

# SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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## SUMMARY

*Alcoholics Anonymous is, according to the Program's basic documents, a spiritual program – especially regarding Steps 2-3, 5-7, and 11-12. This paper reviews the history of the Program with emphasis on its spiritual background, as well as on the roots of the spiritual side of the program, and showing the spiritual accents in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. The paper also considers the Christian background of the movement and, more broadly, explores the connection of AA founders William (Bill) Wilson and Dr. Robert (Bob) Smith with several Catholic people, such as Edward (Ed) Dowling, SJ, and John C. Ford, SJ, and indicates some points of contact between the Program and Ignatian spirituality. The paper illustrates the pioneering role of the Alcoholics Anonymous program in integrating spirituality into the process of recovery from and treatment of addictions, an integration that just recently has been embraced by modern psychotherapy and psychiatry. The paper shows the theoretical and spiritual underpinnings of the Program in the religious context. The paper illustrates the orientation of the Program in assisting addicts to integrate into their recovery their own spirituality, a clearer image of God, and personal spiritual and religious progress.*

## Key words:

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## INTRODUCTION

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a world-wide program renowned for its effectiveness in supporting recovery from alcohol addiction. It is practically unknown in Croatia (Torre, Zoričić, Katanić & Škifić, 2010; Volenik, 2014; Volenik, 2015), although it has long been present through AA meetings in major Croatian towns as well as in the surrounding countries.<sup>1</sup>

Today, the Program is expanding through other fellowships which share the 12-Step approach, and so the Program has become one of the most effective ways of dealing with modern addictive behavior, especially in Western societies.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in this article we will use

the name of Alcoholics Anonymous when referring to the AA as such and 12-Step Program when referring to the broader applications of the method of the Program beyond AA. The article seeks to analyze and evaluate this approach to assisting in the treatment and recovery of addicts and their compulsive behaviors and specifically to explore the spiritual background of this movement, which, as the Program claims, is based on spiritual principles. Finally, we will broadly explore the connections between these spiritual principles and Christian (namely Catholics) doctrine, noting the similarities and differences, and considering possible New Age influences.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

To get a broad picture of the movement's contribution to dealing with all kinds of addictions, especially alcoholism, we need first to look briefly at the history of AA. It is inextricably linked to the personalities of the two founders and initiators of the movement, William (Bill) G. Wilson (1895-1971), author of almost all major theoretical texts of AA, and Dr. Robert (Bob) Smith (1879-1950). Here we are dealing with a truly ample literature, primarily in English, from original documents through various studies, articles, and books to several films.

AA observes as the official date of its founding June 10, 1935, when Dr. Bob had taken his last drink. In 1939 the movement's principal book was finished,

<sup>1</sup> In Croatia, Alcoholics Anonymous hold regular meetings in Zagreb, Split and Osijek and Labin. In Western Europe, the program expands especially after World War II and in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Compared to other countries of this region, there is a much higher presence of AA in Slovenia, while in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, for example, it is much smaller or only symbolic. This is directly related to the prevalence of Clubs of Alcoholics in Treatment, a recovery program founded in the 1960s by Prof. Vladimir Hudolin in Zagreb. This Program was dominant not only in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, but also in Italy. Today, this program is incorporate in the World Association of the Clubs of Alcoholics in Treatment (W.A.C.A.T.) and is by far the most widespread way of recovery and abstinence from alcoholism in Croatia.

<sup>2</sup> The method was adapted and became the foundation of other twelve-step programs which support recovery from drug addiction, as in Narcotics Anonymous (NA), or other addictions and compulsions, as in Overeaters Anonymous or Gamblers Anonymous. (OA, GA) as well as Sex and/or Love Anonymous (SA; SAA; SLAA) or Debtors Anonymous (DA). Support groups such as Al-Anon or Nar-Anon for friends and family members of alcoholics or drug addicts are part of the response to the treatment of addiction as a disease connect with family systems. Fellowships like Adult children of

alcoholics (ACA or ACOA) are dealing with the effects of growing up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional family. Codependent Anonymous (CoDA) deals mainly with toxic relationships, commonly referred to as co-dependencies.

*Alcoholics Anonymous: The story of how many thousands of men and women have recovered from alcoholism*, known as *The Big Book*. Since then there have been four editions of the book, each later one with slight changes, and we will refer here to the fourth and last edition (Anonymous A., 2001). Until now, 21 million copies of the book have been printed, and the fourth edition is freely available for download in an on-line version on the official AA website. Regarding other key literature, it is worth mentioning *Twelve Steps and 12 Traditions*, the so-called "12 and 12", which develops the 12 steps and 12 traditions of the program (Anonymous, 2002). When referring to the early history of the movement, a good source is the official AA edition describing how the AA recovery message conquered the world (Anonymous, 1984). For the topic of this article—the importance and place of spirituality in the AA program—two books should certainly be mentioned here. The first book, issued also as official edition of AA, records the stories of 75 AA members about their spiritual experiences during recovery in AA (Anonymous, 1973). The second book is very comprehensive study on the same topic from a more objective angle, *The Spirituality of Imperfection* (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992).

## THE SPIRITUAL ROOTS OF THE PROGRAM

The history of AA begins, in fact, several decades before the year we mentioned before, 1935. We can start with 1908 when Franck Buchman (1878-1961), Lutheran pastor—founder and initiator of the Oxford groups from which AA would emerge - experienced a strongly transformative religious experience which motivated him to form the Oxford groups in the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> Buchman's mode contains all the elements that later would be applied in the Twelve Steps. We can simply describe the Oxford groups as a unique style of evangelism that emerged from Buchman's conversion. It is characterized by an emphasis on personal change and on the practice of guidance and support through the group, all based on the principle that one's own change must change others (Mercadante, 1996). The typical introduction of a newcomer to the Oxford Group begins with a home meeting. Such meetings were informal gatherings to which senior members invited potential converts. During each session, the group members practiced what they called sharing and which later became the centerpiece of every AA meeting. They shared the story of their life before the Oxford Group,

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<sup>3</sup> In 1921, he founded the Brotherhood of First Century Christians, which in 1931 was called the Oxford Group. Buchman renamed the movement again in 1938 and called it the Moral Re-Armament (RAM). Finally, in after war period the movement switched to its current name - Initiatives of Changes. It present-day center is in Switzerland.

what happened to them when they met the fellowship, and the life change that happened because of their participation in the group. All of these elements can be easily recognized by anyone who has even once participated in any kind of Anonymous meeting.

In the winter of 1934, after years of drinking and of unsuccessful treatment for alcoholism, a failed Walt Street broker, William (Bill) G. Wilson, met Edwin (Ebby) Thacher, an old friend and fellow alcoholic. However, this time something was different. In fact, Ebby, who was already a member of the Oxford groups, was now sober, told Bill about his experience and invited him to meetings (Anonymous, p. 15). Bill's dramatic words reveal at the same time his desperation regarding his condition and a typical modern agnosticism: "I will do anything! Anything! If there is a God, let him be revealed now!"<sup>4</sup> (Anonymous, 1984, p. 121). In the Oxford groups, Bill met the next important future AA member, Rowlan Hazard, who had failed the treatment for his alcoholism with the famous Swiss psychologist and psychotherapist Carl G. Jung and, at Jung's suggestion, had sought a spiritual experience, which we will talk about later. Finally, in 1935, on an unsuccessful business trip to Akron, Ohio, Bill wanted to remain sober and encountered Dr. Robert (Bob) Smith, a physician and alcoholic but also a member of the Oxford Group. Bill told him his story. That not only helped Bill to stay sober that night, but it also helped Dr. Bob to start with his recovery. The first day of his sobriety marks the day when Alcoholics Anonymous officially began. The rest, as is often said, is history. This history could be briefly summarized as follows.

## IMPORTANT DATES AFTER 1935

In early 1939, the then-little brotherhood of AA published their main book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (*The Big Book*), since translated into over 50 world languages. In 1942, Alcoholics Anonymous established their first AA prison group in the San Quentin, California, prison. Publication of the official newsletter of the world fraternity of AA, *The AA-Grapevine*, began in June 1944, and the newsletter now enjoys a circulation of about 100,000 copies. During 1946, again under the direction of Bill Wilson, Alcoholics Anonymous conceptualized their 12 traditions. In those years, the American Psychiatric Association recognized and began officially advocating for AA as an effective

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<sup>4</sup> However, his words after the final decision to stop drinking reveal a completely different picture of God: "There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood him, to do with me as He would. I unreservedly surrendered to His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing that my newly found friend take them away, with roots and branches. I have not had a drink since." (Anonymous, 2001, p. 13)

program for recovery from alcoholism. In 1950, for the first time, delegates from all groups of Alcoholics Anonymous from the United States and Canada met in Cleveland<sup>5</sup>, and they united in the World Brotherhood of Alcoholics Anonymous (the Alcoholics Anonymous World Service Inc.), which since then has been continuously working for the benefit of alcoholics in recovery all over the world. From 1951 onwards, the World Brotherhood of Alcoholics Anonymous has held its regular international conferences (international conventions) for representatives of AA groups from around the world. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* was first published in 1953, and finally in 1962 Bill Wilson, in collaboration with other, younger members, was able to improve the organization of the World Fraternity of Anonymous Brotherhoods through the publication of *Twelve Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Since the 1950s, other fraternities of anonymity had begun to be established, these focused on various substance and behavioral addictions. Their appearance further popularized the Program and multiplied its membership. For example, Narcotics Anonymous (NA), probably the second biggest 12-Step movement, started in 1953, and today there exist numerous fellowships for different types of drugs: Heroin Anonymous (HA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA), Marijuana Anonymous (MA), etc. Gambling Anonymous (GA) was established in 1957 (Petry, 2007) and Overeaters Anonymous (OA) in 1960. In those years, the Program expanded beyond North America, and later on fraternities were formed focused on various behavioral addictions, such as Workaholics Anonymous. Several fellowships address people with problems on the emotional and sexual levels. Good examples are the three fraternities focused on compulsive sex and pornography addiction, better known as the "S" fraternities (SLAA, SAA, and SA) created respectively in 1976, 1977 and 1978 (after the boom of so-called "sexual revolution" of the 1960s in America). One of the youngest fraternities is focused on recovering from codependency (the CoDA), created in 1986.

It is now easy to see that the movement of the 12-Step Program embraces much more than just the "treatment" of modern addicts. The following statement can illustrate its impact: "Alcoholics Anonymous has been called the most significant phenomenon in the history of twentieth century ideas" (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992. p. 4). Although this claim may not be relevant on the global level, it is certainly true for the United States. (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992. p. 246; Flores, 2007). Since each fraternity of Anonymous follows the 12 basic steps and 12 traditions, it is extremely difficult to have accurate data on the number of members because, as tradition 11 explicitly states, "Our public relations

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<sup>5</sup> Till then the various groups were functioning completely separately.

policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films." (Anonymous, 2001, p. 8) This particular attention to preserving the anonymity of members also extends to statistics, but there is, nevertheless, credible information on the number of members, at least with regard to Alcoholics Anonymous. They show that the number of members in the US and Canada has been generally stable over the last twenty years at around 1.4 million, while the number in the rest of the world has increased. In January 2019, the total membership was estimated at over 2.1 million in 180 countries (www.aa.org). Adding to this number the membership of some forty other fraternities of Anonymous, many of them international, there is a multimillion membership, which confirms the claim made above about the importance of this Program.

## SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

One of the aims of this article is to see how much the pastoral practice of different Christian denominations (especially the Catholic Church) can accept the spirituality of the 12-Step Program as a help on the path to recovery of their own members. Another issue of a more recent date which is of concern to some Catholics and, more generally, to Protestants is this: Is the Anonymous Program just self-help process, as it is sometimes presented to the public, or is it, rather, a post-Christian sect? Can Anonymous be accept as a movement with a clear vision of a life without addiction and where the spiritual growth of the addict is what gives him the power to live freely? Of what kind of spirituality are we talking here?

It we want to summarize the early development of the spiritual and psychological background of the Anonymous Program, three main influences can be clearly noticed. First is the psychology of Carl Jung, more specifically, his emphasis on the importance of "religious experience". Second is the Oxford group and its vision of "first-century Christianity" as was promoted by the Lutheran roots of the Pennsylvania pastor, Frank Buchman, which was a considerable influence, as well. Third was William James's presentation in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, especially the description of conversion as experienced by the "new-born" or "sick-hearted" (Kurtz, 2005). It should be noted that, at the time of the creation of the Alcoholic Anonymous, the influence of William James (1842 - 1910)<sup>6</sup> was very strong in United States, which was also reflected in W. Wilson's views as

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<sup>6</sup> Under this influence, we mean recognizing James as the "father of American psychology," with W. Wundt co-founder of modern, experimental psychology. Furthermore, on the philosophical level, he also had a strong influence as a pioneer of the pragmatism.

the conceptual originator of all the theoretical postulates of Alcoholics Anonymous.

## THE INFLUENCE OF CARL JUNG

Carl Jung's influence on the spiritual postulates of the AA tradition was actually twofold, both theoretical and also very practical and direct. After a definitive breakup with Freud in 1912, Jung began to develop his own theory, one that essentially separated him from the former role model, introducing the concepts of the collective unconscious and of the archetypes, which necessarily include the Divine. If Jung's enduring interest in spirituality were to be described in one sentence, one could say that he sought for wholeness, not holiness (Welch, 1982) and that Christianity was his starting point, but not his ultimate point. In his therapeutic work, Jung generally supported the spiritual dimension of his patients, as was the case in his dealing with the American patient, alcoholic Rowland Hazard, who, after several months of therapy in 1931, received the recommendation of the Swiss professor to "join a kind of faith group and seek spiritual experience there ." (*Dr. Carl Jung and Alcoholics Anonymous*, 2019) Much later, in 1961, Jung responded to a letter from Bill Wilson thanking him for as his good advice that had actually become "the first link in the chain of events that would lead to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous". (Anonymous A., 2001, p. 34) Jung wrote words that reflect the craving of many addicts, not just alcoholics: "His craving for alcohol was equal, on a lower level, to the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness, expressed in a medieval language by 'union with God'." In addition to the word "God", Jung added the words of Psalm 42: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God." (Bill W.'s Correspondence with Carl Jung, 2019) However, it would be historically incorrect to state that Jung had a clear Christian vision when he spoke of spiritual experience, and especially when, thirty years afterwards (and only a few months before his death) he spoke of yearning for God by quoting the Bible.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, what is certain and important about the foundations of Alcoholics Anonymous is the "spiritual experience" that would be embedded in the foundation of the Movement through expressions such as "a force greater than ourselves, God as we understand it, or spiritual awakening", as found in the text of the second, third and twelfth Steps of the Program.

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<sup>7</sup> For the further reading and critique of Jung's pantheism, see: James W. Heisig, *Imago Dei: A Study of C. G. Jung's Psychology of Religion*, Lewisbourg, 1979.

## PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC INFLUENCE

In their first two years of existence, Alcoholics Anonymous members were mostly from among the American white, upper middle class and of Protestant roots or denominations, as were Bill W and Dr. Bob themselves. When the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was ready for printing in 1939, there were no Catholics in the New York group." (Kurtz, *Not – God*, Center City, p. 47) Just then, the first and very prominent Catholic entered the Program. His name was Morgan R., and he soon became the first unofficial link between AA and the Catholic Church. Knowing the people in the Archdiocese of New York, he submitted the Big Book manuscript to the Archdiocesan Press Commission, asking for their opinion. The commission's response was more than positive and encouraging.<sup>8</sup>

However, two other persons, both non-alcoholics, would play an even more significant role in the early history of the movement. Also in 1939, Dr. Bob, wanting to work at the Catholic St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, confessed his alcoholic history to one nurse on the hospital staff, Sister Ignatius (Sisters of Charity of Saint Augustine). Afterwards, they began working together to treat alcoholics, who were often diagnosed with "acute gastritis", to help them be hospitalized (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, 1957, pp. 5-6). The other person who one would need to mention is certainly the American Jesuit Fr. Edward (Ed) Dowling. Although his work with Alcoholics Anonymous was only one of his many pastoral and charitable commitments, he had a significant influence on the Program and on Bill W. personally. Pater Ed, as he remained known in the history of AA, lived in St. Louis, Missouri, and was editor of a magazine called *The Queen's Work*. Shortly after the Big Book was published, he read it and was impressed by the coincidences he noticed between the 12-Step Program and some aspects of Ignatian spirituality.

Finally, another American Jesuit strongly influenced AA as well, but a little later. This man was Fr. John C. Ford, one of the most prominent American moral theologians from the end of World War II to the post-Conciliar era. Recovering from alcoholism through AA himself, he developed a deep friendship with Bill W. and helped him design and publish two of the important books of the Program, which we have cited several times (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*). His theoretical contribution to the understanding of alcoholism at the spiritual, physical, and psychological levels helped to develop a deeper understanding of the spiritual part of the addictive process. "I think it is proper to speak of

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<sup>8</sup> Bill W. would receive such a response from Protestant theologian and Pastor Harry Emerson Forsdick, as well.

alcoholism as a triple illness—a disease of the body, a disease of the mind and also a disease of the soul." (*The Catholic Contribution to the 12-Step Movement*, 2019) As a Jesuit, his most significant contribution regarding the process of recovery is in spiritual discernment that includes all three of the elements we have mentioned earlier.<sup>9</sup>

## THE SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOSITY OF THE PROGRAM

The most important terms in the program that outline its spiritual character are certainly "Power greater than ourselves" in the second step and "God as we understand it" in the third and eleventh steps. In the selection of these terms, two very important goals were achieved. On the one hand, the idea of a personal God and the Christian foundation of the movement were both preserved. On the other hand, the Program became open not only to members of various Christian denominations, but also, through the expression "a Force greater than ourselves", to all those who, at the beginning of their working the Program, the concept of a personal (or any) God was foreign, even odious.<sup>10</sup> However, this approach also posed a serious problem as the Anonymous tradition began to build its own spirituality, autonomous and separate from the institutionalized Christianity from which, as we saw, it originated.

Alcoholics Anonymous has always remained connected to the spiritual character of its Program, but the interest in the spiritual underpinning of the Program by modern sciences has only recently begun. Many who have experienced 12-Step recovery or who have worked closely with people in recovery (e.g., pastors, priests, counselors, therapists) have referred to the "spiritual dimension" or "spirituality" as something necessary for the life-saving change of recovery from addiction. (Berenson, 1990; Bruxton, Smith, and Seymour, 1987; Clinebell, 1985; Larsen, 1985) However, there has been little sustained interest in this as something worthy of scientific research (Morgan, 1995; NIHE, 1997). Spirituality is difficult to study within the limitations of scientific method, and some old prejudice in multiple

<sup>9</sup> In mentioning these two Jesuits, we should also mention here the work of Jim Harbaugh, SJ, showing different links between and the common points of the Program and Ignatian spirituality: *A 12-Step Approach to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Franklin, 1997, Kindle Edition.

<sup>10</sup> The reason why the Program is so careful and gradual in "proclaiming" its spiritual side and in claiming that God is the one who can make the addict sober is well illustrated by the following event. When Bill W. and Dr. Bob spoke with the first alcoholic, they began to talk to him about the "spiritual program" and the "Higher Power." Suddenly, he interrupted them, saying decisively, "No, no. It's too late for me. I still believe in God OK, but I know so well that he no longer believes in me." (Kurtz, E —Ketcham, K. 1992, p. 106)

scientific disciplines hinders serious consideration of its possible role in the recovery process. (Morgan, 1999, p. 13) This also applies to the Christian theological literature (somewhat to the Protestant literature, much more to the Catholic), which has also only recently begun to discuss the subject more widely.<sup>11</sup>

However, the Christian background of the Program, as well as its final focus on the personal God whom the addict addresses from his powerlessness, are most evident in the prayers of the Program. Primary and most well known, in use in AA and most others fellowships, is the Serenity Prayer: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.<sup>12</sup> Most steps have their own particular prayers but the most significant are the third and seventh step prayers.<sup>13</sup>

Another well known prayer that the Program takes from Christian spirituality is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi and became popular in America at the time of writing the Big Book and later in the whole world.<sup>14</sup>

## THE 12-STEP PROGRAM AND NEW AGE

In the article we mentioned, "The Catholicity of the 12-Step Program", the author seeks to defend the Catholic "orthodoxy" of the Program, starting with doctrines of Eastern sin and of justification. "There are three principal points of contact between AA and Catholic doctrine that make this rapport clear: (1) the

<sup>11</sup> To read more: Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions*, New York, 1998. Richard Rohr, *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the 12 Steps*, Cincinnati, 2011. Thomas Keating, *Divine Therapy and Addiction: Centering Prayer and the Twelve Steps*, New York, 2009., Saul Selby, *12 Step Christianity: The Christian Roots and Application of the 12 Steps*, Center City 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Its author is American Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), and he pronounced it for the first time in a sermon in 1934, in a longer form that was abbreviated for AA purposes and became famous.

<sup>13</sup> Third Step Prayer

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!

Seventh Step Prayer

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character that stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.

<sup>14</sup> It is a completely Catholic background prayer created in 1912 under the title: Beautiful prayer that can be recited during the Holy Mass. For further reading: Renoux, Christian (2001). *La prière pour la paix attribuée à saint François: une énigme à résoudre* (in French). Paris: Éditions franciscaines.

analogy between AA's understanding of alcoholism and the Catholic doctrine of original sin; (2) the emphasis in both AA and Catholicism on understanding man as a unity of body, mind, and soul; (3) the consequent need for a redemption or remedy embracing both body and soul and effected by God himself, since only he can do it." (Aufill, 2019). Thus, in his extensive argumentation, the author demonstrates that there can be no logical coherence between the AA Program and the New Age spiritualities since the latter insist on self-liberation through one's own commitment and the esoteric knowledge of an individual who finds within himself his own divinity.

However, these and similar highly argumentative works cannot deny the fact that the Magisterium of the Catholic Church clearly and unequivocally quoted the 12-Step Program (but not Alcoholics Anonymous, as such)<sup>15</sup> in its critique of the practices and rites that intend to apply New Age beliefs within a holistic approach to human health and well-being (Nikic 2003). What produced this twist in the perception of the Program in the eyes of the Catholic Church? One good explanation is offered in an article entitled *How the New Age Hijacked the Program*. In a popular-scientific way, the article explains that the problem is not in the Program itself, and not even in those who have influenced it, such as Jung and James, whom many are ready to point to as the conceptual pioneers of the New Age itself. The main problem, according to the article, is in some abuses of the Program by members of some fraternities who have distorted the clear ideas of personal powerlessness and the orientation toward the Higher Power, substituting the New Age ideas of self-help and self-spirituality and thus making these groups classic self-help programs like so many others.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have attempted to present the spiritual background of the 12-Step Alcoholics Anonymous Program and to answer some questions with regard to its connection with the Christian understanding of God.

Back in 1946, the founder of logotherapy, Victor Frankl in his most famous book *Man's search for meaning*, wrote, "Indeed, today psychiatrists are dealing with human problems more than neurotic symptoms. Many who come to a psychiatrist today would have

<sup>15</sup> Advertising connected with *New Age* covers a wide range of practices as acupuncture, biofeedback, chiropractic, kinesiology, homeopathy, iridology, massage and various kinds of "bodywork" (such as orgonomy, Feldenkrais, reflexology, Rolfing, polarity massage, therapeutic touch etc.), meditation and visualisation, nutritional therapies, psychic healing, various kinds of herbal medicine, healing by crystals, metals, music or colours, reincarnation therapies and, finally, twelve-step programmes and self-help groups. (*Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life*)

once sought the help of a priest, pastor or rabbi—and so the physician is confronted more with philosophical issues than with emotional conflicts."

In fact, many a caregiver fails to offer the real solution to an addict, especially to a so-called hopeless case. As we have seen, fundamental conditions for recovery are integration of the self, on the one hand, and spiritual growth, on the other. The 12-step program has proven to be an extremely effective aid that, with its elements of group dynamics and spirituality, provides the addict with a path to recovery and healing. As we have shown, the Program has unquestionably Christian roots, but it goes beyond any one religion and enters the realm of spirituality, where it opens the addict to seeking God and to having a deeper encounter with Him, as well as with himself. In religious practice, the Program (as has been emphasized in many places) cannot be and does not want to be a new "religion" for its members. It helps the believer to be free from the bondage of addiction, and, just as psychotherapists have recognized, the program is an excellent therapy aid providing the "missing link" needed for developing a healthy spirituality that can embrace the freedom of the God who is revealed in and approached through human powerlessness.

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