# The Washingtonian Movement[1]

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## Introduction

Certain similarities between the Washingtonian movement of the nineteenth century and the present-day fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous have been commented upon by a number of observers. In view of this resemblance there is more than historical interest in an account of the first movement in the United States which brought about a large-scale rehabilitation of alcoholics. The phenomenal rise and spread of the Washingtonian movement throughout the land in the early 1840's was the occasion of much discussion, exciting a deep interest. The causes of its equally rapid decline have been a subject of much speculation and are still of concern to the members of Alcoholics Anonymous who may wonder whether or not their movement is destined to a similar fate. This article, therefore, will present not merely a description and history of the movement but also an analysis of the similarities and differences between the Washingtonians and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Since the Washingtonian movement is so intimately linked to the larger temperance movement, it may be well to recall the developments which preceded 1840. Before the 1830's, "temperance" was hardly a popular cause. Even in 1812, when Lyman Beecher proposed to his fellow Congregational ministers that they formulate a program for combating intemperance, ". . . the regular committee reported that 'after faithful and prayerful inquiry' it was convinced that nothing could be done to check the growth of intemperance . . ." (1). The custom of serving liquor at ecclesiastical meetings probably influenced the outcome of this "prayerful inquiry." But Lyman Beecher was not to be stopped. He headed a new committee that recommended the following steps:

> . . . that district assemblies abstain from the use of ardent spirits [not wine] at ecclesiastical meetings, that members of churches abstain from unlawful vending or purchase [not from lawful vending and purchase] of

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liquor, that farmers, mechanics and manufacturers substitute monetary compensation for the ration of spirits, that voluntary associations aid the civil magistrates to enforce the laws, and that the pamphlet of Dr. Rush (2) be printed and circulated (1).[3]

The fact that these proposals were regarded as radical by the custodians of the New England conscience is a sufficient clue to the state of public opinion in 1812.

It was not until 1825 that Lyman Beecher preached his famous Six Sermons (3), in which he defined intemperance not merely as drunkenness but as the "daily use of ardent spirits." In 1826, in Boston, Beecher and Justin Edwards spearheaded the founding of the first national society, "The American Society for the Promotion of Temperance" (American Temperance Society) which sought, according to its constitution, ". . . to produce such a change of public sentiment, and such a renovation of the habits of individuals and the customs of the community, that in the end temperance, with all its attendant blessings, may universally prevail (4)."

The temperance movement began to take hold. In 1829 there were about 1,000 societies with a membership of approximately 100,000. By 1834 there were 5,000 local societies claiming 1,000,000 members, a gain of 500 per cent in 5 years. A temperance press had been established. Effective literature had emerged. Politicians were taking notice. In 1836 the American Temperance Society was merged into the new and more inclusive "American Temperance Union," which decided to take the stand of "total abstinence from all that can intoxicate (5)."

This step required an entirely new orientation. It is therefore not surprising that some 2,000 societies and countless individuals were not ready to go along. Many wealthy contributors, unwilling to forego wine, withdrew their support. Some leaders were discouraged by the resistance to the new pledge and became inactive. Various controversial issues added to the dissension. The movement fell upon lean years. Its leaders, in 1840, were wondering what could be done to restore the momentum of the years preceding 1836. Their efforts were groping and limited.

As for the alcoholic, it was the prevailing opinion, up to 1840, that nothing could be done to help him. Occasionally a "drunkard" did "reform," but this did not erase the general pessimism as to the possibility of rehabilitating drunkards. Since alcohol was held to

[3] Bracketed interpolations by the present writer.



be the "cause" of alcoholism, the temperance movement was aimed solely at keeping the nonalcoholic from becoming an alcoholic. This implied indifference to the alcoholic was epitomized by Justin Edwards in 1822: "Keep the temperate people temperate; the drunkards will soon die, and the land be free (6)."

Thus the stage was set for the emergence of the Washingtonian movement.

## The Baltimore Origins

One Thursday evening, April 2, 1840, six friends were drinking, as they were wont to do almost every evening, in Chase's Tavern, on Liberty Street, in Baltimore. They were William K. Mitchell, a tailor; John F. Hoss, a carpenter; David Anderson and George Steers, both blacksmiths; James McCurley, a coachmaker; and Archibald Campbell, a silversmith (7). Their conversation turned to the temperance lecture which was to be given that evening by a visiting lecturer, the Rev. Matthew Hale Smith. In a spirit of fun it was proposed that some of them go to hear the lecture and report back. Four of them went and, after their return, all discussed the lecture.

> . . . one of their company remarked that, "after all, temperance is a good thing." "O," said the host, "they're all a parcel of hypocrites." "O yes," replied McCurley, "I'll be bound for you; it's your interest to cry them down, anyhow." "I'll tell you what, boys," says Steers, "let's form a society and make Bill Mitchell president." . . . The idea seemed to take wonderfully; and the more they laughed and talked over it, the more they were pleased with it (8).

On Sunday, April 5, while the six were strolling and drinking, the suggestion crystalized into a decision to quit drinking and to organize a total abstinence society. It was agreed that Mitchell should be the president; Campbell, the vice-president; Hoss, the secretary; McCurley, the treasurer; and Steers and Anderson, the standing committee. The membership fee was to be 25 cents; the monthly dues, 12½ cents. The proposal that they name the society in honor of Thomas Jefferson was finally rejected and it was decided that the president and the secretary, since they were to be the committee to draft the constitution, should also decide upon the name. It was agreed that each man should bring a man to the next meeting. And it was left to the president to compose the pledge which they would all sign the next day. The pledge was formulated by Mitchell as follows:

"We, whose names are annexed, desirous of forming a society for our mutual benefit, and to guard against a pernicious practice which is injurious to our health, standing, and families, do pledge ourselves as gentlemen that we will not drink any spirituous or malt liquors, wine or cider."

He went with it, about nine o'clock, to Anderson's house and found him still in bed, sick from the effects of his Sunday adventure. He arose, however, dressed himself, and after hearing the pledge read, went down to his shop with his friend for pen and ink, and there did himself the honor of being the first man who signed the Washington pledge. After obtaining the names of the other four, the worthy president finished this noble achievement by adding his own (8).

The name, "Washington Temperance Society," was selected in honor of George Washington. Two new members were brought to the second meeting. Strangely enough, they continued to meet for a number of weeks at their accustomed place in Chase's Tavern. When the tavern owner's wife objected to the increasing loss of their best customers, Mitchell's wife suggested that they meet in their home. This they did until the group grew too large, whereupon they moved to a carpenter's shop on Little Sharp Street. Eventually, they rented a hall of their own.

As they grew in membership, they faced the problem of making their weekly meetings interesting. Their resourceful president made the suggestion that each member relate his own experience. He started off with his own story of 15 years of excessive drinking, adding his reactions to his newly gained freedom. Others followed suit. This procedure proved to be so interesting and effective that it became a permanent feature of their programs. Interest and membership mounted.

In November the society resolved to try a public meeting in which Mitchell and others would tell their personal experiences. The first such meeting, held on November 19, 1840, in the Masonic Hall on St. Paul Street, was a decided success. Not only did it bring in additional members but it also called the movement to the interested attention of the people of Baltimore. It was decided to repeat these public meetings about once a month in addition to the regular weekly meetings of the society.

John Zug, a citizen of Baltimore who probably had his interest aroused by the first public meeting, made further inquiry and, on December 12, 1840, wrote a letter to the Rev. John Marsh, executive secretary of the American Temperance Union, in New York City,



informing him of the existence of the new society in Baltimore. In it he told about the growth of the group:

These half a dozen men immediately interested themselves to persuade their old bottle-companions to unite with them, and they in a short time numbered nearly one hundred members, a majority of whom were reformed drunkards. By their unprecedented exertions from the beginning, they have been growing in numbers, extending their influence, and increasing in interest, until now they number about three hundred members, upwards of two hundred of whom are reformed drunkards—reformed, too, within the last eight months. Many of these had been drunkards of many years' standing,—notorious for their dissipation. Indeed, the society has done wonders in the reformation of scores whose friends and the community had despaired of long since (9).

So rapidly did the society grow during the following months that on the first anniversary of the society, April 5, 1841, there were about 1,000 reformed drunkards and 5,000 other members and friends in the parade to celebrate the occasion. This demonstration made a deep impression upon the 40,000 or so Baltimorians who witnessed the event.

Additional information on the pattern of activities which made this growth possible, and on the components of the therapeutic program which made the reformation of alcoholics possible in the first place, is given in the writings of contemporary observers. John Zug, in his first letter to John Marsh, included the following description:

The interest connected with this society is maintained by the continued active exertions of its members, the peculiar character of their operations and the frequency of their meetings. The whole society is considered a "grand committee of the whole," each member exerting himself, from week to week, and from day to day, as far as possible, to persuade his friends to adopt the only safe course, total abstinence; or at least to accompany him to the next meeting of the "Washington Temperance Society." It is a motto of their energetic and worthy President, in urging the attendance of the members at the stated meetings, "Let every man be present, and every man bring with him a man."

They have rented a public hall in which they meet every Monday night. At these weekly meetings, after their regular business is transacted, the several members rise promiscuously and state their temperance experience for each other's warning, instruction, and encouragement. After this, any persons present wishing to unite with them are invited forward to sign the Constitution and Pledge (9).

Christian Keener, the editor of the *Maryland Herald*, made these further first-hand observations:

> These men spared neither their money nor their time in carrying out the principles which they had espoused. Many a poor fellow who from the effect of liquor had become a burden to his family and himself was fed and clothed by them, and won by kindness to reform his life; even more than this, they have supported the families of those whom they had induced to join with them, until the husband and father had procured work, and was enabled to support them with his own hands.
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> The peculiar characteristics of this great reform are first, a total abstinence pledge. . . . Secondly, the telling of others what they know from experience of the evils of intemperance, and of the good which they feel to result from entire abstinence (9).

John H. W. Hawkins, an early member, had this to say in one of his Boston speeches:

> Drunkard! Come up here! You can reform. I met a gentleman this morning who reformed four weeks ago, rejoicing in his reformation; he brought a man with him who took the pledge and this man brought two others. This is the way we do the business up in Baltimore. We reformed drunkards are a Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union. We are all missionaries. We don't slight the drunkard; we love him, we nurse him, as a mother does her infant learning to walk (10).

Christian Keener, in another communication, summed up the work as follows, making at the same time a comparison with the operations of the regular temperance societies:

> The great advantage of the Washington Temperance Society has been this; they have reached hundreds of men that would not come out to our churches, nor even temperance meetings; they go to their old companions and drag them, not by force, but by friendly considerations of duty, and a sense of self-respect, into their ranks, and watch over them with the solicitude of friends and brothers . . . (9).

Such was the character of the original Baltimore "Washington Temperance Society."

## The Spread of the Movement

A phenomenon like this could not be confined to Baltimore, for the Washington men had it in their power to meet many pressing needs. First of all, there were the drunkards in need of reclamation —a need long ignored because the opinion prevailed that there was no hope for them. The meeting of this need partook of the miraculous. Secondly, there was the overwhelming drive on the part of the reformed men to carry their message of hope to other victims of drink—spilling over into a desire to prevent such suffering by winning those not addicted to certain sobriety in total abstinence. Finally, there were the needs of the temperance leaders. Set back by the 1836 decision to put temperance on a total abstinence basis, they needed a convincing argument for total abstinence as well as some effective means of rekindling enthusiasm for their cause. The Washington men were the answer to these needs, for what could be a better argument for total abstinence than its apparent power to reclaim even the confirmed drunkard; and what could excite more interest than the personally told experiences of reformed drunkards?



The first recorded activity outside of Baltimore was the speaking of John H. W. Hawkins, in February 1841, to the delegates of the Maryland State Temperance Society, meeting in Annapolis, and to the members of the State Legislature in the same city.

Hawkins, who was to become the most effective spokesman of the movement, had joined the Washington Temperance Society on June 14, 1840, after more than 20 years of excessive drinking. Born in Baltimore on September 28, 1797, he was apprenticed at an early age to a hatmaker. During this apprenticeship he developed a dependence on alcohol which was increased during 3 years in the frontier communities of the West. His religious conversion at the age of 18 did not eradicate this craving. Resuming his trade in Baltimore, he battled in vain against his addiction. The panic of 1837 left him unemployed, reducing him to a pauper on public relief. Guilt and remorse over his family's destitution only intensified his alcoholism. His own account of his last drinking days and his reclamation, as given in his first New York talk, are preserved for us:

> "Never," said he, "shall I forget the 12th of June last. The first two weeks in June I averaged—it is a cross to acknowledge it—as much as a quart and a pint a day. That morning I was miserable beyond conception, and was hesitating whether to live or die. My little daughter came to my bed and said, 'I hope you won't send me for any more whiskey today.' I told her to go out of the room. She went weeping. I wounded her sorely, though I had made up my mind I would drink no more. I suffered all the horrors of the pit that day, but my wife supported me. She said, 'Hold on, hold on.' Next day I felt better. Monday I wanted to go down and see my old associates who had joined the Washington Society. I went and signed. I felt like a free man. What was I now to do to regain my character? My friends took me by the hand. They encouraged me. They did right. If

there is a man on earth who deserves the sympathy of the world it is the poor drunkard; he is poisoned, degraded, cast out, knows not what to do, and must be helped or be lost . . . (8)."

"It did not take his associates long to discover that he had the qualities of a leader. A splendid physique and commanding presence, combined with a gift for extemporaneous speaking, made him an ideal lecturer. (1)" It is not surprising, therefore, that Hawkins was selected to speak before the Maryland State Temperance Society and the State Legislature. Christian Keener left an eye-witness report of the latter occasion which helps to explain Hawkins' appeal:

. . . He commenced his speech by letting them know that he stood before them a reformed drunkard, less than twelve months ago taken almost out of the gutter; and now in the Senate chamber of his native State, addressing hundreds of the best informed and most intelligent men and women, and they listening with tearful attention. The circumstances had an almost overpowering effect on his own feelings and those of his audience. He is a man of plain, good common sense, with a sincerity about him, and easy way of expressing himself, that every word took like a point-blank shot. "His was the eloquence of the heart; no effort at display (9).

About this time, a Baltimore businessman attended a temperance meeting in New York City. News of the Baltimore developments having already been circulated by John Marsh through the *Journal* of the American Temperance Union, this visitor was requested to give a brief history and description of the Washington Society. A conversation with Dr. Rease, after the meeting, brought forth the suggestion that some of the Washington men be invited to New York to relate their experiences. This tentative proposition was taken to the Baltimore society, accepted by them, and the arrangements completed for a delegation of five to go. The five were William K. Mitchell, John H. W. Hawkins, J. F. Pollard, and two other members, Shaw and Casey.

Their first meeting in New York was held on Tuesday, March 23, 1841, in the Methodist Episcopal Church on Green Street. The curious throngs were not disappointed. As in Baltimore, the experiences of these "reformed drunkards" deeply moved and inspired all those who came to hear. Not only that, but real-life drama was enacted at the meeting. The *New York Commercial Advertiser* reported the next morning:

During the first speech a young man arose in the gallery and, though



intoxicated, begged to know if there was any hope for him; declaring his readiness to bind himself, from that hour, to drink no more. He was invited to come down and sign the pledge, which he did forthwith, in the presence of the audience, under deep emotion, which seemed to be contagious, for others followed; and during each of the speeches they continued to come forward and sign, until more than a hundred pledges were obtained; a large proportion of which were intemperate persons, some of whom were old and gray headed. Such a scene as was beheld at the secretary's table while they were signing, and the unaffected tears that were flowing, and the cordial greeting of the recruits by the Baltimore delegates, was never before witnessed in New York (8).

All the subsequent meetings were equally successful. John Marsh and the other temperance leaders who were promoting the meetings were delighted. With no church large enough to hold the curious crowds, it was decided to hold an open air meeting in City Hall Park. More than 4,000 turned out for this. The speakers, mounted on upturned rum kegs, again enthralled the crowd. This impressive occasion was merely the climax of a triumphant campaign: about 2,000 were converted to the total abstinence pledge, including many confirmed drunkards with whom the men worked between meetings. At this time the Washington Temperance Society of New York was organized.

The delegation returned to Baltimore in time for the first anniversary parade and celebration, on April 5th. With the memory of their New York success still fresh in their minds, this must have been a very happy and meaningful occasion—not merely the recognition of a year's achievement, but also a portent of things to come.

Things began to happen rapidly now. Even while the New York meetings were in progress, John Marsh wrote to the Boston temperance leaders about the power of the Washingtonian appeal. Arrangements were quickly made so that within a week after the first anniversary celebration Hawkins and William E. Wright were on their way to Boston for a series of meetings in the churches. There were those who doubted that Bostonians would respond as enthusiastically as New Yorkers, but the coming of these speakers was well publicized and even larger crowds than in New York greeted them. The first meeting was held on April 15, 1841. The *Daily Mail* had this report the following morning:

The Odeon was filled to its utmost capacity, last evening, by a promiscuous audience of temperance men, distillers, wholesalers and retail dealers in ardent spirits, confirmed inebriates, moderate drinkers, lovers of the social glass, teetotalers, etc., to listen to the speeches of the famous "Re-

formed Drunkards," delegates from the Washington Temperance Society of Baltimore, who have excited such a deep interest in the cause of temperance in other places. . . . Mr. Hawkins, of Baltimore, was the second of the "Reformed Drunkards" introduced to the meeting. He was a man of forty-four years of age—of fine manly form—and said he had been more than twenty years a confirmed inebriate. He spoke with rather more fluency, force and effect, than his predecessor, but in the same vein of free and easy, off-hand, direct, bang-up style; at times in a simple conversational manner, then earnest and vehement, then pathetic, then humorous—but always manly and reasonable. Mr. Hawkins succeeded in "working up" his audience finely. Now the house was as quiet and still as a deserted church, and anon the high dome rang with violent bursts of laughter and applause. Now he assumed the melting mood, and pictured the scenes of a drunkard's home, and that home his own, and fountains of generous feeling, in many hearts, gushed forth in tears—and again, in a moment, as he related some ludicrous story, these tearful eyes glistened with delight, sighs changed to hearty shouts, and long faces were convulsed with broad grins and glorious smiles (1).

The *Boston Mercantile Journal* reported the same meeting in the following manner:

The exercises at the temperance meeting at the Odeon last evening possessed a deep and thrilling interest. The hall was crowded and Messrs. Hawkins and Wright . . . spoke with great eloquence and power for more than two hours, and when, at ten o'clock, they proposed abridging somewhat they had to say, shouts of "Go on! Go on!" were heard from all parts of the house. We believe more tears were never shed by an audience in one evening than flowed last night. . . . Old gray haired men sobbed like children, and the noble and honorable bowed their heads and wept. *Three hundred and seventy-seven* came forward and made "the second declaration of independence," by pledging themselves to touch no intoxicating drink; among them were noticed many bloated countenances, familiar as common drunkards; and we promise them health, prosperity, honor, and happiness in the pursuance of their new principles (9).

When even the standing room in Faneuil Hall was filled, a few evenings later, and the crowd responded with unrestrained enthusiasm, several hundred coming forward to sign the pledge at the close of the meeting, there was no longer any doubt that the Washingtonian reformers had a universally potent appeal. Here was "human interest" material *par excellence*. No fiction could be more exciting or dramatic. These true-life narratives pulled at the heartstrings. They aroused awe and wonder at the "miracle of rebirth." Formal religious beliefs had flesh and blood put on dry bones. And, to the victim of drink, the Washingtonian message was like a promise of life to a doomed man. It was the impossible come true.



During these meetings, a Washington Total-Abstinence Society was formed in Boston. Hawkins was also engaged as the paid secretary of the Massachusetts Temperance Society, and on June 1, 1841, returned from Baltimore with his family. Within a short space of time, he and his Boston associates succeeded in carrying the Washingtonian movement into 160 New England towns.

On May 11, 1841, the executive committee of the American Temperance Union, on the occasion of its anniversary meeting in New York City, paid high tribute to the Washingtonians. In July at the national convention of the Union, at Saratoga Springs, this praise was even more fulsome. John Marsh and many of the other leaders saw in the Washingtonians the possibilities of a great forward advance for the temperance movement. None of them, however, even in their most optimistic moments, sensed the vitality that was to be manifested by the Washingtonian movement that very summer and autumn.

Even before the Saratoga convention, two of the most famous of the many Washingtonian deputation teams, Pollard and Wright, and Vickers and Small, had begun extensive tours. By autumn, many teams and individuals were in the field. From the 1842 *Report* of the American Temperance Union, it is possible to trace the rapid spread of the movement throughout the country.

J. F. Pollard and W. E. Wright, both of Baltimore—the former having accompanied Hawkins to New York, and the latter to Boston—began their work early in the summer of 1841 in Hudson, New York. Their first efforts were discouraging, but soon they got attention and in a few weeks nearly 3,000 of the 5,500 inhabitants of Hudson had signed the pledge. A Hudson resident has left this account of their type of meeting:

Some of the meetings took the air of deep religious solemnity, eyes that never wept before were suffused. . . . The simple tale of the ruined inebriate, interrupted by a silence that told of emotions too big for utterance, would awaken general sympathy, and dissolve a large portion of the audience in tears. The spell which had bound so many seemed to dissolve under the magic eloquence of those unlettered men. They spoke from the heart to the heart. The drunkard found himself unexpectedly an object of interest. He was no longer an outcast. There were some who still looked upon him as a man. A chord was reached which had long since ceased to respond to other influences less kind in their nature. . . . The social principle operated with great power. A few leaders in the ranks of intemperance having signed the pledge, it appeared to be the signal for the mass to

follow: and on they came, like a torrent sweeping everything before it. It was for weeks the all-absorbing topic . . . (7).

Pollard and Wright attended the Saratoga convention and then toured through central and western New York; and, that autumn, through New Jersey and Pennsylvania. On this tour they obtained 23,340 signatures to the pledge, "one-fifth of which were supposed to be of common drunkards" (7). Late in 1841 they spoke in Maryland and Delaware. They moved in January 1842 into Virginia, where they worked particularly in Richmond, Petersburg, Charlottesville and Norfolk, pledging Negroes as well as whites.

The other famous team, Jesse Vickers and Jesse W. Small, also of Baltimore, began their campaign in June 1841 in Pittsburgh, where "all classes, all ages, all ranks and denominations, and both sexes, pressed every night into overflowing churches." In a brief time 10,000 were pledged, "including a multitude of most hopeless characters" (7). This success was followed by another in Wheeling, from which place they proceeded to Cincinnati where Lyman Beecher, now president of Lane Theological Seminary, had diligently prepared the way for their coming. Large crowds turned out for the meetings and a strong Washington society was organized which, by the end of 1841, claimed 8,000 members, 900 of them reformed. Cincinnati became the chief center of Washingtonianism in the West, and Vickers and Small spent a great deal of time preparing the converts who were to carry on the missionary work. One of these Cincinnati teams, Brown and Porter, obtained 6,529 signatures in an 8-week campaign in the surrounding country, 1,630 of them from "hard drinkers" and 700 from confirmed drunkards. Another Cincinnati team, Turner and Guptill, toured western Ohio and Michigan. On Dec. 21, 1841, a team of three, probably including Vickers, began a campaign in St. Louis, laying the foundation for a Washington society that numbered 7,500 within a few months. Many communities in Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois were also visited. It is interesting to note that on February 22, 1842, Abraham Lincoln addressed the Washington Society of Springfield, Ill. Just how quickly the West was cultivated by the Washingtonian missionaries, operating chiefly out of Cincinnati, is shown by the May 1842 claims of 60,000 signatures in Ohio, 30,000 in Kentucky, and 10,000 in Illinois. Of these, it was claimed, "every seventh man is a reformed drunkard, and every fourth man a reformed tippler" (7).

The intensity of this cultivation varied with time and place. How



intensive it could be is well portrayed by a citizen of Pittsburgh, in a letter to John Marsh, in April 1842:

> The work has grown in this city and vicinity . . . at such a rate as has defied a registration of its triumphs with anything like statistical accuracy. . . . The most active agents and laborers in the field have been at no time able to report the state of the work in their own entire province—the work spread around us from place to place—running in so many currents, and meeting in their way so many others arising from other sources, or springing spontaneously in their pathway, that no one could measure its dimensions or compass its spread. We have kept some eight or ten missionaries in the field ever since last June, who have toiled over every part and parcel of every adjoining county of Pennsylvania, and spread thence into Ohio and Virginia, leaving no school house, or country church, or little village, cross roads, forge, furnace, factory, or mills, unvisited; holding meetings wherever two or three could be gathered together, and organizing as many as from 20 to 30 societies in a single county . . . (7).

In the Boston area, Washingtonian activity was intensive from the beginning. Within 3 months after the first Hawkins and Wright meetings, the Boston society had this to report:

> Since this society went into operation the delegating committee have sent out two hundred and seventeen delegations to one hundred and sixty towns in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, and Rhode Island, with wonderful success. . . . Some of those towns where we have formed societies are now sending out their delegates. The whole country is now alive to the subject. . . . It is acknowledged on all sides that no people like ours—although unlearned—could create such a wonderful interest in the all absorbing cause. . . .
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> There is no doubt that at least 50,000 persons have signed the pledge in the different towns that our delegates have visited. Where societies were already formed, a more lively interest was created,—new signers obtained from those who had been inebriates, and thus a new energy imparted. . . . Where societies had not before existed, new societies were formed. . . (8).

Ten months later, in May 1842, the Boston society had 13,000 members, had sent 260 delegations to 350 towns in New England, and had produced a number of converts who had become effective missionaries outside of New England. Benjamin Goodhue, in December 1841, stirred up great interest in Sag Harbor and the east end of Long Island. A Mr. Cady, during this winter, toured North Carolina, securing 10,000 signatures. In February 1842 Joseph J. Johnson and an unnamed fellow Bostonian conducted successful campaigns in Mobile and New Orleans.

By May 1842 the movement had penetrated every major area

of the country and was going particularly strong in central New York and New England. The most vigorous urban centers were Baltimore, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington, Cincinnati and St. Louis. The city of Baltimore had 15 societies and 7,842 members. New York and vicinity had 23 societies and 16,400 members. In the *Journal* of the American Temperance Union, on April 1, 1842, John Marsh wrote enthusiastically of the New York activity: "We suppose there are not less than fifty meetings held weekly and most of them are perfect jams. Our accessions are numerous and often of the most hopeless characters" (9). In and around Philadelphia, where the societies took the name of Jefferson, some 20,000 members were enrolled. In the District of Columbia there were 4,297 members, and another 1,000 in Alexandria, Va. Later in the year Hawkins visited Washington and was successful in reactivating the old Congressional Temperance Society and putting it on a total abstinence basis. Congressman George N. Briggs, soon to be Governor of Massachusetts, became president of this reorganized society.

To the list of outstanding reformed men who became effective Washingtonian missionaries during this first year, there should be added the names of George Haydock, Hudson, N. Y. (8,000 signatures); Col. John Wallis, Philadelphia (7,000 signatures); Thomas M. Woodruff, New York City; Abel Bishop, New Haven, Conn.; and Joseph Hayes, Bath, Me.

During 1842 the most outstanding temperance orator of all was won to the cause. John B. Gough, a bookbinder and actor, notorious in Worcester, Mass., as a drunkard, was reformed. When his platform ability was discovered, many Washingtonian societies sponsored his addresses. As his popularity grew he became a professional free-lance lecturer; and during the years 1843–47 traveled 6,840 miles, gaining 15,218 signatures to the pledge (11).

Another important development was the organization of women into the little known "Martha Washington" societies. The first such society was organized "in a church at the corner of Chrystie and Delancey Streets, New York, on May 12 of that year [1841], through the efforts of William A. Wisdom and John W. Oliver" (12). The constitution detailed the purpose:

> Whereas, the use of all intoxicating drinks has caused, and is causing, incalculable evils to individuals and families, and has a tendency to prostrate all means adapted to the moral, social and eternal happiness of the whole human family; we, the undersigned ladies of the city of New York, feeling ourselves especially called upon, not only to refrain from the use of all intoxicating drinks, but, by our influence and example, to induce others to do the same, do therefore form ourselves into an association (12).



These Martha Washington societies were organized in many places, functioning to some extent as auxiliaries of the Washingtonian societies, but also engaged in the actual rehabilitation of alcoholic women. In the annual *Report* of 1843, there is this reference: ". . . the Martha Washington Societies, feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and reclaiming the intemperate of their own sex, have been maintained, in most places, with great spirit . . ." (7).

## Duration of the Movement

How long the Washingtonian movement continued in full force is a difficult question to answer. The most dramatic strides were made between the summers of 1841 and 1842, but apparently the peak of activity was reached in 1843. That year, Gough was touring New England, and Hawkins northern and western New York as well as sections of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. R. P. Taylor was doing effective work in Georgia. Late that autumn Hawkins campaigned in North and South Carolina and Georgia, stimulating great Washingtonian activity in that region. It was a year of high activity, with the major portion of the work carried on, as it was through most of the life of the movement, by numerous Washingtonians whose names are unrecorded.

On May 28, 1844, in Boston, the Washingtonians were the sponsors of, and leading participants in, the largest temperance demonstration ever held, up to that time, with nearly 30,000 members of various temperance organizations participating. Governor George N. Briggs, William K. Mitchell and John B. Gough were the leading speakers.

In the fall of 1845 Hawkins began one of his most intensive campaigns, in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, winding up in the spring of 1846 with very successful meetings in New Orleans and Mobile. During this 8-month period Hawkins not only spoke daily but also directed the work of many assistants and helped, as he always did, to organize societies to continue the work. In much of the territory covered by Hawkins on this campaign the Washingtonian movement was still at full tide in 1845 and 1846. This tends to corroborate the generalization of Wooley and Johnson (12) that "for four years

it continued to sweep the country." But in some of the cities which had been reached by the movement in 1841, a decline had already set in.

In New York City the Sons of Temperance, a total abstinence order which had been founded with the help and blessing of Washingtonians, had begun, late in 1842, to receive into its membership many Washingtonians. Slowly but increasingly it displaced the functions of the Washington societies.

In Cincinnati, in January 1845, Lyman Beecher wrote to John Marsh about the "resurgence of the liquor tide" and of the need for a new type of temperance appeal. He thought that "though the Washingtonians have endured and worked well, their thunder is worn out" (13).

Fehlandt (4) states that "By 1843 . . . interest began to wane, and soon Washingtonianism had spent its force." It might be correct to say that the first signs of waning interest appeared in 1843 but it is not probable that such signs were detectable in most areas before 1844—and in some areas not until later. Hence, no generalization seems to apply to the entire country.

Most significant as an index of general interest are the references to the Washingtonian movement in the annual *Reports* of the executive committee of the American Temperance Union, published in May of each year. The 1842 *Report* enthusiastically details the spread of the movement. The 1843 *Report* reflects continued enthusiasm. The 1844 *Report* notes that the movement "has continued through its fourth year with as much interest as could be expected." The 1845 *Report* contains news of the crowded weekly meetings and increased success of the Hartford, Conn., Washington Temperance Society, but there is also expressed the feeling of John Marsh that the movement "has in a considerable measure spent its force." In the 1846 *Report* the movement is referred to as "once so deeply enlisting the sympathies." In the 1847 *Report* it is admitted that "The reformation of drunkards has not, as in former years, formed a prominent part of the year now past." The 1848 *Report* contains no mention of the Washingtonian movement at all.

Hawkins, Gough and others were called Washingtonians to the end of their lives, but there is no record, to the writer's knowledge, of organized Washingtonian activity beyond 1847 except in the Boston area.[3] There, in March 1847, the Washingtonians of New

[3] The writer has since learned of the existence of the Washingtonian Home in Chicago, founded in 1863 by members of the Order of Good Templars who may well have been Washingtonians. This institution is still engaged exclusively in the rehabilitation of alcoholics.



England held a large convention. In January 1848 the Boston Washington Society reported having 56,380 signatures since the date of its founding in April 1841. According to Harrisson (8), writing in 1860, the Boston society continued to exist and meet weekly up to 1860, at which time 70,000 signatures were claimed. In 1858 the Home for the Fallen, using Washingtonian principles in the rehabilitation of alcoholics, was in existence in Boston.[4] But in other parts of the country, by 1858, there were to be found references to "the early days" when Washingtonianism swept the country.

### *Numerical Success*

How many persons became members of the Washingtonian societies? There is no satisfactory answer to this question. The statistics that are available are varied, contradictory and, hence, unreliable; furthermore, they are given on two different bases—the number who signed the total abstinence pledge, and the number of drunkards reclaimed. Neither of these coincides with the membership of Washingtonian societies.

Several sources (12, 14) repeat the American Temperance Union estimate (7) that by 1843, 5,000,000 had signed the total abstinence pledge and were associated with over 10,000 local societies. Since only 350,000 such signers had been claimed in 1839 (15), this would mean a gain of over 4,500,000 as a result of the Washingtonian "pledge-signing revival." This would represent nearly one-fourth of the total U. S. population in 1846, and more than half of the same population aged 15 years and over. When it is considered, as E. M. Jellinek has estimated, that for the population aged 15 years and older the per capita consumption of distilled spirits decreased by only 14.3 per cent (from 4.9 gallons to 4.2 gallons) between 1840 and 1850, some doubt is thrown upon the validity of this estimate. Marsh himself, in 1848, revised his estimate of total abstainers downward to 4,000,000 (7). Even this number points to the probability that a large percentage of the pledge signers were under the age of 15.

[4] This institution has been in continuous existence to the present time, having undergone a number of changes in name and in policy. It is now known as the Washingtonian Hospital and engages in the treatment of alcoholism by contemporary medical and social techniques.

Furthermore, since the signers belonged to all kinds of temperance societies, it is impossible to estimate what percentage, or how many, were enrolled in Washingtonian societies.

In attempting to estimate the number of alcoholics reclaimed by the Washingtonian movement, more difficulties are encountered. The major one is the fact that all the societies had mixed memberships—former teetotalers (often children), moderate drinkers, excessive drinkers, and confirmed alcoholics. Nevertheless, estimates have been made and the claims vary from 100,000 (12) to 600,000. The latter figure, often repeated, seems to be based on the 1843 *Report* (7) of the American Temperance Union, in which it is stated that: "A half million hard drinkers often drunken, and a hundred thousand sots . . . may safely be considered as having been brought to sign the total abstinence pledge within the last two years." Wooley and Johnson (12) state: "It is commonly computed that at least one hundred thousand common drunkards were reclaimed in the crusade and at least three times as many common tipplers became total abstainers." This seems to be based on Eddy (14), who in turn seems to be quoting an American Temperance Union estimate that, by the summer of 1842, "the reformation had included at least 100,000 common drunkards, and three times that number of tipplers who were in a fair way to become sots."

One chief difficulty resides in the employment of an undefined terminology, including "hard drinkers often drunken"; "confirmed drinkers"; "drunkard"; "common drunkard"; "confirmed drunkard"; "inebriate"; "sot"; "tippler"; "common tippler"; and "tipplers in a fair way to become sots." What do these terms mean and how were they distinguished from each other?

Ignoring the loose use of these terms, for the moment, and turning to the percentage of reclaimed inebriates in Washingtonian societies, a great variety of claims is to be noted. Eight months after its beginning the Baltimore society claimed that two-thirds of their 300 members were reclaimed drunkards (9). At the close of 1841 it was claimed that 100,000 pledges had been taken as a result of Washingtonian activity, "more than one-third by confirmed drinkers" (16). But in the statistics offered by the same source, and for the same period of time, by the vigorous Cincinnati Washington society, only 900 (11.3 per cent) of the 8,000 members were said to have been reformed drunkards. A Brattleboro, Vt., report stated: "We have 150 members already in our Washington Society, six



or seven hard cases." This comes to 4 or 5 per cent. Of the 42,273 pledged members in 82 Vermont towns cited in the 1844 *Report*, only 518 (1.2 per cent) were reformed drunkards. These data suggest that the percentage of reformed drunkards probably varied greatly from community to community—and probably varied at different times even in the same society.

Since the American Temperance Union records are the chief source of information for later historians, some weight may be given to John Marsh's later estimate (13) that 150,000 drunkards were permanently rescued as a result of Washingtonian activity. But when his 1843 estimate of "A half million hard drinkers often drunken, and a hundred thousand sots" is recalled, it is impossible not to be suspicious of his estimates—and particularly of his use of terms. The number may well have been less than 150,000, and it may well have included everything from "confirmed drinkers," to "hard drinkers often drunken" to "common drunkards" to "sots." What the number of true alcoholics was, is anyone's guess.

But if there is uncertainty concerning the number of alcoholics temporarily helped or permanently rehabilitated—or the number of persons who became total abstainers—there is no question that the movement made a tremendous impact.

Its results, furthermore, were not short-lived. Within the temperance movement there was not only a decided gain of strength but also the opening of "the way for more advanced thought and effort. . . (14)." As for the problem of alcoholism, some permanent though limited gain resulted. Dr. T. D. Crothers, a leading psychiatrist of his time, wrote in 1911:

> The Washingtonian movement . . . was a great clearing house movement, breaking up old theories and giving new ideas of the nature and character of inebriety. It was literally a sudden and intense projection of the ideas of the moral side of inebriety, into public thought, and while it reacted when the reform wave died out, it served to mobilize and concentrate public attention upon the question, of how far the inebriate could control his malady, and what efforts were needed to enable him to live temperately. This first practical effort to settle these questions was the beginning of the organization of lodging houses for the members of the societies who had failed to carry out the pledges which they had made. This was really the beginning of the hospital system of cure, and was the first means used to give practical help to the inebriate, in a proper home, with protection, until he was able to go out, with a degree of health and hope of restoration (17).

## Organization and Procedure

As has been indicated, the Washingtonian movement took organized form in the thousands of local total abstinence societies which, almost without exception, had a mixed membership of former teetotalers and moderate drinkers as well as inebriates of various degrees. This was the pattern set by the original Baltimore society.

A large percentage of these societies, presumably, were new societies carrying the Washington name. Many were old societies, reorganized and renamed. But often the work was carried on in societies already in existence, without any change in name. Hawkins, it will be recalled, became the paid secretary of the Massachusetts Temperance Society. Nevertheless, he was active in the Boston Washington society. There seemed, at this time, to be no organizational rivalry, and that must have been true in many communities throughout the years of the movement. In Alabama, Sellers (18) states, "This organization [Washingtonian] was never an independent unit, but was attached to temperance societies already existing."

On the other hand, rivalry and mutual resentment between the "old" and the "new" societies did develop in many communities. Even in Boston, in the demonstration in which so many societies of all types participated in May 1844, the old Massachusetts Temperance Society and the old Massachusetts Temperance Union did not take part (1). Krout summarizes the difficulties that developed between the Washingtonians and the older societies in many communities:

> Under the compulsion of popular demand many of the old societies had employed Washingtonian speakers to revive a waning interest, but they had been disappointed that the new pledge-signers could seldom be persuaded to join existing organizations. Wherever Washingtonian workers conducted campaigns, it was necessary either to form a new society officered by reform men, or to convert the old group into a Washington abstinence society. To some who had laboured long in temperance work . . . it appeared . . . that the Washingtonians had no interest in the triumphs of the struggle prior to 1840. The younger movement seemed to be unwilling to learn anything from the older. Its membership scoffed at the methods and principles formerly held in esteem. . . . The old leaders were being set aside. Any Tom, Dick or Harry could direct the course of the reform. Washingtonian "Heralds," "Standards" and "Advocates" were springing up everywhere, and then expiring from lack of funds. Their existence was too often marked by unpleasant controversies with other



> temperance periodicals. The Washingtonians, on the other hand, charged that the older societies refused to co-operate with them . . . (1).

Further evidence of this distrust and cleavage, as well as of the differences in organization, was given in the *Washingtonian Pocket Companion* (19), published in Utica, N. Y., in 1842:

> Some societies make uniting with them, a virtual renunciation of all membership with any other temperance societies. . . . This is because the principles of the old, and of our societies, differ so widely—and also to prevent the old societies from subverting ours. . . .
>
> Some societies take none but those who have lately made, sold, or used intoxicating liquors—others receive all except children under a certain age —others receive even children with the consent of their parents or guardians.
>
> Some societies omit that part of the pledge which relates to the "Making and selling, directly or indirectly," and pledge to total abstinence from using, only. They think it a benefit to bring the maker and vender into the society first, and then induce them to give up their business.
>
> In some cases, the female members of our societies act as a Benevolent Society, within, or in co-operation and fellowship with us. In others, the ladies form separate and distinct societies. Their names are numerous . . . (19).

Even though no uniformity of organization or procedure prevailed, yet a minimum common pattern ran throughout the movement. This might be said to be (*1*) the reclamation of inebriates by "reformed drunkards"—employing the "principle of love" and the total abstinence pledge; and (*2*) having reformed drunkards telling their experiences for the dual purpose of reaching the drunkard and winning others to the total abstinence pledge.

The Baltimore pattern, very effectively reproduced in Boston under the guidance of Hawkins, seems to have been the ideal pattern which the majority of Washingtonian groups approximated in varying degrees. Since records of the Boston operations have been preserved, the organization and procedure of that society will be given in some detail.

The aggressive missionary work of carrying Washingtonianism into 160 New England towns during the first 3 months of the Boston society's existence has been noted. Of even greater interest are the details of the work with alcoholics, during this same period, as related by Samuel F. Holbrook, the first president of the society:

> The Washington Total Abstinence Society was organized on the 25th of April, 1841. On the evening of its formation the officers elected were a

president, two vice-presidents, a corresponding and recording secretary, and a treasurer; after which there were chosen twenty-four gentlemen to serve as ward committee, whose duty it was to pick up inebriates, induce them to sign the pledge of total abstinence, and forsake all places where intoxicating drink was to be had, and also to visit the families of the reformed and administer to their wants.

It now became necessary to have a place exclusively our own, where we could bring the unfortunate victim of intemperance, nurse him, and converse with him, and obtain his signature to the pledge; . . . [We] were led to Marlboro Chapel. We obtained Hall No. 1 for a business and occasional lecture room, and the chapel for a public meeting once a week. Hall No. 1 was furnished with newspapers from various towns, as well as nearly all the publications of our own city. A table prepared, and the seats were arranged in the form of a reading room; a fountain of cold water and a desk containing the pledge occupied another part of the room.

Our pledge, for the first week, had two hundred and eighteen names; and then, as if by magic, the work commenced. And I think it is doubtful if in the annals of history there is any record of a work of such a nature and progressing with so much silence, and yet so sure in its advance. Surely it is the work of the omnipotent God. . . .

The gentlemen acting as ward committees were filled with unexampled zeal and perseverance in the performance of their duties; leaving their own business in order to hunt up the drunkard; . . . So attentive were they to this voluntary duty that in a fortnight we had four hundred names on our pledge; families in all directions were assisted, children sent to school decently clad, employment obtained for the husband, the countenance of the wife assumed a cheerful and pleasing aspect; landlords grew easy, and in fact everything relating to the circumstances of the reformed inebriate had undergone a complete change for the better. . . .

The reeling drunkard is met in the street, or drawn out from some old filthy shed, taken by the arm, spoken kindly to, invited to the hall, and with reluctance dragged there, or carried in a carriage if not too filthy; and there he sees himself surrounded by friends, and not what he most feared—police officers; everyone takes him by the hand; he begins to come to and when sober signs the pledge, and goes away a reformed man. And it does not end there. The man takes a pledge, and from his bottle companions obtains a number of signers, who likewise become sober men. Positively, these are facts. Now, can any human agency alone do this? All will answer No; for we have invariably the testimony of vast numbers of reformed men, who have spoken in public and declared they have broken off a number of times, but have as often relapsed again: and the reason they give for doing this is that they rely wholly on the strength of their resolution without looking any higher; but now they feel the need of God's assistance, which having obtained, their reform is genuine . . . (8).

Holbrook also made some interesting comparisons with the attitudes and methods of the older temperance societies:



. . . As for reclaiming the drunkard, that was entirely out of the question; they must and will die shortly, and now our business is to take care of the rising generation. And when the hard working woman complained of her drunken husband, the reply was, and from all feeling of good, too, O send him to the house of correction, or poor house, immediately, and then we will do what we can for you and your children. Now the great difficulty was that our temperance friends were, generally, men in higher circles of life, who would revolt at the idea of taking a drunkard by the arm in the street and walk with him to some place where he could be made sober and receive friendly advice. If the drunken man was noticed at all, he was taken aside from under the horses' feet, and perhaps put into some house and there left. . . . But the method of reclaiming the apparently lost inebriate, such as the Washington Total Abstinence Society has adopted, never entered their heads; it was not thought of until our society was formed. Then some twenty or thirty drunkards came forward and signed the total abstinence pledge and related their experience, and this induced others to do the same; and then the work of reform commenced in good earnest (8).

The "Auditor's Report" contains additional information on the activities of the Boston society during its first 3 months. After reporting the receipt of $2,537.10, one barrel of pork, four hams, and a considerable quantity of second-hand clothing, he referred to the system they had adopted "of boarding out single persons and assisting the inebriate and his family who had homes."

In addition to not less than one hundred and fifty persons boarded out [in "three good boarding-houses, kept by discreet members of the society"], two hundred and fifty families have been more or less benefited. Families the most wretched have been made comfortable; by our exertions many families that were scattered have been reunited; fathers, sons, and brothers have been taken from the houses of correction and industry, from the dram shops, and from the lowest places of degradation, restored and brought back again under the same roof, made happy, industrious, and temperate. . . . Our society at present numbers about 4,000 members . . . [about] one third . . . heads of families . . . (8).

Harrisson rounds out the first 2 years' history of the Boston society:

For the space of two years after its organization the meetings of the society were held in Marlboro' Chapel, while the lodging rooms connected therewith were located in Graphic Court, opposite Franklin Street. From there they removed to No. 75 Court Street. . . . They also fitted up rooms under their hall for the temporary accommodation of reformed, or rather, reforming men. They soon again removed to rooms which they procured and fitted up in Bromfield Street. . . .

During the first two years of its existence the officers and members of the society held weekly meetings in six different localities in the city of Boston, namely: in North Bennett Street, Milton Street, Washington Place, East Street, Common Street, and Hull Street . . . (8).

Another glimpse of the activities of this society, 4 years after its founding, is provided in a memorial or petition presented to the State Legislature in 1845:

. . . From the period of its formation to the present time, it has sustained a commodious hall for holding public meetings. . . . Large numbers of persons, in various stages of intoxication and destitution, who have been found in the streets and elsewhere, have been led to Washingtonian Hall, where they have been kindly received, and their necessary wants supplied. The amount of service which has been rendered within the last four years, by this society, cannot be readily appreciated. A multitude of men who, by intemperance, had been shut out from the friendly regard of the world, found in the hall of the Washingtonians, for the time being, a comfortable asylum; and these men departed thence to resume their position as useful citizens. About 750 of such persons have found a temporary home at Washingtonian Hall, during the year just closed, nearly all of whom, it is believed, are now temperate and industrious members of society (8).

As already noted, this society reported having received 56,380 members up to January 1848. According to Harrisson, the central meetings were held each week uninterruptedly at least to 1860. Whether an "asylum" for inebriates was maintained during the intervening years, the writer cannot ascertain. But in 1858 a "Home for the Fallen," representing perhaps a renewal of activities, was being maintained on Franklin Place. It was moved to 36 Charles Street in 1860 and renamed the "Washingtonian Home." Conducted by a separate "executive committee," it nevertheless was operating on Washingtonian principles.

So much for the Boston society. Apparently Hawkins and his associates had laid a more sound foundation than was achieved in many communities.

As for organization and procedure elsewhere, perhaps the best clues are given in the 1842 *Washingtonian Pocket Companion* (19), "Containing a Choice Collection of Temperance Hymns, Songs, Etc.,"—containing also the following directions "For Commencing, Organizing, and Conducting the Meetings, of a Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society."

I. THE COMMENCEMENT.—Wherever there are a sufficient number o



drinkers, to get up what is commonly called "a spree," there are enough to form a Society. It only needs one or more individuals, (if an inebriate, or moderate drinker, but resolved to reform, all the better,) to go to those persons, and to others who make, sell or use intoxicating drinks and explain to them the principles and measures of this great reform, and persuade them to agree to take the pledge at a meeting to be held at some convenient time and place mutually agreed on. In all these efforts, the utmost gentleness, and kindness, and patient perseverance, and warm persuasion, should be used. At the meetings, appoint a Chairman and a Secretary—if reformed inebriates, all the better. After singing a hymn or song, let the Chairman, or other person, open the meeting by stating its objects—relating his experience in drinking, his past feelings, sufferings, the woes of his family and friends, the motives and reasons that induce him to take the present step, and appeal warmly and kindly to his companions, friends and neighbors to aid him in it by doing likewise. The Secretary, or other person may follow with a like experience. . . . Other persons can be called on to speak, until it is time to get signers to the pledge. Having read the pledge . . . invite all who wish to join to rise up, (or come forward,) and call out their names that the Secretary may take them down. Publicity and freedom are preferable to private solicitations, whisperings, and secrecy in giving the names. . . . Then let the Chairman or other person, first pledge himself, and then administer it to the rest.

After this, a hymn or song may be sung, and remarks and appeals be made, and other names be obtained. After all have been obtained to take the pledge, let them again rise up, and let the Chairman, or Secretary, or other person, give them THE CHARGE—a solemn address on the nature and importance of the obligations they have assumed and on the best mode of faithfully discharging them. Then let a committee be appointed to draft a Constitution to be presented at the next meeting. . . .

II. THE ORGANIZATION.—At the next meeting, after singing, let the Constitution be reported, and amended, if necessary, until it suits those who have taken the pledge at and since the last meeting. Then adopt it. It should contain the following, among the needed provisions. Preamble—a simple statement of the prominent evils of intemperance, and of the resolution of the signers to aid in extirpating their root. Some prefer a Parody on our National Declaration of Independence for this purpose. Article 1—The name of the Society, always using the distinctive title, "Washingtonian," in that name. Article 2—Declaring that love, kindness and moral suasion are your only principles and measures, and disavowing denunciation, abuse, and harshness. Article 3—Forbid the introduction of sectarian sentiments or party politics into any lectures, speeches, singing, or doings of the society. Article 4—Provide for offices, committees, and their election. Articles 5, 6, and 7—Duties of officers and committees. (One of these should be a committee to relieve the poor, sick and afflicted members, and families of inebriates.) Article 8—Provide for by-laws, and alterations of the Constitution. Article 9—Provide for labors with those who violate their pledges, and the withdrawal of members. . . .

III. How to Conduct the Meetings.—After the meeting has come to order, always open with a hymn or song. Transact the business of the society with the utmost order and despatch. . . . Then call for speakers. Let there be as many "experiences" as possible, interspersed with brief arguments, appeals, exhortations, news of the progress of the cause, temperance anecdotes, &c. Consult brevity, so as to have as many of the brethren speak, as possible—the more the better. . . . And always be sure to call for persons to take the pledge, when the audience feel in the right spirit. While the pledges are being filled up for delivery, pour out the warmest appeals, or sing the most interesting hymns or songs. If any member or other person violates the rules or order, or trangresses the principles and measures of the society, remind him of it in good humor, gently and kindly. . . . Kindness must be the very atmosphere of your meetings, and love the fuel of all your zeal, and persuasion the force of all your speaking, if you would have your society do the most good . . . (19).

Even more revealing is the definition, contained in the same *Pocket Companion*, of the principles of the Washingtonian movement in terms of its differences from the older societies.

I. All the former Societies directed their efforts mainly, if not wholly to the prevention of intemperance.

"Washingtonianism," while it embraces all classes, sexes, ages and conditions of society in its efforts, makes special efforts to snatch the poor inebriate from his destructive habits—aims to cure as well as prevent intemperance. It considers the drunkard as a man—our brother—capable of being touched by kindness, of appreciating our love, and benefiting by our labors. We therefore, stoop down to him in his fallen condition and kindly raise him up, and whisper hope and encouragement into his ear, and aid him to aid himself back again to health, peace, usefulness, respectability and prosperity. By the agency of sisters in this labor, we endeavor to secure the co-operation of his family in our effort. . . .

II. Other societies, generally were auxiliary to a County—that to a State—and that to a National Society. . . .

"Washingtonianism" . . . [makes] each society independent. . . .

III. Before the Washingtonian Reform, not only the poor drunkard, but many of nearly every other class in society supposed to be in the way of the [temperance] cause, were denounced as enemies—held up to public indignation and reprobation, threatened with the withdrawal of votes, pecuniary support, or public countenance; . . .

"Washingtonianism" teaches us to avoid this course. . . . We believe with the American Prison Discipline Society, that "there is a chord, even in the most corrupt heart, that vibrates to kindness, and a sense of justice, which knows when it has been rightly dealt with." We have tried kindness with the poor inebriate of many years' continuance—we have found it powerful to overcome the induration of heart caused by years of the world's contempt. . . . Hence we adopt the law of kindness—the godlike



principle, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," in our labors to win the maker, seller and user of intoxicating liquors; and we disavow all compulsion, threats, denunciations, hard names, . . . or malice or ill-will toward them. . . . In short, "Moral suasion, not force —love not hate, are the moving springs in the Washingtonian Creed" (19).

The hymns and songs contained in this *Pocket Companion* are likewise revealing. Most of them are simply adapted Christian hymns and temperance songs, appealing basically to religious and patriotic sentiments. In the preface it is frankly stated that only such hymns and songs have been included which introduce no "sectarianism, party politics, denunciation or harshness," or which contain no "phrases and sentiments which all Christians could not conscientiously sing." The central emphasis is probably contained in the following hymn on the "Power of Love."

Love is the strongest tie
That can our hearts unite;
Love brings to life and liberty
The drunkard chained in night.

Obeying its commands,
We quickly supply each need;
With feeling hearts and tender hands
Bind up his wounds that bleed.

Love softens all our toil,
And makes our labors blest;
It lights again the joyful smile,
And gives the anguished rest.

Let Love forever grow,
Intemp'rance drive afar,
A heaven begin on earth below
And banish strife and war.

The principle of love and sympathy for the drunkard is, in countless references, considered to be the distinctively new feature introduced by the Washingtonians—and their central principle. John B. Gough attributed the success of the movement to "the true spirit of Washingtonian sympathy, kindness and charity . . . predominant in the bosom of this great Washingtonian fraternity" (11).

Walter Channing, Unitarian clergyman, in underscoring this principle, also calls attention to the other distinctive feature of the Washingtonian movement—the role played by the "reformed drunkards" themselves:

It was wholly new, both in its principles and its agents. It laid aside law and punishment, and made love, the new commandment, its own. It dared to look upon moral power as sufficient for the work of human regeneration—the living moral power in the drunkard, however degraded he might be. It had faith in man . . . [and so] the drunkard became a moral teacher . . . he rose from the lowest depths of degradation, and became an apostle of the highest sentiment in his nature; viz., the love of man, the acknowledgment of the inborn dignity of man (9).

## The Causes of Decline

The materials presented above would scarcely give the impression that the major cause of the decline of the Washingtonian movement was its lack, and opposition to, religion. Yet that charge gained currency and has been perpetuated in later temperance writings. For example, Daniels, in 1877, wrote that ". . . this effort to divorce temperance from religion was the chief weakness of the Washingtonian movement (20)."

Actually, the charge seems to be based upon a generalization and misinterpretation of certain real difficulties that did develop, in places, between the Washingtonians and the churches—and upon the views of a few extremists. A major source of information about the Washingtonian movement available to later historians were the publications of the American Temperance Movement, edited by John Marsh. In 1842 Marsh did become concerned about the attitudes of some of the Washingtonians: "A lack of readiness on their part to acknowledge their dependence on God, no small desecration of the Sabbath, and a painful unwillingness, in not a few professed Christians, to connect the temperance cause . . . with religion (13)."

It must be recalled that Marsh was the earliest and most ardent promoter of the Washingtonian movement. He had a genuine interest in the reformation of drunkards, but his greater interest was the promotion of the temperance cause. Above all, Marsh wanted to establish the identification of temperance with religion and to obtain the support of all church members. When the behavior of some of the Washingtonians threatened to antagonize some of the church people against the temperance cause, Marsh did his best in his writings to counteract the threatening trends in the Washingtonian movement. Later historians seemed to overlook the fact that Marsh was addressing himself to minority manifestations—and that Marsh succeeded to a considerable extent in countering these trends.

When, in the summer of 1844, Marsh sponsored and accompanied John B. Gough on a tour through New York State, he was pleased with the fact that Gough was able to speak in many churches—"even upperclass churches." On this improved rapport with the churches, Marsh commented:

> The open infidelity, and radicalism, and abuse of ministers, by some reform-speakers had kindled up in many minds an opposition to all temperance effort, especially on the Sabbath; but Mr. Gough took such decided ground on religion, as the basis of all temperance, and the great security and hope of the reformed, as entirely reconciled them, not only to the meetings, but to his occupying the pulpit on the Sabbath (13).



The causes of the coolness and even hostility between some of the Washingtonians and some of the churches lay on both sides. For one thing, many Washingtonians felt that their movement represented a purer form of Christianity than was to be found in the churches. In fact, their chief criticism of churches was on this score and did not stem out of antireligious beliefs. They felt that they were living the principles which the churches talked about. This was expressed, for example, in the following hymn stanza:

> When Jesus, our Redeemer, came
> To teach us in his Father's name,
> In every act, in every thought
> He lived the precepts which he taught (19).

Washingtonians, furthermore, were often critical of the unhealthy other-worldliness prevalent in many churches:

> This world's not all a fleeting show,
> For man's illusion given;
> He that hath sooth'd a drunkard's woe,
> And led him to reform, doth know,
> There's something here of heaven.
>
> The Washingtonian that hath run
> The path of kindness even;
> Who's measr'd out life's little span,
> In deeds of love to God and man,
> On earth has tasted heaven (19).

A number of factors led some of the churches to close their doors to Washingtonians. Class snobbishness was one of these—a fact which particularly riled the lower class Washingtonians in those communities. Dacus (21) points out that the vanity of some of the ministers may have led them to disdain the movement, since they were neither its originators nor its leaders. Dacus certainly is right that many of the ministers of that day held narrow views that made them unsympathetic to Washingtonian principles. The most striking example of this is the argument of the Rev. Hiram Mattison, Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Watertown, N. Y., as stated in a tract published in 1844:

> First—No Christian is at liberty to select or adopt any general system, organization, agencies or means, for the moral reformation of mankind, except those prescribed and recognized by Jesus Christ. But,
>
> Secondly—Christ has designated his Church as his chosen

organization; his Ministers as his chosen ambassadors or public teachers; and his Gospel as the system of truth and motives by which to reform mankind, Nor has he prescribed any other means. Therefore,

THIRDLY—All voluntary organizations and societies, for the suppression of particular vices, and the promotion of particular virtues, being invented by man without a divine model or command, and proceeding upon principles and employing agencies, means and motives not recognized in the Gospel, are incompatible with the plan ordained of Heaven, and consequently superfluous, inexpedient and dangerous (14).

Mr. Mattison's views, however, were not shared by many of the clergymen; nor were the majority of churches at odds with the Washingtonians. Almost all "General Conventions of the Protestant Churches endorsed and encouraged the movement (14)."

The writer agrees with Eddy (14) that, except for the attitudes of a few extremists, "Washingtonianism was not an irreligious movement." The reasons for its decline must lie elsewhere.

The lack of adequate organization is another frequently cited cause of the decline of the movement. As Krout points out, there was no connection between the various groups that carried on the work. "Each group was allowed to follow its own course. . . . As a result, systematic organization was impossible; uniformity in methods was never attained; and chance largely determined the formulation of principles (1)."

The lack of organization was first felt, however, with regard to the needs of the newly reformed men for more social and economic support. This need was adequately met by the original Baltimore society. Certainly the Boston society was well organized to help the impoverished, to get them back on their feet, and to give them adequate social support, and this seems also to have been the case in Philadelphia and other places. But in some communities, notably in New York City, "It was felt that these men who had been so under the power of the drinking habit needed more care and fraternal fellowship than could be given by so informal a society as the Washingtonians (10)." This led to the founding, on a plan similar to that of the Rechabites in Great Britain, of the "Order of the Sons of Temperance." Actually this order was founded by a group of Washingtonians in New York City during the fall of 1842.

They had noticed that although the Washingtonian movement was making rapid advance in new fields, there were already many falling away



from the pledge, and they desired if possible, to hit upon some new plan of operations, some more perfect organization, one that should shield the members from temptation, and more effectually elevate and guide them . . . (17).

It soon manifested an *esprit du corps*, which gathered into it a large portion of the reformed; inasmuch as, on paying a small weekly or quarterly due, they were sure of a useful remittance in case of sickness [$4.00 a week] or death [$30.00]. An impressive initiation gave the order impressiveness, brotherhood, and attachment; and a regalia, a distinction from other temperance men. Soon divisions and grand divisions were found springing up in every quarter. Old temperance societies lost such of their members as were reformed men; and where there was a revival of temperance [where Washingtonianism took hold], young reformed converts were allured hither, often in large proportions . . . (13).

The Order of the Sons of Temperance grew rapidly. By 1850 it had 35 Grand Divisions, 5,563 Subordinate Divisions (local societies), and 232,233 members. Eventually it became international, with a peak membership of 700,000. A later scribe of the order said that it had been brought into existence "to preserve the fruits of the Washingtonian movement." But one of its functional results was the displacement of Washingtonian societies.

This displacement of loyalties and membership was furthered by other orders. In 1845 the "Temple of Honor" was founded as a higher degree in the Order of the Sons of Temperance. Separating from its parent body in 1846, it soon spread over the United States and Canada, numbering "in its ranks thousands upon thousands of the best and most influential citizens. . . . (8)." "The Cadets of Temperance" was another order which sprang from the Sons of Temperance. Designed for youth, it also became independent. There was an order for children, the "Bands of Hope." In 1852 the largest fraternal temperance order of all, the "Independent Order of Good Templars," was founded, with a prominent Washingtonian, Nathaniel Curtis, as its first president. These orders, taking over most of the functions of the Washingtonian movement and incorporating much of the membership under another name, may be considered, from the sociological point of view, an institutional consolidation of Washingtonianism. But they also account, to a considerable extent, for the disappearance of the Washingtonian societies.

The chief causes of the decline of the Washingtonian movement are to be found, however, in its relation to the general temperance movement. Its membership, its purposes, and its ideology were

inextricably mixed with the membership, purposes and ideology of the temperance movement.

Even the Baltimore society did not confine its membership to the reclaimed victims of alcoholism—nor did it lack an interest in the temperance movement. And, outside of Baltimore, these early "Washingtonian missionaries" were invariably sponsored by temperance organizations. When the power of the Washingtonian approach to reclaim drunkards was demonstrated—and when it was shown that the reclaimed drunkards' experiences had the power to arouse great interest in the cause of total abstinence, the temperance leaders threw themselves behind the movement. Here was the answer to their prayers—something that would revitalize the temperance movement.

The American Temperance Union and its executive secretary, John Marsh, in introducing and promoting the Washingtonians, may indeed be given "much credit for the success of the Washingtonians (12)." But in the last analysis, Marsh and others looked upon Washingtonianism as a method, and Washingtonians as the means, for "sparking" the temperance cause. That was their chief function. And it appears that this eventually became the chief interest of Washingtonian leaders themselves. Hawkins kept up the original Washingtonian emphasis of work with alcoholics for a long time, but during the last dozen years of his life (1846–58) most of his interest was centered in the larger temperance cause. John B. Gough made a similar shift in emphasis.

Accordingly, then, when public interest in the distinctive Washingtonian technique of experience-relating began to wane, the interest of Marsh and other temperance leaders in Washingtonianism also declined. Lyman Beecher put it bluntly: ". . . their thunder is worn out. The novelty of the commonplace narrative is used up, and we cannot raise an interest . . ." (13). Marsh himself, from the perspective of later years, spoke of the Washingtonian period as a phase of the temperance movement, giving way to other methods.

Since Washingtonianism was identified with the relating of experiences by reformed men, the displacement of this method was, to that extent, a displacement of Washingtonianism itself.

Another fact which made temperance leaders lose interest in the Washingtonian movement was its identification with the "moral suasion" point of view.

The temperance movement, up to the emergence of Washingtonianism, was not characterized by advocacy of legal action to attain its ends. Some of the leaders, however, had begun to voice the desirability of such action; the issue was in the air. The success of the Washingtonian method of love and kindness in dealing with alcoholics convinced many Washingtonians and others that this was also the method to use with the makers and sellers of liquor. William K. Mitchell, leader of the Baltimore group but also influential throughout the country, was particularly insistent that Washingtonians



> . . . should have nothing to say against the traffic or the men engaged in it. He would have no pledge even, against engaging in the manufacture or traffic in liquors; nor did he counsel reformed men to avoid liquor-sellers' society or places of business. He would even admit men to membership in his societies who were engaged in the traffic (14).

Many of the Baltimore missionaries must have felt the same way and must have advocated this idea wherever they went. Just as Washingtonian experience "proved" the soundness of total abstinence, so Washingtonian experience "proved" the validity of moral suasion. It was as simple as that, in the minds of many, and was so expressed in a resolution presented at the Massachusetts State Washingtonian Convention on May 26, 1842:

> Resolved, That the unparalleled success of the Washingtonian movement in reforming the drunkard, and inducing the retailer to cease his unholy traffic, affords conclusive evidence that *moral suasion* is the *only* true and proper basis of action in the temperance cause . . . (9).

Even at that date, Hawkins and a few others objected and had the resolution modified on the grounds that moral suasion was an inadequate technique for dealing with "unprincipled dealers," and that the aid of the law was necessary. Hawkins' view, however, was not shared by most Washingtonians. Marsh once referred to Hawkins thus: "Though a Washingtonian, he was a strong prohibitionist (13)." John B. Gough, because of his later advocacy of prohibitory legislation, was accused of not being a Washingtonian.

When the general temperance sentiment began to favor legal action, Washingtonian policy was dated and opposed. For a time, many temperance leaders hardly knew whether to regard the Washingtonians as friends or enemies. Senator Henry William Blair of New Hampshire, in 1888, referred back to this emphasis of the Washingtonians on moral suasion as "a trace of maudlin insanity," —because of which the temperance movement was left in a state

worse than before, and as a consequence of which "we have ever since been combating the absurd theory, which is the favorite fortress of the liquor dealers, that the evil is increased because it is prohibited by law (22)."

When the relating of experiences began to pall, and when moral suasion was no longer desired, there was nothing left to Washingtonianism, ideologically, except the reclaiming of drunkards. This, however, became an increasingly secondary interest of those whose primary interest was the furtherance of the temperance cause—and, without the telling of experiences, without the work of alcoholics with alcoholics, and without certain other emotional by-products of Washingtonian groups and activities, this became an increasingly difficult thing to do. And, as fewer and fewer men were reclaimed, the last distinctive feature of the Washingtonian movement dropped out of sight.

A review of the various accounts of the Washingtonian movement makes it clear that the movement turned into something which it did not start out to be—a revival phase of the organized temperance movement. There are frequent references to the movement as "a pledging revival," "a revival campaign," "a temperance revival." The net result was a tremendous strengthening of total abstinence sentiment and the actual enlistment of new millions in the temperance cause. But the original purpose of rehabilitating alcoholics was lost to sight. Nor would it be proper to blame the temperance movement for exploiting the Washingtonians. As E. M. Jellinek[4] has pointed out, the Washingtonian movement was not equipped with an ideology distinctive enough to prevent its dissolution.

With this background, it becomes possible to make a comparison between the Washingtonian movement and Alcoholics Anonymous.

## Comparison with Alcoholics Anonymous

It is apparent that the Washingtonian societies, when they were most effective in the rehabilitation of alcoholics, had a great many similarities to Alcoholics Anonymous. These similarities might be listed as follows:

1. Alcoholics helping each other.
2. The needs and interests of alcoholics kept central, despite

[4] Personal communication.



mixed membership, by predominance of numbers, control, or the enthusiasm of the moment.

3. Weekly meetings.
4. The sharing of experiences.
5. The fellowship of the group or its members constantly available.
6. A reliance upon the power of God.
7. Total abstinence from alcohol.

Most Washingtonian groups probably failed to meet this ideal program, or to maintain it for long. Even in itemizing the ideal program, some of the differences between the Washingtonian groups and Alcoholics Anonymous stand out. The admission of nonalcoholics as members and the incorporation of the "temperance" purpose—the inducement of total abstinence in nonalcoholics—are the most striking differences. Furthermore, at their best, the Washingtonian groups possessed no understanding of alcoholism other than the possibility of recovery through love and sympathy. Their approach to the problem of alcoholism and alcohol was moralistic rather than psychological or therapeutic. They possessed no program for personality change. The groups had no source of ideas to help them rise above the ideational content locally possessed. Except for their program of mutual aid they had no pattern of organization or activity different from existing patterns. There was far too great a reliance upon the pledge, and not enough appreciation of other elements in their program. Work with other alcoholics was not required, nor was the therapeutic value of this work explicitly recognized. There was no anonymity to keep the public from becoming aware of broken pledges, or to keep individuals from exploiting the movement for prestige and fame. Finally, there was not enough understanding of their own therapeutic program to formulate it and thus help the new groups to establish themselves on a sound and somewhat uniform basis.

The differences can be brought out most clearly by a more detailed, comparative analysis of the Alcoholics Anonymous program —its principles, practices and content.

1. *Exclusively alcoholic membership.*—There are many therapeutic values in the cohesiveness and solidarity which a group with a common problem can achieve. But in the light of the Washingtonian experience, the greatest long-run value of an exclusively alcoholic

membership is that it permits and reinforces exclusive attention to the rehabilitation of alcoholics.

*2. Singleness of purpose.*—As stated in the masthead of an organizational publication (23), Alcoholics Anonymous "is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Nothing can divide groups more quickly—and certainly destroy the therapeutic atmosphere more effectively—than religious and political controversy. Strong efforts were made in the Washingtonian movement to minimize sectarian, theological and political differences, but the movement did not avoid attracting to itself the hostile emotions generated by these conflicts. Even if it had been more successful in this regard, it was still caught in all the controversy to which the temperance cause had become liable. Not only that, but within the temperance movement itself it eventually became stranded on the issue of moral suasion versus legal action.

In the light of this experience, the position of Alcoholics Anonymous stands in decided and hopeful contrast. In refusing to endorse or oppose causes, and particularly the temperance cause, A.A. is avoiding the greatest handicap which the Washingtonian movement had. Some temperance leaders may deplore that A.A. does not give them support, but they have no grounds for complaining that they are being opposed or hampered by A.A.

The A.A. program also contains a happy formula for avoiding the religious or theological controversies which could easily develop even within the groups as presently constituted. This is the use of the term "Power" (greater or higher), and particularly the phrase "as we understood Him," in referring to this Power, or God. The tolerance which this phrase has supported is an invaluable asset.

A further value of this single-minded concentration on the rehabilitation of alcoholics is made obvious by the Washingtonian experience. Whenever, and as long as, the Washingtonians were working hard at the reclamation of drunkards, they had notable success and the movement thrived and grew. This would support the idea that active outreach to other alcoholics is a factor in therapeutic success and, at the same time, a necessary condition for growth—and even for survival. Entirely aside from the matter of



controversy, then, this singleness of A.A. purpose is a condition of continued therapeutic success and survival.

*3. An adequate, clear-cut program of recovery.*—Another great asset of Alcoholics Anonymous is the ideology which forms the content and context of its program of recovery, and which has received clear and attractive expression in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (24) and in other A.A. literature.

This ideology incorporates the much sounder understanding of alcoholism which has been developed in recent years. It is a pragmatic blend of that which scientific research, dynamic psychology and mature religion have to offer; and through the literature of the movement, the members are kept sympathetically oriented to the developments in these fields.

Accordingly, instead of viewing alcoholism with a moralistic eye on alcohol—as an *evil* which *ought* to be abandoned—A.A. sees alcoholism as an illness, symptomatic of a personality disorder. Its program is designed to get at the basic problem, that is, to bring about a change in personality.

This program is simply and clearly stated in the Twelve Steps—augmented by the "24 hour program" of abstaining from alcohol, and the supporting slogans and emphases such as "First things first," "Live and let live," "Easy does it," "Keep an open mind," honesty, humility, and so forth. Great stress is also put upon regular attendance at the group meetings, which are characterized by the informal exchange of experiences and ideas and by a genuinely satisfying fellowship.

Compared to the Washingtonian brand, the A.A. sharing of experiences is notably enriched by the psychological insights which have been brought into the groups by A.A. literature and outside speakers. A thorough analysis and catharsis is specifically asked for in the Twelve Steps—as well as an improvement in relations to other persons. Work with other alcoholics is required, and the therapeutic value accruing to the sponsor of new members is distinctly recognized. The spiritual part of the program is more clearly and inclusively defined, more soundly based, and more frankly made an indispensable condition of recovery.

It appears, furthermore, that the A.A. group activity is more satisfactory to the alcoholic than was the case in many Washingtonian societies. A.A. members seem to find all the satisfactions and

values in their groups that the founders of the various orders thought were lacking in the Washingtonian groups.

A decided Washingtonian weakness was its general lack of follow-through. In contrast, A.A. is particularly strong on this point, providing a potent follow-through in a group setting where self-analysis and catharsis are stimulated; where new attitudes toward alcohol, self and others are learned; where the feeling tones are modified through a new quality of relationships; where, in short, a new way of life is acquired—one which not only enables the person to interact with his environment (particularly with other persons) without the use of alcohol, but enables him to do so on a more mature, satisfying basis.

No doubt a similar change occurred in many (though probably not in most) of the alcoholic Washingtonians, but it was more by a coincidence, within and without the societies, of circumstances that were rarely understood and never formulated into a definite, repeatable program. A.A. is infinitely better equipped in this respect.

*4. Anonymity.*—A comparison with the Washingtonian experience underscores the sheer survival value of the principle of anonymity in Alcoholics Anonymous. At the height of his popularity, John B. Gough either "slipped" or was tricked by his enemies into a drunken relapse. At any rate, the opponents of the Washingtonian movement seized upon this lapse with glee and made the most of it to hurt Gough and the movement. This must have happened frequently to less widely known but nevertheless publicly known Washingtonians. Public confidence in the movement was impaired. Anonymity protects the reputation of A.A. from public criticism not only of "slips" but also of failures, internal tensions, and *all* deviant behavior.

Equally important, anonymity keeps the groups from exploiting prominent names for the sake of group prestige; and it keeps individual members from exploiting their A.A. connection for personal prestige or fame. This encourages humility and the placing of principles above personalities. Such behavior not only generates outside admiration of A.A. but has therapeutic value for the individual members. There are further therapeutic values in anonymity: it makes it easier for alcoholics to approach A.A., and it relaxes the new member. It encourages honest catharsis and utter frankness. It protects the new member from the critical eyes of certain acquaintances while he experiments with this new way of life, for fumbling and failure will be hidden.



*5. Hazard-avoiding traditions.*—Another decisive contrast to the Washingtonian movement is the development in Alcoholics Anonymous not only of a relatively uniform program of recovery but also of relatively uniform traditions for avoiding the usual hazards to which organizations are subject.

In Alcoholics Anonymous there is actually no overhead authority. Wherever two or three alcoholics get together to attain sobriety on the general basis of the Twelve Step program they may call themselves an A.A. group. They are free to conduct their activities as they see fit. As would be expected in a fellowship of independent groups, all kinds of practices and policies have been tried. A careful reading of the publication, *A.A. Tradition* (25), will reveal how great the variety has been, here and there. Membership has been limited. Conduct of groups has been undemocratic. Leaders have exploited the groups for personal prestige. The principle of anonymity has been violated. Personal and jurisdictional rivalries have developed. Money, property and organizational difficulties have disrupted A.A. groups. Members and groups, yielding to their own enthusiasms and reflecting the patterns of other institutions around them, have endangered the immediate and ultimate welfare of the A.A. fellowship. These deviations could have been serious had there not existed a considerable uniformity in practice and principle.

In the early days of A.A., the entire fellowship was bound together by a chain of personal relationships—all created on the basis of a common program, a common spirit and a common tradition. This spirit and this pragmatically achieved program and tradition were the only guiding principles, and relative uniformity was not difficult. Alcoholics Anonymous was just a fellowship—small, informal, poor and unpretentious. But with growth, prosperity and prestige, the difficulties of getting all groups and members to see the value of these guiding principles increased. A self-conscious statement and explanation was needed—and this finally emerged in 1947 and 1948 in the "Twelve Points of Tradition," elaborated upon in editorials in *The A.A. Grapevine* (23) and subsequently published as a booklet (25).

In formulating and stating the reasons for these traditions, Bill W., one of the founders, has continued the extremely valuable function which he, Dr. Bob and other national leaders have per-

formed—that of keeping intact the experience-based program and principles of A.A.

Perhaps as important as any other is the tradition of keeping authority in principles rather than letting it become vested in offices and personalities. This tradition is supported by the related principle of rotating leadership, and the concept that leaders are merely servants of the group or groups. The hazard-avoiding values of these traditions are obvious.

The tradition that membership be open to any alcoholic has value in countering the tendency toward exclusiveness, class-consciousness, cliquishness—and it helps to keep the groups focused on their main job of helping the "alcoholic who still suffers."

The tradition of complete self-support of A.A. groups and activities by the voluntary contributions of A.A. members avoids the dangers inherent in fixed dues, assessments, public solicitations, and the like—and it is conducive to self-reliance and self-respect. Furthermore, in minimizing money it maximizes fellowship.

The tradition that "any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed" is important in keeping the A.A. groups from becoming entangled in the problems of property beyond the minimum necessary for their own functioning. The tradition of "the least possible organization" has a similar value. These last three traditions might be summed up as precautions against the common tendency to forget that money, property and organization are only means—and that the means find their rightful place only when the end is kept clearly in view. For A.A., these traditions should help to keep the groups concentrated on their prime purpose: helping alcoholics recover.

The existence of these traditions—and their clear formulation—are assets which the Washingtonian movement never possessed.

What prognosis for Alcoholics Anonymous is suggested by this comparison with the Washingtonian movement?

The least that can be said is that the short life of the Washingtonian movement simply has no parallel implications for A.A. Despite certain but limited similarities in origins, purpose and early activities, the differences are too great to draw the conclusion of a similar fate for A.A.

Are the differences, then, of such a nature as to assure a long life for Alcoholics Anonymous? This much can be said with assurance of consensus: (*1*) In the light of our present-day knowledge, A.A. has



a sounder program of recovery than the Washingtonians achieved. (*2*) A.A. has avoided many of the organizational hazards which plagued the Washingtonian societies. The success and growth of A.A. during more than a decade of public life, its present vigor and its present unity underscore these statements and augur well for the future.

In the writer's judgment, based on a systematic study (26) of A.A., there is no inherent reason why A.A. should not enjoy an indefinitely continued existence. How long an existence will depend upon how well the leaders and members continue to follow the present program and principles—that is, how actively A.A. members will continue to reach out to other alcoholics; how thoroughly the remainder of the A.A. program will continue to be practiced, particularly the steps dealing with catharsis and the spiritual aspects; and, how closely all groups will be guided by the present traditions.

Finally, the writer would suggest that the value in the traditions lies chiefly in the avoidance of factors that can easily interfere with keeping the ideal therapeutic atmosphere found in the small A.A. groups at their best. Most of the personality change necessary for recovery from alcoholism occurs in these small groups—and that work is at its very best when there is a genuinely warm, nonegocentric fellowship. How well this quality of fellowship is maintained in the small, local groups is offered, therefore, as another condition determining how bright the future of A.A. will be.

Whatever the worth of these judgments, they point up the potential value to A.A. of careful, objective research on these and related conditions. This would give Alcoholics Anonymous another asset that the Washingtonians never had.

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