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TRADITION
3



*First
Thought
Wrong
Group*

Short Form:

“The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

Long Form:

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



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Overriding Idea of T3:

“Desire Is All You Need”

Spiritual Principle:

“MEMBERSHIP”



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TRADITION 3



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THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Bill W.'s
Grapevine Writings

Large Print Edition

LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Three February 1948

The Third Tradition is a sweeping statement indeed; it takes in a lot of territory.

Some people might think it too idealistic to be practical. It tells every alcoholic in the world that he may become, and remain, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous so long as he says so.

In short, Alcoholics Anonymous has no membership rule.

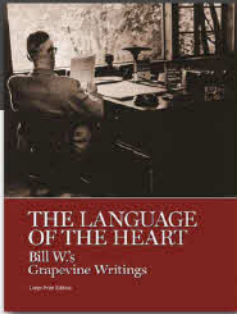


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TRADITION 3



*First
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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Three February 1948

Why is this so? Our answer is simple and practical.

Even in self-protection, we do not wish to erect the slightest barrier between ourselves and the fellow alcoholic who still suffers. We know that society has been demanding that he conform to its laws and conventions. But the essence of his alcoholic malady is the fact that he has been unable or unwilling to conform either to the laws of man or God. If he is anything, the sick alcoholic is a rebellious nonconformist.

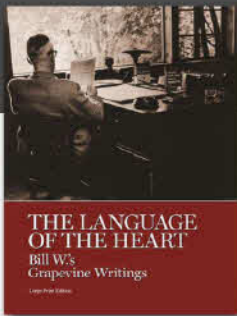


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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Three February 1948

How well we understand that; every member of Alcoholics Anonymous was once a rebel himself. Hence we cannot offer to meet him at any halfway mark. We must enter the dark cave where he is and show him that we understand. We realize that he is altogether too weak and confused to jump hurdles.

If we raise obstacles, he might stay away and perish. He might be denied his priceless opportunity.

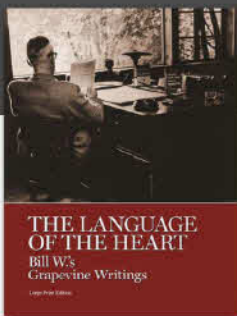


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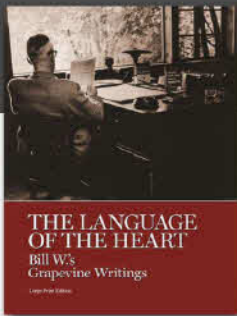


LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Three February 1948

So when he asks, “Are there any conditions?” we joyfully reply, “No, not a one.” When skeptically he comes back saying, “But certainly there must be things that I have to do and believe,” we quickly answer, “In Alcoholics Anonymous there are no musts.” Cynically, perhaps, he then inquires, “What is this all going to cost me?” We are able to laugh and say, “Nothing at all, there are no fees and dues.”

Thus, in a brief hour, is our friend disarmed of his suspicion and rebellion.



LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Three February 1948

His eyes begin to open on a new world of friendship and understanding. Bankrupt idealist that he has been, his ideal is no longer a dream. After years of lonely search it now stands revealed. The reality of Alcoholics Anonymous bursts upon him.

For Alcoholics Anonymous is saying, "We have something priceless to give, if only you will receive." That is all. But to our new friend, it is everything. Without more ado, he becomes one of us.

TRADITION
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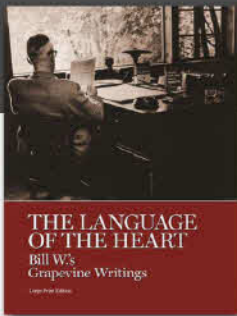


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*First
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Group*



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Tradition Three February 1948

Our membership Tradition does contain, however, one vitally important qualification. That qualification relates to the use of our name, Alcoholics Anonymous. We believe that any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Here our purpose is clear and unequivocal. For obvious reasons we wish the name Alcoholics Anonymous to be used only in connection with straight AA activities.

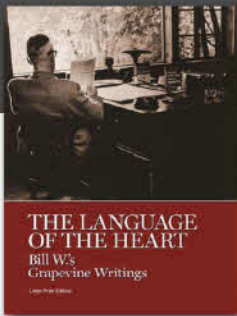


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Tradition Three February 1948

One can think of no AA member who would like, for example, to see the formation of “dry” AA groups, “wet” AA groups, Republican AA groups, communist AA groups. Few, if any, would wish our groups to be designated by religious denominations. We cannot lend the AA name, even indirectly, to other activities, however worthy. If we do so we shall become hopelessly compromised and divided. We think that AA should offer its experience to the whole world for whatever use can be made of it. But not its name. Nothing could be more certain.



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TRADITION
3



First
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Group

As we leave tonight...

If you remember nothing else from tonight's sharing, try and remember this about this Tradition...

**“Desire Is All You
Need”**



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TRADITION

41



First
Thought
Wrong
Group

Short Form:

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.”

Long Form:

“With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.”



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TRADITION
4



*First
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Overriding Idea of This Tradition:

“Our Decisions Affect Others”

Spiritual Principle of This Tradition:

“AUTONOMY”

SUMMARY

OUR DECISIONS AFFECT OTHERS

For too long, I thought I was autonomous in my own right; this is also called being self-centered or selfish, with “self-will run riot.” This Tradition helps me understand that I cannot take any actions harmful to others without dire consequences to myself.

I learned that nothing was really good unless other people also were considered. If I don’t seek the advice and help of others in matters affecting them, then I again become God in my own life, the exact nature of my wrongs.



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TRADITION
4



First
Thought
Wrong
Group

SUMMARY

The one word that characterizes the fourth tradition is the word “decisions.”

This tradition teaches me how to make decisions and maintain good relationships with God and you at the same time.

The traditions show us how to get along with each other.

The second half of the fourth tradition teaches me to consult others when I make decisions that affect them.



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TRADITION
4



*First
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Group*

SUMMARY

I am not to be a dictator in making decisions that affect other people's lives (or the community) as I did when I was drinking.

I need help from others, especially in matters affecting them. My goal is unanimity.

<I repeat> If I don't seek the advice and help of others in matters affecting them, then I again become God in my own life, the exact nature of my wrongs.



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TRADITION

41



First
Thought
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TRADITION 4



*First
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Wrong
Group*



THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

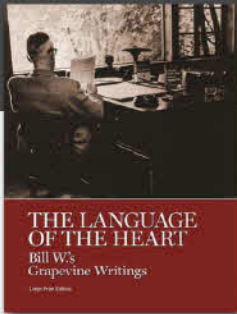
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Tradition Four March 1948

Tradition Four is a specific application of general principles already outlined in Traditions One and Two. Tradition One states: "Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward." Tradition Two states: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience."



LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Four March 1948

With these concepts in mind, let us look more closely at Tradition Four.

The first sentence guarantees each AA group local autonomy.

TRADITION
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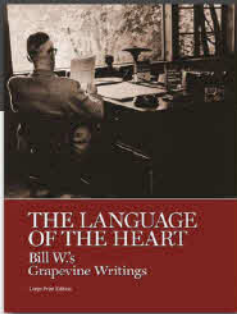
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TRADITION

4



First
Thought
Wrong
Group



LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Four March 1948

With respect to its own affairs, the group may make any decisions, adopt any attitudes that it likes. No overall or intergroup authority should challenge this primary privilege. We feel this ought to be so, even though the group might sometimes act with complete indifference to our Tradition. For example, an AA group could, if it wished, hire a paid preacher and support him out of the proceeds of a group nightclub. Though such an absurd procedure would be miles outside our Tradition, the group's "right to be wrong" would be held inviolate. We are sure that each group can be granted, and safely granted, these most extreme privileges. We know that our familiar process of trial and error would summarily eliminate both the preacher and the nightclub.

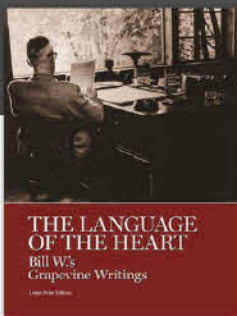


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TRADITION 4



*First
Thought
Wrong
Group*



LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Four March 1948

Those severe growing pains which invariably follow any radical departure from AA Tradition can be absolutely relied upon to bring an erring group back into line. An AA group need not be coerced by any human government over and above its own members.

Their own experience, plus AA opinion in surrounding groups, plus God's prompting in their group conscience would be sufficient. Much travail has already taught us this. Hence we may confidently say to each group, "You should be responsible to no other authority than your own conscience."



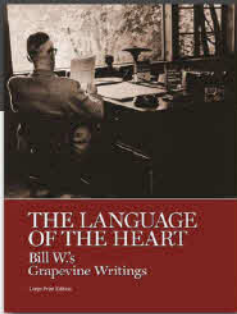
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TRADITION

4



First
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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Four March 1948

Yet please note one important qualification. It will be seen that such extreme liberty of thought and action applies only to the group's own affairs. Rightly enough, this Tradition goes on to say, "But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, these groups ought to be consulted."

Obviously, if any individual, group, or regional committee could take an action that might seriously affect the welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole or seriously disturb surrounding groups, that would not be liberty at all. It would be sheer license; it would be anarchy, not democracy.



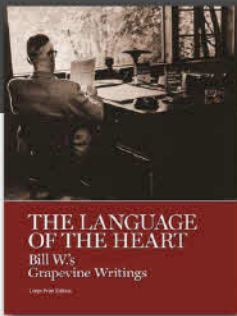
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Tradition Four March 1948

Therefore, we AAs have universally adopted the principle of consultation. This means that if a single AA group wishes to take any action that might affect surrounding groups, it consults them. Or, it confers with the intergroup committee for the area, if there be one.

Likewise, if a group or regional committee wishes to take any action that might affect AA as a whole, it consults the trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation, who are, in effect, our overall general service committee. For instance, no group or intergroup could feel free to initiate, without consultation, any publicity that might affect AA as a whole.



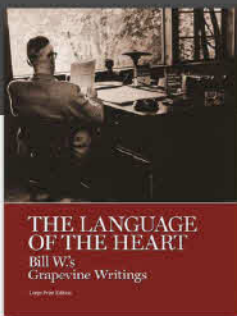
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LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Four March 1948

Nor could it assume to represent the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous by printing and distributing anything purporting to be AA standard literature. This same principle would naturally apply to all similar situations.

Though there is no formal compulsion to do so, all undertakings of this general character are customarily checked with our AA general Headquarters.

This idea is clearly summarized in the last sentence of Tradition Four, which observes, "On such issues our common welfare is paramount."