The Origins and Development of the Oxford Group (Moral Re-Armament)

By

David C. Belden

St Edmund Hall, Oxford

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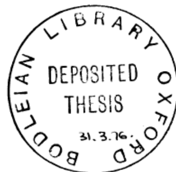

Preface to the 2018 Online Edition

by Andrew Stallybrass

A lifetime ago, David Belden wrote a thesis on 'The Origins and Development of the Oxford Group (Moral Re-Armament)' for his doctorate at Oxford. He had grown up in 'an MRA family', his parents both 'worked full-time', as he had too, before deciding to take a little distance. His doctorate is a precious blend of proximity and distance. Years later, it was scanned and passed around in digital form, a kind of samizdat among those trying to understand the history of MRA and now IofC.

For a long time, it sat on my hard disk un-read. Then I finally got round to reading it and I was rivetted. I learnt a great deal about Frank Buchman and his origins, where his ideas came from, the evangelical 'milieu' of the pre-First World War years. Rather to my surprise, I found that I shared most of David's tentative conclusions, but I also found many fresh insights. David was not settling scores, but trying to understand, an honest search by an honest searcher. His thesis was written and submitted in 1976. So he was able to interview many of the founding generation who worked closely with Frank Buchman, including his own father. Of course, most of them have since died.

Decades later, for some years, David 'animated' a forum, an irregular 'underground' newsletter publication trying to further discussion and dialogue between those who had left the movement, as he had, and some still on the 'inside'. Some had been, have been, deeply hurt. And for some, simply to express the hurt may have helped towards healing. Who in life is unhurt? Who is not the victim of others' mistakes, as well as their own? May at least some of those we have wittingly and unwittingly hurt find the grace to forgive us! As a movement that talked (and practised, at least to some extent) 'change', we have been slow to examine critically our collective behaviour as a movement, to see and understand that any and every group of people, collective, create something of a culture, a mould, with pressures to conform. Which is, of course, in tension with the encouragement to find and follow an individual calling.

David and I share the same birthday, one year apart. We've never worked together, but our paths have crossed and we've corresponded. I strongly felt that his academic work from all those years ago could still interest a contemporary audience, for those who would like to understand better this rather unusual movement. David and I share a conviction that whatever mistakes were made, there were and are in this story some important lessons for those who want to contribute to a better world, who feel deeply the need to stress the human factor and its importance.

As a footnote for researchers and scholars, I would conclude by saying that

there is a most impressive bibliography, and some precious appendices. One on estimated numbers of full-time workers, and another with a time-line for Frank Buchman's travels, from 1902, until his death in 1961. Last summer, during the Caux Forum, my wife and I had a meal with an Australian academic working on a history of Moral Re-Armament in Australia. 'How many times did Buchman visit our country?' she asked. Neither of us knew, but I told her, I can send you a copy of David Belden's thesis, and in Appendix 3 you'll find the answer in seconds, and she did!

Andrew Stallybrass, November 2018

Author's Preface for the 2018 Online Edition

by David Belden

Rereading this thesis I am both glad and sad to realize it is still one of the best things written about one of the most interesting movements of the 20th Century.

Glad, because I think most of my judgments have worn well.

Sad, because long before now there should have been a considerable academic industry analyzing the Oxford Group / Moral Re-Armament. This thesis would then be seen as an early attempt, which left out major areas worth studying, and made assessments that have been effectively challenged elsewhere. I'm sad this thesis has not been challenged.

Brief intro for newcomers to the Oxford Group / MRA

The Oxford Group is best known in the US today as the movement in which Alcoholics Anonymous began. AA left it in the late 1930s. Within AA itself, it is often thought that the Oxford Group disappeared. In its January 2011 cover story on AA, *Harper's*, a national US highbrow magazine, described AA's parent the Oxford Group as 'a defunct 1920s evangelical movement'. *Harper's* no doubt got the 'defunct' idea from AA itself, though five minutes on Google would have revealed a different story.

Although the Oxford Group launched its Moral Re-Armament (MRA) campaign in London in 1938 and over the next few years changed its name to MRA, and eventually in 2001 to Initiatives of Change (IofC), it is still the same movement. In Britain that is even legally true: to find its financial report on the UK Charity Commissioners website to this day you have to look under 'The Oxford Group'.

But what *was* it? I see things through historical lenses, so my one-paragraph summary goes like this, at least today:

The Oxford Group / MRA was an experientialist Christian movement. For its founders the experience of being transformed and guided by the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and God the Father was so powerful that it appeared to be the answer to the problems of a world riven by war and poverty; so powerful that theological differences and even such a central Christian formulation as the Trinity took a distant back seat as people of other religions and none joined the movement: anyone could follow the promptings of the inner voice, make amends, reconcile with enemies, and become part of "the answer" brought by MRA. MRA specialized in embedding personal change in strategies to bring resolution to conflicts, whether in the home, in industry or between nations. Its optimistic vision stood out in contrast to a realpolitik response to world events and to the rival optimisms of socialism, Communism, or capitalism. This thesis shows that this vision evolved from the expansionist, colonialist optimism of pre-WWI American student evangelism, the kind expressed in the book title *Strategic Points in the World's Conquest: The Universities and Colleges as Related to the Progress of Christianity*, by evangelical organizer John R Mott in 1897. Frank Buchman, a protégé of Mott's and founder of the Oxford Group, managed to maintain and reinterpret that optimism in the era of the World Wars and the Great Depression, when few if any others managed to do so. He attempted to make it available to all, including to leaders of anti-colonial movements. Indeed on the basis of this experience and vision he built a thriving movement, that by 1960 had

about 3,000 full time unsalaried workers, some 4-7,000 more militant adherents, and perhaps 100,000 or more followers. The movement built a track record of conflict resolution successes that were attested to in many case by key players and witnesses, but have rarely been studied academically. Despite its desire to be neither an organization nor a formula for life-changing, the attempt to hold together as a strategic "force", along with other more common pressures towards institutionalization, drove MRA down a path that struck many outsiders as cultic. In recent decades great efforts have been made by the movement to move beyond that cultism, efforts that took place after this thesis was written, and with which I am not familiar enough to say anything useful.

Is it relevant today?

Why should the Oxford Group /MRA be both well known to the public and discussed with scholarly acuity today? Here are five reasons I find convincing:

1. **Recovery Movement:** The Recovery Movement is one of the most successful personal change movements of the last century, and still today. Even so, it is not the only method of treating addictions. The religious nature of its origin—not just in the Oxford Group but in the Christian movements from which the Group descended—is highly relevant in understanding it. Furthermore, Recovery Movement people sometimes talk about how their methodology could issue in more social change or political reconciliation than it has. That was one of the differences that led to the split. Willard Hunter, an associate of Buchman's, wrote in his 2002 memoir that when Bill Wilson took the 'alcohol squad' out of the Oxford Group in 1937, "Bill was quoted as wanting to deal only with the alcohol problem. Frank, who himself had an impressive record of helping alcoholics, said, 'But we have drunken nations on our hands, too.'" Buchman's approach to doing that would interest many Recovery Movement people.
2. **Reconciliation:** In the history of warfare and its aftermath, is there any more remarkable example of reconciliation and generosity than the creation of the European Community and the Marshall Plan? MRA was credited by key players (e.g., Truman, Schumann, Adenauer) with a significant role in enabling both to happen. Think about this: After centuries of warfare and two world wars, European rivals voluntarily unified their armament industries so they could not go to war with each other again—with financing from but without conquest by the dominant power of the age. Other reconciliations of note happened through MRA's work, mostly before the current conflict resolution profession began. These reconciliations deserve more serious study than they have yet received.
3. **Experientialism:** Frank Buchman, MRA's founder, has been described by a current American religious scholar, Jeff Sharlet, as 'the gnome of early twentieth-century fundamentalism'[1] and by actress Glenn Close, raised in MRA, as 'a violently anti-intellectual and possibly homophobic evangelical fundamentalist.'[2] But the last four presidents of the movement he founded have been an Egyptian-British Muslim woman, and three men: an Indian Hindu, an Algerian Muslim, and a Swiss Catholic. How many gnomes of US fundamentalism have a legacy like that? If Buchman was a fundamentalist, is there a kind of fundamentalism that is

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[1] *The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power*, by Jeff Sharlet. Harper Perennial, 2008, p 126

[2] *New York Daily News*, October 16, 2014. http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/gossip/glenn-close-reveals-spent-childhood-cult-article-1.1976946

curiously similar to those today who claim to be 'spiritual but not religious'? I believe a more useful word than 'fundamentalist' for Buchman is 'experientialist'. I think study of this may hold possibilities for bridging the believer/unbeliever divides in the modern world.

4. **Sects and Cultism:** Most (perhaps all?) previous Christian movements like Buchman's that attempted to breathe vigorous new life into the churches either remained in their church (e.g., the Franciscans, Pietists, Oxford Movement) or were expelled and formed their own sect, denomination or church (e.g., Lutherans, Methodists). MRA's ability to avoid either course says much about Buchman's skill and perhaps more about the churches' greater tolerance in the 20th Century, as their power declined. MRA never became a sect or church—in fact it tried very hard not to—but it did suffer internally from cultic pressures that rigidified it and arguably led to its decline and to its eclipse in public memory. As a case study in what groups who wish not to become cults can do to avoid that fate, it can be instructive.

5. **Bridging personal and socio-political change.** Today climate change threatens our civilization. People are asking if humanity is even a viable species, given our materialistic talents and our lack of self-restraint, spiritual depth and biophilia. For remedies we all too often split into two camps, or siloes. One silo includes all ideas and practices concerning personal change and growth, whether secular or spiritual. The focus is individualistic and emphasizes personal responsibility. In a rival silo we find all ideas that reveal the limitations of personal choice, including analyses that uncover the effects of culture, socialization, social structure, the economy, and systemic forces like racism and sexism. In that silo we find political organizers and all those trying to change "the system." The most successful movements find ways to combine both: e.g., the Civil Rights Movement in the US that combined church and nonviolent resistance; feminist consciousness-raising that enabled women to see how patriarchy had colonized their personal lives; and the courageous coming out of LGBTQ people that has led to legal rights.

   MRA tried much harder than most personal change modalities to effect Buchman's vision that "MRA believes in the full dimension of change, economic change, social change, national change and international change, all based on personal change". [3] MRA's successes in this realm are fascinating and deserve serious study. Given those successes, its failures are even more fascinating. It was largely because of those failures that I left MRA and returned to Oxford to research and write this thesis. I tell that story in an afterword, along with a sketch of what I left out of the thesis, which included both those successes and failures! This thesis was a preparatory work to doing those studies, so that scholars would have a better idea of just what kind of work Buchman's was.

So there is something worth studying in this movement!

Strange then, that around the year 2000, when a friend of mine wanted to do her own sociology doctorate on MRA at an American university, she was told by her supervisor that she could not, because if the movement was important enough he would have heard of it. That sums up the obscurity into which MRA had fallen.

Luckily for me, Oxford University did think it was important enough in 1971, when I

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[3] Quoted in *Never to lose my vision : the story of Bill Jaeger* by Clara Jaeger, Grosvenor, London, 1995 p 98

applied to do this thesis.

Some Conclusions

I hope the wider distribution of this thesis will encourage those already studying MRA history to go deeper and publish, and those who are looking for thesis topics to consider MRA as a source of vitally interesting experience.

I don't of course know if any academic consensus may emerge around how to characterize the Oxford Group/MRA. Let's imagine that after much study a consensus does cohere around describing it in terms something like these:

- An experientialist Christian movement, heir to a long tradition of such movements, that broke free of confining theology to a greater degree than most previous such movements, as befits a globalizing era when world religions were rubbing shoulders with each other more than previously.
- A movement that made powerful transformative experiences available to people from many different classes and backgrounds.
- An outgrowth of the religious side of triumphalist late 19th Century American expansionism that strove to become universal, to be as available to those oppressed by white supremacy and imperialism as to those purveying it: how successful it was in that endeavour being a matter for debate.
- A sustained attempt to found strategies for conflict resolution, from family dynamics to international conflicts, on experiences of personal transformation and divine guidance.
- A movement so given to telling only the good news about its successes that it strained credulity, especially in an era sceptical of religious influence in affairs of state. And yet independent study reveals that there were significant elements of truth in many of these stories. This compels us to revisit analysis of those events and to reconsider the potential of personal transformation in conflict resolution, even if "personal transformation" today may mean something more universal than MRA's insistence on the four standards and the debatable idea that "adequate, accurate information can be passed from the mind of God to the mind of man".
- An attempt to present a moral challenge to the "powers that be", whether capitalist or Communist, an effort that was perhaps least successful in its country of origin, such that it was taken over there by its offshoot, Up With People, which became fully identified with corporate America and support for the Vietnam War. The awe that Frank Buchman, as a Pennsylvania-Dutch small-town boy, felt for the rich, powerful and aristocratic, flavoured his movement in ways that helped and hindered his mission and contributed to this failure in the US.
- A movement that resisted being institutionalized but that acquired cult-like aspects, notably arising from Buchman's attempt to control the strategies and direction of "his" work, but that encompassed other traits of enforced uniformity of thought and deed , including around its very strict interpretations of sexual purity. This contributed to the split with Up With People and to MRA's reduced ability to appeal to new generations in the universities after WWII.

- A movement both marred by and reproducing the homophobia of its era, which is thought to have had harsh impact on its putatively homosexual founder, whose homophobia became a significant flashpoint in arousing the ire of the intelligentsia in an era when LGBTQ individuals were striving for liberation.

There is much more to say, of course, including MRA's use of theatre and film, its internal "gift economy", the extent and limitations of its appeal to people of colour, and other topics, quite apart from what IofC has made of its heritage.

But if some consensus similar to that above were to appear in academia, then it can in turn become a significant element in a critique of the secularized, anti-spiritual or anti-religious spirit of academia and of the Western intelligentsia in the twentieth century. It can contribute to a critique of the Enlightenment itself, which elevated reason and science above emotion and spiritual insight, rather than unifying them. Yes, the rationalists, socialists, feminists, LGBTQ, and anti-colonial movements, had much to teach the Oxford Group/MRA; but it had much to teach them as well. In many ways, if MRA's sins can be understood and forgiven, it still does. It may be that at present I of C has learned more from them that they have learned from it. Perhaps in retrospect that conversation can be more fruitful than was possible at the time.

Today, with psychology reckoning more deeply with the effects of trauma and the limitations of purely cognitive approaches to it, with feminist and anti-colonial movements revealing how deeply oppressive patterns are lodged in our emotions and bodies as well as our minds, with restorative justice demonstrating how facilitated encounters between harmer and harmed can lead to empathy and transformation, we can begin to see the Oxford Group as a movement far ahead of its time: a movement that attempted with the limited tools at its disposal, acquired from its time and place, to heal the deep hurts of human beings that contribute to the conflicts and oppressions that bedevil us. While we may choose to replace or refine their tools and add a large dose of structural analysis and prescription to their overly individualistic, Western cultural worldview, we can nonetheless find inspiration and hope from their demonstration of the power of personal transformation and spiritual insight in affairs of state.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Garth and Margot Lean. This thesis was finished in 1976, well before Garth Lean (1912-1993) published his 1988 biography of Buchman. This would have been a better document if I had had his book as a source. However, he very kindly allowed me to use one of his main sources, a collection I awkwardly called MSS Biography, while he was working on his book. He wanted me to keep this source confidential at the time but since he referenced it in his own book, *Frank Buchman: a Life,* I can now say that it refers to manuscripts by Dr Morris Martin, who was Buchman's secretary for the last twenty-five years of his life. Martin's own memoir, *Always a Little Further: four lives of a luckie felowe*, was published in 2001. During my first academic year of work on this thesis I lived with Garth and Margot as a guest in their home, before my own clarity that I was no longer even slightly part of MRA led me to move out, with much gratitude for their hospitality and their open-mindedness in having me to stay in the first place.

Thanks to Andrew Dawson: This thesis would likely have remained buried in the British Library, barely read, but for Andrew Dawson in Australia, who scanned the original to create a pdf, and did some time-consuming formatting, in 2014. For example, he converted the footnotes, for which numbering restarted on every page, to continuous numbering through the document; and turned ugly lists into readable tables. I did a bit more formatting, and posted the result on Academia.edu. It was still a very messy document.

Then **Andrew Stallybrass** in Switzerland read the thesis and suggested it for the new website on which it now lives. I did a bunch more work and he did further proofing and copy editing.

Lastly, **Margaret and Andrew Lancaster—**the third Andrew to make this happen!—did a final round of careful proofing.

And finally, thanks to many MRA people who I talked to for the thesis, who are named therein, and especially to my parents, **Ken and Stella Belden**, for their patience and good humour in answering my questions. I am sure it was their influence that gave me free run of the MRA archives, which made much of this possible. I particularly want to express my gratitude to **Robin Mowat** (1913-2006), a history professor in MRA, who engaged with me on any topic I wanted to raise in the most open-minded, un-defensive manner: he was my life-line, the one person in MRA I could talk with while researching this thesis, at a time when I felt that I had lost my entire community and all the friends I had known up to the age of 22. Later, I some of those friendships revived but for a while I couldn't do it and Robin saved me.

Finally, my late supervisor at Oxford, **Bryan Wilson** (1926-2004), was a remarkably patient and circumspect man, who was able to work with a young man who was studying the movement he was leaving, a young man highly protective of his people even while being increasingly critical of them, who was extremely nervous about academia, its motives, worldview, and impenetrability. He allowed me to progress at my own pace, without ever playing the heavy. I was incredibly lucky to have such a kind as well as erudite a supervisor.

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Note: This extended table is not in the original. I made it to find my way around in the absence of an Index, and imagine it will be useful to others. DB

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Abstract

Title of thesis: 'The Origins and Development of the Oxford Group (Moral Re-Armament)'

The thesis is intended to establish a basis for the sociological study of the Oxford Group. As a historical study, its particular concern is to trace (1) the ideological origins of the Group in American revivalism, college evangelism, and missions in the 1890-1918 period; and (2) the ideological development of the Group itself from its foundation in the 1920s, through the period of its most vigorous revivalism in the 1930s, to its political involvements of the 1940s and 1950s.

The thesis seeks to show that previous studies and commentaries on the Oxford Group have lacked an adequate understanding of the ideological motivation of the Oxford Group. In consequence of these misunderstandings, some sociologists have misinterpreted the structure and development of the Group as a social movement. By emphasizing the history of the Group's ideology, this thesis seeks to correct these common misinterpretations.

In subsequent sections, the thesis then analyses the social composition of the Group in the 1930s, and seeks to explain its appeal to an educated upper and middle class clientele. Development of the Group's structure is traced from 1920s to the 1950s and particular attention is paid to its lack of formal organization and its expression of 'non-sectarian' ecumenism. These features are contrasted with the Group's strong internal cohesion and its 'sect-like' enthusiasm.

Introduction

The Oxford Group movement presents an unusual case both to the historian of revivalism and to the sociologist studying religious sects. As a revivalist movement the Oxford Group in the 1930s aimed at national 'awakenings' on the largest scale. But it differed from the stereotyped idea of revivalism based on early Methodism, the American frontier camp meetings and the mass revivalists from Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham in three cardinal ways. It relied on individual interviews practised by large teams of evangelists rather than on mass meetings by 'star' revivalists, as its main conversionist method. It aimed directly to convert the middle and upper classes and particularly the university educated, rather than concentrating on the 'masses'. And it went beyond the typical conversionist preoccupation with the individual to serious involvements in attempting to solve political and industrial problems. Despite its unusual nature, however, the Oxford Group has been neglected by historians of revivalism. McLoughlin, for example, in his standard work on 'Modern Revivalism' makes no mention of it. It has also been considerably misunderstood, being seen for instance as a pro-Fascist movement (for example by Ahlstrom[4]) or as an evangelical movement which became secularised, rejecting its religious content as it became involved in politics.[5] Previous academic historians of the Oxford Group failed to understand the nature of its political involvement, partly because they were not aware of the movement's originating impulse and ideas.[6]

The main purpose of this thesis is to locate the Group's origins in the revivalist tradition and to explain its development from those origins during particularly its first thirty years.

In the sociological study of sectarianism the Oxford Group is of interest as a religious movement which apparently became established in a 'pre-sectarian'[7] phase. For ideological reasons it attempted to dispense with formal organisation and to avoid developing the exclusivity of a sect. It achieved these aims to an unusual degree, to this day encouraging its members to take part in their original denominations. Despite this lack of exclusivity it has exhibited a high degree of cohesion, co-ordination and long term commitment among its core personnel.

If the main aim of this thesis is to explain the Group's ideological development, which in turn entails a study of its originating ideas, the secondary aim is to explain this paradox of its organization – a movement of 'sectarian' commitment without the exclusivity normally associated with it. These two themes will be explained in greater detail after a brief resume of the Group's history.

The Oxford Group

The movement was founded in the1920s by Frank Buchman, an American Lutheran minister and YMCA evangelist, out of his disillusionment with the inadequacies of evangelical 'soul winning' in the YMCA. He built up a small group of committed co-evangelists, at one time called 'A First Century Christian Fellowship'. Recruited mainly from the more prestigious American and British universities, they campaigned

[4] Ahlstrom, 1972, pp 925-6

[5] See below page 8, Anglican Church Assembly's report

[6] See below page 11ff, references to Macintosh, Van Dusen, Keene, Clark, Cantril and Eister.

[7] BR Wilson, 1970, p 29

initially among university students. However, success in stimulating a revival of 'personal evangelism' in South Africa in 1928-30, where they acquired the name 'the Oxford Group', led to a series of ever larger revivalist campaigns in various European and North American cities in the 1930s. These culminated in the 'Moral Re-Armament' campaign of 1938-39 in which the movement's evangelical theory of social renewal and international peace was most fully expounded up to that time. Thereafter the movement's core of committed evangelists, by then numbering several hundred, concentrated particularly on stimulating conversions or 'surrender to God' among influential people in government and industry. They attempted to inspire in leading people a practical unselfishness that would ease class and race conflict both in general and in particular industrial or political negotiations. After 1945 the movement's influence spread to Southern, Catholic Europe and to the colonies in the era of their independence struggles. MRA, as it was called, was presented as the answer to personal and social problems, and particularly in the 1950s as the only alternative to Communism.

Four phases of the movement's development can be discerned, similar in some ways to Robertson's description of the phases of the Salvation Army.[8] In the case of the Oxford Group, the incipient phase took place in the early 1920s, succeeded by the 'phase of enthusiastic mobilization' from 1928-38. A period of organization then began as headquarters, publishing, conference centres, professionalised theatrical propaganda and legal constitutions were adopted, and as the pace of the 'revival' slowed. It is not yet clear whether something comparable to the Army's fourth stage, that of 'terminal institutionalisation' when it became an established sect, can be said to be underway now within the Oxford Group. A new phase was entered after the deaths of the movement's founder, Frank Buchman, and his successor, Peter Howard, in 1961 and 1965 respectively. In the late 60s the movement was split into an orthodox wing which survives, although at a reduced level of activity and with less public controversy, and an innovative wing which has all but disappeared. The surviving movement may be settling into a more moderate reformist mould or it may be gathering itself for a new outburst of controversial activity.

The controversy that surrounded the Oxford Group, from its work at Princeton in the mid-1920s to its full page advertisements in the national press in the early 1960s, arose considerably from its attempt to convert the intelligentsia and those in positions of power to its neo-puritanism. Its very success in making some such conversions during an era of sustained attack on puritan elements in religion and culture was enough to make it a favourite target of criticism. Its invasion of the industrial field with a self-proclaimed 'revolutionary ideology', hitherto the province of left-wing movements, and its success in converting disillusioned Communists, naturally drew the fire of the left. In addition a steady murmur of criticism from within the churches was directed at what was seen as the lack of theology and intellectual discussion in the new movement, the casualties of its overenthusiasm, and its failure to give adequate respect to the organised church. It was, in short, one of the more controversial movements of its day.

[8] R Robertson, 'The Salvation Army: the Persistence of Sectarianism' in BR Wilson 1967 pp 49-105.

The Oxford Group and the Revivalist Tradition

The term 'revival', McLoughlin wrote, 'has come to be applied to any series of spontaneous or organized meetings which produce religious conversions whether they occur in one church, a dozen churches, or in hundreds of churches under the leadership of a spectacular itinerant evangelist'.[9] This description can be applied to the Oxford Group's campaign in the 1920s and 30s, with the one proviso that Frank Buchman's leadership was not spectacular in the sense that Moody's or Sunday's was. He was no public orator. Otherwise the description holds: the Group's campaigns at that time were based in the churches, centred on organized weekend conferences and some large public meetings, and achieved many conversions. Furthermore the Group aimed at and, many observers thought, achieved nation-wide 'awakenings', marked by extensive press and radio publicity, mass meetings and the patronage of leading people including some senior churchmen.

McLoughlin's neglect of the movement is therefore surprising. It presumably stems from two facts. Firstly the Group did not have as great a success in the USA as it had in Britain, Canada, South Africa, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands. Sperry in his 'Religion in America' ascribed this relative failure to the fact that the non-liturgical American churches had been 'so often 'burnt over' by revivals' that 'the Groups had little novelty to offer'. Their main success, he wrote, was among Episcopalians and non-church going circles who were not so familiar with revivalism.[10] McLoughlin was not solely concerned with the American scene, however, and could have been expected to take note of the Group's European success. Nor was its influence on the USA entirely negligible. Ahlstrom, for example, wrote that it 'became for a time a strong, even sensational force'.[11]

A second reason for McLoughlin's neglect of the Group was, presumably, its marginal position compared to the fundamentalist mainstream of the revival tradition during Buchanan's day. Sperry was more perceptive than most in noting that 'many of the old psychological skills of the American revivalist survive in the movement, and we here can still identify them in their new dress'.[12] This 'new dress' led Ahlstrom to consider that the Group had come a long way from its revivalist origins, too far it seems for McLoughlin to include it. The Group's new style was designed to appeal to the upper and upper middle classes at a time when they had by and large rejected revivalism. This inevitably cut it off from the lower class 'Bible belt' revivalism.

Revivalism directed at the upper classes is no less revivalism for that, however. Nor was it as unusual or paradoxical a phenomenon as contemporary amazement at the Group's evangelism to the 'up and outs' made it appear. General observations or hypotheses can be made about the necessary alterations in style and content that were required for revivalism to appeal to the social elite. In turn it can be seen that Buchman was but the last in a line of evangelists who had attempted to fulfil these conditions for appealing to the upper social strata of their times.

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[9] McLoughlin, 1959 p 7
[10] Sperry 1945 pp 160-1
[11] Ahlstrom 1972 p. 925 f
[12] Sperry 1945 pp 160-1

a) Conditions for upper class revivalism

(i) Conditions for upper class patronage of revivalism and personal adherence to it may of course differ. There is ample evidence that members of the ruling classes supported revivalism as a means of maintaining order in society.[13] To gain such patronage it was necessary that revivalism should appear capable of reaching the lower classes and of exerting a practical effect on their attitudes and morality. As such it need not be something that its wealthier supporters believed in themselves.[14]

(ii) For upper class adherence to revivalism, more than a putative effectiveness in social control was needed. It had to be believable. In general this meant that it should not contradict too strongly the philosophical assumptions of the majority of well-educated people. In particular, as the scientific attitude, the influence of Darwin and of Biblical criticism were diffused through society revivalism had to be able to accommodate them. New authority for belief had to be made convincing as the old authorities of Bible and tradition were questioned. With the growing prestige of the scientific method this new authority could only be scientific, or pseudo-scientific, the authority of experimentally demonstrable facts.

(iii) To be convincing to the educated and upper classes, revivalism also needed to speak to their major concerns in life. It is generally accepted as evident that those with a relatively high degree of affluence, power and life expectancy will tend to be more concerned with the quality of life in this world than they are with the 'after-life'. Certain experiential effects in this life therefore had to be seen to follow conversion for it to appear desirable. These might be peace of mind, a sense of closeness to the supernatural, the power to live a moral or successful life, or the hope of improving society as a whole through conversions.

(iv) Finally, the emotional tone of revivalism had to suit its audience. As the manners of urban sophistication developed revivalism had to keep pace if it was to maintain its appeal. Ideally it had to be made to appear natural in the normal settings and language of upper class life.

b) Examples

The first two 'great awakenings' of 1725-50 and 1795-1835 established revivalism as a central feature of the main American denominations. They welcomed revivalism as a means of renewing fervour in their congregations and of socialising the unchurched masses in American religious and social values – whether on the frontier, in the growing industrial cities or among the successive waves of European immigrants. Originally revivalists catered particularly for these underprivileged classes. Gradually, however, revivalist practices were modified to make them acceptable to the urban middle and upper class congregations and financial supporters of the denominations, in the ways suggested above.

(i) The value of revivalism as a dependable method of affecting the lower classes was vastly improved by the adoption of an Arminian rather than an orthodox Calvinist theology. Calvinism had taught that conversions were given to the elect by the grace of God, and could therefore only be prayed and hoped for. Arminianism argued instead that God's gift of salvation was available to all, conditional on their striving

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[13] E.g. see McLoughlin 1959 Chapter 4

[14] For a closely related case see Walker 1964. Walker argued that the doctrine of hellfire was preached before the 18th Century as a means of social control even by intellectuals who themselves did not believe in it.

towards God, and that therefore conversion could be worked for. This doctrine was more hopeful and more democratic. It suited the optimistic, egalitarian attitudes of the young American republic. The Methodists' success in making conversions on the frontier in the late 18th century helped to popularise their Arminian theology among other evangelists, a trend completed by the great revivalist Finney in the first half of the next century. From Finney's theology and advice on 'working up' revivals resulted a century of obsession with revivalist technique among the growing profession of evangelists. Successive experts improved the methods of mass revivalism, culminating in the citywide campaigns of Moody, Mills, Torrey, Chapman and Sunday in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their efforts appeared to fulfil the conditions, at least, for patronage by the affluent that revivalism was reaching and morally 'improving' the lower classes in dependable and business-like fashion.

At the same time the conditions for actual adherence by the educated classes were also being met. Indeed the idea that these revivalists were reaching the working classes was usually over-optimistic. They were mainly drawing in the middle class church congregations.

(ii) For those troubled by the scientific criticism of Biblical literalism modernists like Bushnell and Drummond pointed to the effects of conversion on individual character and thence elevated a new authority for belief that of experience. The 'fruits of the Spirit' were given as evidence of the Spirit itself.

(iii) This emphasis also suited the more affluent classes' concern for improvement in this life. The early revivalists' concern with the future life and the terrifying hellfire sermons that went with it had given way by Moody's time to an emphasis on the love of God and the value of conversion in bettering the convert's moral character. Revivalism sometimes became allied to concern for social as well as individual improvement.[15] The chief elements of the usual evangelical version of civic reform were temperance and hard work, but in some circles, particularly the student evangelical movement in the 1890s, the highest hopes of transforming the world were entertained, including the provision of peace, prosperity and republican democracy for the whole world. Less idealistically, Moody and other revivalists assured the young business and professional men in their audiences that personal worldly success would inevitably follow conversion and decent Christian living.

(iv) Finally, revivalism became increasingly respectable in emotional tone. The intense agony of the 'anxious seat' of Finney's day was replaced by the privacy of Moody's enquiry rooms and eventually by the simple handshake with the evangelist which Sunday instituted as evidence of the desire to lead a new life. The physical expressiveness of the frontier camp meetings gave way to orderly applause and communal singing. Faintings, groanings and shouting were outlawed from the meetings by the time of Moody.[16]

Henry Drummond, the Scots evangelist to students, typified this new approach in its various elements. At home in upper class milieu, appealing for a rational decision by students on an ethical basis to commit their lives to the service of God and humanity, elevating love above fear as the motive for conversion, evidence above scripture as the authority for belief, endorsing scientific progress and modern culture, Drummond

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[15] See TC Smith 1957 passim

[16] e.g. see Byington in Paton 1909

amply fulfilled the conditions suggested above for evangelism to social elites. Frank Buchman saw Drummond as the model for his own work. The description of Drummond's 'school' in Chapters I and II below therefore forms the base line for the consideration of the development of Buchman's movement.

Examples from outside the main revivalist tradition also suggest an affinity between upper and middle class social position and the religious emphases outlined above. The number of religious sects with a predominantly upper and upper middle class clientele is relatively small. Two of these within 19th century Christianity were the Plymouth Brethren and the Irvingites. The former included from the outset a high proportion of well-educated people, some of them with aristocratic connections. Their class position has been suggested as the reason for the absence of phenomena such as foot-washing, the kiss of peace, glossolalia and spiritual healing, which were practised by contemporary lower class movements of comparable theological outlook.[17] The Irvingites included members from the higher reaches of metropolitan society, and their acceptance of glossolalia and spiritual healing is therefore surprising. Embley[18] ascribed this in part to the 'vividly imaginative temperament of Irving himself, after whose death the movement was more subdued'. He also pointed out that those who spoke in 'tongues' were usually the lower class members of the sect.

The main examples of sects with upper and upper middle class members in the late 19th century were those of the New Thought movement, including Christian Science. These notably fulfilled, though with a non-Christian theology, the conditions suggested above for evangelism among the educated. They put forward a pseudo-scientific authority, offered specific this-worldly personal improvement, and were couched in a sophisticated style based on an educational model, with lectures and study courses. The main difference between these New Thought movements and the evangelism of Drummond or later of Buchman lay in the contrast between the former's endorsement of secular hedonistic goals and the latter's adherence to a Christian ethic. Nonetheless both groups were obsessed with means, with power to achieve this-worldly goals, whether these were the personal success goals of New Thought or the personal morality and social harmony goals of Moral Re-Armament.

Frank Buchman managed to popularise a version of Drummond's experiential pietism in the post 1918 era, but in many ways he faced a more difficult task in doing so than had his mentor. It was harder than in Drummond's day to combine pietism with modernist thought. Modernist theology in its concern for scientific respectability had moved beyond the conception of a personal God who could communicate directly with individuals. The social gospel had developed on the one hand into empty social welfare optimism devoid of conversionist experience and on the other into a more rigorous socialist analysis of society which left little room for individual piety in its programme of structural reform. Faced with the triumph of science in undermining traditional authority, the mainstream of evangelical revivalism had turned back to dogmatic, defensive assertion of conversion experience in terms of the old certainties – Biblical literalism and American individualism. Tarred with such conservatism and obscurantism, and also with the excesses and apparent commercialism of revivalists such as Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson, revivalism fell completely out of favour with the urban social elite in the 1920s and 30s.[19]

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[17] PL Embley 'The Plymouth Brethren', pp213-243, in BR Wilson, 1967.
[18] Ibid
[19] E.g. see Bennett 1931

Buchman overcame or circumnavigated these problems. He recruited as his co-evangelists personable students from the older universities. He held his meetings in upper class houses and hotels, as well as universities. The occasion chosen for his conversions was the private interview which was far from all taint of crowd psychology and mass meetings, and nearer to the model of a medical or psychiatric consultation. In emotional tone his call for conversion was restrained and rational, lightened by humour and warmth to avoid over-seriousness, but earnest nonetheless. His message emphasised the this-worldly effects of 'liberation from sin' and the authority of the individual's experiential 'encounter' with God. He carefully avoided embroiling himself in the modernist–fundamentalist controversy and claimed also to be apolitical, thus skirting the most difficult problems. His assumptions about the social effects of conversion were based on a 'consensus' model for society, holding that men in positions of material and political inequality in society could with greater unselfishness live in mutual satisfaction and harmony. This was naturally more appealing to those with a share in existing social arrangements than would have been the more socialist, structuralist view of the road to social co-operation through class struggle. Niebuhr wrote that Sherwood Eddy was almost the only man he knew who combined such socialist principles with personal piety of Drummond's sort.[20] It is not surprising that Eddy's large scale influence as an evangelist declined with his adoption of such a radical stance, while that of his erstwhile colleague, Buchman, grew. Finally Buchman's evangelical terminology suited his audience, as he progressively dropped the terms 'conversion', 'revival', 'evangelism', and too much talk of being 'saved' in favour of talk of being 'changed' and creating a 'revolution'.

Buchman's significance in the revival tradition lay in his ability to present evangelical pietism effectively to the students and upper classes of his day, as Drummond had before him. The major difference between the two men was, perhaps, that Drummond was able to provide an intellectually respectable synthesis of modern thought and pietist experience at least according to the canons of his time, while Buchman was unable to do so. Nor did Buchman encourage the distinguished intellectuals who appreciated his experientialism, such as Emil Brunner or Gabriel Marcel, to provide the movement with such an intellectual grounding. As a result although it could win students, it could admit few mature intellectuals to its inner councils, fostering instead a latent anti-intellectualism which for the most part prevented it from effective dialogue with the intelligentsia of its day. It is for this reason that the valuable contributions which Buchman's thought could have made to social and political understanding – particularly his emphasis and insight on the role of individual morality in national affairs – have been largely neglected by intellectuals. Buchman's development away from Drummond's evangelism, and his debts to Drummond are covered in Chapter VII below, after the biographical section which includes Buchman's apprenticeship in Drummond's 'school' (Chapters V and VI particularly). The Group's social composition, and the reasons for its appeal to the highly educated and socially privileged form the subject of Chapters VIII and IX.

The Oxford Group's Development as a Revivalist Movement

Radically different descriptions of the Group's ideology in its MRA phase have been given. In 1955 a report by a 'Working Party' of the Anglican Church Assembly's 'Social and Industrial Council' made serious charges impugning the Group's

[20] Introduction by Reinhold Niebuhr in Eddy 1955

Christian character. 'Buchmanism in its earlier "Group Movement" phase' it held 'was at least in its own way, centred in Christ as Saviour and Lord. If now, in some of its world-ranging activities it appears to substitute emphasis on the four Absolutes for its former emphasis on Christ, the new departure is a radical break with the past (even of the Movement itself)'. For evidence, they cited an Indian publication by MRA of March 1953 which mentioned Christ only once in an insignificant context and which implied that acceptance of MRA's principles would present no difficulty to a convinced Hindu. The report questioned whether with such a precedent 'the religious element in it [MRA] might not become for practical purposes, so minimal as almost to disappear altogether'.[21]

Others have expressed similar views. A journalist, Geoffrey Williamson, writing on the Group in the early 1950s distinguished between the 'Oxford Group', a Christian movement supported by many respectable Christians, and 'MRA', an increasingly political movement veering perilously far from the stated purpose of 'the advancement of the Christian religion.[22] Driberg (1964) assumed an essential change in the movement's purpose which he describes as 'The crucial switch from redemptive evangelical Christianity to anti-Communist ideology…' MRA had become a tool of US foreign policy, he argued. It was necessary he wrote, for it to become 'a "secular" ideology' in order to be acceptable to Catholics and the non-aligned, non-Christian nations and thus to represent American interests to them. Driberg could quote in aid a letter he had received from the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Fisher, who wrote that MRA's 'Christian character has steadily been replaced by an almost exclusive concentration on fighting Communism as the first purpose of its waiting upon God'.[23] In a more recent work David Edwards took it for granted that MRA was no longer Christian. It had become, to him, an anti-communist crusade using dishonest propaganda in which it publicised a mythology of changed men and improved political situations which had resulted from its influence.[24]

This might seem a clear case of the secularisation of a movement. An explanation might be sought in a goal displacement model similar to that used by Zald and Denton to explain the secularisation of the Group's parent organisation, the YMCA.[25] They argued that the YMCA turned from being an evangelical crusade to a recreational, welfare and 'character building' programme as a response to the changing demands of its clientele.

This was accomplished against the policy of the ideologically committed headquarters staff by virtue of the autonomy of YMCA branches. These were run by local business and professional men who were committed to the YMCA's organisational rather than its ideological maintenance. The Group however, was firmly controlled from the centre. The 'goal displacement' model would apply to it only if it could be shown that the Group's leaders put its influence and organisational success before their original ideology. An argument of this kind was made in 1941 by Cantril, a social psychologist, in explaining the Group's shift from its quiet, student-centred first phase to its much publicised second phase. He argued that Buchman's 'expulsion' from the

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[21] See 'Church Assembly' 1955
[22] Williamson 1954
[23] Driberg 1964 pp 161 and 192
[24] Edwards 1969 pp 169 and 263
[25] Zald and Denton1963

Princeton campus in the mid-1920s forced him to reconstruct his appeal to include adults, in order to maintain his movement's growth.[26]

Such an argument applied to the shift from the revivalist second phase to the 'ideological' or semi-political third phase would note the increasing anxieties of the movement's clientele about threats to their social order, and suggest that Buchman had decided to follow these changing concerns in order to retain his influence with them.

This is in part true. Buchman was greatly concerned to have influence among the influential classes. He tailored his presentation of his message to suit the anxieties of each potential convert or class of potential converts. During the 1940s and 50s the Group's message was presented much more than before as an answer to current social concerns and in a more secularised terminology suited to non-churchgoing men of affairs. Whether this is evidence of the secularisation of the movement, however, is highly dubious.

Various attempts have been made to distinguish between the different ways in which the term 'secularisation' is used.[27] Schneider for instance listed five meanings of the term. His first was the Weberian concept of the 'disenchantment' or 'desacralization' of the world, in which the supernatural comes to be seen as residing in progressively fewer objects and locations. The victory of monotheism over pantheism is an important stage in this process, as is the overcoming of 'superstition'. Close in meaning to this is the notion of the 'decline of religion' in the sense of religious symbolism losing force. Drummond and Buchman placed little 'sacredness' in public at least in the specific Christian doctrines that had been disputed for centuries or in specific and once controversial forms of church polity or liturgy. They welcomed Christians, and even non-Christians, irrespective of creed or church into their circle of the religiously committed if they only subscribed to certain fundamentals – that of 'surrender' to God in particular. They appealed to rational arguments for this 'experimental' step. In these senses they seemed to be contributing to creedal though not to religious indifference.

Schneider's second meaning of 'secularisation' was that of social differentiation, in which organised religion loses its functions and influence in politics, industry, education and the family – spheres that come to be known as 'secular'. Wilson has argued for example that religious and moral values are no longer of use to modern industry for ensuring the docility and loyalty of its work force: 'Industry has passed from internalized "character" values to mechanical manipulation'.[28]

In this sense Buchman's 'Moral Re-Armament' campaign represented a determined attempt at de-secularisation. MRA attempted to make mutual recourse to the practice of 'listening to God' and to evangelical moral values the basis of co-operation between management and labour in industry. According to MRA's argument 'mechanical manipulation' is ultimately ineffective. It contributes first to the alienation of the worker, who is after all a whole man, not merely a role-performer, and thence to class war and industrial disruption. MRA tried to get management to see their workers as whole individuals and to restore face-to-face relations and communications between the representatives of both sides acting as individuals rather

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[26] Cantril 1941 p 146

[27] Shinerin, the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* VI, 2 (1967) pp 207-20; L Schneider 1970, p 176f; E Kranszin, *Social Compass* XVIII (1971-2) pp 203-212.

[28] Wilson, 1966 p 69.

than as role-performers, as the key to industrial relations. MRA equally taught that the only hope of political harmony, educational effectiveness or marital and familial affection was the establishment of moral values and personal communication with God at the heart of these spheres of life.

Schneider's third meaning he termed the 'tragedy of ideas', in which religious values are used to serve worldly ends. This seems to imply that only some purposes are truly religious, presumably the worship and service of God and the hope of eternal life and 'other-worldly' gains.

The extent to which MRA called God in aid to rid the world of Communism might be taken as secularisation in this sense. Schneider's distinction between religious and secular purposes is difficult to apply in such circumstances, however. MRA would argue that such 'secular' ends as supplanting Communism with 'inspired democracy' as they termed their alternative, was in fact part of God's 'plan for the world' and was therefore a religious purpose. It is perhaps more relevant in such cases to suggest that the employment of supernatural means to a 'worldly' end is notable rather as an example of de-secularisation in Schneider's second sense above.

Schneider's fourth meaning – the vaguely expressed failure of religion to affect society – is close to his second, and it is clear already that MRA attempted to be an agent of de-secularisation in this sense. Finally MRA was quite obviously not secularised in Schneider's fifth sense of the term – that of secularism (atheism or to a lesser extent agnosticism). MRA's mental world was one in which every action was counted for or against God in His cosmic struggle with Evil, and in which definite 'guidance' for correct action could be received from God.

Bolle has argued that the secularisation (meaning desacralisation) of particular religious facts is necessary in order to make room for what is newly felt by man to be sacred.[29] This means, he wrote, that, paradoxically, 'a full scale religious renewal is not possible except through secularization'. This seems to be the most helpful way to judge MRA's apparent secularisation. It would seem that the indifference with which MRA treated historical, creedal and ecclesiastical differences was necessary for it in order to emphasise its message of the centrality of the 'eternal war between Good and Evil' and of 'God's guidance' to the practical life of every person and society.

This interpretation of the Group's MRA phase depends on proving the centrality of the doctrine of God's 'guidance'[30] and 'plan' to the movement in its political involvements and attendant 'secularised' appeals. For this a full investigation of the movement's political philosophy is required. As mentioned at the start of this introduction this task has been neglected, or at best attempted most inadequately, in previous academic studies of the Group. Macintosh, for instance, who gave the best analysis of the origins and nature of Buchman's personal evangelism among these academic studies, nonetheless failed to make a comparable analysis of his social and political ideas.[31] Van Dusen, Keene, Clark, Cantril and Eister similarly failed to understand the full extent of Buchman's social aims.[32] As suggested earlier this was partly because they wrote before the Cold War era in which MRA's political

[29] Bolle 1970, p251
[30] 2018 Comment: henceforth I will dispense with the inverted commas around the word 'guidance', now it has been established as a central word in the movement's lexicon. In the original thesis I kept using it, at least another 43 times, which I now find makes reading harder.
[31] Macintosh 1942 pp349-395
[32] VanDusen 1934, Keene 1937, Clark 1944, Cantril 1941, Eister 1950

philosophy was most in evidence. But even in the 1930s among the movement's inner circle and in much of its propaganda this social philosophy was being developed, as described below in Chapters X and XI. The writers mentioned also failed to do adequate research into Buchman's life before his foundation of the Oxford Group. None of them were aware of Buchman's involvement in Mott and Eddy's YMCA 'strategy' for converting the ruling classes of China in the1915-18 period. This, however, was crucially important in the formation of Buchman's social philosophy and to his conception of the social role of the Oxford Group. Mott's political outlook which forms the background to Buchman's work in China is described in Chapter II, and the period in China itself is narrated in Chapter VI.

The Sociological Study of Sects

The attempt to classify religious organisations and outlooks according to a simplified schema has held a central place in the sociological study of religion. Troeltsch initiated the debate with his distinction between church and sect.[33] He characterised sects in terms of the asceticism and total commitment of their members, their preference for lay control, the voluntary nature of membership, and above all their rejection as an oppressed minority, of the Church and the wider society. Niebuhr re-emphasised the connection between sects and the underprivileged.[34] He argued that social deprivation was the generating impulse for sectarian protest. Arguing from the American case, he held that the norms of hard work and asceticism in which sects socialised their members inevitably led them into greater prosperity and thereby to accommodation with society. As a result, the elements of protest, exclusivity and a sense of having a uniquely important mission gave way to the accommodative nature of the denomination, which accepted its role as one among several religious options in a pluralist society. This process was stimulated also, he argued, by the preoccupation of sect members with education once the second generation was born into the sect.

The narrow applicability of Troeltsch's and Niebuhr's generalisations to particular historical times and places has drawn considerable criticism. On the basis of Von Wiese's work Becker proposed a more comprehensive typology of 'ecclesia', 'sect', 'denomination' and 'cult'.[35] Yinger added particularly the concept of the established sect, which maintains its attitude of religious protest beyond the first generation.[36] Wiese, Becker and Yinger distinguished the cult by its concern for purely individual religious needs and by its lack either of strong communal ties among its members or of a policy towards the social order in general.

The Oxford Group – Cult or Sect?

The Oxford Group does not closely correspond to any of these types, however. Sectarian movements of upper or middle class origin could not for instance be explained by Niebuhr's generalisation that 'The sect has ever been the child of an outcast minority, taking its rise in the religious revolts of the poor'.[37] Stark explained upper class 'cults', as he called them, in terms of the personal inadequacies of individuals who are initially scattered, lacking any group feeling of deprivation,

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[33] Troeltsch, 1931
[34] Niebuhr, 1929
[35] Becker, 1932
[36] Yinger, 1957
[37] Niebuhr, 1929

perceiving only their personal unhappiness, but who come together in a loose group through looking for consolation from the same source. Stark characterised such people derogatively as 'lame ducks' too weak to achieve the expectations of their social class. As examples he gave Madame Tatarinova's 'Brotherhood of Christ' in early 19th century Leningrad, Mrs Eddy's 'Christian Science' in its developed stage of ministering to the affluent, and the Oxford Group particularly in its early stage when, he wrote, it offered to privileged youth a method of living up to the sexual norms of their upbringing.[38]

The Group's leaders resented contemporary allegations that only the weak joined their movement, and pointed to the successful scholars, athletes and professional people in the movement's ranks.[39] A less derogatory formulation of the relative, rather than absolute, deprivation explanation might have been acceptable to them however. For instance John Wilson has suggested the concepts of 'ethical deprivation', referring to dissatisfaction with the dominant values of society, and 'psychic deprivation', meaning the sense of lacking transcendental authority, as possible motives in the founding of social movements.[40] Frank Buchman's maxim that 'a small sense of need means a small sense of Christ' points to this sort of explanation for the origin of the movement.

The fact that such explanations can incorporate the appearance of sects and cults in the privileged classes does not however solve the further problem of the type of organization which the Group represents. In his study of the Oxford Group, Allan Eister focused on this problem, and concluded that the Group fitted the cult type. He characterized the latter as 'a loosely organized, generally impermanent group of adults who seek to realize, through their association with some leader or leaders and with each other, satisfactions including some form of religious "thrill" or exaltation'. Commitment to cults tended to be 'partial, segmented and faddist' rather than 'unequivocating, complete, and final' as in sects, he wrote.[41] He considered that membership of the Group could be 'faddist' and generally was temporary. This view was repeated by Yinger who wrote that the high turnover of participants in the Oxford Group was a result of the easiness of the conversion it preached. Group 'life-changing', Yinger wrote, involved 'little intellectual effort, little personal sacrifice or discipline, little change in style of life'.[42] Eister further argued that despite the Group's expressed concern about social problems it was essentially offering private, personal satisfactions. Its organisation he considered loose and undeveloped. Such a characterisation does indeed fit Becker's cult type.

However Eister's and Yinger's descriptions of the Group were inadequate. Eister considered that it would decline gradually, as it began, presumably therefore meaning over the space of about a decade since its growth to prominence took about that long. He appeared to think that this decline was already under way. Instead the Group was to have another two decades of vigorous life and geographical explosion and, despite the setbacks of the last few years, it is still in active existence. Indeed it gives every appearance of being an established group, well into the second generation. Furthermore the turnover of the people belonging to the Group's committed core has not been high. The Group demanded a total, 'sectarian' commitment from these

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[38] Stark 1967 pp 313-17 of Vol II
[39] E.g. Shoemaker 1929 p 22
[40] J Wilson 1973 p 83
[41] Eister 1950 p.82
[42] Yinger 1957 p.98

people and has been rewarded with a lifetime's loyalty from a high proportion of them. The organisation of this committed core though formally loose was informally tightly co-ordinated.

The Oxford Group thus has some of the characteristics of the sect type. This can be seen more clearly by testing it according to a recent set of suggestions of typical sect characteristics.[43] The Group did impose a test of merit on would-be entrants to its committed core. It regulated successful entrants' lives with informal but extremely strong expectations of endogamy, particular minor asceticisms, mutual confession and the co-ordination of all evangelical activity with the headquarters. In organisation it made no distinction between lay and ordained, full- or part-time workers, as long as they were fully committed and converted.

The committed Group adherent was certainly conspicuous as such to outsiders, due to his evangelical activity among them. He or she found their deepest friendships only within the 'fellowship' as they called the Group. Yinger noted the Group's ease in high society and concluded that it was an example of a sect which accepted society.[44] It obviously did not fully condemn secular culture, as Wilson expected of a sect, but it did keep some degree of tension with it.

The main exception to the Group's fulfilment of these sectarian characteristics was on the score of exclusivity. It maintained a strong mental isolation from the rest of society, considered itself the bearer of the highest religious and moral truth, felt persecuted by the British intellectual and social 'establishment', and would only trust converted or 'changed' individuals in its inner counsels. But it did not require these individuals to leave their churches or denominations or even their sects, as long as these sects themselves were not so exclusive as to prevent their members associating with the Group: Quakers and Nazarenes worked full-time with the Group on occasions, for example. This forms the major objection to classifying the Group as a sect. It tried hard not to usurp the churches' functions of regular worship, ordination, or doctrinal instruction.

It should be noted that it is only the 'committed core' of the movement, as it has been termed here, that possessed the above mentioned 'sectarian' characteristics to the full. The impression gained by Yinger, Eister and others of the Group's high turnover of personnel, weak demands on potential converts, and acceptance of society, no doubt arose from studying only the movement's outer reaches. In order to attract converts the Group made it easy for people to associate with it, presenting its message to the public in as entertaining and culturally accommodative a manner as it could. It was thus easy for people to drift in and out of the movement's widely spread 'net'. This was particularly true of the Group's revivalist heyday in the 1930s. As the revival declined in the 1940s this shifting constituency was reduced in numbers, but the few thousands of the committed core remained and even perhaps increased in number.

Groups similar to the Oxford Group

Some light can be shed on the Group's organization by comparing it with organizationally similar groups. John Wilson has pointed out that one of these is the ideologically very different British Israelite movement. This group sought to persuade all Anglo-Saxons of their national destiny as successors of the lost tribes of Israel. It

[43] BR Wilson 1966, pp 207-9
[44] Yinger 1957, p 153

could not afford to be a sect lest it appear exclusive. This would hinder its attempt to spread ideas to the whole nation, to be a 'leaven' in society as a whole.[45] Bryan Wilson has since written of the British Israelites as one among a number of religious groups which 'seek to convince a specific but wider constituency of their destiny, and resist being forced into separation from them'.[46] He called these 'non-separatist sects'.

The Oxford Group also shows similarities to the earliest stages of some conversionist sects. Embley described the progress of the Plymouth Brethren from an initial stage of 'a pre-separatist fellowship of Christians seeking closer unity' to a second stage as 'an ecumenical counter-sectarian evangelical movement which began to draw people from their own denominations to experience a more vital Christianity'. However the need for 'greater definition and articulation' led to an 'inevitable third stage' in which the group became a definitely separate sect. In the first stage the weekly 'breaking of bread' services had been organized so as not to clash with the church services that members of the group still expected to attend.[47] Warburton has pointed to a similar 'pre-separationist phase' at the emergence of other religious movements, notably Methodism, the Disciples, the Pentecostal and the Holiness movements. 'In all these cases', she wrote, 'there was an initial conception of a wide, free and unifying movement of Christendom, which only gradually faded as organisational imperatives, the need for definition, identification, regulation and continuity in a specific mission, differing from that of others, imposed a more typical, more sectarian structure'.[48]

These writers talked of the pressures on such a movement to evolve sectarian attributes as if they were virtually inevitable. It is surely more plausible, particularly in the light of the Oxford Group's case, to suggest that particular historical circumstances might make such an evolution at least partly avoidable. In particular the pre-sectarian movement's emphases and practices, and the level of tolerance within the churches and denominations would seem to be the crucial contingent factors. Warburton elsewhere has explained in these terms the markedly less separatist and fissiparous, more ecumenical organisation of Holiness groups relative to Pentecostal groups. The Holiness groups' emphasis on the largely subjective 'Second Blessing' and personal piety, their more middle class clientele and more professional clergy served to mark them off less from their parent churches than did the visible and 'deviant' practice of glossolalia, with its attendant emphasis on lay inspiration, of the Pentecostals. Holiness groups did not lay a strong emphasis on organisation, or need it initially beyond the requirements of meeting and evangelizing together. It was only when the American Methodist denominations rejected them that they organised in defence as sects. In Britain the more tolerant, Erastian, Church of England allowed the Holiness groups to remain within it. Thus the Keswick Convention, the League of Prayer and the Faith Mission have managed to preserve their interdenominational character as Holiness groups to this day since their foundation in the last century.

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[45] John Wilson 'British Israelism: The Ideological Restraints on Sect Organisation', in BR Wilson 1967.

[46] BR Wilson, 1970, p 211

[47] Embley op cit in BR Wilson 1967

[48] Warburton, TR, in BR Wilson 1967

Responses to the World

It will be shown below that despite criticisms of the Group, the Church of England was similarly tolerant towards it.[49] In adopting this attitude its leaders were mindful of the precedent when their predecessors had forced the reluctant Wesleyan movement into separate organisation. At the same time the Group held in strong measure the various elements of a 'response to the world' that was antagonistic to separatism and fissiparation.

Bryan Wilson has established the importance of a religious group's basic concept of salvation and correspondent attitude to evil – in short its 'response to the world' – for the development and nature of its organisation. Wilson's typology includes four main 'responses to the world' – the conversionist, revolutionist, introversionist and manipulationist – and three less common ones – the thaumaturgical, reformist and utopian. These are intended as ideal types, not closed categories into which each religious movement is expected to fit. It is not surprising therefore that elements of various of these responses seem to co-exist within Moral Re-Armament. The movement's basic orientation had undoubtedly been conversionist. But its increasing involvement in improving particular social problem situations seems to have been evidence of reformist tendencies. Its emphasis on providing the supernatural means to such apparently secular ends as harmony in business has already been mentioned, and shows its affinity to manipulationist movements. Finally its development of its conference centres and its communal life as examples of the 'New World' already in action presents some similarity to the utopian response.

Concentration on the Group's anti-separatist tendencies, however, tends to suggest another coherent ideal typical 'response to the world' which also incorporates the various elements of reformism, manipulationism and utopianism just mentioned. Without wishing to add to the complexity of Wilson's typology, it is perhaps nonetheless worth looking at what might be seen as a sub-category of the conversionist type, possibly to be called the pietist type. This arises from consideration of the successive post-Reformation movements which have initially, sometimes successfully, resisted separatist formation as new sects, culminating for the purpose of this study in the Oxford Group.

The 16th century 'spirituals' such as Arndt and Schwenkfeld, the 17th century Pietists led by Spener and Francke, those Puritans who emphasised pastoral care rather than polemics or ecclesiastical politics, Jane Leade's 'Philadelphia Society', the Moravians, the interdenominational societies of the 19th century including the YMCA and the Holiness groups in different ways all valued 'life-changing' above doctrine, church polity, liturgy or political involvement. 'Life-changing', an Oxford Group term, appears more appropriate to describe their main concern than does 'conversion'. Conversion was only one important part of their approach to the individual. More important for their organisation was their emphasis on preserving and deepening the convert's holiness of life. To this end all these groups stressed their desire, as Wesley did, to form supportive groups for the faithful (conventicles, 'ecclesiolae in ecclesia' class meetings, societies) but not to create barriers to mutual support by forming these groups into new sects and excluding from fellowship those in other confessions. The

[49] Below Chapter XII

Moravians, in spite of their sectarian organisation, held to the desire to be 'a leavening and transforming influence in other communions' and never sought to bring all other Christians into their Church.[50] An early example of an interdenominational group which avoided sect-formation was Jane Leade's 'Philadelphia Society'. Influenced by Behmenist and Pietist ideas this group was 'founded on illumination, the exchange of spiritual experiences among believers, and universal evangelical love. Ignoring national and confessional frontiers, the Philadelphia Society rejected ecclesiastical separatism. On principle its members remained attached to their original Churches'.[51] Oxford Group adherents might well see themselves in such a description.

The success of these groups in avoiding evolution into sects depended largely on the Churches' tolerance towards them. Schwenkfeld was expelled by Luther from his church, as Wesley was from the Anglican Church and the Holiness groups from the Methodist Churches. The Pietists remained a relatively small group with upper class connections. Posing less of a threat to Church authority than the Wesleyans with their mass appeal, large organisation and reliance on lay preachers, the Pietists continued uneasily within their parent Lutheran Church.

The emphasis of such groups on holiness of life demanded more than the 'heart-warming' emotional conversion experience that most of them considered part of the process of being 'reborn'. The revivalist's emphasis on the experience of conversion was indeed a degeneration of the pietist concern for the individual's spiritual life. The ambitious aim of the Pietists and the groups that they influenced was the 'sectarian' aim of making the commitment of the saints the norm. They wanted to extend the Reformation beyond the spheres of doctrine and liturgy to that of daily life under the 'divine will'. Many of them stressed the 'inner light'. They typically preached edificatory sermons, printed spiritual biographies, fostered popular literacy, hymns and devotional rather than academic Bible study, in order to give life-long spiritual edification to the 'common people'. They emphasised lay witness, and conversionist and missionary zeal. From their impulse in large measure grew the 'evangelical awakening' from the 18th century, with its progressive breakdown of Calvinist dogma and denominational antagonisms. Mead wrote that 'what Professor John T McNeill says of John Arndt might be said of Pietism in general: its "aim was to induce theologians and lay people to turn from controversy to fellowship and charity, and from confessions of faith to faith itself"'.[52] The triumph of revivalism in America appeared in some ways to fulfil this hope. 'After 1835' wrote McLoughlin about America, 'churchgoers and ministers alike dropped their preoccupation with theology and based their religion on "experience"'.[53] McNeill's comment on Arndt equally described the Oxford Group leaders' understanding of their role in the modernist-fundamentalist theological conflict.

The Pietist emphasis on the 'fruits of faith' as evidence of faith itself could lead to a dry, legalistic moralism, a puritanical inquisition into the daily lives of members of the group. But it could also hold out hope of moral and thereby social improvement. Stoeffler wrote of the 17th century pietists that 'their profound ethical sensitivity... focused on their preaching and writing upon moral reformation of Church and State

[50] Latourette 1940, p.8, Greaves 1957, p 137
[51] Leonard 1965 p 358. See also Walker 1964
[52] Mead 1956, p. 240 f, quoted from JJ McNeil 'Modern Religious Movements 'Philadelphia 1954 pp 52 and 57
[53] McLoughlin1959, p 67.

through individual regeneration'.[54] TC Smith has shown that the pietist revivalism which had virtually become America's 'national religion' by the mid-19th century was to have important effects in generating the will to social reform and philanthropy in American society, particularly perhaps in rousing moral indignation at slavery.[55] A programme of social transformation was thus latent or implicit in the pietist emphasis. The anti-slavery campaigns indicate the two main forms this programme could take. On the one hand Wilberforce's conversion led him into a campaign using political methods, aiming at a statutory reform. On the other, Finney's 'holiness' phase at Oberlin led him to become so 'excessively optimistic'[56] about the prospects for mass revivalism based on scientific psychology, that he believed political action to be irrelevant – revivalism instead could 'change' so many so quickly that it would carry voluntary abolition in its train. The common emphasis of both social programmes, however, was the typical pietist emphasis on man's sin, duties and capacities for voluntary stewardship, rather than on his 'rights'.

Both Wilberforce and Shaftesbury after him opposed the extension of rights to the British lower classes such as the legalization of trade unions (Wilberforce) and the extension of the franchise and the secret ballot (Shaftesbury). 'Excessively optimistic' or politically realistic, both types of social programme believed in stewardship and 'noblesse oblige' rather than in the social structuralist aim of extending power to the poor or enslaved.

The pietist ideal type thus encourages organisational aids to converting individuals and to maintaining their faith, but discourages separatism. Concentrating on the individual's inner life, it is relatively tolerant towards ecclesiastical and creedal differences. It is typically a reaction to ecclesiastical formalism and theological conflict. Given ecclesiastical tolerance towards it, it can remain as an interdenominational 'fellowship'. The nature of 'conventicles' for mutual spiritual support is, however, that of a closely knit fellowship whose members find their most important relationships only within it. The degree of the churches' tolerance towards pietist groups will in part depend on the degree of loyalty that such groups are perceived to inspire in their members, as well as on the extent of the organisation that they develop. There is thus a tendency towards setting up an alternative set of loyalties even in a pietist group with avowed anti-separatist ideals, which can lead to its rejection by the churches. The organisational implications of pietism include, in addition to regular small group meetings for mutual confession and support, the publishing of devotional literature, and the formation of overseas or local missions. Too great a development of organisation however is inimical to the pietist ideal and can be expected to stimulate the formation of new, informal groups within the original but over-organized group. This was the process, for instance, by which the Oxford Group emerged from the YMCA.

Following the usage of Ritschl and Troeltsch, Stoeffler applied the term 'pietist' not just to Stener's movement but to an ethos, 'a recognisable unity of thought, feeling, emphasis, expression, and purpose formed within all experiential Protestantism'. He characterised it by its experientialism, religious idealism, sense of protest against contemporary formalistic ecclesiasticism, and its defence against illuminism and

[54] Stoeffler 1965 p 20
[55] TC Smith 1957
[56] McLoughlin 1959

antinomianism by an orthodox Biblicism.[57] The Oxford Group was not the mystery some commentators have seen it as being, but a twentieth century manifestation of this tradition. As such it was accorded greater toleration by the Churches than earlier pietist movements; it took experientialism a stage further in crossing the doctrinal divisions between world religions as well as between Christian churches; and it stressed the social effects of individual holiness – in both over-optimistic and realistic programmes – as was appropriate to the contemporary concern with social problems.

[57] Stoeffler 1965

Part One: Origins: Drummond, Wright, Mott

Chapter I: Personal Evangelism

It has been suggested above that the Oxford Group was a twentieth century manifestation of a tradition of Protestant experientialist, or pietist, movements stretching back to the Reformation era. In particular it grew from the American revivalist section of that tradition, and most immediately from the student YMCA before 1920. Within the latter movement it was above all the work and teaching of Henry Drummond, Henry Wright and John R Mott which influenced Frank Buchman, the founder of the Oxford Group. Two elements of their teaching and evangelical methods can be distinguished as particularly important for the development of the Oxford Group. These are their evangelical approach to the individual, considered in this chapter, and their views on evangelical 'strategy' to convert the mission lands, which form the subject of the next chapter. Subsequent chapters (VII and X) examine Buchman's development from these two sets of ideas.

First, as a background to Drummond's teaching, the history of the student YMCA must be briefly described.

The YMCA in the Universities

American colleges since the 17th century had known devotional and 'theological' Christian societies. The latter were similar to the college literary debating societies. Between the 1860s and 1880s, however, most of these religious societies died out, superseded by the more popular student branches of the Young Men's Christian Association. Since its foundation among drapers' clerks in a London business in 1844 the YMCA had grown swiftly on both sides of the Atlantic, supported by leading evangelical ministers. It was marked by lay control, interdenominationalism and above all by its emphasis on the practical daily living of the evangelical life. As such it was an expression of the Arminian evangelicalism that was sweeping through the main American Protestant denominations. Shedd ascribed its popularity in the colleges to the fact that it did not stress the 'theoretical side of religion' but instead 'seemed to offer more effective ways of relating religion to the life of individuals, campus groups, and the campus as a whole'.[58] One of the older college societies, Princeton's 'Philadelphian Society', which developed along similar lines to the YMCA, managed to survive. It later affiliated with the YMCA, in order to give it greater contact with the practical world of business. In 1877 Luther D Wishard, the Philadelphian Society's leading figure, formed the Intercollegiate YMCA organisation. By the 1890s this dominated religious life on most American campuses, a position unchallenged until the 1914-18 War.[59]

In the generation before the 1914-18 War, therefore, American campus religion was drawn not to theological discussion but to practical evangelism, social service and missions. Most members of the student YMCA movement were as untroubled by self-questioning concerning the political and social order as they were by theological controversies. The general consensus was that the Christian's social obligations were met if he led an upright personal life, participated in philanthropy towards the less

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[58] Shedd, 1934 p 119 f
[59] Latourette, 1929 p 585

privileged, served his community and country in conventional ways and contributed to foreign missions.

The situation was somewhat different in Europe. Mott, Wishard's successor as leader of the American Intercollegiate YMCA, found European students asking questions at his meetings that would have seemed 'abstract and philosophical' in the USA. He also met a preoccupation with demands for answers to the injustices of the socio-economic order, for instance among Russian students in 1909, that he was not to find among American students until the 1930s. He was worried by the predominance of rationalist thought in German universities in the 1890s.[60] On the other hand Scandinavian university religion was receptive to, and became dominated by, the American YMCA evangelism from the 1890s to about 1910.[61] The British SCM [Student Christian Movement] was formed in 1893 in close co-operation with the American movement and shared its orientation for the next two decades. Both the Scandinavian and British movements grew partly from local evangelical traditions, but were greatly influenced by the vigorous American movement.

The social sources of the 'pre-critical' optimism which marked this American generation are clear enough. The students had a privileged social position. America in the 1880s and 90s was emerging as a major commercial and political power after a century of preoccupation with internal expansion. 'Mott belonged to the period of Western expansion and dominance', wrote Mackie, 'and he reflected that structure in the religious world'.[62] The 'Pax Britannica' had not yet been shattered by world war. The concepts of progress and the superiority of Western 'Christian' civilisation were generally taken for granted by the privileged on both sides of the Atlantic.

Educated Americans, even those with a strong practical bias like that of John R Mott, were not however entirely insulated from rationalist influences and the challenge to traditional religious authority inherent in Darwinism and Biblical criticism. The optimism and self-assurance of the American student movement in an age of creeping doubt owed much to the defence of religious experience presented to it by Henry Drummond. His framework of ideas did much to enable students of his day to pursue evangelical revivalism with intellectual integrity.

Henry Drummond (1851-1897)

Drummond was a Scots geologist and evangelist who gained international fame in the 1880s for his book *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* which argued that spiritual experience was subject to scientifically discernible laws. It appeared to many educated people to be an adequate defence of their religious experiences in terms of the scientific method. Its vogue among the intelligentsia was short lived, as inadequacies in the argument were exposed. But its description of spiritual experience, and Drummond's essays about and practice of 'personal evangelism' ensured his continuing influence in evangelical circles.

Drummond came from a respectable business family in Stirling, Scotland, his father being head of the family firm, a Justice of the Peace, President of the local YMCA and an elder in the Free North Church. As a theological student of orthodox views in Edinburgh, Drummond joined Moody's 1873-5 British revival to help with meetings

[60] Mott 1897 p 34
[61] Christie 1932 p 214f, and 't Hooft 1932 p223 f
[62] Mackie 1965 p 14

for young men. He was an effective speaker, but his metier turned out to be the individualised evangelism of the 'inquiry rooms' held at the end of Moody's meetings. Although his theology grew away from Moody's in the next two decades he continued without interruption the evangelical counselling that he had learnt from him, and joined Moody for campaigns and conferences in Britain in 1882 and in America in 1887 and 1893. Despite his slum mission work in 1878-82 and later occasional meetings for working men or for Mayfair high society, Drummond remained above all an evangelist to students. He turned down requests from Gladstone to enter Parliament and from the Viceroy of Ireland, his friend the Earl of Aberdeen, to join his staff in favour of the post he held from 1877 to the start of his fatal illness in 1895 as Lecturer, later Professor, of Natural Science in the Free Church (theological) College, Glasgow. His reputation as a geologist, established with his exploration of the Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika region of central Africa in 1883-4, would probably have been greater had he not sacrificed academic work to evangelism. The success of the student evangelical movement in Edinburgh from 1884 was due largely to his influence, which spread to the English and American student movements on his visits to those countries.

In religion Drummond was a thorough experientialist. Against the expectation of family and friends he did not become ordained on finishing his divinity course. Association with fellow Christians, including Friends, Unitarians and Catholics, was natural to him. His search for a 'natural science' of Christian experience and the unruffled ease with which he moved from orthodox to modernist theology were also typical. Church and theology held second place to 'experience' in his religion. In his undergraduate days he had tried mesmerism, and given it up because he found himself too successful at influencing his subjects – an indication perhaps of his particular abilities. As a student before his association with Moody he wrote an essay, 'Spiritual Diagnosis', in which he criticised the theological curriculum for its lack of teaching on 'direct dealing with men'. Future ministers had to be taught how to convert and influence individuals, just as medical students were given clinical practice. For this, he wrote, a scientific classification of the workings of the spiritual life was needed.[63]

One of the early leaders of the Oxford Group wrote that of Drummond's writings it was this essay which most affected Frank Buchman.[64] The Group's first manual, *Soul Surgery*, was an attempt to elaborate a 'scientific' method of evangelism of the sort Drummond called for in this essay, to which it frequently referred.[65] Its author, Howard Walter, saw it as a preview of a larger work on the same theme on which Frank Buchman and Henry Wright were collaborating.[66] This was never written. Walter died in his thirties, Wright and Drummond in their forties, their potential as writers on their subject probably unfulfilled. Buchman lived into old age, but was no writer. In practice Buchman's, Wright's and Walter's evangelistic methods, however, were closely based on the 'natural science' of conversion worked out in Drummond's later life and writings.

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[63] Smith 1899 p50
[64] Shoemaker 1928 p 14, pp5 f
[65] Walter 1940 p 19
[66] Ibid 'Author's Note' p6

Drummond's 'Natural Science' of Conversion

A central principle of Drummond's evangelism was summed up in the maxim, to be found in *Spiritual Diagnosis*, that 'To avoid the Didactic and practise the Attractive must be the rule'.[67] He considered that students would be drawn to Christianity if it were presented as an attractive life rather than as a debatable set of doctrines.

Various methods or points of style followed from this maxim. One was to stress Christ as both an example and a living person with whom any individual could have a loving relationship – but not to stress doctrines about Christ. Drummond's lack of emphasis on the Atonement drew the fire of more conventional evangelists, and was about the only point on which Moody criticised him.[68] Related to this lack of emphasis on theology was the centrality for Drummond of the practical expression of love, as outlined in his most famous address, on I Corinthians 13, *The Greatest Thing in the World*. For him the final test of religion was 'not "How have I believed?" but "How have I loved?"'[69] He would try to capture the imaginations of students with descriptions of the positive value of the lifetime service to humanity which they could undertake. This appeal to love as the motive of conversion was consistent with the approach of Moody and other late 19th century evangelists who had moved away from preaching the appeal to fear of hellfire.

This appeal was particularly appropriate to cultured students at Edinburgh who could look forward with confidence to excellent careers, and for whom modern criticism and science were beginning to erode old certainties regarding hell, the wrath of God, and the literal truth of the Bible. Drummond combined his appeal to love with a theory of evolution that was convincing to many in the 1880s and 90s. Instead of the Atonement – the appropriation of Christ's sacrifice to appease the wrath of God on mankind's behalf – he stressed the loving nature of God whose hand had since the beginning of the world been guiding evolution towards the heights of civilisation that were now within man's grasp. God, he argued, could so inspire and empower men with moral and spiritual sensibilities that they could take evolution forward to create the moral society. He tied this general hope to the particular process of conversion – his converts saw their change of life and adoption of a particular vocation in terms of being a small but significant part of God's evolutionary plan.

Drummond also countered the popular notion of the evangelist's life as that of dour Puritan denial and rigid beliefs, by making it clear that students' cultural pursuits and intellectual doubts were compatible with a Christian vocation. He presented Christianity as 'manly', challenging, hopeful, enjoyable, embracing culture, science and progress. In 1890, appealing for young men to become missionaries, he asked above all for those 'who combine with all modern culture the consecrated Spirit and Christ-like life'. He also assured his converts that they could live the Christian life in lay professional careers equally as well as they could in holy orders. The success of his student evangelical deputations from Edinburgh in converting young people was in large part due to their appearance as 'young, hearty and laughing'.[70] Drummond himself cut an attractive figure. Carswell described him as having an unexpected appearance for an evangelist, being 'an extremely handsome, attractive and well

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[67] Smith 1899 p 52
[68] Shedd 1934 p 287
[69] Wright 1924 p 209
[70] Smith 1899 p 304-5

turned out young man' (at the age of 34), with neatly trimmed mutton chop whiskers, bright hazel eyes, keen and 'brilliantly steady' gaze, and faultlessly tailored frock coat.[71]

Another maxim of Drummond's was to be a sympathetic listener. Once having made the Christian life appear desirable to a person, he was at pains to enable the person to confess his failures, 'sins' and unhappiness. He had a talent for drawing out people's inner anxieties in confession. 'It is safe to say', wrote his biographer with perhaps little exaggeration, 'that no man in our generation can have heard confession more constantly than Drummond did'.[72]

The cathartic effect of this confession was to be followed, in Drummond's scheme of conversion, by a determination to follow Christ, in both 'character' and 'career'. He made this latter distinction because he was convinced that God had not merely a 'general will' for mankind to follow in terms of ethical precepts, but also a 'particular will for me'. In this he was influenced by a sermon 'Every Man's Life a Plan of God' by the liberal American churchman, Horace Bushnell (1802-76), who was best known for his argument for 'Christian nurture' rather than dramatic conversion. Both men saw the Christian life as a constant daily process of following God's will – Drummond himself never had a conversion experience. 'There is a will for where I am to be and what I am to do tomorrow', wrote Drummond. 'There is a will for what scheme I am to take up, and what work I am to do for Christ, and what business arrangements to make, and what money to give away'.[73] He summarised the way 'To find out God's will' in eight points: pray, think, ask wise advice, beware of one's desires though not too much, do the next small thing to be done, act decisively when necessary, don't reconsider the decision taken, and '8. You will probably not find out till afterwards, perhaps long afterwards, that you have been led at all'. The person was to find out, presumably, by whether events worked out well after his decision. In daily life Drummond was given to following 'leadings' or intuitions which he thought at the time came from God.[74]

The central act of conversion in Drummond's scheme was the decision to 'follow Christ in character and career'. His lack of emphasis on theology was apt enough in that for him this commitment 'to Christ' did not particularly depend on historical revelation, but rather on current 'evidences' of the supernatural. In *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* he argued that the proofs for Christianity lie in the scientifically verifiable facts of Christian experience, among which he counted 'the contemporary activities of the Holy Ghost, and the facts of regeneration, and the powers which are freeing men from sin'. Conversion he called a 'great experiment'. The 'factual' results of this experiment were above all the power to overcome 'sin' in practical ways – victory over particular moral failings. 'The salvation proclaimed' wrote Drummond's biographer 'was, with some exceptions, salvation not from hell, but from sin'.[75] Drummond said of the Edinburgh student movement:

> There was no interference with speculation. We respected honest doubt in every direction. We had no creed. We tried to hold every man in the fellowship of Christ, and then left him to settle or leave unsettled his doubts.

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[71] Carswell p 33f
[72] Smith 1899 p 10
[73] quoted by Macintosh 1942 p 367
[74] Smith pp 110 and 118
[75] Smith p 91

> Our gospel was 'Save your lives', not 'Save your souls', and the first aim was to lead every man to become the friend of Christ….[76]

Drummond could allow his convert to 'leave unsettled his doubts' not because belief in the supernatural was unimportant to him, but because he believed so strongly in Christ as an existing spiritual person that any means by which he could get someone to have a relationship with Christ was justifiable to him – Christ would, as it were, take over once in contact with a person. In this the Biblical promise that the Holy Spirit 'will guide you into all truth' in John 16:13 was taken as assurance that the Spirit would be His own theological instructor, making human theological teaching virtually unnecessary for the Christian life. Drummond was greatly influenced by FW Robertson's sermon on John 7:17, 'Obedience the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge', which argued that obedience to God's will in practical matters was the surest way to theological understanding.[77]

Bushnell had also advised 'hanging up' doubts about doctrines for as long as it took to become clear about them, and in the meantime not letting them prevent the individual from leading a Christian life.[78]

The Student YMCA in America after Drummond

The Intercollegiate YMCA was influenced on the one hand by the modernist Drummond and on the other by the famous revivalist Moody. In seeking a venue for student YMCA conferences, Wishard and his colleagues had naturally turned to Moody, himself a one-time YMCA organiser who in addition to his revival campaigns ran evangelical conferences at his home in Northfield, Connecticut. From 1886, Moody's Northfield student conferences, and later other regional conferences on their pattern, became the ideological centre of the movement. Moody was thus in a position of great potential influence in it. But he did not resist its tendency to follow Drummond's theology rather than his own. He was much broader than the fundamentalists who surrounded him and who in the next generation looked back to him as the founder of the conservative Moody Bible Institute. Despite strong conservative protest he invited Drummond to speak at Northfield in 1887 and 1893. His broadmindedness in this was a result of his pietist emphasis on the quality of Christian life – he saw in Drummond a character which he described as the most Christ-like that he had known.[79] This attitude was of a piece with Moody's dislike of proselytization and sectarianism. His influence thus encouraged the growth of a pietist ecumenism based on a devaluation of theological and ecclesiastical differences in the student movement, a pietism which was as aggressive and well organised as his own revivals. But with Drummond's appreciation of science, evolution and the psychology of spiritual experience, the movement for the most part moved in a modernist direction, avoiding the retreat of Moody's conservative followers into a fundamentalist redoubt. Of course the difference between the optimistic, world conquering attitude of the student YMCA and the increasingly defensive Moody Bible Institute was equally a result of their different social experience – future social

[76] *The Springfield Union* July 7, 1887, quoted in Shedd 1934 p 281
[77] Macintosh p 366
[78] Quoted in Wright 1909 p 71
[79] Shedd pp 173, 287and 288

leaders on the one hand, rural migrants in increasingly complex, business dominated cities on the other.

The merging of Moody's and Drummond's influence was seen in the remarkable Cornell graduate who succeeded Wishard in 1888 as one of the Intercollegiate YMCA's two travelling secretaries, and who dominated it for almost 30 years thereafter, John R Mott. Mott had been greatly impressed by Drummond's restrained manner and rational approach in his evangelism. Shedd wrote that the student evangelical movement under Wishard had followed the 'emotional and doctrinal emphasis of the Church as a whole', but that under Mott it stressed rather 'the will' and 'a rational statement of the essentials of religion'.[80] These 'essentials' were the ethical demands and experiential 'evidence' which Drummond had taught in his American tour of 1887. They appealed to Mott's businesslike mind, practical piety and dislike of emotionalism. They were also appropriate to Mott's task of recruiting students to careers as missionaries or YMCA secretaries. The relatively easy demands of the mass revivalists of the day to 'put up your hand' or 'sign a card' were obviously inadequate for this by comparison with Drummond's serious individualised approach. Influenced also by Henry Clay Trumbull, who at Northfield told how he had approached 'fully 10,000 men individually and never been rebuffed' with his evangelical message, and Phillips Brooks' sermon on 'Andrew bringeth Peter', Mott turned increasingly to *Individual work for Individuals*, as one of his first pamphlets was called.[81]

In the 10-15 minute private interviews which Mott gave after public meetings on his college revival campaigns he would attempt to set students on the right path by 'quick diagnosis' of their 'problem' – i.e. whatever was keeping them from wholehearted commitment to the evangelical life – followed by his prescription for overcoming it. The latter would typically be to make a decision of the will, 'a life-decision to follow Christ'. This involved a rigorous morality – 'Abandon decisively everything that reason, conscience or experience shows to be questionable'. The decision was to be maintained first by making Bible study a 'life-habit' and by observing the Morning Watch, or early morning devotions of prayer, Bible study and 'guidance'. He considered the Morning Watch the secret of the 'triumphant life'; it should be a time of 'fellowship' with God, with 'time enough to meet God and to hear His voice and to be sure that you have heard it'.[82] The Quaker influence in Mott's life may have contributed to this.[83] Secondly, commitment should be maintained by 'instant sharing of fellowship', meaning confession to another member of the evangelical 'fellowship' immediately that one was 'tempted' or 'fell into sin'; and thirdly by deciding in what field of Christian work to 'invest' one's life and by entering into it with a will. The title of one of Mott's articles sums up this approach: 'Our Religion Primarily a Matter of the Will'.

Drummond's emphasis in personal evangelism thus came to dominate the student movement. But his 'horror of organization' did not.[84] In this sphere Mott followed Moody. His funeral oration at Moody's Carnegie Hall memorial extolled Moody's

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[80] Shedd p 308
[81] Matthews 1934 p 107
[82] Matthews p 379. Also *Addresses and Papers of John R Mott* Vol VI p 20, from an address in Ceylon Dec. 1895 using the term 'guidance'.
[83] e.g. Matthews pp 28, 103 f – Mott was never more conscious of the 'Holy Spirit' than at his first Quaker meeting.
[84] Phrase used by Shedd 1934 p 282

powers of organisation and money raising for Christian work, his achievement in preaching 'to literally tens of millions' and setting 'thousands' to Christian work. Mott came from a small family business background in an Iowan pioneer town, where as a boy his hobby had been understanding the organization of the national railway network on which their livelihood and the 'taming of the West' depended. Like Moody he brought a considerable business talent to evangelism. The YMCA under his leadership became a highly efficient organisation.

Henry Wright (1877-1924)

Drummond's personal evangelism was perhaps most fully developed in the next generation of the student movement by Henry Wright who came from a cultured New England background. His father, for 25 years Dean of Yale, was a classicist. Henry Wright himself taught classics at Yale in turn, before being enabled to make evangelism his full-time activity by the creation for him of a chair of 'Christian Methods' in 1914 at Yale Divinity School. Here he gave courses on 'The Psychology, Message and Methods of Public Evangelism', 'The Principles of Personal Evangelism' and 'Rural Sociology', which grew out of his evangelical work in the village of Oakham, Massachusetts.[85] Wright was therefore closer to Drummond, as an academic with time for individual work, than was Mott, for whom the pressure of organisational work frequently forced him to curtail time spent on individuals.

Wright was converted from nominal to enthusiastic evangelical Christianity as a young graduate by a talk of Moody's on John 7:17, 'If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God…' – the text of Robertson's sermon which had influenced Drummond. This text became the major theme of his evangelism: that a man's will must be redirected by his own decision – he must become 'willing to do His will' – before he can learn the truth of doctrines or the plan that God has for his life. He expressed this in a number of articles and books, of which the most famous was *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework* of 1909, which became an influential manual within student evangelism. This and his lectures were the major influence on Frank Buchman's evangelical method. Most of the book, which was designed as a Bible study manual, consisted of quotations from the Bible and from Christian writers of the late 19th century, particularly the sermons of Bushnell and Robertson mentioned above, Drummond's writings and Smith's biography of him, and the writings of Mott and of Speer, another contemporary YMCA evangelist. The book is therefore an elaboration of the evangelical method of the whole movement seen through Wright's presentation of it, rather than merely his personal method.

'Method' was itself a pre-occupation of the movement as it had been of the evangelical and revivalist movement as a whole since the time of Finney.[86] If the 'truths' and aims of evangelism were taken for granted, the means of propagating it were not, but were continually open to review and improvement. A young YMCA graduate, who was to become one of Buchman's closest colleagues, wrote after staying with Mott in 1913: 'Mr Mott's life is one of power and all those about him seem to absorb his method. He has come into it by the most natural ways. He studies the secrets of power of every great man he hears of in a thoroughly scientific way and then disciplines himself in the methods he has discovered. He is the most efficient

[85] Bainton 1957 pp 249-251
[86] See above, Introduction p 9

man I ever saw'.[87] It was in this context that Wright's manual became popular in the movement, and that Frank Buchman was able to say with justice that his life had been dedicated to the 'how' of the Christian life.

The central theme of *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework* is one of method, how to find out 'God's will for career' and how to live up to it. This is placed in the setting of God's general plan for the progress of the world, which depends on each individual finding and following God's particular plan for him. The greatest duty of the Christian, indeed for Wright the essence of Christianity, was to fulfil this plan for one's life. The main means of discovering God's will, Wright taught, following Robertson, was 'surrender', or willingness to obey God unconditionally. If a person was willing to obey, he would receive 'compelling convictions' from God of action to be undertaken, the 'power' to obey them, and the certainty of God's presence. It would lead also to fellowship with 'surrendered' friends and with Christ, and to a foretaste of the freedom, joy and peace of eternal life.

Wright and Mott, perhaps more than Drummond, stressed 'the definite act of listening for God' and of praying repeatedly until 'conviction' came. One of Wright's original contributions was the term 'two-way prayer'. He wanted to replace the usual conception of 'intercessory prayer', as a result of which many evangelists had prayer lists of people for whom they asked divine help, by a method of prayer in which the believer asked God how he himself might help those on his prayer list. He expected in such times of prayer to receive 'luminous thoughts', creative ideas of action he could take or words he could say to help another person. Wright taught that such prayer could give useful intuitions into the inner characters of other people, particularly concerning their rationalizations and real reasons for not wishing to 'surrender' to God. Like Drummond he believed that intellectual doubt was often a rationalisation covering a moral failing, in Drummond's words that 'conscious sin' was 'the great blinder of the eyes'.[88] 'Luminous thoughts' could also be of great help, Wright believed, in avoiding accidents or leading one into 'fields of provision'. 'Is not the variableness of the human will', he asked, 'the only thing that stands in the way of a rational system of provision and protection, once granted that God can communicate with men?' The image conjured up by this belief is of God as omniscient military commander sending radio signals to his troops as to weaknesses in the enemy's defences and to likely dangers and opportunities. Wright, and Buchman after him, used such military and telegraphic metaphors in talking of conversion as 'enlistment' in God's army and of the reception of 'luminous thoughts' as depending on the cleanliness of the 'receiving instrument'. To Mott and his biographer the fact that on various occasions different YMCA leaders simultaneously thought of identical plans without consultation was sure proof that God was guiding all of them.[89]

Like Mott, Wright taught that 'surrender to the will of God' involved a rigorous morality. He discussed at length various writers' guides to morality, or to 'Christ in character' in Drummond's terminology, from the point of view of their value in opening the individual to divine leadings. Bushnell's prescription to 'do the right' from which conviction of God's existence will follow, he found too comprehensive. FW Robertson's view – be generous, chaste, true and brave even when doubting God, and certainty will return – he thought stressed aggressive virtues too much, whereas

[87] Maxwell Chaplin in Chaplin 1928 p 68 f
[88] Drummond's 'Dealing with Doubt' quoted by Macintosh p 370
[89] Mott 1897 p 19, Matthews p 359

he considered that Drummond's address on Corinthians 13 overemphasised self-effacing virtues. Speer's 'principles of Jesus', combined the two. But Speer required as the first condition of knowing God's will to 'believe in Christ' and 'be sanctified', terms which Wright found too technical for an unbeliever. Wright's synthesis was to leave all 'technical' theology aside, and advocate an attempt to live up to Speer's 'principles of Jesus', namely absolute purity, honesty, unselfishness and love. The stress on the 'absoluteness' of each standard was in order to emphasise the need for 'total surrender'. Although these 'standards' sounded very general, Wright gave his own detailed interpretation of them. Purity did not mean fastidious aversion from sexual problems nor extinction of the sexual, but it did mean 'mastery of the animal, fleshly instincts' in detail as well as in general. Wright warned his readers to beware of 'impure imaginations and thoughts. Objects pure in themselves which by association recall impure images. Slighting references to women. Ballet… Flirtation where no true bond of love is intended'. The results of impurity included loss of intellectual powers, of self-respect and of strength, 'cowardly shrinking from service of others… and separation from God'. He quoted Bushnell's view that God 'can make us untemptably pure', even to the extent of removing erotic dreams. He suggested praying instantly for Jesus to take over the impure thought or mental image as soon as it occurred. He went through the other three in turn, stressing the personal and individualistic rather than social aspects, of honesty – thieving, cheating, gambling, tax evasion, sharp dealing in trade, exaggeration; unselfishness – impatience, envy, pride, ambition, 'discourtesy, especially to inferiors, e.g. servants', overeating; and love – laziness, neglect of church attendance and social duties such as voting, lack of charity. Wright had not yet been influenced by the social gospel, and did not therefore include evils that contemporary social gospellers stressed, such as unearned income, [paying] low wages, indifference to radical political programmes, etc.

Wright was as concerned with petty infringements of these standards as he was with major ones. Even small failings could rob a person of the heady sense of 'victory' and sublime, if quiet, confidence which was needed to be an effective personal evangelist. An important part of surrender, after 'measuring one's life' by these standards, Wright advised, was to make restitution as far as possible for past misdeeds. This amounted to a public statement of new intent, particularly to those who knew the new convert's worst failings, a step which would make it hard for him, if he had any pride, to go back on his decision in future.

Buchman's Indebtedness to Drummond's 'school'

Anyone familiar with the Oxford Group's practice of personal evangelism will have recognised most of it in the descriptions above of what might be called Drummond's school of evangelism. The Group, however, was the creation of one man, Frank Buchman, in the sense at least that its main ideas, assumptions and methods came to the members of the group through him. He placed different emphases on aspects of Drummond and Wright's evangelism. The proper place for discussing in detail the areas in which the Group's evangelism differed from that of Drummond's school is therefore after the biographical chapters on Buchman's life before the emergence of the Group. The discussion however will continually refer back to this chapter, and will add general comments on the nature of the appeal of Drummond and Wright's evangelism to the students of their day, and on the degree of 'secularisation' inherent in their approach.

Chapter II: Political Relevance and 'Strategy'

It was noted in the Introduction that various commentators on the Oxford Group discerned a major ideological shift in its MRA phase, from revivalism to political involvement. It is the argument of this chapter, however, that this development did not signify a major break from the movement's origins. The political outlook expressed by MRA in the 1940s and 50s was very similar to that expressed by Mott, Eddy and Buchman before and during the 1914-18 war. This pre-war philosophy of the YMCA leaders was a product of the ethical, ecumenical pietism of Moody and Drummond combined with the effects of 19th century Western supremacy and optimism. It centred on the role of the missionary, and was influenced by the early social gospel.

Missions and the Student Evangelical Movement

The main missionary impulse in America, as in Europe, derived from the evangelical revival of the 18th and 19th centuries. China became the main American mission field after the Western powers had forced it to tolerate their missionaries and commerce in the treaties of 1858-60. The impact of Christian missions in China in the 19th century was minimal, however, since they failed to influence the scholar gentry who ruled the country. 'The right 2,000 (or 5,000 or 10,000) converts' wrote a modern historian of Western influence in China, 'would have been enough to influence or even determine the future of Chinese culture; Christians [by about 1900] had perhaps 820,000, almost none of them the right ones for the purpose – to be sure, a purpose which most evangelists did not want to have'.[90] Unlike their illustrious Jesuit predecessor, Matthew Ricci, the evangelicals' purpose, of saving heathen souls from hell, did not include saving China from 'un-Christian' rule.

Two events changed the situation in China. The first was the Boxer Rebellion of 1901. The foreign powers' subsequent military subjection of the country destroyed the power of the traditional guardians of Chinese culture, the mandarins, and opened the country to Western influence and culture. A strong demand arose for Western education. As a result until national and alternative Western philosophies came to prominence in the 1920s, the missionaries were able to teach China's new student class unchallenged. The second event was the growth of a new missionary organisation capable of exploiting this opportunity by presenting Christianity as the foundation of Western science and progress, and potentially of Chinese reconstruction. This was the international YMCA and its affiliated Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions. In the 19th century missionaries had mostly come from 'comparatively humble stations in life'.[91] Their failure to affect the educated class was partly as a result of their own lack of education. From the 1880s increasing numbers of American and European graduates became missionaries, under the influence of the student evangelical movement. From the foundation of the SVM in 1886 to 1924 over 20,000 volunteers went through it to the mission fields.[92] The SVM from 1886 to 1914 provided the focus for the idealism of the American student movement in particular. Among its leaders was formed the concept of a new attempt,

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[90] Treadgold 1973 p 67

[91] Neill 1964 p 335

[92] *The Student World* (*TSW*) 1948 Vol XLI No. 3 p 263: review of Ruth Rouse's *The WSCF; a History of the First Thirty Years.*

three centuries after Ricci's, to convert the ruling classes of China. In this they were influenced both by Drummond and by the young 'Social Gospel'.

The 'Social Gospel'

TL Smith has shown that philanthropic programmes and anti-slavery protests were as characteristic of the American evangelical revival as were the missions in the years before the Civil War. Evangelism was closely associated with the ideals of American society, giving an added 'sacredness' to American democracy, and free enterprise. The leaders of the Home Missionary crusade to immigrants, frontiersmen and young people saw themselves, Smith writes, 'as much civilizing and Americanizing agents as soul winners'.[93]

After the Civil War a more critical stance developed gradually among some ministers who came to see the growing problems of labour and slums as the fault of laissez-faire economics and American business ethics. A number of preachers from Bushnell to Washington Gladden and Lyman Abbott increasingly stressed the need for Christian ethics to apply to political and commercial life. Like Drummond these preachers of 'progressive orthodoxy' accepted Darwinism, taught that 'the basic laws of the faith can be verified inductively', and that the Kingdom of God could be created on this earth by gradual progress. Their main objection to socialism on religious grounds was that progress could not be legislated for, but must be a result of the regeneration of character. A very few ministers, led by Herron in the 1890s and Rauschenbusch in the next decade, adopted a socialist standpoint.

On the face of it Drummond and 'progressive orthodoxy' had much in common. Gladden would not have quarrelled with Drummond's address of 1890 on missions, in which he distinguished between the popular evangelical idea of the world – that it is lost and souls must be saved from it – and his own opinion, which he called the view of evolution – that the world is sunken and needs raising. This was to be accomplished by the cumulative effect of conversions issuing in ethical activity. Drummond himself took part in some philanthropic, if highly paternalistic, welfare work.

But there was a difference of emphasis between Drummond and 'progressive orthodoxy' which was of importance later on. Drummond and his followers concentrated on the means of effecting personal regeneration among the ruling class, with the highest hopes of social progress resulting from their work. The social gospellers, however, went on in the 20th century to develop a more trenchant criticism of the social, as distinct from the individual, causes of social evils and gradually lapsed in their efforts at personal regeneration.

Mott and the Social Gospel

The most striking feature of Drummond's and Mott's social outlook, as it was to be later of Buchman's, was their combination of extensive social aims with what has been termed a 'pre-critical' understanding of society.[94]

Drummond's hope of 'raising' the world was not held so strongly by everyone in the student movement. Robert E Speer, formulator of the 'absolute standards' and one of the YMCA's experts on missions, expected that if any social progress resulted from

[93] Smith 1957
[94] Visser 't Hooft, in *TSW* 1965 p 284

missions it would be both gradual, and incidental to their purpose.[95] However Drummond's ideas could not have found a more vigorous and influential exponent than John R Mott, whose figure dominated the student evangelical movement and the pre-1914 efforts at missionary co-operation. Mott agreed with his friend Speer that preaching the Gospel was the chief of missionary tasks. But he went on to say 'this must ever be looked on as a *means* to the mighty and inspiring object of enthroning Christ in the individual life, in family life, in social life, in national life, in international relations, in every relationship of mankind' – a list incidentally typical of Frank Buchman's speeches also: both men seem to have used the same oratorical device for emphasising the thorough and universal implications of their message.[96] 'Pure Christianity', Mott was confident, would dissolve the caste system in India, reconcile the races in South Africa, and save the non-Christian countries from the 'social evils peculiar to the West' such as city tenements or industrial child labour, and from 'the unchristian impact of our Western civilization' upon them. The latter included in his view not merely Western atheism and rationalism, nor just the immoral habits (cigarettes, opium, alcohol) of Western sailors and tourists, but the more social sins of the 'stealing of territory', 'cruel exploitation' and unscrupulous commerce.[97]

Mott had thus acquired some of the aspects of the social gospel. But he did not acquire any real understanding of the social pressures and interests which ensured that the impact of Western civilisation would continue to be 'unchristian' despite all the YMCA's efforts at counteracting it. His most concrete suggestion for reforming the effect of Western businesses on the rest of the world was to impose a character test on American business representatives going abroad. Of course they must have good business sense as well, he added.

Mott's extensive YMCA building programme across Asia, his expansion of the American YMCA foreign department and of the YMCA welfare work in the 1914-18 war required large funds. Matthew estimated in 1935 that in over 40 years Mott had 'sustained a relation of major responsibility' towards raising at a conservative estimate $300 million, most of it for wartime welfare work. This was mostly provided by American and foreign businessmen for three reasons.

Firstly, as Mott said to Andrew Carnegie while raising money from him, they would be spreading the best of Western civilization. Carnegie was estimated to have made, and then largely given away, a personal fortune of $350 million.[98] It was comforting to such as Carnegie to know that the, or a, main challenge of a Christian leader like Mott to them was to fund missions abroad – it legitimated their fortunes. In the same way Frank Buchman was said to have influenced Henry Ford in setting up the Ford Foundation; and although he and Mott would no doubt have preferred their 'tycoon' friends to have been fully converted, they did not criticise them in public nor did they refuse their money, but saw their giving as one way these men could further the Kingdom of God.[99]

Secondly, as Mott was at pains to point out, missions after a century or more's experience were now run 'scientifically' and according to good business principles.

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[95] Speer 1902 p 115 and 1910 p 75

[96] My underline in quotation from Mott 1900 p 16

[97] Mott 1897 pp 140 and 202 f, 1915 pp 63 f and 106

[98] Dulles 'The United States since 1865' 1959 p 58

[99] Ford did not in fact give money to Buchman, it appears.

Rockefeller sent a representative on almost a year's tour of the Asian YMCAs to test the truth of this before agreeing to Mott's request for half a million dollars to extend YMCA plant there.[100]

Mott himself was a similar type to the big business monopolists, in drive, efficiency, and ability to plan on a large scale. He balanced his budgets by long distance telephone calls to businessmen such as Cyrus McCormick, the inventor of the combine harvester, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and James M. Speers.[101] They spoke the same language. Buchman's friendships with Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and Louis B. Mayer were in the same tradition.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important, these businessmen saw the YMCA as an aid to their commercial expansion. That the YMCA was seen as a cultural wing of American diplomacy is suggested from the report of a meeting in the White House in 1910. Mott invited a group of wealthy laymen to hear President Taft address them on the YMCA's overseas work. In introducing Mott's appeal for funds the Commissioner of the District of Columbia said 'We assemble in the interest of the whole world… with the desire to show all that is best in our own national life to those in other countries…'. Mott then explained the present temporary plasticity of the non-Christian countries, which he considered would soon be threatened by rising nationalism and renewed vigour in the non-Christian religions, and urged that this opportunity be taken advantage of. He then asked for $1,515,000. Rockefeller gave $540,000. Within a few months the fund was closed at over $2 million.

The C-in-C of the Army also spoke.[102] The value of the YMCA to Japanese industrial development and commerce with the USA was pointed out by the National YMCA Secretary for Japan at this meeting. He quoted 'the opinion of Baron Shibusawa, the Pierpont Morgan of Japan', who on his return from leading the recent Japanese Commercial Commission to the USA had called for the development of Japanese 'manhood' as an important resource for national 'prosperity and greatness' by the same method as used in the USA – namely the YMCA. Shibusawa was one of the YMCA's chief patrons in Japan. Buchman was to meet him, maintain contact with his family, and eventually find in his great-grandson one of the leaders of MRA in Japan in the 1950s.

The 'crusade' of the YMCA abroad must therefore be seen quite as much as an expression of American commercial expansion as it was of pietistic Christianity.[103] As Drummond saw progress for Africa in terms of British imperial expansion, so Mott was 'a staunch believer in the power of the United States for good in the world'.[104]

The 1890s were a decade in which, in Hopkins' words, even those social gospellers 'who did not go as far as the Christian Socialists, [nonetheless] challenged the sufficiency of stewardship to control the reckless power of triumphant capitalism'.[105] Some social gospellers in the Middle West became involved in the populist farmers' revolt against the domination of American tariff and monetary policies and of the

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[100] Mott 1900 p 181 and Matthews p 401
[101] Mackie 1965 p 125
[102] Matthews p 402 f
[103] That is to say, chiefly an *unconscious* expression of American expansion in the minds of the YMCA evangelists, whose first concern was their Christian beliefs and mores.
[104] Smith 1899 pp 176 ff and Mackie 1965 p 53
[105] Hopkins 1967 p 121

railroads by Eastern business interests. In the next decade social gospellers joined with muckraking journalists, La Follette's radical 'Progressivism', the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the temperance movement and general middle class fear of the growing power of the corporations to vote in the Progressive governments of Roosevelt and Wilson. It might have been expected that Mott and the other leaders of the student movement would have been heavily involved in these protests against the domination of government by business. Instead their attention continued to be taken up entirely by the mission fields and the task of converting young people. They continued to believe, as Drummond had, that stewardship, or voluntary reformism by the upper classes, was an adequate answer to social and international problems.

There are various reasons for this. Mott depended on business for his finance. He also saw business interests in terms of individual leaders of industry, to whose consciences he could appeal, because he knew them as equals. This was also true in a wider sense of the student movement. Students generally came from, and certainly were destined to join, the upper strata of society. They were encouraged to think of themselves as the 'future teachers and rulers of our nation', 'the rising hope of our country, the church, the world', in the words of a book that greatly influenced Mott.[106] Men like Mott and Eddy, and Buchman for that matter, were also rising in terms of social mobility, moving from rural upbringings to the metropolitan centres, from small business backgrounds to friendship with Presidents and the richest men in the country. Mackie wrote of Mott that 'He liked to meet and talk with "top people" in every walk of life, and had an almost exaggerated respect for temporal authority'.[107] The praise of 'top' people for his work was important to him, and he used it as an advertisement for it.[108] Perhaps his mother's extreme reverence for European royalty was as influential on him as her enthusiasm for holiness and missions, or as was his father's business sense. With this background and his close association with the country's leaders it is not surprising that Mott saw leadership as the most important element in social structure, or that he considered that 'on the human plane, mankind's supreme need is great leadership'.[109] Those ministers who were gradually disillusioned with the 'stewardship' ideal were generally those like Washington Gladden who were in close contact with labour problems. Mott was early on preoccupied with missionary problems, and his effective leadership of both the YMCA and the SVM ensured that the student movement as a whole followed his lead.

The attraction of the 'stewardship' ideal was enhanced by the effectiveness of the student movement's evangelism. The decision of thousands of students to become foreign missionaries reflected real self-sacrifice. In their own experience their conversion was of immense power in transforming their motives and morality. In Moody's hands, or at least in those of his imitators, the appeal to love and service may well have represented a growth of sentimentalism compared to the old hellfire preaching. But the stress laid by Drummond and Mott on 'an ethical decision of the will' did not allow of a sentimental piety.[110] In the words of a later WSCF leader, the faith of Mott's group may have been arrogant, but it inspired in them a 'willingness to

[106] Prof. WS Tyler's *Prayer for Colleges,* 1878 Boston. Quoted in Matthews p 95
[107] Mackie 1965 p 14
[108] e.g. Mott 1897 pp 5-8 – the introduction to his first book consisting of the opinions of the Earl of Aberdeen, Gladstone [the British Prime Minister], Prince Oscar Bernadotte of Sweden, Count Andreas von Bernstorff of Germany, and ex-President Harrison of the WSCF.
[109] Matthews p 354
[110] Mackie 1965 p 19

sacrifice, compassion for those who live in darkness and a faith in God's power to save and guide, which make every different or later attitude seem lukewarm or half-hearted'.[111] They saw no reason why their peers, 'future rulers' of society, should not have equally powerful experiences of ethical conversion, and they thereby put weight into the old evangelical conception of stewardship. If there was a fault in the latter, they believed, it was only in the lack of religious experiences powerful enough to change the lives of society's rulers, not in the inability of converted individual leaders to make radical reforms in society. This view sees the good motivation of leaders as the main essential and main problem in any society, socialist or capitalist. In the words of a leading exponent of this evangelical social gospel, Professor Peabody of Harvard:

> If any revolution in the industrial order is to overthrow the existing economic system, the new order must depend for its eminence on the principles of the teaching of Jesus; but, if the principles of the teaching of Jesus should come to control the existing economic system, a revolution in the industrial order would seem to be unnecessary.[112]

Robert E Speer quoted this passage in support of his contention that even from a social point of view individual conversion was the prime necessity, and not political pressure. A similar belief was to inspire the work of the Oxford Group.

If 'future rulers' were to be converted, and if the hope of social progress lay in converting them, then their conversion was obviously too vital a matter to be left to chance or to the haphazard methods of most evangelists. So argued Drummond. But it was Mott who applied a business efficiency outlook to the task of constructing an alternative, a 'strategy' to convert future elites as a rational step towards transforming the world. The power to convince young educated minds of the practicality of the stewardship ideal lay at least as much in the awe-inspiring efficiency of Mott's strategy as it did on the experience of pietist conversion or in the students' position of social privilege. This strategy is of great importance in understanding the Oxford Group's later political outlook.

The 'Strategy' of Drummond and Mott

Drummond outlined the new approach in his address on missions in 1890:

> The serious taking of every new country, indeed, is not done by casual sharp-shooters bringing down their man here and there, but by a carefully thought-out attack upon central points, or by patient siege planned with all a military tactician's knowledge.

He severely criticised the failure of missionaries in China to influence the educated classes, or to adopt a combined plan for the 'taking' of the country. Highly educated men were required for this task, he argued. He appealed to university students to become missionaries, not in the primitive South Sea Islands where they might be martyred and their abilities wasted, but in China and Japan, where they could have great influence. Following his Asian and Australasian tour of 1890 he was convinced that Japan was 'the most interesting country in the world at this moment' because it

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[111] 't Hooft 1932 pp 223f

[112] Quoted in Speer 1911 p 117

was fast industrialising and was 'prospecting for a religion'.[113] If it was true of Mott that he 'thinks in terms of continents, plans for the world' so it was of Drummond before him… and of Buchman after him.

'The time has come' wrote Mott in 1915 in his book *The Present World Situation*, 'to lay plans upon such a scale and to direct strategy on such lines as are worthy of Christian leaders who expect to conquer a world'.[114] But Mott had already been laying such plans for twenty years. His first book, of 1897, was titled *Strategic Points in the World's Conquest*, and subtitled *The Universities and Colleges as Related to the Progress of Christianity*. The title of his second book, which was also the 'watchword' of the SVM and which epitomised, in Sherwood Eddy's words, its 'audacity and presumption', was *The Evangelization of the World in this Generation*.[115] Mott modelled his own outlook on British imperial strategists such as Cecil Rhodes and Lord Curzon, who he wrote 'had acquired for himself the power of looking at Asia as a whole'.[116] In Christian history he looked back to the Jesuits for inspiration, while 'For the world-mindedness of Roman Catholic policy he has a profound admiration' wrote Matthews.[117] Naturally enough, Mott was impressed by St Paul's concentration, with his 'characteristic statesmanship', on the cities, 'the strategic points of the Roman Empire'.[118] Probably without having read this, but issuing from the same outlook, Oxford Group leaders Paul Campbell and Peter Howard published a study of St Paul in 1956 entitled *A Story of Effective Statesmanship*.

Mott's basic strategy in the 1890s was to create in each country an organisational framework in which personal evangelism could be carried on aggressively and consistently among students, and to link these national frameworks in an international federation. The basic local unit was to be the establishment of a Christian Association in each college. Under Mott's leadership from 1888, Christian Associations were eventually established in every college in the United States (they had reached only 300 out of 1200 in 1888). Wilder's and Mott's visits to Britain in the early 1890s encouraged the establishment of the British SCM and SVM at Keswick.[119] Their tour of Scandinavia in 1895 started 'the American period' in student religion there when vigorous student Christian Associations were formed at all the universities.[120] On this tour, at Vadstena in Sweden, Mott persuaded the leaders of several European student evangelical movements to form the World Student Christian Federation, with himself as permanent secretary. In the next two years Mott and his wife travelled the world visiting colleges and universities in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australasia. He established 70 new college Christian Associations (and re-organized some more), and organised most of them into autonomous national SCMs, which he persuaded to affiliate to the WSCF.[121] As a result the WSCF included Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants of various churches under the evangelical missionary banner. The Japanese SCM for example, was turned from Unitarianism to accepting the

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113 Smith 1899 p 402-7
114 Mott 1915 p 58
115 Eddy 1935 p 58
116 e.g. Mott 1915 p 69
117 Mott 1897 p 23. Matthews 1934 p 138
118 Mott 1900 p 72
119 Martin 1924 p 6 and Matthews 1934 p 112
120 Christie 1932 p 214
121 Mott 1897 pp 208 f

evangelical basis of the WSCF by Mott's persuasion in 1897.[122] In 1901 Mott took over the foreign department of the North American YMCA and turned his organizing ability to building up the YMCAs in the 'mission lands'.

Through almost ceaseless travel Mott continued to foster the SCMs and YMCAs, but turned his attention increasingly to general missionary problems. As chairman of the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference and organiser on his 1912-13 world tour of the machinery of missionary co-operation in the Edinburgh 'Continuation Committees' he extended the ecumenism of the WSCF to include the mission churches. The modern ecumenical movement followed as a direct result, with much encouragement from Mott.[123]

An important aspect of Mott's strategy was his desire for co-operation with, and the respect of, the Churches. Ruth Rouse, a colleague of Mott's in the WSCF, considered that

> …so closely were some Student Christian organisations at their beginning linked with 'pietist' movements of various kinds, the Gemeinschafts-Bewegung in Germany, for example, that there was grave danger that such Student Christian Movements might develop an aloof attitude towards the Churches, and become the child of a religious clique. From this they were saved by the steady persistence with which Dr Mott sought out the ecclesiastical leaders, introduced them to the Student Movement… encouraged the entrance of the Movement into the Theological Colleges….[124]

and so on. Mott saw the student movement as a lay arm of the churches, able as such to do things they could not do: it was to be a forum in which they could co-operate; and it was more able than they were to make contact with non-Christians and to 'penetrate society by serving it in a variety of apparently secular ways', in Mackie's words.[125] Henry Wright elaborated on this in his manual *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework*, in which he argued that the YMCA, followed 'Jesus' own method – evangelization directly by the layman, and indirectly by the clergyman', who was to be merely a teacher in the background.[126]

Mott was determined to preserve the churches' support for his work, and to lead them along the path of ecumenical co-operation of the WSCF. But 'It is doubtful, in spite of his wide reading and his natural appreciation of splendid liturgy', wrote Mackie, 'whether he was deeply aware of the inner meaning of historical separation [of the churches] and theological differences'.[127] Mott saw Christ in all the churches 'which acknowledge him as Lord'.[128] This stemmed directly from the experientialism or pietism of his religion. His father had been converted by a Quaker YMCA secretary and had joined the Methodist Episcopal Church as a result. At college long before his 'conversion' Mott had gone to Mass at the Roman Catholic chapel 'not infrequently'.[129] Drummond's scientific pietism merely added greater certainty, rationality and method to this basic orientation.

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[122] Matthews p 125
[123] Mackie 1965 p 12
[124] Rouse 1930 p 115
[125] Mackie 1965 p 26
[126] Wright 1924 pp 87-98
[127] Mackie 1965 p 51
[128] Mott 1915 p 141
[129] Matthews p 246

Mott had a profound faith in the value of organisations and constitutions. He was also an organiser of rare ability. But his intention was to create the framework for pietist evangelism, not to multiply bureaucracy or to create democratic structures to reflect current Christian opinions. He retained dictatorial control over the YMCA and SVM Mackie considered that his personality was too powerful for a student movement: despite his efforts to delegate leadership and responsibility it was still he who held the power to delegate and his outlook which was impressed on his subordinates.[130] Nonetheless Mott was in no sense content to be a 'star' evangelist – 'The difference between Dr Mott and many evangelists of his day appeared at this point': considers one commentator 'the fellowship itself had to be recruited, organized and inspired'.[131]

Mott did not look on the WSCF or the YMCA as organisations which he controlled so much as parts of a 'fellowship' or 'brotherhood' which he was convinced God controlled.[132] Both characteristics made strong impressions on his colleagues. 'A fuller unity never existed between men', wrote one to him 'than that enjoyed by the group who gathered around your founding and upbuilding of the foreign service' (of the YMCA).[133] Mackie wrote that:

> The Federation acquired the characteristics of a family in which mutual loyalty and friendship, worked out in prayer and correspondence, in travels and in conference, came not only to sustain movements in their Christian witness, but to speak to them of Christ.

This 'fellowship', intensely loyal and dominated by one man's vision, sounds strikingly similar to the Oxford Group. This structural similarity will be looked at later. The point for this chapter is that if the 'family' nature of their organisations was experiential 'evidence' of Christ to Mott and his colleagues, it was also evidence to them of the 'answer' to international conflict. Mott was convinced that the WSCF would counteract nationalism as its internationally minded students went on to become influential in their nations' affairs.[134] Through the WSCF with its 140,000 students in 2,000 societies in 40 nations, Mott declared to President Taft, the 'principles of true brotherhood' will dominate 'the students of the world... in all their relationships, civic, political, national, international and religious'. As evidence of this he cited examples of the WSCF's practical influence: it was 'the first enterprise to assemble French and German students after the Franco-German War' (This was pre-1914 and must refer to the War of 1870)…. While in South Africa during the Boer War, it was the only movement not divided by that convulsion'. Taft replied 'Dr Mott you are actually doing what the rest of us have been wishing and striving for. This great organization which you have developed is doing more than all treaties or tribunals can accomplish…'.[135]

Growing alongside Mott's internationalism and somewhat tempering his Americanism, was his increasing appreciation of nationalist aspirations and non-Christian religions. He advocated the YMCA's sympathetic identification with Japan's 'growing national aspirations'.[136] With Sherwood Eddy on his 1912-13 tour of China he presented Christianity to meetings of government officials and

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[130] Mackie 1965 e.g. p 35
[131] Paul Anderson in Mackie 1965 p 276
[132] e.g. on 'brotherhood' see de Dietrich 1931 p 104 and Matthews 1934 pp 109 and 405
[133] Matthews 1934 p 365 and see Mackie 1965 p 36 on Mott's belief in God's leadership of the WSCF
[134] viz Mott 1897 p 22 and Matthews 1934 p 289
[135] Matthews Chapter XV
[136] Mott 1915 p 72; also Mott 1897 p 197

businessmen as well as to students as the means to build China's prosperity and power. His early contempt for Hinduism and Buddhism turned to appreciation – he even chided the Buddhist leaders of Siam for not spreading their religion more effectively. He encouraged studies of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, the last by Howard Walter, in order to improve Christian appreciation and 'friendly' evangelism towards them.[137] This approach was, no less than the older evangelical approach, intended to convert to Christianity. But it relied on friendliness, sympathy and the example of 'Christian' virtues (compassion, hard work and self-control, leading to prosperity, greatness and philanthropy) rather than on the 'futile procedure of debate and argument'.[138]

Mott's strong point was not his understanding of the nuances of politics, secular or ecclesiastical, but his sense of 'vision' for international or church unity, or for the possible contribution of particular nations to the world. If Drummond was particularly impressed by Japan, Mott was by China, quoting Napoleon's dictum 'When China is moved it will change the face of the globe'.[139] Nathan Söderblom aptly dubbed Mott 'the Napoleon of the Christian student movement'.[140] His ideal was to talk naturally about religion, but later generations remembered rather his 'baroque' overstatements and 'triumphalist' stock phrases, such as that 'every crisis was an opportunity', and 'the years ahead were always the best years'. Cultivating a speaking style that would impress his audience with the seriousness of the task before them, he acquired, in Anderson's words, a 'gnomic style of utterance', a liking for repeating maxims with 'each word dropped separately with a plop into the listening pool of auditors'.[141]

Summary

It is clear from a study of Drummond's and Mott's philosophy that certain characteristics of MRA which appeared to some to be a novel break with the evangelical tradition were in fact a direct development from the pre-war outlook of these leaders of the Student Christian movement. The mission to the middle and upper classes which was always a hallmark of the Oxford Group was itself inherited from the student YMCA. But so too was the attempt to influence such people by presenting evangelical experience as the road to national recovery and international peace. The sense of 'strategic' planning with which MRA teams travelled the world and appealed to the elites of many countries had been integral previously to Mott's outlook. Other emphases of MRA that echoed Mott and were indeed largely derived from the YMCA of his day through Buchman included the value given to the support of prominent people; to mixing on equal terms with social elites and following upper class customs in order to do so, while economising as far as possible; to the 'fellowship' itself as an example of international co-operation; to the development of non-Western leadership of the work; to an appreciation of national cultures and non-Christian religions; to efficient administration as an example of Christian perfection. Finally perhaps the most characteristic trait of both Mott's pre-1914 YMCA and Buchman's movement was the almost limitless optimism which they shared about their mission.

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[137] Matthews Chapter XIII
[138] Eddy 1935 p 10
[139] Mott 1897 pp 156 f
[140] Matthews p 169
[141] Visser 't Hooft 1965 p 284, 't Hooft autobiography p 18, Anderson in Mackie 1965 p 21

The implication of this comparison is to suggest very little difference between Buchman's programme and outlook and Mott's. It will be seen in Chapter IX that there were at least two major differences, however: Buchman's rejection of organisation and the extent to which he appealed not just to future rulers but to present ones as well. Mott and Eddy had done this in China. But Buchman extended the principle to his attempts to convert Western political leaders as well.

Part Two: Origins: Frank Buchman 1878-1918

Chapter III: Youth 1878-1902

A German Community

Frank Buchman was born in Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, on June 4th 1878. This was less than a decade after the first transcontinental railway was opened; it was only six years after the last US acquisition of territory in North America. Continental expansion had only just been formally completed. The West was still 'wild'. But Rockefeller's Pittsburgh refinery and the exploitation of Pennsylvanian coal and limestone for Carnegie's Pittsburgh steelworks had already brought the new Eastern world of industrial boom and monopolies to Buchman's home state.

Buchman's upbringing took place in an area apparently pervaded more by the Europeanness of its origins than by this American setting. Pennsburg was a rural backwater in an area settled in the 18th century by German and German-Swiss migrants.[142] Their cultural patterns kept Americanism and even the English language at bay into the 20th century. An article about Buchman in a 1929 Philadelphia newspaper states that in his youth 'scarcely a word of English was heard in that community'. The area around Pennsburg was known as 'Little Switzerland'. It was rich farming land, and Swiss-German rural traditions dominated the *gemeinschaftlich* community. Oxford Group literature was to paint idyllic pictures of these people with 'their trim farmhouses and their gaily-painted barns, their spotless kitchens, and their lovingly tended churches and churchyards' not to mention 'the traditional Pennsylvania-German meals with their groaning tables, the twenty-four different dishes, the 'sweets and sours', '*schnitz* and *knepp*', '*schunkelfleisch*', 'shoofly pie', and so on'. [143]

'There were only 1200 people in the village of Pennsburg' recalled Buchman. 'Everybody was Pennsylvania German, and in those days we knew everybody. I could lie awake at night and think of everybody who lived in every house from one end of Pennsburg to the other... All the farms were owned by people who knew each other... cousins or relatives'. As well as the church, which was the centre of the town's life, Buchman recalled, 'there was the school house, a hotel, a store and a millinery shop'. [144]

The Family

a) From farm to city

Despite their immersion in this rural backwater the Buchman family were well aware of the wider American society. Buchman's father, Franklin, pioneered west to Indiana road building as a young man, only returning to the Swiss German community because of contracting malaria. The family was patriotic. When mistaken for a German in wartime Korea in 1918 Frank Buchman was able to add to his pride in US citizenship the claim that 'My great-grandfathers on both sides of the house were with

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[142] Buchman's own ancestors migrated from St. Gallen, Switzerland to Pennsylvania in 1740. Ref: The Allentown *Morning Call* supplement June 4th 1953 to mark Buchman's 75th birthday.
[143] Thornhill in Buchman 1961 p xi; Buchman 1958 p 35
[144] MS. Biography

Washington at Valley Forge'. An uncle of his claimed to be the first man to enlist for the North in the Civil War.

Franklin Buchman took over his own family farm in 1860 after his abortive move westwards. He married Sarah Greenwalt, daughter of a substantial farming family who were 'leaders in the [Kistler] valley'.[145] But the desire to move on and better himself remained with him. His father had been an innkeeper as well as farmer, and Franklin soon followed that bent instead. He moved to Pennsburg to run first the general store and then the hotel, The American House. As Frank Buchman later described it, 'It was more of a family affair like the old guest-house, with salesmen and businessmen visiting the cigar factory. It wasn't a big place. It was right down by the tracks – four trains a day and two freights'.[146]

In 1894 when Frank Buchman was 15, his father moved on again. This time it was to the German section of Allentown, the nearest city to Pennsburg, to run a liquor business and to manufacture root beer, ginger beer and sarsparilla, a forerunner of Coca-Cola.[147] Allentown, 90 miles West of New York City and 60 miles North of Philadelphia, was 'known as the 'Queen City of the Lehigh Valley... and claims to be its commercial and industrial metropolis', in the words of a local sociologist of Allentown religion, J. M. Bossard, in 1918.[148] Many workers at the nearby Bethlehem steel industry lived in Allentown. Immigrants of non-German stock were brought into the area by the employment opportunities. Between 1890 and 1900 Allentown's population rose by 40.4% to over 35,000 and by 46.6% in the next decade. In 1890 much of the business and home life of Allentown was still conducted in 'Pennsylvania Dutch' (i.e. German dialect, 'Dutch' being a corruption of 'Deutsch'), though the next two decades saw the passing of the old tongue and of 'the old conservative spirit'. The characteristics of the people which Bossard stressed were their conservatism, 'marked respect for law and order', thrift and contentedness, and the greater importance for them of home and family life compared to English-speaking Americans.

It was suggested in the previous chapter that the upward social mobility of Mott, Eddy and Buchman and others in the student movement may have contributed to their lack of criticism of the upper classes and their exaggerated respect for leaders in church, industry and politics. Buchman came from an immigrant community which was comfortably off and had great respect for authority, as well as from a family that was determined to rise in the world. He early showed a considerable awe at contact with the 'great'. On a school holiday trip to Montreal he was thrilled to discover that 'President McKinley was staying in the same hotel and we saw Mrs McKinley sitting in the window having her hands manicured' a sight he remembered long afterwards.[149] Later as a seminary student he wrote home a long letter asserting his ambition to become an author, 'to aim high' and 'repay you for those advantages which you have given me, by the pleasure you shall receive from saying to others, this is my son. By the grace of God I intend to make the name of Buchman shine forth'.[150] As a preacher, he explained, he must have knowledge of the world as well as of books, and be able to get along with all classes. It is with something of an anti-climax

[145] Buchman quoted in MSS Biography
[146] MSS Biography
[147] The move may also have been made with an eye to furthering Frank Buchman's education as well.
[148] Bossard 1918 p 7
[149] MSS Biography p 14
[150] Undated letter, MSS Biography

after this grandiose conception of his future that one discovers that the purpose of this preamble was merely to get his parents' permission to attend a society wedding.

He showed an ambivalent attitude to this wedding. He needed to go to it, he wrote to his parents, in order to get to know the world and so to be a more effective minister. But on the other hand he argued that they must let him go because it would be impossible to 'taste those pleasures' when he had started his 'life work'. In fact when he did start what he thought was to be his life work, a mission to the lower classes of Philadelphia, he was nonetheless criticised by a fellow churchman for loving to 'hobnob' with the wealthy and for boasting about letters which he had received from Carnegie.[151] Whatever the truth of these criticisms, it seems that by the time of the Oxford Group Buchman had in some ways resolved the tension between his evangelistic purpose and his desire to be with the socially prominent by sublimating the latter in his mission to the upper and middle classes, which 'necessitated' in his view staying at hotels which Presidents frequent and mixing with high society. It was at least convenient, at best a creative use of his personal ambition, that his later mission was to provide ample scope for the foreign travel and social experience after which he hankered as a young man.

b) Authority

If the deference for authority which Buchman displayed in his Oxford Group evangelism owed something to his small-town origins it also may have resulted partly from his relationship with his parents. The letter above about the wedding shows his great desire to please his parents in the career that they had chosen for him, and his obedience to them in relatively small matters. After hearing a talk by the YMCA evangelist Robert E Speer at college he wanted to volunteer as a missionary to India, but his parents vetoed the idea. Their relationship is seen in the manner with which Sarah Buchman could write to her son when he was in Europe at the age of 29, was looking after a sick American couple and needed more money. 'Father says you should not attempt to draw money from someone else's bank account... Please obey... Do not make any debts'. One can only speculate as to the influence which Buchman's acceptance of this firm parental authority had on his religious and political outlook. 'Obedience to the Father' was central to his religion, as was an enlightened paternalism to his politics, while he himself ran the Oxford Group with parental authority as well as love.

c) Hospitality

Buchman's parents were not repressively puritanical. Their home was known for its warm hospitality and excellent meals. The childhood memories of Buchman and a school friend, later Mrs Flora E Longenecker, were of the happiness of days spent fishing, tobogganing, swimming and of Sarah Buchman's 'abundance of good refreshments... We felt free to have all the fun we wanted'.[152] At college Buchman was remembered by his roommate as a 'social leader' and by others as 'fond of female society', once taking twelve girls to a fraternity dance. His parents allowed late night parties. 'In the winter we used to go on sleighing parties to Nazareth', Buchman recalled. 'We'd go and dance all night and drive home fourteen miles by sled in the early morning. We used to dance square dances and waltzes and two-steps

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[151] Pfatteicher 1934

[152] Letter of Mr Flora E Longenecker, a fellow pupil of Buchman's at the Perkiomen seminary, Pennsburg, of Nov. 28 1933. MSS Biography

and polkas'. But he added, 'I gave up dancing when I was twenty-one because I was going to be a minister'.

A characteristic feature of the Oxford Group was to be Buchman's cultivation of a family atmosphere with much emphasis on traditional festivals and good food. Buchman was to draw criticism in his hospice work (1905-07) and later as leader of the Group for spending too much on food. But he was merely attempting to reproduce the generosity of his childhood community, usually in an economical manner. Though tempered by teetotalism and embellished with aristocratic furnishings, the Buchman family and Pennsburg community atmosphere thus lived on in the Oxford Group's Mayfair houses and international conference centres.

d) Education

Buchman spent a year at Allentown High School after the family moved there from Pennsburg. Then his father chose to send him to the local Lutheran Muhlenberg College as more fitting for a future minister than a cosmopolitan college like Princeton. On graduating he entered the Mt Airy Seminary in Philadelphia in 1899. There in 1902 he passed exams in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Homiletics, Exegesis, and Pastoral Theology, and was ordained a Lutheran minister.

Buchman seems to have been academically an average student at school and college. His enjoyment of social life has been mentioned. He appears to have been most noted, however, for his personal and vocational ambition. His desire to become a famous minister has been noted above in his letter to his parents. His cousin Dr Fred Fetherolf, and his Latin professor at Muhlenberg both later remembered his strong-mindedness at college. The latter said it won him 'the respect of those who did not always agree with him', the former that 'he made himself unpopular with some fellows' as a result of it. In the letter to his parents already quoted, Buchman showed a sense of self-importance that could well have drawn both respect and resentment: 'the world will soon require my services' he wrote, or 'I notice here in this Seminary, with a few, a very few exceptions, the students lack general knowledge. They know nothing but what they have studied in books'. They lacked 'a knowledge of the doings of men'. When the time came to decide on his future ministerial post a crippled college friend, JS Bridges Stoppes, criticised him for wanting an influential city church when he himself could expect little in life. Stung by this accusation Buchman turned down an invitation to the promising Olivet Mission in Philadelphia and accepted a more humble and difficult job, to start a storefront church in a run down area on the outskirts of the city.

At college Buchman's religious interest was practical rather than theoretical. He was drawn to social work. Later evidence suggests that his ideal was already at this time conversionist. Buchman was reported in a newspaper interview of 1933 to the effect that the first of his 'illuminating religious experiences' came to him while training for the ministry, when 'I found myself with a consuming passion for converts'.[153] Dr Fetherolf gave independent support to this in his memories of Buchman at college:

> Once I quoted to him from Bacon's *Essays* that a single man could do better work than a married man. He was anxious for me to find that passage. His idea was to have but one interest in life. His was to win men for God.[154]

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[153] *Sunday Chronicle*, London, 1 October 1933
[154] MSS Biography p 16

Religious Influence in Youth

a) Family

The origins of Buchman's vocation to be a minister are clearer than those of his conversionist zeal. It seems to have been taken for granted in his family that he would enter the ministry. He does not seem to have had any conversion or other important experience before the one mentioned in his seminary days. It may have been particularly his mother's wish that he be ordained. In her son's words she was 'a very godly woman', her cousin 'one of the great divines', Dr Emmanuel Greenwalt. An uncle of Buchman's was also a professional man, a doctor. Frank was Franklin and Sarah's only child.[155] The ministry would be a step up the social ladder for the family, as well as an act of devotion. The veto on volunteering for Indian missions suggests that the Buchman parents wanted their son to be a more conventional, local Lutheran minister. The family was not sympathetic to revivalism. Buchman remembered long afterwards his Aunt Mary's admonition to him, perhaps given from concern at his contacts with the student evangelical movement, during his college days: 'Frank, you should be winning people, one by one. Do personal work... You can't change people in crowds'.

b) Lutheranism in Pennsburg and Allentown

Even this degree of conversionism seems to have been foreign to Pennsburg:

'Everybody went to Church' there, remembered Buchman, 'but it didn't affect their lives much, other than they were <u>very</u> moral. I only once saw a man who was changed there. He was a drunkard and got real religion and he was all right. I saw that, but he was the only one. You got confirmed and went to church, but that was all'.

Even in his early thirties Buchman was hesitant in allowing a revivalist appeal to be made in one of his meetings. He was surprised by its effectiveness in persuading about 80 students to make a 'decision for Christ, and explained later: 'It was new to me. I had never seen it before. I had never been raised in that tradition... Mine [his tradition] was very conservative and very cautious'.[156]

The Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania was an exception among the American Lutheran bodies in resisting the acceptance of the Arminian revivalism that had virtually become America's 'national religion' by the mid-19th century. In Allentown at least this resistance was not easy. The history of the Lutheran Church there in the 1880s and 90s, wrote Bossard,

> is marked by internal discussions, legal tangles, bad spirit, strife, bickerings, wrangles concerning questions of faith and 'new measures' [i.e. revivalistic methods], all of which led to wasteful duplication of organization and church building, as well as smaller gains of membership per annum. Numerous citizens became disgusted with the course of events in the Lutheran Church, and while the writer was engaged in investigations relative to this thesis [c. 1917], there were still to be found old residents whose lukewarmness towards their one-time church was ascribed to the strife of these early days.[157]

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[155] An elder son had died in infancy. Franklin and Sarah Buchman later adopted Dan, an orphaned cousin of Frank's, many years his junior, as their second son

[156] Buchman 1961 p 336

[157] Bossard p 46

Perhaps Buchman's own later 'lukewarmness' to his church[158] owed something to these disputes as well as to his own later particular conflict with the Ministerium.

If the tradition in which Buchman was reared was not revivalist, it was nonetheless to some degree pietist. Keene and van Dusen in writing of the Oxford Group's religious origins both refer to the importance of the 'conservative Lutheran pietism' of his upbringing. Van Dusen argues that Buchman was much influenced by

> its other-worldliness, its loyal acceptance of existing political and social authority, its stress on 'sin' and 'faith' and 'rebirth' and 'regeneration', its uncritical use of the Bible, its intense mysticism, even its practice of Divine Guidance.[159]

Related to the first and last of these points is the first of the elements which Keene thought Buchman owed to Lutheran pietism, namely its 'sense of intimate personal contact with God and the practical belief that such contact was the expected and normal experience'. The other two elements Keene picked out were:

2. a pessimistic view of unregenerate human nature combined with an optimistic belief in the possibilities of redemption, and
3. the elevation of faith above works, the view that all must be reborn.[160]

Considering the evidence provided above of the Pennsylvanian Lutherans' conservatism and Buchman's own lack of a conversion experience when under their influence, it seems likely that Van Dusen and Keene have over-estimated the importance of rebirth in the religion of Buchman's youth, at least as a living experience. Its presence in Lutheran theology may of course have been of influence. There is probably more truth in their comments on the political conservatism of Lutheranism, on its sense of nearness to God and its emphasis on sin. After all the Pennsburgers were, as we have seen, 'very moral people'.

c) The Schwenkfelders

An additional element in Buchman's upbringing only, it seems, remarked on by Driberg, was the influence of the Schwenkfelder sect. From the age of 8 until the move to Allentown Buchman attended the Perkiomen Seminary. It was a new school of only 17 pupils, whose parents clubbed together to pay the teachers. The latter were Schwenkfelders. This sect owed its origins to Caspar von Schwenkfeld (1489-1561), though it had not been his intention to found a sect. He stressed the spreading of conventicles, or groups of 'saints', throughout the churches, claiming to belong to no church himself; he rejected the sacraments and believed in the direct inspiration and rule of the Holy Spirit. His followers had fled from Silesia in 1720 to England, Holland and America, where they had settled in the tolerant state of Pennsylvania.[161]

[158] 'Lukewarmness' in the sense of his move from Lutheran to interdenominational (YMCA) employment, which was an early expression of his dissatisfaction with creedal and ecclesiastical forms and his search for the pan-ecclesiastical 'essentials' of Christianity, leading eventually to his formation of a movement without an ecclesiastical or sectarian structure or a formal theology. This is not to suggest that he ever showed public lack of respect to his own Church (with the possible partial exception of his failure to contact the Ministerium to which he was responsible in 1908 – see next chapter.)

[159] Van Dusen 1934 July p 4

[160] Keene 1937 p 36

[161] Pennsburg was in fact the headquarters of the Schwenkfelder sect in America. See 'The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church' (1965 Minneapolis) p 2142

Any definite idea of the Schwenkfelders' influence on Frank Buchman must await further knowledge about the nature of the sect's remnants in Pennsylvania in the 1880s and 90s. One may conjecture, however, that even if the particular theology of Schwenkfeld did not get through to the schoolchildren of Perkiomen Seminary, some attitudes may have done. These would probably have included the belief that religion was primarily an interior matter between the individual and the Holy Spirit, that church and sacraments were of secondary importance, and that the Spirit could rule congregations as well as individuals. It is tempting to go further and to see in Schwenkfeld's conventicles 'leavening' the churches the inspiration of Buchman's 'Group Movement' to 'revitalise' the churches, and to see in Schwenkfeld's belief that doctrines and Bible were symbols of experiences rather than literally true, the origin of Buchman's lack of interest in, and ability to remain unembarrassed by, theological controversy. At least these early influences may have predisposed him to accepting Drummond's experientialism rather than the emphasis on theology typical of both sides of the modernist-fundamentalist conflict.

A surprising fact emerged from Buchman's own account of his childhood. As well as going twice to the Lutheran church each Sunday, he said, 'when I had a friend who was a Catholic I walked with him on Sundays early all the way to Mass which was six miles'. This indicates a softening of traditional attitudes more characteristic of the experiential ecumenism of evangelicals – or of Schwenkfelders – than of Old Lutherans: the same as the ecumenism which had allowed Mott to attend the Catholic chapel 'not infrequently' while at the little Upper Iowa University, and which made Moody welcome Catholics for instance at his Dublin meetings in 1874.[162] Or it may just have been that, as in the matter of drink and dance, the Buchman parents were fairly broadminded.

d) Pennsylvania history and Chautauquas

Two other possible influences on Buchman deserve brief mention. The first is the history of his home state. Buchman frequently quoted William Penn's dictum that 'men must choose to be governed by God or they condemn themselves to be ruled by tyrants'.[163] Buchman had historical interests – for instance his holiday visits to the battlefields of the revolutionary war – and he may well have taken an interest in the Quaker foundation of Pennsylvania. Despite Buchman's favourite quotation from him, William Penn (1644-1718) was scarcely a democrat in the modern sense. He was enabled to experiment in political forms by virtue of owning the whole of Pennsylvania, a gift from the King in 1681. He was a pioneer in religious toleration, in a treaty of friendship with the American Indians and in a 'benevolent' treatment of his black slaves. As an archetypal paternalist believing in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he may well have added weight to Buchman's belief in the potential for good of 'God-guided' leaders.

Secondly, in high school or college vacations, Buchman attended Chautauqua summer schools. These were an important source of education in American values in the hinterlands. They included lectures (on anything from Milton or the American Revolution to cookery or temperance), sports and prayer meetings, and all 'interlarded with xylophone orchestras, Swiss yodellers and college girl octettes'.[164] Leading evangelists such as Henry Drummond or William Jennings Bryan addressed them; as

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[162] Matthews 1934 p 246 and Smith 1899 p 75
[163] e.g. Buchman 1961 pp 131, 161, 240
[164] Dulles 1959

did entertainers like Mark Twain and PT Barnum, and every US President from Grant to McKinley. The Chautauquas may have afforded Buchman's first contacts with mainstream evangelism as well as widening his horizons socially.

e) The Student Christian Movement

Finally it is probable that the student YMCA and SVM had some influence on Buchman at college. His desire to go to India as a missionary stemmed from it. He is known to have been impressed by hearing RE Speer speak at the college, either at college or soon after he began attending the Northfield conferences. More details, however, are not available.

Chapter IV: Buchman's Lutheran Ministry 1902-1908

Overbrook

In 1901 Buchman wrote from the seminary to his mother about the social work he was becoming involved with in Philadelphia, mentioning the rescue missions, hospitals, alms houses, wood sheds for training workers, the reformatory and the prison. 'This work is largely philanthropic', he wrote. 'This lies nearest my heart at present'.[165] After ordination he decided to do city mission work, and, as has been seen, was provoked by a stung conscience to take the least promising pastorate that was offered to him. The invitation from the Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States to inaugurate work in Overbrook was accepted on September 10th 1902. During the next five years Buchman made his own small but original contribution to the social gospel in the American Lutheran Church. He founded what was apparently the first of many 'hospices', or Christian hostels for young men in the American Lutheran Church on the model of hostels he was able to visit in Germany, and integrated it with the city 'Settlement' ideal for which the model was the English Toynbee Hall. The journey abroad which provided the initial inspiration for this innovatory work came soon after his appointment to the Overbrook parish.

Buchman had to start from scratch in Overbrook. He was to found a church to cater to workers and servants in the poorer part of the suburb of Overbrook, the area literally 'on the other side of the tracks' (of the Pennsylvania Railroad) from the homes of the wealthy. He rented, or was given[166] a store with rooms above as his living quarters and church. Furniture was acquired from friends and money raised from local businessmen. In 1936 the Rev G Keller Rubrecht wrote to Buchman of his memory of 'the wonderful meals you placed on the old trunk and around which we fell on our knees and prayed':[167] poverty, good food and dedication marked Buchman's earliest work.

After four months Buchman was congratulated for 'the success with which God is crowning your efforts' by the President of the Ministerium. Probably he was already showing his ability to inspire confidence and love, or gratitude, in working class people, which was to be one of his traits in later life.[168] Before the end of his 2½ years at Overbrook, he later reported, some people walked nine miles to attend his church because of the understanding they found there.

Another trait of Buchman's which first comes to notice in his years at Overbrook was his tendency to overwork himself, leading to exhaustion and virtual collapse. After only nine months at Overbrook he became so run down that his doctor ordered fresh air and rest, a parishioner suggested a voyage to Europe, and he was given three months leave on full salary to make this voyage and regain his health. Intense expenditure of nervous and physical energy was to bring Buchman on several occasions to similar exhaustion despite his strong physique, until in 1942 a partially paralysing stroke forced him to take life more quietly.

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[165] Buchman to his mother February 20th 1901. MSS Biography p 24

[166] MSS Biography states the former, Russell 1934 p 55 the latter

[167] MSS Biography p 28

[168] On this see WH Clark 1944 pp 124 f on Buchman's 'considerate kindness' and genuine interest in the 'humble' and 'unfortunate'. For examples in Group literature see, e.g., Howard 1961 pp 8, 11, 14, 35 ff.

German 'Social Christianity' 1903

After a tour including the Azores, Gibraltar, Italy and Switzerland, Buchman made a point of investigating examples of 'social Christianity' in Germany. He visited Bodelschwingh at Bethel in Westphalia, the Rauhe Haus in Hamburg, the Johannistift in Spendau, Neuendettelsau, Gnadenthal and Kaiserswerth, and learned from Stöcker and Le Seur, according to a German account of the Oxford Group.[169] Of these it seems that he was most impressed by Bodelschwingh,[170] with whom he was to maintain friendship.

It is probable that Bodelschwingh's combination of evangelism and social work represented an important influence on Buchman's understanding of social problems at this time. It is therefore worth looking at briefly. Friedrich von Bodelschwingh (1831-1910) developed a complex of hospitals (particularly for mental patients and epileptics), farms, workshops, workers' homes, hostels and schemes to settle the able-bodied unemployed in agricultural colonies reclaiming waste land. He came from an aristocratic and political family, and used his contacts, particularly with the imperial crown prince, to gain finance and government support for his projects.

Bodelschwingh's ideal in his hospitals and workers' colonies was to create a family atmosphere, to give everyone, including epileptics so far as they were able, a job of work, and to centre their lives on evangelical religion. The hospitals, run mostly by celibate deacons and deaconesses, were kept small in order to preserve the sense of family. Bodelschwingh was a fundamentalist and started his own theological school at Bethel because of the dominance of rationalist biblical criticism in the universities. But his religion was essentially experientialist; as he told a modernist professor 'without the old faith I could not nurse a single epileptic – neither could you'. His evangelical approach to epilepsy involved persuading the patient that the disease was God's punishment for his faults, and that he (or she) needed to confess publicly in church. He thought that if the epilepsy could thus be the cause of the individual's spiritual rebirth, it was to be welcomed by the epileptic who could look forward to death and feel himself superior to the unsaved, if physically healthy, outsiders. Bodelschwingh believed that God guided him and made sure that his fund-raising appeals were successful. He accepted the hierarchical class structure of contemporary society, for instance providing separate hospitals for upper class fee-paying patients. He was also a nationalist, and rejected Carnegie's request to introduce him to the Kaiser in the interests of his world peace plan. Instead he suggested that Carnegie do something about vagrancy and unemployment in America.

There is a possibility that Buchman may have been the go-between between Carnegie and Bodelschwingh. One of the latter's sons wrote that his father was put in touch with Carnegie by 'a young American minister' who was visiting them in 1908 – a year when Buchman did visit Bodelschwingh. Buchman is known to have corresponded with Carnegie. If so, this could have been a heady taste for the young Buchman of the attempts of individual 'great men' to arrange world peace. The 'young minister' was annoyed with Bodelschwingh for turning down both Carnegie's request and the million-dollar gift for Bodelschwingh's work which Carnegie offered

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[169] Laun, *Unter Gottes Führung* quoted by Keene 1937 p 38
[170] Bodelschwingh 'was of such vital influence in my life'. Buchman writing to John Colt Sept 12 1921, quoted in MSS Biography p 266

if he would accept.[171] If it was not Buchman he may nevertheless have heard of the episode from Bodelschwingh or his family.

Buchman was particularly impressed by the Christian hospices for young men which he saw in Germany. The hospice that he was to develop himself in Philadelphia was marked by an emphasis on family life and on the conversion of the recipients of charity, similar to Bodelschwingh's work. In a letter of 1924 Buchman wrote that in his hospice work he was applying socialist principles in the practical life of working people.[172] This should be taken to mean that Buchman at this time identified himself with the 'Social Gospel' as practised by Bodelschwingh – that is to say with a strong emphasis on conversion and on the betterment of life for the destitute and needy by means of evangelical charity. It does not mean that Buchman had become a socialist in the sense of criticising the existing property relations in society and advocating working class organisation to secure the workers' 'right' to control the wealth of the country.

Bodelschwingh's boldness and optimism in applying his principles of evangelical philanthropy were not unlike Mott's. In Bodelschwingh's old age, when Buchman knew him, he was still vigorously expanding his work, for instance entering parliament in his 70s to secure governmental help for his welfare schemes. His horizons were international: he was the only person in Germany whom Julie Sutter, the translator of Drummond's works into German, could find to give substantial help to a project inspired by Drummond's African journey, a mission for improving the conditions of Africans, particularly freed slaves, in the German colonies.[173] Buchman's 'conversion' in 1908 is only explicable in terms of the disappointment of the extensive ambition that he had invested in his hospice. It is not too much to conjecture that the wide scope of Bodelschwingh's hopes of reform had been an example that Buchman aspired to emulate.

Buchman's Hospices

In May 1904 Buchman started a rudimentary hospice for young men adrift in the city, in connection with his store church. Shortly before, he had taken in two 'wild' young boys and their widowed mother, Mary Hemphill, who was addicted to laudanum and whom he had found living in slum conditions. She had been a cook to the Governor of Philadelphia and was to become a mainstay of Buchman's hospice in providing good meals and homeliness. His first hospice was merely an extension of this act of charity, taking others into the rooms over the store.[174]

Soon Buchman was invited to make this his full-time activity as 'housefather' of a full sized hospice being started by the Lutheran Inner Mission Society, the first of many such hospices in America. The Ministerium Minutes for 15th-21st June 1905 announced the opening in Philadelphia of:

> a commodious and perfectly equipped boarding house or hospice for Lutheran young men, capable of accommodating between forty and fifty, and in which comfortable rooms and good board will be furnished at the most moderate rates possible...

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[171] Bradfield 1961 p 220.

[172] Letter of Jan 26 1924. MSS Biography.

[173] Information on Bodelschwingh from Sutter's 'Colony of Mercy' and Bradfield 1961.

[174] MSS Biography

> More than a year ago, the Revd. F. N. D. Buchman, impressed by the need of doing something for this class of young man, began a work along similar lines in connection with his parish at Overbrook, and soon had more than he could accommodate. Here then was a small beginning... It is his and the Board's purpose to actualise as nearly as possible the Christian family life, with all its comforts, refinements and wholesome influences. An elderly lady of good education and fine Christian character will be the house-mother.[175]

This was Miss Sarah Ward, known as 'Aunt Sadie' to the young men at the hospice, a long-time friend of the Moody family whom Buchman had met at Northfield.[176] This is the first indication, incidentally, of Buchman visiting Moody's conference centre.

Sarah Ward's appointment and the aim of creating 'Christian family life' indicate the role of an evangelistic ideal similar to Bodelschwingh's in the founding of the hospice. The young men, mostly rural migrants to the city with hopes of advancement, were to be brought into evangelical religion through a home atmosphere. In this Buchman felt that it was essential that if they could not pay enough to cover the costs of 'family life with all its comforts' then the home should be subsidised. This was provided for in the Ministerium's Minutes:

> Though it is hoped to make the hospice self-sustaining, its very purpose might be defeated were an effort made to make it altogether so... The deficit... will have to be covered from the treasury of the Society.

The Settlement and Toynbee Hall

It was not part of the hostel's purpose to provide employment for its inmates. But Buchman wanted to involve them in their spare time in understanding and doing something about the poverty of the slums. He therefore started a 'settlement' in a slum area settled by immigrants of various nationalities and confessions. Rooms were rented above a stable, from which unhealthy ammonia fumes drifted upwards, according to one source.[177] The Allentown *Daily Item* of February 7 1906 described it in glowing terms, however:

> The Settlement House is thronged with children from the streets who find a warm, happy house. Boys learn carpentering, girls learn sewing, cooking and other domestic arts.[178]

By 1905 there were 70 settlements in the United States according to Hopkins, and about 300 in 1909 by a contemporary account.[179] They formed one of the means by which the 'social gospellers' attempted to extend the influence of the churches among the urban masses. The model for many of them, including Buchman's, was Toynbee Hall in England, founded in 1884 by Canon Barnett and inspired by the Oxford Movement. Barnett's intention was to replace the isolated slum mission work of individuals by a 'resident club with a purpose', ten or twenty people resident in a building in the slums 'rehabilitating the neighbourhood from within'. 'Into this building', wrote an American minister in 1909, 'come men and women from college, business, and profession, to share their lives in work and play with men from the

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[175] Quoted in Driberg 1964
[176] MSS Biography
[177] MSS Biography
[178] quoted in MSS Biography
[179] Hopkins 1967 p 156. Williams in Paton 1909 p 462

grimy factories'.[180] Barnett was against holding religious worship in the settlements, preferring them to be completely non-sectarian. Instead the neighbourliness and secular involvements of the settlement residents were in themselves to be models of religious love and morality for the people of the slums to aspire to.

A friend of Buchman's at this time, a young Philadelphian businessman called Gustavus Bechtold, wrote later in life:

> Frank was always very hospitable and the boys would get there [the hospice] any time, eat dinner and discuss long into the night. Chiefly it was the pressing social problems of the day. We were tremendously fascinated by the Oxford Movement. Canon Barnett was a name spoken in reverence. Toynbee Hall was the model of all we aspired to do.[181]

Buchman later described his hospice to an English journalist as a 'settlement home something like your own Toynbee Hall'.[182]

However the evangelical emphasis was scarcely that of the Oxford Movement and Moody's influence was becoming felt in Buchman's work. One year Buchman took the Hemphills and some of the hospice boys to a Northfield conference. He was beginning to learn himself how to convert young men. A favourite means of conveying his message later was the telling of stories about people he had 'changed', and at least one refers to this time: the story of a boy called George who was converted from a liking for drink by Buchman's friendly attempt to win his confidence instead of scolding him. In a decade when much of the social gospel movement was emphasizing welfare or, among a minority, socialism, Buchman's work continued like Bodelschwingh's in an evangelical outlook.

Conflict with the Board

Evidence of Buchman's large aims for his work appeared during a conflict with the Board of the Inner Mission Society, which controlled the hospice finances. Regarding the 'Settlement House', Rev John Woodcock, who was to be a lifelong friend of Buchman's from this time, wrote:

> I remember I was greatly impressed with his daring. He seemed to be thinking of human need first and assuming that all materials would be forthcoming to meet that need.

Buchman perhaps hoped that the wealthy men with whom he was accused of snobbishly 'hobnobbing' would fund the project.[183] This indeed may have been as strong a motive for mixing with them as the desire for the 'pleasures' of society noted previously. Though this may have worked at Overbrook in financing the store church, it was not adequate for the hospice and settlement. The reason for this is not clear. In Overbrook and for the rest of his life Buchman was to have no difficulty in raising money for his work. It appears that in this case he took the point of view that the Board should meet the hospice deficit as provided for in the Minutes of June 1905.

The Board objected – both to Buchman's failure to keep the hospice accommodation filled with paying members, and to the cost of the meals. Mary Hemphill and her two

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[180] Paton ibid.
[181] MSS Biography
[182] *Sunday Chronicle* 1 October 1933
[183] Pfatteicher 1934

boys were occupying rooms that could have been let and since she was also the cook she was at the centre of the controversy. She was in the end cured of her addiction by Buchman but had lapses that upset Superintendent Ohl.[184] Buchman argued that the expenditure on food was necessary to make the family atmosphere of the hospice attractive enough to draw the young men away from the city's bars and nightlife. On revisiting the hospice in 1940, he said, 'It has become a hostel. It was a home in my time. But there is no Mary Hemphill there any longer'. The Board appointed a housekeeper so that 'the housefather could give his time to spiritual care, and more important the gathering of contributions, the collection of dues and securing new members'. The new housekeeper was also to buy food at less expensive stores. Buchman and Mary Hemphill did not get on with her.

On October 8, 1907, Buchman presented a 17-page hand written document to the Board outlining his conception of the hospice as a home. He asked for their confidence, greater freedom for himself and an increase in his salary from $600 to $1000 a year. He made it clear that he had the highest hopes for the work he was doing and by implication that the Board's penny pinching betrayed a lack of vision. He wrote:

> I do not believe that the church will grapple with the great problems of humanity, I do not believe that the church will ever reach out its arms of influence and sway the great masses of this world, until the church realizes this fact, that whenever there is present a man of need there is an opportunity for it to do its work.

And in case it might be thought that he was veering towards a secularized social gospel, he added:

> In doing any service for humanity, I would let it be understood that I did it with the idea of reaching the soul.

This issue of policy was complicated by a personal antipathy arising between the young 'housefather' and Dr Ohl, the Superintendent of the Board. Buchman had been impressed by Ohl's lectures in his college days. But Buchman's friend Bechtold later told Driberg that:

> Ohl was a difficult personality. He was a musician, a liturgical scholar, a student of social movements – but he couldn't get along with people.[185]

Buchman would stay up half the night talking with the boys, or waiting for them to come in, Bechtold explained, and then he would sleep late in the morning while they were out at work or studies, when Dr Ohl would come 'snooping round' to catch him in bed. Buchman, full of energy and confidence, was no doubt for his part essentially the same as when his 'fixed purpose' made him 'unpopular with some fellows' at college.[186] Colleagues other than Pfatteicher may have found him acting above himself whether in socialising with the wealthy or in presuming that he knew how to 'sway the great masses of this world'.[187]

The Board rejected Buchman's demands of 8th October. He resigned on October 24th, 1907, after only two years as housefather. The next morning John Woodcock

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[184] Driberg 1964 p 34 on this point
[185] Driberg 1964 p 35
[186] See above Chapter III, p 82
[187] Pfatteicher 1934

found him 'sobbing his heart out for he felt his life work had come to an end'. The Hemphills went to live with Woodcock's future wife. Buchman, again exhausted and ill, though this time from disappointment and bitterness as much as from over-activity, sought medical advice and left on another tour of Europe. It started with a Mediterranean cruise and continued with travels through Western Europe, including another visit to Bodelschwingh and a first visit to Britain. Six out of the nine months of this tour were overcast by his sick feeling of bitterness against Ohl and his committee of the Board of the Inner Mission Society.

Europe 1907-1908

As he travelled through Europe, Buchman recalled, 'I had the vision of "Care" in Horace's Ode, following me on a charger, always just behind'.[188] Yet he cannot have been completely self-absorbed or overcast. He left his Mediterranean cruise in Greece in order to look after an elderly American couple on board who had fallen ill and needed treatment on shore. At a US embassy party in Athens he met one of the Greek Crown Princess Sophie's ladies in waiting, Miss Contostavlos, who reported to the princess: 'Today I met an American saint'. 'Impossible', replied the princess, 'I'd like to meet him'. Or so the story goes. They did meet and Buchman's friendship with the Greek royal family, soon to include their Hessian and Romanian royal relatives, lasted throughout his life. The princess asked him to visit Sultan Abdul Hamid in Turkey and gave him an introduction to the American ambassador there as well, in order to contribute to Graeco-Turkish relations. Buchman did so – presumably the first of his many involvements in confidential diplomacy, a curious incident belonging to monarchical rather than modern Europe.

After Turkey and Germany Buchman visited the evangelical conference at Keswick, England, of which he had heard much at Northfield. There were close connections between the American student evangelical movement and the Keswick Convention, from which the British SCM and SVM had found much of its inspiration. The Convention was an annual meeting of evangelicals of all denominations for prayer, Bible study and addresses. It stood for practical holiness and the interdenominational fellowship of evangelicals. Buchman was hoping to meet there FB Meyer, an evangelist whose advice had already been of help to him on his last visit to America. Meyer was not there, but Buchman met others 'who had been his inspiration in student days'.[189] He attended meetings and took copious notes.

The Keswick 'Experience'

For months Buchman had been feeling outraged and bitter at Ohl and his committee. Decades later he recalled:

> I said the Committee were behaving badly. Yet my work had become my idol. All I should have done was to resign and let it go at that. Right in my conviction I was wrong in harbouring ill-will.

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[188] Russell 1934 p 57

[189] The view in MSS Biography: no more details given. This is further evidence of the influence of the student movement and the general evangelical tradition on Buchman at college.

He first fully confronted this dual fault – idealising his work and harbouring ill-will – at Keswick, and the experience of doing so was a major upheaval which provided him with renewed purposefulness and a revised philosophy.

One Sunday found him in a small Keswick church, listening to a woman preaching about the Cross. The sermon dramatically brought home to him his personal culpability. In the earliest extant report of the occasion (1922) he said:

> That afternoon I met Christ; I saw Him on the Cross. It was one of those moments of illumination. I saw the nails in the palms of His hands; I saw the spear thrust, and I saw the look of sorrow on the face of the Christ, and I knew that I had wounded Him, I knew that there was a great distance between myself and the Cross…[190]

Suddenly, in Begbie's words,

> …a wave of strong emotion, rising up within him from the depths of his estranged spiritual life seemed, as it were, to lift his soul from its anchorage of selfishness and to bear it across that great sundering abyss to the foot of the Cross. There he made his surrender to the Divine Will…

This was accompanied, Buchman told Begbie, by 'a vibrant feeling up and down the spine as if a strong current of life had suddenly been poured into me'.[191]

> With this deeper experience of how the love of God in Christ had bridged the chasm dividing me from Him', Buchman told Russell, 'and the new sense of buoyant life that had come, I returned to the house feeling a powerful urge to share my experience. Thereupon I wrote to the six committee-men in America against whom I had nursed the ill-will and told them of my experience, and how at the foot of the Cross I could only think of my own sin.[192]

He also asked their forgiveness. His letters to Ohl and company included the verse from a well-known hymn:

> When I survey the wondrous cross
> On which the Prince of Glory died
> My richest gain I count but loss
> And pour contempt on all my pride.[193]

Buchman's account of the letters in Russell's book is not exactly the same as his actual letter to one which Driberg unearthed, but the latter was clearly an apology and contained a promise 'never more [to] speak unkindly or disparagingly of you'.[194]

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[190] Putney 1922 p 127
[191] Begbie 1924 24 f
[192] Russell 1934 p 58
[193] Facsimile of letter to Ohl in Driberg 1964 p 31
[194] This is another example of the unreliability of Buchman's memory on details. Russell's account (1932) of Buchman's Keswick experience is also curious in that comments which Begbie made about it in 1923 appeared in Russell as quotations from Buchman himself. It seems that either Russell put the words into Buchman's mouth with his permission, or that Buchman memorised and repeated phrases from Begbie's book. That the latter seems to have happened is supported by a similar incident in which Buchman repeated Russell's comments as his own, see Chapter II, p __, footnote __ [blank in the original, and I haven't found the intended footnote]. The references are to Begbie 1924: pp 31 & 32 and Russell 1932 p 63. For Buchman's memory of his letters to the committee, see Russell 1932, p 59, repeated in later Oxford Group books such as Buchman 1961 p 315 and Howard 1961 p 20, and Driberg 1964 pp 36 f.

The same afternoon Buchman told a young freshman from Cambridge about this experience. The young student was bored with the Convention meetings, but during a long walk around Derwentwater with Buchman he 'decided to make the surrender of his will to Christ's will' as well.[195]

Implications of this Experience

Pfatteicher, a later President of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania who knew Buchman during the hospice period, disputed the claim by an Oxford Group writer in the 1930s that Buchman's Keswick experience had given him a new 'vision of a Christ-led world untrammelled by sin'.[196] Instead, Pfatteicher argued:

> It led him to a re-appraisement of the faith which was his and gave him the needed opportunity to come to grips with himself.

Sarah Buchman seems to have taken a similar view that her son was simply doing rather late in the day what she would have expected. 'Just received your letter from Keswick', she wrote, 'and was awfully put out about it that you did not know sooner to forgive and forget'.[197]

Buchman agreed that he had learnt nothing new theoretically. Russell reported him as saying:

> A doctrine which I knew as a boy, which my Church believed, which I had always taught and which that day became a great reality for me.[198]

Nonetheless Buchman considered this the crucial experience of his life. Speaking of it at the age of 81 he called it:

> a vivid sense of having experienced the Atonement. And I left that service with a consciousness of having the complete answer to all my difficulties… I walked out of that place a different man…. It is fifty-one years ago that that experience came to me. It made all the difference in the world.[199]

The evidence of his change of vocation after 1908 supports this appraisal. Before 1908 he had been committed to evangelical welfare service within the Lutheran Church, and had shown an interest in the Northfield conferences. After 1908 he became a full-time evangelist in the mainstream of the Northfield tradition, and maintained no more than an interest in welfare work. The hospice debacle and the Keswick experience were undoubtedly of vital importance to Buchman's attitudes to social service, evangelism and the church.

a) Buchman's attitude to the church

Driberg argued that as a result of what he called Buchman's 'mental breakdown' on leaving the hospice, his failure in 1908 to find another job quickly or to inform the Ministerium of his whereabouts, and his 'dramatic conversion experience' at Keswick 'we are entitled to wonder how stable his mind and personality were'. He wondered whether the conversion was not 'a return, in a less disagreeable form, of that hysteria

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[195] Russell 1934 p 59
[196] Pfatteicher 1934 – an antagonistic essay – and Layman 1933 p 13
[197] MSS Biography
[198] Russell 1934 p 58
[199] Howard 1961 p 21

latent during the crisis of the previous months'.[200] Driberg perhaps failed to comprehend the extent of the ambition and hope that Buchman had invested in the hospice and settlement. If his aims for it were as extensive as he wrote in his ultimatum to the Board – a letter incidentally redolent of high idealism but not of hysteria – then it was surely not abnormal for some months of deep depression to follow its rejection. As Woodcock said, what he had conceived of as 'his life work had come to an end'. Moreover, as evidence from his college days and indeed from his whole life shows, he was a man who needed an intense identification with a mission of major proportions – reforming the church, or the world. His depression was no more evidence of mental imbalance than was the more usual intensity of his commitment to a cause.

1908 found Buchman without a cause. He had failed even properly to begin his programme to renew the influence of his church. From his point of view he had come up against the narrow mindedness of the bureaucrats controlling it. He had in his own way experienced the unbending conservatism of the Ministerium that had caused years of bitter wrangling over 'new measures' in Allentown. Driberg discovered that attendance at Ministerium meetings, or a very good excuse, was mandatory for all pastors, but that two meetings went by in January and June 1908 without Buchman even contacting the Ministerium. This suggests that his bitterness towards Ohl and his committee extended to include the Ministerium as a whole. If he thought the Lutheran authorities impossibly conservative this would explain his temporary rejection of his responsibilities towards them and his inability to apply quickly or easily for another job with them.

b) Buchman's attitude to social work

It seems probable that Buchman's disillusionment in 1908 was not just with the Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania – and perhaps by implication with all churches – but equally with the effectiveness of welfare work as he had practised it. The work's failure had been due largely to the authorities' intransigence; but he gradually realised that he was also to blame for the un-Christian bitterness of his reaction to them. In the milieu of the Keswick Convention, and of his Lutheran pietist upbringing, the moral was clear: both he and the church elders needed a deeper conversion and surrender. In more general terms the moral was that welfare work or socialism, as he called it, was ineffective without the skills of evangelism; that it was not just the recipients of charity but its organisers who needed conversion. From this point of view the most effective action for social improvement was to convert those with power in society: it was not to hate them, which was unchristian, nor to distribute charity, which they would do better if they were first converted. In so far as Buchman had hopes of wide-scale social improvement in his 'social gospel' phase, his Keswick experience did not lead him to reject them in favour of soul saving, but to see conversions as the way to bring them to reality.

c) … and to evangelism.

But the main aim of Buchman's social work, as he wrote in his ultimatum to the Board, had been evangelical. He had seen welfare as a means to convert the poor and strengthen the influence of the church. If the trauma of his work's collapse taught Buchman that the rich and the church authorities also needed conversion, his own experience at Keswick taught him that such conversions were possible. If he could be

[200] Driberg 1964 pp 33-36

converted, so could Ohl's committee-men. His letters of apology to them must be seen in part as attempts to get them to respond in kind. Buchman's conversion of the Cambridge undergraduate on the very day of his own conversion was significant. Henceforward his evangelism would be direct, by witness, rather than done indirectly through welfare work. And it would be directed primarily at his own class – college students, Christian ministers and other Christian workers, professional men. It would also concentrate above all on the experience of conversion, and care little for the theological education or church position of the potential convert. Buchman had had both the latter without the crucial experience of surrender. He described his conversion as an experience of the Atonement, but it was in keeping with it that he should spend his life multiplying the experience without being concerned to preach the doctrine. The doctrine, he now saw, was desiccated without the experience.

These lessons of his 1908 conversion – the need for direct, unmediated evangelism, the possibility of converting students to be effective Christian workers, the experiential emphasis – turned Buchman to the vocation of evangelist, and first to the student evangelical movement. It was to be many years before he discovered that the YMCA and its associated bodies were as intractably bureaucratic as the Lutheran Church, and that independent evangelism with a movement of his own was preferable.

Chapter V: Penn State College, Buchman's 'Laboratory' 1909-1915

The Appointment

Buchman returned from Europe in September 1908 and started looking for opportunities in student YMCA work. A minister in Philadelphia wrote on his behalf to Mott, and suggested Buchman also write to him. Tradition has it that Buchman asked Mott for the hardest YMCA secretaryship available – reminiscent of his choice of Overbrook as his first ministry.[201] Russell wrote that Mott recommended him to the job, Buchman himself that it was one of the college trustees, a leading member of the Democratic Party, who did so.[202] According to the college files it was on the strength of glowing testimonials from his friend Woodcock and from one of Mott's subordinates that he was offered the Penn State College Christian Association secretaryship.[203] Woodcock, who apparently knew the college personally, wrote to Professor Willard, Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the YMCA at the college, that Buchman had been thinking of student work in the West but might accept a 'call' from another area. He said of Buchman: 'I don't believe I have ever met a fellow of finer Christian spirit or with better power of getting at the spiritual side of men'.[204] Anderson, of Mott's office, wrote to Willard of Buchman's previous close identification with the student movement, and his 'breadth' and 'great personal attractiveness'.[205] Both testimonials therefore emphasised the evangelical character of Buchman's previous work. After some hesitation Buchman accepted on Christmas Eve to take up the post at $100 a month with a free room and free heat and light. His hospice salary had been $600 a year.[206]

Three views of Buchman's work at Penn State College (PSC)

Pennsylvania State College[207] was founded in 1855 as an agricultural and liberal arts college and retained something of a backwoods image into the new century. When Buchman arrived there it was beginning to expand rapidly, from less than 1,000 students in 1900, to 2,000 by 1912, and 3,000 by 1920. As a state college it had no church affiliation. A YMCA had been established there in the 1890s and had been developed along the lines of 'individual personal work' by HM Beaver in 1896-7. But since then it had 'degenerated into glad-hand to Freshmen acts, employment service

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[201] Clark 1951 p38

[202] Russell 1934 p 189, Buchman 1961 p 330. Mae Phyllis Kaplan in her MA Thesis on the Oxford Group at Penn State College written in 1934, considered it unlikely that Mott did so. The Philadelphian minister's letter to Mott, and the letter from Mott's office to the college suggest that Mott was aware of the appointment but not closely identified with it. Whatever the truth of this it seems rather typical of the Group's penchant for the testimonials of great men, that the only times Mott is mentioned in Group literature is when he is praising Buchman – either by asking him to take on a tough job, or when he came to PSC 'to see the wonder God had wrought' (in fact he came to give the address at a campaign there, in1915). See Buchman 1961 p 345

[203] These accounts of different testimonials are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

[204] Woodcock, then a minister in Birmingham, Pennsylvania, to Willard Oct. 26 1908 In Kaplan p 79

[205] Letter of Nov. 2 1908. Kaplan 1934 p 80

[206] MSS Biography. Kaplan gave Buchman's PSC initial salary as $600 a month, which must be a misprint.

[207] Typically known as Penn State College. Renamed Pennsylvania State University in 1953.

etc'.[208] All commentaries on Buchman's six years at the college from 1909-1915 agree that he achieved a remarkable growth of the YMCA there. But three very different views have been expressed concerning this success.

The Oxford Group literature, based on Buchman's own version of the story, stressed his tactical brilliance in converting three 'key men' in the college – the agnostic Dean, a popular student and the college bootlegger. 'Through their change, the spirit of the whole place was transformed', went one typical version: 'It became a model of Christian education'.[209] These versions also brought out Buchman's discovery of the value of early morning 'quiet times' – a central practice of the Oxford Group – and his ecumenical co-operation with the local Catholic priest.

Contemporary YMCA evangelists were impressed rather by Buchman's ability to execute large scale campaigns on campus. This is almost the antithesis of one Oxford Group apologist's statement that at Penn State, 'Mass evangelism was discarded, and its place taken by personal contact with man after man'.[210] 'Almost' the antithesis, because these YMCA evangelists emphasised that Buchman raised 'individual work' itself to new heights of systematization, as a method of mass evangelism.

Finally Kaplan, by interviewing in the 1930s local residents and faculty members who had known Buchman at Penn State, discovered a side that scarcely appears in other accounts. This was the intense dislike Buchman aroused in some quarters, which signified his failure to 'change' the college as completely as the other accounts suggested. An evangelical observer at a PSC campaign in 1914 said that 'The faculty was back of it all heart and soul'; while Buchman, though admitting in one version that 'for the first year I was the most unpopular man in State College', explained that those who laughed at him worked with him later.[211] The humorous anecdotes still being told at Buchman's expense 20 years after he left indicate that this was not entirely so. Kaplan considered that the most striking finding in her interviews was 'The violent antagonism expressed toward him by the majority of the State College, People (sic) who knew him when he was there'.

These three aspects – 'personal work', large campaigns, and criticism – will be looked at briefly in turn.

1. Lessons in 'personal work'

The inaccuracy[212] of Buchman's account of his years at Penn State, in stressing his 'personal' not his 'mass' evangelism, was evidently due to his didactic purpose in telling the story. Instead of attempting a full description, he was drawing out particular lessons which he had learned and which were applicable to Oxford Group evangelism. It was at Penn State, he said, 'that I found the laboratory that made what is happening here possible'.[213]

The two most important of these lessons concerned 'quiet times' and the tactic of converting 'key men'. The 'Morning Watch', or early morning devotions of prayer

[208] Kaplan 1934 p 86
[209] Howard 1961 p 22
[210] Murray 1935 p 310
[211] MSS Biography V p10
[212] 'Inaccuracy' from the point of view of the historian, not necessarily from that of Buchman who was drawing out the 'essence' of the story.
[213] 1948 talk, in Buchman 1961 p 330. For an early use of the term 'laboratory experiences' to describe his lessons at PSC, see letter of Buchman to Wright 20 September1918 quoted in Stewart 1925 p 221.

and Bible study, known as the 'quiet time' in the Oxford Group, was widely observed in the student movement. At an early point in his Penn State years Buchman forsook the lie-ins that had been a cause of friction with Dr Ohl, for an hour or more's meditation and Bible study before his two telephones started ringing in the early morning. The value of this practice became apparent immediately. The first morning apparently his only thought about his work was the repetition of a student's name 'Tutz, Tutz, Tutz' in his mind (such repetitions were to be characteristic of Buchman's 'guidance'). He therefore approached Tutz, 'a happy-go-lucky fellow' and introduced him to a converted footballer,

> and so readily did my friend understand him, his problems, his open faults and secret sins, and the divided life that goes with them, his sense of defeat and unhappiness', Buchman told Russell, 'that Tutz made a decision to surrender his life to Christ.[214]

Tutz then converted others.

The advertising power of such conversions of those who did not appear susceptible to religion was not lost on Buchman. He invested much time in building friendships with the three 'key', or influential, figures of the classic Group story. He went with the bootlegger, Bill 'Pickle', to a horse show, visited his family, and took him to an evangelical convention in Toronto, where he was eventually converted. This event surprised the college, particularly since Bill turned teetotal and gave up his illicit trade. The 'agnostic' Dean became a 'veritable dynamo' for Christianity, Buchman recalled, as a result of the conversions of Bill 'Pickle' and of Bill's daughter, who was the Dean's maid.[215] The 'popular student' of the story, Blair Buck, announced his conversion at a public meeting in the college by standing up in answer to the preacher's call for 'decisions for Christ'; 'and some eighty fellows followed his example, for B. was one of the most popular men in the University', Buchman recalled. These events had taken place by the summer of 1910, when Buchman spent a vacation with Buck making sure the 'new life' would be maintained.

Buchman also turned his attention to the athletes of the college. The father of a student who had died from drink was convinced that the football coach, 'Dad' Elliott, was partly to blame and asked Buchman to talk to him. Elliott was converted, and Buchman later said of him: 'That man's influence has meant more than many preachers'. Drinking had been a problem at the college, according to Group accounts of the story, and football results had been poor. But in his report for 1913-14 Buchman was able to write that '1300 students put themselves on record to "fight booze"'. In 1913 and 1914 the football team did not lose a match. To Buchman and others the moral was obvious – temperance through conversion (particularly of the bootlegger and the coach) brings sporting success.[216] It appears, however, that in Buchman's first 'unpopular' year at Penn State the team also did not lose a match, since he wrote as much to Henry B Wright. He wanted Wright to send a note congratulating the football captain on his successful year:

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[214] Russell 1934 p 151 f.
[215] Buchman 1961 pp 330-346
[216] MSS Biography pp 69 & 112. Also Russell 1934 p 204

> Tell him about the spirit of your team at Yale and their interests. If he can only see it so as to give himself still more actively to our work! We are after the key men and we are getting them. [217]

Buchman, then, was already in his first year thinking in terms of the 'key men' strategy. Certainly by 1913, if not earlier, he was promoting the idea of 'personal work' as the most important method of evangelism in his contacts with other YMCA evangelists. A younger college YMCA secretary, Maxwell Chaplin at Princeton, was much impressed by Buchman's work and wrote to him in autumn 1913 that he had just read a pamphlet called 'Individual Work' (perhaps Mott's)[218] and had decided to try to win over 'the officers and cabinet' first. Individual work suited him, he wrote, because he was no public speaker and not much of an administrator, but also because 'it seems as if it is the really Christian method'. He finished by suggesting that 'the reason so few do it is because it demands so much of the one who does it'.[219]

Buchman was obviously learning much from Henry Wright and, indirectly, from Drummond in adopting 'personal work' as a particular specialism. A feature of Drummond's campaign in the American colleges in 1887 had been the policy of reaching the most influential students, 'the very heart and brain' of the college, first, 'and they will do the rest before the term is many weeks older'.[220] It was in Buchman's first year at Penn State that Wright's classic *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework* was published. The two men had already met, and Wright had spent some days at Penn State helping Buchman train 'leaders for the year's work'. He sent Buchman a copy of his book immediately on publication. Buchman replied:

> I am delighted with it. Am introducing it not only in our Senior Classes, but am teaching it myself to about a hundred short course men at a class meeting on Sunday morning at nine. We have them for three months. Think it is admirably adapted to them for daily study... Have but one regret – that I cannot have you as a normal class leader, and your suggestions in it. Do you realize (I don't think you can fully) how you have revolutionized things for us here by that normal class last summer?

After asking his help on other matters he ends:

> Sorry that this arrangement is so one-sided…that I can't do more for you.[221]

Wright's principle of evangelism through friendship is clearly evident in Buchman's relations with Bill 'Pickle' and Blair Buck. Perhaps Wright's advice softened the early tactlessness that Buchman's colleagues remembered of him and reported to Kaplan.[222] But Buchman had been predisposed to the friendly approach already by experiences such as the conversion of 'George' at the hospice.

2. Large-scale campaigns

Evidence of Buchman's concern with mass evangelism, as far as the term is appropriate within a college of about 2,000, has already been given: the petition against 'booze' signed by 1,300, for which some remarkable pressure must have been exerted; the meeting at which Buck and 80 others rose; the number of classes for

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[217] Stewart 1925 p 23
[218] see Matthews 1934 p 107
[219] Chaplin p 70
[220] A letter by Drummond October 7 1887, in Smith p 352
[221] Stewart 1925 pp 72 f
[222] See below, this Chapter pp 72 f.

which he needed Wright's help. Before long Buchman was an expert at these methods, and acknowledged as such by visiting evangelists.

In 1910 and 1912 Wright came to Penn State to give two series of talks. Describing the latter Wright's biographer wrote that:

> The excellence of his preparations for special meetings was an outstanding fact about Buchman's service at Penn State.

Almost 100 'decisions for Christ' were registered as a result of these meetings over three days. Buchman asked Wright to concentrate on interviews with those who were already 'planning to go into definite Christian service'. Wright wrote to a friend 'I spoke pretty nearly steadily for three days... It was a glorious work'.[223] Others were less used to such non-stop interviews and addresses. One wrote to Buchman:

> It took me a week to get over that strenuous day at State College, I would not have missed it for a hundred dollars, nor repeat it for five hundred. You ought to confine your invitations strictly to Pennsylvania Dutchmen who are as steel-framed as you.[224]

Lloyd Douglas, author of popular religious novels, described one of Buchman's campaigns in the *North American Student* for April 1914:

> It was the most remarkable event of its kind I ever witnessed. Two hundred men standing at the back, wedged shoulder to shoulder, were so interested they forgot they were unable to secure seats. The thing that made the campaign great was the magnificent organisation back of it. The brains and heart and soul of that organisation was Buchman. One night Buchman decided we should pair off and visit the fraternity houses and put up to each group the proposition of definite Christian decision. It was an impossible job and everybody realized the futility of it but Napoleon Bonaparte Buchman. Well there were great doings that night. Prominent fraternity men admitted that from henceforth they meant to make good. The faculty was back of it all... especially President and Mrs Sparks whose hospitality and interest were unshakeable.[225]

Maxwell Chaplin brought a delegation from Princeton at Buchman's invitation to help in this campaign, and wrote from Penn State to a friend about it. Apart from his five Princeton students there were twenty other helpers from outside staying for the week. Sherwood Eddy was giving the addresses. Chaplin wrote,

> It is a great affair – to see a state university shaken out of a condition of self-sufficiency into a state in which they turn out fifteen hundred a night [on five nights] to hear a man present, in the most direct way, the need of the world for Christianity and the individual's need for Christ.[226]

Buchman's 1915 campaign at Penn State was an even larger affair. Stewart, Wright's biographer, who was there, called the campaign 'unique' for the number of outside helpers, the number of personal interviews, and the extent of fraternity house meetings. Mott was secured to give the addresses, while Wright conducted a series of

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[223] Stewart 1925 p 76
[224] MSS Biography V p 8. For a similar reminiscence by K.S. Latourette, the historian and evangelist, see Buchman 1958 p 39
[225] MSS Biography V p 10
[226] Chaplin 1928 p 75

meetings for the faculty on 'The Message of Jesus for the Scholar and the Teacher'. Stewart wrote,

> Buchman was a master at connecting men with those who could be of greatest help. There were interviews every hour of the day and until after midnight. Every man from outside was assigned a secretary who planned for him hour by hour, scheduled interviews, and arranged all details. It was an effective plan, now much used in colleges and general evangelistic work here and abroad.

The whole college, he continued, seemed to be taken over by a spirit of moral earnestness, and of discussing the 'vital issues of life'. Stewart and his delegation of nine from Yale returned home 'happy and thoughtful' in the special sleeping car booked for helpers from the New York area.[227]

In his history of student evangelism in America CP Shedd wrote of 1915:

> There were big evangelistic campaigns [in the U.S colleges], thirty-seven of them, several planned on the large-scale basis inaugurated by Frank Buchman at Penn State.

He adds that there were fifty 'personal workers' on Buchman's 1915 campaign, presumably from outside.[228] Another writer reports that Buchman had 150 workers under him on this campaign, presumably including PSC students.[229] 1,700 of the 2,500 students attended each of Mott's four meetings.[230]

In Buchman's first year at Penn State, membership of the Christian Association rose from 491 to 1,040 out of a student body of about 1,500.[231] In 1911 the college President reported that its membership was now 1,287.[232] Perhaps Buchman's reminiscence of 1948 that 1,200 out of 1,600 students were attending Bible classes refers to the same year.[233] It is evident that he was not averse to head counts for all his emphasis on personal work.

3. Unpopularity – the less successful side

One of the few expressions of appreciation of Frank Buchman which Kaplan picked up in the early 1930s at Penn State echoed the view of his supporters, that:

> all he does is through his prayer life. For Mr Buchman is a most happy Christian, carefree but very interested in folk... He lives in an atmosphere of real faith.[234]

It is hard to know how to reconcile this with a professor's criticism given to Kaplan:

> Buchman oozed the oil of unctious [*sic*] piety from every pore. I would not be interested in seeing him again if it were at the cost of having to shake hands with him. He was a consummate ass.[235]

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[227] Stewart 1925 p 83
[228] Shedd 1934 p 378
[229] MSS Biography p 111
[230] ibid
[231] MSS Biography p 65
[232] Shedd 1938 p 11
[233] Buchman 1961 p 345
[234] anon, Kaplan 1934 p 107
[235] Kaplan 1934 p 109

The main criticisms of Buchman at Penn State which were made to Kaplan and Clark by eyewitnesses accused him of snobbery and ambition. One recalled that he was ‘always talking about important men and women he knew’; for instance once when telegramming that he would be late back from a convention he added a long list of the famous whom he had met there.[236] In a letter to Willard about a Northfield conference, Clark wrote, Buchman

> boasts of the figure his delegation had cut at the conference, even to particularizing about the Yale member who referred to ‘Our friend from State’.[237]

At one conference the PSC delegation numbered over 100 men. Clark’s informants suggested that Buchman wanted to outdo the wealthy colleges in the size of his delegations. To pay for students’ trips to conferences, one method he developed was the gathering of trailing arbutus [also known as mayflower] and sending it to wealthy women, who responded with ‘unsolicited’ gifts of money.[238]

Humorous anecdotes about Buchman told to Kaplan referred to his melodramatic manner. One story, quite possibly apocryphal[239], told of his approaching a professor in his room without the latter noticing him, despite the uncarpeted floors, and saying impressively, ‘I want you to meet Jesus’. ‘The professor looked up from his desk, turned to face Buchman, and nonchalantly acknowledged the introduction with “How d’ya do Jesus”’. He was also resented for telling people that he had been up all night praying for their souls.[240] Clark reported that:

> One alumnus states that Buchman was not highly respected by the rank and file, another that despite the ridicule, there was no one on the campus who would not have been embarrassed to be observed by Buchman in some indulgence or vice.[241]

One alumnus wrote to the college YMCA complaining that Buchman enrolled incoming freshmen in the YMCA on the strength of their accepting gift Bibles and then sent them bills for dues.[242] Perhaps some of Buchman’s statistics were inflated. Whatever the criticisms, none denied his success in expanding the YMCA. One faculty member who was in Kaplan’s view attempting to be unbiased admitted that by various advertising methods – including ‘capitalizing as assets, leaders in athletics, in literary lines, social high-lights, low brows, gilded sinners or what not’ – Buchman built up the largest college YMCA in the United States:

> Doubting Thomas’s on the side-lines there were, but results, let us be frank, called out an enthusiastic loyalty to his public self.

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[236] Kaplan 1934 p 193
[237] Letter from Aurora, Mich, July 27 1909, in PSC files. Clark 1944 p 104
[238] Clark 1944 p 41
[239] 2018 comment: I can’t tell now why I thought I had to warn readers this might be apocryphal. I sense a touch of MRA-bred defensiveness on Buchman’s behalf here, or perhaps too great a concern for MRA sensitivities, even though I was trying hard for objectivity.
[240] Kaplan 1934 p 90
[241] Clark 1944 p 44
[242] Clark 1944 p 40

His 'private self' on the other hand was marked by extreme reserve, this informant added; he had not been sure if this 'hidden self' concealed Buchman's past or 'the larger issues of the future'.[243]

Other Developments in Buchman's Evangelism

a) Social service

A minister of a town church at the time of Buchman's post at Penn State wrote long afterwards to Clark that Buchman had devoted much time to personal work with the 'underprivileged', outside of church groups. He held campaigns in jails and reformatories for students to 'help and convert' the inmates.[244] Among the speakers whom he brought to the college were Jane Addams, well known Chicago social worker, and Melinda Scott, a pioneer of the Catholic workers movement, who took up the cause of women workers in sweatshops. 'Just to listen to the story of [her] life is a sermon', said Buchman. 'You can't keep people away. Reality – they all respond to that'.[245] On the other hand, Kaplan wrote that he also invited wealthy men to speak in chapel in the hope of raising money from them for Association expenses.[246] Buchman's social concern was real, but his method still belonged to the evangelical origins rather than the increasingly socialist contemporary trend of the Social Gospel.

One by-product of Bill 'Pickle's' conversion was the group of nineteen local janitors 'mostly his old boot-legger friends' in Russell's version, whom he gathered for religious meetings. Bill had first gone to a local church, and been told by the minister not to come back. Buchman recalled that when Bill told him of this, 'I felt as if I'd been stabbed'. Buchman ministered to the group instead, and at their request taught them about the Apostle's Creed. It was another experience for Buchman of the conservatism and rigidity of the churches.

b) Ecumenism

Buchman found an ally in the local Catholic priest however. In later years he was proud to recall the numbers of Catholic students who had returned to Mass 'with a real experience' as a result of his efforts.[247] The priest, Father O'Hanlon, said a special yearly Mass for Buchman and his work at State College. Buchman had to overcome resistance in the college to his having a Catholic speaker like Melinda Scott, but was undeterred by it.[248]

c) Hospitality, travel, overwork

Buchman's reputation for hospitality was maintained. Mary Hemphill re-joined him as housekeeper and cook in 1912 when he moved to a large apartment in order to make more of a home atmosphere for the students. In vacations Buchman's 'wanderlust' asserted itself. In 1911 he took his parents and adopted brother on a three months tour of Europe, including a visit to Bodelschwingh's 'Colony of Mercy'. The next summer saw him again in Europe, trying to learn French in Grenoble on Henry

[243] Kaplan p 108
[244] Clark 1944 pp 43-44
[245] MSS Biography p 69
[246] Kaplan 1934 p 88
[247] Buchman 1961 p 337
[248] MSS Biography p 69

Wright's advice – a project which failed.[249] If Buchman was generous to himself in such ways, he was also generous to others. On one vacation paid for by a wealthy supporter he returned after three days, having given all the money to some children whom he had met who lacked shoes. Sceptics at the college admitted that he would give 'the shirt off his back' to help someone, but pointed out that he had dozens of others waiting for him, and complained that he was always needing more money because of his generosity.[250] He worked himself to exhaustion on several occasions. Clark found his letters to Willard from his 1911 vacation: on August 10th he wrote that the doctors had told him to rest or he would wear himself out; on September 8th he wrote that while resting he had sent 'hundreds of postal cards and written any number of letters. Wrote ten today in the interest of the work'.[251]

The pattern for the Oxford Group was thus being formed at Penn State – social improvement through evangelism, independence from the churches, ecumenism, hospitality, travel and an 'unusual expenditure of energy'.[252] In another respect it was also appearing. Growing from Buchman's 'personal evangelism', a small group of students gathered daily at 5 a.m. in his room to hold the 'Morning Watch' together. Similar meetings were held on Sunday evenings at 9.30 or 10.00. Those attending were 'completely devoted to him'.[253]

Involvement in the Wider Student Movement

Professor Pattee, the English Professor at Penn State from 1894 to 1928, recalled that:

> sooner or later, there appeared on the campus every college religious leader in the nation to study Buchman's methods.[254]

As seen above, many other college Christian Associations copied Buchman's methods of large scale campaigning. According to Wright's biographer the years before 1914 were marked by formalism and lack of 'marked and sustained spiritual activity' in the Eastern colleges. If this is so, college evangelists would naturally have been interested in the happenings at Penn State.[255]

The intercollegiate YMCA conferences were the chief means by which college evangelists exchanged experiences and built wider reputations. In 1913 the new Association Secretary for Princeton attended the National Conference for College Secretaries at Estes Park. He noted that there were 'a few towers of strength' there, and that he had come to know one of them particularly, Frank Buchman, about whom he wrote home:

> He is a man of about thirty-five and a wonder. He has shown what it is possible for a YMCA Secretary in a college to do. In five years he has entirely changed the tone of that one-time tough college.[256]

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[249] MSS Biography p 103-110
[250] Kaplan 1934 p 92
[251] PSC Assoc. files. Clark 1944 p 99 f
[252] Clark 1944 p 99
[253] Clark's conversations with PSC graduates. Clark 1944 pp 42 f
[254] MSS Biography p 69
[255] Stewart 1925 p 79
[256] Chaplin 1928 p 62

This was Maxwell Chaplin, who was to become one of Buchman's disciples in practising personal work, and who brought a delegation to help in his 1914 campaign.

Buchman repaid Chaplin's help in kind by sending a group in May 1914 to speak at Princeton's Philadelphian Society (YMCA). Chaplin was impressed by their impact. The plan of sending deputations from one college to another, he wrote Buchman, had great possibilities, and they should do it on a larger scale next winter – as indeed they did in the 1915 campaign at Penn State and in Wright's Yale campaign with Sherwood Eddy shortly afterwards. To Chaplin the deputation idea seemed novel. It had however been a major part of Henry Drummond's student evangelism at Edinburgh, and had been one of the lessons he had taught to Mott and others in his 1887 American campaign. Its redevelopment perhaps owed as much to Wright as to Buchman.

Stewart wrote that the 'lethargy' of New England college religion which he noted before 1914 largely disappeared as a result of a conference at Williamstown for 43 college secretaries and 'other leaders' held in July 1914. The Northfield Conference which immediately preceded this 'Williamstown Conference' had marked Henry Wright's return to active leadership after two years' illness. It was Wright who inspired those at the Williamstown Conference with a new sense of dedication and enthusiasm. In this he was helped by other experienced colleagues, in particular, Stewart writes, by David Porter, CP Shedd and Frank Buchman. During the two-week conference these men built up a spirit of 'prayer and fellowship' and of 'quiet, unhurried counsel together' among the secretaries. Most of them were younger men, half indeed being less than two years out of college. The emphasis at the conference came to be placed on talking honestly about their lives and on 'eagerness to discover the will of God for individual lives'.

Many later considered this conference to have been a turning point in their lives, in terms both of personal dedication and of the 'fellowship' and co-operation beginning between and within the college Associations. 'Inner circles similar to the Williamstown group' were formed at other colleges as a result. Stewart described these groups as 'small, unadvertised fellowships of students committed to going anywhere or doing anything for Christ and His Kingdom'. It was largely these groups which were responsible for the increased number and scale of campaigns in colleges in 1915. In the summer of 1915 a conference was organised to do for the secretaries of the rest of the country what 'Williamstown' had done for the Eastern group.

Stewart concluded that at the Williamstown Conference:

> Every man present felt that he had been mentally and spiritually examined and empowered for the years ahead. The experience was one which sometimes comes in retreats of this nature – a visitation seldom repeated.

It can be fairly said that Buchman tried to recapture the sense of honesty and fellowship of the Williamstown 'group' in the deputations and small conferences which he was to hold in the next ten years or so, out of which the Oxford Group was to grow.

Given Buchman's success by 1914 and 1915 it was not surprising either that he desired to move on, particularly to gain first-hand experience of YMCA work abroad, or that the leaders of the YMCA recognised in him a useful evangelist for major campaigns abroad. The first such invitation came from Mott. It was to help in the YMCA campaign among soldiers in Europe during the summer of 1915. Buchman

accepted in April. Then a second invitation came, also from the YMCA, to join Sherwood Eddy on a campaign in India. Buchman already knew Europe from four visits, but he had never been to India, which he had wanted to visit since college days. Perhaps because of the greater opportunity for broadening his knowledge of the world that it offered, he accepted Eddy's invitation instead, in June 1915.

Chapter VI: 1915-1919 Learning 'Strategy' in Asia

1. The 'Evangelistic Forward Movement' in the East

In 1912-13 John R Mott, aided by a 'team' including the YMCA evangelist Sherwood Eddy, made a major attempt to present the 'stewardship' social gospel to students and the upper classes in the Far East. Its success signified a breakthrough in the efforts the YMCA had made since the 1890s to reach these classes. In the next two or three years major interdenominational campaigns were launched in China, Japan, South India and Korea. These marked the high point of the YMCA's 'strategy' in Asia, which was soon to founder in the changed post-war conditions.

Eddy followed up the 1912-13 tour with one in 1914, which had an even larger success in terms of the numbers of students, officials, and businessmen who joined Bible classes to learn about Christianity. It was also remarkable in reaching the inner circles of the ruling class. Eddy was received by the President, Yuan Shih-kai, and by governors and other high officials. A few conversions were even achieved among the latter. He was allowed to erect a pavilion in the Forbidden City in Peking for his meetings. It was covered with tents lent by the Ministry of War. The Minister of Education declared a half-day holiday to allow school students to attend.[257] This, however, was the peak of official approval, since from 1914 Yuan Shih-kai re-emphasized Confucian teachings, while students turned increasingly to Western sceptical and radical literature. This trend, however, was not immediately clear to the YMCA evangelists, who maintained high hopes.

News of Eddy's success in China in 1914 prompted the South India United Church [SIUC] to undertake a similar 'Forward Evangelistic Movement' from 1915. The church invited the YMCA to provide evangelists. Eddy responded, and took Frank Buchman with him. This campaign was designed by the SIUC to avoid the accusations of superficiality levelled by some missionaries at Mott and Eddy's China campaigns. Of these a writer in the *Church Missionary Review* complained in July 1915, for instance, that 'Large numbers who signed promises... did not keep their engagements'. Before Eddy's next tour of China in 1917 the same periodical was to assert that Eddy's previous campaigns did not lead 'thousands of heathen' to become Christian 'after hearing our address' as many missionaries appeared to believe. The campaigns, it argued, merely built on church preparation by persuading some already interested to attend Bible classes, and some already instructed to ask for baptism, while arousing an initial interest in many which could only be extended by church workers visiting them personally.[258] Some of these criticisms, not dissimilar to those of churchmen for revivalists in America at the time, must have reached the South India United Church. Their campaign was conceived from the start as a three-year programme, and 'personal work', or the preparation and following up of individuals, was to be a major aspect of it.

Instead of relying on their visiting evangelists, the campaign organisers attempted to make every church member an evangelist. In the event only a quarter of the membership took part, but even so the statistics were impressive enough: 8,288 Christian workers left their ordinary duties to promote the campaign in a 'week of

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[257] Latourette1929 p 611

[258] *CMR* Vol LXVI No. 795 July 1915 p 389; *CMR* Vol LXVIII No. 819 Oct/Nov 1917 p 410. See also *CR* 1916 June 47 (i) pp 370 ff

simultaneous evangelism' in September 1915. They visited 3,814 villages, addressed 310,900 people, and registered 8,503 enquirers and 6,422 decisions.[259] This plan of a week's 'simultaneous evangelism' was used on the Indian example in China in 1917 and subsequent years. Eddy's China campaign of 1917 differed from his previous ones there in stressing this systematic personal evangelism.[260] In June 1918 the China Continuation Committee, the organisation for missionary co-operation, passed a resolution calling for practical training and experience in personal evangelism for all missionaries.[261] By 1919 the South Indian campaign organiser, HA Popley, could write that: 'A great army of personal workers has been raised and trained in many of the large cities of China. The same is coming to pass in India'. He considered that personal evangelism had now been 'thought out' as effectively as had other aspects of the missionary task, such as education and church organisation.[262]

Throughout this 'Movement' there remained also an emphasis on Mott and Eddy's original message of 'social salvation' through individual conversion. Eddy presented Christianity as the 'secret of life and power behind... civilisation'.[263] One of Mott's converts in 1913 had been General Feng, who became well known for imposing a strict evangelical regime on his soldiers, thousands of whom were baptised. He confessed his sins publicly with tears, and expected Christianity to lead to the unification of the country and 'national salvation'. The view that lay behind his confessions, that his and his soldiers' sins were hindering their country's welfare, was, wrote Latourette, a characteristic Chinese conception.[264] If so, it chimed nicely with the evangelical concept of stewardship, of personal morality in leaders and led as the way to national health. Another leading Chinese who held a similar conviction was Hsu Ch'ien, a fellow revolutionary of Sun Yat-sen's. Hsu had written and personally delivered the petition in 1911calling on the Emperor to resign. He bitterly opposed Yuan Shih-kai's subsequent attempt to restore the Empire. Already thinking of becoming a Christian, perhaps from Sun's example, he decided to do so if Yuan should die, believing it would be an act of God. On the second day after Yuan's unexpected death in June 1916, Hsu became a Christian. He became convinced that Christianity alone could save China, and that the failure of Sun's brief government in 1911 was due to its lack of Christianity.[265]

Sun Yat-sen was himself a Christian, a western educated modernist Protestant. Liberal missionaries, including Frank Buchman,[266] typically blame the failure of Sun's 1911 Republic on the warlord Yuan Shih-kai. But Treadgold argues that Sun was too much a product of his education to succeed: like the modernist missionaries such as Mott and Eddy he was highly optimistic but failed to produce a political programme that took note of the realities of power in China. His religion meant little, Treadgold writes, except in times of trouble, but it encouraged him to have faith in democracy, Science, Christian education and American institutions and industries.[267] Similar criticisms could be made of Sun's successor in the Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-shek.

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[259] Popley Dec, 1915 pp 461-3
[260] See Eddy 1918, for example
[261] *CR* Vol 49 (i) p 351 June 1918
[262] Popley 1919 Feb.
[263] Eddy 1915 p 378
[264] Latourette 1929 p 777f
[265] He told this at Buchman's Kuling Conference 1918, taken down verbatim; quoted in MSS Biography pp 174f.
[266] Report of Kuling Conference 1918, quoted in MSS Biography
[267] Treadgold 1973 Chapter 3

Though politically more capable, Chiang failed to achieve the independence of Western and commercial interests which would have been necessary to put through his reforms; but he continued to hope that revivals of Christianity would ‘clean up’ the country of corruption and provide the dynamic for reform. He therefore became a vocal supporter of the Oxford Group.

2. Buchman’s Role in the Personal Evangelism of this Campaign

Buchman spent over three years in Asia between 1915 and 1919. He became heavily involved in both aspects of the campaign outlined above – personal evangelism and social salvation through the conversion of leaders, particularly in his attempt to convert Hsu and Sun to a more effective Christianity. It was at this time that he fully imbibed the ‘world conquering’ aims and ‘strategic’ planning of Mott and his colleagues in the YMCA, which he was to revive in the late 1930s. Of equal importance, however, was his learning to apply the highly organized personal evangelism he had pioneered at Penn State to a wider field.

The extent of the Asian campaign’s indebtedness to Buchman for its policy and methods of personal evangelism is not clear. On the one hand there were many testimonials from the leaders of these campaigns to Buchman for his contribution in making them aware of the need for adequate ‘personal work’. On the other hand it was in the nature of the revivalist style of Eddy and Mott that it would provoke a reaction by the permanent missionaries in favour of more personal, long term evangelism. This reaction had already set in by the start of the Indian campaign. It is fair to assume that Buchman was selected by Eddy to join in the Indian campaign largely because of his reputation for directing large numbers of personal evangelists in college campaigns. That Buchman had such a reputation is clear from a brief biography of him introducing his article ‘Personal Work’ in August 1916 in the *Chinese Recorder*: ‘Dr Mott characterized the Personal Work in connection with his evangelistic campaign there [at Penn State College] two years ago as the most thorough he had ever seen’.[268] Buchman wrote from Travancore ‘I have a workers’ group of 1,300’ indicating that he was in charge of at least a large section of the personal work of the campaign.[269] On balance it seems that Buchman turned out to be the main ‘expert’ at hand at the moment when there was a considerable demand for his skill.

a) Buchman’s ‘personal work’ in India and China 1915-1916

In 1915 Eddy had been invited to hold mass meetings for the Syrian Churches in Travancore (South India), first for the South India United Church, second for ‘the middle and high caste Hindus of the secondary cities’ such as Vellore and Palamcottah, and third for students in North India. During his six and a half months in India Buchman accompanied Eddy, visited most of the large cities in the country, and went on a ten-day tour of several princely states. Bishop Whitehead, one of the campaign’s leaders and a long term friend of Buchman’s from this time, introduced him to Mahatma Gandhi in Madras. He met and corresponded with Tagore. Of the Christians he met, he was much impressed by Amy Wilson Carmichael, founder of the Dohnavur Mission and a well-known evangelical in the Keswick tradition. Eddy left for America before Buchman, leaving him with his return fare to Seattle and a

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[268] *CR* 1916 Aug 47 (2) opp p. 507.
[269] MSS Biography

loan of $100. Buchman decided that he would visit China, however, both to prepare for Eddy's projected 1917 campaign there, and perhaps equally to extend his own horizons. Four and a half months in China (March to August 1916), paid for in the end by Eddy, and less than a month in Japan completed Buchman's reconnaissance of the East.

The main impression Buchman gathered from this journey seems to have been of the inadequacy of both mass revival meetings and of the YMCA in terms of making lasting conversions and fully 'surrendered' lives. The South Indian mass meetings addressed by Eddy, Bishop Pakenham Walsh, Stanley Jones and others he described as 'like hunting rabbits with a brass band'. He wrote to Mott on November 10 1915:

> You have asked me to write my impressions. The outstanding one that daily compels attention is that the Christian workers in India need to be taught the 'how' of Christian service. There are agencies abundant and many Christian workers, but they do not seem to get into close vital human touch with the people... There is an utter lack of consciousness everywhere of the need of individually dealing with men.

Buchman made one of the first indications of his growing aversion to organisation in a letter to Eddy: 'We depend on hostels, organization – we must go deeper. Otherwise we will develop a constituency of parasites'. This eighteen page letter stressed the necessity to 'get this consciousness of the need for personal work into the lives of our [YMCA] secretaries'. He quoted letters from many of the latter about their lack of 'power' and faith in the midst of administrative duties. One example he cited referred to four secretaries working together, one of whom was well known for dishonesty. No one knew how 'to change the whole tenor of his life' until Buchman talked with him. In a subsequent letter this man wrote of a 'new world having opened up' for him as a result.

These impressions prompted one of the very few articles written by Frank Buchman, published first in the magazine of the South India United Church in February 1916 and then in August 1916 in the *Chinese Recorder*, an interdenominational missionary magazine. The article was entitled 'Personal Work'. Its theme was that personal evangelism was the method which would get the results the missionaries were longing for, in quantity and influence of converts. He quoted Mott to this effect from Mott's latest book. The method itself as he outlined it was very similar to Drummond's – attractive presentation, tailor-made to each individual, 'incisive diagnosis', confession, and practical suggestions for action to be taken in the 'new life'.[270]

Buchman's practical skills in personal work in turn made a considerable impression on YMCA and other evangelical missionaries. HA Popley, the Indian campaign organiser, wrote that he 'has been able to put this vital subject before us in a way that has never been done before', so that 'for the first time many realized the importance of this kind of work'.[271]

KT Paul, YMCA General Secretary for India wrote to a colleague, EG Carter:

> This Buchman is a very great soul. At Madras he has done a remarkable work. On S. his effect has been marvellous. He has confessed how utterly wrong he was in regard to the Serampore money affair and how he has decided to return

[270] ref: Buchman February 1916 and August 1916

[271] Sundkler 1954 p 83, quoting the Minutes, SIUC Fifth General Assembly, 1915, and Popley 1915 December, 1916 February.

> every pie of it. How I crave we could have Buchman in India for all time. The things he does make me terribly humble.

At a conference for school students run by EG Carter in North India Buchman worked a similar 'miracle' with Victor, a student who had been resisting both discipline and conversion. A Bishop, wrote Russell, was so impressed by Victor's conversion that he asked Buchman to do the same for an undergraduate he knew at Oxford, thus providing Buchman's entree to that University.[272] It was this practical ability that most impressed one JW McKee, who addressed a Presbyterian teachers' conference in the Punjab in March 1916 on Buchman's principles for conducting 'personal interviews'.[273] Eddy himself was impressed, writing to Buchman when nearing Aden on the boat home,

> The more I think of it the more I realize what a unique work you have done. Talk over the whole question of permeating our China campaign with personal work. It is a forgotten secret in the Church...

Buchman had a similar reception in China. His host in Canton wrote to Eddy of Buchman's first meeting for 50 missionaries 'Every man he touched was a key man and you can realize what this will mean for our work'.[274] The 'unusual' nature of his work and its promise for 'large and permanent results' was remarked on at Shanghai.[275] In August a letter in the *Chinese Recorder* announced the formation of 'personal work groups' in Shanghai, perhaps the earliest reference to such groups arising in Buchman's wake. One curious result of his influence was the formation of 'The Buchman Club', meeting for evangelical prayer, Bible study and witnessing, on several ships of the US Navy operating from Chinese ports. Buchman was to find the Club still in operation two years later in the Philippines.

His reputation went ahead of him. The American Episcopal Bishop of Hankow, Logan Roots, wrote later of his first meeting 'in Kuling, on a rainy summer day in 1916' with Frank Buchman. 'I had heard much of this man and was one among many who were eager to meet him'. Roots was especially struck by the

> unconventional simplicity and incisive power of the man. He talked with refreshing directness of matters usually obscured by the hesitant language of professional reformers. To him men were more important and instinctively he sensed their needs.[276]

b) Recruiting in America for a new campaign in China

A young YMCA secretary in Lahore, Howard Walter, had been greatly taken with Buchman's evangelism. He was returning to his old seminary, Hartford, Connecticut, for further study and wanted Buchman to join him there to write a manual on 'personal evangelism' together. Hartford Theological Seminary was a small non-sectarian college with an evangelical tradition. It always had an active evangelist on its staff, if possible. At this time the college President was looking, in Clark's words,

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[272] Russell 1934 p. 81. It was Bishop Pakenham Walsh who, on meeting Buchman in Cambridge in Nov. 1920, asked him to visit his nephew in Oxford (MSS Biography p 134)
[273] McKee 1916/1918 p 984
[274] George Lerrigo, regional secretary of the YMCA for S. China, to Eddy. MSS Biography p 146. Buchman had asked Lerrigo to invite the missionaries to dinner at a hostel on his behalf, particularly asking for Chinese to be there.
[275] WW Lockwood to Buchman June 7, 1916. MSS Biography p 149
[276] Roots, obituary booklet undated

for 'the most able evangelist available'. Walter recommended Buchman, and was supported by the Dean after he had made further investigations.[277] Buchman accepted. It was an appealing post for him, one that would enable him to exert influence on future ministers, to continue his association with HB Wright, to have financial security and, like Drummond's post, to travel for much of each year. The seminary provided an expense account for his outside evangelistic activities, both as a contribution to evangelism and to recruit suitable students to the college.[278] He was given freedom to fit his classes around his visits to other colleges, conferences etc. Seminary students who knew him were enthusiastic about his arrival. 'Maxwell Chaplin was just saying', wrote Walter to Buchman of the latter's appointment, 'that it ought to revolutionise this seminary – perhaps all seminaries in the end, if you stay here long enough'.[279]

A further reason for Buchman's acceptance of the post may have been the desire to recruit a group to return to Asia with him to teach the skills of personal work which he had felt were so lacking among Christian workers there. At least this soon became his chief purpose at Hartford. He explained it in a letter to the college President, W. Douglas MacKenzie, who was also appropriately Chairman of the Board of Missionary Preparation in North America.[280]

> 'Very early in my residence at Hartford', Buchman wrote in this letter of February 1917, 'a little group of those like-minded gathered, in a fellowship of companionship and silence. At the very first hour, this luminous thought came that there would be a rebirth of the consciousness of individual work throughout the world...'[281]

He called this 'the Hartford idea'.

The language – 'little group', 'companionship', 'luminous thought' clearly owed much to Wright. Stewart's description of the 'Hartford Seven', as Buchman and Walter's group came to be known, was also very reminiscent of his description of Wright's 'Williamstown group': he called the former 'friends who grew to have a fellowship of prayer and common understanding rare among even the most dedicated groups'.[282] Some of the 'Hartford Seven' went regularly during the 1916-17 academic year to hear Wright's lectures at Yale on 'The Principles of Personal Evangelism'. They travelled the four hours each way once a week for 36 weeks to attend them. Wright had permanently on view in front of the class a sentence of Moody's: 'The world has yet to see what Jesus Christ can do in, by, for and through a man who is wholly given up to the Will of God'. Of this Buchman said 'I coupled it with this verse, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me'. That is what we faced 36 hours a year. It took me six weeks until I came to absolute conviction and yielded myself to that principle'.[283]

It is obvious that Wright had a major influence on Buchman at this time, but it is not clear what was new to Buchman in this 'principle'. It may be that, as on a later occasion in Cambridge in 1921, he needed to renew in himself a 'consecration' or

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[277] Clark 1944 p 47
[278] ibid
[279] MSS Biography
[280] in 1916 anyway. *IRM* 1916 p 297 Vol V
[281] MSS Biography p 154
[282] Chaplin 1928 p 116
[283] MSS Biography p 156

personal identification with the largest possible aims of evangelism: 'drawing- all men unto Me', or, in Cambridge in 1921, 'remaking the world'. On both these occasions the limitless scope of the pre-war SVM aims – the 'evangelisation of the World' – were made personal for Buchman. In 1916 it was what 'Christ can do' through *one man*. In 1921 it was even more personal, a thought 'from God' that '*You* will be used to remake the world'.[284]

Stewart wrote that Wright used 'the idea of small groups' in nearly every part of his work at Yale.[285] Buchman's adoption of the idea as the means to teach personal work in the East presumably owed much to him.

The 'Hartford Seven' were named by Stewart as Sherwood Day, Walter, Buchman, John L Mott (the son of John R C Mott), Frank Coan, Herman Lum, and Maxwell Chaplin.[286] Chaplin, as has been seen, had been influenced by Buchman as a student at Princeton. Mott, junior, was a friend of Chaplin. Both had been persuaded at an SVM convention in 1913 in favour of a missionary life. Mott had accompanied his father on his world tour of 1912-13, while Chaplin had been talking in the 'strategic' terms of Mott senior's writings since his freshman year at Princeton. Herman Lum had been student President of the Penn State YMCA, when Buchman was Secretary there, and presumably had been greatly influenced by Buchman. Sherwood Day and Walter had both been in missionary work already, but also owed much to Buchman.[287] Day later described to Russell how Buchman had first taught him 'personal work' at Hartford. The group was united, therefore, in its missionary enthusiasm and personal indebtedness to Buchman or at least to his and Wright's personal evangelism.

Buchman's letter to MacKenzie of February 1917 indicated that others were drawn into the group, including 'potential men' visiting Hartford.

'The decision of young John Mott to go to India can definitely be traced to this little group'; he wrote, as could 'the Springfield Conference; Max Chaplin's service with the Princeton men in France; King Burridge's and Ralph Harlow's work among the colleges; Lowry Mead in crystallising his purpose for his future work in China'.

Already by this time Buchman was planning his next visit to China for the coming summer, with some of the Hartford Seven and two others from Yale, who were therefore presumably also influenced by Wright. Their aims for China in terms of the training of leading Christians to undertake personal work were highly ambitious.

'We confidently believe', wrote Buchman to MacKenzie, 'that this little group will do a world service that will be telling in a new order of Christian work. It is already changing the policy of important bodies. Our key thought is this: That for sustained evangelism, <u>individual work must be the constant, meetings the occasion</u>…'[288]

They left for China in July 1917.

It is not clear which 'important bodies' were being affected by the Hartford group. This may refer to the organisation of Eddy's projected 1917 China campaign, or it

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[284] my italics. Howard 1961 p 27

[285] Stewart 1925 p 228. See also Wright's ideal of a group including the 'intensely earnest' recounting of personal experience, ibid p 225

[286] Chaplin 1928 p 87

[287] A letter from Walter to Buchman testifies to the great effect the latter had had on the former's life – it is quoted in MSS Biography without date, but probably 1916.

[288] MSS Biography

might refer to Billy Sunday's revival in New York. Howard Walter briefly mentioned in his book *Soul Surgery* that:

> Personal work was the corner stone of the mammoth evangelistic campaign conducted by the Rev William A Sunday in New York City in 1917, through which no less than 200,000 men and women confessed to receiving a spiritual quickening in Christ during the month that Mr Sunday was preaching in the tabernacle, and Mr Frank Buchman was conducting personal workers' groups in all parts of the city.

Buchman had obviously not turned his back on mass evangelism but was trying to link efficient personal work to it in the major revivals of both America and Asia.

c) Personal work in Asia 1917-1919

Buchman spent about 13 months in China in this period. He made visits to Korea, Japan and the Philippines in 1918 and 1919. He returned to America in April 1919, disappointed with the failure of his work in China, but hopeful of its possibilities elsewhere in Asia. As usual he had undertaken an exhausting amount of travel and of morning till night 'personal work'.

The main initial focus for Buchman's work was Eddy's next campaign, planned for autumn 1917.[289] Buchman's group of five – Walter, Day, Buchman and the two Yale graduates, Gould and Olson – arrived in July, early enough to spend the summer attending the annual missionary conferences at the hill resorts.[290] Walter, who was becoming a specialist in Muslim studies, contributed at Kuling to one of a series of conferences being held by a noted missionary to Muslims, Dr SM Zwemer, designed to encourage missionary efforts among Chinese Muslims.[291] Zwemer and Buchman were noted by the *Chinese Recorder*'s editorial of September 1917 as being among the major attractions of the Kuling resort, along with its temperate climate and the presence of about 2,000 foreign missionaries through the summer.[292] Buchman, however, was dissatisfied with the quality of his 'soul surgery' there. The next year at Kuling he was to say, 'Last year's conference was not personalized. It failed at many points. Frankly last year I was only scratching the surface'.[293]

After the conferences Walter returned to India, while Gould and Olson went to their mission stations in China, leaving Buchman and Day to prepare for Eddy's campaign. Leading a party of other evangelists including three Chinese and Ruth Paxson of the YWCA, they visited some of the larger cities of China. Eddy's postponement of his campaign to early 1918, due to the demands of his evangelism among troops in Europe,[294] gave the 'Buchman team' longer to prepare the local campaign organisers for the 'personal work' aspects of the campaign.

The pages of the *Chinese Recorder* included several highly enthusiastic reports of Buchman's work during the autumn and winter of 1917/18. The longest of these, by

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[289] *CR* Vol 48 (1) p 341 (May 1917): 'Personals Column' announced Buchman's and Walter's arrival in Shanghai June 23rd to prepare for Eddy's meetings. Mr Rugh of Eddy's campaign was also to manage their schedules.
[290] *CR* Vol 48 (2) (1917 Aug) p 547, noted the group's arrival to help the YMCA with 'conference work'.
[291] Ibid p 679 (Oct 1917); and Latourette 1929 p 749
[292] *CR* Vol 48 (2) p 551 (Sept 1917)
[293] MSS Biography quoting verbatim report of the Kuling Conference 1918
[294] *CR* Vol 48 (2) p 741 (Nov 1917) on Eddy's delay.

Cheng Ching-yi in December, had the title 'Miracles!' The Rev Cheng Ching-yi, DD, had worked in Britain for some years on translating the New Testament and had attended the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference; he was a leading minister of the London Missionary Society and as Chinese Secretary of the China Continuation Committee [a committee of the National Missionary Conference in China, formed after John R. Mott's visit to China in 1913] was becoming the foremost Chinese exponent of the ecumenical cause. His article was written after personal participation in the work of Buchman's group in Hankow and Nanking. It consisted mainly in examples of the 'miracles' worked by Buchman, which were kept anonymous. A pastor, for example, confessed his failure as a minister at a Buchman meeting, and publicly asked a church elder to forgive him for their seven-year disagreement. Two other pastors in a mission who had quarrelled, at times bitterly, for some years, confessed and shook hands publicly as a token of restored friendship. A young missionary, Cheng continued, confessed he had no 'power' because of 'egotism, unkindliness and other things', and as a result became 'a keen soul-winner'. Seminary students confessed their sins before the whole seminary, one admitting his failure to make any conversions in eight years preaching. The result, wrote Cheng, was the 'vitalization' of every part of these men's lives and of all types of Christian activity.[295]

Harvey, one of the YMCA organisers, wrote in the January *Recorder* that the YMCA in 1918 would continue to give much attention to co-operation with what he called 'the movement for personal evangelism led by the Rev Frank Buchman and the party of workers associated with him'. The result of their work in one city, he wrote, had been to replace the 'complacency' of the Christians with 'humble and contrite' recognition of their own weaknesses and sins, and desire to evangelize; personal work and Bible study groups had sprung up as a result.[296] Later issues gave enthusiastic reports of Buchman's visits to Foochow and Hankow, and of Day's 'Revival in Foochow College, December 1917'.[297]

AL Warnshuis, HA Popley's equivalent in China as the missionary appointed to be full-time co-ordinator of the Evangelistic Forward Movement,[298] was enthusiastic about Eddy's campaign results in the spring. He particularly praised the 'personal work' aspect embodied in the practice of admitting to some meetings only those Christians who brought a non-Christian with them, thus making each Christian an evangelist.[299] Eddy's description of the campaign appeared in parts to be a paraphrase of Buchman's 'Hartford Idea': for example

> the meetings were only a passing incident, while the personal work and steady effort of the Chinese Christians was the constant and important factor.[300]

In April the Continuation Committee's 'Special Committee on a Forward Evangelistic Movement' printed two pamphlets, both in Chinese and English. One contained articles by Eddy, Paxson, Warnshuis and others. The other consisted of an article, 'Personal Evangelism', by Buchman and testimonies to his work by various

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[295] Cheng 1917
[296] Harvey 1918 p 38
[297] *CR* Vol 49 (1) p 141 (Feb 1918) and p 207 (March)
[298] From March 1916. Appointed by the China Continuation Committee, whereas Popley was appointed by the SIUC. Refs: *CR* (June 1914) Vol 45 p 343, and June 1916 Vol 47 (1) p 358.
[299] Warnshuis 1918 and Russell 1934 p 75. Buchman was using this 'personalized meeting' method in Canton.
[300] compare with above p 86, Buchman to MacKenzie, underlined sentence.

anonymous missionaries. Buchman opened his article by describing the 'great hunger' for personal evangelism which he found among Christian workers weighed down by their administrative duties. One of the contributors pointed out that in 1916 the net gain in communicant membership in China (26,173) was less than the number of salaried Christian workers there (27,562) and less than one tenth the number of communicant Christians at the start of 1916 (268,652). (This referred to Protestants only.) The conclusion was that it was not enough for personal work to become part of a new department of church work, it had to become part of every Christian's and every department's life, as faith and prayer already were. Buchman wrote,

> Personal work does not so much demand more time as it does the personalization and spiritualization of all human contacts... Are we depending upon our preaching, or our teaching, or our medicine, or our writing to win men for Christ? When did we win our last man?

As well as 'spiritualizing' these role contacts, Buchman wanted Christians to discard any conventional politeness that distanced them from others:

> Men are hungry for those who understand and who will get back of convention and talk reality from hearts that have suffered like pains and have won, through no merit of their own but through the gracious power of a forgiving and loving Christ.[301]

One of the contributors to this pamphlet wrote that in Hong Kong they had been 'working in this direction' in 'a small way' previously, but from Buchman's first visit (i.e. 1916) his 'definite message about this method' made them pay particular attention to it. In Hankow and Nanking, though the idea of personal evangelism was not new, a correspondent wrote, Buchman put it with 'new force and energizing power'. In Nanking it had been accepted by all the missionaries and 'is being applied with serious purpose'.[302] These statements suggest that the belief in and desire for personal work was widespread among the missionaries, but latent, and that Buchman's abilities in the field made it a subject to be taken seriously and even to be learnt. Independent evidence of the desire for, or at least of awareness of the lack of, personal work can be found in the pages of the missionary periodicals.[303] In his history of China missions, Latourette wrote that the lack of time for evangelism and for personal contacts with the Chinese was particularly true of the American missions, which were responsible for most of the medical, social and higher education work of the Protestants.[304]

d) 'Lessons'

Buchman made advances in his practice of personal work during this time in China, which were to be of great importance to his future development. The first concerned the original group that spent the summer together in 1917. However unusually close the 'Hartford Seven' may have been according to Stewart, it soon appeared that they were not close enough on this occasion. Tensions grew within the group over different plans and over criticism of Buchman himself. Perhaps Buchman was pressing the group too hard to stay together for longer to carry out the 'Hartford Idea', or was in some other way over-aggressive. Eventually the mutual criticisms were all

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[301] Buchman 1918
[302] Buchman 1918
[303] e.g. *CR* Vol 48 (1) pp 211 and 246 (April 1917)
[304] Latourette 1919 pp 618 f.

brought out in some long discussions between Walter, Day and Buchman, starting in a Tientsin hotel room. Walter wrote afterwards that he had learnt during that summer the importance of 'utmost frankness' between members of a group. In their talks, he wrote,

> every critical thought was brought to the light and we went forth with new unity and mutual confidence determined to keep on that firm basis with each other and with all our fellow workers.[305]

This continual and detailed frankness was to be a principle of all the 'teams' with which Buchman worked and travelled thereafter, including of course those which did stay in existence and formed his movement.

Other advances were made at a conference which Buchman himself ran at Kuling in the summer of 1918.[306] Attendance was by invitation. Buchman was determined this year to go 'below the surface'. This involved talking openly about the kind of private 'sins' of which he had become aware among the missionaries during his year's work. He said that when he had first arrived a missionary had asked him to 'give a strong message on perversion'. He had not realised then as he did now, he said, how extensive were homosexual relationships, or as he put it 'absorbing friendships', among the missionaries.[307] He had also learnt the value of making public confession himself. After much private wrestling with his desire not to 'lose face', he admitted during a meeting that he had cheated the Pennsylvania Railroad by using a reduced fare privilege to which he was not really entitled, and that he would send them a cheque and an apology. This was an attempt to break through the 'self-righteousness' at the conference, which bore results. A sick British businessman there decided to pay back some money owed as well, which 'was the beginning of the whole change in the Conference'.[308]

A positive success at the conference concerned Dr Cheng Ching-yi and other Chinese who formed there the Chinese Home Missionary Society.[309] That this owed much to Buchman, and to Wright, is obvious from the sixth and final resolution of their statement, which reads in part:

> we as a committee accept the following challenge, "that it is yet to be seen what God can do in and for and with and through a 'group' composed of individuals wholly consecrated to Him." [310]

Buchman later called this the birth of the 'China for Christ' movement.[311] The latter was actually founded in Shanghai in December 1919, when some 100 leading Chinese Christians and missionaries met under the auspices of the China Continuation Committee. The fact that Cheng Ching-yi was its first general secretary, however,

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[305] MSS Biography

[306] A 'Buchman' conference was announced for August 1st – 15th to follow the 'General' one at Kuling of July 28-August 3: *CR* Vol 49 (2) p 488 (July 1918)

[307] MSS Biography

[308] Putney 1922. p 70. Bishop Molony had told Buchman when he spent Christmas with him in Ningpo in 1917, that a confession of dishonesty by himself to a dishonest servant had led to the latter's change and 'the beginning of an awakening in his diocese'. This was no doubt the inspiration for Buchman's confession at the conference. In telling the bishop's story to the conference he finished 'A confessing Christian is a propagating Christian. That is how that truth became a reality to me'. (MSS Biography)

[309] see above p 106

[310] Cheng 1918

[311] Putney 1922 p 70

implies that it owed something to the Chinese Home Missionary Society.[312] Latourette praised the latter as 'one of the most prominent of the Chinese attempts to propagate the Faith'.[313]

e) Criticism

Not surprisingly Buchman aroused considerable antagonism from his 'hard-hitting' approach at the second Kuling conference. Howard later wrote of Buchman's time in China as a whole:

> It was now that Buchman first felt the viciousness of opposition from men in the grip of such sins as homosexual indulgence who felt the edge of his challenge and refused to change.[314]

This probably refers to Kuling 1918. Some at the conference asked him not to talk about 'sin' again. Others complained to Bishop Roots of Hankow, who had been an enthusiastic supporter of Buchman. One missionary's criticism expressed to Roots led him to stop the financial support from the Stewart Evangelistic Fund for Buchman after the conference – this fund had financed the Eddy campaign, including Buchman since his arrival in 1917.

This was a severe setback. At the conference Buchman had refused to soften his message on 'sin'. In public he had said:

> There has been considerable pressure brought upon me this year to go back to the 'old meeting' plan – a great address that will lift people and then they can go away and discuss it.[315]

Privately he felt depressed and at one point briefly, suicidal. After the summer conferences he had to retire to a resort, exhausted and ill.[316]

His initial reaction to the criticism was apparently to justify himself as a 'saint' and at the same time to be conscious of his own sinfulness: in his 'quiet time book' he wrote:

> Sinners hate a man who deals plainly with sin. He's opposed by the righteous because he attacks their righteousness. [*sic:* meaning self-righteousness?] Greatest saints are most acutely conscious of their sin; a deep need of a Savior.[317]

In September he wrote to Wright, 'I have experienced what you often said we would meet with – criticism'.

Later he was prepared to admit partial blame himself for the antagonisms aroused at Kuling. 'As I see Kuling in perspective', he wrote to Bishop Roots on October 8, 1918, 'I am convinced that the burden I was carrying at that time may have caused a certain 'harshness' in me...'

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[312] *IRM* Vol X No. 37 January 1921 p 10.
[313] Latourette 1929 p 807
[314] Howard 1961 pp 34, 35
[315] Kuling report in MSS Biography
[316] He had to write from his retreat at Port Arthur to H Blackstone, the administrator of the Stewart Evangelistic Fund, asking him to kill a rumour going round that he had had a breakdown and had to return to the USA. MSS Biography.
[317] MSS Biography

This ‘burden’ would presumably refer to his loneliness: ‘Sherry’ Day was ill, his father possibly dying, and criticism from the missionaries acute. But he went on in this letter to justify his ‘harshness’ after all, as similar to that praised in Cyril Bardsley’s *The Way of Renewal* in the chapter on ‘the failure of the church’. The latter ‘is a strong phrase’, Buchman quoted from Bardsley,

> from some lips it may be a hard phrase. It may imply judgements and blindness to much that is good, but it is not so with us who now think about it, for we use it of ourselves first.[318]

In other words, Buchman was convinced that his own rigorousness with himself entitled him to make ‘prophetic’ criticisms of the church and its missionaries. He left China shortly afterwards, never to return. He wrote to Roots from Korea that he had hoped that the Japanese leaders would be readier than the Chinese ‘for a genuine “Life” program’, and that his heart was heavy at the ‘Christian leaders who turned back’ in China.[319]

The reasons for the opposition to Buchman are not hard to see. Some of it undoubtedly was a result of pricked conscience, as Buchman and Howard argued. The missionary whose criticisms led to Roots’ opposition to Buchman subsequently left missions for business after a scandal broke about his adultery with one or more of his secretaries. Thereafter Roots revised his opinion of Buchman and worked closely with him through the 1920s and 30s.[320] The basic reason for the opposition was doubtless related to the time-worn tension between professional churchmen and aggressive reformers. Buchman’s evangelism posed a direct threat to the prestige and to the role of the minister. Of the Kuling conference he said, ‘One of the results will, we hope, be an endeavour to laicize the Chinese Church’.[321] He encouraged ministers to admit their faults publicly, while he aimed to make every layman an evangelist. In his outlook, competence in ‘soul surgery’ was the main test of a living faith and the basis for spiritual authority, not theological education or church position. He criticised the professional competence of missionary doctors, teachers and administrators if it became for them a substitute for personal evangelism. His emphasis on lay evangelism led the *Chinese Recorder’s* editor to describe his work as ‘the embodiment in practical religion of modern democratic principles’. In addition to resentment at Buchman’s severe criticisms of them, some missionaries had a natural dislike of the apparent ease with which visiting ‘star evangelists’ like Buchman and Eddy could gain funds, ‘results’ and publicity, much of which was only possible through the unpublicised work of persevering local church people.

3. Buchman’s ‘Key Man’ Strategy in China 1917-1918

Although the teaching of ‘individual work’ skills to the missionaries was Buchman’s main task in China, it was done fully within the context of the YMCA leaders’ strategy to reach the Chinese ruling elite. Buchman’s contribution to this strategy was his attempt to get influential Christians to practise personal work themselves in order to convert other leaders of the country. At the same time as visiting missionaries in the various cities on his itinerary he made a point of searching out the most influential

[318] MSS Biography
[319] Buchman to Roots Oct. 8, 1918, in MSS Biography
[320] viz Roots April 1934 and obituary booklet
[321] MSS Biography

Chinese and foreign Christians. Several of these men gathered at the Kuling conference in 1918 at his invitation.

Buchman's intentions in this matter were clearly set out in his letter about the 'Hartford idea' to MacKenzie in February 1917, and obviously formed *a*, if not *the*, major part of that idea. It is worth quoting in full since it foreshadowed the plans of the Oxford Group in its major campaigns.

Buchman wrote:

> 'The Hartford idea'. Our plan for China is, briefly, this: to inculcate this same passion for individual work in the leaders of China. In a recent conference with Mr Harvey and Mr Warnshuis, who have just come from China, they told us that the President of China and many of the political leaders of China know of our coming and that the former Minister of Foreign Affairs for one of the Southern Provinces said that he was madly glad (I did not realize that the Chinese language was capable of such an expression) that we were coming.
>
> Our plan for a city like Peking is to gather fifteen of the most influential Christians – Europeans and Chinese – and train them in the HOW of Christian work. The Peking circle is to include General Feng of the Chinese Army, Admiral Lee of the Navy, CC Wang, who is Minister of the Interior, Hsu Ch'ien, Vice Minister of Justice, Mr CH Wong, who is codifying the Chinese laws, Mr CT Wang, who is the President of the Chinese Assembly, Bishop Norris, and leaders in the different missions.
>
> This same program is to be carried out in cities like Pao Ting Fu, Hankow, Chang-Sha (the Yale of China), Nanking, Shanghai, Canton, Hong Kong, Foochow and Swatow.
>
> …All this is a superhuman task, and the only answer that all of us know is that God has ordained us that we should go forth and bring forth fruit, and that our fruit shall remain...
>
> I could not have shared the deepest possessions of the lives of this little group had I not known that we were so abundantly assured of your genuine interest and heartiest approval. It is no easy matter to write as I have written today'.

For once Buchman had broken his reserve with a fellow faculty member, and, in the words of the Penn State lecturer who had criticised this reserve, spoken of 'the larger issues of the future'.

This plan shows that Buchman intended to work with men, such as General Feng and Hsu, who had been converted, in the hope that Chinese 'national salvation' would follow from personal moral change and faith. The list turned out to be unrealistic, and Buchman far too self-assured in stating that the Peking circle 'is to include' such a collection of notables, let alone the other city 'circles'. Nonetheless he was able to interest Hsu in particular, by weaving his message on personal change into the hope of national salvation.

Immediately on their arrival in Shanghai the Buchman group met 'the Foreign Minister', Dr Wu Ting Fang, and Dr CT Wang, 'the Vice Speaker of the House',[322] though of which government in this confused 'war lord' period is not clear – presumably Sun Yat-sen's impotent Southern government. This meeting does not

[322] MSS Biography

seem to have come to anything. His introduction to Hsu and Sun came by a more roundabout route, and one appropriate to an evangelist seeking 'guidance from the Holy Spirit'. It was at the Kuling conference in 1917 that Buchman first made Dr Cheng Ching-yi's acquaintance, and made a good impression on him. Cheng subsequently accompanied Buchman to Canton in November 1917 to introduce him to 'key men' in Sun's party. One whose name, not surprisingly, came to his mind in his morning meditations was Hsu Ch'ien, and they set about trying to discover his whereabouts. Before they had done so, however, Buchman had 'guidance' that Cheng should go to Shanghai, without any apparent reason. Cheng went, by boat, and was surprised to discover that the first person he met on board was Hsu. Thus did Buchman's 'luminous thoughts' work, and prove themselves, to his and his colleagues' minds, to be of divine origin. Hsu wrote out a letter of introduction for Buchman to Sun Yat-sen,[323] which led to Buchman's first meeting with Sun, in Canton on November 20th.

Buchman knew how to interest Hsu when they met finally in February 1918. Hsu told the Kuling conference in 1918 that 'Mr Buchman had had a vision, a divine vision that a man like myself should join with God to do His will in the land'. This was no doubt both a flattering and a challenging thought. It also required action. He decided to try and 'win' back a one-time Christian in political life, and he started a Bible class in Sun's headquarters.

Buchman met Sun again in late February,[324] and discussed China's sins in general, and Sun's second marriage in particular, with him. A note to Buchman written on Sun's behalf indicates the tenor of their conversation:

> Dr Sun does not know how you can be so mistaken about his 'wives'. For he never had more than one wife. The present Mrs Sun Yat-sen is a Christian, also. Before she married Dr Sun he had already been divorced from his former wife.

Sun told Hsu later that day that he was a good Christian in private, and believed that his famous escape from the imperial Chinese legation in London in the 1890s had been due to prayer. Hsu agreed that that was 'a miracle' but warned that 'he would not be able to do any more miracles again if he did not really repent his sins'.[325] Hsu returned to the attack in April, explaining to Sun that his divorce was not justified under Christian teaching, and that according to Chinese proverbs he ought not to have abandoned a wife who married him in time of trouble, nor as 'commander of his troops' should he keep a mistress in 'the camp'. This was not just a personal issue: 'How could he hope to save the country and keep the hearts of his people brave when as a leader he was doing such things', Hsu remonstrated.[326]

When Buchman next met Sun he was impressed that he 'seemed mellow and very responsive to every suggestion'. Writing to Hsu he added

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[323] MSS Biography

[324] Howard reported some meetings between Buchman and Sun in a cement factory cellar in 1917, since Sun was on the run. 'A' thinks this might refer to meetings in Canton in November 1917.

[325] Letter of Hsu to Buchman MSS Biography

[326] This appears to be a later letter of Hsu to Buchman, MSS Biography

> You have done him and China a real service. You did a courageous thing in speaking so frankly to him. You possess the fearlessness of a Lincoln... I believe God is going to use you in bringing about His great plan for China.[327]

This meeting with Sun was again a result of 'guidance' of Buchman's, to travel on a particular train during his brief visit to Japan in June 1918, though not knowing Sun was on it. They met twice again, on the evening and following morning after the train journey.

This seems to be the extent of Buchman's meetings with Sun. Howard quoted Sun as saying that Buchman was 'the only man who told me the truth about myself', an admission of guilt presumably concerning the divorce issue. Whether this is apocryphal or not is not clear. The episode throws light, however, on Buchman's, if not Sun Yat-sen's, conception of the relation between personal purity and salvation. Treadgold considers in his recent book on Western influence in China, that the modernist evangelists such as Mott and Eddy were not concerned about Sun's second marriage, and that only some old fashioned evangelicals were greatly troubled by it.[328] Treadgold, however, is slightly misleading in terming Mott and Eddy unequivocally as 'modernist', since although they brought in the 'evolutionist' conception of national salvation they did not abandon a traditional morality nor a concern for the sort of conversion that Moody practised. Their analysis of China's ills was still largely in terms of personal sins. Eddy did not adopt a more political outlook until after the war. Their lack of political analysis was most marked, nonetheless, probably in those like Buchman who followed their general philosophy but specialised in personal work. In Hsu's view, and perhaps in Buchman's, Sun's personal 'purity' would not merely be another element that would increase his appeal to the nation and thereby his political strength; it would be something that would enable God to do 'miracles' through him. At Kuling in 1918 Buchman said

> Who can tell the power of one man won for Jesus Christ? If the selfish Yuan Shi-Kai [*sic*] had been won it might have changed the history of China.

To put one's hope in such an event was indeed trusting to miracles and abandoning the necessary work of political analysis and planning. The optimism of this 'who can tell?' view was to be a hallmark of the Oxford Group's political outlook, and the source both of some of the unexpected successes and of its major failures; a view that would not surprisingly draw accusations of 'naiveté' from reformers who were given to more realistic political planning.

Buchman's confidence in being able to convert such as Yuan Shih-kai or even the Christian Sun Yat-sen, must have stemmed largely from his success in converting the most difficult or unlikely people at Penn State, from Bill 'Pickle' to the agnostic Dean. At least this is what comes to mind in his confident hope in going to China:

> I believe we shall win China for God and that we can do it by picking out our most difficult opponents and winning them.[329]

He wrote to Henry Wright that he had used his 'laboratory experiences' as examples at the Kuling conference, in training such as Hsu and Cheng. If his 'laboratory' had shown that a whole college could be 'changed', then why not apply it to a nation?, he may have wondered. Among the officials who came to Kuling in 1918 was General

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[327] Buchman to Hsu July 3, 1918. MSS Biography
[328] Treadgold 1972 p 220 note 96
[329] MSS Biography

Wu Te-chen and ST Wen, a former Commissioner of Foreign Affairs. Buchman stressed strongly the national effects of 'sin'. General Wu agreed that to save China they must attack immorality such as corruption and concubinage.

> 'I have decided to work among the officials', he said. 'As a whole, they are rotten. We need to help them and to form a new regime, a new government, a new force and a new army'.

Hsu said, 'I had the idea of saving the nation before I became a Christian, but I did not know how to sacrifice'.[330] There seems to have been little appreciation of the political difficulties of forming 'a new regime'.

In the 1920s Hsu in company with many other educated and political Chinese turned from modernist evangelical Protestantism to Russian influenced socialism. Buchman however remained set in the political views of his Chinese period.

Conclusion

Buchman may have been disappointed when he left China, but his work did not lack its appreciators, from Hsu Ch'ien or Cheng Ching-yi to a veteran of college evangelism and missions, Harlan Beach. Beach had acquired a compendious knowledge of missions as secretary of the SVM from 1895-1906. Later he was the first incumbent of the chair of Missions at Yale.[331] He got to know Buchman on the Mediterranean cruise of 1908. Notes of his survive, possibly made for a Yale lecture, which gave his assessment of Buchman in China. He mentioned the latter's humour, friendliness and deep earnestness. He wrote:

> He solemnizes me, like God talking... People criticized that he emphasized sin, that he was too severe. He talked about real things that are fundamental. Not like others who always have the same address. He had generalship, and he could work with a team. His personalized meetings were very effective. A great step forward compared with other forms of work.[332]

1918 was Buchman's fortieth year. He had shown himself to be a man of dynamic energy and unusual abilities both as an evangelist to individuals and as an organiser of individual work on a large scale. After a 'false start' in social work, he had found his vocation in this full-time evangelism. He was a man who needed a great cause, a particular mission in which to submerge his powerful ambition for social success, his 'wanderlust' and energy. He had found in his 1908 conversion the humility to admit to ambition and the cause in which to sublimate it – the mission to 'personalise' Christian evangelism around the world. This he saw, however, as a social, not an individualistic cause. He hoped for the transformation of the world by the unselfish stewardship of converted men and women. Committed to teamwork, he was much loved and respected by his team. But he was too much in the prophetic mould, identified himself too closely with his mission, and his mission with God's will, to work closely with those who disagreed with him. Progressive disengagement from existing institutions (first his church then the YMCA and colleges) and the growth of a team sharing his certainties, accepting his authority and seeing outsiders as potential only for change not dialogue, was the inevitable result over the next decade. The

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[330] Kuling report, MSS Biography
[331] Bainton 1957
[332] MSS Biography – no further reference given there.

paradox of Buchman's conversion was his humiliation and yet his certainty that God had changed him and continued to speak to him and use him: he was at once humiliated and elevated. This was eventually to be mirrored in the paradoxes of his work: its 'fellowship', ecumenism and emphasis on reconciliation – and yet its intolerance of disagreement; its accent on apology – yet its failure as a movement to admit to any mistakes; its promise of converting the world's power structures – despite Buchman's failure to convert Ohl's Committee, the Hartford Faculty, the YMCA in China or later the British Churches; its members' individual self-sacrifice – yet collective sense of superiority.

Post-Script to Part II: Buchman at Hartford Seminary 1916-1922

Buchman held his post of 'Extension Lecturer in Personal Evangelism' at Hartford Seminary from 1916 to 1922.[333] During this time he spent only three full academic years based at Hartford[334] out of the six years that he was employed there. His itinerant evangelism became progressively incompatible with this post for two reasons: antagonism from among the faculty, and his own inability to fulfil a routine timetable while following the 'direction of the Holy Spirit'.

The antagonism between Buchman and some of the faculty was mutual. As a lecturer Buchman was not a faculty member. His stringent criticisms of theological teaching as 'oftentimes divorced from life',[335] and of the teachers for failing to encourage the moral and spiritual, as well as the intellectual, growth of their students was therefore all the more galling to some of the faculty. They saw him as an over-eager evangelist who held contempt both for scholarship and for the privacy of the students. One person, interviewed by Clark, who had known Buchman at Penn State and Hartford, remembered him as a fundamentalist who would not read modern scholars on the Bible. Another could scarcely remember the content of Buchman's lectures, but had a clear memory of his attempt to convert each member of the class. These efforts extended to long visits in the students' rooms, on occasion keeping them from their studies and more than once leading finally to a request to leave. Acrimonious dissension among the students over Buchman's interference led the Trustees of the college to ask him to live off campus. So in his second or third year there (1920?) he moved from the student 'dormitory', Hosmer Hall, to a boarding house in the city.[336]

Other sources of friction with some of the faculty included the expense account for outside evangelism with which Hartford provided Buchman – he was apparently travelling and spending more than anticipated – and the reputation that he acquired for unreliability in keeping engagements, since he was sometimes 'guided' to break them.[337] In the summer of 1920 his good progress at Cambridge, England, persuaded him to stay on there through the autumn, not returning to Hartford until Christmas.[338] At this time he drafted, but did not send, a letter to the Hartford authorities saying that his unexpected stay at Cambridge was 'guided', that he would return to Cambridge in the summer of 1921 and that he must be free to be 'guided' further, and would therefore offer his resignation if they felt this to be incompatible with his post. The Hartford President, MacKenzie, facilitated these stays at Cambridge by arranging for Buchman to live at Westminster (theological) College through a former fellow

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333 See above Chapter VI pp 82 ff "Recruiting in America for a new campaign in China"
334 See Appendix III
335 Letter of Buchman to Shoemaker Nov. 24, 1922, MSS Biography p 232
336 For most of this paragraph: reference Clark 1944 pp 46-56.The actual content of Buchman's lectures according to a memo in the Hartford Foundation files was in 1919-21: 'Class Instruction in Personal Evangelism', in one semester only; in 1921-22 four courses, in first semester only: '1. Beginning Course. Principles of Personal Evangelism (two classes one for men and one for women.) 2. Advanced Course. Diagnosis, Personalization, Illustration, Recent Movement at Oxford and Cambridge. Discourse different from Advanced Course of last year. 3. Course for Bible and Personal Evangelism... This course shows how to use the Bible in dealing with individuals... 4. Clinic for Men. Open to all' on the course. Ref: Clark 1944, p 48, Keene 1937 p 55
337 Clark 1944 pp 46-56
338 Letter, Buchman to Dean Jacobus of Hartford, Nov 15 1920. MSS Biography pp 246f

student, Professor John Oman, who was on the staff there and whose lectures Buchman attended.

In the end Buchman's resignation, formally offered on February 1st, 1922 to take effect at the end of the academic year, took place ostensibly over a separate issue. The faculty delayed in authorising him to hold a special course for volunteer students which he had unwisely announced before gaining permission for it. Clark considered that Buchman used this issue as a pretext which allowed him to show some pique at the faculty, and that he had already half decided to resign. The earlier request to leave the 'dormitory' was a much more severe criticism by the Hartford authorities, Clark pointed out, than this. The faculty considered that Buchman was making too much of the affair, posing as a martyr.[339] 'He left bitterness and divisions on the campus long after he was gone', wrote Clark, who found that the faculty in 1943 still held an unfavourable opinion of him.

On the other hand, as in China, criticism of Buchman was balanced by enthusiastic support. He was popular with many students, well liked by the service staff, and was on friendly speaking terms with the faculty most of the time.[340] His successes included getting

> most of the fellows in two of the most exclusive and representative [*sic*] Clubs... up at a quarter to six in the morning to keep their quiet time.[341]

President MacKenzie remained a firm supporter and urged him not to resign. He reported favourably on a Group house party to the faculty in 1933.[342]

Buchman decided to resign while travelling to the Washington Conference on disarmament and the Far East, where he was to meet some of the delegates at the invitation of Colonel Forster, who was on the British delegation to the conference.[343] His 'guidance' written shortly before his resignation was 'Resign. Don't worry about finances. Tell MacKenzie the thing he propagates does not bring life'.[344] Loudon Hamilton wrote in 1941 that Buchman's:

> vision had been 'There w$^{\underline{d}}$ [*sic*] be a World-Wide awakening of personal religion after the war' – He used to say this constantly at meetings and privately. It was this conviction and this urgency, that led him to resign from Hartford Theol. Seminary 1922...[345]

This combination of evidence points to the various reasons for Buchman's resignation: poor relations with some of the faculty but, more important, his own mission with its expanding opportunities in Britain and in international affairs, its alienation from 'lifeless' theological study, its dependence on the unforeseeable directions of the 'Spirit'. A final element of importance was his reasonable expectation of getting enough finance to be an independent evangelist.[346]

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[339] Clark loc cit
[340] Clark loc cit
[341] Putney 1922 p 39, Buchman speaking.
[342] MSS Biography p 274. MacKenzie also apparently asked Buchman to join the Hartford faculty; Buchman refused in order to stay closer to the students. MSS Biography 227.
[343] Ibid. Also in published accounts of Buchman's life, such as Howard 1961 p 26
[344] MSS Biography p 272
[345] Hamilton 1941
[346] See below Chapter VIII, p.111 f

Buchman was undoubtedly less successful at Hartford as an evangelist than he had been at Penn State. No doubt this is why his period there has received such scant attention in the Group's literature about him.[347] He aroused antagonisms that rankled long after he left. The episode formed one more in a chain of disillusioning experiences of hide-bound or 'lifeless' churchmen for Buchman, a chain that included the hospice directors, the minister who refused to include Bill Pickle in his church, the Chinese YMCA and many foreign missionaries in China, and which perhaps started with the disputes over 'new measures' which had racked Allentown in Buchman's youth. Billy Sunday valued Buchman's friendship and occasional help on his campaigns up to 1924 because Buchman was not 'one of those starched collar Christians' or conventional ministers who disapproved of Sunday's uneducated, energetic evangelism.[348] Buchman sympathised not with Sunday's failure to manage his 'team's' finances, nor with his mass revivalism entirely, but with his 'life' and reality, his liking for witness and for 'stirring people up'. Like Sunday he was to come into conflict with cautious, conventional Churchmen and with intellectuals. He could not both expand his programme and remain in a post where his colleagues or superiors might hinder him. He had to be in control of his own programme and his own group, or, from his point of view, he had to be free for the 'Holy Spirit' to control both. His energy, determination to build a 'fellowship', inability to abide criticism or hindrance and disillusionment with the student Christian movement forced him, unlike Drummond and Wright, to leave the security and confines of a university post for fully independent evangelism.[349]

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[347] The Penn State story by contrast featured in the editions of Buchman's speeches and other standard works, such as Howard 1961 and Campbell 1970. It was even turned into a musical play and film, 'Pickle Hill' by Howard

[348] Reminiscence of Loudon Hamilton, who joined Buchman on two of Sunday's campaigns – Dayton, Ohio, six weeks Oct/Nov 1922, and a North Carolina town spring 1924. Personal interview 21.3.75

[349] For fuller discussion of Buchman's disillusionment with the YMCA see below Chapter X pp 137 f.

Part Three: The Development of The Oxford Group's Ideology, Appeal, Tactics

Chapter VII: Departures from Drummond's 'School'

Buchman's indebtedness to Drummond's 'school'

It should now be apparent that Buchman had thoroughly imbibed Mott's grand strategic approach by 1920. When in the early 1920s he quietly set about raising an unstructured 'fellowship' in the older universities of America and Britain he had in mind a long term strategy, in terms of the saving of nations through evangelical awakenings among the influential upper and middle classes. This was to happen through a fellowship that it was hoped would avoid the bureaucratic and modernistic trends of the YMCA and WSCF, and build, more effectively than the 'Hartford Seven', a 'rebirth of the consciousness of individual work' around the world. It should also be clear that Buchman's own experience of the hospice and of his 1908 'conversion' had closely accorded with Drummond's and Wright's emphases that surrender was the first essential, even in social work, and personal evangelism was therefore the most needed work, even for social renewal; that decision, confession and restitution were central to surrender; and that a theological education was of little use without an experience.

Buchman concluded from his own experience and from the teaching of Drummond's 'school' that the essence of religion was a life of surrender to God's will, and that the supernatural could guide and empower the person who was making every effort to overcome his moral faults and peccadilloes. He also learnt the effective practical psychology of Drummond's method. Since various excellent expositions of Buchman's method have been made it seems unnecessary to do more than summarise them here. This summary will be followed by a consideration of the main differences between Drummond's and Buchman's personal evangelism – differences which are relevant both to the structure of Buchman's movement and to the question of its degree of secularisation.

a) Conversion

The conversion experience which Buchman propagated was not simply a single 'heart experience'. Certainly it *was* expected to bring joy and a sense of closeness to Christ. But above all it was an experience of power over sin. This was not to be accomplished by an act of faith or a rush of emotion alone, nor was it likely to take place in a public meeting. It was rather a series of steps mainly taken in private with a 'soul surgeon' or evangelist. Failure to complete these steps would probably result in a failure to make the conversion experience permanent. Buchman used to summarise these steps during the movement's early phases using the formula of the 5 C's: Confidence, Confession, Conviction, Conversion, and Continuance.

Despite some changes of emphasis, the Group's evangelism was basically similar to that of Drummond and Wright which was described in Chapter 1. The first step, *confidence*, included Drummond's maxim to make the evangelical life appear attractive and challenging, even 'dashing'. It also meant that the evangelist should admit to his own faults, and appear trustworthy and sympathetic, and as a fellow

sinner who had found 'victory' not a censorious or pious critic. This would encourage the potential convert to bare his soul in *confession*, admitting to those things in his life of which he was most ashamed and which he felt prohibited him from living up to the evangelical standards which had been made to appear so attractive. This shattering experience of admitting fully, not 'just' to himself or to God, but in detail to another person, his most degrading or inadequate characteristics and worst deeds would cause a deep *conviction* of sin and hatred of sin in the convert. At this point the evangelist was required not to show a sentimental sympathy, but briskly and confidently to present the way out.

He would help the convert to rebuild a new identity by a commitment of himself to God (*conversion*) first in private prayer and then by announcing his decision before other people. This would typically take place in a group or public meeting, often many times. It would also involve, through restitution for past sins and hurts caused to others, a statement of new intent to those people who knew best the convert's worst characteristics. Finally *continuance* involved a process of preserving and deepening this new commitment over many years. This included:

(i) observing daily devotions of Bible reading, prayer and listening to God, in which the convert would seek to regulate the details and main course of his life by evangelical criteria and 'luminous' thoughts;

(ii) participation in the fellowship, which would include regularly sharing his guidance from God with one or more companions, and also admitting to temptations to sin as soon as possible, thus living his interior 'thought life' in the open and making secret backsliding virtually impossible;

(iii) setting out to convert others, leading to responsibility for their spiritual progress, which in itself made another motive for not giving up;

(iv) attending Group meetings, Bible study, and campaigns in the locality, and probably some of its larger conferences as well. The demands of 'continuance' in themselves required the growth of fellowship, whether within or independent of existing church structures.

b) Evidence

As in Drummond's method the evangelist was expected to present his case in reasoned terms, and to demand little or no theology to begin with. The potential convert might be told that even if he doubted God's existence he could 'make the experiment' and see whether the steps described above would not lead to certain evidence of the supernatural. Such evidence would have been expected both in the power which the surrendered found as if from nowhere to dispense with sinful habits and attitudes – with, for instance, masturbation, addiction to alcohol or tobacco, cancerous resentment or debilitating shyness and so on – and in guidance.[350] The latter was typically of two kinds: first, *correction*: conviction of sin or conscience concerning particular faults to be rectified or duties to be fulfilled, and second,

[350] 2018 Comment: In the original thesis at times I went overboard with inverted commas, presumably to distance myself from the movement. I now find them unnecessary and believe they make the book harder to read. I have taken many such quote marks out of this section in particular. E.g. this sentence originally read "Such 'evidence' would have been expected both in the 'power' which the 'surrendered' found as if from nowhere to dispense with 'sinful' habits and attitudes… and in 'guidance'."

direction: 'definite, accurate, adequate information' as to what the individual should do or say. These correspond to Drummond's general and particular wills of God.

Many examples of the latter could be given from the Group's history. Some were dramatic, involving saving someone from committing suicide or, in the war, from being hit by a shell; at a camp for Princeton YMCA students in 1919 Buchman greatly impressed those present by having guidance to go at an unlikely time to a particular tent, where he found a young man suffering acute appendicitis just in time to get him to hospital and save his life. More commonly guidance was related to reaching people in spiritual need; for instance Buchman explained at a house party in 1922 that one evening not long before:

> I wrote two letters, and I wanted to write a third. Then it came to me: 'No; you will meet so-and-so'. I went out, and there he was. The other night I went to bed with a splitting head-ache [*sic*], but I knew that I had to go down, and that person would be there, and there he was... God can (if I may use the term) say: 'Hallo' to us, and show us exactly what he would have us to do, … just what to write.

This was an advanced experience of twelve years, he added, but recruits 'like Perry here do have their luminous times'. As Perry himself said on the same occasion:

> I know definitely that certain things have happened which I cannot explain on any basis of subliminal consciousness, or anything like that... Call it coincidence if you like, but when things like that happen continuously, it is difficult to blame them on blind chance [and easier to ascribe them to] a living omnipotent Father.[351]

This experientialism had virtually replaced the need for specific Christian theology, even in the 1920s.

c) 'Colourless' Theology

This is not to say that many members of the Group, particularly parish ministers like Howard Rose or theologians like Julian Thornton-Duesbery did not continue to preach the theology of their church.[352] Indeed most members of the Group would at least have been brought up in a Christian environment, and usually an educated one in which Sunday School, Churchgoing and parental influence would have taught them their denominational theology. The experience of 'surrender' and 'guidance' in turn brought this theology 'alive' for Group converts, bringing them to realise perhaps for the first time and with new vibrancy that the God of the scriptures was a 'living person' with whom they could have a relationship, and who could guide and protect them. But most of them knew that the success of the movement did not depend on their denominational theology and allegiance, indeed would be enhanced if they kept it in the background as a personal matter except when appealing to fellow members of their denomination.

Rev Sam Shoemaker, an Episcopal parish minister who was if anything on the more ecclesiastical wing of the movement, expressed this in a pamphlet of 1928:

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[351] Putney 1922 pp 78 and 107 f

[352] For example, Rev Sherwood Day in his pamphlet '*The Principles of the Oxford Group*' 1929 prefaced his exposition with, 'It should be said at the start that we are here taking for granted the great Bible truths concerning redemption'. Rev Howard Rose wrote of the importance of the Atonement in his pamphlet on the Group, also probably 1929, p 18

> Now this group is entirely tolerant about whether you are a Fundamentalist or a Liberal or a Roman Catholic or a Seventh Day Adventist... But it is not tolerant about whether you think that guidance is moonshine, or conversion is unnecessary, or personal work is possible only for the 'gifted'.[353]

In the same way Drummond had sought for students to lead his Oxford work who were 'absolutely neutral and colourless men, both ecclesiastically and theologically', who being 'unsworn to any religious party' could 'unite the high and low factions in a piece of neutral evangelistic work'.[354] By 'neutral' of course he did not mean neutral to 'sin' or to the demands of 'God's will'.

The main lines of Buchman's approach and method were thus very similar to Drummond's. Incidentally, both would have disliked the idea of a 'method' as a formula applicable without adaptation or thought to any potential convert. Above all their method depended upon an intense preoccupation with each separate individual:

'I have no method', said Buchman in 1922 '...with each person, it is different. The aim is to meet people's needs. It is really not a method, but a principle of life. Let us keep that in mind, because the moment it becomes stereotyped, it becomes useless. It has to be a different thing with different people'.[355]

d) Terminology

In details also Buchman owed more than was often realised by contemporaries to Drummond and Wright. He was not, for instance, the first to produce formulae like the '5 C's' or the one, referring to sin, 'hate, confess, forsake, restore', as a summary of the conversion process. 'Woo, Win, Warn', another favourite of his, antedated him: it referred to an important principle of Drummond's and of the Group after him – to be sure to 'capture the imagination' before 'tackling the will' of the potential convert. Much of the terminology typical of the Group was in fact inherited from Drummond's and Wright's circle – 'guidance', 'life-changing', 'sharing', and of course Speer's 'four absolute standards' among them. Wright's emphases on these 'standards' and on 'restitution' as a means of bringing a general desire to reform oneself down to a particular, costly action which 'drove in stakes' against going back on one's conversion, were central to the Group. Metaphors taken from the military ('enlistment' etc.), from wireless telegraphy and science, and from contagious illness (the evangelical life, like measles, can only be 'caught not taught'), which were the stock in trade of Buchman's speeches are also traceable to his earlier milieu. So were some of his most characteristic sayings, such as Moody's principle 'It is better to set ten men to work than to do the work of ten men' which was also a favourite of Mott's, – not surprising since he, like Buchman, was consciously building a 'fellowship'.

By 1915-20 Buchman had become probably the most intense and ambitious (not necessarily in a pejorative sense) of the leading exponents of Drummond's 'school'. The central fact about him then, as later, was his remarkable ability to convert individuals. Other evangelists had mixed feelings towards him. His abilities were unusual, but they carried faults with them that caused concern. Wright did not leave any written opinion of Frank Buchman, but Clark wrote that:

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[353] Shoemaker 1928 (d) pp 24f
[354] Smith pp 311-113
[355] Putney 1922 p 49

> A close friend and co-worker of Professor Wright states that he looked on Buchman as a religious genius but was definitely critical of some of his methods, particularly his emphasis on sex.[356]

Sherwood Eddy's considered view, in his autobiography of 1935, was very similar. He was critical particularly of Buchman's lack of awareness of social structure and also of his early emphasis on 'the confession of "secret" sexual sins', but he acknowledged that 'Then as now Frank Buchman was nothing less than a genius in personal dealing with men'.[357] Buchman's abilities made him both capable of innovation, such as his emphasis on sex problems, and impatient with superiors or colleagues who failed to agree. He was both highly critical of others, dispensing prophetic warnings about society, and oversensitive to criticism of himself. His remarkable ability to perceive moral failings of a particular type in others – 'sins' of sensuality, pride, lethargy, individuality – led him to neglect both the concern for intellectual enquiry and the tolerance that had distinguished Drummond and Wright. These points will be elaborated in turn.

Emphasis on Sex

a) Controversy

If Wright did disapprove of Buchman's emphasis on sex it adds considerable weight to the many similar criticisms of Buchman's early evangelism. The criticism of this sort most celebrated by critics of the Group, from *Time* in 1926 to Driberg in 1964, was the President of Princeton's 'ban' on Buchman evangelising on his campus. Undergraduates' complaints about Buchman's 'inquisition' into their private lives and his 'unhealthy interest in morbid sexual matters' led President Hibben probably in late 1923 to ask Buchman to keep off sex in his evangelism. Buchman refused, because, he said, sexual 'secret sins' were the very thing troubling about 85% of Princeton students. Buchman was referring to masturbation. Hibben may have thought he meant homosexuality. At any rate Hibben took this comment as slander, and may or may not have asked Buchman to stay off campus. He was reported in the press in spring 1924 as saying, 'There is no place for Buchmanism in Princeton'. However he had written only shortly before to Buchman expressing full confidence in the Philadelphian Society (college YMCA) staff, who were all 'Buchmanites'.[358] Later he was to deny ever having criticised Buchman or his associates.[359] He was said to have banned Buchman in early 1924 at a meeting with him and his supporters, Shoemaker (the Philadelphian Society President) and the college doctor, Dr D.B. Sinclair, though the latter were unaware of it.[360] Hibben himself asked Buchman to visit the campus in 1926, while the ban was supposedly still in effect.[361] Hibben, it seems, was thoroughly indecisive in the affair. But in 1926 *Time* made a sensationalised story of the 'ban' and the charges of sexual inquisition made against Buchman. His followers who still controlled the Philadelphian Society lost a vote of confidence and resigned. An enquiry into Buchman's methods by a joint committee of trustees, faculty and

[356] Clark 1944 p 45 footnote 4
[357] Eddy 1935 pp 212f
[358] Hibben to Buchman January 2, 1924, MSS Biography pp 293-311
[359] Hibben to John Beck, May 21, 1932. MSS Biography
[360] Letter of Sinclair to Buchman of November 1, 1926.
[361] Hibben wrote Buchman 1926 summer inviting him to bring King George of Greece to Princeton to receive an honorary degree.

students appointed by Hibben acquitted him of all the charges, including those of encouraging 'mutual confession of intimate sins' at meetings, and of laying the emphasis on confession of sexual sins. The report however considered that mistakes had been made due to 'an excess [of] zeal and an occasional lack of judgement and tact'.[362]

Others who criticised Buchman for overemphasising sex included Ernest Mandeville, who gave the issue publicity in articles in *The Churchman* and the national press.[363] Charles WC Ferguson in his *The Confusion of Tongues: A Review of Modernisms* was one of several less seriously minded critics of the movement who enjoyed writing lurid descriptions of its supposed 'orgiastic festivals', a form of fiction initiated by Driberg in his earliest newspaper articles on the Group in 1928.[357][364]Hadley Cantril saw Buchman's success in the 1920s almost entirely in terms of the application of his psychologically powerful techniques of confession-within-a-group to sexual problems:

> Since his appeal was successful chiefly because of the guilt a number of young men and boys suffered from what they considered their own immoral, abnormal sexual behaviour (masturbation), the explanation for his success belongs properly in the domain of the psychoanalyst or some other branch of psychotherapy.[365]

Finally Macintosh, a sympathetic critic and Yale theologian, contrasted the Group unfavourably with Wright's greater wisdom and discretion in allowing public confession.

> 'The leaders of many of the early meetings' of the Group, he wrote, allowed 'some serious and even tragic mistakes... especially in the direction of detailed confessions, in mixed public meetings, of sexual sins, involving in some instances the reputations of others...'

He added, writing in 1942, that the Group had since learnt from experience and criticism on this issue. He gave no examples or evidence of his assertion of 'tragic mistakes'. Van Dusen took a similar view.

In defence members of the Oxford Group made denials in the press and in pamphlets that sex was dealt with indiscreetly in their meetings. An Anglican bishop wrote that the sins of 'envy, pride, consciousness, cowardice, sloth, uncharitableness, and insincerity' were given chief attention at a 1927 'houseparty' he attended, not 'the gross and carnal sins'.[366] A Graham Baldwin, writing a 'critical study' of the movement as a Yale Divinity School thesis in 1928, noted of the charge of sex obsession against the movement that 'periodicals have devoted columns to such criticism; ministers have bitterly decried it from their pulpits…' But from his personal experience as a participant of the movement since 1924 'I have never witnessed an

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[362] Report to President Hibben of the Special Committee p 7-8 in Clark 1944 pp 71 f. Clark's view is the fullest account of the Princeton episode, considerably condensed in my summary above.
[363] e.g. Mandeville 1931
[364] Ferguson 1929 pp 96 and 99
[365] Cantril 1941 p 161. Incidentally Cantril has his facts wrong in implying that both Princeton and Oxford Universities officially condemned Buchman's evangelism. The Princeton report exonerated him, while Driberg's lurid accounts of the Group in Oxford in 1928 eventually drew a reply from several college heads and other senior academics supporting Buchman's good name. *Daily Express* 1928 Feb 27, 28, 29. *The Times* June 23 1928.
[366] John Roots 1928 p 14. See also Perkins 1932 replying to Mandeville.

unhealthy exhibition of careless sharing of sex problems in groups of men and women'.[367]

Generally, however, the movement's apologists did not deny that sex was emphasised, but said it was done 'healthily'.

b) Reasons for Controversy – Over-enthusiasm

Although examples are not forthcoming, the comments by Macintosh and the Princeton report suggest that there were some 'mistakes' in which sexual confessions caused embarrassment or worse, in the Group's early history. The main reason for this would probably have been the over-enthusiasm of new converts. Baldwin noted that some converts became embittered and repelled by the memory of their own emotional confessions, and left the movement.[368] Macintosh hinted that Wright would have been unhappy at the way his principle of restitution was applied by some Group members, who proved insufficiently aware of the harm restitution could do to the recipient.

Under the pressure of enthusiastic conversionism there were some 'mental breakdowns' in the wake of the movement. Some of these were taken care of by Professor LW Grensted, the Oxford psychologist and a friend of the Group.[369]

Macintosh admonished the Group with Stewart's description of Wright:

> He was constantly presenting the claims of Christ to men, for he was a born evangelist, but his method was so kindly and his solicitous affection for the man with whom he was working was so apparent, that all were touched and none could take offence...[370]

The same could hardly have been said of Buchman, who unlike Wright, stirred up bitter controversy and partisanship in most of the places where he centred his work. The implication may be that the lack of moderation of the Group's leaders, by contrast with Wright, was partly responsible for some of the excesses of their newer recruits, and for some of the movement's casualties.

c) Reasons for controversy – Victorian taboos

It is possible that gross indiscretions, let alone 'nervous breakdowns', were rare indeed, given the lack of evidence. Buchman's undergraduate critics at Princeton, asked to give names of those with grievances against Buchman's sexual inquisition, provided twenty: when interviewed by the official committee 18 denied any grievance; of the two who claimed a grievance, one later retracted it while the other's complaint was dismissed as too vague.[371] Clark considered that the most notable aspects of the Princeton controversy were the violence of the feelings against Buchman and the relative absence of concrete evidence to support them.[372]

Much of the controversy over Buchman's emphasis on sex, particularly masturbation, was due to the taboo nature of the subject, which was played upon by the press. Buchman would have disagreed strongly with those who, with the help of the newly popularised writings of Havelock Ellis and Freud, were pressing in the 1920s for

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[367] Baldwin 1928 pp 21-24
[368] Baldwin 1928 p 18
[369] Mentioned by J.P. Thornton Duesbery in interview 27.9.74
[370] Stewart 1925 p 4
[371] MSS Biography
[372] Clark 1944 p 74

more relaxed sexual mores or for the acceptance of contraception. But he was nonetheless with them in the van of relaxing the taboo on *discussing* sex.

In this Buchman drew a dual fire: on the one hand from churchmen who thought it ungentlemanly or who could not believe what surveys were soon to show, that Buchman's estimate for the prevalence of masturbation was if anything conservative; and on the other hand from students who wanted to break down sexual puritanism and who saw in Buchman's use of the growing freedom in discussing sex for evangelical purposes a particularly dangerous and insidious enemy. This undergraduate opposition at Princeton centred on a circle of so-called 'aesthetes' who formed a 'Theatre Intime' group, which met in Murray Dodge Hall opposite the Philadelphian Society. Neilson Abeel, one of its leaders, was alleged to have told HK Twitchell, a leading 'Buchmanite' student, that 'if he did nothing else in his life he would smash what Frank Buchman was doing'.[373] The student 'aesthetes' were a new phenomenon, opposing traditional puritanism with a flamboyantly 'beautiful' manner and an elevation of styles decried by society at large, and by evangelicals in particular, as effeminate and homosexual. The increasing popularity of radical political groups marked the growing diversity of ideologies open to students after 1918 – the war having largely discredited the optimistic liberalism that had marked the YMCA's heyday. Buchman later called the Princeton opposition 'the first real upsurge of the negative forces' lumping the aesthetes with the political radicals: 'It [the Princeton opposition] was Communistic and it began with moral Bolshevism'.[374] Presumably he meant by this not just that some of his homosexual critics flirted with Communism, but that the new ideologies – aesthete or Communist – struck systematically at traditional values and religion and proposed alternatives. At Penn State the worst opposition had been a few sneers and jokes.

From the aesthetes' point of view the worst thing about Buchman was his success at conversions. 'The real trouble at Princeton', said a well-known New York preacher, Dr Alfred Parker Fitch, to Shoemaker, was that Buchman and his group nearly converted the campus. This was certainly their aim. In 1918 Buchman wrote to a senior Princetonian that the student opposition was partly directed at him (Buchman) personally:

> because in their heart of hearts they know that here is a personality who is producing life, and... who has succeeded at least in one University over a period of seven years to change the entire moral and spiritual life of the faculty and the student body and to gain the full support of the Board of Trustees.

Buchman's penchant for exaggeration was already well developed, but his aims were clear. These made a worthy challenge for the new forces of aestheticism.

Buchman and Freud

Shoemaker justified the movement's emphasis on sexual problems in 1928 by writing that 'we did not make modern conditions: we found them': conditions in which Freud was better known and which were marked by 'an increase in sexual irregularity within the past fifteen years'. The answer to the latter, he continued, was not to censure the young but to talk sympathetically with them 'throwing what medical light you can on

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[373] MSS Biography

[374] Buchman talking privately to friends in Locarno, March 11 1949. MSS Biography.

the subject and then saying to them that when all is said and done, Jesus Christ makes a difference in the amount of will-power a man can muster...'

There was no point in talking in generalities about sex, he advised, since:

> the kind of confession which helps is always concrete confession. You must get at what is the matter as a psychologist must. They must be free to blurt it out...[375]

John Roots, a recent Harvard graduate and member of the movement, in the same year justified the Group's emphasis on sex by pointing out that 'Psychiatrists say that it is an important factor in a great majority of their cases'.[376]

Evidence of the influence of contemporary psychology on Frank Buchman is available as early as 1917-19. Bishop Lewis, who had warned him to be alert to 'perversion' among missionaries in China, directed him to the clinical literature in the field. Buchman soon after attended lectures by a Dr Wooster of Boston on problems of sex in relation to society, probably in 1919. Notes that he made at this time, though rather cryptic, indicate his interest:

> 'Christianity in touch with the newer psychology. Their techniques, Psycho-neurosis and its treatment. Nine tenths of people suffer sexual maladjustment, incomplete sexual harmony. Unsatisfactory wives. The theatre, the dance and the novel as erotic stimuli. A sense of inferiority from earlier masturbation radiates over a whole emotional field. What a man needs is redirection and a religious faith'.

To President MacKenzie of Hartford he wrote that a talk with Bishop Lewis had confirmed his intuitive diagnosis of 'undercurrents that were robbing Christian workers of power' in China, and added, 'I maintained a wholesome attitude on this whole question of impurity – I have been silent when I should have spoken'.[377]

There were probably other influences on Buchman from psychiatry,[378] but this comment to MacKenzie put them in perspective. They merely confirmed Buchman's own experience and gave him added courage to speak out. For an example of the latter, at a 'house party' in 1922, Buchman gave weight to his message on the ill effects of sexual indulgence by quoting the case of two Christian medical specialists who were given to enquiring whether their patients' illnesses were in part caused by 'evil thoughts'. Incidentally an indication of the openness of Buchman's conversation about sex is given in his elaboration of these 'evil thoughts' as 'secret sin, masturbation, tossing off as it is called over here [England]; attachments for women, and forms of sensuality of all the different kinds'; this though a Bishop and a journalist were at the all-male house party.[379]

It must be remembered that Buchman heard confessions frequently. While awareness of medical and psychiatric opinion may have encouraged him, the aptness of Mandeville's description of Buchman as 'the Freud of Religion' is due less to his reading of Freud – if he did read him – than to the probability that like Freud he

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[375] Shoemaker 1928 pp 15
[376] Roots 1928 p 15
[377] Buchman to MacKenzie May 21 1919. Source for this paragraph – MSS Biography
[378] Clark reports an informant who suggested that Buchman picked up his ideas on sex from a mental hospital where he did some work. Clark 1944 p 110
[379] Putney 1922 p 134

discovered for himself the importance of sexual problems in the course of hearing uninhibited confessions.

Though interested and encouraged by psychology, Buchman was also wary of it. On one occasion in the early 1920s he was talking in Drummond-like vein of the need for a 'science of spirituality'. But lest it be thought that this could be reduced to a psychological technique or intellectual discipline he went on:

> Think of Jesus as the great diagnostician. There is danger in constructing a science of this kind that we will think it is a man-made thing. The true diagnostician meets with God.

Buchman wished to maintain intuition and 'luminous thoughts' at the centre of his practice of diagnosing mental and moral anxieties. Nonetheless, during the Oxford Group period he showed 'a great respect for psychologists who were also men of faith – LW Grensted in Oxford, Maxwell Telling in Leeds, Alphonse Maeder in Zurich etc'.[380]

Neglect of Intellectual Concerns

A typical story of Buchman's abilities in 'life-changing' was told by Sherwood Eddy in his biography. Eddy and Buchman were helping in a campaign at Yale before the war. Students 'were pouring in for personal talks by appointment every fifteen minutes and faster than we could handle them'. One of them, an argumentative atheist, demanded: 'Prove to me the existence of God and I'll believe it'. Eddy spent the allotted period fruitlessly offering an apologetic argument, and passed the student on to Buchman. The latter countered the atheist's opening statement with the reply 'My friend, you are an adulterer'. Asked how he knew, he replied 'Because it's all over your face'. The student admitted it and 'then found that his "atheism", as a superficial doubt or unconscious pose, had somehow evaporated'. Eddy concluded:

> After a series of similar experiences I learned that, however unconsciously, the religious difficulties of most men are moral or emotional rather than intellectual.[381]

Eddy's view of Buchman as a 'genius' in such situations was shared by Henry van Dusen, theologian and erstwhile colleague of Buchman's. He became critical of the Group. But he still considered Buchman's understanding of problems of the personality to be greater than that of any psychiatrist in the world. He described Buchman as 'psychic' in diagnosing men's problems.[382]

The memories of current members of MRA who worked with Buchman, like the movement's books about him, contain many examples of his unusual abilities in 'diagnosis'. Some of these were similar to Eddy's story, telling of Buchman's successful countering of intellectual objections by insights into his critic's source of personal unhappiness.[383]

The success of Buchman's method in these cases suggests that intellectual objections to Christianity were indeed often 'poses' to cover unhappiness, rejection of family, or inability to adhere to the moral code of the person's Christian upbringing. Buchman

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[380] Recollection of KD Belden (my father) October 1975
[381] Eddy 1935 pp 213-214
[382] Van Dusen 1934
[383] e.g. Howard 1961 p 9f

called intellectual doubts 'smoke-screens', defence mechanisms to hide moral failure or unhappiness.

This, however, was an analysis that could not be proved wrong to those who believed in it. Anyone who voiced doubts would be suspected of moral failure, particularly if they left the Group or if they questioned the Group's moral, rather than intellectual, principles. Examples can be given from the 1920s. Bob Collis, Cambridge rugby blue and Irish international, was one of Buchman's prize converts of the early 1920s. He was 'changed' after experiencing the relief of talking with complete frankness for the first time in his life about his extreme worries about masturbating. The experience freed him from the habit. Later he came to the opinion that this freedom was a psychologically understandable experience and that Buchman's theological interpretation of it in terms of 'conversion' and 'God's power' was unnecessary. Buchman was tolerant of these doubts and assured him that in time he would understand. However when Collis took up smoking and questioned Buchman's diagnosis of a mutual acquaintance as sexually perverted, Buchman accused him furiously of sin.[384] Thus Buchman did not take Collis' intellectual doubts seriously, nor apparently at first consider them rationalisations of sin, since Collis was of good character. He simply considered these doubts unimportant and transient, trusting no doubt that if Collis remained committed the 'Holy Spirit' would 'lead him into all truth'. It was only when Collis' 'moral character' and ability to sense immorality in others seemed in doubt that Buchman became alarmed.

It appears from the writings of AG Baldwin and HP Van Dusen that both were attracted by the 'reality' of the experience of the supernatural in Buchman's group, but were eventually repelled by the lack of intellectual honesty or understanding in it. Van Dusen was inevitably accused of moral failure, however, as his real motive for leaving the Group.[385] He was suspected of ambition for church preferment. The fact that in time he became president of Union Theological Seminary and 'one of the world's pre-eminent Presbyterians' did not necessarily counteract this suspicion in Group circles.[386]

Howard Walter explained this outlook in *Soul Surgery*. There were four levels, he wrote, on each of which people may sin – the spiritual, intellectual, social and physical (chiefly sexual) levels. He continued:

> Those who best know the facts declare that ninety per cent of the ultimate sin around us is on the lowest physical level, to which we penetrate most rarely, and with greatest maladaption in our personal work.[387]

Buchman's adaptation to this work, however, led him to neglect the criticisms of 'sin' on the intellectual level made against his work. If he really believed that the latter sins were only part of 10% of all sin, this is not surprising. Analysis of the intellectual failings of the movement, however, suggests that they were highly important both in alienating potential sympathisers in the intelligentsia and in their effect on the movement's structure.[388] The failings on which contemporaries commented

[384] Collis 1937
[385] Baldwin 1928, Van Dusen 1934, Conversation with Loudon Hamilton 1976
[386] Quote from '*Time*' March 10 1975, p 51, obituary article.
[387] Walter 1940 (1919) p 43f
[388] For explanation of why some leading intellectuals did join the movement see below Chapter IX pp 125 ff; for the effect on the Group's structure of its neglect of intellectual concerns see below Chapter XIV section 2 pp 196 ff

concerned in particular the Group's practice of guidance, its attitude to the social gospel, and its intolerance of criticism and therefore of real debate. Some commentators contrasted Buchman unfavourably with Drummond and Wright on such issues.

a) Guidance

DC Macintosh analysed Buchman's indebtedness to Wright in one section of his book *Personal Religion* of 1942. He was well qualified to do so. Wright had been his friend and colleague for ten years at Yale. He had first hand acquaintance with the Oxford Group. His attitude was sympathetic, as a committed evangelical, but critical as a modernist and exponent of the social gospel. At the time of writing he was Dwight Professor of Theology and the Philosophy of Religion at Yale.

Macintosh saw two major departures from Wright's principles in the Oxford Group. The first, mentioned above, was its lack of sufficient respect for individuals in its overenthusiastic confessions and restitutions. The second point concerned its practice of 'listening'. In his chapters on Wright, Macintosh discussed at some length an apparently minor difference between Drummond's and Wright's advice on finding out 'God's particular will'. Drummond advised not reconsidering decisions taken after seeking God's 'leading', whereas Wright was quite prepared to do so. Macintosh considered that this showed that Wright was more aware than Drummond that 'luminous thoughts' might be mistaken, might come from the subconscious rather than from God. Whatever the truth of this, Macintosh was highly critical of the tendency of many Oxford Group members to go beyond Wright in placing too great an emotional certitude on the divine origin of intuitional 'fugitive suggestions'. He saw this as a flight from critical thought. The inconsistency of believing in 'hunches' or directions by guidance, which often, in his experience of the Group, contradicted each other, should have been obvious, he felt.

Van Dusen, though also sympathetic to the Group as an evangelical who believed in God as 'a living, guiding Power', was equally critical of the actual practice of guidance by many in the Group:

> In the course of a day I have heard Mr Buchman report twenty or twenty five instances of direct 'guidance' – predictions of definite events which God had told him were surely to occur. Perhaps a fourth or a fifth of them have actually come to pass. They were triumphantly cited as vindications of the practice. The great bulk which at the end of the day remained unfulfilled were blithely ignored.

Van Dusen considered that there was great value in the Group's practice of personal meditation at its best – 'an eager mind, purified by rigorous religious discipline, relaxed yet alert, expectantly open to the most delicate suggestion of the highest' – and also that the Group's formal expositions of guidance were 'usually sane and persuasive'. It was the practice of it that offended his critical sense, as it must have done that of many others.

There is nothing in the Group's usual practice of guidance to suggest anything but the greatest earnestness in seeking God's will on the major and minor decisions of life. Nor is the Group's protestation that they see guidance as 'illuminating' thought, not 'eliminating' it, to be doubted. Indeed the Group's adherents' every actions are probably subjected to more painstaking thought than are those of most of their contemporaries, chiefly as a result of the practice of the quiet time. Reference to

neglect of intellectual concerns in the practice of guidance, therefore, means in this context not lack of thought, but the typical loose application of the term 'guidance', or of such phrases as 'God told me to do this', by Group adherents to many of their commonplace quiet time thoughts.

Related to this loose claiming of divine origin for the results of ordinary thinking is the Group's failure to apply scientific criteria in its advocacy of the 'experimental road to faith'. Group adherents often suggest to agnostics that they try the experiment of 'listening to God' and 'obeying the thoughts that come'. They expect that the resulting experiences of guidance and change will give the agnostic actual proof of God's existence. By normal scientific criteria this cannot be true however – the 'proof' is purely subjective, dependent on the individual accepting by faith the Group's explanation of the often unusual or baffling experiences that come to him when 'following guidance'. Such loose thought is inevitably repugnant to many an intellectual, whether Christian or agnostic. Its centrality, however, to the Group's religion will be argued below.[389]

b) Awareness of Social Structure

Macintosh made the further criticism that the Group failed in the intellectual challenge posed by the more sophisticated exponents of the social gospel, and that in this too its adherents were less open minded than Wright. Before 1918 Wright had rejected what he saw as the naïve view of some social gospellers that the improvement of social conditions would automatically 'Christianise' individuals. He participated in social improvements, for instance in providing sports facilities for the young people of Oakham, but only for the sake of creating a milieu in which evangelism could be carried out more effectively. However, Macintosh considered that between 1918 and his early death in 1924 Wright gained 'a new appreciation of the importance of social righteousness, not simply as a means but also as an end'. Stewart, Wright's biographer, also briefly mentioned this awakening to the need to reform economic and social life.[390] This was a common enough reaction to the catastrophe of the war, shared by other evangelists of Wright's and Buchman's circle, most notably Sherwood Eddy. Macintosh's major criticism of the Group was its failure to follow Wright's tentative steps and Eddy's bold ones in this, a failure seen in the tendency of Group leaders to speak as if all that was needed to solve complex economic, social and political questions was for influential people to surrender to God and have guidance.

Van Dusen agreed to some extent. He thought that many in the Group appeared to believe that spiritual revival alone would save society; and that even when they were more realistic than this, their individualistic emphasis meant that their social programme, in so far as they had one, would work for benevolent paternalism not a restructuring of society. However he thought the Group's practice again more open to criticism than its theory in this: its conspicuous consumption and upper class lifestyle, and its uncritical and 'studious attention to position, title and social prestige', in particular. Nothing, he wrote, 'furnishes such innocent merriment to friendly critics' as the latter. The Group's defence was that its lifestyle and the use of testimonials from the famous was purely instrumental, adopted in order to have greater influence. But Van Dusen's and others' criticisms showed that it was clearly not instrumental in impressing the intelligentsia. The Group's failure to appreciate this leaves a lingering

[389] this chapter p 105 f
[390] Stewart 1925 p 90

suspicion that Buchman did indeed have an exaggerated respect for temporal authority, his ability to 'talk straight' to 'top people' in private notwithstanding. This was similar to Mott's respect for authority. Drummond, perhaps, had been less impressed by social status. Though lionised by Mayfair society he had turned away from the possibilities this offered, to concentrate on his students. He also might have followed Wright in gaining a greater awareness of the evils of the contemporary social structure under the impact of the later social gospel. He had not after all thought that his evangelical mission absolved him from helping to set up welfare organisations.

Buchman's defence against the charge of naiveté in his hopes for social transformation was that his job was to be an evangelist. Evangelism alone would not solve political problems, he agreed. But he felt sure that converted, honest, unselfish politicians could do so. It was a view that saw politics as a separate department of life, with its own experts, not as the socialists saw it, as a universal struggle from which no one was exempt. Buchman did not develop significantly in his political views from those of Drummond, nor of Wright before 1918. He did, however, rise to the intellectual challenge to present the old stewardship social gospel in modern terms, as will be seen.[391] The Group's full-time workers' intellectual capacities were considerable. But they were put to the service of presenting 'Truth', not to searching for it. As a result, Van Dusen's fears were realised. The Group's results included some enlightened paternalism and some remarkable political reconciliations, but no realistic attempts or campaigns to restructure society in terms of a wide redistribution of wealth or of power. Macintosh's diagnosis must be upheld. Buchman failed to keep pace with the social gospel's developing awareness that major social change required mass political action and clear political strategies, and that conversion which did not lead directly to these was inadequate to the task of 'remaking the world'.

c) Intolerance of Criticism or Debate

AG Baldwin noted the intolerance of Buchman's followers towards other groups in 1928, as did Van Dusen in 1934, and as others have done since. Van Dusen seemed to have been writing from personal experience when he noted that sympathetic questioning of the Group tended to get treated by its leaders as 'opposition', while 'honest opposition is labelled "persecution"'.

The Group's view was expressed bluntly by two of its leaders in 1954:

> Moral Re-Armament cannot be honestly opposed on intellectual grounds because it is basic truth. MRA is built on incontrovertible moral truth, whose effectiveness, wherever it is applied through the world, cannot be gainsaid. So opposition to Moral Re-Armament has special significance. It always comes from the morally defeated…[392]

The causes of this intolerance were various.

1. One reason was that some of the opposition to the Group was, as it claimed, due to pricked consciences. The latter has already been noted in the Chinese episode (Chapter VI). The fact that the leaders of the first major opposition to Buchman's work, the Princeton aesthetes, were blatantly 'immoral' and tended to lead unhappy subsequent lives also confirmed Buchman's view of the nature of

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[391] See below Chapter X

[392] Howard and Campbell 1954 p 64 f

opposition to him – of the aesthete group, Lloyd-Smith and Colt committed suicide, Abeel was a suspected suicide, another entered a mental institution thinking he was the Devil, and a fifth was fired from a college position on a morals charge.[393] As explained already, 'sin' could be imputed to most of the Group's critics, however.

2. A second reason was the Group's desire to protect its new recruits. Shoemaker justified the Group's anger at its critics by arguing that disparagement of the movement might put off some who were just beginning to find religious faith through it. 'Do not expect any of us... to be unmoved', he wrote, 'when you begin stealing the faith of these spiritual children'. Peter Howard described his return to his newspaper office after his first encounters with the movement: 'the venom which any new friend of the Oxford Group must expect to have thrust at him with sharp piercing hypodermic needles' dissuaded him from returning to the Group for a time.[394] He became as angry as Shoemaker at the way that even the movement's well-meaning critics gave ammunition to its enemies and put off its potential recruits.[395] A similar argument was presented in the Group's vigorous campaign to get the Anglican Church Assembly to reject a critical report of MRA presented to it in 1955.[396] This attitude, however, meant that the Group was never prepared to enter public debate, except where it could control the course of the debate. It likewise discouraged internal debate in the Group about its fundamental principles.
3. The Group was in part reacting against the 'mere spectatorism' of uncommitted, intellectually arrogant undergraduates – a common phenomenon particularly, Julian Thornton Duesbery remembers, of Oxford in the 1920s during the Group's formative period.[397]

However the Group's usual denial of open debate had deeper roots than the three mentioned so far. Its religious faith was rooted in its subjective interpretation of particular experiences. The 'coincidences' of guidance and the individual's change in which he found the unexpected power to overcome unwanted character traits, were to Group adherents evidence of God at work. This interpretation could not be allowed to be subverted by other more cautious, critical or 'academic' interpretations. To have done so would be to have robbed the Group members of the sense of 'reality' and exhilaration in their spiritual life. The sense of direct contact with God in the cosmic struggle against evil, the ability to do specific tasks in this struggle under God's direction, was central to the Group's experience. It was essential to its followers' certainty, dynamism, security and joy.

A young convert wrote of this experience in a personal account of a Group camp at Cromer in 1930. After he had had guidance to accept the invitation to attend the camp:

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[393] According to MSS Biography, and Loudon Hamilton 1975. 2018 Comment: my inverted commas around 'immoral' and 'sin' were supposed to indicate skepticism, but I want to add more forcefully here that these examples of suicide and mental illness cannot be considered simply individual issues in a time when severe social repression of and legal punishments for homosexuality reigned. Whatever else these were, they were also responses to structural oppression.
[394] Shoemaker 1928 (iv) p 28. Howard 1941 '*Innocent Men*' p 47
[395] Howard and Campbell 1954 p 65
[396] See Church Assembly 1955 'Report of Proceedings' e.g. p 50
[397] Thornton-Duesbery Interview 1974

> Immediately the various obstacles in the way of a sudden departure began mysteriously to melt away; plans and details began to click into place with that mathematical precision, which is the sure and certain proof of God at work.

As the camp progressed successfully, one evening:

> We all turned in with an overwhelming sense of God at work in the world. To follow guidance was not merely to do the right thing and avoid mistakes. It was to have the whole of the Universe ultimately on your side, and all God's resources at your disposal.

As he left, he was enabled to catch his train because the person who drove him to the station knew enough about cars to fill up the tank from the spare petrol tin:

> I suppose that is why God sent me down to the station with him and not with Geoffrey, as we had intended... God is interested in the trains and the meals and the movements of His children.

Although obeying guidance might involve 'inconvenience, flexibility and temporary disappointment – in other words the Cross', it also meant 'the sharing in a plan, which, in its breadth and its grandeur and its love, has no limits and no end'.[398] To have subverted this belief in the Group's role as God's weapon by questioning its basic concepts of guidance, purity, social renewal or whatever, would have been to destroy its confidence. For the Group to have admitted the validity of such questioning would have meant immediately cutting down its drive. In the 1930s it would have meant endangering the revival momentum. Later it would have meant to MRA adherents the sabotaging of the world's only hope of sanity and survival. The alternative was to brand questioners and critics as belonging to, or if well intentioned as being used by, the 'negative forces'.

The view that opposition to the Group was a rationalisation of moral defeat was useful in avoiding debate, and in maintaining a charitable attitude to critics. Given this view the obvious way to treat critics was not to attack them in public nor to debate with them, but to hope for the 'inspired' chance to 'tackle' them on their sins, as Buchman had tackled the atheist in Eddy's anecdote. 'You can win your argument and lose your man' was a common saying in the Group, proscribing debate for the good of the critics themselves. 'Not a negative note' was another of Buchman's injunctions which effectively proscribed internal criticism. Both were useful maxims for maintaining the offensive. But they also betrayed the movement's greatest weakness from the point of view of many of its would-be sympathisers: it did not preach or practise enough the belief that 'God is Truth, as well as Love and Power', in Van Dusen's words. Or in those of Stanley High, who wrote about a house party in *The Outlook* in 1925, it needed:

> a larger expression of reason, a more conscious union of intellect and the desirable 'mystic experience'. The college man's intellectual problems are not always 'smoke- screens' for an unworthy life, as certain leaders are wont to say. To many students they are genuine obstacles...

The Group's exalted sense of nearness to God and its proscription on debate carried other implications. For example, it meant that its propaganda was not written in the form of apologetic, but of stories of people 'changed', 'victorious' and happy, and later of social problems 'solved'. Its expressions of its philosophy were brief.

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[398] Archive document H3

Buchman wrote no books, and, after 1919, no articles. His ideology was expressed in his speeches, most of them short (2 to 6 small sides of print), marked by repetition of a few concepts and by stories of change, above all by an optimism and exaggeration of the movement's success. This might just be conceded as 'artist's licence' as he paints his heroic mural of the 'coming triumph of the God-guided forces'[399], or it might just be labelled dishonesty.[400] That many educated or realistic observers, including no doubt many potential converts, were alienated from the Group by its lack of awareness of intellectual concerns or of plain honesty is undoubted.[401] It may be wondered why educated people, including some famous intellectuals, joined it at all. The next chapter will establish that highly educated people were among the Group's leaders. The subsequent chapter will look at the reasons for their adherence to it.

Conclusion: basic differences between Buchman and Drummond's 'school'

Buchman's stress on sin as the hindrance to dispelling intellectual doubt about God harked back to Drummond's distinction between 'honest doubt' and doubt caused by the 'blinding of the eyes' by 'conscious sin'. Drummond, however, spent much of his energy in combatting 'honest doubt' by formulating his own reconciliation of Christian belief and the scientific method. Buchman and his followers inherited Drummond's confidence that belief was soundly based on the 'facts' of experience.[402] But they did not produce apologetics to defend this view as Drummond did. Perhaps the discrediting of Drummond's apologetic, already acknowledged by his friend and admirer GA Smith in his standard work on Drummond of 1899, was of influence in this. Buchman may have concluded from it that Drummond's psychological-spiritual method was independent of his intellectual formulations. More important, though, was surely Buchman's own intuitional cast of mind, sensitivity to the type of physical 'sin' in others, and overriding sense of direct communication with God. From this followed the Group's lack of appreciation of intellectual concerns, of scrupulous accuracy, of the value of debate, of the complexity of social structure, of humility concerning themselves and of appreciation of their critics. But equally from this lack of intellectuality followed the Group's experientialist appeal, its certainty and its dynamism. The conclusion of sympathetic critics such as Macintosh, Baldwin, KI Brown, Van Dusen and Arnold Lunn was that the Group were saving hundreds from unhappy, purposeless, 'defeated' lives, and introducing them to valuable spiritual experience, but at a price. This price was not mainly the Group's overenthusiasm, which could be and was largely tamed, nor the embarrassments and the small number of breakdowns caused by it. The price was rather a failure to maintain critical thought.

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[399] For example see below Chapter X pp 150 f

[400] Artistic license or dishonesty – this can only be a value judgement. Prophetic license might be a more apt description. Buchman attempted to enlarge people's idea of the possible or of what God could make possible. By prophetic exaggeration he attempted to encourage his listeners and followers to take on more difficult tasks. He equally criticized the movement harshly in private for failing to live up to this scale of vision on many occasions.

[401] Arnold Lunn, a distinguished Catholic layman with a well-known faith in the power of argument, noted in the 1950s the 'enigma' of MRA – that it combined spiritual depth with a lack of critical sense which inevitably alienated the intelligentsia. (Lunn 1957 '*Enigma*'.) His perseverance may eventually be breaking down the Group's distrust of argument and apologetic: viz Lean 1975.

[402] e.g. Eleanor Forde, a leading member of the Group in the 1920s: 'there are principles we can know, scientifically if you like, which lead us into a relationship with God…' in Forde 1927, p 5. Roots 1928 p 26 and Walter 1940 (1919) p 19 as well.

That is not to say that critical thought about the movement's tactics and strategy was lacking – it was not – but that thought about the movement's beliefs and its social diagnosis and the value of its social programme was insufficient. It was insufficient to integrate the movement into the mainstream of Western thought: intellectuals came into the movement, but none effectively translated its insights for the intelligentsia as a whole to understand. The Group was isolated, unappreciated by the writers, editors and producers who dominate the British mass media. It suffered this neglect even while its leaders were personally in sympathetic contact with many individual leaders of public and intellectual life. The Group has thus not achieved the recognition that it deserved among the educated circles from which it grew. If it were to do so by entering into open debate about itself, the question is whether it could maintain its sense of being a close, dynamic fellowship with a uniquely important, divinely given mission to change the world.

Chapter VIII: Social Composition of the Group

Information on the Group's adherents is difficult to gather owing to its own lack of records. The Group has no official membership or dues, nor therefore lists of members. A few lists have been preserved of the full-time workers available at particular times and places. Detailed biographies of 29 of the leading male British full-time workers were prepared during a legal dispute over their eligibility for call-up in 1941. Otherwise the researcher must depend on sorting out from the large number of published descriptions of the Group's work what indications he can of its social composition. Interviews with older members of the movement have also been helpful.

a) The 1920s

Buchman's 'target groups' as he set about raising a new evangelical fellowship were the more prestigious universities of America and Britain, and any other persons of influence whom he might be able to meet on his travels. To make contacts he used the YMCA and student Christian societies' networks, introductions from existing contacts, and hotels and first-class liner accommodations where he could meet the influential socially. His growing team reflected these targets and methods, being composed of students and young graduates, YMCA workers, church ministers and returned missionaries, and a smattering of aristocrats and professional people.

An attempt to list all Buchman's active, committed followers, not including mere well-wishers or financial supporters, in 1925 has yielded about 20 names. By this year much of his early American support had fallen away, leaving the main leaders of his future American work with him. The advances in England and Holland had not yet started in earnest. The 18 most obvious names (including one or two like Cleve Hicks who were associated with Buchman's followers but may not have seen themselves as owing loyalty to him and the group until a year or two later) yield the following table:[403]

[403] The names are: American: Hanford Twitchell, Eleanor Forde (McGill, course uncompleted), Charles Haines (Quaker) – business; SM Shoemaker (Episcopal minister, ex-YMCA, ex-missionary), Van Dusen Rickert, Ray Foote Purdy, Scoville Wishard, Howard Blake, Kenaston Twitchell, (brother of Hanford) – Princeton; Sherwood Day (Presbyterian minister, ex YMCA, ex missionary) – Yale; Frederick Lawrence and John Roots (sons of Episcopal bishops) and Cleveland Hicks – Harvard and/or Harvard Episcopal Theological College; Nan Stearly – Vassar. British: Loudon Hamilton, EH 'Nick' Wade – Oxford; Godfrey Webb-Peploe – Cambridge; Colonel David Forster, CB, CMG, DSO. Dutch: Baron and Baroness van Heeckeren. Other possible names: Bill Bryan, Elsa Purdy, Garrett Stearly (American); Howard Rose and Julian Thornton Duesbery had been interested by Buchman but were not for a year or two to be identified with his group (British). AG Baldwin may still have been part of the Group at this time (Williams University, American). Sources; mainly *The Letter*, also Hamilton 1941, Forde autobiography (brief, typewritten, in MRA archives Cabinet 4).

1925		Americans	British
Total Number		14	4
Education:	Graduates: definite	2	2
	Possibly graduates	2	
	Failed to complete univ. course:	1	
	Studying at university:	9	1
		(total 14)	(total 3)
	Which universities	6 Princeton	2 Oxford
		3 Harvard	1 Cambridge
		1 Yale	
		1 Vassar	
		1 McGill	
Occupation	Student	9	1
	Business	2 or 3	
	Army		1 (Colonel)
	Full-time with Buchman	3 (of whom 2 temporary)	3 (of whom 2 temporary)
Religion	Ordained or to be ordained in next 3-4 years:	8 (4 Episcopal, 4 Presbyterian)	1 or 2 (C. of E.)
	Denomination of others, if known:	1 Quaker	
Sex	Male	12	4
	Female	2	
Age	below 25	probably 9	probably 2
	25 – 35	probably 5	probably 1
	over 50		1

The list is probably incomplete, perhaps leaving out two or three American women students in particular – several of the men on the list married in the next 2-4 years.[404] In Holland, Baron and Baroness van Heeckeren, future leaders with their two daughters of the Dutch branch of the movement, had already had their first 'house party' for Buchman, in September 1924.

Buchman's main financial supporter in the early and mid-1920s was Mrs Tjader, a wealthy widow in New York who maintained a considerable number of missionaries of various denominations through her fundamentalist International Union Mission. Buchman's New York team in 1922-24 had included young men in banking, real estate and stockbroking, while a lawyer friend had given him the use of his office.[405] Clark claimed to have the names of wealthy people who supported Buchman financially in the early 1920s.[406] Some of these may have been members of the loose association formed in 1921 or 1922 to raise $3,000 yearly for Buchman's work.[407] This it failed to do, most of its members being insufficiently committed. They

[404] 2018 Comment: this cryptic construction was based on my assumption that these men would have married women who were already involved. That would have been true for later periods of the movement, but I don't know if it was for the mid-1920s.

[405] Hamilton 1941

[406] Clark 1944 p 61 Footnote 1

[407] The Committee of this association was: J Colt of Princeton, Chairman; GW Perkins, Treasurer; Dean Jacobus, Stanley Woodward of New Haven, David McAlpin, WH Woolverton, Dr RM Russell, Day and Shoemaker. MSS Biography p 313

included the Dean of Hartford College and one ‘David McAlpin III of New York’. By late 1922 only three of the nine were still associated with Buchman, it appears.[408]

In the later 1920s the occupation distribution of Buchman’s committed ‘team’ changed as several of them (Lawrence, Hicks, Shoemaker, Wade) took up parish ministries or college chaplaincies. In America more students and young graduates swelled the team. The most committed of these tended to get ordained – again mostly Episcopal (such as Garrett Stearly) and Presbyterian (Lukens, Campbell), although *The Letter*’s personal columns included Southern Baptist and Congregationalist ordinations of group members. Among those who joined them were young businessmen, ‘a middle aged New York business woman’, ‘a great woman-educator who had a thousand delinquent boys under her in the New York public schools’ (Olive Jones), a graduate of West Point, and the Executive Secretary of Princeton University and his family.[409]

In Europe in the same period Buchman’s contacts with the aristocracy began to bear fruit, bringing titled names into the committed team for the first time – Lady Beecham, Mayfair hostess who held weekly meetings for the Group and attended house parties; and in Holland Baron and Baroness van Wassenaer, and the Baron’s brother-in-law and business associated Eric van Lennep who led the work with the Van Heeckerens. In 1930 Shoemaker reported that in Holland the work ‘has had its rise principally amongst the younger nobility, but it has extended also to the middle class as well’.[410] Growth of the work in Edinburgh centred on a businessman and his wife, Stuart Sanderson, and on the university. Loudon Hamilton in 1928 reported that Tuesday evening meetings were being held at the home of a younger artist couple, older women organised by Mrs Sanderson, a men’s weekly group by Mr Sanderson, and that the work was helped by favourable reports from men who had seen Buchman’s results in China. The growth points were the students and younger social set, ministers and younger businessmen.[411]

The main European centre from the late 1920s however was Oxford. The active supporters or leaders of the Group there in the late 1920s included Principal Graham-Brown of Wycliffe Hall (Anglican Theological College); LW Grensted, Oriel Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion; Howard Rose, rector of St Peter-le-Bailey; and Julian Thornton-Duesbery, of Wycliffe Hall and from 1928 tutor and chaplain at Corpus Christi College. A retired headmistress took a flat in Oxford to help the work among women students. Undergraduates, including several Rhodes Scholars, joined the Group in increasing numbers from 1926-27.

b) The 1930s – full-time workers

The Group’s official statement of 1954 that: ‘It is a fact that ever since 1921, a preponderance of the trained leadership of the Oxford Group has consisted of Oxford

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[408] Loudon Hamilton 1975 interview

[409] Shoemaker 1928 (iv) p 22. Olive Jones was a former President of the National Education Association, later joining Shoemaker’s Calvary Church as director of religious education; she wrote two books on bringing up children according to Group principles. The Princeton administrator (later Senator) H Alexander Smith, had served on the committee to investigate Buchman’s activities, thereby becoming a convinced supporter; his daughter Helen Smith married Ken Twitchell, Princeton graduate and one of the vocational full-time leaders of Buchman’s work in America and Britain.

[410] *The Letter*. Shoemaker 1930 (ii) p 3. *Church Times* article on Lady Beecham’s Group meetings.

[411] *The Letter*. No 4 August 1928, p 25.

graduates' was clearly false with regard to the 1921-28 period.[412] From the early 1930s however the movement's base shifted from America to Britain, and to Oxford in particular. The Group's major campaigns from 1928 outside Britain were led by 'travelling teams' in several of which Oxford graduates and undergraduates were preponderant: 6 out of 8 on the team to South Africa in 1928 (a seventh being Howard Rose, an Oxford minister), 13 out of 21 on the first team to Canada in spring 1932, 18 out of 27 on a team to Canada in 1934, 57 out of 70 (or in another version, 70 out of 138) on a team to Denmark in 1935.[413] Most of these were undergraduates on the earlier campaigns. These figures were collected by the Group to defend its right to the name 'Oxford', and were therefore the best figures available to present the case. Other travelling teams had lower percentages of Oxford men and women. The 1929 team led by Buchman to South Africa, for example, included only one of the better known Oxford team members, and she was the retired headmistress mentioned above. Of the other 15 on the list 10 were Americans and 2 Dutch, 3 being unknown to me.[414] The 1930 team of 23 to South Africa included 7 Oxford undergraduates, These were still early teams, however. By the mid-1930s it is probable that in Britain, possibly in the movement as a whole, a majority of the male permanent full-time workers were Oxford graduates. In 1938 a Group memo asserted that the latter were responsible for the Group's work in 20 countries, and that of the 53 full-time men at the London HQ, 29 were Oxford graduates.[415]

The Group's travelling teams and local campaigns included various people temporarily giving all their time as well as more permanently full-time workers. Thus a list such as the one of February 1939 entitled 'Whole Time Oxford Group Workers in London' would include several different types of people.[416] There seem to have been three main categories of committed Group adherents:

1. Vocational full-time workers. Those who decided on graduating, or on leaving their original employment, not to undertake a career but to work full-time indefinitely with the Group, without salary. They would live on 'faith and prayer' i.e. gifts and covenants from the Group adherents or sympathisers or on private income. Their number inevitably included the Group's main leadership, since they could be more mobile and give more time than categories 2) and 3).

2. Those in regular careers. Those people, equally committed, who decided to pursue their careers as the best way to witness, and to help the Group. They would typically give generously to the Group's work in money, leisure hours and vacations, or in longer leaves from work for particular campaigns. Their number included ministers of various denominations, members of professions, owner-managers of family firms, and, later, trade unionists, etc.

3. Those lacking full employment. This is a varied category of those who were able to spend much or most of their time working with the Group, not having other full

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[412] Macassey 1954 p 12

[413] Macassey 1954; H 45

[414] *The Letter* No. 6, p 42 3. The 3 uncertain – Miss Florence Fox, Miss Janie Rambo, Mr John Beck. Margetson (1930) wrote that this team numbered 19, however, and included 'undergraduates... and some younger university girls' – perhaps some therefore from Oxford. Four of the five Group members who stayed the 1929-30 winter in South Africa to maintain the work were young Americans – Rev Garrett R Stearly and his wife, Rev John Roots and Rev Cleveland Risks. (Shoemaker 1930 (ii) p 4)

[415] H 45

[416] H 74

Status	Full-time in 1939		Nationality			Gender	
	Definite	Probable	British	Other European	American	British male	British female
1) Vocational	71	1	63	2	7	39	24
2) In Careers	7	2	9			4	5
3a) Leisured	-	1	1				1
3b) 'At home'	7	1	8				8
3c) Retired	5	2	6		1	2	4
3d) Unemployed	-	3	3			2	1
Subtotals	90	10	90	2	8	48	45
Not Known	3		3				
Totals	103		103			93	

employment, but without the freedom of movement of 1). They came from the top and bottom of the social spectrum.

a) The '<u>leisured unemployed</u>', as the Group literature sometimes called upper class people living off private income.

b) Women looking after sick or ageing dependants – '<u>daughters at home</u>' typically from middle and upper class families who could afford servants, thus freeing them for Group work part of the time.

c) <u>Retired</u> people, some of whom for a time could be as active as vocational full-time workers.

d) <u>Unemployed working class</u> men and women, living on the dole.

With the help of one of those on the 1939 list of full-time workers,[417] who was then a personal secretary to one of the Group's leaders, it has been possible to identify the status of most of those on the list. According to the categories above the 103 names on the list were divided as follows: (wives of men in categories 2), 3c) and 3d) are here accorded the same status as their husbands).

[Table format revised for sake of clarity.]

The social composition of categories 2) and 3) will be looked at later. The 39 British men in category 1) were overwhelmingly university graduates, the majority from Oxford and Cambridge. 19 were definitely graduates from Oxford, 4 from Cambridge, 6 from other universities; another 3 were graduates probably of Oxford or Cambridge; two more were probably graduates. Only one was definitely not a graduate, the educational status of the remaining three being not known. Of the 24 British women in category 1), several were graduates, including at least two from Oxford (one a D Phil i.e. doctorate) and one from London University.

This 1939 list included the majority of the movement's British vocational full-time workers. An attempt to list others of them who were not on it has yielded only 9

[417] Mrs. KD Belden, at that time Miss Stella Corderoy [my mother].

names – though this must be an underestimate. Of these 9, 7 were graduates (5 Oxford, 1 Cambridge, 1 Edinburgh). All were men.

The students who were converted at Oxford by the Group in the 1930s and who became active members of the 'team', mostly came from professional family backgrounds.[418] Only the occasional ones came from the working class (Addison), the aristocracy (the Hon Miles Philimore), or the landed gentry (Evans).

In 1940, after their younger men had been called up, the Group leaders applied for exemption for their remaining 29 most experienced and responsible men of military age left in Britain. Brief biographies of these 29 were prepared. Only three were not university graduates. Of these, one was an ex-Army Officer who had trained for the ministry at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, one was a former engineer, while the third had worked for a time in his father's business, until his long leaves of absence on Group business had finally become permanent leave for full-time Group work. Of the graduates, 19 had been at Oxford, 3 at Cambridge, one each at Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Trinity College, Dublin, and Regents Park Theological College, London. Of the 21 whose subject of study was mentioned only one had done a scientific subject, gaining a pass degree; most common were classics, history and theology, with two lawyers, and one each of modern languages, music and 'Politics, Philosophy and Economics'. Several took more than one subject, between 2 and 5 gaining more than one degree while another had done post-graduate study (on Kant) at Oxford before being Assistant Lecturer in Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh for three years, without taking a further degree. There were at least three first class degrees among them.

Only one of the 29 seems to have come from a working class background. This was Harry Addison, of Sunderland, who gained a scholarship to Newcastle (University of Durham) where he achieved a 1st in classics, going on to take a 2nd in Literae Humaniores in Oxford, before training for the Baptist ministry in London. Of the others, of 18 whose schooling was mentioned 16 went to public schools; and another whose schooling was not mentioned was the brother of one of these 16; the remaining two went to grammar schools. Father's occupation of two of the ex-public schoolboys was mentioned: Congregational minister and colonel; and of four of the others: Anglican minister, N Ireland linen manufacturer, owner of a family firm, and worker (Addison). This leaves 9 without indication of social origin: 8 of these had attended university, one after six years on the staff of Lloyd's Bank, London. The ninth was the former engineer, the oldest on the list at 39, who had worked from 1919-39 in the 'Electrical Industry'. Altogether at least 9 had had experience in regular employment, ranging from university lecturing to tea broking.[419]

Ten of the 29 had trained for the ministry: 6 of them at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford (Low Church, Church of England) where they had passed the general ordination exam but had chosen to work full-time with the Group instead of being ordained, with official approval; one similarly at Westcott House, Cambridge; two trained for the Baptist ministry and the last for the Congregational, serving for two years as a minister of a church near Oxford. The religious affiliation of 4 of the others was mentioned: one Congregational, one Church of Scotland, and two Church of England.

[418] Interview with KD Belden 1974

[419] The full list of previous employment of these nine: 1) engineer 2) army officer 3) university lecturer 4) advertising agency 5) Thos. Cook travel agents 6) tea broking followed by public school teaching 7) father's firm 8) Lloyds Bank 9) Government sponsored cultural tours popularizing British composers abroad.

These 29 were the backbone of the Group's administration in 1940. 12 full-time workers and 250 part-time workers who had taken wide responsibilities were already in the Services. 'There are no older men to take over' claimed a memo on the 29 in April 1941. The social background of the movement's British leadership is thus clear: mainly middle class graduates with a bias towards arts subjects, largely Church of England but including a good number of Nonconformists. The ages of the 29 ranged from 24 to 39; average age 29.4. They had all met the Group between 1925 and 1935, most (23) between 1929 and 1933; and they had started working full-time mostly between 1933 and 1937 (four earlier and three later). They were preponderantly men who had been undergraduates in the early 1930s, and had been converted to the Group as such.

c) The 1930s – other team members

Other members of Buchman's travelling teams were typically of a similar social class – professional and business – but usually included some more 'colourful' characters such as a converted countess or a 'Changed Communist'.[420] The 1929 team to South Africa included clergymen, businessmen and a Dutch Baroness (Lilli van Heeckeren) as well as students and the retired headmistress. The team that went the following year included some of the same people, plus 'two Church of England clergymen, Rev John Gaynor Banks, of the Society of the Nazarene [and] an English doctor'.[421] The group which Buchman took to the United States in April 1932 included a Colonel and his wife, a Count, two Baronesses, a Bishop's daughter, Watt the converted Communist miner, and a member of the Edinburgh stock exchange. The team taken to North America in 1934 numbered 80, among them 5 titled aristocrats, three clergymen and two senior public school masters. Later teams grew larger still, but probably maintained similar proportions – about half students or recent graduates, the remainder chiefly business and professional people with a smattering of workers and aristocrats.

Local, as opposed to travelling, teams varied according to the area. In 1934 a minister in Poplar, East London, invited a Group team to witness in his parish. He wrote in *The Guardian:*

> They were a real cross-section of society, porters from the hotel where some of the team were living, typists and people of leisure, young men from the City and unemployed from South London. They included Swiss, Germans, Americans, South Africans, and Canadians, and also such people as the Bishop of Hankow... Professor Norval, and Mr Douglas Buchanan, KC, both from South Africa, and Father Jack Winslow from India'.

Many of the resident Londoners in this team 'gave up evening after evening to come down to help us after their working hours'.[422] This was followed by campaigns, staffed largely by Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates, in two other predominantly working class boroughs, East Ham and Hackney. As a result unemployed men and workers began to join the team, at least temporarily.

In the next year a more ambitious campaign was launched in the parish of Christ Church, Penge, South London. A team of 300 conducted the campaign, most of them

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[420] Rodden 1933
[421] Margetson 1930 p 4 and Shoemaker 1930 (ii) p 4
[422] Legge, *The Guardian* Feb 2nd 1934, reprinted as a pamphlet.

South London residents, using their evenings after work. Many came to live in the Penge district temporarily, travelling to work daily from there. The Parish Magazine recorded, with evident enjoyment at the representative nature of the team, that it consisted largely of clerks, typists and shop assistants but

> also included Naval and Army Officers, an Admiral and a General, flying men [*sic*], civil servants and municipal employees, commercial travellers and manufacturers, a dirt track racer, doctors, teachers and artists, a photographer, a chorus girl and a comedian, town councillors and unemployed, housewives and chauffeurs, clergy and ministers of different denominations.[423]

Local groups were frequently led or initiated by clergymen. In July 1932 an official Group publication listed the movement's English addresses in various cities and towns: of the 27 names and addresses, 12 were Reverends, 1 a Canon, 1 a Head Deaconness and 5 military or naval senior officers.[424] In 1933 the work went forward in Northern Ireland on the initiative of a minister who had been introduced to the Group by a member of his congregation. In the same year advances were made in Bristol and the West of England by clergy and business people, and in Oxfordshire as a result of one Group member's work with the clergy.[425]

Returning to the 1939 London 'whole-time workers' list, the social composition of the Group's committed team apart from its vocational full-time workers can be indicated. Those in careers included two or three businesswomen, a minister and his wife, a League of Nations employee and a star of light opera. Of the retired people four were upper or middle class (headmaster, headmistress; Lady Fletcher, the widow of a well-known Cambridge scientist; and an American Episcopal Bishop, Logan Roots). One, Mrs Annie Jaeger, had owned a small hat shop in working class Stockport which she had recently sold up for £40 to work full-time with the Group. Largely as a result of her and her son's work in East London, the list included four working class militants from the labour movement – Tod Sloan, a watchmaker presumably retired, and a life-long agitator; Bill Rowell, ex-Communist and leader of the West Ham unemployed, and his wife; and George Light, another leader of the unemployed. Two women living in East London worked with Annie Jaeger. The women at home on the list would have come from middle or upper class families.

In conclusion, the Group's committed adherents as a whole came from the same class background as its vocational full-time core. Ministers, teachers, business and professional people predominated. Evidence from East and South London, however, showed that working class people and 'clerks, typists and shop assistants' were being drawn into the movement as well.

d) The 1930s – the clientele

Shoemaker's Calvary Church staff in the late 1920s and the 30s made determined efforts to convert down-and-out alcoholics in their city mission. But this was not to be a feature of the Group's work as a whole.

As Marjorie Harrison pointed out in her critical account of the Group *Saints Run Mad* in 1934, both money and leisure were needed to join in some typical Oxford Group

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[423] Christ Church, Penge, Parish Magazine, March 1935: 'Oxford Group Campaign Number'.
[424] H 11
[425] H 24

activities.[426] A degree of social skill and confidence in a middle and upper milieu were also presumably helpful. In the 1930s Group house parties were held often in hotels and Oxford colleges. Its London headquarters was in Brown's Hotel, Mayfair, patronised by royalty and the famous, and, for a time, in the Metropole Hotel. Some people without means might be paid for by individuals in the movement to attend a house party, where the cheerful welcome given would have helped to put the less confident at ease. Nonetheless house parties were typically attended by those the Group was aiming to change – the well-to-do and influential, church workers and students. The category of the 'influential' sometimes included working class people. Jimmie Watt was converted by a German countess at the 1930 Oxford house party for instance. But the striking impression that this converted Communist made on Group campaigns suggests that he was a rarity in the early 1930s.[427]

At first the lower class people converted by the Group seem to have either been employees with whom Group teams came in contact as it were fortuitously (such as hotel porters) or special categories, either particularly unfortunate (unemployed, prisoners) or politically minded (the occasional communist or trade unionist). Buchman was well known in his movement for his real interest in, and time for, the staff in the hotels, liners and houses in which he stayed. This emphasis was imparted to the movement. A collection of stories of witness made by a minister in the Group in North East England was fairly representative of the Group's presentation of itself. It included in addition to headlines like 'Clergyman Surrenders and Becomes Effective', 'Hotel Proprietress Faces the Four Standards' or 'One of the Leisured Class Accepts Responsibility for Other Lives', some such as 'God Can Use a Jobbing Gardener'. The latter ones included an unemployed man, 'an extremist' (a socialist), and a maid who now 'shared' with the mistress she had once resented.[428] In December 1931 a team of 90 visited St Helens, where a third of the working population were said to be unemployed. Two unemployed boys joined the team, one having 'guidance' to give up the dole and 'live on faith'.[429]

A newsletter from Oxford in 1932 mentioned that undergraduates in the team had met at the YMCA a mechanic and spare-time burglar, who was thereupon converted, gave himself up to the police and witnessed at his trial, receiving considerable publicity in the press. At a Sheffield meeting in 1933 a speaker told how he had been converted while serving a sentence in Lincoln gaol.[430] A 1933 Group newssheet stated that the chaplain of a well-known prison in America said that the whole atmosphere of the prison had improved after 'the lives of many prisoners' had been changed by the Group.[431] This line of work may have been tried first in South Africa, where an Advocate of the Supreme Court told of

> prisons, where there are active groups, led by prisoners, and where individual prisoners, dedicated to God, are being used to change other lives in the gaols.

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[426] Harrison 1934 p 30. Holidays were at least needed to attend house parties of more than a weekend's duration, and money for travel and accommodation, even at the cheap rates that the Group usually acquired: e.g. 10/6d a day (bed and board) for house parties at the Metropole Hotel. Other activities were of course free, requiring only commitment and efficient use of time such as local campaigns, meetings and house parties in local homes, church halls, schools etc.

[427] Another converted Communist was called George King, from this time also, it seems.

[428] 'Good News?' 'The Oxford Group at Work in North-East England' printed by Bernard M. Goodwins, St. Peter's Vicarage, Allendale, Northumberland

[429] H 13

[430] H 21

[431] H 22

> In one prison from 25 to 30 per cent of the inmates are regular attendants at the group meetings...[432]

Apart perhaps from the St Helen's campaign of 1931, it seems that the first major campaigns in working class areas were those in Poplar, East Ham and Hackney in 1934. Rev RG Legge, one of the sponsoring local ministers, was delighted to find his congregation 'gripped', and growing in size during the nightly meetings: 'Men who to my knowledge had never before been near a religious building were there night after night', talking with team members until midnight. Both Legge and an Oxford newsletter of June 1934 reported the case of an unemployed man who, after being converted, found that the two rooms in which he lived with his wife and several children and which had been Hell' could now be 'Heaven'.[433] In Hackney at Easter, some young Oxford undergraduates made quite a scoop in converting the leader of a gang of toughs and unofficial greyhound bookies, the Tin-Ring Tatlers. The leader brought the gang to Group meetings and was himself reconciled with his family, eventually joining his father's one man painting and decorating business.[434]

As a result of these campaigns the Group held a Whitsun camp under canvas in Hertfordshire, a milieu suited to the pockets and social experience of the men it had been reaching in East London. 40 men attended,

> including an employer and 5 of his employees, 3 Oxford men, two young businessmen from the City, an ex-Fascist agitator, several ex-amateur bookmakers, some bargees, and other 'unemployed' men on full-time work. [i.e. unpaid life-changing work].

Another report of a Whitsun camp for 40 men near London in a file of 1936 in the Group's archives may refer to this one of 1934 or one may infer that a second camp may have been held. This report mentioned that among those attending were employers, men of means, a professional boxer, a coalheaver, a verger, clerks, workmen, and unemployed, ranging from married men aged up to 45 to a 16 year old messenger boy.[435] In the summer of 1935 a camp for over 100 students, businessmen and unemployed men was held near Oxford.[436] In 1936 another for about 1,000 'unemployed workers and students' took place at the same time as other house parties, in the week leading up to the Group's largest meeting in Britain up to that time, of 25,000 in Birmingham.[437]

In 1936 the Lord Mayor of Newcastle and his wife, Alderman and Councillor Mrs Locke, attended a Group conference in Harrogate. When his mayoral year was over, he and Harry Addison,[438] travelled through Britain meeting civic and political leaders. Locke, an ex-miner and Labour Party organiser, helped to introduce the Group to members of the Labour movement. Another who helped in this was George Light, a former textile worker from Yorkshire who had then done adult educational work for Warwickshire County Council. Axed in the economy campaign following the depression, he became Chairman of the Warwick Unemployed Association.[439]

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[432] Holme 1934 p 11
[433] Legge 1934 Feb; H 24
[434] Lean 1974 pp 47-50
[435] H 2 and B 14
[436] OG 1935 (i)
[437] OG 1937 (iv)
[438] One of the few Oxford undergraduates from the working class to join the Group
[439] H 97

Addison, Locke and Light arranged the first 'workers Training week-end' in Britain for the MRA campaign, in 1938 or '39. Some 300 came, miners and steel workers from Durham, wool workers from Yorkshire, cotton workers from Lancashire, and Clydeside shipyard workers.[440] Light introduced Buchman to Ben Tillett, the veteran trade unionist who had founded the Dockers' Union in 1887 and led the strike in 1889 for the 'docker's tanner'. From 1938 to his death in 1943 Tillett was a firm supporter of the Group.[441]

The Group's major campaign in the 1930s in working class areas however followed Buchman's decision to launch the MRA campaign in East Ham Town Hall in June 1938. For the next two years or more intensive large scale efforts were made in and around East London, led by Annie and Bill Jaeger.

The impression of the Oxford Group as an entirely middle and upper class movement attempting to appeal solely to the 'up and-outs' in the 1930s is therefore not accurate. Nonetheless the majority of those attending house parties were middle and upper class. Many examples could be given. The 1935 Oxford house party will suffice. The Group's report of it cited the main categories present as:

> Business men and women, doctors, editors, politicians, unemployed men, undergraduates, professors, with countless others, including many whole families.

Academics present included the Rector of Tubingen University and the Provost of Queen's College, Oxford, BH Streeter, who publicly associated himself with the Group on this occasion. Among senior churchmen present were the Primate of All Ireland, the Archbishop of Melbourne, and the Metropolitan of India. Baron de Watteville of Paris witnessed at the opening service, as did Lady Barrett and Dr Northridge, a psychologist from Belfast. 150 came from North America, more than 200 from Scandinavia, 10,000 in all.[442]

In 1936 Oxford was too small to accommodate the summer conference. Instead a vast industrial fair building in Birmingham was used for the final weekend gathering of 4 separate house parties and two youth camps. It was 'the first time on which we have ever attempted to mobilize our forces throughout Great Britain', reported the Group's transport team.[443] A large wall chart was printed to facilitate the organisation of the event. Under the heading of 'Message', those 'sectors' of the nation for which the Group had both a particular philosophy, and people able to speak for it, were listed. They included Agriculture, Education, Housewives, Business Women, Business, Leisured Classes 'Retired', and Ditto 'Unemployed', Law, Youth and Artists, but not workers, politics, civic or labour. The development of these latter sectors was still largely in the future.[444]

An important category of support should be mentioned finally. In the early 1930s there was widespread interest among clergy. In 1932 more than one third of the 220 present at a Birmingham house party were ministers. At the Group's major event of the year, the Oxford summer house party in 1933 more than 1,000 ministers attended. During the Group's campaign the next year in Canada large numbers of ministers

[440] C 207 b
[441] Tillett 1940 and 1943
[442] OG 1935 (i)
[443] B 6
[444] B 2

participated, 300 reportedly meeting daily in Toronto during the campaign there.[445] A tenth of all the clergy in Norway attended a special house party near Oslo in 1935 or 1936, according to a Group publication.[446]

e) The 1930s – Other Countries

In the Group's major campaigns of the 1930s outside Britain it set out to appeal above all to the professional and business classes, including where possible politicians and writers of influence. In Canada during the 1932 and 1934 campaigns the Prime Minister, Mr RB Bennett, gave luncheons for members of the team to meet members of his Cabinet.[447] A young member of the team wrote to friends at home that their message had been well received by fashionable crowds in Ottawa, and had held 'the boiled-shirt, lip-stick crowd' in Montreal.[448] The President of the Norwegian Storting (Parliament) invited the Group to Norway in 1934. Before long, active adherents included the President of the Farmers Union, a recent President of the Authors Association, the Bishop of Tromsö, and a once agnostic advocate of the Supreme Court.[449] Two years later Ruth Bennett, a British Group worker, was particularly impressed, she wrote in a newsletter, by the large number of professional people in the Group there. In Holland it was 'the tremendous number of business men in the Group' and of whole families, which struck her.[450] A year later a Group pamphlet declared that:

> Among those who are responsible for the work [in Holland]... are the owners and directors of some of the most important national industries. For example, there are leaders of the Coal, Radio and Electrical Industries. Bankers are active in the movement. Other leaders are the Dutch diplomatic representatives in Brussels and Oslo, the director of the Dutch East Indies News Agency, the assistant editor of the great Labour daily, *Het Volk*, the Secretary of the Financial Committee of the League of Nations Secretariat, the President of the Lawyers' Association, a Judge of the Hague Court, and several Burgomasters, who, [it could not resist adding] in Holland, are appointed directly by the Queen. The movement in the Dutch East Indies is led by the Chief of the Commercial Department of the Government, the former Treasurer-General, and the Secretary of State for Education.

At the high point of the Dutch campaign, the mass meetings in Utrecht in 1937, special meetings were held for a number of professions – lawyers, business men, doctors and nurses, clergy, journalists, burgomasters, (80 of them), and teachers (a meeting of 2,000, attended by the Minister of Education). In addition, 'The President of a Waiters' Union arranged a 'midnight meeting' for waiters, chauffeurs, theatre musicians and attendants, taxi drivers and domestic servants who could only come at this hour', to which 500 came.[451]

Similar accounts exist of the Group's campaigns in Denmark and Switzerland, 1935. In Copenhagen a socialist meeting to criticise the Group was more or less taken over

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[445] H 13, H 21, H 25
[446] OG 1936 (i) p 37
[447] H 13, H 21, H 25
[448] OG 1936 (i) p 37
[449] OG 1935 (i)
[450] H 31
[451] Holme 1937 pp 3 and 14

by working class Group converts, according to the Danish paper *Dagens Nyheder*. The Danish Archbishop, 'himself now a leader of the Oxford Group', was moved to comment that 'Organized religion is at last reaching the intellectuals and the working classes'.[452] Here again, however, it was the middle classes who formed the bulk of the movement's adherents.

f) The 1940s and 50s

This remained true of the movement in the next decades. However, MRA was extended geographically and to some extent socially in the 1940s and 50s. Geographically, it spread to Asia, Africa, Latin America and to parts of Europe which it had previously hardly influenced (Italy, France, Germany.) Socially, determined efforts were made with some success to influence trade unionists and labour movement militants, particularly in the USA, Britain, the German Ruhr district, Northern France and Northern Italy. Probably as a result of this, when MRA teams moved into Latin America and Asian countries they sometimes attempted to influence the lower levels of society. Successes were reported among the dockers and *favelados,* or shanty town dwellers, of Rio de Janeiro, the slum dwellers of New Delhi, and villagers in Panchgani, Maharashtra. However, whereas the work among industrial labour militants formed a major part of the Group's programmes, efforts among favelados or rural peasants were largely incidental to them.

The Group's main appeal since the 1939-45 War as before it has been to the middle class. It appears that its full-time workers since the war have tended to include a lower proportion of university graduates, however. This may have been inevitable in that the numbers of full-timers increased several fold in the post-war decade. However it is also noteworthy that the Group never repeated its early successes in creating 'something approaching revival' on university campuses after its decline in Oxford in the late 1930s.

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[452] OG 1937 (iv) p. 4

Chapter IX: The Experientialist Appeal

Personal Renewal

There is no doubt that the Group's chief appeal in the 1920s and 30s was the practical, positive results of 'life-changing' in individuals' lives. 'Let us substitute transformed personalities for arguments about religion', wrote Shoemaker in 1927.[453] Similarly in combating the criticism over the Princeton episode Buchman advised that instead of argument they should 'have enough spiritual miracles that people cannot gainsay the work'.[454] They were determined to stand or fall by the results of their work in 'transformed personalities' and 'spiritual miracles'. The weight of the evidence is that it was indeed these results which were responsible for the Group's success.

The Group's early literature – in the 1920s and early 30s– was mainly concerned with personal renewal. If reference was made to possible social results it was generally very brief. Many Group publications made no reference at all to the wider social implications of personal renewal. Buchman himself did not mention it in his summary of the movement's principles in the *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*.[455] His letter to his supporters from India in March 1925 describing his team's work since November was entirely taken up with news of personal conversions and faith. He told of a Madras businessman who had been converted and had then apologised to his Indian foremen for treating them 'like dogs', deciding to run his business more charitably; but Buchman's conclusion from this was that the businessman 'may be the human means for a revival in Madras',[456] not that 'here was the answer to social problems'.

The Group's best-selling book, *For Sinners Only*, similarly referred to a case of a Chinese lawyer who was converted and then stood up to pressure from Communists as an inspiring example of a Christian ready for martyrdom (unlike a later use of the same incident in an MRA book as an example of the Group's early resistance to Communism).[457] In other words *For Sinners Only* emphasised the personal not the 'strategic'.

For Sinners Only, like the bulk of the Group's early literature, consisted mainly of stories of people who had 'changed'. In reading them today their attractiveness to the people the Group was trying to reach is still evident. For a start they are concerned with attractive people. Begbie for instance wrote in his book, *Life-changers*, of among others a Cambridge rugger blue, a dynamic young American minister, and an Oxford athlete and philosopher 'looking exactly like the circulating library's idea of an officer in the Brigade of Guards' whom he dubbed 'Beau Ideal'. Begbie and Russell described a movement of highly educated, socially privileged young people. They pointed out that some of them were intellectual, some athletic, others young tear-aways, but that all enjoyed a warm fellowship together. The latter was characterised as both light hearted and, when appropriate, deeply serious. The people in the Group were described as such that the strongest characters and the most privileged would not

[453] Shoemaker 1927 (iii)
[454] MSS Biography p 310 Buchman to Ray Purdy Aug 7th, 1926 from Brown's Hotel, London
[455] Buchman 1928
[456] Buchman 1925
[457] Russell 1934 p 70; Howard 1961 p 43

be ashamed to join them; while the despondent, weak or less privileged would find themselves in a new world in the Group.

The Group members were not described, however, as remote in their privileged situation. First and foremost they were seen as 'ordinary' people who were sympathetic to others' problems because they had experienced their problems themselves. The Group was not for the pious, the supercilious or censorious; it was *For Sinners Only*, a 'fellowship of sinners': all were expected humbly to 'share' their 'sins' on appropriate occasions.

The social distinction and warm friendship which characterised the Group were appealing in themselves. But its main attraction was the power that it said was available to any person to overcome his sins and find authority and direction in his life. The stories in Group literature or witness meetings are not primarily about finding salvation in the next world through the right beliefs, but in this world through 'a decision of the will' and 'listening to God'. The personal problems characteristic of the Group's clientele were those which its members had triumphantly overcome. Begbie's rugger blue had been distressed by sexual temptations and failures, but had become 'conscious of invisible power' to resist them after conversion. His Beau Ideal had moved from detached, armchair philosophy to purposeful involvement in a great task. The tear-aways of the Oxford Motor Club had progressed from frustration to dynamic, directed participation. The young American minister had lost his hesitancy and inability in dealing 'face to face' with individuals, and become 'a troubadour of God' converting individuals with 'joyful enthusiasm'. Divorces were averted, conflicts with parents resolved, difficult relatives and friends converted. Some 'changes' were spectacular, but most concerned the failings of ordinary people: 'worry, pride, selfishness, resentment, jealousy, complaining, fault-finding, irritability, and many other things…' in the words of one Group pamphlet.[458]

Some books managed to convey vividly such stories of change. But the principal means of passing on the Group's message was not the printed word but the personal encounter, particularly, perhaps, the encounter with a friend or relative who had 'changed'. The 'change' of a well-known Canadian social gospel minister followed that of his son.[459] Whole families joined the Group, or, more often, brothers and sisters. Fifteen members of a South London cycling club were 'changed'.[460] In Detroit in 1932 during a major Group campaign a businessman's wife had members of the 'travelling team' to stay: her husband, daughter and five of their friends were changed within six months. Another Detroit businessman was converted, and before long brought his partner, sales manager and secretary into the Group.[461] Family, church, business or leisure activity networks could serve to spread the Group's experience of life-changing.

Examples of the Group's basic appeal of changed lives could be given endlessly from the pages of its publications. More difficult to convey is the sense of joy and wonderment at their good fortune that marked the testimonies of many of the changed. Buchman often referred to his work in the 1920s as 'a programme of Life', and criticised existing Christian institutions for lacking 'Life'. It was not their aims he disagreed with, but their failure to make them vibrant and alive in the daily lives of

[458] Rowlands undated (1930s) p 7
[459] Roddan 1933
[460] H 24
[461] R. Hicks 1932 Letter IV

their members. Taking up Buchman's old emphasis on the word 'how', one of the Group's book covers asked 'How? How? How? "How" is the master word for Christianity in the twentieth century. All too often religious teachers have been content to discuss "why" instead of "how". Everyone who knows why wants to know how...The Oxford Group Movement is an upsurge of new spiritual life. It claims to know "how"...'[462]

The joy of Group members was largely the relief and happiness of feeling that there was after all, demonstrable and experienced in their very lives, the power to live up to ideals. This was the Group's main appeal – its ability to offer the individual 'power', rather than a philosophy of religion, of psychology or of social change. Given the joy of experiencing power to 'live straight', 'listen to God' and convert others, many individuals would not have let doubts on theology or philosophy hinder their new life.

Intellectuals

The theologians who joined the movement did not necessarily approve of or learn from its theology. Streeter was said to have advised some clergymen that he took his own theology into the Group. The Group leaders' experientialism allowed them to tolerate this. In turn what impressed some well-known theologians was the Group's experiential aspect.

Colleagues of BH Streeter, a leading theologian and New Testament scholar of the day, may have been puzzled at his public identification with the Group in 1934. He gave his reasons simply. 'By 1934', he said, 'I had seen enough of the Group to realize that it was making bad men good and good men better faster than any other movement...'

His own marriage was greatly helped first by the change in his wife, Irene, through the Group. For him life-changing was apparently a new art to be learnt from the Group.[463] In turn he tried to ground the Group in a more thorough theology, with his book *The God Who Speaks*, originally the Warburton Lectures for 1933-35.[464]

Geoffrey Allen, Chaplain and Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, in the early 1930s, later to be a Bishop, was one of the Group's leading spokesmen for a period. He recalls that he went through four successive phases – of Modernism, Barthianism, the Oxford Group and Psychology. The first two were thoroughly academic. For him the Oxford Group gave a valued understanding of the experience corresponding to his theology. His interest in psychology then led him to apply critical thought to this experience from another viewpoint.[465]

Emil Brunner, the Swiss theologian, was similarly attracted to the Group because of its 'reality' in daily life. Preaching had been the chief method of spreading Christianity for 400 years, he wrote in 1936, but 'word inflation' had led to a loss of confidence in sermons. 'The modern man' he continued 'will only listen again when he can see something real. The day of cultural cliques and religious specialists is over.

[462] Benson 1936
[463] Thornhill 1943
[464] Streeter 1936. And see obituary in Oxford Diocesan Magazine 1937 p 233
[465] Personal interview with Bishop Allen 1974

The Gospel is once again being taken to the market place and preached by the laity...'[466]

Gabriel Marcel, the Catholic existentialist philosopher, held Group meetings in his home with his wife in 1933-4. As he wrote much later:

> You can well imagine that what interested me was not the ideology proclaimed by the Group, that is to say its teaching about the four standards, taken in isolation... that was bound to seem to me rather naive.

His interest was both in the act of self-surrender or 'letting-go' in a time of stillness and recollection, about which he had written before meeting the Group, and in:

> the encounter... the act by which one person's consciousness (for want of a better word) can open up in the presence of another person's consciousness.

Personal witness at its best was to him an example of 'that *inter-subjectivity* which played such a central role in my later writings...' He left the movement, partly because Group members were suspicious of critical reflection about their beliefs and practices, but returned to it in the 1950s. Again it was the experience that interested him, particularly in that it was now being applied to politics. On a visit to Caux he noted 'the extraordinary joy which radiates especially from all the young people' there. They had experienced a transcendence of 'going-beyondness' that was 'beyond the categories of discourse'... 'What we are dealing with here', he wrote, 'is not a theology, even of the most rudimentary kind, and still less a philosophy; it is an experience'.

Needless to say he did not fully accept Buchman's and the Group's theology – differing from them on as fundamental a point as the divine origin of guidance. The book which he edited for the Group in 1958 consisted of autobiographical accounts of 'changed' individuals.[467]

Marcel's attitude to the Group was echoed in an article by another Catholic intellectual, Karl Adam, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Tubingen. Buchman, he wrote, was:

> not aiming to build another Christian church, but to re-create personal experience of the moral and religious a priori from which all living religions begin.[468]

To take a final example, Arnold Lunn wrote after investigating MRA in the 1950s of the enigma of a movement that could so offend the aesthetic conscience by the 'puerilities' of some of its propaganda and its distrust of intellectuals, and which nonetheless created impressive spiritual experience. His conclusion was that the movement must be approached existentially rather than intellectually.[469]

Thus intellectuals could value for themselves the experience of joy, witness and power over 'sin' in the Group. But it is not surprising that those mentioned – Streeter, Brunner, Allen, Marcel, Lunn – maintained an inner independence of the movement and a somewhat critical attitude towards it even when involved in it. The failure of young men such as Baldwin and Van Dusen in the 1920s to continue to participate in

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[466] OG Weekly Supplement Jan 22 1936 article by Brunner
[467] Marcel 1960 Introduction
[468] Adam 1952
[469] Lunn 1957

the movement's experiential dimension while dissenting from its theology has been noted. The ability of older theologians to do so may have owed something to a growing confidence and tolerance in the movement. But it probably owed more to their mature independence of mind and the Group's desire not to offend such valuable participants.[470]

Existential Authority

For these intellectuals and for many churchmen and students with 'inherited' and sincerely held religious beliefs, the Group added an important experiential dimension to their religion. In others, however, the experience preceded belief. Drummond's sort of argument from experience, first to a logically and scientifically demonstrated Reality, then to acceptance of Christian doctrines, would not perhaps have convinced a Gabriel Marcel. But it was thoroughly convincing to many undergraduates and others whose questioning of traditional religious authorities had left them 'in the cold' without a real faith of any kind. For them the main attraction of the Group might still be the changed lives of its followers. But a further and potent appeal might be the certainty of Group members in their faith, and the fact that this was apparently based on experience not on traditional authorities of Bible or church alone.

At least two agnostics converted by the Group have been forward in presenting the rationality of the 'experimental road to faith'. Basil Yates came up to Oxford in the mid-1920s expecting eventually to be ordained. Instead he became an agnostic. After taking the top degree of his year in Politics, Philosophy and Economics, he went on to a Lectureship in Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University. His conversion there brought him back to Oxford to study theology with Rev Thornton-Duesbery for a year. Writing in *The Hibbert Journal* in 1958, after 26 years full-time work with the Group, he explained his view that Frank Buchman had shown to those who had rejected the whole spiritual sphere 'the universally acceptable bases' of faith 'which everyone everywhere can take as his starting point'. This was because Buchman had 'put faith back into the rational category of a universally accessible experience which is open to any man who cares and dares to make the necessary experiment'.[471]

Garth Lean, one of MRA',s leading writers, was also an agnostic when he encountered the Group as a law undergraduate at Oxford. He was told when he expressed his intellectual doubts to Kit Prescott, a Group member, that he:

> should leave aside intellectual discussion and start to seek a relationship. 'Hang the doctrines you do not understand on a hook like a suit of clothes

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[470] 2018 Comment: clarification – I meant that, unlike sufficiently established intellectuals, younger people expressing intellectual doubts would most likely have been subjected to so much criticism and questioning about their moral state, especially their sexual sins, that they would have had to cave in or leave. For me, this was personal. In dissenting and writing this thesis in my mid-twenties I was all too aware of how my moral state was presumably being viewed in the movement. However, no one criticized me to my face. Perhaps my status as the child of MRA leaders, who was also living with Garth and Margot Lean during the first year of my grad studies, gave me some of the same protection accorded to the intellectuals. My spiritual state was left to the Beldens and Leans, with whom I was, by this time, sadly unable to connect. Everyone else, with the exception of historian Robin Mowat, dropped contact with me. I felt both liberated and abandoned. Robin, whom I had not been close to before, was a life-line, able to discuss my intellectual doubts without defensiveness or hostility.

[471] Yates 1958

> – and let them hang until you have a bit of experience' he [Prescott] said. When I returned to them, he thought, I might have a different perspective.

He did. 'Faith by Experiment' has been a major theme of his recent books.[472]

The centrality of this approach to Drummond's evangelism, and Buchman's indebtedness to him for it, has already been considered. Here it is enough to point out that the approach was one with a considerable appeal in an age when the scientific method had achieved great prestige and undermined traditional religious authorities. Admittedly a rigorous application of the scientific method to the Group experiences would not have proven the Group's theological interpretation of them.[473] But for many wanting a faith and destiny to share in the 'power and joy' of the Group, the 'scientific' approach was an added and convincing argument. The Group's reliance on existential authority was also valuable in appealing to those who were thoroughly confused or dissatisfied by the intellectual approach to religion. The Group provided an alternative to joining in the modernist versus fundamentalist melee. Hensley Henson, Bishop of Durham, the Church of England's most vigorous opponent of the Group, was particularly concerned at the revolt against intellectual thought which he discerned in it. Even in defending the Group against Henson, one of its senior Oxford supporters had to admit that this revolt was 'an important factor' in the Group's appeal to students, and that 'some of the Groupists are carrying their anti-intellectualism in religion much too far'.[474]

The Style of the Group

An experiential appeal on its own was not enough. The Group would not have appealed as it did to the upper and middle classes if it had been marked by the excesses of Billy Sunday's generation of revivalists. The showmanship and fortunes of Sunday and Aimee Semple MacPherson had brought the revivalist profession into disrepute. The newly popularised concepts of psychology had led educated people to dub mass revivalism as manipulation using the emotional atmosphere of the crowd. For a generation, between Sunday's last fling at the end of the 1914-18 War and Billy Graham's rise after the 1939-45 War, revivalism was out of fashion, viewed by the sophisticated urbanite as a quaint survival in the rural states of the US 'Bible Belt'.

Buchman was quite at home with Billy Sunday and worked with him on his major New York campaign of 1917, and on later campaigns in the early 1920s. He considered the stories of Sunday's financial greed to be misrepresentations of the man himself, if not of some of his entourage. Sunday was greatly impressed by Loudon Hamilton, Begbie's Beau Ideal in his book '*Life-changers*', to the extent of asking him in the early 1920s to take over as his successor on his now smaller revival campaigns. Buchman refused, saying that Hamilton needed to learn teamwork first.[475]

Despite this early co-operation with Sunday, however, Buchman's revivalism appeared to be almost the antithesis of Sunday's and this accounted for much of its success. In the 1920s and early 1930s at least, Buchman's evangelism was unpublicised, whereas Sunday had used blatant advertising techniques; it was, as Buchman's comment to Sunday indicated, marked by teamwork, whereas Sunday's

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[472] Lean 1974 pp 9 and 34
[473] See above p 108 footnote 403, for Forde's view that a scientific road to God was possible.
[474] Henson 1933. Major 1933
[475] Personal conversation with Loudon Hamilton 1975

had been dominated by the star evangelist himself; it centred not on the mass meeting but the quiet weekend retreat; it emphasised private decision, in the light of full understanding of the ethical demands of that decision, not a sudden gesture of intent under the spell of the crowd; it called for a lifelong commitment within a framework designed to maintain it, not a decision that was left to the convert's own church, if he had one, to build upon, if it could. In short it respected the individualism of the convert, and the right to make an unemotional and rational decision. It has already been noted in the context of Drummond's 'school' that this style was appropriate to the recruitment of undergraduates to a vocation. It did not insult them by making the challenge to them superficial or irrational. This approach, which had won Mott in the 1880s, was equally effective in Oxford in the 1930s.

This difference of approach was commented on frequently at the time. An editorial in the Toronto *Mail and Empire* in 1934 explained the Group's wide following among the city's churches as being largely due to the fact that:

> the Group meetings are unattended by those waves of emotionalism which have rendered so many ordinary evangelistic movements unwelcome to many people of conservative temper.[476]

CF Andrews, a famous evangelical missionary and social reformer, found at his first house party in Oxford that 'there was very little emotional excitement outwardly shown as often is experienced in a mass movement', which encouraged him to participate in the Group. Occasional embarrassing confessions there probably were. But they were not the rule and were discouraged by Group leaders, particularly from the later 1920s.

Another important element of the Group's style was its ability to make evangelism appear 'natural' in an ordinary social milieu. Every effort was made to site its activities on ground that was familiar to its 'target group'. Thus meetings took place in people's homes; in hotels, smart flats or Mayfair drawing rooms for the well-to-do; in town halls and pubs for East Londoners; in churches for their congregations; even in the House of Commons for MPs and at the League of Nations for delegates. Shoemaker was quite open about the reason for calling the weekend retreats 'house-parties':

> you see, if we called it a 'conference' some of the people would never come. The half-social aspect of it is what draws them in, because it hitches on to their own kind of experience.[477]

Thus the setting complemented the speakers who witnessed at the meetings: both were chosen as far as possible to reflect the experience of members of the audience. Beverly Nichols wrote that he left the Group on what was to him the shattering discovery that the speakers at the meeting which had first impressed him had been carefully chosen to do just that.[478]

Philip Leon, another ex-adherent, however was not averse to this. He called the Group witness meeting 'this sacred spectacle, as elaborately, but also as legitimately, stage-managed as any work of art'.[479]

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[476] March 20 1934. Quoted in H 25
[477] Shoemaker 1927 (ii)
[478] Nichols 1949 p 263
[479] Leon 1956 p 144

The style of the Group changed somewhat according to the audience at which the message was aimed. Evangelical terminology was much more to the fore in Shoemaker's and Buchman's early articles and in *Soul Surgery* than in the Group's 1930s publications. This disassociation of the Group from its evangelical origins, in terms of patois if not of content, deserves further treatment in a later chapter, since it was to become of major importance from the 1940s in changing the Group's entire image. In the 1920s and 30s however the Group's work was still couched enough in evangelical language to be readily recognisable to church members, without being so evangelical that it immediately alienated others. Shoemaker described their difference from the stereotyped evangelical in writing:[480]

> Quoting Bible texts first-off, fitting a theological formula to the inquirer, tackling people without first establishing a natural human relationship – these belong to the old, and not the new, evangelism .

The house party

The unstructured personal encounter and the public witness meeting were important in the Group's evangelical method. However the main elements of the Group's appeal so far mentioned – the witness to a life of 'power' and joy, the sober appeal, the half-social atmosphere – came together most typically in the Group's innovation of the house party. It has been seen that this owed much to Wright's conferences for Christian workers. Retreats and summer conferences had played important roles in YMCA college evangelism. But Buchman's use of the small conference as a primary means of converting enquirers and swiftly building them into a fellowship was novel.

The house party was a psychologically effective means of combining the power of personal interviews and confessions with the need to create group consciousness and teamwork. In its psychological effect it bore resemblances to the more recent practice of the weekend or week long 'encounter group', as described, for instance, by the American psychologist Carl Rogers.[481] Both might begin with a collection of strangers who were expectant but wary of talking openly with each other about personal matters; or they might both include people who already knew and distrusted each other from long acquaintance. In both the early lack of ease and tendency to engage in small-talk in the meetings of between 20 and 40 people would require careful handling by the group 'leader'. In the house party Buchman would get everyone to introduce themselves and explain why they had come, giving a chance both for Group members to witness briefly and identify themselves and for the cautious to express their doubts or mistrust. Gradually barriers would break down, often as a result of Group members speaking openly about their personal experiences. Outside the meetings, at meals and in private conversations, some individuals would respond by talking of their own difficulties. Often, in house party as in encounter group, by the second or third day of living and talking together a surprising degree of mutual honesty and understanding would have developed, an atmosphere in which people could find themselves reappraising their views both of others whom they might normally dislike and of themselves, becoming ready to admit to long repressed emotions and to a desire to be different. The few days might be an experience that the

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[480] Shoemaker 1927 (ii)

[481] See Rogers 1973. Rogers there described his own methods, which however have some similarities with the wider range of 'encounter groups', 'T-groups' 'sensitivity training groups', 'Synanon groups' etc., as practised mainly in the USA in the last two decades.

participants would remember with exhilaration and amazement, at the feeling of oneness or in Marcel's words 'inter-subjectivity' achieved within the group, whether it had made a lasting difference to them or not.

'One makes friends at incredible speed on this basis', wrote one enthusiast of his first house party. People were becoming entirely frank with each other for the first time in their lives, he continued, and they left

> 'a different crowd. They had come a little contemptuous, very sceptical, and practically all with no more than a formal religion. They separated with the odour of the super-natural lingering in their nostrils, many with a new kind of faith and a new kind of peace, and everybody with the subdued feeling which usually accompanies a great cascade of new knowledge about yourself…'

This account, of 1924, is similar to others in the 1920s, before the house parties grew too large to conform exactly to this model.[482] These accounts described the scepticism and unease of the first evening; the naturalness, humour, 'radiant countenance and shining eyes' with which Group members witnessed; Buchman's genius both for telling stories of 'ordinary' people (i.e. similar to the audience) who had changed and for tactful but unobtrusive management of the meetings; the informality of the affair, and the ability of people to attend meetings as they felt like it; with sports usually in the afternoons; the emphasis on sin and, on the last day, on 'continuance'.

Unlike the encounter groups practised by psychologists such as Rogers, of course, the Group house parties included periods of Bible study and instruction in the Group's ideology, and were intended to integrate participants into the movement. The participants' experiences were defined in a theological framework. In this, group witness meetings and house parties perhaps held some similarity to the Communist Chinese 'criticism' session, in which wayward members are criticised, confess and are re-integrated into the ideology and the group. This sounds somewhat more brutal than the Group house party, though not necessarily much more so than the criticism that was occasionally meted out to Group members within the team. A similar function may have been achieved however, in both 'changing' the individual and drawing him into an ongoing and militant or campaigning group.

Revival in the Churches

Clergy responded as others did to the offer of personal renewal in the Group. Some recorded this, including well-known preachers such as Leslie Weatherhead and WE Sangster who did not join the Group though benefitting from its emphasis for a time and remaining friends of the Group. An additional appeal of the Group to many clergy, however, was the hope that it held out of stimulating a revival of faith within the churches, and of the churches' influence in the nation. Julian Thornton-Duesbery recalled the early 1930s as a time of 'considerable despair' for many Anglican clergymen. The late 1920s had seen a reaction against the hopeful Life and Liberty Movement of the immediate post-war period. The rejection of the Prayer Book revision twice in 1927 and '28, and the slump of '29 had added to the gloom, and to

[482] 'Neophyte' 1924. See also Baldwin 1928, KI Brown 1925, 'Journalist' 1929, Shoemaker 1927 (ii), Putney 1922, *The Letter*.

the desire for a new invigorating movement. Thornton-Duesbery considered that many clergy sought this in the Oxford Group.[483]

The Group's evident success among the middle and upper classes of course recommended it for consideration. The Provost of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, wrote of its growth in South Africa in the *Church of England Newspaper* in January 1930. He quoted a South African minister who had written in the Pretoria *Diocesan Magazine* of 'churches and churchmen reawakened through this movement, lapsed communicants have come back with a new sense of life'.

Another point in the Group's favour was its leaders' insistence that their theology was orthodox, and that they had no intention of starting or allowing any new denomination or sect. The reaction of the British established and free church [or Nonconformist, not part of the state church] authorities was generally one of cautious approval, of encouragement to the churches to learn from the Group and absorb it, and to the Group to modify its egocentricity. WB Selbie, a well-known free churchman and Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, whom the Group was happy to quote as a supporter, in fact took this sort of view. In his preface to a collection mainly of critical essays on the Group he admonished it for its lack of theology and its concentration on a single conversion method. But he concluded that it was 'a real and effective work of the Spirit of God' and that the challenge was to the churches to absorb the Group's 'new life'. 'For a long time', he wrote, the churches 'have been unanimous in voicing their need of revival. It may be that the way of revival is at hand for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear'.

The development of the Group's relationship with the churches will be considered in a later chapter. Here it is enough to point out that it had many of the necessary qualifications to be taken seriously by lay and clerical churchmen as a possible means of revival.

One of the Group's early publications quoted an article about it in the *Oxford Times* in 1928:

> The justification for the group at all is the dissatisfaction with much of the religion found in Oxford – undergraduates, with the eyes opening to the fact that true religion must be all or nothing, are intolerant of the moribund conservatism that to a large degree characterises the formal religious side of Oxford, and of the latitudinarian views of certain undergraduates' religious societies.

The Group benefitted from the churches' relative stagnation.

Development of a social reform appeal

In 1930 the invitation to the summer house party at Oxford, a four-sided leaflet briefly explaining the Group's purpose, referred only to personal renewal. The next year's one presented the Group instead as the answer to 'the world's present political and economic crisis'. This new line took time to be adopted and understood by Group members. In 1934 members of the 'team' in Oxford reported that the year had been one of 'pioneering' in their work. They had thought more deeply about the social consequences of their evangelism and concluded that it was the 'only hope for World Reconstruction'. Furthermore, they had discovered that 'Life changing against a

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[483] Interview with Thornton-Duesbery 1974

background of World vision has resulted in a harvest of changed lives, in emboldened leadership and in a significant advance in every section of university life'.[484] One Oxford student converted to the Group in 1932 or '33 has recently written that at first his interest in it focussed on personal issues, but that by his final exams in 1934 'it was clear to me that I was in something bigger than a revival'. An event that had affected his understanding of the Group had been a meeting at the House of Commons in a committee room in December 1933, arranged by the Group. Carl Hambro, the President of the Norwegian Parliament, had told the MPs present that the work that Buchman and his team were doing was more important for world peace than most of what was done at the League of Nations. 'Hambro's words', Garth Lean wrote, 'opened up the exciting possibility that people like me, and not just politicians, could have some part in altering history'.[485] Lean went into full-time work with the Group immediately on graduating.

As the political situation worsened in the 1930s the Group emphasised increasingly that it held the answer to the crisis. The political evils stressed in Buchman's speeches and the Group's invitations were continually crisis, instability, the threats of war and revolution, economic collapse, 'chaos and confusion', rarely if ever injustice and poverty. Given the centrality of this appeal in the Group's publicity of the later 1930s it is probably fair to see some of its growth and sustained momentum at that time as arising from its offer to the 'ordinary' person of the chance to participate in a mass action that it promised could affect the international situation. As such it grew, like the very different Peace Pledge Union and Communist and Mosleyite parties, in part as a response to a growing fear of war. Its particular appeal was still however the experientialist one – that changed lives could make a material difference not just to home or church but to politics. And its message did not in any sense share the abovementioned groups' radical criticism of the social structure. Cantril went too far in accusing the Group's adherents of hypocritically calling for revival as a blind to cover their enjoyment of social privileges. Many of them made great personal sacrifices. But Cantril was not wholly unjustified in seeing the Group's social appeal in the late 1930s as that of a movement which promised stability and national unity without in fact threatening its clientele's material interests.[486] It became in part one of the more extreme responses of the middle and upper classes to the instability of the pre-war period. Group members came to feel that their movement was a real hope, even the only hope, for averting war. After the events of 1936, wrote one full-time worker, it had become evident to her that the Group's work was no longer an 'absorbing game' but 'a matter of life and death'. 'Statesmen and thinking people in all walks of life are agreed', she continued, 'that the Group is the thing: the only question in everyone's mind is "Can you be in time?"'[487]

It seems that the statements that the Group collected from such as Hambro, Baldwin, Lansbury, Bennett (the Canadian Prime Minister), and other leading politicians who believed in general that religious revival was necessary for national political health, played a part in helping the Group's appeal as a social as well as a personal answer.

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[484] H 24
[485] Lean 1974 p 51 f
[486] Cantril 1941. The accent is on 'threaten'. The Group did of course expect its converts to hold their material possessions in 'stewardship' for God under 'His direction', which could involve them sacrificing these interests. But it did not preach compulsory expropriation or other forcible changes of the social structure.
[487] [this footnote is numbered in the text but the footnote itself is missing].

It might appear from this that the Group developed its message in order to keep in tune with the anxieties of its clientele. The fact appears to be, however, that it was the latter's growing anxiety about international crisis which helped Buchman to put his full conception of the Group's purpose into action. For a full understanding of this it is necessary to look at what Buchman made of Mott's emphasis on 'strategy' and the political relevance of revivalism.

Introduction to Chapters X to XII: From Revival To 'Revolution'

Controversy over the nature of the Group's ideology in its MRA phase after 1938 has been examined in the Introduction. As noted in the last chapter, however, the development from a personal appeal to the social and political emphasis which marked the MRA campaign was a gradual shift starting as early as 1931. The causes of this shift throw light on the nature of the MRA ideology, explaining the essentially religious nature of its political involvements despite its adoption of a more or less secular, moralistic image. There seem to have been six major influences encouraging the movement to present itself as a 'revolutionary ideology' capable of bringing international peace and co-operation. These form the subjects of the next three chapters. They were:

(1) Buchman's concept of a nation saving strategy acquired from the YMCA under Mott, which took seriously the vague belief of many contemporary churchmen and politicians that religious revival could bring great social benefits. (Chapter X)

(2) The international political situation, marked by the growth of militant parties of left and right and the fear of war. (Chapters IX and X)

(3) The mounting euphoria in the Group itself as the success of its revivalism in several countries drew massive crowds and admiring comments from politicians. (Chapter XI)

(4) The growing number of cases of reform or reconciliation within businesses or between politicians that followed conversions in Group campaigns, and which demonstrated in a small way the possible social effects of revival. (Chapter XI)

(5) The growing maturity of Buchman's team leaders, who became capable of running campaigns of 'strategic' impact on industry and politics. (Chapter XI)

(6) The declining interest of the churches in the Group, which encouraged the Group increasingly to by-pass the churches in its work and to develop its own style which was largely out of sympathy with theirs. (Chapter XII)

Chapter X: Buchman's Concept of Strategy

The view that saw the MRA campaign as a 'radical break' with the Oxford Group betrayed a lack of understanding of the Group. Even in the 1920s and early 30s the Group leaders expected that one day their work would be big enough to affect political realities. The fact that this was not at first understood by the majority of their followers, even active participants such as Emil Brunner and Gabriel Marcel being unaware of it,[488] points to the conclusion that members and leaders of the movement had different interpretations of it – not that a strategy to affect politics was absent from the direction of the revival. As has been seen, the Oxford student team of 1933-34, soon to furnish many of the full-time leaders of the Group, was schooling itself in the theory of the political revivalism long before 1938.

Buchman of course had participated in Mott's Asian 'strategy' during 1915-19 and imbibed its philosophy. Because his movement did not achieve prominence in the West until the 1930s, nor in the rest of the world until the 1950s when he was still its dominating figure, it was natural for contemporaries to think of him as part of a post-1918 generation. Mott, on the other hand, chaired ecumenical conferences in the 1920s and 30s as something of a grand old man of the movement, whose creative period had been pre-war. But Buchman was only 13 years younger than Mott, 7 younger than Eddy, and one younger than Wright, and was formed as much as they were in the pre-1918 YMCA. Indeed, unlike Eddy and Wright, his social philosophy did not greatly change after his experience in Asia 1915-19. This was evident first from his continuing efforts through the 1920s to make contacts with the leaders of nations; and second from his attempts to direct the Group revivals as soon as they began in the late 1920s along the channels of 'national relevance' – whether the movement's rank and file understood this or not. Indeed the main evidence for Buchman's direct continuation of Mott's philosophy of 'a strategy for world conquest' is the fact that from the early 1920s he purposely shunned publicity and concentrated on personal evangelism with a long term view of building a revival and a trained team of leaders that could support such a strategy.

The YMCA after 1918

The 1914-18 War had different effects on the leading members of the YMCA. The YMCA had almost monopolised idealism on American campuses during Mott's and Buchman's undergraduate years. Morality, patriotism, God, progress, social welfare and the scientific method – it had incorporated them all and thrown a major challenge to each idealistic student to dedicate his life in missions, ministry or profession to the 'evangelisation of the world in this generation'. For many, perhaps most, of those who had taken this 'watchword' seriously, the 1914-18 War was a catastrophe, showing up their hope as illusory – there could no longer be a comfortable assumption that Western 'Christian' civilisation had everything to teach the 'heathen'. Sherwood Eddy wrote later that the war:

> shattered the easy, optimistic complacency of my previous ideas of a fictitious evolutionary social development towards millennial Utopias.

[488] Brunner 1955 Tokyo lecture. Also Gabriel Marcel 1960 p 3. Both saw the Group's political message as a post 1938 development.

He came to the view that the conflicts which had led to the war were integral to the 'whole competitive economic system', and that as an evangelical he should be in the forefront of the attack on capitalism as some of his predecessors had been on slavery.[489] Judge Gary and the Chicago YMCA, their funds from business sources threatened because of Eddy's new found socialism, demanded his resignation. If the YMCA as a whole did not follow Eddy's lead, its old certainties were nonetheless broken. Mott himself handed over the leadership at last to younger men, who democratised both the YMCA and the WSCF. These organisations came to reflect in their membership the increasingly pluralist ideological situation in the universities. The student YMCA became more modernist, and more oriented towards social service. Recruitment among students for foreign missions declined, falling off sharply after 1924.[490] Writers in *The Student World*, the magazine of the WSCF, noted the eclipse of the old pietism within their organisation.[491] Fundamentalist students tended to leave the WSCF-affiliated Student Christian Movements, setting up rival organisations, for example in Britain and Norway.

Mott's reaction to this rejection of the pietist conversionism and evangelical crusade for which he had laboured showed, in Macintosh's judgement, 'unaccustomed weakness'. 'What do the students really want?' he asked, 'I have learned to put their judgement ahead of mine'.[492] Eddy wrote that Mott was too set in his diplomatic role of holding his organisations together to take up a new prophetic role post-war.[493]

Like Eddy, Buchman retained a prophetic outlook, still looking for a radically remade world. He did not come to see this in socialist terms, however, but in a yet more incisive and dedicated practice of the old pietist conversionism. He saw the pre-war YMCA as being over-optimistic, as did Eddy. Unlike Eddy, he found fault not with its theory of social progress through conversionism, but with its hope that this progress might happen as a result of the YMCA's own cumbersome machinery and ineffective evangelism.

Buchman's disassociation from the YMCA 1919-1921

From his first months in India in 1915 Buchman had criticised the YMCA.[494] He saw it as too involved in administration to give adequate attention to personal evangelism, or even to the moral and spiritual state of its own Secretaries. His first response had been the 'Hartford Seven' enterprise, an ambitious attempt to reform the YMCA and missions in China by a public campaign. As an official member of Eddy's campaign team he had had at his disposal the interdenominational network of the YMCA and China Continuation Committee. His original Hartford team had dwindled to one constant companion, Sherry Day, however, and when criticism came he felt the loneliness of his position. He had been shocked by the extent of sexual irregularities among the missionaries, and considered these to be a major cause of the opposition to him, directed, as he thought, at the acuity of his diagnosis and 'soul surgery'.

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[489] Eddy 1935 p 16
[490] Latourette 1929 p 769
[491] e.g. in *TSW* Vol XXIII 1930 p 78
[492] Macintosh 1942 p 343
[493] Eddy 1935 pp 205-7
[494] e.g. DF McClelland wrote from Madras after Buchman's first visit that Buchman had said they must 'redeem the Association [YMCA] as a spiritual force'. MSS Biography p 141

'Had no idea such sin existed except in isolated cases', he noted in a memo on his return from the East. 'Being misunderstood opened my eyes. There is a clique that is impure'.

The task, therefore, of reforming the missions appeared all the greater at the same time as he felt increasingly alone in pursuing it.

Buchman was also dismayed at the lack of co-operation he received from the YMCA. In the autumn of 1917 he had had difficulty in gaining finance from evangelistic campaign funds, despite his official position on Eddy's campaign team. Walter wrote to Eddy in October 1917 that this obstruction to their work was caused by fundamental wrongs, sapping the 'spiritual strength' of 'our movement'. Buchman's economic problem was solved temporarily by finance from the Stewart Evangelistic Fund. But this was withdrawn as a result of criticisms of his handling of the Kuling Conference of August 1918. Buchman then wrote to Howard Walter on September 12, 1918:

> The people at headquarters have never been won and the opposition was evident in most subtle forms. They have been trying for some time to use every conceivable means to get us out of China, as the shoe pinched harder and harder and as we got deeper into the personal lives of the men. We have seen some pathetic things, Howard, but they are all turning out, we are convinced, to the furtherance of the Gospel and we can in a measure appreciate the dramatic movement in Paul's life, when they did not want him in one city, he went with joy to another.
>
> I think we will dismiss the whole matter, and I can only say the Church and the YMCA need a John the Baptist. The books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah contain adequate pictures of the needs and conditions.

From this time he increasingly stressed the evils of large-scale organisation of Christian work and, as a more effective alternative, informal teams of evangelists. In an article in the *Korea Mission Field* for March 1919 he wrote:

> We become job-centric instead of man-centric... Institutionalism is the enemy of life. Organization makes us like white mice in a whirling cage. Personalization and team work are the basis of effective work. Christ took twelve ordinary, unlikely, untrained men'.

What was needed, he continued, was 'the permanency of experience gained through the quiet, intensive work of inspired teams of vitalized individuals'.[495]

'I am convinced that one of the most effective ways to advance the cause of Christ', he wrote to friends in February 1921, 'is to have a peripatetic school of men... living on the principle of "life" and working through individuals and groups just as Christ brought His message in His time'.[496]

In building this team he was no doubt inspired in part by Wright's concept of small groups. But his inspiration also came from his reading of the Prophets and the New Testament. His letters show that the model for his team was the Apostles; for independent, 'God-guided' travel, St Paul; for his growing certainty of his 'God-given' mission to reform the churches and secular affairs, as seen above, Ezekiel,

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[495] MSS Biography – no further reference given there.
[496] ibid

Jeremiah, and John the Baptist. The first name that his group adopted was appropriately 'A First Century Christian Fellowship'.

Van Dusen, a close associate of Buchman's during 1919-21, later wrote that Buchman's aim at this time and indeed from about 1914 (though this seems too early since it predates his first Asian tour), had been world-wide revival to save mankind from 'impending catastrophe', through personal and team evangelism starting in the universities.[497] This is no exaggeration for the period 1919-22. In the summer of 1919 he wrote in prophetic vein words 'received from God' in a quiet time:

> I am going to work in and through you in mighty power. I am going to use you in power. The old order is passing. A new order coming in Christian work. Fear not its consequences. The basis – a Holy Spirit directed life.

In May 1921 he almost fell off his bicycle in Petty Cury, Cambridge, as 'God spoke' to him saying 'You will be used to remake the world'. 'God used to tell me in 1921', he said in England in 1938, 'that there would be a mighty awakening of God's Almighty Spirit in the land'.[498] In 1922 his guidance on returning to England was 'A great and mighty movement at Oxford'.[499]

From 1917 Buchman had been planning his own time and travels increasingly by inspirational or 'guided' response to available opportunities, refusing to be bound by fixed timetables or by his terms at Hartford where he was still an extension lecturer. When he left the Far East for America in March 1919 he fully intended to return within a few months. He had been expecting to visit Taiwan and Vladivostok, and had had a successful time in Japan; but he returned to America instead, probably because of his father's declining health. As it was, he did not return to Asia until 1924, nor to further East than Thailand until 1956. Instead he remained in the West in response to growing opportunities in American and British universities. The 1920s were spent in building his 'apostolic group'.[500]

Contacts with the influential – 1920s

In recruiting a team as a basis for a future re-awakening Buchman went particularly to students. Nonetheless throughout the 1920s he continued, though without publicity, to seek out and attempt to convert the leaders of nations, as he had done in China. Although during the 1920s he did this to a small extent in Britain, in attempting to involve at least two well-known writers and several minor 'establishment' figures in his work, it was in India, Australia, Italy and South Africa that he approached the highest political figures at this time.

In India in 1924-5 he renewed contacts with Indian leaders, attending the Belgaum Conference of the Congress Party, where he met Gandhi, Rajagopalachari and Nehru. He had some long discussions with Gandhi later in 1925, and met Nehru again at least twice, in Allahabad and at Geneva in 1926. He stayed a weekend with Tagore. Two Viceroys in succession entertained him during 1925 – Lord Reading and Lord Lytton, the latter having him to stay at the Viceregal Lodge. Lytton later said that Buchman

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[497] Van Dusen July 1934 p 1
[498] Buchman 1961 p 49
[499] MSS Biography
[500] For further details of the movement's foundation and growth in the 1920s see above Chapter VIII, and Chapter XIII below. The point for this chapter is not the details of Buchman's work at this time, but his intentions.

was one of three Americans who had greatly helped him in his spiritual life. The Governor of Madras asked Buchman to meet him after hearing of his conversion of a Scottish businessman in Madras.

Later on this world tour of 1924-6 in Australia, Buchman was equally determined to meet the national leaders. He visited the Archbishop of Melbourne with letters of introduction from English friends; met the Governor-General and the Earl of Stradbroke, a State Governor with whom he became 'warm friends' and one of whose ADC's he converted; was introduced by Senator Guthrie to the former Prime Minister, 'Billy' Hughes, and met Bruce, the current Prime Minister. He also renewed acquaintance with a wealthy landowner whom he had first met in a Mayfair hotel. On his return through South East Asia he met the Siamese royal family with the help of a cabled introduction from Prince Adalbert of Prussia, and was a frequent visitor at Government House in Rangoon, Burma.

In Italy in February 1926, Buchman wrote to Mussolini, regretting that he had no letters of introduction with him but mentioning that 'I saw on more than one occasion leaders of all the various parties' in India, and that those who had been impressed by his work included the Australian Prime Minister, the political journalist Begbie, and Andrew Carnegie.[501] A visit to the royal family in Bucharest prevented him from following up this request immediately, but he achieved his interview with Mussolini in October.[502]

In September 1926 he was in Geneva to hear Archbishop Söderblom, the Swedish ecumenical leader, speak at the League of Nations. The two men had lunched together earlier in the year. Buchman wrote enthusiastically to one of his group in Princeton that the League conference afforded:

> Excellent contacts – really a world field... Every day I am in touch with people met in different parts and changed through the message.

He was delighted that a house in Geneva had been offered to him for parties for League delegates the following year.[503] On this occasion he also met Benes, the Czech delegate, who was to give a luncheon for 250 delegates and diplomats to meet the Group in 1935 when he had become President of the League of Nations Assembly.

In its MRA phase the Group was to develop this art of using international conferences to meet the influential to a high degree. Buchman's 1926 Geneva visit was in fact the second time that he had practised it. The first time had been Buchman's visit to the Washington Disarmament Conference in 1921 mentioned earlier.[504]

It was in South Africa in 1929 that Buchman first felt able to achieve the sort of programme that he wanted. His 'team' in Oxford had grown large and dynamic enough to have started the beginnings of a revival in South African universities and schools on a visit there in 1928, without Buchman himself participating. Their evangelism had achieved considerable publicity, and had even been discussed by the Cabinet, according to a letter from one of the group. There was considerable interest among the clergy. It seemed that the Group's aim of a revival of personal evangelism within the churches might first be achieved there. In 1929 therefore Buchman led a

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[501] Buchman to Mussolini Feb. 6 1926 (MSS Biography)
[502] Buchman to Mrs. Tjader Oct. 6 1926 mentions this (MSS Biography)
[503] Buchman to Ray Purdy Sept. 13 1926 (MSS Biography)
[504] Postscript to Part II, p 90

second team from Britain to South Africa. In doing so he laid down the principles on which his subsequent teams to other countries were to operate. They were remarkably similar to the aims of the Hartford group that had gone to China in 1917. 'Think through the ten men in Africa who, if they were won, could mean most to the nation', he told his team. 'Convert the editors, MP's, Cabinet Ministers, the Administration, the Bishops. They will travel on the team'.

The Governor General of South Africa, Lord Athlone, did become part of Buchman's team, taking him to meet former Prime Minister Jan Smuts on this occasion, and ten years later taking a leading role in the launching of the MRA campaign. He had been particularly interested in Buchman's work by hearing of the conversion of a Springbok rugby hero, George Daneel. It had also been helpful for Buchman, no doubt, that he had carried a letter of introduction to Athlone from Queen Sophie of Greece, and that a Dutch aristocrat on his team, Lilli van Heeckeren, already knew the Athlones.

The 1930s

It would be tedious and unnecessary to go through each of the Group's major campaigns following the South African success, listing the eminent people who were contacted or involved in them, and describing Buchman's efforts to make the campaign relevant to national issues. The increasing scale, and for Group adherents the resultant euphoria, of these campaigns will be described in the next chapter. Here just a few incidents that throw light on Buchman's developing conception of his strategy will be given.

a) Communism – South America 1931

In 1931 Buchman visited South America to make a personal reconnaissance of a continent of which as yet he knew nothing at first hand. He had before this expressed the view that personal evangelism was 'the only cure for Bolshevism'. But the South American visit seems to have made him think more seriously about Communism. In Sao Paolo he wrote: 'Communism is the most highly organised and effective leadership abroad today'. 'It is amazing', he wrote in another letter, 'to think of girls of 18 or 19 in Cuzco University being propagandists of Communism. Have Christians any answer to such a prepared programme?' The world depression he saw as potentially a blessing in disguise if it persuaded people to turn to spiritual values 'and so saved us from falling into Communism'.[505]

The main effect of this experience on Buchman seems to have been to nerve him to launch out with more daring mass appeals. In Sao Paolo he wrote: 'What is needed is emboldened leadership to meet the present world crisis'; and 'The new leadership must challenge a bankrupt age. People want such leadership. Alone, no; a group. It is a company that will do it together'. In Rio he asked himself, 'Have we a counter-propaganda? Do our academic laboratory studies stand the wear and tear of modern life? Materialism prepared the soil for Communism... I see no movement in all Christendom that is commensurate [to the Communist challenge]... Can there be a powerhouse that generates the energy to change modern history?'

As he returned home on board ship in the summer of 1931 his guidance was:

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[505] MSS Biography

> a whole continent is open to the message... This is the age of the ordinary man. The Devil gets him if we don't. There must be much more initiative on our part, much more dare. The Christian forces have been too apologetic... Dedicate yourself to the people.[506]

In the next year he showed some awareness also of the danger of Fascism:

> If we do not remake the Church crowds, some dictators will unmake them. Communism and Fascism have created the greatest crisis in the history of the Christian Church since the Catacombs. What does this entail? A whole new orientation in the presentation of the church – go out into the streets, highways and hedges... This means the fur will fly, but I am ready to go through with it!

These notes, written in the disjointed fashion typical of Buchman's 'guidance', indicate his preparation of his own mind, a gathering of courage and acceptance of the 'destiny' he sensed for himself, to turn the revivalist potential of his movement to the task of world conquest, or at least world conflict. 'Collision is essential', he wrote in Sao Paolo in the context of the Communist threat, 'for the saving of Christianity'.

In July 1931 the journalist AJ Russell, interviewing Buchman for his book on the Group, reported that:

> He foresees the day when an army of five hundred or more consecrated life-changers may descend on a town or city and set to work winning it to Christ.[507]

Thus the determination to reach 'the people' and 'remake the Church crowds' was already issuing in large-scale plans. These were to be put into effect during the next 3 or 4 years. Not all who took part in these early campaigns in 1931-3 can have understood the urgency with which Buchman planned them to counter the Communist, and to a lesser extent the Fascist, threats.

b) Nazism – Germany, early 1930s

Buchman had returned to Germany many times since his first visit there in 1902. In the 1920s he had spent most of his summers in Britain and on tours of the continent training small 'teams', usually visiting old friends like the Hessen royal family and attending German spas en route. In the later 1920s a German 'team' began to form through Buchman's visits to Berlin in 1927 and 1928, and the attendance of a few Germans at American or British house parties – for instance Ursula Bentinck at a Minnewaska, USA, house party in 1927, and the Ferdinand Launs with a group at Matlock, Yorkshire, in June 1929.[508] Laun translated some of the Group's literature, publishing it as a book, *Unter Gottes Führung*, in 1930. After the visit of a Munich lady to a Dutch house party in 1931, a house-party was held in 1932 in her city.[509] Buchman was in Germany again in 1933, not long after Hitler's take-over in January of that year.

Buchman's reactions to Nazism were mixed. A 'team' of 400 met in Oxford to prepare for the July house party of 5,000 in late June 1933. At this team gathering, reported Cleve Hicks, one of the Group full-time workers:

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[506] MSS Biography
[507] Russell 1934
[508] *The Letter*, No. 6, Oct. 1929, p 48
[509] H4

> Frank Buchman gave us the vision of what he had just seen of awakening throughout Germany, a nation, politically on its toes, cleaning up many sore spots in its economic and moral and governmental life, alert and ready for a new day. The change had come within six months. He said 'Just think if this revolution were under the direction of God's Holy Spirit, and was by consent rather than by outward control!' Buchman then reviewed the Group's success in Canada. 'We began to see', wrote Hicks, 'the possibility of a new order on this earth as we were emboldened to obey His leading'.[510]

In September 1933 after a Swiss house party of 1,000, held in the German language, and a ten-day house party in Germany itself, Buchman and a group of 25 others took a break, staying at a hotel in Bad Homburg. 'It gave us an exceptional opportunity to assess and evaluate the remarkable revolution that is going on' in Germany, wrote Ray and Elsa Purdy, two of the American leaders of the Group. They continued:

> Whatever one may think of the Nazi undertaking, this country after fourteen years of defeatism and a sense of helplessness is awake. There is a sense of destiny, removed from the war spirit, which demands the rights of peace and work, and is bringing back again the enthusiasm, assurance and faith on which a successful German polity can be built. At their Party Congress in Nuremberg there were three hundred thousand officially accredited delegates. Have you thought what it would mean to have New York or Vancouver or Johannesburg the host to such a disciplined band if they were soldiers of Christ? The German house party of the groups, September 15th-25th, provided for the leaders in the German groups a 'Rustzeit' or training time in preparation for such national revival.[511]

The implication of these two quotations is that the Group's leaders were impressed with the early Nazi regime as in some respects a model for their own work, or at least as a challenge to organize national renewal on a comparable scale, if in a different way. Their enthusiasm for the swift 'clean up' of the country and inspiration for its people was tempered by regret that it was based to some extent on coercion and that it was not 'God-guided' or Christian. The anti-Semitic activities of the regime were not yet publicised – there is no reason to think that the Group leaders would yet have heard of them. Two elements of the Nazi 'revival' most impressed them according to this evidence – the enthusiasm generated for renewing the country and the scale of the mass meetings.

It seems likely that the change of the Group's public style in the mid-1930s owed something to the impression that the Nazi, and perhaps the Fascist and Communist, rallies made on the Group's leaders. The early absence of 'anything to offend good taste' or of emotional appeals at the Group's house parties gave way to a new kind of showmanship that Billy Sunday would scarcely have recognised, although he might have appreciated it. There were no Nazi-type salutes or uniforms, no glorification of a human leader. But the Group's metaphors became increasingly militaristic and the celebration of youth took a marked place in its propaganda. This seems to have developed first in Denmark in 1936 when 'a large public demonstration' attended by 12,000 was held at Ollerup, the site of the previous year's Scandinavian Olympic Games.

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[510] H 21

[511] H 23

‘Pageantry and music had a bigger place than they have had before in Oxford Group history’, wrote Reginald Holme, one of the Group’s writers. ‘Even professionally detached pressmen felt inspired as the demonstration opened with a march of 1,000 youth bearing the flags of the 20 nations who during the past year have sent 1,000 representatives to Denmark. As the young standard bearers flanked the tribune Hitler’s swastika hung next to the French tricolour’.

At the entry of the banners a regimental band played a marching song ‘composed by young Danes to express the spirit of modem militant Christianity’.[512] The whole assembly later sang together another new song, ‘Bridge Builders’, which had ‘a peculiar throb and rhythm which has rung ever since in the minds of those who heard it that Easter Sunday’. Another new development at this ‘demonstration’ was ‘a choral recitative’ dramatizing ‘The Quest of Humanity’.

The marching flags and pageantry appeared prominently in the Group’s other large meetings that year – of 10,000 at Stockbridge, USA, and of 25,000 in Birmingham, England. The Group published a calendar for 1937, with a cover picture of a fair-haired youth blowing a tasselled trumpet in a pose suffused with idealism and hope. Posters advertising the ‘New Enlistment Youth Camp’ for 1,000 in Birmingham in 1937 featured three slightly less idealised, shirt-sleeved youths sounding their trumpets to the sky. The song written for the occasion had the chorus:

> Vanguard of the New Enlistment, rise
> Marching with banners unfurled.
> God-confident armies mobilise
> Free for remaking the world.
> Then break with our softness and lust!
> All false gods we’ll trample to dust!
> Vanguard etc.

Other Group songs of the period included Eleanor Forde’s ‘Drums of Peace’ of 1934 with lines like ‘Guided by our God we march along’, Bygott’s ‘Britons Rise Again!’ of 1936 – ‘Rank on rank,/ with martial tramp,/ God’s new army rallies’... – and Petrocokino’s ‘Remaking the World’ of 1937 with the opening lines:

> On the Revolution!
> With God our Leader, we’ll sweep all before us.
> We take up the challenge
> To bring the world under His control.[513]

The glorification of God as ‘Leader’ was frankly recognised by Group members as appealing to the contemporary desire for dictatorship. ‘The dictatorship of the Holy Spirit’ became a favourite phrase in the movement, used freely by Frank Buchman in his speeches from 1934 or earlier.[514] At a rally of 10,000 in Denmark in 1935 Buchman expressed the appeal of this:

> There must come a spiritual authority which will be accepted everywhere by everyone. Only so will order come out of chaos in national and international affairs. [515]

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[512] Holme 1935 p 3
[513] Holmes-Walker 1937
[514] Buchman 1961 pp 4, 17, 42, 78
[515] Ibid p. 13

The desire for a miraculous orderliness in world affairs echoed through Buchman's speeches and Group publications of the mid 1930s onwards. 'God's guidance brings a divine co-ordination into the economic fabric of the world. God alone knows all the facts, and God alone can do it', promised a 1934 Group pamphlet.[516]

An article in a Dutch newspaper, quoted in a Group pamphlet, developed this theme. The Group, a movement of thousands, did not intend to gain electoral power nor to

> intrude upon the liberties of their fellow-citizens. But what they do, is: They accept leadership. They follow one leader and they obey him. What the leader wants, they do. Without that leader they have no hope for the future. This they feel in the depth of their souls.
>
> Their leader, however, is not a human being. All men are of the same rank in this movement.[517]

The appeal seemed to be dictatorship and order without coercion or a human Fuhrer. A dream indeed: a churchman at the Group's Interlaken Assembly in 1938 saw suddenly that:

> The Church militant could also be triumphant, the fulfilment of every dream of the human spirit, the satisfaction of all the seemingly irreconcilable social and political ideals whose antagonism tracks Europe today and threatens the future of civilisation.

For at Interlaken, he wrote, he found 'already in existence' the Marxist vision of a classless society (by voluntary sharing), and the democratic ideal of individual freedom and responsibility,

> yet the longings of the Fascist states were also fulfilled, those longings for one ultimate authority able to impose unity and thus to achieve strength, for where every individual has gladly accepted the Dictatorship of the Holy Spirit, all are united and strong in the simplicity of their obedience to Him.[518]

This heightened expectation was made possible by the growth of the Group in numbers and influence, a development to be charted in the next chapter. It was equally a response to the crisis situation of the late 1930s. The point here is that it was, thirdly, a development for which Frank Buchman, and the younger leaders of the Group trained by him, had been working constantly since the early 1930s.

c) Buchman's training of his team – 1930s

In the autumn of 1933 the Group launched a 'March on London', 'when some 500 of us will be there in a team for eight months to bring vital life and spiritual attack on the nerve centres of the Empire' in the words of one full-time worker.[519] Buchman used every occasion to ensure this scale of expectation in his team. A Sunday newspaper article which quoted Mosley as saying that he had about 100,000 followers with 2 million more 'fascist-minded', impressed Buchman.

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[516] H 25
[517] Holme 1937 p 11
[518] Article 'Interlaken' by HR MacInnes in *Lines of Communication*, a diocesan magazine of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem, the Holy Land, Transjordan, Syria and Cyprus, Dec. 1938 Vol 15 No. 12.
[519] Cleve Hicks H 21

'Have you got two million people in England who are Holy Spirit-minded?' he asked his team. 'Where was the German Church at the turning-point of Hitlerism in Germany? Where will you be at the turning-point of Fascism in this country? Are you thinking of Christian forces massed for common action?'

In his public speeches Buchman attempted to impress on his followers the difference between traditional revivalism and the Group's revival. For instance in Oslo City Hall, March 1935: 'In these days we need more than revival. The present age needs revolution'. His most forceful speech on these lines was made in 1938 at a Scandinavian Assembly of the Group at Visby. Unlike most of his speeches, which typically put forward a positive picture of change and the possibility of an end to crisis, this speech was marked by a tough tone of criticism directed at his own supporters. He accused many of them of wanting 'a nice comfortable awakening; you would call it a revival. A nice armchair religion', an attitude, he said, that would make revolution and war possible by default. The 'goose-fleshy Christians' who refused to join a disciplined team and baulked at mass publicity methods, who feared criticism and declined to become 'fellow-revolutionaries' with him, would give a free hand to 'some of the cleverest people in the world [who] are thinking along the line of destructive revolution, and ... are already at work'. To the Oxford team in 1936 he had said that there would have been no 'red revolution' in Spain if the Group had been at work there effectively.

d) Buchman's Scandinavian strategy 1934-7

The rise of Communism and Nazism had thus persuaded Buchman and the Group leaders to organize on as large a scale as possible; to introduce emotive 'crowd' tactics of massed marches and singing; to stress the urgency of the situation and the need for divine dictatorship; and to distinguish between the old, 'comfortable', and the new, politically relevant, revivalism. This trend was evident in another important element of the Group leaders' policy: their choice of countries in which to launch their campaigns.

The first 'revival' in the sense of nationwide publicity and sudden widespread success in conversions, had happened unexpectedly, in South Africa. This had been followed up energetically by Buchman leading teams to continue the work there in 1929 and 1930. On the boat returning from South Africa in 1929 Buchman had the 'guidance' that 'You will meet the leaders of English public life this time'. The next 3-4 years were spent in furthering the Group's work in Britain, North America, and, on the continent, in Switzerland. These were a logical extension of Buchman's work of the previous years: Canada as an English-speaking country, more capable of being affected 'nationally' than the larger United States, but in which the US 'team' could fully participate; Switzerland as the home of the League of Nations. The visit of a team of 100 to Geneva in 1932, the largest travelling team up to that date, was made in response to an invitation from Mrs Alexander Whyte, widow of a famous Scots minister, who was able to make many introductions for them there. This was in line both with Buchman's discovery of the League conferences as a useful field for contacts in 1926, and with his contact with Söderblom and with Sir Henry Lunn's ecumenical conferences for Christian leaders which he had attended in Switzerland in 1930. In 1932-3 the German work appeared to be growing strongly – again a development from Buchman's work of the 1920s, as explained above.

1934 marked a break in this development however. In January 1934 after a house party in Stuttgart the German authorities seem to have refused permission for large

national house parties of the Group.[520] At any rate none were held thereafter in Germany, until after the war. Local Group meetings were allowed for a time, however, while Germans were able to attend house parties outside Germany. Buchman and BH Streeter attended a Nuremberg Party Rally in September 1935, and Buchman with other friends went to the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games.[521] Early in 1936 the newspaper of General Ludendorff described the Group as one of the 'sinister super-national forces which wage a constant underground war against Germany', and at this time permission to import Oxford Group literature was refused by the Propaganda Ministry.[522] Orders dated Feb. 10, 1938:

> placed informers in local Group meetings in Germany and detailed methods for preventing the Oxford Group spreading in the Nazi party. Later these instructions were repeated with regard to the army.[523]

Thus from 1934 the Group's activities in Germany were progressively curtailed. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but probably concerned the Group's actively Christian and internationalist character, and fear of its possible use by Western intelligence networks. After the Nazi conquest of Norway during the war the Group was suppressed there, some of its leading members being among the first Norwegians to be imprisoned or executed. Hambro wrote to Buchman that the Group's English name had led the Nazis to think it had some connection with British Intelligence.[524] A similar view was evident in a Gestapo report on the Group written in 1939 and published in 1942.[525] This report also criticised the Group's inter-racialism, its Christian theology and, by contrast with the churches, its conversionist vigour. The Dutch Nazi party openly criticised the Group in 1937 for holding a mass rally in Utrecht at the same time as one of their meetings was held there, which failed to draw similar crowds.[526]

Buchman's attitude to the Nazis in this period 1934-9 was ambiguous. In public he made a statement in 1936, which the Group has regretted ever since, to the effect that God should be thanked for Hitler's construction of a bulwark against the spread of Communism. He added that anti-Semitism was, 'Bad, naturally. I suppose Hitler sees a Karl Marx in every Jew'. However he still held out hope: 'Think what it would mean to the world if Hitler surrendered to the control of God. Or Mussolini, or any dictator. Through such a man God could control a nation overnight and solve every last, bewildering problem'. Social and economic problems, he continued, 'can't be solved by immoral measures. They could be solved within a God-controlled democracy, or perhaps I should say a theocracy, and they could be solved through a God-controlled Fascist dictatorship'.

In response to much criticism of Buchman for these statements, Peter Howard later implied that Buchman was mis-reported, and that, in any case, 'The whole of the

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[520] MSS Biography
[521] MSS Biography
[522] Dai1y Telegraph Feb 24 1936 quoted in Thornton-Duesbery 1934 p 63
[523] Sicherheitsdienst RFSS, Oberabschnitt Süd-West (SS Security Services South-Western Division), Stuttgart, Feb 10 1938, quoted in Thornton-Duesbery 1964 p 64
[524] Hambro to Buchman Feb 1 1943. See also Thornton-Duesbery 1964 p 66
[525] Thornton-Duesbery 1964 pp 123-5
[526] See Lean 1974 p 59. Howard Blake, a Group worker, wrote to Buchman on 25.2.1936 from Copenhagen enclosing an article of the same date from *Berlingske Aftenavis* describing General Ludendorff's recent inclusion of the Oxford Group with the Jews, Free Masons, League of Nations and the Pope as part of 'a supernatural power that wants to kill the German Spirit'. MRA Archives.

man's life is contradictory to everything that statement implies'.[527] Certainly Buchman was not in favour of the brutal and anti-Christian activities of Nazism, while the Group was extremely active in supporting the 1939-45 War effort. But Buchman never repudiated his statement of 1936 and indeed there is good reason to believe that he stood by its four main points:[528] 1) the importance of Western governments resisting Communism. 2) the evil of anti-Semitism. 3) the possibility of 'God-guided' dictatorships, or elected cabinets, solving social problems, (this last was not quite as simplistic an idea as it sounds since Buchman's conception of a 'God-guided' government would probably have included its encouragement of the Group to organise personal evangelism on a mass scale to ensure a complementary responsibility or 'obedience to God' among people at all levels of society).[529] 4) the possibility of any dictator being converted.[530]

Buchman made considerable efforts to reach the Nazi leaders to convert them, as he had tried with Mussolini and with Western cabinets. One report holds that he tried but failed to meet Hitler as early as 1932. He never did meet him. On August 14th 1936 he met Himmler, the only leading Nazi with whom he achieved an interview, it seems. The conversation, according to Jacob Kronika, a Danish journalist staying at the hotel where the meeting took place, was a fiasco:

> Himmler could not, as he had intended, exploit the 'absolute obedience' of the Oxford people towards God, for the benefit of the obedient slaves of the SS, and the Nazis.[531]

In 1938 Buchman persuaded a friend in Berlin, Lord Redesdale, to read to Hitler a letter in *The Times* of September 10 in which Baldwin, Salisbury and other leaders of the British establishment approved the principles of 'Moral Re-Armament'. Buchman's failure to criticise Nazism in public was almost certainly related to his over-optimistic hope of converting its leaders. In 1933 Emil Brunner and some British church leaders criticised him for inviting the pro-Nazi Bishop Hossenfelder and others to Britain. Buchman's defence was an aggressive one – that he had expected Brunner and the church leaders to have helped him convert the Nazis.[532] His optimism, here as elsewhere, was limitless, to the point of being unrealistic and dangerous not merely to his own reputation but in encouraging the view that public opposition to Hitler was second best to attempting to convert him.

Buchman may not have been sufficiently aware of the political forces supporting Hitler or therefore of the impossibility of arresting such forces by converting a few leaders; but he became well aware of the essentially evil nature of the Nazi regime.

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[527] Thornton-Duesbery 1964 p 127

[528] The statement is also in thoroughly Buchmanesque language; it could hardly have been faked.

[529] 2018 Comment: I am astonished now that I did not qualify this statement by pointing out that Buchman's own authoritarianism in running his movement hardly makes a dictator-led Oxford-Group style revival a happy prospect. Just how much Buchman and Oxford Group diehards truly believed in the democracy they defended in WWII is still not clear to me: social structures were simply not as important to them as changed lives and people who were 'obedient to God'. Buchman's movement, however, has democratized itself in the decades since his death.

[530] Two years later a small and obscure branch of the movement was to echo Buchman's sentiments in sending a telegram to Hitler, which read 'The Shanghai Oxford Group are praying that Herr Hitler may so love humanity that he will live in history as a reconciler of nations, May God so guide him' – a piece of wishful thinking on a heroic scale. Source: a letter from Margery and Donald Farquharson in Shanghai to John [surname not included], 6.12.1938, MRA Archives

[531] Thornton-Duesbery 1964, p 62, quoting Jacob Kronika in '*Flensborg Avis*' Jan 2, 1962

[532] Lean 1964 p 65

'Germany has come under the dominion of a terrible demoniac force', Kronika, the Danish journalist, reported him as saying on the day of his interview with Himmler: 'A counter-action is urgent... We must ask God for guidance and strength to start an anti-demoniac counter-action under the sign of the Cross of Christ in the democratic countries bordering on Germany, especially in the small neighbouring countries'.[533]

This conversation Kronika reported 26 years later. It may be inaccurate. But it is also the view within the Group that Buchman's strategy of starting revivals in Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland was aimed eventually at Germany.[534]

For after the check in Germany in 1934 Buchman launched into Norway, and the next year Denmark, two countries in which he had not previously been preparing his work. These campaigns were not planned by the summer of 1934, when Ireland was expected to be the scene of the Group's next effort to create 'a national spiritual awakening'.[535] The Irish campaign started in October when Buchman led a large team to Belfast. It was cut short, however, when Buchman left with a smaller group of 30 to attend a house party organised by Hambro, the President of the Norwegian Parliament, for 100 of his friends in Norway. The house party grew to 1,400. Buchman increased his team to 200. As in South Africa an unexpected 'national revival' was under way. Ireland had to wait as major attention was concentrated for the next four years on continental Europe.

The move to Norway was probably initially one of Buchman's 'inspired guesses', a reconnaissance in response to the invitation which Hambro had given. The Group's campaigns in Denmark in 1935 and the Netherlands in 1937, however, were carefully planned on the largest possible scale. In 1936 the momentum of the British and American work was kept up with major assemblies. But the emphasis from October 1934 to the Interlaken International Assembly of 1938 was definitely on the smaller countries around Germany. This is at least circumstantial evidence that Buchman, who was fully in charge of the Group's international programme, was fulfilling the 'strategy' which Kronika recollected that he had outlined. This strategy may also have been implicit in a letter Buchman wrote to Sir Lynden Macassey in autumn 1935:

> The policy in striking in Scandinavia last year was with the hope that the whole continent of Europe would be influenced and find a true answer through the dictatorship of the living Spirit of God.

Buchman's reasons for not launching a major campaign in Sweden also throw light on his aims at the time. The Danish campaign in 1935 almost went off half-cock without sufficient impact on press and politics. This was because:

> Everything had been wonderfully prepared, the Bishop favourable, when some old-fashioned Christians started a house party on old lines.[536]

They organised a prayer meeting for reporters, thereby giving them a scoop and being made to appear quaint and out of date. Although there were by 1935-6 a large number of contacts and many converts in Sweden, where a large campaign could have been supported, Buchman did not want to give the same impression of an old-fashioned

[533] Thornton-Duesbery 1964 p 62
[534] And see Holme 1937 p 5: Describing the Group's work as creating a 'Spiritual Oslo Front', Holme explains, 'Two years previously [i.e. 1934] the Oxford Group had the strong conviction that God might use the smaller nations of Northern Europe to redress the balance of the large ones'.
[535] H 24 and H 25
[536] Buchman quoted in MSS Biography

evangelical revival. In order to appear politically relevant, he wanted to start with contacts with the Prime Minister and national leaders: 'That's where we have to begin in that nation', he said. 'I don't want to go in on the old basis'. In Vienna and Budapest he had been able to meet with cabinet ministers. 'My present thought', he wrote in 1936, 'is to try and get to Sweden when I can see the country together at a single function'.

Buchman and Mott – Comparison

Having examined Buchman's strategy in the 1920s and 30s some further observations can be added to the brief description of the Group's indebtedness to John R Mott at the end of Chapter II.

a) Implicit Post-Millennialism

Mott and Buchman were equally wary of taking sides in a theological dispute like that between the pre- and post-millennialists.[537] But both shared the 'triumphalist' optimism characteristic of the post-millennial hope – the belief that the present society was perfectible without requiring the massive supernatural intervention of the Second Coming of Christ to inaugurate the millennium. 'Before a God-led unity', Buchman proclaimed, 'every last problem will be solved'.[538] His speeches were redolent with unlimited optimism about the possibilities for world peace and prosperity if only people – both leaders and masses – would 'change'. He was extremely pessimistic about the alternative, giving 'prophetic' warnings about the probable destruction of civilisation as a whole if men refused to change. But to Buchman, as was said of Mott, 'every crisis was an opportunity'.[539] Throughout his speeches he gave examples of the movement's influence in changing men and the world's readiness for 'the answer', which convinced him that, if his audience would only respond, they would 'help change the world quickly'.[540] Visser 't Hooft's characterisation of Mott's style of public speaking as 'baroque over statement'[541] is almost too mild to describe the exaltation in Buchman's progress reports: MRA in 1949 'has found a million feet', 'It has God's mind', and 'Everyone feels Moral Re-Armament has the answer for Germany…'; in 1953 the 'seed thought' of Moral and Spiritual Re-Armament' 'Has taken root among the leadership of the world'; while the introduction to one of his speeches claimed that in 1939 these 'two words "Moral Re-Armament" caught the imagination of nations'.[542]

There was a greater urgency, even desperation, in Buchman's optimism in the post-1918 decades compared with that of the pre-1914 YMCA, however. The latter rode on unquestioned assumptions of Western superiority, the inevitability of progress, the beneficence of American social structure, the Christian nature of Western civilization. The YMCA could plan to save the future by converting the young. Buchman by contrast was involved, as he thought, in a desperate attempt to save the present, for which leaders and masses alike had to be converted immediately. The concept of

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[537] e.g. Mott (1900 p 10) wrote that 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation' implied no special theory of eschatology.
[538] Buchman 1961 p 205
[539] Mackie 1965 p 5f
[540] Buchman 1961 p 105
[541] *TSW* 1965 p 284 ff
[542] Buchman 1961 pp 170-4, 210

Anti-Christ appeared in the writings of Shoemaker, senior American spokesman of the Group after Buchman himself, in 1937:

> What makes and keeps this crisis high-pitched and world-wide? I believe it to be the force of antichrist, making the greatest bid in all human history for the soul of mankind and the life of the world... Antichrist is the negative front throughout the world and his troops include many who do not know they are in his army, while all neutrals are his allies.[543]

The emphasis on crisis, 'negative forces', 'demoniac force' and, on the other side of the coin, on the miraculous order to be gained from 'God-control' and 'guidance' – these developed strongly in Buchman's speeches and the Group members' consciousness in the 1930s. From the mid-30s the Group adherents seem to have thought increasingly in terms of stark alternatives – 'God-control' or dictatorship, MRA or War, MRA or Communism. Mott's crusading hope based on pietist conversion could only survive post-1914 conditions if it was encouraged by news of revival, made desperate by fear of world collapse, and deprived of critical discussion.

b) Stewardship

The exact means by which Buchman expected his evangelism to 'remake the world' was not always clear. Sometimes he expected, in his greatest outbursts of optimism, that virtually entire populations would be converted. In the middle of the revival in Norway he extrapolated from the five months results so far to ask:

> 'Five years? Every person changed? Every business? Whole cities getting direction? Politics? And Parliament? A nation listening to God? International relationships?'[544]

At other times he pointed out less ambitiously that, 'There is a tremendous power, too, in a minority guided by God'. This line of reasoning extolled the 'leavening' power of the organised movement, 'a quiet army of ordinary people' who can 'be a force in a country'. A model for this was sometimes taken to be the Communist Party, whose influence far exceeded its numbers by virtue of its 'passion' and planning.[545]

Thirdly Buchman would emphasise the role of leadership:

> Here is something for all men everywhere, but most of all for the men in government and industry who need to make it the policy of their nation.[546]

Buchman's dying words expressed this theme: 'Why not let Britain be governed by men governed by God?' Like Mott he considered the praise of 'top' people to be an excellent advertisement for his work. His speeches frequently included words of praise from secular and clerical leaders, and stories of how 'changed' leaders had brought reconciliation into national or international disputes. He held up as an example St Nikolaus von der Flüe, the 15th century Swiss farmer and soldier who

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543 Shoemaker 1937 pp 2-4

544 Buchman 1961 p 8. Other examples: 'Let's think of the philosophy of it – one man changed; a million changed; a nation changed' (1935) p 22. Or 'There are four million people in your country. Four million people listening to God?' (1935) p 18. See page 24 (1936); page 50 – 'Every man, every woman, every child mobilized' (1938); page 54 – 'planning to save the millions' (1938); finally the MRA 1939 campaign to get '100 Million Listening'.

545 Ibid p 63 (1938), p 15 f (1935); p 157 (1947). Also see p 60 (1938) and p 160 (1947)

546 Ibid p 215 (1954)

under 'the guidance of God became the most sought-after arbiter in affairs of state' of his day.[547]

Whether it was the millions, the group or the statesmen who were to be most influential in bringing the 'answer to crisis', however, they were to do so by voluntary 'caring and sharing' not by force or political pressure. 'If everyone cared enough and everyone shared enough', he expected 'everyone would have enough'.[548] Stewardship was Buchman's panacea, as it was Mott's.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that Buchman learnt the main lines of his social outlook, and caught the spirit of his extraordinary hopefulness, from the pre-1914 YMCA. He expressed himself often in almost the same phrases that Mott used. Both men liked to list the areas for which their evangelism was relevant, for instance: Mott's words to Taft, that the WSCF sought to bring the principles of brotherhood to dominate students 'in all their relationships, civic, political, national, international and religious' was echoed many times by Buchman in such phrases as a 'programme of life which issues in personal, social, national and international salvation'.[549] Buchman rejected Mott's organisations. But his movement was to recapture the sense of fellowship, based on shared experiences of pietist evangelism and a shared belief that God was in control and that victory was around the corner, which had marked the WSCF and YMCA under Mott.

Buchman's work was in the tradition of Mott's YMCA but it was not as Driberg called it 'an old-fashioned revivalist movement'. This phrase conjures up images of other-worldly hopes, of salvation from hell, and of merely individual concerns. From the start, and certainly during its most 'revivalist' phase in the early and mid-1930s, as well as later, the Group's leaders saw it as a strategic attempt to wrest the contemporary world from 'materialist' un-Christian and 'Bolshevik' ideologies, by converting the socially and politically influential.

[547] Ibid p 154
[548] Ibid p 205 And see ibid p 46 for his original formulation of this idea.
[549] Matthews 1934 p 289. Roots 1928 p 20

Chapter XI: Revival Euphoria, Results and Revised Tactics. 1930s - 1950s

Two main reasons have so far been given for the Group's new emphasis in the 1930s on its social and political relevance: first, the increasingly unstable political and economic situation and the anxiety this created in the Group's middle class clientele; and second Buchman's ideology, consistently held since his YMCA period. Two other important factors fed the Group members' hopes to seemingly unrealistic levels. These were firstly the experience of participating in mass 'revivals', and secondly the accumulation of many reports of small-scale, but significant, social changes – some of them of a fairly radical nature – in businesses, town councils, farms and so on as a result of the Group's conversions. The lack of a tradition of critical thought in the Group led many of its members to build massive hopes for the Group's influence in social renewal on these somewhat flimsy bases.

1) Mass Revivals

Pamphlets on the Group's principles in the 1920s sometimes include a sentence or a paragraph on the theoretical answers to the world's problems inherent in 'stewardship' and 'fellowship'. There was a confidence in these statements, but scarcely an expectation that the Group could or would in practice solve such problems. By the big Scandinavian campaigns of the mid 1930s, however, the Group's pamphlet writers were beginning to voice such expectations, echoing Buchman's optimism. 'This movement', wrote Holme in 1935, is 'possibly the greatest force for rebuilding the world on sure foundations'.[550]

This euphoric optimism was consciously fostered by those tactics, borrowed in part from the mass revivalist tradition and from political rallies, described in the last chapter – pageantry, flags, parades, massed singing of martial hymns, huge meetings. In October 1935 it was reported that the Group meetings in Copenhagen during the General Election drew larger numbers than any of the political ones. This moved one newspaper to comment:

> It is beyond question that our country has never before experienced the irresistible power of such a religious tide.[551]

'Rising Tide' was chosen as the Group's slogan for 1937, the year that it claimed to have drawn 100,000 to mass meetings in Utrecht at Whitsun. It is probable that this and some other massive totals were inflated to add to the impression of the movement as an irresistible tide. The Utrecht figures, for example, referred to the aggregate of the head counts at each of the Group's meetings over a weekend;[552] many people would have attended more than one of the meetings and therefore been counted twice. The true figures might have been nearer half those reported, or less – it is now impossible to say. These meetings were nonetheless hugely impressive to the Group adherents involved. In five or six years they had seen their movement grow from conferences of a couple of hundred to assemblies of tens of thousands; from travelling teams of 20 to teams of hundreds; from their British and American base they were 'conquering' a new country almost every year by the mid-30s. Stories of the complete

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[550] Holme 1935 p 9
[551] *Dagens Nyheder* October 19th 1935
[552] Holme 1937 p 16

humiliation of opposing groups fed their self-confidence: 'Anti-Oxford Meeting Colossal Fiasco', headlined *Dagens Nyheder* in March 1935 in Denmark, repeated in Group reports; while a Dutch Nazi rally in Utrecht at Whitsun 1937 was an equal flop.[553]

The fall-off of public interest might be dramatically swift, as was reported after the Group's campaigns in Louisville 1931 and Denmark 1934-5.[554] But there was always a larger meeting, drawing greater publicity, in another country to hide this from view. In Britain the Group's numbers did not diminish suddenly after the peak meetings of 1936. The number of full-time workers and others trained there over a ten-year period ensured that it was not an overnight phenomenon. The Group indeed appeared to be rooted in every major town and city, and in hundreds of rural areas, each major region being serviced by full-time workers. In other countries, though initial reports inflated the Group's numerical influence, sizeable teams nonetheless remained.

At large conferences and on major campaigns conversions could come with almost overwhelming rapidity. At the Stockbridge, USA, camp in 1936, part of an assembly of 10,000, there was, they said, 'a miracle every thirty minutes'.[555] In the thick of such results Buchman's hope of 'changing' the whole populations of small countries may not have seemed quite as inconceivable as it appears in hindsight.

The war inevitably checked the 'rising tide' of the Group's influence. Large campaigns continued until the full-time workers were drafted, in 1941 in Britain and 1942 in the USA. Smaller campaigns using patriotic musical revues to put over the Group's message were nonetheless managed thereafter on both sides of the Atlantic. The Group's evacuated British headquarters in Tirley Garth, Cheshire, kept the pre-war converts in touch by newsletters. The only people who could travel were those in the armed forces. They did much to link up the Group centres around the world, and to initiate Group work in new countries such as Egypt and Cyprus, even during the war.

The post-war years saw a new burst of energy and commitment in the Group. Already disrupted from their normal careers by the war, many demobbed servicemen and women decided to work to 'win the peace' with the Group, swelling its numbers of full-time workers far beyond their pre-war peak. Although there were no mass meetings to compare with the pre-war meetings in size, the Group's new tactic of using theatrical revues and plays bore dividends in terms of contacting large total audiences. *The Forgotten Factor*, the Group's most successful play, was said to have been seen by over a million people in seven years (May 1944-February 1952), including 100,000 in its London run of October 1946 to May 1947. Although the Group's national conferences never again reached the totals claimed for Birmingham '36 or Utrecht '37, its international gatherings at Caux, Switzerland, maintained the pre-war atmosphere of large numbers. They also gave to participants a sense of hope, similar to that of the pre-war 'national awakenings', that whole countries, or at least whole industries and the leaders of countries, were coming close to being 'changed'. 24,000 people from 88 nations attended the Caux 'World Assemblies' of 1946-50. They included 10 Prime Ministers, 93 Cabinet Ministers, trade union leaders from 35

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554 See Maisie Ward 1937 p 27 f. Though it is not possible now to tell whether those who fell away were fully 'changed' during the campaign, or whether they were simply interested or excited by it. It was probably the latter in most cases.

555 OG 1930 (1) p 11

countries representing 40 million workers, 'more than 1,000 Marxists and Communists', 14 US Senators and 23 (in another list 60) members of the House of Representatives, 1,000 youth from 91 universities, and '100 Muslim leaders from 10 countries'.[556] The presentation of such statistics was designed as before the war, to give a sense of the Group's overwhelming importance. The figures for *The Forgotten Factor* and other plays were probably inflated, based on aggregate audiences which would have included the Group faithful returning time and again with different groups of friends or contacts. But the Caux figures were probably more accurate.[557]

The campaigns of the post war years were also impressive. Buchman toured Germany in 1948 with a team of 260, and the Indian sub-continent in 1952-3 with a team of 180, including the casts of four plays with five tons of equipment, flown in by charter plane. On this occasion he was invited to Asia officially by, among others, the Prime Ministers of Ceylon, Thailand and Burma, and the senior Buddhist abbots of Burma. For the movement's members this period was, if anything, more impressive than the 1930s in providing evidence that the Group was growing fast enough to solve the world's major problems. One of the Group's leaders wrote to Buchman in 1944 that, 'If the next 20 years are anything like the last 20 years there is no question that under God we shall remake the world'.[558] There was nothing in the next 5 to 10 years to disillusion such a hope. Another Group member could proclaim with utmost sincerity to a meeting of German Communists during the 1948/49 campaign in the Ruhr, that lives could be 'changed' 'on a colossal scale' and bring in the classless society in their generation.[559]

2) Socio-Political Results – 1930s

The first major example of 'radical' social results arising from the Group's work seems to have occurred largely unsolicited in South Africa, after the early campaigns there of 1928-29. In 1929 a Group meeting attended by about 300 English and Afrikaans people took a joint vow 'at the feet of Jesus Christ' to keep the peace between their two peoples. A bitterly anti-British 'Boer Nationalist', Professor Norval of the University of Pretoria, was converted and began to work with other English and Afrikaans converts for mutual understanding. The *Manchester Guardian* in 1934 commented, in the words of a Group report, that 'the underlying spiritual awakening was a powerful factor in the formation of the Fusion Government'. A member of that Government, Jan Hofmeyr, the Group report continued 'stated to British members of the Oxford Group: "Nothing but a Damascus road experience could have made this fusion possible"'.[560] Various commentators also noted the Group's contribution to black-white relations. CF Andrews, missionary, friend of Gandhi's and campaigner for Asian rights in South Africa, thanked the Group members for their 'active help'. 'It is not too much to say that the success... when the hostile anti-Asiatic Bill was

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[556] Howard 1951 and OG 1950 (i)
[557] The view of Garth Lean, in conversation 1975; KD Belden (personal communication Oct. 1975) points out that the Caux figures were usually based on statistics submitted annually to the local Swiss authorities for taxation purposes. He considers *The Forgotten Factor* figures to be fairly accurate as well.
[558] Jaeger to Buchman April 24 1944
[559] Howard 1951 p.10
[560] Group international report 1940 pp 88 f

postponed', he wrote in 1931, 'was due in a great measure to the prayers and active sympathy of the Oxford Group Movement'.[561]

Professor Edgar Brookes, a well-known exponent of racial integration who became a leader of the Group in South Africa, wrote that it had brought 'a great access of strength and vision' to the efforts of various Churchmen in improving race relations. In particular, he wrote, it had confounded expectations by converting some white racialist employers and farmers, who had then apologised to 'their natives' and started better relationships with them.[562]

In the course of the 1930s increasing numbers of such accounts of reconciliations and improved practices by employers and employees appeared in Group witness meetings and publications. John Meekings, a converted businessman, for example, started a large chicken farm in Sussex to employ unskilled, unemployed men from depressed areas such as South Wales. His principle in running it was that 'The employer has got to identify himself entirely with his men …, has got to give himself to them', in addition to giving them 'good houses, clothes, wages and so on'.

The 'team spirit and contentment of all the workers' impressed the representative of a trade paper who visited the farm, according to a Group report of Meekings' experiment.[563] Other examples given in the same publication included an employer 'irritable to the point of savagery... intolerant of the workers' point of view, willing to risk a strike rather than yield an inch', who was converted and made unexpected concessions at the next negotiations with the union; a French employer who opened the firm's books for the workers' inspection, thus removing 'the suspicion of secret profits' and remaining free of strikes in a difficult period; an English employer of whom 'a labour leader' said 'This man, under the guidance of God, has done more voluntarily for his men than any revolutionary government would compel him to do'; and finally, on the other side, a 'girl clerk' who secured a rise in wages for 'the girls working under her' because she was 'no longer afraid of losing her job for stating the employees' case'.[564] Many more examples could be given, such as the Northern employer and his wife who gave up their large house and salary and moved into a worker's cottage so that their firm would not have to lay off workers in the depression.

The first example of the Group's influence on international relations also dates from the 1930s. Dr JAN Patijn, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, was 'changed' or greatly influenced by the Group. In September 1938 in a speech in Geneva he 'attributed the improved relations between Holland and Belgium in a large measure to the influence of the Oxford Group'.[565] Shortly before as 'diplomatic Minister' in Belgium he had been in charge of negotiations over a dispute. The Netherlands lost the cause. Dutch ill-feeling was increased by the attitude of sections of the Belgian press. Patijn was apparently in a position to let the mutual antagonism continue, or to cool it by a conciliatory response. He refused to do the latter, until prompted by a sense that it was 'God's Will' that he should do so. After he had made a conciliatory public speech, he said 'all bitter comments against my country ceased'.[566]

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[561] CF Andrews, typed and signed statement, MRA Archives
[562] OG 1936 (i) pp 38-39
[563] OG 1936 (1) pp 14 f. See also M Ward 1937 p 17
[564] OG 1936 (i) pp 21 f
[565] OG 1940 (i) p 47
[566] Buchman 1961 pp 77-78

3) New Tactics

These social effects of the Group's work in the 1930s had been implicit in its emphasis on ethical action. Among hundreds of stories told in Group literature or witness meetings of converts paying overdue taxes, saving their marriages, or treating their servants better, it was not surprising to find some of employers improving wages and conditions or of town councillors ending old enmities and thereby running the council more efficiently. Such stories of social improvement concerned the areas in which individuals had the scope to make a difference: for example the owners of family firms or of capital could make more far-reaching experiments than could town councillors or diplomats. But employees or diplomats could at least make their institutions or negotiations run more smoothly. Conflict situations can be worsened, and attitudes hardened in sensitive areas such as racial or industrial relations by the insensitive or embittered actions of key individuals – this much is clear from any working acquaintance with such situations. By the same token the same individuals – perhaps management representatives, union leaders, unofficial workers' leaders, those who symbolise the faults of their side to the other side by virtue of personality, position, prestige etc. – can help to calm down antagonistic feelings. Radical change over a wide area however will typically involve inescapable conflicts: for instance an attempt to extend enlightened paternalism to every firm would be resisted by less idealistic vested interests. It was noticeable that none of the converted employers experimented with shared ownership or industrial democracy of a radical kind – they retained control of their own firms. In short the Group showed in the 1930s that there were limited ways in which converted individuals could aid reconciliation in social disputes or make enlightened experiments in industry, without adopting a 'divisive' political programme that would inevitably lead to conflict.

It was in this area that the Group came to specialize in the 1940s and 50s. The 1930s social results had been largely unforeseen by-products of a conversionism that stressed ethical action and sacrifice of personal pride and possessions. In theory it was a short step from this situation to the intentional generation of such social results. To the Group there were good reasons for trying to take this step. First, if, as it believed, the main social disputes of the day depended on Group principles for their resolution, the Group had a duty to step in and help. Secondly any success in this line would be a powerful argument in solid secular terms for the Group's message: the equivalent, for the state, of Bill 'Pickle's' conversion for Penn State College. If Bill's 'change' had led to that of the Dean, the resolution of a major conflict might lead to the conversion of a nation's leaders and businessman.

In practice however there were considerable difficulties involved. The tactic of deliberately affecting an industrial or other social conflict situation demanded more professional skill in some ways than did the Group's house party tactics of the 1920s and 30s. To bring harmony in an industrial conflict might involve converting Marxist union militants or hard bitten employers – people who had not, and probably never would, choose to go near a revival meeting. The latter had also been true of student atheists, but they were far removed from the political toughness of industry.

The application of such tactics therefore required a new sort of evangelical training. The American recruits to full-time work of the 1920s – such as Day, Shoemaker, Purdy, Twitchell, Stearly, Cleve Hicks – had been trained in a college milieu and in evangelical phraseology. It was not therefore surprising that it was mainly from the later, British recruits of the early 1930s that there emerged the pioneers of the Group's

evangelism to union militants, employers in large industries and cabinet ministers. These younger full-time workers had also been trained in college, but during the time of the rising revival euphoria. They had quickly become accustomed to campaigns that were expected to influence nations. They had participated in them on college vacations – both in working class campaigns in London in 1933-34 and in meeting national leaders on the Canadian and Northern European campaigns. Attempts to 'change' the 'most difficult person in college' – sometimes successful – had quickly become augmented by adventures like Garth Lean's in Hackney in 1934, when he had converted the 'Tin Ring Tattlers' gang leader, or George Wood's in Canada in 1932, when as a teenager he had made a deep personal impression on Bennett, the Prime Minister.

Full-time workers were urgently required in the mid-1930s. New campaigns had to be staffed, the work in whole new areas and countries to be maintained. The scale of activities required professional management of the Group's travel, publicity, finances and publications. There were not enough veterans from the 1920s to fill these demands. To a large extent it was the young British recruits who did so. Immediately on graduating they could find themselves with responsibility for a major geographical or professional area of the Group's work. For Lean and Holme from 1934 this responsibility was to be 'the world's press'. It soon involved them in converting not just young reporters but senior and well-known journalists, from Denmark to New York, as well as learning to write and publish for the Group themselves.[567] For Yates, it was education; for Guise, sportsmen; for Prescott, businessmen and rotary clubs; for Sciortino, youth; for Caulfield, education and later France; for Francis Goulding, Persia and the Middle East and, with his brother Edward, Yorkshire. Some, such as Jaeger, Addison, Gain, Cook and Weight, specialised in working class areas and trade unions.[568]

It was particularly this industrial 'team' who pioneered the Group's new tactics of influencing actual conflict situations. Their success in this was based on two developments. The first started with the conversion in the later 1930s of a few labour militants – Tod Sloan, Will Locke, Bill Rowell and George Light in particular. Gradually the Group's labour 'team', including these men and students from working class backgrounds, like Addison and Jaeger, worked out how to present their message in Marxist or socialist terms to win more such men: 'change' they described as 'revolutionary', resistance to it 'reactionary', its result being the 'classless society'. The latter was starting in embryo already, they argued, as aristocrats like Lady Antrim participated in the Group's work in harmony with men like Tod Sloan. Employers like Farrar Vickers, who had made their family firms models of co-operation were held up as examples that capitalists could become unselfish... and Stalin was quoted to the effect that if such a thing were possible, class war would be unnecessary. Trade unionists were criticised as being reactionary in their inability to 'change' their own motives – 'replace one batch of greedy men by another batch of greedy men was no answer', Jaeger told Tracy Doll, President of the Detroit CIO in 1942 adding, he reported to Buchman, 'that we couldn't just go on fighting for a nickel here and a nickel there. We need to fight for a new world...'

They made out MRA to be more radical, more dynamic and demanding than class war; and they did so in a hard-hitting but also a humorous manner. Jaeger wrote of the

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[567] See Lean 1974

[568] Archives Document C 203

conversation with Doll, 'It was a ding dong battle which he seemed to really enjoy'. It ended with Doll being intrigued enough to want to come to an MRA conference nearby.[569] Some leading trade unionists were converted.

The second base of the labour team's success was their systematisation of their work. Loudon Hamilton described learning on Billy Sunday's campaigns in the early 1920s how to contact the leaders of all the various aspects of a town's life in preparing a series of meetings.[570] Buchman had also become a thorough professional at such methods on college and revival campaigns. The Group's campaigns of the 1930s reflected this thoroughness. It was however taken to new levels of application by Jaeger and his team in East London in the late 1930s. 'Lists spell commitment', Jaeger was given to saying at this time – lists of all the councillors, trade unionists, ministers, and so on in an area.[571] These were used for a systematic process of visiting such men at work, while at the same time women on the team visited their wives at home. Bill Jaeger's mother, Annie Jaeger, was highly effective at the latter. Often lacking the money for the bus fare she would 'go on the knocker' in East London, walking miles to visit some person who was 'key' to the work or else was simply in need. From her published memories and her daughter-in-law's biographical additions to them she appears as one of the Group's most warm-hearted, humble, unaffected and yet forceful evangelists.[572]

The Jaegers and their team, by then including three young Clydeside shipyard workers – Corcoran, Ramsay and Gillespie – continued their work from 1939 in America. Here Jaeger's systematization had a field day: they attempted to reach the leading trade unionists of the United States. By June 1943, Jaeger could write to Buchman:

> We now have something like 1,500 labor [*sic* – American spelling] allies in the country and are welcome in all their homes and have stayed in or had meals in a good many.[573]

A month later he wrote of their plans to 'train 50 to 100 of our labor men across the country'. He hoped within a year or so to have a 'united force with an adequate Christian philosophy' which could 'change the course of labor in this nation'. In September he was able to report that 86 'labor leaders and their wives' had been at the Group's conference centre at Mackinac Island, Mich., during the summer. He wrote:

> For our labor work in America our strategy has taken us to the point where we are within grasp of changing the ten or twenty top labor men in the nation who can alter the course of history and whom the millions will follow.

He then named 11 of them.[574] In December the industrial team were at work in Philadelphia. Some 'covered the union men' of particular factories while others – including American veterans of the 20s such as Ray Purdy and Garrett Stearly – visited the management. The two groups met together daily to plan.[575] By January 1944 the number of 'labor allies' had risen to 2,000, 'whom we know personally and keep informed of the progress of the work'. The 'team' attended the AFL, CIO and

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[569] Jaeger to Buchman from Dearborn, Michigan, July 21 1942
[570] Loudon Hamilton interview 1975
[571] Memory of KD Belden, in 1975 interview
[572] Annie Jaeger 1968
[573] Jaeger to Buchman June 2 1943 from Detroit.
[574] Ibid Sept 16 1943
[575] Ibid Dec 9 1943

other conventions. But the top union men were not 'developing' adequately: 'The left forces' Jaeger wrote 'have gained both in the national unions and the state CIO councils'. 1944, he felt, would be a year to 'develop more our work among the administrators', meaning apparently the Government and Congressmen; some such as Senator Truman and Congressman Wadsworth, whose support they already had, he felt could develop 'under the guidance of God' to the point where they could 'help create the right kind of peace'.[576] Meanwhile the labour work continued. Articles on the Group's work and message were sent out weekly to 260 papers. It was not known how often they were printed, but 'from the papers we have actually seen, we know that last year over 700 articles were published in the labor papers of 130 cities in 30 different states. These papers have a combined circulation of 5½ million'.[577]

The Group had thus come to resemble in some respects the 'organisational weapon' of Selznick's description of the US Communist Party.[578] Operating behind the scenes, putting personal pressure on key individuals, staffed by a small group who were disproportionately influential by virtue of their extreme level of commitment, the Group was becoming an unexpected rival using similar unconstitutional roads to influence, to the CP. Not surprisingly it was at this time that the Group first drew public criticism from Communist sources.

4) Results after 1939

The Group's evangelism was in some respects more suited to the war and post-war conditions than it was to those of the pre-war years. The task of affecting the international crisis before the outbreak of war was too vast for the Group to make any convincing contribution by its evangelism. The attempts to reach the Nazi leaders, to surround Germany with 'national awakenings' and in the MRA campaign of 1938-39 to rally the leadership of Britain and America behind general statements on the Christian basis necessary for peace were inevitably ineffectual – they were dealing with far larger political forces than an evangelical group could influence. During and after the war however the major issues of national affairs in some cases were focussed on relatively small-scale local situations which the Group could affect. In particular the war effort and post-war reconstruction depended considerably on increasing production in, respectively, the armaments and mining industries. The Group quickly turned from its Battle for Peace campaign of 1938-39 to supporting the war effort. Jaeger and his team in America developed their industrial work to bring reconciliation in certain key armaments industries, before as well as after the United States entered the war. The first results by 1943 were enough to convince Senator Harry Truman, then Chairman of the Senate War Investigating Committee which had studied the home front situation, that:

> There is not a single industrial bottleneck I can think of which could not be broken in a matter of weeks if this crowd were given the green light to go full steam ahead.[579]

The premiere of the Group's play *The Forgotten Factor*, which dramatized the resolution of an industrial strike through personal change in management and union

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[576] Ibid Jan 4 1944 from Philadelphia
[577] Ibid Jan 22 1944 from Philadelphia
[578] Selznick 1960
[579] Statement of 19 Nov. 1943, published in full in Buchman 1961 pp 361-2

leaders, was sponsored by Truman, Congressman JW Wadsworth, General John T Pershing (C-in-C of the American forces in Europe in 1917-18), Admiral Leahy (Roosevelt's Chief of Staff), the leaders of the rival labor federations (William Green of the AFL and Philip Murray of the CIO) and HS Coonley, former President of the National Association of Manufacturers.

In Britain the Group's tactics at the start of the war were intended, like the 1930s campaigns, to have a general influence. The 1938 MRA campaign had involved securing the support of national figures such as former Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin for general statements of Christian philosophy, and the signatures of 75,000 people for a message of support to the MRA campaign in America: it was as if the Group was trying to focus the Christian commitment of the country as a whole on the need to 'listen to God' in a time of crisis. This sort of approach worked more effectively in the war, when there were simple, concrete tasks that every individual could do to help neighbourhood, and thereby national, morale. The Group produced a list of such contributions that individuals could make – including 'listening to God' – and presented it as an expression of the nation's Christian philosophy appropriate to the country's need. The Group's national network of local groups, and of contacts with civic leaders, which had been started during 1936-37, were used to distribute the 'morale leaflet'. Some 250 'civic and other authorities' co-operated in the campaign. Systematic coverage was made of particular areas – such as the Battersea campaign of January to June 1940. Led by two vicars in the Group, sponsored by the Mayor and MP and staffed by the Group's full- and part-time London 'teams', the campaign included the visiting of 10,000 homes, many of them several times, and a Town Hall meeting for 1,000. By February 1941 people trained on this campaign had started similar undertakings in thirteen areas in or near London.[580] Local groups outside London helped evacuation measures run smoothly, and one of the Group's full-time workers produced a film of a successful evacuation run on Group principles.

After the war the now skilful industrial team concentrated first on the British mining industry, in response to the Labour Government's appeal for coal. Like the war effort, this was an issue that suited the Group. Few people, only the extreme left, could disagree with the need for increased production. There was scope, where issues of personality disrupted smooth industrial relations, for the Group's conversionism to be applied and to produce results. Such results were perhaps more obvious to some of the participants than to others. But impressive testimonies were given to the Group's influence by trade unionists in the pits as well as by management, while serious criticism from the left, and from churchmen involved in industry who were to the left of the Group, also testified to its impact.

The most impressive post-war results of the Group's new tactics, of applying evangelism directly to particular social conflicts, were secured in France and Germany. In the Group's Ruhr campaign leading Communist Party members of long-standing – such as Max Bladeck and Paul Kurowski – were converted, first to the Group's general philosophy of changing men as the key to social co-operation, and in time to specifically Christian belief. The whole Ruhr CP had to be re-organised, while it lost ground dramatically in its representation on Works Councils. The Group also concentrated on attempts to bring reconciliation between the defeated Axis powers, Germany and Japan, and their neighbours. Permission was secured from the Allied occupation administrations of Germany and Japan for groups of leading citizens to

[580] A4 Archives document

attend MRA conferences in Switzerland. Adenauer, the first Chancellor of West Germany, and Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, both later thanked the Group for its contribution to Franco-German relations, and decorated Buchman for it.[581]

In the 1950s the Group's geographical expansion into the Afro-Asian-Latin American continents was carried out entirely with the new emphasis on the role of life-changing in settling disputes. This was the same sort of emphasis with which Mott and Eddy had presented evangelism to Asian audiences in 1912-18. It was again effective at least in gaining public endorsement from a large number of pro-Western leaders, from Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi to the Shah of Iran, Chiang Kai-shek to Brazil's General Bethlem.

The details of the Group's claims to influence in industrial and international disputes pass beyond the scope of this work. The shift in the Group's conception of its task to the point where it became involved in such disputes is much more central to this thesis. However, even without presenting detailed and necessarily lengthy case histories here, it is possible to comment on the plausibility of the Group's claims in general.

The Group's claims to influence can be broadly divided into two types:

1) The large scale evangelistic campaign, centred on mass meetings before the war and on theatrical productions after it, which it could be claimed had an effect on public opinion – in raising war morale, cooling the passions of class war or of bitterness generated by the 1939-45 war.
2) The personalised intervention in industrial or political conflict situations, developed from the late 1930s and perfected in the post-war years, which it was claimed was effective in producing co-operation between previous opponents.

The former claims are the hardest to evaluate because they are the most nebulous. It may well be true, for instance, that the tour of Irene Laure through West Germany after the war and her speeches to the regional parliaments in particular had a real effect in promoting pro-French feeling in Germany. Madame Laure was a well-known French socialist and a member of the Marseilles resistance.[582] She had hated Germany intensely until her conversion at Caux had led her to forgive for the sake of rebuilding European unity. She had a dramatic story and was a compelling speaker. She and other MRA speakers could have had an effect on German public opinion.[583]

As to the second type of claim, the role of Jean Monnet in bringing European politicians together by personal influence indicates that there was scope for the latter in creating both the institutions and the good will necessary for European co-operation post-war.[584] The MRA conferences and interventions could have contributed to this, as they probably also did later in helping personal relations between political opponents in Morocco, Tunisia, Cyprus, Nigeria and several other

[581] See Mottu 1970 pp 111-122, and Howard 1961 pp 60-65
[582] Addition in 2017: Andrew Stallybrass, a passionate historian of the movement, tells me the story about the Gestapo torturing Mme Laure's son, which I often heard told in my youth in MRA, is almost certainly false. 2018 he writes: "I think I've tracked down the birth of the legend. She didn't say it, but one of the Germans she met did, Peter Petersen, later an influential MP, who did a lot for reconciliation with Israel."
[583] E.g. see Mottu 1970 pp112-3, and Mowat 1973 p 53
[584] footnote number in text but no reference given.

countries in the 1950s. In many political or industrial negotiations even elected leaders have a certain degree of freedom in the way they present the issues to the public; success may depend to some degree also on the ability of negotiators to trust each other, and mistrust can be based on long held personal bitterness. Within these limits there is no doubt scope for a persuasive message of reconciliation based on a skilful personal evangelism.

The Group's influence on individual union or management leaders often started by their ability to make contact in a friendly manner, and to help with personal problems in the man's family. John Caulfeild, the Group worker with particular responsibility for France, for instance, was able to secure an invitation for lunch with a leading French textile employer, Robert Carmichael, and his family soon after the war had ended. Caulfeild, an officer still in uniform, was an interesting guest in his own right. Eventually he drew the conversation round to the topic of guidance and persuaded the family to try a period of silence together there and then. This had the startling effect of leading one of Carmichael's daughters to share her dissatisfaction with the family. This in turn proved to have an impact on her father that eventually drew him into investigating the movement. He became one of its leading exponents in French industry.[585] This sort of story was repeated many times in the Group's accounts of its influence in industrial or political deadlocks. It was apparently able to affect individual negotiators' attitudes by first affecting some of their basic attitudes towards other people arising from the experiences of their 'private' lives.

Finally the Group's influence appeared dramatic or important on many occasions because its converts already had powerful reasons for wanting 'something like' the Group's philosophy. This was particularly true of the Group's dramatic conversions of Communists after the war. The statements of the converted Communists show that they were already disillusioned with the Party: a recurring theme was their fear that class war allied to the Cold War could in the nuclear age end in the ultimate destruction of a Third World War; weariness with war, conflict, and party discipline, seem to have been important also. MRA's presentation of itself as more dynamic and revolutionary than Communism, its accent on co-operation and its emphasis that management could 'change', made it an acceptable radical alternative to the CP. As a 'third way' between Communism and capitalism the Group was able to gain interest also from leaders of the so-called 'Third World' as well.

[585] Carmichael also became one of the relatively few employers to interpret MRA principles as requiring practical efforts towards major structural economic reform: he became a leading campaigner for an international commodity agreement to stabilize the world price of jute, out of his concern for the problems of India and Pakistan. His prolonged efforts were eventually successful. See Mottu 1970 pp 142-145

Chapter XII: Secularised Image and Relations with the Churches

Drummond's maxim 'To avoid the Didactic and practise the Attractive' held different implications in the world of mid-twentieth century industry or of the anti-colonialist 'Third World' than it had in college circles of the 1890s. Drummond could 'avoid the didactic' without avoiding evangelical Christian terminology altogether. In appealing to non-Christians the Oxford Group found it advisable to drop evangelical terminology as far as possible: too much talk of Christ himself had become off-putting and 'didactic' from the point of view of Western Marxists or non-Christian Asians. As a result of this the Group laid itself open to the charge of leaving Christian belief, and indeed even religion as a whole, out of its message in its MRA phase.

The Altered Presentation of the Message

The difference between Buchman's evangelism in the 1920s and 30s, and the developed methods of MRA, can be seen by comparing the movement's earliest and most recent 'manuals' on 'life-changing'. The earliest, and the only major one produced until 1954, was Howard Walter's *Soul Surgery*, written in India shortly before his death in 1918, published there in 1919 and republished in Oxford for the use of the Group in the 1930s and afterwards. In 1954, presumably because *Soul Surgery* was thought to be too old-fashioned, a new manual was written by Peter Howard and Paul Campbell, called *Remaking Men*. The most recent thorough manual, a rewritten version of the 1954 book, was Campbell's *The Art of Remaking Men* of 1970. Like *Soul Surgery* it was published in India. But there are striking differences between the two. *Soul Surgery* was evidently a product of Christian missions: its author was a YMCA missionary in Lahore; it first appeared as a series of articles in the missionary periodical *The Indian Witness* and it bore a foreword by 'HAP', presumably HA Popley, an LMS missionary and the co-ordinator of the Forward Evangelistic Campaign with which Buchman had worked in India. *The Art of Remaking Men* was also written by a North American – a Canadian medical doctor and full-time worker with MRA and a Christian. But it was published by RM Lala, editor of MRA's news weekly *Himmat*, a leader of MRA in India and a Parsee, by religion; it had a foreword by MRA's best known figure in India, Rajmohan Gandhi, a Hindu.[586]

Soul Surgery was a discussion of the most effective method of propagating Christianity, addressed to a Christian audience. Its stock vocabulary for describing the experience, methods and campaign it advocated was evangelical: 'personal evangelism'; 'conversion'; 'the forces of the Christian Church'; 'bearing personal witness to what Christ had done for them'; 'prayer and Bible study'; 'sin'; 'we of Christ's army'; 'backsliders'; 'the onslaught of temptation'; 'the mysterious 'leadings' of God's Spirit'; 'the healing power of Christ'; and 'salvation' were its natural terminology. In addition Walter used some more modern borrowings from medicine and psychiatry, such as the surgery metaphor; 'spiritual clinic'; 'sex life'; and the 'formation of a new ego'. There were frequent quotations from Christian preachers, from Smith's *Life of Drummond*, and from the New Testament. These included a quotation on the value of getting Muslims to read the Bible as a first step

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[586] Walter 1940 (1919). On Popley see articles in '*Harvest Field*' 1915-19, and Popley 1914, 1915 and 1917. Campbell 1970.

on the road to conversion, and another from Buchman on the 'only three essential factors' in 'life-changing', namely 'Sin, Jesus Christ, and (the result) a Miracle'.[587]

The Art of Remaking Men on the other hand was addressed to 'everyone everywhere' on the problem of 'how to make men unselfish enough to make society work'. It talked of 'changing' not 'conversion'; the essentials of which were firstly to 'measure your life by absolute moral standards', secondly to accept the authority of 'God's guidance' and thirdly to go 'all out' to change the world. 'Changed' people became 'revolutionaries' not 'evangelists'. The effect on society of personal immorality, and the need therefore to make a conscious decision to change, featured strongly. There was much mention of God, and His ability to direct and empower those who are committed to Him, but little mention of Christ. Christ was in fact referred to by name on only six of the book's 106 pages, the first time being on page 52, while 'the Cross' was mentioned on a further two pages. A hymn on the Cross was introduced in terms of being a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi's, who was of course not a Christian – such an introduction thus legitimating the inclusion of the hymn to Indian Hindus and other non-Christians. This was typical: commitment to God was central in the book, but commitment to Christ or Christianity appeared optional. Some terms such as 'temptation' and 'sin' remained.

Walter and Campbell's descriptions of Frank Buchman were notably different. Walter described Buchman's involvement in evangelical circles, such as his YMCA and missionary connections and his work with Billy Sunday and Sherwood Eddy, and his Lutheran ministry. In the three chapters which Campbell devoted mainly to Buchman he referred to his Lutheran Inner Mission work (1902-1908) as if it were secular social work; to his Hartford Seminary post as resident evangelist merely as a 'salaried position... at a college'; and to his Asian visits without reference to missions or Christianity. Buchman was described as a Christian, but nowhere as a minister. Connections with evangelists like Sunday were not mentioned. Buchman's work at Penn State was described in his own words in a talk he gave in 1948. In this Buchman himself started with a secular description of his work: he said he was asked to go to Penn State by a senior political figure to settle the differences between the faculty and the students who were on a strike, comparable, he added, to contemporary student strikes (i.e. presumably political). In the original 1948 version Buchman however later revealed the traditional evangelical nature of his work in describing how a visiting Bishop preaching at the college demonstrated to him the value of asking the students to stand up during his address as evidence of a 'decision for Christ'. This whole paragraph was left out in Campbell's version, without acknowledgement of the excision. Indeed many unacknowledged cuts were made in Campbell's version, although it was presented as the actual talk given by Buchman in 1948. Most of these cuts were of culture-bound Americanisms and of references to the primarily religious nature of Buchman's work, even including such sentences as 'My job was to turn this university Godwards'. In one crucial sentence which encapsulated Buchman's critique of secular social work, that an idealist 'was trying to solve the whole problem of social service without Christ', Campbell coolly replaced the word 'Christ' with 'change'. Other cuts included Buchman's reference to the YMCA and two paragraphs addressed to churchgoers, though references to the inadequacy of the churches remained.[588] None of these cuts were acknowledged.

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[587] Walter 1940 (1919) pp 76 and 86.

[588] Comparing Campbell 1970 Chapter XIII with Buchman 1961 Supplement II in particular pp 331,

Rewriting of the Movement's History

Such re-writing of history was common in Oxford Group literature. The secularisation of the Group's self-presentation or in other words its public disassociation from its connections with evangelical or any kind of organised Christianity, can be traced decade by decade in the altered accounts of Buchman's early life in the Group's publications.

In the 1920s, for instance in Roots' pamphlet of 1928 as in *Soul Surgery*, full accounts of Buchman's life before 1920 were given. The same was largely true of books published in the 1930s about the Group by sympathisers in the churches or by members of the Group who were already established churchmen.[589] These typically included the fact that Buchman was engaged in Christian work at Penn State at Mott's invitation, but omitted actual mention of the YMCA.[590] They also stressed Buchman's work in the 1920s in Oxford, but neglected his greater involvement in US colleges. Both of these alterations or emphases must have been conscious, and both were politic – the Oxford connection had good propaganda value in Britain where these books were written, while the YMCA by now had an unfortunate image of welfare services rather than 'world conquering' evangelism.

This tendency was much more marked in accounts of the movement's origins written in the 1930s by its young full-time workers. Holme's pamphlet of 1934 was an equivalent to Roots' pamphlet of 1928, as a description of the movement's growth and principles by one of its young university educated enthusiasts. Roots, an American, had stressed the growth of the movement simultaneously in England, continental Europe and America, taking his illustrations mainly from America; but Holme, an Oxford graduate, fostered the Oxford legend by omitting the work in America and asserting erroneously that the movement 'has centred in' Oxford since 1921. Unlike Roots, Holme did not give a full account of Buchman's early connections, omitting to mention that Buchman was a Lutheran minister[591], or that his 'experience at Keswick in 1908' was connected with the Convention; that he had been involved with the YMCA or other evangelical circles, or that his 'work in China' was in a missionary context. This pattern was copied in the Group's main publication of 1936, with the difference that Buchman's 1908 experience took place in 'a lakeland village in England', thus effacing all connection with the evangelical Keswick Convention. Both this and Holme's pamphlet, however, asserted the centrality of Christ and the Cross in Buchman's and the Group's life.[592]

In the later 1930s and the war years the Group's publications were campaigning pamphlets, not given to recalling the movement's history. In 1947 an official account of the Group's principles and growth by Rev JP Thornton-Duesbery was published by the Group in London.[593] This again omitted mention of Keswick or the YMCA, but gave a much fairer picture of Buchman's early life, consistent with Rev Thornton-

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334, 340 and 342.

[589] *Layman* 1933, Murray 1935, Allen in Crossman 1934, and Rowlands undated (1930s). Also Russell – a writer on religious topics – 1932.

[590] Op cit: Murray p 308, Allen p 11, Russell p 189. *Layman* left out Penn State

[591] Instead of 'Reverend', Holme called Buchman 'Dr', an honorary title conferred by his alma mater in 1926. As a title it carried greater respect in secular circles. Henceforth it was the title normally used in the movement for Buchman.

[592] Roots 1928 p 12, Holme 1934 p 9, OG 1936 (i) p 4

[593] Thornton-Duesbery 1947 p17

Duesbery's own evangelism and academic standards. In the same year an edition of Buchman's speeches was published, with an introduction by Rev Alan Thornhill who, unlike Thornton-Duesbery, had left the academic life for full-time work with the Group. He not only left out the Keswick episode and the YMCA but also, unlike Thornton-Duesbery, he omitted to mention Buchman's ordained status, the connection of his hospice with the Lutheran Church, his evangelical and revivalist connections and his Hartford seminary post. Nonetheless Buchman's work at Penn State was described as a post in 'Christian work' and the centrality of Christ to his life was made clear. From Buchman's speeches some further details could be gleaned about his early evangelical connections, but these were by no means clear in any of the editions of the speeches which were the movement's main text-books from the 1940s.

In the 1950s and 60s accounts by MRA leaders of their movement's origins varied according to the audience addressed. For example in later editions of Buchman's speeches the phrase in Thornhill's introduction about 'Christian work' at Penn State was amended to 'religious work' – presumably for the sake of the Group's growing Asian readership. In an article written solely for Asian readers, in a Pakistani magazine in 1953, which he appeared to base on this introduction, Thornhill left out the 'religious' epithet altogether – Buchman was merely on 'the staff' there. There was no mention, scarcely even an implication, of Christianity in this portrait, though the 'guidance of God' appeared in it. Thornhill added the point that an ancestor of Buchman's had first translated the *Quran* into Latin.[594]

A similar presentation of MRA in an Indian paper led to the Anglican 'Working Party's' published doubts about the Group's Christian character. Even in a booklet of 1954 designed to counteract this imputation, however, crucial facts about the Group's origins were left out. In this relatively full treatment of them one finds Buchman's ordination and hospice work, but without reference to the Lutheran Church; Keswick, but not the Convention; 'Christian work' again at Penn State but not the YMCA; the Hartford lectureship, but not that it was in personal evangelism; 'Christian work' in the Far East, but not YMCA, missions or Sherwood Eddy.[595]

Peter Howard's writings on Buchman were equally or more mis-informative about his early Lutheran, evangelical and revivalist connections.[596] So also was *Frank Buchman 80* by 'His Friends', a collection of tributes and reminiscences of 1958.[597]

Dr Frank N.D. Buchman, An Eightieth Birthday Tribute by 'some long-time friends and fellow workers' recorded by John Roots, who had written the pamphlet of 1928 mentioned above, introduced a new myth.[598] This was that by his associations with Gandhi, Sun Yat-sen and Viscount Shibusawa in the 1914-18 War Buchman had been able 'to introduce his philosophy into the heart of the Orient well in advance of the Comintern'. This was to discount entirely the fact that it was the philosophy and work of Mott, Eddy and other YMCA leaders that Buchman was helping to propagate; it

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[594] *Illustrated Weekly* of Pakistan. MRA Special Number, Vol V June 1953
[595] Oxford Group 1954 March pp 1-4
[596] See Howard 1946 (*That Man Frank Buchman*). 1951 (*The World Rebuilt*, subtitled 'The true story of Frank Buchman and the men and women of Moral Re-Armament') and 1961 (*Frank Buchman's Secret*).
[597] Buchman 1958. e.g. see pages 35, 39
[598] Roots 1958 p 26

implied that Buchman himself originated the concept of a Christian 'strategy' to 'win' nations in Asia.

The most secularised account of the movement's origins produced for Western consumption was written by Morris Martin, for 23 years Buchman's personal secretary, in a book mainly for young Americans, published in Los Angeles in 1965.[599] This was similar in tone to Thornhill's article of 1953 in Pakistan, except that Buchman's American, rather than Quranic, connections were stressed.

Finally, one fact has never been mentioned in any Group publication – the involvement of Buchman and his group with the fundamentalist International Union Mission in the mid-1920s. In about 1926 Buchman was Vice-President, Shoemaker was 'Sec. Vice-President' and Day was Treasurer, Shoemaker and Day also being on the Board of (five) Directors of this organisation. One of its earlier pamphlets showed Buchman as 'Sec. Vice-President' and Day and Hamilton on the Executive Committee. The 5 principles of this 'strictly evangelical and interdenominational' missionary society included 'The Recognition of the whole Bible as God's inspired Word…' and 'The Second Personal Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ…', its object being to preach the Gospel, 'bringing the heathen to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, both through missionaries and native helpers…' – in short an old fashioned evangelical missionary society. Buchman's methods and experientialism were far from Fundamentalism and from a 'heathen natives' terminology. The IUM was, however, a useful source of funds, paying for his 1924-26 world tour and providing other finance and a New York office. He was soon to disassociate himself from the IUM as other sources of finance and headquarters became available.

Apart from *Soul Surgery*'s reference to it, Buchman's association with Billy Sunday has also not been mentioned in Group literature, although Buchman and his 'team' were helping on a Sunday campaign as late as 1924.

Conclusion – Reasons for this Disassociation

In summary, there was a trend in Group literature towards the omission of evidence of the specific historical connections between Frank Buchman and Christian organisations and traditions in the period before the Group's fully independent organisation in the late 1920s. This trend started in the 1930s and was most marked from then onwards in the writings of full-time workers. The process was most fully developed in literature designed for non-Christian readers, either Asians from the 1950s onwards or secularised young Americans of the mid-1960s.

This gradual re-writing of history, making Buchman's early life appear either secular or merely vaguely Christian, went along with a gradual change in the presentation of the movement as a whole. The object of this was to emphasise the universality of Buchman's message, in the end not merely for all Christians as in the 1930s, or for all religions as in the 1950s, but for all well-meaning people. The Group's self-presentation was only secularised, however, in leaving out localising references that tied the Group to particular Christian organisations, or, later, to the Christian religion. It was not secularised in the sense of leaving out all reference to the supernatural. The power of God to guide, strengthen and change individuals was as central to Campbell's manual of 1970 as it had been to Walter's of 1919, though largely shorn of its Christian connections and theology. Shoemaker had written in the 1920s that the

[599] Roots 1965, chapter 4 by Martin

Group did not care what Christian denomination a person belonged to, so long as he believed in guidance, conversion and the duty of everyone to be a 'life-changer'. MRA in the 1950s to 70s continued to make these demands, but extended its tolerance of the 'changed' person's theology or church affiliation to include people of non-Christian religions. This tolerance was shown in public. But the Group had not in private lost Drummond's confidence that the 'Holy Spirit' would instruct the 'surrendered' and the 'guided' in the Christian faith. Roots wrote in 1958 that: 'Though spiritual faith is its driving force, it (MRA) is manifestly not a "religion", since its aim is to induce all men to practise the religion they profess –' … And yet he added '... without prejudice, of course, to any further truth into which they may subsequently be led'. He went on to write that MRA had been called 'an ideology of the Holy Spirit – that little-understood but potent force which, Christians are taught, may be expected to guide mankind into all truth'.[600]

Relations with the Churches

The essence of the Group's approach to the Churches was summed up by BH Streeter in 1937:

> The Oxford Group is recalling the Churches to their proper task of saving the souls of nations as well as individuals; it competes with no Christian denomination though it aspires to revivify all.[601]

In the 1920s and early 30s Buchman often described the Group as a movement for personal evangelism within the churches, and claimed that it had no organisation apart from them. This sort of statement went out of fashion in the movement in the 1940s and afterwards. The Group then gave the impression that it had to some extent given up the effort to get the churches, particularly perhaps the British churches, to 'save the nation' – instead it was attempting to 'save the nation' directly itself.

The high point of the churches' interest in the Group was in the early 1930s when it appeared to many that the Group might be the revival that individual congregations and the churches as a whole needed. A thousand ministers at one Oxford house party marked the high tide of this interest, in 1933. Thereafter interest gradually slackened. Buchman had put great value on reaching the British clergy. Despite notable exceptions and a considerable continuing 'team' among the parish clergy – over 100 clergy met for instance at a Group three-day conference in 1943[602] – the response was far from what the Group had desired.

There were various reasons for this. Most important was the fact that despite Buchman's reiterated assertion that the Group 'enhanced all primary loyalties', in practice there was often a conflict of allegiances between Church and Group. Stories circulated of Group converts returning to their churches, only to attempt to run them entirely on Group lines; Group ministers might swell their congregations with Group converts, at the expense of failing to maintain a catholic policy that could include non-Group adherents. Far from universally bringing reconciliation, the Group, at least

[600] Roots 1958 p 21

[601] ibid p 7

[602] 124 clergy accepted invitations to the 1943 April meeting at the Group's London headquarters. A list of these gave the church affiliations of 94 of them: C of E 62; Congregationalist 10; Methodist 10; Baptist 5; 'Welsh' 3; Presbyterian 1; Salvation Army 1; Society of St Francis 1; 'Norway' 1. There was also a Mr Wilson of the Four-Square Gospel Church.

on some occasions, caused as much disruption and ill-feeling in parish life as Buchman had once caused in college faculties. Bishops in the early 1930s, mindful of the Wesleyan precedent, tended to welcome the Group and at the same time to warn of the danger of loyalty to the Group overriding loyalty to the Church.[603] The growth of the Group's organisation was itself a cause of concern to churchmen and may have contributed to Shoemaker's and Bardsley's disillusion with it in the early 1940s.[604] Episcopal disapproval of the Group's apparent tendency towards sectarianism, in the sense of its growing organisation, may have put pressure on those, such perhaps as Shoemaker and Bardsley, who saw their future within the framework of the established church, to end their relationship with the Group.

The Group's attitude to those of its leading members who 'defected' into ecclesiastical careers, namely that their individualism and ambition overrode their consciences, is too harsh. For those brought up in a Church tradition and closely identified with it, there was much that was lacking in the Group's outlook. As Archbishop Temple was reported to have said, the Group was a good place for a churchman to reside in temporarily. Its urgency, experientialism and revivalist outlook could help to teach a clergyman how to be a vital evangelist. But it lacked the appreciation of the slow working of church influence, of the inherent tragedy of or limitations on human nature, and of the need for tradition, that is valued in the established churches.

Many of the Group leaders had little patience with the churches' concern for ecclesiastical structure and the preservation of denominational distinctions. 'What we call the church isn't really the church', said Buchman privately in the early 1930s; 'Our old moulds will be broken at times like these'.[605] In 1936 he said, 'The Church Fathers will tell you that the Church is where the Holy Spirit is, and the Holy Spirit is

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[603] e.g letter of Bishop of Worcester (Dr Perowne) to Rev WHB Yerburgh, Rector of Bredon, Tewkesbury, printed in unnamed newspaper Dec 1st 1933: after attending an Oxford house party he was convinced there was 'far more good than evil' in it, that it reached sections of the population with whom the Church 'speaking broadly, has conspicuously failed' that its methods were 'eminently sane and reasonable'; but he was doubtful of its applicability to parish life, noted the danger of Group members 'paying a higher allegiance to "The Groups" than to the Church', and criticised the assumption of many 'Groupers' that 'theirs is the only method for producing the fullness of the Christian life'. He was anxious to do all in his power 'to recognise and foster the movement and harness its activities to the work of the Church in this diocese'. See also:

1. The Bishop of Croydon (who was confident that the Group was going to remain in the Church) *Church of England Newspaper* 22.12.1933.
2. Bishop of Gloucester (Dr Headlam), Presidential address to his Diocesan conference, probably 1933: he said that the Group was valuable, but that it neglected intellectual concerns and church association.
3. Bishop of Hereford, Diocesan Conference, 1933? He warned of the danger of the Church forcing the Group into forming a new sect; he urged the clergy to try and 'turn their [Group converts'] zeal into channels of Church work'.
4. Bishop of Oxford: Oxford *Diocesan Magazine* March 1932 Vol XXVIII pp 53-59: he noted the apparent incompatibility of the Group's prophetic outlook and the church's outlook and warned of the danger of sectarianism in the Group. See ibid Vol XXVIII 1933 pp 288-93 also.

[604] Cuthbert Bardsley, the present Bishop of Coventry, an Oxford graduate who worked full-time with the Group 1934-40, becoming one of its leading members in Britain. From a strong church tradition, son of a Canon, he took a parish post in Woolwich in the war and severed connection with the Group.

[605] MSS Biography Vol III p 74

certainly in the Groups'.[606] 'I wonder what the Church of the future will be' he asked in 1937, and replied 'I am convinced it is going to be above confession'.[607]

He greatly valued evangelical hymns and advised his 'team' in April 1937:

> I know all the difficulties that the Church makes for us but don't let us forget to get these deep things [hymns etc.] from the Church.[608]

But in general Buchman did not hold much reverence for the churches in their contemporary state.

Indeed he was capable of harsh criticisms of the churches, which seem to have grown stronger as he came to see the Group itself as the 'force' that was 'saving the nation'. To Shoemaker he wrote in 1934:

> Our work in America is still ecclesiastical and ecclesiastics are not going to change the world; for example the situation in the German Church.[609]

He was largely critical of the Danish Church people who gave his 1935 campaign a false start by having an 'old-fashioned' house party. He wrote to Bardsley of his Swedish contacts that they just wanted:

> a 'pick-me-up' for the Church... rather than the rebirth of everything in the Church in addition to making the Archbishops arch-revolutionaries. Men like these Archbishops and bishops and clergy are not willing to go through the pain of rebirth.[610]

The issue for Buchman was the churches' failure to join in an aggressive attempt to influence national policies – 'putting Jesus Christ in the midst of the modern world', as he put it. In 1937 he was describing the Church in private as 'defeated, papier-mâché', it 'seems to have moved into a desert, decadent, defeated'.[611] By 1940 he was saying of the US situation, 'The Church seems to be irrelevant and even to be the enemy of those who want to wake the nation up'.[612]

In the next year Shoemaker, one of Buchman's colleagues since the start and now a well-known Episcopal minister, asked Buchman to remove the Group's American headquarters from his New York church and announced his withdrawal from the Group. Buchman later commented that 'two forces' met in Shoemaker's parish church and 'it just didn't work'; the 'forces' were 'one group of people who try to preserve something' and the other who 'think of the Church in terms of a panzer division... The Church's job is to save the world'.[613]

It seems clear that although Buchman continued to court church leaders and clergy in the hope of 'converting' them, from the late 1930s or early 1940s he no longer made this a priority.[614] His work was no longer 'within the churches' but 'ahead of' them.

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[606] Ibid Vol IV p 42
[607] Ibid p 85
[608] Ibid p 74 to team at Brighton April 1937
[609] Ibid Vol III p 145. Buchman to Shoemaker March 28 1934
[610] Ibid Vol IV p 111. Buchman to Bardsley Feb 21 1937
[611] Ibid p 85 and p 95
[612] Ibid Vol V p 45
[613] MSS Biography Vol V p 77 'Panzer' was used in the sense of a swift and effective offensive, not in terms of Nazi ideology. 2018 Comment: though from a nonviolence perspective, or an anti-colonialist one, all these military and conquest metaphors and talk of God-guided dictators suggests affinities to totalitarianism.
[614] A similar view from another Group leader: Rev Alan Thornhill (C of E), full-time worker, speaking

The metaphors that appealed to the Group in this context were those that described it as the 'spearhead' of the churches, attacking secular or non-Christian strongholds which they could not touch, or as a 'net' gathering in the unchurched, introducing them to faith and letting them work out their own religious or denominational affiliation afterwards.

The Churches for their part continued to support the Group, by and large, when it was felt that the Group was being unfairly attacked or criticised. Considerable feeling was aroused, for instance, by the Ministry of Labour's decision not to class the Group's skeleton staff of 29 as full-time lay evangelists eligible to be reserved from military conscription in 1941. 2,500 clergy signed a petition appealing to reverse this judgement, while the Anglican Archbishops, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the President of the Methodist Conference, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union, and others, made representations. This was seen as an issue of the State's support or lack of it, for a Christian movement, rather than as a vote of confidence by these churchmen in the Group. But they certainly considered it Christian. In 1954 when the informal Anglican report on the Group questioned its Christian character, some hundreds of clergy, two or three bishops and various Free Church leaders supported the Group, although by this time the most senior Anglicans were not so sympathetic towards it.[615] Dr Townley Lord, ex-President of the Baptist Union, re-assured one MRA full-time worker:

> Don't you worry, my boy, there are only nine million in the Anglican Church. There are twenty million of us. We'll take care of you.[616]

Various churchmen also incorporated some of the Group's methods into their work – particularly its informality in evangelism and its use of small groups and 'house parties'. For instance, the Anglican Evangelical Group Movement, a group of liberal evangelicals in the Church of England, showed an interest in the Oxford Group in the early 30s.[617] At that time other 'Group Movements' came into existence, particularly the Methodist evangelical 'Cambridge Group' which began independently as an interdenominational 'truly sharing fellowship' practising 'evangelism by friendship', and had some contact with the Oxford Group.[618]

In 1933 some churchmen, Methodist and Anglican it seems, who had been impressed or 'vitalised' by the Oxford Group but alienated by its lack of doctrinal theology and of a social gospel and by the authoritarianism of its leaders, started a magazine to rally the like-minded and reform the Group. The magazine, called *Groups*, gradually

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at 'Oxford leaders training' meeting Dec 11-14 1936: 'Yet I belong to a church which, with all that [its respected position, property and large personnel], and much more important, with the power of Christ behind it, which has failed its country in its hour of need, and not said that prophetic word or given that prophetic direction for which we are all looking' during the abdication crisis. 'It is very busy, concerned with its own corner, in a little circle, letting the mainstream of the national life go unchecked and unled'. (MRA Archives).

[615] In Britain. There was more support from senior churchmen in other countries, especially Germany, Sweden, Denmark, India, Japan. See Mowat 1955.

[616] Dr Lord in conversation to KD Belden in 1954, reminiscence of KD Belden in personal conversation 7.10.1974.

[617] '"The Groups" in Parochial Life' 'not for publication' by the AEGM (inc) Church House, Westminster: an article on the value of the Cambridge and Oxford Groups' methods. Bishop Allen confirmed the AEGM's interest in the Group in personal interview 12.10.1974. As did an article in *The Record* Nov. 20 1931.

[618] See Bibliography *Cambridge Group Manuals* particularly No. 5 (Spivey 1937) and *A Group Speaks* (1931).

lost contact with the Oxford Group, which it presumably discovered was beyond its power to affect, and it also lost its early dynamism. It changed its name to *Discipleship* shortly before the cessation of its publication in 1935.[619] Other churchmen moved through the Group and on to other things which emphasised parish life, the sacraments, theology or church tradition more than the Group did; these included ministers like Howard Rose and Jack Winslow who remained close to the Group while no longer taking leading or active roles in it.

Conclusion

The height of the Group's and the churches' interest in each other was reached in the early 1930s. Thereafter relations grew gradually colder. The classic clash of impatient 'sectarian' enthusiasm against the ecclesiastical establishment did not however result in the emergence of the Group as a sect in the full sense of the term. This issue will be looked at in the next and final section of the thesis. Part of the reason for this was Buchman's determination to maintain the Group's ecumenical, eventually pan-religious, character, on the one hand, and the churches' forbearance in not openly rejecting the Group on the other.

The coolness of relations between the churches and the Group did not force the Group into the sectarian mould, but it did have the effect of cutting the Group off to a great extent from its natural recruiting base. The crowds at Group campaigns in the 1930s had largely been middle class church crowds, its leaders mainly young ministers or graduates either with some theological training or at least from traditional Christian homes. With the Group's disillusionment with the churches and specialisation in industrial and political evangelism, with the concomitant change of terminology and dropping of evangelical associations, there went an inevitable decrease in easy communication between the Group and average parish congregations and ministers. When the more evangelical ministers sought help in revitalising their church life in the post-war era they naturally turned to Billy Graham rather than the Oxford Group. Though the latter's Caux conferences and some of its meetings maintained numbers in the thousands, in no country could the Group have been dubbed a 'revival' in post-war years, as it had been in several countries before the war. Its methods were more sophisticated; it might be claimed that its work, if less extensive, was more intensive in applying 'life-changing' to problem situations in society. But the movement ran for 30-40 years largely on the leadership raised in the universities in the early 1930s. There was no comparable level of recruitment of young graduates or other able young people in the 1940s or 50s. The movement in the 1970s has an able but ageing leadership dating from the 1930s, an active group of young people in their 20s and 30s, but a much smaller number in their 40s and 50s. The reason for this was probably the Group's concentration in the 1940s and 50s on industrial and political evangelism and relative neglect of college evangelism. The almost carefree enthusiasm of the Group in the early 1930s emphasising above all personal change and experience of Christ, had been replaced by a more serious and mature pursuit of 'life-changing' as a means to resolve crisis situations. This in turn was connected to the Group's sense that it had left the 'church crowds' behind and was engaged on more serious tasks.

New recruits of the 1960s, brought in by the Group's efforts in India and in the industrialised countries to reach more young people, inevitably did not put the same

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[619] *Groups* edited by ABW Fletcher and Frank C Raynor at 51, Gower St., London WC1, monthly. June 1933 Vol 1 No. 1; continued to Vol 3 No.7. See also Raynor 1934; Elliott 1939 page 32.

primary emphasis on Christian belief as had their predecessors in the 1930s. They were brought in by the largely secularised appeal in its developed form. In India Christianity was obviously optional for new recruits to the Group at least in the sense of open avowal to Christian beliefs. For the movement's leaders there were mainly non-Christians in public, however much they read their New Testaments and Thomas a Kempis in private. In the United States the lack of a strong religious foundation for MRA's 'youth movement' in the mid-60s was probably a major factor in the departure of that movement from MRA's traditional outlook, and from association with MRA. The young people were interested in a level of general idealism, excitement, rock music and a challenge to change the world – an appeal so successful that it took on a life of its own before the second stage of integrating the new recruits into the deeper commitments and beliefs of the movement had been accomplished. In Britain, Christian instruction of new recruits (e.g. Bible study courses) has been perhaps more emphasised since the American disaster.

The extent of the secularisation of the Group's real message, as opposed to merely its presentation, is difficult to gauge. The movement's leaders in the West certainly believe that in no respect has their movement become secularised in its aims or content. They agree that their presentation is more secular. They point out that their task of sharing their faith with young people who start from a non-Christian or agnostic standpoint is a delicate one and not to be hurried. If there are more young people in MRA's ranks today, particularly in India, who are not fully believing Christians than there were in the Group in the 1930s that is not a cause of worry to MRA's leaders. They see all the movement's younger recruits as being on a path to eventual complete Christian belief and experience, even if this path is a longer one than that which the earlier recruits, fresh from a Christian education, travelled. The support of successive Metropolitans of the Anglican Church for India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon over forty years has been a source of encouragement to the Group in its Asian work.[620] Group leaders now also point with satisfaction to the fact that the established churches in their missionary work are coming round to similar methods to the Group's, that is to say respecting other people's religious background, living and working with them, and trusting that they will be drawn in their own time to Christianity.

Doubts however remain. Only the future will tell whether the Group's younger recruits are now on the road to full Christian belief and full support for the Christian Church in its widest meaning, or whether the Group's original lack of interest in denominational differences is being extended in its second and third generations to lack of interest in some of the specific beliefs of the Christian canon and in the sacraments and the Church.

By comparison with the founder of Buchman's Church [i.e. Martin Luther] or with the early Pietists, the Oxford Group was of course secularised in some respects. Buchman was not known, for instance, to have done anything equivalent to throwing an inkpot at the Devil. Though he believed no less, probably, than Luther did in the existence of the Devil, for Buchman the supernatural was less physically present in the natural order. God's intervention in nature was seen by the Group as being limited to a sort of divine telepathic contact with individuals, 'guiding' them and empowering them. Hell, and the appeasement of God's wrath, did not figure largely in their

[620] Foss Westcott in the 1930s and 40s; Arabinda Nath Mukerjee in the 1950s; Lakdasa de Mel in the 1960s and 70s. See, for instance, Arabinda Calcutta's statement in Mowat 1953 p 37.

thoughts. Their concern was more with the betterment of life on this earth according to God's will. This was in line with the erosion of 'superstitious fears' about hell and the concentration on this life encouraged in the 19th and 20th centuries by science, increased longevity of life, material progress and man's greater confidence in manipulating his social environment. The Group participated in this secular trend of secularisation.

But in the context of this trend, and despite the fading of their interest in some matters ecclesiastical and theological, the Group salvaged perhaps the most essential religious element, the felt experience of a relationship with the supernatural which affected the way they carried out every conscious action of their lives.

Part Four: Structure

Introduction (added in 2018)

The last three chapters investigated how Buchman's ambitious experientialist vision – of personal change leading to social and political change – led him to develop highly organized revivals and then campaigns and conferences aimed at changing leaders in industry and politics. In the process we have seen how he came to disparage and break free from the churches. In the 30s he had watched the German churches fail to counter the Nazi takeover of his ancestral country. From the 30s onward he saw the Western churches equally ineffective as Communists and others on the left made gains in Western industry and other spheres, and then of course take over Eastern Europe and China after the War, and challenge the West across the 'Third World'. He had wanted the churches to provide an alternative to the materialistic, totalitarian, ideologies of the day. But as he saw them fail to do so, he determined to fill that need himself, with his own worldwide 'team'.

The focus in those chapters was on intentions, ideas, and campaigns.

The focus in the remaining two chapters is on internal organization.

In the 1950s and 60s MRA people liked this jingle to describe their work:

> It's not an institution
> It's not a point of view
> It starts a revolution
> By starting one in you

Despite its attempts not to be an institution, it inevitably became one.

These chapters look at why and how the institution developed. Chapter XIII looks at the initial intentional gelling of Buchman's previously loose 'fellowship'. Chapter XIV looks at the organizational and cultic aspects of the movement as it matured.

Chapter XIII: Formation of the Group 1919-1926

a) Use of Existing Evangelical Networks

A new movement may well grow initially along the networks both of existing similar movements and of the 'target group' that the movement's founders aim to recruit. In Buchman's case the latter consisted of networks of personal contacts in the universities, and among the professional and upper classes. Initial contacts in these areas were usually made by introductions, such as those from the two Anglican bishops in China who asked him to call on their sons at Cambridge, or by chance meetings arising from Buchman's frequent use of first class hotel and liner accommodation.[621] The most common sources of introductions within his 'target group', however, were the existing evangelical movements and institutions. He might be disillusioned with the YMCA, with academic Hartford, and with mass revivalism, but the contacts made in these fields gave him the opportunity to recruit to a new 'fellowship' of his own.

Buchman made his entry to the leading US universities largely through the YMCA. On his return from China in 1919 he attended the Northfield Conference, where his 'life-giving service' earned Mott's gratitude and interested a group of Princeton students. He attended the latter's evangelical camp in September before term, and visited Princeton at least once a month for intensive sessions of personal 'interviews' that winter. He was able to report to Hartford before long that he now had at Princeton a group of '18 men who are banded together to work on a Program of Life'. In May 1920 twenty Princetonians who were entering the Ministry gave him an inscribed pair of gold cufflinks in gratitude for his influence. That year his group at Princeton asked the college President, Hibben, to take on Sam Shoemaker, a Princetonian 'missionary' whom Buchman had 'changed' in Peking, as Secretary of the Philadelphian Society (the college YMCA). Hibben had been favourably impressed by Buchman's help for Max Chaplin's Princeton campaign in 1915, and agreed. From 1919 to 1926 Buchman's followers – including both students like H Pitney Van Dusen and the graduate Secretaries Shoemaker and Purdy – ran the Philadelphian Society. Buchman put in intensive efforts at Princeton until 1923-24, when opposition there attracted national publicity. Until then he had high hopes that it might become 'another Penn State', with the whole campus affected.[622]

In 1920 in an attempt to repeat the successful entry to Princeton, Sherry Day joined the staff at Dwight Hall, the Christian Association centre at Yale.[623] In 1922

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[621] Bishop White of Kaifengfu asked Buchman to visit his son, Bishop Molony of Ningpo his stepson. MSS Biography p 246 and Allen in Crossman 1934 p 12. Liner contacts included Lady Henry, to whose home near Henley he invited his Princeton contacts at Oxford in May 1921, and the wife of 'a famous American lawyer' in 1921. Meeting the latter again at the Ritz, London, Buchman successfully invited her, her husband and 'a well-known English MP' to a house party in Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Other hotel contacts included Rudyard Kipling and Siegfried Sassoon at Brown's Hotel, London, both of whom apparently enjoyed their talks with Buchman: and also at Brown's members of the Greek royal family whom he had first met on his 1908 tour. References: MSS Biography 263 f, and Collis 1937 pp 107 f from which the two quotes were taken.

[622] MSS Biography pp 229-231, 236, 293 ff. Clark 1944, Van Dusen 1934 July p 17. The first national publicity given to the Princeton controversy was in late 1923 in a New York evening paper, perhaps the *World Telegram* – reminiscence of Loudon Hamilton in personal interview 21.3.75. For the controversy itself see above Chapter VII pp 177f.

[623] Clark 1944 pp 61 f. Day had been recruited at Hartford, 1916.

Shoemaker addressed a small audience at Phillips Brooks House, the equivalent at Harvard. During the winter and spring months of the years 1920-24 Buchman concentrated on the Eastern US colleges, often taking with him converts from England – two Cambridge students for ten weeks in spring 1921, Colonel Foster in the winter of 1921-22, Loudon Hamilton during 1922-23 and 1923-24. By personal interviews and a series of small house parties near the colleges concerned they built up groups of supporters in several colleges. The group would flourish in a college, however, only when one or two people there took ongoing leadership of it, and these people were generally Christian Association officials. The group did not make real headway in Harvard, for instance, until John Roots, the son of Bishop Roots of Hankow, took leadership there together with two students at the nearby Episcopal Theological Seminary; these two were both ordained to a church near the university, from which they kept an active Harvard group going into the late 1920s.[624] At Williams efforts were made by Buchman and Forster in 1921-22 winter, but continuing activity was only achieved for a period in 1924-5 when the Christian Association student President was a follower of the movement.[625]

During the same period in America Buchman and his group participated in other evangelical campaigns. In 1920 Buchman himself organised the US tour of the well-known Indian mystic and Christian, Sadhu Sundar Singh.[626] In 1922 and 24 he and Hamilton helped Billy Sunday in local campaigns; on the second occasion with a group of students from a Baptist college, Colgate in Northern New York State, where Hamilton had been given an official position by the Governors for a year in order to evangelise the students. Taking them on one of Sunday's campaigns was seen as a good way of training them.[627] In 1924 and 26 members of Buchman's group were prominent in two SCM missions to small towns.[628]

Contacts within student evangelical circles also afforded Buchman openings in Europe, where he spent his summers during this period. On his first visit to England since his return from Asia he went to the SCM conference at Swanwick, in 1920. It was an invitation from the more evangelical Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) to attend a retreat in October 1920 which persuaded him to stay on at Cambridge that autumn. His meeting with Colonel Forster at a CICCU occasion in 1920 led to their fruitful association, which continued with Buchman giving a series of talks at Ridgelands Bible College at Forster's request in 1921. Buchman attended the Keswick Conference in 1921, 22 and 24. Three Oxford undergraduates, Howard Rose, Nick Wade and Julian Thornton-Duesbery were first interested in Buchman's work at Keswick, and became in time strong members of the movement. These initial contacts were developed through Buchman's usual methods of house parties, and of taking new converts on delegations to other colleges or to interest influential people such as Kipling and Begbie.

Buchman's first visit to Scandinavia took place in July 1921, when he attended an SCM conference as a principal speaker and official American delegate. Alexsi Lehtonen, later to be Primate of Finland, wrote to him that his visit and message had

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[624] Cleve Hicks – who also held some post in the university, either Christian Association secretary or Episcopal chaplain – and Fred Lawrence. See also Clark 1944 pp 64 f.

[625] Ibid pp 63 f. The student President was A Graham Baldwin – see Baldwin 1928

[626] Another well-known visitor to the States, Paul Kanamori from Japan, was the principal speaker at a conference Buchman organized at Hartford in 1920. MSS Biography p 231

[627] For these campaigns with Sunday see above, Post-script to Section II p168

[628] Clark 1944 pp 75 f

made a ‘deep impression’ on many. Such contacts later assured the Oxford Group a good reception in Finland, where its first assembly was held at the same venue as the 1921 conference.

b) Limitations of this approach

Van Dusen later characterised Buchman’s influence as amounting almost to a ‘revival’ on some American campuses in the early 1920s.[629] The number of converts at each university was not large, probably not above 25-30 at a time at Princeton where the work was most successful,[630] but their reputation as aggressive evangelists was considerable. There was also a young business and professional men’s group in New York which in 1923-4 attracted the attention of Thomas Edison through the conversion of his nephew Rushworth Farr, of Winston Churchill through that of his cousin, Travers Jerome, and of Harvey Firestone, the tyre manufacturer and of his friends the Henry Fords, through that of Firestone’s alcoholic son, Russell. Russell’s conversion and subsequent lifelong sobriety was also of influence in the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous, which owed much to Buchman’s approach.[631] The early 1920s was therefore a creative and successful period for Buchman in some ways. But by 1924-5 the limitations of his work were becoming obvious. The main drawback was that few of his converts remained in close contact with him. Van Dusen certainly exaggerated in writing that only about six people on both sides of the Atlantic would have called Buchman their leader in 1925 – there were at least twenty, perhaps twice as many as that. But it was true that most of his converts had fallen away from close association with him.

There were several reasons for this. Firstly, a price of working within established Christian movements and networks was that Buchman’s converts typically entered conventional Christian careers. As ministers and missionaries, theological lecturers or YMCA officials they might be cut off from continued close association with Buchman by physical distance or by pressure of work. Secondly, the adverse national publicity which Buchman received over the Princeton controversy in the mid 1920s must have confirmed doubts about his work already held by many of his converts. His emphasis on sex probably seemed socially unrespectable to some aspiring young ministers. To others his neglect of modernist theology, of intellectual debate and of the social gospel in its more sophisticated phase must have seemed grave faults. Bob Collis, Buchman’s star convert in Cambridge, England in 1920, came to disagree both

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[629] Van Dusen 1934 July p 5

[630] Loudon Hamilton agreed with this figure for Princeton in personal interview 21.3.1975, though he was unsure about the numbers of conversions in general at this time.

[631] Hamilton ibid. In particular, Hamilton said, Dr Bill W, the founder of AA, was impressed by Buchman’s practice of putting the convert into action witnessing for others: by taking responsibility for others the new convert, or newly sober alcoholic, would have the extra incentive needed to stay sober. Dr Bill W, it seems, had unsuccessfully treated Russell Firestone, and came to New York on Firestone’s conversion to see how Buchman’s group had done it. 2018 Comment: Hamilton’s memory was at fault here, and I didn’t catch it because I knew nothing about AA when writing this thesis. Bill Wilson was no doctor – Hamilton surely meant Dr Bob, AA’s co-founder, who was from Akron. They were both alcoholics who found sobriety through the Oxford Group and only split from it to found AA after some years within the Group, working especially with Sam Shoemaker, building their work with alcoholics. That I grew up at the heart of MRA and knew nothing about the AA connection is an interesting comment in itself about MRA. One reason may be that Shoemaker’s exit from the Group had led MRA to disparage and ignore him and his connections. Another may be that they thought AA had taken a lesser road, abandoning world remaking. Nowadays the movement is happy to publicize the connection.

with Buchman's theology and with the anomaly of his proscription on wine and tobacco while 'eating five-course dinners' – the choice of asceticisms seemed illogical to him.[632] One of Buchman's YMCA colleagues, Ralph Harlow, raised questions at a house party concerning Buchman's attitude to 'social justice in industry, the amassing of unjust wealth' and so on, and was censured in private afterwards for having 'marred the harmony of the meeting'. Sherwood Eddy cited this example in his autobiography to underline his own disagreement with the movement over its social philosophy, and implied that Harlow's was not an isolated case.[633] Max Chaplin, like Eddy, remained appreciative of Buchman's personal evangelism. He wrote that if he wanted spiritual fellowship he turned to his fundamentalist friends, but also that if he required discussion of theology or politics he had to turn to his modernist friends.[634] Like these friendly critics Begbie was to write appreciatively of Buchman's psychology, while disagreeing with the more conservative aspects of his theology.[635]

TR Glover as an evangelical gave Buchman his support, but as a Biblical scholar and Cambridge don was pained by Buchman's Biblical literalism and penchant for opening the Bible at random to discover significant messages from it.[636]

In truth Buchman was an experientialist more than a fundamentalist: he did his utmost to work with anyone who would accept the experiences of 'change', 'guidance' and teamwork – an openness which enabled modernists like Chaplin, or later Streeter and Emil Brunner, to participate in the movement while keeping their own theology. Considering this, it may be that those who left Buchman's group may usually have had other reasons for doing so in addition to theological disagreement, particularly moral indignation at Buchman's lack of a social gospel or at his authoritarianism.

Thirdly some of Buchman's converts would have left out of disillusionment at his ability to help their personal problems, or out of failure to live up to his stringent morality. At the 1922 Putney house party one Cambridge student said that after the house party a year before he had had six months complete freedom from 'a particular kind of habit, [presumably masturbation] and then it gradually crept back again'. He returned, others did not. Eddy considered that such reversions, after which the idea of another confession might seem impossible or repulsive, were a major reason for students turning against the movement in its earlier days.[637]

The integration of Buchman's converts within conventional church structures, combined with adverse national publicity and various doubts about his work thus encouraged many of them to drift away from close identification with him.

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[632] Collis 1937 p 115.
[633] Eddy 1935 p 212.
[634] Chaplin 1928 p 203. Although Buchman was not a Fundamentalist, it seems probable that Chaplin would have been referring to him here, perhaps among others, as a non-modernist to whom he went for spiritual fellowship. Being pacifist, Chaplin's politics were far from Buchman's. He helped at Buchman's house parties, however, when home from China on furlough, as the socialist Eddy took part in the largely 'Buchmanite' mission to Waterbury in 1926. Clark 1944 p 77 on the latter.
[635] Begbie 1923. This is a theme of the book. E.g. see pp 13 and 17.
[636] Collis 1937 p 114. Glover thanked God from the Mansfield College pulpit for 'the new illumination that has come to Oxford', referring to Buchman's work there in 1922. He had participated in the 1915 South India campaign with Eddy, bishop Pakenham-Walsh and Buchman, presumably knowing Buchman from that time. In August 1922 he arranged a weekend house party for Buchman at his college, St John's Cambridge, and attended some of the meetings.
[637] Eddy 1935 p 210

c) New Emphasis 1924

Van Dusen wrote in 1934 that 'Of the fifty ablest young ministers on the Atlantic seaboard today, somewhere near half were directed into their vocation by his [Buchman's] influence' in the early 1920s.[638] This could well have been a source of satisfaction to Buchman. It was evident that his work was indeed leavening the churches without itself becoming institutionalised. Drummond and Wright had had a similar kind of influence.

But Buchman was unsatisfied. He sought for a closer fellowship of these converts. In this desire lay the origin of the movement as such, and its continuing rationale.

The turning point after which Buchman's leading followers made greater efforts to instil group consciousness, loyalty and common action in their converts, seems to have taken place during 1924-26. It was from 1927 that Buchman's followers started to publish pamphlets, bearing titles such as *The Principles of the Fellowship*, and a newsletter. It was from 1926-27 that the group in Oxford began to convert students in numbers similar to those at Princeton earlier, but also to integrate them into a self-conscious group, meeting and worshipping regularly together.[639] The first issue of the newsletter, printed in New York in July 1927, recorded that:

> The year has seen a great development among the troops. It has been a year of intensive training and discipline – a year that has seen the birth of a group of people who are ready to work as a team under the direction of the Holy Spirit.[640]

This new emphasis on group solidarity developed out of two related episodes, the controversy at Princeton and Buchman's world tour of 1924-26. Buchman had been accustomed for some years to take one or more converts with him on his visits to colleges and on his summer tours of Europe. The 1924 world tour was a new departure, however, first in its envisaged duration of at least a year, second in including Buchman's three most mature followers – Day, Shoemaker and Hamilton – and third in the degree of team discipline that he insisted upon. At the start of the journey Buchman told his companions, 'looking daggers' at them in Hamilton's memory of the event: 'Now there's going to be discipline on this trip... We have got to forge a blood-bought fellowship'. 'You have got to learn to work together like the fingers on a hand', he also said.[641]

The tour itself was not an unqualified success. Before it was half over the team had dwindled to two from the original seven: Hamilton had left because of illness, Rickert and Wade to join their university terms, Webb-Peploe to join a mission in India as planned, and Shoemaker in bad humour to take up a parish post in New York. Buchman and the ever-faithful Day continued to Australia and South East Asia on

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[638] Van Dusen 1934 July p 5. Purdy, as General Secretary of the Philadelphian Society, wrote in a letter of Jan 28 1927 printed in *The Daily Princetonian* that '25 or 30 men... have gone out into the field of Christian work largely through his [Buchman's] influence' in the previous 8 years from Princeton. Including those in other universities, Van Dusen's figure could be correct – though of course his judgement of who were the 'ablest younger ministers' would have been influenced by his acquaintance with those who were influenced by Buchman when he himself was working with Buchman in the early 1920s.

[639] 'Worshipping together' – at Grensted's special weekly services at the University Church, St. Mary's, following the Tuesday training session.

[640] *The Letter* No. 1.

[641] interview with Hamilton 1975.

their own. Nonetheless the points had been made that Buchman expected the closest teamwork and a level of commitment which Wade found 'astonishing' and which he for one, became determined to reach;[642] and that their work was not merely personal religion in conventional local contexts but international and capable of world-wide expansion. 'House-parties' were held en route and a good number of people were converted. In 1927 *The Letter* No. 1, as the first newsletter was called, was started specifically to link the 'house party' converts who were 'now in almost every corner of the world'.

Buchman's reasons for placing this new emphasis on teamwork were clear enough. First of all 'fellowship' of an informal kind was central to his evangelical method, both to maintain each convert's faith in the difficult period after the first euphoria of 'surrender' had worn off, and to increase the impact made by a team of evangelists. He had long ago learnt that if they were mutually open, sharing their thoughts and criticisms with each other in private, the team members could i) present a united front; ii) co-ordinate their work more efficiently; iii) be an example themselves of the co-operation that they wanted to see among other Christians; and iv) train each other to be more effective as 'life-changers'. One of the troubles of the lone evangelist, as Buchman wrote to Shoemaker when urging him to join the 1924 travelling team, was that he failed to train others around him adequately.[643]

Secondly, and of perhaps equal importance, however, was the impact of the Princeton controversy on Buchman and his followers. This first attracted national press comment in late 1923, and reached a peak of press discussion in 1926. Long before this however in May 1924, Buchman had reacted against the criticism with the 'guidance' to 'clear out of Princeton completely'. It was on this occasion that he decided to implement the plan that had been forming in his mind over the previous year to 'Go round the world. Take an apostolic group. One-man endeavour is a false principle'.[644] In 1926 the official Princeton investigation into 'Buchmanite' activities on campus vindicated him and his followers who were still running the 'Philadelphian Society'. But student hostility remained strong and Buchman's followers finally resigned, the Philadelphian Society's religious work was then reorganised and turned over to a society with another name in order to rid it of 'Buchmanite' associations.[645] The episode only strengthened the loyalty of Buchman's leading followers to him, however. Ray Purdy, the Philadelphian Society Secretary, and his two associate secretaries, Howard Blake and CS Wishard, wrote in January 1927 to *The Daily Princetonian* of their:

> unique sense of loyalty to him [Buchman] and his work because he incarnates to us more perfectly than any other religious leader today the working principles of evangelical Christianity as found in the New Testament. [646]

Buchman sent these three and two other Princetonians, Ken Twitchell and Garrett Stearly, to study in Oxford in the later 1920s, where they helped to ensure that the Oxford group would develop on lines of team loyalty. These five, with Day, Shoemaker, Eleanor Forde, Olive Jones and one or two others became the backbone of the movement's American leadership for the next decade.

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[642] Russell 1934 p 244
[643] Buchman to Shoemaker Jan 26 1924, MSS Biography
[644] MSS Biography
[645] WH Clark 1944 p 73
[646] Jan 28 1927 *The Daily Princetonian*, a reprint in MRA Archives

'We can truly say we are grateful for our opponents', stated *The Letter* No. 1, 'for they have done us the same service today as did the opponents of the Early Church when the Gospel, driven out of one town, spread to another there to take root and flourish', referring to the Princeton opposition and the sudden growth of the Oxford work. 'Criticism' it also said '... has served to forge a group of people who are speaking boldly in their witness for Christ'.

That the movement's formation was thus considerably in reaction to opposition is of importance. It indicated a closing of ranks, around the leader. The connection between this and Buchman's own sensitivity to criticism and his refusal to meet it with debate and his belief that it generally indicated sin in the critic, seems plain. From its start the Group was partly defensive, finding in aggressive group evangelism a security against attack and criticism. This defensiveness was presumably not just against the Princeton critics, but also against those of Buchman's converts who had declared themselves 'Buchman graduates', in Van Dusen's phrase,[647] because of their theological, political, 'moral', or 'immoral' objections to aspects of his work.[648] This might imply that those who joined the close 'fellowship' at this time were those who, despite academic achievements, were temperamentally alienated from intellectual debate.[649]

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[647] Describing himself; memory of Loudon Hamilton's, told in personal interview 21.3.1975.
[648] For Van Dusen's view on the Group members' oversensitivity even to friendly criticism, see above Chapter VII, p 105
[649] Academic achievements: Purdy, Twitchell and Howard Blake were all Phi Beta Kappa fraternity – roughly equivalent to first class honours in a British university. (Hamilton, interview 21.3.1975).

Chapter XIV: Pressures towards Sectarian Formation

Organisational Growth[650]

Buchman had already established the main organisational structure of his movement in the early 1920s. The basic unit was the local group. These were linked by correspondence, conferences, joint participation in campaigns, and by travelling delegations or 'teams' of Group evangelists. A central headquarters address was already in use for contacting Buchman, who co-ordinated the 'house parties' and campaigns. Full-time workers soon became necessary for local groups, travelling teams and headquarters.

The 1930s saw a huge increase of the full-time work involved in the latter two areas. Embryo departments under full-time workers were established to cope with the main functions of the Group's campaigns.

A second major expansion of organisational tasks took place after 1945. This time it was not related to a growth in the movement's numbers or outreach so much as to new labour intensive methods – the use of theatre, the acquisition of large conference centres and an increase in publishing, in particular. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the increase in organisation that these new methods necessitated was fully functional for the movement's purpose: it meant that increasing numbers of full-time 'evangelists' were involved in administration rather than in face-to-face encounters with the general public. However it also enabled the Group to experiment with communal living as a microcosm of the 'new world' more fully than before, and to make this itself an advertisement for their principles. These tendencies inevitably gave an impression that the Group was moving further towards becoming a sect on some levels, at the same period as it was ideologically drifting away from the churches.

Elaboration of several of the above points follows:

a) The Local Groups

These provided fellowship and support for converts, recruited new members, trained them as evangelists, and ran local campaigns which often from the 1930s were co-ordinated with the movement's wider campaigns. In the pages of the newsletter of 1927-29 the term 'group' referred both to the movement in an area 'the Princeton group', 'the Oxford group' – and, if it was large enough, to sections of it which met together regularly – there were three groups at Princeton (undergraduates, seminarians and 'girls') and eight men's college groups and a women's group at Oxford, by Easter 1928 for example. In each area the movement was directed by an 'inner group', which was sometimes dominated by a particular leader – the minister in a church-based group, or a full-time worker attached to the area. At Oxford the college groups gathered weekly on Sunday evenings, while the undergraduate leaders, about 30 of them by Easter 1928, met again on Tuesday nights. The university milieu offered the greatest possibilities for intensive group life – both at Oxford and Princeton the undergraduates began to hold daily meetings. Group members would meet individually more often than this, often co-operating in evangelistic forays to 'change' someone. Local groups held 'house parties' in hotels or country houses in nearby

[650] 2016 note: the original numbering in this chapter was confusing. The heading above was labelled 1. But there was no subsequent 2. So I have removed the 1.

rural settings, both to plan their work and to introduce new people to it. During the 1930s the terms 'team' and 'team meeting' for the groups became more popular.

b) Inter-Group Links

Local group members would meet each other on joint campaigns or at large house parties. In 1927 the high point of the year for the American groups was the movement's longest and largest house party up to that time – ten days at Minnewaska attended by 165. A second ten-day house party at Minnewaska in 1928 drew 240. Yearly house parties at Oxford grew from 200 or 300 in 1930 to 10,000 in 1935. Later the post-war conferences at Caux, Switzerland, and Mackinac Island, Michigan, performed the same function.

Local groups also combined in regional house parties and campaigns on a smaller scale. Regional co-operation seems to have been pioneered particularly in London. A list of the 'team' available there in autumn 1930 noted 6 scattered boroughs which contained 'a number of thoroughly reliable people who have been through one or two House Parties, and are ready for teamwork'. At Dulwich there were 'at least five such people, and about a dozen more rapidly coming on'.[651] The Dulwich team 'had guidance' to meet at 7.15 a.m. daily, and built up a strong group over the next few years. In 1934 they planned a summer campaign in surrounding South London boroughs. In preparation, 1,000 'life-changers' from scattered groups all over South London met for a day to work out the principle of 'correlation', at Cannon Street Hotel: the number indicates the movement's rapid growth in the intervening years, (it may have included a few people from further afield, however.) They were encouraged to check individual plans with the Group leaders, and to be sure to identify with the name 'Oxford Group' thus restricting individual initiative for the sake of concerted action.[652] In March 1935 the South London groups joined in what was perhaps the movement's most ambitious local campaign to that date, in Penge, organised by Howard Rose, who had moved from Oxford to a parish there three years before. 300 'life-changers' joined the campaign, most of them South Londoners helping during hours off work, many of them staying in local homes for the campaign fortnight. Rose was an ex-officer. 'Upon Arrival', read his instructions to the campaign helpers, 'Proceed direct to HQ where (if required) billets will be allotted' along with a map of the district and instructions on which homes to visit. In this military style the homes of 11,000 people were visited in 10 days, along with shops, cafes, and the police and fire stations. Shopkeepers and the cinema manager helped by advertising the campaign to their clientele. Civic and Chamber of Commerce receptions were given for the Group.[653]

Campaigns of such size were usually organised by the International Team, as it was called. Local campaigns of a comparable scale were probably not held again until the later 1930s when full-time workers developed the East London work. Regional co-operation was also developed furthest in the late 1930s when one or two full-time workers took responsibility for each major area of the country – the North East,

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[651] H 5
[652] H 24
[653] Christ Church, Penge, parish magazine 'Oxford Group Campaign Number' March 1935; invitation and instructions to helpers. MRA Archives.

Yorkshire, the Midlands, Liverpool area, South Wales, South East England in particular.

c) 'Travelling Teams'

The Group's major campaigns of the 1930s and afterwards were led by Frank Buchman with groups of any number between 20 and 1,000 members of the movement on the move with him. Large teams of evangelists were necessary if the movement's principle method – the personal evangelical encounter – was to generate a revival in a new territory. Apart from these major campaign teams under Frank Buchman, other travelling teams periodically set off to link the various local groups or reconnoitre new areas. A particularly successful example of the latter was the team sent by the Oxford group[654] to South Africa in 1928 which unexpectedly started the first of the Group's 'national awakenings'; as a result it was not surprising that Buchman led the 1929 and 1930 teams to South Africa himself. 1928 also saw a group of six, called by *The Letter* 'The Travelling Team', touring the United States for four months. Their 36 stops included weekend missions for churches from Brooklyn to Kansas City, help for groups centred on private homes, leadership of conferences in Pittsburgh and Minnesota, a house party for the summer colony at a seaside resort initiated by a Group member, and assistance at two 'Schools of Life' at Group ministers' churches in New York and Cambridge, Mass. In between they had times of retreat. The 'School of Life' was the term used in the 1920s for conferences for advanced training of group members.[655]

These teams had an important function in training the Group members who helped on them, as well as their more obvious functions of opening up new territories or knitting together scattered local groups. Ray Purdy, who led 'The Travelling Team' of 1928, called it 'a peripatetic school of life'. Its main purpose, he wrote, was the training of leadership and their preparation for nation-wide evangelism.[656] Mobile teams provided training both in awareness of the movement's national and worldwide mission, and in more intensive evangelism and teamwork than was usually possible in a local situation. Many committed members of the movement who remained in their original careers received intensive training on these teams, as they did in running conferences also. For instance Shoemaker joined the 1924-25 world tour, and took six months leave from his church for Group work in 1932; other American ministers took leave to gain experience on travelling teams, such as the Lawrences in 1928; the leaders of the Dutch work – Van Wassenaer and Van Lennep – went to America with Buchman in 1928, and so on. Membership of these teams may also have been important in recruitment to full-time work – many of the British full-time workers had originally gone on travelling teams in their college vacations. Buchman chose his team members with care to make sure they were trustworthy, but he also sometimes included one or two 'unchanged' people in the hope that the experience would lead to their conversion.

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[654] 2018 Comment: the Oxford group, lower case, but because they called themselves that, and a sign on their railway carriage said reserved for the Oxford Group, the press picked up the name and in all the ensuing publicity, it stuck. No doubt Buchman, who had been greatly enamored of the Oxford Movement in his years at Overbook, was happy to have his own movement echo the name—for which he received some vehement criticism in years to come from the movement's detractors.
[655] *The Letter* Nos 4 and 5
[656] *The Letter* Nos 4 and 5

d) Headquarters

After leaving Hartford College in 1922 Buchman based his American work in New York. A lawyer friend gave him the use of his office in the Law Building at 36 West 44th Street. There the small team met every morning when they were in town, while their mail and telephone messages were kept for them in their absence.[657] Such were the Group's minimal early requirements of a headquarters. In 1923 or 24 Buchman moved his base to the International Union Mission office, Hotel La Salle, 30 East 60th Street.[658] This was a large and luxurious building, in which 'mother Tjader' as she was known, the IUM founder, gave Buchman's group an office and a small bedroom upstairs. It was too grandiose, however, and gave Buchman's group the false appearance of being wealthily endowed. Either the Hotel La Salle, or another building in which Buchman's New York base was housed for a time, was owned by Rockefeller, which also gave a false impression that he might be funding the group. The headquarters therefore moved again, probably in 1926, to 11 West 53rd Street, and finally found a more permanent home in a new extension built by Shoemaker to his parish church in about 1929; there it remained until Shoemaker left the movement in 1941. By the later 1920s the New York headquarters' functions had increased to include weekly suppers for the local team followed by a meeting, the production of the intermittent newsletter *The Letter*, and the mailing of the pamphlets that the Group started to produce from 1927.

In London, Buchman stayed regularly at Brown's Hotel, Mayfair, from 1921 to 1938. From 1931 the Group rented rooms there permanently, the number growing from three rooms in 1931 to eight in 1938.[659] In August 1936 another five rooms were rented in nearby Albemarle Street, in the name of Roland Wilson, who before long was to be the Group's first official Secretary. The Metropole Hotel was used as an additional headquarters for a time. The attraction of Brown's Hotel was its influential clientele and the cheap rate which the management gave to Buchman out of respect for his work. It became too cramped, however, as the British work expanded. In 1939 the Group bought a 99 year lease of 45 Berkeley Square, an impressive 'embassy-style' mansion near Brown's Hotel, to be the movement's new headquarters. Leases of offices in the mews behind the building and of another large private house in the adjoining Charles Street were acquired at about the same time. During and after the war leases of four other Charles Street houses were given or bought by different individuals for the movement's use. From these premises the growing administrative work of the movement was carried on – publishing, correspondence (during the war years letters addressed to the Oxford Group averaged 2,230 per year, not including personal letters and order forms for books, 67% of them from first contacts),[660] newsletters, travel arrangements, accountancy, co-ordination of campaigns and house parties. They were also used for elegant receptions, personal interviews, team meetings and accommodation for permanent personnel and for others passing through on Group business. During the war the basement of 45 Berkeley Square was strengthened to serve as the headquarters' air-raid shelter; while much of the administrative work, such as the large book department, was evacuated to a country

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[657] Hamilton 1941
[658] IUM pamphlet, undated, of 1923 or 24.
[659] Brown's Hotel was owned by a Swiss, Anton Bon, whom Buchman had helped and who always gave him a room in gratitude. From 1931 the extra rooms held continuously were given at a very low rent. (KD Belden 1975).
[660] A 5.3

house near Tarporley, Cheshire, which had been made available for the movement by its owner, Miss Irene Prestwich. The Berkeley Square complex remained the British headquarters of the Group for over three decades. The 1970s are seeing its removal to freehold sites around the Group's Westminster Theatre Arts Centre, SW1.

e) First Separate Departments

The influx of full-time workers in the mid-1930s from the British universities, most of them from professional family backgrounds, enabled the Group's campaigns to be developed to a high degree of professional competence. Publishing, publicity and travel arrangements were, not surprisingly, the first to benefit – they were central to the Group's 1930s campaigns, which were highly mobile and which were led by men who were conscious of the value of publicity. Until it was compelled to, the Group resisted the development of more institutional functions such as accountancy and property management; while functions such as theological education or worship were ruled out permanently in order not to encroach on the churches' authority.

Russell's 1932 bestseller, *For Sinners Only,* probably did most to convince the Group that publications could be a highly effective form of evangelism. Favourable press coverage of the South African and Canadian campaigns of 1928-32 counteracted Buchman's earlier desire for anonymity and his unfortunate relations with the American and British press in the 1924-28 period. From the early 1930s the Group's leaders embraced the necessity for good press relations and publications. Several young full-time workers wrote pamphlets and photo magazines, and produced them with considerable professionalism in the mid-1930s, and afterwards. In 1938 Lean and Holme set up the Rising Tide News Service for collecting and distributing news about the Group. Its London headquarters and national cable offices in 24 countries represented a formalisation of the movement's informal network of 'teams' around the world. The distribution of news about the Moral Re-Armament campaigns of 1938-39 was thoroughly organised: 4,200 articles and reviews were sent out from the London office in the first two months of 1939, for example. During the war Group members wrote a column carrying Group news and wisdom, 'Mr Sensible's Column' which, at its height, was syndicated to well over 200 British local papers.

In 1938-39 Group full-time workers travelled around Britain setting up a network of contacts with local booksellers by showing them a 16mm film publicising tennis star HW 'Bunny' Austin's book *Moral Re- Armament – The Battle for Peace*. The book sold out of its first edition of 250,000 in a month; a second 250,000 was published. The book department continued successfully through the war. About 4 million books and pamphlets were distributed in the first year and a half of the war, and despite shortages of supplies and personnel another million by its end. The conversion in 1940 of one of Beaverbrook's leading journalists, Peter Howard, added a major writing and organising talent to the movement.

After the demise of *The Letter* in 1930 news of the movement's activities was distributed through intermittent magazine reports, pamphlets, house party reports and correspondence, and often in stencilled newsletters by individuals such as those sent by Roger Hicks from the North American campaign of 1932 to Group members in Britain. Sometimes official, printed programmes of events for several months ahead were produced. News was also carried in two small North American periodicals which were subscribed to from wider afield – Shoemaker's monthly parish magazine *The Calvary Evangel*, and the *Montreal Witness and Canadian Homestead* renamed

The New Witness in 1936. Both of these stopped publishing Group news or ceased publication in 1940-41. The London headquarters' mailing of newsletters was started in the 1930s but became particularly important in the war years when the Group's main newsletter went out weekly to several thousand. A special Services newsletter kept members of the Armed Forces informed and encouraged in their perhaps lonely evangelistic efforts. In 1945 the Group's first regular printed periodical was started in America, a monthly photo magazine called *New World News*. The next year its editorial office moved to London. From the late 1940s to 1951 the Caux conferences gave rise to their own information service, of which a British edition was also produced. Finally in 1952 the situation was improved by dividing *New World News* into a quarterly pictorial, and a plainly printed fortnightly *MRA Information Service*. This reported the movement's world news. In 1965 it began to be published weekly.

The Letter of 1927-30, printed in America, had been an informal, chatty affair giving news of marriages, births and ordinations as well as of the progress of local groups and travelling teams. From the early 1930s however the content of the Group's magazine reports, like the later periodicals, was designed entirely for public consumption. This marked a new awareness in the movement of its public news-worthiness and of its potential for growth far beyond a fellowship whose personal news could be contained in a magazine. Similarly the establishment of periodicals after the war was part of the further professionalisation of the Group's work made possible by the influx of full-time workers at that time and required by the Group's increased attempts to influence industrial and national policies. A pictorial of comparable appearance and technical quality to *Life*, carrying serious articles on industry and national affairs, *New World News* was designed to reach an audience who would not have taken a more typical evangelical periodical (perhaps slightly old-fashioned in production or stridently revivalist in tone) seriously.

Another area of professionalisation in the Group's work in the 1930s was seen in its travel department. Ray Nelson, an Oxford graduate in English who started full-time work in 1934, became its main expert, largely self-taught on the job like the Group's other professionals in journalism, publishing etc. The travel account was opened in his name. In 1936 he was in charge of transport for the rally of 25,000 in Birmingham, for which 20 special trains conveying 8,000 passengers were laid on. Special reduced fares were negotiated with the railways. A printed organisation chart for the occasion showed that Nelson was in charge of 39 'Regional Commissars' for Britain, while his colleague Stephen Foot co-ordinated 11 'National Commissars' for overseas countries sending delegations. This organisation was especially created to make the Group's first national 'mobilisation' go smoothly. Nelson also arranged transport for the 1935 Oxford house party of 10,000; for the British delegation of 1,000 to the 1937 Utrecht rally; for the 1,000 British who went to the Swiss Interlaken international conference of 1938 and the team of 150 who left for the American MRA campaign in 1939.

These large rallies required efficient organisation in other respects also. The 1936 Birmingham wall chart showed four other main areas of responsibility: 1) 'Message' – including the programme of meetings, 'Slogans', 'Message of Sectors' (i.e. philosophy and witness from different occupational or regional groups), and pageantry ('Processions, Dress, Songs, Music, Banners, Posters'). 2) 'Stewarding' which included crowd handling, insurance, Red Cross, litter disposal, latrines, lost property, catering and the arrangement of flags, loud speakers, chairs, platforms etc. in the massive British Industries Fair hall. 3) Publicity, which involved a press team

of 16 under Garth Lean covering the local, national and overseas press, and others responsible for 'Radio, Film, Stenographers, Gramophone Records and Books, Posters, Stamps, Postmark, Car and Luggage Labels'.) 4) 'Birmingham' – relations with the local public, churches, police, AA (Automobile Association) and RAC (Royal Automobile Club); the provision of a portable Post Office and extra telephones, and the arrangement of accommodation. Each of these four sections were under the responsibility of one man; the names of those taking charge of the particular tasks were added to the chart in ink.

The Group's eagerness to use modern media led to its production of films in the later 1930s – the work of an Oxford graduate, Peter Sisam, who started full-time Group work in 1937. He also built up a photo library of over 1,300 negatives and prints for the press by 1941.[661] The Group also broadcast on the radio when possible, and used nation-wide poster campaigns.

f) Legal Requirements

The Group was compelled to adopt a more institutional framework than it desired by the legal requirements of property ownership and the receipt of legacies. In 1938-39 in a High Court case (Thackrah -v- Wilson) a legacy left to the Oxford Group was held to be invalid on the ground that the Group was not a legally identifiable body. On the best legal advice the Group's leaders remedied this situation by applying to the Board of Trade for incorporation as an Association not for profit, under the Companies Act (1929). In June 1939 they were granted a licence as an association with limited liability under the name 'The Oxford Group', with a special dispensation to leave out the word 'Ltd'. Incorporation had also been made advisable because of the Group's acquisition of property in the Berkeley Square area in 1939, and because of its growing finances. From August 1933 the Group had had an account at Barclays Bank, New Bond Street, near Brown's Hotel, with cheques drawable by Roland Wilson. A literature account was later opened at the same bank in the names of Miss G Evans and Miss M McNab. The requirement of the Companies Act that finances be audited yearly and be open to public scrutiny made for extra professional work, but also cleared up any public doubts about this informal system of finances. Because of a technical point in the terminology of the Memorandum of Association the Oxford Group was not eligible for charitable status. This was corrected, and the Group was recognised as a charity in March 1951 on the basis of the purpose of 'the advancement of the Christian religion'. This enabled it to gain certain tax benefits.

The Companies Act required the incorporated Group to appoint a Council of Management. Roland Wilson, aged 31, an Oxford graduate in Greats who had started full-time work in 1933 and was a Congregational minister, became its first Secretary. Leslie Fox, FCA, a qualified accountant, was later appointed and remains its Treasurer. Wilson was succeeded after thirty years' service as Secretary by Gordon Wise, a younger full-time worker of Australian origin who had been an RAAF pilot in the war. None of the 17 Council members could themselves receive any material benefit from the Association, in order to preserve its non-profit status, although most of them were full-time workers. They therefore had to rely for financial support entirely on private resources or on covenants and gifts made personally to themselves by supporters of their work. Other full-time workers also relied in general on private

[661] Archives document C 203

income or personal gifts, but could expect to receive expenses from central funds if necessary.

Incorporation merely added a formal element to the Group's structure. Another statutory requirement, however, was to alter that structure drastically for the duration of the 1939-45 war. This was military conscription. In 1940 the Group held that its remaining 29 full-time workers should be reserved from the call-up as 'lay evangelists', a category established when Ernest Brown, a well-known Christian, was Minister of Labour, to cover the key lay workers in Christian organisations such as the Group itself. Under Ernest Bevin, the new Minister of Labour, however, the Group alone among such bodies with lay evangelists was refused reservation of its workers. Protests to Bevin included three personal letters from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a letter signed by 174 MP's. Bevin personally refused and made it an issue of resignation in the Cabinet. The source of Bevin's antagonism to the Group is not clear. The result of this ministerial interpretation of a parliamentary act, however, was to deprive the Group of its active full-time personnel for about five years near the height of its influence and activity. The effect of the decision was only mitigated slightly by the ability of some of the Group's leading workers to carry on part time work at the Group headquarters in London – Roland Wilson by his immediate ordination by the Congregational Union and position for the rest of the war as minister of a church in North London, a few by exemption on health grounds, a few by being called up into Civil Defence in the London area.

The Group was later incorporated in other countries including by 1954 the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Holland, Sweden and Switzerland.[662] These national associations were autonomous. But they usually included a minority of Group leaders of other nationalities on their boards of management. For example the Swiss 'Fondation pour le Réarmement Moral' in 1954 consisted of a Swiss President, with Frank Buchman as Honorary President, 8 Swiss members, 3 British, 3 American and one French; some of the foreigners being on the boards of their own national associations as well.

g) Post 1942 Labour Intensive Methods

i) Communal Living and Conference Centres

Buchman spent the war years in the USA. A highly creative period in the movement's history developed around him there in 1940-42. 1939 had seen the launching of the MRA campaign in the States, with huge meetings and wide publicity in the mass media. Active campaigning continued in the next years. But Buchman also held extended periods of training for his team in remote rural resorts. For three successive summers members of the Group congregated in holiday buildings which they had to clean out and run themselves – at Lake Tahoe in the Sierra Mountains near the California-Nevada border in 1940, at Tallwood, Maine in 1941, and at Mackinac Island, Michigan, at the conjunction of the Great Lakes in 1942.

At Tahoe Buchman was first given the use of a house for five people. Gradually other accommodation was lent them until up to 100 of his 'team' were living in the area. HW Austin has described the intensive training Buchman gave them which turned 'a motley crew' of diverse types into 'a united revolutionary family and force'. It was

[662] Macassey 1954 pp 44-46

marked for instance by Buchman's insistence on 'purity' in personal relationships, by which he meant not just no overt 'flirting' but no 'sentimental' attachments; and by his emphasis on economy and on perfection in daily tasks. Meals were eaten communally, cooked and hand served by the women. If the latter failed to do this perfectly Buchman would want to know what moral failings in them were responsible – for instance jealousies or resentments in the kitchen.[663] For Buchman this training of his workers to overcome moods and 'self-centredness' and thus to achieve high standards, whether in cooking, economy or 'purity', was integral to team evangelism. Meals as much as meetings and publications were used to 'change' new people. The atmosphere of an MRA private home or centre was seen as a vital advertisement for 'changed' family life.

In 1942 Buchman suffered a stroke which left his right leg and right arm and hand partially paralysed. For the rest of his life he required constant help with simple physical tasks and was usually confined to a wheel chair. His personality and mental abilities were unaffected, apart perhaps from an increased irritability at times. As a result of this the style of the Group's work had to change. Long summer conferences around Frank Buchman became the centre of its operations. Before the war the Group had held its 'house parties' in hotels or colleges, where the catering and other services were provided for it. In the depression years hotel accommodation for conferences was relatively easy to secure on reduced terms, particularly from managements sympathetic to the Group. This situation was changed after the war. Long summer conferences made the movement's ownership of its own conference centres economical. At the same time this enabled the Group to run the conferences as a model of its principles in action.

From 1942 the Island House on Mackinac Island, which Buchman had been given for a nominal rent of $1.00 a year, was made a permanent conference centre. During the next two decades buildings with accommodation, catering and meeting facilities for about 1,000 people were constructed on land acquired by MRA, on the island. In 1946-49 the Swiss branch of the movement bought four ~~large~~ hotels[664] in the Alpine resort of Caux, overlooking Lake Geneva, to be an equivalent European centre.[665] In the post-war period the London centre of offices and six houses in the Berkeley Square area was completed. Similar mansions in exclusive boroughs of other capital cities were given to the movement or were acquired by it – in Paris, The Hague, Stockholm, Bonn, Melbourne, Los Angeles and New York for example (the last a country estate outside the city – a gift). In the 1960s conference centres began to be developed in Odawara, Japan, and Panchgani, India.

These centres were manned by the Group's full-time workers and by conference 'delegates'. Caux photographs showed, for instance, Italian MP's of opposing political convictions cheerfully operating the large dish-washing machine together. Tasks were distributed according to sex – the women cooked, served meals and cleaned; the men chopped vegetables, 'ran' trays of food from kitchens to dining halls, washed up and carted baggage. A few salaried staff, not necessarily 'changed',

[663] Austin 1975, chapter 13
[664] Note in 2017: Andrew Stallybrass points out that 'four large hotels' is incorrect: there were two large ones—Mountain House and The Grand Hotel—and two small ones—the Villa Maria and the Alpina. I was probably unconsciously channelling my childhood self, which saw them all as large.
[665] See Mottu 1970 *The Story of Caux*

were employed for some maintenance gardening or cleaning tasks. Group members had to learn the professional aspects of hotel and property management.

This added an important element to Group conferences. 'Life changing' at the old 'house parties', a name out of fashion in the Group after the late 1930s, had taken place over meals and personal talks, and through meetings. Now it also went on within the teams which worked on practical tasks. Not only the formal meetings, but any communal task was now preceded by a brief meeting of the group which was running it, for guidance, discussion and a quick prayer. Any task was seen as a dual opportunity: to impress visitors by the Christian care and professional perfection with which it was done; and to work out problems of relationships – egocentricity, laziness, jealousy etc. – in the task group.

Another 'labour intensive' element was added to the Group's communal living after the war – the bringing up of full-time workers' children. Most of the 1920s recruits to full-time work had married in their twenties. Most of the British full-timers of the 1930s however had been younger at the time of recruitment and too involved in the headlong pace of revival to contemplate marriage in the 1930s. The war then caused them to postpone it further, due to separation and a gruelling programme of work for those in Britain who combined war service jobs with running the movement. The immediate post-war years therefore saw a spate of marriages among full-time workers in their thirties, followed closely by their contribution to the baby boom. The proscription on 'sentimental relationships' did not prevent those who were 'guided' to marry and to rear families from doing so: it 'only' prevented the normal courtship process of the contemporary society, and led most married Group members to abjure contraception and therefore sexual intercourse except for begetting children. Engagements were made not by selection through 'dating' or 'flirting' but by the individual man's 'guidance' to propose, checked with close friends and senior colleagues, and the corresponding 'guidance' and 'checking' by the woman concerned after she had been proposed to (or before if she had an inkling that it was coming).[666] The principles of the full-time workers who married in the post-war years were by and large not to let marriage and child rearing slow down their pace of work and evangelism, since they were now the experienced leaders of the movement. Younger women fulltime workers were therefore enlisted to help look after the children: Miss Dorothy John, a qualified teacher, applied Group principles with much success to the nursery and early primary education of these children in London and Caux.

ii) Theatre

Another innovation of the 1940 Lake Tahoe summer was the production of a musical revue dramatizing the Group's principles as applied to the war effort. The same summer Alan Thornhill wrote a play at Tahoe about the successful resolution of an industrial conflict (*The Forgotten Factor*). From these two productions followed the movement's use of theatre as the central focus of its mobile campaigns over the next three decades. Like the innovation of conference centres and communal living this necessitated having many professional full-time workers at one remove from personal evangelism – actors, stage-hands, producers, choreographers, musicians, writers,

[666] Comment on this passage by KD Belden October 1975: 'This doesn't sound quite as romantic and enjoyable as it has really been in all these very happy marriages! – and lasting ones'.

lighting technicians, 'wardrobe mistresses' etc. Theatres were built at Caux and Mackinac. The Westminster Theatre was bought in London.[667]

The attraction of theatre as a method was similar to that of the original house party: it had normal social rather than religious connotations. Like the house party, and more effectively than a public meeting, it could also be carefully staged to give a sense of participation in an intimate experience of others' lives, including the effects of 'sin' and 'change' upon them. MRA plays typically presented a before-and-after picture of 'change' in a situation familiar to the audience – family life, industry, office – or in national affairs or historical situations (such as Thornhill's play on Wilberforce). These can be seen as an elaboration of witnessing and, more particularly, of Buchman's talent for telling stories of 'change'. The theatre, and the MRA feature films that grew out of it, had the advantages over house parties of being available to larger audiences, of all classes. What they lacked by contrast in their ability to involve the audience personally the Group tried to make up by personal talks after the play.

Organisational and other pressures to develop sectarian characteristics[668]

It will be seen later that the Group's organisational growth was given by Sam Shoemaker as one of the reasons for his disillusionment with it. The Group's leaders in the 1920s had claimed that the Group was to remain within the churches and that it had no organisation apart from them. But by the 1940s it was clear that the Group had developed a considerable organisation of its own and that this was not only independent of church control but was no longer operating mainly in church circles. Most of the early recruits from the universities to full-time work had felt it desirable to prepare for ordination first, after graduation. Those graduating from about 1933 onwards no longer seemed to find this necessary. The movement's growth was too rapid, its need for full-time workers too urgent, to allow a leisured year or two of further study on intellectual aspects of the faith for its young graduates, they presumably thought. This, along with the sudden growth of the movement in the early 1930s which prompted it, marked the Group's emergence from its slower 1920s pace in the shelter of the college YMCAs and churches, into its fully independent world-wide expansion. The first decade of this headlong expansion saw the Group's attempt to sweep the churches with it, then the failure of this attempt, and its determination to press on nonetheless. This mutual disillusion between the churches and the Group was accompanied by two major expansions of the Group's full-time staff and of its organisation, in the later 1930s and again in the post-war period, as we have already seen.

The Group's organisational growth and its independence of the churches were not, however, in themselves the strongest pressures that were edging the Group towards a more sectarian formation. These came rather from elements of the Group's internal life which had been present from its foundation, though their importance was no doubt increased with the growth of the Group's staff and their communal life. They were 1) its emphasis on 'fellowship', 2) its tendency towards mental isolation, and 3) its authority structure. It was these in particular which made conflicts of loyalty

[667] The money was raised by a large number of donations, as a memorial to the men and women in MRA who lost their lives in the war.
[668] 2016 note: this heading is labelled h) in the original but clearly introduces the next numbered headings.

between Group and Church inevitable for the more ecclesiastically oriented Group members.

1. Emphasis on 'Fellowship' – Cohesion

As explained above[669] the formation of the Group had followed in part from the demands of Buchman's evangelism for a 'fellowship' to maintain converts' commitment, to train them and to co-ordinate their campaigns. The main element of Buchman's 'fellowship' which enabled these functions to be performed was the practice of the 'sharing' of inner thoughts between converts.

Every committed convert was expected to hold a morning 'quiet time'. For the full-time workers this period of meditation on waking up in the morning was generally about an hour long, taken with a pot of tea to aid concentration. Prayer and study of a Bible passage or of a devotional classic (favourites included Thomas a Kempis and Drummond's *The Greatest Thing in the World*) took up part of the time. But 'listening to God' and writing the thoughts that came in a notebook ('guidance book') occupied most of it. Buchman explained in 1922 that 'I do it better when I am on my back in bed' shortly before 5 a.m.[670] Most preferred sitting up in bed or in a chair, it appears. The quiet time notes would cover the day's plans, thoughts for the future, worries about the work or about relationships, guilt about 'sins' and determination to improve or to make restitution, thoughts about the Bible reading and lessons to be learnt from it: in short the gamut of the team member's feelings, resolutions, philosophy and plans. These notes would then be read out – 'shared' – daily with one or two others – with the spouse if married, or if not with close colleagues of the same sex. Particular suggestions or criticisms were shared with the persons they referred to. Colleagues on a particular job would also tend to share relevant guidance. Thoughts of more general relevance were told at team meetings.

At any point in a Group member's day 'the instant sharing of fellowship', as Mott had called it,[671] might be needed – the admitting to a close colleague of the same sex of temptations, sexual or otherwise, perhaps leading to a short prayer together. Team members were expected not to dwell on their sins but to deal with them quickly and get on with positive tasks: 'Change, unite, fight', 'Forget yourself and go all out', 'Go so fast that the mud doesn't stick' were some of their sayings about this. They were also expected to take possibly severe criticisms from other team members. This could be a hard discipline when corrective was not accompanied by charity, as it sometimes was not in the heat of campaigns or particularly in the strains of the war years. HW Austin recalled that at Tahoe Frank Buchman helped him to recover from the criticism of others who had not learnt to 'heal' after they had 'hurt'.[672]

On the other hand one of the great benefits of team membership was seen by many converts to be the closeness of friendships within the team. Relationships might be unsentimental and mutually challenging, and marriages somewhat lacking in physical intimacy. But they also afforded through 'sharing' an intimate knowledge of each other, and a stimulant against boredom, compromise and the often remarked upon 'settling down' of middle life. A medical survey of today's older Group workers

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[669] Chapter XIII
[670] Putney 1922 p 80.
[671] See Chapter I p 26 above.
[672] Austin 1975 Chapter 13 p 13 in MSS

might well find their health and vigour almost as far above that of the national average as their divorce rate is below it. No full-time workers have been divorced, nor have other marriages been dissolved where both members remained committed Group adherents. 'Sharing' and the movement's emphasis on reconciliation meant that many of the mutual antagonisms and frustrations inevitable among groups of people working and living closely together were brought out into the open, discussed and overcome. A full-time worker, through sharing with team members and converting others, might come to have an intimate knowledge of and friendship with tens or even hundreds of people. The movement must be seen as an interlocking and overlaying of many networks of intimate relationships based on deep friendship and sharing between group members who have met on local and travelling teams and at conferences and other centres. This made the independence of any individuals or married couples within the Group difficult to achieve, even if it was desired. The effect was perhaps similar to that of the individual's place in an extended family. This was particularly true for full-time workers. When they brought up children in the post war decades they did not usually form nuclear families. The children called their parents' colleagues 'uncle' and 'aunt', with 'Uncle Frank' a sort of revered extra grandparent. Those living together in each Group home or conference centre were referred to as 'the family at' wherever it was, while the movement as a whole was sometimes called 'a worldwide family'.

Inevitably, few if any friendships with people outside the Group could be as binding for the Group members as those within it. The shared values, analysis of life, and involvement in the Group's progress reinforced the closeness of team relationships.

2. Mental Isolation

The Group's impatience with intellectual argument and the effect of this in bolstering its adherents' confidence in their mission has already been fully discussed. It is hardly necessary to add that this strongly reinforced the solidarity of the 'team' as a whole.

Two academics who wrote books in favour of the Group in the 1930s later left it at least partly because of the dangers of mental isolation which they discerned in the Group, which they came to feel bore disturbing similarities to the totalitarian political movements of the day. Philip Leon in the 1950s saw the Group's emphasis on the role of the 'determined minority' marked by unity and concentration as having been borrowed from Communism and Nazism. Like the latter the Group's 'great purposiveness and extraordinary dynamic' consisted 'chiefly in hope, in this case a limitless hope' that the world could be changed. But also like the totalitarian ideologies, he continued, the Group's role as a determined minority forced it to treat the rest of the world as cases to cure, not as real men to hold dialogue with and by whom to be criticised. Therefore he concluded instead of leavening the world they became isolated from it in a collective arrogance.[673]

Geoffrey Allen brought an interest in psychology to bear on his experience of the Group in the 1930s. He came to see the Group convert's confession during his conversion leading to a transference of his emotions onto the evangelist, as in psychoanalysis a patient's emotions frequently became attached to his analyst. Psychiatrists had to encourage the patient's detachment. But in the Group, Allen considered, the convert's emotions often became dependent on the Group as a whole

[673] Leon 1956 pp 140, 149 f

and were not detached since the Group did not release its claim to authority, or to the authority of its ideas, over the convert. The strain of the political and economic situation, he argued, made converts all the more willing to abdicate their independence of thought in return for security within the Group. Nazism and the Group were similar he wrote, in their 'idolatrous devotion' to the collectivity; in the heightened emotion resulting from the liberation of all the convert's energies to a single goal; in the fellowship of the crowd, the price of which is intense hatred of outsiders; in the rising sense of power, of being beyond criticism and on the winning side; in the lack of critical judgement; and in the heightened ability to sacrifice for the group. Allen gave as an example the Group's use of the speaking chorus (the repetition by a meeting of certain phrases) and the practice of shuffling chairs forward around the speaker at Group meetings, both of which restricted individuality and a critical turn of mind.[674] The Group also talked of the need to detach the convert's dependence from the evangelist, but in terms of transferring this dependence onto God. In practice this meant encouraging the individual to overcome his desire for the approval of the rest of the team, thus enabling him to hold them without compromise to the Group's principles. It did not mean the encouragement of criticism of the Group's principles.

Leon and Allen probably exaggerated the Group's intolerance. Group members were used to forming relationships, sometimes close ones, with people of many different types who were not committed to the Group. They were not mentally isolated in the sense of being unaware of the views of others. But there was certainly some truth in Leon's and Allen's view that a price of the Group's dynamism and unity was an emotional and intellectual concentration which was sectarian or uncompromising in its rejection of other viewpoints. The Group was both extremely open to accepting new seekers and members quickly into the fellowship, and yet exclusive in seeing salvation as dependent on acceptance of its principles.

The boundary lines between Group members and outsiders were clearly marked. Immediately visible boundary marks indicating a non-member included the use of tobacco, alcohol, make-up, sexually provocative dress, and at least according to *Remaking Men* of 1954, suede shoes and other 'effeminate' dress for men; but not the use of moderately [expensive? Word missing] clothes and food, face powder or coiffeurs for women, or smart fashions of an unprovocative nature. On closer inspection members of the movement were recognisable by their adherence to the disciplines of morning 'quiet times' and 'sharing' and by their appreciation of the nuances of 'purity', 'lifechanging', the 'Christian' as opposed to the materialist approach to social problems and so on.

3. The Authority of Frank Buchman

Observers at house parties in the 1920s and 30s sometimes commented on the fact that Buchman kept himself in the background, pushing his younger followers into positions of responsibility. This was indeed one of his foremost principles of teamwork. During the late 1920s, increasingly, house parties and travelling teams were carried on without his presence, a mark of the success of his policy. However AG Baldwin's comment on this in 1928 that the leadership of the movement was now shared and that Buchman's disappearance would no longer hinder it, was an over-

[674] Allen 1935 passim

statement. Buchman's leadership continued to be essential to the movement's growth and development, and his authority in it unchallenged. This authority continued until his death to be a powerful force for cohesion and co-ordinated activity within the movement. Buchman expected Group members to take initiatives, but he could veto them by his disapproval. A notable example of this concerned The College of the Good Road which was established in Caux in 1949. It was an ambitious attempt to formalise the training normally given within the Group, and to add a somewhat more academic element to it. The college was largely the brainchild of Roger Hicks, an Oxford graduate and full-time worker of considerable abilities who had been a lecturer in History at Madras University 1928-31, taken a theology course at Cambridge 1932, taken leading roles in the Canadian, Norwegian, Swiss and Dutch campaigns in the 1930s and helped start the Group in the Balkans in 1938-39.[675]

He became the college 'Principal'. 314 students enrolled for the autumn term of 1949. Lectures were given under Departments for the arts, current affairs, economics and political science, history and 'ideology' (Marx, St Paul, Buchman) and on MRA in operation. The lecturers were mainly MRA full-time workers, but included Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Nigerian political leader, and Theophil Spoerri, Professor of French and Italian Literature, and Rector of Zurich University. The project proved to be a controversial one within the movement. Eventually Buchman stepped in and put an end to it. It seems probable that he thought that its leaders were becoming over-ambitious and arrogant; and he perhaps felt that the college was diverting the team from the front line of evangelism.[676]

Buchman's authority was accepted for several reasons. Above all was his reputation for a more intimate contact with God than his colleagues had. This was partly based on his apparent ability to divine the needs and thoughts of members of his team at important times, even sometimes when they were on different continents, and on the frequency with which his 'guidance' seemed to foretell events or give him information about people.[677] It was also related to his total identification with his mission, seen for instance in his ability to drive himself to extraordinary lengths in its service. Typical of this in the years before his stroke were his efforts at Princeton in the early 1920s. His visits there had to be brief. On one occasion in 1919 he had 5 hours sleep in three days because of the spate of personal interviews, on another held interviews 'every half hour' for three days with sleep snatched in the early hours of the mornings.

His memory and mental concentration were as prodigious as his energy. One of his team described a night's train journey on the North American campaign of 1934 when Buchman had just decided to extend the campaign to the Canadian West. Overnight he had to prepare pairs of team members to go ahead to seven Canadian cities to prepare the way, by a connecting train the next morning. The incident is worth a fairly full quotation:

> Frank had himself visited these cities just two years before. So far as we knew, he had no expectation of returning at this time or in the foreseeable future. As soon as it was clear which two would go to each city, Frank began dictating

[675] Biography of Hicks in C 203.

[676] 2018 Comment: I don't know why I didn't also speculate here that the college was likely going in too intellectual a direction for Buchman. Employed at colleges for many years, he had become sceptical of intellectual prowess: let others focus on that and his movement would focus on 'Life'.

[677] See Lean 1974 p 63 'Hundreds of well-authenticated stories…' concerning this.

> letters of introduction to relays of secretaries through the night... I have never experienced anything like that night's dictation – each letter a personal letter to every major hotel-owner across Canada, to every newspaper editor in those cities, and to other leading men. With no notes or diary, Frank dictated from memory, with names and correct spelling, greetings to wives and often to children with their names, letters brimful of news... with a warmth and spontaneity as though he had seen them a week or two before.

The fourteen set off the next morning, the team member concluded, 'while Frank in full vigour led the attack on the United States'.[678]

Buchman frequently cleared out his bank account to help an individual or the movement. He booked transport for large teams without having the finance for them. In such cases he trusted that 'God would provide'. The money usually came in, and his followers were further impressed by his readiness to take risks on the security of his guidance from God. When Roger Hicks was a young man he offered Buchman the £25,000 he had just inherited. Buchman refused because he thought Hicks needed to learn to manage his own money under guidance. He then accepted about l/10th of the sum which Hicks had guidance to give. Hicks did not know at the time Buchman refused the money that he had just reserved liner passages for 32 people to go to Canada without the money to pay for them.[679]

Buchman's team was frequently amazed and challenged by his ability to plan on a large scale. In this he was of similar mould to his friend Henry Ford, and of course to Mott. The huge rallies and teams of up to 1,000 of the 1930s were Buchman's conception. In 1952 he was advised by Hicks and another member of his team who knew India to take as an absolute limit 30-50 people on his projected visit there. Instead he took 180 with four plays. His ability to make friendships on equal terms with leading politicians or royalty, and to criticise them frankly to their face in private on occasions, was above that of most of his followers. He also had a shrewd eye for publicity and for the sort of campaign that would make headlines in the press and interest a city's or country's leadership – whether it was using the famous tennis player on his team to hold an exhibition match to break down suspicion in the little town of Sarasota, Florida, when illness confined him there in 1943, or sending his team to the British coalfields in 1946 when the Labour Government had called for increased coal production.

Buchman 'often erred', wrote Austin, 'in the ruthlessness of his rebuke to a man or woman', particularly in the years after his stroke.[680] He often followed up such rebukes with a message of apology or a bunch of flowers. He could also use anger and rejection of others in a calculated manner. Peter Howard wrote to his wife in 1946 of Buchman that one of his

> favourite expressions is, 'Now he can damn well go to thunder'. He adds, 'If I didn't say "damn" sometimes, Peter, they wouldn't pay any attention to me.[681]

More significant than this was his public rejection of friendship with Peter Howard himself from 1946 to 1950. Howard was working full-time for the movement. His abilities were comparable to Buchman's in terms of energy, flair for publicity, ability

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678 MSS Biography
679 Lean 1974 pp 68-9
680 Austin 1975
681 Peter Howard to his wife, Jan 3 1946, in Wolrige-Gordon 1969 p 195

to plan on a large scale and to be taken seriously by some of the world's leaders. It was obvious that he would have a great influence on the movement, particularly after Buchman's death. Buchman, however, was unhappy with his level of independent commitment to God. He felt that Howard looked to him too much for approval and authority. So he deliberately ostracised Howard in public as well as in private. This trial, similar, wrote Garth Lean, to Loyola's treatment of his chosen successor Father Laynes, ended when Howard decided to live without any recourse to 'human security', as he put it, submitting totally to God's will.[682] 'Those who knew Peter Howard in the last years of his life', wrote Howard's daughter, 'will understand that these four bleak years with Buchman made the achievements of the future possible. As Howard himself often quoted, "There is no Crown without the Cross"'.[683]

Buchman asked for his team colleagues to criticise him, but did not make it easy for them to do so.

'It was not easy', wrote Lean, 'to break through to a fearless relationship of give and take with him, and too few of us did it as a constant'. To do so, he continued, was to invite 'contact with a white-hot flame of devotion to God which searched out your own motives and demanded further and ever further change in yourself', a daunting prospect. But, Lean added, Buchman could also be 'tender, when one least deserved it' and open to change himself. [684]

Howard was accepted as successor to Buchman on the latter's death because he combined outstanding personal abilities with a similar degree of 'closeness to God' and commitment, in the opinion of other leading Group members. He was, however, of their generation and had shorter experience of the movement. He could probably not therefore be quite as dictatorial as Buchman, though he also had a capacity for calculated anger and for 'searching out the motives' of his team. Nor was he held in such awe or treated to such honours within the movement as his predecessor. Buchman's birthdays, with his full encouragement, had been occasions for major celebrations and speeches, for the collection of appreciative messages from famous men, and for the publishing of 'tributes' to the leader by his followers.[685]

After Howard's death in 1965 there was no outstanding personality able to hold authority over the movement's various national leaders. The office of 'Leader of MRA' was not a bureaucratic one that was automatically filled. 'Leadership goes to the spiritually fit' asserted a Group saying. After 1965 it went to the combined teamwork of the twenty or so leading members of the movement – such as Wilson, Wood, Lean, Belden, Jaeger, Barrett, Cook, Caulfeild, (all British), Campbell (Canadian), Gandhi, Lala and Mathur (Indian), Wise and Coulter (Australian), Mottu and other Swiss, Shibusawa (Japanese), and Belk (American).

Buchman and Howard appeared in some ways to be typically 'charismatic' leaders. However, their special contact with the supernatural was a charismatic ability that was diffused throughout the movement. Every member of the Group was expected to receive their own guidance. Buchman and Howard were theoretically, and sometimes in practice, subject to the 'guided' criticism of other Group members. Buchman himself was also subject to the movement's ideology, (that is to say, to the ideology as he had always understood it, rather than to the more conventionally revivalist or

[682] Lean 1974 Chapter 9 p 93
[683] Wolrige Gordon 1969
[684] Lean 1974 pp 64 and 75
[685] See OG 1938 (i), Buchman 1958 etc.

evangelical ideology that most of his followers in the early 1930s believed that the Group stood for). Buchman did not have the 'ideal-typical' charismatic leader's ability to alter the movement's ideology beyond the teachings he had consistently given from the beginning of the movement. To do so would have been to invite rebellion by at least some of his more experienced followers, who conceived of their allegiance as being first to God and the Christian faith and only secondarily to Buchman and the Group. This was indeed the principle that Buchman tried to instil in his followers. Buchman's and Howard's authority, like that of the movement's more local leaders, was in short, accorded to them because of their ideological understanding, their personal abilities in organisation and evangelism, and above all their charismatic contact with God and self-identification with 'God's work'.

There was an informal but recognisable chain of leadership from Buchman down to the newest member of a local group, or to the scarcely 'changed' stage-hand on an MRA play. The most important of the movement's principles in this respect was its insistence on 'checking'. Initially, it seems, this emphasis was developed to counteract charges of the Montanist 'heresy' of uncontrolled inspiration inherent in individual guidance. Guidance, the movement's leaders assured doubtful churchmen, had to be checked, not only against the scriptures and 'absolute moral standards' but also with more experienced people. This however opened the way to a legitimation of control by the movement's leaders over the inspiration and actions of their followers. The intricate chains of 'sharing' and 'checking' – of local group members with local leaders, of the latter with full-time workers, and of them with national leaders and eventually Buchman himself – enabled an observation and control of group members' lives down to small details, and a co-ordination of their work in the movement's international strategies. Of course this control was voluntarily accepted. Material sanctions were not normally available to the Group's leaders over their followers. Only about three full-time workers were asked to leave to take ordinary jobs in thirty years: one for health reasons; two because Buchman felt their lives were not adequate, though it seems he probably regretted this later.[686] Others left voluntarily. In some ways it might be thought that it was easier to leave the Group than to stay in, particularly for those full-time workers without assured income, who had to live with the daily concern – or daily faith – of not knowing how to meet their next travel or rent bill. The Group's moral discipline was also challenging. On the other hand many Group members' entire emotional, financial and life 'investments' had been made in the movement. The sanctions available to their colleagues and leaders in the Group were the powerful ones of being able to withdraw approval, friendship and trust.

Brothers and sisters, parents and cousins were often converted by the Group. Endogamy was the rule for Group adherents, particularly for full-time workers. In the second generation therefore considerable networks of family relationships were achieved. Many of the leading younger full-time workers today are connected by blood or marriage – such as the Thwaites, Phelps, Craig, Vibert, Wood, Wilson, Lancaster family network linked by both first and second generation marriages between Group members, and including at least 30 members of the Group, 18 of them vocational full-time workers.

An indication of the degree of cohesion within the Group in one of its aspects is afforded by a study of the rate of turnover of committed workers. It will be remembered that a list of 103 full-time workers in London in February 1939 was

[686] KD Belden interview 1974.

	Total	Continued vocational full-time work		Remained fully in movement – not vocational	To side lines	Left
		Until death	Until now			
British vocational	63	17	36	3	1	6
US vocational	7	1			2?→	4
Europe vocational	2		2			
In Careers	9			5 plus 2?→		2
Leisured	1			1		
'At home'	8			8		
Retired	6			6		
Unemployed	3			1	2	
Not known	3					←3?
Totals	102	18	38	26	5	15

analysed in Chapter VIII above. An enquiry into the fate of these in autumn 1974 established that only 15 of them had left the movement and a further 5 had moved onto its sidelines, maintaining only tenuous contact with it. 12 of these 20 left in the late 1960s - early 1970s during the breakaway of the youth movement in the USA and elsewhere.

The complete table follows:

(Arrows refer to the direction of doubt.)

Less than one thirteenth of these committed workers had therefore left the centre of the movement within 25 years, and less than a fifth even after the crisis of the late 1960s.

4. Conflicting Allegiances and Withdrawals

Buchman asserted that commitment to the Group 'enhanced all primary loyalties', to family, church, nation or whatever. Loyalty, however, has different interpretations. 'The true patriot', went a Group saying, 'is the man who tries to bring his country under God's control', not the one who supports his country 'right or wrong'. By the same logic loyalty to family or church meant 'fighting' to establish 'God's control' and Group principles within them. Loyalty to the church might alternatively be interpreted, however, as preserving it from being rent by the demands of the Group, or as 'fighting' to alter the Group's harsh judgement of the churches.

Some churchmen and academics were unable to maintain full allegiance to the Oxford Group. Professor Grensted for instance largely withdrew from it from the later 1930s. Howard Rose, another of the Group's early Oxford leaders, found that his calling as a parish priest gradually drew him out of active involvement in the Group, though he remained sympathetic. Julian Thornton-Duesbery explained that he experienced the conflict of loyalties between Group and church or college 'acutely'. If ever this

conflict had become insupportable, he said, he would have chosen the church. At times he did move out of the Group, although always to return. The issues on which he experienced these conflicts included the problem of how far he might appear to be committing his college to support the Group when he made public statements in its favour while he was college Principal. Although Thornton-Duesbery would speak as an individual, the Group was always keen to make the most of any supporter's official position. College colleagues might therefore feel that the college's name was adding kudos to the movement unwarrantedly. The pressure of Group leaders to get their more eminent supporters to sign public statements was thus sometimes resisted out of loyalty to their own institutions. This pressure was, apparently, one of the main reasons for Grensted's move to the sidelines of the movement.

The desire for an ecclesiastical or academic career was one of the main points at which conflicting loyalties might be felt. In 1932 Buchman would have liked Thornton-Duesbery to go full-time with the Group. His former principal at Wycliffe Hall, an ex-supporter of the Group, by then Bishop of Jerusalem, urged him to take a teaching post in his diocese. 'Guidance' was not clear. He went to Jerusalem. Had he chosen full-time work as a vocation, like his friend Alan Thornhill, Chaplain of Hertford College, Oxford, it is doubtful whether he would have experienced so many subsequent tensions of loyalty. Rev Thornton-Duesbery's opinion was that every practising clergyman in the Group inevitably felt some conflicts of loyalty. Faults in this lay on both sides, he added. He considered that the 'wrong kind of individualism' was 'the besetting sin' of Anglican clergy. The lack of strong ecclesiastical discipline, the clergyman's possession of the freehold of his church, and the traditional prestige and flattery accorded to the local minister could encourage his sense of being 'king of his own castle'. On the other hand he pointed out that some clergy, while not necessarily resisting teamwork with the Group, came up against 'a certain authoritarianism proceeding from Brown's Hotel'.[687] These two points – a) a successful minister's resistance to team discipline and b) the Group leaders' authoritarianism – can be best illustrated by two cases of splits in or withdrawals from the movement.

The first example concerns Sam Shoemaker, an important figure in the movement from 1918-1941, the second, Frank Raynor, a minor figure who passed quickly in and out of the movement's fringes in 1932-33 at a time when Shoemaker was still one of the Group's well known spokesmen.

a) Resistance to team discipline: Shoemaker

Sam Shoemaker was 'converted' by Buchman as a missionary in Peking in 1918. He led Buchman's assault on Princeton as YMCA Secretary there in the early 1920s. The first indication of his relationship with Buchman comes from a letter Buchman wrote to him at the end of his time at Princeton. Buchman invited him to join his world tour of 1924 and not take up another post in regular Christian work immediately. He wrote:

> You have been riding roughshod over experiences which have forged Sherry and me into an intelligent, workable team. You need a year's discipline in a team... I have always tried never to cramp your style and may have erred in the past on the side of leniency. You need the drab, not the dramatic.

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[687] Information for this and the preceding paragraph from Thornton-Duesbery interview 1974

He added that Shoemaker would not be able to develop permanent leadership in others if he remained an individualist. He also criticised his 'faculty of pre-judging my knowledge of situations'.[688] As Collis was finding out at about the same time, to question Buchman's diagnosis of a situation was to invite a wrathful retort from him.[689]

Shoemaker joined the 1924 tour. But he was pursued by letters from the board of Calvary Church, New York, offering him the post of minister there, each letter increasing his potential salary. In Constantinople Shoemaker surprised his less moneyed companions by buying carpets and other furnishings for his future rectory. At times he greatly resented Buchman's efforts to give him 'the drab' on the tour, whether it was doing menial tasks for him on board ship or accepting to take a minor role in a meeting for which he had prepared to be the principal speaker. In Delhi he finally decided to return at once to New York, against Buchman's judgement, and did so.[690]

Calvary Church became the movement's American headquarters through the 1930s and Shoemaker one of the Group's most active members. But Buchman and Hamilton were never asked to speak at Calvary publicly.[691] Personal differences between Shoemaker and Buchman continued. There was an occasion in 1932, for instance, when Shoemaker insisted on going on holiday in Florida against Buchman's judgement – Buchman accused him of 'self-will'.[692] Buchman, as already mentioned, wrote to Shoemaker that the American work was too ecclesiastical.[693] Shoemaker made the gentlest of hints in print as early as 1928 that there was a danger of too much organisation in the movement. He called it:

> entirely unorganized... much more like a leaven than like an organisation: and *some of us* pray it may ever remain so (my italics).[694]

In 1941 he announced to the press that he was severing connection with the movement and had asked Buchman to make his headquarters elsewhere. A full understanding of Shoemaker's withdrawal from the movement awaits a closer study of his life. The view from within the movement was that he preferred to be 'king' of a parish than part of a 'fellowship' that was marked by a severe discipline of mutual criticism and that was going beyond the earlier ecclesiastical centredness of the American Group to involvement in national affairs.

That there was more to Shoemaker's withdrawal than this is suggested by the fact that Sherry Day left the Group at the same time. This must have been a severe blow to Buchman. It probably contributed, along with the draft issue and his tendency to overwork, to his stroke of 1942. Shoemaker had always tended to individualism but Day had been known as the one of all Buchman's followers most likely to remain with him.[695] He had been called 'Frank's shadow and complement' by Russell, the 'saintliest' Christian in the Group by Shoemaker, and by Buchman 'the most

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688 Buchman to Shoemaker Jan 26 1924. MSS Biography
689 Collis 1937
690 Hamilton interview 1975
691 Ibid
692 Thornton-Duesbery interview 1974
693 See above Chapter XII p 171
694 Shoemaker 1928 (iv) p 23
695 Hamilton interview 1975

trustworthy man I know'.[696] The November 1941 issue of Shoemaker's parish magazine – the month that Shoemaker left the Group – carried an article by Day, described now as a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Amherst, Virginia, entitled 'I Believe In... the Holy Catholic Church'. The implication may have been that the Group did not to a sufficient extent.

Clark wrote in 1944, that Shoemaker and Day left the Group 'because they feel that it has forsaken its early principles'. In particular, he wrote, they felt 'that the Group had forsaken its early Christian emphasis in its utilization of mass methods and was in danger of becoming simply another religious organization.[697] Thus the reason for which Buchman, and presumably Shoemaker and Day, had left the YMCA was now given as a reason for leaving the Oxford Group. The other side of the coin of the Group's emergence from an ecclesiastical milieu to 'tackle' the nation was its growth of organisation and independence. The other side of the principle of teamwork was the authority of Frank Buchman in this independent team. Shoemaker was a strong and vigorous personality who it seems was irked by Buchman's claim to authority.

Other more 'old fashioned' evangelicals also left at about the time of the MRA campaign – notably in Switzerland and South Africa, but very few in Britain, it seems.[698]

b) Authority from Brown's Hotel – Groups Magazine

In the early 1930s the interest of the clergy in the Group's work led to a growth of evangelism in its name that went beyond its control. With insufficient time or staff to train all the clergy who attended house parties, it was not surprising that the Group found its name and methods being used by some of them in ways to which it objected perhaps as too narrowly evangelical, too intellectual, or too ecclesiastical. This might have been seen as the sort of unorganised permeation of the churches that the Group leaders said they wanted. Instead the latter attempted to impose their authority on these spontaneous branches of the movement, by insisting that their 'guidance' be 'checked' with the Group leaders. At least one minister found this profoundly shocking, when it happened to him.

Frank Raynor, a Methodist minister, was greatly impressed by *For Sinners Only* and by his first house party in about 1932-33. Though later he took care to assert that his own re-awakening had already begun independently, Group methods helped him to start a local 'revival' from his manse. He joined in various minor campaigns run 'on Group lines' on his own or on a friend's initiatives. Before long it was made plain to him 'that the campaigns we were conducting did not accord with the 'techniques' and 'guidance' of the Group leaders'. He found that far from being an informal fellowship it was 'organised into a closed corporation'. He had already felt that 'guidance' was 'a point of utmost danger in the movement'. Now on being admonished repeatedly in correspondence from Group leaders that 'You have not checked your guidance with us' he concluded that 'guidance' had been 'made the grounds of a new infallibility'. 'From that time' he went on 'I quietly dropped the word "Oxford" and continued my work as a "Grouper"'.[699]

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[696] Russell 1934 (1932) p 232 f
[697] Clark 1944 p 59 and p 87
[698] KD Belden interview 1974
[699] Raynor 1934 pp 108-170

Raynor's foundation of *Groups* magazine, described briefly earlier,[700] was a response to all 'those who came to us in their need' – ministers and others who valued many of the Oxford Group's emphases but had failed to stay with the Group not just because of moral defeats but also because of intellectual disagreements. The magazine was designed to discuss the criticisms of the movement and establish an open, orthodox image of it. The Oxford Group's failure to do this 'had created in the public mind the feeling not only that the movement was something sinister, secret, Jesuitical, but also that there were behind it ulterior motives, secret dictatorships and financial obscurities'.

By contrast the 'notes' of the new magazine would be 'Universality; Freedom; Frankness and Full Sharing'. The first edition of 5,000 sold in a fortnight. Later issues sold larger numbers. Like the Oxford Group, Raynor and his colleagues stressed the joy and release of conversion, and the peace, forgiveness and 'guidance' that should result from a continuing closeness to God. But for them 'Fellowship' meant a world-wide oneness of spirit with all other 'surrendered' Christians rather than a militantly unified discrete body of colleagues 'checking' all their activities. Raynor also objected to the Group's upper class image.

Raynor's conception was of a looser, the Group might have said 'sentimental', fellowship emphasising the benefits of 'personal evangelism' to ordinary congregations and ministers. It lacked an understanding of the 'strategy' and the cohesion of the 'determined minority' in which Buchman believed. It was perhaps typical of the 'armchair Christianity' and desire for localised 'comfortable' revivals for which Buchman castigated many of his followers in his 1938 speech at Visby, the sort of revivalism, he said, which had no hope of rivalling Communism as a force in the contemporary world.

The collapse of *Groups* magazine perhaps indicated the truth of Leon's warning that it was impossible to emulate the Group's collective dynamic and yet escape their collective arrogance, impenetrability and rejection of critical debate. Or perhaps it was, as the Oxford Group might have thought, evidence that Raynor was a sentimentalist, a man unwilling to pay the price of real 'change' and 'fellowship'. Indeed perhaps these are two ways of saying the same thing, with pejorative or positive valuations of it respectively: that the ongoing success of Buchman's movement beyond the fashionable rise and fall of its revivalism was a result of the cohesion and long term commitment of its members which Buchman's authority, 'strategic' ideology, emphasis on a 'fellowship' of 'sharing' and 'checking', and impatience with intellectual debate, had created.[701]

Raynor was an unimportant figure in the Group's history, except in so far as he may have typified the response of many clergy who attended a few Group functions, learnt something about 'life-changing' from them, but resisted the Group's drive to make of them fully committed and co-ordinated members of a campaigning 'fellowship'.

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[700] Chapter XII p 172

[701] 2018 Comment: but consider the success of Alcoholics Anonymous, which also rejected authoritarian control and anything like Buchman's strategy. Individual AA groups have remarkable autonomy. It is the lifechanging methodology, group process, anonymity, and autonomy that have enabled it to become what some have called the world's largest anarchist organization. Bill W said that if AA people treated him like the Oxford Group people treated Buchman, it would 'drive him right back on the bottle'.

5. A Recent Split

Raynor and Shoemaker withdrew from the movement, taking with them parishes and friends, but they did not split it seriously. The only real split in the movement's history, in the sense of taking a considerable body of its full-time and committed members off to form a breakaway but continuing movement, happened in the late 1960s. It is too soon, and information is too sparse, to attempt a thorough explanation of this. But some brief speculations can be made. The reason for attempting such speculation, in a period that falls outside the chronological focus of this thesis, is that frequently the clearest indications of the role of a particular authority are afforded when that authority is suddenly removed. The situation after the deaths of Buchman and his successor, Howard, could be expected to throw some light on the role of Buchman's authority in the movement during the earlier period with which this thesis is chiefly concerned.

In 1964-65 Peter Howard started a dynamic branch of the work on American campuses. A series of major speeches by Howard in universities, and two summer conferences at Mackinac Island led to a wave of enthusiastic new recruits. Using beat and folk music they created an MRA revue of a new type, exciting enough to win a place in the pop music hit parade. Over the next four years this *Sing Out*, later renamed *Up With People*, revue became a major success for the movement in other countries as well as America. But from about 1966 differences of opinion led the *Up With People* oriented national branches of MRA in the USA, Brazil, Japan, South Africa, Kenya, Germany, Denmark and Italy to break away from the orthodox movement centred in Britain, Switzerland, India and Australia, and including Norway, Sweden, Holland, France and New Zealand.

In most countries the movement underwent considerable disputes. In Britain, for instance, some people on the fringe of the movement or out of sympathy with it turned to *Up With People*. In the early 1970s the *Up With People* revue declined in popularity, dynamism and in the content of its message. The message, it appears, was reduced from Howard's experientialist Christianity, and controversial criticisms of Western morality and lack of 'ideology', to an educational programme of vague goodwill, acting abroad as informal ambassadors for the American State Department. Militant 'purity' and 'guidance' were replaced by less demanding substitutes. Little of the breakaway movement now remains.[702] The main body of the movement is at present regaining ground and renewing contacts with 'lost' countries.

A consideration of the causes of the split suggests the following:

1) The fact that it happened so soon after Buchman's and Howard's deaths, when there was no longer a commanding authority figure in the movement suggests that their authority had been important in keeping the movement both together and committed to its traditional ideology.
2) It also suggests that within the national branches of the movement that broke away there was already a lack of thorough commitment to this ideology in certain respects. *Up With People* went further than MRA had ever done in accepting finance from business sources, and in accepting official invitations from

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[702] 'Little… remains'. This, written in 1975, was incorrect. In 1976 *Up With People* performed at half time at the Superbowl, perhaps the premier US sporting event, the first of five such appearances. It continues as an educational nonprofit to this day.

politically right wing regimes, notably Franco's regime in Spain. Its 'sentimentalism' in moderating the Group's standards on 'purity', for instance, was also a large departure from MRA orthodoxy. However, it may be that these tendencies were themselves related to the orthodox movement's weaknesses or policies. MRA under Buchman and Howard had revelled in public in the appreciation of politicians like Diem, Kishi and Nixon while yet trying to maintain in private a degree of moral tension with them. For the ranks of the movement it was the mutual admiration that was experienced, however, rather than Buchman's or Howard's personal 'straight talking' to top politicians behind closed doors. In public the movement had also presented its secularised image, which was related to its attempt to be 'on the wavelength' of contemporary national leaders and youth, while privately within the Group maintaining its Christian emphasis. Many of the young people attracted by the *Up With People* revue would have needed extended training in the movement to understand its leaders' Christian beliefs. These two policies – public flirting with conservative political leaders and a secularised image, contrasting with private criticism of them and Christianity – required a fine balance. It would not be surprising if many of the Group's full-time workers found themselves unable to keep this balance when the possibility of unparalleled success and popularity among young people gave them the chance of sloughing off the popular image of MRA as a puritanical, old-fashioned group with closed minds.

3) The fact that more or less the whole US full-time team and most of the foreigners on it joined the team leaders in rejecting the 'old' MRA may have been related to the Group's structure in the USA. Tax benefits made it advisable for the Group there to channel all its income through a central fund. Individual full-time workers were therefore financially dependent on the centre. This was the opposite of the British situation, where full-time workers raised most of their income personally, often from those they had 'changed' in their locality or sphere of evangelism. One result may have been to induce a certain complacency and lack of everyday 'dependence on faith and prayer' in the American 'team', which may have slightly detached them from the roots and moral tensions of their faith. The American work was also more mobile, and less rooted in local areas. This was due both to the size of the country and to the lack of a real revival there in the 1930s on the scale of the British development. The travelling, full-time team was therefore both more dependent on its leaders and more independent of a grass roots base than in Britain.

4) Buchman's overriding authority in the movement, the awe in which he was held, and the difficulty of criticising him, may have reduced his followers' ability to criticise his successors. The lack of a tradition of criticising other aspects of the movement, such as its theology and moral code, would have added to this inability to criticise Buchman's successors. In America Blanton Belk, generally recognised as the leader of the American work, thus may have been allowed too much power.

Free speech and democracy were ideals the movement had claimed to defend against Communism. But it had not practised them itself. Its deference to worldly authority, its secularised appeal, its neglect of 'intellectual' debate, the dictatorship within the movement – indeed the very points for which it had been most criticised by churchmen and liberal intellectuals – proved to be its own undoing in several countries after Buchman's death.

The *Up With People* split-off does not only indicate the movement's weaknesses, however. The subsequent history of the main body of the movement also shows its strengths. In particular it shows the posthumous success of Buchman's efforts to spur his colleagues to take an equal share of responsibility for MRA. Buchman had not envisaged a permanent leadership of the movement by one individual after his death. Howard's leadership was intended as a temporary transition measure, bridging the gap to a corporate leadership of men from different countries. It was the unforeseen suddenness of Howard's death at 56 which found this group unprepared to forestall the American breakaway movement which came so soon afterwards. The split-off stimulated the growth of this group into giving the more fully co-ordinated, active leadership which they provide today. Under their leadership, and within only five years of the *Up With People* problem reaching its peak, MRA is actively regaining all the affected territories. They are discovering also that the residential, as opposed to the full-time, teams of MRA in these countries included a larger number of people sympathetic to the original ideology of the movement. The resilience, cohesion and adaptability of the movement has thus been demonstrated, particularly in contrast to the speedy decline of the breakaway movement which has now ceased to exist, except for a commercial, educational, secular remnant of *Up With People* in the USA.[703] [704]

6. Resistance to Pressures to Develop Sectarian Characteristics.

Having described the various pressures on the Group to develop sectarian forms of organisation and exclusivity, the most important fact remains. In the 1970s the Group has still not developed fully sectarian characteristics, and gives no sign of doing so. Its members continue to worship at their own churches. Churchmen such as Rev Thornton-Duesbery continue to take part in its inner council.

The reasons for this are mainly two. Firstly the churches have not tried to assert their authority within the movement in any vigorous manner, nor proscribed its members: in short they have not forced the Group into defensive sectarian formation. Secondly the Group has above all been outward looking, a campaigning group dedicated to influencing the outside world rather than to maintaining its own communal life and faith. In this mission the need to appear universally applicable to people of all faiths and of none has been of paramount importance. For its very *raison d'être* the Group could not afford to appear as a narrow sectarian body. Much has been made in this thesis of the restricted mental world of the Group, and yet on the other hand of Buchman's talent for presenting his message in terms that would catch the interest of contemporary men and women of affairs. The latter appeal depended on the Group's appearance of universalism, not of narrowness. If the Group ever degenerates into a sect, it can be taken for granted that either the churches have turned intolerant or that it has abandoned its original purpose of 'putting Jesus Christ in the midst of the modern world' in favour of a more comfortable place on the sidelines of the modern world. The very certainty of the Group that it had the one 'Answer' for the world, the

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[703] For the contents of this paragraph I am indebted to notes made by KD Belden (my father) October 1975.

[704] 2018 Comment: The disparagement of *Up With People* in this last sentence – ceasing to exist *except as* a commercial educational enterprise – reflects my father's view in 1975, and frankly, his horror and anger at the disloyalty of his erstwhile colleagues who, in his view, abandoned God and moral integrity to go for worldly success. A very different view from within *Up With People* can be found for example in the 2001 memoir *Always a Little Further* by Buchman's long-time personal secretary, Morris Martin, who left MRA to go with *Up With People.*

certainty which was behind its mental restriction, was also the source of its urgent determination not to be dismissed as a sect but to be available to all men and women.

Conclusion

Correcting Misinterpretations of the Group's Ideology

The central theme of this thesis has been to correct certain misconceptions of the ideology of the Oxford Group, which have gained currency among some sociologists, historians and journalists. These were mentioned briefly in the introduction.

The most serious of these misinterpretations, both in the extent of its inaccuracy and in regard to the wide public which it has reached, has been the study by Tom Driberg, the recently ennobled journalist and long serving Labour MP.[705] A reader seeking information on Moral Re-Armament in a British Public Library will in most cases find Driberg's substantial work, sometimes accompanied by a slimmer, partisan work by one of the movement's leading authors. Of the two, it will be Driberg's volume, with its footnotes and its air of serious enquiry by a public citizen, which will appear to be the more impartial. This work was, however, the culmination of Driberg's thirty years of writing, principally in articles in the popular press, against the movement. In his articles Driberg reiterated many of the familiar innuendoes of sexual and financial scandal and mystery with which journalists titillate their public's imagination concerning religious movements. Driberg's study therefore has to be approached with as much scepticism as the movement's own propaganda. But it remains the main source of critical information and argument on the Oxford Group's post-1945 phase.

Driberg contended that the Oxford Group had departed from its revivalist, Christian origins to become virtually a tool of American foreign policy and business interests, as a movement which gathered people of any religion into an anti-Communist crusade, without any longer trying to convert them to evangelical Christianity. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether the Group could be said to have had a conservative effect on society, the central argument of this thesis has been that Driberg was wrong in so far as he suggested that the Group intentionally transformed itself into a secular, conservative political weapon.

Driberg may have popularised the most extreme misunderstanding of the Oxford Group, but he was not alone in misinterpreting its ideology. More serious academic writers have also been mistaken concerning the Group. The chapters on the Group in Hadley Cantril's *The Psychology of Social Movements*, and a doctoral thesis by WH Clark, both written in the 1940s, are cases in point. In different ways both authors concentrated on the Group's appeal to its clientele rather than on the intentions of the Group's leaders. This led Cantril into the errors of suggesting that Buchman altered his ideological message in order to reach a different public, and that the Group's adherents were consciously hypocritical in calling for a reformed society. Cantril seemed to have little appreciation of the stability and sincerity with which Buchman believed in his ideology – a point that must be recognised whether it is considered that Buchman was mistaken in his beliefs or not.

Concentration on the Group's clientele rather than on its leaders led Clark to stress the origins and methods of Buchman's individualized evangelism, without investigating his wider aims. This was simply because it was the personal evangelism which was most obvious to the American college students of the 1920s and 30s with whom Clark was familiar. Clark's study fails to explain the development of the movement, nor

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[705] Driberg 1964

does his analysis provide a basis on which to interpret that development. The wide scope of MRA's hope of 'remaking the world' and its involvements in important international and industrial crises seem to fit uneasily with the picture of the movement provided by Clark. The main value of Clark's thesis was in his research into the Group's early history in the American colleges. He touched on the Group's changing emphases, particularly in stating that the Rev Shoemaker left the Group in 1942 because of its 'less Christian' outlook, but did not attempt any explanation of this.

Eister, who wrote the fullest sociological study of the Group, also came closest to understanding Buchman's ideological aims. He wrote that Buchman had always seen revival as the only way to save civilisation,[706] thus contradicting Cantril and Clark's view that the Group had started simply as an expression of personal evangelism. But Eister also made at least one crucial mistake. He wrote that the younger leaders of the MRA phase had not undergone the same process of 'soul surgery' – that is the full experience of personal evangelism – that the movement's converts of the 1920s and 30s had undergone. This was to imply that personal Christian evangelism was fading out of the movement – the very criticism later made by Driberg and others, such as the Church Assembly's 'working party' and Edwards.[707]

Like Clark's study, this thesis has concentrated on the Oxford Group's origins and early years, but with a different purpose. One reason for concentrating on the origins of the Group has been to establish the nature of the change in the Group which was under way at the time that Clark was writing and which he could hardly have been expected to have explained. This was the crucial change that Driberg and others saw as the secularisation of the movement.

In establishing the nature of the Group's development this thesis has taken as its starting point the fact of Frank Buchman's overwhelming authority in the movement. Necessarily, any change of policy represented Buchman's own reactions to developing events. Analysis of Buchman's ideology and personality is therefore central to understanding the policies of the Group. In turn the central fact about Buchman's aims was that they were formed and matured before he founded the Oxford Group. The Group was a creation of the second half of his eighty-year life span. Given these evident facts it is surprising that more research has not previously been done into Buchman's early life and the formation of his philosophy of evangelism and social change, the main contours of which were already established by 1920.

The first two parts of this thesis sought to fill this gap in our knowledge of Buchman's early life and thought. The subsequent two parts treated the development of the Oxford Group thematically rather than as a continuous narrative. There were traced in turn the development of the Group's personal evangelism, its overall strategy, its relations with the churches and its internal organisation. In each case the description started with Buchman's early ideas and experiences, and followed through the ways in which these were modified or expressed from the 1920s to the post 1945 era.

The conclusion of this investigation has been to assert that there was no great change in Buchman's ideology at any point during the Group's development. Buchman's work in Asia in 1915-19, and the philosophy of Drummond and Mott on which it was

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[706] Eister 1950 p 14
[707] See the Introduction.

based, formed the inspiration for the 'strategies' of Moral Re-Armament in seeking to affect nations in the 1940s and after. It has been argued that from the early 1920s when Buchman began his independent personal evangelism in American colleges, he had in mind a long term goal of building a revival and a disciplined fellowship capable of, as he saw it, saving civilisation from conflict and collapse. The subsequent developments of the movement – from small scale college evangelism and the creation of a 'team', to nation-wide awakenings, to political and industrial involvements, must be seen as a logical progression towards fulfilling these aims. For although Buchman's ideology did not change significantly, his expression of it most certainly did.

Buchman altered his strategy and tactics in putting forward his ideology in response, it has appeared, to two main sets of factors. The first was the degree of his movement's development, the second the international and social situation. The movement at first needed above all the recruitment of individuals into a committed fellowship, however small. Next an emphasis on revival became appropriate as the fellowship became large enough to support revivals. Finally a concentration on 'revolution' or the affecting of socio-political realities became possible when the movement was sufficiently widespread and its younger leaders sufficiently mature to cope with this 'full dimension of change', as Buchman called it.

The international and social situation if anything aided Buchman's attempts to bring up his young movement to maturity. The Group's initial revivalist success occurred largely through the appeal of personal evangelism. But before long the growing concern felt by the movement's clientele about the world depression and the threat of war enabled Buchman to stress increasingly that the Group also had the answer to these world trends. Buchman rarely tried to educate his public in their political aims or assumptions. He tried instead to show them that their aims could only be achieved by 'changing men' and 'listening to God'. Thus he moulded his expression of his ideology to the current concerns and within the current terminology of his clientele. The movement thus claimed mainly to have the answer to the concerns of the Western middle classes, since these formed the bulk of its clientele – namely the answers to class conflict, European or colonial wars, and personal problems of family life and inadequacy. But as left wing and agnostic or secularized attitudes increased in prominence in Western society, and as MRA moved into the areas of industrial unrest and the Cold War where such ideas were of great importance, the movement's expression of its ideology came to reflect these concerns of a different clientele. The apparent 'secularisation' of the Group's propaganda was thus merely a logical manner of expressing Drummond's experientialist approach to theology to a secularised audience. The aim of finally drawing the enquirer through an experience, however it was initially defined, into full Christian life and belief, remained.

This careful attempt to offer a set of experiences to particular and influential groups of society, using if need be different theological or intellectual formulations at different times and for different groups, has, not surprisingly, appeared mysterious to many observers. There has appeared to be something too calculated or Jesuitical about it to convince some onlookers of the sincerity of its leaders. A comparison can be made, however, between Buchman and a Jesuit missionary like Matteo Ricci, who came close to converting the Chinese court in the early 17th century, until forbidden by Rome to wear a mandarin's dress and to express Catholicism in traditional Chinese concepts. In secularising his expression of his faith Buchman merely put on the language and used the concepts of a secularised 20th Century audience as Ricci had

for the 17th Century Chinese court. The good sense of this course of action from the Christian missionary's point of view becomes obvious when contrasting Ricci's or Buchman's successes with the failures of fundamentalist evangelicals to convert either the 19th century Chinese or the 20th century Western ruling classes.

Buchman's work was not therefore mysterious. It was a fairly straightforward expression of a coherent set of attitudes that have appeared in various forms in Protestant and Catholic history – attitudes that emphasised moral and mystical experience and the experiential unity of all reborn Christians, above Church polity, creed and polemic. This much was argued in the Introduction. An attempt has been made throughout the thesis to relate the Group's development to this logically coherent group of attitudes, which have been labelled 'pietist'.

The Group as a Social Movement

If the first aim of this thesis has been to establish the nature of the Group's ideological development in response to the published misinterpretations of it, the achievement of this aim has not been seen as merely an end in itself. An assumption behind the writing of the thesis has been that there is much of intrinsic interest in the Oxford Group to the sociologist of social movements, but that no adequate interpretation could be obtained of the Group's structure, much less of its development as a social movement, unless greater attention were paid to the self-interpretation of the Group, to its own conception of its mission. The structure of a movement is after all the outcome of a set of compromises between the leaders' aims and the somewhat intractable human and social material with which they have to work. In addition therefore to the first task of describing the origins and nature of the Group leaders' ideology, the thesis has been concerned with the social composition of the Group's clientele, and with the social pressures that helped to determine its structure.

A study of the Group's clientele confirmed first impressions that in Britain it was drawn mainly from the educated middle classes, of Anglican and Nonconformist churches in fairly equal measure.

The social pressures affecting the Group's structure were found to include the requirements of an efficient campaigning organisation; the effect of external criticism and of external tolerance, especially from the churches; the requirements of the law towards organisations; the effect of war; and the possibilities for a conversionist movement available in modern communications technology.

Particular attention was paid to the result of the combination of the Group's experientialism with the new tolerance of Church and state towards religious movements. The ideal structure towards which many pietists worked in the past – from Caspar von Schwenkfeld in the 16th century to the founders of the WSCF, the forerunner of the modern ecumenical movement, in the 1890s – was perhaps most nearly achieved by the Oxford Group (and by some smaller contemporary movements like the Faith and Prayer Mission) in the 20th Century. Their success may be attributed to the high degree of tolerance which they experienced. The ideal which inspired these various movements was that of an informal fellowship across confessional boundaries of converted Christians, meeting in small groups for the sharing of spiritual experiences, for confession, prayer and often for divine illumination and devotional Bible study.

The surprisingly strong internal cohesion of the Group – surprising, that is, for a movement which has rejected formal organisation, membership and sectarian exclusivity – has been explained partly by the effect of the practice of 'sharing': the sharing of not only beliefs, attitudes, experiences and to some extent of material goods, but also the sharing of innermost thoughts and of recourse to a method of determining the dictates of the divine authority, through 'guidance'.

The Group's efficient co-ordination and unity has also, however, been a result of the movement's acceptance of human authority, conceived of by Group adherents as the authority of the most 'spiritually fit'. An important development occurred in the 1960s as this authority, once vested in single leaders, Buchman and his successor Howard, came to be vested in a group of leaders in different countries meeting and travelling frequently. This was not achieved, however, without some difficulties, culminating in the breaking away of a significant section of the movement in the *Up With People* campaign in the late 1960s.

This study of the Group suggests that a religious movement can afford to dispense with formal hierarchy, membership and disciplinary procedures and still maintain an effective and persistent unity if there are present:

a) a strongly established convention of resolving personal conflicts and of maintaining individual conviction by face-to-face, personal discussion ('sharing')

b) a shared ideology that discourages conflict in society

c) a shared emphasis on experiential faith, and a concomitant lack of value accorded to theological or other argument

d) a convention for agreeing upon the desires of the supernatural authority

e) a willingness to accord authority to leaders, conditional upon their adherence to the shared ideology and conventions of the group.

The Group's Social Effect

In the 'Conclusions' to his sociological study of the Group, Allan Eister wrote of the Group's effect on society:

> Although the Group disclaimed any specific program or philosophy of social action, the effect of its emphasis upon changing individuals one by one, upon individual responsibility, and upon minimising or resolving conflict, regardless of the situation or the issues at stake, was clearly conservative.[708]

The Group itself would take issue with such a conclusion. To support its case the Group both cites its general aims of radical social transformation and sets outs its interpretation of particular events in which it claims to have played a decisive part. It has claimed for instance to have influenced the founding of the European Iron and Steel Community and to have contributed to the avoidance of war in the independence struggles of several countries, such as Tunisia and Nigeria. With such examples it seeks to prove the value of its own role and method, of making men aware of the 'Holy Spirit' in their affairs. The Group's detractors dismiss these claims as myths or gross exaggerations. It is however difficult, on an open assessment of the available

[708] Eister 1950 p 210

evidence, to discount entirely the Group's claim to have affected the outcome of some social and political issues.

The Group, particularly in its MRA phase, was organised efficiently to reach and influence key negotiators in industrial and political disputes. It has been beyond the scope of this study to analyse closely any one of MRA's involvements in such disputes. But this study should form a useful basis for such detailed analyses. The student of industrial and international relations might find something of interest in analysing some of MRA's claims. MRA in effect proposed the hypothesis that key individuals' moral and spiritual 'health', as defined by MRA, was of significant importance to their ability to reconcile conflicting interest groups. The Group claims that its experiment proved this hypothesis. This study would suggest that it would be worth studying the Group's experiments to assess the value of its claims.

Most discussions of MRA's social effect tend to be dominated by conflicting value judgements. Those favouring social structural change will tend to be impatient with the Group's individualistic emphasis. Those desiring reconciliation within existing structures with an eye to reforming them in the end, will tend to be more approving of the Group. Some more factual observations can be made, nonetheless, and can contribute to a fuller understanding of the Group's effect on society.

The first observation arises from contrasting the Group's aims with its achievements. Frank Buchman believed that major social change could and would result from the 'rising tide' of individual conversions generated by the Group. For instance he argued that if a large number of businessmen were to 'change', business itself would be reformed radically. The logic of this may or may not be correct. The historical facts, however, are that even at the height of its influence the Group only converted at the most a few hundred businessmen, and only a tiny handful of these translated their conversions to a standard of 'absolute love' into practical programmes for reforming industry. These few, furthermore, scarcely went further than contemporary Christian paternalists of other persuasions were going in reforming industry. The implication is that while Buchman's logic may have seemed correct, his vision of social transformation through individual conversion was unfeasible, with the methods he used and in the society in which he applied them. This is not necessarily to argue with Eister that the Group's effect was conservative, only to argue that its hope of major social transformation was unrealistic.

A second observation can be made concerning the Group's lack of readiness to take its own principles to logical conclusions which would bring it into direct confrontation with the middle classes. The Group has traditionally contrasted its aim of social change through individual change with the Marxist approach. The latter might be considered to be one variety of the social structuralist approach, which argues that individuals will improve only as the structure of society is altered. The Group constantly argued that social structural change was pointless if unaccompanied by personal change. Consequently it refused to take up a public political position, though it frequently made public its position on matters of individual morality and faith. There were exceptions to this, however. In the Second World War the Group aligned itself completely behind the war effort. It might have been thought that the Group's insistence that life-changing was the prime need in attacking social evils would have led them logically to a pacifist position.

Pacifist tendencies within the Oxford Group in fact afford an insight into its attitudes to social radicalism. In the famous debate of February 1933 when the Oxford Union

passed the motion 'That this House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country', one of the principal proposers of the motion was an ardent adherent of the Oxford Group. David Graham, the elected Librarian for that term, had furthermore received the idea and the wording of the motion in a quiet time as divine guidance, he wrote to a friend in the summer of 1933.[709] In the autumn the President-elect, Frank Hardie, had asked colleagues for ideas for motions. The pacifist motion was Graham's main suggestion, and was accepted. Graham's speech rejected war in effect as a social structuralist blind alley, and advocated life changing as the viable alternative. When the furore arose in the national press after the debate, Graham was delighted that the publicity enabled him, as he wrote, 'to witness, to all manner of key people in country, and to invite them to the House-party'. At the same time he was able to report that, not surprisingly:

> I have got the confidence, as never before, of Oxford Liberals, Socialists and Communists. Frequent personal talks, likely to lead to changed lives soon, followed my original speech, and have gone on.

Graham was also pleased to be able to counter press allegations that Communists had carried the vote, with the comment:

> The joke was that not a single Communist was present. They had a meeting of their own at the time.

The possible lesson from this event, that this sort of action could gain the confidence of the left, was never adopted by the Group. The movement later turned the history of the 'King and Country' debate on its head. The debate 'has been deliberately and maliciously confused by the Communists with Oxford Group' claimed an internal MRA memorandum, of about 1960.[710]

> This resolution was engineered by members of the October Club, which is the Communist Party in Oxford University... It was opposed by men trained in the Oxford Group, and a resolution proposed by men in the Oxford Group had it rescinded in 1938. The pacifist smear against the workers in Moral Re-Armament was created by the Communist leadership who wanted to liquidate the force of MRA during the war years.

It is ironic that a publicity-conscious movement should have had to disown one of the most celebrated, if indirect results of its teachings. It is also ironic that Graham's pacifist speech which the movement disowned, was in fact merely taking the Group's opposition to social structuralist conflict to its logical conclusion. The reason for the Group's denial of this speech, of course, was that Graham's logic brought him to too radical, 'cranky' and, according to popular opinion, too 'unpatriotic' a position. The Group has never yet allowed the logic of its beliefs and ethics to take it into vigorous campaigning on any issue that would place it in the same camp as the social structuralist left and in opposition to the conservative centre. This is not to suggest that the Group avoided radical pacifism merely in order not to offend its supporters. It surely abjured pacifism out of its real sense of horror at Hitler's designs. It is significant, however, that the Group was sufficiently aroused against Hitler to adopt a social structuralist position towards him, but was never so aroused against social evils of poverty and colonialism within the British nation or Empire to give public support to social structuralist programmes of reform in those spheres. The conclusion must be

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[709] 'Extract from a letter sent by David Graham to Thompy …' 8p typed MRA Archives (3.19:1.4)
[710] 'The Department of Justice …' 4p duplicated MRA memo of 1960-1 MRA archives (3.19:1.5)

that the Group shared the basic political outlook of the class from which it predominantly was drawn.

The crucial question concerning the Group's future is whether it can maintain its optimistic belief that major social transformation will follow personal change. It is this belief that has inspired its post war campaigns and conferences. If disillusionment were to sap the strength of this belief in the second and third generations of the movement the experience of other movements might suggest that various courses lie open to it. The pre-1914 optimism of Moody's disciples turned through disappointment into a defensive conservative attempt to preserve evangelical teachings in isolation from liberal influences. The conversionist zeal of the early Quakers, on the other hand, mellowed into the reformist movement of today marked by a sense of world concern, ethical action and fellowship. It is beyond the scope of this study to suggest which direction the Group might follow.

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2018 Mea Culpa: In 1975 I clearly had low commitment to doing the bibliography correctly. My excitement was all about the research, longing to understand the world I was raised in. It was much less about writing up the thesis, which took me away from my activist life and communal home for a year, and least of all about doing the bibliography. I had no intention of an academic career or publication of the thesis. So lots of info is missing here. I am not now trying to remedy it, only to tweak formatting to make it a little clearer. I hope any serious researcher will be able to locate these items in a library like Oxford's Bodleian or in the MRA archives, the two places I did most of my research.

Key: 'Westminster' = Westminster Productions
'Grosvenor' = Grosvenor Books
(Both of these are run by Moral Re-Armament)
'Association Press' is run by the YMCA
Pa = Pamphlet
Ed = editor of
Italicized title: a book. Title in quotes: article or pamphlet

For abbreviations for periodicals in the footnotes and in **I. Books and Pamphlets**, see section **III. Periodicals, Newsletters**.

For abbreviations in the footnotes referring to items in the MRA archives, see section **II. Documents In MRA Archives**.

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MSS BIOGRAPHY

A manuscript biography of Frank Buchman by one of his co-workers, who wishes to remain anonymous. Page numbers in my footnotes refer to the first two loose-leaf volumes. The author has occasionally been referred to as 'A' in the footnotes. 2018 Comment: now that he is deceased, I believe it is OK to say that the author was Morris Martin.

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1924 Pa 'Neophyte Gives His Impressions of a Frank Buchman Houseparty' (Anon) Madras. Printed at the Diocesan Press Reprint from *The Real Issue* 8.5.1924

NEWMAN, Rev L

1964 Pa 'Where's George?'

NEWTON, JF

1946 *River of Years*, J.B. Lippincott, New York

NICHOLS, Beverley

1936 *The Fool Hath Said*, Jonathon Cape, London

1949 *All I Could Never Be*, Jonathon Cape, London

NIEBUHR, H Richard,

1929 *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, New York

1937 *The Kingdom of God in America*, New York

1956 Ed with DD Williams: *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, New York

NOWELL, John
1952 Pa 'Free Men in Industry'

OBERLANDER, Theodor
1955 Pa 'Faith in a Revolutionary Task'

ORGLMEISTER, P
1965/6 Pa 'The Battle for Modern Man'

OXFORD GROUP
1934 Magazine 'The Oxford Group International Houseparty' July 4, 7, 14, and 21. Oxford
1935 i) Pa 'The March of Events' Oxford
ii) Pa 'The Oxford Group in Denmark Eve of Election' Oxford
1936 Pa 'The Drums of Peace' Oxford
1937 i) Pa 'Education and the New World Order' Edinburgh
ii) Pa 'Rising Tide' editions in various countries
iii) Pa 'Statements by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury et al
iv) Stencilled Pa 'Notes on the Growth of the Oxford Group 1921-37'
1938 i) Pa 'Live Wires'
ii) Pa 'MRA the Need of the Hour'
iii) Pa 'Moral Rearmament' Toronto
iv) Pa 'What is the Oxford Group'
1939 i) 'Memorandum and Articles of Association', Birchams, London
ii) Pa 'Calling All Sportsmen' England
iii) Pa 'The Golden Age of MRA' Oxford
iv) Pa 'MRA in the South of England'
v) Pa 'MRA in Burma' London
vi) Pa 'How to Listen' London
vii) Pa 'One Hundred Million Listening' London
viii) Pa 'One Hundred Million Listening' USA
1940 i) International report, untitled. 115 pages stencilled
ii) Pa 'MRA in Japan'
iii) Pa 'The Rise of a New Spirit' British, US, Australian and Canadian editions
iv) Pa 'Towards a New Era'
1941 i) Pa 'A National Issue'
ii) Pa 'The Oxford Group, Messages from the United States of America, October 1941' London
iii) Pa and supplement'The Oxford Group and the Campaign for MRA'
iv) Pa 'You Can Defend America' USA
1942 i) Pa 'You Can Fight for Canada'
ii) French edition 'Canadiens Rallions Nous!'
iii) Pa 'How to Read the Bible'
1943 i) Pa 'Horkey'
ii) Pa 'Press can aid Management, Labour Teamwork'
1944 i) Pa 'Battle Together for Britain'
ii) Pa 'Battle Together for Britain - A Report'
iii) Egyptian, West Indian, Australian, Swedish & Swiss counterparts of 'You Can Defend America'

iv) Pa 'What Does Kenya Need for Total Defence?'
v) Pa 'Your Part in Total Victory'
1945 Pa 'The March of an Idea'
1946 i) Pa 'A Task Force in the War of Ideas Visits a City'
ii) Pa 'Caux, World Assembly'
iii) Pa 'Democracy's Inspired Ideology'
iv) Pa 'Out of the Frying Pan' USA
v) Pa 'Victory Week' London
1947 Pa 'Report of Instructors Training Course for Danish Officers
1948 i) Pa 'Es Muss Alles Anders Werden' Germany
ii) Pa 'Spearhead of an Answer'
iii) Pa 'Where does the Money Come From?'
iv) Pa 'Who are these people?'
1949 i) Pa 'Questions & Answers in France and Germany'
ii) Pa 'Road from Ruin'
iii) Pa 'Australasian Assembly'
1950 i) Pa 'A Uniting Ideology for Democracy'
ii) Pa stencilled 'MRA 1948-1950 London'
iii) Pa 'Dawn of MRA in Nagasaki'
iv) Pa 'Mission to the West'
1951 i) Pa 'A New Policy in the Pacific'
ii) Pa 'Washington Assembly Report'
1952 i) Pa 'Assembly of the Americas'
ii) Pa 'How MRA is financed'
iii) Pa 'Industrial Conferences'
iv) Pa *The Forgotten Factor*
v) Pa 'The Forgotten Factor in East Africa'
vi) Pa 'Who is Dr Buchman?'
1953 i) Pa 'Film Studio makes History with MRA Plays'
ii) Pa 'The Voice of Moral Re-Armament'
1954 Pa 'May Day – MRA Supernational Demonstration'.
1955 i) Pa 'Moral Re-Armament. Some Comments by the Council of Management of the Oxford Group on the recent Report of the Social and Industrial Council of the Church Assembly'. London
ii) Pa 'Statement by the Council of Management of the Oxford Group in regard to the method of making the Report on Moral Re-Armament adopted by The Social and Industrial Council of National Assembly of the Church of England' London
1960 Pa 'Ideology That Wins'.
1961 i) Pa 'Assembly of the Americas'
ii) Pa 'For God's Sake Wake Up' (Collected full page newspaper advertisements)
1964 i) Pa 'Shaping the Future'
ii) Pa 'The Struggle for Character in Tomorrow's Citizens'
1973 'Report and Accounts' – one of a series produced annually, including Auditors' Report
1975 'The Revolutionary Path – Moral Re-Armament in the thinking of Frank Buchman' Foreword by KD Belden. Grosvenor, London

PAGE, Ralph
1944 Pa 'Frank's "D" Day'

PATON L.B.

1909 Ed *Recent Christian Progress – Studies in Christian Thought and Work During the last 75 years*, by Professors and Alumni of Hartford Theological Seminary. New York. Chapters include:
'Evangelism' by Rev EH Byington.
'The YMCA' by HA Walter
'Social Settlements' by Rev AR Williams

PEDLEY, Joan

1972 *Jesus In Our Age*, Blandford, London

PERRY, Edward T

1969 Pa 'God Can Be Real' MRA New York

PFATTEICHER, Ernst P

1934 *The Man From Oxford*, Paradise Falls Summer School, Pennsylvania

PINSENT, Roy

1949 Pa 'Productivity in Industry' England

PLOWRIGHT, B.C.

1932 *For Groupers Only*, Allenson, London.

POLLOCK, AJ

Undated Pa 'The Oxford Group Movement' The Central Bible Truth Depot. London

POPLEY, HA

1914 'Suggestions for workers' mentioned by Sundkler 1968 p 83

1915 i) *A Handbook of Musical Evangelism*, by Mr LI Stephen & Rev HA Popley mentioned in *HF* Vol XXV No 1 p 111
ii) 'The Evangelistic Campaign in the South India United Church', in *HF* Vol XXXV No 12 Dec 1915

1916 Feb. 'The Foreword Movement in the Syrian Churches', *HF* Vol XXXVI No 2

1917 *Handbook for workers in evangelistic campaigns in India*, CLS Press 1917 mentioned in *CR* Vol VII No 26

1919 'Wanted An Army' *HF* Vol XXXIX No 2 Feb. 1919

PRESCOTT, Dorothy M.

1967 *Stories for the Junior Assembly*, London (and other volumes in the same series)

PRESTWICH, Irene

1971 *Irene Prestwich of Tirley Garth. A personal memoir*

PRONK, Carlos

1951 Pa 'We Will Rebuild The World', London

PUGH, Geoffrey

1955 Pa 'What is MRA?'

PUTNEY

1922 MS 'Report of the Putney Heath House Party', in MRA Archives 150 pp typed

PYM, TW

1933 *Sharing,* SCM Press

RAMM, Fredrik

1944 *Not Without Blame*, Trans. by McKay, Blandford, London.

RAYMOND, Ernest
1973 *Miryam's Guest House*, Cassells, London (ref to the Oxford Group Chapter 8)

RAYNOR, Frank C
1934 *The Finger of God: A Book about the Group Movements*, London, Group Publications Ltd., 51 Gower Street.

REED, Austin
1949 Pa 'The Conquering Spirit' England

REYNOLDS, Amelia S
1929 *New Lives For Old*, Flaming H. Revell, New York

RIFFE, John
1953 Pa 'Unity in the Unions', MRA USA

ROBBINS, Brian
1964 Pa 'Technology and the Individual'

RODDAN, Andrew
1933 *For Doubters Only*, Vancouver

ROGERS, Carl R.
1973 *Encounter Groups*, Penguin London. First Published USA 1970

ROOTS, John
1928 Pa 'An Apostle to Youth' New Haven (Oxford edition, 1936?) Reprinted from *Atlantic Monthly* CXLII (Dec 1928 pp 807-817)
Late1920s Pa 'The Intelligent Evangelization of Youth'
1965 Ed *Modernising America*, Pace, Los Angeles

ROOTS, Logan H (Bishop of Hankow)
Undated Obituary booklet: 'Warrior's Testament' Contains an extract from Roots' unfinished book 'Battle for Civilization' on Frank Buchman (In MRA Archives London)
1934 i) 'The Oxford Groups in the Far East', the *C of E Newspaper*, April 6
1934 ii) Pa 'The Two Options'

ROSE, Cecil
1936 *When Man Listens*, The Epworth Press, London (revised, Blandford 1956)

ROSE, Howard
Late 1920s
i) Pa 'Group Leadership' Oxford
ii) Pa 'A Fellowship of Personal Religion within the Churches' Oxford
iii) Pa 'The Quiet Time' Sanderstead, Surrey
1930 Pa 'A Modern Oxford Movement' Reprinted from the *Church of England Newspaper*.

ROUSE, Ruth
1930 'John R Mott' in the *Student World,* April
1948 *The WSCF: a History of the First Thirty Years*, SCM London Reviewed in *The Student World* XLI No e 1948 pp 263 ff

ROWLANDS, FW
1930s Undated Pa 'The Oxford Group' London, The Lutterworth Press.

ROWLATT, Mary
1953 Pa 'The Egyptian Situation

1956 *A Family in Egypt*, Robert Hale, London.

RUSSELL, AJ

1931 July 12 Article in the *Sunday Referee*
1933 *One Thing I Know*, Hodder, London
1934 *For Sinners Only* Hodder, London (1st edition 1932)

SANGSTER, WE

1934 *God Does Guide Us*, London

SCHNEIDER, Louis

1970 *The Sociological Approach to Religion*, Wiley, New York

SCHOLLGEN, Werner

1955 *Aktuelle Moral Probleme*, Patmos Verlag, Dusseldorf

SCHULTZ, Aage

1951 Pa 'The Best Book I Ever Read' London

SCHWEHN, W.W.

1940 *What Is Buchmanism?* St Louis

SCOTT LIDGETT, J

1936 *My Guided Life*, Methuen, London

SELDES, George

1947 *1,000 Americans*, Boni and Gaer, New York

SELZNICK, Philip

1960 *The Organisational Weapon*, The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois. 1st edition 1952

SHEDD, CP

1934 *Two Centuries of Student Christian Movements*, Association Press. New York
1938 *The Church Follows its Students*, Yale UP

SHIELDS, TT

1933 Pa 'The Oxford Group Movement Analyzed' The Gospel Witness, Toronto

SHOEMAKER, SMS

1924 'A Young Man's View of the Ministry' Association, New York (Copyright 1923)
1927 i) *Children of The Second Birth*, Revell (3rd edition) New York
ii) *Realizing Religion*, Association, New York (Copyright 1921)
1928 i) Pa 'My Relation to what is called Buchmanism', New York
ii) *Religion That Works*, Revell, New York
iii) Sept. Pa 'A Parson Answers a Bishop', Morehouse Milwaukee
iv) Dec Pa 'A First Century Christian Fellowship', New York Reprinted from *The Churchman*
1929 i) *Twice-Born Ministers*, Revell New York
ii) *The Breadth and Narrowness of the Gospels*, Revell New York
1930 i) Pa 'One Boy's Influence' Association New York (Copyright 1922)
ii) Pa 'The First Century Christian Fellowship Today' New York
1931 *If I Be Lifted Up. Thoughts About The Cross*, Revell New York
1932 i) *The Conversion of the Church*, Revell. New York
ii) *Confident Faith*, Revell New York
1933 Pa 'The Church and the Oxford Group'. Morehouse Milwaukee

1934 *The Gospel According to You*, Revell New York
1937 Pa 'The Church Has The Answer'. New York
1938 Pa 'God and America' New York
1942 and others: Pa 'God Has The Answer' New York
1965 *Extraordinary Living for Ordinary Men*. Excerpts selected from the writings of Sam Shoemaker by his daughter, Helen Shoemaker Rea, and the staff of Faith at Work. Zondervan Books, Grand Rapids

SKARD, Øyvind
1954 *Ideological Strategy*, Blandford London

SLATTERY, S
Undated 1930s Pa 'A Year with the Oxford Group'
1969 *I Choose*, University Press, Winchester, Massachusetts

SMITH, George Adam
1899 *The Life of Henry Drummond*, Hodder & Stoughton London

SMITH, H Dixon
1938 *Discipline for Life-Changing Service*, The Christian Literature Society for India

SMITH, Martin L (Bishop of Rochester)
1934 with Francis Underhill: *The Group Movement*, SPCK London

SMITH, Timothy L
1957 *Revivalism & Social Reform*, Harper Torchbook edition 1965 New York
1962 *Called Unto Holiness*, Nazarene Publishing House

SMITH, Victor
1971 with others: *New Life for Art*, Grosvenor, London

SOKOLSKY, George
1936 Pa ' The Oxford Group' Reprinted from the *New York Herald Tribune* 1 Jun 1936

SOUTH WALES VOICE
1965/6 Pa 'The Man From No Place'

SPEER, RE
1902 *The Principles of Jesus*, Revell, New York
1908 Pa 'The Value of Hardness – A Northfield Address', Robert Scott, London
1910 *Christianity and the Nations*, Duff Missionary Lectures 1910 Revell (New York?). Speer was then 'Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyt. Church in the U S of A'.
1911 *Some Great Leaders in the World Movement*, Revell

SPENCER, FAM
1934 Ed *The Meaning of the Groups*, Methuen, London

SPERRY, WL
1945 *Religion in America*, Cambridge USA, Harvard University Press

SPINKS, G Stephen
1952 *Religion in Britain Since 1900*, Andrew Dakers, London (Ref to BH Streeter and the Oxford Group).

SPOERRI, Pierre
1967 Pa 'Who Are The True Europeans?'

SPOERRI, Theophil
1950 Pa 'Basic Forces in European History', College of Good Road, London
STARK, Werner
1967 *The Sociology of Religion*, Routledge, London
STEWART, George
1924 'HBW – An Appreciation' in Wright 1924
1925 *The Life of Henry B Wright*, Association Press, New York. Foreword by Mott
1928 Ed *The Letters of Maxwell Chaplin*, Association Press New York. Foreword by RE Speer
STEWART, Herbert
1930s undated Pa 'For Christians Only' Stewart was General Secretary, Scripture Testimony League, Montreal
STOEFFLER, FE
1965 *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, Leiden
STRACHEY, Ray
1928 *Group Movements of the Past and Experiments in Guidance*, Faber London (Republished with a foreword by Bishop Henson 1934)
STREETER, Canon BH
1935 Pa 'Luther, Erasmus und die Oxford Gruppe' Leopold Klotz Verlag, Gotha, Germany
1936 *The God Who Speaks*, Macmillan, London (Abridged version, Grosvenor, London 1971)
SUENENS, Monsignor LJ
1954 *The Right View of Moral Re-Armament*, Burns and Oates, London
SUNDKLER, Bengt
1954 *Church of South India: The Movement Towards Union 1900-1947*, Lutterworth Press, London
1968 *Nathan Söderblom: His Life & Work*, Uppsala
SUTTER, Julie
1901 *A Colony of Mercy – or Social Christianity at Work*, London
SVM.
1893 pa 'The Keswick Camp July 19th-29th 1893' 4 sided invitation to the 1st conference of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union.
SWAIM, Loring T
1962 *Arthritis, Medicine and the Spiritual Laws*, Blandford, London
TANGYE, Derek
1942 Ed *Went The Day Well*, Harrap, London
TAYLOR, H Birchard
1943 Pa 'Industrial Statesmanship' Leeds. Reprint of US edition of 1943
TEELING, William
1936 *Gods of To-Morrow*, Lovat Dickson, London
THOMAS, Edgar
1952 Pa 'The Education of Backward Children'
THOMAS, Ivor
1933 Pa 'The Buchman Groups', The Faith Press, London

THORNHILL, Alan

1943 *One Fight More*, Muller, London

1950 Pa 'The Significance of the Life of Frank Buchman', College of Good Road, London

Playscripts:

1954 *The Forgotten Factor,* Blandford London (Indian edition MRA Bombay 1969)

1965 *Mr Wilberforce MP*, Blandford London

1968 *Bishop's Move* Westminster, London

1969 *Hide Out* Westminster, London

Also see Howard, PD plays for co-authored plays

THORNTON-DUESBERY, JP

1931/2 i) 'The Guidance of God. A Study of the Oxford Group Movement' in *The Expository Times* No 43 pp 251-4

ii) 'The Guidance of God. A Further Study of the Oxford Group Movement' in ibid 458-461

iii) 'Sharing' Ibid pp 502-505

1932 Pa 'Sharing' Oxford

1947 Pa 'The Oxford Group, A Brief Account of its Principles and Growth' London

1955 Pa 'The Oxford Group and Moral Re-Armament: Statements by Christian Leaders'

1960 i) Pa 'Restoring a University'

ii) Pa 'A Visit to Caux'

1964 *The Open Secret of MRA*, Blandford London

1974 Personal interview with Rev Canon Thornton-Duesbery at his home 27.9.74

TILGE, Robert

1951 Pa 'Industry in a Revolutionary Age' London

TILLETT, Ben

1940 Pa 'Moral Re-Armament' London

1943 Pa 'Ben Tillet, Fighter and Pioneer' Blandford London

TREADGOLD, DW

1973 *The West in Russia and China: Vol II China 1582-1949*, Cambridge University Press, England

TROELTSCH, Ernst

1931 English Translation by Olive Wyon of *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 Vols London

TRUMAN, Harry S.

1939 see Buchman 1939 iii).

1943 Pa 'Battle Line for American Industry' with Hon James W. Wadsworth Washington

TWITCHELL, H.M.

1926 Pa 'Caught by 'Buchmanism' in Spite of Myself' By 'a Princeton Graduate and New York Business Man' New York. In 'The Letter No 3'. this is stated to by H.M. Twitchell

TWITCHELL, Kenaston

1949 i) Pa 'How Do You Make Up Your Mind'

ii) Pa 'Supposing You Were Absolutely Honest'

VAN DUSEN, H.P.

1931 'The Outlook for the Student Movement in the United States' in *The Student World* XXIV No 1

1934 'Apostle to the Twentieth Century' and 'The Oxford Group Movement' in *The Atlantic Monthly* Vol 154 Nos 1 & 2 July 1934

VICKERS, Farrar

1954 *This Family Business*, Benj. R. Vickers & Sons, Leeds

VICKERS, John

1965/6 Pa 'The Westminster and Industrial Recovery'

VIDLER, Alec R

1971 *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, Penguin, London, revised edition

VINEY, Hallen

1936 Pa 'How Do I Begin' Oxford (also Danish & American editions)

1968 Pa 'Which Way is Right?'

WALKER DP

1964 *The Decline of Hell*, London

WALSH, JD

1966 'The Origins of the Evangelical Revival' Chap VI in *Essays in Modern Church History*, ed by GV Bennett & JD Walsh, London, Adam & Charles Black

WALTER, Howard A

1919 *Soul Surgery* 1st edition (3rd edition Association Press, Calcutta 1928; 4th OUP Oxford 1932; 5th ibid 1937, 6th ibid 1949; 7th Blandford, London undated 1950s)

WARBURTON, T Rennie

1969 'Holiness Religion: An Anomaly of Sectarian Typologies', in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol VIII No 1 Spring

WARD, Maisie

1937 *The Oxford Groups*, Sheed and Ward, London

WARNSHUIS, AL

1916 'A Special Week of Evangelism' in *C.R.* 1916 Nov Vol 47 (2) p 794-5

1918 'Some First Impressions of the Special Evangelistic Campaign in Four Cities in South China', *C.R.* Vol 49 (i) p 248 April 1918

WATT, Frederick B

1943 *Who Dare To Live*, Macmillan London

WEATHERHEAD, Leslie D

1934 *Discipleship*, SCM, London

WEIL, Richard

1950 Pa 'Moral Re-Armament'

WELCH, Alderman Fred

1956 Pa 'A Memorial' to Alderman Welch

WEST, George A (Bishop of Rangoon)

1943 Pa 'Remaking Empire and Industry' Philadelphia

1944 i) Pa 'Tomorrow's Empire'

ii) Pa 'George Can Do It'

1945 *The World That Works*, Blandford, London (1st published by Thacker, Bombay)
1948 *Jungle Witnesses*, SPG London

WEST, Grace
1950 Pa 'Car Micobar', SPG London

WESTMINSTER THEATRE ARTS CENTRE
1966 'Programme for the opening of the Westminster Theatre Arts Centre'
1967 *Souvenir Book*, Westminster London

WICK, Karl
1960 Pa 'We Stretch Out Our Hand', Reprint from *Vaterland*

WILDER, Robert P
1936 article on the foundation of the SVM in 1886, *TSW*, Vol XXIX

WILLIAMS, Hugh Steadman
1969 Pa 'The Theatre of Change'

WILLIAMSON, David
1935 *Religion in the King's Reign*, Pilgrim Press, London

WILLIAMSON, Geoffrey
1949 'Dr Buchman and his strange flock', (2nd of 2 articles) *John Bull* December 10, 1949
1954 *Inside Buchmanism*, Watts & Co. London

WILSON, Bryan R
1966 *Religion in Secular Society*, Penguin, London
1967 *Patterns of Sectarianism: organisation and ideology in social and religious movements,* Heinemann, London
1970 *Religious Sects: a sociological study*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London

WILSON, John
1973 *Introduction to Social Movements*, New York

WILSON, Mary
1963 Pa 'Feeding the Hungry Mind'
1965/6 Pa 'The Most Fascinating Character in the World'
1970 Pa 'Electing God to Leadership
1960 *God's Hand In History,* (+ succeeding volumes *The Son of God*, 1961, *A Rushing Mighty Wind*, 1963, *Builders and Destroyers*, 1968), Blandford, London

WILSON, Roland W
1964 i) Pa 'The Multiplying Millions - Liability or Asset'
ii) Pa 'Aims for 1965'
iii) Pa 'Britain's Role in a Nuclear World'
1965/6 i) Pa 'A Nation Free to Decide'
ii) Pa 'Goals or Resources'
iii) Pa 'An Aim for the Last Third of Twentieth Century'
1967 i) Pa 'Bargaining or Obeying'
ii) Pa 'Our Rightful Revolution'
1968 i) Pa 'What Are You Going To Vote For?'
ii) Pa 'Lets Turn The Tide'
iii) Pa 'The Universal Man of God's Design'
iv) *The Old Testament For Modern Explorers*, Blandford, London

WINSLOW, Jack C

1934 *Why I Believe In The Oxford Group*, Hodder, London

1936 *The Church In Action*, Hodder, London

1938 *When I Awake*, Hodder, London

WISE, Gordon

1975 Personal interview at his home. Gordon Wise is the present Secretary to the Council of Management of the Oxford Group in Britain 22.3.75

WOLRIGE-GORDON, Anne

1968 Pa 'Patriots and Traitors'

1969 i) *Peter Howard: Life and Letters*, Hodder, London
ii) Pa 'Revolt or Revolution'

1970 Playscript: *Blindsight*, Westminster, London

WOOD, A Lawson

1964 Pa 'Development of a Strategy for World Revolution'

1967 Pa 'Industry, Deadlock or Destiny'

1965 Pa 'Statement on MRA for the Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland'

WOOD, Georgie

1960s (undated) *Royalty, Religion and Rats*, Privately, Burnley

WOOD, Stuart

1933 *Glorious Liberty: Dartmoor to Calvary*, Hodder, London

WOODWARD, Rev David

1968 *Our Separated Brethren*, Catholic Truth Society, London

WRIGHT, Henry B

1924 *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework*, Association Press, New York. Copyright 1909. This edition with 'HBW – An Appreciation' by George Stewart.

YATES, Basil Lund

1958 'Dr Frank ND Buchman's Contribution to Contemporary Religious Thought' in *the Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1958 (Reprinted as a pamphlet by Eaton Press, Liverpool)

YINGER, J Malton

1946 *Religion in the Struggle for Power*, Durham (N. Carolina)

1957 *Religion, Society and the Individual*, New York.

ZALD, MN and DENTON, P

1963 'From Evangelism to General Service: The Transformation of the YMCA' in *Administrative Science Quarterly* 8 (June 1963) pp 214-34

ZALD, MN and ASH, R

1966 'Social Movement Organisations: Growth, Decay and Change' in B McLaughton *Studies in Social Movements*, NY 1969 pp 401-485

II. Documents In MRA Archives

These documents are referred to in the thesis footnotes by my reference numbers alone. 2018 Comment: I have left punctuation etc. in this section as in the original.

Filing Cabinet 3: Section labelled '**History of the Oxford Group 1921-37**'. My reference H1-48

H 3 The Groups – A First Century Christian Fellowship list of publications Calvary Church, New York, 3 pp, printed. Undated c 1929/30

H 4 John's Account. Account of an Oxford Group camp at Cromer, 6pp typed, 21.8.1930

H 5 Team Available Autumn 1930 List of team available, apparently in the London area. 1 page

H11 THE OXFORD GROUP IN ACTION Names and address of Group representatives in 9 countries; programme of events for July 1932 – Jan 1933 announcement of'1933 summer house party at Oxford. 4pp printed July 1932

H13 Letter from the Group at 7, Linton Rd., Oxford to friends in South Africa giving news of the movement during Jan-April 1932. 5 pp typed 10.4.1932

H21 Letter from Cleveland Hicks at Browns Hotel, London giving Group news. 2 pp typed. Aug 1933

H22 The Oxford Group In The World Newssheet Printed Autumn 1933

H23 Letter from Ray and Elsa Purdy, giving news of the Group in Europe during 4 months. 3 pp typed 6.10.1933

H24 News of the Oxford Group Newsletter from Oxford. 8pp typed June 1934

H25 With the Oxford Group International Team News of the 1934 Group campaign in Canada and the USA 6 pp, printed 1934

H31 Newsletter from Ruth Bennett in England, about the Group in Europe 6 pp typed June 1936

H45 Facts About The Oxford Group in defence of the name Oxford Group 2 pp, typed. 1938

Filing Cabinet 3: Section labelled '**History 1938 onwards**'. My reference A1-6

A 4 Memorandum on the work of the Oxford Group 4 pp, typed, February 1941

A 5.3 Document starting 'Oxford Group Letters. . '. draft for a memorandum 3 pp typed 1946 or 47

Filing Cabinet 3: Section labelled '**Call Up**' Personal Dossiers of Time[711] Workers. My reference: C 200-253

C 203 Notes on Oxford Group Whole-Time Workers Memo 6 pp typed 9.4.1941

[711] Must mean Whole Time or Full-time workers

C 207b H. Addison, report on North East England work of the Group 5 pp handwritten. c.1941

Filing Cabinet 3: Section labelled '**British Industries Fair 1936**'

Folder 'Birmingham B.I.F. 1936'. My reference: B1-5

B 2 Collection of advertising material and organisational charts for the B.I.F. assembly

B 6 Folder 'Report on Railway Transport B.I.F. July 1936'. 18pp typed report

Folder 'Birmingham 1936-37. My reference: B7-17

B14 Anonymous report on New Enlistment Youth Camp at B.I.F. of Easter 1937. Handwritten.

III. Periodicals, Newsletters

with key to abbreviations used in footnotes

The Calvary Evangel, New York. SM Shoemaker's parish magazine circulated within the Oxford Group from 1929 to 1942

C.R. *The Chinese Recorder* Interdenominational Missionary periodical. Presbyterian Mission Press, Shanghai

CMR *The Church Missionary Review*, C.M.S. London

Groups Ed by FC Raynor and ABW Fleeter London. Monthly from June 1933 Vol No 1 to Vol 3 No 7

HF *Harvest Field* Interdenominational Missionary periodical

IRM *The International Review of Missions* Ed by JH Oldham. Oxford University Press

The Japanese Monthly Changed Life by the Japanese Oxford Group. 1st issue 1938 Nov. English version *The Changed Life Quarterly* was also produced

The Letter by the First Century Christian Fellowship/Oxford Group. 7 issues between July 1927 and April 1930 New York

The Messenger by the International Union Mission, New York

MRA Information Service since 1949. Editions produced in Britain and other countries

New World News MRA pictorial, monthly Dec 1944 to Dec 1951, quarterly 1952 - 1965 March. London, Washington, Melbourne

Oxford Group News Duplicated newsletters May 1939 to Jan 1946, London

Services News Letter 1942-6 London and MRA headquarters USA

TSW *The Student World* the organ of the world Student Christian Federation

The New Witness sympathetic to the Oxford Group. May 1933 - May 1936 produced as the *Montreal Witness and Canadian Homestead;* June 1936-1939 as *The New Witness* Montreal.

Appendices

Appendix I: Numbers of Full-time Workers

These can only be approximate, since definitions of the term ‘full-time worker’ altered. See Chapter VIII p 113 f.

Key: V = vocational full-time workers.

lnfo 1.6 = MRA Information Service Vol I No 6.

Date	Numbers of Full-time Workers, with definition of term where possible	
1921	0	
1922	2	Both V. Buchman and Hamilton
1924-5	3-6	1 more V (Day). 3 temporary (Shoemaker, Rickert, Wade).
1933	25	living on ‘faith and prayer’: (reminiscence KD Belden).
1934	at least 30	(Crossman 1934 p 114).
1934	about 160	unsalaried ‘on “full-time” work’. (Holme 1934 p 20). (exaggeration? He presumably included temporary full-time people on tour with the Group).
1939 Feb	103	in London. 68 of them V. (H 74).
1941 Feb	over 100	‘permanent whole-time staff’ in Britain (A 4).
1941 Apr	31	male whole-time workers in Britain (C 1), after 12 whole-time men and 250 part-time workers who took wide responsibilities, had enlisted (C 252). 29 of the 31 drafted late 1941 (C 1).
1946 winter	287	full-time workers (all or most V) (A 5.5(1)).
1951	100’ s	in Frank Buchman’s ‘force of fully trained personnel’ (Howard 1951 p 132) - i.e. world-wide?
April 1952	120	full-time workers at London H.Q. (Info 1.6) Included in:
April 1952	400	full-time workers altogether in Britain (some foreigners).
April 1952	Nearly 1,200	full-time workers throughout the world (Info 1.6), including the 400 in Britain.
1961	3,000	unsalaried full-time workers throughout the world of whom:
1961	300	in Britain (Yates’ estimate in *Observer* March 1961.
1965	200	In Britain, unsalaried full-time workers (*Observer* Feb 28 1965).

Appendix II: Numbers Of 'Changed' People

The aim here is to note estimates of the movement's entire following. These will inevitably be very inexact. For a start the movement's leaders meant different things at different times in estimating support – active members, those 'fully' 'changed', those 'partly' 'changed' or influenced, those supporting...

<table>
<tr><th>Date</th><th>Estimate</th><th colspan="2">Meaning</th></tr>
<tr><td>Early 1920s</td><td>200?</td><td colspan="2">Considerable success at universities in terms of conversions.</td></tr>
<tr><td>1925</td><td>c. 20</td><td colspan="2">Those converts who remained loyal to Buchman. Shoemaker put the number at 12-15. (See Chapter VIII, p. 110 f, Shoemaker 1930 p 7).</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>150?</td><td colspan="2">But 150 saw Buchman off on his world tour 1924: including relatives and well-wishers.</td></tr>
<tr><td>By 1928</td><td>'several hundred'</td><td colspan="2">- changed, (Roots, 1928)</td></tr>
<tr><td>By 1930</td><td>2,000</td><td colspan="2">in S. Africa. (Shoemaker 1930 p 4).</td></tr>
<tr><td>By 1935</td><td>1,000s</td><td colspan="2">in Norway (P 54 p 7. Hambro's estimate).</td></tr>
<tr><td>1941 Feb</td><td>170+ groups</td><td colspan="2">Groups in 170 towns of over 20,000 population and many more in smaller places (C 252).</td></tr>
<tr><td>1946/7</td><td>Large no. of groups</td><td colspan="2">'an active group' in 'nearly every sizeable community' in Britain (A 5.6 (2].</td></tr>
<tr><td>1939</td><td>'Millions'</td><td colspan="2">Frank Buchman's estimate of his followers' numbers. (Eister p 97).</td></tr>
<tr><td>1941</td><td>1000s</td><td colspan="2">of local 'Group workers' i.e. part-time, in Britain (ref: A 4).</td></tr>
<tr><td>1951</td><td>100,000s</td><td colspan="2">Howard's estimate of world wide following (1951 p 132).</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">1960s or late 50s?</td><td>7-10,000</td><td>Militant adherents</td><td rowspan="2">Howard's earlier estimate for numbers in Britain (Observer Feb 28, 1965)</td></tr>
<tr><td>100,000</td><td>supporters as well</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix III: Buchman's Travels

Date	Countries visited with approx. duration of visit (N.B. This may be incomplete.)	
1.	**<u>While Holding Salaried Positions in USA</u>:** Lutheran parish and hospice (1902-07: 5 years), YMCA Secretary at Penn State College (1909-15: 6 years), Extension Lecturer at Hartford Theological Seminary (1916-22: 5½ years).	
1903	Europe	3 months. (Gibraltar, Italy, Switzerland, Germany)
1908	Europe	9-10 months. (Med. Cruise – Egypt, Palestine, Greece, Turkey – Germany, Britain, Austria, Czechoslovakia etc.)
1911	Europe	3 months. (Britain, Holland, Germany, Italy, Switzerland).
1912	Europe	2-3 months? (France etc.)
1915 - 16	Asia	India 6½ months (Aug-Feb), China 4½ months (Mar-Aug), Japan less than one month.
1917 - 19	Asia	China 13 months (July 1917-May 1918, July-October 1918). Tour of Philippines, Korea, Japan (May-July 1918). Korea, 5 weeks (Oct-Nov 1918). Japan 4 months (Nov 1918-March 1919).
1920	Europe	5 months (Jul-Dec). (Mainly Britain, also France, Switzerland, Italy; and Germany?)
1921	Europe	5 months. (May-Oct.). (Mainly Britain, visiting Finland, France (twice), Germany...)
2.	**<u>As an independent, peripatetic evangelist.</u>**	
1922 - 23	USA, Europe	Summer visits to Britain, with continental tours, continued as in 1920-21. Winters in North America.
1924 - 26	World Tour	Britain 3 months (Jun-Sept 1924), Netherlands (Sept/Oct), Roumania, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria (Oct/Nov), Ceylon (Dec), India 6 months (Dec-May 1925), Australia 2 months (Jun-Aug), Singapore (Sept), Thailand (Oct/Nov), Burma (Nov/Dec), India (Jan- ?), Italy (Feb), Romania, Britain (April).
1926	USA, Europe	(May 17-June 9), Britain (Jun-Sept?), Switzerland (Sept), Britain.
1926 - 27	USA	11 months? (Oct '26 - Sept '27).
1927 - 28	Europe	15 months. Based in England, with visits to: Scotland, Netherlands, Germany (Berlin) (Oct/Nov); Netherlands (Utrecht) (Dec); Netherlands, Germany (Berlin), Scotland (March-April 1928); Netherlands (September); Scotland (Oct).
1928 - 29	USA, Europe	USA (Dec 28 - May?). Britain, Netherlands (June), Germany, Britain.
1929	South Africa	4 months (Jun or Jul - Oct). Britain.

Date	Countries visited with approx. duration of visit (N.B. This may be incomplete.)	
1929 - 30	USA	c. 4 months (Oct or Nov - March).
1930 - 31	Europe	9 months (march - Jan). Mainly Britain, with continental tour in summer 1930.
1931	S. America	c. 4 months (Jan-May).
1931-2	Europe	11 months (May-April).
1932	USA	2-3 months (Apr-Jun).
1932-3	N. America	Canada 2 months (Oct-Dec), USA (Dec/Jan/Feb?), Canada (Feb/Mar? - Jun?)
1933 - 34	Europe	c. 10 months (Jun -Mar). Including visits to Switzerland and Germany (Sept); France (Jan) etc
1934	N. America	3 months between Canada and USA (Mar-Jun).
1934 - 35	Europe	16 months. Including N. Ireland (Oct ’34), Norway (Oct ’34 to Mar ’35?), Denmark (Mar - Jun ’35 and later in the year?) Germany (Sept ’35), Switzerland (Oct), Britain.
1935-6	USA	5½ months (Oct – March)
1936	Europe	2-3 months? (Mar-May?) Denmark (April), and Britain.
	USA	2 months? (May/June).
	Europe	2-3 months: Britain (July), Germany (Olympics) (Aug).
	USA	2 months? (Aug-Oct?).
1936 - 39	Europe	2 years 5 months (Oct ’36 -Mar 1 ’39). (Or did he visit America in this time? No evidence that he did). Itinerary: Britain (Oct-Nov ’36), Paris, Austria, Hungary, and others? (Nov-Dec),
1937	Europe	Britain (Dec-Jan), Netherlands (Jan), probably Britain, continental tour, Britain (April),Netherlands (Apr-May), Britain (Jun-Nov?), Italy (Nov), Germany (Dec) and others?
1938	Europe	Med. cruise - Egypt, Palestine, Syria (Feb/Mar), Germany (Apr/May), Britain (May-Jul?), Scandinavia, Switzerland (Sept), Britain (Oct?-Mar).
1939 - 46	N. America	7 years and 1½ months (Mar ’39- Apr ’46) Mexico City (Sept ’40)
1946 - 47	Europe	1½ years (Apr ’46-Oct ’47). Britain (Apr-Jul), Switzerland (July-Oct?), Britain, Italy 6-7 months (Oct or Nov ’46 to May ’47), Britain?, Switzerland (Jun/Jul).
1947-8	USA	9-10 months (Oct ‘47-Jun or Jul ’48, or later?).
1948 - 50	Europe	2 years and 3 months: Germany (Oct ’48), Switzerland (summer conferences 1948 and ’49 and ’50), France (Oct ’49), Germany (Dec ’49 to Jun ’50?), Italy (Oct ’50).

Date	Countries visited with approx. duration of visit (N.B. This may be incomplete.)	
1950 - 52	N. America	c. 1 year and 9 months (Oct ’50-July ’57). Also visit to Canada (Aug ’51).
1952	Switzer-land	3-4 months (Jul-Oct).
1952 - 53	Asian tour	Ceylon (Oct), India c. 6 months (Oct-Apr/May), Iran, Turkey.
1953 - 55	Europe, N. Africa	London (Jun ’53), France, Switzerland (summer conference ’53 and ’54?), Italy (winter ’53-’54), Morocco (Feb-May ’54?).
1955	USA	From 1954 or early ’55, until Aug ’55.
1955 - 56	Europe	5 months. (Aug ’55 - Jan ’56). Switzerland (summer conference), Italy (winter).
1956	Australia, Asia, Europe	2-3 months (Jan-Mar or Apr), New Zealand, Japan, Thailand, Burma, then brief visits to Calcutta, Karachi, Beirut, Rome, Frankfurt, London (Jun), Switzerland (summer conf.)
1956 - 60	USA	Over 3½ years (late 1956 - Apr 1960). Summer conferences in Michigan, winters in warmer climate, (Pasadena ’56, Miami ’57; Tucson, Arizona, ’58 and ’59).
1960-61	Europe	c. 1 year 4 months (Apr ’60-Aug ’61). Switzerland (summer conferences ’60 and ’61, Christmas ’60), Italy (winter); Dies in Germany (Aug 7th).

Notes:

i) Until 1940s this was surface travel (ship, rail, car), as was the journey from Genoa to Australia in 1956. Otherwise it seems the major journeys of the 1940s and 1950s were all, or mostly, by air.

ii) From his stroke in 1942 Buchman was partially paralysed and requiring constant medical attention. The pattern of his, and therefore to a considerable extent the movement’s, activities from the mid-1940s to 1961 therefore centred on long summer conferences, in Caux, Switzerland, or Mackinac Island, Michigan (USA).

Afterword Written in 2018

My story as it relates to this thesis

In many colleges today it is thought that a researcher or writer has a duty to reveal their 'positionality' to the reader. On the assumption that 100% objectivity is impossible, the writer explains enough of their ideas, experience and location in society, to give the reader an idea of where their conscious—and especially unconscious—biases may lie. I am delighted with this practice. But when I wrote this thesis the myth of objectivity was in full swing, so I kept my own past in MRA out of it. When I quoted Mr. or Mrs. Belden, I did not even mention they were my parents.

I researched and wrote this thesis between the ages of 22 and 26, in 1971-5. I wrote it out of curiosity, not for a qualification. I had no desire to be an academic.

My English parents, born in 1911 and '12, worked full-time with MRA all their lives, starting with their recruitment in the early 1930s. I was born in 1949 in Switzerland when they worked with the Swiss MRA 'team' for three years. I was proud that two of my godparents were Philippe Mottu, primary co-founder of the MRA conference centre at Caux, and Dorli Hahnloser, widow of another co-founder. I was christened by Frank Buchman in the English church at Caux. Raised from age three in London's MRA headquarters—seven large communal homes housing upwards of a hundred full-time workers—I successfully played the good boy. As a teen I made a few speeches and felt myself to be by necessity a future leader of MRA, which I saw as God's primary work in the world. Then at age 17, facing a nine-month gap between school and university, I accepted a general invitation by Rajmohan Gandhi at an MRA youth conference to volunteer with MRA in India, of which he was the leader.

India turned me upside down. I was grabbed by the incredible vivacity of the country, its wild diversity of dress, religion, and mores. I was stunned by the slums of Bombay and Poona, the short and desperate lives of so many of the working poor, the maimed beggars. I returned home clear that poverty would be my life's work and MRA would be the means to fight it.

For five years I threw myself 100% into MRA. As a history student at Oxford I was determined to birth a revival of the Oxford Group. The late 60s were years of vibrant left-wing activism. In June of 1968 I went to Paris to recruit revolutionary students to come to Caux. I knew my English history, the successes of the Labour Movement, the ways democracy had been partially won by the likes of Cromwell's soldiers, the Chartists, the Suffragettes. I wanted a merger of MRA's personal change expertise with the Left's understanding of power, class, and waging conflict: what it took to build trade unions, democracies, welfare states, egalitarian societies. Almost nobody in MRA or outside it seemed to want that merger as desperately as I did. And none of us in MRA proved to be any good at recruiting left-wing student activists. I felt extremely alone and discouraged.

On graduating, I worked full-time with MRA in Ethiopia for a year. After serous conversations with Maoist students in Addis Ababa I concluded MRA was too naïve about power dynamics and oppressive systems, whether globally or in its own ranks, to have much impact in addressing world poverty. Writing this thesis became my way to transition out of MRA socially, intellectually, and economically (it came with a three-year government grant, not loan – let us weep for those long gone days). I needed to immerse myself in MRA in a new way, to understand its antecedents and where it stood in the history of ideas and spirituality. I was given free run of the MRA archives, then in 45 Berkeley Square, around the corner from my childhood home. I still idealized my parents and their work in many ways, even while I parted company with it.

While writing the thesis I also immersed myself in the countercultural left in Oxford. I co-founded a project we called Uhuru, after Nyerere's Tanzanian socialism. It was a centre for campaigns on world poverty, a store selling wholefoods, a vegetarian café, a community work project, and an importer of Tanzanian coffee we sold nationwide as Campaign Coffee with packaging about the inequities of the world coffee trade (now credited as the first fair trade commodity sold in Britain). 1976, the date on this thesis, is also the publication date of *A Working Alternative*, the book on Uhuru I co-wrote with my first wife Tess, with contributions from other members of the Uhuru collective. I called my chapter 'Marx and Brown Rice'. I wished we had had the skills of teamwork and self-review that MRA practiced even while mourning MRA's inability to understand our systemic analysis of society.

What I left out of this thesis

Reading this thesis today I am pleased by how well it stands up as a partial portrait of the movement. Almost everything I wrote here still seems to me to be well founded. The corrections I have included in the text, as footnotes, are surprisingly few. No doubt I missed some. I welcome corrections and different viewpoints from readers.

I knew in 1976 that I had left out major items. I can add more today. Here's a partial list:

MRA's success stories: I intended the study to be of MRA's origins and early sociological character, not its post WWII history. In particular I didn't attempt any evaluation of its success stories in international or national affairs: e.g., no assessment of how much influence it might have had in Franco-German reconciliation after 1946. This was way beyond my abilities, since each story requires serious knowledge about the country(ies) concerned.

The split with Up With People: I was personally agitated by MRA's split in my time, when Up With People and most of MRA's national work in the US, Kenya, Japan and other countries left the movement, so I did write about that in the context of MRA's internal structure. That could be done a great deal better now. The story of a movement that specializes in resolving conflicts, descends into one of its own, and then struggles to come back and reconcile, is a story worth telling and I hope someone will research it and tell it in depth, with full respect for all parties. I thought Lee Storey's 2009 movie *Smile 'Til It Hurts: The Up With People Story* (available on Vimeo) was a fine start, though I doubt Up With People thinks so. But respect involves taking the trouble to deeply understand the other party's perspective and story; it doesn't mean accepting it as the only story.

Sexuality and homophobia in MRA: In my twenties, I thought I was too screwed up myself about sex to know how to make sense of MRA's puritanism and homophobia, so I barely touched it in the thesis. I can't recall when I learned that many people considered Buchman to have been by nature homosexual, but I didn't touch that here. Morris Martin, Buchman's long-time secretary who went with Up With People did write about Buchman's putative homosexual nature in his 2001 memoir, *Always A Little Further.* But no one I know of has done a good job of studying MRA's interpretations of Absolute Purity, or the ways it was used to bolster group think and authoritarianism in the movement, or how far MRA's extreme puritanism may have arisen from Buchman's own sexuality. Somewhere on IofC's private XChange site there exists a long 2002 essay by me on "The Nature of Leadership in MRA" in which I ask a lot of questions about this. For example: "has there been any other religious movement, ever, anywhere, which expected its young, newly married, hopefully in-love-with-each-other, full-time workers to share a bedroom every night in chastity, until they had the movement's permission to make a baby?" And, I should have added, for the decades after conceiving. I'm impressed that IofC put my essay up there and wish I had written it better.

Power relations and the "C" word: I found the sociological study of religious movements tremendously interesting and helpful. But I was very reluctant to use the word "cult" to

describe MRA, seeing it as more pejorative than descriptive, especially since I wanted people to take it seriously. Today I would find it easier to use the term in a neutral context: in various ways I see MRA now as a cult. By that I mean that it displayed some classic cultic tendencies such as exaggerated deference towards a leader, internal uniformity of thought, excessive self-regard for the group, disparagement of outsiders, unwillingness to critique its own ideas and norms or to openly talk about the wounds it inflicted. That there are far more extreme examples of cults doesn't mean MRA wasn't drifting into the same ballpark. In fact much of human life—religious and secular—does, including many groupings we don't think of as cults, as my favourite book on the topic makes clear, Arthur Deikman's *The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society.* It has long struck me as curious that guidance, that very individual meeting with the inner voice, which you might think would help people stand strongly against peer pressure, became transformed in MRA into something that you shared daily, in networks of sharing, such that in time your inner thoughts became so well known to others, and theirs to you, that it became rather hard to think one's own separate thoughts. At least that was my experience. I would be interested to see someone investigate this aspect of the movement. It seems to me that close-knit groups need to take deliberate measures to avoid our inevitable human tendencies towards cultism: some of which the Oxford Group was aware of and attempted, and others it was not and did not.

"Anti-intellectual" and anti-religious intellectuals: My father, Ken Belden, as an MRA leader particularly objected to my characterizing MRA in the thesis as 'anti-intellectual'. He said that the leadership were by and large highly trained intellectually and had many vigorous debates among themselves about ideas and strategy. I grant that but I stand by my evaluation. I would make greater effort today to explain what I meant, so that he and others like him could have understood the point. At the same time I would love to see a study on the movement's relationships with intellectuals and the mainstream of academia. Most sociologists of religion, when I was studying the field, believed that religion was a leftover of former times, on the way out. I was stunned when that began to change, after I left the academy, and scholars began to show more humility. The polarization and mutual antagonism between Buchman's experientialism and intellectual worldviews from the 1920s to the 1960s and to a degree to the present day were not just Buchman's fault: it was also a failure of the intellectuals (with increasingly rare exceptions like Gabriel Marcel) to understand what was going on under their noses.

I hope the wider distribution of this thesis will encourage those already studying MRA history to go deeper and publish, and those who are looking for thesis topics to consider MRA as a source of vitally interesting experience.