

12 STEPS TO WHERE? Part II

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AND THE 12 STEPS

ARE THEY CHRISTIAN?

From December 11, 1934—the date of the beginning of Bill W.’s sobriety and from June 10, 1935—the date of the start of Dr. Bob’s sobriety, the organization Alcoholics Anonymous slowly began to take form, yet without a name for three years. These men from the first days of sobriety were active in assisting other alcoholics to find freedom from alcohol. They immediately embarked upon a relentless missionary campaign of seeking out and to proselytize drunks utilizing the methods for spiritual conversion learned from the Oxford Group. One aspect of the *Oxford Group’s* method was to make available a particular book or books to the individual with whom they were working. This was the experience of Bill W. following his “hot flash” conversion in the Towns treatment center.

Rational light on this mystical event came “the next Day”, when someone (possibly Ebby) handed Bill a copy of the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, by William James M.D., which he found to be “rather difficult reading” but nonetheless devoured “from cover to cover”¹

It was with them (religious experiences related in the book) that Bill learned that even his experience at Towns was not unique. He could never recollect if it had been Ebby or Nowland who gave him the copy of *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.²

In the previous chapter comments were made concerning this book, i.e., it contains many stories of special spiritual experiences which this author upon reading the book is convinced are mostly stories of spiritistic encounters.

Dr. Bob often chose *The Sermon on the Mount* by Emmet Fox, a **New Thought** minister, for literature support, a book promoted by the Oxford Group that denies the *Divinity of Jesus*, but promotes *Divinity within man*. The New Thought name can be traced to their teaching that the whole outer world—whether it be the physical body, simple things in life, wind and rain, the clouds, and the earth itself are amendable to *man’s thought*. The earth had no character of its own, only the character man gives it by his own thinking. This movement was the source of a later concept known as “the power of positive thinking.” Man, it is taught, has dominion over all. Scholars Anderson and Whitehouse comment:

New Thinkers are fond of such affirmations as... 'The Christ in me salutes the Christ in you.' Rather than viewing Jesus as the first and the last member of the Christ family, many New Thinkers believe that Christ is a title that we can all earn by following Jesus' example."³

An Internet article carried an article May 20, 2008, titled "Alcoholics Anonymous Cofounders Were Not Christians,"⁴ and therein are references to individuals who received for reading, Fox's book, *The Sermon on the Mount*, as they were seeking sobriety. Some comments are given below from these individuals.

In a recorded 1954 interview, early AA member Dorothy S.M. reminisced, "The first thing Bob did was get me Emmet Fox's *"Sermon on the Mount."*"⁵ Dorothy then recalled how it went with alcoholics who wanted help: "As soon as the men in the hospital, as soon as their eyes could focus, they go to 'The Sermon on the Mount.'"⁶

Archie T., the founder of Detroit AA, stayed with Dr. Bob and Anne Smith for more than ten months. He became sober in September of 1938. Archie T. recollected, "In Akron I was turned over to Dr. Bob and his wife. ...I spent Labor Day in the hospital reading Emmet Fox's *Sermon on the Mount,*' and it changed my life."⁷

This book, *Sermon on the Mount*, teaches that Jesus "taught no theology whatever." On page 3 and 4 it states:

There is absolutely no system of theology or doctrine to be found in the Bible; it simply is not there.... The "plan of Salvation" which figured so prominently in the evangelical sermons and divinity books of a past generation is as completely unknown to the Bible as it is to the Koran. There never was any such arrangement in the universe, and Bible does not teach it at all.

Another book promoted by the Oxford Group and that was used in the early work and formation of the organization—Alcoholics Anonymous, was *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* by Carl Jung M.D. In summary, at least part of the literature used to bring spiritual conversion to the alcoholic and patterned after the Oxford Group were two books written by spiritualist mediums and the other by a minister denying the divinity of Jesus Christ and promoting the pantheistic dogma of the New Thought movement. In the Oxford Group, studies were conducted from the Bible, from the book of James, and I Corinthians 13. However, none of these passages refer to the Divinity of Jesus or that under no other name under heaven could there be salvation. Where do we find Christianity in this scenario?

When Bill W. looked back in the history of AA and its development he gave credit to these books and their authors as being forefathers of AA

...both the men Wilson considered forefathers of Alcoholics Anonymous were deeply involved with spiritualism. William James, who was a friend and admirer of Frederic Myers and who himself served as president of the American Society for Psychical Research, spent innumerable hours, in the course of twenty-five years, in séances with Mrs. L.E. Piper, the marvelous trance medium whom the S.P.R. kept practically under house arrest in Boston. It was precisely James's openness to spiritual manifestations in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* that made him simpatico with Wilson. Carl Jung, too, took occultism seriously, beginning with his doctoral dissertation, "*On the Psychology and Pathology of So-called Occult Phenomena*" (1902: the same year as *Varieties*).⁸

The Varieties of Religious Experience text had considerable influence on forming the 12 steps found in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The first draft of these 12 steps was lost but they have been reconstructed to similar wording as displayed below:⁹

1. We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol— and that our lives had become unmanageable;
2. Came to believe a God could restore us to sanity;
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God;
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 of these defects of character;
7. Humbly on our knees asked Him to remove these shortcomings—holding back nothing;
8. Made a complete list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all;
9. Made direct amends to such people where ever 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 contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out;
12. Having had a spiritual experience as the result of this course of action, we tried to carry this message to others, especially alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Bill's first three steps were culled from his reading of James (a spiritualist psychiatrist), the teachings of Sam Shoemaker (Episcopal priest working with Oxford Group), and those of the Oxford Group itself.¹⁰

That evening Bill had a couple of visitors who looked at his 12 steps. They had objections to the use of the word "God" and his comment on step seven of "humbly on our knees asking Him

to remove one's shortcomings." A few days later Bill appeared at the AA office and showed the manuscript again. The same objections arose again. So he changed certain steps as follows.¹¹

- #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*;
- #7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings;
- #11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our 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 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;

These compromises seemed to placate the atheists and agnostics and made wide the gate leading to acceptance by many people of all races, religions, gender, financial position, social standing etc., of the twelve steps. Bill's desire was to make the steps acceptable to agnostics, atheists, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, Masons, or any religious organization and non believers. The title, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, was chosen after many name considerations.

With the success for alcoholics using 12 step principles many other programs for various addictions, i.e., smoking, obesity, etc., incorporated and adapted the 12 step tactics into their programs. Many churches have utilized this approach in recovery classes they have sponsored.

Let us return to the time that Bill W. was in Towns hospital and had the "hot flash" conversion, the room filled with a great white light and Bill experienced a feeling of a great *Presence*. Was it the same power that inspired him as he *relaxed* and asked for *guidance*? To whom was the request for "guidance" directed to? Was it to the Christian God— Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God? Was it to some unknown god or no god? To a pantheistic god? None of the books containing the story of this event including Bill's own words give us a direct answer. Bill has previously stated that he was not able to accept a *King on High* who he could have a relationship with, yet he could accept a Universal mind, Nature Spirit type god, a pantheistic style god—"The Great Reality deep down within."

This question, not yet answered, is very important because if the 12 step fellowship method goes to the whole world, the *power source* of Bill's "inspiration" in developing the 12 steps will be the *power* of influence exerted over the world. A result in *sobriety* cannot of itself be the criteria we use to determine the source of *power*, as Satan is given great *power* to heal. He may come as an angel of light in the form of man, even a minister, and deceive even the very elect. The Bible tells us we cannot serve two masters; we must determine if the *power* is of Jesus Christ our Creator God or of His adversary.

Would I expect the power of Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God to be manifest in a person who denies Him, who has been active as a medium contacting spirits of the dead; visited with embodied spirits; who played the Ouija board in a vigorous manner; promoted books written

by notorious spiritualist mediums and/or a minister who denies the Divinity of Christ and teaches that we have *divinity within* to bring spirituality to an individual seeking change? If Bill's "inspiration" was not from the Christian God of a 6 day Creation, then how could the 12 step method be so beneficial, so effective? As we continue to follow the story of the popularity and growth of AA and the 12steps in recovery programs this question, "what is the source of power of the spirituality of these steps?" This should be uppermost in our mind.

In 1938, *Alcoholics Anonymous* was published and began to be the written guide used in the fellowship meetings. Progress in increasing numbers of groups and of people continued but slowly. When Father Edward Dowling, the Jesuit priest from St. Louis, visited Bill W. he said:

...we have been looking at this book, "Alcoholic Anonymous."¹²

Father Dowling told Bill he was fascinated with the book because the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous **paralleled the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola**, which is the spiritual guide for the Jesuit order. Father Dowling became the spiritual advisor to Bill W.

Who is St. Ignatius Loyola? He was the founder of the Jesuit Order in the early 1500's. His Order had the goal of returning the Protestants as well as the whole world to the fold of the Roman Catholic Church. He is also known as a *Christian mystic*. A comment from author Edmund Paris, in his book, *The Secret History of the Jesuits*, follows:

Ignatius of Loyola was a first-class example of that "active mysticism" and "distortion of the will." Never the less, the transformation of the gentlemen-warrior into the "general" of the most militant order in the Roman Church was very slow; there were many faltering steps before he found his true vocation....

Blissful visions and illuminations were constant companions of this mystic throughout his life.¹³

He never doubted the reality of these revelations. He chased Satan with a stick as he would have done a mad dog; he talked to the Holy Spirit as one does to another person actually; he asked for the approval of God, the Trinity and the Madonna on all his projects and would burst into tears of joy when they appeared to him. On those occasions, he had a foretaste of celestial bliss; the heavens were open to him, and the Godhead was visible and perceptible to him.

...From the start, medieval mysticism has prevailed in the Society of Jesus; it is still the great animator, in spite of its readily assumed worldly, intellectual and learned aspects.¹⁴...

What is the origin of his spiritual exercises? A comment is made contrasting the direction that Luther chose in his drive to follow God in comparison to Ignatius' choice is presented.

Inigo, instead of feeling that his remorse was sent to drive him to the foot of the cross, persuaded himself that these inward reproaches proceeded not from God, but from the devil; and he resolved never more to think of his sins, to erase them from his memory, and bury them in eternal oblivion. Luther turned toward Christ, Loyola only fell upon himself...visions came ere long to confirm Inigo in the convictions in which he had arrived...Inigo did not seek truth in the Holy Scriptures but imagined in their place immediate communication with the world of spirits...Luther, on taking his Doctors degree, had pledged his oath to holy scripture ... Loyola at his time, bound himself to dreams and visions; and chimerical (fantasy plots) apparitions became the principle of his life and his faith. ¹⁵

Ignatius, in choosing to follow the god revealed to him in his visions and apparitions did not choose the same God of Luther but chose a pantheistic god as revealed in the following statement presented by the Catholic "Brentwood Religious Education Service", April 2005:

Then perhaps we begin to see the examen (prayer and meditation) as so intimately connected to our growing identity and so important to our finding **God in all things** at all times that it becomes our central daily experience of prayer. For Ignatius finding God in all things is what life is all about. Near the end of his life, he said that "Whenever he wished, at whatever hour, he could find God." (*Autobiography*, p. 99) (emphasis added)

Being able to find God whenever he wanted, Ignatius was now able to find that God of love in all things through a test for congruence of any interior impulse, mood or feeling with his *true self*. "For now my place is in him, and I am not dependent upon any of the self-achieved righteousness of the Law." (Philippians 3:9) ¹⁶(emphasis added)

Early in his career Ignatius was arrested three times and imprisoned twice by the Inquisition because of his teachings. He had a special ability to attract young people and this he did on university campuses. What was it that made him so attractive?

...It was his ideal and a little charm he carried on himself: a small book, in fact a very minute book which is, in spite of its smallness amongst those which have influenced the fate of humanity. This volume has been printed so many times that the number of copies is unknown; it was also the object of more than four hundred commentaries. It is the textbook of their master: the "spiritual exercises".¹⁷

Edmund Paris sums up the value and effect of these Spiritual Exercises:

It is understandable that after four weeks devoted to these intensive Exercises, **with a director** as his only companion, the candidate would be ripe for the subsequent training and breaking. ...Imposing on his disciples actions which, to him, were spontaneous, he needed just thirty days to break, with this method,

the will and reasoning, in the manner in which a rider breaks his horse. He only needed thirty days “triginta dies”, to subdue a soul.¹⁸ (emphasis added)

In the book, *Ignatius of Loyola, The Psychology of a Saint*, by W.W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., p. 87 gives us a glimpse of the influence of Ignatius’ Exercises upon the Church for the last four and one half centuries.

Spiritual Exercises is one of the most influential works in Western civilization. It became a guide for spiritual renewal in the Roman church during the entire counter-Reformation and has been a primary influence in the spiritual life of the church ever since, particularly through the efforts of Ignatius’ followers in the Society of Jesus. It remains a powerful influence and is the basis for much of the contemporary retreat movement.

...It contains a series of practical directives—methods of examining one’s conscience, engaging in prayer of various kinds, deliberating or making life choices, and meditating. This program of spiritual development, if you will, is interspersed with outlines and directives for various meditations and contemplations¹⁹

Later in the year of 1940, Bill W. traveled to St. Louis to visit Fr. Dowling. Bill noticed in the office of the *Queen’s Work*, the outline of the similarities between AA’s 12 Steps and Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises. John Markoe a Jesuit priest and an alcoholic had prepared the outline.²⁰ Bill W. and Ed Dowling continued a close friendship for the following 20 years until the death of Dowling. There were around 150 letters written between these two men during those years as well as many visits with each other. Robert Fitzgerald, S.J., a member of the order of Jesuits that Ed Dowling belonged to, gathered together the letters spoken of above and published in 1995 the book, *The Soul of Sponsorship*, illustrating their friendship. From this book some following paragraphs share some of their correspondence.

In 1952 Bill W. began to work on a small book which he purposed to be an addition to the literature for Alcoholics Anonymous, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Bill wrote to Ed Dowling in May 1952, requesting a copy of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Loyola, for he wished to study them so as to help him in composing the rest of his essays. Along with the letter requesting a copy of the *Spiritual Exercises* Bill had sent to Dowling copies of his essays of two of the 12 Steps. The book was to consist of an essay of at least 2000 words for each of the 12 Steps and likewise for each of the Twelve Traditions. Bill asked Fr. Ed Dowling who was the Editor of the Catholic journal *Queens’ Work* to critique the copies that were sent to him.²¹

Dowling returned a letter to Bill on June 20, 1952, expressing his delight that Bill was going to do an interpretation of each of the 12 steps. He commented that he was sending the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* to Bill. July 17, 1952. Bill’s return letter speaks of his impression of the *Spiritual Exercises* received.

...Please have my immense thanks for that wonderful volume on the Ignatian Exercises. I'm already well into it, and what an adventure it is! Excepting for a sketchy outline you folks had posted on the Sodality wall years back, I had never seen anything of the Exercises at all. Consequently I am astonished and not a little awed by what comes into sight. Again, thanks a lot.²²

Bill spoke of the problem he had in writing the essays about the steps. He felt he needed to broaden and deepen the steps for new members as well as those of long term. He had to make them acceptable for atheists, agnostics, believers, depressives, paranoid, psychiatrists, clergymen, and everyone else. How to open wide the entrance into the steps? This was his dilemma. Bill had previously shared that he had good help in writing of the essays by authors Tom Powers, Betty Love, and Jack Alexander. Now he makes the following quote:

The hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think. But I have good help—of that I am certain. *Both over here and over there.*²³ (emphasis added)

The author of *The Soul of Sponsorship*, Fitzgerald, on reporting about this letter says “over there” refers to the spirit world. Fitzgerald further comments that the *voice* from the other world, as Bill stated it, came out as if it was an unremarkable comment. Bill was writing about the help he was getting in his writing from Boniface, a spirit entity that was purported to be an Apostle or priest from England that went to Germany, Bavaria, and France as a missionary in the 1600's. Fitzgerald continues his comments about Bill W. and the spirit—Boniface. Bill had chosen not to join the Catholic Church after a year of study because he could not see a Pope having infallibility. Fitzgerald, a Jesuit priest, is puzzled because Bill refuses to join the hierarchical church but was open to receiving help from a dead bishop via his spirit entity. Bill tells his story of Boniface:

One turned up the other day calling himself Boniface, Said he was a Benedictine missionary and English....I'd never heard of this gentleman but he checked out pretty well in the Encyclopedia.²⁴

Bill asked Fr. Dowling to check Boniface out for him. Ed Dowling was able to identify Boniface as an apostle of Germany of the 1600's. Dowling cautions Bill with the following words speaking of spirits:

...that these folks tell us truth in small matters in order to fool us in larger....²⁵

Dowling continued to give caution to Bill concerning the spirits and their messages. He refers to the play *Macbeth* wherein spirit voices—otherworld voices bring temptation to Macbeth to murder the king, Duncan. He tells Bill to read the *Spiritual Exercises* on page 100, the Longridge edition; on this page *Two Standards Meditation* appear in italics. In this text Ignatius views the devil on a throne high above yet surrounded by chaos and smoke, drawing all

under his control. To this group will be granted riches, enticements to pride, and other vices. In contrast on a low plain, is seen Christ, inviting any who will come join under His flag and accept humility, poverty and all other blessings. Once each year Father Dowling attended a retreat where he would pray the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, which contain rules for discernment of spirits as well as rules for discerning God's will. St. Ignatius was visited by, he believed, spirits of the devil as well as members of the Divinity and he formed these rules to help himself discern which he was being visited by.²⁶ Is it not probable that all of the spirits visiting Ignatius were of the devil?

A response to the advice of Dowling to Bill W. came in a letter from Bill dated August 8, 1952. He said he had read the requested passage and accepted the need for caution when communicating with spirits from the otherworld. Yet he was reluctant to have the church limit his connections with the otherworld. He reasoned that it did not make sense that the devil's spirits could gain access to our world but the saints incarnate spirits did not seem to make it through. Why he reasoned is the opening so wide for the devil's spirits but so restricted for all the good folks. He mentions that he no longer had a compulsion toward the "spooks business" but occasionally one gets through without invitation, such as Boniface.²⁷

In 1955, at a celebration of AA's 20th year anniversary a symbol was displayed which had been chosen to be the logo for Alcoholic Anonymous. The symbol, a circle enclosing a triangle with the words Recovery, Unity, and Service written on each arm of the triangle, was mounted on a banner which floated above the audience. The symbol's meaning is explained:

...The circle stands for the whole world of AA, and the triangle stands for AA's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service. Within our wonderful new world, we have found freedom from our fatal obsession. That we have chosen this particular symbol is perhaps no accident. *The priests and seers of antiquity regarded the circle enclosing the triangle as a means of warding off spirits of evil, and AA's circle and triangle of Recovery, Unity, and Service has certainly meant all of that to us and much more.*²⁸

The 12 Steps constitute the foundation principles of guidance in Alcoholics Anonymous fellowship program—the "spiritual powerhouse of AA." Father Ed Dowling was the first to recognize the potential for application of the 12 Steps to other "compulsions."²⁹ Their use is now found in a large number of recovery-like programs designed to help in overcoming a variety of dysfunctional practices, attitudes, etc., and its use has moved into the church in a big way.

In a previous chapter we reviewed in brief the origin and development of these 12 Steps. Would it not be appropriate to give thought and consideration to the potential that tentacles of spiritualism may have found its way into the 12 Steps? These Steps had their beginning out of the Oxford Group wherein no mention is found of the shed blood of Jesus Christ cleansing us

from our sin and they promoted a book in therapy for alcoholism that denies the divinity of Jesus Christ. Strong influence came from the books of two spiritualists (Jung and James), the cofounders (Dr. Bob and Bill W.) were from the beginning involved in séances and other forms of psychic phenomena. The initial writing of the steps came following “relaxation” and a request for “guidance” from Bill W. who was an active spiritualist and medium. When the 12 Steps were to be amplified, broadened, and explained in detail in the book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, there was the spirit “Boniface” that Bill said was giving him aid in his writing. Jesuits priests were astonished at the similarity between their *Spiritual Exercises* and the 12 Steps.

While Bill was deeply engrossed in the use of LSD for alcoholics and giving it to many of his acquaintances, Father Ed sent him “Rules for Discernment of Spirits” coming from the second week of Spiritual Exercises. These are recorded in *The Soul of Sponsorship by the Jesuit Priest Robert Fitzgerald*, page 98, and appear below.

It is the mark of an evil spirit to assume the appearance of the angel of light. He begins by suggesting thoughts suited to a devout soul but ends by suggesting his own...little by little drawing the soul into his snares and evil designs.

The Bible is very clear and forceful in its warnings against spirit involvement of any kind.

There shall not be found among you...one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whosoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you. Deut. 18: 10-12

Many would say the results speak for itself; there have been millions of people that found sobriety from their association with AA and continue to do so. Is it not a program designed to be neutral to various religions as well as for those of no religion? It is a system that depends on the choice of the member to freely choose the principles of the 12 Steps, there is no hook or coercion. How could a person even suspect spiritualistic influence to be incorporated into the program? Would it not more likely signify that the person holding such thoughts and concerns has a problem and not AA? Up to this time almost all source material used to write these chapters on 12 Steps has come from books that either the AA organization sanctions or from books whose authors are themselves members of AA and/or supporters. Now I will present questions that some have asked who are not members of AA or supporters of, as they evaluated the 12 Steps.

First, there is the history of spiritualism association as related in previous paragraphs. The question is asked: will the Creator God, the true God of the universe, use people who are in the service of Satan, as revealed by being a spiritualist medium, etc., to bless His followers with vital information and healing methods? Will the messages and methods passed on by those who are

Satan's agents, be free of spiritualistic entanglement? It is needful that we look carefully at certain of the 12 Steps and consider the questions asked by those who have concern that there might be deceptive spiritualistic influence within.

Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19:13)

As for the person who turns to mediums and spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set my face against that person and will cut him off from his people. (Leviticus 20:6)

What is the base for the individual steps? Christian? Pantheistic? Secular? Again the reader must decide, read on. In an attempt to find the answer to the question as to whether or not the originators of, and the AA program itself, is Biblical and Christian based we will look closely at certain specific Steps with that question in mind.

Step # 1.: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.

A. Comments presented by AA in support of the first Step:

When Bill W. was in Towns Hospital December 1934 for his alcoholism, Dr. Silkworth presented his concept that alcoholism was a "disease" (the first professional to do so) and that a person had an allergy to alcohol, which, in turn, caused the uncontrollable urge to drink. Bill W. accepted Dr. Silkworth's opinion that alcoholism as a disease had no moral implications and so Bill was relieved of any guilt that his alcoholism had had anything to do with his personal decision to drink. The medical profession accepted the definition of alcoholism as a "disease" in 1944. However, Bill Wilson felt that a *spiritual power* was what was involved in bringing him to sobriety.

The tyrant alcohol wielded a double-edged sword over us: first we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on drinking, and then by an allergy of the body that insured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process.³⁰

This first step is stating that the person must come to utter helplessness to be able to move toward freedom of alcohol's hold upon him. Unfortunately these criteria did not work well for those who wished to quit drinking but had not yet reached that state of total helplessness. To remedy this defect in the program, AA simply raised the threshold of what was considered the *bottom* in one's experience. Therefore the belief that one had now reached the bottom long before they actually did reach the worst possible physical condition, made the program acceptable to many heavy drinkers.³¹ For therapy of this "*physical disease*" AA sought after and accepted a *spiritual solution*. We could agree that for most alcoholics there is a need of a physical solution through nutrition, exercise and proper habits of life as well as a spiritual.

However, the physical—chemical influence on the body of alcohol is not now understood to be an allergy.

B. Concern over step one.

When man sinned selfishness took the place of love:

His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed.³²

It is impossible to escape from our habits and behavior by ourselves. Our hearts are ruled by sin and we cannot change such.

There must be a power working from within, a new life *from above* before men can be changed from sin to holiness. **That power is Christ.** His grace *alone* can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul and attract it to God, to holiness.³³

Paul the Apostle experienced the “bottoming out” experience that is referred to in AA’s step one. He longed to be free of the enslavement of sin and he cried out:

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?
(Romans 7:24)

The only way to God is through Jesus Christ.

Step One is a dangerous counterfeit for both Christians and non-Christians. It serves as a substitute for acknowledging one’s own depravity, sinful acts, and utter lostness *apart from Jesus Christ*, the only Savior, and the only way to forgiveness (relief of true guilt). Step One is also a substitute for Christians to acknowledge that without the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in them, they are unable to live righteously. *Apart from Christ in them, they are unable to please God.*³⁴
(emphasis added)

19. Step # 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

A. Comments presented by AA in support of the 2nd Step:

Bill W. the agnostic on Dec. 11, 1934, while in Towns Hospital, readily accepted Ebby Thatcher’s invitation to choose a God, a **Higher Power** of his understanding when introduced to the Oxford Group’s method of overcoming alcoholism. It did not matter as to what one chose for a God as long as one was selected. It was a way of getting a person to make a step of surrender into the Oxford Group’s influence, a foot in the door concept. Once a choice was made then the individual could be exposed to more of their teachings. With this approach a

person did not need to accept Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God. One could participate in the Oxford Group's meetings yet could expect to receive the "blessings" of God. In fact, the Oxford Group made no mention of the Divinity of Jesus Christ and recommended a spiritual book for study that taught *divinity within—pantheism*. Alcoholics Anonymous adopted step 2 from the Oxford Group.

Bill W. makes it clear in his personal story that is written in the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, that he could not accept the God of the Christian, and that Jesus Christ was simply a man. So when it was suggested to him that he could choose his own concept of God this appealed to him; it was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than himself, nothing more to start with.

In writing the "big book"—"Alcoholics Anonymous," Bill put forth great effort to properly state Step Two to make it acceptable to anyone, so avoiding offense. Jack Alexander, the reporter for *Saturday Evening Post* in 1941, spent a month with the AA fellowship meetings investigating carefully their method and teachings so that the article he was to write for the *Post* would be accurate and truly reflect their teaching. He wrote the following:

Describing AA's "higher power," Alexander noted the alcoholic "may choose to think of his Inner Self, the miracle of growth, a tree, and man's wonderment at the physical universe, the structure of the atom, or mere mathematical infinity. Whatever form is visualized, the neophyte is taught that he must rely on it and, in his own way, to pray to the Power for strength."³⁵

You may question whether choosing some inanimate object is really suggested or done in AA; the following quotation speaks to this issue:

...In fact, initiates who come seeking help, but who have trouble inventing or envisioning a god, are often told they can worship a "doorknob," or even the group itself to begin their spiritual journey. The first time we heard we thought

it was a joke—some form of esoteric humor. But it is not. We have heard the "doorknob-deity" speech a number of times now. It apparently serves as their **starter-god**. Like the training wheels on a bike—only there until the child is ready for the next big step. Believe in something, newcomers are told; believe in anything; just *believe*.³⁶

We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.

Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect contact with Him. 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.³⁷

B. Serious questions and comments that are frequently made concerning the second Step:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20: 3)

I am the Lord, that is my name. I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to idols. (Isaiah 42:8)

What profit is the idol when its maker has carved it, Or an image, a teacher of falsehood? For its maker trusts in his own handwork when he fashions speechless idols, Woe to him who says to a piece of wood, 'Awake.' To a mute stone, 'Arise!' And that is your teacher? (Habakkuk 2:18-19)

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper...(Romans 1:28)

If Alcoholics Anonymous is based on Christian principles how is it I can choose a Higher Power that is not the Christian God, and still be Christian? If I choose the pantheistic god known by a hundred different names (universal energy, prana, chi, the Great Reality, god of Nature, Presence, mana, Self, etc.) does that equate to the Christian God and His principles? The same question is asked when choosing an inanimate object, idea, the fellowship group itself, etc., as my god?

These people "Who say to a tree, 'you are my father, and to a stone, "you gave me birth." "For they have turned their backs to Me, and not their face." (Jeremiah 2:27)

The Christian looks at this choice as being critical because some of the following steps directly relate to this choice. The question arises, "is this choice simply a trick to get the individual further involved before we spring the Christian God on him or her, or instead to deceptively slip in the god of the pantheist?

Many Christians defend AA and may not see it this way, but they are in agreement with a belief system that "lifts up strange gods," Amos 3:3. In AA all gods are called the "Higher Power" thus relegating Christ our King to commonality, as if He were simply one nameless deity among many—pantheon.

In their Churches on Sunday they call God by that Name above all names: Jesus Christ the Savior. But here, in their all-gods sect, they call Jesus by the term all members use for their various gods. So Jesus becomes a "higher power." Thus has the savior been placed in the pantheon, the temple of the gods.³⁸

When I fellowship in AA and we repeat the Lord's Prayer and the Serenity Prayer together, do I in this form of joint worship join with unbelievers in their worship? They worshiping their chosen god and I the Lord Jesus? I am sure many who participate in AA will consider that this verse is not appropriately used in this instance. You decide.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? ...Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord.
(2 Corinth 6: 14-17 NIV)

Step # 3: "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him."

A. Comments presented by AA in support of the Third Step:

In Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Step Three is likened to opening a door that has been locked, all that is needed is the key. The **key** is to **give our will**, our power of choice to the Higher Power we have chosen to be our God as we understand. We turn our will and our lives over to the control of that Power. This is a critical step, it is critical because it lets the Power we have chosen be the ruler of our lives. All the other steps in AA depend upon our effort to conform to the principles of *this step* and to place our trust in our chosen God.³⁹

So how, exactly, can the willing person continue to turn his will and his life over to the Higher Power? He made a beginning, we have seen, when he commenced **to rely upon AA for the solution of his alcohol problem.**⁴⁰ (emphasis added)

The prayer of serenity:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine be done.⁴¹

B. Serious questions and comments that are frequently presented concerning the third step.

This Third Step in conjunction with step two is the most serious decision one can make in all of the 12 steps. This step is asking me to turn my will, my decision power over to whatever Higher Power I decide upon. The Christian understands two powers in the universe, first,—the power of God the Creator, Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God, and second, the power that Satan has been allowed to exercise. When we choose a God of my understanding, I choose one or the other. No matter what entity I may choose as a Higher Power if it is not Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God I will have chosen the power of Satan for my god. There is no other power to choose from!

Let the reader consider the quotations below:

The will is the governing power in the nature of man, bringing all the other faculties under its sway. The will is not the taste or the inclination, but it is the deciding power, which works in the children of men unto obedience to God, or unto disobedience. Every child should understand the true force of the will. He should be led to see how great is the responsibility involved in this gift. The will is . . . the power of decision, or choice.

...In every experience of life God's word to us is, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Joshua 24:15. Everyone may place his will on the side of the will of God, may choose to obey Him, and by thus linking himself with divine agencies, he may stand where nothing can force him to do evil.⁴²...

From the Bible we have this counsel:

Wherefore, my beloved: as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to **will** and to do of (his) good pleasure. (Philippians 2: 12,13)

When I surrender my will into the hands of Jesus Christ to be the Lord of my life then His will directs my life in obedience to Him; if I surrender my will into the hands of Satan then he becomes the lord of my life and his will is the power that directs me. Satan has great power and may well do great and wondrous works in my life but eternal life comes only through Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God. Let us reflect once again upon this critical point.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man, cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

We are choosing the Lord of our life in this third step, there is no other choice more important that we will make.

We are told that a person makes a beginning toward the goal of sobriety **when one commences to rely upon AA for the solution of his or her alcohol problem**. Does AA become our god? Does not the power to overcome, come from Jesus Christ? Choosing AA does not necessarily involve choosing Jesus as our power and that is the only way to overcome evil.

When we give our will and turn our lives over to the power we chose to believe in, it is important to not have given our permission to spirits—fallen angels, to have sway with us.

Warren Smith, in *Standing Fast in the Last Days*, tells how a psychic woman who uncannily knew many details about him, told Smith the spirits on the other side needed his permission to work in his life.⁴³

Step # 5. “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

A. Comments by AA in support of step #5.

After one has made an inventory of all past wrongs, recognized defects of character, and sins then they are to be confessed to some other *human being*. AA declares this is *mandatory* to maintain sobriety. Furthermore, it is said:

...It seems plain that the grace of God will not enter to expel our destructive obsessions until we are willing to try this.⁴⁴

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: 16)

The suggestion is that only by presenting one’s self judged defects to some other person, *not holding back anything* in the confession can one proceed on the road to straight thinking, honesty, and humility. This is a real test of willingness to confide with some chosen person facts that you may not want anyone else to know.

Provided you hold back nothing, your sense of relief will mount from minute to minute....Many an AA, once agnostic or atheistic, tells us that it was during this stage of Step Five that he first actually felt the presence of God. And even those who had faith already often become conscious of God as they never were before.⁴⁵

B. Comments questioning confessing all my sins to another human being.

In the study of preparing to write this chapter I discovered that confession not only is taught in the Bible, but has been promoted by the Catholic Church, Ignatius Loyola in the Spiritual Exercises, by the psychiatrists Freud and Jung, Oxford Group, and picked up and practiced by Alcoholics Anonymous. Within these groups confession **is made to man**. The question is asked: Is it Biblical that I confess **all** my sins to my fellow man? Quotations are shared pertaining to this question.

In the work of overcoming there will be confessions to be made one to another, but the word of God forbids man to put an erring man in God's place, making confessors of frail humanity. We are to confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another that we may be healed. The appointment of men to the

confessional of the Roman Church is the fulfillment of the **design of Satan** to confer upon men power which belongs to God only. God is dishonored by the absolution of the priest and by the confession of the soul to man. Confessions of secret sins are made to men whose own hearts may be as sinks of iniquity. **There are sins which are to be confessed to God only**, for he knows the whole heart and will not take advantage of the trust reposed in him; he will not betray our confidence, and if we submit ourselves to him, he will cleanse the heart from all iniquity.⁴⁶ (emphasis added)

Many, many confessions should never be spoken in the hearing of mortals; for the result is that which the limited judgment of finite beings does not anticipate. . . . God will be better glorified **if we confess the secret, inbred corruption of the heart to Jesus alone** than if we open its recesses to finite, erring man, who cannot judge righteously unless his heart is constantly imbued with the Spirit of God. . . . **Do not pour into human ears the story which God alone should hear.**⁴⁷ (emphasis added)

...He who kneels before fallen man, and opens in confession the secret thoughts and imaginations of his heart, is debasing his manhood and degrading every noble instinct of his soul. In unfolding the sins of his life to a priest,—an erring, sinful mortal, and too often corrupted with wine and licentiousness,—his standard of character is lowered, and he is defiled in consequence. His thought of God is degraded to the likeness of fallen humanity, for the priest stands as a representative of God. This degrading confession of man to man is the secret spring from which has flowed much of the evil that is defiling the world and fitting it for the final destruction.⁴⁸

If one confesses his faults to the god of his understanding but not Jesus Christ the Son of God, of what value is it? Only Jesus Christ can forgive sin, the devil cannot, and all “Gods of our understanding” outside of Jesus Christ are false gods.

Wilson cautions in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 74, that “we cannot disclose anything to our wives or our parents which will hurt them and make them unhappy.” He speaks of “perhaps one is mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn’t care to have advertised.” In *Bill W. and Mr. Wilson*, author Raphael points out the adulterous behavior of Bill W. which continued during his sober years and with this exception to the rule in confession of all sins, he had made an escape for himself.⁴⁹

The psychiatrist C.G. Jung has written some interesting observations on “confession” as used by the Catholic Church, Ignatius Loyola’s Spiritual Exercises, Germany’s “Professor Shultz’s autogenic training (now called biofeedback), Freud’s psychoanalysis, and his own analytical psychology approach to mind—cure. He compares confession to the Hindu’s use of Yoga as the tool to enter into the unconscious, which he (Hindu) considers a higher level of consciousness. In psychological use its purpose is to open up the *unconscious* to the *conscious* mind. Both

approaches suppress our protective inhibitions and opens the mind to outside influence and /or control.⁵⁰

He (Jung), elaborates further on the origin of confession use in mind therapy:

The first beginnings of all analytical treatment are to be found in its prototype, the confessional. Since, however, the two practices have no direct causal connection, but rather grow from a common psychic root; it is difficult for an outsider to see at once the relation between the groundwork of psychoanalysis and the religious institution of the confessional.⁵¹

Jung further tells us that the first stage of psychoanalysis is in essence a “catharsis” (purging) of the mind by confession with or without hypnotic aid; also this places the mind in the same state as the Eastern yoga systems describe, i.e., meditation—open to control by outside powers.

Even if the neurosis is cured there may be a complication that creates a limitation in the use of confession. The patient may be bound to the individual receiving the confession. If this attachment is forcibly severed, there is a bad relapse. This is seen also in hypnosis. Freud first noticed this problem of fixation on the therapists by patients undergoing catharsis. The fixation is similar to that of a child to the father. Notice:

The patient falls into a sort of childish dependence from which he cannot protect himself even by reason and insight. The fixation is at times astonishingly strong—so much so that one suspects it of being fed by *forces quite out of the common....* we are obviously dealing with a new symptom—a neurotic formation directly induced by the treatment.⁵² (emphasis added)

It appears that the use of confession in therapy is not innocuous.

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.”

A. Comments by AA in support of step # 11.

Prayer is an act of supplication and a method of communication addressed to Deity, it may be silent or vocal. There are many forms of prayer and such as is offered to idols, to the pantheistic god or gods of the pagan, to the God of Christians, etc. Praise, gratitude, allegiance, to one’s God can be expressed by prayer as well as request for guidance, assistance, deliverance, and blessings. Jesus Christ the Son of God prayed to His Father for guidance and strength and He in turn taught the apostles to pray. Throughout the Bible prayers were recorded of various people and frequent mention was made of specific prayers being offered. Certainly it is fitting for an individual seeking sobriety to be encouraged to pray and pray often

asking for the power of God to grant him healing from his malady. There is no other power than Jesus Christ that can truly free us from our afflictions. There is some awkwardness in the subject of prayer, however, in the 12 Step program. What type of God are we praying to? The God as we understand him can be even an inanimate object, an idea, etc. A quotation from the essay on the Eleventh Step is shared below:

To certain newcomers and to those one-time agnostics who still cling to the *AA Group* as their higher power, claims for the power of prayer may, despite all the logic and experience in proof of it, still be unconvincing or quite objectionable.⁵³

In careful review of Step Eleven's essay, the description of meditation as suggested in the 12 Steps is much closer to the Eastern style meditation than the Christian concept of meditation. To illustrate let us examine several sentences explaining meditation as to be used in the 12 Steps.

As though lying upon a sunlit beach, let us relax and breathe deeply of the spiritual atmosphere with which the grace of this prayer surrounds us. Let us become willing to partake and be strengthened and lifted up by sheer spiritual power, beauty, and love of which these magnificent words are the carriers. Let us look now upon the sea and ponder what its mystery is; and let us lift our eyes to the far horizon, beyond which we shall seek all those wonders still unseen.⁵⁴

This much could be a fragment of what is called meditation, perhaps our very first attempt at a mood, a flier into the *realm of spirit*, if you like. ...Meditation is something which can always be further developed. It has no boundaries, either of width or height....But its object is always the same: to improve our conscious contact with God, with His grace, wisdom, and love.⁵⁵ (emphasis added)

Even use of a mantra is slipped in, in an inconspicuous way:

...and repeat to ourselves, a particular prayer or phrase that has appealed to us in our reading or meditation. Just saying it *over and over* will often enable us to clear a channel choked up with anger, fear, frustration or misunderstanding, and permit us to return to the surest help of all—our search for God's will, not our own, in the moment of stress.⁵⁶ (emphasis added)

B. Questions asked concerning and comments made about the Eleventh Step.

In Step **Two** a god of our choice and understanding is chosen; in Step **Three** that god is given a person's **will**, turning one's life over to that power. Confession of sins and faults is made in Step **Five**, to another **human being**. In Step **Eleven** prayer and meditation are directed to the power selected in Step Two. No boundaries are placed on meditation and so it can vary from

an active thought process to the Eastern style meditation of silence and emptying the mind wherein the purpose is to make contact with a “god” entity.

In prayer we present what is in our heart in praise, requests, dedication to whatever God of our choice, asking this God to possess us, to put **his will** into **our will** and be the Lord of our life.

How critical it is that we choose the one and only true God, Jesus Christ the Divine Son. In the fellowship meetings I read that the Lord’s Prayer and the Serenity Prayer are both prayed out loud in unison by the entire group. The Lord’s Prayer begins with “Our father which art in heaven...” A question asked is, if I being a member of the fellowship have not chosen Jesus Christ as my Higher Power yet I pray to “Our Father,” Of what value is this? The Bible verse John 14:6 tells me:

Jesus saith unto him: I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man, cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

How can these prayers ascend to the Father when we have denied the Son.

The word “meditation” is of concern to me. Most of us upon hearing the word “meditation” consider an active cognitive process by which we have given study to a word, phrase, or passage and look to God, through the Holy Spirit, to join in blessing us with understanding, to fill our mind with His wisdom. When the meditation practice of the Oxford Group is carefully reviewed it appears to be more of the Eastern pagan practice of “deep breathing,” “silence,” “emptying the mind,” as the method of communion with God. Does it open our mind to being possessed by a god not of our choosing? Shall we give control of our mind to the powers of darkness?

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:11,12)

The devil continues to hone his techniques and deceptions to precision. A movement of today referred to as the *Emergent Church* has as its goal to sweep the world into its deceptive dogma; it has also reached out to the 12 step program. The stated goal of the Emergent Church is to be an agency bringing peace to the world through uniting all religions. The power of this movement is through a special style of mystical prayer that is proclaimed to bring God **down** to you, the Christian prayer is to raise man **up** to his God. The prayer method of Rohr and Keating has many names but a more comprehensive name is “contemplative prayer.” This prayer movement is actually Eastern meditation in a very smooth disguise. It is sweeping the world.

Two outstanding leaders in this movement, Father Richard Rohr and Father Thomas Keating, both Catholic priests, facilitated a conference in 2008.

...to demonstrate to those in 12 Step Fellowship ways to embrace the invitation of the 11th Step to improve our conscious contact with God...(This) will offer us all a wonderful opportunity to *deepen our contemplative practices*.⁵⁷

The goal of Rohr and Keating is to incorporate their mystical contemplative prayer methods into the 12 Step program. They present the use of a repetitive phrase, or word (mantra), and a special *breath prayer* at these conferences. Following this Eastern meditation method it is not unusual to hear of people who experience a sense of euphoria, feeling of well-being, and the feeling that they are in the “presence of God” as a result of these special prayer techniques. They build their foundation of Christianity upon “feelings” and not on “thus saith the Word.” Remember that in the “big book—Alcoholics Anonymous” of AA the central doctrine of the New Age is to be found therein.

We found the *Great Reality deep down within us*. In the last analysis, it is only there He can be found.”⁵⁸

CONCLUSION:

AA claims not to be religious, only **spiritual** in nature, is there a difference? The U.S. Supreme Court ruled November 15, 1999, upholding a lower Appeals Court decision, that the AA program **is religious**. Its fellowship meetings are religious in nature; they cite the participants as a body reciting the Lord’s Prayer and the Serenity Prayer. They worship a “Higher Power”, confession is a part of the service, testimony is given, and they are instructed to go spread the word. It has been voiced about that it is Christian in orientation and arose from a Christian organization—Oxford Group, and its founders Dr. Bob and Bill W. were near Christians. In several months of reading many books which are under the blessing of Alcoholics Anonymous as well as books written by members who are supporters of the organization *I never once found any sentence or reference that acknowledged in any way **Jesus Christ to be the Divine Son of God** and that the way to the Father was only through Him*. Forgiveness of sins and removable of character defects happens only through the access of Jesus Christ to God the Father.

The program accepts any and all gods placing itself more closely within pantheism by definition than Christianity. Some critics have called it idol worship, I let you decide. Spiritualistic practices were involved with its cofounders from the beginning and had influence in forming the core program, the 12 Steps. Two fundamental reading texts used by AA were written by spiritualists—Jung’s *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* and William James’ *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, were:

... the sources of many of Wilson’s profoundest ideas about religion, philosophy, and psychology.⁵⁹

AA early on used the text by Emmitt Fox, *The Sermon On the Mount*, and which the Oxford Group had used regularly for working with alcoholics. This text denied the Divinity of Jesus Christ, denied that the Bible had doctrine.

A noted writer and editor of a monthly religious journal expressed his conviction that the spiritualistic activities of Bill Wilson and Bob Smith occurred after the establishment of the program of AA. This is not true as Bill's own statement given earlier in this text, dates the summer of 1935 as the start of AA as well as a summer that he and Bob were active in the practice of spiritualism.

“AA was entangled in spiritualism from the very beginning.”⁶⁰

The cofounders Dr. Bob and Bill W. were also personally deeply involved in spiritualism in a variety of ways including séances, Ouija board use, table rapping, and automatic writing and as a “control medium”. Bill mentions in a letter to Sam Shoemaker that:

“Throughout A.A., we find a large amount of psychic phenomena, nearly all of it spontaneous....These psychic experiences have run nearly the full gamut of everything we see in the books. In addition to my original mystic experience, I've had a lot of such phenomenalism myself.”⁶¹

Bill had a spirit guide, Boniface, that Bill said helped him in writing *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Author Raphael in *Bill W. and Mr. Wilson p. 161*, tells us that Bill W. was committed to “mystical modes” as a way of enduring sobriety. A text extolling the merits of AA makes the following summary:

The building blocks that Bill W. synthesized into his concept of a fellowship that could help alcoholics were derived from disparate sources: the psychology of Carl Jung, transcendental and existential mysticism, Christian fundamentalism and early notions from American medicine about the role of allergy as a cause of alcoholism.⁶²

The central core dogma of AA is to be found within the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and is summarized as follows. A person usually comes to an acceptance of his or her inability to control his or her life. A (Higher Power) of one's understanding is chosen to be your God; then a person consecrates and gives their life and “will” to that “Higher Power.” Next an inventory is made of one's faults and these are confessed to another human being; then the chosen Higher Power is asked by prayer and meditation to take away those faults; thus allowing that Higher Power (no matter what it is) to be ruler of my life.

Marilyn Ferguson, in *The Aquarian Conspiracy* called by the New York Times the New Age Bible, makes a potent point concerning 12 step programs and their influence in transformation of the mind into accepting the neo-pagan belief system. She makes this comment:

- Self-help and mutual-help networks—for example, Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters anonymous, and their counterparts, whose twelve rules include paying attention to one’s conscious processes and to change, acknowledging that one can choose behavior, and cooperating with “higher forces” *by looking inward*.⁶³ (emphasis added)

In this chapter the history and teachings of the AA program has been presented as their writings have presented it. Contrasting views are also presented. The reader will make up his own mind as to whether or not the 12 Step type programs would be your choice of therapy. I have heard expressed concerns that such programs tend to be looked to as the power for overcoming and take away our confidence in the power of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from our habits and sins. The Creator God is frequently allowed to be replaced, by our enthusiasm, for a “program,” even without our believing such is happening. I share with you statements made by ministers of the gospel relevant to this subject.

These Christians believe only through attending this all-gods religion can they be free. But it is a strange sort of “free,” because they have to attend these meetings **for life**. In fairness, they have been encouraged to participate by their own pastors, family members, and by other Christians who already attend. For seventy years Christians have been part of this movement.⁶⁴

Well, I choose Jesus Christ as my Higher Power, I have given Him my will, I have confessed only those faults that are proper to confess to my fellow man, my prayers are to the God of heaven through the Name of Jesus and I have no part with Eastern style meditation. When I refer to the Higher Power I have in my mind the reference to Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God. So what is the concern?

I have heard the question: do I look to AA for healing rather than the power of Jesus Christ and His healing grace? Do I have more confidence in the 12 Step program than I do my professed Lord and Savior to keep me in sobriety? Pastor John MacArthur addresses this question in the following comment.

Others would formally affirm Christ’s sovereignty and spiritual headship over the church, but they resist His rule in practice. To cite just one instance of how this is done, many churches have set various forms of human psychology, self-help therapy, and the idea of “recovery” in place of the Bible’s teaching about sin and

sanctification. Christ's headship over the church is thus subjugated to professional therapists. His design for sanctification, however, is by means of the Word of God (John 15:3; 17: 17). So wherever the *word* is being *replaced with twelve-step programs and other substitutes*, Christ's headship over the church is being denied in practice.⁶⁵ (emphasis added)

We have confidence in the saving power and gift of eternal life through our faith in the merits of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, yet when it comes to freeing ourselves from our sinful habits and addictions it is such a temptation to seek deliverance through the popular methods and programs designed by Satan to deceive us into giving him worship in place of Jesus Christ the Divine Son of God.

Do not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead even expose them. (Eph. 5: 11-12)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. (1 John 4: 1-3)

The book Steps to Christ has twelve chapters which reveal the way to Salvation through Jesus Christ our Creator and the thirteenth is a chapter of celebration of the freedom in Christ Jesus. Steps of themselves are not the concern, it is the teaching in the step that could deceive one into choosing unawares a power other than the Divine Son of God. Having great fellowship and continued sobriety is not proof positive that the power of overcoming is of heavenly origin.

These chapters on 12 steps, similar to the chapters on psychology, were submitted to a variety of individuals including professionals in mind—therapy for their response to the content. The feedback was positive as well as negative. The negative responses tended to dismiss or discredit concerns about the strong spiritualistic history of the founders. It was expressed that no spiritualistic practices had been observed in those attending recovery programs. In fact a stronger fellowship seemed to come from attendance with a recovery group or program than occurs at their church. This may very well be, however, the concern is whether that is a fellowship that leads to eternal life by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. If one does choose to participate in AA or a 12 step program then beware of those steps that harbor risks exposed in this chapter. The next chapter contains a personal story of three recovered addicts who developed a recovery program that features Jesus Christ as the power by which we may overcome through the use of His Word. Enjoy.

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