



# Hitting Bottom

In Underearners Anonymous

George McLauchlin

Alcoholics Anonymous founder, Bill Wilson, and the man whose group dynamics led to its formation, Frank Buchman, both believed that their method of gathering would one day transform our troubled world. Fortunately for us, Bill could see that AA needed to stay focused on working with Alcoholics and not on changing the world.

In the first decade of our 21st Century, a group of recovering debtors took AA's 12-step way of life and turned it into a fellowship to help people overcome underearning. Underearners Anonymous could possibly be the best expression, so far, of the world-changing work that Wilson and Buchman envisioned.

While UA has built its recovery model upon the foundation laid out by AA, underearners are not alcoholics, so that now, going on two decades after its inception a foundational question needs be asked, "What is hitting bottom in UA?"



George has been a member of UA since 2017 and has done service as GSR, Treasurer and meeting chair.

He attended the World Services Conference at Rancho Palos Verdes CA in 2018.

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In Underearners Anonymous

Hitting Bottom in Underearners Anonymous

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*Previous Books by This Author*

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Absolutely Sober: A History, Principles and Practice of  
the Destruction of Self-Centeredness 2012

Nothing: A Sober Discussion of Being and Non-Being  
2022

“I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere,  
reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. (U.A.)  
always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”

BILL WILSON, TORONTO 1965

## *Disclaimer*

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This work is *not* an authorized publication (Conference Approved Literature) of Underearners Anonymous. The author freely offers this tract to the UA community as a helpful guide for coming into the absolute surrender that is required for a solid entry into the process of recovery from the compulsion to underachieve and “hide out” in life which is referred to as “underearning.” It is inspired by his own personal experience of hitting bottom, as one who was, until he found UA, a chronic under-be’r. He freely shares this account with all who dare to become absolutely sober in Underearners Anonymous.

Establishing a sure foundation in these first three steps of the recovery process will guarantee that the underearner, who makes an honest effort, will achieve the spiritual awakening which is the promised result of working the steps in the Underearners Anonymous program just as it is in each and every other twelve-step community.

## Disclaimer





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Rarely have we seen a person fail who  
has thoroughly followed our path.  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG. 58

## *Preface*

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My precious and faithful book launch action partner, Jeffrey, had very kindly admonished me for cutting my ties to the Tuesday Morning Underearners Anonymous Men's meeting. It is a credit to his own mastery of the spirit of unity in the body of recovery that he did not cut off his relationship with me as some others have done.

Shortly after his brotherly "scolding" I began preparations for the third book in my "Creating a Sober World" series, *Yet Not I*. As I gathered my thoughts on how I should proceed, it became immediately obvious to me that my compatriot in recovery was right—I needed to come back to UA. It was not so much that UA needed me—it does need me in the way that all twelve-step recovery embraces the "we" that makes us all one in recovery—but I, indeed, needed UA. I had a debt to pay. I needed to give back what has been so freely given to me.

Underearners Anonymous was the reason I had been so joyfully able to finish my last book—and for all the chaos that is now roiling our fellowship—it is still a life-transforming and sacred space; an amazing gift that keeps on giving.

I saw my duty. I must graciously re-embrace this wonderful gift and pass it on to all who will receive it.

## Preface

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG. 17

## *Dedication and Acknowledgements*

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This little booklet is written in honor of and in tribute to all those who have gone before us on this path of spiritual transformation by way of the twelve steps.

First, in heart-felt gratitude is our beloved Andrew Deutsch, the acknowledged co-founder of Underearners Anonymous who, along with fellow members of his Debtors Anonymous group, envisioned the possibility of using the tools of DA and the steps set forth by Alcoholics Anonymous to help people overcome underearning and was responsible for the launch of the Underearners Anonymous Fellowship in 2005.

We are extremely indebted to Andrew and all those who, over the years, have joined together in expanding this wonderful life-changing and world-transforming community.

In extending thanks and heartfelt appreciation to Andrew, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that none of what he and his UA co-founders passed down to us would have been possible without the breakthrough contributions of Alcoholics Anonymous founders, William Griffith Wilson and Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith. Wilson believed that the movement, of which he and Dr. Smith had played such key roles in advancing, could one day save our troubled world. In his speech at the second AA World Services Conference in 1955 Bill Wilson said:

There are those who predict that Alcoholics Anonymous may well become a new spearhead for a spiritual awak-

## Dedication and Acknowledgements

ening throughout the world. When our friends say these things, they are both generous and sincere. But we of AA must reflect that such a tribute and such a prophecy could well prove to be a heady drink for most of us – that is, if we really came to believe this to be the real purpose of AA, and if we commenced to behave accordingly. Our society therefore, will prudently cleave to its single purpose: the carrying of the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Let us resist the proud assumption that since God has enabled us to do well in one area, we are destined to be a channel of saving grace for everybody.<sup>1</sup>

Bill was quite aware that AA needed to focus on helping alcoholics and not allow pride and grandiosity derail it from its primary purpose. Bill's wife Lois affirmed this sense of the world-changing potential of the movement that might come to fruition when the principles upon which it was based became familiar to more and more people. At the AA World Services Conference in Montreal in 1985 Lois declared:

I believe, as Bill did, that if he could find a way to give others what he had, he would begin something that would change the world ... Bill and I always believed that, as more and more people embrace our way of life and reach out in love to others, the principles on which our fellowship is based, will one day save our troubled world.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, I need to add that, there would be no AA and therefore no UA were it not for the creator of the Oxford Group out of which AA emerged, Franklin Nathaniel Daniel Buchman. Buchman also believed that his methods and the experience he had embraced at the English Keswick Convention of 1908, and which he had

then passed on to Bill Wilson and others, would one day transform our world. In a talk he gave a few months before his passing in 1961<sup>3</sup> he said:

I want all to feel they have a share as they partake of the priceless boon which has come to them and to me through the Oxford Group ... They can best perpetuate this gift by carrying forward a philosophy that is adequate for a world crisis and that will, at last, bring the nations to the long-looked-for Golden Age ushered in by the greatest revolution of all time whereby the Cross of Christ shall transform the world. <sup>4</sup>

It is in honor of their profound vision for the potential power of the gift that has been passed down to us as members of Underearners Anonymous that I share my deepest gratitude for Andrew Deutsch, Bill Wilson, Dr. Bob Smith and Frank Buchman\*. I hereby dedicate this work to their memory and to all who would be willing to “pass it on.”

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\* Pronounced: Bōōk' mŭn

## Dedication and Acknowledgements

The only specifically American inventions  
that have made this a better world are  
Alcoholics Anonymous and jazz,  
and jazz has no bad side effects.

KURT VONNEGUT



## *If You Want What We Have...*

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If you have decided you want what we have  
and are willing to go to any length to get it—  
then you are ready to take certain steps.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, PG. 58

I first came to Underearners Anonymous in the closing days of 2016. I was in the early stages of writing my second book in what I have been calling the “Creating a Sober World” series.

Suffering from the typical blockages that often stop writers from completing their projects, I fortuitously stumbled upon a July 26, 2016, story on the pages of the online magazine *New Inquiry*. The piece by Caroline Durlacher was titled, “Addicted to Failure: Neoliberalism foists on career-minded millennials a self-relation which resembles that of alcoholics in the throes of addiction”

I mercifully avoided stumbling over, what was then for me an inscrutable subtitle, and eagerly jumped in and digested:

A friend of mine is in a program now, and she’s doing much better. Underearners Anonymous (UA), a 12-step program founded in New York City in 2006, is a program for people who have trouble pursuing their personal “vision,” a term which appears seven times in the brief “About UA” pamphlet. In one sense, “underearning” is simply what its name implies: an “inability to provide for one’s needs.” But it’s not just about earning a higher salary. It is also about “under-achieving, or under-being, no matter how much money we make.”

“Wow,” I thought, “That’s me!”

Like so many others who first hear of UA, I immediately Googled “Underearner’s Anonymous” and was soon attending my first face-to-face meeting in Oldsmar, Florida, a little town about a half hour’s drive from my home in Tampa.

It was perfect. I would say as much in March of the following year in a letter to my soon to be acquired sponsor, UA co-founder, Andrew D:

I have 36 years of continuous sobriety in AA, but I have been surprised and delighted to find a whole other level of sobriety and possibility for spiritual growth in UA — it embodies what I have been looking for, for the past 36 years. My sense is that UA has taken the recovery message to the verge of a whole new possibly for the world as both Bill Wilson and Frank Buchman believed it would.

It is simply inspired genius. Another installment of the gift of God that has come to us through AA.

UA did what it promised it would. It helped me become aware of those character flaws that had been blocking me from moving forward in my book writing. In UA, I was soon able to step over my self-pity and fear of success—two major personality defects among the many, that I would soon discover, were blocking me from completing my project and becoming all that I should be.

In my regular attendance in meetings, I was inspired and encouraged by the stories of others who were pressing on toward their own goals and objectives. Also, UA was impressively well-organized—phone and in-person meetings were posted on the UA website and listed doz-

ens of times for a “smörgåsbord” of topics appropriate to the healing of underachieving and under-being—every day in every time zone—in a variety of the languages spoken in groups all across the globe, from Iran to Australia. Meeting formats were well laid out and the meetings themselves well-disciplined in the way they were conducted—I surmised that their structure had been inspired by the very orderly way in which I had observed AA meetings were conducted in the New York City area.

I was sold on UA.

I volunteered to be group service representative (GSR) for the Friday Noon Prosperity Express Gratitude Call.

With the loyal support of Jane, Vlad and a handful of others, our gratitude group soon grew in numbers and spawned a Wednesday gratitude meeting—our two groups were so enthused about gratitude that we even thought of establishing a gratitude intergroup and had a vision for promoting gratitude as a tool in UA recovery.

### *Rancho Palos Verdes 2018*

Then I attended my first and only World Services Conference at the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center in Rancho Palos Verdes, CA in late October of 2018.

To say I was shocked and disappointed is an understatement.

The members of the General Service Board did not seem to realize that they were elected to serve the needs of the fellowship. It was obvious to me that these leaders of Underearners Anonymous did not appreciate one of the great gifts that Bill W. had bestowed upon the AA

family and which was available for us to lay hold of and make our own in UA if we could only find the humility to do so.

Besides publishing *Alcoholics Anonymous* and assembling the traditions, Bill had also spent the first years of AA's existence working out a plan to turn over the leadership of AA to its members through their Group Service Representatives (GSR's) and their elected General Service Conference. The job of the smaller General Service Board would be to serve as trustees in corporate legal concerns and to support and serve the needs of the larger fellowship as it was represented by the General Service Conference.

Looking back now, I see why members of UA, not being alcoholics, might not have been able to even mildly appreciate the inspired way that Bill Wilson had structured the governance of AA as a global community.

In talking about that seeming inability, it will serve us to remember some things about the origins of AA.

When Wilson published the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the fellowship numbered fewer than one hundred members between Akron and Cleveland Ohio and New York City. Bill had written the book with the help of his Oxford Group friends in New York and with the support and encouragement of Dr. Bob and the group in Akron. He thought that sales of the book would cover his expenses, but no one seemed to be interested in buying.

But then, when hard-nosed journalist Jack Alexander was told by his publisher about some problem drinkers who seemed to have found a cure for their, up until then, unstoppable alcoholism, he was quick to visit groups in Akron, New York and Cleveland. He

would report that he had discovered a gathering of low-bottom, hopeless drunks who were busy helping each other overcome, what had forever been, a fatal malady. Alexander's piece appeared in the March 1, 1941 edition of *The Saturday Evening Post*, "Alcoholics Anonymous: Freed Slaves of Drink, Now They Free Others."

Jack included in his article a mailing address where readers could write to get a copy of the AA book. Sales of *Alcoholic Anonymous* took off and soon people were writing to Bill asking for more details on how to work the program and how to help their fellow alcoholics recover.

Groups sprang up all around the country. Within thirteen years, membership had swelled to 100,000.

Bill stayed busy answering questions and himself quizzing members on how they were conducting their meetings. I shared this condensed account of that story in my first book *Absolutely Sober: A History, Principles and Practice of the Destruction of Self-Centeredness*:

Members would write to Bill: Who can be a member? On what basis? How about anonymity? Should members charge for the work they do for others?

Either he or his secretary wrote responses to these and many other questions. At some point he asked that the groups send him a list of all the rules and requirements for membership. The list, when Bill wrote them all down together, took a great many sheets of paper.<sup>5</sup>

A friend suggested that all these guidelines could be distilled into a set of principles that would guide the members of this new society in dealing with each other and the outside world.<sup>6</sup> It is remarkable to note that these principles seem to have arisen out of the experience of the groups themselves. Some had been in practice since the

beginning, as was the case with the principle of anonymity.

Bill's genius was in his ability to cull and interpret the vast amount of information he was obtaining from the groups. In this sense it could be said that he was not the author of these principles. The great and notable contribution that Bill Wilson made to the world was his ability to put these principles into a usable form that has sustained the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous all these years. He had found a way of codifying the principles for ordering a God-centered and God-led society.

He originally dubbed these principles *Twelve Points to Assure Our Future*. They were first published in the A.A. magazine, *The Grapevine*, in 1946. Bill later wrote an editorial for each point, explaining its origin and why it was necessary.<sup>7</sup>

These ideas, later named by Bill, the *Twelve Traditions*, took some selling, and Bill was a consummate salesman. They were, along with Bill's other ideas for governance of the society, brought up for a vote at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary convention of A.A. held in St. Louis in 1955.

The proposal to establish a General Service Board, not to govern,<sup>8</sup> but to be the guardian of the Twelve Traditions, was passed by a "roar of approval." Bill W. had turned the fellowship over to its members.<sup>9</sup>

AA solved its organizational challenges and has proven itself to be a stable and resilient organization over the almost seventy years since Bill W. turned the leadership of the fellowship over to its members.

Now, almost twenty years since its own beginning, Underearners Anonymous is facing the same challenge Bill faced. Anyone who would be willing to attend the Zoomed monthly business meeting of the General Ser-

vice Board, as I recently did, would see that the leadership is aware of the challenge that UA faces. The meeting format includes the following paragraph from the forward to the second edition of AA's "Big Book:"

"Our Society then entered a fearsome and exciting adolescent period. The test that it faced was this: Could these large numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership, and money? Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms which would split A.A. apart?

Soon A.A. was beset by these very problems on every side and in every group. But out of this frightening and at first disrupting experience the conviction grew that A.A.'s had to hang together or die separately. We had to unify our Fellowship or pass off the scene. As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the A.A. groups and A.A. as a whole could survive and function effectively.

The challenges which now beset the UA Community are like the ones AA faced and can best be explained by addressing, at least, two factors which, to my way of seeing, stand out above a host of other issues.

Of most significant is the fact that underearning is unlike any other compulsion—substance abuse or behavioural. If an alcoholic or drug addict relapses, it is immediately obvious to all. And, even the behavioural compulsions, such as sex, overeating, debting and gambling, are fairly difficult to hide. But with underearning, the level of dysfunction can be pretty much self-defined and it is almost impossible for those on the outside, or even the underearners themselves, in some

cases, to even know if they are in a state of relapse. Members in leadership positions, in both GSB's and the GSRC, as well as their individual groups, could be in a state of relapse and they and the members they serve could be blissfully, or not so blissfully, unaware of it.

Secondly, the origins of Alcoholics Anonymous, unlike UA, were very organic—that is, AA was built from the bottom up. Although the AA fellowship started in Akron and New York City, it did not really begin its initial rapid growth until people all over the country had time to receive their copy of the “Big Book,” and begin to reach out to fellow alcoholics and join together in hundreds of small, independently run, AA groups.

UA, on the other hand, from what I understand from my contacts in the fellowship, started as a face-to-face meeting in Nyack, New York but soon shifted to mostly phone meetings with members in New York City and then in Los Angeles as New York members moved out to the West Coast. It was not shaped by the dynamics that AA went through as its members underwent the process of hitting bottom and growing toward spiritual maturity in their separate, independently governed, AA groups.

It appears that the development of the UA fellowship has been a monolithic one—our fellowship has been controlled from the top down and not from the bottom up as it was in AA.

Admittedly, these preceding comments are just my own personal insights and opinions.

There are two additional issues which come to mind which I also think should be considered a source of chaos and confusion in the UA fellowship.

My first concern is the issue of “self.”



## Hitting Bottom In UA

The formats of some meetings I have attended refer to helping members become “our best selves.” Even our co-founder, Andrew D., wrote a book, *Build Yourself Up Without Limit*;\*<sup>10</sup> but the twelve-step process, according to the AA book, is not about becoming a better self. It is about the destruction of self-centeredness. The underlearner must undergo this destruction of self-centeredness if they wish to develop the ability to hear the voice of our individual and fellowship-wide higher power—the promised result of becoming “sober”—in order for us to become God-guided individuals in a God-guided recovery community.

Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid.  
It meant the destruction of self-centeredness.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG.14

That being said, there is the other issue that I think needs to be addressed:

Vision.

The UA pamphlet states in several places, even as Caroline Durlacher was quick to point out—that UA is devoted to vision. But the addiction recovery model that comes to us from AA is not about vision. It is focused on developing the ability to—as I have already mentioned—*hear* the voice of our higher power, which is the ultimate authority in our fellowship, as it must come to be the ultimate authority in our own personal lives as well.

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as is expressed in our

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\* A self without limits would be an infinite self, the dangers of which I discuss in more detail in the endnote.

If You Want What We Have

group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

UA SECOND TRADITION

I am quite aware that every member of our UA fellowship, who happens upon this booklet, will likely have their own interpretation of what ails UA. Some are bound to have any number of great ideas on how to calm the chaos that now besets our precious recovery family.

As for me, I will repeat what Bill said in a quote I posted earlier from the AA “Big Book:”

The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, PG. 17

We have a way out; and that way out has forever and will always be to take that first step – the admission of complete defeat.

I suggest that all of us who can see the reality of our present circumstances and who are willing to do so – join me in admitting:

- We are powerless over the chaos and divisions now besetting us in Underearners Anonymous.
- We are powerless over our General Service Boards.
- We are powerless over the General Service Representative Committee.
- We are powerless over our fellow UA members.
- We are powerless over the disunity which results

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from a dual emphasis on vision and hearing.

- We are powerless over the disunity which results from the dual goals of self-actualization and the destruction of self-centeredness.
- We are powerless over our compulsive selves.
- We are powerless over our sick and chaotic world. And ...
- We are powerless over our own underearning and under-being.

Thank God – all is not lost.

There is one thing that we are not powerless over.

That one thing is – the always and ever-present opportunity we have to step over the edge – to let go – releasing our clinging attachment to our old lives and our old ways of being and under-being.

When we are willing to move forward – ever-so-slightly – to ease ourselves toward the brink of our own personal “jumping off place” – to take that final short step, and allow ourselves to make the plunge – God gives us the grace to admit complete defeat.

This step is certain – and its result, certain.

If you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to take “certain steps.”

## If You Want What We Have

By their example they showed us that humility and intellect could be compatible, provided we placed humility first. When we began to do that, we received the gift of faith, a faith which works.

AA STEPS AND TRADITIONS PG. 30

## *Who Cares to Admit Complete Defeat?*

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Step One: We Admitted that we were powerless over underearning – that our lives had become unmanageable.

As Bill Wilson worked on the book that would be the official repository for his twelve traditions, he could not help but be troubled in spirit.

It had been almost twenty years since his friend Ebby Thatcher had come knocking on his door at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn. Ebby had heard that Bill was there at home drinking himself to death. And though Bill would deny it when Ebby pressed the point, yes, he had accepted the fact that his obsession with alcohol was incurable. So, dressed in pajamas and bathrobe, he was sitting at his kitchen table, bottle and glass in hand, somberly focused on the task before him.

Then, Ebby stepped in. It was immediately obvious to Bill that his old drinking buddy was different; something had changed—he was clear-eyed, clean-shaven and neatly pressed. What was it? It soon became clear—Ebby was sober, shockingly sober. Bill had not seen him this way since they were classmates together back at Burr and Burton seminary. Ebby, in eager response to Bill's astonishment, patiently began to explain what had happened.

The conversation they began that day, would eventually birth the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous and to a movement that continues to impact us all.

But now, as Bill worked on a new re-telling of the

twelve steps that would accompany the official publication of the twelve traditions, he could not help but wonder about his old pal.

Ebby had been the one to lead Bill into the Oxford Group and mentored him in the Group principles of spiritual “change.” In 1946 and 47 Ebby would be the assistant program director for High Watch Recovery Center in Kent, Connecticut.

But then, inexplicably, Ebby started boozing again. And though his old friend would never regain sobriety, Bill continued to call Ebby his sponsor. Bill did not know it then, but Ebby would die of emphysema in 1966 without, himself, ever fully experiencing the change toward which he had directed Bill. Ebby’s case was just one of the many that the founder of AA would puzzle over as he prepared his commentary on the twelve steps.

“What was preventing Ebby from staying sober?”

And, why had so many others, like him, come into the fellowship over the previous twenty years only to relapse into — as was most often the case — a final brutal struggle with demon rum.

Bill penned his conclusion in two words that still resonate with all of us who desire to share our recovery with a world that is addicted to everything. Bill placed these words as the answer to the question he asks in the first paragraphs of *Step One* in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*:

Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that, glass in hand, we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive drinking that only an act of

Providence can remove it from us.

No other kind of bankruptcy is like this one. Alcohol, now become the rapacious creditor, bleeds us of all self-sufficiency and all will to resist its demands. Once this stark fact is accepted, our bankruptcy as going human concerns is complete.

But upon entering A.A. we soon take quite another view of this absolute humiliation ...

### *Absolute humiliation.*

For most people, absolute humiliation is something that they will, at all costs, strive to avoid. But for the low-bottom hopeless drunks who were desperately looking for a way out of their bondage, this absolute humiliation was like a glue that bonded them as they were drawn together in the pioneering days of the New York and Akron chapters of the drunk squad of the Oxford Group.

Bill continues:

In A.A.'s pioneering time, none but the most desperate cases could swallow and digest this unpalatable truth. Even these "last" gaspers often had difficulty in realizing how hopeless they actually were. But a few did, and when these laid hold of A.A. principles with all the fervor with which the drowning seize life preservers, they almost invariably got well. That is why the first edition of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," published when our membership was small, dealt with low-bottom cases only. Many less desperate cases tried A. A., but did not succeed because they could not make the admission of hopelessness.

As AA matured, many newcomers would come into the fellowship who had not yet been struck by the absolute humiliation that the pioneers had suffered.

But if these “problem” drinkers would only listen and learn from the old-timers, they too, could absorb that sense of absolute humiliation without being forced to pay so dear a price as the founders had been compelled to pay.

It is a tremendous satisfaction to record that in the following years this changed. Alcoholics who still had their health, their families, their jobs, and even two cars in the garage, began to recognize their alcoholism. As this trend grew, they were joined by young people who were scarcely more than potential alcoholics. They were spared that last ten or fifteen years of literal hell the rest of us had gone through. Since Step One requires an admission that our lives have become unmanageable, how could people such as these take this Step?

It was obviously necessary to raise the bottom the rest of us had hit to the point where it would hit them.

We’ll pause here for a moment.

Yes, we are dealing with underearning – not alcoholism. But those of us who have really hit bottom in UA can readily identify with this absolute humiliation even as did those second and third generation problem drinkers to whom this preceding passage was addressed.

Here, in this hitting bottom contingent of UA, we are committed to bringing up the bottom for all of us in UA, even as the old-timers did for the newcomers in the infancy of Alcoholics Anonymous.

With this in mind, there is one more installment of humiliation that must be recalled. We find this reminder in the “Big Book.” Bill has highlighted it on page 24, placing it in italics hoping, I would surmise, to make



sure that no one would miss it. But, obviously and unfortunately, many did and still do, or else Bill would not have had to restate it so boldly and unequivocally as he later did in *Step One of the Twelve and Twelve*:

*The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.*

So there it is, Bill's first attempt to emphasize the suffering and humiliation. People, he was saying, compulsively forget just how bad it can get and repeat the same behaviors.

Why do they ignore this suffering and humiliation?

Our addicted person does not have a choice about their compulsive behaviors. Their "choosers," as I am known for saying, "are stuck on stupid."

Most people think that they, and everyone else, have a "sovereign free will." They cannot fathom any good explanation as to why an addicted person continues engaging in the same self-destructive behavior over and over and – as is often said – expecting different results. "Why don't these addicts just learn to make better choices?" The fact is that they do not have the power to *not* act out on their addictive impulses.

Until we admit complete defeat, the result of all our flailing around will always be the same. It is from this reality that we get the second part of *Step Two*, "restore us to sanity." The addicted person appears to be insane.

But addiction is not a mental illness in the psychological sense. It is, and must be treated as, addiction, not

mental illness. The treatment for addiction is the twelve steps, not psychological counseling. In many cases, professional counseling is a helpful adjunct to the addiction counseling, but the addiction must be treated as a primary issue – its own unique form of insanity.

I have been sharing some of these thoughts about *absolute humiliation* with friends in our UA fellowship for a number of years now. Most often, the reaction I have received when I say, “humiliation,” is a polite correction, “You should not say humiliation—you need to very humbly say “humility.”

I have received this response in one-on-one conversations and in groups. When I shared on this topic in the Tuesday morning men’s group some months ago, for instance, the shares I received back were basically in the already mentioned form of, “Oh, no. You should always say humility, not humiliation.” After receiving any number of these reactions, I finally got a sense that UA would never be able to really sober up. It was then, that I walked away from participation in the fellowship for several months.

Although, actively disengaged, I still stayed in touch with my friends in UA and was kept abreast of the total breakdown that has occurred. There is nothing to say about it except to say, “Are we sufficiently humiliated yet? How bad does it have to get in the two GSB’s and GSRC and with all of us before we have the gumption to finally admit complete defeat?” We each must take responsibility, must we not? This is *our* family.

When I finally decided to come back, I started by attending the men’s 5 PM ET meeting. During my first

shares in that group, I quoted from Bill's passage on complete defeat and was relieved to receive a cordial response by the group in general. But most importantly, it seemed that a number of men actually heard the message. Over the next several meetings, some began to say, "I am suffering absolute humiliation."

"Bravo for them" I say. Anyone who can utter that painful phrase is on their way. A number have also reached out to me. They really hear the truth in the words quoted from the *Twelve and Twelve* in what I am saying and they want to hit bottom in UA. They recognize the importance of embracing this *absolute humiliation*.

That is the reason why I am writing this little booklet and intending to freely gift the Kindle version to the whole fellowship. I plan on making it available as a no-cost resource to all those whom, I prayerfully anticipate, will take responsibility for making sure that we, the whole family of Underearners Anonymous—from the top to the bottom—from old-timers to newbies—join in harmonious and concerted acceptance of our absolute humiliation.

So now, in response to an unspoken challenge which I suspect is hanging pregnantly in the air, for some, if not all of us: "What exactly is this *absolute humiliation*?"

My answer to that inquiry is found in one of the foundational books of our Western culture—the Old Testament *Book of Genesis*.

In *Genesis* Chapter 3, God tells Adam to *not* eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But soon, a second voice comes onto the scene. The double—Diablos—the devil, a second voice—duality—doubt has arrived and asks, "Has God really said?"

We all, of course, know that Adam becomes undone by this doubt and succumbs to eating the fruit. Instantly he is shocked to see his own nakedness.

He and Eve have forever been naked—ever since their creation—but his and Eve’s nakedness has never seemed to bother them. But now, suddenly, as Adam’s eyes have been opened to behold his own nakedness, he is overcome by an emotion that he has never before been forced to endure—absolute humiliation.

I need to add, that in addition to suddenly beholding his own nakedness Adam has now also shifted into a new position relative to his being in the created order. He, who was up until this moment, fully embodied, now becomes the disembodied observer of his own nakedness (perhaps actually seeing his own nothingness, which will be discussed in the next chapter). This will be important to remember as we move forward.

He flees from the horror of all of it. He and Eve run and seek to hide and busily try to cover themselves with fig leaves.

I’ll pause here for some editorial comments. Do you not see the human condition in this?

All of humanity, since that fateful day is in a state of existential uncoveredness. All human activity is, in one form or another, directed at covering up this nakedness.

Our pursuit of power and control, fame, fortune, influence, and all the multitudinous activities one can imagine, fall under the heading of the three wills which can be referred to by the names of the modern-era thinkers who named them: Friedreich Nietzsche’s will to power; Sigmund Freud’s will to pleasure; and Victor Frankl’s will to meaning.

## Hitting Bottom In UA

Our addicted personalities are built upon our naturally given wills to power, pleasure and/or meaning.

People think they can, in exercising their own sovereign wills, cover themselves even as Adam and Eve attempted to do.

The squabbles which have now embroiled the UA fellowship, on every level, are just a manifestation of the same compulsive defects of character acted out by us underearners wherever we may be in our community.

Absolutely humiliating!!!

How do we find some solution to our problem?

In the case of Adam, God had a plan.

God would not let Adam and Eve cover themselves. He killed animals and prepared skins to cover the nakedness of these two disobedient ones. In time the whole Biblical narrative shows itself to be an account of how God planned to prepare a body that would cover the nakedness of his human creation.

Underearners Anonymous and all twelve steps communities are an extension of that plan whether people are aware of it or not. This extended plan is spiritual, not religious, as is often said.

Through Lutheran Pietist pastor Frank Buchman, God prepared a way of gathering that allows those of us who have been forced out of hiding—even if ever so slightly—to have our absolute humiliation covered—or as we are blessed to say: recovered. We, who have had our “fig leaves” stripped away, have been brought together as a covering for one another. We have quit being individual “I’s” —“I was naked and I hid myself” —we are now a “We.” *We* have admitted that *we* were powerless over ... our existential nakedness (or perhaps,

our nothingness) ... we cannot cover ourselves. Our lives have become unmanageable.

Now, we can say, "I was naked—absolutely and humiliatingly naked—but I found my 'covering'—my 're-covering'—in my recovery family."

To belong to such a group as ours ... is to be re-embodied. When an alcoholic comes to AA or an Under-earner comes to UA—or any other of us addicted ones come to our "home" group— all we need say is, "I am an alcoholic," or "I am an underearner," etcetera—and immediately, we become members of the body. We are instantly reimbodied—our absolute humiliation is now covered because the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop the destructive behavior that has brought us into our new family.

There is much more that will be said. But, for now, we welcome you into the process of *Hitting Bottom in Underearners Anonymous*.

If you can admit that you are powerless—that you have come to a place of complete defeat—if you have experienced or are willing to admit to the experience of *absolute humiliation*—then, we have got you covered.

Welcome to the body that is hitting bottom in underearners anonymous.

## *Being Nothing*

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At the Hospital...I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself, I was nothing...  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG. 13

Bill Wilson went to considerable lengths in telling us how crucial it is – if we really hope to hit bottom in our recovery from addiction – to embrace our powerlessness and absolute humiliation. But then he leaves us in mystery about this little phrase which he has tacked onto the account of his surrender to God, “I admitted...that I was nothing...”

Since I discovered this little nugget in 2016, I have written a whole book about *it*—*Nothing*. If I had not come into UA, I could never have completed that book. In UA I encountered a culture committed to helping me overcome under-being. What I have concluded, from my many months in UA recovery, is that all of my under-being was a result of my ego-driven attempts to: be something—do something—control something—and forever, ‘struggling’ to achieve—something. As I meditated and wrote about “nothing” I discovered that the solution to any problem I might have was simply allowing myself, like Bill, to *be nothing*.

What a precious gift this genius bequeathed to those of us who are eager to hit bottom in UA and embrace our prosperous recovery.

## Being Nothing

Bill was in Towns Hospital in mid-December 1934. He had just finished being detoxified following his latest bout of out-of-control drinking. In depression and despair, he was ruminating over what his friend Ebby had said – that if he would turn his life over to the care of God, he could be cured of his alcoholism.

The thought of a God who could solve his drink problem continued to repulse him. But then...he says:

... for one brief moment, my proud obstinacy left me, and I found myself crying out, more in anger than in pain, I think, 'If there is a God, let him show himself to me; I will do anything, anything. Let him show himself to me.'

"The room lit up in an intense white light and I was caught up in an ecstasy that words cannot describe.

"In my mind's eye, it was if I were on a mountaintop and a wind, not of air, but of spirit flowed through my body, and it burst upon me that I was a free man. The obsession to drink left me. That obsession that absolutely pervaded my total being left me.

"Eventually the ecstasy subsided and now I found myself back in that hospital bed, but this time, surrounded by a presence, a presence of pure joy. And I realized that I, this number one man, that I was a part, if even only a tiny part, of a universe ruled in justice by a loving compassionate personal God; and all I could say was, 'So this is the God of the preachers. This is what they've been talking about all these years.'<sup>11</sup>

The above is a brief portion of Bill's usual talk, this time given in Dallas in 1954. In it he described in detail, the moment of his surrender – and what a profound experience it was. I can never hear it, nor read about it, that I am not touched by the depth of Bill's conversion.

We could spend some time focusing on Bill's spirit-



ual awakening, but any dwelling on this subject of spiritual awakenings would be premature. We are still focused on “hitting bottom” and *being nothing*.

Bill never did elaborate upon his experience of *being nothing*, although he later mentioned it again in *Step Seven of the Twelve and Twelve*:<sup>12</sup>

Many of us who had thought ourselves religious awoke to the limitations of this attitude. Refusing to place God first, we had deprived ourselves of His help. But now the words “Of myself I am nothing, the Father doeth the works” began to carry bright promise and meaning.

Bill had likely come to speak of *being nothing*, in the way that he did, because the Oxford Group of which he had been an active member in the years leading up to his writing of the AA text, had embraced this idea of *being nothing*. Frank Buchman was fond of saying:

This listening to God is not the experience of a few men. It’s the most sane normal healthful thing a person can do ... You begin to realize your own nothingness.<sup>13</sup>

Buchman himself had undergone his own spiritual transformation at the English Keswick\* Convention in 1908. It was there that he likely first came to regard himself as *being nothing*. A song which was sung there since the first convention in 1875 captured the Keswick emphasis on the destruction of self-centeredness:

Oh, To Be Nothing  
Oh, to be nothing, nothing  
Only to lie at his feet.

---

\* pronounced: Kes'-ik. The “w” is silent.

## Being Nothing

A broken and empty vessel –  
For the Master's use made meet!  
Emptied that He might fill me  
As forth to His service I go;  
Broken, that so unhindered,  
His life through me might flow.

Oh, to be nothing, nothing  
Only to lie at His feet,  
A broken and emptied vessel –  
For the Master's use made meet!

GEORGIANA M. TAYLOR 1869

Attendees of the Keswick Convention, like Frank, would also have been reminded of the writings of St. John of the Cross:

To reach satisfaction in all,  
Desire its possession in nothing  
To come to possess all,  
Desire the possession of nothing  
To arrive at being all,  
Desire to be nothing.

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

At the time Buchman and Wilson were advancing this idea of *being nothing*, the thought was being poeticized in popular and influential literature of the period:

I've been freed from the self  
that pretends to be someone,  
And in becoming no one,  
I begin to live.  
It is worthwhile dying,  
To find out what life is.

T.S. ELIOT

Although this emphasis on being nothing may have been a slightly more common confession in Christian monastic communities, it had never found its way, at least as far as I was aware, into the church world at large. I myself was pleasantly surprised when I discovered, for the first time, that The Apostle Paul agreed with this idea of being nothing:

If anyone thinks they are something, when  
they are nothing, they deceive themselves.

GALATIANS 6:3

### *The Philosophy of Nothing*

Although Bill Wilson and Frank Buchman would almost surely have been completely unaware of it, the notion of the *being* of *non-being* was beginning to become a topic of philosophical discussion at the same time that the Oxford Group was in its heyday, and the founders of AA were working the way to their respective bottoms.

The leading philosopher of the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger, wrote his monumental work, *Being and Time* in 1927. Shortly thereafter he began his lectures at Friberg University with a talk entitled, *What Is Metaphysics?* He started off that lecture by saying that any discussion of metaphysics, or the meaning of being, must begin with a question about nothing. Heidegger then quickly confirms a conclusion made by his nineteenth century philosophical predecessor Georg W.F. Hegel regarding the oneness of being and non-being:

The nothing does not remain the indeterminate opposite of beings but reveals itself as belonging to the Being of beings. "Pure Being and pure Nothing are therefore the same" This proposition by Hegel is correct.<sup>14</sup>

I'll say that again more simply for clarity:

## Being Nothing

PURE BEING AND PURE NOTHING  
ARE THEREFORE THE SAME.<sup>15</sup>

This statement sums up what I am suggesting as a sober way to think about our being. If we wish to be *pure being*, we must first embrace *pure non-being*. In other words, if we wish to fully be all that we are meant to *Be* we must first embrace our perfect *Non-Being*. This will surely seem like a strange idea, but you will see the validity of this truth when we go back in time to the first philosophers and take a look at where our understanding of *being* and *nothing* originated.

But, before we go there, we will benefit from first closing out our observations on how people deal with the idea of *nothing* in our postmodern world by looking at how science has dealt with *nothing*, or “the nothing.”

Once again, Heidegger is the one who has the most penetrating words to say in this regard:

Against it (nothing) science must now reassert its seriousness and soberness of mind ... The nothing—what else can it be for science but an outrage and a phantasm? If science is right, then only one thing is sure: science wishes to know nothing of the nothing. Ultimately this is the scientifically rigorous conception of the nothing. We know it, the nothing, in that we wish to know nothing about it.<sup>16</sup>

And

Scientific existence possesses its simplicity and aptness in that it relates to beings themselves in a distinctive way and only to them. Science would like to dismiss the nothing with a lordly wave of the hand ... the presumed Soberness of mind and superiority of science become laughable when it does not take the nothing seriously.<sup>17</sup>

Those who do not keep abreast of unfolding scientific knowledge may not know that, in the twentieth century, the scientific community has been challenged to come to grips with *the nothing* in two different ways:

**1: *The nothing out there.*** Since the dawn of recorded scientific investigation in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, thinkers have asked the question, “Did our cosmos have a beginning or is it infinite – without beginning or end?”

The 4<sup>th</sup> century BC atomist and natural philosopher, Democritus, said that all that existed was atoms and the void. He also thought that the cosmos was made up of an infinity of infinite worlds.

This idea of an infinite cosmos has been, throughout the ages, one of the two ruling paradigms. The other significant theory is the one presented in the Bible.

The Biblical view holds that the world had a beginning, being created by God out of nothing. This belief was always open to debate as to its scientific merit until the early twentieth century when astronomers began to observe, what they would later determine to be, an expansion of the cosmos. This expansion seemed to suggest that our universe had started from a moment of time in the distant past.

This theory came to be called the “Big Bang Theory.” This theory remained just that—a fairly convincing idea—until two radio astronomers discovered what is now called The Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation. With their radio telescope, they were able to capture an image of our universe when it was only 380,000 years old—still in its infancy. For most people this was sufficient proof to confirm the idea of our cosmos starting from a much smaller-sized ball of plasma roughly 13.74 billion years ago – it had a beginning.

Astrophysics and their fellow cosmologist were not particularly pleased with the idea that our universe had started from an unbelievably heavy little pea-sized ball—and before that...*nothing*? As Heidegger would say, scientist wished to know nothing of this nothing.

Scientists have instead dreamed up a twenty-first century version of Democritus's infinite multiverse. In their attempts to establish the validity of this infinite multiverse they are also in trouble. There is no way of measuring anything out beyond the limits of our universe—all the tools for doing so exist only inside of space and time—so scientists cannot say exactly how our universe appeared out of ... what?—*Nothing*? You see their perplexity.

Physicists face a second difficulty in attempting to prove the existence of an infinite multiverse because they must rely on mathematics to establish their theories regarding the multiverse. But mathematics itself, as ultimate truth, has been in a crisis for the past one hundred years.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Bertrand Russell, in attempting to answer the philosophical skeptics of previous generations, began asking the question "What is a number?" He failed in his attempt to come up with an answer. Then, in the 1920s Kurt Gödel proved that there is no truth in mathematics. He established this truth using mathematics. Russell and Gödel both concluded that mathematics is a tautology.\* There is no ultimate truth in mathematics. There is no way to use numbers to prove that anything exists out beyond the edge of our finite universe.

**2: *The nothing down here.*** Max Planck, one of the founding fathers of quantum physics said this in 1945:

As a man who has devoted his whole life to the most clear-headed science, to the study of matter, I can tell you as a result of my research about atoms this much: There is no matter as such. All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particles of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.<sup>18</sup>

Most people would be totally oblivious to the fact that this booklet, which you are now holding, and even the hands which hold it, do not “exist” in the way that we have—since the beginning of scientific thinking—been taught to think about things “existing.”

Everything we see and touch ... everything that we are... is the product of a conscious intelligent mind. That mind is the creator and sustainer of all matter. What *is* here is merely waves of energy of two types which have become bound together by the force of some sort of cosmic consciousness:

**Photons**—light waves/ particles (light is determined to be waves or particles depending on how the light is measured.) Light combines with bosons.

**Bosons**—like photons, are not actually particles, as such; they seem to emerge from an energy matrix referred to as the boson field.

Photons and bosons combine to form quarks; then, quarks and photons combine to form protons, neutrons, and electrons, the secondary building blocks of all that we think of as matter—but matter is still not matter in the materialistic sense, but the product of a cosmic mind.

### *Science vs. The Nothing*

This has been a short summation of the two main circumstances in which the world of science has come up against *the nothing*. Of course, those whose lives are totally committed to science do not wish to deal with the implications of having to accept the *nothing out there* and the *nothing down here*. Thus, the world of science continues to lose credibility among ordinary folk as we non-scientists now have access to the internet and can see for ourselves how confused science has become – all because of the scientific world's fear of *nothing*.

### *The Origins of Our Confusion Over Being and Nothing*

So, how did our world become so confused about *being* and *non-being*?

I first need to confess that I would have come to know none of what follows had not a dear fellow UA member, upon hearing that I was writing a book about *nothing*, suggested to me that I read Peter Kingsley's book, *Reality*.

*Reality* is Kingsley's deep study of a poem by the "philosopher" Parmenides. I put the word "philosopher" in quotes because Parmenides is the "thinker" whom Plato looked back to as his authority when he was working out his own philosophy. But you could safely say that Parmenides was not actually a philosopher in the way we think of that term today.

According to Kingsley, Parmenides was a high priest of Apollo. As was the custom, such a priest would enter into a cave or temple and, after ingesting a beverage made from wheat infested with an ergot having the properties of a hallucinogen similar to LSD, lie down in the temple. Guarded over by temple attendants, he



would then enter into a trance state and be transitioned into the “the other world.”

Parmenides’ poem is a record of his journey into the underworld. Entitled, *On Nature*, the poem served the ancient world as a philosophical underpinning for what would later become Plato’s, “rational” universe.

During his trance, Parmenides descends down into the domain of the dead where he encounters the goddess of death, Persephone (the one whose duty it was to execute the curses which have been laid upon the souls of the deceased).

She tells him of three paths that may be traveled:

*I will do the talking; and it's up to you  
to carry away my words once you have heard them.  
What I will tell you is which of the roads of inquiry,  
and which roads alone, exist for thinking.  
The one route, that is and is not possible not to be,  
is the way of Persuasion; for persuasion  
is Truth's attendant.<sup>19</sup>*

*And as for the other, that it is not, and  
is necessary not to be: this, I can tell you,  
is a path from which no news returns.  
For there is no way you can recognize what is not –  
there is no travelling that path – or tell anything about it.  
What exists for saying and for thinking must be.  
For it exists for it to be; but nothing does not exist.  
You ponder that*

The first path that the goddess has laid out for Parmenides was the route of Persuasion—the way that is... and is impossible not to be—existence. This can roughly be summarized as, “Being is.” We’ll call this path the path of *Being*.

## Being Nothing

Then she tells of a second path. This is a way that is actually – *not* a way. She declares that you cannot travel this path or even say the word *nothing*, because “*nothing* does not exist.” This is the path of *Non-Being*.

Then, there is a third path, which she describes as a path of constant change—the path described by Parmenides’ philosophical antagonist, Heraclitus. We can think of this path as the path of *Becoming*:

*But then I also hold you back as well from the one that mortals fabricate, twin heads, knowing nothing. For helplessness in their chests is what steers their wandering minds as they are carried along in a daze, deaf and blind at the same time: indistinguishable, undistinguishing crowds who reckon that being and non-being are the same but not the same. And, for all of them, the route they follow is a path that keeps turning backwards on itself.*<sup>20</sup>

*How can it come into being? For if it came to be, it is not; and if at some point it intends to be, then again it is not. So it is that creation has been extinguished, and of destruction there is not a word to be heard.*<sup>21</sup>

This third path is Heraclitus’ way of constant change and becoming—diversity. Plato would call the first path the way of truth and this third path he would refer to as the way of opinion.

### ***In Summary:***

Persephone said, that of the three paths, only two actually exist and may be spoken of: *Being* and *Becoming*. The only path that should be traveled according to her is the first path—the way of Truth: *Being is*.

*Why is all of this important?*

In the following generation, Plato will take this poem and use it as the basis for his conception of what we all know to be the universe in which we live.

We will go into more detail in the next chapter when we talk about the *self*, but for now, I know that I need to give my reader a break by bringing this account of *nothing* to a close.

I will simply conclude with the observation that if Parmenides had not been tricked by the goddess of the underworld, we could all be living in trinitarian cosmos which includes *being*, *becoming* and *non-being*. You and I, in *being nothing* would not feel the compulsion to *become something* in the way we do.



But, unfortunately for us, Plato, in fashioning his version of the cosmos, did not include *non-being* in his structure. His version of the cosmos ended up imparting to the Western world, a dualistic *uni-verse* – a unity in diversity – in which *becoming* is in a fatal battle with *being*. *Becoming*, (diversity) is seeking, as is its nature, to destroy *Being* (unity) – it may have already succeeded; we will have to wait and see.



Why did Plato create this unworkable “reality?”

The answer to that question will be covered in the next chapter in which we will tell why and how Plato created his *uni-verse* as a mirror to the ego/self – the disembodied eye of the rational, geometric, soul.

We will also begin our journey of deliverance out of this bondage to the dysfunctional Platonic self, all the while becoming more and more ready to accept our new identity as pure *being/non-being* which comes to us when

## Being Nothing

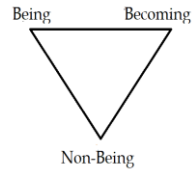
we make an absolute surrender to our higher power.

**A Brief Postscript:** As I finished this little treatise on hitting bottom, I realized that I needed to turn my attention toward what I could do to help restore unity to UA.

Our fellowship, like the rest of Western culture is in a battle between *Being* – (*Unity/Cosmos*), and constant change, *Becoming* – (*Diversity/Chaos*). There is no way anyone can step into the middle of this battle and not get devoured by the chaos. All that can be done is to hold to the sober bottom of the trinity of the *Being, Becoming, and Non-being*.

A few chapters from now, when we get through to the section on Unity, we will see that all we can do to end the chaos in UA, as well as the larger culture, is to simply *Be-Nothing*, and to bring our community to *The Nothing* which is the at the heart of what it is to be sober. We will be devoting all of our energy to helping our beloved friends hit a real bottom.

Our community dynamics will look like this: ----->



Selfishness – self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of all our troubles.

ALCOHOLIC ANONYMOUS PG. 62

## *Sources of the Self*

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Above everything, we...must be rid  
of this selfishness, we must or it kills us!

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG. 62

Despair.

That's the word that comes to mind when I consider the readers of this tract who have courageously made their way to this fourth chapter. You have embraced the absolute humiliation that Bill said was necessary for a solid *First Step* into the process of spiritual change; and by now, you have also begun to tussle with coming to accept the idea of your own *nothingness*. You are also likely to be – as I am only too keenly aware, in working with people at this stage in the process – on the verge of despair.

*Congratulations!* This tinge of despair is a good and hopeful sign that you are now on your way to the destruction of self-centeredness.

The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard wrote the most extensively on this topic of despair in his book, *Sickness Unto Death*. There, he said that the self is made up of various levels of despair.

I will not now go as deeply into these levels as he did, but simply acknowledge that people who come to this stage in their spiritual process, typically experience despair in two ways: despair over the loss of what they thought they were, intertwined with absolute humiliation brought on by the sudden awareness of their own *nothingness*. Secondly, they can also become overwhelmed by the despair that comes from fearing that they

may be unable or unworthy to fully attain the level of spiritual maturity which a successful completion of our process promises.

This despair is the sure sign that self is coming undone. It – the self – is cunning, baffling and powerful and will endeavor to do whatever it takes to remain in complete control. When it senses that steps are being taken that may remove it from the center of a person's *uni-verse*, the self becomes terrified. It brings out the big gun – despair. So, go ahead and despair, dear friend – as you surely must – but *do not* worry...this season of despair will not last forever. It will end when self has been dethroned – removed from the center of your life.

### *The History of the Self*

There are two primary ways in which we view the origins of the self in our Western cultures. The first is the one we have already discussed in Chapter Two in the telling of how Adam fell out of oneness with his Creator. Upon eating the forbidden fruit, Adam descended into selfhood and was cast out into a world of good and evil – duality.

The second way in which we see the emergence of the self is the one that Plato invented. We will tell that story in just a moment; but first I think it would be most helpful to take a look at what happened to Plato's self at the hands of sixteenth century Roman Catholic mathematician and philosopher René Descartes.

Descartes was greatly moved by a sense of doubt concerning the nature of reality following the discoveries of the scientist/astronomers Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler and then Galileo who had, over the previous centuries, established that the earth was not, as had for-

ever been believed, the center of God's Creation. Their discoveries had shown that the earth, in reality, revolved about the sun. This discovery, prompted astronomers to say that the sun was the center of our (seventeenth-century)\* universe. This, along with other scientific breakthroughs of that era, had a profound effect upon the thinking of everyone in our whole Western world.

Descartes found himself going into a period of intense meditation in which he asked himself if there was anything at all that he could accept as being absolutely true. At the end of his search, he came to the conclusion that the only thing that he could know to be certain, without a shadow of doubt, was that he was doubting. Doubt was true. (Here we see a common link in the origins of the Adamic self.)

Descartes further observed that he could only know that he doubted by observing his own thought processes. He, in the end, concluded that the only two things he could be absolutely sure to be true were, "I doubt," and "I think." He could not even know that he doubted except that he knew, for sure, that he was also thinking.

He tells of this discovery in his *Discourse on the Method* (published in 1637). There, he first shared his famous, *Cogito ergo sum* – "I think, therefore, I am." This phrase is often referred to as *The Cogito*.

This *Cogito* is the egoic disembodied "thinker" self, with which most people usually identify.

Now, for a quick little practical exercise:

I can ask you, or anyone else, this question, "Who

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\*It would take a few more centuries before telescopes would become powerful enough to peer beyond the limits of our own solar system.

is this 'I' that says "I think" when you say "I think?"

Most folks will say "Why, that's me, that's my self."

Next, I ask, "Ok then, who is this who answers with the reply, "That's my self"?"

Who is that?

I have inserted this short history on Descartes and a brief practical exercise in the hearing of the "I" because, I am sure they each will help our reader be more aware of the "self" who is engaged in the reading of these pages about the origins of self, as we look back at what was going on when Plato created his disembodied ego, "I."

What follows may be more than many readers would want to know about the Platonic self, but there are those among us who may need to study these pages as they root out the more entrenched nuances of their "rational souls." Those who feel safe in skipping this section can jump to page 47, *The Self in Summary*

### *Why and How Did Plato Do It?*

Before Plato invented his version of the self, Greek personalities did not display a unified sense of identity.

The characters in classical Greek literature do not have a "self" or a "soul" in the way these terms are normally used today. In the Homeric sagas, the characters lack a unique locus where all their thoughts and feelings occur. The Homeric "psyche" seemed to designate the life force which fled the body at death, rather than the site of thinking and feeling.<sup>22</sup>

Homer's characters are filled with energy in the heart, lungs, and other parts of the body. Their great deeds or misdeeds are a result of having various parts of their bodies inhabited by a god or goddess.



Also, in the Homeric legends, the gods and goddesses themselves showed very human traits: anger, vengeance, envy, pride and all the other human weaknesses. The heroes of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* could excuse themselves of immoral behavior by saying “the goddess made me do it.” These tales formed the source of Greek education and resulted in a people who were only as moral as their immoral divinities.

It was into this world that Socrates appeared and began to “philosophize.” He wrote down nothing of all that he taught; his wisdom was preserved by his student Plato.\*

Plato did not intentionally set out to develop a certain new type of character; he was intent on creating a just society, one that would have appreciated the greatness of such a man as his beloved teacher, Socrates.

In the latter half of the Fifth Century BC, Athens was conquered by the neighboring communistic military tyranny, Sparta. The Spartans installed thirty tyrants to rule over Athens. Socrates had been a mentor to some of these tyrants. After the Spartans were defeated and democracy restored, the council charged Socrates with “impiety” – they said that his teaching had undermined morality and corrupted the youth. He was sentenced to death. He could have connived to escape his fate as was commonly done in Athens, but he chose, instead, to remain true to his philosophy and drink the poison that was ordered for his self-administered execution.

As an aristocrat, Plato had been in favor of the tyranny. He, like his aristocrat friends in Athens, had

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\* This history on Plato has been taken from Bertrand Russell’s *History of Western Philosophy* except where noted.

preferred the Spartan form of government over the chaotic democracy which governed the city-state.

After the death of his beloved mentor, Plato went on a journey in search of the best way to govern the city; ancient historians likened it to the wanderings of Odysseus. He would absent himself from Athens for the next twelve years.

He set out in 399 BC, first visiting the nearby city of Megara learning from the wisdom of Euclides, a teacher in the tradition of Parmenides. Then he went to Cyrene, the largest Greek colony in Africa, to study with the mathematician Theodorus, after which he traveled on to Egypt, where he learned from the priests that:

Greece was an infant-state, without stabilizing traditions or profound culture, not yet therefore to be taken seriously by these sphinxly pundits of the Nile.<sup>23</sup>

From Egypt, he sailed back to the Greek colonies in Southern Italy, to Croton, where Pythagoras had relocated his cult when it had come under persecution on the Ionic island-city of Samos. Around 388 BC Plato visited another Pythagorean community in Tarentum and there met Philolaus, the first Pythagorean to write a book, and more importantly he met Archytas, in whom he saw a philosopher who could combine his mastery of geometry with the application of political power.

Under the influence of Archytas, Plato adopted the Pythagorean doctrines of reincarnation, metempsychosis (the transmigration of the soul—reincarnation), immateriality, and communism as practiced by philosophical friends. It would be the teaching of the Pythagoreans that would most affect Plato.

Pythagoras had developed a way of mentoring mem-

bers of his cult by way of a disciplined initiation into the mysteries of geometry which combined ecstasy with rationality. This would be the model that Plato would later use to develop his own band of enlightened minds—lovers of wisdom—his “philosopher kings.”

When Plato finally returned to Athens, he began to attract those who were interested in his wisdom teaching. Central to Plato’s instruction would be the knowledge he had acquired from the Pythagoreans. He would place over the entrance to his Academy:

LET NO ONE WHO IS NOT A GEOMETER ENTER

Plato was most interested in morals and good government, and thus, in seeing how the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, could come to control his own passions—how was he to master “himself” and be empowered to make better choices through reason? How is the immaterial soul, which Plato considered good, to overcome the desires of the physical body, which he considered evil?

The philosopher does this by contemplating and gaining a vision of “the Good.” The “eye of the soul” must turn away from the distractions of the merely illusory world, and catch a vision of the Good. The fruit of this contemplation would be theory (*theoria*: I see the divine – *theo*, divine + *oria*, I see). This contemplation of the Good was to Plato’s way of thinking—*reason*—obtaining a vision of the divine order of the cosmos. It was tied closely to rationality. (The word “rationality” comes from the word *ratio*, the way in which numbers work with such predictability and certainty as to allow calculations of the various parts and angles of geometric forms using deductive reasoning alone, without resort

to empirical evidence.)

Plato sought to reconcile the duality of Parmenides' unity (cosmos), and Heraclitus's diversity (chaos), by saying that the world of diversity was only illusory, apparent, unreal. Behind this world of appearances there was the real, unchanging, unified world. Plato's belief in a reality behind the appearances of things was based on the beauty and wonder that he beheld in the "mystical" power of geometry, and Orphic religious beliefs about the true world and reincarnation which he had learned from the Pythagoreans,

At this juncture I need to interrupt this narrative and point out some key differences between the thinking of Heraclitus, and Plato. Heraclitus favored the auditory over the visual. Plato's thinking is focused on vision—the eye of the soul; whereas Heraclitus had spoken of the hearing of the Logos:

"The *logos* holds always but humans always prove unable to ever understand it, both before hearing it and when they have first heard it."

For Heraclitus' contemporary, Parmenides, truth was also not visual; for his truth came out of the mouth of the goddess of the underworld as he tells us; and even Socrates was known for standing around for hours at a time, on many reported occasions, listening to a voice that spoke to him. He called it his daemon.<sup>24</sup>

And, we cannot forget that the Judeo-Cristian tradition is based on the hearing of the voice of God. I need not add any more to this account, but I cannot help but mention, that addiction recovery is based on learning to hear the voice of our fellowship-wide higher power.

Underearners Anonymous, seems to have left open the door to vision as a guide to our recovery.

In the real world, Plato said, there was the perfect shape of the triangle, the square, the pentagon, the circle and the geometric solids: sphere, tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedrons. These Forms were the true originals of everything in the world of appearances—the diverse and changing world. The circle and the square which we see in our world of appearances are only inferior copies of the true Forms of the circle and square in the ideal, unchanging, world. There was also a perfect Form for cat, and cow, as well as justice, truth and beauty—the large and the small, similar and different—everything that we can think of and see had a perfect Form. All these things which we perceive in the world were, according to Plato, merely imperfect “shadows” of the true Forms which exist in the real world—the world of the *Ideas* (Forms).

Plato’s Ideas did not reside outside of the cosmos. They were immanent—embedded in the apparent order of things, but transcendent to us; his *uni-verse* was divine and he said that we become divine when we align ourselves with this divine order.

The proper functioning of this disembodied soul, Plato says in the *Timaeus*, gives the lover of wisdom access to immortality.

God gave this sovereign faculty to be the divinity in each of us, being that part which, as we say, dwells at the top of the body, and inasmuch as we are a plant not of an earthly but of a heavenly growth, raises us from the earth to our kindred who are in heaven. For the divinity suspended the head and root of us from that place where the

generation of the soul first began, and thus made the whole body upright. Now when a man gives himself over to the cravings of desire and ambition and is eagerly striving to satisfy them, all his thoughts necessarily become mortal and, as far as it is possible altogether to become such, he must become entirely mortal, because he has cherished his mortal part. But he who has been earnest in love of knowledge and of true wisdom, and has exercised his intellect more than any other part of him, must have thoughts immortal and divine, if he attain truth, and in so far as human nature is capable of sharing in immortality he must altogether be immortal.<sup>25</sup>

Plato's disembodied geometric souls would become trained up over a lifetime, as the Pythagoreans had been, learning to control their carnal natures by making the choice between the mortal and the immortal, the carnal and the divine—until they become qualified to be “philosopher kings.” These philosopher kings, as partakers in divinity, would rule over Plato's republic.

Plato was never able to actually test out his vision for utopian government. A friend he had met in his travels in Syracuse, Dion, persuaded him to return there and instruct the younger Dionysius in philosophy, hoping that in Syracuse, Plato could establish his Republic. But it did not turn out well. When Dion fell afoul of court intrigue, Plato was sold into slavery. Ransomed by his friends, he was returned to Athens.

One historian of philosophy observes that Plato seems to have remained true to his pursuit of a philosophically inspired communist utopia, but in the end thought that it could be achieved, not through training a corps of philosopher kings — but through laws:

Indeed, an unending faith in the power of his guiding

vision may account for Plato's otherwise astonishing claim, in his last text, *Laws*, that the "Ideal starting point" for creating a city of laws is ... tyranny!<sup>26</sup>

### *The Self in Summary*

Plato developed, what I have called, the "geometric soul" as the ideal person to rule his communist utopian tyranny. He never succeeded in bringing his Republic into being.

When Greece was defeated and taken over by Rome in 146 BC, Greek philosophical ideals made their way into Roman culture and ultimately played their own unique role, along with a myriad of other forces, in corrupting and destabilizing Roman society. When the Roman Empire finally collapsed in the Fourth Century AD, The only "cultural institution" still standing was the Christian Church.

Christianity could have brought forth its own unique understanding of a Christian "self," but unfortunately, many of the leading early Church Fathers had been students of Plato's ideas through their devotion to the teaching of Plotinus, a third-century AD follower of Plato.

St. Augustine, also, had been a student of Plotinus. Dr. Charles Taylor in his *Sources of The Self* says of him:

... for Augustine the Christian opposition between spirit and flesh was to be understood with the aid of the Platonic distinction between the bodily and the non-bodily.<sup>27</sup> Along with this duality, Augustine took on the full panoply of related oppositions; of course. The higher realm was also that of the eternal as against the merely temporal, of the immutable in contrast to the ever-changing.<sup>28</sup>

## Sources of the Self

Through the teachings of St. Augustine, and other early Christian apologists, Plato's geometric "rational" soul would find its way into the structure of the Western/Judeo-Christian way of thinking and being.

It would not be until the nineteenth century, as the reformation opened up a renewed search into the deeper truths of the Bible, that some Christians would begin to talk about escaping from the bondage of Plato's geometric egoic self and developing the ability to lead a God-centered, God-guided, and God-empowered life. Fortunately for us, in 1908, Frank Buchman got that message and began to pass it on wherever he could.

We are beneficiaries of his largesse.

We can say that we, who are hitting bottom in UA, are committed to the destruction of self-centeredness and being guided by God. We have made it our life purpose to help others destroy self-centeredness and become God-guided as well.

We are no longer slaves to the self. We are each—members of a world-wide body of men and women who have admitted complete defeat and have set out to destroy our bondage to the Adamic/Platonic-Pythagorean-geometric self, thus setting our being free to lead the new life into which our Higher Power, God, is now guiding us.

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the  
turning point. We asked his protection  
and care with complete abandon.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG. 59



## *Surrender of The Will*

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*Step Three:* Made a decision to turn our will  
and our lives over to the care of God  
as we understood God.

Now we are at *Step Three* in our hitting bottom process. We have admitted complete defeat and have embraced our absolute humiliation. We are also becoming eager to embrace our *nothingness*. Perhaps, we have also now entered into the throes of despair.

Wow, what a great spot from which to make our life-changing “decision.” We are now at that place in the process where we surrender our lives to God *absolutely*:

With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Remember that we deal with *under-being*\* – cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power – that One is God. May you find Him now.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG.58-9

### *We Made a Decision*

*Decision* is another one of those words over which folks can be in complete confusion. People think that making a choice and making a decision are the same thing. So, I will set up some examples for clarification.

I can choose to strap on a sport parachute, and then,

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\* alcoholism, of course. But I wanted to let underearners enjoy this passage.

I can choose to take it off. I can then, choose to strap it on again, and choose to board the jump plane and ride over to the jump zone; and then, I can choose to ride the plane back to the airfield.

If I choose to get up out of my seat on the jump plane and step to the edge of the door, I can also always choose to go back and sit down.

But if I step up to the door of the plane and then “choose” to take that next step out into empty space, I cannot, then, change my mind—I cannot make a different choice. I have made a *decision*. I have “killed off” other options. There is no going back to the plane. In fact, the drama of stepping out is so great that the very thought of choosing a return to the plane is unthinkable.

This is what decisions are. They are life-changing and world altering—and when done properly—mind-blowing.

The word *decide* comes from the Latin word for “cut,” *cidere*. From that root we get the words homicide, suicide, genocide, pesticide and many other similar words. In each case, someone or something dies.

In a decision, what dies, is the competing choice or choices—other options. That is what we are trying to make clear when we talk about “deciding” to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God.

Among our recovering friends we often hear it said, “I have to make a decision to turn my life over to God every day.” But that cannot be true. A decision is something that we do one time. Like jumping out of the plane and...

Like getting married.

I may choose to marry Sally or Sue. The appointed

day comes. The one I have chosen, and the one who has chosen me, stand before the officiant, and that person utters the words, “I now pronounce you man and wife.”

In that instant, as those words are uttered, my position in life is suddenly changed. A decision has been made. I, who was up to this moment single, am now no longer single—my status is now, “married.” And if I wish to reverse that *decision*, I must enact another decision—go through a legal process of having my marriage declared ended by a judicially authorized written decree of divorce or annulment.

So, let’s take a look at what you will be doing in *Step Three*. You will be, according to the wording of the step, turning your will and your life over to the care of God as you understand God. When done properly, this constitutes the death to a life centered in the self and turning to a life centered in God—a God-centered life.

Now I need to tell you...those who have gone before us have not helped make this act of decision particularly clear to us. Let’s take Bill Wilson, for example. In the prayer that he provided for alcoholics on page 63 of *Alcoholics Anonymous* he sets forth these words of surrender:

“God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!” ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG. 63

To start off, Bill’s very polite but, wimpy, “I offer myself to thee” is not sufficiently decisive. So, we will instead, need to use stronger wording, “I give,” “I sur-

surrender," or better yet, "I abandon myself to you."

And, to make it more explicit as to what we are surrendering to God – instead of using the word *myself*, a concept over which we are still, most likely, not completely clear – let's describe all those things which constitute my *self*:

My hopes, my dreams, my plans, my schemes; all that I have or will ever hope to have; all that I am or will ever hope to be; my future, my past and my eternal now.

You may find that there are some other dimensions of your being that need to be added to this list, but, for now, this will give us a good example for how to begin.

Besides calling for a surrender of our life (self), this *Third Step* also calls for the surrender of our will. But, as I will again have you notice, in this prayer Bill does not actually use the words "surrender the will" in quite the same way he spoke of surrender of the will in the wording of *Step Three*, which we examined on the previous page. In fact, it seems that, although talking about surrender of the will, Bill continues to speak, in two lines of the prayer, as one who still has his own free will which must be exercised:

"...that I may better do Thy will."

"May I do Thy will always!"

Later, in the AA text, Bill will once again speak as a man who has not actually surrendered his will as he says in discussing the practice of the *Step Ten* daily inventory:

"How can I best serve Thee – Thy will (not mine) be done." These are thoughts which must go with us con-

stantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will."

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG. 85

It would be inappropriate to be too critical of our former atheist friend. When Bill wrote this, his journey of recovery in the Oxford Group had been a tumultuous three years. There were probably not more than forty alcoholics sober in groups between Akron, and NY. And, like most people back then, and even now, he would have found it troublesome to talk about the complete surrender of his "sovereign free will."

I have counseled and sponsored hundreds of people, with many of them suffering relapses before finally becoming fully recovered. When those relapsers returned from their most recent stumbles, I would ask them, "Did you turn your will over to God?" They would almost always respond with, "Yes, yes; I turned my will over to God." Then I would sheepishly ask, "Who was that god: the god of the door knob or the ash tray or the palm tree?" as often jokingly said in AA.

"No, no, no!" They would reply, "I turned it over to God," My next question followed, "Ok, now, tell me this. Do you have a free will?" Almost invariably, and almost without thinking or being aware of the absurdity of it, they would say, "Of course, I have a sovereign free will."

The absurdity of it is that, if they had a free will, then why would they have relapsed; and if they had given their wills to God, how then, did they still have a sovereign free will?

I would next say, "Ok, this time, let's turn your "sovereign free will" over to God.

We then would pray the prayer of surrender which you will soon be shown. When they then surrendered

their “sovereign free wills,” they would seldom, if ever, relapse again. They have killed off their position as one who is an all-controlling, sovereign self.

### *Changing Positions*

On page 62, just prior to where Bill posts his third-step prayer, he uses this phrase:

WHEN WE TOOK SUCH A POSITION...

What we are doing in *Step Three* is changing positions. We are, as Bill said, taking the position that henceforth God is going to be the boss, and we are going to be the worker. He will be the father and we will be the child. He will be the center of our world, and self will be moved to the periphery. We'll still possess a self, but self will not possess us.

In working with people taking this step, I like to add this phrase, “From now on, God, you will be the master and I will be your slave.”

As you might expect, most people recoil at any mention of being a slave to God. It goes against everything that they have ever been taught to think about what it means to be free.

Then, I remind them that they are already slaves to the self. In mustering the courage to pray in this way, they will be letting not just God, but also the self, know that they are now moving into the position of being a slave to God and are no longer willing to be a slave to the self. When this is carefully and patiently allowed to sink in, most folks succumb to the wisdom of letting the self know that they have changed positions.

So now, let's put our prayer of surrender together.

This prayer will need to contain: an admission of complete defeat; a surrender of our lives — *selves*; a surrender of the sovereign free will; and a confession of our new position in relationship to God.

### *Our Sample Prayer of Surrender*

God, I give up. I admit complete defeat. Here and now, I give you my life: my hopes, my dreams, my plans, my schemes; all that I have, or will ever hope to have; all that I am or will ever hope to be; my future, my past, and my eternal now. I include in this surrender: my vision, and my goals; trusting that you will return them to me fully realized in the way you have intended them to be.

I also give you my sovereign free will such as I may have ever had one.

From here on out, you will be my boss and I will be your worker; you will be the father, and I will be your child; you will be the master, and I am now your slave — your love slave.

From this moment forward, please tell me what to do and give me the power to do what you tell me.

Amen.

What is recommended at this point is that you take this sample prayer, pray over it, and modify it only as God directs you. Place your name at the top in place of "*Our Sample...*"

Then, when you have had a chance to prayerfully speak with God concerning this monumental *Step* — either alone or with a trusted spiritual friend as a witness — repeat your prayer out loud. Once your sacred time is complete, take a physical copy of your prayer, sign and date it, and place it in a safe place inside your recovery book, Bible or other sacred literature. Now you will have a memorial to this important hour in which the

Grace of God moved you in your moment of decision.

It is done. You have surrendered and turned your will and your life over to a power greater than your *self*.

Many of us, upon saying our prayer, felt an indescribable joy, the sense of being free from the self and basking in an ecstasy of the *pure being* of *pure non-being*, or as Bill Wilson described it in simpler terms:

When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed... we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the here-after. We were reborn.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG. 63

### *We were reborn.*

I hope that, upon the completion of your prayer, you too experienced that sense of being “born again” that Bill was writing about. If that did not happen, do not give up. Take this little booklet, or your kindle version of it, and go back over it with your sponsor or prayer partner. Find out where you may be drawing back from absolute humiliation, or from total surrender to your nothingness. Perhaps you are unwilling to experience the despair that comes when you finally become engaged with the destruction of self-centeredness. It may be that you have not actually shifted into your new position.

We do not allow ourselves to be impatient with anyone who would want to draw back from this crisis of hitting bottom in Underearners Anonymous. It is so tempting for members of the UA community to embrace the other tools: meetings, time recording, possession consciousness, savings, action partners and meetings, vision, service, and the many other aids to recovery that



the community offers. With such an abundance of resources, it is only natural that our underearning friends would seek to avoid the absolute uncoveredness that comes in seeking out a sponsor with whom they will need to become totally vulnerable – willing to tell the whole truth about themselves as they work the steps.

I have encountered many members, or heard them tell their stories in meetings – of how they had come into UA and enthusiastically made a very encouraging start in the healing of their underachieving, only to realize after a few years into the process, that they had not yet addressed their fundamental problem.

That is reminiscent of people who come into AA and work what is known as a “white knuckle program,” only to relapse into their alcoholism. There comes a day when the underearner has to confront the fact that all the tools at their disposal, apart from the working of the twelve steps, have not yet solved their problem. This might also be the case with any of those involved in the leadership of UA who may now, upon reading through this section of the booklet, see their way clear to come out of denial and concede to the possibility that the chaos which now surrounds them is their very own addiction in full display for all, including themselves, to see.

I pray that this account of hitting bottom will help us all, including those in leadership of our community, to take responsibility for the humiliating situation in which Underearners Anonymous, as a world-wide recovery culture, now finds itself.

This completes the hitting bottom portion of our *Hitting Bottom in Underearners Anonymous* tract.

There are numerous resources available throughout

the recovery world that will show our reader how best to do the inventory steps. Your sponsor surely has their own way of doing inventory, and if you have laid a good foundation in these first three steps, then further solid progress in your journey is assured, as long as you follow directions while also asking our fellowship's higher power to tell you what to do and give you the power to do what *It* tells you.

I finished this fifth chapter of our little booklet, in the final weeks of 2022. In January, I attended both GSB meetings as well as the GSRC meeting. As I considered our painfully obvious and ongoing discord, it stuck me that disunity in UA is here to stay – that is, unless there would be those individual members among us who would be willing to make unity a number one priority.

I had launched this little treatise on hitting bottom as a way to aid our whole community in its much-needed hitting bottom in recovery. I now realized that – as crucial and necessary as the hitting bottom message was – more than just bringing up the bottom was needed. Someone had to take responsibility for bringing unity to UA. And since no one else seemed to even recognize the need, I concluded I could be one who would step up to the challenge.

The following chapters record my adventure of rediscovery and a reconnection to the foundation stones that undergird our marvelous space of spiritual transformation and will hopefully lead us all to oneness in our precious spiritual community

(At top, I shared that I would not be including the inventory steps, but in view of my renewed commitment I have included my own slightly modified version of Bill's inventory steps in *Chapter 8 Perfectly Recovered.*)

## *Unity*

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Our common welfare should come first,  
 personal recovery depends upon UA unity.  
 UNDEREARNERS ANONYMOUS TRADITION ONE

I originally got involved with issues of unity back in June of 2019. An email that I sent to the GSR committee explains it all:

To: All UA Group Service Representatives and other parties interested in UA world service.  
 From: George M. GSR for the Prosperity Express  
 Gratitude Meeting, Fridays @ Noon, EST

Subject: Response to a nomination, (not seconded) that placed my name before the GSR committee for consideration for the position of GSR Committee chair in the May GSR meeting.

I was quite surprised and greatly honored to be called out at our last meeting by [S] who seemed to think I would make a suitable candidate for consideration as the chairperson for the General Service Representative committee. Thank you very much [S] and others who encouraged me to consider serving as chair.

Since that meeting I have been in some serious prayer and meditation as to how I need to respond. I will first share that UA has made a profound difference in my life. I have been involved in 12-step recovery for more than 35 years prior to joining UA, but UA has taken my recovery to a whole new and undreamt-of level of healing. I could happily remain an active member of my home group, and serve as GSR for that group without needing to get any more deeply involved in UA World Service.

As I contemplated what I should do, I reread the traditions

as discussed in the *AA 12 & 12*, read the *A.A. Service Manual* which contains Bill W's history of how and why AA developed its Concepts of World Service, and finally stumbled upon a good summary in our own UA literature – page 5 of 6 from the document sent out last year as [UA-service-structure-document2.1.pdf](#). (I have italicized three words for further discussion):

Just as the Twelve Steps are guides for *personal recovery* and the Twelve Traditions are guides for *group unity*, the Twelve Concepts are guides for *World Service*. These Concepts serve as a path for Twelfth Step work on a world service level, and show how the UA groups, the World Service Conference, and the Underearnings Anonymous General Service Board work together to carry recovery in UA to the still suffering underearner.

I have singled out these three concepts – *personal recovery*, *unity*, and *service* for further comment. I have for some time been aware that our current UA logo, which represents our community, not only to the world, but also to ourselves as a community, does not include the words *unity* or *service*. And in regard to *recovery*, we see a redundancy in the use of words *prosperity* and *abundance*.



Prior to last year's World Service Conference, it became obvious to me that some of the problems we are having as a community may be due to the fact that we have an inadequate vision of what our culture is all about. (I need to mention that my degree was in Advertising from the University of Florida and have always had an eye for these issues that affect an organization's public relations)

Getting clear about the shape of the conversation a community is having is fundamental to how an organization functions. It seems to me that before UA can grow in unity and service and into its full potential it, (we), must take responsibility for how we present our message in visual form. The question is, "Is this how we want the world to see us – is

## Hitting Bottom In UA

this how we want to see ourselves?

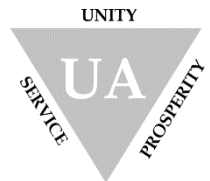
Alcoholics Anonymous, in contrast, presents itself as: ----->



I know. I am sure that the founding UA members did not want to have a copy-cat triangle. I understand. But I cannot get my head around our logo. Since the time of Plato, rational thought has been geometric and visual. I might be able to serve inside of a community that sees its relational structure as rectangular, but I cannot engage in a conversation for addiction recovery that does not include unity and service. I am also averse to being so repetitiously committed to prosperity/abundance—for me it does not feel like sobriety but more like self-centeredness.

Since I became involved with my own gratitude group, there have been many who have thought that gratitude should be a fundamental concept, a tool of UA recovery, as it includes the ideas of both receiving and giving which, many see as the essence of prosperity. I also question the use of the word *abundance* as equivalent to recovery or prosperity. It's a fine word, but is not prosperity more than merely abundance?

Prior to our WSC last year, at the urging of some of my group members, I came up with a few ideas which I shared with some other GSR's.



Mark B. our former GSRC chair came back with his own idea ----->

## Unity

I was told that the WSC last year was a break-through, but I found it very discouraging. I am not convinced that Robert's Rules of Order will bring about the unity we seek. Since the conference I have lost the passion I had to see a shift in our world service conversation. My being called out in last month's meeting has reawakened me to the concerns that I was expressing prior to the conference.

In my opinion, our current logo is evidence that UA has some more growing to do. We appear to have not made a commitment to placing *unity* as well as *service* in the center of our cultural conversation but we are seeking to use a political process to bring about unity and encourage service.

I say that it is time that we had a UA-wide conversation and come up with an updated vision of who we are as a culture. I suggest that we need to engage in this discussion over a period of some months until we begin to arrive at a consensus, a unanimous agreement, if possible, as to what we can really commit ourselves to.

For myself, I would not be willing to serve as chairperson for the GSR committee inside of what I consider such an unworkable framework. Roberts Rules of Order will not fix what is ailing us in UA at the level of world service until we have this discussion.

I would be willing to lead a weekly discussion of the issues that I have raised here as chair of a GSR *subcommittee* with the hope that we can enroll the larger community in a more stable, solid and unified vision. That vision is, I suggest, one that includes at the very least: *unity and service*. Perhaps we could also see the advantage of heralding *gratitude and responsibility*. In any event, I am convinced that this discussion is an idea whose time has come. Until then I myself need to stay out of the political fray. I see no way of getting at least as much out of this next level of service as I put into it—for a compulsive underlearner that would be a step into a state of relapse.

I hereby take my name out of consideration for GSR

committee chair person.

In gratitude and service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George".

George M.

Since I wrote this letter back in 2019—as I do not need to tell you—things have only gotten worse. And things will only continue to get worse, I say, until unity is made the number one priority in our fellowship.

Unity is the first tradition for a reason. The twelve-step world, as we have come to know it, began one night in the spring of 1935, when Bill Wilson met for dinner with Dr. Robert Smith in the Akron Ohio home of Henrietta Siberling. Henrietta had arranged for Dr. Bob to meet Bill Wilson, who was, like Bob and herself, also an Oxford Group member visiting from New York City. He was using group principles to stay away from alcohol. The doctor expected that Bill would attempt to tell him, a physician—who was confident that he knew all there was to know about alcoholism—something that he had not already heard.

Bob was surprised when Bill began their conversation with words to the effect of, “Doc, I need your help. I have to talk to another alcoholic or I will not be able to keep myself from drinking.”

Thus began an ever-expanding fellowship that is based on the fact that all of us who hope to overcome our malady—in whatever form it may have taken—must embrace others who are likewise suffering. We need each other...even as Bill said to Bob.

I need you and you need me.

So I, myself, had to come back to UA.

I deeply regret, and apologize to the whole UA family for not staying and fighting for unity before now. I was wrong. I am so ashamed of myself. I have learned my lesson. I cannot fulfill my destiny in life without you. Please forgive me. This time I will not quit until UA is unified or I have passed on into eternity.

### *I Am Responsible.*

The next thing I must do is to declare to the whole Underearners Anonymous family that: Here and now I take full responsibility for bringing about unity in UA. (I penned this on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2023.)

Although I may, at some future date, volunteer to be on an official unity subcommittee, it will not be necessary for me to do that now in order to be *the* one, or *a* one, who is responsible for unity. Either officially or unofficially, I am now responsible for Unity in UA.

### *Admitting Complete Defeat.*

There will be several opening steps that will need to be taken to ultimately bring unity to UA. The first will be to declare, as I already have said at the end of chapter one, “We are defeated.”

I know that this will be difficult for many people, from the top to the bottom of our community, to accept. But I am sure that there may be any number of people who see how impossible our situation is, and who would be willing to join me in the embrace of *Step One*: I am powerless over the dysfunction in UA and my life is unmanageable. We do not need a great number of people to join together in this. One more will do—just as one other person was all that Bill needed to launch Alcoholics Anonymous.



### ***Embrace Our Absolute Humiliation***

I have talked about this crisis of unity with a representative sample of folks in UA leadership and I am quite aware of how strong is the aversion to embracing absolute humiliation. I will not be forcing absolute humiliation on anyone. I simply stand here at the bottom—in the basement—as it were, of UA. I am digging, digging, digging down—deeper and deeper—onto the bedrock of complete defeat and absolute humiliation. I do this because this space of gathering that has been passed down to us by those who have gone before us is so promisingly glorious, tremendous, and powerful. It need not be retarded in its growth into its proper dimensions by being left to totter on shifting sand. This gift needs to be firmly planted on an unmovable foundation.

If, at any time, those in the structure above notice that they are defeated, they are welcome to come and join us—we defeated ones—here. We will not be trying to bring the UA structure down to our level; we will be bringing up the bottom—working with other low-bottom under earners to bring absolute humiliation to UA by “attraction rather than promotion.”

### ***Having Had a Spiritual Awakening as The Result...***

Rarely do we ever hear this step read clearly: *Step Twelve*: “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” we usually hear, “uzzuahh result...”

I, myself have had a spiritual awakening as The result of working these steps. I have, over the last forty years, engaged in many, many different psychological and spiritual processes, but it is the practice of the twelve steps that has ultimately brought about my spiritual awakening such as I can now claim to have had one.

Just as Bill came to know great joy upon his surrender to God, I have come to know the joy unspeakable that comes from *being nothing*.

... joy unspeakable and full of glory: 1 PETER 1:8 KJV

I have already mentioned the ecstasy that comes to anyone who has arrived at this place of *being-nothing*. I know that many will think it crazy, but I promise you that I will be standing in the basement of UA and continuing to *be nothing* as a way of welcoming home all those who enter into our fellowship, surrender to our higher power, and come to know – as Bill and so many others have discovered – as I repeat what T.S. Eliot said:

I've been freed from the self that pretends to be someone and in becoming no one I begin to live. It is worthwhile dying to find out what life is.

### ***Disunity From Top to Bottom***

So far, I have been discussing unity as it is seen from top to bottom.

People come into UA, or any other recovery community, with some hitting bottom and others, coming into recovery, feeling that they do not need to admit complete defeat.

These individuals are confident that they are, in some way, still in control. They may even get into service and leadership but they have not yet tasted the full depth of the problem as it is experienced by the low-bottom underbe'r.

The Top  
GSB's & GSRC  
Self-control,  
Political  
power  
"I" am the self



The Bottom  
UA Members  
God control,  
Admission of  
complete  
defeat,  
"I" am the  
body  
(The "We")  
Nothingness,  
Absolute  
humiliation

Naturally, this top-to-bottom disunity is a challenge, but it is not the biggest problem Underearners Anonymous faces.

### *Disunity From Side to Side*

The larger challenge, and the one that is most difficult to describe, is the horizontal disunity. This is the divide that goes back to Plato's unity and diversity – the ancient ongoing struggle between Parmenides' *Cosmos* and Heraclitus' *Chaos*. This is the division that prompted nineteenth-century philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, to "take a hammer to" all of Western philosophy.

Nietzsche had detected that Plato's thinking favored Parmenides over Heraclitus and had, in so doing, promoted *unity* over *diversity*. He, himself, took the side of Heraclitus so that, as his thinking has continued to gain ascendancy in our post-modern world, we are descending into Nietzsche's Heraclitean *diversity chaos*.

In the larger cultural context, this conversation is framed as modernist/conservatism versus postmodern /progressivism – or left vs. right.

In UA, this debate shows up – as I continue to repeat – as *unity* vs. *diversity*. In UA groups, we now have introductory comments which state that we are "people" instead of men and women. There is now emphasis on the use of one's desired gender pronouns – a topic which might have more wisely been treated as an "outside issue," but has now been brought inside without anyone asking whether some of these concerns which are being promoted, might just be, in themselves, symptoms of under-being,

As I was editing this section, the GSR website was reposted which shows the scheduling for a UA Safe

Space and Racial Awareness Support Group with the subtitle: *Gathers monthly to discuss the issue of racism in UA and to collaborate to take actions.*

Those words are a bit scary. What if I were to do something that concerns members of that group? What actions would they consider taking?

These developments could be likened to members of AA demanding that, along with the coffee, 3.2 beer must also be served at an AA meeting. (Everyone knows that “near-beer” is dangerous for the alcoholic – but no one is even remotely questioning the wisdom of allowing the invasion of diversity and inclusion into UA along with other types of political agendas.)

I know... I have just “stepped in it.”

There is no way to even have a conversation about these topics, as our little diagram illustrates.



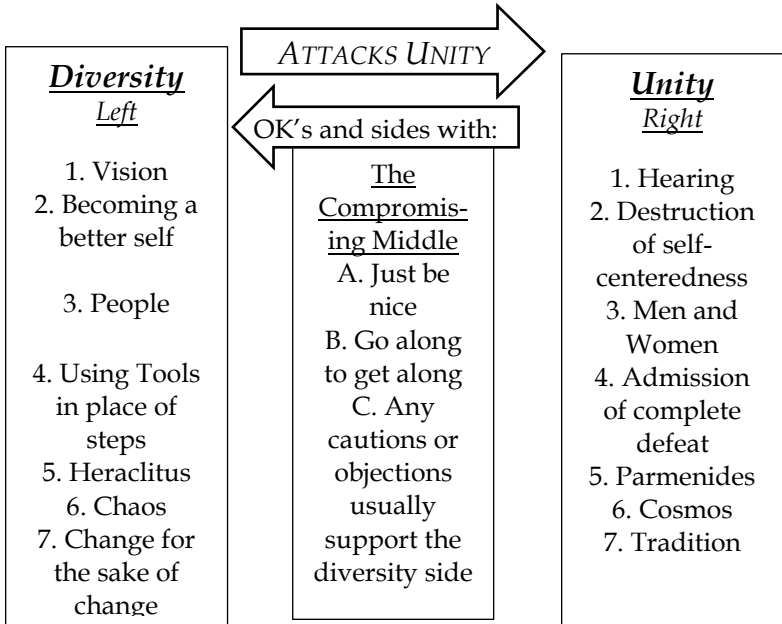
*Diversity-Becoming* will automatically destroy *Unity-Being*. And – no matter what anyone may say about it – objections and cautions are just sucked into the vortex which is the battle between these two opposing points of view.

I don't want anyone to get me wrong.

One of the great strengths and attractions of UA is its diversity – vision *and* the hearing of our twelve-step recovery; tools *along with* steps; becoming a better self – *along with* the destruction of self-centeredness. But when diversity triumphs and the twelve-step recovery process is not afforded its proper priority, then the dysfunctional dynamics of our addiction become embedded into the political structure of the fellowship itself. UA becomes

sicker and sicker

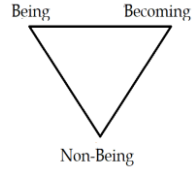
I'll demonstrate this by showing what happens when these two sides are not grounded solidly in the recovery process by mapping out these two opposing points of view – diversity vs. unity:



Diversity is attacking and seeking to destroy unity. And, as you can see, there are also those in the middle who see the chaos that is being created, but nevertheless – in wishing to think of themselves as being compassionate, wise, and nice – go along and support the *diversity* side, thinking that in so doing, they will create harmony. Their attempts at compromise only continue to empower *diversity* in its quest to destroy *unity*.

I will say it one more time: There is no way to stop this by taking one side or the other or even by standing in the supposedly reconciling middle.

It would indeed be a mistake to take any of this personally. Our Western world has been this way ever since Plato invented his *universe*. Only in the last few hundred years has the “Becoming” side, been allowed to so thoroughly assault the “Being” side of our culture. As long as most people believed in God, or a higher power, that belief provided a stable footing.



Belief in God—which we shall associate with the third position—*Non-Being*—grants us a stable refuge from the battle between *Being* (*Unity*) and *Becoming* (*Diversity*).

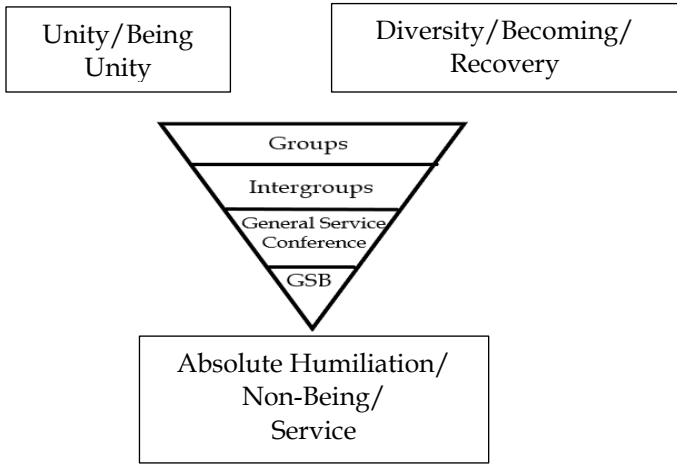
### ***Nothing Unites Us***

I fear that in saying that we only have *nothing* in common, my reader will accuse me of being disturbingly redundant; but I know that it is crucial for people to get this: Pure *being* and pure *non-being* are the same.

Only by embracing our *nothingness* can we hope to bring this battle between *Being* and *Becoming*—unity and diversity—to a reconciling grounding in a sober commitment to the hearing of the voice of our fellowship’s higher power, the God of our understanding.

I thought it would be helpful to close out our discussion of unity by offering a sketch of how our community may best function. In doing this I have gone back to the Alcoholics Anonymous service structure and shown their service-structure sections from bottom to top in its relation to unity, service, and recovery: General Service Board; General Service Conference; Intergroups; and Groups.

## Hitting Bottom In UA



If those at the bottom of the triangle, the ones in leadership, (perhaps I could also use the word “control”—and include both GSB’s and the GSRC) would focus on admitting complete defeat and the embrace of absolute humiliation, then there could at least be some possibility for a return to unity.

I recently attended a GSR Committee meeting. It was pleasant, well-attended, and well-organized and conducted. But there was no sense of the complete defeat that is necessary to bring the UA culture to the heart of the absolute humiliation in which unity may be restored.

The funds necessary to fight the legal battle were reported; plans for a coming World Service Conference were discussed; new literature projects were announced; appeals were made for members to staff various committees. But in all these discussions not even a word in lip-service was given to the admission of complete defeat and powerlessness over our addictions to power pleasure and meaning which plague both sides of the Underearners Anonymous divide. Not a word was

## Unity

uttered in regard to the need for us all to destroy our self-centeredness.

No mention was made of the anguish that is endured by all of us for whom this lack of unity in Underearns Anonymous is a festering and painful wound.

*Nothing* will relieve the pain.

We who are dedicated to bringing up the bottom – lifting up the *pure being* of *pure non-being* – are not about to tell the rest of UA how they ought to view our community; but we are, all the same, committed to the destruction of self-centeredness and the absolute submission to our higher power as we reach out in oneness to bring us all onto this foundation which is the bedrock our recovery.

*Nothing* is as powerful as  
an idea whose time has come  
VICTOR HUGO<sup>29</sup>



## *A Context and a Vision*

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Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message to the underearner who still suffers.

UNDEREARNERS ANONYMOUS - TRADITION FIVE

Seeing how essential it is to the preservation of the unity of our community – we must now establish a solid, sober bottom to our culture at large. If we wish to have any hope in achieving that end, it will be necessary for us to know a bit more about the origins of the space in which all twelve-steps groups operate. Doing that will be a revelation of the deepest understanding of the central pivot of our whole context for communication.

The venue in which UA and all twelve step groups gather is a unique example of a context for communication dedicated to one specific purpose: spiritual transformation – the destruction of self-centeredness.

It is positioned outside of the world of philosophy and natural philosophy as it stands outside of Plato's *uni-verse*. It is also non-scientific – in that it is not a space that can be described in terms of the “science” of psychology. It is also not religious in the way that the guardians of religion prefer to think of religion.

It may be misleading to refer to it as a “space” since, when properly understood, it places those who have entered it, outside of space and time and into eternity.

This way of gathering came down to us, as we know, from Frank Buchman. He developed it while he was mentoring college students in his role as YMCA director at Penn State University in the second decade of the twentieth century. In the beginning he called it *A First*

*Century Christian Fellowship*. There was a reason for this.

### *The Origins of The Oxford Group*

Frank was an American-born Lutheran Pietist pastor. He naturally inherited the Lutheran protestant aversion to the established church, but as a young man raised in the pietistic tradition among the Schwenkfelders of eastern Pennsylvania, he also had a distain for the national or denominational church and what we might today refer to as “churchianity,” or “doing church for the sake of church.”

After his ordination into the ministry, he began a work in the Overbrook section of Philadelphia. After a couple of years there, he opened a hospice for the disadvantaged in the area and installed a homeless opiate addict, Mary Hemphill, as the cook. In order to best help her, he took it upon himself to take a vow of abstinence from alcohol for the rest of his life. Although a “tee-totaler” himself, he made it a point to never judge others who drank. This attitude would eventually make its way into the Oxford Group and then into AA.

He had a falling out with the men who oversaw his ministry and resigned in a huff in 1907. The following year his father paid for him to go on a tour of Europe. That summer he ended up at Keswick England where he heard a message that changed his life and continues to impact our world. From the moment he heard that message, he was catapulted into a ministry to students<sup>30</sup>— first in the US and then, a decade later, at Cambridge and Oxford Universities in England.

He described his way of ministering as “a voice of protest against organized, ‘committee-ized’ and lifeless Christian work” and “an attempt to get back to the beliefs and methods of the Apostles.”

The anonymously authored pamphlet, *What is the Oxford Group?* says of Buchman's fellowship and its way of gathering:

...the Oxford Group ... has no membership list, subscriptions, badge, rules, or definite location. It is a name for a group of people who, from every rank, profession, and trade, in many countries, have surrendered their lives to God and are endeavoring to live a spiritual quality of life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Oxford Group is not a religion; it has no hierarchy, no temples, no endowments; its workers have no salaries, no plans but God's Plan; every country is their country, every man their brother. They are Holy Crusaders in modern dress, wearing spiritual armour. Their aim is A New World Order for Christ, the King.<sup>31</sup>

The Oxford Group is not one group. It is a collection of groups active for Christ in many countries, meeting in ordinary places where ordinary men and women are accustomed to meet in the course of their daily lives. They are similar to the groups of early Christians who met in places hidden from their oppressors, to keep alight the torch of Christianity. The Oxford Groups do not find it necessary to hide—at the moment—but their mission is the same as that of the early Christians—the redemption of individuals and nations from Sin, and to keep alive the Faith for which Christ came on earth, suffered and died, so that every man, woman, and child in this world might see and understand that Perfection of Life to which all of us would attain if we too, would be Christ-like.<sup>32</sup>

After establishing the effectiveness of his methodology with students in America, Frank took his strategies to Cambridge and Oxford. There he would host what he would refer to as "house parties." Wealthy

friends would offer him the use of an estate in which people could come visit for a week and interact with the students. One early house party in 1935 drew 10,000 people from 50 countries – among them, 1,000 clerics.<sup>33</sup>

At regular intervals, students would stand up and share with the crowd how they had been “changed” in the familiar pattern of: What I used to be like, what happened and what I am like now.

Listeners would be invited to participate in the “change” themselves. Given a copy of what was known as the *four absolutes* they would then be instructed to go home and prayerfully write down where their lives had failed to measure up to the absolutes. The following day they would come back and go over their lists with one of the student volunteers.

Eleanor Forde, one of those volunteers described this process:

“Go through those standards before we get together and then we will talk about listening to God,’ we’d say.”

“Of course, they would not come the next day unless they meant business, but nearly everyone did. So they’d come and they’d mostly have it all written down, and boy! The things that came out were the deepest things in their lives. Then they’d get down on their knees and make a decision to give their lives to God, and then they’d go away and change other people.”<sup>34</sup>

The people who had been changed were invited to gather together with others who had also been touched by the Oxford Group message and encouraged to form their own groups and continue to share their change with others. This network of groups eventually reached out to Ebby Thatcher. In the fullness of time, Ebby

reached out to his friend Bill.

When Ebby found his friend sitting in his kitchen drinking himself to death, Bill at first resisted; but then, through the power of the very presence of God which seemed to accompany Ebby and his Oxford Group message, he too was “changed” and became a member.

Bill was what Christians would think of as “un-churched.” He had turned his back on religion at age 11 when, at the end of a presentation by the Bennington, Vermont County Temperance Board, his Sunday school class was asked to come forward and “take the pledge.” He could feel his stubbornness kick in, “Who did they think they were to tell him how to live the rest of his life? Whose rules were these anyway. He wasn’t going to drink, but he wasn’t going to sign their pledge either.”<sup>35</sup>

He walked out of the East Dorset Congregational Church that Sunday morning and never looked back. He would, from that day forward, consider himself an atheist.

But finally, alcohol got the best of Bill’s “Don’t tell me what to do’ attitude.” It brought him to the Oxford Group. But even within this very non-churchy gathering, he felt constrained. He preferred to gather with his low-bottom alkies—“The Drunk Squad” of the Oxford Group,” as we remember they liked to call themselves.

The NY City Oxford Group leadership did not take kindly to Bill and his gang of dipsomaniacs. “Not maximum” is how the elite referred to them. Bill and his men soon departed.

Shortly after that, Bill began to compose his “Big Book.” He naturally included the Oxford Group emphasis on being God-guided as central to recovery; but he eliminated all but the vaguest references to the source of

his spiritual awakening, and its roots in Christian Pietism and perfectionism.

It might be just as well. Think of all the people who would have died from alcoholism had Bill allowed AA to become overtly religious – it likely would have killed it. As it is, many who come to AA today, either by order of the court or voluntarily, often balk at AA as being too religious. But most people – and I include myself – think of it as, amazingly, just right.

### *Shaping of the Context*

The space in which UA gathers was first shaped by Frank Buchman's particular flavor of Lutheran Pietism and then, as we shall see a little later, by his experience at the English Keswick Convention of 1908.

Bill W. took the space which he had inherited from Frank, and used it to carry the message of change to his fellow alcoholics. But Bill did not do much in the way of shaping it. His twelve steps were simply the 5 C's\* of the Oxford Group spread out into twelve, in order to make them more workable for alcoholics. Bill's traditions were the codification of attitudes about gathering as member-led groups which he had picked up from the Oxford Groups but also uniquely modified as Bill worked with the first AA groups to form upon publication of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The traditions were an amazing contribution, but they did not change the shape of the context.

What mostly shaped this space, and thus all those groups which flow from it after AA, is alcohol itself.

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\* Confidence, Confession, Conviction, Conversion, and Continuance, these correspond to the five days of the Keswick Convention which could be seen as Powerlessness, Position, Process, Practice and Purpose.

Throughout history there have been times of spiritual transformation – often referred to as revivals – but usually these transformations become watered down and absorbed into the larger culture and lose their power to change people. What is unique about AA is the nature of alcohol itself and the way in which alcoholics must absolutely destroy their own self-centeredness in order to overcome their compulsion. For the alcoholic, there needs to be an unwavering commitment to perfection, albeit only as it relates to their behavior with alcohol itself. But this need for a whole-hearted and perfect devotion to an uncompromising absolute, has shaped AA in a way that is, indeed, unique.

### *UA Moves into the Space*

In 2005,<sup>36</sup> our very ingenious founding group of debtors got a brilliant idea: Perhaps, the inability to make enough money to keep themselves out of debt was also a part of their problem. Could it be that they were addicted to underearning? This is what they came to understand about our condition – from *About UA*:

Underearning is many things, not all of which are about money. Underearning is about under-achieving, or under-being, no matter how much money we make. It is about the inability to fully acknowledge and express our capabilities and competencies. The visible consequence is the inability to provide for one's needs, including future needs.<sup>37</sup>

Recovery in UA means developing and exercising spiritual muscle which is at the core of any Twelve Step program. Specific to UA, recovery is also about developing a prosperous vision and being willing to take bite-sized actions to bring that vision alive through active participation in the program.<sup>38</sup>

In the second paragraph above it is said that recovery in UA is about developing spiritual muscle; but traditionally, the twelve-step way of recovery has been described as learning to hear the voice of the community's higher power – God, as members understand God. It has always been directed to the practice of developing the ability to follow this spiritual guidance and not about developing a stronger self-will (spiritual muscle) or even about developing a larger vision.

An emphasis on vision was, however, important to the AA message; but vision in AA was treated quite differently by Bill W. In his vision for AA, in *Chapter Eleven* of the AA text, *A Vision For You*, Bill says:

Our hope is that when this chip of a book is launched on the world tide of alcoholism, defeated drinkers will seize upon it, to follow its suggestions. Many, we are sure, will rise to their feet and march on. They will approach still other sick ones and fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous may spring up in each city and hamlet, havens for those who must find a way out.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, AA came into the world before there was any internet, Free Conference Call, or Zoom. So early AA faced a daunting challenge in even getting its message of a cure for our country's incurable alcoholism out into a world that was desperately seeking one.

UA was birthed into a digitally interconnected visual-virtual world.

### **The UA pamphlet asks: How Does UA Work?**

Cultivating this connection with a power greater than our selves, combined with the other elements of working the program, moves us slowly from a depravation-based consciousness to a prosperity-based consciousness, from



## Hitting Bottom In UA

a life of inaction to a life of completing actions toward a larger vision. We do this one step at a time with the support of the fellowship.<sup>40</sup>

We who are members say that Underearners Anonymous works very well; but those of us within the fellowship who have hit a humiliating bottom, say that it is not so much about *cultivating a connection* with God as it is about an *absolute surrender* to God, as is stated in our conference approved recovery literature.

And, we are also in agreement in affirming that we are moved to a larger vision; but should that vision be one focused on our own larger personal goals or even a vision that is about the UA culture becoming larger and more influential in its attraction of those standing outside the walls of our community?

We recall Bill and Lois Wilson and Frank Buchman's remarks about vision which were featured in our acknowledgements section:

**Bill:** Alcoholics Anonymous may well become a new spearhead for a spiritual awakening throughout the world.

**Lois:** ... the principles on which our fellowship is based, will one day save our troubled world

### *A Vision of Perfection*

Readers may notice here, that I have left off Frank's Buchman's "vision" comments. Not to worry. We will return to Frank's remarks a little later. But for now, we will need to look at vision in the almost shocking manner in which Bill W. set his vision down in *Step Six* of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

If we are to gain any real advantage in the use of *Step Six* in problems other than alcohol we shall need to make a brand-new step into open-mindedness. We shall need to raise our eyes toward perfection, and be ready to walk in that direction. It will seldom matter how haltingly we walk. The only question will be, "Are we ready?"<sup>41</sup>

I would not have included Bill's vision for perfection in our little hitting bottom booklet had I not been called to turn my attention to the issue of Unity in UA.

Perfection is not a popular topic today. Most people are not interested in perfection. Those rare cases, who in any way become attracted to it, soon discover that the pursuit of perfection has a troubled past and is considered next to impossible to achieve.

So, I will not be listing "Spiritual Perfection In UA" on our UA Calendar, although it would be right at home there among a diversity of other meetings in every country in all the languages and all the other types of issues—along with racial and ethnic concerns; those supporting gender identity topics; comfortably nestled there on the same calendar as our *God-Free Recovery* meetings—all in our God-guided recovery culture. It is all good. All are welcome and all safe here.

I am cognizant of the fact that perfection in UA will need to be confined to the bottom tier of our recovery conversation and kept well below the horizon of our larger community dialogue—hidden close to the heart of those of us who have committed ourselves to hitting bottom and *being/nothing—perfectly nothing* in Under-earners Anonymous.

## *Perfectly Recovered*

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So, the difference between “the boys and the men” is the difference between striving for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective which is of God.

THE TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS P 68

In *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Bill writes “The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.”<sup>42</sup>

Although Bill has written this simple declaration in a way that should not, in any way, be confusing, many people in the rooms of recovery, nevertheless are heard to say, “we only aim for progress.” But there could, of course, be no spiritual progress if there were not a target beyond mere progress at which people are to aim.

Once again, in the pages of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Bill proceeds to make this clear:

...it seems plain that few of us can quickly or easily become ready to aim at spiritual and moral perfection; we want to settle for only as much perfection as will get us by in life, according, of course, to our various and sundry ideas of what will get us by. So the difference between “the boys and the men” is the difference between striving for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective which is of God<sup>43</sup>

We have to remember that this is the same Bill Wilson who had published his *Alcoholics Anonymous* without ever once making any mention of the Oxford Group absolutes.<sup>44</sup>

The *Absolutes* were, as we have already mentioned,

the standards that Frank Buchman had deployed in helping prospective newcomers to his groups conduct their own confession of shortcomings and sins: absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love.<sup>45</sup>

Bill Wilson early-on criticized the Four Absolutes as being too tough for alcoholics to swallow, just as he later criticized several other Oxford Group principles and practices. By contrast, Dr. Bob consistently favored use of the Four Absolutes as did his wife Anne, and the other leaders in the Akron Oxford Group. To this day, the AA groups in Akron still emphasize the Four Absolutes.<sup>46</sup>

Bill, also, likely resisted using the Four Absolutes because the culture of New York City in the 1930's, unlike that in Ohio had, for several decades, been operating on the belief that there were no longer any absolutes: "of time and space, of good and evil, of knowledge, above all of value."<sup>47</sup> I will share additional comments by Frank Buchman's biographer Garth Lean, regarding the passing of the absolutes in our society.

"This belief had arisen at the end of the first world war and coincided with, or perhaps was in part caused by two other contemporary phenomena: the wide-spread acceptance of Freudianism, and the fact that Leninism, with its espousal of atheism and a totally relative morality, now controlled one of the major countries of the world. In fact, the age of relativism had arrived, and — much to Einstein's displeasure, for he himself believed passionately in absolute standards of right and wrong — his theory of relativity was used to give scientific respectability to the whole process. As moral relativism spread, it became the dominant theme of art and literature over many decades and penetrated every area of life, lay and ecclesiastical."<sup>48</sup>

In the writing of the “Big Book,” Bill toned down any emphasis on the absolutes, but then, thirteen years later, as he wrote out his comments for *Step Six* in the *Twelve and Twelve*, we see that he has returned to the idea of perfection as the target for recovery. What happened?

No one can say for sure.

After the publication of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Bill had received a visit from a Jesuit priest.

Father Ed Dowling had gotten hold of a copy of the recently published book, and upon reading it, felt compelled to travel all the way from St. Louis to find and meet the author. Father Ed had been very much impressed with the way in which the step process in AA mirrored the *Spiritual Practices* of Jesuit founder St. Ignatius of Loyola. Father Ed and Bill bonded and soon Ed became Bill’s spiritual advisor as Bill set to work on the traditions and prepared his comments on the steps that would be included in the *Twelve and Twelve*. It was likely under the influence of Fr. Ed, that Bill engaged in talks with Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, at the time a nationally recognized radio personality hosting the *Catholic Hour* from the NBC studios in New York City.

For a while, Bill entertained thoughts of joining the Roman Catholic Church. In the end, however, he realized that his becoming a practicing Catholic would surely have a negative impact on his beloved AA fellowship.

Bill's turn to perfection could also be the result of his own spiritual struggles.

During the time that he was writing the *Twelve and Twelve*, he struggled, as he had for all his life, with bouts of crippling depression. He was also trying to quit smok-

ing and was attempting to tamp down his chronic womanizing tendencies, all while being coached by Fr. Ed. You can't help but think how these continuing struggles would weigh heavily on the man who had written—while still under the spell of the Oxford Group—words that spoke of what was needed to lead a God-guided life: ...the destruction of self-centeredness.

Was there a way to get rid of self-centeredness? Maybe that is why Bill later hooked up with Aldous Huxley and dropped acid. He promoted it as a cure. Then he discovered niacin and got busy promoting it as a cure. Oh well.

We do not fault Bill at all. In 1934 he had been trying to drink himself to death; 13 years later he finds himself the spiritual “guru” of a community of 100,000. It is simply amazing that he survived it all. We owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude ...and forgiveness.

With Bill's penchant for getting involved in outlandish causes in mind, it is natural to treat his perfection comments with more than a bit of skepticism. But we should not be so hasty. We still have not gotten down below the surface and come to understand how he may have been influenced by Buchman's vision for his *First Century Apostolic* way of gathering and the Cross of Christ ushering in a long-looked-for Golden Age.

### ***A Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory***

With perfection in mind, we now will walk through a modified version of Bill Wilson's inventory process which features a few additions which we find helpful in the understanding of resentments and others that allow for a more sober approach to issues related to sex— all the while keeping an eye out for whatever is required to attain the perfect destruction of self-centeredness.

Although Bill eliminated the four absolutes, he did cling to one: Absolute Honesty. He referred to it as “rigorous honesty;” Bill would make it the central theme of “How it Works.”

Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.<sup>49</sup>

In place of the four absolutes, Wilson offered the recovering alcoholic four inventory lists:

- resentments
- fears
- people we have harmed
- sexual failings

### *Resentments*

In the “Big Book” Bill says that when anyone of us take the position of complete surrender to God, as set forth in *Step Three*, we will experience a spiritual rebirth—we will be “reborn”—just as he had been at Towns Hospital in 1934 (Although in later editions of the AA book he warns that this may not always happen as dramatically as it did for him. See Endnote.<sup>50</sup>)

He immediately adds that this spiritual awakening “could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us.”<sup>51</sup> Then he makes a bold declaration regarding these things

which had been blocking us:

Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics (addicts, under earners, debtors, gambling addicts, sex addicts,) than anything else. From it stem all sorts of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PG.64

### *Getting Past The “No”*

Before we get too deeply into our resentment inventory, it would be helpful to first talk about our “No.”

Everyone has a least one. We usually develop it while we are mere toddlers (years one to three), during that phase of our life in which—psychologist Erik Erickson<sup>52</sup> says—we are developing our autonomy.

During this chapter in our development, we are learning to map out the boundaries of our life and world. It is a time that is quite challenging for both parents and children. We usually hear it referred to as the “terrible twos.”

Although we may be greatly loved and cherished by our parents, we do not always speak the same languages. All of us—we ourselves, as well as mom and dad communicate from our own unique language style: we may be primarily kinetic (action oriented), cognitive (quiet thinker types), or emotive (feeling centered);<sup>53</sup> but we usually do not share the exact same gifting as our parents, so there will be conflicts in our communications even in the most loving of homes.

Upsets are bound to occur as we little ones set out to explore and come to know and become one with our environment. The problem becomes even more pro-



nounced when parents are, themselves, not so patient and understanding and may be, even a bit, or more than a little bit abusive.

Thus, we develop our “No.” We do this pre-verbally – it is not cognitive; we do not have words for it – it is just how we feel about things: don’t hurt me, don’t shame me; don’t reject me; don’t embarrass me; stop abusing me; don’t abandon me; don’t tell me what to do.

Most of us go forward, even into our adulthood, with our “No” still fully active and intact. You can hear it in the rooms of recovery as members talk about the reasons why we have had troubles in getting along on the job and why we have not yet gotten to work with a sponsor as we recount all the many ways in which we are still struggling and attempting to solve our problems through our own willfulness.

We come into addiction recovery with our “No” blocking us from engaging in the process because we are repeatedly saying, “don’t hurt me, don’t shame me, and don’t tell me what to do.”

Not even aware of the fact that we are saying these “No’s” our sponsors and friends must encourage us to hear and boldly step over and beyond our “No.”

Besides the “No,” there is a second hurdle that we have erected. It can be thought of as “false guiding-belief(s).” These are formed during the following stage of our psychic development as our three-to-six-year-olds begin to define our purpose in life. The purpose we have come up with is usually directly related to and often seems to be the childish solution to our “No” – “I have to prove myself, justify myself, explain myself, protect myself; I have to be in control; I have to figure it out.”

None of these guiding beliefs are true. But they surely do seem to “feel” true; and we come into addiction recovery fully committed to learning how to at last – take control, prove ourselves or, figure it all out.

We may come into UA with a desire to be more prosperous, successful, more productive etc. – and these are all laudable reasons for coming to recovery. But the achievement of those purposes will only be fully and permanently realized when sobriety and the sharing of our recovery becomes our primary purpose in life.

Our primary purpose is to stop underearning, one day at a time and to help other underearners do the same.

PREAMBLE OF UA

### *Now, To Our Resentments:*

Resentments rob us of our energy and the will to overcome and succeed in life. Our resentments keep us in bondage to the past and to the unhealed pains, suffering and frustrated passions of our two-year-old selves.

Bill W. wrote, “In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry.”<sup>54</sup>

*Alcoholics Anonymous* provides a detailed description of how to conduct this inventory of resentments. The UA website also has a version of this inventory.\* I have also laid out a map of my own way of doing this inventory below.<sup>+</sup>

On a sheet of legal paper turned on its side we make four columns with the following labels across the top:<sup>55</sup>

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\* [https://www.underearnersanonymous.org/about-ua/ Prosperity express resentment inventory.](https://www.underearnersanonymous.org/about-ua/Prosperity%20express%20resentment%20inventory)

+ <http://www.soberworld.com/resentments4column.pdf>

## Hitting Bottom In UA

- Who I resent is ...
- The reason I resent you is ...
- What I get out of resenting you is ...
- What it costs me to resent you is ... \*

We then pray – asking God to show us all the names who need to be in column one: “Who I resent.” After we complete the listing of all those who come to mind, we come back to column two and list the reasons for our resentments – writing out in detail, using as our guide the column title, “Why I resent you is...”

Once we have completed column two, we come back and go over each name again. This time we will put down: “What I get out resenting you is ...” For most people, this seems like a very odd idea. The usual reaction when asked to fill out this column is “I don’t get anything out of these resentments.”

The truth is, that if we did not get something out of holding on to our resentments, we would simply let go of them. It is easier to show this, than to explain it, so I will sketch it out using our resentments against “dad”:

Column One

Column Two

Who I resent:

Why I resent you is ...

Dad

Dad, I resent you because you, shamed me, abused me, belittled me, you cheated on mom, you were not a good father - provider; you were never there for me when I needed you; you abandoned me. Besides that, you had bad breath and combed your hair funny.

*(Or our resentment could be like this...)*

Dad you were too good to me; you smothered me. You would not let me make my own mistakes. You always did everything for me... You

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set an example for manliness I could never hope to live up to.

### Column Three

#### What I get out of resenting you is ...

What I get out of resenting you, Dad, is ... I get to be angry, bitter, hopeless and in despair. I get to feel sorry for myself and blame you for the way my life turned out. I get to judge condemn and execute you in my own mind. I get to tell myself that I have to prove myself, justify myself, be right, be in control. I get to be the victim; I get to be an alcoholic – a drug addict.

We call this third column, the *payoff* column. When we do not forgive our fellow human beings for things they did, or we think or imagine that they have done to us, we ourselves are left to wallow in our own anger, fear, self-pity, vengeance and a host of other forms of self-torment.

In our fourth column we list what it is costing us to “not” forgive those who have hurt us:

### Column Four

#### What it costs me to resent you is ...

What it costs me to resent you, Dad, is ... Peace, joy, love, prosperity, sobriety, my creativity, loving you, a relationship with you, God’s love and forgiveness.

Having gone over our resentment list with our sponsor and having finally told the whole truth about these resentments, our sponsor then asks us to say: “Dad, I forgive you.”

If we have told the whole truth about these grudges, we should feel a release of pent-up emotions as we speak these words of forgiveness (tears and sobbing are not

uncommon). If not, our sponsor takes us back through each column until we have “coughed up” all our negative feelings. When we have finally and fully let go, our sponsor looks us in the eye and instructs us to repeat, “Dad, I forgive you,” now adding ...“Will you forgive me?” This is asking forgiveness for holding ill will against him all these years.

In some cases, we may feel justified in thinking that “Dad” does not deserve our forgiveness, but it is not about the person we are forgiving. We forgive because we ourselves want to be set free. We “act out,” this forgiveness, using our sponsor or step partner as a mirror. This asking for forgiveness, is a way of acknowledging the wickedness of our own behavior.

We repeat this process with each person on our list, making sure to add mom, and God and ourselves to the list. (In listing *ourselves*, we need to write our own name –I would say, “George, I resent you because...”)

### *Fears*

All twelve-step programs recommend taking an inventory of fears, but to my knowledge, the program that has done the best job in dealing with fears, is the Underearners Anonymous program.

It could be that because UA, in dealing with the issue of “under being” itself, recognizes that the under-earner is hiding from life – and that they are hiding from life in very familiar patterns which UA founder Andrew D. termed “museum states.” Andrew came up with thirteen different modes in which people typically hide. He has explained these museum states in depth in his book, *Build Yourself up Without Limits*.<sup>56</sup> Adapting these from Andrew, I ended up with my own set of fourteen:

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Struggle-aholic	Crumb-aholic	Less-thaner
Superhumanism	Isolationism	Rage-aholic
Angst Glutton	Pleaser	Victim
Mr. or Mrs. Guilty	Actor	Shame-aholic
Numb-aholic	Figure-it-out-aholic	

Identifying these “museum states” serves the same purpose as identifying – bringing to the surface, and discarding – our false guiding beliefs.

I have linked to the standard UA fears inventory as well as to a form\* that has space to list one hundred fears along with check boxes for each museum state. As we go over each fear with our sponsor, it becomes obvious to us how it is that we have been compulsively hiding from life and from the Creator who has called us into our recovery in Underearners Anonymous. Now we can courageously face our fears and take this opportunity to surrender them all to God.

### *Fear of Death*

No discussion of fear would be complete without mentioning our fear of death. The central activity of this process of becoming perfectly *nothing* in the *pure being* of our *pure non-being* will be to surrender, to our higher power, our fear of death. We shall experience the fruit of this surrender most powerfully at the end of a *Chapter 9, Yet Not I*.

### *Now About Sex*

“Now about sex” is the way that Bill Wilson introduced the section in the AA moral inventory process that dealt with sexual issues. I have already gone into some detail about Bill’s treatment of sex.

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\* Fears list with museum states: [www.soberworld.com/fearsinventory.pdf](http://www.soberworld.com/fearsinventory.pdf)  
Fears on GSB1 <https://www.underearnersanonymous.org/about-ua/>

AA was focused, as it was meant to be focused, on the problem of alcoholism. But many of these recovering alcoholics, upon establishing permanent sobriety, then turned their attention to their sexual addictions by joining a sexual addiction\* recovery community. Each of these sex addiction cultures have different standards for what they deem to be the target of recovery. Many of us who

are hitting bottom in UA have first come through a sexual addiction recovery community. Those of us who have had the best recovery in this area usually participated in groups that aimed for the absolute of sexual purity.

### *Our Standard - Sexual Purity*

In our Hitting Bottom in UA gathering, we have adopted sexual purity as our standard.

Here I need to begin by saying that there are, by our understanding of the standard, only two sexes: male and female. If we are to conform to the standard of sexual purity, then sex is to be between a biological male and a biological female inside of marriage. I make no apologies for this standard. In our hitting bottom contingent we hold ourselves out as a refuge for those who are fleeing what remains of our sexually craven culture and are seeking the fellowship of others who wish to pursue a life of perfection. Sex in marriage occurs within the marriage covenant or promise: The man promising to “love, honor and cherish” the wife, and the wife, promising to “love honor and obey” the husband.

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\* Sex addiction may be thought of as a compulsive need for sexual acts, love, romance, intrigue, and emotional co-dependency.

I know that this “honor and obey” phrase is a problem for some people, but one of our favorite mentors, the now deceased Derek Prince, summed up this issue in a few words: The husband is the head, and the wife is the neck, if she is doing her job properly, she can turn the head any way she wants to.

It works to define at the beginning of the marriage covenant (the contract), who it is who is to have the final say—even if *he* ends up doing it exactly as *she* would have him do it. That is the only way it works. The final authority must rest somewhere and it works to determine where that authority lies at the outset. Forever—until our day—it rested with the man of the family.

It is the breakdown of this relationship that is one of the major contributing factors in the collapse of our culture at large.

I will say some more about the male, female relationship in a story I enjoy sharing with my male clients and sponsees to assist them in understanding this difference between men and women. I tell them that all they need to know about sex can be learned from observing the male black widow spider: The male black widow crawls across the web and engages in sex with the female ... then she has him for supper. That’s why they are called black widows. The male does not survive.

Neither does the human male survive sex with the human female.

Since the arrival of readily available female contraceptives and easily obtainable abortions, women have felt more at liberty to engage in sex outside of marriage. This has allowed the pursuit of sexual pleasure to be unleashed in our culture at large and is not con-



fined inside of the context that demands that men and women pay the full price for the sex they engage in.

People may think they can escape from paying the ultimate price that must be paid, but it is the culture itself that pays – society at large is the entity that ultimately must pay the price when sex is not kept inside its proper bounds and permits the pursuit of sexual pleasure to become an idol and another addiction.

The Christian members of our hitting bottom culture know that the Church has always honored the sacrificial nature of the male/female relationship:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also  
loved the church and gave himself for her  
EPHESIANS 5:25 KJV

Husbands are to love their wives sacrificially. They are to take the position of being crucified for their wives. Marriage is to be, in a real sense, a death to the self life. The husband dies into his relationship with his wife sacrificially and the wife surrenders her authority and power sacrificially.

### *Sexual Idolatry*

There was a time before our world became inundated with pornographic images. Now we can hardly open our eyes without being bombarded with images that are designed to enflame our natural sexual urges.

What are we to do about these idols in our culture?

We have learned from the sex addiction recovery programs that we are not likely to control the urges or to be exempt from being exposed to sexual images.

One very effective tool in dealing with sexual idolatry is what is called the “three-second rule:” It takes a

second to notice that we are engaging in some sort of sexual idolatry, and two seconds to actually respond and turn away. In that interval, we have already engaged in sexual self-indulgence. Those of us who are Christians are familiar with Jesus' caution that "whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."<sup>57</sup>

As soon as we notice that we have just committed adultery (idolatry) with our eyes, or our imaginations, we immediately confess to God, "I just committed adultery. I ask that you take this from me. This is your problem now; it is no longer mine. Thank you." (This practice will become our standard once we have made our initial *Seventh Step* surrender of our sins.)

### *Inventory of Sexual Sins*

Last, but not least, we make a list of every instance in which we have committed sexual sins with other people. This is, as I have said, any sexual behavior which has occurred outside the bounds of holy matrimony, and even within, if it has become self-indulgent.

We make our list and then go over each name, with our sponsor, praying for God to heal each one from the harm we have caused them by our engaging with them in our sexual self-indulgences. We, along with our sponsor, then pray for God to break the "soul ties" we have with them. These prayers have the effect of wiping away the video tapes we have in our heads of our encounter with them. This greatly diminishes the sexual idolatry that goes inside our minds.

As we cleanse ourselves from sexual impurity, we rejoice that we do not have to be carried down into the pit into which the culture which surrounds us is descending. Whenever we feel overcome with a compelling

urge to plunge into sexual self-indulgence we can simply say, God, here, I give this to you. Thank you; this is now yours.

### *Confession and Surrender of Our “Shortcomings”*

Now we should be eager to be set free from our character defects, shortcomings and sins. Looking back a few chapters, we recall that we referred to these bondages as fig leaves. We have been covering up our nakedness and our *nothingness* with our emotional fig leaves—angers, fears, and a multitude of self-centered compulsions, of which we were totally unaware and, over which we had absolutely no control.

In the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* Bill W. says that in order to avoid falling into confusion over what we should call these defects, we should start with the universally recognized list of “the seven deadly sins:” pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth.<sup>58</sup>

Over the past eighty years we have advanced in our knowledge of the psychology of addiction and have acquired names for all these formerly “un-nameable” traits, adding them to the list of the traditional ones:

selfish	self-centered	self-seeking
self-serving	self-pitying	grandiose
liar	cheat	thief
arrogant	lazy (slothful)	prideful
vicious	vindictive	murderous rage
playing the victim	hopeless	despairing
envious	greedy	lustful
sexually idolatrous	sexually self-indulgent	gluttonous

It occurred to me that our Christian members might appreciate being reminded of what Jesus said about these “character defects” from Mark Chapter 7:

For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup>adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

We look through these lists of defects of character and check to see if there are any that we have left off our own. We may also have discovered defects of our own that are not on these lists. Whatever the case, we now have a name for each and every one of these emotional fig leaves which have kept us bound up in our dysfunctional selves. We are now ready to give these defects of character to God.

The “Big Book” *Seventh Step Prayer* speaks of asking God to remove every defect of character that stands in the way of our usefulness to God and our fellow humans—and this is good. But I have found it useful to encourage those taking this step to add the words, “I now give or surrender these defects to you. Thank you for taking them from me.”

All of us who have taken this step have found that God is eager and willing to take each and every one of our sins, the only question is, “Are we willing to release our grip on them—will we really let them go?”

To Bill's traditional prayer we might want to add:

God, here and now I confess that I have been selfish, self-centered, self-seeking, self-serving etc. (we name every one of our defects). Thank you for being a God who has demonstrated your willingness to take these sins upon yourself. I now give them all to you. Thank you. These are all now your problem; they are no longer mine.

Amen

### *Daily Practice*

Constant and ever-ready confession of our defects of character—distinct from the struggle to control our compulsions—is a discipline, but it is one that all of us who seek to live a God-guided life, and to pass this life on to others, must master. This is *Step Ten*, the daily—and as we become more proficient in the practice of it—moment to moment confession of our shortcomings.

### *Making Amends*

“I...was...was... was...wrong.” “I was wrong.”

It is such an amazing and miracle-working phrase: “I was wrong.” Some of us are old enough to remember the comedian Steve Martin twisting and turning as he takes a good twenty minutes to spit it out, “I was wr...wr...wr...wr...”

We practice saying this to ourselves.

“I was wrong.” “I was wrong.”

Once we have absorbed the humility that is imparted by the making of this confession, we will be in a better position to make our amends.

We practice these following points with our sponsor so that we are able to say this cleanly, neatly and responsibly when we meet with those we have harmed:

- I was wrong. (We will describe our offense—what I said or did or did not do. How I treated you etc.)
- I am so ashamed of myself for what I did (or didn’t do).
- I have learned my lesson and I promise I will never do that to you or anyone else again.
- Will you please forgive me?
- What can I do to make up for the harm I have done to you?

Once our sponsor is satisfied that we have connected with the humility that will be necessary to properly make our amends, we pull out our list of those we have harmed. We made it while we were working through our resentments. We make these amends “wherever possible,” not “whenever.” We pray and ask God’s guidance as to the most auspicious time and place and pray that we remain ever-willing and ready.

The one to whom we are making our amends may not accept our apology. That is fine. We still must make it. If we do this calmly, cleanly, and sincerely, we can leave the results to God and take any second thoughts and self-condemnation, which may result from their own un-forgiveness of us, and give them, too, to God.

In some cases, our apology so moves the recipient that they inquire into the reason for our change. In keeping with our newly-found sober way of being we simply say, “I thought I was something, but I discovered that I was really nothing.” “I joined Underearners Anonymous and started dealing with my compulsion to hide and underachieve.” If they respond positively, we give them a copy of our *About UA* pamphlet and, once again, leave the results up to God.

### *The Steps We Took*

So, these are the steps we have taken so far. Of course, I have embellished them, in the way that I have, in order to grab the attention of those members of Underearners Anonymous whose aim is to hit the same sober bottom that the pioneers of AA hit. My hope is that we, who desire to be completely sober in UA, will be able to find the same solid foundation that the first generation of recovering alcoholics found. We want to be part of their “We” even though our problem is not

necessarily alcohol.

We may not have been hiding in the bottle, but we were—all the same—hiding in our own versions of *under-being* and attempting to avoid the absolute humiliation that all of us addicts, of whatever variety we may be, are seeking to avoid. Now we have been totally uncovered and have found ourselves almost fully recovered in the latest unfolding of this marvelous twelve-step way of life that has been handed down to us by the founders of AA and now UA.

### *We Inherit the Promises*

The AA book contains a passage that is a favorite of every member and is, in some groups, read at the end of every meeting. It is on page 83 and is referred to as *The Promises*.

By the time that we have worked through our inventory and made amends for harms done, we will begin to know the truth of “The Promises”:

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

The promises come true. But most importantly, by now, as we have been living for a considerable stretch of time in our culture of recovery and have worked through our steps with a sponsor, we have become progressively less self-centered. We are no longer thinking quite so much about *ourselves* as being an “I”; now we are more and more coming to see that we are a “We.”

*We* belong. *We* are members of a body that is in recovery not just from alcohol, drugs, sex, debting, gambling, over-eating or underearning. *We* are slowly but surely being set free from the bondage to the entity that has kept us locked into our “addictions”—*we* are being liberated from our sovereign selves—our imperious, sovereign, “I’s.”



Sin is a three-letter word  
with “I” in the centre.

FRANK BUCHMAN



## We

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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.

FORWARD TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

The whole of the addiction recovery culture is built on the foundation of the “We.” It is a community that takes the form of the answer to the question “What did *we* do to overcome the bondage of our addiction, or addictions?” In another way of saying it: This is what *we* did to overcome our bondage to our self-centeredness.

It had all begun at Keswick. Frank Buchman had discovered it during his five-days at the conference in the first week of August 1908.

Each day had addressed a different aspect of what is required to attain spiritual perfection—the organizers wisely avoided the use of the word “perfection” instead referring to the gathering as “A Convention for the Attainment of Practical Holiness”:

Day 1 - *We* are *powerless* over our self-centered sinful natures. Day 2 - There is a *position* into which *we* must shift that places us on a foundation which allows us to overcome our self-centeredness and sinfulness. Day 3 - There is a *process* of confession of shortcomings that will solidify the new position *we* have taken. Day 4 - There is a *practice* of restoration that *we* will use to sweep away the wreckage of the past. Day 5 - *We* will be “changed” once *we* have completed these first four stages, but *we*

can only keep this change vital and deepening by passing the practice of it on to others as our primary *purpose* in life.

In its simplest terms: What we got from Frank Buchman's experience at Keswick was five "P's": Powerlessness, Position, Process, Practice and Purpose.

Frank would take these five foundational principles and call them his five C's: Confidence, Confession, Conviction, Conversion, and Continuance. In training his group members to use these principles to bring about spiritual transformation, Buchman was hoping to bring about a Christian revolution:

The Oxford Group is a Christian revolution whose concern is vital Christianity ...

A new spirit is abroad in the world today. A new illumination can come to everyone and bring men and women of every creed and social stratum back to the basic principles of the Christian faith, enhancing all their primary loyalties. The solution of our difficulties must come from such a spirit rising from within people.

Leaders in all walks of life are now convinced that our hope rests in a change of heart. One sees abundant evidence of this throughout the Empire. World-changing will come through life-changing.

To bring about this new world order the Oxford Group believes that a world-wide spiritual awakening is the only hope.

Upon a foundation of changed lives permanent reconstruction is assured. Apart from changed lives no civilization can endure.

Bill Wilson had his own sense of spiritual change. It had come to him when his friend Ebby showed up in his room at Town's Hospital with a copy of William James'

*Varieties of Religious Experience*. In it he read:

The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature.

Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes.<sup>59</sup>

As Bill sat up in his hospital bed, reading James' estimation of alcoholism, he at last felt understood. Then, while still in hospital—still tasting his life-changing sense of nothingness and self-transcendence—Bill got his vision for passing his change on to still others.

At this point, my excitement became boundless. A chain reaction could be set in motion, forming an ever-growing fellowship of alcoholics whose mission it would be to visit the caves of still other sufferers and set them free. As each dedicated himself to carrying the message to still another and those released to still others, such a society could pyramid to tremendous proportions.<sup>60</sup>

It is unlikely that Bill would ever have had such a powerful vision had he not been under the sway of his Oxford group connections and their goal of bringing about a "new world order."

All across the country, the Oxford Groups had been meeting with great success. Many people were coming to faith in Christ for the first time; others were being brought into a deeper connection with God; and alcoholics were being cured of their alcoholism.

But there were several things about the OG culture that Bill, and those he was reaching out to, found troublesome: Many of the people, for whom the Groups could have been most helpful, were turned off by their aggressive evangelism; the OG was also open to excess-

ive publicity, which can undermine the alcoholic's need for an anonymity which subdues their often fatal grandiosity; also people did not like the word "absolutes"—although they had no problem with the four principles to which the word applied; there was too much coercion in the way the groups worked with new members; in practice, guidance seemed to only be taken seriously when approved by Fr. Sam Shoemaker or Frank Buchman themselves; the principles of tolerance and love, while touted in principle, were not practiced in the way that often happens inside of religious organizations; and lastly, religious demands were sometimes made on people that conflicted with their established beliefs.<sup>61</sup>

The Oxford Group was looking to influence and change the upper crust, educated and well-connected—the leaders and shapers of the larger society—to bring about change from the top down. Bill was drawn to change the world from the bottom up—he was only interested in bringing the same change that had happened to him to other alcoholics.

It is also important to mention that at this time, many of the young men who made up the bulk of the Oxford Group leaders would soon begin to be called into military service as war began to become unavoidable. Frank Buchman had, in August 1936, made some remarks concerning Adolf Hitler which brought the OG under severe criticism. Oxford University followed up by banning Buchman from using the name "Oxford."

Buchman renamed his work Moral Rearmament and then followed up by shifting into holding public crusades over individual meetings, as he began trumpeting the need for a return to traditional morality

in preparation for the fight which he could see looming ahead against Nazism and communism.

While this history was unfolding, the drunk squad of the Oxford Group would be growing and expanding—staying true to the power of the “We” that comes from meeting in small groups.

Returning again to our emerging drunk squad... After a few months of failures in passing his “cure” on to a host of alcoholics with whom he had been working in New York, Bill finally found the man who would allow him to change his message from an “I” —“this is how I got sober”—to a “We.” He found his number two—Dr. Bob. Together they found a number three and soon the “We” was more than just a “You and a Me.”

The next two years saw a score more get sober at the hands of Dr. Bob and his Oxford Group friends in Akron; Clarence Snyder was bringing a small crowd down from Cleveland each week. In New York, Bill was not having quite so much success, but a few did manage to sober up and stay that way. Even with this seemingly slow going, what Bob was doing in Akron, and Bill in New York, was still a miracle.

In November of 1937 Bill returned to Akron. When he and Bob got together and counted up their successes, they discovered that around 40 people were staying sober. Bill queried Bob: Perhaps they could improve their results if they would send out missionaries from their midst to pass along their message—or maybe they could open a hospital for alcoholics.

Dr. Bob was not impressed with Bill’s ideas, but he was not opposed to one—a book that would recount how they and their buddies had gotten sober together. The Akron and Cleveland crowd were unmoved by any

of these schemes; but taking a cue from Dr. Bob, some reluctantly went along with this last one. The group took a vote. The book idea passed by one vote.

Now armed with the approval of the Akron group and with the backing of Dr. Bob, Bill returned to New York eager to begin writing. But first he had to have some money to keep himself afloat.

With the help of one of his first successes, Hank Parkhurst, he set up Works Publishing, hoping to sell stock in the soon to be written book. Then, when things still looked bleak, Bill reached out to his brother-in-law Leonard Strong. Leonard arranged a meeting with directors of John D. Rockefeller's foundation; but even then, Bill failed to get his desired financial boost.

John D. Jr. wisely understood that giving money to this endeavor would only destroy it. He did, however, allow the directors to set up a drawing account of \$5,000 that provided Bill and Bob each with \$30 per week.

Finally, in May of 1938, with Bill's financial crisis somewhat cooled down, he began writing the book that would become *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

The writing of the book was something of a battle. Ruth Hock, the secretary that Hank, had hired to help them in Hank's oil business, Honor Dealers, described the process: Every paragraph was picked over again and again, "it got a real mauling."<sup>62</sup> From the pages of *Pass It On -The Story of Bill Wilson and How the AA Message Reached the World*, I add these further details:

Ruth ... said that Bill appeared in the office one day with the steps practically complete. But when he showed the manuscript to the local members, there were heated discussions and many other suggestions. Jimmy B. opposed the strong references to God, in both the steps

and the rest of the early chapters; Hank wanted to soft-pedal them; but Fritz insisted that the book should express Christian doctrines and use Biblical terms and expressions. Ruth remembered that: "Fritz was for going all the way with 'God'; you [Bill] were in the middle; Hank was for very little; and I—trying to reflect the reaction of the nonalcoholic—was for very little. The result of this was the phrase 'God as we understood Him,' which I don't think ever had much of a negative reaction anywhere."

Bill regarded these changes as "concessions to those of little or no faith" and called them "the great contribution of our atheists and agnostics. They had widened our gateway so that all who suffer might pass through, regardless of their belief or *lack of belief*."<sup>63</sup>

While the book was being written, membership in this little band of recovering drunks rose to 100. Finally in April 1939, the book was published. It did not immediately begin to sell. A review by Harry Emerson Fosdick, pastor of New York's Riverside Church, triggered some sales. Then one of the most popular radio programs in the country, *We The People*, allowed a recovering member of the group tell his own story followed by his description of how the program worked. Host Gerald Heatter, himself, plugged the book. The results were less than hoped for; but bit by bit people began to share word of the book with those who might be helped. By 1941, membership had grown to 2,000.

Then in March of 1941, the afore-mentioned *Saturday Evening Post* article changed everything. The piece by Jack Alexander produced a groundswell of interest. Orders for the book swamped AA's mail box. The fellowship of AA took off.

### *How Does All This Apply To The “We” in UA?*

When I turned my attention to the topic of unity several chapters ago, I referred to my journey as being an adventure of rediscovery and a reconnection to the foundation stones that undergird our marvelous space of spiritual transformation. And, it is here that I stumbled into a remembrance that has most moved me.

In 1935 America, alcoholics were really people who, you could say, were as good as dead. Dr. Silkworth, medical director of Towns Hospital, had already told Lois that Bill would have to be confined to a mental hospital for his out-of-control drinking. Bill D. in Akron was actually looking forward to his commitment, having been hospitalized for overdoses on alcohol six times in the previous year.

Medical doctors, in general, were averse to providing even the most rudimentary care to alcoholics, as they considered them beyond hope. Bill himself had resolved to drink himself to death; but he was only one among the countless tens of thousands all across the country and the world who considered themselves as good as dead.

Then news of the book finally got out. All across America, individual alcoholics—mostly men, but women also, began to read the book and “How It Works.” From 2,000 in 1941, the culture increased, in 1952, to 111,765.\*

Astounding!!!

Most amazing of all—it was all done by the “We.” It was not directed by anyone from on high. It was done by individual men and women reading the book and

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\**Pass It On*, p, 344. I’ve quoted other sources as saying 100,000 by 1955.



passing, what was happening to them as a result, on to others.

Bill and Ruth responded to the avalanche of mailed-in questions by writing to everyone who asked for help. Eventually Bill would distill what he was learning into his “Twelve Points to Assure our Future.” But he was not now actually running AA. AA, now, really had taken on a life of its own. What was driving the explosive growth in AA was the “cure” itself. Neither Bill himself, nor Dr. Bob, were actually in control of AA. By now, AA was in the hands of countless individuals and groups of alcoholics all across the country.

The founders, likewise, no longer controlled any of the AA assets—literature, donations, or AA corporate offices. When Bill and Bob had gone to the Rockefeller’s for help, the directors had convinced them of the wisdom of placing AA in the hands of a board of trustees comprised of four non-alcoholics and three recovered alcoholics—the Alcoholic Foundation.

Now as he and Bob were both getting older and would no longer have any impact on how AA was run, Bill realized that it was imperative that he make sure that AA was turned over to the members themselves.

From 1946 and for the next four years, Bill continuously promoted the idea of a member-led General Service Conference which would be the actual governing body of AA. The Alcoholic Foundation would still oversee the daily affairs of the New York Headquarters, the literature, and other assets, but they would be subject to the governance of the members through their democratically elected General Service Representatives and those that they would elevate to serve during an annual meeting between the Alcoholic

Foundation and these representatives in what would be the annual meeting of the General Service Conference.

Bill's idea for this way of governing was not understood or appreciated by AA members, nor was it embraced by the trustees. During the years Bill wrestled with establishing the Conference, four non-alcoholic trustees resigned in protest.

Bill eventually found an ally in trustee, Bernard Smith. When, in 1950, Smith was finally able to convince the trustees of the wisdom of Bill's vision, they then fully endorsed his Conference idea.

Though his Conference plan was now finally given the green light, Bill would still be challenged to work out the details of developing the non-adversarial political procedures that would lead to the peaceful election of members of the Conference—a miracle in itself. From 1951 to 1954 the Conference plan was tested and proved itself to be the hoped-for solution Bill was envisioning it to be. One of the first things the Conference suggested was changing the name "Alcoholic Foundation" to "General Service Board"—they said that the word "foundation" had negative associations for alcoholics. From this and other such suggestions, the trustees became impressed with wisdom that could come from the Conference.

Finally, in 1955, at AA's Second International Convention, Bill turned AA over to its members. AA now belonged to the alcoholics. It was no longer governed by its parents. AA had "come of age."

### *Underearner's Anonymous Comes of Age*

Writing this little book has been such an awesome adventure. I really had no idea "We" would end up

exactly here – where “We” are now. But it does stand to reason that “We” would, does it not?

It has been what? seventeen years since UA first got started. It is now entering its late teens, so it is only to be expected that “We” should be asking, “Isn’t it about time for Underearners Anonymous to ‘Come of Age’?”

Will “We”? Can “We”?

I asked some of our friends in UA – our partners in service on the GSR committee – what were some of their thoughts concerning where we now stand in UA? Here, I share their replies, not intending to make any particular point, but just sharing what the thinking of this representative sample of our leadership seems to be:

A fellow GSR and former GSR chair says, “UA is caught up in some sort of breakdown that has been going on for a while. It is a hole that is really hard to get out of. Unfortunately, our fellowship is not flawless and bulletproof.

Another, a former trustee, texted me, “Part of the problem is that very few people in our fellowship really understand what it means to NOT underearn. From what I can tell, Alcoholics Anonymous is not just about not drinking, it’s about becoming TRULY sober, to the point that drinking is not even an option.

One of our sister fellow-servants, who has been active in the formation of UA literature since 2011, lamented the fact that a booklet approved by the board in 2020 is still not available to the fellowship. She says that although the legacy GSB is part of the approval process – they do not appear to be functional. She closed our little chat with, “I have seen the incredible servant leadership of all the committees. I believe 100 per cent that higher power has a plan – HP has a plan that will be

revealed in time.”

Another, a brother who has been in our fellowship since 2015 says, “It’s unfortunate that it is happening.” He attributes the dysfunction to the underearning symptom of stability boredom. “We just can’t get along with friends or family.” He says that over time he has seen the same issues with the same people. “People have taken sides.”

Another GSR comments: A chosen few are thinking they need to lead the many. The traditions are not being followed the way that other fellowships follow them. It’s all about communication and one side will not communicate. I do believe that sometime this will all get worked out. We need to break down the communication road block.

All of these friends who are now, or have previously served as GSR’s, are in agreement that there is a breakdown. But they are also still hopeful that, somehow, some way, our fellowship’s Higher Power will bring us through.

I myself am confident that we will come through this breakdown stronger than ever.

### *Some Of My Own Thoughts on Our Divide*

I have already mentioned that I noticed the divide in the way UA was operating at the GSB level when I attended the 2018 World Service Conference. The UA GSB was totally in control in the governance of UA. This was not the model that Bill laid out before us as he set up the AA General Service Conference as ultimate authority in AA. I have looked at both the UA and AA general service structure and cannot ascertain exactly where the mistake was made, but I suggest that it is now time that the UA membership, through our General

Service Conference, should be set up as the ultimate authority in UA even as is stated in concept Number One in our *Twelve Concepts of World Service*:

**Concept 1:** The ultimate responsibility and authority for Underearners Anonymous World Service should always remain with the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship as expressed through the UA Groups.

**Concept 2:** The UA Groups have delegated complete administrative and operational *authority* to the General Service Board. The groups have made the Conference the voice and the conscience for the whole Fellowship, excepting for any change in the Twelve Steps and Traditions.

One place at which a conversation could begin at redrawing the boundaries of the GSC and GSB would be to look at the word that I have highlighted in Concept 2: The GSB should have the *responsibly* for administrative and operational actions of the GSB on behalf of UA, but the *authority* for its functioning ought always be delegated by UA members. Any authority under which the GSB may operate should always be granted, as needed for its functioning, by “We” UA members as represented by our elected General Service Conference.

I will bring this chapter to a close by making two more suggestions that I believe will move us to a place where “We” the members of UA can bring unity and harmony to our fellowship from the bottom to top.

### *Moving Us into Unity*

Those who represent our UA groups to the larger UA community serve us as our Group Service Representatives. One of the first requirements for service as a

GSR is that the member be working with a sponsor, having completed, at a minimum, steps one through five of the twelve-step process. What I propose is that we add to this the requirement, that our member GSRs should be barred from voting until they first demonstrate the ability to recite, from memory, the first three paragraphs of *Chapter One of The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

It is necessary that all of us, who wish to serve as our group service representatives, have a basic mastery of the process of getting sober in UA. It has been stated multiple times that underearning is not like alcoholism and it is difficult to determine when an underearner may have gone into a state of relapse. There is no way to guarantee that our fellow members have actually achieved a functional level of sobriety.

So, you are likely not surprised when I suggest, that it should be made a requirement for service at the level of the General Service Conference, that in order for a GSR to be allowed voting privileges, they first demonstrate that they have hit bottom in UA. The simplest way to do that would be by undergoing an interview in which they demonstrate that they have memorized the first three paragraphs of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. In so doing, they will prove that they have connected with the humility that is necessary to serve the fellowship at this higher level.

I, myself, have begun to require my sponsees to show me that they have memorized these passages. I work with them in my Zoom room so that I can see them face to face. It usually takes a few weeks for them to successfully memorize these words. Sometimes there is resistance—the “No,” “Don’t tell me what to do.” But in

every case, they soon enough come to see the wisdom of getting their emotional arms around this phrase which I first posted in *Chapter 2* as I emphasized the words *absolute humiliation*:

Who cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit that, (Underearning) glass in hand, we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive (under-being) drinking that only an act of Providence can remove it from us.

No other kind of bankruptcy is like this one. (Underearning) Alcohol, now become the rapacious creditor, bleeds us of all self-sufficiency and all will to resist its demands. Once this stark fact is accepted, our bankruptcy as going human concerns is complete.

But upon entering (UA) A.A. we soon take quite another view of this absolute humiliation.

It is here, as we seek to come of age in our community dedicated to overcoming under-being and underearning that we now admit complete defeat.

Our problem, I say, is not just what some judge it to be: dictatorial behaviour by the legacy GSB and the actions they have taken in their attempt to control UA according to their own wishes. We must admit that our GSR committee has also made its own, not so soberly thought-out, mistakes. The committee thought that it could solve our governance problems through politics – hold a World Service Conference against the wishes of the Legacy GSB, fire the unresponsive GSB and elect a replacement board of trustees. Now, they have come up with the perfect solution to our divide – let’s mediate.

Perhaps mediation will work.

Wouldn't it be great if it did. But mediation will likely not ultimately solve our problem. Our fellowship may make it through this present crisis, but the fundamental problem will only continue to resurface unless we as a culture admit to complete defeat. We need to find the same sober bottom that the "We" established for us in our parent fellowship, Alcoholics Anonymous.

Returning to paragraph three of our *Step One* memory passage.

We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be the firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.

It will only be through admission of, not only personal, but now also community-wide utterly humiliating defeat, that we will be able to see Underearners Anonymous finally established on the firm bedrock upon which a happy and purposeful community may be built.

### ***Recommendation number two***

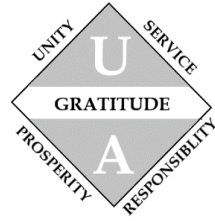
As I said in my 2019 letter in *Chapter 6, Unity*, our fellowship is not particularly clear about vision. You will hear this asked again and again from our fellow members. "What exactly is our vision?" So now I unofficially recommend that we work out our vision.

Here again I offer my idea of a new and improved logo – one that captures all the critical dimensions of our community-wide conversation in a way that our current logo so miserably fails to do.



## *Unity*

The first aspect that should catch our eye is Unity. It also UA's first tradition. "Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends upon UA unity.



Focusing on Unity also helps us with the destruction of the self-centeredness, which Bill W. had emphasized is our problem and which, he said, must be destroyed if we are to live God-guided lives.

## *Service*

Going clockwise around our logo we next come to Service.

I assume that many members who have had the perseverance to get this far into this little book are also likely engaged in service at the GSR level—perhaps starting off as a group chair, business chair, or other group officer. And this is all great. But of utmost importance in impact on our fellowship, is our service at the level of sponsor—of passing along to another underbe'r—on an individual basis—our own experience strength and hope.

In my case, before agreeing to take me on, my own sponsor made sure to obtain a promise from me that I would sponsor others once I had completed my steps with him.

In looking back into the annual World Service Conference meeting notes, I see that having enough members volunteering to be sponsors has been a concern since at least 2013. So, it does seem that at some point, we will need to up the ante and say that members cannot serve on the GSR committee if they are not currently

Sponsoring others. A requirement for working the program up to the level of *Step 5* is only asking for trouble. It is time that we “come of age” in this respect.

### ***Responsibility***

I will say more about responsibility in the following chapter. But for now, in speaking to the problems we are now facing, I ask again what I asked in *Chapter 6*, “Who is responsible for the mess we are in?”

I have said and will say again, “I am responsible.” I saw this catastrophe coming; I could see how impossible thing would become; and I walked away. But now I am back and have taken responsibility for making us all one in recovery.

And, to the extent that every UA member, who wants to participate in leadership takes the same stand, “I am responsible,” there is a good likelihood that we will come through this crisis of maturation, stronger than ever. We cannot point the finger at others and say, “They are responsible, or you are responsible for our current chaos.” No, we are all at fault – dysfunctional – some more than others. We are all to blame and each to blame. To be responsible, is to take whatever blame is necessary to be taken for the whole catastrophe. We each must – individually – take responsibility.

### ***Prosperity***

For many, prosperity is the single most important focal point for their participation in UA. And to the extent that the member keeps their eyes turned away from the other issues, they will likely continue to crash and burn. The tools and the many strategies available to our community are wonderful and must be fully embraced, but not at the expense of Unity, Service,

Responsibility and Gratitude.

### *Gratitude*

We often hear it expressed as an attitude of gratitude. I, myself, was the chairman for many months of the Friday noon, Prosperity Express Gratitude meeting. I still hold my own personal weekly gratitude meeting in which I and my friends take our three-minute shares as we name 25 things for which we are grateful. This practice fosters an attitude of gratitude.

It is out of gratitude that I have taken a few months of my spare moments to put together this little book. I am confident that my effort has been time well invested. I am so grateful for UA. It is such a gloriously promising fellowship.

I share the same vision for UA as Bill and Lois had for AA and Frank Buchman had for his Oxford Group. All I can do is to do whatever it takes to pass my blessings on to others. That is why I have committed to making the Kindle version of this book free to all.

I have also decided that I will raise the funds necessary to send a printed copy, at my expense only, to everyone who has helped me put these thoughts together. Thank you all for your precious gifts to me.

## *I Am Responsible*

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I do not think it is possible to say too much about responsibility. At the Fourth International World Services Convention in Toronto, Bill Wilson imparted to us this, his final notable gift.

As he and Lois, clasping hand in hand, stood in front of a throng of ten thousand formerly hopeless alcoholics, they led the crowd in a joint proclamation:<sup>64</sup>

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

It may seem that anyone who joins into the making of this proclamation is departing from the “We” that the previous chapter was extolling, but that is not the case. It is actually a deepening of the commitment to the “We.”

In embracing this declaration, and making it part of one’s ongoing purpose, all of us who take on this responsibility as our own, are making a commitment to carrying “Our” experience strength and hope out into a world that is in bondage to the *self*. We” do it as responsible individuals, but also a “We” nonetheless.

Responsibility can never be a collective endeavor. When people exclaim “we are all responsible” you can rest assured, that there will likely be few among those saying it, who are actually taking responsibility. Responsibility is an individual activity.

It is always an “I am responsible.”

I am responsible for sharing our marvelous way of life to all who will receive it.

For this reason, I think it is prudent to caution all of us in Underearners Anonymous to think very seriously about the phrase that the provisional board (GSB2) has adopted, “We are all UA.”

It is quite catchy. And it does speak to the reality that the only requirement for membership in UA is the desire to stop underearning. Yes, we all belong – I belong, and you belong – I am an underearner, and you are an underearner. We are all members – based solely on our desires to overcome under-being or underearning.

But it is something altogether different to declare, “We are all UA.” It is a nice catchy phrase, but I am not quite so sure UA has yet earned its stripes, as it were. We have not yet proven that we are a “We” in the way that phrase seems to assume it is appropriate to declare it.

I am not saying that anyone is really doing this, but as the alternative GSB (GSB2) declares “We are all UA,” there just may be a little bit of “Nanny, Nanny, Boo Boo,” directed toward the legacy GSB (GSB1.)

The legacy GSB are underearners just as we all are. We need be very patient and understanding in saying this. They, just like all of us, are engaged in the very same difficult journey to our absolutely humiliating bottom. Be patient with us all.

### *Tying up Loose Ends*

I would be a skirting of my responsibility to our more diligent readers if I did not bring closure to two items toward which I have drawn more than a little attention.

The first is Bill W’s vision of perfection.

It is quite obvious – even with all the steps we have taken, the service we are rendering, and all the efforts we have made at turning our will and our lives over to the

care of a power greater than ourselves – that we have not yet come to a place where we can claim perfection.

Maybe it is time that we examine Frank Buchman’s vision – a vision that will likely only resonate with those among us who find our higher power in Jesus Christ.

I would not even be sharing this now, were it not for the fact that this vision is built into the very DNA of our twelve-step culture. I feel sure that, while the following chapter may not make any sense to many members who read it, I am confident that a fair number of those who have grown up in the Christian tradition will find in it an answer to the question, “What is perfection?”

I, in no way, intend to bring any offense to those who have a different sense of higher power, or a different understanding of unity and diversity. I only intend the inclusion of this vision for those of us for whom it resonates and will embrace and use it in a way that is a blessing to them and to all those they are called to serve.

Here, I again share Frank’s vision for the space in which the whole twelve step culture gathers:

I want all to feel they have a share as they partake of the priceless boon which has come to them and to me through the Oxford Group ... They can best perpetuate this gift by carrying forward a philosophy that is adequate for a world crisis and that will, at last, bring the nations to the long-looked-for Golden Age ushered in by the greatest revolution of all time whereby the Cross of Christ shall transform the world.<sup>65</sup>

Whether we like it or not, an examination of our historical roots reveals that the experience we pass on to one another, all started with Frank Buchman’s afternoon at Keswick.

*Yet Not I*

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... when you take the attitude, or place  
of death, God undertakes to put into  
you all that He wants out of you.

MRS. JESSIE PENN-LEWIS

The bible conference Frank Buchman attended in August of 1908 had been held at Keswick, on the north shore of Derwentwater in England's Lake District every summer since 1875. Billing itself as a "convention for the attainment of practical holiness," attendees would rightly assume that it was a teaching about spiritual perfection. Perfection was, as I have repeatedly said, controversial then, even as it is now.

Frank was familiar with the theme of the convention. He had attended D.L. Moody's Northfield Massachusetts meetings during his college years. Although most of the Northfield presenters were Keswick regulars Frank, had somehow, never grasped the true import of the Keswick message—as often happens with people:

...seeing they do not see, and hearing they  
do not hear, nor do they understand.

MATTHEW 13:13

It might have been the depths of Mrs. Penn-Lewis's own personal encounter with the Cross of Christ that touched him, but however it happened, as she continued to speak, the light at last shone down on an amazing truth that had been hidden from his view, though it had forever been standing right there in plain sight:

We need a 'fixed point', which acts as a centre and a goal, and that 'point' in the history of the world – back to the ages before it, and forward to the ages following – it is the Cross of Calvary. It is the central pivot of the dealing of God with the universe in every aspect. It is because we Christians get away from the 'fixed point' of the Cross that we wander into all kinds of cul-de-sac places, where we lose the balance and right perspective of truth.

We must therefore be brought by the Holy Spirit to the place where we realize that we have nothing in us that can be 'improved,' and be willing to come to that Cross, and to say "when He went to Calvary, He took the sinner too." Oh defeated child of God, take the simple fact of faith in His words, that you died with Christ upon His Cross; that you were baptized 'into His death' – put right into Him, and buried out of sight – and there leave yourself, reckoning that you have died unto sin, and as far as you are concerned, have finished with it. Then reckon upon union with Him in resurrection; that you have in Him a new life. If we would put it briefly, we might say that when you take the attitude, or place of death, God undertakes to put into you all that He wants out of you. What a gospel for the people! Let us give it to them. It is truly a gospel of glad tidings – the Cross – the place of victory over sin as well as the place of reconciliation with God.<sup>66</sup>

The lady preacher's message that day, forever altered Buchman's life:

It produced in me a vibrant feeling, as though a strong current of life had suddenly been poured into me and afterwards a dazed sense of a great spiritual shaking-up. There was no longer this feeling of a divided will, no sense of calculation and argument, of oppression and helplessness: a wave of strong emotion, following the will to surrender, rose up within me...and seemed to lift



## Hitting Bottom In UA

my soul from its anchorage of selfishness, bearing it across the great sundering abyss to the foot of the Cross.<sup>67</sup>

And...there came into my life a vivid sense of having experienced the Atonement. And I left that service with a consciousness of having the complete answer to all my difficulties and sins. I heard the wind of heaven. It passed over me and through me, and I walked out of that place a different man.<sup>68</sup>

What was it that so deeply touched Frank that Sunday afternoon?

The message that Mrs. Penn-Lewis delivered that day was different from what is mostly heard in Christian churches in our western culture. Usually, the message of the Cross is presented as—what is referred to as, Substitutionary Atonement—Jesus died on the Cross of Calvary in place of us sinners who completely deserve to die for our sins—Jesus taking the sins of all of humanity upon himself, dies in our place as our substitute. So the saved person should be grateful and act better to show that they appreciate what Jesus has done for them.

What was different about the Keswick message was that the central emphasis of the entire conference was the understanding that when Christ died on Calvary, we too, died with him as explained in *Romans Chapter 6, verses 3-11*.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in

## Yet Not I

the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead ...  
NKJV

The difference: This scripture which was the central focus of the Keswick Convention, declares we also died on the Cross with Christ, 2,000 years ago—a onetime event in time—but also a death that is forever experienced in the eternal now.

St. Paul declares this truth over and over again:

Reckon yourself to be dead.

ROMANS 6:11 KJV

You are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.

COLOSSIANS 3:3 KJV

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

PHILIPPIANS 3:10 KJV

The Apostle caps off his whole proclamation of our death in Christ, when he declares his own position as one who is crucified with Christ:

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I.

GALATIANS 2:20 KJV

The last three words, “yet not I” are translated from the Greek: *oukéti egoó* or *yet not ego*. To take the position of being dead in Christ is to take the position that frees us from the ego, the self.

Referring back to Chapter 4, Sources of the Self we recall that the sinning Adam immediately becomes a disembodied eye in the same way that Plato posits the rational self as being the disembodied “eye of the soul.”

By identifying with Christ in his death, we become the body of Christ. We become the body that is crucified, the body that is buried, and the body that is raised again to new life as a resurrected body.

This distinction is made perfectly clear by St. Paul as he describes what happens to our embodied being at death:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:42-44 KJV

There is no disembodied self. This sovereign disembodied “I” is a fiction that Plato made up, and which then got imported into our way of thinking from the earliest apologist of the Christian faith.

Keswick was simply applying what had finally been discovered about Bible truth once the reformation gave believers access to the Bible, allowing them to dig into the texts and discover these hidden gems of truth.

What Frank Buchman did was take this amazing revelation and made sure that it did not get tucked away into the latest version of denominational Christianity. He made sure that his teaching was passed along by in-

duals acting as apostolic members of the body of Christ.

### *Living as The Body*

... so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

ROMANS 12:5-6 NKJV

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27 ESV

Bill Wilson, undoubtedly, picked up the idea of destruction of self-centeredness and gathering as a “We” from the Oxford Group; but then he purged *Alcoholics Anonymous* of any Christian language that would give the reader even a hint of how we are to finally go about destroying our fatal self-centeredness.

We cannot blame Bill for this. He was trying to save alcoholics and knew that allowing AA to become too religious would kill it.

But now, those of us who are Hitting Bottom at depth are extremely grateful that we have found a safe place to gather in the “rooms of Underearners Anonymous.”

Perhaps UA may never come of age—and that will be fine. For us now, it is a blessed and safe space.

It may be, that this space in which we have been given the freedom to enter and overcome our under-being, will be the space in which Frank Buchman’s vision can at last “Come of Age.”

For you are dead, and your life is  
hid with Christ in God.

COLOSSIAN 3:3 KJV

## *Practice of the Presence*

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Sought through prayer and meditation to improve  
our conscious contact with God as we understood  
God, praying only for knowledge of God's  
will for us and the power to carry that out.

UNDEREARNERS ANONYMOUS STEP ELEVEN

We practice the presence of God on a daily basis.

What we got from the Oxford Group and which was  
then preserved and passed down to us is, what we can  
think of as, positional truth.

We are the body.

I am the body, you are the body, we are the body.

We are not the self or the thinker.

We have admitted complete defeat; embraced the  
humiliation that comes from admitting our complete  
powerlessness over our compulsions and have made a  
complete surrender of our wills and our lives over to the  
management of God.

We are now the "We." A community in recovery. If  
we are Christians, we can also think of our new position  
of being-in-the-world as being the Body of Christ.

Morning and evening, we practice declaring our  
position: (some\* need only be spoken by the Christians  
among us):

I AM THE BODY

I AM NOT THE HEAD

I AM NOT THE SELF

I AM THE BODY OF CHRIST\*

I AM NOTHING

I AM DEAD

Practice of the Presence

I AM BURIED\*

I AM RESURRECTED\*

I AM SEATED IN HEAVENLY PLACES\*

I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST, NEVERTHELESS I LIVE\*

I AM YET NOT I\*

I AM A GRATEFUL UNDEREARNER

I AM A GRATEFUL UNDERBE'R

GOD, TELL ME WHAT TO DO AND GIVE ME THE POWER TO DO  
WHAT YOU TELL ME.

As we continue to practice these positional truths on a daily basis we will, over time, come to hear more and more clearly, the voice of the *logos* that Heraclitus spoke of – Holy Spirit as Jesus spoke of it – our Higher Power as Bill W and the founding AA members came to call it.

THANK YOU, GOD.

*Pass It On*

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Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive under earners, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

UNDEREARNERS ANONYMOUS STEP TWELVE

The greatest possible investment in time and talent I could make would be to invest it into the hearts and lives of the people who come to Under earners Anonymous seeking the opportunity to come out of hiding.

I pass the history contained here, the ideas, and the experience which has inspired this book on to you, as all of it has so freely been given to me.

Pass it on.

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All Biblical references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from:

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*Alcoholics Anonymous*

*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous.*

*Pass It On*

*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*

*My Name is Bill, Susan Cheever*

*On The Tail of a Comet* (Biography of Frank Buchman)  
Garth Lean

*About Under Earners Anonymous Pamphlet*



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2 Ibid.

3 The man that Frank had picked to carry out his vision, Peter Howard, survived him by only four years. Those who inherited the work on Peter Howard's passing were not prepared to properly carry out the founder's intentions. Thankfully, Buchman's vision has not been lost. Through the years there have been those of us who have kept alive in our hearts, Frank Buchman's world changing vision and his confidence in the power of the Cross to change the world.

4 Garth Lean, *On the Tail of a Comet* p. 531.

5 *Pass It On*, AA World Services, p. 305.

6 Ibid., p. 306.

7 Ibid.

8 When I wrote this in 2011, I was not as knowledgeable about the distinct roles of the General Service Conference and the GSB.

9 Susan Cheever, *My Name is Bill*, Washington Square Press, NY 2004, p. 212

10 I included these comments about the infinite self in my "Nothing" book. pg. 67-68 "one of the underpinnings of psychosis is the preoccupation with an escape into infinite possibility. I will attempt to shed some light on this by adding two observations from the acknowledged genius of the psychological, Søren Kierkegaard: For the self is a synthesis in which the finite is the limiting factor, and the infinite is the expanding factor. Infinitude's despair is therefore the fantastical, the limitless. Instead of summoning back possibility into necessity, the man pursues the possibility – and at last cannot find his way back to himself. There is now a whole generation or more who have drunk the Kantian/Hegelian /Nietzschean /Hera-clitean infinity Kool-Aid and have developed the compulsion to keep drinking – desperately seeking to stave off "infinitude's despair." They have been mesmerized by infinite becoming (progress/change) and are now totally out of touch with necessity. If they could only see that they are nothing – eternally nothing – they could, perhaps, sober up and come to experience themselves, not as infinite ... but eternal being.

- 11 Bills talk 1954
- 12 *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pg. 75
- 13 Lean, p. 75
- 14 Heidegger, Martin, "What is Metaphysics?", translated by D. F. Krell, in D. F. Krell (ed.) *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, HarperCollins, NY, 1993. p. 108. Heidegger references Hegel's (*Science of Logic*, vol. 1 *Werke* III, 74)
- 15 *Ibid.* p. 109.
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- 18 *Das Wesen der Materie* [The Nature of Matter], speech at Florence, Italy (1944) (from *Archiv zur Geschichte der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft*, Abt. Va, Rep. 11 Planck, Nr. 1797).
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- 21 *Ibid.* p. 163.
- 22 Charles Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, Harvard U. Press, Cambridge, MA, 1989, p. 118
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- 24 Plato, *Symposium*, 175b.
- 25 Plato, *Timaeus*, 90b-c.
- 26 James Miller, *Examined Lives* p. 69
- 27 Charles Taylor, p. 127
28. *Ibid.*
- 29 Great Ideas of Western Man, Victor Hugo
- 30 Upon leaving the chapel that day, he ran into a young man who was a freshman at Oxford. He shared the message as he had received it from Mrs. Penn-Lewis and the young man was also changed. This is the first time that Frank had seen a person so powerfully converted by a short message.
31. Layman with a Notebook, "What is the Oxford Group," Oxford University Press, 1933, available at [www.stepstudy.org](http://www.stepstudy.org), p. 6.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 9.
- 33 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford\\_Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_Group)
- 34 Lean, *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- 35 Susan Cheever, *My Name is Bill*, Washington Square Press, NY, NY, 2004 p.45

36 The Carolyn Durlacher article in Chapter One said 2006, but the history of UA in Wikipedia says that Andrew held the first UA meeting on October 3, 2005

37 What is Underearning? in *About UA*

38 What is Recovery in UA? in *About UA*

39 *Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 153

40 How Does UA Work? in *About UA*

41 *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, NY, NY 1953, p. 68

42 *Alcoholic Anonymous*, pg. 60

43 *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 68 I had to think twice before using this quote.

44 The word absolute shows up in the index on pp. 14 and 25 but does not refer to the four absolutes.

45 <https://silkworth.net/alcoholics-anonymous/the-four-absolute-standards-of-jesus/> This a link to Dick B. discussion of the source of the absolutes as Frank Buchman received them from Harvard Theology Professor Henry B. Wright's application of Robert Speer's *The Principles of Jesus*.

46 [silkworth.net/alcoholics-anonymous/four-absolutes-4/](https://silkworth.net/alcoholics-anonymous/four-absolutes-4/)

47 Lean, pg. 82-83

48 Ibid

49 *Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 58

50 Ibid, p 567-8 SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE: The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms. Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous. In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-conscious-ness" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook. Among our rapidly

growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone.

What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves. Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it “God-consciousness.” Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial. We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable

51 *Alcoholics Anonymous* p. 64

52 <https://simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html>

53 Cognitive languages:

- Strategist (administrative gift) (global vision, strategic plan:) filter- “What is your plan?”
- Teacher (teaching gift), filter- “Am I interested in this?”
- Producer (giving gift) (make and manages resources), filter- “Are you managing your resources?”

Emotive languages:

- Responder (mercy Gift) (Prefers to know how much you care more than what you know), filter- “Do you care?”
- Exhorter (exhorter Gift) (Encourager, salesman politicians. Promise more than they can deliver), filter- “Are we relating?”

Kinetic languages:

- Mover (prophetic Gift), (Pioneers; they start more that they can finish) filter- “Are you keeping your word?”

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- Doer (service Gift), (Service, doing), filter- “Are you doing your share?”
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