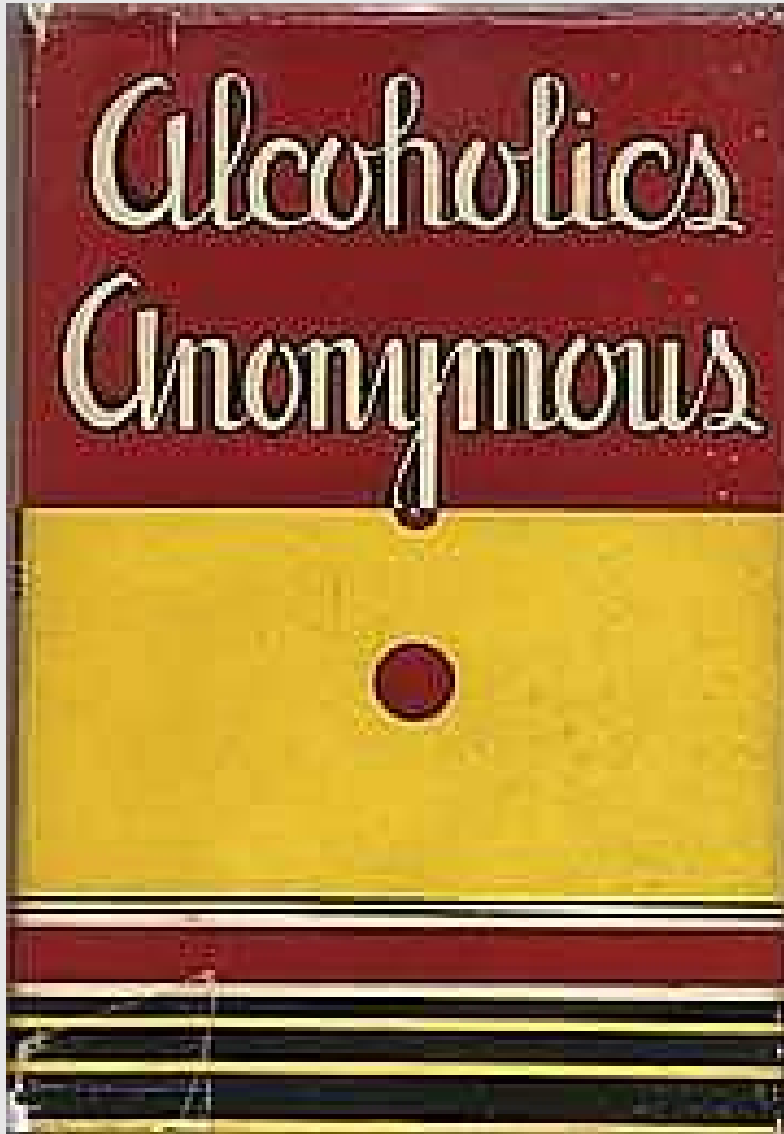
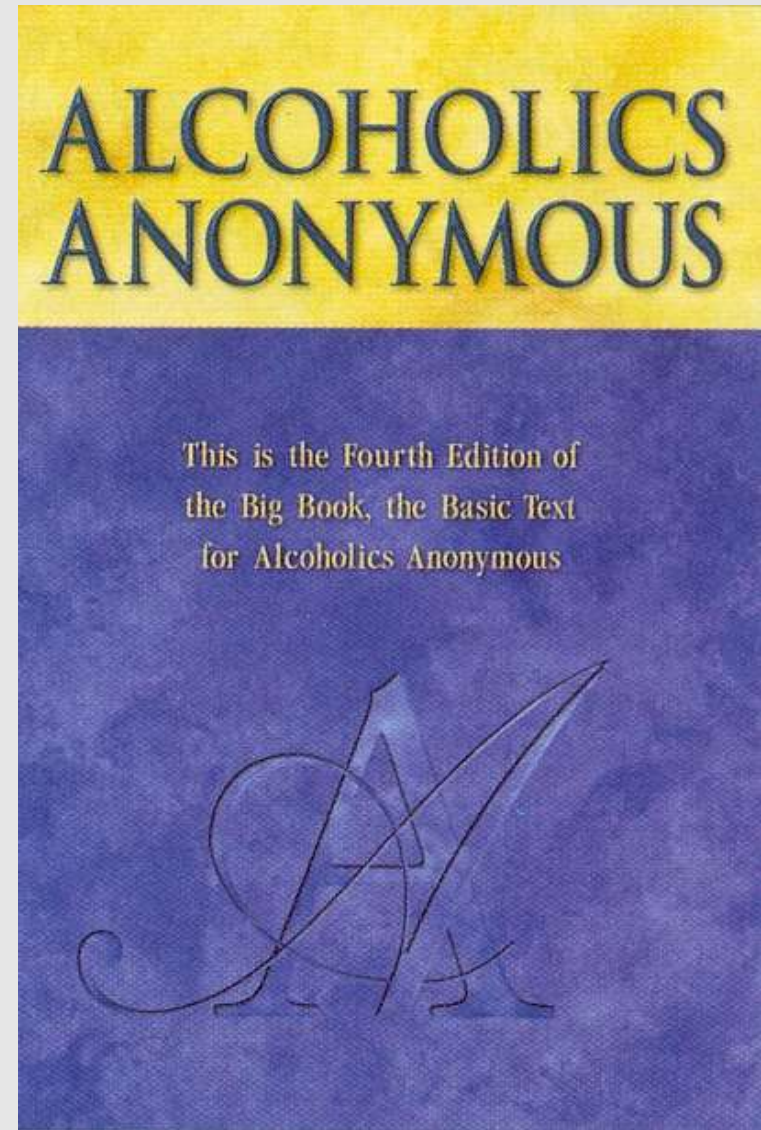


# Where did the Big Book come from?



1<sup>st</sup> Edition - 1939

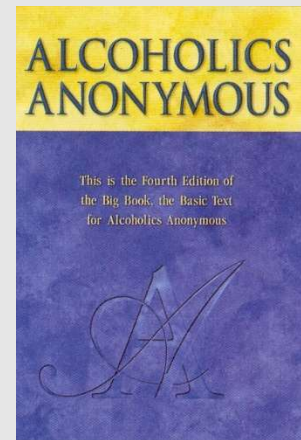
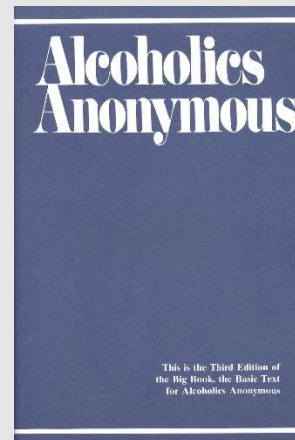
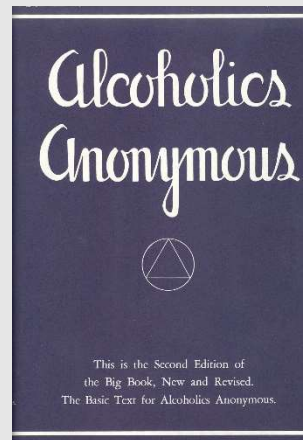
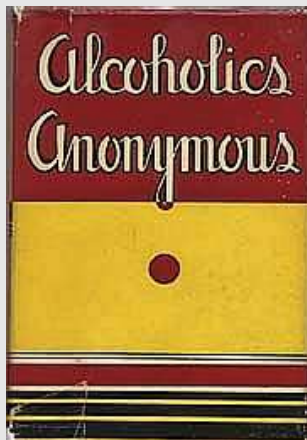


4<sup>th</sup> Edition - 2001

# Where did the Big Book come from?

What were the sources of the principles of the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous? Bill Wilson answered this question in an address delivered to the Medical Society of the State of New York on May 9, 1944.

Bill W. stated:





May 9, 1944

“At the very outset we should like to make it ever so clear that A.A. is a synthetic concept – a synthetic gadget, as it were, drawing upon the resources of medicine, psychiatry, religion and our own experience of drinking and recovery.”

*“You will search in vain for a single new fundamental.”*



May 9, 1944

“We have merely streamlined old and proven principles of psychiatry and religion into such forms that the alcoholic will accept them. And then we have created a society of his own kind where he can enthusiastically put these very principles to work on himself and other sufferers.”

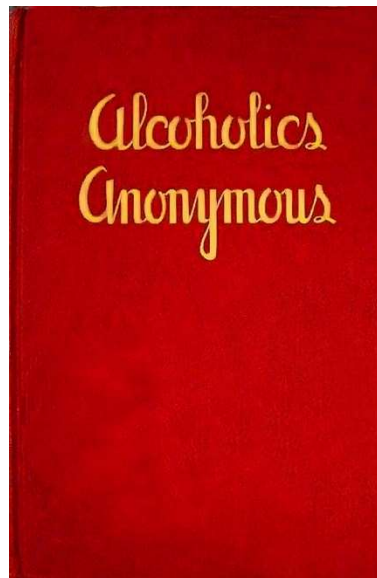
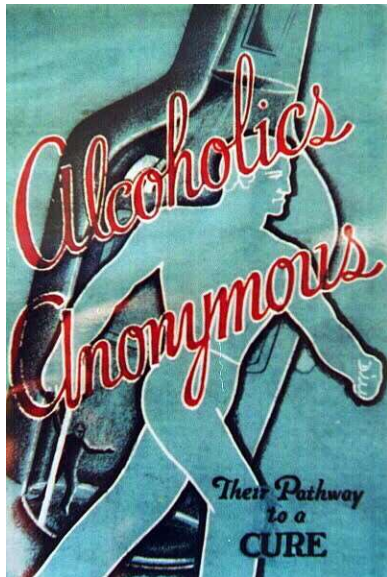
“Alcoholics Anonymous” has made two major contributions to the program of psychiatry and religion. These are, it seems to us, the long missing links in the chain of recovery.

1– Our ability as ex-drinkers, to secure the confidence of the new man – to build a transmission line into him.

2– The provision of an understanding society of ex-drinkers in which the newcomer can successfully apply the principles of medicine and religion to himself and others.”



“We have merely streamlined old and proven principles of psychiatry and religion into such forms that the alcoholic will accept them.”



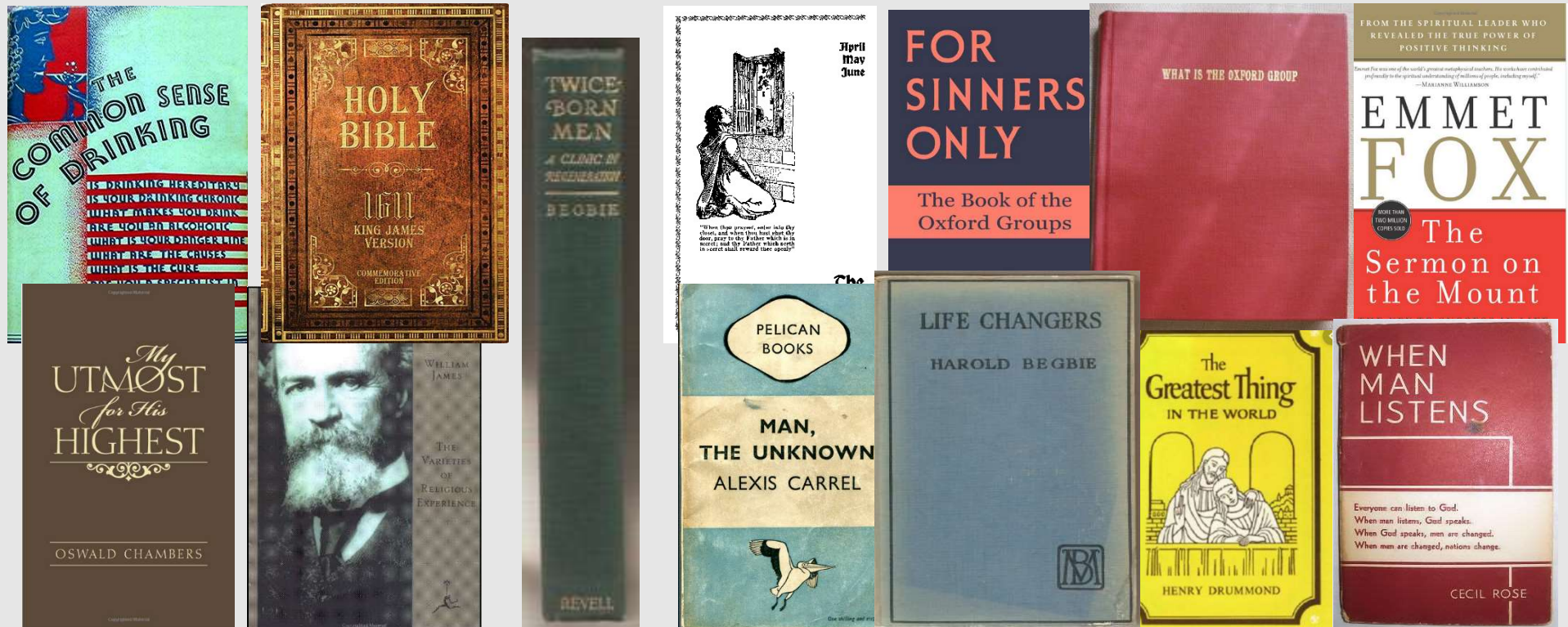
## VERB

1.design or provide with *a form that presents very little resistance* to a flow of air or water, increasing speed and ease of movement.

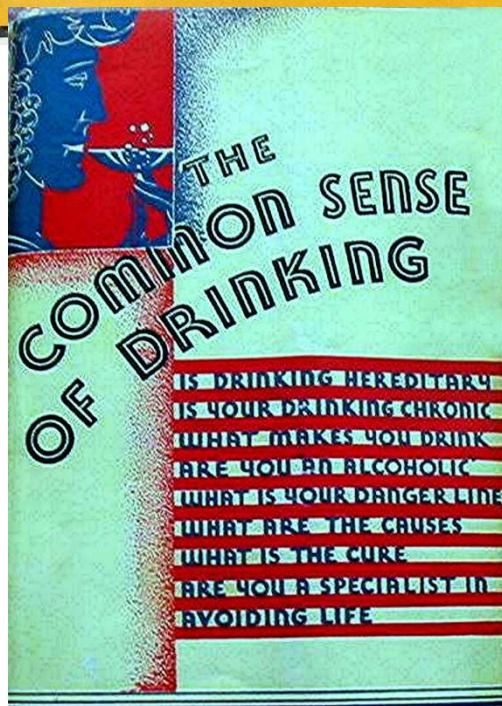
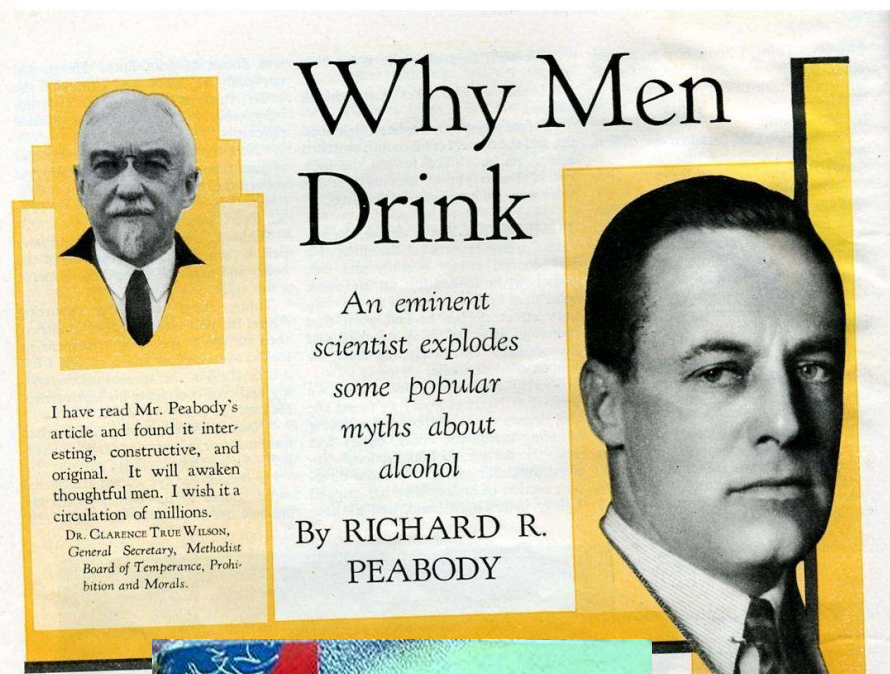
2.make (an organization or system) *more efficient and effective by* employing faster or *simpler working methods*

“You will search in vain for a single new fundamental.”

## *The Books behind The Book*







## THE COMMON SENSE OF DRINKING

By Richard R. Peabody

Published in 1934, this 191 page volume was written by an alcoholic who had recovered through the program of the Emmanuel Movement in Boston. Peabody went on to become a lay therapist in New York City and had an office near the Calvary Church where Bill Wilson was attending meetings of the Oxford Group.

# THE COMMON SENSE OF DRINKING

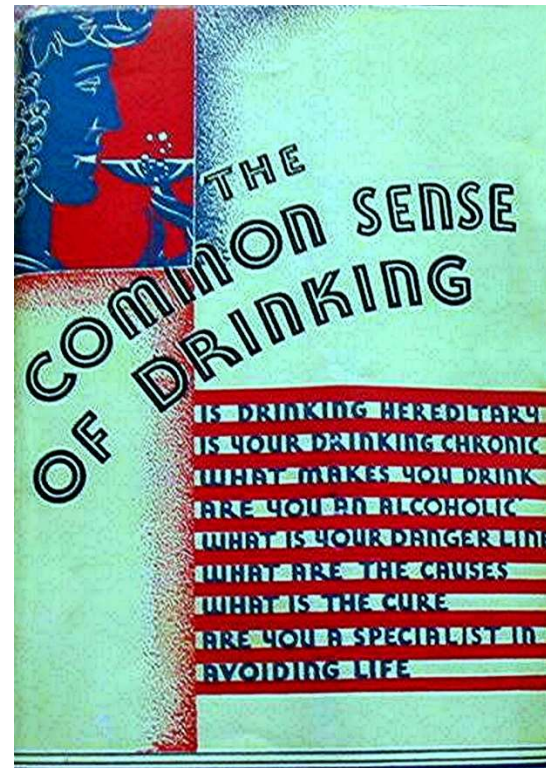
By Richard R. Peabody

From this title, Bill Wilson. borrowed phrases such as:

“once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic,”

“half measures are of no avail,”

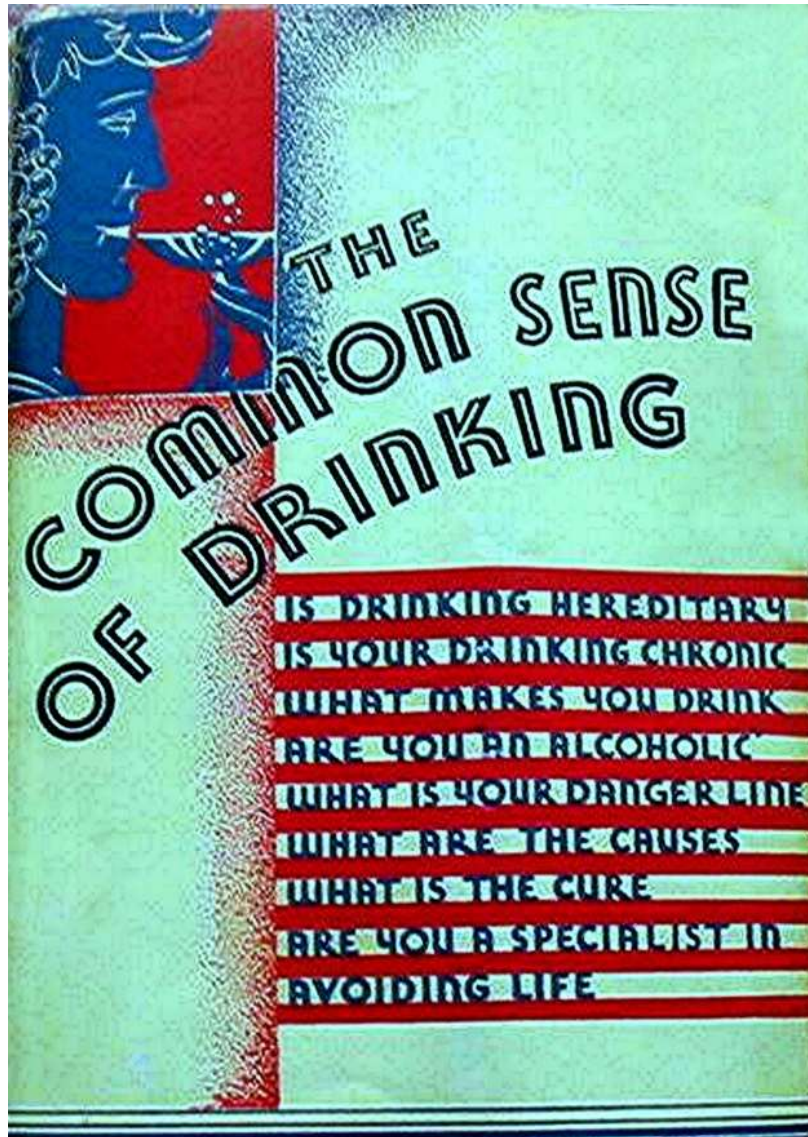
and perhaps the entire story of “a man of thirty”  
contained in the chapter “More About Alcoholism.





# THE COMMON SENSE OF DRINKING

By Richard R. Peabody



Is your drinking hereditary?

Is your drinking chronic?

What makes you drink?

Are you an alcoholic?

What is your danger line?

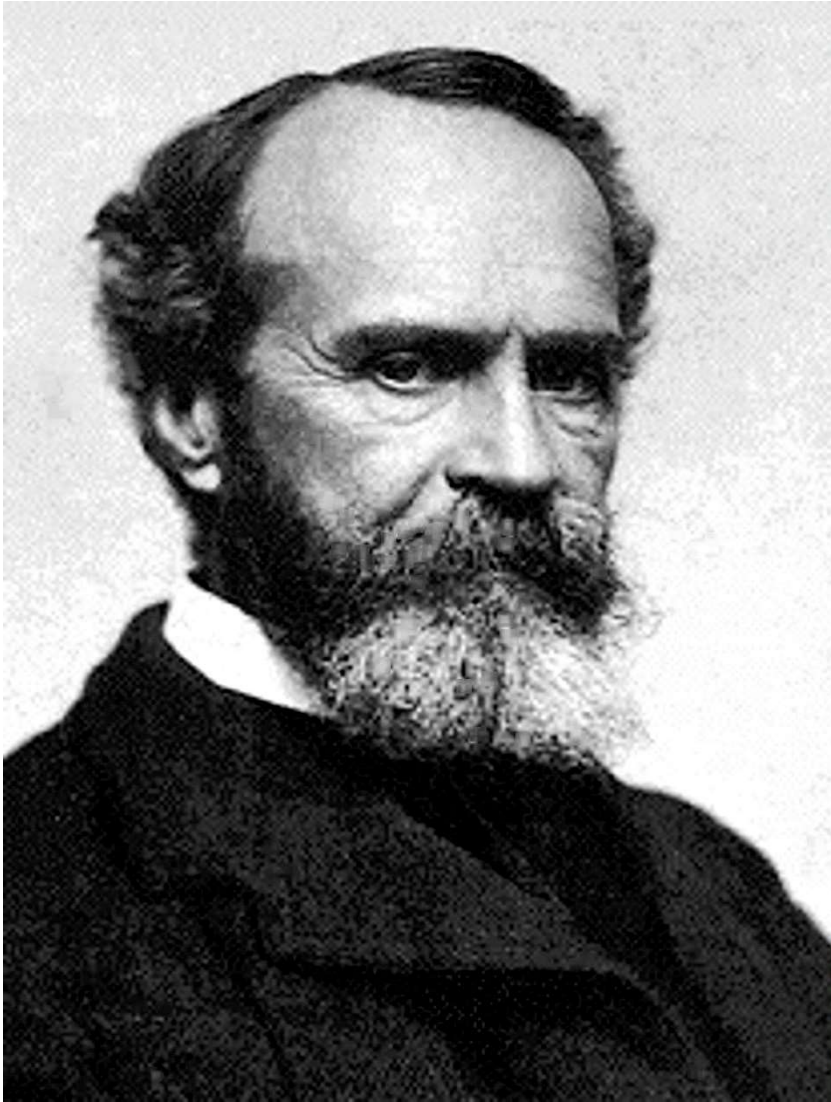
What are the causes?

What is the cure?

Are you a specialist in  
avoiding life?

# THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

By WILLIAM JAMES



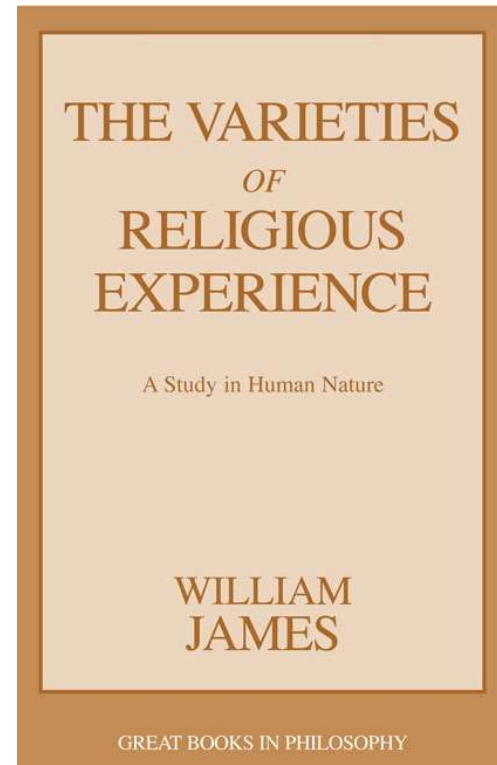
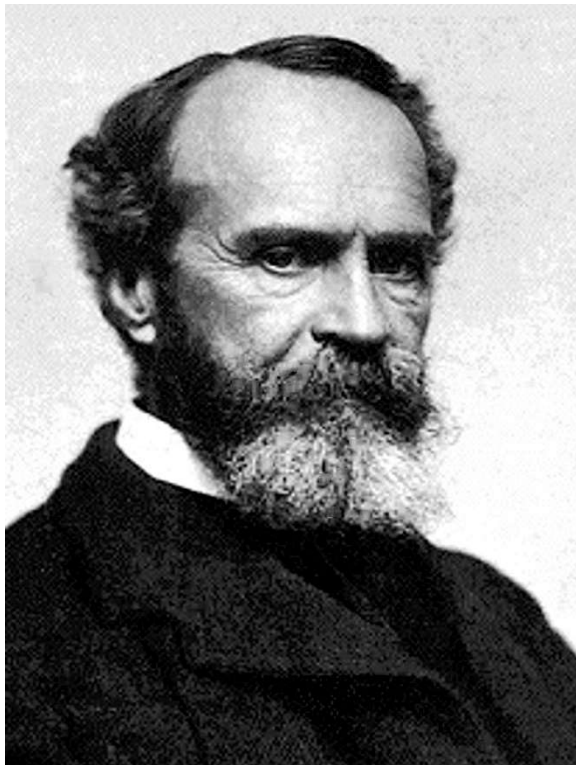
The most important influence?



# THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

By WILLIAM JAMES

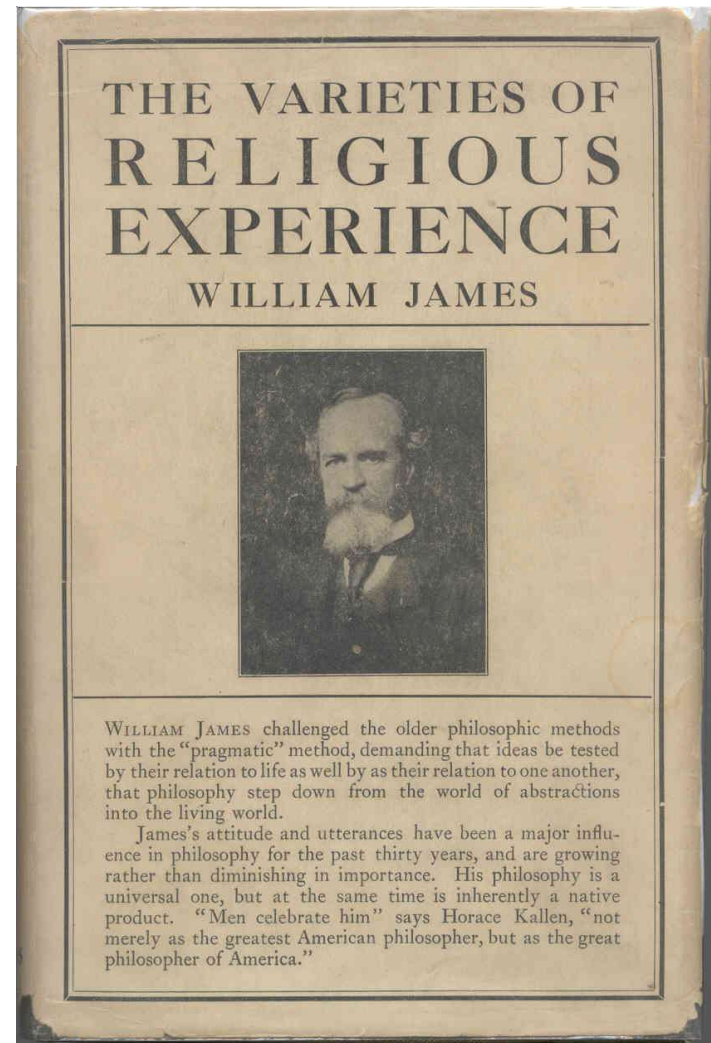
Published in 1902, this 526 page book was read by Bill Wilson following his spiritual experience in Towns Hospital in order to better understand what had happened to him. The book was given to him by Ebby.



# THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

By WILLIAM JAMES

Religious or spiritual experiences, James thought, had the power to transform people. Some were sudden; other came on gradually. Some flowed out of religious channels; others did not. But, nearly all had the great common denominator of pain, suffering and calamity. Complete hopelessness and deflation at depth were almost always required to make the person ready for the transforming experience



# THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

By WILLIAM JAMES

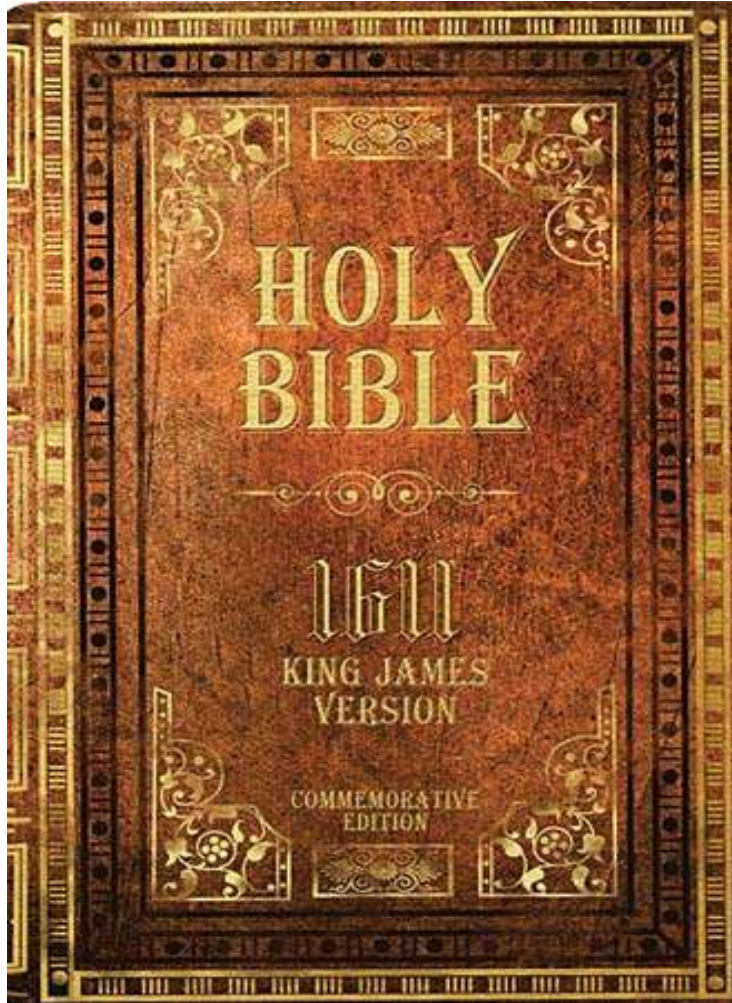
Bill Wilson reasoned that to have a spiritual experience or spiritual awakening...

- *There had to be complete failure of the will in a certain part of one's life. With the alcoholic it was the ability to control one's drinking.*
- *There had to be an admission of failure.*
- *There had to be a cry for help.*

Thus, the A.A. procedure of telling one's story stressing the progressive loss of control and the fatal nature of the malady consisting of a physical allergy coupled with a mental obsession. When these facts were driven home, the alcoholic could surrender to the problem and become open to the solution

## THE KING JAMES BIBLE

The early members read and studied the bible and concentrated upon the following three areas;



Matthew, Chapters 5-7, Jesus' sermon teaches many of A.A.'s underlying principles including "Thy will not mine be done," "First Things First," "Easy Does it," forgiving to be forgiven and the principle of restitution.

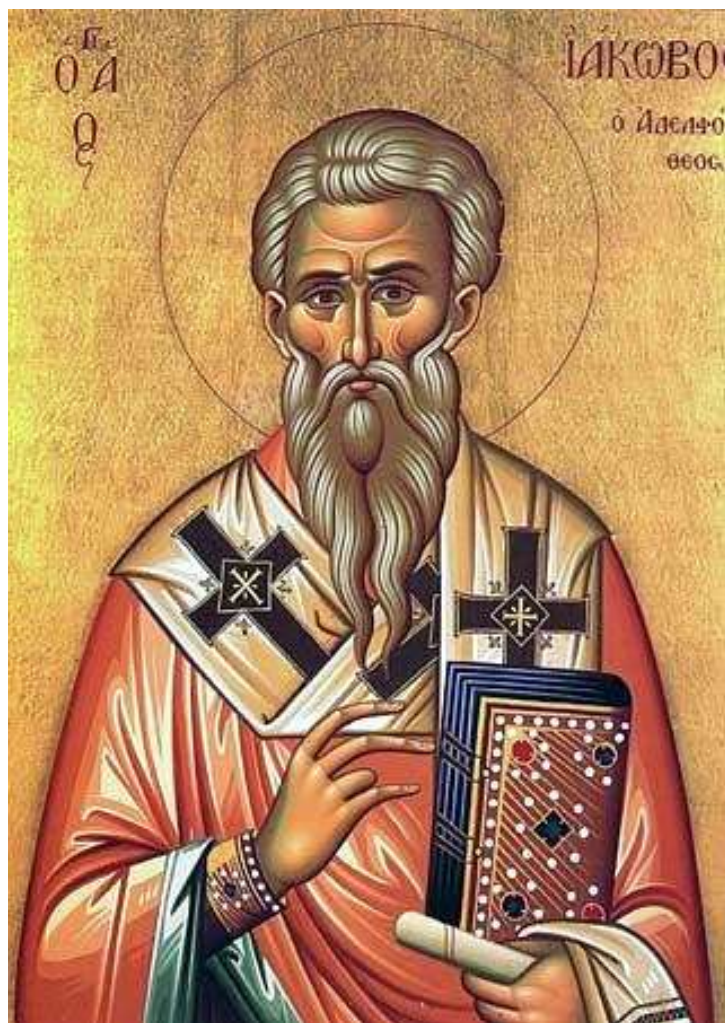
I Corinthians XIII. Paul listed the aspects of love and the points of what love is not. He also points out the distinction between gifts, perfection and love.



## THE KING JAMES BIBLE

The Book of James. The theme of James' writing is Christianity in action and deals with a series of topics which were of great interest to the alcoholics.

These topics are:



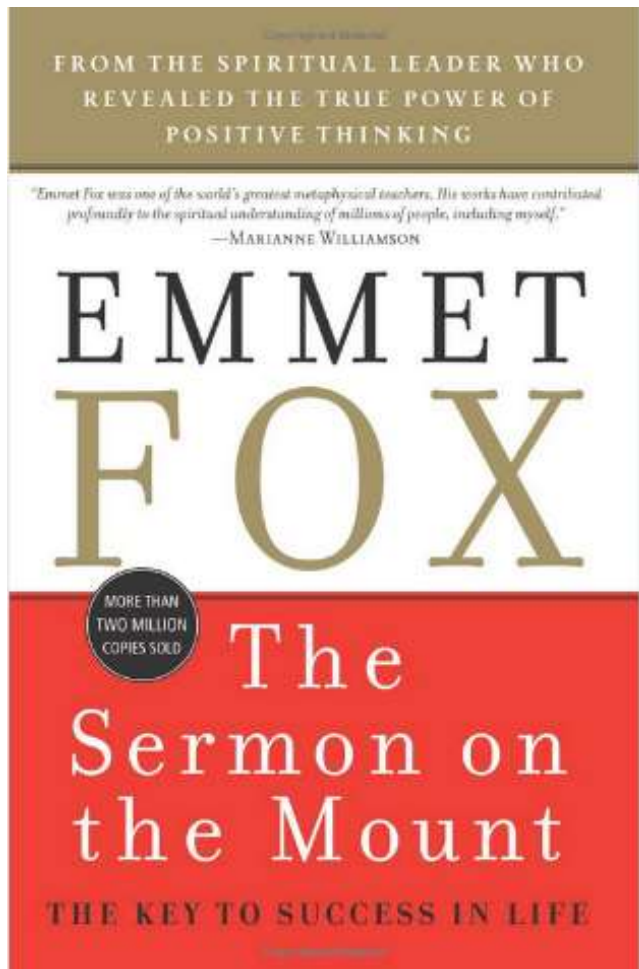
1:1-18	Trials and Temptations
1:19-27	Listening and Doing
2:1-13	Mercy and Judgment
2:14-26	Faith and Works
3:1-12	Taming the Tongue
3:13-18	True and False Wisdom
4:1-12	Friendship with God
4:13-5:12	Investing in the Future
5:13-20	The Power of Prayer

The phrase “Faith Without Works is Dead” is taken directly from the Book of James. In fact, The Book of James was so popular with the early members many favored naming the fellowship “The James Club.”

# THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

By Emmet Fox

Published in 1934, this 199 page volume was used by the early A.A. members and those in the New York area who attended Fox's lectures at Steinway Hall.



Fox explains that the Beatitudes are a prose poem in eight verses (Matthew V) which is complete in itself, and constitutes what is practically a general summary of the whole Christian teaching.

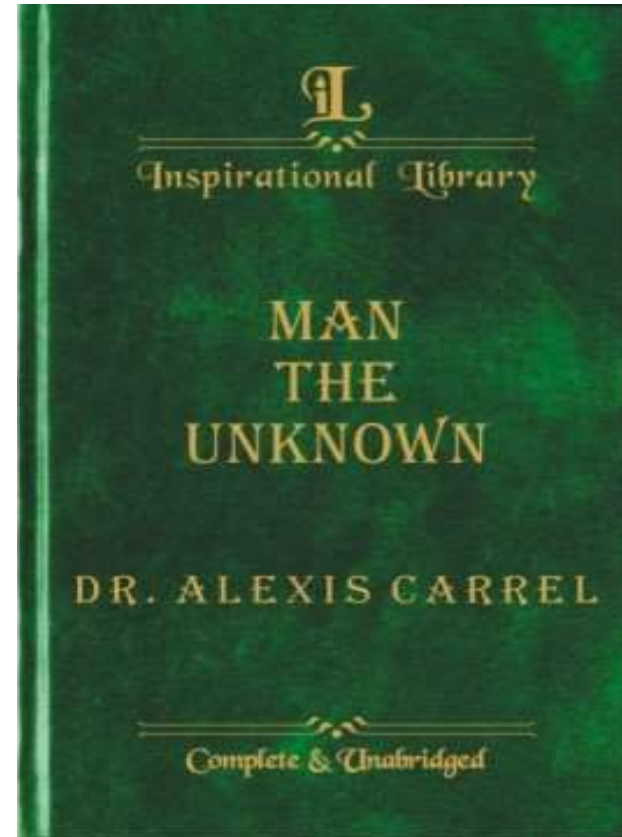
The book was of special interest as the Oxford Group had adopted four basic points; Absolute Honesty, Absolute Purity, Absolute Unselfishness and Absolute Love as guides to our life in God.

# MAN THE UNKNOWN

## By ALEXIS CARREL

Published in 1935, this 346 page volume was the turning point in determining what focus the Big Book should take.

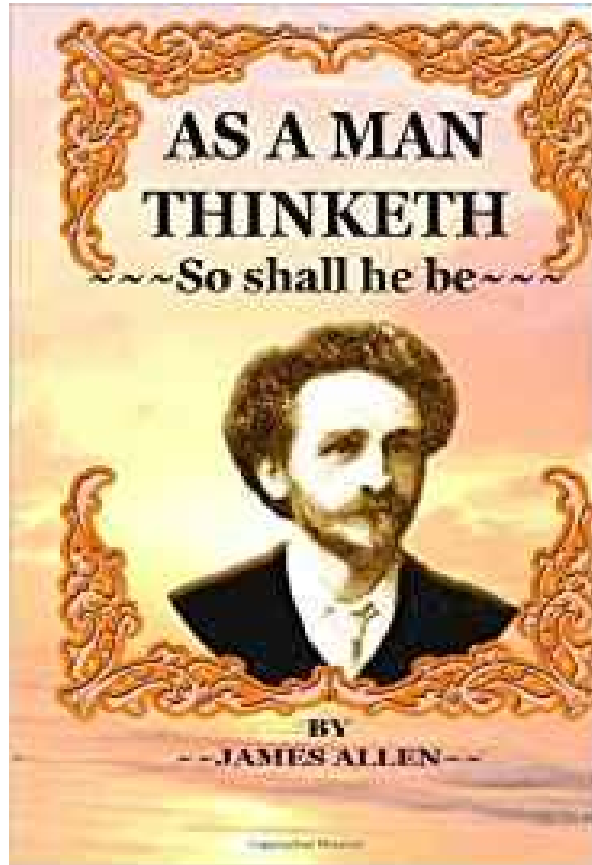
“On reading that book (Man, The Unknown) some of us realized that was just what we had been groping towards. We had begun to build a program out of our own experiences. At this point we thought; let’s reach into other people’s experiences.



Let’s go back to our friends the preachers, the social workers, all those who have been concerned with us, and review what they have got and bring it into synthesis. And let us, where we can, bring them in where they will fit.

# AS A MAN THINKETH

By JAMES ALLEN

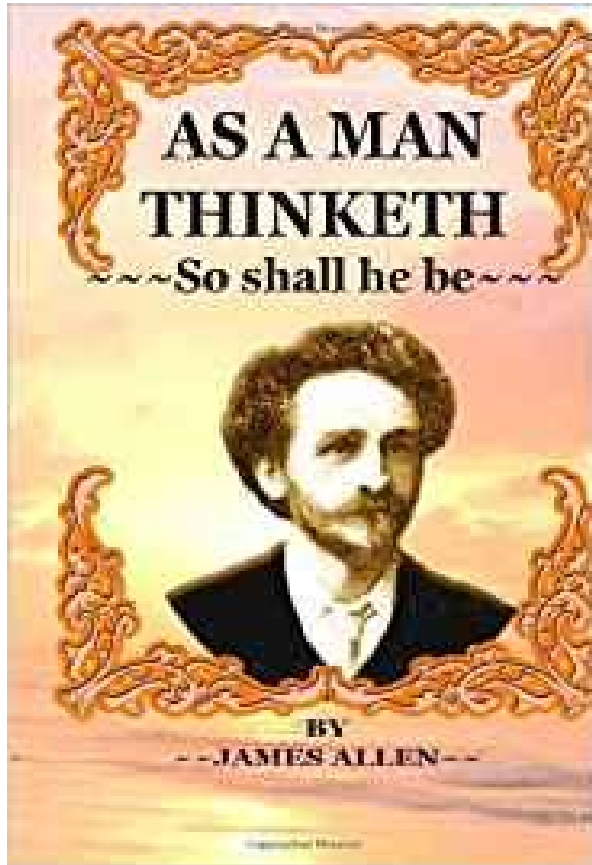


Published in 1910, this volume can vary in page quantity but is usually printed as 59 pages. This book was used by early members to understand the principles of “CAUSE AND EFFECT.”



# AS A MAN THINKETH

By JAMES ALLEN



“A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts.”

“Man creates all of the circumstances of his life through thought, and his environment is the reflection of these circumstances.”

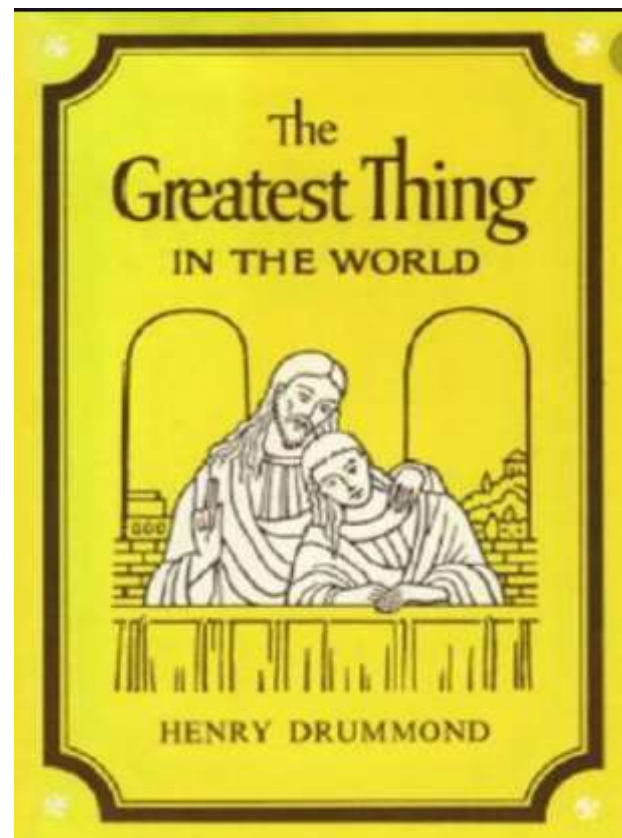
“The mind must be treated as a garden and man must learn to identify and remove the weeds.”

“We must learn to crucify ourselves on a daily basis as daily living demands daily dying.”

Thus, the core A.A. ideas that “we must get down to causes and condition”, “so our troubles, we think, are basically of own making.” That “some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.”

# THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD

By HENRY DRUMMOND



Written in 1883 at a mission station in Africa, Drummond first delivered his lecture on LOVE at the 1887 Northfield Conference in Massachusetts.

This volume is an analysis of the Thirteenth Chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, explaining that the greatest thing in this world is love.

# THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD

By HENRY DRUMMOND



Drummond describes the spectrum of Love as having nine elements.

PATIENCE

“Love suffereth long.”

KINDNESS

“And is kind.”

GENEROSITY

“Love envieth not.”

HUMILITY

“Love vaunteth not itself, is not easily puffed up.”

COURTESY

“Doth not behave itself unseemly.”

UNSELFISNESS

“Seeketh not her own.”

GOOD TEMPER

“Is not easily provoked.”

GUILELESSNESS

“Thinkith no evil.”

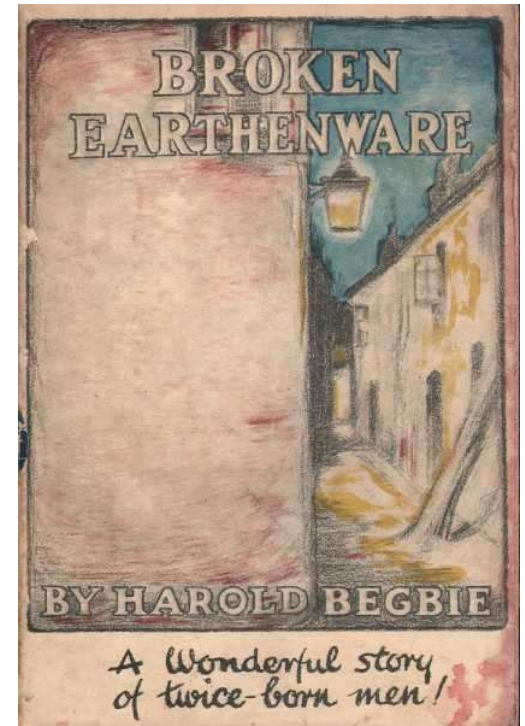
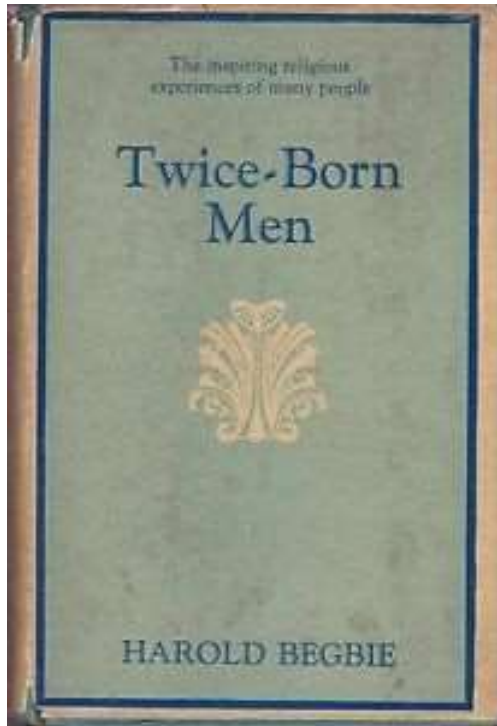
SINCERITY

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth.”

To these nine aspects the early members of A.A. added GRATITUDE and TOLERANCE.

# TWICE BORN MEN (BROKEN EARTHENWARE)

By HAROLD BEGBIE



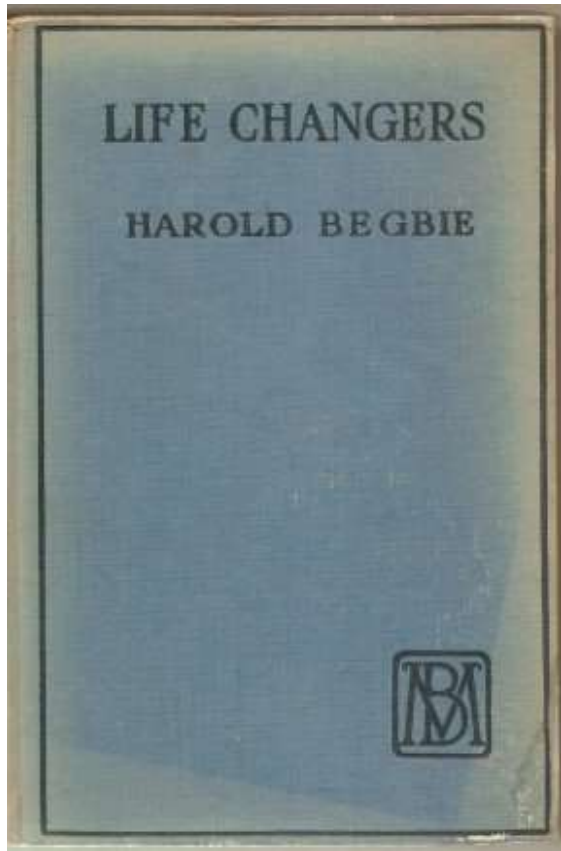
Published in 1909, this 280 page volume was dedicated to William James and is a collection of the personal stories of men who recovered through spiritual experiences while in contact with the Salvation Army in London, England.

The stories have titles such as A TIGHT HANDFUL, THE CRIMINAL, THE COPPER BASHER, LOWEST OF THE LOW, RAGS AND BONES and APPARENT FAILURE. The Big Book contains similar anonymous titles.



# MORE TWICE BORN MEN (THE LIFE CHANGERS)

By HAROLD BEGBIE



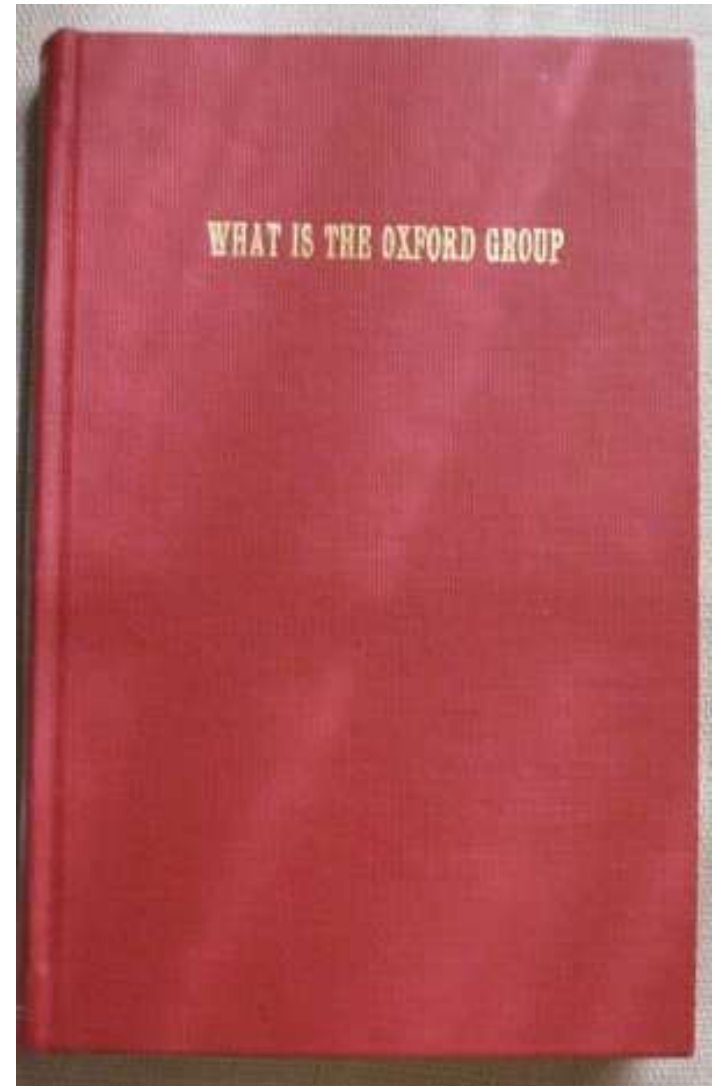
By the fall of 1922, a core group of converts (Groupers) had emerged from the first house parties at Cambridge and similar gatherings at Oxford. Claude Sutton, Robert Collis, Loudon Hamilton, Sherwood Day, Henry Van Dusen, Murray Webb-Peploe and Sam Shoemaker had become known as The Life Changers. Their personal stories were told in Harold Begbie's 1923 book MORE TWICE-BORN MEN.

7 Personal Stories – “Greats”, “A Rugger Blue”, “A Beau Ideal”, “Persona Grata”, “Princeton”, “A Young Soldier” and Sam Shoemaker’s – “The Virginian”

# WHAT IS THE OXFORD GROUP

By A Layman with a Notebook

Written by Ralph Neale and published in 1933, this 132 page volume was considered the “basic text” of the Oxford Group and its purpose was to explain the basic principles of the Group’s Life Changing Program and practical spiritual activities. The Oxford Group had four basic points which are the keys to the kind of spiritual life God wishes us to lead. These points are;



# WHAT IS THE OXFORD GROUP

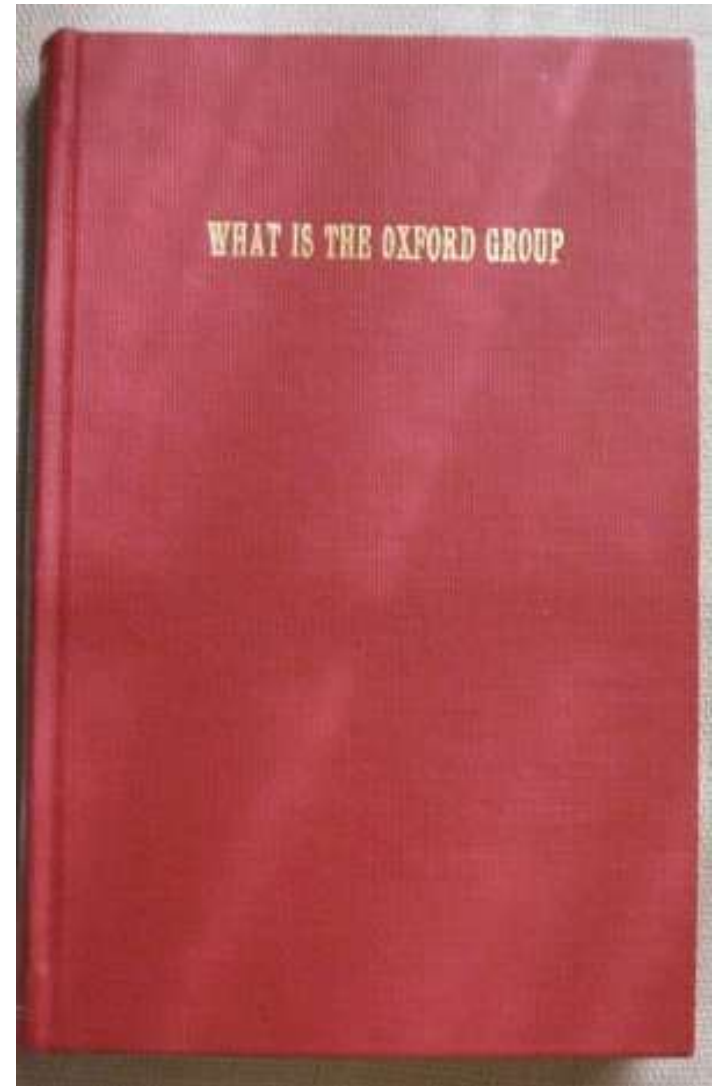
By A Layman with a Notebook

ABSOLUTE HONESTY,

ABSOLUTE PURITY,

ABSOLUTE UNSELFISHNESS

and ABSOLUTE LOVE.



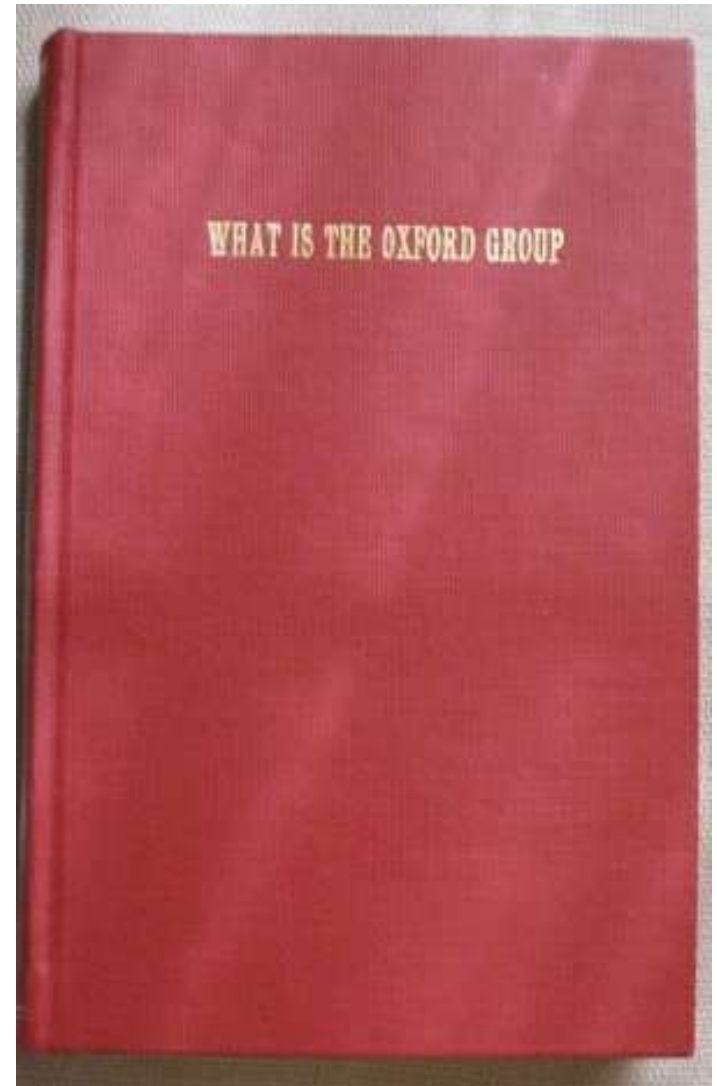
# WHAT IS THE OXFORD GROUP

By A Layman with a Notebook

To be spiritually reborn, and to live in the state in which these four points are the guides to our life in God, the Oxford Group advocated four practical spiritual activities:

1- The Sharing of our sins and temptations with another Christian life given to God, and to use Sharing as Witness to help others, still unchanged, to recognize and acknowledge their sins.

2- Surrender of our life, past, present, and future, into God's keeping and direction.



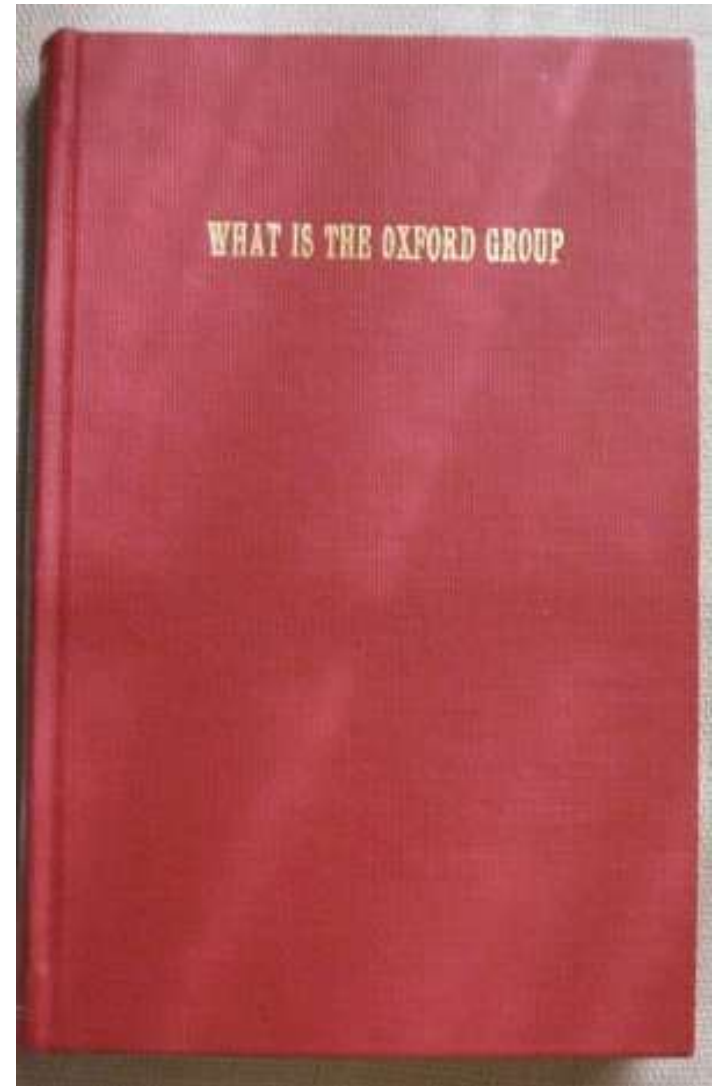


# WHAT IS THE OXFORD GROUP

By A Layman with a Notebook

3- Restitution to all whom we have wronged directly or indirectly.

4- Listening to, accepting, relying on God's Guidance and carrying it out in everything we do or say, great or small.

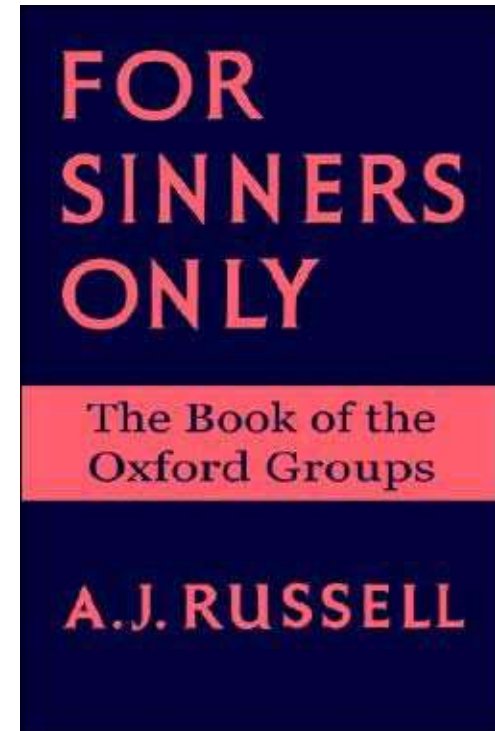
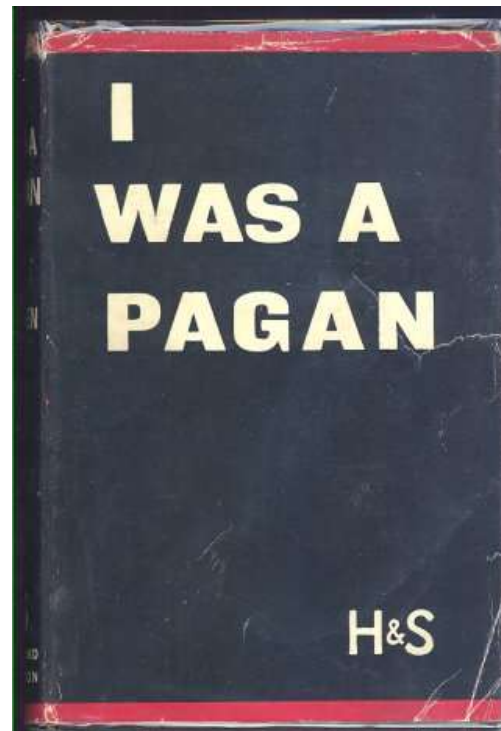
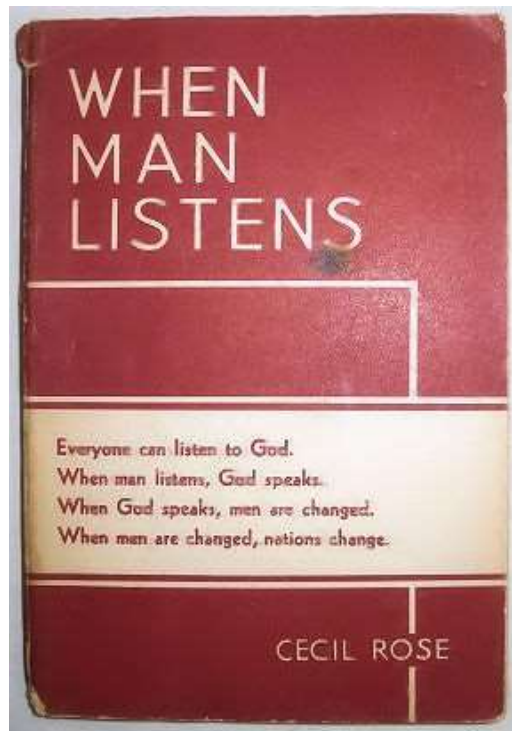


# WHAT IS THE OXFORD GROUP

By A Layman with a Notebook

“These activities have proved indispensable to countless numbers who are living Changed lives. They are not new ideas nor inventions of the Oxford Group. They are the simple tenets of simple Christianity.”

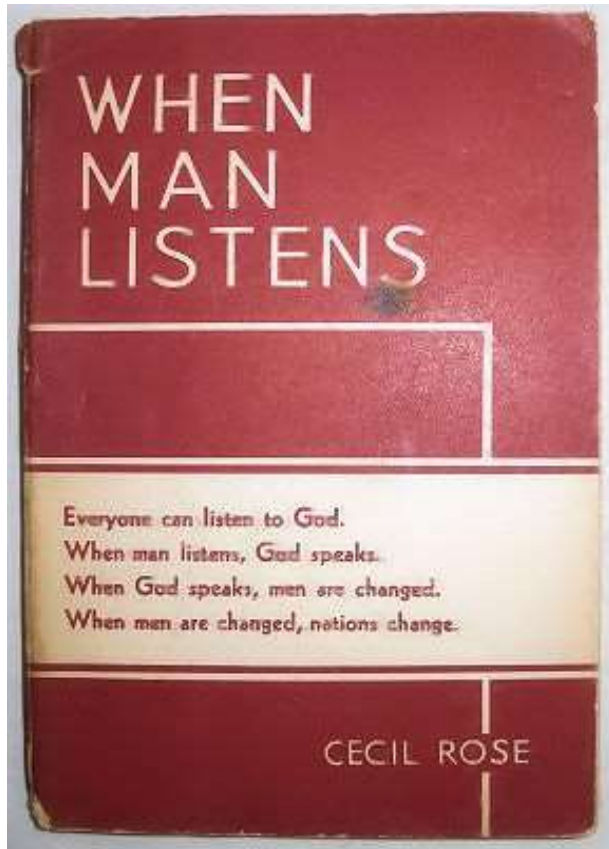
– *What is the Oxford Group 1933*



# WHEN MAN LISTENS (GOD SPEAKS)

By Cecil Rose

Published in 1937 by New York Oxford University Press, it's main theme was that "When Man Listens, God Speaks. When man obeys, God Works." Many of the ideas of this book found its way into our basic text.



"Willingness for Him to take charge will mean an honest and thorough scrutiny of every area of my life. It will bring to light all sorts of things that I have not been willing for God to alter habits, indulgences, wrong relationships, personal ambition, opinions, and sheer self-will."

# I WAS A PAGAN

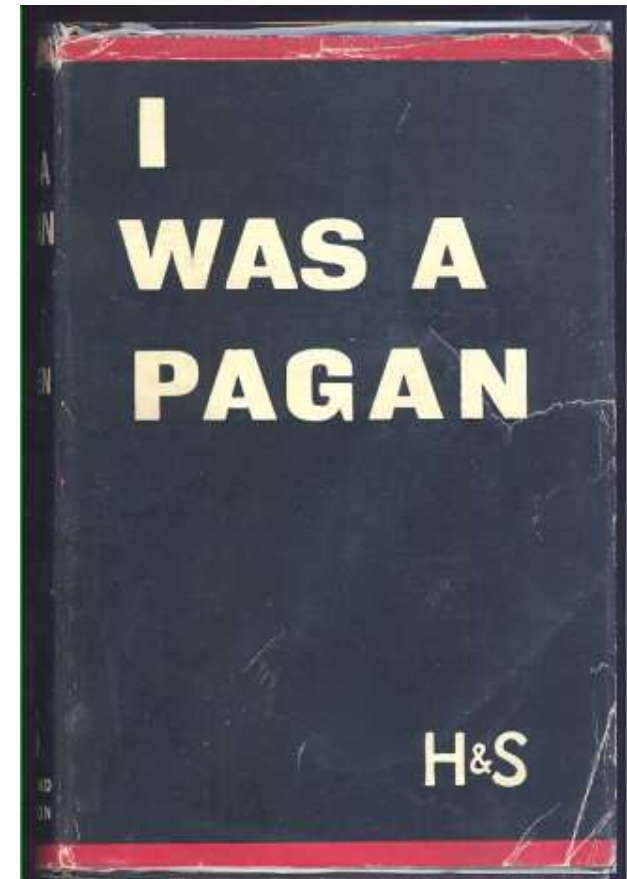
By V.C. Kitchen

Published in 1934 by Harper & Brothers, this book told the story of the changed life of Victor Kitchen. The book talks of moving from “Paganism” to “Destiny” or as Kitchen said: “This Business of getting back to God”

*The idea behind “The Steps”?*

“They said, however, that I *could* have it—just as they did—if I would pay the same price—comply with the same conditions—*and go through the same series of exceedingly simple steps.*”

“Thy will be done” was substituted for  
“I am the captain of my soul.”

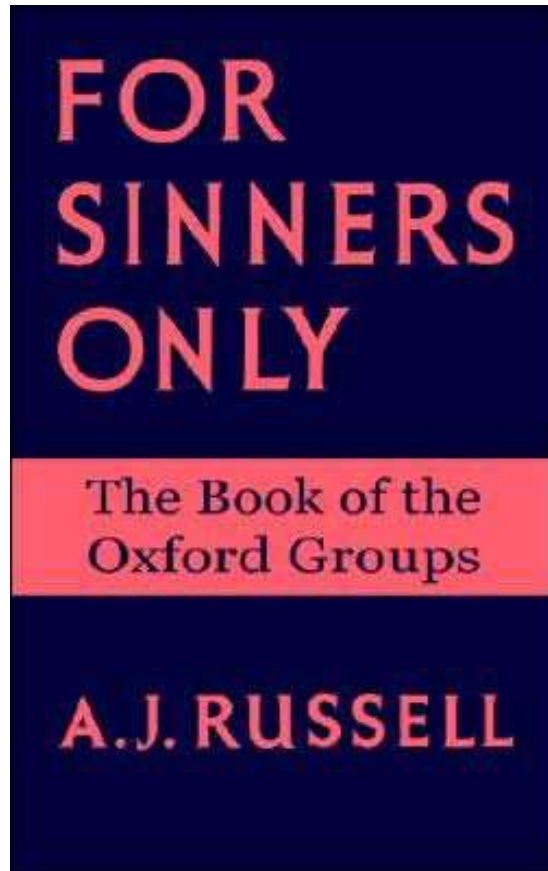




# FOR SINNERS ONLY

By A.J. RUSSELL

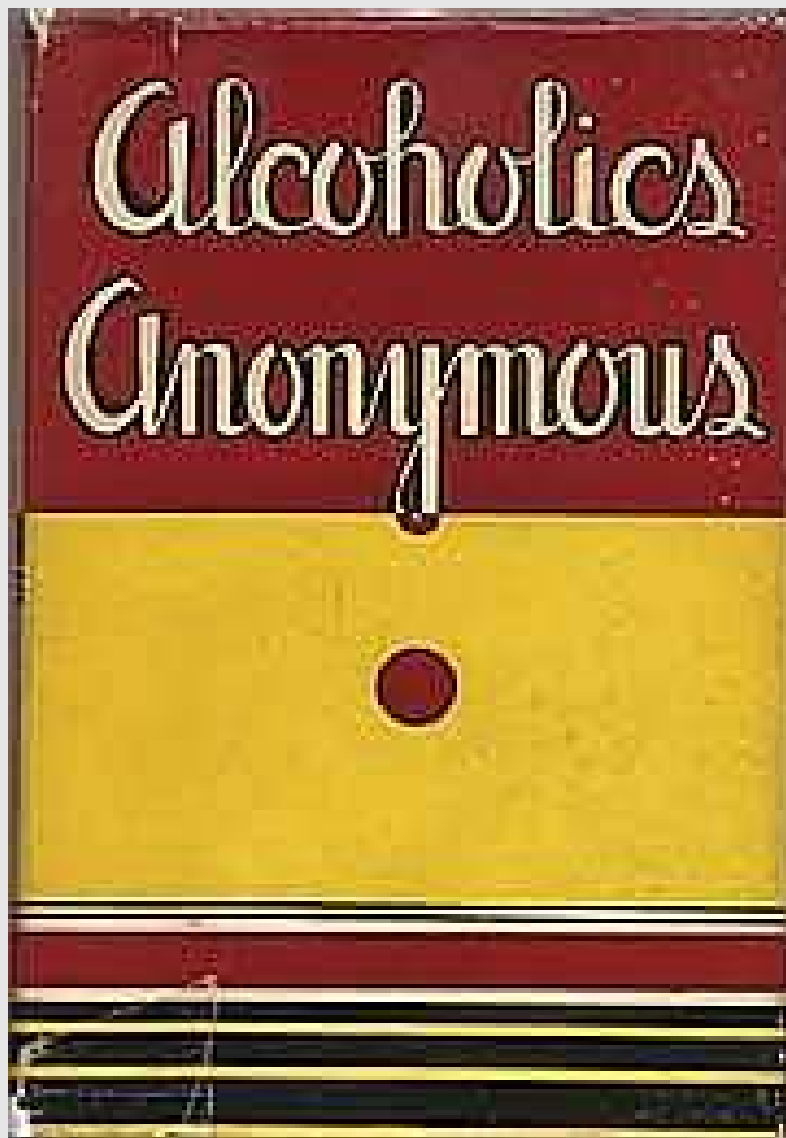
Published in 1932, this 347 page volume was a testament to the effectiveness of the Oxford Group. The book describes in detail the aims and processes used to bring a person to a “changed life.”



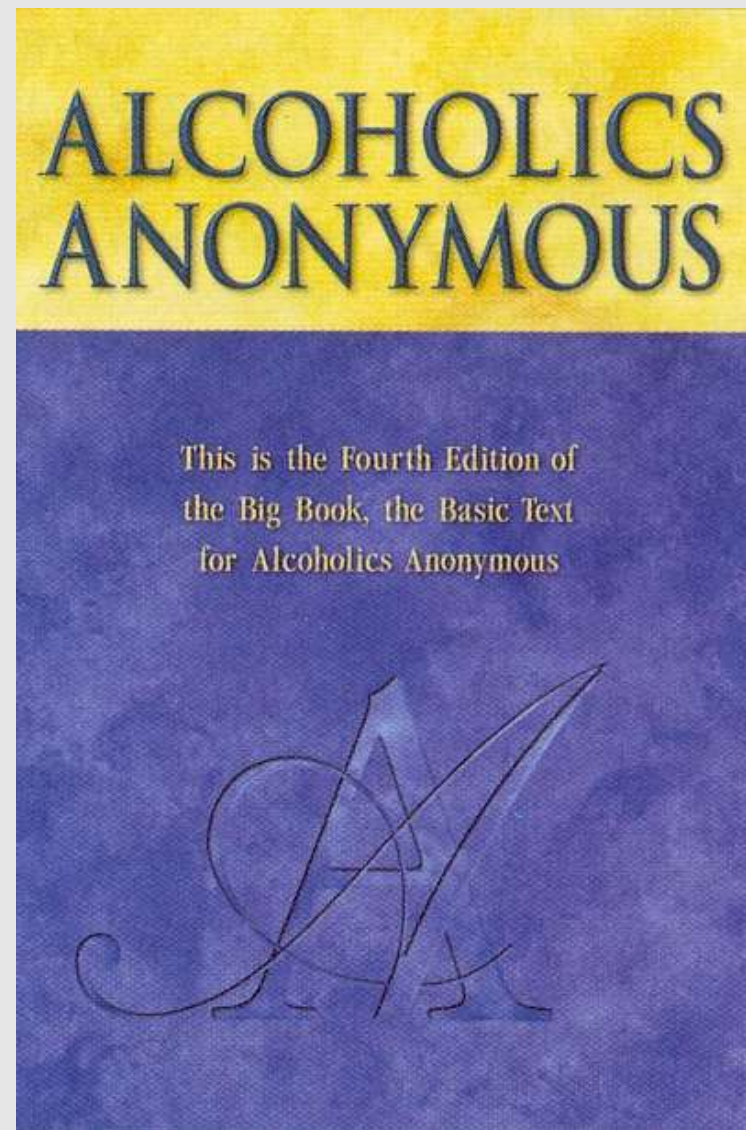
The Oxford Group describes “SIN” as anything which blocks a person off from God or his fellow men.

From Chapter 5 of Russell’s book, Bill borrowed much of the writings on self and how “self” functions. Most of the ideas contained in Steps 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9 came directly from this book.

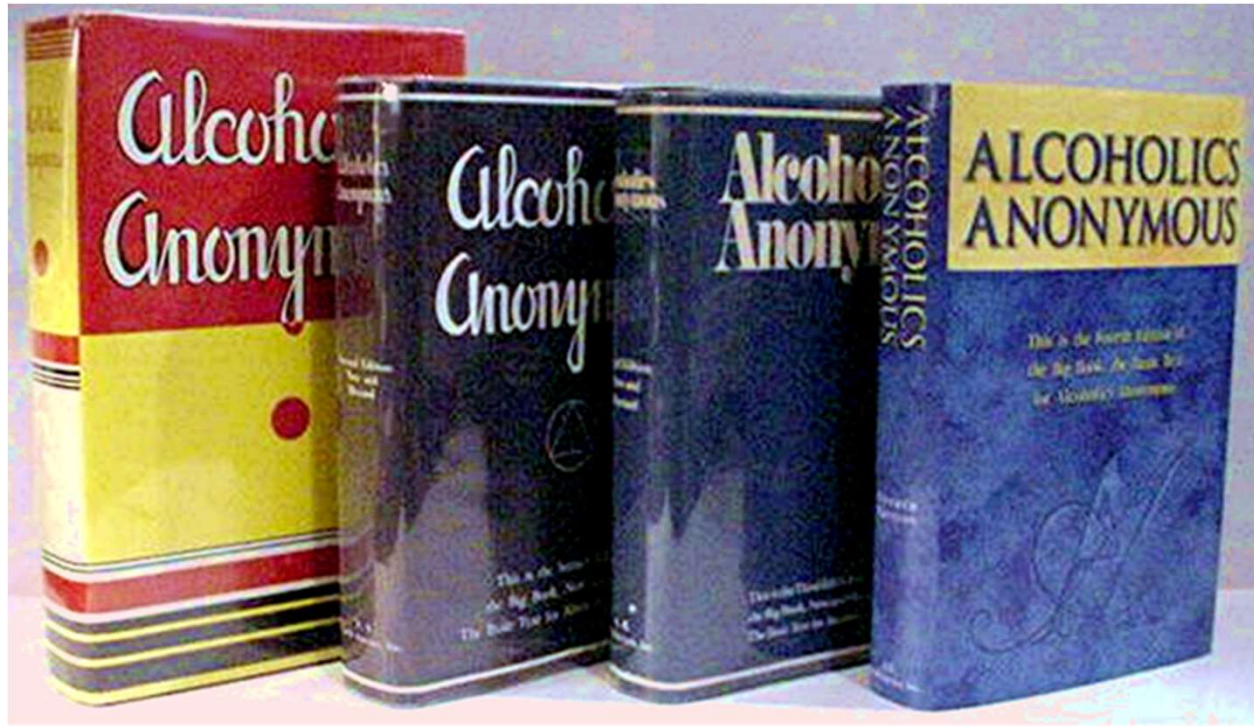
# The Printing History



1<sup>st</sup> Edition - 1939



4<sup>th</sup> Edition - 2001



1st edition - 300,000 copies were distributed from 1939 to 1955 in 16 printings

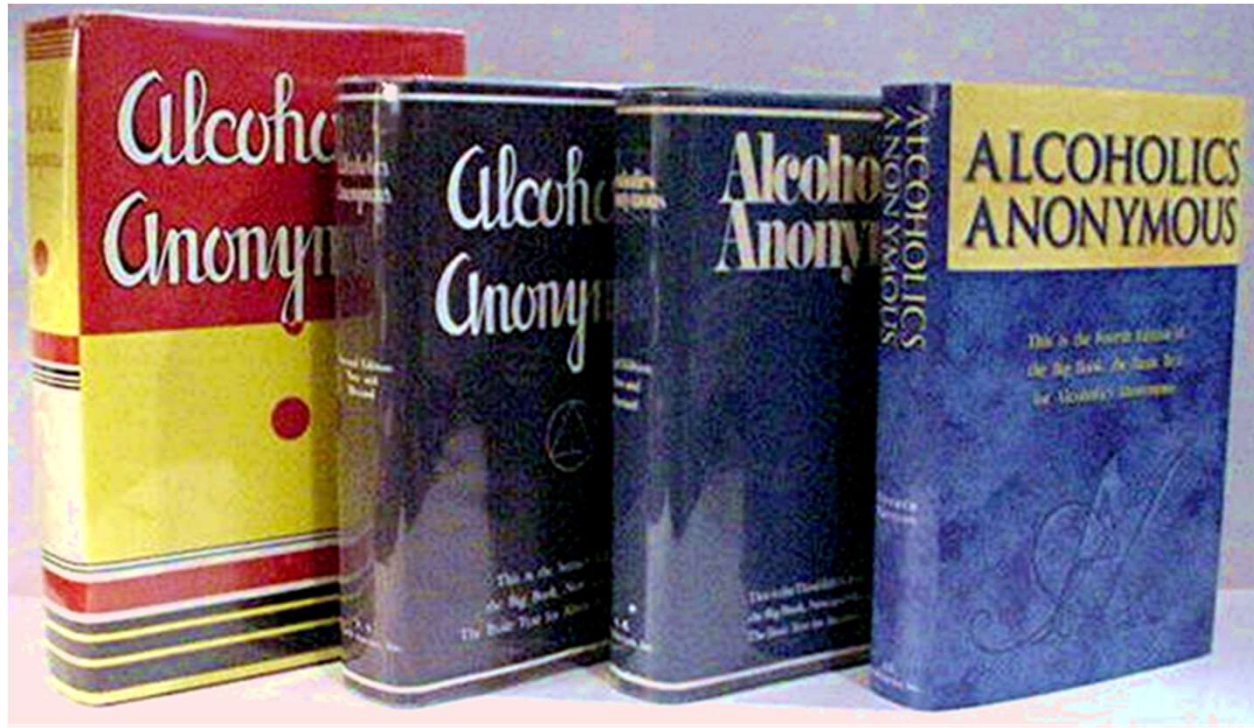
2nd edition - 1,150,000 copies were distributed from 1955 to 1976 in 16 printings

3rd edition - 19,550,000 copies were distributed from 1976 to 2002 in 76 printings

In 2001, the Conference approved publication of the 4th edition Big Book.

As of December 2018, more than 37,500,000 copies of the book Alcoholics Anonymous have been distributed.





During the 2020 virtual International Convention in Detroit, Dr. George Koob of the National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism accepted the 40 millionth copy of the book as an expression of A.A.'s gratitude for the long history of cooperation and communication between Alcoholics Anonymous and professionals in the field of alcohol abuse and alcoholism.