

## Cora Finch

# Additional Notes to Stellar Fire

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<http://web.archive.org/web/20080619234902/http://www.stellarfire.org/additional.html>

## 1. Remarks from Dr. Jung

The correspondence between Carl Jung, Leonard Bacon and Rowland Hazard, along with other contemporary material, has filled in many of the details concerning Rowland's initial therapy. However, in the traditional account of Jung's role in the development of AA, the analysis itself is relatively unimportant. Of much greater importance is a conversation thought to have occurred later, when Rowland had relapsed and returned to Zurich.

In my initial research, I tried unsuccessfully to find a date on which such a conversation might have occurred. My hope was that the context might clarify Jung's meaning. Robert Winer M.D. ([www.neurocareusa.com](http://www.neurocareusa.com)), who is a neurologist, psychiatrist and Jungian analyst, informed me recently that Carl Jung had given his own account of a patient who was very likely Rowland Hazard. As Dr. Winer pointed out, Jung's own explanation of his thinking is of much greater value than secondary sources.

Jung made the remarks during a seminar for the Guild of Pastoral Psychology in London, on 5 April 1939. His talk was issued privately in 1954 as a transcript from shorthand taken by an attendee (Jung approved the transcript). This was later included in Volume 18 of the Collected Works, *The Symbolic Life*. In answering a question concerning the reasons Roman Catholics were unlikely to develop neurosis (it was Jung's position that they rarely did, due to the richness of the symbolic life in the church), Jung said (p. 272, paragraphs 620-1):

My attitude to these matters is that, as long as a patient is really a member of a church, he ought to be serious. He ought to be really and sincerely a member of that church, and he should not go to a doctor to get his conflicts settled when he

believes that he should do it with God. For instance, when a member of the Oxford Group comes to me in order to get treatment, I say, "You are in the Oxford Group; so long as you are there, you settle your affair with the Oxford Group. I can't do it better than Jesus."

I will tell you a story of such a case. A hysterical alcoholic was cured by this Group movement, and they used him as a sort of model and sent him all round Europe, where he confessed so nicely and said that he had done wrong and how he had got cured through the Group movement. And when he had repeated his story twenty, or it may have been fifty, times, he got sick of it and took to drink again. The spiritual sensation had simply faded away. Now what are they going to do with him? They say, now he is pathological, he must go to a doctor. See, in the first stage he has been cured by Jesus, in the second by a doctor! I should and did refuse such a case. I sent the man back to these people and said, "If you believe that Jesus has cured this man, he will do it a second time. And if he can't do it, you don't suppose that I can do it better than Jesus?" But that is just exactly what they do expect; when a man is pathological, Jesus won't help him but the doctor will.

Although the Oxford Group claimed many adherents during the 1930s, only a chosen few were allowed on speaking tours. Rowland Hazard spoke at several Group events in the United States and Canada beginning in 1934. In 1935 he was encouraged by his Group mentors to take the next step and make a trip to Switzerland, to attend the international Oxford Group convention held in Geneva that September (Hazard/Smith correspondence, 16 June through 21 August 1935, H. Alexander Smith papers, Mudd Library, Princeton University). Smith, who was Sam Shoemaker's father-in-law and active in the group, was not planning to go to Geneva himself but assumed Rowland would be going.

Notes in the back of Sam Shoemaker's 1935 appointment book also refer to this trip. The writing is very small and difficult to decipher, but some notes are clear: "Rowland to Geneva," and "Team Sat. morning, Rel. to Geneva, Basle & Zurich. Demonstr. gt.

char. of work." (Samuel Moor Shoemaker papers, Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois). It is clear that Rowland had plans to go on a speaking tour which included Zurich. However, there is no evidence that he actually went to Europe, in 1935 or at any time in the mid-1930s. A list of notable Americans attending the Geneva conference, sent by Helen Smith Shoemaker to her father, did not include Rowland Hazard (H. Alexander Smith papers, Princeton).

In a later talk, also included in Volume 18 of the Collected Works (p. 242), Jung said:

This compartment psychology reminds me of another case. It was that of an alcoholic who had come under the laudable influence of a certain religious movement and, fascinated by its enthusiasm, had forgotten he needed a drink. He was obviously and miraculously cured by Jesus, and accordingly was held up as a witness to divine grace or to the efficacy of the said organization. After a few weeks of public confession, the novelty began to wear off and some alcoholic refreshment seemed to be indicated. But this time the helpful organization came to the conclusion that the case was "pathological" and not suitable for an intervention by Jesus. So they put him in a clinic to let the doctor do better than the divine healer.

Richard Dubiel, in *The Road to Fellowship* (p. 162), reports that Rowland Hazard was hospitalized in New York City during August 1936, after suffering a relapse while in New Mexico. His family also sought the help of Shep Cornell, Rowland's closest Oxford Group friend, in dealing with the problem. It is interesting to note that Carl Jung arrived in New York on August 30, 1936 for a lecture tour which included New York, Cambridge and Providence. He gave a seminar at Bailey Island, Maine, and met with many former analysands (Deirdre Bair, *Jung: A Biography*, pp. 418-423). Jung's recollection that he "sent the man back to these people" therefore may have referred to a conversation which took place in the United States, not Switzerland.

It certainly seems likely that Jung's remarks refer to Rowland Hazard. If so, Wilson's recollection—that Jung's refusal to treat Rowland, and the accompanying message, was fundamental to Bill's own conversion and recovery—is implausible. Rowland's first speaking tour with the Oxford Group was the Canadian trip in late November 1934, just before Bill's last stay at Towns hospital. Jung refused to treat the patient because the patient had already made it clear, through public testimony, that the Group was responsible for his recovery. That conversation, if it was with Rowland Hazard, could not have occurred before 1936.

If the conversation did occur in 1936, the new chronology might help provide answers to two other questions. First, why did Bill Wilson wait so long to write Carl Jung? According to Mel B. (in his book, *New Wine*, quoting Nell Wing), a Jungian student first made the suggestion in 1945. Then, "the idea came up from time to time over the next 15 years without any action ever being taken" (p. 9). When Wilson finally did write the letter, Jung was 85 years old and quite ill, having had a stroke in 1960. Is it possible that the delay reflected a concern that Jung would remember a different sequence of events?

It is also interesting that there are significant differences between the account of the conversation in the 1939 book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and the letter Wilson wrote to Jung in 1961. The words of doom attributed to Jung in the book are much more extreme ("he could never regain his position in society and he would have to place himself under lock and key or hire a bodyguard if he expected to live long") than those in the letter (which refer only to the worthlessness of further medical or psychiatric treatment). Perhaps by 1961 someone had told Bill Wilson that Jung had his own recollection of the conversation.

Whatever the explanation may be for Wilson's story, Jung's own account of his thinking on these issues is an invaluable addition to our understanding of them. Jung's message is not so much about hopelessness (medical, psychiatric or otherwise) as it is about consistency. Jung clearly felt that people need to pay attention to

what has worked for them in the past, particularly with regard to spiritual things. His gentle mockery of the Oxford Group implies that the objective truth of a belief system may not be important.

There is no reason to doubt that the teachings of Carl Jung were transmitted to Ebby Thacher by Rowland Hazard, and that in some form they influenced Bill Wilson also. Bill Wilson later emphasized one particular claim: that immediately following Rowland's treatment he returned to drinking, that Jung told him he could not recover except through religious means, and that he then achieved long-term sobriety in the Oxford Group. The details of the story do not seem to match this chronology. Jung's influence was apparently less specific, a reflection of his general respect for religious healing.

## 2. Bill Wilson and the Letter

The primary connection between Bill Wilson and Rowland Hazard was their mutual friend, Edwin (Ebby) Thacher. Ebby met Rowland in Manchester, Vermont during the summer of 1934, when Cebra Graves introduced them. Cebra had become involved with the Group earlier that summer. Shep Cornell, who was a close Oxford Group friend of Rowland, was then a house guest at the Hazard summer home in Shaftsbury, Vermont.

Cebra persuaded Rowland and another Grouper, Shep Cornell, to help Ebby stay away from alcohol. Ebby stopped drinking and later moved to the Calvary Mission in New York City under Rowland's guidance. Ebby paid a visit to his old friend Bill Wilson, took him to a service at Calvary Mission, and later brought him into the Oxford Group. Ebby maintained a close relationship with Rowland over the next year, traveling to New Mexico with him during the summer of 1935. No doubt some of what Ebby learned was passed on to Bill.

Rowland Hazard was not Bill Wilson's only source of information about Carl Jung, however. Bill and other early AA's read Jung's popular book, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, a fact Bill mentioned later in a letter to Jung (part of this letter, sent March 20, 1961, is reproduced in *Pass It On*, (New York: AAWS, 1984), pp. 383-4. During the 1940s Bill was in therapy with a Jungian analyst, and over the years he corresponded with others who were familiar with Jung's work.

One little-known Wilson correspondent determined, more than anyone else, the way that Jung's legacy to Alcoholics Anonymous would be understood. In 1960, Frederick Walker sent Bill two articles he had written. The articles and a letter of reply from Wilson are now in the Kirk Collection at Brown University in Providence,

Rhode Island. "The Primary Problem of Alcoholism" advanced Walker's theory as to why recovery from alcoholism is so difficult. The second article, "My Soul Thirsts For Thee," described the spiritual change or surrender which could make recovery possible.

Little is known about Walker himself, although he was clearly an accomplished writer with an excellent grasp of the literature of spirituality and mysticism. I suspect that he was the same Frederick Walker, a journalist and public relations consultant, who contributed to the conservative/libertarian magazine *The Freeman* in the late 1950s. Judging from Wilson's correspondence with Walker, he does not appear to have been a member of AA. He lived in Europe during the late 1950s and spoke to Jung. Walker had read Bill Wilson's account of Carl Jung's involvement in the events leading up to the founding of the fellowship and told Jung about it (Frederick Walker interview, Ernest Kurtz collection, Brown University).

Neither of the articles Walker sent to Bill Wilson mentioned Carl Jung, although Wilson's letter of reply did mention him. There are in fact signs of Jungian influence in some of Frederick Walker's ideas, particularly his explanation of how it could be possible that the alcoholic both wants and does not want to recover:

This characteristic of not wanting to recover is all too familiar to anyone who has tried to help alcoholic sufferers. Yet any profound inner force carries its opposite side, a *reversus*, which if moved carries the person concerned in a direction completely opposite to the course previously followed. The desire not to get well carries its opposite desire which is just as deep to get well. Once this opposite is moved to function an inner conflict begins which formerly did not exist since the desire for fatality was not challenged, and once this conflict has started the will to live emerges triumphant for it is the nature of things that most living organisms instinctively desire to live when there is a counteraction to the desire to subside into oblivion, or in overcoming hostile external conditions.

Beyond hints such as this, the articles are not specifically Jungian. Walker drew a link between his theory that the root of alcoholism is an inner self-destructive urge to Alcoholics Anonymous concepts.

The persons who join Alcoholics Anonymous or other successful agencies have emerged from this conflict with a newly reinforced will to live, increasing awareness of their diseased condition, and a resolution to overcome the hold of alcohol on them. (pp. 4-5) Where recovery from alcoholism is complete the results are often amazing and of great value .... The *reversus* has been freed and a new life pattern is established and lived. How this achievement is accomplished is still dark, as dark as many other phases of alcoholism, but the results are visible.

The first move in making the will to recover a living becoming is surrender, absolute surrender. The sufferer must and does admit he is powerless in the grips of his disease. Here, by surrendering any pretensions to retaining his own will, he makes an act of will which begins his recovery!

The other article, "My Soul Thirsts For Thee," is notable for its similarity to the letter Carl Jung sent to Bill Wilson a short time later. It would be difficult to explain this resemblance as a direct result of Jung's influence on Frederick Walker, because Walker never quoted Jung, or even referred to him, in the article. He quoted a number of other people, including Aldous Huxley, Don John Chapman, Karl Menninger, Abraham Lincoln and alcoholism specialists Dr. Robert V. Seliger and Selden Bacon, but never mentioned Jung.

Frederick Walker was corresponding with both Carl Jung and Bill Wilson during the same time period. If Walker sent the same article to Jung that he sent to Wilson, this might help to explain the appearance of similar phrases in Jung's letter. Jung, for example, used a line from Psalm 42 in his letter to Wilson: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." (*Pass It On*, p. 384) Frederick Walker's article opened with a

section of Psalm 63 beginning: "O God, thou art my God, I seek thee, My soul thirsts for thee."

Walker began with the observation that "All men are born potentially mystics," but through selfishness and the attractions of the world the potential for illumination is lost to all but a few:

The mystics are the true pursuers of the Absolute, which is a word which not too happily means love of and dedication to God. The lives of the mystics are supremely dedicated to their love and devotion. They, and they alone, live through to their triumphant and transcendent destiny. To most people no such dedication exists, or if it does it is dimly sensed; their lives are scattered and diversified and lacking in meaning. Yet there is another class of persons dedicated to an Absolute as final as the love of God, and these persons are alcoholics whose false Absolute which claims their complete dedication is alcohol. (p 2)

Walker then summarized William James' explanation, from the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, of alcohol as the great exciter of the Yes function in man. The drinker (at least, the potentially alcoholic one) sees a light which is comparable to the light which comes to the mystics. But:

An alcoholic is in essence engaged in a suicidal course, a slow process of giving way to the death wish, and what is this death wish? It is a desire to die to something within. The mystical dying to self is a well known development in the spiritual life .... In a fumbling way the alcoholic is conscious of the defects of his self which appall him, as is the mystic, but his method of dying to these abhorrent traits ends in lingering suicide. Yet unmistakably the vision of light which has illuminated the inner aspects which are revolting or shocking, and which motivates his drinking, was in fundamental reality an opening grace leading to the radiant center if it had been truly recognized. (p. 4)

The task, as Walker saw it, was to convince the alcoholic that, "Spiritually endowed he has succumbed to a materialistic possession. Reveal to him his true endowment so that he finally knows himself and the materialistic possession will pass into the mists." (p. 9)

If alcoholism were truly met as the religious problem it is by religious bodies in a religious way it is possible to believe that not only would many alcoholics be led to recovery but many potential alcoholics would be saved from severe illness and death .... "My soul thirsts for thee." There it is, the eternal thirst, but which so often and so tragically is degraded into a physical thirst for alcohol, so unending in its cravings that the thirst brings destruction. Yet the eternal thirst is a great grace, a true mystical endowment, which leads into the light if it keep its true course. (p. 13)

On March 5, 1960 Bill Wilson wrote to thank Walker for the manuscripts and express his agreement (Kirk Collection, Brown University Library). "It is the experience of many of us in the early stages [of drinking] to feel that we have had glimpses of the Absolute and a heightened feeling of identification with the Cosmos. I am satisfied that these feelings are generally more marked in the alcoholic than in average drinkers." But, as much as he agreed with Walker, Wilson did not feel that he could say so publicly, both because of AA tradition and for practical reasons.

If, however, we were to publicly claim that the alcoholic's desire to drink had a heavy component of religious motivation, I think that would be very widely misunderstood with the result that many people would be kept away. The average clergyman would see red and the average psychiatrist would call this arrant nonsense. Since we require the cooperation of these professions, and because they are our chief source of new members, there wouldn't be much sense in doing this wide-spread, at least in the situation of

Alcoholics Anonymous. Maybe you have some suggestions here, however.

What suggestions Frederick Walker gave may never be known. Did he see a way out of Bill's dilemma? Bill added a postscript to his letter, however, mentioning Jung for the first time:

P.S. What is the state of Dr. Carl Jung's health nowadays? I have often felt remiss in not telling him of the part that he really played in the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous. Would such a letter from me still be in order? In this connection, I send you a copy of "A.A. Comes Of Age" where some note is made of this fact.

One result of the Wilson-Walker correspondence was the famous letter of reply from Carl Jung, in which Jung essentially endorsed the Wilson version of Rowland Hazard's history. Later research indicates that Wilson's recollection diverged from the actual sequence of events, but at the time there was no way for anyone to check the details.

Ernest Kurtz read the Frederick Walker articles and correspondence while researching his history of AA, *Not God*, and interviewed Walker. He cited that interview in support of his impression that the Bill Wilson expression "deflation at depth" derived largely from Jung (p. 178; note, p. 318). On listening to the interview, I had the impression that Walker endorsed Kurtz' theory in spirit but not in detail. Jung, Walker said, considered an inflated ego to be a barrier to individuation. It is a bit of a stretch from this to the AA concept of deflation at depth.

Frederick Walker's writing was certainly not dominated by Jungian concepts, containing as it did contributions from a variety of sources. There is no evidence that the articles were ever published. Nevertheless, through their influence on Wilson, probably also on Jung, and on Ernest Kurtz, the articles contributed to the impression of a historical link between Jung and AA.

### 3. Loose Ends

This section gathers together some details which, although interesting, did not fit in with the main story line. A few questions occurred to me as I was writing, and I was able to find (at least partial) answers.

#### **Rowland Hazard didn't go to Africa alone, did he? Who were his traveling companions?**

Here is an excerpt from a Chicago Tribune article about the trip. Rowland was in the hospital in Arusha at the time it appeared.

Naples, Italy, January 20

George F. Getz, wealthy Chicago coal man and noted amateur zoologist, accompanied by his party of five other hunters, arrived here from Zanzibar on the Italian steamer Mazzini after what was described as the mightiest big game hunting invasion ever made into the Dark Continent. The hunters were accompanied by 250 native porters while in the wilds.

Part of their adventurous, dangerous foray into Tanganyika, formerly German East Africa, lay over Theodore Roosevelt's old trail of about twenty years ago. Elephants, lions, tigers, jackals, rhinoceroses, hippopotami, and giraffes fell before their rifles. In addition, Mr. Getz reports the special accomplishment of shooting the rare animal called the oryx, which is a furry beast larger than a greyhound.

The adventurers met the furious charge of African buffaloes, which Mr. Getz says are the most savage beasts in Africa. Treacherous native guides went on strike when the party was several days inland, threatening to desert. Still

another difficulty presented itself in the form of malaria, which attacked the hunters in the marshes.

The Getz party made a trip of 1,200 miles inland, going toward Lake Victoria in Tanganyika. They covered about 2,500 miles in 60 days. The party consisted of Mr. Getz, George F. Getz Jr., C. D. Caldwell, president of By-Products Coke company; Harry Vissering of Kenilworth, Dr. Arthur Metz of Chicago, and Roland Hazard of New York.

George Getz was the official promoter for the second Dempsey-Tunney boxing match, held immediately before his departure for Africa. Getz owned a large private zoo in Holland, Michigan, the fulfillment of a boyhood dream. Live animals captured during the trip were shipped to the zoo—according to the article there were six giraffes, six zebras, one young rhinoceros, and many baboons and monkeys.

Dr. Metz, an accomplished photographer, recorded the trip on movie film. George Getz later put the film together with some explanatory frames (in the silent-movie style), prepared a script, and gave presentations to groups. The film has now been copied to VCR and is available for viewing in the archive of the Holland Museum in Holland, Michigan. The script Getz wrote has unfortunately been lost. In the only image on the film which is specifically identified as Rowland Hazard, he is attempting to climb a gigantic anthill.

### **When did Rowland Hazard seek help from Courtenay Baylor?**

According to Richard Dubiel, (in *The Road to Fellowship* pp. 66-67) the first indication that Rowland was to be seeing Courtenay Baylor appeared in a letter from his mother to his brother written 24 July 1933. This was about two weeks after the resolution of the standoff between Allied Chemical and the Stock Exchange. Courtenay Baylor billed the family (there was a fund set aside for such

expenses) a substantial amount of money over the next few months and then smaller amounts through the fall of 1934.

Early in 1933, Rowland had turned over the management of his businesses, including those in New Mexico, to other family members. My guess is that during the first six months of 1933, the reason Rowland was not involved in his usual business concerns was the crisis at Allied Chemical and Dye. In late 1933 and early 1934 he was probably recovering from a relapse.

The specific reason for choosing Baylor is not known, although Baylor had a good reputation as a lay therapist who worked with alcoholics. Interestingly, he was not the first person to treat Rowland who had Emmanuel movement connections. Dr. Edward Cowles had worked with the Emmanuel groups while completing a fellowship in psychiatry/neurology at Harvard in 1907-09. Beginning in 1922, Cowles directed a "Body and Soul Clinic," on the Emmanuel pattern, at St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery Church in New York City.

Rowland's family evidently had some acquaintance with Courtenay Baylor as early as 1929. On 28 December of that year, Elmer Keith wrote a letter to Courtenay Baylor from Switzerland. It is listed in a bibliography compiled by Dick B., as "regarding Dr. Carl Jung, Dr. Frank Buchman and his fellowship, on an experience of God, sharing and 'power' from above." The letter is not in Dick B.'s own collection, however, and I have not been able to locate it.

### **How did Rowland choose the property in New Mexico, and what did he build there?**

On 2 December 1928, Rowland's mother wrote to his brother about a trip Rowland had just made. He had driven to Santa Barbara in a rental car, beginning somewhere north or east of Arkansas (I cannot tell where the trip began). He spent some time in Rockwall, Texas where there was an excavation of a possible archeological site.

The Rockwall site was in fact a natural geological formation, but there was evidently some dispute about that at the time. Byron de

Prorok, an eccentric adventurer/excavator with an interest in Atlantis and other crypto-archaeological themes, had recently made a trip there. Rowland's interest in the site raises the possibility that his interest in the Southwest was partially archeological.

Rowland's trip to Santa Barbara took him through New Mexico. According to later newspaper accounts, it was car trouble that led to his chance discovery of the beautiful La Luz area. In the months following the trip, he began to make arrangements to purchase the property. A 1955 article in the *Albuquerque Journal* described the area and its history:

It was the same panorama—one embracing the White Sands of New Mexico, whose light in the west melts into the shadows of the San Andres—that in 1719 appealed to some Franciscan padres and again in 1929 to a wealthy young man from the East.

The view was from the western slope of the Sacramento Mountains on the east. A stream splashed down a deep canyon from some high watershed. Here the Franciscan fathers in 1719 built a church and called it *Nuestra Señora de la Luz* (Our Lady of Light).

The village which grew up in the site of the mission was a popular stopping place for many years, with a successful inn. It was all but deserted after the railroad passed it by. Then Rowland Hazard arrived, with "as many ideas as he had dollars."

He began operations in a big way, hiring men who were experts in their professions or trades. Hazard himself was a chemical engineer and had served in World War I. He also was an avid traveler and during sojourns in California had become an admirer of the old hand-made tile roofs and floors of early missions there. He decided to have such tiles for his La Luz Canyon home and brought in Conia Rodrigues from Old Mexico, a well-known ceramic artist.

Rodriguez discovered there was suitable clay to be found in the hills nearby where Hazard was erecting his home. The New Yorker erected a pottery plant on the site ....

Hazard established elegant display quarters for the pottery in New York City, Florida and the West coast .... The New Yorker then bought the rambling old inn in La Luz. He had it redecorated and reroofed with the rosy-red tile from the pottery plant. By this time Hazard had invested \$300,000 in the area. (*Albuquerque Journal*, 22 November 1955)

The article quoted above did not even mention Rowland's farms, which produced a range of agricultural products using modern water-saving methods.

While in Vermont years before, Rowland had become friends with Carl Ruggles, the composer. Ruggles, his wife Charlotte and son Micah spent the winter of 1929-30 at Rowland's ranch. Another friend, artist Henry Schnakenberg, also visited that winter.

Hazard's ranch, just outside of Alamogordo on one of the nearby mountains, consisted of the main house, where he lived, and several smaller guest houses. When Schnakenberg ... visited in March, he wrote to his family the "the place is high up on a mountain looking for miles into the distance." Carl remembered that everyone spoke Spanish, and that the cowboys taught Micah to ride horseback ....

Life in Alamogordo was not all work. Often there were dinners at the ranch house with their host, who arranged sight-seeing trips for them where Carl could paint or sketch. When Henry Schnakenberg arrived, there were even more festivities, and he, too, had his own little house near the Ruggleses. Hazard arranged for all of them to go on a three-day trip to the Carlsbad Caverns, guided by his overseer, the state geologist of New Mexico.

—from Marilyn J. Ziffrin, *Carl Ruggles: Composer, Painter, Storyteller* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994)

**Are there any potential parallels to the explanation attributed to Jung in Alcoholics Anonymous?**

But is there no exception as to the wickedness of man's heart?  
Yes, in those that are born of God.

John Wesley, sermon preached in Halifax, 21 April 1790

Begbie cites several cases in which drunkards of years' standing become free from the drink habit seemingly at one stroke, and turn from lives of criminality to eager service of others. Cases of this sort have driven both theology and psychology to search for explanation somewhere outside the field of ordinary mental occurrences. Theology has, of course, had recourse to the supernatural, and psychology to the subconscious. And there is no doubt that if the subconscious be given a sufficiently wide interpretation, psychology is justified in looking to it for the explanation of these striking phenomena. Experiments with ... posthypnotic suggestion and with those pathological cases which Freud, Prince, Sidis and others have made so familiar .... experiments of these and other types show much the same sort of sudden rise of ideas, convictions and emotions not to be accounted for by the normal consciousness as is to be found in the conversion of St. Paul or of Alphonse Ratisbonne.

James Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness: A Psychological Study* (New York: MacMillan, 1923) p. 160

## 4. About William James

The faith-state may hold a very minimum of intellectual content .... When, however, a positive intellectual content is associated with a faith state, it gets invincibly stamped in upon belief, and this explains the passionate loyalty of religious persons everywhere to the minutest details of their so widely differing creeds.

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*<sup>1</sup>

Partakers of the life of God,  
"Drunkards of the Divine"—what else?

We face the serpent or the rod  
And buckle truth within our belts—

Truth that strange thing that must describe  
The instant feeling of a man,  
Nor shirk the emotions of the tribe,  
That all must know or no one can.

Leonard Bacon, *William James and Autumn*<sup>2</sup>

And long after "pragmatism" in any sense save as an application of his *Welt-Anschauung* shall have passed into a not unhappy oblivion, the fundamental idea of an open universe in which uncertainty, choice, hypotheses, novelties and possibilities are naturalized will remain associated with the name of James; the more he is studied in his historic setting the more original and daring will the idea appear.

John Dewey, *The Pragmatic Acquiescence*<sup>3</sup>

The advice of Carl Jung has been transmitted to us by way of at least two people, Rowland Hazard and Bill Wilson. The substance of the advice, as reported in Bill Wilson's writings, is reminiscent of

William James' views on conversion. Carl Jung spoke to William James in 1909, and had presumably read some of his work. If Jung was familiar with *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Rowland's problems may have reminded him of a phrase quoted by James: "the only radical cure for dipsomania is religiomania."

Intellectually, James was the heir of Charles Sanders Peirce, who coined the term pragmatism. When Peirce attempted a thumbnail sketch of pragmatism he used the maxim, "Dismiss make-believes." But James had absorbed the mysticism of Emmanuel Swedenborg in his childhood home, and throughout his life believed in the objective reality of paranormal phenomena. His instinct led him to see different possibilities in pragmatic theory.

James wrote his two-volume *Principles of Psychology* over a period of 12 years, completing it in 1890. It was an unprecedented study of the physical basis and biological function of consciousness, and was foundational to American cognitive and social psychology. James took an empirical and naturalistic approach, ostensibly avoiding metaphysics. His more strictly philosophical work, on pragmatism and radical empiricism, appeared over the next 20 years.

The most enduring of his writings on religious philosophy is *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The book is primarily a descriptive work, and the title implies an appreciation for a wide range of religious phenomena. However, James regards only the most dramatic (and often bizarre) experiences of the transcendent as of "religious" interest. The more ordinary manifestations of religious consciousness are simply, in his view, a matter of training or volition.

Theodore Flournoy, a psychologist and friend of William James, wrote "When one attempts to put the very varied content of his essays and lectures into precise and well-arranged formulae one runs the risk of gravely misrepresenting him."<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the religious philosophy of James reached Alcoholics Anonymous through the Oxford Group. The Group was famous for turning out formulae, checklists, slogans and mnemonic devices.

Harold Begbie's *Twice-Born Men, A Clinic in Regeneration: A Footnote in Narrative to William James's "The Varieties of Religious Experience"* (1909) was a popular title among Groupers. Begbie was a London journalist, novelist and conservative Christian who had studied the work of the Salvation Army in the London slums. In the early 1920s Begbie became involved with Frank Buchman and wrote a book about Buchman's movement, *Life-Changers: More Twice-Born Men*.

*Twice-Born Men* begins with an outline of James' religious philosophy as understood by Begbie.

What is "conversion"?

According to Professor James, in whose steps we follow with admiration and respect, "to be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a soul hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities."

Elsewhere he speaks of "those striking instantaneous instances of which Saint Paul's is the most eminent, and in which often, amid tremendous emotional excitement or perturbation of the senses, a complete division is established in the twinkling of an eye between the old life and the new."

These definitions, as all the world knows, are illustrated in Professor James's book by remarkable and well-authenticated histories of personal conversion. The evidence for the reality of these immense changes in character is overwhelming, and the only point where the psychologists find themselves at issue is the means by which they have become accomplished. As to that interesting conflict of opinion the reader is referred to the combatants. The purpose of this book, which I venture to describe as a footnote in narrative to Professor James's famous work, is to bring home to men's minds this fact concerning conversion, that, whatever it may be, *conversion*

*is the only means by which a radically bad person can be changed into a radically good person.*<sup>5</sup>

A shift seems to have occurred from James' careful definition of a transformational experience to Begbie's version (the italics are in the original). James at least attempts some anthropological detachment. Begbie throws caution to the winds and makes conversion—inevitably Christian, in his world—the only route to reformation. It was natural that he would find common cause with Buchman. Although Oxford Group members probably also read James in the original, their reading of it was undoubtedly influenced by the interpretation of Begbie.

## Notes

1. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New American Library edition, 1958) pp. 381-2.
2. Leonard Bacon, *Sunderland Capture and Other Poems* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940) p. 1.
3. John Dewey, "The Pragmatic Acquiescence," *The New Republic*, January 5, 1927, p. 188.
4. Quoted in David M. Wulff, *Psychology and Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991) p. 477.
5. Harold Begbie, *Twice-Born Men, a Clinic in Regeneration: A Footnote in Narrative to William James's "The Varieties of Religious Experience"* (London: Fleming H. Revell, 1909) p. 16-17.