



TRADITION 5



*First
Thought
Wrong
Group*

Short Form:

“Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

Long Form:

“Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”



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Overriding Idea of This Tradition:

“We Only Have One Purpose”

Spiritual Principle of This Tradition:

“PURPOSE”

SUMMARY

We Only Have One Purpose

It is the great paradox of A.A. that we know we can seldom keep the precious gift of sobriety unless we give it away. This Tradition delineates pretty clearly our individual primary purpose, as well as the group's.

Each of us is but a small part of the whole, but by joining AA's primary purpose to our own, we become something bigger than our individual selves.



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THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Bill W.'s
Grapevine Writings

Large Print Edition

LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Tradition Five April 1948

Says the old proverb, "Shoemaker, stick to thy last." Trite, yes. But very true for us of AA. How well we need to heed the principle that it is better to do one thing supremely well than many things badly.

Because it has now become plain enough that only a recovered alcoholic can do much for a sick alcoholic, a tremendous responsibility has descended upon us all, an obligation so great that it amounts to a sacred trust.

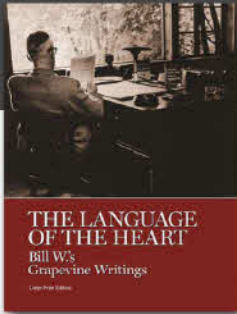


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For to our kind, those who suffer alcoholism, recovery is a matter of life or death. So the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous cannot, it dare not, ever be diverted from its primary purpose.

Temptations to do otherwise will come aplenty. Seeing fine works afoot in the field of alcohol, we shall be sorely tempted to loan out the name and credit of Alcoholics Anonymous to them; as a movement we shall be beset to finance and endorse other causes.

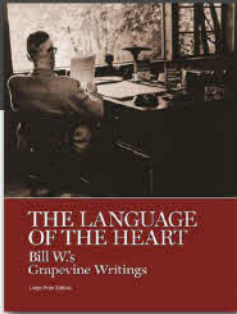


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Should our present success continue, people will commence to assert that AA is a brand-new way of life, maybe a new religion, capable of saving the world. We shall be told it is our bounden duty to show modern society how it ought to live.

Oh, how very attractive these projects and ideas can be! How flattering to imagine that we might be chosen to demonstrate that olden mystic promise: "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." Fantastic, you say. Yet some of our well-wishers have begun to say such things.

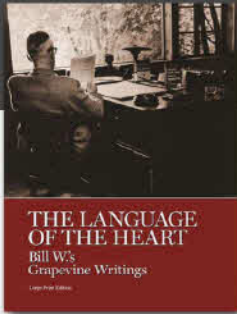


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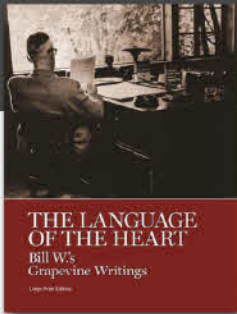


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Tradition Five April 1948

Fortunately, most of us are convinced that these are perilous speculations, alluring ingredients of that new heady wine we are now being offered, each bottle marked “Success”!

Of this subtle vintage may we never drink too deeply. May we never forget that we live by the grace of God—on borrowed time; that anonymity is better than acclaim; that for us as a movement poverty is better than wealth.



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And may we reflect with ever deepening conviction, that we shall never be at our best except when we hew only to the primary spiritual aim of AA. That of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers alcoholism.

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What Can Happen When a Group Loses Sight of Tradition 5?

An AA group can lose sight of Tradition 5, which emphasizes a single purpose of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic, if it becomes too focused on external activities or ventures. **This can happen when a group:**

Distracts itself with outside activities:
If a group becomes involved in things like job placement, charitable work, or other ventures that take their attention away from helping the alcoholic, they can lose sight of their primary purpose.

Loses focus on the shared experience of recovery:
If a group starts prioritizing things like wealth, property, or prestige, they can begin to see AA as a path to personal gain rather than a tool for recovery.

Focuses on individual needs instead of group needs: When individual members start prioritizing their own needs or agendas, it can lead to the group losing its collective focus on helping others.

Engages in outside affiliations or endorsements:
If a group becomes affiliated with or endorses outside entities, they can risk having their primary purpose compromised, as the group could become bound to another entity's agenda.

Allows outside factors to influence the group's decision-making:
If external pressures or influences start dictating how the group operates, it can lead to the group losing its focus on its core principles.

In essence, a group can lose sight of Tradition 5 if it becomes too focused on **ANYTHING other than helping alcoholics recover and sharing the message of AA.**

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Short Form:

“An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”



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Long Form:

“Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A. —and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.”

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Overriding Idea of This Tradition:

“We Keep It In-House and Remember T5”

Spiritual Principle of This Tradition:

“NON-AFFILIATION”



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Tradition Six May 1948

The sixth of our Twelve Points of AA Tradition is deemed so important that it states at length the relation of the AA movement to money and property.

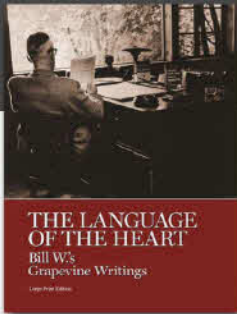
This Tradition declares in substance that the accumulation of money, property, and the unwanted personal authority so often generated by material wealth comprise a cluster of serious hazards against which an AA group must ever be on guard.



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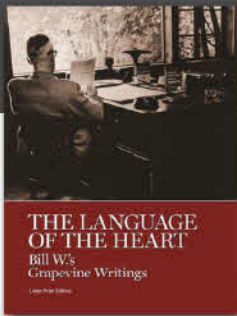
Tradition Six also enjoins the group never to go into business nor ever to lend the AA name or money credit to any “outside” enterprise, no matter how good.

Strongly expressed is the opinion that even clubs should not bear the AA name; that they ought to be separately incorporated and managed by those individual AAs who need or want clubs enough to financially support them.

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Tradition Six May 1948

We would thus divide the spiritual from the material, confine the AA movement to its sole aim, and ensure (however wealthy as individuals we may become) that AA itself shall always remain poor.

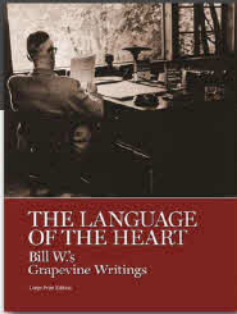
We dare not risk the distractions of corporate wealth. Years of experience have proven these principles beyond doubt. They have become certainties, absolute verities for us.

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Tradition Six May 1948

Thank God, we AAs have never yet been caught in the kind of religious or political disputes which embroil the world of today. But we ought to face the fact that we have often quarreled violently about money, property, and the administration thereof. Money, in quantity, has always been a baleful influence in group life. Let a well-meaning donor present an AA group with a sizable sum and we break loose. Nor does trouble abate until that group, as such, somehow disposes of its bankroll. This experience is practically universal. "But," say our friends, "Isn't this a confession of weakness? Other organizations do a lot of good with money. Why not AA?"

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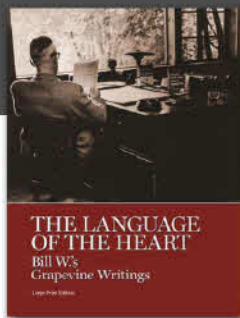


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Tradition Six May 1948

Of course, we of AA would be the first to say that many a fine enterprise does a lot of good with a lot of money. To these efforts, money is usually primary; it is their lifeblood. But money is not the lifeblood of AA. With us, it is very secondary.

Even in small quantities, it is scarcely more than a necessary nuisance, something we wish we could do without entirely. Why is that so?

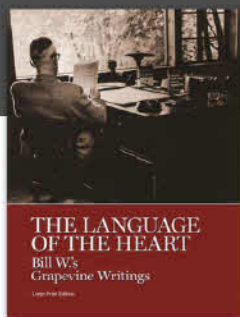


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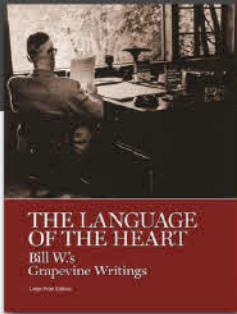


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We explain this easily enough; we don't need money. The core of our AA procedure is one alcoholic talking to another, whether that be sitting on a curbstone, in a home, or at a meeting. It's the message, not the place; it's the talk, not the alms.

That does our work. Just places to meet and talk, that's about all AA needs. Beyond these, a few small offices, a few secretaries at their desks, a few dollars apiece a year, easily met by voluntary contributions. Trivial indeed, our expenses!



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Tradition Six May 1948

Nowadays, the AA group answers its well-wishers saying:
“Our expenses are trifling. As good earners, we can easily pay them.

As we neither need nor want money, why risk its hazards?
We'd rather stay poor. Thanks just the same!

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What's the most important thing I need to know about A.A.'s Tradition Six

The most crucial aspect of AA's Sixth Tradition is its principle of non-affiliation. This means that AA groups should never endorse, finance, or lend their name to any outside organization or enterprise. The reason for this is to safeguard AA's primary purpose of carrying the message of recovery to suffering alcoholics and to prevent problems related to money, property, and prestige from overshadowing that purpose. **Here's a more detailed breakdown:**

Non-Affiliation:

AA groups are meant to be independent and self-governing. They should not become entangled with outside organizations or businesses, even if those organizations have seemingly positive intentions.

Preserving Integrity:

By not endorsing or financially supporting external entities, AA avoids any potential conflicts of interest or biases that could compromise its core message and values.

Focus on Primary Purpose:

The Sixth Tradition ensures that AA groups remain focused on the primary goal of helping other alcoholics achieve sobriety. It prevents distractions that could arise from money, property, or prestige.

Examples:

This principle means that AA groups should not endorse specific products, services, or charitable causes. They should also avoid using their name or money for any business venture, including clubs.

Maintaining Autonomy:

The Sixth Tradition helps AA groups maintain their autonomy and independence, allowing them to operate free from external influence or control.

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