

THE FOUR ABSOLUTES

Honesty Unselfishness Love Purity

With a historical look at the effects of the Oxford Movement And The Four Absolutes upon Alcoholics Anonymous

In 1948, Dr. Bob recalled the Absolutes as “the only yardsticks” AA had in the early years. He would measure decisions carefully by those yardsticks, and if they measure up, then he knew he could be far wrong.

Before the Gatehouse meeting in May, 1935 when Bill W. and Dr. Bob first met, both were members of the Oxford Group. The Oxford Group was a movement started in 1921 by Frank Buchman, an Allentown, Pa. minister, and was founded as a return to first-century Christianity originally in 1908. The Four Absolutes were written in 1904 by Christian writer Robert Speer, and later would become a part of the Oxford Group teachings.

The Oxford Group would come to Akron as a result of the gratitude of Harvey Firestone for the help given his son, Russell. Bud, as Russell was known, recovered from his alcoholism by applying the Oxford Group principles. During their presentations at Akron’s Mayflower Hotel and area churches in 1933, two ladies named Anne Smith and Henrietta Seiberling were in attendance.

In New York, Bill W.’s best friend, Ebby T. had joined the Oxford Group through his association with Rowland H. Ebby would later bring the message of the Oxford Group to Bill, who became active in Sam Shoemaker’s Calvary Church, the Oxford Group headquarters in New York. When Bill traveled to Akron in 1935, he met Dr. Bob with the help of Henrietta Seiberling.

Bill W. would later write that early AA got its ideas of self-examination (Steps 4 & 10), acknowledgement of character defects (Steps 6 & 7), restitution for harm done (Steps 8 & 9), and working with others (Step 12) directly from the Oxford Group.

The Four Absolutes are not a formal part of our AA philosophy of life. They were borrowed from the Oxford Group Movement back in the days when our society was in its humble beginning. In those days our founders and their early colleagues were earnestly seeking for any and all sources of help to define and formulate suggestions that might guide us in the pursuit of a useful, happy and significant sober life.

Because the absolutes are not specifically repeated in our Steps or Traditions, some of us are inclined to forget them. Yet in many old time groups where the solid spirit of our fellowship is so strongly exemplified, the Absolutes receive frequent mention.

There could be unanimity on the proposition that living our way of life must include a constant striving toward not only an awareness but a constant striving toward greater achievement in the qualities which the absolutes represent. Many who have lost the precious gift of sobriety would ascribe it to carelessness in seeking these objectives. If you will revisit the Twelve Steps with care, you will find the Four Absolutes from a thread which is described in a sober life of quality, every step of the glorious journey.

The Twelve Steps represent our philosophy. The Absolutes represent our objectives in self-help, and the means to attain them.

Honesty, being the ceaseless search for truth, is our most difficult and yet most challenging objective.

Purity is easy to determine. We know what is right and wrong. Our problem here is the unrelenting desire to do that which is right.

Unselfishness is the stream in which our sober life must flow, the boulevard down which we march triumphantly by the grace of God, ever alert against being sidetracked into a dark obscure alley along the way. Our unselfishness must penetrate our whole life, not just our deeds for others, for the greatest gift we bestow on others is the example of our own life as a whole.

Love is the medium, the blood of the good life, which circulates and keeps alive its worth and beauty. It is not only our circulatory system within ourselves, but it is our medium of communication to others.

The real virtue is in our striving for these Absolutes. It is a never-ending journey, and our joy and happiness must come each step of the way, not at the end because it is endless.

Our life is a diary in which we mean to write one story, and usually write quite another. It is when we compare the two that we have our humblest hour. But let's compare through our self-inventory and make today a new day. Men who know themselves, have at least ceased to be fools. If you follow the Golden rule, it's always your move too. To love what is true and right and not to do it, is in reality not to love it, and we are trying to face reality, remember? The art of living in truth and right is the finest of fine arts, and like any fine art, must be learned slowly and practiced with incessant care.

To discover what is true and to practice what is good are the two highest aims in life. If we would be humble, we should not stoop, but rather we should stand to our fullest height, close to our Higher Power that shows us what the smallness of our greatness is.

Remember the four questions,

- Is it true or false?
- Is it right or wrong?
- How will this affect the other fellow?
- Is it ugly or beautiful?

Answering these queries every day with absolute integrity, and following the dictates of those answers one day at a time, will surely lead us well on our journey toward absorbing and applying the Absolutes.

Source: Akron AA Archives

REMEMBER

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