

## 12 STEPS — TO WHERE? PART I

I was asked: what is your stand on 12 Step programs? My response was: what about 12 Steps? The answer came back to me: well, your seminars and book, *Spiritualistic Deception in Health and Healing*, expose spiritualism in health care, but you have said nothing about 12 step programs and we have personally taken programs where 12 steps were used and have concern. This comment surprised me. First, I knew only a little about the 12 step doctrine and in past years had felt no hesitancy to recommend participation in Alcoholics Anonymous 12 step program. Second, I was not as informed as I might have been that the 12 step approach had expanded as a framework for recovery therapy in so many different avenues.

There were several individuals encouraging me to study this issue and if a second book exposing spiritualism in health care was to be written, I was urged to include a discussion of this subject. Notice, I had a bias in favor of the 12 step program as used for various afflictions. This chapter is my response to those requests and from my research. These two chapters on Twelve Steps may seem excessively detailed and lengthy, however, every paragraph has been written with a specific purpose. That purpose is to relate to each of the principles presented to me in favor of the Twelve Step program by its proponents. Twelve Step exercises were not the first steps used in the field of mind therapy, Ignatius Loyola in the 1500's established *Steps of Spiritual Exercises* in his Jesuit Order, and later the eminent *spiritualist Swedenborg* (1688 to 1772) included in his writings a spiritual 12 steps. However, there is no evidence that the steps of Ignatius were copied by Swedenborg or that the 12 step program of Alcoholic Anonymous was in turn copied from Swedenborg.

Today, "12 steps" are best known for their use in Alcoholics Anonymous sobriety programs. However, the 12 step method is used in a large variety of programs conducted to help people overcome addictions and improper habits. To understand how this came into being we need to tell the story of how AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) started and grew into a worldwide organization. The story is told in detail in *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the blue book) and *Pass It On*, published by Alcoholic Anonymous World Services, Inc., in this chapter it will be presented in a more brief form.

### BILL WILSON:

Bill Wilson as a young man had risen in the financial world to a profitable position as a stock analyst of influence in the New York Stock Exchange. With his rise to financial success so there was a rise of Bill's association with alcohol. Alcohol began to dominate his life to the extent that he was drinking night and day. When the stock market crashed in October 1929, so too did the fortunes of Bill Wilson. For the next five years Bill remained unemployed, supported by his wife.<sup>1</sup> His involvement in alcohol grew deeper with the passing of time.

Promises and attempts to stop alcohol consumption had been in vain, he was not able to stop, and continued the downward spiral toward oblivion. His physician brother-in-law convinced him to seek admission three times to the Towns Hospital for alcohol and drug addictions in New York City, which was known for its "belladonna treatment" (a combination of two hallucinatory drugs) along with hydrotherapy. After the third admission in less than two

years he left the hospital sobered for a few months, but reasoned he could take “one” drink on Armistice Day 1934; he quickly found himself back where he started--incessant drinking.

As Bill sat drinking in the kitchen at his home while his wife was away working, he received a telephone call from an old drinking friend requesting permission to come to Bill’s home to visit. Bill states that his friend was *sober*; it had been years since Bill had seen him that way.<sup>2</sup> Bill looked forward to drinking again with his friend, Ebby Thatcher. When Ebby came into the house and sat down Bill pushed a drink across the table but Ebby refused the drink. Bill urged him again to take it but a firm refusal was the response. Bill asked “what is all this about?” The reply: “I’ve got religion.” Bill was stunned, but reasoned that it left more drink for himself. Ebby then shared with Bill how two months previously his friend Rowland H., came from the “Oxford Group” as he, Ebby, was in court and the judge was committing him to the insane asylum. The judge was persuaded to suspend the sentence and let Rowland and his friends work with Ebby Thatcher in their religious way. Ebby Thatcher said it worked; for two months he had been dry.<sup>3</sup>

Rowland H. was a recovered alcoholic and had an interesting story as it has to do with the earliest beginnings of Alcoholic Anonymous. Rowland was desperately trying to become sober so he went to Switzerland to be a patient of the psychiatrist C.G. Jung M.D. There he received therapy for a year and returned home. Before long he returned to alcohol. He returned to Switzerland but Jung told him he had no more help for him and to go home and find a *spiritual* answer through religion. Rowland returned home, joined the *Oxford Group* and became sober. He heard of his friend Ebby and sought him out at the time the judge was going to commit him. Bill’s friend Ebby had come to Bill to offer him this same path to sobriety, if he was interested. Bill was interested, realizing he was hopeless. In writing about this event Bill reviews his understanding of the forces in the universe. He declares that he was not an atheist:

...Despite contrary indications, I had little doubt that a mighty purpose and rhythm underlay all. How could there be so much of precise and immutable law, and no intelligence. I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe, who knew neither time nor limitation. But that was as far as I had gone. 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.<sup>4</sup>

When Bill looked at and listened to his friend who had been in the process of being committed to being locked up because he was totally incapable of personal control. As he heard the testimony of Ebby testifying of his miraculous recovery, Bill then and there had a re-appraisal of his prejudices toward religious people. Here was an impossible change in a human heart. Bill comments in telling his own story that he could accept a power of the universe referred to as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature but could not accept a King of the Heavens no matter if He was said to be the source of love.

At this point Ebby suggested to Bill why not go ahead and “*choose his own concept of God?*” What a thought, just to be willing to believe in a *Power greater than himself*, nothing more, Wow! There was no real surrender at this point and Bill continued to drink. Some days later Bill was drunk and in despair, so he sought out Ebby for help. Ebby was not at the mission

where he stayed, but Bill attended the meeting that was being conducted at the mission by the Oxford Group. In a drunken condition he kneeled and committed himself to the *God of his understanding*. However, he continued to drink. Bill was at his lowest ebb once again, recognizing he was incapable of climbing out of the pit he had slid into. He admitted himself once again into the alcoholic rehab hospital in New York. Bill tells us he placed himself into the hands of God, *as he understood him*. It was while undergoing treatment with Dr. Silkworth's *Belladonna Cure* Bill experienced a "Hot Flash" spiritual conversion while in the Towns Rehab Center, and he ceased drinking. Immediately prior this sudden conversion Bill Had shouted out:

I'll do anything! Anything at all! If there be a God, let Him show himself!"

What happened next was electric. "Suddenly, my room blazed with an indescribably white light. I was seized with an ecstasy beyond description. Every joy I had known was pale by comparison. The light, the ecstasy — I was conscious of nothing else for a time.<sup>5</sup>

Then, seen in the mind's eye, there was a mountain. I stood upon its summit, where a great wind blew. A wind, not of air, but of spirit. In great, clean strength, it blew right through me. Then came the blazing thought 'you are a free man.' I know not at all how long I remained in this state, but finally the light became more quiet, a great peace stole over me, and this was accompanied by a sensation difficult to describe. I became a living spirit. I lay on the shores of a new world. 'This' I thought, 'must be the great reality. The God of the preachers.'<sup>6</sup>

A question, what is the source of this "Hot Flash" experience? Did the hallucinating drugs he was being prescribed while in the hospital have any effect? Was it from the Creator God of the Universe? Did it come from some other power? The effect was certainly long lasting; and the first time Bill had experienced anything like it.

Wilson had his "hot flash" spiritual awakening, while being treated with these drugs, He claimed to have seen a white light and when he told his attending physician, Dr. Wiliam Silkworth about his experience, he was advised 'not to discount it.' When Wilson left the hospital he never drank again.<sup>7</sup>

He took full responsibility for his ways and turned them over to this new found *Friend*, the new "God-consciousness within,"<sup>8</sup> and the effect was "electric."<sup>9</sup> Bill drank no alcohol from that day forward, Dec. 11, 1934.

Ebby continued to share with Bill the principles that the Oxford Group taught which are identified in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* by Bill Wilson. These consist of self-examination for character faults, then admitting and confessing them to some other human, giving restitution to those who you may have harmed, and working as a missionary to help others who are in a similar status.<sup>10</sup>

### OXFORD GROUP:

Let us digress a bit at this time in Bill's story to gain an understanding of the *Oxford Group*.

An American Lutheran pastor, Frank Buckman, initiated a spiritual movement starting in the U.S. in 1908, then, moving to England, by 1921, it was known as *A First Century Christian Fellowship*. It grew rapidly in numbers and by 1931 was referred to as the *Oxford Group*, and in 1939 was legally incorporated under that name. They were centered in England at Oxford. This movement became *international* with participation of hundreds of thousands in number in many countries of Europe, the Americas, and Asia. There were no membership rolls, no dues, no paid leaders, no theological creed, nor regular meetings. It was a fellowship of people wishing to follow *their God*; chosen by their understanding of a *Higher Power*.

Buchman paid little attention to theology as found in the scriptures, he stressed simplicity of beliefs and emphasized people are sinners, all sinners are capable of changing, *confession* must precede change, with a change God can be *accessed directly*, miracles do happen, and those individuals changed must guide others into change.<sup>11</sup> With the characteristic of minimal theology this movement was accepted by other beliefs with little concern. The goal of this movement was to bring *global peace* through changing people from the heart outward. It concentrated its missionary effort on persons of leadership positions and of wealth. In this endeavor they were very successful.

The minimal theology of the Oxford Group consists of four absolutes: 1) absolute honesty, 2) absolute purity 3) absolute unselfishness 4) and absolute love. Spiritual practices employed were 1) Sharing (confessing) your sins with another person; 2) Surrendering your past, present, and future life unto the control of the Higher Power of one's understanding; 3) Restitution to any one harmed; 4) *Listening* for God's *guidance* and then following it.

It was a custom to *confess one's sins* (sharing) not only to another individual but also in a public forum. The sharing of the sins of members was practiced with the idea that it would help others that as of yet had not changed to recognize they were sinners and openly confess their sins. The Oxford Group looked at alcoholism as a spiritual "disease—sin" hence the need for a spiritual solution which confession addressed; consequently a "cure" was possible. *Listening for God's guidance* was done daily in early morning by private meditation, prayer and scripture study. The individual would take pen and paper and write down the directions received from God during the "silence" of meditation.

#### **BILL WILSON: (continued)**

From the time Bill W. reached sobriety and began to proselyte the principles of the Oxford Group until his first success of helping bring another alcoholic to sobriety (Dr. bob Smith) was fifty drunks and six months later, summer, June 10 1935.<sup>12</sup> Lois and Bill Wilson attended an Oxford Group meeting in Frederick, Maryland at Francis Scott Key Hotel. James Houck, an Oxford Group member also attended these meetings stated that Bill W. always centered on alcohol and was obsessed with carrying the message of deliverance.

Bill was on a business trip to Akron, Ohio, in May 1935, but the business proposition he came to complete fell through, plunging him into a compulsion to drown it in alcohol. At the Mayflower Hotel in Akron, where he was staying he looked into the cocktail room and was tempted to go in, get drunk and forget this misadventurous business trip. He fought off the overwhelming urge, said a prayer, "received guidance," and then looked at the ministers' directory board in the hotel. His finger fell on the name of Reverend Tunks who turned out to

be acquainted with members of the Oxford Group in Akron. Bill was directed by Tunks to call Henrietta Seiberling; as a new Oxford Group had been meeting at her house for just one month. Bill was invited to join with them in a meeting where he met Bob Smith, M.D. The meeting with Dr. Bob was the beginning of a long association, as well as experiencing his first success in helping another drunk to sobriety.

### **BOB SMITH, M.D.: (Dr. Bob)**

Bob Smith was raised in a small New England town by a religious family. With his family, he attended regularly not only Sunday services but Sunday evening, Monday evenings and often Wednesday for prayer meeting. When he left home he decided not to enter a church again except for special occasions, such as funerals, etc. This pledge he was faithful to.

In his college days he took up drinking for pleasure and he excelled in this new-found pursuit. Following the college years he worked as a salesman selling large hardware products and was able to continue the use of alcohol without interfering in his work. After three years he chose to study medicine. The companionship of alcohol continued with him into the study of medicine. It caused him to have to transfer to another medical school after his second year. He eventually finished school, and then had two further years of hospital internship training. During the internship he was too busy to have time to drink. He went into private practice following the internship and once again took up drinking.

Alcohol plagued him throughout his working years. He admitted himself to rehab institutions many times, yet, continued to drink. During these years his wife was faithful to him and continued to search for some method of help. Nothing was of value. In the spring of 1935, Bob had contact with members of the Oxford Group in his town and through Henrietta Seiberling of Akron met a man (Bill W.) who was a recovered alcoholic. This friendship resulted in Dr. Bob's sobriety, starting June 10, 1935, when Dr. Bob took his last drink. This friendship of Dr. Bob and Bill W. resulted in the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous, June 10, 1935.<sup>13</sup>

### **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:**

Bill Wilson stayed in Akron for some months attempting to resurrect the business project that had brought him to Akron, while also continuing to support Dr. Bob Smith in his ongoing sobriety. Both began to work for other alcoholics in Akron as well as attending Oxford Group meetings. Bill eventually moved into the home of Dr. Bob as he worked on his business project. They began to work on developing a program to be used to help alcoholics gain sobriety. They immediately looked for drunks to share their approach with. A third recovered alcoholic, Bill D., soon joined them in sobriety, then a fourth, Ernie. A partnership was born for working with alcoholics.<sup>14</sup> There was no name for this group; however, they still stayed close to the Oxford Group. After four months in Akron Bill's business adventure failed so he returned to New York.

Bill and Lois attended Oxford Group meetings including various Oxford house parties (large gatherings) from 1934 until 1937. Bill was holding his own meetings for alcoholics at his home during the time he was attending the Oxford meetings. This brought a rift between the two groups in 1935.<sup>15</sup> The Oxford group in New York advised the alcoholics they were working with not to attend the meetings at the home of Bill and Lois. Bill departed from the Oxford Group in

1937. In 1938 the Oxford Group was asked by Oxford University to change its name to avoid controversy; this it did taking the name *Moral Rearmament (M.R.A)*.<sup>16</sup>

In 1937 Bill traveled to Akron, Ohio, to see Dr. Bob. The two men conducted a formal review of their separate work. There were nearly 40 men in sobriety as a result of their work the past two years. Both Dr. Bob and Bill W. were broke financially but rich in spirit. They came to the realization that it might be possible for their program to eventually circle the globe.

What a tremendous thing that realization was! At last we were sure. There would be no more flying totally blind. We actually wept for joy, and Bob and Anne and I bowed our heads in silent thanks.<sup>17</sup>

In this meeting, agreement was made for preparing a book to be used in their meetings. A book would make it possible to present a standard program everywhere. As they were working with alcoholics to gain sobriety they had been recommending a book on the beatitudes of the Bible, authored by a *New Thought Movement* minister, Emmett Fox. Several individuals that joined the groups and became ex-alcoholics wrote in their testimonies of having received recommendation from their group leaders to study that book.

In the spring of 1938 Dr. Bob and Bill W. moved forward to produce a text book for their group. The duty for writing fell upon Bill W. The purpose for the book was to have a text that would stimulate interest in sobriety, motivate those desiring to reach this goal and contain the program information followed in the recovery meetings that were presently being conducted. When Bill came to the place in the book writing where he was to form the basic program to follow, he hesitated; he knew it needed to be powerful and thorough:

There must not be a single loophole through which the rationalizing alcoholic could wiggle out.<sup>18</sup>

So far the recovery programs conducted did not have written material to follow; they simply followed word-of-mouth techniques. There were six basic steps then in use by the Oxford Group as follows:

1. We admitted that we were licked, that we were powerless over alcohol.
2. We made a moral inventory of our defects or sins
3. We confessed or shared our shortcomings with another person in confidence.
4. We made restitution to all those we had harmed by our drinking.
5. We tried to help other alcoholics, with no thought of reward in money or prestige.
6. We prayed to whatever God we thought there was for power to practice these precepts.

Bill had concern that the six steps as outlined were not definitive enough and needed amplification so as to avoid ambiguity. In December of 1938, while lying in bed with pen and paper he first *relaxed, then asked for guidance*, and then began to write. As he started writing the words flowed out of his mind and within 30 minutes he had formed 12 steps in the place of the original six.<sup>19</sup>

When the book manuscript was finished, 400 copies were printed to be circulated for appraisal. There was strong criticism by the atheists and agnostics in the group of recovered

alcoholics reviewing the manuscript prior to printing because of the word “God” being used so frequent. So the word “God” was changed to “Higher Power as you understand it” and or “God as we understand Him” was substituted in most places. Another expression Bill had used was the expression “asking of God on one’s knees to having one’s shortcomings removed,” and this phrase was requested to be removed. Thus the agnostics and atheists were placated. In April of 1939 Alcoholics Anonymous had become a fellowship with its own text and program.

The 12 steps are the backbone of the Alcoholics Anonymous program; the title soon took on the nick-name *Fellowship* and has continued for the past seventy plus years. There was a difference in philosophy from the teachings of the Oxford Group and Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowships; the Oxford Group taught that alcoholism is a spiritual malady and can only be cured by spiritual means; Alcoholics Anonymous takes the stand that alcoholism is a “disease” that needs a spiritual experience to control but does not effect a cure. Hence, once an alcoholic—always an alcoholic so there is need to have continuous fellowship.

The completed book contained the 12 steps. At this time in 1939 the number of recovered people was slightly more than one hundred. They voiced their reason for supporting the publishing of this book.

We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book...<sup>20</sup>

## PROGRESS

Progress in spreading the 12 step program was slow as were the book sales. There was a gradual increase in locations for the Fellowship meetings and contacts were made in various ways which often led to additional groups starting. On a cold rainy night in the winter of 1940 Bill W. had an unexpected guest. Father Ed Dowling, a Jesuit Priest from St. Louis, also editor of the *Queen’s Work*, a Catholic publication. He had come to visit with Bill after obtaining and reading the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The book created a great interest in this priest and he wanted to discuss it with the author. He said he was fascinated by it because of parallels of *12 Steps of AA* to the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, the spiritual discipline of the Jesuit order. Bill stated he knew nothing of the exercises of Loyola. The similarity of spiritual exercises of the Jesuit Order and the AA 12 steps so impressed the local Jesuit organization in St. Louis where Father Dowling was a member, that another priest (an alcoholic) of the order wrote out both the Jesuit spiritual exercises and the 12 steps and posted them together in the *Queen’s Work* publication office. A friendship started that night of their meeting which was to grow in depth for the next twenty years. Bill later characterized that evening as the evening he had a “second conversion experience.”

On March 1, 1941, *The Saturday Evening Post* published an article on Alcoholics Anonymous 12 step program, and success in sales of the book as well as increased interest of people wishing to participate in the program followed immediately. The country now knew of AA, book orders came in and there was steady progress in expansion in the number of fellowship meeting groups.

A mental state of deep depression afflicted Bill Wilson around 1944 and was to remain with him for ten years. It greatly interfered in his work. He was unable to write more than one half page per day as he worked on his next book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Nell Wing, his secretary, tells that he frequently broke down in tears while dictating to her. He found that many recovered alcoholics a few years following recovery, suffered depression. He wrote letters to many of them in an attempt to help them and himself as well.

In 1953 the Alcoholic Anonymous organization published *Twelve Steps—Twelve Traditions*, a book that had taken Bill W. several years to complete. This book was an extensive treatise and amplification on the 12 steps that had been the backbone of Alcoholics Anonymous' program for gaining sobriety. He added the Twelve Traditions that pertained to the working and governing principles of their organization. These Tradition Steps in 1950 had previously been ratified by the first International Alcoholics Anonymous Convention. This book became a very popular addition to the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Alcoholics Anonymous eventually received acceptance, as a powerful, safe, inexpensive, method for gaining sobriety. This acceptance came from the medical establishment, from religious bodies (especially from Roman Catholicism), and from most secular organizations and general public. It became a worldwide organization, guided by the books *Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve traditions*. The program is the same in all countries of the world.

This organization has maintained that it is not a religion but simply a tool which all organizations and religions may safely use without interfering in their religious belief or personal persuasion. Bill Wilson put great effort in writing to choose words and phrases that would keep wide the gate of entrance into AA. He stated that he had to make it work for:

“...atheists, agnostics, believers, depressives, paranoids, clergymen, psychiatrists, and all and sundry”.<sup>21</sup>

The Foreword for the 2nd edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in 1955 states there were 6000 groups in 52 countries with 150,000 recovered alcoholics. In March of 1976 the 3rd edition was introduced and 1,000,000 people were meeting in 28,000 groups in 90 countries. By the time of the third edition *Alcoholics Anonymous* had been translated into 43 languages. The 4th edition came off the press November 2001. Comment is again made that the membership had doubled to 2,000,000 since 1976; 100,800 groups were meeting in 150 countries and 15,000,000 books of Alcoholics Anonymous had been printed.

The core principles utilized in the group meetings are the 12 steps. These steps have been used in many other programs for recovery from different addictions and destructive practices; for obesity, narcotic addiction, anger control, sexual perversions, and a variety of programs for anxiety and neurosis. The 12 steps are also in popular use within many churches. Wikipedia in an article on the 12 steps contains the following quote:

In 1999 Time Magazine declared Bill W. to be in the top twenty of the *Time 100: Heroes and Icons* who exemplified “courage, selflessness, exuberance, super human ability and amazing grace” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

A writer, Dick Burns, a recovered alcoholic now in his eighties, has produced 30 or more

books promoting the 12 step program as originating from a Christian organization, **the Oxford Group**, and that the co-founders, Dr. Bob and Bill W., were near to being Christians. He also has been a staunch defender in print against critics that dispute his characterization of 12 steps being a Christian-based program. Charges of involvement of spiritualism in the origin of and contained within the 12 steps have been made over the years by a variety of individuals including ministers of the Gospel. Dick Burns in his defense of the principles of the 12 steps has not directly answered critics on this point. To the critics it seems that he side-steps this issue.

The common public concept as well as by many individuals who utilize the 12 steps for use in programs for conditions other than alcoholic addiction is that the program is based upon the Judeo Christian tradition. Since I had spent many years researching spiritualism's rapidly spreading influence in medical therapy several individuals suggested that I had the background knowledge to recognize seeds of spiritualism within the 12 step system if it was present. I received very strong urging to do such a study. I was not anxious to do so as I carried the belief that AA was indeed based in Christian doctrine, was an excellent organization, and was doing a good job in helping recovery for various problems.

I am aware that information that would presumably expose spiritualistic concepts within 12 step therapies would initiate strong reactions. This would bring forth questions in the mind of the reader as to whether I, the author, had become unbalanced and saw ghosts of spiritualism in everything. The subject of the book, *Spiritualistic Deception in Health and Healing*, has been as a whole, well accepted except by those individuals who were involved in a particular therapy exposed. Often I hear that the book is correct in all but a specific therapy which of course was the one this person had belief in. The only defense of a spiritualistic method of therapy ever presented to me in twenty years in sharing my understanding of spiritualism's influence in medicine has been, "well, it works."

I have asked myself the question many times, am I seeing spiritualistic ghosts where they do not exist? In most every seminar I have presented exposing spiritualism's rapidly spreading tentacles, there has been someone who had been involved in New Age or occult practices that came to me and expressed their thanks for my willingness to expose these deceptions and that my material was correct. These comments have helped to calm concern of "over reaction" on my part.

In the remainder of this chapter I will present what I learned in my study on 12 Steps. I will then let the reader decide if the concern expressed of spiritualistic concepts being incorporated within the 12 steps is or is not true.

### **WAS THE OXFORD GROUP CHRISTIAN?**

The proponents of AA have insisted that the Oxford Group was a *Christian movement*, but one could ask upon what basis is this comment made? Pastor H.A. Ironside, in a sermon preached in Moody Memorial Church, testified:

I have gone through book after book, supposedly setting forth the teaching of the Oxford Group Movement, and have not found one reference to the precious blood of Christ in any of them, nor any reference to the fact that the worst sin that any one can possibly commit is the sin of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. 'There is none

other name under heaven given among men, where by ye must be saved' (Acts 4:12)<sup>23</sup>

There were practices of the Oxford Group that were not in harmony with Christian theology. These included choosing *a god of your understanding* and not the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God who came in the flesh, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Also their method of confession, that of personal sins being "shared" in a public forum is not Biblical. The scripture text in James 5 that tells us to "confess our faults one to another" is telling us to confess to our brother when we have faulted him, not to share it with everyone. We are to confess our sins to God and not to mortal man unless we have faulted him.

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess (your) faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. James 5: 15,16

The English word "meditation" often leads to confusion. It has a dual meaning and sometimes it is difficult to differentiate as to which meaning is meant when the word is used. One meaning is referring to a deep thought and study attitude wherein our mind is most active upon a subject; another definition refers to an emptying of the mind, a cessation of active thought, placing the thought process in neutral. Often it is necessary to look at the setting in which the word is used to know the intention of the author. Such is the case in its use in writings pertaining to the Oxford Group.

Also it had become a practice of the Oxford Group to hold meditation sessions. Members would sit, pencils in hand, waiting to jot down any "guidance" that might come through during their silences,...<sup>24</sup>

An Oxford Group member, C. Irving Benson, who was also a minister, gave caution concerning the Quiet Time/guidance in spite of the Bible being read during this period.

The silence becomes a sacrament wherein God comes to us<sup>25</sup>.... I wait in self-forgetting silence, contemplating the presence of God.<sup>26</sup>

Pastor H.A. Ironside, a noted fundamental evangelist of the 1930's and 1940's, was very familiar with the Oxford Group and carefully evaluated their teachings. He made the following comment in regards to their meditation practices in a small booklet he wrote entitled, *The Oxford Group Movement: Is It Scriptural?*

Each (Oxford Group) member is urged...to sit quietly with *the mind emptied* of every thought...waiting for God to say something to them...sometimes they tell me nothing happens, at other times the most amazing things come. Tested by the Word of God, many of these things are unscriptural. They lay themselves open for demons to communicate their blasphemous thoughts to them.<sup>27</sup> (emphasis in original quote)

Robert Thomsen wrote in his biography *Bill W.*:

...that it had become a practice of the Oxford Group members to hold meditation sessions. They would sit, pencils in hand, waiting to jot down any guidance that might come through during the silences and it was extraordinary how many times that winter the message from on high would indicate that Bill Wilson should get himself a job and leave his drunks in peace.<sup>28</sup>

Two women identifying themselves only as “Two Listeners” wrote the book, *God Calling* wherein they received Quiet/Time “guidance” in the manner outlined by the Oxford Group. They tell us they received the words of Christ Jesus on a daily basis.<sup>29</sup> These words they received were not from the Holy Scriptures but out of meditation of “guidance.” One of the two “Listeners” wrote the introduction for the book and entitled it *The Voice Divine*, wherein she speaks of the experience of the other “Listener” receiving guidance.

But with my friend a very wonderful thing happened. From the first, beautiful messages were given to her by our Lord Himself, and every day from then these messages have never failed us.

We felt all unworthy and over whelmed by the wonder of it, and could hardly realize that we were being taught, trained and encouraged day by day by HIM personally, when millions of souls, far worthier, had to be content with guidance from the Bible, sermons, their Churches, books and other sources.<sup>30</sup>

A prior Oxford Group member, then later an AA member, Richmond Walker, wrote a small book, *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*. This book had much in it that was based on the book, *God Calling by the two “Listeners.”* He did not refer to Jesus Christ but substituted words that fit a universal spirituality. The book, *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*, millions of AA members have read.<sup>31</sup> AA history website says of *Twenty-Four Hours a Day*:

The book explained how to practice meditation by quieting the mind and entering the **Divine Silence** in order to enter the divine peace and calm and restore our souls.<sup>32</sup> (emphasis added)

Modern Mystics describe “silence” as in *Three Magic Words* by Uell S. Anderson:

The brain is stilled. The man at last lets go; he glides below it into the quiet feeling, the quiet sense of his own identity with the *self* of other things-of the universe. He glides past the feeling into the very identity itself where a glorious all consciousness leaves no room for separate self thoughts or emotions. (emphasis added)

I turn from the world about me to the world of consciousness that lies within. I shut out all memories of the past, create no images of the future. I concentrate on my being, on my awareness. I slide deep into the very recesses of my soul to a place of utter repose. I know, I know that this is Immortal Self, this is God, this is me, **I am**, I always was, I always will be. (emphasis added)

*Twenty-four Hours in a Day* states:

There is a **spark** of the **Divine** in every one of us. Each has some of God's spirit that can be developed by spiritual exercise.<sup>33</sup>

The Oxford Group Movement promoted several additional books for study. One was given to Bill W. by Ebby Thatcher shortly after Bill's conversion. This book was *Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James, M.D. James was professor of psychiatry and philosophy at Harvard and a contemporary of Freud and Jung. He, too, (James) was a renowned spiritualist.

"... Bill learned that even his experience at Towns was not unique. He could never recollect if it had been Ebby or Roland who gave him a copy of William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, but he remembered the impact of the book. It was James's theory that spiritual experiences could have a very definite objective reality and might totally transform a man's life."<sup>34</sup>

...as Bill Pittman has found, *The varieties of Religious Experience* was "the most often quoted book" in Oxford literature,...<sup>35</sup>

The Oxford Group considered "sin" as a moral issue and hence confessing a prerequisite to conversion which would be the solution for sin. They also looked at alcohol as a sin and hence with a conversion it could be cured. Their style of conversion did not depend upon a person accepting by faith Jesus Christ and His shed blood as a propitiation for their sins. The entire system of the Oxford Group appears to leave Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God out of equation and so man attempts to save himself.

The doctrine of pantheism—the **Divinity of man** and salvation through progression of the divinity of man is seen in the teachings of the Oxford Group. Will this same teaching be seen in Alcoholics Anonymous teachings? Are these teachings of the Oxford Group **Judeo-Christian doctrine**? That is something the reader must decide!

## **WERE THE COFOUNDERS, BILL W. AND DR. BOB OF**

### **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS CHRISTIANS?**

#### **DR. BOB SMITH:**

Dr. Bob had been raised in a Christian home but had chosen to reject Christianity or any religion when he left home. He only entered a church for a funeral or some similar gathering. His alcohol consumption started in college and grew in intensity through his life.

There is very little written about the doctor and his relationship to Christian fellowship. It is true that he was involved closely with Oxford Group activities for two or more years but I did not find any information that revealed he had accepted Christianity. Dr. Bob had been in the Masonic organization but his membership was suspended in 1934. It was later restored when

he gained sobriety. When Alcoholics Anonymous formed he gradually moved away from the Oxford Group. From this association it is known that Bob did have a daily twenty minute period of devotion, reading the scriptures, sitting in quiet meditation with pencil and paper in hand waiting for “guidance.”

We do know from a letter sent by Bill W. to his wife Lois in the summer of 1935 that Dr. Bob, Anne, his wife and Bill W. had been active in séances and other psychic events. *Pass It On* an official book of AA, page 280, tells of a neighbor, friend, and fellow AA member, Tom P., who with his wife frequently joined in “spook sessions” at the Wilson home with Dr. Bob and Bill and their wives; spook sessions were séances and other psychic acts.

Dr. Bob found great interest in and promoted to others while attempting to bring them to sobriety, the book *Sermons of the Mount*. This book is a commentary by Emmet Fox on the Beatitudes of Matthew chapters 5-7. Emmet Fox was a minister of the *New Thought Movement* which was active in New England in 1800’s. ‘The New Thought Movement’s doctrines’ were a blend of Christian and Eastern teachings and had wormed its way into many churches of that day feigning as if it would bring a revival and spiritual regeneration. Actually it was a pantheistic “wolf in sheep’s clothing” as is revealed by its teachings.

Fox comments that Jesus was the most influential man in the history of the world. For three and one half years of ministry, His influence continued after his absence affecting vast numbers of people, many nations, and entire civilizations. Jesus is not spoken of as the Divine Son of God in his entire book. Promptly from the beginning of the book we are informed that the Bible does not present any plan of Salvation, no system of theology, has no doctrines, that all doctrine of churches is man derived, denigrates the seventh day Sabbath, and that the Bible does not teach atonement by the shed blood of Jesus Christ; the Bible is simply a composite of old fragments of writings of authors unknown. The Adam and Eve story is simply an allegory. His book teaches that *man is divine* and is in *progression* toward (“maturity”)—godhood, where he will possess everything God possesses.

He tells us that Jesus said the following: “I have said ye are God,” and “all of you sons of the Most High.” He believed that Jesus actually did miracles but that the power for performing them was obtained by Jesus’ understanding of spiritual things, not that he was “God in the flesh.” He also teaches that “we are all fundamentally one—all part of the Great Mind.” He also teaches that the word “Christ” is not identical with the name Jesus. It only represents “Absolute Spiritual Truth” about any subject.<sup>36</sup>

Does Dr. Bob’s activity in séances, the psychic arena, and in promoting these doctrines from Fox’s book cause you to question whether or not he was Christian?

#### **BILL W.:**

In chapter one of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Bill W. tells us he was not an atheist and had never been one. He stated he had always believed in some great power above himself and had

actually thought on these issues. He did believe that there was some “Spirit of the Universe not bound by time or space”, a “Creative Intelligence”, “Universal Mind” or “Spirit of Nature.” His mind was closed to accepting a God that he could have a personal relationship with. He saw Christ as man only, not God in the flesh.<sup>37</sup> He considered himself an agnostic.

Ebby Thatcher, Bill’s friend and a member of the Oxford Group, had suggested to Bill W. that he could choose *a God of his own conception* to surrender to. This approach appealed to Bill. What type of God did Bill’s conception pick? He spoke of a Power Higher than himself, but was that **Jesus Christ**, the *only name* (Acts 4:12) under heaven whereby we have salvation? He surrendered himself totally unto the Higher Power he had decided on, the “**God-consciousness within.**”<sup>39</sup>

“God-consciousness” was not, however, a term taken from James (William James), but rather from the *Oxford Group*; it described the nature of personal revelation. Consider, for example, the definition in V.C. Kitchen’s *I Was A Pagan* (1934), an Oxford Group testimonial, by a reformed drunkard, that Wilson likely read. “I am now, in other words,” writes Kitchen, “receiving super natural aid—not through a nonsensical Ouija Board nor any other spiritualistic ‘instrument’—but through God-consciousness—through direct personal contact with the third environment—the spiritual environment I had so long been seeking.”<sup>39</sup>

We will need to explore more of Bill’s statements made over time to better determine if he had chosen the God of Christians, *Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God*, or perhaps a pantheistic god. The term “God” is used widely as a synonym for various concepts of a Higher Power. A pagan refers to a universal energy—a force, the New Ager similarly. A Christian mystic refers to a power he envisions within himself, often referred to as “God Consciousness,” “Self,” “Christ Consciousness,” etc. Which God did Bill W. pick? He tells us that it was not needful to consider another person’s concept of God, as one’s own conception is all that matters no matter what it is. A “Creative Intelligence, or a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things,”<sup>40</sup> was all that is needed to begin to get results. Bill makes the following comment:

*When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book.*<sup>41</sup>  
(emphasis added)

Where was this God of his conception to be found?

...We had to search fearlessly, but He was there, He was as much a fact as we were. We found the **Great Reality deep down within us**. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us.<sup>42</sup> (emphasis added)

Here we have a statement, made by the author Bill Wilson in the official book for Alcoholics Anonymous, upholding a pagan—New Age doctrine of *the Divine within*, **pantheism**. Does that

sound like Bill chose the God of the Christian? These are typical terms and expressions I see routinely used in writings from pantheistic Eastern religions and neo-paganism of the West.

Let us look *again*, at Bill's *conversion experience* while he was in Towns Hospital December 11, 1934. This account of the *light experience* is recorded by Robert Thomsen in a biography of Bill and brings out an expression not recorded in the previous rendering of this happening. As Bill cried out in desperation:

"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. It was as though he were standing high on a mountain top and a strong clear wind blew against him, and round him, through him—but it seemed a wind not of air, but of spirit—and as this happened he had the feeling that he was stepping into another world, a new world of *consciousness*, and everywhere now there was a wondrous feeling of **Presence** which all his life he had been seeking. Nowhere had he ever felt so complete, so satisfied, so embraced.

...Then when it passed, when the light slowly dimmed, and the ecstasy subsided—and whether this was a matter of minutes or much longer he never knew; he was beyond any reckoning of time—the sense of **Presence** was still there about him, within him. And with it there was still another sense, a sense of rightness. No matter how wrong things seemed to be, they were as they were meant to be. There could be no doubt of ultimate order in the universe the cosmos was not dead matter, but a part of the living **Presence**, *just as he was part of it*.

Now in place of the light, the exaltation, he was filled with a peace such as he had never known. He had heard of men who tried to open the universe to themselves; he had opened himself to the universe. He had heard men say there was a bit of God in everyone, but this feeling that *he was a part of God, himself a living part of the higher power*, was a new and revolutionary feeling.<sup>43</sup> (emphasis added)

These statements convincingly suggest that the God Bill W. had chosen was a **pantheistic** god, not Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God, the God of a Christian. We will continue reviewing statements made by Bill to his friends and in his writing. The quotation above brought to my mind a comment by E.G. White concerning contemplating the *Presence of God*:

It introduces that which is naught but speculation in regard to the *personality of God* and *where His presence is*. No one on this earth has a right to speculate on this question. The more fanciful theories are discussed, the less men will

know of God and of the truth that sanctifies the soul....Those who entertain these sophistries will soon find themselves *in a position where the enemy can talk with them*, and lead the away from God.<sup>44</sup> (emphasis added)

At this point in looking for an answer to the question of whether or not Bill Wilson was a Christian we need to share with the reader Bill's long time connection with spiritualism. When it began no one can be sure, however, the first written information starts with his association with his wife, Lois. Lois in her autobiography, *Lois Remembers*, recounts fond memories of her church and church family. She came from a family that were members of the Swedenborgian Church (also known as *Church of New Jerusalem* or *New church*) and she had attended this church all her life, and was married to Bill in it January of 1918. The mystical aspects of this religion so fascinated Bill and Lois that they vowed to explore it more deeply some time. Her grandfather was a minister in the Swedenborgian church. She mentions the strength and guidance she received from the church's teachings. What is the origin of the Swedenborgian Church and what are its teachings?

Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) of Sweden was one of Europe's great minds: mining engineer, expert in metallurgy, astronomy, physics, zoology, anatomy, political economics, an author of voluminous writings, Biblical theologian, a spiritualist, seer, and medium. He has been considered the forerunner of modern spiritualism. He was a psychic from childhood and he continued in such all his life. His influence extended to many great names such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Carl Jung, Helen Keller, etc., and his influence lasted for two centuries. An embodied spirit claiming to be Christ directed him to re-write every verse of the Bible. He claimed to have direct communications with God, angels, Moses, David, Mary, Martin Luther. Aristotle, the apostles, and many, many other spirits.<sup>45</sup> Notice the quote below:

...that night in 1745 his visions began to invade his waking life as well. As he ate, he became aware of frogs and snakes crowding into his private dining room, and an unknown gentleman materialized in a corner to rebuke him for eating too much. Back home in Salisbury Court the stranger appeared again, and introduced himself as Christ, the man-God, creator and redeemer of the world. He then made an important announcement: humanity stood in need of a definitive explication of Holy Scripture, and Swedenborg had been selected to provide it; moreover, to assist him in his labors, he was to be given unrestricted access to the entire spirit world.  
<http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/swedenborg2.html> (George P. Landow)

Swedenborgians do not believe that salvation is exclusively through Jesus Christ, but that salvation was possible through all religions. He felt that he was destined to bring this doctrine to the world through his writings.

In Swedenborg's book, *Divine Providence*, paragraph 36 he writes:

...picture wisdom as a magnificently and finely decorated palace. One climbs to enter this palace by **twelve steps**. One can only arrive at the first step by means of the Lord's power through joining with Him...As a person climbs these steps, he perceives that no one is wise from himself but from the Lord...the in union with love. (emphasis added)

This bit of information is interesting because 200 years later Bill W. would be the writer of a 12 step program that would go to the whole world. Is it possible that the origin of both these top scenarios came from the same spiritual source?

What effect of being a member of the Swedenborgian Church had on Lois is not clear but it is known that she joined Bill on many of his pursuits in the field of spiritualism such as in séances and table tapping, and the Ouija board.<sup>47</sup> The first recorded spiritualism activity of Bill is seen in his letter to Lois in the summer of 1935, the time when Alcoholics Anonymous had its beginning. He had been in Akron, Ohio, for several months staying at the home of Dr. Bob and Anne Smith, the other cofounder of A.A. Bill wrote to Lois stating he had been active in séances and other psychic events with Dr. Bob and Anne.<sup>47</sup>

*Pass It On* is an official book published by the Alcoholics Anonymous organization telling the life story of Bill Wilson. Chapter 16 shares with us that Bill had a persistent fascination and involvement in psychic phenomena. He had a firm belief in reincarnation and felt everyone had had several lives already and the present life was a "spiritual Kindergarten." It was from this belief that he pursued various forms of occult practices. He believed he could receive energy from another person. He trusted in clairvoyance and other extrasensory phenomena, levitation, Ouija board, séances etc., and played the part of a medium. Spirits would materialize and talk with him.<sup>48</sup>

This 16th chapter also relates that by 1941 he was holding regular Saturday "spook sessions" at his home—Stepping Stones. One room was reserved just for those sessions. It was dubbed the "spook room" and here various psychic experiments were carried out.

Different friends and neighbors would join with him in these endeavors. They also practiced "table tapping," performed by several people sitting around a table and placing their hands on the edge of the table and then questions would be asked and answers would return by the table tapping out by alphabet a letter code, at times the table would levitate. At other times Bill would lie on the couch semi-withdrawn, yet not in trance, and receive messages, sometimes one word at a time slowly and other times rapidly.<sup>49</sup>

He tells of a special time in 1947 that several spirits appeared before him when he was visiting in a home at Nantucket. The visitation of these materialized ghosts occurred when he was alone in the kitchen of the home where he was a guest; the ghosts gave their names and what they had done in life. One of these entities gave the name of "Shaw" and he had been a store keeper on the Island, another gave the name of David Morrow and he had been a sailor,

the third called himself Pettingill, a master of a whaler from the Island, then the last another whaling master. Later that day from a monument in the city center and at a museum he found evidence of such people having lived and worked from Nantucket 100 years previously.<sup>50, 51</sup>

On one session of using a Ouija board, Bill wrote the following:

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.<sup>52</sup>

A friend and neighbor, Tom P., tells of one particular “spooking session” he attended along with Bill and Lois at the home of his aunt and uncle. An old sunlight faded table was brought into the room. They sat around the table and began “...Knocking the table around” and it would ...”spell out messages. It would raise and tap.”... The table would also levitate. They turned out the lights and took their hands off the table and it “wrapped around inconclusively, and we’d say, ‘Oh well, he’ll find us another session,’ and we all went home.”<sup>53</sup> The next day Tom’s aunt called to tell them that morning the table was found refinished perfectly. Everyone went to see, to believe.

Tom said he was a problem for these people (Bill and Dr. Bob) because being an atheist and materialist he could not believe in spirits and other worlds. Tom expressed how that Dr. Bob and Bill “believed “vigorously and aggressively” in spiritualism. That it was not a fun thing or a hobby; it had a purpose for them. It related to their interest in AA “So the thing was not at all divorced from AA. It was very serious for everybody.” Tom also stated that Bill never did anything that was not connected to AA or his own spiritual growth. Tom put it this way, he, Bill, was “one-pointed.”<sup>54</sup> Another author sheds more light on Bill’s status as spiritualist:

Wilson himself seems to have been an “adept”, that is, “gifted” in the psychic sense; and he served as a medium for a variety of “controls,” some of them recurrent. “Controls,” in the lingo of spiritualism, are the discarnate (having no physical body) entities who seem to usurp a medium’s identity and literally to speak through him or (far more usually) her. Sometimes the control answers questions; sometimes a spirit seems to materialize. In fact, according to the account published in *‘Pass it On,’* Bill had one such experience during a trip to Nantucket in 1944.<sup>55</sup> (*Pass It On* gave the date as probably 1947)

A member of the Alcoholics Anonymous and the biographer of *Bill W. and Mr. Wilson*, Matthew J. Raphael speaks plainly in his book page 159:

...it might be said for the cofounder at least, AA was entangled with spiritualism from the very beginning.

After twenty years in AA, Bill and Lois began to break away from the constant duties of AA and in a spirit of controversy about their actions they continued to communicate with spirits. Their séances were not secret and they had many guests that joined with them in their psychic activities. Biographer Susan Cheever in her biography, *My Name is Bill*, relates in chapter 22 “The Spook Room” something of these “spook” activities.

...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 Rayette and Ella Griffith, of Lois’s beloved mother, and her handsome father who read Swedenborg’s teachings to his children in the Clinton Street living room, of all those who had passed on before them.

Bill became acquainted and developed a close relationship with Aldous Huxley, an author (*Brave New World*), philosopher, teacher, and *pioneer of New Age consciousness*. Huxley connected Bill with two Canadian psychiatrists, Humphry Osmond and Abram Hoffer, who were working with alcoholics and schizophrenics in an attempt to break through their resistance to surrender. Bill had been involved in helping the alcoholic surrender himself by a spiritual means. Their efforts in experimenting with the use of LSD were with the hope of it being useful for the addict. Nell Wing Bill’s secretary tells us:

There were alcoholics in the hospitals, of which AA could touch and help only about five percent. The doctors started giving them a dose of LSD, so that the resistance would be broken down. And they had about fifteen percent recovery.<sup>56</sup>

Bill himself took LSD and gave it to his wife, secretary, friends and alcoholics. (It was not illegal at that time.) Bill was very pleased about the use of LSD and he believed it eliminated barriers erected by “the self” that stood in the way of a person’s direct experience of the cosmos and of god (a pantheistic god).<sup>57</sup>

According to Bill W. *psychic phenomena* of all types as mentioned in the books is found very frequently throughout AA. He shares that besides his early “hot flash” experience, “he had experienced an immense of psychic phenomena of all sorts.” Here Bill seems to equate his “hot flash” conversion with other psychic events he experienced throughout his life. Bill believed that:

... the cumulative weight of these phenomena validated his belief in *humanity's divine* and therefore *immortal nature*, and he wanted every alcoholic to be able to say, as he could, that their belief in God was “no longer a question of faith” but “the certainty of knowledge (gained) through evidence.”<sup>58</sup>

Bill Wilson had an additional character flaw, unfaithfulness to his wife. Author Hartigan tells us that Bill’s “interest in younger women grew more intense with age.” It became such a problem and embarrassment that:

...a “Founder’s Watch” committee formed of people who were delegated to keep track of Bill during the socializing that usually accompanies AA functions. They would steer him one way and the woman in another.<sup>59</sup>

Was Bill W. a Christian? That label has been placed on him by multitudes of people. First, what is a definition of Christian? A working definition might be the following: a person who believes in **Jesus Christ as the Divine Son of God** having come in the flesh, born of a virgin, lived a life without sin, died on the cross, His death on the cross paid the penalty for our sins, and by *faith* in the merits of His shed blood we are pardoned by God, empowered to overcome sin into obedience and may have eternal life.

Was this the God of Bill W.? We read in the biography, *Bill W.*, by Francis Hartigan the following:

His belief in God might have become unshakable, but he could never embrace any theology or even the divinity of Jesus, and went to his grave unable to give his own personal idea of God much definition. In this sense, he was never very far removed from the unbelievers.<sup>60</sup>

The biggest reason why Bill felt that he lacked faith may have to do with his admission that he was never “able to receive assurance that He (Christ) was one hundred percent God...”<sup>61</sup>

The Apostle John warned us of those who do not accept the Divinity of Jesus Christ. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that (spirit) of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already it is in the world. (1 John 4:3)

A footnote for chapter 9 # 1. Follows:

At a 1954 AA conference in Fort Worth, Texas, speaking about “How the Big Book Was Put Together,” Wilson referred ironically to “the good old book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*”: “some People reading the book now, they say, well, this is the AA Bible. When I hear that, it always makes me shudder because the guys who put it together weren’t a damn bit biblical.”<sup>62</sup>

One more quotation concerning Bill W. and his interest and activities in spiritualism is made in a letter July 31, 1952, by Henrietta Seiberling, the woman who first introduced Bill W. to Dr. Bob in Akron Ohio in 1935.

He imagines himself all kinds of things. His hand 'writes' dictation from a Catholic priest, whose name I forget, from the 1600 period who was in Barcelona, Spain—again, he told Horace Crystal he was completing the works that Christ didn't finish, and according to Horace he said he was a reincarnation of Christ. Perhaps he got mixed in whose reincarnation he was. It looks more like the works of the devil but I could be wrong. I don't know what is going on in that poor deluded fellow's mind.<sup>63</sup>

Information has been presented to make it possible for the reader to develop his opinion as to whether the claim by people promoting AA, that its cofounders, Bill Wilson and Dr Bob Smith, were Christians or not. The next question to answer is as to whether AA is founded upon Christian principles and is truly a Christian based program. This is the subject of the next chapter.

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