

## Bill and Ebby

In November 1934, Wilson was visited by old drinking companion [Ebby Thacher](#). Wilson was astounded to find that Thacher had been sober for several weeks under the guidance of the [evangelical](#) Christian [Oxford Group](#).<sup>[17]</sup> Wilson took some interest in the group, but shortly after Thacher's visit, he was again admitted to Towns Hospital to recover from a bout of drinking.



This was his fourth and last stay at Towns hospital under Doctor Silkworth's care and he showed signs of [delirium tremens](#).<sup>[18]</sup> It was while undergoing treatment with [The Belladonna Cure](#) that Wilson experienced his "Hot Flash" spiritual conversion and quit drinking.<sup>[19]</sup> Earlier that evening, Thacher had visited and tried to persuade him to

turn himself over to the care of a Christian deity who would liberate him from alcohol.<sup>[20]</sup> Earlier that evening, Thacher had visited and tried to persuade him to turn himself over to the care of a Christian deity who would liberate him from alcohol.<sup>[20]</sup> According to Wilson, while lying in bed depressed and despairing, he

cried out, "I'll do anything! Anything at all! If there be a God, let Him show Himself!"<sup>[21]</sup> He then had the sensation of a bright light, a feeling of ecstasy, and a new serenity. He never drank again for the remainder of his life. Wilson described his experience to Dr. Silkworth, who told him, "Something has happened to you I don't understand. But you had better hang on to it".<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

Wilson joined the Oxford Group and tried to help other alcoholics, but succeeded only in keeping sober himself. During a failed business trip to [Akron, Ohio](#), Wilson was tempted to drink again and decided that to remain sober he needed to help another alcoholic. He called phone numbers in a church directory and eventually secured an introduction to [Dr. Bob Smith](#), an alcoholic Oxford Group member. Wilson explained Doctor Silkworth's theory that alcoholics suffer from a physical allergy and a mental obsession. Wilson shared that the only way he was able to stay sober was through having had a spiritual experience. Smith was familiar with the tenets of the Oxford Group and upon hearing Wilson's experience, "began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness that he had never before been able to muster. After a brief relapse, he sobered, never to drink again up to the moment of his death in 1950".<sup>[22]</sup> Wilson and Smith began working with other alcoholics. After that summer in Akron, Wilson returned to New York where he began having success helping alcoholics in what they called "a nameless squad of drunks" in an Oxford Group there.

In 1938, after about 100 alcoholics in Akron and New York had become sober, the fellowship decided to promote its program of recovery through the publication of a book, for which Wilson was chosen as primary author. The book was given the title *Alcoholics Anonymous* and included the list of suggested activities for spiritual growth known as the [Twelve Steps](#). The movement itself took on the name of the book. Later Wilson also wrote the [Twelve Traditions](#), a set of spiritual guidelines to ensure the survival of individual AA groups. The AA general service conference of 1955 was a landmark event for Wilson in which he turned over the leadership of the maturing organization to an elected board.