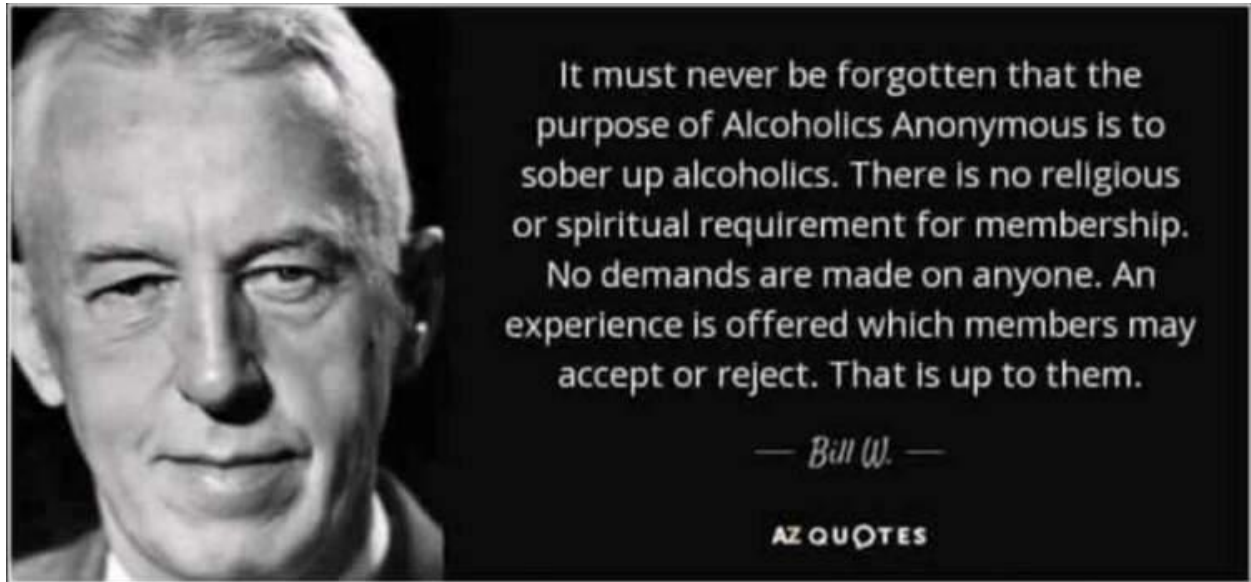


Relevant Quotes for Secular AA



Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little.

Alcoholics Anonymous, Page 164, 1939

The spiritual life is by no means a Christian monopoly... Consider the eight-part program laid down in Buddhism: Right view, right aim, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindedness and right contemplation. The Buddhist philosophy, as exemplified by these eight points, could be literally adopted by AA as a substitute for or in addition to the Twelve Steps. Generosity, universal love and welfare of others rather than considerations of self are basic to Buddhism.

Akron Pamphlet, "Spiritual Milestones in Alcoholics Anonymous", edited by Dr. Bob

It must never be forgotten that the purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous is to sober up alcoholics. There is no religious or spiritual requirement for membership. No demands are made on anyone. An experience is offered which members may accept or reject. That is up to them.

Letter to Father Marcus O'Brien, written in 1943, and quoted in *The Soul of Sponsorship* by Robert Fitzgerald

We reflect that the roads to recovery are many; that any story or theory of recovery from one who has trod the highway is bound to contain much truth.

Bill Wilson, Grapevine, September 1944

Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend on money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Third Tradition, Long Form, 1946

So long as there is the slightest interest in sobriety, the most unmoral, the most anti-social, the most critical alcoholic may gather about him a few kindred spirits and announce to us that a new Alcoholics Anonymous Group has been formed. Anti-God, anti-medicine, anti-our Recovery Program, even anti-each other — these rampant individuals are still an AA Group if they think so!

Bill Wilson, Grapevine Article, "Anarchy Melts", 1946

Our AA door stands wide open, (We) sign nothing, agree to nothing, and promise nothing. We demand nothing. (We) join on our own say-so... We do not wish to deny anyone the chance to recover from alcoholism.

Bill Wilson Letter, 1946

We have, in AA, no coercive human authority. Because each AA, of necessity, has a sensitive and responsive conscience, and because alcohol will discipline him severely if he backslides, we are finding we have little need for manmade rules or regulations.

Bill Wilson, Language of the Heart, 1948

First, Alcoholics Anonymous does not demand that you believe anything.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Page 26, 1953

No AA can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled. Our Twelve Steps to recovery are suggestions; the Twelve Traditions which guarantee AA's unity contain not a single "Don't". They repeatedly say "We ought..." but never "You must!"

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Page 129, 1953

Do you think we should tell those people: 'You can't belong to Alcoholics Anonymous unless you print those Twelve Steps the way we have them?' No.... We even have a Tradition that guarantees the right of any group to vary all of them, if they want to. Let's remember, we are talking about suggested steps and traditions.

Bill Wilson, General Service Conference, 1953

While AA has restored thousands of poor Christians to their churches, and has made believers out of atheists and agnostics, it has also made good AA's out of those belonging

to the Buddhist, Islamic, and Jewish faiths. For example, we question very much whether our Buddhist members in Japan would ever have joined this Society had AA officially stamped itself a strictly Christian movement.

You can easily convince yourself of this by imagining that AA started among the Buddhists and that they told you you couldn't join them unless you became a Buddhist, too. If you were a Christian alcoholic under those circumstances, you might well turn your face to the wall and die.

Letter, 1954

Page 34, As Bill Sees It, The AA Way of Life

I'd just like to spin some yarns and they will be a series of yarns which cluster around the preparation of the good old book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Some people reading the book, now, they say, well, that this is the AA Bible, and when I hear that, it always makes me shudder because the guys who put it together weren't a damn bit biblical. I think sometimes some of the drunks have an idea that these old timers went around with almost visible halos and long gowns and they were full of sweetness and light. Oh boy, how inspired they were, oh yes. But wait till I tell you..."

A talk in Forth Worth, Texas, June 12, 1954

To begin with, the Steps are not enforceable upon anyone – they are only suggestions. A belief in the Steps or in God is not in any way requisite for AA membership. Therefore, we have no means of compelling anyone to stay away from AA because he does not believe in God or the Twelve Steps. In fact, AA has a technique of reducing rebellion among doubting people by deliberately inviting them to disagree with everything we believe in.

Letter to Father Ford, May 4, 1957

To some of us, the idea of substituting 'good' for 'God' in the Twelve Steps will seem like a watering down of AA's message. We must remember that AA's Steps are suggestions only. A belief in them as they stand is not at all a requirement for membership among us. This liberty has made AA available to thousands who never would have tried at all, had we insisted on the Twelve Steps just as written.

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, Page 81, 1957

In Step Two we decided to describe God as a "Power greater than ourselves." In Steps Three and Eleven we inserted the words "God as we understood Him." From Step Seven we deleted the expression "on our knees." And, as a lead-in sentence to all the steps we wrote these words: "Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a Program of Recovery." AA's Twelve Steps were to be suggestions only.

Such were the final concessions to those of little or no faith; this was the great contribution of our atheists and agnostics. They had widened our gateway so that all who suffer may pass through, regardless of their belief or lack of belief.”

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, Page 167, 1957

Speaking for Dr. Bob and myself I would like to say that there has never been the slightest intent, on his part or mine, to trying to found a new religious denomination. Dr. Bob held certain religious convictions and so do I. This is, of course, the personal privilege of every AA member.

Nothing, however, could be so unfortunate for AA’s future as an attempt to incorporate any of our personal theological views into AA teaching, practice or tradition. Were Dr. Bob still with us, I am positive he would agree that we could never be too emphatic about this matter.

Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, Footnote, Page 232, 1957

As time passes our book literature has a tendency to get more and more frozen – a tendency for conversion into something like dogma. This is a trait of human nature which I am afraid we can do little about.

Bill Wilson Letter, 1961

In AA’s first years I all but ruined the whole undertaking... God as I understood Him had to be for everybody. Sometimes my aggression was subtle and sometimes it was crude. But either way it was damaging – perhaps fatally so – to numbers of non-believers.

Even now, I catch myself chanting that same old barrier-building refrain: “Do as I do, believe as I do – or else!”

Bill Wilson, Grapevine Article, “The Dilemma of No Faith”, 1961

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.

AA International Conference, 1965

Newcomers are approaching us at the rate of tens of thousands yearly. They represent almost every belief and attitude imaginable. We have atheists and agnostics. We have people of nearly every race, culture and religion. In AA we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a universal suffering. Therefore the full liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy should be a first consideration. Hence let us not pressure anyone with individual or even collective views. Let us instead accord to each other the respect that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way towards the light.

Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of AA, so long as he or she so declares.

Bill Wilson, Grapevine Article, "Responsibility is Our Theme", 1965

Simply because we have convictions that work very well for us, it becomes quite easy to assume that we have all of the truth. Whenever this brand of arrogance develops we are sure to become aggressive. We demand agreement with us. We play God. This isn't good dogma. This is very bad dogma. It could be especially destructive for us of AA to indulge in this sort of thing.

Bill Wilson, General Service Conference, 1965

All people must necessarily rally to the call of their own particular convictions and we of AA are no exception. All people should have the right to voice their convictions.

Bill Wilson, General Service Conference, 1965

There were agnostics in the Tuesday night Group, and several hardcore atheists who objected to any mention of God. On many evenings Bill had to remember his first meeting with Ebby. He'd been told to ask for help from anything he believed in. These men, he could see, believed in each other and in the strength of the group. At some time each of them had been totally unable to stop drinking on his own, yet when two of them had worked at it together, somehow they had become more powerful and they had finally been able to stop. This, then — whatever it was that occurred between them — was what they could accept as a power greater than themselves.

Bill W., by William Thomsen, Page 230, Published in 1975

We had to become much more inclusive and never, if possible, exclusive. We can never say to anyone (or insinuate) that he must agree with our formula or be excommunicated. The Atheist may stand up in an AA meeting denying God, yet reporting how he has been helped in other ways... we make no religious requirement of anyone. All people having an alcohol problem who wish to get rid of it and make a happy adjustment with the circumstances of their lives, become AA members by simply associating with us. Nothing but sincerity is asked of anyone. In this atmosphere, the orthodox, the unorthodox, and the unbeliever mix happily and usefully together, and in nearly every case great spiritual growth ensues.

Pass It On, Pages 172-3, Quoting Bill Wilson regarding the split from the Oxford Group,
1984

I've become aware that 12-step programs are home to people from every religion, denomination, sect, cult, political tilt, gender identity, sexual preference, economic strata, racial and ethnic background, believers in gun rights and abortion rights and the right to

home schooling, drinkers of coffee and tea, whiskey and mouthwash, people who sleep on their sides or their stomachs or sidewalks.

Marya Hornbacher, *Waiting: A Nonbeliever's Higher Power*, 2011

If you were to ask me what is the greatest danger facing AA today, I would have to answer: the growing rigidity – the increasing demand for absolute answers to nit-picking questions; pressure for GSO to “enforce” our Traditions; screening alcoholics at closed meetings; prohibiting non-Conference-approved literature, i.e., “banning books;” laying more and more rules on groups and members.

Bob Pearson, GSO Manager (1974-84), General Service Conference, April 26, 1986

My bold prediction is that if AA doesn't accommodate change and diversify, our 100th anniversary will be a fellowship of men and women with the same stature and relevance as the Mennonites; charming, harmless and irrelevant.

Joe C., quoted in “The ‘Don't Tell’ Policy in AA”, January, 2012

Whenever, wherever, one alcoholic meets another alcoholic and sees in that person first and foremost not that he or she is male or female, or black or white, or Christian, Buddhist, Jew, or Atheist, or gay or straight, or whatever, but sees... that he or she is alcoholic and that therefore both of them need each other – there will be not only an Alcoholics Anonymous, but there will be the Alcoholics Anonymous that you and I love so much and respect so deeply.

Ernest Kurtz, published in *Not-God*, Page 305, and adapted by Ernie in January, 2013

Spirituality is something everyone has. We wake up with it in the morning. It is love and hate, anger and joy; we are spiritual beings because we are affected if people love us or hate us or ignore us. In a spiritual program we have no creed or specific theology or rituals. Now there are some rituals in AA and I think we have to be careful about these. In the South they almost always end meetings with the Lord's Prayer but when they did that at the world conference in San Antonio in 2010, I was surprised and frankly I was a little shocked. Again, I consider myself reasonably religious and I want you to be religious but don't try to make AA religious. The line between religion and spirituality has to be maintained strongly in this fellowship.

Rev. Ward Ewing, Former GSO Chair, Rebellion Dogs Publishing Podcast, 2013

AA has always been evolving; it is always in a state of becoming. Hopefully AA shall never become rigidly dogmatic, but shall always be imbued with love and tolerance, so as to ensure everyone is included.

Phyllis H., GSO General Manager, WAAFT International AA Conference, 2014