

# **FRANK BUCHMAN**

## **(A turning point in his life)**

Frank Buchman was born in Pennsylvania on June 4, 1878. He became one of the most famous Christian workers in the world. Alcoholics Anonymous is perhaps the most famous outgrowth of his work with over 500,000 groups meeting in 116 countries. The “turning point” that set the stage for this and other spiritual success in his long career came in England in 1908.

In May 1904 Buchman founded a hospice organization to help children in need. That ministry flourished and in the spring of 1906 moved to the inner city of Philadelphia where throngs of children from the streets learned to follow Christ and make an honest living. On May 3, 1906 the Board of the hospice met to devise ways of spending less money. This created a conflict with Buchman, and in Oct. 1907 he presented them a 17 page hand written defense of his work, his needs, and presented them with an ultimatum. He was confident that the ministry could not continue without him. To his amazement he was forced to submit his resignation. In Jan. 1908 Frank sailed for Europe on the SS Molke. He was a bitter and discouraged man.

The “turning point” we are talking about came during a Sunday service at a little stone chapel in England with only 17 people present. It was a message Buchman had heard many times about the Cross of Christ. On that day, however, the Holy Spirit put new meaning in the message and Buchman saw that his sin of ill-will against his board was driving nails into the hands of his Savior. He said: “I began to see myself as God saw me, which was a very different picture than the one I had of myself. I don’t know how you explain it, I can only tell you I sat there and realized how my sin, my pride, my selfishness and my ill-will had eclipsed me from God in Christ. I was in Christian work, I had given my life to those poor boys and many people might have said ‘how wonderful’, but I did not have victory because I was not in touch with God. My work had become my idol. I did not need

any other voice of the Man on the Cross, I thought of the lines, 'This hast Thou done for me, What have I done for Thee,. Thou Crucified?' I was the center of my own life. That big 'I' had to be crossed out. I saw my resentments against those men standing out like tombstones in my heart. I asked God to change me and He told me to put things right with them".

While Buchman wrote to all six board members only one of his letters has survived. It was addressed to Dr. J. F. Ohl, the chairman of the Board, and is dated July 27, 1908.

*"I am writing to tell you that I have harbored an unkind feeling toward you - at times I conquered it but it always came back. Our views may differ but as brothers we must love. I write to ask your forgiveness and to assure that I love you and trust by god's grace I shall never more speak unkindly or disparagingly of you. The lines of this hymn have been ringing in my ears - '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'".*

From this point onward Buchman sought for absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love. His total dedication and transparency began a chain reaction of conversions that transformed millions of lives all over the world. One of his early converts was a notorious bootlegger at Penn State University named Bill Pickle. This led the football coach and some of the star players to become Christians. Then the revival spread from the college to the town, then to other college campuses across the nation and around the world. In the 1920's the movement became known as the Oxford Group.

Buchman became world famous and had the opportunity to witness to men like Mao Tse-tung, Ghandi, Nehru, Princess Sophie of Greece, Mussolini, Himmler, Eric Liddell, Franklin D. Rooseelt, Herbert Hoover, Henry Ford, Solzhenitsyn, Kipling, Edison, and others too numerous to mention. Ultimately seven nations, including France, Germany, Greece, Japan, and the

Philippines decorated him for the positive effect he had on their relations with other countries.

The unleashing of the power of God in his life did not come easily. It came at the cost of his own identity and pride in a little stone chapel when he decided to deny himself, take up his cross, and pour contempt on all his pride.