?" Inquiring minds want to know.

The really bad thing about those old-timers who relapse is that they threaten to bring the whole logical structure down; they threaten to collapse the whole house of cards. They are living proof that the Twelve Steps don't really work. I mean, if the Twelve Steps won't even save people who have done them for 9 or 18 years, then what hope is there for the rest of us?



The A.A. *Big Book* gives us the following religious teaching:

And acceptance is the answer to *all* my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation — some fact of my life — unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake.

The A.A. *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd Edition, *Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict*, page 449.

If nothing happens in this world by mistake, if everything is just "exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment", then we have no free will and no individual responsibility for our actions. We are just robots or puppets, being manipulated by God and being made to do His Will. We have to be, because everything that happens, including what we do, is just the Will of God. So we cannot possibly have any choice in the matter, or else something that we do could be a "mistake".

*If we do something good, it was just what God wanted to happen.*

*If we do something that is low and vile and evil, it was just what God wanted to happen.*

*It's all just part of God's Great Plan.*

You and I cannot possibly do something wrong, because if we did, then that would invalidate the above statement — it would be something that God did not want to happen, and there would be something in this world that was not "exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment."

But the logical conclusion of such a doctrine is absurd:

*If someone chooses to go rape and murder a pretty girl, hey! — that was not a mistake — that was just the will of God. We might as well just accept it and be serene and grateful about it because "Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake."*

Such a doctrine is obviously grossly heretical. Most all of the major religions of the world teach the concepts of free will and individual responsibility. They tell you to



get a grip and manage your own life and do good works. They don't let you just bliss out and mindlessly proclaim that everything that happens is just what God wishes.

Incidentally, the statement that nothing happens by mistake — it's all God's Will — also invalidates A.A. Steps Four and Five. We cannot possibly be guilty of "moral shortcomings", "defects of character", and "sins" if everything was happening just as God wished it to. We haven't done anything wrong — we were just doing whatever God wished us to do. It was all just part of God's Great Plan.

So there is no point in us listing all of our "sins" in Step Four, and confessing them to someone in Step Five, because we haven't committed any. It's a contradiction in terms. Likewise, we don't need God to remove our flaws and shortcomings in Steps Six and Seven, because we don't have any. We are exactly what God made us to be, and who are we to choose to change God's Great Plan?

The logical conclusion is that we should simply throw away A.A. Steps Four through Seven, and stop wallowing in guilt.

The statement that nothing happens by mistake — it's all God's Will — also makes God into a heartless monster:

- The Holocaust, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Treblinka, and all of World War Two — that all happened because God wanted it to happen, and God wanted all of those people to suffer and die?
- The Church murdered millions of girls as witches throughout the Middle Ages because God wanted it to happen?
- The recent tsunami that killed more than 160,000 people from Malaysia to Sri Lanka was also not an accident — it was God's will? God wanted all of those poor brown-skinned people to die?
- And Hurricane Katrina was just God punishing the South for improper religious beliefs and for voting for George W. Bush?

*No, "Repent America" director Michael Markovitch said (31 Aug 2005) that God destroyed New Orleans because of a gay festival that was scheduled to be held there a week later.*

*Wow. That's just like [Jerry Falwell's declaration](#) that God allowed 9-11 to happen, and God allowed the World Trade Center to be destroyed, and God allowed thousands of innocent people to be killed, because of "the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians".*

With a God like that, who needs a Devil?

*(Well fortunately for me, I don't believe that God is like that. It's just some heartless religious nut-cases who are like that.)*



Another heretical part of the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve-Step religion is the dogma that says, "Once an addict, always an addict. Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. Quitting isn't an option for addicts like us."

Christian religions believe that people can be saved, that they can be salvaged or redeemed, that they can always be made into something better. And one way or another, the other major religions of the world also say essentially the same thing. They all agree that you can work on yourself, and resist temptation, and make yourself into a better person. Only A.A. says that there is no hope for you, ever, that you are powerless over your sin — alcoholism — and cannot manage your own life, and that you cannot ever recover, and that the only thing you can do is essentially give up on yourself, and hope that God takes over and does something useful with you, and maybe makes you into something good. So, in total despair, you turn over — surrender — control of your will and your life to God in Step 3.

It is a standard Alcoholics Anonymous heresy to teach that no one can resist temptation by himself. A.A. says that you must always continue to attend meetings, and practice the Twelve Steps, for the rest of your life, because you are only "in recovery," and can't ever finish it, and actually get recovered, and learn to stand on your own two feet:

"Nobody ever graduates from this program, not ever",  
the faithful brag.

In conclusion, I can only say that whatever growth or understanding has come to me, I have no wish to graduate. Very rarely do I miss the meetings of my neighborhood A.A. group, and my average has never been less than two meetings a week.

... our one desire is to stay *in* A.A. ...

A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, Jim Burwell, *The Vicious Cycle*, pages 249-250.

A.A. doesn't seem able to distinguish between an unchangeable condition, like the genes someone inherits, and a changeable condition, like one's behavior. I will agree

that, unless genetic engineering makes some fantastic advances real soon, I am pretty much stuck with all of the genes that I inherited. And at least one of them does seem to be [a gene for alcoholism](#). But after that, all bets are off. The gene does not force me to drink. The gene changes how my brain and body react to alcohol, and changes how I feel when I drink it, but the gene doesn't force me to drink. I don't have to do it. I can quit, and I have quit. And I can recover from the effects of having drunk too much, and live a different life. As the Christians would say, ["I can do good. I can choose good over evil. I have free will."](#)

Those who believe that wallowing in powerlessness forever is a good thing to do might consider this Biblical passage, John 10.33:

They answered, "We do not want to stone you because of any good deeds, but because of your blasphemy! You are only a man, but you are trying to make yourself a God!"

Jesus answered, "It is written in your own Law that God said, 'You are gods.' We know that what the scripture says is true forever; and God called these people gods, the people to whom the message was given."

Somehow, I get the impression that "knowing your place", and staying in your place, isn't quite what Jesus believed in. How do you read that? Jesus also used the phrase "children of God" more than once, as in, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be known as the children of God." What do children of God grow up to be? I don't think that "Bigger children of God" is the entire answer.

Here, we might also consider this statement by St. Paul in his letter to the Romans:

All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery, but you have received the spirit of sonship.

*The Reader's Digest Bible*, page 668.

Also see Romans 8:14-15.



Bill Wilson was inconsistent on the issue of "Once an addict, always an addict." The Alcoholics Anonymous theology is very confused and contradictory there, because Bill Wilson and his *Big Book* also teach us the doctrine of instant perfection, just like

Frank Buchman's cult did. So you get both "you never recover" and "you are suddenly transformed" in Bill Wilson's religious teachings:

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. ... We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. ... Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. ... We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 6, *Into Action*, pages 83-84.

We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

The *Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 6, *Into Action*, page 75.

Assume on the other hand that father has, at the outset, a stirring spiritual experience. Overnight, as it were, he is a different man. He becomes a religious enthusiast. He is unable to focus on anything else. ... There is talk about spiritual matters morning, noon and night.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 9, *The Family Afterward*, page 127.

As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 4, *We Agnostics*, Page 46.

We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.

The *Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 2, *There Is A Solution*, page 25.

**Don't Leave Five Minutes Before The Miracle!**

A.A. slogan

The idea of sudden, dramatic attainment of perfection is tempting, but heretical (as well as impossible). Christianity and all of the other major religions of the world teach us that love takes a lifetime — that spiritual attainment is a slow, life-long process of "Progress, not instant perfection" — and you don't just suddenly attain

Heaven on Earth, or get instantly rocketed into the fourth dimension. Life just isn't that easy.

Like Tom Driberg wrote about [Buchmanism](#) (a.k.a. "the Oxford Groups", a.k.a. Moral Re-Armament, MRA), which Bill Wilson adopted as the theology of Alcoholics Anonymous:

For — to sum up the main criticisms — MRA is irrational in its mystique and authoritarian in its methods; it rejects free discussion; it practises with insufficient discrimination [the dangerous, and often deadly, doctrine that the end justifies the means](#); and, by seeming to proclaim the possibility of instant perfection, it raises hopes that cannot be fulfilled. In short, it is essentially non-Christian and anti-democratic.

*The Mystery of Moral Re-Armament; A Study of Frank Buchman and His Movement*, Tom Driberg, 1965, pages 304-305.

And just to confuse the issue further, "*Progress, Not Perfection*" is also a common A.A. slogan. But that slogan of course contradicts all of Bill Wilson's writings that were quoted above that talked about instant transformation.



Speaking of "the end justifies the means", that is another of Bill Wilson's heresies.

Bill Wilson taught the A.A. recruiters to hide the true nature of Alcoholics Anonymous — to be deceptive and downright dishonest about the details of the A.A. program when speaking to prospective new members — it's okay because it will get more recruits into Alcoholics Anonymous.

To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach. We might prejudice them.

*The Big Book*, 3rd and 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, Chapter 6, *Into Action*, pages 76-77.

It is seldom wise to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to him, and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message.

*The Big Book*, 3rd and 4th Editions, William G. Wilson, Chapter 6, *Into Action*, page 77.

And Bill instructed the recruiters not to be very explicit about A.A. theology when talking to doubters:

When dealing with such a person [an agnostic or atheist], you had better use everyday language to describe spiritual principles. There is no use arousing any prejudice he may have against certain theological terms and conceptions about which he may already be confused. Don't raise such issues, no matter what your own convictions are.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 93.

In his history of Alcoholics Anonymous, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age*, Bill Wilson described how he practiced deceptive recruiting for his cult religion, rationalizing that he had to do it because alcoholics are so bad:

When first contacted, most alcoholics just wanted to find sobriety, nothing else. They clung to their other defects, letting go only little by little. They simply did not want to get "too good too soon." [The Oxford Groups' absolute concepts](#) — absolute purity, absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love — were frequently too much for the drunks. These ideas had to be fed with teaspoons rather than by buckets.

*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age*, William G. Wilson, pages 74-75.

Real Christians do not dole out the truth about their churches and their beliefs by "teaspoons, rather than by buckets".

Real Christians do not hide the truth about just what is expected of new members.



Yet another heresy in the Alcoholics Anonymous dogma is the concept of inherited sin. That is an old idea, one that the ancient Jews believed in. Jesus Christ was asked whether a man who was born blind was blind due to his own sin, or the sin of his parents. Essentially, Jesus said, "Neither. We aren't playing that game any more. Paradigm shift time. He is blind for the greater glory of God." And then Jesus healed the blind guy. (John 9:1)

But A.A. still believes in inherited sin. An alcoholic is born with the gene for alcoholism, so he is born with the spiritual disease (read: "sin") of alcoholism. He is guilty and damned and condemned to Hell the instant the sperm hits the egg. And the

only salvation available to him is to accept A.A. and the Twelve-Step program with its Higher Power as his savior.

This effectively makes Alcoholics Anonymous one of the strangest deviant sects of Calvinism around: They believe in predestination with a nasty genetic twist.

Occasionally, at some meeting, one of the faithful will entertain you with stories of how he was an alcoholic and dysfunctional, even as a child, even before he took his first drink. (I wish I were making this stuff up, but I'm not.) And he wasn't talking about codependency, or being an ACOA — adult child of alcoholics. He wasn't talking about having been made maladjusted or neurotic by an out-of-control alcoholic parent (although he might well have been). He was talking about being a dysfunctional person, an alcoholic, because he was born one. He was talking about having been born with a hereditary "spiritual disease" and having acted wrong since birth.

One story in the *Big Book* begins:

My alcoholic problem began long before I drank. My personality, from the time I can remember anything, was the perfect set-up for an alcoholic career. I was always at odds with the entire world, not to say the universe. I was out of step with life, with my family, with people in general.

...

There was no material or external reason for this.

The A.A. *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, *Stars Don't Fall*, page 400.

In the *Big Book*, Doctor Bob, the co-founder of A.A., described his alcoholism this way:



Young Dr. Robert Smith

Unfortunately for me I was the only child, which perhaps engendered the selfishness which played such an important part in bringing on my alcoholism. ...

After high school came four years in one of the best colleges in the country where drinking seemed to be a major extra-curricular activity. Almost everyone seemed to do it. I did it more and more, and had lots of fun without much grief, either physical or financial. I seemed to be able to snap back the next morning better than most of my fellow drinkers, who were cursed (or perhaps blessed) with a great deal of morning-after nausea. Never once in my life have I had a headache, which fact leads me to believe that I was an alcoholic almost from the start. My whole life seemed to be centered around doing what I wanted to do, without regard for the rights, wishes, or privileges of anyone else; a state of mind which became more and more predominant as the years passed. I was graduated "summa cum laude" in the eyes of the drinking fraternity, but not in the eyes of the Dean.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, Dr. Robert Smith, page 172.

So, he was a born alcoholic, and his alcoholism was caused by in-born selfishness.

The idea of that some people are "born the wrong way" is repeated at the start of every Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. The A.A. members begin every meeting by reading out loud Bill Wilson's declarations in the *Big Book* that the people for whom the A.A. program did not work were "constitutionally dishonest with themselves" and "born that way":

RARELY HAVE we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such



unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty.

The *Big Book*, William G. Wilson, Chapter 5, *How It Works*, page 58.

*(Notice the double-talk: It isn't their fault, but it is their fault because they are defective. It sure isn't the fault of Bill's program, Bill says.)*

Many other people report the same kind of nonsense:

Now, a person who has never had a drink, or never drank problematically, would never be called "alcohol dependent" — but you frequently find such people in AA meetings, saying that they "identify as 'alcoholics'", because they "have the character defects of alcoholics" or some such. There have even been reports of people calling their PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN "alcoholics", because they display "self-centeredness"! This rubbish is only possible in a world where "alcoholism" has a mystical, "spiritual" meaning that has nothing to do with alcohol. And it also explains why many people are suggesting that EVERYONE should be in a 12-Step program, whether or not they have any substance abuse problem.

"Alcoholism" = gambling = "sex addiction" = messiness = being married to someone who has any problem, etc. They are all the same "spiritual disease", all must be "arrested" by steppism.

— Rita


And more:

Many of the people in the program who were parents would accuse their young children or teenagers of acting "alcoholically" when they were disobedient or acted selfishly. Some of the members' young kids actually believed that they were alxies or addicts even though they had never even nipped off of someone's beer or smoked a joint. It was sad to see children brainwashed by this nonsense. One boy would come up for chips and yearly medallions stating his "clean time" even though he had never used drugs. This mother's middle daughter did the same thing at the AA meeting and this kid never drank. The boy ended up being a problem in his young adult years and the NA/AA father banned the kid from the home. The youngster was once a good boy. Could it be that years of hearing this bull\$hit of how he was an "addict" during his formative years led him to believe that he was worthless and would never amount to much unless he continued to go to

these meetings with his dad?  
— A.H.

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Matthew 18:6



One problem that any Christian will have with Alcoholics Anonymous is the organization's abandoning of the Bible. The *Big Book*, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, is their new Bible. Some members claim to still use the Bible; I sometimes hear a bit of lip service to the Bible like, "Keep the *Big Book* next to the Good Book," but you won't see a Bible at a meeting, and you won't hear it quoted. Everybody is carrying the *Big Book*, and all readings come from it, or from a similar book of daily meditations, also written by Bill Wilson and other members of A.A..

In fact, reading aloud from the Bible at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings is usually forbidden. The Bible is considered "outside literature". Reading aloud at meetings from anything but A.A. "Council Approved" (and A.A.-published) literature is forbidden.

In addition, A.A. has essentially abandoned Jesus Christ. The A.A. faithful believe that Bill Wilson is superior to Jesus Christ when it comes to dealing with alcoholism, and you will hear Bill Wilson quoted a hundred times more often than Jesus Christ. (As a matter of fact, I can't really remember the last time I heard Jesus Christ quoted in an A.A. or N.A. meeting...)

The third edition of the A.A. *Big Book* does not contain the word "Jesus" anywhere, not even once. Bill Wilson raved constantly about "God", but didn't talk about Jesus Christ at all. There is one and only one mention of "Christ" in the entire book, and it is Bill Wilson's statement that before his hallucinatory experience on [belladonna](#), his so-called "[spiritual experience](#)," he didn't have much use for Christ:

With ministers, and the world's religions, I parted right there. When they talked of a God personal to me, who was love, superhuman strength and direction, I became irritated and my mind snapped shut against such a theory. To Christ I conceded the certainty of a great man, not too closely followed by those who claimed Him. His moral teaching — most excellent. For myself, I had adopted those parts which seemed convenient and not too difficult; the rest I disregarded.

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 1, *Bill's Story*, pages 10-11.

Apparently, Bill continued to disregard a lot of that stuff even after he "saw the light," or saw "[the God of the preachers](#)", because Bill never mentioned Jesus or Christ again, not anywhere in the *Big Book*, not ever.

The first edition of the *Big Book* contained one story, "My Wife and I," that contained a line mentioning Jesus Christ:

Here were these men who visited me and they, like myself, had tried everything else and although it was plain to be seen none of them were perfect, they were living proof that the sincere attempt to follow the cardinal teaching of Jesus Christ was keeping them sober.

That story was dropped from the second, third, and fourth editions.

- The word "God" appears in the first 164 pages of the *Big Book* (which William G. Wilson either wrote, co-authored, or edited) 106 times,
- the word "Power", as in "Higher Power" or "that Power, which is God" appears 22 times,
- the divine "Him" appears 26 times,
- and the divine "His" is used 15 times,
- but *there is no mention of "Jesus Christ", not one single mention.*

Alcoholics Anonymous is not a Christian religion, no matter what some members like to say. [It is a religion all right](#), in spite of the denials of the members who claim that it is only a "[spiritual program](#)." Alcoholics Anonymous is a Buchmanite religion. Alcoholics Anonymous is just [Frank Buchman's crazy "Oxford Group / Moral Re-Armament" religion](#), only slightly edited by William G. Wilson and Dr. Robert H. Smith.

Basically, Alcoholics Anonymous believes in and practices the teachings of [Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman](#), another man who had little use for Jesus Christ,

because he preferred his own beliefs and teachings to those of Jesus. Bill Wilson did not invent the theology of A.A. — he merely copied it from Frank Buchman.

In spite of that fact that Bill Wilson tried to hide the strong connections between Frank Buchman and A.A., Buchman's Oxford Group got three mentions in the third edition of the *Big Book*, while Christ got only one. (The first two mentions of the Oxford Group are in the Foreword to the Second Edition, and the third is on page 218 of the third edition, in the story "He Thought He Could Drink Like A Gentleman".)

For that matter, when you consider the fact that Jesus' first miracle was changing water into wine at a wedding party, there might be a real problem with Jesus being a member of Alcoholics Anonymous... (John 2:1 to 2:11.)

I am reminded of a contemporary critic of Frank Buchman's Oxford Group, [Pastor H. A. Ironside](#), who criticized Buchmanism by saying that it was not a Christian religion, in spite of Buchman's claims that it was, because everything in Buchmanism would still be possible even if Jesus Christ had never been born. The same thing is true of Alcoholics Anonymous. A.A. would not have to change one word of the official church dogma even if Jesus Christ had never been born. The sacred Twelve Steps of Bill Wilson do not mention Jesus Christ, and do not require Jesus Christ in order to work, and the Twelve Steps don't even require Jesus Christ to have ever existed.

Neither are the Twelve Steps based on any of the teachings of Jesus Christ. ([They are based on the teachings of Dr. Frank Buchman.](#))

Alcoholics Anonymous simply has no need for, and no use for, Jesus Christ. A.A. worships Bill Wilson and Doctor Bob, not Jesus Christ.

Another feature of the worship of Bill Wilson is something that I would call *the worship of false saints and false relics*. Bill Wilson and Doctor Bob were not saints, and their former possessions are not holy relics.

Way back in 1963, [Dr. Arthur H. Cain criticized](#) the growing cultishness of Alcoholics Anonymous, saying:

A.A. as a group must recognize its real function: to serve as a bridge from the hospital or the jail to the church — or to a sustaining personal belief that life is worthwhile. It must not pose

as a spiritual movement that provides everything the alcoholic needs to fulfill his destiny. It must not teach its young (as it does in Alateen, its Sunday School for the children of alcoholics) such catechisms as: "We will always be grateful to Alateen for giving us a way of life and a wonderful healthy program to live by and enjoy." It must realize that "the actual coffee pot Anne used to make the first A.A. coffee (shown in "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age," Harper 1957, a commentary on the A.A. bible, Alcoholics Anonymous, Works Publishing Company, 1946) is not the Holy Grail. The cake and coffee served after meetings are just refreshments, not the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

*Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?*, by Arthur H. Cain, Harper's Magazine, February 1963

Arthur Cain might have added: "And the *Big Book*, 'Alcoholics Anonymous', is not the Word of God, either. And an old-timer who is selling a copy of the *Big Book* to a newcomer is not grandly passing on the Holy Wisdom to the younger generation, but you wouldn't know that from the proud look on the old-timer's face."

In fact, Christians have often found it necessary to even start their own recovery groups, separate from the A.A. mainstream, just to have an emphasis on Jesus Christ:

Saddleback's 12-Step program began when [John] Baker, a recovering alcoholic and increasingly devoted Christian, grew frustrated with the taboo of mentioning his higher power — Jesus Christ — at traditional Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. In the secular world, the concept of a higher power — the cornerstone of 12-Step programs — can be anything from God to a doorknob, depending on the spiritual comfort level of the person in recovery.

"At an AA meeting, you can talk about anything else, but not Jesus Christ," Baker says. "I'd be mocked when I talked about my higher power."

*12 Steps, Christian Style, Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 1999.

<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/an990430.html#47>

William Playfair observed,

In fact, the most striking evidence of the non-Christian nature of AA is in the testimonials of its members. In *Came to Believe*, which we are told is a record of "the spiritual adventure of AA as experienced by individual members," not one single testimonial out of the several hundreds could clearly and unquestionably be considered Christian. Not one single reference

to the God and Father of Jesus Christ or Jesus Christ, as the one and only Savior, can be found. This is especially interesting when one realizes that every other kind of testimony is recorded. Out of the millions of AA members, surely AA could have included *one* Christian testimony in a book filled with testimonies! If anything, this book shows an anti-Christian bias.

Members acknowledge Allah, the Life Force, any power greater than a drunk, the AA group as a whole, etc., but never the Lord God of the Scriptures. Either the number of Christians in AA is so small as to be negligible, or AA editors have chosen to exclude Christian testimonies. I will leave it to the reader to decide for himself which explanation is the correct one.

*The Useful Lie*, William L. Playfair, M.D. with George Bryson, page 95.

And just recently (August 2003), the following exchanges occurred in the Internet newsgroup "alt.recovery.addiction.alcoholism" between some A.A. true believers and me:

Mias:

I thank God for A.A., and A.A. for God!

---

Orange:

Which God is it that A.A. gave you, Jesus Christ, or some other god?

---

Mias:

On your inquiry about my God I will only say that 'God, as I understand Him' will suffice. I will also say that that God instructs me not to judge so that I be not judged. I better take that advice.

---

Orange:

In other words, you refuse to answer the simple, honest question about which god Alcoholics Anonymous gave you. And it apparently is not Jesus Christ, or you would be happy to say so.

One of the criticisms that a theologian had of Frank Buchman's Oxford Group Movement was that it was not Christian at all, in spite of Buchman's claims

that it was. The proof: that none of Buchmanism would have to be changed in the slightest even if Jesus Christ had never been born.

And Alcoholics Anonymous, which Bill Wilson derived from the Oxford Group, is just the same. A.A. has no need of Jesus Christ.

---

Mias:

you ought to study the manual of whatever religion you prescribe to and see if your actions fit in at all. [It is so sad that so many 'money-makers' these days proclaim a belief system that they have not studied at all just to obtain a following.](#)

I did not put a 'hex' on you. You are doing it on yourself and will know that one day.

God bless you.

---

Orange:

Hey, I'm just trying to get at the truth, which you don't want to tell. I have maintained for a while now that Alcoholics Anonymous is not a Christian religion, even though it puts on airs of being Christian.

A.A. doesn't have the honesty or the guts to tell the pastors or priests of the churches in whose basements A.A. meets that A.A. is really non-Christian and has no use for Jesus Christ. Bill Wilson has replaced Jesus in the A.A. religion.

So I'm still asking, "What God or god did A.A. give you? What is so terrible about that simple honest question?" Why won't you answer it?

Doesn't your God tell you to tell the truth? To be rigorously honest? (Big Book, page 58.) So let's see some of that rigorous honesty.

---

Robert:

You are in the wrong group if you are looking for Jesus. I make no claim about healing the blind. Relative to these facts, you are one blind fuckwit.

---

Gail:

WEEEEEEELLLLLLLL, I introduced myself and said that I did not have a problem with the language being used in the rooms of AA. MY problem was when someone talked about Jesus and quoted scripture from the bible in an AA meeting. But, that was my problem. If I wanted to hear the gospel, I would go to church. If I want to hear from people like me and what we share, I come to AA.

---

Rosie:

way to be gail! :))

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Speaking of abandoning the Bible, some A.A. apologists claim that the Twelve Steps are based on the Bible. Several books and articles have made such a claim — the authors simply browsed the Bible and picked out some quotes that sounded sort of like some of the Twelve Steps, and then claimed that the Steps were based on Biblical teachings. (It's the same process as seeing things in Rorschach ink blots — things that aren't really there.) They simply ignore the obvious fact that Bill Wilson's 12 steps are unquestionably just the occult practices of the fascist cult leader Dr. Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman, a man who preferred his own teachings to those of Jesus Christ, and who claimed that any contemporary Oxford Group member's Guidance and revelations were just as authoritative as those in the Bible.

The more faithful Christians have found it necessary to "adapt" Bill Wilson's 12 steps for Christian use. For example, Step Three:

**3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.**

becomes:

**3. Made a decision to turn our lives over to God through Jesus Christ.**



If the Twelve Steps were really based on the Bible, then it should not be necessary to change them and "adapt" them to make them acceptable to a Christian recovery program.<sup>2</sup>

The irony of a Twelve Step program customized for Christians is that many who use it believe it is not only effective but Biblical. The author of Rapha's program explains that:

*Rapha's Twelve Step Program for Overcoming Chemical Dependency* is designed ... to complement the original Biblically based Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.<sup>8</sup>

If the original Twelve Step program needs to be "adapted" for Christians, it seems odd to say that it is "Biblically based." What kind of double talk is going on here? Unfortunately, this kind of confusion is characteristic of the literature of "Christianized" recovery programs.

After all is said and done, Christians do not seem to be making the recovery industry approach more compatible with Biblical Christianity. On the contrary, the recovery industry seems to be influencing the Christian approach.

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8. Robert S. McGee, Pat Springle, and Susan Joiner, *Rapha's Twelve-Step Program for Overcoming Chemical Dependency* (Houston, Dallas: Rapha Publishing/Word, 1990), cover.

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*The Useful Lie*, William L. Playfair, M.D. with George Bryson, pages 84-85, and 185-186 (footnote).

In the final analysis, any religion that tells you that you can worship a bedpan or a doorknob or a Group Of Drunks as your "god" is more heretical and totemic than Christian. And to insist that you will get a miracle by praying to such a "Higher Power" is more superstitious than spiritual. It is the worst sort of idolatry.



Speaking of ignoring Jesus Christ and the New Testament of the Bible, Alcoholics Anonymous actually also ignores the second half of the Old Testament. A.A. is based on rather primitive ideas of God rewarding people for being good and believing in Him. In the earliest books of the Bible, the Israeli sheep herders and goat herders had essentially very childish ideas of religion — *"just be good and believe in God and*

*God will take care of you and make you win wars and give you lots of sons and make everything else okay too."*

But then the Book of Job came along and refuted such simple-minded ideas. In the Book of Job we learned that bad things happen to good people. The Lord our God will not necessarily reward goodness in this lifetime.

Job was a good man who suffered immensely, and the Lord did nothing to stop it. Job's friends taunted Job and asked him why he still believed in his God when the Lord had obviously abandoned Job. The Book of Job answered that question with another question: "Who are you to question the motives of God?"

The philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous is still stuck at a pre-Jobian stage of development. A.A. members act like narcissistic children who expect God to take care of them and grant all of their wishes if they are good. It is essentially just Santa Claus Spirituality — Santa will bring the children a bunch of goodies if the children behave themselves. The Alcoholics Anonymous Third Step specifically declares that God will take care of you if you surrender your will and your life to God:

*"3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."*

Well, there is nothing in the Bible that says that God will take care of your will and your life for you if you surrender like that. The Book of Job says just the opposite — that God won't.

"Waiting for God to provide is a good way to become very spiritual and very gone from this worldly scene."

== John Phipps

Let us not forget the "*It's spiritual, not religious*" conceit. A.A. members like to claim that "Religion is for people who are afraid of going to Hell, and spirituality is for people who have been there." Which leaves the A.A. members feeling superior to the people who own the churches in whose basements A.A. meets, because the A.A. members think that they aren't afraid of going to Hell any more, and the other people are.

Likewise, A.A. members imagine that A.A. is superior to the other religions because Alcoholics Anonymous is supposedly more open-minded and liberal about religious and spiritual matters. (Actually, it isn't. The "great spiritual freedom" is just a bait-and-switch trick to mollify the newcomers. You really have to believe in the A.A. version of God — a tyrannical order-dictating wishing-granting micro-managing patriarch — for the 12 Steps to actually work.)

Which in turn is another point of conceit: A.A. members feel that A.A. is superior to a religion, because a religion is just a bunch of people who meet in a church, while "spirituality is everywhere..." (The A.A. members somehow overlook the small detail that they meet in the very same building as the church members.)



And then there is the issue of ordained clergy. Both Alcoholics Anonymous and its theological predecessor, Frank Buchman's "Oxford Groups" (a.k.a. "Moral Re-Armament"), had a bad habit of arrogantly declaring that their own members were better theologians and better counselors than ordained priests and ministers.

The Alcoholics Anonymous *Big Book* printed one story where a newcomer who had read the previous edition of the *Big Book* enthusiastically declared that he was better at curing alcoholism than anybody else:

Here was a book that said that I could do something that all these doctors and priests and ministers and psychiatrists that I'd been going to for years couldn't do!

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, page 473.

Likewise, well before that, Oxford Group members were declaring that experienced old sinners and degenerates from the back alleys were better spiritual advisors than

ordained ministers and priests. Rev. Geoffrey Allen was a leader and a true believer in the Oxford Group Movement who attempted to explain and rationalize [all of the practices of the Oxford Groups](#), like receiving Guidance from God in séances and "sharing" sins with others who are not ordained priests or ministers. First, Rev. Allen explained how all members had to openly confess their sins in Group meetings, and then he declared that the Oxford Group cult members were better qualified to hear the confessions than ordained clergy:

Sooner or later, when we are ready to receive it, the Spirit will lead us to a deeper sharing of all that has been weighing on us from the past. It is a healthy practice for everyone, when they are led by God to do so, to share to the depths whatever in the past has most burdened their memory with thoughts of guilt. Such deep sharing may often be of things of which it is a shame to speak in public, and it will be right to accept the guidance of the Spirit, and to share with some older individual. Such an individual will then stand to us as ambassador of the forgiveness of Christ. In a Church which was fully Christian the natural person to whom to take such confession would be the priest. [Whether in the actual Church the priest is always the right person is questionable. He might be shocked; and that might be good neither for him nor for us.](#) The person who receives such confession [must be someone who has learnt from his own experience](#), both under the Cross and in the Christian fellowship, that the forgiveness of Christ outreaches the furthest sin of man. [He will therefore never be shocked; before the utmost evil he will say without blame, as Christ would say: 'Thy sins are forgiven; go and sin no more.'](#)

*He That Cometh; A Sequel to 'Tell John,' being further essays on the Message of Jesus and Present Day Religion, Geoffrey Allen, Fellow and Chaplain of Lincoln College, Oxford, 1933, pages 131-132.*

- Notice how Rev. Geoffrey Allen implied that non-clergy (i.e., Oxford Group members) were more qualified, or at least better equipped, than ordained clergy to hear confessions, because they wouldn't be shocked by what they heard. Allen declared that the poor innocent cloistered feeble-minded old priests might be harmed by shocking confessions, but some worldly, experienced old degenerates from the back alleys could handle the job with ease.

[\(Also notice how Rev. Allen used the propaganda techniques of "\*Sly Suggestions\*" and "\*Argue From Adverse Consequences\*" to suggest that priests \*might be shocked\* by sensational confessions, and \*that wouldn't be good for either of us\*, and then Rev. Allen simply assumed that his conjecture was true, and he proceeded to "fix the problem" by having](#)

Oxford Group members "who will never be shocked" hear the confessions.)

And A.A. still does that today:

- "Only another alcoholic understands."
- "Alcoholics have a special ability to reach another alcoholic."
- And again, Bill Wilson wrote that alcoholics are better counselors than ministers or doctors:

Ministers and doctors are competent and you can learn much from them if you wish, but it happens that because of your own drinking experience you can be uniquely useful to other alcoholics.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *Working With Others*, page 89.

- The more nutty and arrogant A.A. members even go so far as to declare that they were chosen by God to cure the alcoholics. They have God saying to A.A. members:

'Unto your weak and feeble hands I have entrusted power beyond estimate. To you has been given that which has been denied the most learned of your fellows. Not to scientists or statesmen, not to wives or mothers, not even to my priests or ministers have I given this gift of helping other alcoholics which I entrust to you.'

Judge John T., Speech given at the 4th Anniversary of the Chicago A.A. Group, October 5, 1943.

- Rev. Allen also claimed that the spiritual counselors who heard the confessions must be experienced sinners who have learned about the sin *from their own experience*.

*So let's see... Logically, Catholic priests can't hear confessions about wild sexual affairs unless they have had a few dozen themselves... Right? And murderers can only confess their sins to another experienced murderer... Right?*

(Oh really? Since when? Where did Rev. Allen get that? That isn't in the Bible or any other religion's scriptures... That isn't part of the doctrines of the Catholic Church or any other church that practices

confession. Rev. Allen seems to have gotten a lot of his theology out of thin air, or from Frank Buchman, who just made it up out of thin air.)

And likewise, it takes an experienced old alcoholic to hear confessions ("sharing") about alcoholism, right?

- Rev. Allen also claimed that unordained non-clergy (like Oxford Group members) had the power to forgive and absolve sins in the name of Jesus Christ — that they could *"stand to us as ambassador of the forgiveness of Christ" — "Thy sins are forgiven; go and sin no more."* — which is a new religious doctrine that will certainly start some interesting theological debates: *"Who needs seminaries or trained clergy? Who needs ordained ministers and priests? Some college dropouts with a couple of months of indoctrination in cult religion should be good enough..."*

*That shows typical cultish arrogance. Cult members like to claim that they are special, and somehow more qualified than ordinary people — even more qualified than the experts or the professionals.*

And A.A. still does that. A.A. members are forever bragging that they are better drug and alcohol counselors than the professionals or the doctors, and they also routinely claim that their flavor of "spirituality" is so much better than the established churches.

Professor George E. Vaillant, who is a member of the Alcoholics Anonymous Services, Inc. Board of Trustees, put forth a similar argument while praising Alcoholics Anonymous and the religious method of treating addiction:

...religion, in ways that we appreciate but do not understand, provides forgiveness of sins and relief from guilt. Unlike many intractable habits that others find merely annoying, alcoholism inflicts enormous pain and injury on those around the alcoholic. As a result, the alcoholic, already demoralized by his inability to stop drinking, experiences almost insurmountable guilt from the torture he has inflicted on others. In such an instance, absolution becomes an important part of the healing process.

*The Natural History of Alcoholism Revisited*, George Vaillant, page 243.

But "religion" does not forgive or absolve sins, not any more than the local Ladies Home Garden Club does. And a religion that declares that you can worship just any old Higher Power — anything like a bedpan or a doorknob or a Golden Calf — cannot claim that such idols will grant absolution and forgiveness.

Now an ordained Priest might hear confessions and grant absolution, but Alcoholics Anonymous cannot make that claim while it simultaneously insists that it is not a religion and it has no ordained priests.

Oh, and the alcoholic is not "**demoralized by his inability to stop drinking**". Alcoholics are not powerless over alcohol. Drinking alcohol is a choice.

- And of course Rev. Allen would have us believe that all of the Oxford Groupers were constantly receiving Guidance from God, Who was even telling them whether they should confess something and to whom they should confess it. Rev. Geoffrey Allen's theology was a radical departure from mainstream Christianity.

[And A.A. still does that, too. Such occult "channelling" of God is discussed a little further on.](#)

- The mention of using laymen, rather than ordained clergy, to hear confessions brings up another problem with the Oxford Groups. The Group members who hear confessions are supposed to keep such confessions confidential, but what about the people who leave the groups? How long will they remain silent?<sup>2</sup> And what about the Group members who are less than *Absolutely Pure*, and tend to be gossips and blabber-mouths? The Oxford Groups had just that problem — gossips who could not keep secrets. [More on that here.](#)

[And of course Alcoholics Anonymous has the same problem today. Anything you say in an A.A. meeting can become common knowledge all over town as the local gossips have a hey-day. And your "sharing" can even be used against you in a court of law.](#)



The A.A. "sharing" of public confessions in A.A. meetings is another heretical practice. Bill Wilson got that idea from Frank Buchman and his Oxford Groups cult. Frank Buchman seized on a fraction of one verse in the Bible, and claimed that it warranted the practice:

"Confess *your* faults one to another and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

== James 5:16

As you can see, that verse emphasized people praying for each other, not constantly confessing everything to everyone.

The very early Christian church did practice public confession, but they learned the hard way that the practice of public confessions in church services created all kinds of horrible problems, including corrupting the children, and people taking pride in their sins, so they banned the practice of public confessions. (And that is still the official policy of the Roman Catholic church today.)

- When the children hear the adults confessing all of their sinful indulgences, some of the children think that maybe they would like to try that themselves.
- The children will also start to think that such behavior is normal — obviously, everybody's doing it.
- And then some people will take pride in their sins, and brag about them, rather than confess — declaring that their infidelities were bigger and longer than anybody else's, and their drunken binges were bigger and longer and more outrageous and more adventurous than anybody else's....
- And then people will take some more pride in their salvation: "My miraculous conversion was much bigger than yours — I overcame far greater sins than you did — I was *really* miraculously pulled up from the depths (so God must really care about me)."
- In addition, people will grow jaded and desensitized to the sins confessed when they hear too much of sin. Something about which people talk every day, and admit every day, becomes commonplace and loses its power to shock or shame. The unthinkable becomes thinkable. Grave sins become mundane and ordinary.



It is a great stretch to go from that one fragment of a line that St. James wrote to making a circus and a public spectacle out of confessions. This is old hat — a 2000-year-old mistake.

Notice that the Catholic Church has people confess to an ordained Priest in private, in sworn confidence, in a confessional, not in public. There are a number of good reasons why the Catholic Church has a ban on public confessions. Over the centuries, they learned the hard way what not to do.

The Oxford Group cult, from which Bill Wilson derived the practices of Alcoholics Anonymous, had the same problems. Frank Buchman just resurrected a very old mistake, and then Bill Wilson copied it from Frank.

Also read [this](#) and [this](#) and [this](#) for more about the problems with the Oxford Group practice of confessions in group meetings.



Many churches will object to the occult practices inherent in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Essentially, Step Eleven demands that the A.A. follower "channel" God. (Yes, channelling, just like Shirley MacLaine taught.) The A.A. member is supposed to just sit quietly, and pray and meditate until he hears God talking to him. Then he assumes that his own internal mental noise, the voices in his head, are *The Voice of God*, talking to him and giving him religious instruction and marching orders:

*11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*

(Note the contradiction here: The standard A.A. dogma says that you can use anything you wish for your Higher Power — a doorknob, a teddy bear, a bedpan, a motorcycle, or [your A.A. group](#) {G.O.D. == "a Group Of Drunks"}. But when you practice Step Eleven, and pray to *Doorknob Almighty* or *Baal Bedpan*, "God" answers back... Hmmm....)

Bill Wilson learned this particular technique from the notorious fascist cult leader [Dr. Frank N.D. Buchman](#), whose Oxford Groups would sit silently during the "[Quiet](#)

Hour" and listen for God to give them messages. (Apparently, God told Frank that Adolf Hitler and Gestapo chief Heinrich Himmler were really wonderful fellows.)



The whole Buchmanite family participates in the *Quiet Time*. They sit quietly with notebooks in hand, ready to write down the messages that they receive from God.

*Step Eleven* suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. ...

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. ...

On awakening, let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking...

...

Here we ask God for inspiration...

...

What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. **We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas.** Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. **We come to rely on it.**

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that **we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be...**

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, pages 86 to 87.

- So, if we practice the Twelve Steps enough, we will supposedly end up in a state of mind where we are in constant *conscious contact with God*, and God is just always talking to us and guiding us and telling us what to do, all day long.
- We may get into trouble by doing all kinds of absurd things and believing all kinds of absurd ideas because we think that God is telling us to do it. We may, in fact, become totally delusional and crazy. Nevertheless, Bill Wilson says that "*We come to rely on it*" anyway.

Obviously, the "God" to Whom Bill Wilson is referring here is not a bedpan, a motorcycle, or the "Group Of Drunks" in Whom Bill generously declared that we could believe, if we so chose, just a little earlier.

It cannot even be a nice, vague "Higher Power" or "God as we understand Him"; It has to be Bill Wilson's fascist, willful Old-Testament dictator Who orders His followers around all day long, because teddy bears, door knobs, motorcycles, bed pans, and vague, foggy entities like "Good Orderly Direction" do not psychically dictate work orders and give power. So much for the freedom of religion that Bill promised us.

Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world...

The *Big Book*, William G. Wilson, page 100.

I saw a T-shirt today that said,  
"I do what the voices in my head tell me to do."  
I laughed.

And then it occurred to me that if the T-shirt was being worn by a Buchmanite, or a true-believer Alcoholics Anonymous member, that it wasn't a joke.

The same criticisms of the doctrine of *Guidance* that theologians and clergy leveled at Frank Buchman's Oxford Groups apply to Alcoholics Anonymous:

- The person who is under *Guidance* discards his rational thinking mind and just follows impulses that he receives from he knows not where. He abandons intelligent planning of his life in favor of following sudden impulses that just come from somewhere — hopefully, but not necessarily, from a good source.

His life often becomes erratic and impulsive, following now this moment's *Guidance*, and now that, [breaking appointments and commitments on a whim](#).

- And of course, there is the unavoidable question of "What is the real source of this '*Guidance*'? — God? The subconscious mind? Or one's favorite demon?"
- There is simply no Biblical support for this psychic practice.
- Dr. Herbert Hensley Henson, the Bishop of Durham, said in his criticism of the Oxford Groups:

Groupism discloses in its conception of '*Guidance*' precisely the same error as that which infects its conception of '*witness*'. It **'seeks a sign'**. It insists on something precise, concrete, calculable. Its temper of mind is rather Pharisaic than Christian. It seeks proofs of Divine action in what is abnormal, amazing, even miraculous. Its view of inspiration is mechanical, and its treatment of Scripture literalist. Thus it comes about that, even in the process of exalting the genuinely Christian conception of the '*guided life*', it perverts and lowers it.

*The Oxford Groups; The Charge Delivered At The Third Quadrennial Visitation Of His Diocese Together With An Introduction*, Herbert Hensley Henson, D.D., 1933, page 70.

With all of his séances and [spook sessions](#), Bill Wilson was constantly '*seeking a sign*'.

- The people who advocate the practice of *Guidance* only use it to replace rational thought and intelligent thinking. They never suggest that someone should put on a blindfold and use "*Guidance from God*" to cross busy freeways, trusting his "[vital new sixth sense](#)" to tell him how to dodge cars, trucks and buses.

I am reminded of a criticism of Frank Buchman's doctrine of [Guidance](#):

"Guidance is only to be sought in those matters which are usually matters for reason and common sense or for principles and conscience. No suggestion is ever made that we should substitute '*guidance*' for our eyesight and walk across a busy street under '*guidance*' with our eyes blindfolded. In other words, that in man which he shares with other animals is honored and trusted to do its work. The reason, which most obviously distinguishes him from

other animals, is dethroned."

— Mr. Reginald Lennard

quoted in *The Groups Movement*, The Most Rev. John A. Richardson, pages 75-79.  
Morehouse Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wis., 1935.

If you really "have faith" and truly believe that God is guiding you in your every activity and inserting thoughts into your head all day long, then you should have no problem with making another "leap of faith" and walking across freeways blindfolded, trusting that the Lord will tell you when to go and where to place your feet... If the Lord is capable of giving you infallible *Guidance* in all important matters, then surely the Lord can be trusted to tell you how to safely cross busy highways and freeways.

In Buchmanism, the best of the human mind is thrown into the trash can, while the lower centers of the animal brain are retained. Rational thought and intelligent thinking — the best of what separates us from the lower animals — are distrusted and discarded, while the optical centers, which even toads and snakes have, are still trusted to do their jobs properly. If anything, Frank Buchman got it all backwards. Carried to its logical conclusion, Buchmanism would reduce us to being dumb, stupid, unthinking animals who just mindlessly obey orders, or into brainless robots that are under external control.

*And so will Bill Wilson's version of the Buchmanism, where you spend your life "Seeking and Doing the Will of God".*

*Seeking Guidance* is a lot like using the *I Ching* to make every decision.

The Buchmanite practice of constantly seeking *Guidance* for every decision reminds me of those people who, in the nineteen-sixties, became obsessed with the *I Ching*, and used it to make every decision in their lives.

One consults the *I Ching* by drawing straws or throwing coins, the outcome of which determines which pages of the book one should read to get guidance, advice, and vague, suggestive platitudes ("*Perseverance furthers*").

Some people who are knowledgeable about the *I Ching* say that you are not supposed to consult it more than a few times in your life — that it was never intended to be a daily guide in all matters.

It is easy to see that someone who uses the *I Ching* and the random outcome of coin tosses to determine his whole life is misguided and obsessed with the occult. What is less obvious is that someone who uses *mainstream* religions (even Christianity and the Bible) in the same manner is making the same error.

Frank Buchman's *Guidance* and Bill Wilson's *Eleventh Step* are also undoubtedly that same error.

When God wasn't talkative enough, the A.A. founders Bill Wilson and Dr. Robert Smith turned to [the Ouija board](#) to get more messages from the spirits. The official A.A. biography of Bill Wilson and history of Alcoholics Anonymous, *PASS IT ON*, tells us, on pages 275 to 280, how both Bill and Bob pursued their interest in spiritism during the 1940's. They believed that it demonstrated the existence of the "Higher Power" so central to their A.A. program.

*PASS IT ON* says: "One of Bill's persistent fascinations and involvements was with psychic phenomena." It speaks of his "belief in clairvoyance and other extrasensory manifestations" and his belief in his own psychic ability. (Page 275.) "This was not a mere pastime. It was a passion directly related to AA which went on for many years." (Page 280.)

Likewise, Susan Cheever reported, 'Like Bill, Bob believed in paranormal possibility [*sic.*] and the two men spent time "spooking," invoking the spirits of the dead.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus, shortly after the Wilsons moved into their Bedford Hills home, Bill and friends began to hold regular "spook sessions", complete with mysterious messages on a Ouija board, spirit rapping, and channelling of spirits. Bill Wilson even set aside one downstairs room as the "spook room" where the séances were held. (It is still there. You can go visit the house "*Stepping Stones*" and see the spook room, downstairs to the left, complete with book shelves loaded with occult books.)

Bill Wilson fancied himself an "adept", "gifted" in the psychic sense, and he served as a medium for a variety of discarnate entities who chose to speak through him in séances and "spook sessions." One account published in the official A.A. history book, *PASS IT ON*, tells of a pre-breakfast conversation that Bill had with a trio of ghosts — whom Bill Wilson claimed were three distinct long-dead Nantucket citizens — during a trip to Nantucket in 1944. (Pages 276-278.)



A 1917 Fuld Ouija board

(Actually, that conversation with the old ghosts of Nantucket looks suspiciously like [a faked psychic stunt.](#))

Henrietta Seiberling wrote that Wilson also practiced [automatic writing](#), which is supposed to be a way of receiving the thoughts of a dead person. How it works is, you relax and clear your mind, and then just write down whatever comes into your head. Then you imagine that your writings are messages from departed people or other spirits. Bill imagined that he wrote dictation from a Catholic priest who had lived in the 1600 period in Barcelona, Spain.

In the official A.A. history book '*PASS IT ON*', Bill Wilson described the "spook sessions" this way:

"The ouija board got moving in earnest. What followed was the fairly usual experience — it was a strange mélange of Aristotle, St. Francis, diverse archangels with odd names, deceased friends — some in purgatory and others doing nicely, thank you! There were malign and mischievous ones of all descriptions, telling of vices quite beyond my ken, even as former alcoholics. Then, the seemingly virtuous entities would elbow them out with messages of comfort, information, advice — and sometimes just sheer nonsense."

Bill would lie on the couch in the living room, semi-withdrawn, but not in a trance, and "receive" messages, sometimes a word at a time, sometimes a letter at a time. Anne B., neighbor and "spook" circle regular, would write the material on a pad. Lois describes one of the more dramatic of these sessions:

"Bill would lie down on the couch. He would 'get' these things. He kept doing it every week or so. Each time, certain people would 'come in.' Sometimes, it would be new ones, and they'd carry on some story. There would be long sentences; word by word would come through. This time, instead of word by word, it was letter by letter. Anne put them down letter by

letter."

Bill and Lois Wilson, quoted in  
'PASS IT ON': *The story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world*, Alcoholics Anonymous  
World Services, Inc. staff, 1984, pages 278-279.

See larger quote [here](#).

*Notice how Bill Wilson clearly stated that he received messages from evil spirits, something that he also denied or minimized when it suited him to do so.*

Bill Wilson declared that the A.A. involvement with the occult was extensive and commonplace, not a rare or exceptional thing. In a lengthy letter to Rev. Sam Shoemaker in 1958, Bill wrote:

Throughout A.A., we find a large amount of psychic phenomena, nearly all of it spontaneous. Alcoholic after alcoholic tells me of such experiences and asks if these denote lunacy — or do they have real meaning? These psychic experiences have run nearly the full gamut of everything we see in the books. In addition to my original mystical experience, I've had a lot of such phenomenalism myself.

*'PASS IT ON'; The story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world, 'anonymous' (A.A.W.S. staff), page 374.*

Bill enthusiastically wrote to his Catholic Priest friend, Father Ed Dowling, telling about the help and guidance he was receiving from spirits of the dead while writing his second book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (July 17, 1952):

...Bill adds, "But I have good help — of that I am certain. Both over here and over there." The "over there" refers to the spirit world. Bill slipped in this voice from the other side like this was an everyday happening. It was, he said, the voice of Boniface, an apostle from England to Germany, Bavaria, and France, who reformed old church structures, and as bishop with powers from Rome, set up new monasteries and bishoprics. Amazing, that Bill with hangups on the hierarchical church was open to receiving help from a dead bishop.

One turned up the other day calling himself Boniface. Said he was a Benedictine missionary and English. Had been a man of learning, knew missionary work and a lot about structures. I think he said this all the more modestly but that was the gist of it. I'd never heard of this gentleman but he checked out pretty well in the Encyclopedia. If this one is who he says he is



— and of course there is no certain way of knowing — would this be licit contact in your book?

He checked with Dowling to discern the spirit. Bill ended this letter by saying that he is "coming back to earth" (from Boniface) and that Harper was interested in publishing the book.<sup>106</sup>

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106. *Pass It On*, Chapter 16, has a wonderful description of the time Bill heard voices who gave him their names in Nantucket. Their exact names checked out both in the graveyard and in the whaling museum.

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*The Soul of Sponsorship: The Friendship of Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J. and Bill Wilson in Letters*, edited by Robert Fitzgerald, S.J., pages 59 and 116 (footnote).  
Hazelden Pittman Archives Press, Center City, MN, 1995.

The reason that "*their exact names checked out*" was probably because it was a faked psychic stunt.

And so was the stunt with Boniface.

All that Bill Wilson had to do was go to either the public library in New York City or the library at Columbia University, and find an old manuscript or book of the sermons of Boniface, and memorize a few paragraphs from it (in Latin), and then recite them during a séance. He recited them letter by letter, so he didn't even have to get the pronunciation correct.

And how was the message verified as coming from Boniface? By a scholar or minister looking it up and finding it in an old book about Boniface.

*And if you think about it for a while, you have to wonder: "If it were really the spirit of Boniface, why would Boniface waste a precious opportunity to communicate with humanity by just repeating one of his old sermons that had already been written down and printed in a book? Why wouldn't Boniface send a new message, something that he had learned from five centuries of dwelling in Heaven?"*

Ah, but if Boniface did that, then Bill Wilson would have a hard time getting it "verified" as coming from Boniface, wouldn't he?



Father Edward Dowling, S.J.

Father Dowling's response was far less enthusiastic. He felt that Bill was messing with lying evil spirits from the dark side:

"Boniface sounds like the Apostle of Germany. I still feel, like Macbeth, that these folks tell us truth in small matters in order to fool us in larger. I suppose that is my lazy orthodoxy."

Letter from Fr. Ed Dowling to Bill Wilson, July 24, 1952,

*The Soul of Sponsorship: The Friendship of Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J. and Bill Wilson in Letters*, edited by Robert Fitzgerald, S.J., page 59.

Bill wrote back that he felt that the attitude of the Catholic Church towards his psychic contacts was narrow-minded and unreasonable:

"It doesn't seem reasonable to think that the Devil's agents have such direct and wide open access to us when other well-disposed discarnates including the Saints themselves cannot get through. That is, in any direct way. Since prudent discrimination and good morality is necessary when we deal with people in the flesh, why shouldn't these be the rule with discarnate, too. So motivated, I don't see why the aperture should be so large in the direction of the Devil and so small in the direction of all the good folks who have gone ahead of us. One can't blame the Church for being cautious but I do sometimes wonder if the view isn't rather narrow and even monopolistic. To assume that all communications, not received under Church auspices, are necessarily malign seems going pretty far. I'm not sure the Church says this but that is what the inference always seems to be. I do say this, though, more in the nature of speculation than argument, for the spook business is no longer any burning issue so far as I am concerned. Without inviting it, I still sometimes get an intrusion such as the one I described in the case of the purported Boniface."

Letter from Bill Wilson to Fr. Ed Dowling, August 8, 1952,

*The Soul of Sponsorship: The Friendship of Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J. and Bill Wilson in Letters*, edited by Robert Fitzgerald, S.J., page 61.

*The ghosts were talking to Bill Wilson without him even inviting them? Bill really did have mental problems, didn't he?*

Also notice the mind game that Bill Wilson was playing. Bill first wrote to Father Dowling with a "wowzy-zowzy look-at-me" attitude, bragging about his psychic contacts, but when Father Dowling expressed disapproval and wouldn't bite on that hook, Bill changed his rap and declared that he had lost interest in "the spook business". But Bill's séances and "spook sessions" still went on for years.

Many of the early A.A. members were very disturbed by Bill Wilson's occult activities, and they tried to get him to stop it. One, Sumner Campbell, wrote to a man whom they all respected, C. S. Lewis at Cambridge University in England, describing Bill Wilson's spook sessions and asking his opinion. Lewis wrote back with total disapproval, saying, "This is necromancy. Have nothing to do with it." Bill Wilson ignored the criticism and continued conducting his séances and communicating with the dead people each evening anyway.<sup>3</sup> (That is the same C. S. Lewis as the author who is famous for the *Tales of Narnia* books like *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, and also *The Screwtape Letters*.)

Father Dowling's skepticism and reluctance to endorse Bill's forays into the occult isn't very surprising, considering that the Bible explicitly bans such superstitious nonsense, under penalty of death:

Don't sacrifice your son or daughter. And don't try to use any kind of magic or witchcraft to tell fortunes or to cast spells or to talk with the spirits of the dead.

The LORD is disgusted with anyone who does these things, and that's why he will help you destroy the nations that are in the land.

Never be guilty of doing any of these disgusting things!

Deuteronomy 18:10-13

Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:31

I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people.

Leviticus 20:6

They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger. So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His presence ...

2 Kings 17:17,18

You shall not allow a woman to live who practices sorcery.

Exodus 22:18

A man or woman who is a medium and has a familiar spirit or is a wizard shall surely be put to death, be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them.

Leviticus 20:27

Unfortunately, the A.A. national headquarters has sealed the records of Bill's "spook sessions" and doesn't allow any scholars, investigators, curious members, or nosy skeptics to see them any longer, so we can't get any more of those interesting details of Bill Wilson's and Doctor Bob's contacts with the spirits from the Great Beyond.<sup>4</sup>

But, perhaps, if you practice Step Eleven enough, you too will start hearing voices in your own head... And maybe, if you hold séances and use the Ouija board, automatic

writing and spirit rapping, you can contact the spirit of Bill Wilson directly, and ask him about this stuff yourself.

See "*The Funny Spirituality of Bill Wilson and A.A.*" for [more of Bill's supernatural shenanigans](#).

Also see what Nell Wing, Bill Wilson's secretary for many years, wrote about [Bill's spook sessions](#).

Speaking of people trying to hide the truth, the lengths to which some true-believer Alcoholics Anonymous apologists will go to rationalize and explain away Bill Wilson's occult practices are both disgusting and amusing. In her white-washing biography of Bill Wilson, Susan Cheever (also author of *Note Found In A Bottle*), wrote,

Perhaps we are right to think that the dead are gone forever, locked away somewhere that makes communication with us impossible. Or perhaps that isn't what has happened. Perhaps what has happened is that our modern world distracts us and distances us so completely that we no longer hear the voices of the dead. Even when we are present at a deathbed, and this is a rare occurrence, the corpse is whisked away by men from the funeral home and reappears in a sanitized version, dressed and made up and laid in an expensive box.

Usually, though, the coffin is closed, and the grave prepared by strangers and then filled in by them after everyone has gone home. Today we are so removed from the process of dying and burying the dead that it's no wonder that the dead don't seem to be around. Both Bill Wilson and Bob Smith came from a different world, an old-fashioned world where the difference between the living and the dead was not as clear.

Sometimes the Wilsons used a Ouija board. A flat piece of wood marked with two lines of alphabet and two lines of numbers....

*My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson — His Life And The Creation Of Alcoholics Anonymous*, Susan Cheever, page 204.

What unmitigated bull. I have personally seen a family member die. Then friends and I dug the hole and made the coffin, and conducted the funeral, but that experience did not make me suddenly start conducting séances and playing with Ouija boards, trying to communicate with the spirits of the dead.

Also notice how Susan Cheever is actually trying to rationalize away Bill Wilson's crazy occult practices with "*Sly Suggestions*": "Perhaps ... the dead are *NOT* gone forever, locked away somewhere that makes communication with us impossible..."

As in, "*Maybe we just can't hear the dead people as well as Bill Wilson could...*"

I am curious: Does Susan Cheever personally conduct séances and practice necromancy, or is she just trying to argue that it was perfectly reasonable for Bill Wilson to do it? Did Susan conduct spook sessions and contact the spirit of Bill Wilson during her research for her book, to get more intimate details about Bill's life? If not, why not? Doesn't she really believe in it? Does Susan Cheever really believe that practicing necromancy is crazy?

Susan Cheever appears to be *in denial* when it comes to the truth about Bill Wilson, and she will go to extreme lengths to try to make Bill Wilson out to be a great man — even a genuine psychic — rather than a mental case and a fraud. She even ended her chapter about *The Spook Room* by strongly implying that Bill was right — that he really did talk with dead people. Cheever wrote that each evening, Bill and Lois would conduct a séance, and:

A quiet would come over them, almost as if they were conducting a group meditation. Lois would calm her beating heart and gaze out at her gardens. Up the hill, in the fading light, she could just make out the outline of Wit's End. Bill would take his place on the long sofa — one of the few pieces of furniture that could accommodate his entire length.

Outside, they could hear birdsong, the warblers and finches from the garden. Sometimes Bill would unfold his body from the sofa, take down one of his violins, and saw out some sweet country tune. Then he would lie down and there would be silence again in the room, now lit with a few candles.

There would be a slight, almost imperceptible stir in the silent air, as if someone had come invisibly to keep them company. The curtains rustled in the evening breeze. The smoke rising from the ashtray wavered. The smell of the outdoors, the new-mown grass in the summer or smoke from the piles of burning leaves in the autumn, would fade from their senses. Even the sounds from nature seemed to enter the trance. They could hear a silence beyond silence. Then there would be an almost inaudible tap, or Bill's quiet voice would begin to

form a letter.

Bill and Lois had a rich past together, and on these evenings they were in the presence of the past, in the company of the Yankee householders clustered around their kitchen tables on cold nights before they had electricity. They were in the presence of all their own dead, of Bill's cousin Clarence whose sad violin had been Bill's first fiddle, and the stern Fayette and Ella Griffith, of Lois's beloved mother, and her handsome father who read Swedenborg's teachings to his children in their Clinton Street living room, of all those who had passed on before them.

*My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson — His Life And The Creation Of Alcoholics Anonymous*, Susan Cheever, page 204.

You have to give Susan Cheever credit where credit is due — she has a poetic way with words. You can almost smell the autumn leaves burning. You can almost see the Bedford Hills woods in the fall. But all of that picturesque fluff has absolutely nothing to do with Bill Wilson being a phony psychic and a nut-case who dabbled in the occult. Cheever should learn that there is an immense difference between spirituality and superstition. There is also a big difference between "spirituality" and "spiritism".

Note that in November of 2004, after Susan Cheever published her book *My Name Is Bill*, she was elected to the Board of Directors of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency — the NCADD — the A.A. front group that was founded by "Mrs." Marty Mann to promote Alcoholics Anonymous. If Cheever helps to write the NCADD promotional literature, then I would guess that there will be even less of a connection between their propaganda and reality.

Ask yourself, do you really want to get your advice and information about the critical life-or-death issue of alcohol addiction from some wackos and crazies who think that conducting séances and spook sessions and talking to ghosts and spirits of the dead — necromancy — is perfectly normal and acceptable behavior, and even a jolly good thing to do?

Father Dowling's attitude towards Bill Wilson's

"channelling" reveals another problem with the occult: Bill made the mistake that a lot of occultists make — he simply assumed that the spirits with whom he was supposedly making contact were usually good, benevolent spirits who had only the best of intentions towards the living — in spite of [his description of a séance where evil souls also came visiting](#): "*There were malign and mischievous ones of all descriptions, telling of vices quite beyond my ken...*" Channellers like to assume that because a spirit does not have a physical body, that it can not be selfish. Logically, if people turn into ghosts, then there must be all kinds of evil ghosts around, left over from evil people, of whom there is certainly no shortage in this world. Why couldn't Bill or any other channeller be accidentally channelling the ghost of Adolf Hitler or Caligula or some serial killer who just got executed?

Why should death transform an evil personality like Adolf Hitler into a kindly, loving spirit who will just always tell us the truth and only pass on the best of cosmic wisdom to us? I see little reason to believe that death would just suddenly make an angel out of Adolf. If we are channelling and opening ourselves up to random spirits, why wouldn't a creep like Hitler occasionally show up and lie to us about who he is, and try to fool us into thinking that he was a good ghost, and then try to poison our hearts and minds with his evil and his hatred? After all, that's pretty much what he did while he was alive.

And Bill Wilson was assuming a lot when he assumed that he would always be able to tell the difference between the good ghosts and the bad ghosts who came a'visiting. Presumably, the really clever bad ghosts won't tell you that they have evil ulterior motives. They will lie to you. After all, they *are* evil spirits, aren't they?

For that matter, why mess around with the small fry? I mean, Bill Wilson and Frank Buchman insisted that we would talk to nothing less than God Almighty Himself when we sought *Guidance* during our *Quiet Time*. So why couldn't — wouldn't — the Big Guy for the Other Side show up? And how could we tell for sure which one was talking to us? After all, Lucifer was said to be very beautiful — he was The Angel of Light before his big fall. — And he is now said to be very clever and very convincing.

In their excellent book, "*The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*", the authors Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad talked about channelling. One of the problems with channelling that they brought up was just how many completely unfounded assumptions come along with the idea of channelling, in an unconsciously accepted package deal:



1. Being disembodied makes the entity a pure (or purer) voice of cosmic wisdom and spirituality.
2. The entity not only knows more, but can access information otherwise inaccessible, or at least exceedingly difficult to get on one's own.
3. The entity tells the truth.
4. People's well-being is the entity's basic interest.
5. The entity knows what's best for a given human or humans in general.
6. These entities would not be motivated by power or wrongly manipulate those who come to them. In short, they have no self-interest.
7. One is better off getting the information than not.
8. The fact that most channels put forth a similar message and share a similar worldview is sufficient proof that what they say must be for the most part true.

*The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*, Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, page 123.

So, like we were saying, everybody just assumes that they are not channelling the spirit of Hannibal Lecter or Theodore Bundy or Jeffrey Dahmer. And, for that matter, nobody ever seems to get Forrest Gump, either. It's always Cleopatra or St. Francis of Assisi or Joan of Arc or some genius like Einstein...

Worse yet, everybody just happily assumes that "the spirits" know what they are talking about, and tell the truth, and really do have peoples' best interests at heart. We have, of course, no evidence to support such giddy Pollyanna beliefs.

Kramer and Alstad go on to describe *A Course in Miracles*, which is described by its promoters as a manual that will teach you how to be a channeller, and which will even put you in contact with the spirit of Jesus Christ, they say.

In their book *Crazy Therapies*, Margaret Thaler Singer and Janja Lalich described *A Course In Miracles* this way:

Another remarkable publication, *A Course in Miracles*, first came forth in 1975. Helen Schucman, a psychologist at Columbia University, claimed that for seven years, starting in 1965, she had been the channel for the voice of none other than Jesus. According to Schucman, "the Voice" began by saying, "This is a

course in miracles..." with such force that Schucman felt compelled to take notes. The Voice's dictations resulted in a twelve-hundred-page work, including a teacher's manual, which was published in three volumes by several of Schucman's colleagues. Initially, hundreds of thousands of sets were sold by word of mouth. To date, the current publisher claims that more than a million copies of the three-volume set have been sold.

The *Course*, or ACIM (as it is sometimes referred to by its advocates), has been wildly popular and regarded as helpful by many since the 1980s. Yet in discussions or reviews it is rarely mentioned that Schucman was raised in a metaphysical environment, that she professed to receive signs from God as early as age four, and that the *Course* was little different from much of her own previous writings that weren't "channelled."

*Crazy Therapies; What are They? Do They Work?*, Margaret Thaler Singer and Janja Lalich, pages 74-75.

Much of *A Course In Miracles* sounds disconcertingly similar to some aspects of Alcoholics Anonymous:

...the course more than intimates that through the proper practice (doing its lessons), anyone can become a channel for the spirit of Christ.

All channelled information, including religions, creates a closed system that is entirely self-referential. Any challenges from outside can be deflected by calling them limited understanding. So there is little to be gained from debating the validity of the *Course's* worldview. Rather, we want to show that its worldview is renunciate, and contrary to the posture that people must rely on themselves, *A Course in Miracles* is authoritarian. We single it out because it is a classic example of programming thought to renunciate beliefs.

Although the *Course* calls itself essentially Christian, it does away with Christianity's more unpalatable dogmas, such as sin, a judgemental God, and damnation. Instead, like the Eastern Oneness perspective, it calls the world we live in an illusion to be transcended and is specific about calling all separation an illusion. It likewise denigrates the self and self-centeredness with such statements as "Either God or ego is insane." Its central message is that through surrendering to God's will, which is pure love, illusions will evaporate and one will be eternally at one with God. The essential methodology used to achieve this is forgiveness. Instead of being forgiven for sin through Christ, however, the new message is that through forgiving one

can transform one's life and become Christ-like.

Forgiving consists of letting go of all judgements and grievances towards others and towards the circumstances of the world at large. The ideal is to forgive unconditionally.<sup>6</sup> The very doing of this is said to loosen the bonds of ego that keep people from their birthright, which is experiencing eternal love without fear. Sin is redefined as lack of love, so forgiveness is not of sin, but instead of error, or rather of one's own and other's illusions. Illusions are presented as the cause of all enmity and suffering, which is similar to certain Hindu and Buddhist perspectives. Letting go of past pains can have psychological benefits; but to turn this into a prescription for salvation ensures doing so becomes an idealized mold that denies and represses vital aspects of being human. This is the real danger of the *Course*, and of renunciate religion in general.

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<sup>6</sup> "Love and Control: The Conditions Underlying Unconditional Love" describes how the ideal of unconditional love is a prescription of a renunciate moral order that insidiously impacts emotions and relationships, distorting the experience and expression of love. Its sections "Forgiving and Letting Go" and "The Religious Freedom of Unconditional Love" show how these ideals mask their underlying authoritarianism and why they are unlivable. Ideals of unconditional forgiveness or unconditional compassion (the Buddhist version) are variations on the same theme that create unlivable standards of emotional purity.

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*The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*, Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, pages 125-127.

To start at the top, Alcoholics Anonymous is also a channelled religion. Step Eleven specifically instructs members to practice channelling every day. This is simply a continuation of Frank Buchman's doctrine of *The Quiet Time* where one makes oneself into a channel to receive *Guidance* from God:

**11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**

The authors correctly point out that a channelled religion creates a completely self-referential system. One cannot criticize it or find fault with it because any criticism can be deflected by saying, "*Well, you just haven't done the practices long enough to know the truth. Try our path for a year, and then you will see.*"

A.A. has just that problem. Anyone who questions A.A. dogma gets condescending put-downs that he is "just a newcomer, a baby, and hasn't been a member long

enough to know". He is "still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God..." (*Big Book, page 87.*) It is difficult to counter the claims that if you just practice the Steps long enough, hard enough, "*working a strong enough program*", that you, too, will eventually receive Divine Guidance and begin to see the truth of the A.A. program and the brilliance of Bill Wilson.

Then we have several other points of similarity between Alcoholics Anonymous and *A Course in Miracles*: Both are authoritarian and renunciate, both demand that your "self, self-centeredness, and ego" be crushed, both demand that you "surrender to God's will" [**really, surrender to the cult**], and both indulge in grandiose babble about super-human purity and unconditional love.

Look closely at the A.A. statements that newcomers will receive "complete acceptance" and "unconditional love". Such grandiose claims are ridiculous on the face of it — because they are actually accompanied by veiled demands that the newcomer quit drinking, *Keep Coming Back*, get a sponsor, *Work The Steps*, and believe in A.A. — but there is much more to it than just that:

- First off, the other side of the coin is that the older members must grant all of that "complete acceptance" and "unconditional love" to the newcomers, whether they really wish to or not.
- Then there is the problem that, as a member, you must suppress your own feelings about other people, and your own moral standards, too. You cannot form your own opinions of other members or their conduct — that would be judgemental and "unloving". They call it "*taking someone else's inventory*". You are supposed to just keep giving others that "complete acceptance" and "unconditional love", and never criticize their behavior, no matter what...  
(The relevant slogan is: "If you point a finger at someone else, you will find three pointed back at you.")
- Sometimes, this has been taken to such an extreme that when women A.A. members are raped by other A.A. members, or seduced by their sponsors, or "13th-Stepped", as they call it, the women are supposed to "just accept it", and "find their part in it", and "stuff their feelings." Women have even been told to "make amends" by apologizing to their rapists. (Apologize for what?)

Kramer and Alstad point out:

Love and self-sacrifice are joined in all renunciate moralities. When unconditional love is made into a prescription of how to be, it is really an

authoritarian mechanism of control. If one gives, or loves, or forgives willingly, it isn't a sacrifice. They become sacrifices when done because of an ideal. Here one is not only controlled by the ideal but wants others to be controlled by it, too.

*The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*, Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, page 297.

So all of the appeals for, and demands for, complete acceptance and unconditional love are really just another mechanism of authoritarian control — especially, of authoritarian mind control:

*"You must feel unconditional love for the other members. You must feel acceptance, and grant it to the others."*

(Never mind that fact that coerced unconditional love isn't really love at all.)

But the grandiose demands for "complete acceptance" and "unconditional love" are basically impossible to fulfill, because they are too lofty, too angelic, and totally unrealistic. As Kramer and Alstad wrote: ["Ideals of unconditional forgiveness or unconditional compassion \(the Buddhist version\) are variations on the same theme that create unlivable standards of emotional purity."](#) Such high ideals are just some more examples of the standard cult characteristic of ["An Impossible, Superhuman Model of Perfection"](#). Such standards are things which are great for making people feel inadequate, inferior, and guilty, because people can't live up to them, but those super-human standards are not much good for anything else.

No sane person would even want to live by such high-falutin' standards. Imagine that you are in an A.A. meeting, and one of the other members "shares" the confession that he has been kidnapping, raping, and murdering little girls during full moons. Would you really feel obligated to give him "complete acceptance" and "unconditional love"? I sincerely hope that you would feel disgust and anger and call the police on him, fast.

(And that example is not too much of an exaggeration: [The Paul Cox case](#) featured an A.A. member who confessed in and after an A.A. meeting that he had murdered a doctor and his wife while on a drunken binge. Another A.A. member told the police.)

On a more mundane level, would you wish to give him complete acceptance if he confesses that he throws temper tantrums and beats his wife or kids regularly? Or mugs gays and blacks for the fun of it? Shouldn't you rightly criticize him and tell him to stop behaving in such a despicable manner?

*(But if you do, that's "cross-talk", which is forbidden... And they might silence you*

*with the slogan: "When I point a finger at my neighbor, I find three pointed back at me.")*

On a more practical level, I find that I simply do not like all of the people I meet at A.A. meetings, and I don't even want to be friends with some of them, never mind pretend that I am giving them complete acceptance and unconditional love. And I certainly don't want to look like I am granting complete acceptance, or even approval, when they tell me about some of their bad habits. And I don't feel guilty about that, either — as a functional adult, I claim the right to decide for myself whom I will accept into my life, and to what I will give my approval and acceptance.

Kramer and Alstad continued describing the *Course in Miracles*:

What is not noteworthy about the *Course* is its worldview, which is not essentially new, but a mixture of Eastern mysticism with Christian love and forgiveness. Of more interest to us is its claim of not being authoritarian. It is overtly stated that it is not necessary to believe any of the *Course's* assertions to experience the promised transformations:

You need not believe the ideas... accept them... [nor] even welcome them. Some of them you may actively resist. None of this will matter, or decrease their efficacy.

All that is required is conscientious daily practice of the lessons.

*The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*, Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, pages 127-128.

The claim that you don't have to believe in the stuff masks the fact that *you have to believe in the stuff*.

Why else would you do it every day?

Why else would you do it at all?

*Why else would you even want to do it?*

And, even if you are a bit skeptical to start with, you will gradually get converted into believing all of it:

The *Course* is but another revealed (by an unchallengeable authority) renunciate ideology that separates the spiritual from the mundane, the pure from the impure, the selfless from the self-centered. It says listen to your own voice, but programs what your voice will say by taking away the validity of experience, reason, thoughts, and disapproved of emotions. Like gurus, it then fills the vacuum it creates with its own renunciate worldview offering the same old coin of eternal bliss. Nothing could be more authoritarian, for who could argue against a disembodied spirit with the credentials of a traditional

God? If one were to say (as we do) that one's inner voice says something quite different, then what?

When challenged, adherents often cavalierly reply, "Do the lessons and you'll see for yourself. Besides, you can't know the *Course* or criticize it until you try it." From our perspective, this confidence merely shows that those willing to be programmed get programmed. To understand why this is so, one must not only examine the exercises, but also the nature of the mind that is willing to do them daily for an extended time.

*The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*, Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, page 131.

That's a standard cult dodge:

*"You can't judge our program until you've tried it. Just do our practices for a year, and you will see that it is all true."*

If you do their program for a year, you will be so brainwashed that you will believe whatever they say.

Bill Wilson described how the Alcoholics Anonymous practice of channelling also gradually converts the newcomer doubters into true believers:

The persistent use of meditation and prayer, we found, **did open the channel** so that where there had been a trickle, there now was a river which led to sure power and safe guidance from **God as we were increasingly better able to understand Him**.

So, practicing these Steps, we had a spiritual awakening about which finally there was no question. Looking at those who were only beginning and still doubting themselves, **the rest of us were able to see the change setting in**. From great numbers of such experiences, we could predict that **the doubter** who still claimed that he hadn't got the "spiritual angle," and who still considered his well-loved A.A. group the higher power, **would presently love God and call Him by name**.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, pages 108-109.

Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, the authors of *The Guru Papers*, went on to describe an adherent of this *Course in Miracles*: He was alienated from the real world — he wanted an ideal world "where non-violence, compassion, selflessness, and love would reign supreme." But the actual world around him wasn't so nice, or so easy. The adherent said, *"The more I faced the 'real world,' the less real I felt."* So he gravitated towards a worldview where such ideals did reign supreme. He got his ideal world by denying the reality of this world where those ideals do not reign supreme,

and insisting on the reality of a higher, more moral, truly spiritual world that was more to his liking:

- *"This is all an illusion."*
- *"Nothing here is real."*
- *"The spiritual world is the true reality, and that world really is governed by the principles of love, justice, non-violence, compassion, selflessness, etc..."*
- *"Nothing I see here means anything."*
- *"This can all be transcended."*
- As the Beatles sang (perhaps a bit in spoof) *"Nothing is real, nothing to get up tight about."* (*Strawberry Fields Forever*)

Thus the misguided idealist renounces this world that has disappointed him, and he also denies his own thoughts and feelings which are in and about this world — he can "stuff his feelings" and suppress his anger, disappointment, rage, pain, and sorrow, and just pretend to feel only eternal bliss and joy (or "Serenity and Gratitude") because the "true reality" is just fine. He programs himself to only believe in and accept the reality of his perfect dream world. It's the ultimate escape artist's trick.

Bill Wilson expressed almost exactly the same sentiments in his second book:

Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of *belonging* that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God's will, the moment we begin to see truth, justice, and love as the real and eternal things in life, we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to Him, all will be well with us, here and hereafter.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, Page 105.

Also see the bait-and-switch item "[First it isn't political, and then it is](#)". The tendency to ignore this world, and only believe in the perfection of "the other world", leads many people to be politically reactionary, quite happily ignoring the plight of the poor and homeless, the down-trodden and unemployed, and the sick and dying, because it is obviously *God's Will* that they suffer so...



There are many striking similarities between that *Course In Miracles* and the Alcoholics Anonymous program:

1. Both practice channelling. Both teach that you should receive wisdom and instructions from a "Higher Power" or a Spiritual Being who resides on "a higher plane of existence", and who will talk to you in a séance or "Quiet Time" or "meditation session" or "spook session".
2. Both say that you don't have to believe in the program for it to work:

*"Alcoholics Anonymous requires no beliefs."*

*"Alcoholics Anonymous does not demand that you believe anything. All of its Twelve Steps are but suggestions."*

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, page 26.

*But you really have to believe in it.*

In fact, Bill Wilson went on and on in [Chapter Four of the Big Book](#), raving about how we all had to "*abandon Reason and just have Faith*." Wilson spent one whole chapter of the *Big Book* talking about nothing but how all atheists, agnostics, and independent thinkers had to be converted to believing in his Buchmanite religion. (Chapter Four teaches nothing about how to quit drinking — it's all about how you *must* believe in Bill Wilson's peculiar religious beliefs. And then they *still* use that deceptive "*no beliefs required*" slogan. Go figure.)

3. Both have practices that you must do every day. The *Course in Miracles* has its "lessons", and A.A. has its Twelve Steps:

We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *Into Action*, page 85.

We just covered how you practice channelling — Step Eleven — during your morning "[Quiet Hour](#)"

Another daily practice is the Twelfth Step — *Go Recruiting*:

Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be.

...

Your wife may sometimes say she is neglected.

Note that "helping others" is a euphemism — cult-speak — for recruiting new cult members. You "help them" by deceiving them and hiding the religious nature of the Alcoholics Anonymous program, until later.

Note how Bill Wilson recommended that you spend so much time recruiting that your wife complains that you are neglecting her. Bill did.

4. A.A. also "separates the spiritual from the mundane, the pure from the impure, the selfless from the self-centered."
  - **Selfishness — self-centeredness!** That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. ...  
... the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so.  
*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 62.
  - **Who cares anything about a Higher Power, let alone meditation and prayer? Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry A.A.'s message to the next sufferer? No, the average alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, doesn't care for this prospect...**  
*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, page 24.
  - **But after a while we had to face the fact that we **must** find a spiritual basis of life **or else**.**  
*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 4, *We Agnostics*, page 44.
5. Both the *Course In Miracles* and Alcoholics Anonymous want to destroy your ego. Both demand that you rid yourself of "self, selfishness, self-centeredness, and ego":
  - **Above everything, we alcoholics **must** be rid of this selfishness. We **must**, or it kills us!**  
*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, *How It Works*, Chapter 5, page 62.
  - **Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions. ...**  
**First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.**  
*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 5, *How It Works*, pages 64-65.

- All Twelve Steps of A.A. are designed to kill the old self (deflate the old ego) and build a new, free self.  
The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, story "A Five-Time Loser Wins", page 459.
- And new Hazelden propaganda tells us the same old things:

We must rid ourselves of this selfishness or it'll kill us. It's that serious. Selfishness usually leads to relapse. And relapse, in our case, is often fatal. Now, we can't rely on ourselves to be rid of our self-centeredness — it would be rather self-centered to think we could, don't you think? There's help. God can deliver us from our self-centeredness.

*Big Book Unplugged; A Young Person's Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous*, John R., **Hazelden**, 2003, page 24.

[Question: What study, survey, poll, or controlled experiment showed that "*selfishness usually leads to relapse*"? Did anybody ever do such a study? Or was the author just making things up again?<sup>1</sup>]

6. So, according to Bill Wilson and A.A., self is nothing but bad, and you cannot trust yourself.
7. A corollary to these demands for ego-destruction is the implicit belief that your innermost self is essentially dishonest and evil. (That is a Gnostic heresy.) Remember Star Trek, with the Good Kirk versus the Bad Kirk? Well, according to A.A. theology, you also have a good self and a bad self, and the bad self is stronger, and usually wins, unless it is constantly beaten down. (Which your sponsor and the other group elders will be more than happy to do for you.)
8. Both the *Course In Miracles* and Alcoholics Anonymous indulge in grandiose talk about "pure love", "unconditional love", "complete acceptance", and other super-human purity which is impossible for members to attain. We already covered that above.
9. So both also induce feelings of guilt and inadequacy in their members.
10. Both ACIM and A.A. say that "it isn't a religion", even though they push a self-contained worldview complete with a well-defined God and a prescribed "*way of life*".
11. They teach you to deny the reality of your own feelings and your own thoughts:
  - "Stuff your feelings."
  - "Feelings aren't facts!"
  - "You should feel Serenity and Gratitude."

- "You have a thinking problem, not a drinking problem."
- "Stop your stinkin' thinkin'"
- "Your best thinking got you here."
- If you disagree with A.A. about anything, then "You are in denial."

You must essentially distrust and renounce your [feelings](#) and [thoughts](#) about this world, and instead emphasize the reality of the revelations and work orders that supposedly come to you from *A Higher Power* while you practice Step Eleven.

— But then they tell you that you can't even trust that. You cannot trust yourself when it comes to either admitting your faults or hearing the voice of God. You must submit all of your received *Guidance* to your sponsor or the other group elders for their approval, because:

If all our lives we had more or less fooled ourselves, how could we now be so sure that we weren't still self-deceived?

... what comes to us alone may be garbled by our own rationalization and wishful thinking. The benefit of talking to another person is that we can get his direct comment and counsel on our situation, and there can be no doubt in our minds what that advice is. Going it alone in spiritual matters is dangerous. ... Surely then, a novice ought not lay himself open to the chance of making foolish, perhaps tragic, blunders in this fashion. While the comment or advice of others may be by no means infallible, it is likely to be far more specific than any direct guidance we may receive while we are still so inexperienced in establishing contact with a Power greater than ourselves.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, pages 59-60.

So it doesn't even matter what "[Guidance](#)" you think you receive from your "Higher Power". Your sponsor will tell you what you *should have* received. Again, we get the [Gnostic heresy](#) that you (and all alcoholics) are inherently corrupt, so dishonest and deceitful that you cannot even be trusted while you pray and meditate and listen to God.

Note that Frank Buchman claimed that [he could tell whether someone's thoughts came from God or not](#). Buchman never explained how he got that magical power, but when he listened to people reading their pages

of received "Guidance", he didn't hesitate to pronounce some thoughts "God-given", and some not.

But Bill Wilson never claimed that he had any such ability. That creates a big problem. How could Bill's protégés turn to Bill for verification of their received messages from God? Logically, they couldn't, because he wouldn't know what "The True Word of God" was any more than they did. So how could they be sure that the whole A.A. clubhouse wasn't just foolishly deceiving itself, going off on a crazy "spiritual tangent"? Whom could they trust to really know for sure what God's will was? Nobody.

12. Likewise, A.A. also promotes a "*renunciate worldview offering the same old coin of eternal bliss.*" Except that the wording that A.A. uses is "Serenity and Gratitude".

*"If you work the Steps enough, and Seek and Do the Will of God enough, you too can feel uninterrupted Serenity and Gratitude."*

13. You must accept the idea that the thoughts, motives, reasons, feelings, and logic of *Something Else* are far superior to your own:

- "Sanity is living a life that is dictated by '*The Will Of God*'. Insanity is living according to your own will."
- "*Stop your stinkin' thinkin'*;
- *You have a thinking problem, not a drinking problem;*
- *Your best thinking got you here.*"
- "*Trust your sponsor and the other old-timers. They know the routine.*"

14. You must "surrender to the Will of God." (**The real meaning is that you must surrender to the cult.**) You must accept and submit to the absolute authority of others, like your "Higher Power", your sponsor, and the other old-timers, even while you pretend that the A.A. program is not authoritarian --

*"Nobody in A.A. has any power over anybody else"*

and

*"All of its Twelve Steps are but suggestions."*

But when it is God who dictates your orders, the "voluntary" A.A. program becomes the ultimate authoritarian program:

[Step] 3. [We] Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him.*

The *Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 59.

We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, *as we understood Him*: "God, I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, page 63.

Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our suggested [MY required] Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant. His drunkenness and dissolution are not penalties inflicted by people in authority; they result from his personal disobedience to [MY] spiritual principles [superstitious practices].

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, page 174.

*"Work The Steps or Die!"* That doesn't sound very voluntary to me.

15. You must believe that there is a better, higher, reality than this one — a reality that is invisible to the average person, but if you just "*work a strong program*", you will gain access to that higher world. And, of course, both the *Course in Miracles* and A.A. claim that they have the one-and-only true magical formula that will get you there.

To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.

*Step Eleven* suggests prayer and meditation. ...

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 6, *Into Action*, page 85.

We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.

*The Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 2, *There Is A Solution*, page 25.

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. ... We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. ... Our whole attitude and outlook upon

life will change.

*"The Promises"*, from *The Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, pages 83-84.

We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

*The Big Book*, 3rd edition, William G. Wilson, chapter 6, *Into Action*, page 75.

16. Thus, you also have to believe that *There Is A Panacea — One Magical Cure-all* — that will solve all of your problems:

Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 3, page 42.

Obviously, such a *Course in Miracles* that ostensibly teaches "how to channel" is a ticket to travel right out of this world. The promoters of the course hint that it is a ticket to Heaven. Others would suggest that it's a trip to Hell.

And Alcoholics Anonymous has the same problem.



Later in their book, Kramer and Alstad specifically talked about Alcoholics Anonymous, and said,

Although overtly leaderless (actually, old-time members assume leadership roles), A.A. shares many features of authoritarian cults: an unchallengeable written authority ("The Word"); commandments or rules to live by; a conversion experience achieved through inducing surrender to a super-human power; and dependency on the group, which often undermines relationships with those who do not accept the sanctity of the 12 Steps.

Disagreement with any of the Steps is labeled denial or resistance. Like other authoritarian groups that manipulate fear and desire, fear of leaving is instilled by the often repeated warning, "You can't make it without us."

As is true of every authoritarian structure, surrender is the key to making it work. Part One of this book details how the act of surrender itself has potent psychological repercussions. Giving control to something envisioned as more powerful and worthy than oneself not only temporarily eliminates conflict, but often enables one to feel renewed and even reborn. Feeling "reborn" is characteristic of all religious conversion experiences which, when combined with repentance and amends, gives an aura of wiping the moral slate clean. In A.A. what one is actually surrendering to are the 12 Steps and the unchallengeable assertion that if one "works the Steps" properly and long enough, they will perform the miracle of sobriety. But this miracle still requires continual group support because the 12 Steps do not eliminate one's inner split, but rather act to strengthen one side by suppressing the other. The goodself cannot contain the badself all on its own, no matter how lofty an ideology it assumes (or surrenders to). This is why it is important for such programs to have people acknowledge powerlessness for life, and thus be in continual need not only of the 12-Step ideology, but of group support.

The A.A. model not only programs people not to trust themselves, self-mistrust is essential for it to work. Its litany is, "The 12 Steps work — don't question them." When someone does drop out, sure enough the addiction (the badself) resurfaces — as warned. On returning to A.A., the "We told you so" smug reproof further locks in the belief of being powerless. The group acts like a chorus of goodselves whose refrain is "You'll always lose control on your own." A.A. interprets its ability to predict relapses as a verification of its ideology (rather than of its ineffectiveness), using this to tighten authoritarian control over its members. But the model of a divided self explains far better why even after years of sobriety the siren-song of excess lurks beneath the surface, leaving no choice but to "take it [sobriety] one day at a time."

...

... there are some, particularly proponents of responsibility models, who seriously challenge the long-term efficacy of A.A. and its success rate. How well A.A. actually works is not our focus. Authoritarian structures of all sorts do indeed work to the degree that those in them obey their precepts. Like most authoritarian belief systems, the 12 Steps provide a powerful, mechanical strategy with fairly predictable results for those who conform.

A key question is how is "work" defined? We do not doubt that abstinence through A.A. could be far better for some than their previous desperate, dysfunctional lives. These programs can enable divided people to function in



a social order whose values promulgate their inner division. Yet leading a manageable life only through believing that one is unalterably sick is a very limited view of recovery. If stability is dependent on continually acknowledging one's basic powerlessness, it is seriously flawed. What remains is the underlying fear that one is untrustworthy at the deepest level.

"Cures" that do not bring an integration are disabling in their own way. People who fear being taken over at any instant by an element within themselves are crippled, though often less overtly so than before the goodself (with outside help) gained the upper hand. Any framework that does not take the division within people into account can never truly implement a cure, if by cure one means an integrated being who has self-trust, and thus is not susceptible to authoritarian manipulation. To live in fear of oneself is to be psychologically crippled.

*The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*, Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad, page 245-247.



While we are talking about the problems with the Oxford Group and Alcoholics Anonymous practice of dabbling in the occult, there are very serious theological problems with Frank Buchman's whole doctrine of receiving constant "Guidance" from God, and with Bill Wilson's copy of it in Step Eleven, too:

**Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**

[Rev. John A. Richardson wrote about such 'Guidance':](#)

It is difficult to conceive anything more degrading. The theory and practice of 'guidance' is not merely foolish and likely to lead in practice to moral pitfalls. It is in itself fundamentally immoral.... Imagine a world in which everyone lived wholly by 'guidance,' making each day simply the execution of commands received in the morning 'Quiet Time' and noted in the guidance book! All planning and thought, everything permanent in human relationships and human purposes, everything which makes life really human and worth living, would be brushed aside as an irrelevant waste of time if this theory were worked out to its logical conclusion and acted upon to the full" ("Morals and the Group Movement," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, Nov., 1933, p. 602).

I leave the subject by merely recording the opinion of the Rev. E. R. Micklem, of Mansfield College, Oxford, one of the contributors to *Oxford and the Groups*. "To look for daily intimations," he says, "-- subtle promptings — which indicate the tasks God has in mind for us, rather than to look for illumination on the way of grasping the multifarious and obvious opportunities of service which our ordinary daily life presents, is to attempt to live in a world of mechanical responses rather than of personal relationships" (p. 144).

*The Groups Movement*, The Most Rev. John A. Richardson, pages 75-79.  
Morehouse Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wis., 1935.

If we are supposed to just sit quietly every morning and "channel God" and receive our work orders through "[spiritual live wires](#)" (as Frank Buchman called them), then we are reduced to being nothing but mindless little robots that are remotely controlled by God, just like the radio-controlled toy cars that you can buy at Radio Shack. We don't need to think or plan or have a brain at all — we are just radio-controlled toys, objects be moved here and there by the whims of God (or worse, by the whims of some "Higher Power" who is not 'God').

That is grossly heretical. Nowhere in the Gospels did Jesus ever say that the Christian life consists of being a mindless robot who just follows orders.

No action which is not voluntary can be called moral. So long as we act like machines, there can be no question of morality. If we want to call an action moral, it should have been done consciously and as a matter of duty. Any action that is dictated by fear or by coercion of any kind ceases to be moral.

== Mahatma Gandhi, 1930, quoted in *All Men Are Brothers*, page 158.

And then there is the question of who is entitled to speak for God. Bill Wilson and Alcoholics Anonymous start off saying that you will hear the voice of God when you practice Step Eleven.

**Step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**

But then Bill Wilson declared that you weren't qualified to hear God talking to you, and that you had to take your received occult messages to your sponsor or other group elders, and let them interpret the 'words of God' for you, and tell you what God really meant:

If all our lives we had more or less fooled ourselves, how could we now be so sure that we weren't still self-deceived? How could we be certain we had made a true catalog of our defects and had really admitted them, even to ourselves?


... what comes to us alone may be garbled by our own rationalization and wishful thinking. The benefit of talking to another person is that we can get his direct comment and counsel on our situation, and there can be no doubt in our minds what that advice is. Going it alone in spiritual matters is dangerous. How many times have we heard well-intentioned people claim the guidance of God when it was all too plain that they were sorely mistaken? Lacking both practice and humility, they had deluded themselves and were able to justify the most arrant nonsense on the ground that this was what God had told them. ... Surely then, a novice ought not lay himself open to the chance of making foolish, perhaps tragic, blunders in this fashion. While the comment or advice of others may be by no means infallible, it is likely to be far more specific than any direct guidance we may receive while we are still so inexperienced in establishing contact with a Power greater than ourselves.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, pages 59-60.

It is grossly heretical for Bill Wilson to imply that the A.A. sponsors get to speak for God.

- How and when did the sponsors and other group elders become qualified to and privileged to speak for God?
- What seminary or church trained and ordained them as priests, and entitled to interpret the words of God for other people?
- How do many years of drinking too much alcohol, plus a few years of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, make men into good theologians and wise spiritual advisors?

How does Alcoholics Anonymous rationalize arrogating the job of priests and ministers?



Speaking of the occult, the way Bill Wilson tells the story of his "spiritual experience" while detoxing in Towns Hospital, Bill summoned up God the way that a wizard would summon up a demon by name:

This is part of [Robert Thomsen's description](#) of Bill Wilson's "spiritual experience"

His fingers relaxed a little on the footboard [of the bed], his arms slowly reached out and up. "I want," he said aloud. "I want..."

Ever since infancy, they said, he'd been reaching out this way, arms up, fingers spread, and as far back as he could remember he'd been saying just that. But always before it had been an unfinished sentence. Now it had its ending. *He wanted to live.* He would do anything, anything, to be allowed to go on living.

"Oh, God," he cried, and it was the sound not of a man, but of a trapped and crippled animal. "If there is a God, show me. Show me. Give me some sign."

As he formed the words, in that very instant he was aware first of a light, a great white light that filled the room, then he suddenly seemed caught up in a kind of joy, an ecstasy such as he would never find words to describe. ...

*Bill W.*, Robert Thomsen, pages 222-223.

In the A.A. book *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age* (1957) [Bill described his experience](#) this way:

All at once I found myself crying out, "If there is a God, let Him show himself! I am ready to do anything, anything!"

Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light. ... I thought to myself, "So this is the God of the preachers!"

In the book *Bill W.: My First 40 Years*, Bill Wilson described his "religious experience" this way:

The terrifying darkness had become complete. In agony of spirit, I again thought of the cancer of alcoholism which had now consumed me in mind and spirit, and soon the body. But what of the Great Physician? For a moment, I suppose, the last trace of my obstinacy was crushed out as the abyss yawned.

I remember saying to myself, "I'll do anything, anything at all. If there be a Great Physician, I'll call on him." Then, with neither faith nor hope I cried out, "If there be a God, let him show himself." The effect was instant, electric. Suddenly my room blazed with an indescribably white light. I was seized with an ecstasy beyond description. I have no words for this. Every joy I had known was pale by comparison. The light, the ecstasy. I was conscious of nothing else for a time.

*Bill W.: My First 40 Years*, William G. Wilson, pages 145-146.

Note that Mr. Wilson allegedly had the power to summon up the Spirit of God, just by demanding that God show himself. Ordinary sorcerers and wizards have to settle for summoning up ordinary demons, but not Bill Wilson. Bill Wilson waved his arms in the air and commanded God Almighty Himself to appear (and Bill didn't even say "Please"):

"If there is a God, show me. Show me. Give me some sign."

"If there is a God, let Him show himself!"

"If there be a God, let him show himself!"

Also note that Bill was arrogantly demanding that God show him a sign. We touched on that before, when Christ condemned the Pharisees for demanding to see a miracle and seeking signs, in [Matthew 12.38](#) and Matthew 16:1.

And although they seem to never come right out and say it directly, the A.A. true believers often imply that somehow God had to answer Bill Wilson's demand for a sign, or that God did give Bill a spiritual experience because Bill demanded one:

As usual, Dr. Silkworth gave Bill belladonna and barbiturates, and as the alcohol wore off, Bill sank into a deep depression. ... Although he didn't believe in God, although he believed only in the power of his own mind, he found himself begging God for help. "If there be a God, let him show himself!" he cried. The response was amazing. "Suddenly my room blazed with an indescribably white light..."

*My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson — His Life And The Creation Of Alcoholics Anonymous*, Susan Cheever, pages 117-118.

So Bill Wilson demanded that God show Himself, and God had to obey Bill Wilson...  
*"The response was amazing."*

Susan Cheever didn't bother to mention the inconvenient but important fact that [belladonna](#) is a very powerful hallucinogenic drug. She just said that the doctor gave Bill belladonna and barbiturates in the hospital, and then, when Bill demanded that God show Himself, the results were "amazing" — Bill started to see things. I would

suggest that the "amazing" results were far more due to the [hallucinogenic drug cocktail](#) taking effect than due to Bill's ridiculous arrogant demand that God show Himself and [give Bill Wilson a sign](#).

By the way, Bill Wilson's story about having been an intellectual non-believer was just another one of Bill's phony pretenses, a groundless tale that Bill fabricated to make the story of his so-called "spiritual experience" sound much more dramatic and impressive.

"Although he didn't believe in God, although he believed only in the power of his own mind, he found himself begging God for help."

Bill Wilson liked to brag that he had been a conservative atheist and an "icy intellectual" who had received a modern education in science and evolution at a wonderful engineering college, and then Bill was supposedly converted into a faithful true believer by an amazing holy vision and a dramatic religious experience.

There isn't a word of truth in that malarkey. Not a single word of truth. It is all a lie.

1. Bill Wilson's high school education was at the Burr & Burton Seminary, and that school did not teach Bill to be an atheist.
2. And then Bill didn't even pass the entrance exams for the engineering college that his mother chose for him — MIT. So Bill went to a tiny military academy where he also failed to graduate.
3. Then, in 1938, Bill Wilson wrote in the *Big Book* that he was not an atheist, and had never been an atheist — that he had always believed in a "Spirit of the Universe" (page 10).
4. Bill Wilson was just a superstitious college flunk-out who later made up grandiose stories of "intellectual atheism" in order to impress people.



Another item of Bill Wilson's heresy is this: Christianity teaches that you receive grace from God as a gift, and that you are not saved by good works. Bill says just the opposite: that you get in God's good graces by doing all twelve of Bill Wilson's Steps:

We are sober and happy in our A.A. work. Things go well at home and office. We naturally congratulate ourselves on what later proves to be a far too easy and superficial point of view. We temporarily cease to grow because we feel satisfied that there is no need for all of A.A.'s Twelve Steps for us. We are doing fine with just a few of them. Maybe we are doing fine with only two of them, the First Step and that part of the Twelfth where we "carry the message." In A.A. slang, that blissful state is known as "two-stepping." And it can go on for years.

The best-intentioned of us can fall for the "two-step" illusion. Sooner or later the pink cloud stage wears off and things go disappointingly dull. We begin to think that A.A. doesn't pay off after all. We become puzzled and discouraged.

Then perhaps life, as it has a way of doing, suddenly hands us a great big lump that we can't begin to swallow, let alone digest. We fail to get a worked-for promotion. We lose that good job. Maybe there are serious domestic or romantic difficulties, or perhaps that boy we thought God was looking after becomes a military casualty.

What then? Have we alcoholics in A.A. got, or can we get, the resources to meet these calamities which come to so many? ... Well, we surely have a chance if we switch from "two-stepping" to "twelve-stepping," if we are willing to receive that grace of God which can sustain and strengthen us in any catastrophe.

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, William G. Wilson, pages 112-113.

Notice how Bill Wilson equates the following of his dictates with "spiritual growth":  
*"We temporarily cease to grow because we feel satisfied that there is no need for all of A.A.'s [Bill's] Twelve Steps for us."*

Bill actually has the arrogance to declare that people will not "grow" spiritually unless they do what he says. (And yes, Bill is hiding behind other people again, by saying "A.A.'s Twelve Steps", rather than *"my twelve steps, which I wrote and shoved on everybody else"*.)

Bill says that something bad will eventually happen in your life. I agree. It's Murphy's Law. Something bad will always happen, eventually, sooner or later. Bill says that you won't be able to handle it unless you do the Twelve Steps. I disagree.

There is absolutely no evidence that the Twelve Steps make you better able to handle those nasty blows and hard knocks that life can deliver, and Bill offers us no evidence of that, either.

Then, in another verbal shell game, more slick double-talk, Bill arbitrarily declares that we *surely have a chance* if we switch to doing all twelve of Bill's "*suggested*" steps, and if we *also* receive the grace of God. Yeh, and I surely have a chance of winning the lottery, too, if I buy a ticket. But how much of a chance?

*There is not necessarily any connection between doing Bill Wilson's Twelve Steps, and receiving grace from God, but Bill deceptively links them together in one sentence, as if he has a special exclusive wholesale distribution arrangement with God, as if God will give you His grace only if you are willing to do all twelve of Bill Wilson's Steps. (That is more evidence of Bill's [insane delusions of grandeur](#).)*

The Bible specifically teaches us that Grace is a gift from God, and that it cannot be bought with good works, but Bill Wilson says that you must earn Grace from God by working Bill's program and doing all twelve of his Steps.



One of the more disgusting aspects of Alcoholics Anonymous is their attitude towards wrong-doing by other A.A. members. If you criticize A.A. for things like [allowing the sexual exploitation of young women](#) who come to A.A. seeking help with drug or alcohol problems, the A.A. members whine and rationalize: "*We are not Saints!*" Bill Wilson's line on page 60 of the *Big Book* is used as an excuse for all kinds of sins and crimes. And then they tell you, "*Don't take someone else's inventory.*"

After listing the 12 Steps in the *Big Book*, and calling them "principles", rather than the cult religion practices that they really are, Bill Wilson declared:

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged . No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

William G. Wilson, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 60.



So, because most A.A. members do not perform the 12 Steps correctly, they claim that it is okay to sexually exploit underage girls in Alcoholics Anonymous and shrug it off by declaring that "We are not saints."

The same goes for financial dishonesty and any other kind of exploitation of newcomers.

And the line, "Progress, Not Perfection" is also used as an excuse for wrong-doing. As if we can't expect Harry K. to behave properly this year; maybe he'll stop the child molesting next year after more he makes some more "spiritual progress".



We have not completed the job of ripping apart Buchmanism or the A.A. religion. Far from it. I don't know if it is worth the bother to do all of it, but I feel like mentioning this item:

Both the *Big Book* and members sharing in meetings say things like:

I have no other explanation for the many good things that have happened to me since I have been in A.A. — they came to me from a Greater Power.

*The Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, 3rd Edition, page 367.*

The A.A. members don't seem to realize it, but every time one of them "shares" the sentiment that they are feeling so grateful because their Higher Power rigged events to make things turn out so good for them, they open up an incredibly nasty can of worms.

When I hear one of them yammering mindlessly like that, I always want to ask,

"Since your Higher Power is controlling every little detail of this world, and making things so good for you, I have to ask, why did your Higher Power start the War in Vietnam? Two million innocent people were killed over there, besides making all of the guys of my generation very unhappy. And then the war spread to Cambodia, and another two million people got killed there.

And then there was that nasty slaughter in Rwanda, with the Hutus killing the Tutsis by the hundreds of thousands, usually by hacking them to pieces with machetes.

And those are just the first couple of items that come to mind, right off the top of my head, from my own memory.

And then there was Auschwitz, Treblinka, Buchenwald, and the whole Holocaust...

And then there were Stalin's purges...

And that's just a small part of what has gone on in this century alone. I could go on and on with the slaughter of Tibetans by the Chinese, the Armenians by the Turks, the Guatemalan Indians (native peoples) by the Spanish landlords, the slaughter of Chinese and Koreans and Philipinos and everybody else by the Japanese in World War II...

And to really bring things up to date, about *sixty thousand* people starved to death today, here on this planet Earth, and more than half of them were children. That's who starves. The children. And 60,000 people starve to death *every day* here. There were 60,000 today, and 60,000 yesterday, and 60,000 the day before that. And there will be 60,000 tomorrow, and the next day, and the next...

And then, just to put the frosting on the cake, Africa is being decimated by a plague of AIDS, where poor people are dying by the millions, without any hope of getting medicines, no hope whatsoever, because the medicines are simply impossibly expensive.

I'd really like to know why your Higher Power did all of that to other people, while He was busy making you so happy with your new car, and your job, and your house..."

This is nothing new. Theologians have been debating this question for thousands of years. And Bill Wilson mentioned it himself in the *Big Book*, in explaining why he didn't like religions:

The wars which had been fought, the burnings and chicanery that religious dispute had facilitated, made me sick. I honestly doubted whether, on balance, the religions of mankind had done any good. Judging from what I

had seen in Europe and since, the power of God in human affairs was negligible, the Brotherhood of Man a grim jest. If there was a Devil, he seemed the Boss Universal, and he certainly had me.

*The Big Book*, 3rd Edition, William G. Wilson, Chapter 1, *Bill's Story*, page 11.

Unfortunately, Bill never returned to this issue. After he flipped out on Charles Towns' quack "[belladonna cure](#)" and saw "[The God of the Preachers](#)", Bill just declared that having a special relationship with God was wonderful, and the only way to live, and that everybody ought to do it. Bill just blissed out, and mindlessly ignored this issue forevermore, and never answered his own question.

Other theologians have not been so blind, or so giddy. They have debated the question endlessly. And they keep coming up with the same problem: If you believe in a God who can and does control every little detail of this world, then God is responsible for all of the bad stuff that happens, as well as all of the good stuff.

Some religions can deal with this. Hinduism has many gods, and some of them are evil or demonic. Kali and Shiva come to mind as two of the Destroyers. Buddhism, on the other hand, has no deities, *per sé*. Rather, Buddhism recognizes that there is duality in all things, so creation and destruction, or good and evil, or love and hate, or light and dark, or positive and negative, are two sides of the same coin, and you can't have one without the other. Judaism sees God as observing the world from above, usually with some bemusement, and not interfering with human affairs down here much at all. Christianity mostly takes that approach, but many sects are very mixed up on the subject. Some sects see life on Earth as a chess match between God and Satan, with us as the pawns. Others see it as a football game, with God and Satan as opposing coaches, and we are stuck in the middle of the field, as players, and have to win the game for God. (Well, assuming that you decided to play for God's team, that is...) In neither of those cases is God all-powerful. There wouldn't be much point to it if God could always just cheat and fix the game whenever He started to lose...

An incomplete religion like Buchmanism, or the A.A. religion, has a problem when the believers want to declare that God has complete control of the world when he is doing favors for A.A. members, but does not have control of the world when bad things are happening to non-members...

I call those religions incomplete because they are not thoroughly thought out. They are not philosophically or logically self-consistent. They are little more than collections of unconnected superstitions. It is ridiculously Pollyannaish to say that God is controlling the world and doing favors for me, but God is ignoring the rest of the world, so God isn't responsible for any of the bad stuff that happens elsewhere.

The A.A. or Buchmanite believer is likely to answer, "That bad stuff is caused by people who are doing their own will, rather than obeying the Will of God."

Nope, that is just dodging the issue. If God has control over this world, then God has to relinquish control to allow some little fool to cause trouble.

Imagine this scenario: I see a child carrying a gun into his school, to shoot up the place. Imagine that I can easily take the gun away from the kid, and keep him from hurting anyone. But instead of doing that, I say, *"That youngster has free will. I shall let him exercise his free will."*

If I were to really do that, then I would be criminally responsible for some kids getting shot.

It's called "Criminally Negligent Homicide," and it's a real crime. You can be charged with killing people when you never lifted a finger to hurt them, when you just negligently failed to do what would keep them from getting killed.

It's also called "Depraved Indifference". That's what the Christian Scientist parents get charged with after they let their children die by refusing to take them to a doctor and get them some competent medical care.

I can't get off of the hook by saying that I simply chose to not control the situation, that I gave the child free will, and that I allowed the kid to do whatever he wished just because he was being rebellious and self-seeking, and did not wish to do my will.

No, I wouldn't get off of the hook that easily. And the Higher Power who micro-manages the world doesn't get off of the hook that easily either. He ends up getting the blame for everything. Allowing bad people to do bad things to this world is controlling the world just as much as not allowing them to do it.

Even if you decide not to choose,  
You still have made a choice.

== A song by Rush

The answers that most religions have come up with are:

- **One:** To say that God *does* micro-manage the world, or is intimately involved in everything, down to the individual atoms, and is responsible for everything. That's Hinduism and Buddhism. But note that, in those

religions, there is no "Will of God" like the Fundamentalist Christians describe. Such a will is a very human thing.

In Hinduism or Buddhism, the only "Will of God" that exists is exactly what is happening right now, everywhere in the universe. God's Will is that the atoms exist, and the electrons keep orbiting the nuclei, and the force of gravity holds everything together. God definitely *does not* sit up on Cloud Nine and grumble about, "I wish Joe Blow would quit screwing his secretary", or "I wish the Egyptians would quit enslaving the Israelites."

In Hinduism, it's like God made the entire physical universe out of Himself, so He's now busy being everything down here, and there is nobody upstairs to call on and ask Him to change things.

- **Two:** To say that God *does not* micro-manage every little detail of this world, so He really isn't responsible for all of the bad stuff that happens. That's Judaism, Islam, and most sects of Christianity. There, the believers claim that God does have a Will, but is incapable of doing it Himself, so He needs us to do it on the physical plane for Him.

(I know, I know, a lot of people will start screaming about "God is Omnipotent and can do anything." But that shoves God and His abilities back up to category One above, where God *does* micro-manage the world after all. And to claim that God *can* micro-manage the world, but refrains from doing so because He gave us free will, just gets us back to God being guilty of Criminally Negligent Homicide, and makes God an irresponsible micromanager.)

But A.A. members don't have the benefit of either of those two religious doctrines. A.A. theology tries to be half and half. A.A. members claim that God *is* running their lives, and *is* keeping them from drinking, but God *isn't* responsible for any of the bad stuff. So they have opened up that nasty can of worms, and bought into the whole puzzle. They end up with a religion that is illogical, and is not self-consistent — a religion that contradicts itself:

- **God *is* running my life and is responsible for all of the good stuff that I do,**
- **but God *is not* running my life, and is not responsible for all of the bad stuff that I do.**

And likewise:

- **God *is* running the world and is responsible for all of the good stuff that happens,**
- **but God *is not* running the world, and is not responsible for all of the bad stuff that happens.**

Some A.A. members claim to have the answer: God gives Free Will to all people, and lets them do whatever they wish. And it's usually evil. God only interferes in this world to help a few people, those who are seeking and doing God's Will.

That leaves A.A. members with an even more callous and cruel God than any other religion around here is describing. God is so mean and unloving that He will allow children to be beaten and raped, old ladies to be murdered, and whole populations of Jews, Russians, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Tutsis, Tibetans, Native Americans, or Bosnians to be slaughtered in genocidal wars, and God doesn't give a damn about those people because they aren't grovelling before him, confessing all of their sins, and begging for knowledge of God's Will and the power to carry it out?

God only loves the Buchmanites and the Twelve-Steppers, and everyone else in the world can just drop dead? A.A. just gets weirder and weirder.



Another aspect of the incompleteness of the 12-Step religion is the question of an afterlife. A.A. basically has nothing to say on the subject. All that Bill Wilson offered people was a sober "[Heaven on Earth](#)" in the present.

Some 12-Step believers will now claim that this shows that A.A. is not really a religion; it is just an add-on to other religions. They wish to leave such theological questions to the other religions. But that doesn't wash when the Hazelden Foundation is telling us to [set our religion aside](#) and just practice the A.A. 12-Step program to get A.A.-style "spirituality". A.A. most assuredly *is* a religion — it's just an incomplete one that fails to address such issues.



## The A.A. God:

- The A.A. God is the generic brand that comes in a plain white box at the supermarket.
- The A.A. God has a lot of will. He has a Will for everything and everybody, and everybody is supposed to do *something* to please God. Apparently, the A.A. God did not succeed in making the world the way that He wanted it to be, so both He and his followers have to be constantly changing things, trying to get it right.
- The A.A. God is an authoritarian male figure Who closely resembles an Old-Testament patriarch, like Charlton Heston playing Moses.
- The A.A. God is a *dictator*.
- The A.A. God wants you to be a slave forever.
- The A.A. God loves you the most when you are grovelling on your knees, confessing what a worthless sinner you are. Only then will the A.A. God do favors for you.
- The A.A. God is highly illogical, if not outright insane. First, the A.A. God will stick you with the genes for alcoholism and make you a born alcoholic, then He will wish you weren't an alcoholic and an excessive drinker. Go figure.
- The A.A. God has a grand plan for you: First, incurable alcoholism, and then, more incurable alcoholism.
- The A.A. God is so harsh that He will condemn you to a horrible painful death by alcohol unless you properly perform your sycophant duties *every day*. The A.A. God routinely kills alcoholics who don't *Work the Steps* thoroughly.
- When the A.A. God heals alcoholics, He only fixes them for one day at a time. For some unknown reason, God's magic wears off after 24 hours.
- The A.A. God micromanages the world. He is constantly tweaking everything, pulling millions and billions of puppet strings to make things happen differently, to make things turn out exactly the way He wants, and to convenience some of his followers.
- The A.A. God cheats at solitaire.



## Footnotes:

1) The *Big Book Unplugged; A Young Person's Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous* has a credibility problem. Page 44 declares that the DSM-IV describes "the symptoms of alcoholism". It doesn't. The American Psychiatric Association never used the word "alcoholism" in their *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. They described two related conditions: *Alcohol Dependency*, and *Alcohol Abuse*, but they carefully avoided endorsing the idea of any such "spiritual disease" as "alcoholism". Nevertheless, the author deceptively wrote:

To demonstrate that addiction is now officially considered a disease, mention that medical doctors look for specific symptoms in diagnosing alcoholism and chemical dependency. They are outlined in the *DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)*, published by the American Psychiatric Association. This is a physician's bible.

As is usual for steppers, this author once again repeats [the mistake of Bill Wilson and Marty Mann](#) — confusing the *symptoms of a disease* with the *signs of a disease*. The DSM lists signs of mental disorders, not symptoms. The symptoms of a disease are what the patient complains about. The signs of a disease are what the doctor observes and measures.

(If the DSM-IV listed all of the symptoms — complaints — of mentally ill people, it would really be a strange book.)

(But guess what the DSM-IV really does list? [Delusions of Grandeur](#), and [Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#), the signs of which Bill Wilson prominently displayed.)

Also, the DSM-IV is the "bible" of psychiatrists, not "medical doctors" or "physicians".

Likewise, page 51 of *BB Unplugged* tells us that:

Chapter 8 is written by wives, but you don't need to be a wife to benefit from the authors' advice.

That is totally untrue, and everybody who knows the history of the *Big Book* knows it. Bill Wilson wouldn't let his wife write the *To Wives* chapter even though she very much wanted to do it. Bill Wilson didn't trust his wife Lois to "get the style right", he said, so [he wrote it himself](#), while saying that the wives of the alcoholics wrote it.



So why does the author of *Big Book Unplugged* insist on repeating Bill Wilson's old lies to the youthful newcomers?

2) *The Useful Lie*, William L. Playfair, M.D. with George Bryson. "The real truth from the Bible and science about addictions and codependence — and how you can be free of them!" See pages 81 to 85 for a description of the process of "Christianizing" the A.A. program.

3) Susan Cheever, *My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson — His Life and the Creation of Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 207.

4) See Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous*, Hazelden Educational Foundation, Center City, MN, 1979, page 136 and pages 416-417, "Closed Sources and Their Status To Scholars".

5) Susan Cheever, *My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson — His Life and the Creation of Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 197.

6) Cocaine Anonymous World Services, Inc., *Hope, Faith, and Courage; Stories from the Fellowship of Cocaine Anonymous*, page 13.

7) Thomas L. Noa, D.D., Bishop of Marquette, *MORAL RE-ARMAMENT and the CATHOLIC LAY APOSTOLATE*, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Indiana, USA, 1961?.

8) Thomas L. Noa, D.D., Bishop of Marquette, *MORAL RE-ARMAMENT and the CATHOLIC LAY APOSTOLATE*, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Indiana, USA, 1961?.

9) L. P. Jacks, writing in *Oxford and the Groups*, by Allen, Rev. G. F., Crosman, R. H. S., *et al.*, 1934, pages 129-130.



## Bibliography:

*The Christian Bible*, any version.

"*The Big Book*", really:

*Alcoholics Anonymous*, Third Edition.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. New York, NY.

ISBN 0-916856-00-3

Dewey: 362.29 A347 1976

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*

(written by William G. Wilson, published as 'anonymous'.)

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. New York, NY, 1952, 1953, 1984.

ISBN 0-916856-01-1 (larger hard cover edition, 1984)

LCCN: 53-5454

also see:

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. New York, NY, 2000.

ISBN 0-916856-06-2 (smaller hard cover edition, 2000)

Dewey: 362.2928 T969 1965

*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes Of Age* published as "anonymous", but really written by William G. Wilson

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS), New York, 1957, 1986.

Harper, New York, 1957.

ISBN 0-91-685602-X

LC: HV5278 .A78A4

Dewey: 178.1 A1c

This is Bill's history of Alcoholics Anonymous. It suspiciously differs from known history [here](#) and [there](#).

*'PASS IT ON'; The story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world* 'anonymous'

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS), New York, 1984.

ISBN 0-916856-12-7

LC: HV5032 .W19P37x 1984

LCCN: 84-072766

Dewey: 362.29/286/O92

This is the official, council-approved version of the history of A.A.. Strangely enough, there is actually some very interesting stuff in here, including chapter 16,

which describes [Bill's spook sessions and séances](#), talking with [the spirits of the dead](#), and communicating with spirits through spirit rapping and the Ouija board. See pages 275 to 285.

*Language Of The Heart* William G. Wilson

A.A. Grapevine, New York, 1988.

ISBN 0-933-68516-5

LC: HV5278 .W15 1988

LCCN: 88-71930

This is a collection of Bill's writings, speeches, and letters, assembled after his death.

*Bill W. and Mr. Wilson — The Legend and Life of A.A.'s Cofounder* Matthew J. Raphael

University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, Mass., 2000.

ISBN 1-55849-245-3

Dewey: B W11r 2000

This book was written by another stepper — the name 'Matthew Raphael' is a pen name — and it generally praises Bill Wilson and recites the party line about most things, but it also contains a bunch of surprises, like detailing Bill's sexual infidelities, his and Bob's spook sessions — talking to the 'spirits' in séances through the use of Ouija boards, spirit rapping, and channeling, LSD use, and publicity-hound megalomania.

*Bill W.* Robert Thomsen

Harper & Rowe, New York, 1975.

ISBN 0-06-014267-7

Dewey: 362.29 W112t

This is a good biography of William G. Wilson, even if it is very positively slanted towards Mr. Wilson, because the author knew Mr. Wilson and worked beside him for the last 12 years of Mr. Wilson's life. This book will still tell you about some of Bill Wilson's warts, his fat ego, his publicity-hound behavior, and his years-long "dry drunks"...

*Bill W. My First 40 Years* 'An Autobiography By The Cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous'

(This is Bill Wilson's autobiography, supposedly published anonymously.)

Hazelden, Center City, Minnesota 55012-0176, 2000.

ISBN 1-56838-373-8

Dewey: B W11w 2000

This book was reputedly assembled by ghost writers at Hazelden from the same autobiographical tapes of Bill Wilson that Robert Thomsen used for his book.

*Bill W. A Biography of Alcoholics Anonymous Cofounder Bill Wilson* Francis Hartigan

Thomas Dunne Books, An imprint of St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, 2000.

ISBN 0-312-20056-0

Dewey: B W11h 2000

Francis Hartigan was the secretary of and confidant to Bill Wilson's wife Lois. This book is pretty much a white-wash and tells the whole story from Bill's point of view. But it does contain a few surprises, like the chapter "The Other Woman" which details Bill's love affair with Helen Wynn, and hints at all of his other affairs where he cheated on Lois, both before and after sobriety, all of his married life.

*Not God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* Ernest Kurtz

Hazelden Educational Foundation, Center City, MN, 1979.

ISBN 0-899-486065-8

LC: HV5278

LCCN: 79-88264

Dewey: 362.2/9286

This is a very pro-A.A., toe-the-party-line history of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*The Soul of Sponsorship: The Friendship of Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J. and Bill Wilson in Letters* Robert Fitzgerald, S.J.

Hazelden Pittman Archives Press, Center City, MN, 1995.

ISBN: 1-56838-084-4

Dewey: 362.29286 FITZGERA 1995

This book includes Bill's letters to Father Dowling where he describes his psychic contact with spirits from the "other side", including "Boniface", who was supposedly a medieval Benedictine missionary and English. Father Dowling answered that he felt that Bill was making contact with evil spirits who were deceiving him. [See page 59](#). It also contains letters describing Bill's LSD usage — that is the subject of all of chapter 13.

*Hope, Faith, and Courage; Stories from the Fellowship of Cocaine Anonymous* Cocaine Anonymous World Services, Inc.

Cocaine Anonymous World Services, Inc., Los Angeles, CA, 1993.

ISBN 0-9638193-0-5 (hardcvr) ; ISBN 0-9638193-1-3 (softcvr) ; ISBN 0-9638193-9-9 (H&I edition)

A book of [testimonials](#) ([proof by anecdote](#)) from the headquarters of Cocaine

Anonymous. Among other things, it teaches us the heresies that "Today I know that I am powerless over the outcome of everything and that my life is still unmanageable by me" (page 38), and GOD = "the Group Of Drug addicts at the meetings" (page 13). Most of the book is devoted to telling us that the story writers were miserable until they joined Cocaine Anonymous, and they were made just *so happy* by doing the Twelve Steps.

*The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power* Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad  
North Atlantic Books/Frog Ltd., Berkeley, California, 1993.

ISBN 1-883319-00-5

LC: BF698.35 .A87 K73 1993

LCCN: 93-18494

Dewey: 303.3'3--dc20

A great book. Definitely makes the Top 10 list. Discusses the hidden, underlying authoritarianism in many religious cults and some other religions, too.

*Crazy Therapies; What are They? Do They Work?* Margaret Thaler Singer and Janja Lalich

Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1996

ISBN: 0-7879-0278-0 (alk. paper)

LC: RC480.515.S56 1996

LCCN: 96-16107

Dewey: 616.89'14--dc20 or 616.8914 S6175c

Quite good. Describes and criticizes various fad therapies which were popular from the nineteen-sixties through the -eighties.

*Big Book Unplugged; A Young Person's Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous* John R. Hazelden, Center City, MN, 2003.

ISBN 1-59285-038-3

Dewey: 362.292 R111b

This is largely extracts from the *Big Book*, rewritten with the goal of enticing young people into the organization. Rather insidious stuff, besides being incorrect. [See the footnote above for criticisms.](#)

*My Name Is Bill: Bill Wilson — His Life And The Creation Of Alcoholics Anonymous* Susan Cheever

Simon & Schuster, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, 2004.

LC: HV5032.W19C44 2004

Dewey: 362.292092--dc22 or B W11c 2004

ISBN: 0-7432-0154-X

Another biography of Bill Wilson written by a stepper with a bad case of hero

worship. She glosses over and rationalizes all of Bill Wilson's faults. She even claims that Bill Wilson was right when he was conducting séances — that he really was talking to the spirits of the dead. See quotes [here](#).

*MORAL RE-ARMAMENT and the CATHOLIC LAY APOSTOLATE* Thomas L. Noa, D.D., Bishop of Marquette  
Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Indiana, USA, 1961?.  
LC: BJ10.M6N6  
This is a small pamphlet where Bishop Noa explains that Moral Re-Armament is incompatible with the Roman Catholic faith.