

# Early A.A.'s "James Club" and The Bible's Book of James

By Dick B., © 2003

P.O. Box 837, Kihei, HI 96753-0837  
(808) 874 4876  
[dickb@dickb.com](mailto:dickb@dickb.com)  
<http://www.dickb.com/index.shtml>

## Part One: The Bible's Book of James and James the "Author"

### James the Brother of Jesus of Nazareth

**Which "James"?:** You could ask a hundred people in Alcoholics Anonymous, or any "12-Step Fellowship" if they know who "James" was, or if they had heard in A.A. about the "James Club," or if they had ever heard about the relationship of the Bible's Book of James to Alcoholics Anonymous. The chances are you would draw a blank with most, if not all those questioned. Yet there's lots to be told and much to be learned, all to the good of those who want what early AAs claimed and had—a cure for their alcoholism. When we speak of "James," we are speaking of the person or persons named as *James* in the Good Book. In fact, we are speaking only of the "James" mentioned in the New Testament. This article will cover what the Bible and the work of some Bible scholars tells us. But there is a *caveat*: If the Bible itself doesn't actually provide a specific answer, then the remarks of the scholars are frequently speculations or educated guessing. Hence we don't always know the answers for sure.

**The Many Named James:** There are several persons named James who are mentioned in the New Testament (*New Bible Dictionary*, 2d ed. England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982, pp. 549-550).

(1) There is *James, the son of Zebedee*, a Galilean fisherman who was called with his brother John to be one of Jesus's twelve apostles (Matthew 4:21-22, speaking of Jesus, says: "And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.")

(2). There is *James, the son of Alphaeus*, another of the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:2-4 says: "Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called

Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholemew; Thomas and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.”

(3) There appears to be an *otherwise unknown James* who was the brother of the apostle Judas (not Iscariot). See Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13.

**(4) Then there is James, the brother of Jesus.** This James is specifically referred to in the Bible as the Lord’s brother. Matthew 13:55 states: “Is not this [Jesus] the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?” The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 1:18-19: “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.”

***This James, the brother of Jesus, was not one of the Twelve Apostles.*** He was not—until after the resurrection—a believer, and did not, until Jesus was raised, honor his brother Jesus. John 7:5 states: “For neither did his brethren believe in him.” Mark 6:3-7 states: “Is not this the carpenter [Jesus], the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching. And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;” (See also Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume I*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910, pp. 265-266, 503). But this James is mentioned with frequency. And numerous scholars have referred to him as “the brother of our Lord” (F. F. Bruce. *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 1983, pp. 11, 106, 112; *The Companion Bible: Being The Authorized Version of 1611 with Structures and Critical and Explanatory Note with 198 Appendices.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1974, p. 1847, Appendix 182, p. 205; *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Cesarea, in Palestine*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981, pp. 48-49, 75-76, 289). See also the other authorities cited in this Part of our article.

### **After the resurrection, James, the Lord’s Brother, Had a New Role**

***God raised Jesus from the dead.*** The Gospels and Acts reported that Jesus was resurrected and seen by many. The Apostle Peter twice confirmed that he and others had seen that Jesus was resurrected. Acts 2:32 states: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses.” Acts 5:30 states: “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.”

***Things changed for James after God raised Jesus from the dead.***

*First, following the resurrection, Jesus was seen in his resurrected body by James and then by all the apostles (In 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, Paul wrote: “For I delivered unto you first of that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures; And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.” See also Bruce, *New Testament History, supra*, pp. 211, 244; *New Bible Dictionary, supra*, p. 550).*

*Second, historians report that James had converted and began keeping company with the twelve apostles. See Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History, supra*, 75; also, according to Acts 1:13 and other frequent references to James, he thereafter kept regular company with the twelve apostles. See Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, supra*, p. 266; Bruce, *New Testament History, supra*, pp. 210-211.*

*Third, before long, James seemed to have become a leader of the Jewish-Christian church at Jerusalem. In Galatians 1:17-19, Paul writes that, after his own conversion: “Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me . . . Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.” Fourteen years later, Paul returned to Jerusalem with Barnabus. He wrote in Galatians 2:9: “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabus the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” See also Acts 12:17; Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History, supra*, p. 49.*

*Fourth, James allegedly became the leader of the Jerusalem church and then was killed. Though the remarks are undocumented in Scripture, some scholars state that James remained as sole leader of the Jerusalem church, working to maintain its unity with Paul and his mission when Paul visited Jerusalem for the last time (*New Bible Dictionary, supra*, p. 550). And that, a few years later, James suffered martyrdom by stoning at the instigation of the high priest Ananus (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, supra*, p. 221, 267-268, 276-277).*

***Many scholars, without citing Scriptural authority, named the Lord’s brother, “James the Just.” They wrote also that he became the bishop of Jerusalem.***

Hegesippus’ largely legendary tradition claims that James was known as “the Just” because of his (Jewish) piety. Whatever the reason, he is said by many Bible scholars to be, and to have been specifically named, “James the Just” (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, supra*, pp. 264-677; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*. New York: Doubleday-Galilee, 1980, pp. 94, 200, 205, 225, 347, 349, 375, 391; Adolph Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, Vol. I. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998, pp. 50-51, 92; Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, NY:

Penguin Books, 1967, p. 18; *Eusebius Ecclesiastical History*, *supra*, pp. ii-iv, 49, 76. At page 76 Eusebius says: "But James, the brother of the Lord, who, as there were many by this name, was surnamed the Just by all, from the days of our Lord until now, received the government of the church with the apostles.").

Some scholars have claimed that James was appointed the first bishop of Jerusalem and, according to tradition, by the Lord himself (*New Bible Dictionary*, *supra*, p. 550). Moreover, that he probably presided over a council of the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem and gave their judgment (See Acts 15:13-23; *New Bible Dictionary*, *supra*, p. 550).

## **James, Confession, and Prayers for the Sick**

***The Special Importance to AAs of the Statements by James, in Chapter Five of the Book of James:*** Of major significance to AAs concerned with their early history and the cures in the pioneer A.A. period is the impact on the early A.A. fellowship of James 5:13-16. And we will discuss this in Part Two of this article.

***James wrote about two important ideas:***

(1) *Confession of sins.* James 5:16 states: "Confess your faults one to another."

(2) *Prayers by the elders of the church for a sick person, accompanied by anointing with oil.*

James 5:13-16 states: "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

***Both ideas—confession to another, and prayers for the sick—became of substantial importance in early A.A. surrenders, and later even in some practices of the Fifth Step of A.A.'s Big Book.*** In fact, the whole A.A. process of surrender in Akron—whether at the hospital or later "upstairs" at the home of Dr. Bob or that of T. Henry Williams—involved several of the surrender, prayer, confession, forgiveness, and healing ideas in the Book of James. These spilled over into early A.A. And the practices themselves produced, for many subsequent centuries, healing work by the Apostolic and later churches. See Rev. F.W. Puller, *Anointing of the Sick in Scripture and Tradition with Some Consideration of the Numbering of the Sacraments* (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1904); J. R. Pridie, *The Church's Ministry of Healing* (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1926), pp. 67-86, 123-134; Dick B., *When Early AAs Were Cured. And Why* (Kihei, HI: Paradise Research Publications, Inc., 2003), pp. 89-101. They are still employed in A.A. by many of the followers of A.A. pioneer Clarence Snyder and his third wife, Grace. See Dick B., *That Amazing Grace: The Role of Clarence and Grace S. in Alcoholics Anonymous*. San

Rafael, CA: Paradise Research Publications, 1996, pp. 7, 16, 26-28, 34-38, 83-87, 92-93, 95-106, 113-114.

## **The Belated Status of the Book of James as Part of New Testament Canon**

***The Dispute Over the Book:*** For many decades during the First Century and even thereafter, the Book of James was questioned and disputed by some (See James J. Megivern, *Bible Interpretation: Official Catholic Teachings*. Wilmington, NC: A Consortium Book, 1978, p. 27; *New Bible Dictionary*, *supra*, p. 175). For several centuries, it was not accepted in the canon of authoritative New Testament books (See Bruce, *The New Testament Documents*, *supra*, pp. 21-23; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2d ed. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, pp. 59-60; *New Bible Dictionary*, *supra*, pp. 171-177).

***Its Acceptance in the Fourth Century:*** In 367 A.D., Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, laid down the twenty-seven books of our New Testament as alone canonical; with Jerome and Augustine following his example shortly thereafter in the West. The Book of James was included (See Megivern, *Bible Interpretation*, *supra*, pp. 36-38, 48, 65-66). The process farther east took a little longer (Bruce, *The New Testament Documents*, *supra*, pp. 25-26).

### **Disputes About “Faith” and “Works”**

***Arguments persist to this day as to whether James and his “faith without works” teaching is in conflict with Paul’s doctrine of “justification by faith.”*** The distinction really involves two separate ideas: (1) Righteousness—freedom from sin—that righteousness, justification, redemption, and freedom from sin and condemnation which comes as a gift to believers by reason of their acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour (Romans 3:21-30; 4:23-25; 6; 8; 10:8-10. Thus Romans 3:27-28 states: “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law”) (2) The practice of the love of God—fulfilling the royal law according to Scripture: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” James 2:8 states: “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.” See also Matthew 22:36-40; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:11, 20; 2 John 4; Galatians 5:14.

***The faith of Jesus Christ—not “works” or “the deeds of the law”—justifies*** [acquits] those who choose to become Christians (Romans 3:20-24 states: “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. . . . But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. . . . Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” This faith of Jesus Christ delivers believers for their offenses and acquits them of sin. Romans 4:24-5:1 states:

“But for us also to whom it [righteousness] shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Believers are then said to be free from the dominion or rulership of sin. Romans 6:14, 22 states: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. . . . But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” The righteous, acquitted believer can therefore stand before God without any sense of guilt or shame. Romans 8:1-2, 33 state: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. . . . For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. . . . Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect. It is God that justifieth.” Even though A.A. is shot full with references to “by the grace of God,” its member seldom hears how that grace is manifested so that a believer need not run around continuing to confess shame and guilt and self-condemnation. The believer’s freedom and release come from faith—not by taking some “steps” or by “works” that he must “do” to become “good” and “free. Paul wrote in Galatians 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

**God’s commandments and obedience in “doing” good works.** James and the rest of the scriptures insure that “faith,” “justification,” and “righteousness” shall not be barren or alone or leave the believer as nothing because the faith has not been accompanied by the love of God in the renewed mind in manifestation (See James, Chapter 2, 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13). James leaves no doubt about the necessity for obedience to the commandments of God, the importance of God’s Word, and the love of God and Jesus Christ. Instead, James also simply spells out—much in conformity with the sermon on the mount and 1 Corinthians 13—just what faith means *in practice*.

**Faith empowers. Obedience implements.** In the Book of Acts, Peter said of the man who had been healed of being lame since birth: “And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power or by what name have you done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.”(Acts 4:7-10). The faith of Jesus Christ empowers. Obedience to God is the expected action. (Romans 12:1-2—often cited by early AAs—states: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”).

*For me, therefore, there are convincing arguments that Paul’s writings on “justification by faith” establish that a person becomes righteous on the basis of faith alone. This, for example, has nothing to do with legalistic observances commanded by the Torah (See*

also David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Maryland: Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., 1999, pp. 730-735; *Complete Jewish Bible*, Maryland: Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., 1998, pp. 1511-1512).

*And there are equally convincing arguments that James's statements consistently, harmoniously, and correctly teach that "genuine" faith (as some scholars call it) must then be implemented through obeying God's commandments.* These commandments are mentioned in James and amount to teaching "good works" that constitute walking in love. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:1: "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. . ."). These same contentions convince me also that "genuine" faith comes through an inward acknowledgement that salvation, the new birth, faith, and the new man in Christ is received by grace (2 Corinthians 4:5-7, 13, 15-16; 5:17; Galatians 2:16-21; 5:6-7; Ephesians 2:1-10, 213. They convince me, also, that, by manifesting God's love flowing outward in the form of good works, you prove the worth and importance of faith by expressing your faith through good works—good works enabled and empowered by faith, and deeds spelled out by God in scripture as vital to obedience to His will.

## **Comments on A New Birth by Grace and Doing Works as Obedience**

***The Bible Sequence That Places James in Perspective: Christians by Believing First; Then Christians as Doers of the Word.*** St. Augustine suggested, we are not born Christians; we must become Christians.

***Children of God by Faith:*** The First General Epistle of John states: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:13) and "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. . ." (1 John 5:1). Galatians 3:23-25 states: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. . . . For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"; see also Ephesians 1:12-13; 2:8-9; Romans 10:8-10. The new birth is available and is received by the faith of Jesus Christ. Galatians 2:16 states: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ."

***Obedience by doing God's word:*** James—apparently writing at an earlier time in terms of the New Testament literature—was simply teaching that faith alone—faith without works—is "dead," or "barren," or "idle." See *The Companion Bible, supra*, p. 1850, note 20. James spells out many deeds or "works" that are consistent with faith, God's commandments, and God's law for the living of Christian love and service—the very subject about which A.A.'s Dr. Bob spoke so simply at the close of his life.

***James emphasizes doing the will of the Father—just as does the Sermon on the Mount.*** James specifically teaches: "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:20-

22). The Bible states countless times that man's ways are not God's ways. God's ways are spelled out in His Word. These specifications are to be obeyed by doing, lest, as James says, we deceive ourselves. Lest we wrongfully believe we are "walking" in love just because we have heard it taught, believed it, but were idle in the doing. As covered below, the Book of James was apparently written before Paul's epistles. It does not appear to reject the later writings and doctrines of Paul that salvation and the new birth taught by Jesus in John, Chapter Three, comes only through believing—not works.

***Jesus and the Apostles emphasized the need to come to God first, through believing.*** John 3:3 says: "Jesus answered, and said unto him [Nicodemus], Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:16-18 states: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." The Apostle Peter wrote of Christ in 1 Peter 1:21-23: "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." The incorruptible seed of Christ, received by believing the word of God, produces a new birth through believing that Word, and not by doing "good works" it commands of God's children. As Paul wrote: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

***Faith and a new birth. Works by Obeying God's commands through doing.*** Works therefore do not produce faith or a new birth; nor did James claim they did. Believing according to scripture produces a new birth; then the believer is to follow the two great commandments to love God and love his neighbor; and that obedience requires that he be a doer, not a hearer only.

## **Evidence as to Author and Date of the Book of James**

***Though still an issue, there are many views that James, the Lord's brother, is probably the Author of the Book of James:*** *The New Bible Dictionary* (*supra*) contains a thoughtful discussion of the still existing questions about the authorship of the Book of James. [In brief form, so does *The Companion Bible*, where the scholar E. Bullinger wrote: "The Epistle of James has been the subject of controversy both as regards the identity of the writer, and as to the time of writing" (p. 1847, note 3)]. This question of identity is: Was the author James, the Lord's brother, or was it someone else? There has been uncertainty about the authorship, and there have been several theories that attempt to resolve the question. Hence the Epistle of James did not receive general acceptance in the West until the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. But *The New Bible Dictionary* concludes as follows: "It seems logical to suppose that either James himself composed the Word, or else a secretary or later redactor compiled it from James's sermons." See



*New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 550-551. The eminent Bible scholar Bullinger is more emphatic: "There is little doubt, however, that the writer was James, 'the Lord's brother'" (*The Companion Bible*, *supra*, p. 1847, n.1).

***The Date of Writing and the Contention that the Epistle of James was the First Written of the New Testament Documents:*** It is fair to say that the dating of Biblical manuscripts is hardly an exact science and involves many approaches and differing views among those who attempt it. While there are differing views on the date the epistle James was written (some arguing for A.D. 67 and some for A.D. 45), the scholar Bullinger quotes the highly regarded Bishop Lightfoot as follows "And a careful study of the chronological question has convinced me that they are right who hold the Epistle of James to be perhaps the earliest of the New Testament writings. It belongs to that period of the Pentecostal dispensation when the whole Church was Jewish, and when their meeting-places still bore the Jewish designation of 'synagogues'" (*The Companion Bible*, *supra*, p.1847, note 3). Then, in Appendix 180, at page 208, Bullinger lays out the chronology of the Acts period and following, showing the Epistle of James as occurring during the days of Claudius, and having been written in 45 A.D.

### **My Conclusions About the Book of James and James Its Author:**

The Book of James was accepted as canon in 367, 393, and 397 A.D. (Megivern, *Bible Interpretation*, *supra*, p.37, 48, 66). It well may be the first written canonical book of the New Testament (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Volume I*, *supra*, p. 270). James, the Lord's brother, probably wrote it. Consistent with his pre-eminence in the Jewish church, the probable author James begins in James 1:1 stating: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting." Though James was not one of the "twelve," he did command special respect and have special stature at a later point as the brother of Jesus and an apparent pillar of the Jewish Christian church at Jerusalem (See Schaff, *History*, *supra*, pp. 339-350; Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity, Vol. I*, *supra*, p. 92). In fact, as the other Apostles seemed to vanish from Biblical accounts, there remains frequent mention of three leaders: Peter, Paul, and James, the Lord's brother. And I believe we just don't know exactly who wrote the Book of James or when it was written, but can state that it has been an accepted part of the New Testament for many centuries now and is consistent with the other Christian works.

End of Part One

## **Part Two: Alcoholics Anonymous, the Book of James, and "The James Club"**

### **Early, Widespread A.A. Enthusiasm For the Book of James**

#### **What the Founders Said**

The following account appears in A.A.'s "Conference Approved" *Pass It On* (NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1984), p. 147. Bill Wilson had gotten sober in Towns Hospital in late 1934, went to Akron on a business deal, and met Dr. Bob Smith at Henrietta Seiberling's Gate House. Shortly, at Anne Smith's suggestion, Bill moved in with the Smiths. Though not particularly accurate in its characterization of the daily Bible readings, the official A.A. history says:

Bill now joined Bob and Anne in the Oxford Group practice of having morning guidance sessions together, with Anne reading from the Bible [Oxford Group "guidance" did often include reading of the Bible, but the Smith-Wilson Bible study could not be called a "guidance session." The A.A. account continues:]. "Reading. . . from her chair in the corner, she would softly conclude, 'Faith without works is dead.' "As Dr. Bob described it, they were "convinced that the answer to our problem was in the Good Book. To some of us older ones, the parts that we found absolutely essential were the Sermon on the Mount [Matthew, Chapters 5-7], the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of First Corinthians, and the Book of James. **The Book of James was considered so important, in fact, that some early members even suggested "The James Club" as a name for the Fellowship** (emphasis added).

Published four years earlier, and written by a different author, the "Conference Approved" account is told somewhat more accurately in *DR. BOB and the Good Oldtimers* (NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1980), p. 71:

"For the next three months [after Bill met Bob in May of 1935], I [Bill] lived with these two wonderful people," Bill said. "I shall always believe they gave me more than I ever brought them." Each morning, there was a devotion, he recalled. After a long silence, in which they awaited inspiration and guidance, Anne would read from the Bible. "James was our favorite," he said. "Reading from her chair in the corner, she would softly conclude, "Faith without works is dead." This was a favorite quotation of Anne's, much as **the Book of James was a favorite with early A.A.'s—so much so that "The James Club" was favored by some as a name for the Fellowship** (emphasis added).

In his own history of early A.A., Bill Wilson wrote:

And we could remember Anne as she sat in the corner by the fireplace, reading from the Bible the warning of James, that "faith without works is dead" (*Alcoholics Comes of Age*. NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1967, p. 7). Historian Ernest Kurtz quoted **Wilson as saying, "We much favored the Apostle James"** (Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God*, Expanded ed. (MN: Hazelden, 1991, pp. 40, 320, n.11, emphasis added). Historian Bill Pittman wrote of "**Dr. Bob's Required Reading List**" and, among the five named items, Pittman placed first on his list "The Holy Bible, King James Version. The Sermon on the Mount, The Lord's Prayer, **The Book of James**, The 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of First Corinthians" (Bill Pittman, *AA The Way It Began*. Seattle: Glen Abbey Books, 1988, p. 197, emphasis added).

In his last major address to AAs in 1948, **Dr. Bob said:**

When we started in on Bill D. [A.A. Number Three], we had no Twelve Steps. . . But we were convinced that the **answer to our problems** was in the Good Book. To some of us older ones, the parts that we found **absolutely essential were** the Sermon on the Mount, the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, **and the Book of James**. . . . ( *The Co-Founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. Biographical sketches Their last major talks*. NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1972, 1975, pp. 9-10, emphasis added).

In a pamphlet published by the Friday Forum Luncheon Club of the Akron A.A. Groups, the writer selected the following from a “lead” [talk] given by Dr. Bob in Youngstown, Ohio:

Members of Alcoholics Anonymous begin the day with a prayer for strength and a short period of Bible reading. **They find the basic messages they need in** the Sermon on the Mount, in Corinthians **and the Book of James** (Dick B., *The Good Book and The Big Book: A.A.'s Roots in the Bible*, 2d ed, Kihei, HI: Paradise Research Publications, Inc., 1997, p 21, emphasis added).

**A pamphlet published by “AA of Akron,” and written at the request of Dr. Bob states:**

**There is the Bible that you haven't opened for years. Get acquainted with it. Read it with an open mind.** You will find things that will amaze you. You will be convinced that certain passages were written with you in mind. Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew V, VI, and VII). Read St. Paul's inspired essay on love (I Corinthians XIII). **Read the Book of James.** Read the Twenty-third and Ninety-first Psalms. **These readings are brief but so important** (Dick B., *The Good Book and The Big Book*, *supra*, p. 20, emphasis added).

### **Historical Researchers Have Confirmed This Early James Emphasis**

Many historical researchers have also confirmed the importance of James in early A.A. See Nan Robertson, *Getting Better Inside Alcoholics Anonymous*. (NY: Fawcett Crest, 1988), p. 47; Bill Pittman. *AA: The Way It Began*, *supra*, pp. 182-183, 197; Mitchell K., *How It Worked: The Story of Clarence H. Snyder* (Washingtonville, NY: AA Big Book Study Group, 1999), pp. 69, 103-104; Dick B., *That Amazing Grace: The Role of Clarence and Grace S. in Alcoholics Anonymous*. (San Rafael, CA: Paradise Research Publications, 1996), pp. 34-37, 71, 73-76; Dick B., *The Good Book and The Big Book*, *supra*, Foreword by Dr. Bob's son, Robert R. Smith; Charles Taylor Knippel. *Samuel M. Shoemaker's Theological Influence on William G. Wilson's Twelve Step Spiritual Program of Recovery*. (St. Louis: Ph. D. Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Saint Louis University, 1987); Wally P., *But For The Grace Of God*.

. . (WV: The Bishop of Books, 1995), pp. 32, 39, 45, 205, 211-213, 225; *Women Pioneers In 12 Step Recovery* (MN: Hazelden, 1999), pp. 1-2, 11-16.

As we will discuss shortly, Nora Smith Holm's *The Runner's Bible: Spiritual Guidance For People on The Run*. (Colorado: Acropolis Books, Publisher, 1998 Edition) was very popular in pioneer A.A. and used particularly by Dr. Bob .That devotional was filled with references to verses in James that became part and parcel of A.A. language and ideas. See pp.16, 46, 51, 73, 79, 81, 86-87, 95-98, 100-101, 106, 110, 121, 126-127, 139, 152, 181, 184, 186, 221, 230, 245-246. And I found virtually the same plethora of relevant James quotations in the four years of quarterlies published by *The Upper Room* between 1935 and 1939, and used daily by the pioneers. Bill Wilson's secretary Nell Wing has also written a good bit on the Bible study and emphasis in early A.A. There is plenty of further confirmation of the enthusiasm for the Bible, which they called "The Good Book," and the Book of James among pioneer AAs. But the foregoing comments by the founders, and the research work of many should suffice to prove that you and I, if we want to know about A.A., need to know much more about the Book of James.

### **Burying A.A.'s Bible Roots and Particularly Its Book of James Root**

**If I were to characterize the demise of our complete history, our Bible roots, and the proof of cures in A.A., I would phrase the actual process as follows: Just ignore the Bible, Jesus, and the cures. Just ignore Quiet Time, Anne Smith, Rev. Sam Shoemaker, and the Christian literature they read. Just focus on what was allegedly wrong with Frank Buchman and the Oxford Group. Tell people that Dr. Bob tried to rely on the Bible and church and prayer and the Oxford Group, but got drunk. Tell people the original A.A. pioneers practically all died drunk. Tell them the key to A.A. effectiveness lies primarily in one drunk's sharing his experience, strength, and hope with another still-suffering drunk. Tell people A.A. is "spiritual, but not religious." Tell them "recovery" is not about a "religious experience," but about a "spiritual awakening." Tell them they will never be cured, but they can have an "awakening" by taking the 12 Steps. Tell them they can then only expect a "daily reprieve" from the curse of alcoholism. And tell them they can believe in any "god" they invent or choose, or in no god, or in "Something," or nothing at all. And every one of these falsehoods, distortions, and pieces of guesswork can be found in the fellowship, the writings, and the "histories" that abound today.**

**Parenthetically, I can affirm that the foregoing paragraph does not describe the A.A. I joined, nor the A.A. in which I recovered and was cured; nor does it even faintly resemble the beliefs and practices of the pioneers or the guidelines they found in the Book of James. In fact, all these distortions seem more the product of confused, incomplete, irreligious histories and historians than what you find in our meetings, in our Fellowship, in our Big Book, or in our Twelve Steps. The repeated telling of these purported facts has done much to emasculate A.A. as I know it and has spawned endless confused thinking and sharing.**

**The gaps in historical approaches:** Now we go briefly to what I see as a totally inadequate and negative historical approach to A.A. As stated, there is ample evidence that the program was developed in Akron. There is ample evidence that the program was Christian in character. There is ample evidence that, when Dr. Bob decided firmly to quit drinking and place his reliance on our “Heavenly Father” as revealed in the “Good Book,” he got well. And that he immediately became the mentor and major advocate champion for the basic Bible ideas that produced the effective results in early A.A. There is ample evidence that the Bible was read in meetings, stressed, and used as the basic source for A.A. ideas. There is ample evidence that Akron A.A. was not Oxford Group A.A.—of the variety with which Bill, Lois, Hank Parkhurst, Rev. Sam Shoemaker, Rev. Irving Harris, and the sparse in number Eastern AAs were involved.

My recent research has disclosed much evidence that most of the successful Akron Biblical ideas emerged from Dr. Bob’s own reading, substantial church membership, and participation in Christian Endeavor in his youth. See Dick B., *When Early AAs Were Cured. And Why* (Kihei, HI: Paradise Research Publications, Inc., 2003), pp. 6-13. The Akron group was, at most, a “clandestine lodge” of the Oxford Group. Many called it an “old fashioned prayer meeting” and a “Christian Fellowship.” No other Oxford Group people [other than the handful in that met with the drunks at the T. Henry Williams home in Akron] were devoted to helping drunks with meetings, a fellowship, teaching, and prayer in the way used by Dr. Bob’s Christian Fellowship.

**The Missing Facts:** Yet this material is missing from almost every recent historical writing about A.A. There is little or no mention of the Bible. There is little or no mention of Quiet Time. There is little or no mention of Rev. Sam Shoemaker. There is little or no mention of Anne Ripley Smith and her major role in early A.A. as “Mother of A.A.” There is much more criticism of the Oxford Group than there is an accurate description of its ideas and their enormous impact on Bill’s Big Book and Twelve Steps. See Dick B., *The Oxford Group and Alcoholics Anonymous: A Design for Living That Works*, 2d ed. (Kihei, HI: Paradise Research Publications, Inc., 1998). There is virtually no discussion of the content and impact of the Christian devotionals—*The Upper Room, My Utmost for His Highest, The Imitation of Christ, The Greatest Thing in the World, The Runner’s Bible*, or others that were daily fare in early A.A. There is seldom any mention of the Christian books early AAs read—usually just a focus on the books of Professor William James (a non-Christian) and Emmet Fox (a Christian of the “new thought” variety). This means little or no mention of the voluminous writings of Rev. Sam Shoemaker, Glenn Clark, Oswald Chambers, E. Stanley Jones, Harry Emerson Fosdick, and Oxford Group authors who were widely read for spiritual growth in early A.A. In fact, Dr. Bob circulated those materials, kept a journal of those to whom the books were loaned, required their return, and then asked questions of the readers as to what they read and what they found.

There is no mention of Jesus Christ. There is no mention of the gift of the Holy Spirit. And you will search high and low for any mention of the much favored Book of James as a key to the solution to their problems and to cure by the power of God. Historian Ernest Kurtz observed: “Yet A.A.’s total omission of “Jesus,” its toning down of even

“God” to a “Higher Power which could be the group itself, and its changing of the verbal first message into hopeless helplessness rather than salvation. . . were profound changes” (Kurtz, *Not-God, supra*, p. 50). Kurtz is correct about changes in A.A. But he certainly does not speak for A.A. or for me. His views are much colored by his persistent and consistent claim that A. A. is about “not-godness.” See Kurtz, *supra*, pp.150, 160, 185, 206-207, 218-219. Regrettably, his views are echoed by most historians, but they are examples of the very “rigidity” and “discipline” which perhaps emanate from Kurtz’s status as a former priest. This rigidity and doctrinal position, however, have been severely questioned by many including two quoted in Kurtz’s book. A 1983 A.A. Conference keynote speaker, a Canadian, and trustee said: “. . . there appears to be developing within our Society a rigidity, a perceived need for law and order, a determination to enforce the Traditions to the letter, without any elasticity. If that attitude became widespread, the Fellowship could not function” (Kurtz, *supra*, p 266). Three years later, retiring G.S.O. senior advisor Bob P.—a director and trustee for six years and its general manager for a decade—said: “If you were to ask me what is the greatest danger facing A.A. 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. . .” (Kurtz, *supra*, pp.266-267).

I can verify from extensive personal attendance and activity within A.A. that Bob P. and the Canadian trustee are correct in their observations. In my past decade and much more of extensive travel and investigation, as well as participation in many types of meetings and conferences, I have seen the following: (1) Alcoholics screened and thrown out of closed meetings. (2) The prohibition of non-Conference approved books, flyers, and even the Bible. (3) Striking from the rolls A.A. groups which study the Bible, study Emmet Fox, or invite speakers who tell of our Biblical roots. (4) Banning from historical websites and chat-groups the remarks of those who tell of our Christian beginnings. (5) Letters written on A.A. stationary which attempt to intimidate AAs and groups in regard to symbols, publications, book placement at meetings, and religious expressions. (6) Litigation and litigious communications emanating from GSO, attempting to penalize the recalcitrant and impose uniformity. This just has to be due, in part, to inaccurate historical writings and information, or irrelevant professionalism injected into our Fellowship, or irreligious prejudice, or just plain egotistical desire to control. As A.A. buys this stuff, its success rates deteriorate, splinter groups proliferate, and older members just plain leave! That’s not to mention the tens of thousands who are denied access to the flavor, the history, the open-mindedness, the altruism, and the autonomous service in early A.A. itself.

I often recall the old expression “No pay for soul surgery.” Stemming from the Oxford Group and embodied in A.A.’s Twelfth Step work (particularly that involving Dr. Bob and over 5,000 people he helped without charge), it meant, “we don’t get paid for our service.”

By contrast, we AAs today pay for “Conference Approved” and GSO published books and literature; we pay for offices; we pay for administration; we pay for conventions; and

we pay for litigation. All this comes from annual revenues, largely from book sales, that are in the neighborhood of ten million dollars. Such overhead encourages fear, the desire to control, and the attempts to protect points of view. And it has driven the facts out of most of our histories—facts about God, facts about Christianity, facts about the Bible, facts about our founders, facts about what they read and did, facts about the sources of our ideas, and facts about cure!

***The all-too-numerous revisionist historical writing and doctrines today:*** I have made a search many times. I have books flowing my way with great regularity. I have looked at the historical writings of most of the best-known A.A. writers, who don't work for A.A. General Services. These are fine people, good writers, and researchers. But our real spiritual history is missing in their work. I'm not one of those frustrated, disgruntled believers in A.A.—and there are many—who thinks there is some kind of conspiracy to eliminate God, the Bible, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit from A.A. I am one of those who simply can't understand how or why so many good writers just don't write or talk about or analyze the real Bible roots of A.A.

Let's be specific. The following works appear to contain absolutely no, or certainly no significant, mention of the A.A. and the Bible, or of the Book of James as far as our actual and original recovery program is concerned: Mel B., *My Search For Bill W.*, (MN: Hazelden, 2000); Mel B., *New Wine: The Spiritual Roots of the Twelve Step Miracle*. (MN: Hazelden, 1991); *Bill W.: My First 40 Years*. (MN: Hazelden, 2000); Sally Brown and David R. Brown. *A Biography of Mrs. Marty Mann: The First Lady of Alcoholics Anonymous*. (MN: Hazelden, 2001); Robert Fitzgerald, S. J., *The Soul of Sponsorship: The Friendship of Fr. Ed Dowling, S.J. and Bill Wilson in Letters*. (MN: Hazelden, 1995); Francis Hartigan, *Bill W.: A Biography of Alcoholics Anonymous Cofounder Bill Wilson*. (NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous*, Exp ed. (MN: Hazelden, 1991); Matthew J. Raphael, *Bill W. and Mr. Wilson: The Legend and Life of A.A.'s Co-founder*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000); Robert Thomsen, *Bill W.* (NY: Perennial Library, Harper & Row, 1975); Tom White, *Bill W.: A Different Kind of Hero: The Story of Alcoholics Anonymous*. (PA: Boyds Mill Press, 2003); William L. White, *Slaying The Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (IL: Chestnut Health Systems/Lighthouse Institute, 1998).

***The Emergence of Non-AA "Twelve Step Bibles"***: Shortly after I began my research into the Biblical roots of A.A., I ran into a very sad trend that suddenly had been magnified into huge proportions. In the zeal of the early 1990's for treatment programs, rehabs, therapists, and recovery books, several major religious publishers decided to formulate a new type of A.A.—presumably for Christians. Regrettably, however, these ponderous works simply shoved the Bible into the Twelve Steps instead of recording and commenting on the Biblical history of A.A. itself and the Bible's contributions to the Steps. As with the historians, however, there seemed to be a large and undue focus on the "Oxford Group roots" of A.A. to the exclusion of the Bible itself. The publishers rammed into their "recovery" Bibles page after page of Step commentaries attached to supposedly relevant verses. Seeming to respond enthusiastically, "para-church" groups,

often calling themselves “Christ-centered” Twelve Step Fellowships, began wide use of these “Twelve Step Bibles.” The publishers sold a chunk of the religious community on the idea that the Bible, without the Twelve Steps, was an ineffective recovery tool. The three “Twelve Step” Bibles that I found most in use were: (1) *Recovery Devotional Bible* (MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993); (2) *Serenity: A Companion for Twelve Step Recovery* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990); (3) *The Life Recovery Bible: The Living Bible*. (IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992). All this work on the Bible and the apparent self-conceived effort to fit God’s plan and will into the 12 Steps makes me wonder how many lives could have been saved in the last decade if these same publishing efforts had been invested into reporting on, setting forth, and teaching about the original Bible ideas. And highlighting the facts and “how” of the pioneer reliance on the Creator that epitomized early A.A.’s Christian Fellowship and astonishing cures.

### **Identifiable Spillovers in A.A.’s Big Book and 12 Steps From James**

To avoid repeating materials in the next two sections, I’ll state first that there are many quotes, references, and ideas in the Book of James that regularly appeared in early A.A. writing and practices. The following are a few:

**“Faith without works is dead”** was practically the father of the ideas that bounced around early A.A. from James. The verse itself is quoted or paraphrased several times in the Big Book. The verse was allegedly the favorite Bible verse of Anne Smith, Dr. Bob’s wife. The verse was allegedly Bill Wilson’s favorite, along with the Book of James. And expressions said to have come from this verse were and are common in A.A. Thus Wilson named his Big Book promotion corporation “Works Publishing Company.” The shortest sentence in A.A.’s Big Book is “It works.” And most every A.A. meeting concludes with a circle in which the members join hands, join in prayer, and conclude by shaking their chain up and down, crying, “Keep coming back. It Works.” See also Kurtz, *Not-God, supra*, pp. 68-69; Raphael, *Bill W. and Mr. Wilson, supra*, pp. 116-117.

**“Confess your faults one to another”**—though modified and amplified by the Oxford Group, by Rev. Sam Shoemaker, and by Bill’s Fifth Step and discussion, James 5:16 has been almost universally acknowledged to be the basic source idea from James 5:16 for Step Five.

**“But the tongue can no man tame: it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison”** In his last talk to AAs, Dr. Bob cautioned them to “guard that erring member the tongue.” And Anne Smith made similar comments in the spiritual journal she kept and shared with early AAs and their families.

**“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”** can be found in many Bible passages. It is called “the royal law according to the scripture” in James 2:8. And the verse is paraphrased in the Big Book.



**“Father of lights,”** a reference to Almighty God in James 1:17. Bill quoted this phrase, but misspelled it in his Big Book. He often mentioned it in talks to A.A. members. He spoke of the “Father of lights” who presides over us all.

The words and phrases in the following sections will illustrate how many other basic A.A. ideas came from the Book of James, though they were not actually quotes of chapter and verse and did not provide appropriate attribution.

## **Specific Pioneer A.A. Ideas From James**

Again, to avoid undue repetition of the detailed study in the next section, we will merely highlight here some of the key James ideas that seem to resemble words and phrases AAs adopted.

Patience.

Avoiding temptation.

Asking wisdom of God with unwavering faith.

Enduring temptation.

Recognizing that resisting temptation is man’s responsibility, not God’s job.

Laying aside wrath and filthiness and receiving the Word of God with meekness.

Being a “doer of the word,” not a hearer only.

Purporting to be religious, but failing to bridle the tongue.

Accepting that “pure” and “undefiled religion” includes visiting the fatherless and widows and keeping yourself unspotted from the world.

Not being a respecter of persons in well-doing.

Fulfilling the royal law to love thy neighbor as thyself.

Keeping all God’s commandments, not just the ones you like.

Accompanying faith with works.

Taming the tongue.

Recognizing that envying and strife are the product of devilish “wisdom.”

Knowing that wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits, and without partiality or hypocrisy.

Asking amiss in prayer comes from asking to consume the object upon your own lusts.

Knowing God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Submitting yourselves to God. Resisting the devil, and believing he will flee from you.

Drawing near to God knowing He will draw near to you.

Humbling yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and knowing He shall lift you up.

Avoiding the speaking of evil of, or judging, other brethren.

Saying that if the Lord will, you will live, and do this or that.

Knowing you are to do good, and that not doing it, is sin.

Holding no grudges.

Eschewing swearing.

If you are sick, summoning the elders of the church and letting them pray over you.

Believing this prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up and forgive his sins.

Confessing your faults one to another

Praying for one another that you may be healed.  
Believing that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.  
Knowing that he who converts a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

You can find these principles in the writings of Rev. Sam Shoemaker, in *The Upper Room*, in *The Runner's Bible*, in Oxford Group writings, and in much of the Christian literature early AAs read with regularity. Many cite the correlative verses in James. And those steeped in A.A. sayings and thought should readily recognize the parallels.

## **A Review of the Bible's Book of James in A.A.**

Both Bill W. and Dr. Bob stated many times that Jesus's sermon on the mount contained the underlying philosophy of A.A. Furthermore, our research has demonstrated how many words, phrases, and ideas in A.A. were borrowed from the sermon. However, of probably much greater importance (than the Sermon) in the day-by-day thinking of early A.A., was the Book of James. It was much studied by A.A.'s co-founders. Quotes and ideas from the Apostle James can be found throughout the Big Book and in A.A. literature. As shown, the Book of James was considered so important that many favored calling the A.A. fellowship the "James Club" (*DR. BOB and the Good Oldtimers*, p. 71; *Pass It On*, p. 147). And even the most fundamental phrases in A.A., such as "It Works" and Bill Wilson's own "Works Publishing Company" (which published the First Edition of the Big Book), probably have their origin in the "Faith without works is dead" phrases in the Book of James (See: Nell Wing, *Grateful to Have Been There*, pp. 70-71).

Let's therefore review the Book of James, chapter by chapter. As we do so, we will point to traces of that book which we believe can be found in, or probably influenced the text of, the Big Book. At the outset, we would report that as our research into the Biblical roots of A.A. has progressed, so has our understanding of some root sources that previously went unnoticed.

***A.A.'s lack of commentaries on James that were similar to those for Corinthians and the sermon on the mount.*** Not only did A.A.'s have the Bible itself to study, when it came to the sermon on the mount and First Corinthians, but they had and used commentaries by Henry Drummond, Samuel M. Shoemaker, Oswald Chambers, Glenn Clark, E. Stanley Jones, and Emmet Fox.

But we could find no similar commentary that the pioneers used with the Book of James, despite A.A.'s specific emphasis on James. Finally, we studied again and again the spiritual literature early AAs read.

**Relevance of *The Runner's Bible*:** We noticed in *The Runner's Bible* the frequency with which all the books and chapters that Dr. Bob called “absolutely essential” (Matthew chapters 5-7, 1 Corinthians 13, and James) were there mentioned. We particularly noticed the frequency with which *The Runner's Bible* mentioned and discussed verses from the Book of James. Hence our reader will find many references to *The Runner's Bible* in the footnotes of our title *The Good Book and The Big Book*; for we believe that the little “Runner’s” devotional book may have provided Dr. Bob, Anne Smith, and perhaps even Bill Wilson, with much of the fodder that caused them to focus on James and conclude that James was their “favorite” book of the Bible.

In a phone conversation with the author in 1995, from his home in Texas, Dr. Bob’s son stated that *The Runner's Bible*—(a little Biblical devotional book)—was often used by those who wanted a quick and easy source for Biblical ideas in which they were interested. Perhaps, then, that book became a reference source for Dr. Bob, Anne, and even Bill Wilson when they were studying the pertinent Biblical ideas they extracted from 1 Corinthians 13, the Sermon on the Mount, and particularly James. Now let’s look at the chapters in James—one by one.

## James Chapter 1

1. **Patience.** Chapter One is not the only chapter in the Book of James which mentions patience. Nor is it the only portion of the Bible that stresses patience. But we’ve noted that James was a favored Biblical source in early A.A., and James 1:3-4 do state:

Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Patience certainly wound up as one of the most frequently mentioned spiritual principles in the Big Book (pp. 67, 70, 83, 111, 118, 163).

2. **Asking wisdom of God with unwavering believing.** James 1:5-8 state:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.  
But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.  
For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

Asking for God’s direction and strength and receiving “Guidance” from Him, are major themes in both the Old and New Testaments. They were important Oxford Group ideas as well. We therefore discussed them at length in our titles on the Oxford Group and on Anne Smith’s spiritual journal. Certainly the Big Book, including the Eleventh Step itself, is filled with such Guidance concepts (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp.13, 46, 49, 62-63, 69-70, 76, 79-80, 83, 84-88, 100, 117, 120, 124, 158, 164).

**3. Resisting temptation.** It should surprise no one that AAs of yesteryear and of today are interested in resisting temptation, and having the power to do that—the power of God. James 1:12-16 state:

Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to those that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.

***Resisting temptation with God's help and being cured and remaining cured.*** [My personal view is that the foregoing verses offer much insight into the *cure* of alcoholism and other life-controlling afflictions. Man is to resist the devil—says James in a later verse. Man is to endure temptation when he is tried. When he is tempted, he cannot blame the temptation on God—who cannot be tempted and does not tempt. He can be tempted by being drawn away of his own lust and enticed. James 3:15-16 speaks of a “wisdom [that] descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish.” And, says James, when the enticement results in lustful [and excessive] thoughts and behavior [such as getting drunk and drunkenness], it can and should be recognized as sin, and sin as the producer of death.

For the real alcoholic, the “devilish,” tempting thoughts must be resisted and expelled. The prescription is not merely to abstain from drinking and go to 12 Step meetings. That's not in the Book of James. The enjoined error occurs when one man fails to submit to God, resist the devil, humble himself in the sight of God, and appropriately believe to be lifted up and out by his Creator. 2 Corinthians 10:5 calls for casting down human reasoning and “every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

We are the ones to control the thoughts. 1 Corinthians 10:13 points out: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” To be “cured,” I believe we need to recognize that temptation to disobey God is common, that thoughts about letting the temptation make a nest in our mind and motivate our behavior must be and can be cast out. They need to be resisted. They need to be expelled. And we need to believe what God says—we are submit ourselves to God; resist the devil; and be assured that the devil will flee, that God will lift us up, and that we can escape and bear the temptation with the help of our faithful Creator.]

Resisting a temptation certainly includes use of willpower, believing, praying, changing behavior and cronies and hangouts. The latter three can be instruments of success or of failure. The first three, with God's help, are essential to success.

**4. Every good and perfect gift comes from God, the Father of lights.** James 1:17 states:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Bill seemed to be referring to this verse when he wrote on page 14 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.:

I must turn in all things to the Father of Light [sic] who presides over us all. [Alcoholics Anonymous, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., correctly says “the Father of Lights,” p. 23.]

Bill made the same reference to God, the Father of lights, who presides over us all, in Appendix I of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.:

This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all (p. 566).

The “Him” who presides over us all was, of course, James 1:17's “Father of lights”— the Creator Yahweh, our Almighty God.

**5. Let every man be slow to speak, slow to wrath.** James 1:19-20 state:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

The same verse is quoted in *The Runner's Bible* and seems quite relevant to the Big Book's injunction, “If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. . . . God save me from being angry” (Fourth Edition, pp. 66-67).

**6. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.** James 1:21-22 state:

Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Reverend Sam Shoemaker, whom Bill W. called an A.A. co-founder, made this comment on the foregoing:

I think St. James' meaning is made much clearer in Dr. Moffatt's translation, “Act on the Word, instead of merely listening to it.” Try it out in experiment, and prove it by its results—otherwise you only fool yourself into believing that you have the heart of religion when you haven't (Shoemaker, *The Gospel According to You*, pp. 44-55).

In the same chapter, Shoemaker also pointed out that prayer is often more a struggle to find God than the enjoyment of Him and cooperation with His will. He added that “God is and is a Rewarder of them that seek Him.” (See Shoemaker, *The Gospel According to You*, p. 47; and Heb.11:6).

We cannot find specific or similar language to that of James 1:21-22 in the Big Book; but A.A. declares over and over that A.A. is a program of *action*, that probably no human power can relieve a person of his alcoholism, and “That God could and would if He were *sought*” (4th ed., p. 60, emphasis added). A.A.’s program emphasizes action in the experiment of faith it adopted from John 7:17—*seeking* God by *following* the path that leads to a relationship with God. James 1:22 enjoins *doing* God’s will as expressed in His Word—not merely listening to it. James was an Akron favorite. Shoemaker was a Wilson favorite. “Faith without works” was a Big Book favorite; and it therefore seems quite reasonable to believe and possible that A.A.’s emphasis on *action* might well have derived largely from James 1:21-22.

**7. Pure religion and undefiled before God . . . to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.** James 1:27 states:

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

At the very least, this verse bespeaks unselfishness and helpfulness to others which were cardinal A.A. principles—particularly the principles embodied in Step Twelve. In fact, that’s the point made in one of early A.A.’s pamphlets:

And all we need to do in the St. James passage is to substitute the word “Alcoholic” for “Fatherless and Widows” and we have Step Twelve (*Spiritual Milestones*, AA of Akron, pp. 12-13).

## **James Chapter 2**

Chapter Two of the Book of James may have made two direct and major contributions to the language of the Big Book and also to A.A.’s philosophy. Those two contributions were “Love thy neighbor as thyself” and “Faith without works is dead.”

**1. Love thy neighbor as thyself.** James 2:8 states:

If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.

This commandment to “Love thy neighbor” exists in other parts of both the Old and New Testaments. Thus, when the Big Book incorporated this phrase, there is no assurance that the quote is from James rather than from another Bible verse to the same effect (e.g., Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14). But the Big Book certainly does state:

Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of “Love thy neighbor as thyself” (p. 153).

The Book of James is very probably the specific source of this Biblical quote since Dr. Bob, early AAs, and Bill Wilson himself spoke with such frequency about “love” and tolerance as the code of A.A. *and* the Book of James as AAs’ favorite book.

**2. Faith without works is dead.** Said to be the favorite verse of Anne Smith and perhaps the origin of many expressions in A.A. concerning “works,” this sentence, or variations of it, appears several times in Chapter Two of the Book of James. For example, James 2:20 states:

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

“Faith without works” as a phrase, and as an A.A. “action” concept, is quoted or referred to many times in the Big Book (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 14-15, 76, 88, 93, 97). A.A.’s original Oxford Group connection also put emphasis on these James verses concerning the importance of witnessing. And sometimes, I believe, A.A. today has put lots of emphasis on “works” and forgotten the “faith part.” The “faith” of pioneer A.A. is the faith of Jesus Christ. Galatians 2:16 says:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

**3. Helping Others.** It hardly requires citation or documentation to state that A.A.’s cardinal objective is to help others. And this service concept is underlined in Chapter 2 of James, beginning with verses 1 to 7. James 2:15-16 state this principle very well:

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

And every alcoholic who has helped one of his miserable, suffering, destitute brothers in need will instantly relate to those verses and hence to the importance of James to the early AAs.

**4. The Ten Commandments. Again!** James 2:10-11 state:

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

[Whatever one may think is representative of today’s A.A., he will find language about and references to the Ten Commandments with great frequency in *early A.A.*]

### **James Chapter 3**

**1. Taming the tongue.** In his Farewell Address to A.A., Dr. Bob said:

Let us also remember to guard that erring member the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance (*DR. BOB and the Good Oldtimers*, p. 338).

A major portion of James chapter 3 is devoted to the trouble that can be caused by an untamed tongue. Following are a few verses emphasizing the point:

Even so the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things.  
Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and *it is* set on fire of hell.  
But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.  
Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be (James 3:5, 6, 8, 10)

These verses are not quoted in the Big Book. But Anne Smith referred to them frequently in her journal, as did other A.A. roots sources (Dick B., *Anne Smith's Journal*, pp. 28, 44, 76, 77; Holm, *The Runner's Bible*, p. 68). But, in paraphrasing those verses, Dr. Bob seemed to be speaking of the necessity for tolerance, courtesy, consideration, and kindness in our speech and actions. James makes clear that good *conversation* should be a focus—conversation, we believe, that is laced with consideration, kindness, and tolerance (See James 3:13). And these latter principles *are* very much in evidence in the Big Book (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 67, 69-70, 83-84, 97, 118, 125, 135).

**2. Avoidance of envy, strife, and lying.** James 3:14-16 proclaim that a heart filled with envy, strife, and lies has not received *that* kind of “wisdom” from God, but rather from devilish sources. The verses state:

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts; glory not, and lie not against the truth.  
This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.  
For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

“Envy” is not as much decried in the Big Book as jealousy; but a more modern translation of these King James verses equates “envy” *with* “jealousy” (*The Revised English Bible, New Testament*, p. 208). And the Big Book most assuredly condemns jealousy (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 37, 69, 82, 100, 119, 145, 161). In fact, the Big Book states as to jealousy *and* envy:

Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion—jealousy (p. 82).

The greatest enemies of us alcoholics are resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration, and fear (p. 145).



And as to strife, the Big Book states:

After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody or anything. We have to (p. 103)!

James 3:17-18 talk much about making peace and the fruit of righteousness being sown in peace of them that make peace.

As seen in the quote from James 3:14, lying and dishonesty are also declared to be devilish; and one should note and compare the Big Book's frequent emphasis on grasping and developing a manner of living which "demands rigorous honesty" (4<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 58). As to all the verses in James 3:14-16, however, there is little certainty that these particular verses were an exclusive or even major source for the Big Books condemnation of envy, jealousy, strife, and dishonesty because all these traits are stated to be objectionable by many other parts of the Bible.

#### **James Chapter 4:**

**1. Asking amiss for selfish ends.** A.A.'s writings have much to say about overcoming selfishness and self-centeredness. But the following in James 4:3 particularly eschews selfishness in prayer:

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Several Christian A.A. sources that were favorites of Dr. Bob's discuss this verse at length. And the Big Book authors may therefore have borrowed from James 4:3, in this statement:

We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work (Big Book, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 87).

**2. Humility.** The Book of James has no corner on the Biblical injunction to be humble. But the importance of James, and the remarks of Reverend Sam Shoemaker (quoted under Item 3 immediately below) suggest that the following verses from James may have been a source of the Big Book's frequent mention of humility. James 4:7, 10 state:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

The Big Book's Fourth Edition is filled with exhortations to be humble, with stress on humbling one's self before God, and with suggestions for humbly asking His help. Examples include:

There I humbly offered myself to God, as I understood Him, to do with me as He would (p. 13).

He humbly offered himself to his Maker—then he knew (p. 57).

Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity (p. 68).

We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day “Thy will be done” (pp. 87-88).

### **3. Trusting God and cleaning house.** James 4:8 states:

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

The Big Book says on page 98 of the Fourth Edition:

Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.

And, in language closely paralleling that in James 4:8, the Big Book says further that one can establish conscious companionship with God by simply, honestly, and humbly seeking and drawing near to Him:

He has come to all who have honestly sought Him. When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us (page 57)!

In Step Seven, the Big Book relates “cleaning house” of one’s character defects to “humbly asking” God to remove them. The foregoing verses in James, which speak of drawing near to God, cleansing our hearts, humbling ourselves in His sight, and then being “lifted” up by God, appear to have been directly involved in framing the Big Book’s Seventh Step language. In fact, many years after the Big Book was written, Sam Shoemaker thus clarified his understanding of the Seventh Step, in a 1964 issue of the *AA Grapevine*:

Sins get entangled deep within us, as some roots of a tree, and do not easily come loose. We need help, grace, the lift of a kind of divine derrick (Shoemaker, “Those Twelve Steps as I Understand Them”; *Volume II, Best of the Grapevine*, p. 130).

### **4. Taking your own inventory.** James 4:11-12 state:

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

We discussed the Fourth Step idea of taking your own inventory in connection with the relevant verses in the Sermon on the Mount—which were often quoted by Oxford Group people and by Anne Smith (See Matt. 7:1-5). But the Big Book also speaks of: (1) looking “for our own mistakes,” (2) asking “Where were we to blame,” and (3) realizing, “The inventory was ours, not the other man’s.” Considering the importance to AAs of the Book of James and its insights, the foregoing James verses probably also had an impact on the A.A. idea of avoiding judgment of another and focusing on an examination of one’s *own* conduct when it comes to wrongdoing.

## James Chapter 5

1. **Patience.** We discussed A.A.’s “patience principle” as having probably derived from James, Chapter One. As we said, however, important stress on patience can be found in James 5:7, 8, 10, 11.

2. **Grudges** (covered in A.A.’s 4<sup>th</sup> Step resentment inventory process). James 5:9 reads:

Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the judge standeth before the door.

A major portion of the Big Book’s Fourth Step discussion is devoted to resentment, about which page 64 says:

Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease.

The Big Book then suggests putting resentments *on paper*—making a “*grudge list*” (pp. 64-65). Oxford Group spokesman Ebenezer Macmillan wrote at length in his title *Seeking and Finding* about eliminating resentments, hatred, or the “*grudge*” that “blocks God out effectively.” Rev. Sam Shoemaker also specified “grudges” as one of the “sins” to be examined in an inventory of self (Shoemaker, *Twice-Born Ministers*, p. 182). Since the Big Book lists resentments or “grudges” as one of the four major “character defects” which block us from God, it quite possible that the “grudge” language in the Big Book was influenced by James, and perhaps specifically by James 5:9.

3. **Asking God’s forgiveness for sins.** We repeat James 5:15, which was partially quoted above. The entire verse says:

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

The Big Book says this about asking God’s forgiveness when we fall short:

If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson (4<sup>th</sup> ed, p. 70).

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. . . . After making our review, we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken (4<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 86).

The foregoing Big Book quotes show that, even after their initial surrender, wrongdoers may still, in A.A.'s view, seek and receive God's forgiveness for shortcomings indulged after the initial surrender. Here again, James has no corner on the statement that God makes it possible, through forgiveness, for a believer to regain fellowship with Him. The following in 1 John 1:9 may also have been a source of such Big Book ideas:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We have discussed forgiveness in connection with the Sermon on the Mount. It is fair to say, however, that the Book of James, 1 John, or Matthew could each, or all, have been the basis for the Big Book forgiveness concept.

**4. Confess your sins one to another.** It has often been noted that *both* the Oxford Group concept of sharing by confession *and* Step Five in the Big Book were derived from James 5:16:

Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed.

Of much more significance than "sharing by confession" and the source of Step Five is the direct patterning of Akron's "real surrenders" on this verse and those surrounding it. Akron brothers prayed for the new man. They brought him to Christ. They had him accept Christ and utter his own prayer for cure and to live by the principles of Christ. The objective was to have him become a Christian, to rely on the power of god, to be cured, and to live by Christian principles.

**5. Effectual, fervent prayer works.** James 5:16 states:

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

A.A.'s Big Book Fourth Edition says:

Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.

James 5:16 could well have been a major basis for the Big Book comments on the effectiveness of prayer.

**6. Anointing with oil and effecting healing through prayer by elders. See James 5:13-16.**

One A.A. writer, who was sponsored by Clarence Snyder, has repeatedly suggested that in their “surrenders,” early AAs almost literally followed the foregoing verses from James. Many others (seven that I have personally interviewed), who also were sponsored by Clarence Snyder, have said this contention is in error. A.A. oldtimer Larry Bauer from Ohio both wrote and phoned me to say that he was quite familiar with the surrenders, that he had been taken upstairs and was born again, but that there was no anointing with oil.

But several comments should be made about surrenders, the prayers, and the question of anointing. First, there seems little confirmation that Dr. Bob, T. Henry Williams, and the Akron pioneers took a newcomer “upstairs,” had him “surrender” to Christ, prayed for him and with him, and anointed him with oil. The oil part has simply not been proven to my satisfaction in view of the fact that six of Clarence Snyder’s presently living sponsees have told me they knew of no anointing as they were taken through the Steps or nor had they heard history such an account from Clarence. Second, in preparing my biography of the role of Clarence and his wife Grace in A.A., I spent a week in company with my son Ken in the home of Grace at Jacksonville, Florida. And I think it is fair to say that there is nothing about Clarence’s ministry and practices that was not covered with Grace (See Dick B., *That Amazing Grace, supra*). Grace talked at length about what Clarence told her about the pioneer program, the surrenders, the prayers “upstairs,” and how Clarence had taken people through the Steps for years (Dick B., *That Amazing Grace, supra*, pp. 6, 27). But I can’t recall Grace’s mentioning anointing with oil by the pioneers though she and Clarence practiced this in their healing work and in the “prayer and praise” segments of their spiritual retreats, after the retreat itself had concluded (See particularly *That Amazing Grace, supra*, pp. 95-97, 101, 6, 27). To be sure, many of the elements of the James verses were followed by the pioneers—including those relating to confession, healing, and prayer. Third, in his later years, Clarence Snyder founded and conducted retreats for AAs and their families which are still being held. At these retreats, there is a “prayer and praise” session where there is anointing with oil and prayer for those in need. The sessions follow the close of the retreat itself.

Finally, we make particular mention of these confession, prayer, healing, and anointing ideas in

James because so many of the healing practices of the Christian church in the beginning and throughout later centuries did rely on the words of St. James and did heal with the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. There is an enormous amount of scholarly writing on James 5:16, confession, “Unction,” prayer by the elders, and the laying on of hands in connection with Christian healing. These writings did not escape the notice and readings by Dr. Bob on Christian healing.

Probably the leading work is F.W. Puller, *The Anointing of the Sick in Scripture and Tradition, with some Considerations on the Numbering of the Sacraments* (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1904). Others include Percy Dearmer, *Body and Soul: An Enquiry into the Effects of Religion upon Health, with a description of*

*Christian Works of Healing From the New Testament to the Present Day* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1909), 217-255, 287-292, 396-400; J. R. Pridie, *The Church's Ministry of Healing* (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1926), pp. 67-86, 110-114; George Gordon Dawson, *Healing: Pagan and Christian* (London: Society For Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935), pp. 146-159; John Maillard, *Healing In The Name of Jesus* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), pp. 116, 283-284; James Moore Hickson, *Heal The Sick* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1924), pp. 252-269; Evelyn Frost, *Christian Healing, 2d ed.* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1949), pp. 331-332. These points are also extensively documented and discussed in the titles listed in our bibliographies in my recent works on healing and cure. See Dick B., *Cured: Proven Help for Alcoholics and Addicts* (Kihei, HI: Paradise Research Publications, Inc., 2003); *When Early AAs Were Cured. And Why* (Kihei, HI: Paradise Research Publications, Inc., 2003); *God and Alcoholism: Our Growing Challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Kihei, HI: Paradise Research Publications, Inc., 2002). These materials cast a new light on how and why early AAs all said they had been cured; that there was a cure for alcoholism; and that they had developed a cure. Their belief was supported and fortified by nineteen centuries of Christian healing records.

There is newly confirmed early A.A. history of bringing newcomers to Christ, having them ask God to take alcohol out of their lives, and having them ask in Jesus's name for strength and guidance to live by His principles. There is newly confirmed proof that Akron oldtimers prayed for and with the newcomer in their "surrenders" asking God to heal, guide, and strengthen. There is a vast amount of newly gathered evidence of a decade of early A.A. cures. You can find the documentation and accounts of these facts in my titles cited immediately above and also in several very recent titles by a prodigious writer and careful researcher new to our scene. See Richard K., *Separating Fact From Fiction: How Revisionists Have Led Our History Astray* (Haverhill, MA: Golden Text Publishing Co., 2003); *So You Think Drunks Can't Be Cured?* (Haverhill, MA: Golden Text Publishing Co., 2003). These historical facts are important because the convictions about "healing" and "cure" were so evident and strong in early A.A.; and the return of healing emphasis—whatever the technique or Biblical authority—is urgently needed in today's recovery programs (particularly those being launched in the "faith based" sector,).

### **What These Historical Facts about A.A. and Its Roots in the Book of James Offer Believers and Others in A.A. Today**

If you are going to invent gods, place your faith in meetings, concentrate on not drinking, ignore the need to change your life, fail to ask God's help and guidance, reject prayers for healing, just forget the Book of James in A.A. today. My premise is that the Word of God contains the Will of God. If you don't like the Bible, don't believe in God, don't want to hear about Jesus Christ, think A.A. is supposed to be irreligious, and want the easy way of attendance at meetings—often just "centers of self-centeredness," then you don't need James or the Good Book. But James contains some powerful injunctions

about walking God's way, rejecting temptation, and being cured—of any temptation, sickness [and, I would add, the “temptation” inevitably involved in “addictions.”].

One misguided, seemingly mean-tempered moderator of a history chat group or two epitomizes the rigidity which will, if not abandoned, continue to insure sickness, reject cure, and suppress history itself. She tells her fans that her sites are “safe.” She actually bans or deletes contributions from those she thinks are “preaching,” or departing from some of her reports of time-honored myths, or who dare to speak of pioneer reliance on God, study of the Bible, achievement of cure, or Jesus Christ.

***Principles from the Book of James you can take to the bank.*** Here are some simple points from James in the Good Book that believers and others searching for God's truth can grab and hold.

- ✂ Abstain, abstain, abstain: Excessive drinking comes from temptation and is sinful.
- ✂ Be patient in your walk with God.
- ✂ Ask God's wisdom and guidance with unwavering belief in His goodness.
- ✂ Reject temptation. That is your job. God doesn't tempt.
- ✂ Do what God says, don't just listen to the Word and remain idle.
- ✂ Anger, envy, strife, criticism, and grudges are devilish in origin and results and reject God's Commandments.
- ✂ Remember that your faith in God's love and power is to be accompanied by deeds.
- ✂ Remember that your erring tongue can harm, and must be consistent with good works.
- ✂ Don't complain about unanswered prayers until your prayers coincide with God's will.
- ✂ Submit yourself to God. Resist the devil. Believe the devil will take a hike.
- ✂ If you draw near to God, He will draw near to you.
- ✂ Humility in seeking God is an essential to His lifting you up.
- ✂ Get your faults on the table and eliminate them.
- ✂ Ask other believers for their prayers.
- ✂ Ask for healing and cure and for solutions to all your problems.
- ✂ Expect and believe for deliverance.
- ✂ The effectual fervent prayer of a believer pays off.

***The Pioneer A.A. program illustrates for us the relevance of James today.*** As I have written in so many of my publications, the early A.A. program was simple, effective, and produced a high rate of cures that has not been equaled without God. Its basic ideas came, as Dr. Bob declared, from the Bible itself. The program can be simply stated as follows:

- ✂ You either want to quit, to resist temptation, and do what it takes; or you don't.
- ✂ You either will abstain from drinking; resist temptation; and quit for good; or you won't.

- ✂ You will seek medical help at the beginning if needed.
- ✂ You will accept Jesus Christ as the way, the only way, to come to the Creator.
- ✂ You will ask, in the name of Jesus Christ, for healing, for strength, for guidance, for forgiveness, and for a daily walk in reliance on, and obedience to, God.
- ✂ You will recognize that the Bible, plus messages revealed by God when he chooses and if you seek them, plus the renewing of your mind with what God tells us are—each of the three—keys to obeying God and receiving His promises.

***A Key from James that is a major factor in A.A. today:*** You will recognize that the key to the early A.A. program was not drunkalogs or meetings or cleaning up a drunk. It was Christian fellowship and witnessing by those who had suffered from similar problems, followed the path known as the “way,” been cured themselves, and were able to describe exactly how it had happened, what they had done, and how God had done for them what they could not do for themselves.

The malady, the requirement of abstaining from temptation, the necessity for Christ, the promises of God, the power of God, and the necessity for obedience to God’s will had been covered in the Good Book and known for centuries (**The malady-drunkenness:** Proverbs 23:29-35: “Who hath woe? . . . They that tarry too long at the wine. . . . At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. . . .” Proverbs 31:4-6: “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. . . .” Galatians 5:19-21: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest. . . . envyings, murders, drunkenness. . . . they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Ephesians 5:18: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess. . . .” **The solution-submission to God and resisting the devil:** James 4:7-10: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. . . . Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” **The necessity for Christ and the promises of God:** Acts 4:10-12: “Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man [the man previously lame from birth] stand here before you whole. . . . Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 2:38-39: “. . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” **The Power of God:** Ephesians 1:19: “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.” **Obeying God’s will:** Galatians 5:16: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Romans 6:16: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants are ye to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness.” James 1:12-16: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. . . . But every man is tempted, when he is drawn way of his



own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.” Ecclesiastes 12:13: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

I found, for my cure, that the promises of God were backed by the willingness and ability of the Creator to perform them. Until I dug into the Good Book, read it frequently, put its contents in my mind, prayed as it instructs, and believed God, the cure did not occur. Once I did, the cure was received. Cure for me means wholeness. From my first day in A.A., I have never picked up a drink or taken a sleeping pill. That part, with God’s help, was easy. The tough part meant overcoming two major elements of the malady: (1) Severe withdrawal accompanied by seizures, delirium, confusion, forgetfulness, insomnia, shaking, depression, and dependence upon others. (2) Enduring and seemingly hopeless despair, anxiety, and fear—factors certainly arising from my own past behavior, endless legal problems, and prospects of punishments. These were the biggies. I had to learn that “The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” It (fear) did. I then did (put my trust in the Lord); and I was (cured and safe). And the promise of 3 John 2 has become a reality: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” Dr. Bob’s wife, Anne Smith, elatedly put that verse in the journal that she shared with early AAs and their families. It probably represents a large chunk of the cure God provides to those who believe.

After 13 years of research into early A.A., I firmly believe that, almost eighteen years ago, I began in A.A. pursuing the pioneers’ path, though I did not originally know they had trod that path with astonishing success. And I can today understand how and why the Book of James was such a favored guide for them. In fact, what a different and successful A.A. it would be if one or more meetings were devoted to reading and re-reading the Book of James—hopefully with this study—and believing without wavering that healing and cure can and do result when the Good Book (and Dr. Bob’s “absolutely essential” sermon on the mount, 1 Corinthians 13, and the Book of James) is studied, learned, and believed. It worked in the first decade for the pioneers, and it can work for those today who “really try” and embrace it.

End of Part Two

Dick B., P.O. Box 837, Kihei, HI: 96753-0837; (808) 874 4876; email: dickb@dickb.com;  
URL: <http://www.dickb.com/index.shtml>.