

Step Three: God as He May Express Himself

God of Our Own Understanding

Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) came into existence in 1935 when much of our society was centered around the churches in the communities where we lived. As a child in my hometown, on Sunday morning I could look out the window and see a vast majority of my neighbors walking to church. That was the way it was in the early 1940's. The book, Alcoholics Anonymous was published in 1939, and it was highly influenced by many early members of the program at that time. A.A. could have, very easily become a religious program, but fortunately, the elders of that time realized, by the mistakes of the Oxford Group, and the Washingtonians, that they had to make it clear that, *a desire to stop drinking was the only requirement for membership*, and that the individual members could choose their own concept of a power greater than themselves, i.e. God as we understand him. In Tradition Two it says, "As He may express Himself in our group conscience" When the word God is used in the remainder of the book, it is not always followed by the "as we understand him" qualifier, and I believe that many members get the idea that somehow, they are trying to push religion on them. That is understandable. When I was faced with that possibility, I personally found it easy enough to read the black part of the pages in the book and to not let myself become distracted by what I now recognized as a cultural norm at the time. I had no problem setting aside my religious bias and recognizing the parts of the Big Book and the 12&12 that clearly state all the options available when it comes to finding a "Power Greater Than Myself", and I can name 3 right off top. 1) Alcohol itself was my higher power for a long time and still would be if had not gotten into the program. 2) My EGO ran my life for quite a while until I got serious about Real life Issues. 3) The A.A. program itself. I found myself spiritually lost when I entered the program and when faced with the need to come to terms with the Higher Power issue, I now realize why it took so long to settle this subject. Years of drinking and an underdeveloped thinking process it was hard to get up to speed right away. As I got more familiar with the Big Book, and the 12&12, I started to uncover all the evidence that debunked the idea that I had to conform to any religious doctrine. In the 12&12 I read on page 26, *"alcoholics anonymous does not demand that you to believe anything."* On belief, *"to acquire it, I had only to stop fighting and practice the rest of A.A.'s program as enthusiastically as I could."* (Pg.27) Also on page 26 where it states, "Take it easy. The hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think... A one-time vice-president of the American Atheist Society ... got through with room to spare" Then on page 33 of the 12&12 it says "Therefore, Step Two is the rallying point for all of us. Whether agnostic, atheist, or former believer, we can stand together on this step." Today I am comfortable with my own concept of a Higher Power, and I use the word God only to put a name on a concept that has no physical form, and I might say that it expresses itself in *the collective conscience of the world we live in*. I can assure you that if you read these qualifiers and practice the rest of the principals of the program, as enthusiastically as you can, you will come to terms with a personal concept of a higher power as well as any of us.