

CROSSING THE 'GREAT DIVIDE'

The Student Christian Movement and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship

as Varieties of Canadian Protestantism

1928-1939

by

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ABSTRACT

Were Protestants in Canada separated into distinct groupings – either liberal/modernist or conservative/fundamentalist – in the early twentieth century, or were there also areas of shared experience? While some good historical studies of these divergent expressions exist, little has been done to place them side by side or to recognize that they operated in similar contexts. From the historical literature the impression emerges that a ‘great divide’ ran through Canadian churches. This thesis compares liberal and conservative Protestants in the decade preceding World War Two through the lenses of two organizations, the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). Beginning in 1928-29, these organizations often shared space on college and university campuses across Canada. To what extent, in this context, were their beliefs and practices similar or divergent? Did these student groups represent two Protestant extremes which had very little in common?

In order to address these questions, various aspects of the SCM and IVCF are compared: (1) their self-definition, which is reflected in statements of belief and purpose issued by leaders, the denominational backgrounds of members, associations with other individuals and groups, and the relationship between the two organizations; (2) their religious life, as expressed in public devotional activities; and (3) the various evangelistic activities in which students engaged in order to spread their convictions and to attract new members.

A wealth of archival material reveals some key differences, but also some commonalities. This evidence helps to elucidate the nature and extent of the divide between liberal and conservative Protestants in the earlier part of the twentieth century.

Moreover, a glimpse into the religious world of students, as seen through the histories of the SCM and IVCF, challenges the theory that Christianity was pushed to the fringes of university life by the social and intellectual changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The thesis concludes that the SCM and IVCF (which continue to function today) were in the 1930s, important examples of Protestant Christianity's ability to express itself in new forms in order to maintain a vital presence on Canadian university campuses.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. MARKING THE BOUNDARIES: SELF-DEFINITIONS OF THE STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT AND INTER-VARSITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP	20
3. LAYING THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION: STUDENT DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES	64
4. SAVING SOULS OR SAVING THE SOCIAL ORDER? THE STUDENT EVANGELISTIC IMPULSE	83
CONCLUSION.....	119
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	127
VITA.....	134

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What was the place of Christianity within Canadian colleges and universities earlier in the twentieth century? Beginning in 1928-29, many campuses hosted at least two religious organizations. The Student Christian Movement (SCM) already had existed since 1920-21, when students had decided to form a movement free from the more traditional student departments of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations and the missionary-minded Student Volunteer Movement. The SCM espoused a liberal Christianity dedicated to the study of the ethics of Jesus and the application of his teachings to the improvement of the world social order. Eight years later, students, with the assistance of British counterparts, organized Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). Its more traditional purpose was to draw students into a life of personal Christian faith and evangelism. Both movements considered the context of Canadian higher education to be antagonistic to Christianity and both promoted a conservative morality.¹ But rather than joining forces against external pressures, IVCF and the SCM saw their roles as unique and for the most part kept to themselves. Occasionally members of the two groups volleyed slanderous terms at each other: IVCF was caricatured as 'fundamentalist' and the SCM was labelled as 'modernist'.

The SCM and IVCF were by no means the first Christian student movements in Canada. Student-led revivals occurred in the nineteenth century, for example at Acadia College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia in 1865.² A Christian Association existed at the University of Toronto from at least 1873, and the first Canadian conference of Christian students was held in 1879.³

This Christian student activity in Canada paralleled activity in other countries, especially Britain and the United States. The 1870s saw the beginnings of student evangelistic enthusiasm at first Cambridge University and then Oxford. In 1877, the same year that Cambridge formed a Christian Union, the first inter-collegiate Christian student movement was formed in Louisville, Kentucky by Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) delegates representing twenty-five colleges.⁴ The efforts of John R. Mott and others led to the formation of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) at Northfield, Massachusetts in 1888, the development of national Christian student movements around the world, and, in 1895, the linking of these movements under the umbrella of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF).⁵

The histories of the SCM and IVCF are intricately interwoven with this earlier international Christian student activity. The Canadian SCM was an early member of the WSCF and also sent delegates to SVM conferences in the United States. The Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union in 1910 was the first of a number of British student

¹ Paul Axelrod describes the SCM's efforts as "reinforcing the moral order of the campus and serving as a conservative force." Paul Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada during the Thirties* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 18.

² George A. Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour? In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 39-40.

³ Pete Lowman, *The Day of His Power: A History of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-18, 20-21.

groups to leave the increasingly liberal-minded British SCM. In 1928 these new groups combined into the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (known as IVFEU or simply IVF).⁶ The same year, British students decided to send one of their own, Howard Guinness, to aid Canadian students in forming a similar movement, which would become IVCF.

By the time IVCF emerged at the end of the 1920s, the SCM had established itself across Canada. No comprehensive list of SCM units exists, but by 1931 the SCM at the least was active at, in Ontario, the University of Toronto, the University of Western Ontario (London), Ontario Agricultural College (Guelph), McMaster University (Toronto, later Hamilton), and Queen's University (Kingston); McGill University and MacDonal College in Montreal; in Nova Scotia, Acadia (Wolfville) and Dalhousie (Halifax) universities; in New Brunswick, Mount Allison University (Sackville) and the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton); Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; and, in western Canada, the University of Manitoba and Brandon College, the University of Saskatchewan and Regina College, the University of Alberta, the University of British Columbia and Victoria College. As well it had a unit at Mount Royal College in Calgary at least by 1936 and could be found at a few other smaller colleges in Ontario and Quebec.⁷

Organized as a national movement in early 1929, IVCF spread throughout Canada during the late 1920s and the 1930s. It is evident that until 1933 IVCF was able to sustain

⁵ Ibid., 26-31.

⁶ Ibid., 36-37, 52. Today the British movement is known as the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF).

units only at the University of Toronto (the unit was founded in 1928), the University of Western Ontario (1929), the University of Manitoba (1929), the University of British Columbia (1929), and McGill (1930). A few official units were added through the course of the decade: Queen's University in 1933, the University of Alberta in 1934, Mount Royal College in 1936, MacDonald College in 1937, Dalhousie University in 1938, and the University of Saskatchewan and Victoria College in 1939. In addition, on a number of campuses efforts were made to draw together like-minded students but did not result in official IVCF groups: these campuses included McMaster University, the University of New Brunswick, Acadia, Mount Allison, and Bishop's College in Lennoxville, Québec.⁸ A comparison of these lists reveals that the SCM and IVCF shared space on every major university campus in Canada and on many of the smaller college and university campuses.

From today's vantage point, in the light of current media attention to, on the one hand, the ongoing critical discussion of the divinity of Jesus by liberal theologians and, on the other hand, the apparent growth of conservative and fundamentalist Christianity in North America, a division within Protestantism in the 1930s does not look overly strange. But for Protestants in the 1930s, this division was new and, for many, disconcerting. Not too many years previously the Protestant experience was largely one of consensus and a

⁷ Compiled from SCM National Council minutes, lists of student representatives and lists of contributions in budgets, 1929-39, Student Christian Movement Papers, Inter-Church Collections, United Church of Canada/Victoria University Archives, Toronto [hereafter SCM UCA], box 84-94.

⁸ Compiled from Melvin V. Donald, *A Spreading Tree: A History of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada, 1928-29 to 1988-89* (Richmond Hill, ON: Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1991). A list of groups associated with the Canadian IVCF is included in the British IVF's history, *Christ and the Colleges: A History of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions*, edited by F. Donald Coggan (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1934), 164. This list includes the University of Alberta group, whereas Donald's account places the inception of this group in early 1935. See Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 169-170.

position of cultural prominence.⁹ But in the 1920s Protestantism internationally, and especially so in the United States, was wracked by a number of public conflicts between so-called fundamentalists and modernists. Within this historical perspective, a number of questions emerge. What was the extent of the divide between liberals and conservatives in the Canadian Protestant church in the 1930s? Was the presence of two student groups on Canadian campuses proof of persistent fundamentalist-modernist tensions?

Little research has been done which brings together supposedly competitive Protestant branches: instead, historical studies of twentieth-century Protestantism often have polarized to examine one side or the other of the liberal-conservative spectrum. Nonetheless this concentration has produced some important works. In their groundbreaking studies on liberal Protestantism, American historians William R. Hutchison and William McGuire King describe the movement as the willing accommodation of Christian beliefs to modern ideas and as an expression of a Christian hope to establish God's kingdom. This hope manifested itself in a "religious enthusiasm for humanity" and in the social gospel, a movement which aimed to bring about change by applying the teachings of Jesus to current economic and social life.¹⁰ Hutchison further refines the understanding of liberalism by distinguishing between modernists, whose framework was modern science, and liberal evangelicals, whose framework was Christianity.¹¹ On the

⁹ See especially William Westfall, *Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989) and Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century: College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

¹⁰ William McGuire King, "An Enthusiasm for Humanity: The Social Emphasis in Religion and its Accommodation in Protestant Theology," in *Religion and Twentieth-Century American Intellectual Life*, ed. Michael J. Lacey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; New York: the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1989), 53, and William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 2-4.

¹¹ Hutchison, *Modernist Impulse*, 7.

other extreme, George M. Marsden has done much to elucidate the nature of fundamentalism in the United States. In his view, fundamentalists' belligerent opposition to modernism was the key feature which distinguished them from other conservative Protestants.¹²

In Canada, scholars have focused their attention primarily on the numerically dominant Protestant denominations – the Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans and Baptists – generally referred to as the “mainline churches.” Historians have shown a special interest in the rise of the socially concerned expressions of Protestantism, and specifically in the formation of the United Church of Canada and the particulars and timing of the secularization of Canadian society. Richard Allen analyzes the “social gospel” in its heyday in the 1910s and 1920s and argues that in the latter part of the 1920s Protestants became more interested in abstract theological questions, traditional religion, and personal religious experience.¹³ Most recently, Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie have argued that the Methodist and Presbyterian denominations and the United Church which brought these denominations together maintained an important position in Canadian culture through the social teachings of evangelical Protestantism until at least World War Two. They conclude that the evangelicalism of the nineteenth century was in fact much more enduring than some scholars would allow and that its social expression was a positive movement rather than a defensive attempt to cling to a position of cultural

¹² George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 4.

¹³ Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 230, 300-301.

authority in the face of scientific, theological and societal challenges.¹⁴ This evangelicalism was “fed by two powerful streams, inner piety and social evangelism.” which varied in intensity over time: in the 1920s Protestants focused more readily on social service, and in the 1930s they turned to the more private and pietistic elements of evangelicalism.¹⁵

Conservative Protestantism, on the other hand, is a relative newcomer to the field of religious history in Canada. John G. Stackhouse Jr.’s *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* has provided a good introduction to some of its features.¹⁶ Likewise the voluminous efforts of George Rawlyk as a writer and editor have given the fledgling study of Canadian conservative Protestantism significant impetus.¹⁷ But historians in

¹⁴ Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie, in *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996) contest the conclusions of Ramsay Cook and David Marshall, who argue that the secularization of Canadian society occurred earlier in the twentieth century and was brought about in part, although unintentionally, through the churches and clergy. Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) and Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Gauvreau and Christie, *Full-Orbed Christianity*, introduction and p. 249. “Evangelicalism” is a thorny term to define. Essentially here it is taken to refer to a network of individuals and organizations which maintain a common set of emphases, namely the authority of the Bible, the need of conversion (putting one’s faith in the atoning work of Christ for human sin), the importance of Christ’s death and resurrection, and activism/evangelism. For more in-depth analyses of evangelicalism’s features, see David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-3; George M. Marsden, “Unity and Diversity in the Evangelical Resurgence,” in *Altered Landscapes: Christianity in America, 1935-1985*, ed. David W. Lotz et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 63; and John G. Stackhouse Jr., *Canadian Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century: An Introduction to its Character* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 7. Evangelicalism has been described appropriately, by Timothy L. Smith, as a “kaleidoscope” which retains these key emphases but nonetheless changes its shape in different contexts. Marsden, “Unity and Diversity,” 63. Thus evangelicals retain what they view as the essentials of traditional Christianity but they also interact with and are influenced by their cultural surroundings. Joel A. Carpenter has most recently argued that instead of characterizing evangelicalism “as a throwback, as a religion of consolation for those who cannot accept the dominant humanist, modernist, liberal, and secular thrust of mainstream society, perhaps it is more accurate to see evangelicalism as a religious persuasion that has repeatedly adapted to the changing tone and rhythms of modernity.” Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 234.

¹⁶ Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*.

¹⁷ See especially Rawlyk, ed., *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997); idem, ed., *The Canadian Protestant Experience 1760 to 1990*

Canada have generally made little more than cursory remarks on what has been shared and what has been disputed between liberals and conservatives in the twentieth century. One is left with the impression that Protestantism in Canada was sharply divided.

In a short general survey, edited by George Rawlyk, historians have attempted to portray Protestantism in its fuller sense. Phyllis D. Airhart points to differences of theology, region, class, and ethnicity which emerged in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and eventually served to fracture the Protestant consensus. She also notes, however, that both sides accommodated modern aspects – liberals accepted current ideologies such as progressivism and conservatives employed modern technologies such as radio to communicate their beliefs – and both retained the activism of the earlier evangelicalism.¹⁸ In this same study the narrative is carried forward by Robert A. Wright, who argues that Canadian Protestants experienced fundamentalist-modernist tensions in the 1920s but by the latter part of this decade reached some stability as they realized that the differing parties could coexist.¹⁹ George Rawlyk, in *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?* traces the flow of evangelicalism within the broader stream of Protestantism from the late eighteenth century to the 1990s. In the late nineteenth century, he perceives, when many Protestant leaders such as clergymen-professors in the mainline institutions “drifted from their evangelical moorings towards liberalism and beyond,” the majority of the “rank-and-file” churchgoers retained conservative, evangelical beliefs. Gradually, over the next few decades, more and more Protestants chose to follow the path of their former leaders

(Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); and idem, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?*

¹⁸ Phyllis D. Airhart, “Ordering a New Nation and Reordering Protestantism, 1867-1914,” in *Canadian Protestant Experience*, ed. Rawlyk, 117, 125, 127, 131.

towards liberalism.²⁰ By the 1920s and 1930s, Rawlyk contends, liberalism established itself in the colleges, seminaries and administrations of Protestant denominations to the point that there existed, in Rawlyk's estimation, a liberal-minded "Protestant bureaucratic academic hegemony."²¹ Meanwhile, those committed to evangelicalism became more defensive and leaned towards fundamentalism. In impressionistic studies such as these, scholars have offered some reasons for the growing divide among Canadian Protestants in the early twentieth century. But in the interest of highlighting general features and trends these accounts necessarily employ broad brush strokes rather than attention to detail.²²

It seems that examples of comparative analysis are more easily found outside of Canada's borders. American historian George Marsden has suggested that, at least in the United States, most Protestants before the decade of the 1930s stood somewhere between the two poles of fundamentalism and modernism and chose sides in the 1930s.²³ Likewise, William Hutchison elaborates on the relationships in the 1920s between American liberal Protestants, fundamentalists and secular humanists.²⁴ British historian David Bebbington perceives a similar split among conservative and liberal evangelicals in Britain in the 1920s. He reminds the reader that evangelicalism had always been diverse in its membership and doctrines. Even when, after the First World War, the doctrinal

¹⁹ Robert A. Wright, "The Canadian Protestant Tradition 1914-1945," in *Canadian Protestant Experience*, ed. Rawlyk, 139-197.

²⁰ Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?* 12-13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 31-35.

²² Recent articles by David Plaxton and William H. Katerberg more specifically demonstrate the wide variety of theological leanings which existed within the United and Anglican denominations, respectively. David Plaxton, "'We Will Evangelize with a Whole Gospel or None': Evangelicalism and the United Church of Canada," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. Rawlyk, 106-122, and William H. Katerberg, "Redefining Evangelicalism in the Canadian Anglican Church: Wycliffe College and the Evangelical Party, 1867-1995," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. Rawlyk, 171-188.

²³ Marsden, "Unity and Diversity," 64.

²⁴ Hutchison, *Modernist Impulse*, chap. 8.

divide grew sharply. liberals and conservatives still cooperated within a number of organizations. But, Bebbington says, the polarization became “deep and permanent.” Essentially the divide grew from differing responses to cultural circumstances: where liberals sought to integrate evangelical religion with society, conservatives resisted out of the belief that society had “moved too far away from Christian values.” Even so, the result was not “a simple separation into camps” but rather “a broadening continuum of Evangelical opinion.”²⁵

In two recent articles, American historians have begun to demonstrate the value of placing the theologies and practices of liberal and conservative Protestants side by side. Grant Wacker finds that at the turn of the century those individuals who would eventually divide into more clearly-defined liberal and fundamentalist camps were part of a network of shared concerns and evangelical experience.²⁶ More specifically, Wacker discovers that while theologians diverged on some issues, they collectively trumpeted the importance of the Holy Spirit in the work of the church, they responded to the same issues, and they cooperated in various activities. Wacker concludes that liberals and fundamentalists “emerged from the same religious womb” and could be characterized as rival siblings.²⁷ Taking a similar approach, Richard Ostrander focuses on the devotionalism of certain liberal and fundamentalist leaders. Ostrander, like Wacker, finds that even when the gap between the two groups of leaders had widened, they still held

²⁵ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 181, 227-228. Other helpful discussions of the theological variety within the Church of England are Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1734-1984* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1988), and Randle Manwaring, *From Controversy to Co-Existence: Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1914-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

²⁶ Grant Wacker, “The Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age in American Protestantism, 1880-1910,” *Journal of American History* 72, no. 1 (June 1985), 45-62.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 49, 59.

some common ground, such as the conviction that prayer was an essential part of the Christian life. Ostrander uses two models to clarify the devotional differences: like a battery, conservatives harnessed God's power each morning through the two "terminals" of prayer and bible study, whereas liberals, like a windmill, exposed themselves to a variety of spiritually rejuvenating sources throughout the day.²⁸

These authors interested in comparison are concerned with Protestantism in the United States and (in the case of Bebbington) Britain. If Canadian historians adopt their paradigms, this must be done with caution and a keen eye for differences. But comparison is needed to nuance the two opposing expressions of Protestantism in Canada as depicted in the historical literature. William H. Katerberg, in a study of Canadian Anglican evangelicals, suggests that since there exists ample literature examining evangelicalism, "the next logical step is to explore the similarities and differences between self-identified evangelical Protestants and other Christians."²⁹ Accordingly, a key task of the present study is to juxtapose the SCM and IVCF in their first decade of shared existence, in an attempt to illuminate points of contact and divergence.

Relatively little research has been done on either the SCM or IVCF. In 1941 Ernest A. Dale, a University of Toronto professor, wrote a commemorative yet thought-provoking history of the SCM.³⁰ Since then, a number of academics have devoted studies to the SCM's history; these have almost exclusively focused on the SCM's political and

²⁸ Richard Ostrander, "The Battery and the Windmill: Two Models of Protestant Devotionalism in Early-Twentieth-Century America," *Church History* (March 1996): 42-61.

²⁹ Katerberg, "Wycliffe College and the Evangelical Party," 187-188.

³⁰ Ernest A. Dale, *Twenty-One Years A-Building: A Short Account of the Student Christian Movement of Canada, 1920-1941* (Toronto: Student Christian Movement, 1941).

social activism.³¹ These emphases are also reflected in social histories of the 1920s and 30s: Richard Allen, in *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28*, highlights the SCM's social gospel activism and Paul Axelrod, in *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada during the Thirties*, emphasizes its political radicalism.³² Most recently Catherine A. Gidney, in a brief study of the University of Toronto SCM unit, likewise has highlighted the movement's activism but has gone further and suggested that throughout its existence the SCM tried to connect faith with social action, the balance being tipped in favour of one or the other at different points in time.³³

IVCF has been the object of few academic studies. Former IVCF staff member Melvin V. Donald's commemorative history contains a wealth of information presented in a largely anecdotal format.³⁴ David Phillips' Master's thesis on the history of IVCF focuses specifically on Western Canada but often attempts to encompass the national movement; Phillips characterizes IVCF's appearance in Canada as an extension of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s. John G. Stackhouse Jr., in contrast, contends that IVCF avoided controversy; he describes IVCF as a meeting-place for students

³¹ Aspects of Margaret Beattie's 1972 Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Pressure Group Politics: The Student Christian Movement" were incorporated by the SCM into Margaret Beattie et al., *A Brief History of the Student Christian Movement in Canada, 1921-1974* (Toronto: Student Christian Movement, 1975); a decade later, Donald L. Kirkey Jr. analyzed in detail the formation of the SCM in "'Building the City of God': The Founding of the Student Christian Movement of Canada," (M.A. thesis, McMaster University, 1983). Kirkey also presented a paper to the Canadian Historical Association, June 1988, entitled "The Decline of Radical Liberal Protestantism: The Case of the Student Christian Movement of Canada."

³² Allen, *Social Passion*; Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*.

³³ Catherine A. Gidney, "'Poisoning the Student Mind'? The Student Christian Movement at the University of Toronto, 1920-1965," paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, June 1997, pp. 7, 24.

³⁴ Donald, *Spreading Tree*.

of varying church experiences and as a key institution in the growing network of conservative evangelicalism in twentieth-century Canada.³⁵

A handful of scholars in Canada and elsewhere have drawn brief comparisons between the SCM and IVCF. Both Robert Wright and John Stackhouse note that IVCF formed as an alternative to the liberal-minded SCM.³⁶ John Webster Grant describes the SCM as an organization which distanced itself from the churches, was involved in social activism and, for a time in the 1930s, moved into a mode of “intro-spective religion”; IVCF, on the other hand, he depicts as an interdenominational effort of predominantly sectarian, conservative evangelicals.³⁷ Though David Phillips briefly looks at the relationship between IVCF and the SCM from 1925 to 1965, this is viewed largely through the lens of the two international organizations of which the Canadian movements respectively were members, the World Student Christian Federation and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). But since IFES only came into being in 1946-47, the earlier period when the SCM and IVCF came to coexist on Canadian campuses is largely ignored.³⁸ British sociologist Steve Bruce contributes an important panoramic comparison of the British SCM and Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (IVFEU) in his book entitled *Firm in the Faith*. He uses these two movements to demonstrate the decline of liberal Protestantism and the growth of conservative

³⁵ David Phillips, “The History of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in Western Canada” (M.C.S. thesis, Regent College, 1976); Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*. Robert K. Burkinshaw, in *Pilgrims in Lotus Land: Conservative Protestantism in British Columbia 1917-1981* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), also discusses the IVCF unit at the University of British Columbia (and its predecessor, the Student Christian Fundamentalist Society) but for the most part relies on the arguments of David Phillips’ thesis.

³⁶ Wright, “Canadian Protestant Tradition 1914-1945,” 165.

³⁷ John Webster Grant, *The Church in the Canadian Era*, rev. ed. (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing Co., 1988), 130, 178.

³⁸ See chap. 10 of Phillips, “IVCF in Western Canada.”

Protestantism through the twentieth century and to illuminate what contributed to these processes. Bruce contends that the SCM and IVFEU “operated at the same time, in the same culture, and in the same market” and ultimately, excepting a few divergent activities, “can be regarded as similar in everything except their ideologies.”³⁹

The sparse historiography concerning the SCM and IVCF is certainly not the result of limited sources: to the contrary, rich archival material is housed in national collections. for the SCM at the United Church/Victoria University Archives at Emmanuel College, Toronto, and for IVCF at its head office in Richmond Hill, north of Toronto. Both movements organized a board of directors and an executive committee which, for the most part, kept regular meeting minutes.⁴⁰ Reports of annual national conferences and the reminiscences of former members are also important sources which often elucidate both strengths and failures. Other sources vary, and include personal correspondence between leaders (including reports between travelling secretaries and the general secretary based in Toronto), correspondence with community supporters, brochures which advertised upcoming events such as retreats, and other assorted materials. These sources are generally either prescriptive or descriptive in nature.⁴¹ Gaps in the evidence do exist and it would be unwise to claim that the present study is an exhaustive presentation of the two movements’ identities and practices. But in sum total these sources are sufficiently

³⁹ Steve Bruce, *Firm in the Faith* (Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Co., 1984), 65-66. The book generally sets out to prove that conservative Protestantism, in contrast with liberal Protestantism, has endured because its specific creeds have given it clear boundaries or identity, what Bruce refers to as a strong “product profile” (80-81).

⁴⁰ Minutes of IVCF’s meetings were recorded and filed as of 1935-36, after the arrival of a new general secretary, C. Stacey Woods. Melvin Donald notes that between March 1930 and September 1934 almost no detailed report of any kind was kept. Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 153.

⁴¹ The attempt has been made throughout to distinguish clearly between leaders’ suggestions and hopes and the actual programme events.

numerous and varied to shed light on many of the two movements' beliefs, activities, and interactions with other individuals and organizations in Canada and internationally.

Why is a comparative study of the SCM and IVCF important? First of all, the sparse historiography of these two movements suggests that the contributions of students to churches, universities, and society in general, have often been ignored. A number of the key historical works dealing with the influence of Protestantism in Canada in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have focused extensively on the views of clergymen-professors; indeed, much of the secularization debate revolves around their writings.⁴² Historians Ramsay Cook and David Marshall point to changes within colleges and universities as evidence that secularization was taking place: Cook contends that over time theology was replaced by sociology, and Marshall similarly argues that the Bible's use as a textbook diminished and clergymen ceased to be in positions of academic influence.⁴³ Evidence that Christianity's presence in the educational curriculum diminished is compelling. But the realm of the extracurricular should not be overlooked. The study of the SCM and IVCF serves to counterbalance historians' reliance on the writings of professors and other educational administrators and points to the fact that, even when the curriculum changed, Christianity maintained a presence, in various forms, on campuses.

It is true that college and university students in the 1930s represented only a small portion of Canadian society – in 1931, for example, only three per cent of Canadians

⁴² Examples are Ramsay Cook's *The Regenerators*, Marguerite Van Die's *An Evangelical Mind: Nathanael Burwash and the Methodist Tradition in Canada, 1839-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), David Marshall's *Secularizing the Faith*, and Michael Gauvreau's *Evangelical Century*.

⁴³ Cook, *Regenerators*, 4, and Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, 22-23.

between the ages of twenty and twenty-four were enrolled in higher education.⁴⁴

Likewise, membership in the SCM and IVCF was small: for example, Catherine Gidney states that members of the SCM unit at the University of Toronto, one of the more active units in Canada, represented between four and eight per cent of the total student body from the 1920s to 1965,⁴⁵ and it is likely that in the 1930s IVCF's numbers were even smaller. Small numbers did not, however, mean little influence. Canadian institutions of higher education through the 1930s contributed thousands of leaders to the religious, educational, political and entrepreneurial sectors of society. Paul Axelrod has argued that although a university degree did not guarantee success, it did make available "a range of *potential* opportunities largely unavailable to less educated citizens."⁴⁶ In the 1930s, the SCM and IVCF contributed much to student activism and to the collective voice of religion on Canadian campuses. These movements should be treated as important organizations within educational institutions and within the broader Canadian society.

There is also a need for a more integrated presentation of each of these movements, for a treatment which balances thought and action. Scholars interested in IVCF have most often emphasized its creed and have characterized it as a conservative reaction to liberal theology. A deeper understanding is needed of how IVCF's beliefs found expression in actual activities and to what extent these were planned in opposition to liberalism. Conversely, the SCM has frequently been portrayed as a radical organization engaged in the public criticism of aspects of the social and political order and in the pursuit of social justice. The question arises as to what extent the 'Christian' in 'Student

⁴⁴ Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 21. Axelrod notes that this three per cent enrollment actually exceeded figures for Britain and Germany but lagged significantly behind the United States.

⁴⁵ Gidney, "Poisoning the Student Mind?" 6-7.

Christian Movement' was an important factor for members: did the SCM's programme include religious activities and did Christian beliefs support their activism? The arguments of those who have compared the SCM and IVCF have hinged on the issue of belief: IVCF held to a traditional evangelical creed, while the SCM espoused a radical social Christianity. But there is room for more analysis of whether any common ground existed between their theologies and to what extent the two movements' programme activities could be distinguished from each other.

The fact that the SCM and IVCF were voluntary organizations offers a new dimension to religious history which often has relied, whether by choice or by necessity, on the voices of élites such as clergy and professors. John Stackhouse and George Marsden agree that institutions allow richer historical portrayals; Marsden asserts that institutions "stand midway between the people who run them and the larger movements and cultural trends in which they participate" and "can be means through which to look at both the more particular and the more general."⁴⁷ The histories of the SCM and IVCF permit the analysis both of underlying principles which connected them with or dissociated them from the wider stream of Protestantism and the activities of a number of their leaders.

The fact that the majority of these two organizations' activities were run voluntarily by students and were extracurricular to both the educational institutions that hosted them and the denominations which associated with them also prevents an overly élitist account. Non-students – sometimes professors, clergy, missionaries or

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷ Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, and Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 1.

entrepreneurs – did play important advisory roles in the SCM and IVCF. But, it must be remembered, these people typically had been students themselves. Moreover, especially in the early years of both of these movements, staff numbers were minimal and national offices were small. IVCF's staff, for example, consisted into the latter 1930s of a general secretary and two or three travelling secretaries covering most of the country. The SCM as the older of the two organizations was only slightly more established. Thus the stories of the SCM and IVCF provide insight into a relatively obscure realm of Protestantism as expressed by students and propelled largely through the energies of students themselves – individuals who at the same time worked towards academic success in the hopes of finding careers, who often were employed part-time and during the summers to pay for their education, and who attended other campus events such as sporting contests, dances, or concerts.⁴⁸

For the historian interested in comparing various manifestations of Protestantism, it is significant that the SCM and IVCF, with their distinctive liberal and conservative theologies, coexisted in Canada from 1928-29 onward and often worked within the walls of the same institutions. If they at least shared the physical context, the question needs to be asked, to what extent they held other features in common. For example, did their close proximity force the two movements to sharpen their own identities? Chapter two seeks to determine the separate identities which the SCM and IVCF fashioned by engaging their historical traditions, by issuing formal and informal statements of purpose and belief, by associations with individuals, organizations and institutions, and by their posture towards each other.

⁴⁸ For a more complete picture of campus life in the 1930s, see chap. 5 of Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*.

In chapters three and four, programmes are outlined and compared. Chapter three concerns the question of how the SCM and IVCF sought to foster Christian piety through devotional activities. Chapter four focuses on their activism, in other words how the SCM and IVCF put their beliefs into practice.

Behind these questions lie larger ones such as whether the 'fundamentalist' and 'modernist' caricatures were accurate representations of IVCF and the SCM and to what extent there really did exist a 'great divide' between these two movements. If each was part of a larger divide on the Protestant landscape, did these two student movements consider this barrier insurmountable? Or did there exist shared concerns, beliefs or practices which made crossing the divide possible?

CHAPTER 2

MARKING THE BOUNDARIES: SELF-DEFINITIONS OF THE STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT AND INTER-VARSITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

I do not see any real necessity for a new organization. Students of evangelical opinions are quite welcome in the Students' Christian Association, provided they are willing "to live and let live."¹

-Rev. F.J. Moore, head of the University of Toronto SCM, 1929

Therefore we can truthfully announce that we do not go from place to place with the avowed object of forming branches of the IVCF as such. This may seem to some an idealistic attitude to take, but we only speak the truth when we declare that we would much prefer to see the Student Christian Movement carrying out our programme than find it necessary to undertake it ourselves apart from them.²

-Noel Palmer, general secretary of IVCF, 1931

As Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship spread slowly across Canada through the 1930s, some students, college and university administrators, and church leaders questioned the necessity for two Christian campus groups. Such criticism of this parallel presence was undoubtedly known to leaders and members of the SCM and IVCF. Partly in response, these individuals sought to give clear definition to their respective movements.

To elucidate the SCM's and IVCF's self-definitions, there exists a variety of sources ranging from diaries, correspondence and personal reminiscences to staff reports, the minutes of administrative meetings and material intended for wider distribution such as

¹ Rev. F.J. Moore, quoted in "New Movement is Fundamentalist, Says Organizer," *University of Toronto Varsity* [hereafter *Varsity*], 18 January 1929, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada Papers, IVCF National Office, Richmond Hill, ON [hereafter IVA], unlabelled box, attached to letter from Rev. H. Brash Bonsall [principal of Birmingham Bible Institute]. "Unlabelled box" references throughout are to a box housed in the IVCF library which contains an assortment of historical material mixed with more recent correspondence and research notes by Melvin V. Donald.

fundraising letters, pamphlets, transcripts of talks and published materials. These either explicitly or implicitly identified the historical roots of their respective movement: what each opposed; its beliefs and goals; the individuals and organizations with which it associated itself; the Protestant denominations which composed its membership; and how the two student groups felt about one other. A comparison of the SCM's and IVCF's statements of self-definition reveals that key differences existed between the two movements. At the same time, surprising commonalities also emerge and suggest that the two movements shared more than physical space.

Differences were evident when individuals described their respective movements' historical roots. The question of what circumstances or issues had precipitated and shaped the SCM or IVCF became especially important when leaders were keen to convince potential financial contributors of their particular movement's significance on Canadian campuses. Establishing a sense of 'tradition' – an understanding that each of these movements was not fledgling but drew from earlier movements – was seen as a means of building credibility. Historical influences continued to be mentioned years later as former members or leaders reflected on their college/university days; these reminiscences, sometimes critical, were often the subjects of SCM or IVCF anniversary celebrations.

The SCM pointed to a handful of student movements as its spiritual predecessors. Members recalled that in the late nineteenth century an international student Christian revival had taken place which had produced important catalysts for the Canadian SCM. Specifically named were the English SCM, founded in 1894, and the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), formed a year later. Another influence, interwoven with the

² Noel Palmer, "Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled

history of the British SCM. had been the transatlantic wave of student missionary effort facilitated under the banner of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM), founded in 1888 in Northfield, Massachusetts and headed by John R. Mott. One former SCM'er recalled:

The [British] SCM took its inception from that amazing outburst of evangelistic zeal which swept the Western world, and particularly the English-speaking countries, at the end of the nineteenth century. This was in many ways the zenith of missionary endeavour, and the Student Movement was born amid cries of "The evangelisation of the world in our time" and mass recruitment of university "volunteers" for service under this banner.³

But it was noted further that a shift in purpose had taken place over the next decades:

"Originating in a challenge to university students to carry the Gospel to faraway lands, it soon found itself with a somewhat different task on its hands, the task of carrying the Gospel to these very university students. Thus has evolved its traditional mission, the evangelisation of the intelligentsia of the whole world."⁴

More indigenous influences were the Student Departments of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations in Canada, which had been coordinating religious activities on campuses since the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The SCM acknowledged gratefully the "valuable service rendered by these organizations to the colleges of Canada." But, according to SCM accounts, following World War One students in Canada, as in other parts of the world, had perceived a need for a new organization devoted solely to working among university and college students.⁵ Students also had

box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 19.

³ "The Student Christian Movement of Canada," reflection, 1953, SCM UCA, box 84-10, file 14.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "The Student Christian Movement in Canada," fundraising letter, [1921-22], SCM UCA, box 84-15, National Office Printed Materials Scrapbook, 1920-34, p. 18.

been disillusioned with the support of the war effort by Protestant churches, of which the YM/YWCA's were perceived to be extensions.⁶

The SCM's understanding of its roots, then, was layered; while it recognized the valuable contributions of the SVM's evangelistic enthusiasm and the activities of the church-based YM/YWCA's, the SCM consciously altered or departed from the aims of these more conservative movements. Paradoxically, the SCM traced its history to nineteenth-century evangelicalism and the decades of student work carried out by the YM/YWCA's but at the same time also defined itself in opposition to this tradition.

IVCF traced its roots to some of the same movements but viewed them differently. IVCF leaders, like SCM leaders, identified their history with the transatlantic evangelical revival of the latter nineteenth century and the efforts of the SVM and leaders such as John R. Mott and Robert Wilder. They also expressed some reservations about this heritage, but for reasons opposite to the SCM's. Some felt that in later years Mott had overemphasized ecumenism, or inclusivism, to the detriment of his evangelical faith. One IVCF secretary recalled the animosity of Mott and his many friends in the worldwide church towards fledgling evangelical groups such as IVCF. The secretary had been surprised upon discovering that these same leaders who in the 1930s IVCF leaders considered to be the "chief opponents of orthodoxy" had, around the turn of the century, been active "in leading university missions, in personal soul winning, advocating quiet times and foreign missions."⁷ At the same time he credited Robert Wilder (eventually

⁶ Kirkey, "Building the City of God," 82. For examples of this SCM opinion, see Dale, *Twenty-One Years A-Building*, 4-5, and J. Davidson Ketchum, "After Twenty Years," [1941?], SCM UCA, box 84-11, file 1.

⁷ Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 12, and Charles Troutman, "Backgrounds of Evangelical University Witness in the United States," Ms, 1 June 1965, p. 142. Troutman spent a number of years in the latter 1930s working with the Canadian IVCF, especially in Québec. This manuscript contains helpful information on both the

pushed away from the SVM and WSCF because of his traditional beliefs) with bringing “a strong missionary emphasis” into evangelical student movements worldwide.⁸

Moreover, Inter-Varsity leaders acknowledged the place of the British and the Canadian SCM in their own movement’s history but also emphasized that IVCF had been formed partly in opposition to these movements’ liberalism. The first IVCF general secretary, Noel Palmer, recognized that the SCM had emerged out of the evangelistic fervour of the late nineteenth century and that it still held vestiges of the original courage and enthusiasm for evangelism.⁹ IVCF leaders generally agreed that the SCM, out of its eagerness to evangelize, emphasized an inclusive membership and, in order to achieve this, suppressed doctrinal discussions. Subsequently, in their view traditional doctrines which IVCF considered to be the life-blood of Christianity gradually were replaced by a liberal theology.¹⁰ In Palmer’s words, IVCF stood “where the SCM stood thirty years ago.”¹¹ IVCF described itself as a child of the British Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (IVFEU or IVF), which itself had been formed by groups which had

Canadian and the American IVCF. Thanks to James Berney, General Director of IVCF of Canada, for loaning this manuscript.

⁸ Troutman, “Backgrounds of Evangelical University Witness,” 133. Douglas Johnson notes that Wilder was a key speaker at the first International Conference of evangelical students in High Leigh, England in 1934 and toured a number of British universities in early 1935. Douglas Johnson, *Contending for the Faith: A History of the Evangelical Movement in the Universities and Colleges* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 182, 192-193. Wilder’s books, such as *Valiant in Fight*, were distributed among students. See Charles Troutman, “Inter-Varsity and Inter-School Christian Fellowship Secretarial Information, P.Q. 1937-38,” annual report, [1938?], IVA, box 4, file “Annual Reports - C. Troutman.”

⁹ Noel Palmer, “Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement,” Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file “History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer,” 3-5. Palmer warned: “Those who think of the Movement as just a dead society eaten up with modernism know nothing of [the missionary] side of it, and cannot easily realize the appeal which it makes to the eager student-mind.” Palmer had himself been a member and even a student secretary, for a short term, of the SCM at Oxford University until 1920, at which time he helped to found the evangelical Oxford University Bible Union. Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 17-18, 61.

¹⁰ Troutman, “Backgrounds of Evangelical University Witness,” 69-71. Concerned with the British SCM and IVF, Steve Bruce perceives that the evangelicals who broke away from the SCM tended to describe the SCM’s early days as very conservative, when in reality it was composed of eventual liberals and conservatives who suppressed doctrinal differences in order to cooperate in evangelism. Bruce, *Firm in the Faith*, 67-68.

splintered from the British SCM between 1910 and 1920.¹² Leaders also pointed out that there were SCM'ers who, frustrated with the SCM's dismissal of traditional orthodoxy, had joined IVCF.¹³ Thus IVCF leaders saw their movement to be opposed to the inclusivism and liberal theology of the SCM and the SVM, and determined that it was their task to re-establish a conservative orthodoxy, which the other groups considered to be outmoded.

As has already been evident in their understanding of the historical roots of their respective movements, SCM and IVCF leaders named specifically what their respective movements sought to oppose. In addition, therefore, to underscoring their historic origins, leaders justified their movement's existence and defined its purposes through reactive statements.

The SCM reacted strongly against traditional Christianity. One SCM'er described the movement in the inter-war years as iconoclastic and "sharply critical" of the church's "outmoded shibboleths."¹⁴ Likewise, leaders expressed their belief that church traditions had obscured the "real Jesus"; a 1929 seminar brochure declared that Jesus' teachings and

¹¹ Noel Palmer, untitled Ms, [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer."

¹² "The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada," pamphlet, [early 1930s], IVA, unlabelled box, file "N.P. 1930-33."

¹³ Noel Palmer, untitled Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer." Historian Richard Allen likewise notes that a portion of the SCM's membership in the late 1920s found "a more congenial home" in the newly-founded IVCF (which Allen erroneously describes as having moved onto Canadian campuses from the United States; in fact the reverse is true). Allen, *Social Passion*, 311. For substantiation that this in fact occurred throughout the 1930s, see Arthur Hill, "Early Days of the IVCF in Canada," Ms, [ca. 1965], IVA, unlabelled box, file "A.H. - 1933-34"; Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 82; Stan Reid to Charles Troutman, 21 November 1950, IVA, unlabelled box, file "K.H. 1929-30"; Charles Troutman to Claude Vipond, 23 September 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Charles Troutman, QC"; Cathie Nicoll, report, 2-9 December 1939, IVA, unlabelled box, file "'34-'41"; Troutman, "Backgrounds of Evangelical University Witness," 82. Some conservative students had already organized alternative groups to the SCM before the emergence of IVCF, such as those involved in the Student Volunteer Band at the University of Western Ontario, formed in 1925, and the Student Christian Fundamentalist Society at the University of British Columbia, formed in 1926. Phillips, "IVCF in Western Canada," 341.

¹⁴ "The Student Christian Movement of Canada," reflection, 1953, SCM UCA, box 84-10, file 14.

authority had been “shrouded by ancient philosophies and theologies.”¹⁵ Similarly, a general secretary saw Jesus’ central place in the SCM to be “not as historical figure, not as central pillar in a theological system, nor as corner-stone in a vast, universal institution. - but as a pulsating, throbbing, dynamic personality who reveals God and transforms man.”¹⁶ For the SCM, the task was to recapture the true essence of Jesus which had been ignored or covered up by the church.

A key instrument in the SCM’s task of revealing the ‘true’ Jesus to students was the higher criticism of the Bible. Unlike the traditional view of the Bible as the authoritative and literal Word of God, the higher criticism analyzed the Bible as literature. “One of the greatest needs of educated Canadians,” wrote one member, “has been for a popularised appreciation of the modern approach to the whole Bible.”¹⁷ Liberal theologian Henry Burton Sharman prepared Bible study guides for the SCM which encouraged students to sift through the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke in search of the authentic sayings of Jesus. In reaction against the perceived dogmatism of the church and the more directive bible studies of the YMCA and YWCA,¹⁸ Sharman asserted his belief that students were able to discover for themselves the ramifications of Jesus’ teachings: “If we cannot rest confident in the belief that when Jesus is adequately known the implications of his thought will be obvious, not only so but likewise

¹⁵ Brochure for Camp Minnesing Iota Sigma Seminar, [1929], SCM UCA, box 84-15, National Office Printed Materials Scrapbook, 1920-34, p. 130. This camp, organized by Henry Burton Sharman, was named “Iota Sigma Seminar” in reference to the first and last letters of Jesus’ Greek name (Ἰησους). It was in these decades that fraternities (or “Greek-letter societies”) were appearing, with some resistance, on Canadian campuses. See Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 106-108.

¹⁶ Murray Brooks, “Some Thoughts of the ‘Genius’ of the SCM,” reflection, 1957, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 24. In regard to the SCM’s critical and iconoclastic attitude towards the church, see also “The Student Christian Movement of Canada,” reflection, 1953, SCM UCA, box 84-10, file 14.

¹⁷ Wilfred F. Butcher to Ernest Dale, 25 August 1941, SCM UCA, box 84-11, file 1. Butcher’s conclusion was that the SCM “as a whole” had failed in this task.

compelling, then we should regard ourselves as engaged in a hopeless task."¹⁹ SCM leaders employed the higher criticism in the sincere hope that this modern technique would reveal the relevance and significance of Jesus.

The SCM also sought to de-emphasize what they considered to be the church's otherworldly orientation – its traditional belief in a transcendent, supernatural God who would destroy the earth and judge individuals, either admitting them to heaven or banishing them to hell. One SCM document proposed that modern people, through the influence of science and social reform, sought a "new type of religious experience" which rejected "the otherworldly framework of traditional Christianity." Rather, a modern faith should be shaped through involvement in the modern world.²⁰ Naturally, this critical posture toward the supernatural element of Christianity and their questioning of doctrines such as the authority and inspiration of the Bible were linked together.²¹

More generally the SCM sought to counter what it sensed to be the church's dogmatism – its claim to have a monopoly on the truth, or its blind acceptance of certain doctrines. In opposition to this, the SCM valued a context which gave free rein to ideas. One former SCM'er reminisced that the movement provided a forum for those who had

¹⁸ Gidney, "Poisoning the Student Mind?" 8.

¹⁹ *This One Thing: A Tribute to Henry Burton Sharman* (Toronto: Student Christian Movement, 1959), 43-44, quoted in Beattie et al., *Brief History*, 75-76. On Sharman's background, see Airhart, *Serving the Present Age: Revivalism, Progressivism, and the Methodist Tradition in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 115.

²⁰ "Syllabus & Reference Material for Discussion Group Leaders on Student Problems, Elgin House 1928," pt. 3, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 25.

²¹ Other areas of suspicion, according to Donald Kirkey, were Jesus' virgin birth and physical resurrection, miracles, and messianic claims, as well as traditional doctrines of sin. Kirkey, "Building the City of God," 88.

grown up attending church but who at university questioned its beliefs.²² A general secretary pointed out the SCM's attitude of intelligent open-mindedness and implicitly contrasted it to the anti-intellectualism of the wider church:

The SCM encourages its members to be students in fact as well as in name. If one is to be a Christian, one must be an intelligent Christian. He must develop mental 'guts' and use them in persistent, unrelenting study and more study. Positions held are tentative and fluid, not fixed; attitudes are scientific, not dogmatic. Students make no claim to have found a final base but only to be ever reaching out further; seeking, questioning, enquiring, becoming. They never expect to attain to finalities or ultimates. . . . SCM members refuse to accept creeds and doctrinal statements without question, or to conform to usages and forms unless they see an intelligent reason for doing so. To the church they bring fresh thinking, infusion of new life. . . .²³

To this leader the openness to new thought in the SCM was not a complete rebellion against the churches but rather was intended to convey "new life" to a decaying institution. Thus, while abhorring a dogmatic attitude, the SCM defined itself not as rejecting the church but as being in the vanguard of church reform, intent to jettison decrepit doctrines and replace them with new and vigorous thinking.

IVCF, in contrast, defined itself in opposition to the liberal element of the church. In IVCF's view, accepting liberal presuppositions was a large step toward rejecting religion altogether. One IVCF secretary challenged the idea of Leslie Weatherhead, a well-known liberal Methodist author, that religious experience could be explained

²² Reid E. Vipond, "Some Reflections on The Student Christian Movement at Queen's University, 1933-1939," Ms, 1991, W. Bentley Macleod Fonds, Queen's University Archives, A.ARCH 2303.15. file "SCM letters," 8-9.

²³ Murray Brooks, "Some Thought of the 'Genius' of the SCM," reflection, 1957, SCM UCA, box 84-136. file 24. Not all leaders agreed with this intellectual liberty. W.A. Visser't Hooft, general secretary of the WSCF, challenged SCM'ers to be loyal to Christian convictions. "My own hope," he said, "is that the SCM will become a movement which will increasingly ask students to choose; that it will challenge students to commit themselves. There must be discussion and study in the SCM, but these must lead up to a choice." Dale, *Twenty-One Years A-Building*, 42. Likewise Canon Leonard Dixon, who came to Canada after being involved with India's SCM, immediately noticed that the Canadian SCM lacked "positive conviction" in comparison with the movement in India. Whereas in India the movement had articulated its belief in Christ, the Canadian attitude was, in Dixon's words, "Let each man paddle his own canoe and possibly some day he may arrive." To the extent that the Canadian spirit had resembled the Indian one, he deemed that the

through psychology. The secretary retorted that Weatherhead's views were "neither good psychology nor sound religion." To students who might be swayed by Weatherhead, IVCF needed to state its conviction that "evangelical" Christianity was not subject to a scientific analysis.²⁴

IVCF specifically targeted the higher criticism of the Bible. An IVCF graduate student challenged the liberal view "that the Bible is at once a tissue of myths, legends, forgeries, weird apocalyptic visions, some more or less dependable history and . . . that this motley assortment constitutes a masterpiece of religious literature." Those who embraced the higher criticism, the student believed, could easily end up "in the camp of atheism."²⁵ A pamphlet of the early 1930s employed a sailing analogy to characterize the end result of questioning Scripture's divine inspiration: "The world is being driven before the winds like a rudderless vessel at sea, because its leaders are rejecting the practical authority and guidance of the Bible."²⁶

IVCF leaders encouraged a number of student responses to the liberal view of the Bible. In 1931 the general secretary advised students to be patient; time, he believed, would vindicate their position concerning the Bible. He questioned whether scholarship would ever completely resolve difficulties with the Bible. In fact, quite the opposite, "countless theories" which attempted to "discredit the Bible in part or whole" had already

results had been positive. Leonard A. Dixon, "SCM University of Toronto - 1931 to 1935," [1941?], SCM UCA, box 11, file 1, p. 2.

²⁴ Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 30 December 1937, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada."

²⁵ Fred H. Leach, "The Significance and Importance of the Doctrine of the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible," TMs, Canadian supplement to the British IVFEU magazine, 1937, IVA, box 3, file "1935-36 British IVCF," 8.

²⁶ "The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada," pamphlet, [early 1930s], IVA, unlabelled box, file "N.P. 1930-33." For an example of IVCF's conflict with the liberal view of the Bible at the University of Manitoba in 1929, see "Varsity Christian Union," *The Manitoban* (10 January 1930), clipping, IVA,

been proven false, and facts which confirmed the Bible's "authenticity and authority" were steadily increasing. IVCF's main defense against the higher critics would be to demonstrate the practicality of obedience to biblical teaching.²⁷ Six years later, an IVCF graduate student advocated a more intellectual response; a reasoned defence of the doctrine of inspiration, he felt, was a necessary precursor to the proclamation of the Christian message. In between an anti-intellectual "mysticism" and a humanistic "rationalism" lay "a legitimate criticism of the text of the Bible" which recovered the most accurate rendering of the original biblical writings.²⁸ This expression of a moderate position hints that the liberal-conservative conflict over the Bible had subsided somewhat. However, both this and the earlier statement clearly reacted against the liberals' subjection of the Bible to modern judgment.

IVCF leaders disdained the liberal beliefs prevalent in the SCM. For example, Howard Guinness, the British student who toured Canadian campuses and organized the IVCF in 1928-1929, summarized in his diary what he considered to be the beliefs of two SCM'ers who held to a 'humanized' Jesus, universal salvation, and the need to subject the Bible to modern criticism:

Christ was a man who made many mistakes but got as near God as anyone can. He found "the way of life." And inspires us to do the same. We may learn much more about God than He ever Knew! They quoted the parable of the "draw net" [Matthew 13:47-50] to show that the kingdom was composed of all both bad and good! . . . When I pointed out that the last part of the story said that the bad were cast away, they (in surprise and pain - almost indignation) said that surely I didn't think Christ had said that! It had been put in

unlabelled box, and "The Varsity Christian Union: Form of Declaration of Membership," brochure, 1929, IVA, unlabelled box, file "K.H. 1929-30."

²⁷ Noel Palmer, "Our Purpose, Programme, & Problems," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer."

²⁸ Fred H. Leach, "The Significance and Importance of the Doctrine of the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible," TMs, Canadian supplement to the British Inter-Varsity magazine, 1937, IVA, box 3, file "1935-36 British IVCF," 5-6. Leach made reference to two conservative Princeton theologians: Dr. B.B. Warfield and Dr. J. Gresham Machen. For more information on these scholars, see Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

later by some ignorant transcribers! They only accepted certain parts of Matt[hew], Mark, and Luke which agreed with their notions. All passages that disagreed with them had been inserted! *And they were in deadly earnest.*²⁹

Interactions such as this reaffirmed Guinness and other leaders in defending traditional Christian doctrines against the liberal element in Protestant churches.

More positively than statements of reaction, both movements formulated their convictions into concrete statements of belief and purpose. These further illuminated their differing self-definitions. The SCM's "Basis and Aim," revised in 1933, stated:

The Student Christian Movement of Canada is a fellowship of students based on the conviction that in Jesus Christ are found the supreme revelation of God and the means to the full realization of life.

The Movement seeks through study, prayer, and practice to know and follow Jesus Christ and to unite in its fellowship all students in the colleges of Canada who share the above conviction, together with all students who are willing to test the truth of the conviction upon which the Movement is founded.

The Movement desires to share with others the values discovered in Jesus Christ and to join with those of like mind in all lands and of every race and rank in the creation of a world-wide order of society in harmony with the mind and purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.³⁰

IVCF's "Statement of Agreement," composed in 1933, declared:

The aim of the Fellowship shall be to establish and maintain in the universities, colleges, Normal schools and secondary schools of Canada groups of students whose objects shall be:

- (a) To witness to the Lord Jesus Christ as God Incarnate, and to seek to lead others to a personal faith in Him as Saviour.
- (b) To deepen and strengthen the spiritual life of members by the study of the Bible and by prayer.³¹

Appended to IVCF's aims was a list of specific doctrines which the movement hoped to represent to students and to which all in leadership or advisory positions had to adhere:

²⁹ Howard Guinness, diary, 16 March 1929, IVA, unlabelled box.

³⁰ SCM Constitution, revised 11-13 September 1933, SCM UCA, box 84-15, National Office Printed Materials Scrapbook, 1920-34, p. 8. The third clause, added in 1933, was influenced directly by the following American YWCA statement of purpose: "To realise full and creative life through a growing knowledge of God. We determine to have a part in making this life possible for all people. In this task we seek to understand Jesus and follow him." SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 4-6 June 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file "1932."

³¹ Quoted in Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 93.

1. The Divine inspiration, integrity and authority of the Bible.
2. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. The necessity and efficacy of the vicarious death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world.
4. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.
5. The consummation of the Kingdom in the "glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ."³²

These statements of purpose reveal clear differences between the SCM and IVCF.

The most obvious difference between the SCM's and IVCF's statements was IVCF's inclusion of a five-point doctrinal statement. While the SCM's statement did include 'convictions' concerning Jesus Christ, IVCF delineated its beliefs in much more detail. Evidence suggests, in fact, that the IVCF Board of Directors insisted that IVCF have a clear belief statement in their Constitution in direct reaction to the SCM's "Basis and Aim."³³

In stating their goals, the two movements reflected their divergent theologies. The SCM's aim to build a "world-wide order" based on Christian principles resonated with the influence of the social gospel, the liberal Protestant move to establish the "Kingdom of God" on earth through social reform.³⁴ Jesus' teachings, it was felt, could be drawn on to inform solutions to modern-day social, political and economic crises. Behind the social

³² Ibid. There is agreement that IVCF's five-point doctrinal statement came from an external source, but specifically which source is unclear. Former secretaries C. Stacey Woods and Charles Troutman stated that it was adopted, with slight variations, from a statement of faith drawn up by American fundamentalist leaders in the 1920s. C. Stacey Woods, *The Growth of a Work of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 46, and Troutman, "Backgrounds of Evangelical University Witness," 152. In contrast, former general secretary Arthur Hill believed that the statement was drawn from the basis of faith of the British China Inland Mission (CIM). Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 93. In 1935, IVCF leaders made minor word changes and embellished the third doctrine to read: "The necessity and efficacy of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world, and the historic fact of His bodily resurrection." IVCF Constitution, [1935-36], IVA, box 3, file "Executive Committee Canada (Fellowship Constitution)"; see also app. 1 of Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 325. Until 1935, when local chapters were invited to subscribe to the common Basis, each chapter had formulated its own statement, which caused "quite a bit of confusion." IVCF Board of Directors minutes, [1935], IVA, filing cabinet, binder "Minutes, Board of Directors, 20 Jan. 1936 - 16 Oct. 1954."

³³ Arthur and Mrs. P. Hill, interview by Robert and Madge Paulette, transcript, 1981, IVA, unlabelled box, file "A.H. 1933-34."

³⁴ Margaret Beattie calls the period 1920-1939 the "Social Gospel" phase of the SCM. Beattie et al., *Brief History*, 74.

gospel lay a commitment to the theological belief of God's immanence in human society through the person and work of Jesus. Thus in the "Basis and Aim" it was stated that Jesus revealed "the mind and purpose of God" and offered "the full realization of life." A professor pointedly asked University of Toronto SCM'ers in 1928. "How is there going to be any religious attachment to a God who sits in glory on high and watches the suffering in the world He has made?" Rather than a clouded and inscrutable deity, God had become, in the person of Jesus Christ, "subject to His own laws, sharing with us the toil and pain and torture, a God of love who enjoys all that love would impose."³⁵ In Jesus, God placed himself in the midst of human history and society and, as a result, made himself understandable and worthy of devotion.

This theology, combined with the evolutionary idea that human society was constantly progressing, led to a great deal of optimism and idealism in the SCM. "There were many of us," one former member recalled with some self-criticism, "who were starry-eyed about the possibilities of transforming everything into the Kingdom of God." He noted further his perception that for most students in the movement, "man was basically good and all that was really needed was social engineering under humanitarian and preferably Christian auspices. 'Original Sin' was a musty theological concept, a church word, used in the interest of paralyzing social change and progress."³⁶

³⁵ Dr. J.M.P. Sclater, reported in article, "Christ Makes God Possible Object of our Worship," *Varsity* 47, no. 98 (1 March 1928), *Varsity* microfilm, University of Toronto Archives. See also Henry Burton Sharman, "What is the Gospel?" transcript, 1927, attached to letter, H.L. Bowman to Murray Brooks, 29 April 1960, SCM UCA, box 84-10, file 37.

³⁶ William R. Coleman, "Some Reflections of the Place of Theology in the Canadian SCM," paper presented to the SCM Leadership Training Programme, 29 August - 5 September 1973, Toronto, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 24.

By the midpoint of the 1930s the SCM's idealism, reflected in its statement of purpose, had subsided. Voices emerged which considered liberal theology to be naïve. For example, an SCM'er at United College, Winnipeg, in 1934 challenged the egocentricity of modern society from a theocentric perspective:

The Modern Point of View . . . insists that everything, even God, be judged from the human standpoint – that everything, even religion, starts from man and his needs. But if our religion does not stand upon the conviction that God has spoken then it has no basis. We must get back to a theocentric view of life and its issues, and cast into limbo our homocentric delusions.³⁷

Another former SCM'er remembered a search in the 1930s for a theology which would “make a realistic appraisal of the human situation” without resulting in either “cynicism” on the one hand or “pietism” on the other.³⁸ Notwithstanding these changes in viewpoint, the “Basis and Aim,” together with its theological presuppositions, endured through the 1930s.

In contrast to the SCM's liberal theology and emphasis on the social gospel, IVCF in its constitutional statement highlighted conservative beliefs in God's transcendence and personal submission or surrender to the divine will. God's transcendent nature was apparent in doctrines concerning the divine inspiration of the Bible, the “presence and

³⁷ *Canadian Student* 16, no. 4 (1934), 107-108; quoted in Kirkey, “Decline of Radical Liberal Protestantism,” 28.

³⁸ William R. Coleman, “Some Reflections of the Place of Theology in the Canadian SCM,” paper presented to the SCM Leadership Training Programme, 29 August - 5 September 1973, Toronto, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 24. According to Donald Kirkey, in the 1920s SCM members held “a simple faith in the goodness of man, the immanence of God, the inevitability of progress, and the efficacy of education.” But faced with the depression, fascism and potential military conflicts in Europe and the Far East some began to search for “a God of power, one divorced from the world of sinful man.” Kirkey concludes that in the 1930s two noticeable streams developed: one group of students continued to emphasize the social gospel and the critical study of Jesus' life, while another group, more firmly rooted in the church, advocated a “moderate liberalism” or an orthodox theology. Kirkey, “Decline of Radical Liberal Protestantism,” 26-27, 29. Likewise Catherine Gidney points to the graduation of war veterans and the fragmentation of the social gospel movement in the late 1920s and early 1930s as factors contributing to a shift towards conservatism. Gidney, “Poisoning the Student Mind?” 8-11. Paul Axelrod notes a greater conservatism among students generally with the onset of the Depression. Axelrod, *Making A Middle Class*, 98.

power of the Holy Spirit.” and the expected culmination of history in the “glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.” Moreover IVCF’s doctrinal statement, likely in reaction against the SCM’s emphasis on Jesus’ humanity, underscored Christ’s deity and used the traditional titles “Saviour” and “Lord” to represent their members’ intent to ‘submit’ to him. Various IVCF’ers echoed this characterization of the human-divine relationship. For example, a student from western Canada wrote in the 1932-1933 academic year that, during an IVCF conference held by their university group, “the inner circle of our Fellowship . . . faced the uncompromising claim of Christ to absolute surrender – to the letting go of that hidden ‘something’ which holds a man back from entire obedience to His voice.”³⁹

Another difference between the statements of purpose of the two movements was the extent to which they were open to inclusive and ecumenical ideals. IVCF, though hopeful to attract students from various backgrounds to its cause, gave no clear indication of who was welcome in its membership. The SCM’s “Basis and Aim,” in contrast, stated that all students were welcome to join, so long as they were interested in testing whether Jesus’ life and teaching had any bearing on their lives and understanding of God. Likewise, the SCM intended to “unite” students across Canada and then to link them with similarly-minded students in other parts of the world. The SCM valued inclusivism and ecumenism, whereas IVCF, as has been noted in the discussion of its historical roots, was critical of the SCM’s (and the SVM’s) interest in these areas to the neglect of doctrine.

³⁹ Noel Palmer, “Report from the Colleges and Schools,” February 1933, IVA, box 1, file “History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36).” See also newsletter, [1937-39], IVA, box 1, file “Material of Historic Interest (1937-39),” 3.

A final difference between the statements related to the movements' contrasting approaches to addressing the religious needs of students. The SCM, by emphasizing that students should "understand Jesus" and "test the truth" of the SCM's convictions, demonstrated an intellectual approach. Thus general secretary Murray Brooks, expanding on the SCM's "Basis and Aim," strongly recommended that the movement attune itself to "the best scholarship," especially in the fields of religion and education. "Any Movement with students," he explained, "that encourages sloppy or superficial thinking will never meet with great success."⁴⁰ IVCF, on the other hand, in its aims to bring students to "personal faith" in Jesus and to "deepen and strengthen" their "spiritual life," displayed a more pietistic approach. This leaning was succinctly expressed by an IVCF secretary in 1938: "We firmly believe that the students [sic] primary need is not intellectual but moral, and so adapt our programme."⁴¹ Thus, the secretary applauded the efforts of the McGill IVCF in 1938-39 in its "determined effort to make Christ known" rather than "spending time on theological debate or social criticism."⁴²

Beyond the statements of purpose, another difference was that IVCF and the SCM associated with quite dissimilar individuals and organizations. IVCF sought speakers and advisors from the business and academic communities, but frequently ministers and missionaries filled this role. IVCF coveted the support of a number of scholars and wealthy businessmen, such as Dr. William Bell Dawson, Montreal retired scientist and son of the eminent nineteenth-century geologist and McGill principal Sir William

⁴⁰ Murray Brooks, memorandum (confidential), (1930 or 1931?), SCM UCA, box 84-14, National Office Letter Book, 1921-34, p. 128.

⁴¹ Charles Troutman to John W. Taber, 31 October 1938, IVA, box 1, file "Material of Historic Interest (1937-39)."

⁴² Charles Troutman, annual report, 1938-39, IVA, unlabelled box, file "'34-'41."

Dawson; Montreal millionaire A.J. Nesbitt, president of an investment firm and various public utilities companies and one-time board member of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute; and Dr. Frank Allen, head of the University of Manitoba physics department. In Toronto, key links were formed between IVCF and evangelical professors at Toronto Bible College (TBC) and Wycliffe College.⁴³ Ministerial contacts included Anglican Canon Dyson Hague and Presbyterian Dr. John G. Inkster of Toronto.⁴⁴ The Reverend Rowland V. Bingham, editor of *The Evangelical Christian*, founder of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and organizer of the Canadian Keswick conferences, played an important role in the formation of IVCF. Missionaries from the SIM and the China Inland Mission frequented Inter-Varsity meetings, and reports of their endeavours were circulated within the movement.⁴⁵

Some regional differences in IVCF's associations were apparent. Contact in the West with evangelical members of mainline denominations existed, but other supporters of IVCF came from fundamentalist institutions such as the non-denominational Elim Chapel in Winnipeg, founded and pastored by millionaire Sidney Smith,⁴⁶ and, in

⁴³ For example, TBC president John McNicol spoke on occasion to IVCF gatherings, and Professor T.W. Isherwood of Wycliffe sat on the IVCF Board of Directors in the early 1930s. For these and many other connections, see Donald, *Spreading Tree*. Alwyn J. Austin has written an unpublished history of TBC, "The Great Design": A History of Ontario Bible College," TMs. Thanks to Dr. Marguerite Van Die for loaning this manuscript.

⁴⁴ Inkster's church, Knox Presbyterian, had been one of the congregations which resisted church union in the 1920s. Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 250.

⁴⁵ On the China Inland Mission in Canada, see Austin, "The Transplanted Mission: The China Inland Mission and Canadian Evangelicalism," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. Rawlyk, 351-368.

⁴⁶ British student evangelist Howard Guinness, after meeting Smith in Winnipeg in 1929, described Elim Chapel in his diary as "a very strong centre for Fundamentalists in Winnipeg." Howard Guinness, diary, 9-10 February 1929, IVA, unlabelled box. Sidney Smith's influence was far-reaching in both business and religion: he was the president of Reliance Grain Company, was twice the president of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange, was the Director of several American and international corporations, speculated in oil and gas, was on the boards of both Moody Bible Institute (Chicago) and Dallas Seminary, organized Bible Conferences in the U.S.A., and in 1925 was the president of the World's Christian Fundamentalist

Calgary, the Prophetic Bible Institute founded by Alberta's Social Credit premier, William Aberhart.⁴⁷ But IVCF, decidedly resistant towards aspects of fundamentalism, exercised caution in these associations. In Winnipeg, several Elim Chapel members including its pastor, Sidney Smith, were nominated along with members of Baptist, United, Anglican, and Brethren churches to sit on an IVCF advisory committee. "We are out to get people from all churches into the group," mused the local IVCF secretary, "and Elim to most of them is the last word."⁴⁸ When conflicts occurred in Edmonton between the local IVCF committee and the "more extreme elements of the fundamentalist wing," the IVCF general secretary instructed that British Columbia should be the focus of the western Canadian work in the following year.⁴⁹

IVCF also associated with the Keswick movement, which originated in Britain in the 1870s. This movement consisted of conventions, held usually in a scenic environment, where personal holiness was promoted through a process of 'consecration' or total surrender of one's will to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the filling of one's life with the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰ In addition Keswick promoted evangelism and missions. In Canada, Keswick conventions, at which some IVCF secretaries assisted, were held in the Muskoka district north of Toronto and were organized by the Reverend

Association. D. Bruce Hindmarsh, "The Winnipeg Fundamentalist Network, 1910-1940: The Roots of Transdenominational Evangelicalism in Manitoba and Saskatchewan," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. Rawlyk, 303-308.

⁴⁷ Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 16 November 1937, IVA, box 3 file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada." On Aberhart, see chap. 2 of Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*.

⁴⁸ Cathie Nicoll to C. Stacey Woods, report, 3 March 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Cathie Nicoll, Winnipeg." To Nicoll, four Elim members who were well-known, educated and proficient in pursuits outside of the church were more likely candidates than Smith.

⁴⁹ General secretary's report, IVCF Executive Committee minutes, 25 May 1937, IVA, Filing Cabinet, Binder "Minutes, Executive Committee of the Board, 1936-1940." Four members of the local committee resigned as a result of these conflicts. For another example, see C. Stacey Woods to Jim Forrester, 4 February 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada."

Rowland V. Bingham. Moreover, British-born IVCF leaders active in Canada, such as Howard Guinness, Noel Palmer and Cathie Nicoll, brought their experience of the British Keswick with them. Indeed, elements such as the promotion of personal piety and the theme of surrendering one's will to Christ were contained in IVCF's philosophy. But the IVCF Executive Committee took care to ensure that IVCF maintained an identity distinct from Keswick by insisting that IVCF give no official sponsorship of the Keswick conventions.⁵¹

In addition, IVCF maintained a friendly relationship with the American League of Evangelical Students (LES), which had been founded by a number of Princeton theologians (including the well-known and outspoken J. Gresham Machen) out of a concern to defend Christian orthodoxy. While IVCF appreciated the efforts of the LES, leaders occasionally expressed regret at its overly intellectual approach and consequent neglect of evangelism. Soon after arriving in Canada from Britain in 1928, Howard Guinness attended an LES conference in Chicago; he recorded his impression that "dead theology is stifling the League."⁵² In 1935, an LES representative found it necessary to explain to the IVCF general secretary that the LES did not consider "apologetics and soul-winning" to be opposites. "To put it tersely," the LES leader said, "we believe that without a healthy apologetic there can be no healthy evangelism."⁵³ IVCF nonetheless considered its pietistic approach to students to be more effective. But the LES was an

⁵⁰ For an analysis of the Keswick movement in Britain, see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, chap. 5, and Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 77-78.

⁵¹ John R. Howitt to Rowland V. Bingham, 2 April and 18 May 1936, and Rowland V. Bingham to John R. Howitt, 30 April 1936, IVA, box 3, file "Executive Committee."

⁵² Howard Guinness, diary, 8-10 December 1928, IVA, unlabelled box.

⁵³ Calvin Knox Cummings to C. Stacey Woods, 28 February 1935, IVA, box 3, file "League of Evangelical Students 1925-35."

important American associate at least until the growth of an American IVCF out of the Canadian IVCF in the late 1930s.⁵⁴

IVCF also linked itself to similar student movements in other countries.

Commencing in 1934, IVCF either supported or participated in international conferences of evangelical students.⁵⁵ These conferences, which aimed “to unite and strengthen the National Evangelical Unions” and “to seek by all means amongst students in all the countries of the world to stimulate personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to further evangelistic work.” reflected IVCF’s evangelical identity.⁵⁶ IVCF also depended on British Inter-Varsity Press and Scripture Union publications and made reference to British evangelical scholars in their Bible study outlines.⁵⁷

Many of the SCM’s associations differed considerably from IVCF’s. The SCM welcomed various liberal Protestant academics as advisors and speakers, including Henry Burton Sharman, for a short term a professor of the University of Chicago; S.H. Hooke, a professor of Oriental Studies at Victoria College, Toronto; J. King Gordon, son of the Presbyterian minister and novelist Charles Gordon (pen-named Ralph Connor) and briefly

⁵⁴ A number of the first American IVCF chapters were formerly LES chapters. At least one Canadian secretary, Charles Troutman, came out of the LES (and Wheaton College, Illinois). Minutes, Executive Committee of the Board, 26 February and 28 April 1936, IVA, Filing Cabinet, Binder “Minutes, Executive Committee of the Board, 1936-1940.” On the origins of the American IVCF, see chap. 3 of Keith Hunt and Gladys Hunt, *For Christ and the University: The Story of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of the U.S.A./1940-1990* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), or, for a briefer summary, Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 183, 207-208.

⁵⁵ Douglas Johnson to C. Stacey Woods, 18 May 1936, IVA, box 3, file “1935-36 British IVCF (Constitution IFES).” The conferences culminated in 1947 in the formation of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), essentially an evangelical alternative to the WSCF. Lowman, *Day of His Power*, 79.

⁵⁶ Douglas Johnson to C. Stacey Woods, 18 May 1936, IVA, box 3 file “1935-36 British IVCF (Constitution IFES).”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, and Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 20 January 1939, Victoria, IVA, box 4, file “Correspondence: Jim Forrester (Western Canada) 1938-39.” In 1933, at IVCF’s fifth annual conference, a motion was made “that the Scripture Union be adopted as the official reading of the IV & ISCF during the

professor of Christian Ethics at United Theological College, Montreal; and Gregory Vlastos, a professor at Queen's University.⁵⁸ J.S. Woodsworth, a former Methodist minister and later leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation party, spoke at a 1931 SCM meeting at the University of Manitoba.⁵⁹ The involvement of Gordon and Vlastos led the SCM naturally into association with the organizations founded by these individuals: both were founding members of the League for Social Reconstruction (LSR), and Vlastos was instrumental in the formation of the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (FCSO). Already in 1931, before the FCSO had been organized officially, the SCM National Council expressed interest in this new movement and resolved to support it through membership and merge "the general objectives of this Movement" into the SCM's programme.⁶⁰ According to Roger Hutchinson, many FCSO members came from the SCM.⁶¹ The FCSO shared with the SCM the beliefs that the current social problems stemmed from religious issues and that, therefore, a religious response to the problems should be provided.

coming year." IVCF fifth annual conference minutes, 15-18 September 1933, IVA, unlabelled box, file "A.H. 1933-34."

⁵⁸ Michael Gauvreau makes brief reference to Hooke's beliefs in *Evangelical Century*, 274-276. Vlastos' contributions among students are elaborated by George Rawlyk and Kevin Quinn, in *The Redeemed of the Lord Say So: A History of Queen's Theological College 1912-1972* (Kingston: Queen's Theological College, 1980), 116-117. For examples of the thought of Vlastos and Gordon, see chaps. 3 and 7 of *Towards the Christian Revolution*, ed. R.B.Y. Scott and Gregory Vlastos (n.p.: Willett Clark & Co., 1936; reprint, Kingston: Ronald P. Frye & Co., 1989).

⁵⁹ Peter Douglas, "A Family Photo of the United Church of Canada, Winnipeg, 1930" (M.S.T. thesis, University of Winnipeg, 1990), 91-92.

⁶⁰ SCM National Council minutes, 11-14 and 23 September 1931, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 11.

⁶¹ Roger Charles Hutchinson, "The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order: A Social Ethical Analysis of a Christian Socialist Movement" (Ph.D. diss., Victoria University, 1975), 27-30. According to George Rawlyk and Kevin Quinn, Gregory Vlastos pushed the fairly conservative Queen's SCM to a position where "it seemed like nothing short of a basic reorganization of society was their answer to pressing social issues." But the SCM "proved too ponderous and conservative an organization" for Vlastos' purposes, and he combined with other professors and clergy to form the FCSO. Rawlyk and Quinn, *Redeemed of the Lord*, 117.

The SCM also linked itself with student governments and other university organizations and movements. Their policy in this regard was outlined by the National Executive Committee in 1932: "The general opinion was against the SCM taking any official part in college politics, but members of the SCM should be encouraged to join other progressive and constructive organisations and to add their weight in the encouragement of all causes consistent with the aims of the Movement."⁶² In 1938, the leadership recommended that the SCM cooperate "in all possible ways" with the National Federation of Canadian University Students (NFCUS), which had been founded in 1926, in order that the SCM might "affirm the freedom of religious groups in university life at all points where the power vested in student government abuses that freedom." For similar reasons they encouraged support of the Canadian Student Assembly (CSA), which, together with the Canadian University Press, had been founded after a Winnipeg SCM conference in 1938.⁶³ The SCM was also a member of the Canadian Youth Congress (CYC), which, according to historian Paul Axelrod, was at the centre of a significant youth movement in Canada in the latter half of the 1930s. The CYC's agenda included world peace and improved health and recreational and educational facilities for students.⁶⁴ In addition, SCM groups were encouraged in the latter 1930s to support unofficially various

⁶² SCM National Executive Committee minutes, "Notes on Staff Conference," 4-6 June 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file "1932."

⁶³ SCM National Council minutes, "Report of Commission on 'Relationships'," 1938, SCM UCA, box 84-94. Regarding the NFCUS, the CSA and the Canadian University Press, see Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 128-131, 134, 143-148. Also see SCM National Council minutes, 13-15 September 1930, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 10.

⁶⁴ Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 131, 134.

groups promoting civil liberties and peace movements, such as the League of Nations Society.⁶⁵

The SCM also associated with foreign student movements and religious presses. From its outset the SCM participated in the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). The WSCF shared the SCM's concern to promote ecumenism and social awareness. A speaker at a 1928 WSCF conference in Jerusalem, attended by delegates of diverse nationalities, denominations and theological leanings, observed "a great yearning especially among the youth of the world for the full and untrammelled expression of personality, for spiritual leadership and authority, for reality in religion, for social justice, for human brotherhood, for international peace."⁶⁶ The SCM also valued the publications of the British SCM Press⁶⁷ and frequently included the works of American liberal scholars in its discussion groups.

In addition to maintaining connections with quite different individuals and organizations, the two movements also diverged in their views of society. Both the SCM and WSCF defined themselves in opposition to a perceived burgeoning secularism, or indifference to Christianity; but their interactions with this secularism diverged. The SCM in part viewed its role as prophetic; it was, in the words of one leader, "a searchlight to constantly expose conditions and situations to the public view, where they could be seen and dealt with."⁶⁸ As a solution to political, social, economic and moral problems, the

⁶⁵ SCM National Council minutes, [1936], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 16, and SCM National Council minutes, "Report of Commission on 'Relationships'," [1938], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 18.

⁶⁶ Murray Brooks, newsletter, 21 April 1928, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 28.

⁶⁷ Murray Brooks, general secretary's report, SCM National Council minutes, 22 August 1934, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 14.

⁶⁸ SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 4-6 June 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file "1932."

SCM offered “the meaning and joy of the Christian life.”⁶⁹ In 1929 the SCM general secretary issued a challenge that the SCM “assert with greater emphasis than ever our conviction that ‘Jesus was right’.”⁷⁰

From its strategic position on Canadian campuses, the SCM sought to confront society’s ignorance of Christianity. Its members did not find anything particularly wrong with university and college curricula, except that religious questions were being relegated or suppressed. “Graduates can scarcely consider themselves qualified to leave the university,” declared one official publication in 1939, “until they have considered the claims of religion in the same fashion and with the same determination as they consider the claims of science, philosophy, psychology, etc.”⁷¹ According to one leader, the SCM stood alone among student organizations in the work of combatting the ‘religion’ of secularism through a presentation of the pervasiveness of Christianity:

The Student Christian Movement is the only body that is undertaking to demonstrate on the university campuses the part religion plays as the integrating force in the lives of individuals and societies. To the Movement, then, falls the task of keeping ever before the Canadian student body the fact which Dr. [Reinhold] Niebuhr pointed out, ‘the crisis in the world to-day is not merely a clash of rival political, economic, and social systems; it is fundamentally a clash of cultures – and, in the last analysis, a conflict of rival religious faiths’.⁷²

The SCM, within the context of higher education, competed with expressions of secularism for the loyalty of Canadian students. For example, in opposition to materialism the movement hoped to demonstrate that “life does not consist in an abundance of things that one may possess but in a perfect relationship to one’s fellow-

⁶⁹ SCM National Council minutes, [1937], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 17.

⁷⁰ SCM National Council minutes, 7-11 September 1929, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 9.

⁷¹ “Student Christian Movement in the University of Toronto News Bulletin,” 3, no. 2 (March 1939), UTA, B79-0059, box 15, file “SCM in U of T News Bulletin.”

⁷² Ed Lute, 1938, quoted in Dale, *Twenty-One Years A-Building*, 39.

men and to God. . . ."⁷³ The SCM thus determined to search out the perceived weaknesses and pitfalls of modern society and to solve them through religious, specifically Christian, principles.

IVCF leaders characterized the university or college setting and the typical Canadian student in much more negative terms. In 1939, one secretary described the University of Alberta as a "fume pit of intellectual paganism" and the "most irreligious" campus he had visited.⁷⁴ Likewise he characterized the majority of students as immature, indecisive and overly idealistic, criticizing without coming to any conclusions or expecting "some sort of universal verification" before supporting an idea. He painted a bleak picture: "They fill the world with philosophical skeletons and, pursuing a mirage across the burning sands of speculation, finally add their own whitened bones to the pile of tragedy. They will not go to the oasis." The secretary hoped that IVCF members would provide "experimental validation" to the scientifically-minded student that a relationship with Jesus, the "oasis," brought certainty and vitality to one's life.⁷⁵

That the SCM and IVCF differed in theology and philosophy was borne out practically in the fact that the two groups kept to themselves and occasionally criticized each other. Sources from 1929 to 1939 shed little light on the SCM's opinion of IVCF, but it is likely that they viewed IVCF as part of the traditional Christianity against which they were reacting. Indeed, occasionally SCM'ers stated their perceptions that IVCF'ers were

⁷³ Murray Brooks to SCM graduate members, 24 January 1931, SCM UCA, box 84-14, National Office Letter Book 1921-34, p. 123. See also SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 4-6 June 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file "1932."

⁷⁴ Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 7 March 1939, IVA, box 4, file "Correspondence: Jim Forrester (Western Canada) 1938-39."

⁷⁵ Jim Forrester, letter, [1939], IVA, box 4, file "Correspondence: Jim Forrester (Western Canada) 1938-39."

fundamentalists or overly pious. For example, IVCF evangelist Howard Guinness recorded in his diary being called a “book-worshipper” (a reference to evangelicals’ view of the Bible’s authority) by SCM leaders in Toronto.⁷⁶ Only days after the formation of an IVCF group at the University of Toronto the local SCM leader described them as “fundamentalist.” He appears to have used this term because of the IVCF members’ decision to form a distinct group, and voiced the opinion that since evangelical students were “quite welcome” in the SCM as long as they were willing “to live and let live,” a “new organization” was unnecessary. This SCM leader pointed out that, unlike the supposedly “fundamentalist” IVCF, “no single term” was adequate to characterize the SCM.⁷⁷ Another SCM’er likewise reminisced that in the 1930s IVCF “appealed to the Christian pietists and fundamentalists.”⁷⁸

That the SCM was defensive towards IVCF is understandable. Almost everywhere that new evangelical groups emerged, an SCM group already existed. “On every campus, practically,” noted IVCF’s first general secretary in 1931, “the Student Christian Movement is the officially recognized organ of the religious life of the University. Any new society is immediately liable to the suspicion that it is competitive, controversial, or otherwise undesirable.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Howard Guinness, diary, 12 December 1928, IVA unlabelled box.

⁷⁷ Rev. F.J. Moore, quoted in article, “New Movement is Fundamentalist, says Organizer,” *Varsity*, 18 January 1929, attached to correspondence from Rev. H.B. Bonsall, IVA, unlabelled box.

⁷⁸ William R. Coleman, “Some Reflections of the Place of Theology in the Canadian SCM,” paper presented to the SCM Leadership Training Programme, 29 August - 5 September 1973, Toronto, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 24.

⁷⁹ Noel Palmer, “Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement,” Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file “History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer,” 1. For examples, see Gidney, “Poisoning the Student Mind?” 11, 15-16, Phillips, “IVCF in Western Canada,” 119, and “Two Sides to Every Question,” University of Alberta IVCF tract, 1936, IVA, unlabelled box, file “34-41.”

Likely as a result of their ‘underdog’ status, IVCF said a great deal about the SCM. It is significant in understanding early IVCF criticism of the SCM that a number of IVCF’s first leaders came out of the British Inter-Varsity movement which had recently split from the British SCM. Howard Guinness, for example, typically referred to SCM’ers as “modernists” and was very explicit about his interest in gaining “a foothold” on campuses where the SCM existed.⁸⁰ IVCF’s first general secretary, Noel Palmer, had been a secretary of the Oxford University SCM in 1919 when he had undergone a profound religious experience and, in the next year, had helped to form an evangelical group distinct from the Oxford SCM.⁸¹ These leaders’ experiences with the SCM may have predisposed them and, by association, the Canadian IVCF, to entertain a competitive attitude towards the SCM.

This competitiveness persisted throughout the 1930s. In 1934, IVCF general secretary C. Stacey Woods publicly debated Canon Leonard A. Dixon, the Toronto SCM secretary, on the *raison d’être* of the newer movement. Woods advocated that IVCF’s existence was justified in view of its distinctively orthodox view of the Bible; apparently Dixon conceded this point.⁸² In the latter 1930s IVCF leaders applauded the possibility in Victoria and Guelph that the local SCM units, composed largely of evangelical students, might officially connect with IVCF.⁸³ The impression is left that the two movements, and especially IVCF, were contesting for student loyalties.

⁸⁰ Howard Guinness, diary, 8 November 1928, IVA, unlabelled box. See also Phillips, “IVCF in Western Canada,” i.e. p. 342.

⁸¹ Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 17-18.

⁸² Woods, *Growth of a Work of God*, 45.

⁸³ Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, reports, 30 December 1937 and 2 March 1938, IVA, box 3, file “Jim Forrester, W. Canada,” and Belva Atkinson, report, 25 February 1939, IVA, box 4, file “Correspondence: Belva Atkinson (Ontario) 1938-39.” For other IVCF impressions of the SCM, see Jim Forrester to C. Stacey

The distinction between IVCF and the SCM was defined in more detail by IVCF's first general secretary, Noel Palmer, in 1931. Palmer perceived three major differences between the two movements. Firstly, the SCM held to a liberal theology which ruled out evangelical belief and experience, even as it claimed to be scientific and open-minded.⁸⁴ He hoped that IVCF would demonstrate, in contrast to the SCM, that testing Christianity through "unreserved surrender" of one's life to Christ was "more scientific."⁸⁵ Secondly, he regarded the SCM's intellectual approach to be not only unscientific but unrealistic: it obscured human sinfulness and alienation from God and thus prevented students from reaching a deeper level of Christian experience. He exclaimed that in contrast it was "better to have even the crudest mental pictures with a genuine knowledge of God than to be a polished heathen and not to know God."⁸⁶ His final disagreement with the SCM concerned its lack of clearly defined conditions for membership. The SCM's basis of membership consisted of "generalizations which any person religiously inclined might well sign"; thus full membership and even leadership positions were extended to students who were "not hungry for pardon and peace with God."⁸⁷ Rather than mirroring the SCM's seemingly endless discussion of religious and social questions, which Palmer

Woods, report, 29 October 1937, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada," and Cathie Nicoll, report, 4-18 February 1939, IVA, box 4, file "Correspondence, Cathie Nicoll (Manitoba) 1938-39."

⁸⁴ Noel Palmer, "Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 6-7. Palmer clarified that the SCM as an organization was not to blame for its "unscientific" openness, but rather the university professors with which the SCM associated.

⁸⁵ Noel Palmer, untitled Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer."

⁸⁶ Noel Palmer, "Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 8, 10. Page numbers in the original are incorrect from page eight onwards.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

called a “nervous neutrality.” IVCF should promote obedience to God.⁸⁸ Thus Palmer defined IVCF in opposition to SCM emphases.

Yet Palmer also talked of the SCM in more cooperative terms. He recognized the value of some features, such as the SCM’s comprehension of modern youth, its practicality concerning the issues of modern society, its emphasis on scholarship, and its focus on Jesus as a topic of study.⁸⁹ This moderation in his treatment of the SCM raises a question as to whether the two movements were actually closer together than the above differences would suggest. Indeed, notwithstanding profound differences, a variety of similarities and shared emphases also emerge from the statements by which each movement defined its origins and goals.

First of all, the perspectives of SCM and IVCF leaders on their historical roots overlapped. Representatives of both movements, eager to give their respective movements a sense of ‘tradition’ or credibility, in effect traced influences back to the same network of turn-of-the-century student movements. The Student Volunteer Movement and the British SCM figured prominently in the histories of both the SCM and IVCF. Both Canadian movements also saw themselves as having protested against elements of this legacy of student activism.

Besides these historical influences, the SCM and IVCF shared a few other associations. Since the college or university campus was the main context in which they operated, both movements sought to have good relations with university administrators. A commission of the SCM National Council encouraged leaders to “strive continually to cultivate better understanding between the SCM and University Administration.” In part

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

this amicability was seen as a necessary precursor to the SCM's perceived task of pressuring administrators to confront campus problems.⁹⁰ IVCF, often the 'underdog' to the older SCM,⁹¹ was not so concerned with official recognition as it was with clemency. General secretary Noel Palmer wrote in 1931: "It is wise and truly Christian to pay scrupulous attention to all laws of the school or college, to show every proper respect for the authorities, and to let them know what goes on – do nothing under cover. But if we have their tacit approval, or at least toleration, we do not need more."⁹² Though the SCM felt more secure, ultimately both groups were at the mercy of administrators. The SCM, for example, in the early 1920s had been refused admission at McMaster University, a campus which for a decade had been undergoing fundamentalist-liberal conflicts among professors and administrators.⁹³ This contrasted with the tolerance displayed towards both student movements at Queen's University, whose president, R.C. Wallace, in the latter portion of the 1930s sat on the Queen's SCM's Advisory Board and chaired the National SCM for one term; meanwhile he met with IVCF leaders at Queen's and offered them the same rights and privileges as the local SCM group.⁹⁴ Such administrative interest and involvement, however, was unusual.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 2-5.

⁹⁰ "Report of Commission on 'Relationships'," SCM National Council minutes, 1938, SCM UCA, box 84-94.

⁹¹ On the antagonism of the Principal of Wesley College, Winnipeg, towards IVCF see Cathie Nicoll, reports, 18-23 and 22-28 October 1937, IVA, box 3, file "Cathie Nicoll, Winnipeg."

⁹² Noel Palmer, "Our Purpose, Programme, & Problems," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer."

⁹³ Kirkey, "Building the City of God," 149-150. Instead, the university's chancellor imposed a "Christian Union" which joined the YMCA and YWCA branches and the Student Volunteer Band. For more on the controversy at McMaster, see Rawlyk, "A.L. McCrimmon, H.P. Whidden, T.T. Shields, Christian Education, and McMaster University," in *Canadian Baptists and Christian Higher Education*, ed. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 31-62.

⁹⁴ Reid E. Vipond, "SCM at Queen's University, 1933-1939," and Charles Troutman, Ontario report, [1937-38], IVA, box 3, file "Charles Troutman, QC." According to the latter report, Wallace believed that IVCF "was taking a part which the SCM could or would not take."

Churches constituted yet another significant association which the SCM and IVCF shared. Attempts were made by both movements to be on amiable terms with as many churches as possible. The SCM recorded in 1932 that it depended on partnership with churches and could more readily do so than in the previous decade because the churches' "liberal and progressive element" was growing.⁹⁵ An IVCF secretary reported from Calgary in early 1939 that he had interviewed various clergymen and had gained the "definite interest" of most. "The United Churches are set against us," he said, "but we have the rest."⁹⁶ Church leaders spoke at SCM and IVCF functions and sat on the administrative committees, and the student groups occasionally made use of church buildings. Moreover, undoubtedly in many churches across the country students from both movements participated together in church activities. For example, St. James' Anglican Church, situated near the Queen's University campus in Kingston, hosted both IVCF and SCM events and speakers.⁹⁷

Notwithstanding these contacts with churches, these groups shared a determination to remain independent of church control. J. King Gordon, an influential leader in SCM circles, after being released in 1934 from his professorship at United Theological College in Montreal expressed his agreement with American scholars Reinhold Niebuhr and Harry Ward that the church served vested interests and that the

⁹⁵ "Notes on Staff Conference," SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 4-6 June 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file "1932."

⁹⁶ Jim Forrester, report, 27 March 1939, IVA, box 4, file "Correspondence: Jim Forrester (Western Canada) 1938-39." The "rest" meant Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist.

⁹⁷ David Lyon, *Living Stones: St. James' Church, Kingston* (Kingston: Quarry Press, 1995), 103. Lyon as well as George Rawlyk and Kevin Quinn, in *Redeemed of the Lord* (p. 117), contend that the SCM group at Queen's was more conservative theologically than the national organization, which helps to explain St. James' affinity with both student movements. But the fact that both movements drew members from mainline denominations such as the United Church suggests that SCM and IVCF members may have worshipped together on Sundays on a regular basis.

task of social change was left to “prophetic minorities.”⁹⁸ Undoubtedly he viewed the Student Christian Movement as one of these minorities. Similar to Gordon’s sentiment, IVCF general secretary C. Stacey Woods confided in early 1938: “Somehow or other I feel that the future of the church of God to some extent at least lies outside the organized denominations, and that if young people are to be reached it will perhaps be along the line of our present attack only developed more thoroughly and fully.”⁹⁹ Both movements essentially aimed to work in tandem with the denominations while, at the same time, they viewed themselves as the more progressive and prophetic elements of Christianity.

Both IVCF and the SCM also associated with the YM/YWCA’s. The SCM, formed partly in reaction against these more traditional organizations, still aimed to be on friendly terms with them. In 1934, an SCM commission studied the movement’s relationship with the YM/YWCA’s and reported that discussions “had resulted in a much better understanding and more cordial relationships.”¹⁰⁰ The SCM also made use of YMCA facilities, such as its camp at Lake Couchiching, Ontario.¹⁰¹ The YMCA opened its doors also for IVCF functions.¹⁰² Likewise, current or retired YMCA secretaries occasionally sat on IVCF’s Executive Committee.¹⁰³ It is significant that both campus groups associated with these important, longstanding Christian organizations.

Both movements reacted with ambivalence to the Oxford Group movement, a moralistic crusade operating on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean which toured Canadian

⁹⁸ Hutchinson, “Fellowship for a Christian Social Order,” 27-28.

⁹⁹ C. Stacey Woods to Jim Forrester, 6 January 1938, IVA, box 3 file “Jim Forrester, W. Canada.”

¹⁰⁰ SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 16 April 1934, SCM UCA, box 84-56.

¹⁰¹ Reid E. Vipond, “SCM at Queen’s University, 1933-1939.”

¹⁰² Belva Atkinson, weekly report, 6-13 November 1937, IVA, box 3, file “Correspondence Belva Atkinson, ON.”

¹⁰³ See Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 139-140.

cities in 1932 and 1933.¹⁰⁴ On the one hand, according to one SCM member, this movement which advocated personal confession of ‘sin’ and commitment to virtues of honesty, purity, love, and unselfishness in terms not specifically Christian, challenged SCM’ers across Canada “to look squarely at one’s life and to seek anew that which is basic.” On the other hand, this SCM member perceived that the Oxford Group movement’s popularity was based on a clear departure from the SCM’s socially critical mandate: “The demands of this group calling men and women to focus their energies on contemplation and the devotional life seemed to have more appeal to many more students than did the rigorous demands of the SCM leadership for students to become engrossed in seemingly insurmountable national and political problems.”¹⁰⁵ The Oxford Group movement, for a time, appears to have turned the attentions of SCM’ers inwards, in a sense challenging the SCM’s self-definition. However, another SCM’er wrote that although the Oxford Group’s high standards of living impressed SCM members, generally the SCM frowned on “its too great dogmatic assurance and its lack of emphasis on Christianity as applied to social, national and international affairs.”¹⁰⁶ Equally ambivalent, the IVCF general secretary, at IVCF’s annual conference in 1933, noted briefly that “during the past year we have had other groups come into our midst, such as the Oxford Group. . .” and advised that Inter-Varsity should not make any “definite connection” with the

¹⁰⁴ For an analysis of the Oxford Group Movement’s influence in Canada, see Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, 205-206, 213-227.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Paris, “Report on SCM of Canada,” pt. 2, Ms, August 1965, SCM UCA, box 84-80, file 8, pp. 32-33.

¹⁰⁶ Dale, *Twenty-One Years A-Building*, 34. Donald Kirkey likewise asserts that SCM leaders were “quite uncomfortable with the otherworldliness, the emotionalism, the public confession and the reliance on divine guidance that were part of [the] Oxford Group Movement and its meetings” but suggests that after the movement’s decline students were more open to traditional religious practices. Kirkey, “Decline of Radical Liberal Protestantism,” 18, 19.

movement.¹⁰⁷ Thus each student movement saw positive points of connection between itself and the Oxford Group, but at the same time, the SCM objected to the Group's individualism and IVCF insisted on maintaining its independence.

Both the SCM and IVCF aimed to be interdenominational in their memberships. Since neither movement kept detailed membership records, a clear assessment of the background of members is difficult to make. The SCM made only a few references to its denominational make-up, but these suggest that the SCM found only limited success in achieving its ecumenical goal. One former SCM member recalled meeting individuals in the SCM with backgrounds ranging from sectarian conservatives to theology students in church-sponsored colleges to agnostics and atheists, but made no reference to specific denominational backgrounds.¹⁰⁸ It is also evident that the membership varied between SCM units. The University of Saskatchewan's SCM group, for example, included conservative evangelical students at least until the formation of an IVCF group in 1939.¹⁰⁹ But elsewhere in Canada the SCM's ecumenism did not always extend to conservatives.¹¹⁰

Some outsiders associated the SCM with the United Church of Canada, an observation which suggests that a good percentage of its membership came from this denomination.¹¹¹ A student who had left the SCM recalled that the movement "was

¹⁰⁷ IVCF fifth annual conference minutes, 15-18 September 1933, IVA, unlabelled box, file "A.H. 1933-34."

¹⁰⁸ "Reflections on SCM - Tillman," [1947-48?], SCM UCA, box 84-11, file 2.

¹⁰⁹ Phillips, "IVCF in Western Canada," 341.

¹¹⁰ One student, Arthur Hill, recalled that, while attending an SCM study of Jesus' life based on liberal theologian Henry B. Sharman's books at the University of Western Ontario in the latter 1920s, he was told that "there was really no room" in the SCM for his traditional views. Hill persisted and even became a leader, but after further theological disagreements he left. Arthur Hill to Charles Troutman, 17 January 1950, IVA, unlabelled box, file "A.H. 1933-34." Eventually Hill and other students joined IVCF, and Hill became IVCF's general secretary for a short term in 1933. Donald, *Spreading Tree*, 50-52, 139-144.

¹¹¹ While outside this study's time-frame, one source from 1950 observed the fact that SCM units in western Canada were "composed almost exclusively of members of the United Church" and suspected the same of

recognized as the official mouthpiece for the United Church in the universities."¹¹²

Another student's recollection also hinted that membership was dominated by United Church students: despite the SCM's ecumenical ideal, he said, the movement had "rarely succeeded in appealing adequately to students of the Anglican, Baptist and Presbyterian traditions."¹¹³ Though sources are incomplete, a gap seems to have existed between the SCM's ecumenical ideal and its actual membership.

IVCF, like the SCM, sought to attract a wide range of denominational representation in its membership. Denominations mentioned by leaders ranged from the more established United, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist and Lutheran denominations to the smaller and more conservative churches such as Salvation Army, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Nazarene, Plymouth Brethren, and Mennonite. Also similar to the SCM, IVCF's composition varied between regions. Leaders' complaints about fundamentalist students, for example, came almost exclusively from western universities.¹¹⁴ It is likely that western IVCF chapters and the constituencies which supported them consisted of a larger fundamentalist proportion in comparison with Ontario and Montreal. Both IVCF and the SCM, then, sought to attract students from different denominational backgrounds and experienced variations in composition between

the Maritime units. Jim Puxley, "Reflections of a New General Secretary," 1 January 1950, SCM UCA, box 84-10, file 24, p. 4.

¹¹² Arthur and Mrs. P. Hill, interviewed by Robert and Madge Paulette, transcript, March 1981, IVA, unlabelled box, file "A.H. 1933-34."

¹¹³ Wilfred F. Butcher to Ernest Dale, 25 August 1941, SCM UCA, box 84-11, file 1.

¹¹⁴ See Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 28 January 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada." and C. Stacey Woods to Cathie Nicoll, 11 November 1937, IVA, box 3, file "Cathie Nicoll, Winnipeg."

regions.¹¹⁵ Each, despite its claims to being interdenominational, in actual fact drew a more narrowly defined membership.

The SCM and IVCF also were similar in what they opposed. Both reacted to some degree against traditionalism in the church: the SCM viewed conservative creeds as *passé*, whereas IVCF viewed them as in need of revitalization. Despite being at times caricatured by the SCM as 'fundamentalist', IVCF, in fact, deliberately distanced itself from what it viewed to be the negative aspects of fundamentalism and thus shared some of the SCM's apprehensions about this conservative expression of Protestantism.

To begin with, IVCF rejected what it perceived to be fundamentalism's torpid or ineffectual approach to religious life. A secretary reported from Vancouver in 1937, "There is a dead weight of inertia here which sees every progressive step as too radical." This "fine old world conservatism" would "end in conserving nothing"; instead, this attitude indicated a "denaturalized" Christianity, one which had little relevancy to society.¹¹⁶

IVCF leaders specifically abhorred the perceived anti-intellectual spirit of fundamentalism. According to a pamphlet used in the early 1930s, IVCF valued "exact and unprejudiced scholarship."¹¹⁷ In the view of the first general secretary, IVCF'ers could expect that God would expose their "minds and souls to real tests" as an engineer places

¹¹⁵ While IVCF leaders viewed interdenominationalism to be an important goal, they were more concerned to attract evangelical students. A secretary who reported from Edmonton in 1939 that the local IVCF had become "more truly interdenominational" by attracting "United Church and Anglican interest" stated more specifically that these churches contained "some good evangelicals." Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 28 February 1939, IVA, box 4, file "Correspondence: Jim Forrester (Western Canada) 1938-39."

¹¹⁶ Jim Forrester, report, 30 December 1937, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada."

¹¹⁷ "The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada," pamphlet, [early 1930s], IVA, unlabelled box, file "N.P. 1930-33." This attitude towards scholarship appears to have been consistent, at least at the national level: in 1938, the general secretary congratulated an Inter-Varsity secretary in BC on achieving a degree,

stress on steel. In response to anti-intellectualism, IVCF'ers should live "full-orbed" lives by being equally aware of biblical teaching, the conclusions of natural science, and the needs and opinions of humans.¹¹⁸ On occasion IVCF leaders recorded their frustrations at the irrationality or close-mindedness of certain fundamentalist members.¹¹⁹ Although it did not employ an avowedly intellectual approach to students, IVCF hoped to present its evangelical message in an articulate and understandable way.

IVCF leaders likewise rejected fundamentalists' sectarian attitude, which they closely related to anti-intellectualism. "We respect the visible body of Christ," exclaimed the first general secretary, "and deplore the easy and conscienceless way of breaking fellowship and setting up new churches so prevalent among us to-day." He accused sectarians of hypocritically condemning modernism while entertaining more "subtle" and "dangerous" heresies such as "spiritual pride" and "exclusivism."¹²⁰ In arguing for a deep sensitivity among IVCF'ers to the views of others, the secretary cautioned that members "must stand for . . . no pretentious sham, no snobbery of any kind, nothing unmanly or

since this would "be of help in giving you standing in the work before students." C. Stacey Woods to Jim Forrester, 14 April 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada."

¹¹⁸ Noel Palmer, "The Bible," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," and idem, "An Address to the Toronto Inter-Collegiate Christian Union," pamphlet [transcript of address], [1932?], first printed in *Varsity*, 24 February 1932, IVA, unlabelled box, in envelope from Muriel D. Lagomorsino, 31 March 1987.

¹¹⁹ In 1938 at the University of British Columbia, an IVCF secretary wrote that some fundamentalist members objected to the "new sounds" and "new phrases" of IVCF's presentation of Christianity. "A little bit of thinking about religion," the secretary elaborated, "is an unusual exercise for them. They like to listen to the old familiar platitudes, the hackneyed sentences that mean only repugnance in the minds of the majority of the unspiritual intellectuals we are trying to reach." Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 28 January 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada."

¹²⁰ Noel Palmer, "Our Relationship to the Denominations," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer." See also, in the same file, "Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement," 15.

unwomanly, nothing false or hollow," but rather should possess "a great big heart of humblest, honest love."¹²¹

It should be noted then that IVCF's inclusion of a list of doctrines in its statement of purpose should not be construed as yet another expression of fundamentalist efforts staunchly to defend conservative theological precepts. General secretary C. Stacey Woods clarified that IVCF did not see its doctrinal emphases as a flag to be saluted by students but rather as an anchor which, in an emergency, could be "tossed overboard really unseen or unnoticed, to hold the Inter-Varsity ship from drifting onto the rocks, shallows and flats of spiritual ineffectiveness and paralysis."¹²² IVCF adhered to this traditional creed out of a belief that it remained absolutely relevant and necessary for a vital spirituality.

Thus both IVCF and the SCM abhorred the dogmatism which they found within church walls and reacted against the growing secularism of society. Essentially the SCM and IVCF placed themselves between an ineffective Christian traditionalism and an increasing indifference to Christianity and demonstrated an unwillingness to capitulate to either side.

Neither movement, moreover, wanted to appear to be highly reactionary; leaders expressed hopes that their respective movements would be amicable forces on Canadian

¹²¹ Noel Palmer, "Witnessing for Christ," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer." See also C. Stacey Woods, monthly report, November 1934, IVA, box 1, file "History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36)."

¹²² Woods, *Growth of a Work of God*, 46. Woods recalled two occasions when leaders used the doctrinal statement in this capacity: a student vice-president of the McGill IVCF group was asked to resign because "he could no longer accept the Bible as God's infallible Word," and the national office threatened to disaffiliate the University of British Columbia IVCF unit when it invited a "notorious" Australian liberal minister to speak and ignored IVCF's insistence that the minister be asked to sign the doctrinal statement. *Ibid.*, 45, and C. Stacey Woods, interview by David Phillips, transcript, 10 November 1975, IVA, unlabelled box, file "N.P. 1930-33" [misplaced?].

campuses. One SCM secretary insisted to the Executive Committee in 1932 that the SCM's approach to students should be of a "positive and constructive" nature.¹²³ Likewise general secretary Murray Brooks urged SCM leaders to present a positive message in a religious atmosphere which was "charged with haziness and uncertainty."¹²⁴ The IVCF general secretary, in an address to the University of Toronto IVCF in 1932, noted that there was "an intense longing for something positive" among students.

Both movements, in fact, viewed their efforts as an attempt to rejuvenate Christianity. IVCF, confronted, in the words of its general secretary, with "all the superficial unbearableness of dogmas and authority in religion," should direct students' attention to Jesus as the source of true life.¹²⁵ Elsewhere he stated: "If there is one thing certain about original Christianity, it is that it was *alive, radiant, aggressive, conquering*."¹²⁶ Likewise, an SCM brochure in 1929 advertised one of its conferences as an opportunity to "get a fresh, vivid picture of Jesus as a great, vital winning personality."¹²⁷ In the same year, the SCM general secretary expressed his conviction that "the religion of Jesus" was able "to lift men and women out of the conditions in which they find themselves and to empower them to live the free, abundant, joyous lives that God intended they should live."¹²⁸ Notwithstanding their different interpretations of the

¹²³ SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 4-6 June 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file "1932."

¹²⁴ Murray Brooks, memorandum (confidential), [1930 or 1931?], SCM UCA, box 84-14, National Office Letter Book, 1921-1934, p. 128.

¹²⁵ Noel Palmer, "An Address to the Toronto Inter-Collegiate Christian Union," pamphlet [transcript of address], [1932?], first printed in *Varsity*, 24 February 1932, IVA, unlabelled box, in envelope from Muriel D. Lagomorsino, 31 March 1987.

¹²⁶ Noel Palmer, "Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 12-13.

¹²⁷ Elgin House Conference brochure, 11-19 September 1929, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 20.

¹²⁸ Murray Brooks to graduate SCM members, 12 March 1929, SCM UCA, box 84-14, National Office Letter Book, 1921-34, p. 90.

person and work of Jesus Christ, both the SCM and IVCF aimed to direct students to Jesus, through whom they would find happiness and power for living in the modern world.

This shared emphasis on the centrality of Jesus and on attracting students to acknowledge him were reflected in the two movements' statements of purpose. Although they emphasized different aspects of his character, both movements highlighted Jesus Christ as central to their self-definitions. Moreover, both groups viewed study and prayer as important means by which students could "follow Jesus Christ" or "deepen and strengthen the spiritual life." Finally, each also stated its aim to expand its membership. The SCM advocated two methods: welcoming into their membership students "willing to test the truth" of the movement's beliefs about Jesus and joining with those "of like mind" in other countries. IVCF promoted the task of 'witnessing', or leading others "to a personal faith" in Jesus.

Finally, IVCF and the SCM made the effort at various points throughout the 1930s to be on friendly terms or even to cooperate with each other. IVCF general secretary Noel Palmer encouraged IVCF'ers to be congenial towards the SCM.¹²⁹ He mentioned that he and SCM leaders had discussed the two movements' distinctives and had prayed together; he had even conversed with one SCM secretary, Anglican Canon Leonard A. Dixon, about a possible union of the two movements.¹³⁰ IVCF general secretary C. Stacey Woods made it his practice in his travels to "drop in to have tea" with local SCM secretaries; apparently they jokingly greeted each other with the terms "fundamentalist" and "modernist." Woods emphasized that "the ability to maintain our distinctives without compromise and

¹²⁹ Noel Palmer, "Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 19.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 5, and untitled Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer."

at the same time to avoid rancour and bitterness was most important.”¹³¹ Likewise, in 1934 SCM leaders attended the IVCF National Conference to discuss the relationship of the two movements, and in 1939 the SCM invited the chair of IVCF’s executive committee to sit on the SCM Board in “a personal or representative capacity.”¹³²

However, it appears also that in such instances of proposed cooperation IVCF and the SCM preserved their distinctiveness. After conversing with SCM secretary Canon Leonard A. Dixon about greater cooperation, IVCF general secretary Noel Palmer reflected that the SCM would first need to demonstrate a commitment to evangelical beliefs and goals.¹³³ Discussions at the IVCF National Conference in 1934 with SCM representatives arrived at the conclusion that the movements had divergent purposes and thus, in the words of one person present, “there was no possible ground for an official relationship, although it was felt that there might be the warmest friendship and co-operation between individuals in both organizations where occasion provided.”¹³⁴ At McGill in 1938-39 the SCM sought to work with IVCF but each group ultimately recognized that a compromise of convictions would be necessary.¹³⁵ In 1939, an SCM Committee at the University of Toronto sought IVCF’s involvement in a university mission. The two groups were unable

¹³¹ C. Stacey Woods, interviewed by C. Tipp, transcript, 1973, IVA, unlabelled box, file “‘34-‘41,” 5-6.

¹³² IVCF sixth annual conference report, 20-25 September 1934, in the British IVFEU magazine, 7, no. 1 (Michaelmas Term 1934), IVA, unlabelled box, file “‘34-‘41,” and IVCF Executive Committee minutes, 6 September 1939, IVA, filing cabinet, binder “Minutes, Executive Committee of the Board, 1936-1940.”

¹³³ Noel Palmer, untitled Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file “History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer.”

¹³⁴ IVCF sixth annual conference report, 20-25 September 1934, in the British IVFEU magazine, 7, no. 1 (Michaelmas Term 1934), IVA, unmarked box, file “‘34-‘41.”

¹³⁵ Charles Troutman, annual report, 1938-39, IVA, unlabelled box, file “‘34-‘41.” Cooperation also failed for the IVCF in light of the view that “the SCM is quite despised on the campus.”

to agree on a speaker, so the SCM sponsored the event officially and two IVCF representatives sat on the Committee.¹³⁶

It is evident that the SCM and IVCF viewed themselves as having a distinct service to Canadian students. The SCM sought to gather students from many backgrounds into the study of the life of Jesus and the application of his teachings to the construction of God's kingdom on earth. The movement prided itself on its inclusive and ecumenical principles. IVCF aimed to rally students around Christ as Lord and Saviour in order to produce stronger Christians and more effective evangelism. The SCM in its endeavour to follow Jesus engaged the results of liberal scholarship and the philosophy of the social gospel, thereby placing emphasis on the use of the intellect. IVCF held to traditional orthodoxy and claimed that this belief was verified through the Christian life, the surrender of one's will to Christ. These divergent purposes led the two groups to form different associations: evangelical and fundamentalist schools, missionaries and ministers in the case of IVCF, and radical liberal scholars and socialist and peace movements in the case of the SCM.

But, in retrospect, remarkable similarities existed in the self-definitions of these movements. They traced their historical roots to the same late-nineteenth-century student evangelistic and missionary enthusiasm. They interacted in comparable ways with a number of organizations such as the YMCA, YWCA and Oxford Group movement; moreover they both linked themselves with other student groups internationally. Their local memberships consisted of some degree of representation from a wide spectrum of

¹³⁶ Report of the Religion and Life Week Committee, 1939, Student Christian Movement (University of Toronto) Papers, University of Toronto Archives [hereafter SCM UTA], B79-0059, box 23, file "SCM U of T Religion & Life Week 1939."

Protestant denominations. Both movements placed themselves between a growing irreligiousness on the one hand and a dead or inarticulate orthodoxy on the other, and were essentially hopeful of linking the two worlds of church and society by infusing the churches with new life through energetic student witness and communicating the message of Jesus to the secular world. Finally, attempts made by the two groups to cooperate suggest that these were more than competitive organizations, but that they also recognized areas of common purpose.

CHAPTER 3

LAYING THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION: STUDENT DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

Worship is coming to have a more definite and central place in the Student Christian Movement. Forced back by the pressure of a world which is hostile to Christianity, men and women are beginning to realize their dependence upon God.¹

In the midst of the scepticism and confusion of the University campus, the IVCF has been a steadying and stimulating influence. The informal, heart-searching Bible studies, frequent times for prayer with Christian students have meant so much to me. Above all I have come to know Christ better and to realize more fully that it is in Him – not in man's flights of philosophical speculations – that there "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."²

The Student Christian Movement and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship shared the belief that Jesus Christ was key to the salvation of a world which was seen to be increasingly confused, sceptical and hostile towards Christianity. For these movements a major agency in saving the world would be students who were spiritually prepared to face the challenges of modern society. Thus the respective programmes of the SCM and IVCF on Canadian college and university campuses sought to facilitate this spiritual development of students.

Programmes to facilitate this goal consisted of three types: study, worship, and Christian evangelization. Study included discussion groups and educational lectures. Worship usually entailed prayer and/or singing religious songs. The spreading of the distinctives of Christianity ranged from friendship with other students to campus

¹ "Student Christian Movement in the University of Toronto News Bulletin," 2, no. 1 (November 1937), SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 15, file "SCM in U of T News Bulletin."

evangelism to local and international missions or development projects.

Leaders of both movements saw these activities as crucial to the fulfillment of their mandates. In the early 1930s SCM general secretary Murray Brooks described “study, prayer and friendship” as “the primary methods whereby men’s lives may be enriched and the Kingdom of God be realised on earth.”² Also in the early 1930s an IVCF brochure likened this movement’s programme to the care of one’s physical body: “You must have air to breathe—that is prayer. You must eat good food—that is the Bible. You must exercise—that is witnessing and working for Christ. Without these three, you cannot be healthy; with them, you can hardly be unhealthy.”³ Through these activities the SCM and IVCF determined to nourish the Christian character of students in order to prepare them to spread the Christian message more effectively. Specifically, meetings designated for worship and study endeavored to focus students’ attention on Jesus Christ with the conviction that this would empower them for life and service. This chapter, then, will look at the shaping of the student through devotional activity, and the following chapter will analyze the goal of this activity, namely Christian service.

Sources permit only an examination of public forms of devotion: the private realm remains at best elusive. But a comparison of the devotional activities of IVCF and the SCM tests the extent to which their beliefs and philosophies filtered into practice. Moreover, a number of important differences and similarities emerge: sources reveal that devotional practices reflected the divergent theologies of the SCM and IVCF but also that both

² “A Letter from a Student to You,” McGill IVCF pamphlet, [post-1936], IVA, box 9, file “University Chapters (Cdn) ‘36-’42.” The biblical reference is to Colossians 2:2-3.

³ Murray Brooks, memorandum (confidential), [1930 or 1931?], SCM UCA, box 84-14, National Office Letter Book, 1921-34, p. 128.

⁴ “The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada,” pamphlet, [early 1930s], IVA, unlabelled box, file “N.P. 1930-33.”

movements, intent on understanding and relating to God, shared a concern to nurture the lives of students by encouraging time spent in Bible study and worship.

Both the SCM and IVCF considered a 'relationship with Christ' to be the fundamental channel of spiritual vitality. The SCM's statement of purpose declared the movement's convictions that Jesus Christ was "the supreme revelation of God and the means to the full realization of life" and that its members should seek to "understand and follow" him.⁵ Inter-Varsity's statement of purpose emphasized the importance of individual "faith" in Jesus Christ as "Saviour."⁶ IVCF general secretary Noel Palmer wrote in 1931 that spiritual vitality was deepened through "constant disciplined fellowship" with Jesus Christ through prayer and Bible study.⁷

The SCM and IVCF also associated spiritual renewal with receptiveness to the Holy Spirit. Howard Guinness, the British student evangelist who brought the concept of IVCF to Canada in 1928-29, considered his primary task to be to direct students "into the *fullness of the Holy Spirit's power*" (Guinness' emphasis).⁸ In 1939 a travelling secretary in Quebec who reported growth in the influence of IVCF reiterated this belief by stating that "any work of this nature is done solely by the Spirit of God."⁹ Murray Brooks, representing the Canadian SCM at an international Christian conference in Jerusalem in 1928, was impressed by the words of one of the conference's speakers. "It is the inescapable fact that the present spiritual life of the churches is not adequate to the task

⁵ SCM Constitution, revised 11-13 September 1933, SCM UCA, box 84-15, National Office Printed Materials Scrapbook, 1920-34, p. 8. A similar but informal statement in regard to Christ was made by general secretary Murray Brooks in 1929. See SCM National Council minutes, 7-11 September 1929, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 9, p. 2.

⁶ IVCF Constitution, 1935-36, IVA, box 3, file "Executive Committee Canada (Fellowship Constitution)."

⁷ Noel Palmer, "Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement," Ms [draft], [1931]. IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 18.

⁸ Howard Guinness, diary, 7 November 1928, IVA, unlabelled box.

⁹ Charles Troutman, annual report, 1 February 1939, IVA, box 4, file "Annual Report—Charles Troutman,

for which they exist.” The solution, needed urgently, was “the renewal of the life of the church by a fresh inflowing of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰

Because of this shared conviction both groups focused their programmes on activities such as Bible study and worship which would guide students into deeper devotion to Christ and a life of spiritual power. Both the SCM and IVCF gave a prominent place to the study of the Bible. IVCF’s first general secretary, Noel Palmer, wrote in 1931 that IVCF stood “primarily for the practical and spiritual study of the Bible with a view to living the life it enjoins and promises.” As the rays of the sun caused growth in a plant, so the illumination which resulted from the study of the Bible produced spiritual growth. The Bible was considered to be the basis of Christian belief and a guide for living. Continual study of it produced “an armoury of the soul” from which could be drawn protection and help.¹¹ Numerous former SCM’ers reminisced that the Bible study groups were the most valuable SCM activity; according to one, the study of Jesus in the gospel records of Matthew, Mark and Luke was “truly the foundation of the life of the Movement.”¹² Another SCM spokesperson prescribed the Bible as the “basic source” of the movement’s “inspiration and religious information.”¹³ From the study of the Bible flowed spiritual sustenance and vitality.

SCM and IVCF leaders employed a similar format for studies. The groups generally were informal and discussion-based. Ideally this format allowed students who

Quebec,” 2.

¹⁰ Murray Brooks, newsletter, 21 April 1928, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 28, p. 4. This parallels Grant Wacker’s assertion that both liberal and conservative Protestants in the United States emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in the church. See Wacker, “Holy Spirit.”

¹¹ Noel Palmer, “The Bible,” Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file “History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer,” 2-5.

¹² Fredda Peden, reminiscence, [1941], SCM UCA, box 84-11, file 1. See also, in the same file, Leslie B. MacHattie, “The Impact of the SCM.”

¹³ [Henry Burton Sharman?], untitled document, [1933 or later], SCM UCA, box 84-132, file “Dr. Sharman.”

did not profess to be Christians to feel welcome. At the University of Toronto in the 1931-32 academic year, an SCM'er leading a study of Jesus' life characterized the study as an open discussion in which prejudices and previous knowledge were to be set aside so that all students, including those who did not claim to be Christian, might participate.¹⁴ In 1931 IVCF general secretary Noel Palmer, comparing IVCF with the SCM, contended that, contrary to the opinion of some, IVCF like the SCM included religious 'seekers' in discussion groups.¹⁵ Thus both movements found informal discussion to be a method especially suitable for their purposes.

While studies typically consisted of informal discussion, SCM and IVCF leaders suggested a number of guidelines. IVCF groups sometimes drew from previously prepared Bible studies such as those provided by the British Inter-Varsity Fellowship, the British Scripture Union, or Chicago's Moody Bible Institute. In 1939, for example, IVCF made use of a new British Inter-Varsity Press publication, entitled "United Bible Study," a three-year guide which introduced Scripture texts and suggested questions which would open up discussion.¹⁶ The SCM's study groups on the life of Jesus often drew from Henry Burton Sharman's *Jesus in the Records* or *Records of the Life of Jesus* which juxtaposed similar verses from Matthew, Mark and Luke in order to highlight similarities and differences between these narrative accounts. This 'cut-and-paste' process, referred to by some as the 'Sharman method', became a standard format of SCM Bible studies. Other books were also used as guides, such as Leslie Weatherhead's *His Life and Ours*, a consideration of Jesus' psychological significance for modern living; *Message of Jesus*

¹⁴ *Varsity* clipping, 19 January 1932, SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 18, file "1931-32."

¹⁵ Noel Palmer, untitled Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 3.

¹⁶ "United Bible Study: A Course of Nine Studies for Bible Study Circles," vol. 1, ed. Rev. H.E. Guillebaud (London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1939).

for Life of Today, by United Church minister and ardent social gospeller Ernest Thomas, which focused on current issues in the light of Jesus' teachings; and *The Bible and the Quest of Life*, which aimed to examine the "eternally relevant contents of the Bible" and extract "contemporary application."¹⁷ For both IVCF and the SCM, such extra sources were meant to be a starting point for discussion.

Leaders of both movements, convinced of the importance of study, also underscored certain regulations. An SCM leader in the late 1920s and 1930s later recalled that Henry Burton Sharman, who frequently led studies in person, laid down specific requirements such as "seriousness of purpose, regular attendance at group meetings, careful preparation, including written answers to questions, participation in discussion and, most important of all, intention to accept and act upon the truth discovered."¹⁸ Similarly, IVCF's "United Bible Study" guide from 1939 suggested that each member of a study should read the material beforehand, be "regular and punctual" in attendance, and pray individually for "spiritual results." It also offered advice for leaders on how to prepare and phrase questions to facilitate discussion, and how to involve members and lead them towards practical conclusions. Thus while the SCM emphasized Jesus' humanity and correlation with modern social issues and IVCF emphasized Jesus as God and ruler of each individual's life, the two student movements' leaders nonetheless structured studies in similar ways and placed similar expectations on participants.

Worship, whether in the form of prayer or singing, was another important element of SCM and IVCF programmes. Prayer was viewed as central to the purposes of IVCF. One

¹⁷ "Courses for Study Groups Recommended for 1935-36" (SCM of Canada), [1935?], UTA SCM, B79-0059, box 7, file "Archives 1935-1936."

¹⁸ Gertrude Rutherford Brooks, letter in appreciation of Henry Burton Sharman, 10 June 1954, SCM UCA, box 84-10, file 11.

IVCF secretary, distressed in 1937 that evangelical students at the University of Alberta devalued the activity of prayer and rarely seemed to get beyond “mutual consolation,” asserted that prayer should be “the basis” of IVCF’s work.¹⁹ In 1938 another secretary writing to a prospective member stated that daily prayer meetings (also referred to as DPM’s) were the core activity of IVCF groups across Canada.²⁰ The SCM also included prayer in its programme, although to a lesser degree than IVCF. The Movement was criticized by some for not emphasizing prayer enough, but leaders, in 1932, countered this criticism with the argument that they sought “a greater sense of reality in prayer” and thus avoided conventional forms of prayer. Accordingly, the Executive Committee proposed that the SCM study the “place and importance” of prayer and encouraged the “realisation of the presence of God in all our life and activity.”²¹ Meetings of the SCM Executive Committee and the National Council included times of prayer and worship.²² Sources suggest that in the latter part of the 1930s prayer became more prominent in the SCM. A “News Bulletin” issued by the SCM at the University of Toronto in 1937 asserted that worship was “coming to have a more definite and central place” in the movement. This statement was followed by announcements that two SCM groups on campus met weekly for a twenty-minute prayer meeting and that, for men, the Hart House Chapel was always available for “private meditation and prayer.”²³ For six weeks prior to an

¹⁹ Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, 29 October 1937, IVA, box 3, file “Jim Forrester, W. Canada.” Two weeks later Forrester reported that the quality of the University of Alberta IVCF group had much improved, due especially to “persistent prayer amongst the faithful.” Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, 16 November 1937, IVA, box 3, file “Jim Forrester, W. Canada.”

²⁰ Charles Troutman to Claude Vipond, 23 September 1938, IVA, box 3, file “Charles Troutman, QC,” 2. The daily prayer meeting was a feature inherited from British evangelical groups.

²¹ SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 4-6 June 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file “1932,” 3.

²² SCM National Executive Committee and National Council minutes, 1929-1939, SCM UCA, boxes 84-56 and 84-94.

²³ “Student Christian Movement in the University of Toronto News Bulletin,” 2, no. 1 (November 1937), SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 15, file “SCM in U of T News Bulletin.”

evangelistic effort in 1939, a group of between four and sixteen SCM'ers met every morning for a ten-minute prayer meeting.²⁴

Both movements also organized national prayer events. Beginning in the 1930s, IVCF annually designated one day to pray for the staff, students, and specific activities and needs of IVCF groups. Similarly, the SCM, as a member of the World Student Christian Federation, participated in a yearly "World Day of Prayer for Students." Prayer, then, was an activity considered worthwhile by both student movements.

The singing of religious songs also held an important place in organized events of the SCM and IVCF such as weekend retreats, camps, chapel services and house gatherings. In an SCM songbook from the University of British Columbia, a number of devotional songs focused students' attention on Christ.²⁵ The song, "Grant Me True Courage, Lord," pointed to the companionship of Jesus as a motivation for service: "Grant me true courage, Lord / To front each new endeavor, / Confiding in Thy word / That Thou wilt leave me never / Alike in gloom or joy / Each duty to fulfill / My faithful heart employ / To do Thy perfect will." The book also included a number of 'spirituals' which came out of the African-American tradition, such as "Were You There?" which contained the very evangelical lines: "Were you there when they crucified my Lord," "Were you there when they nailed him to the tree," "Were you there when they laid him in the tomb," and, finally, "Were you there when God raised Him from the dead?" Other songs could communicate in a more light-hearted way, such as "Lord, I want to be a Christian / In-a my heart, in-a my heart. / Lord, I want to be a Christian / In-a my heart. . . ." Subsequent verses repeated the sentences, "Lord, I want to be more loving," "Lord, I want to be more

²⁴ Report of the Religion and Life Week committee, [1939], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 23, file "SCM U of T Religion & Life Week 1939."

holy,” and “Lord, I want to be like Jesus.”

An IVCF songbook offers parallels with the above SCM collection.²⁶ Included were “Lord, I want to be a Christian,” “Were You There?” and many others which focused on Christ. Themes of SCM songs such as Jesus’ companionship, Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the believer’s desire to emulate Jesus are reflected in IVCF’s choice of hymns, such as “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” and “Take My Life and Let it Be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”

In addition to the practice of Bible study and worship, SCM and IVCF leaders gave formal lessons on devotion. At a 1937 student conference in Bellingham, Washington which was attended by IVCF students from the University of British Columbia, a Canadian IVCF secretary led three half-hour discussions on the topics of devotion, prayer, and Bible study.²⁷ The University of Toronto SCM in 1935-36 recommended a study of the theme of worship and suggested some supplemental reading including titles such as *Methods of Private Religious Living*, *Fellowship in Thought and Prayer*, and *Ways of Praying*.²⁸ In the same year the U of T group heard lectures on worship and on African-American spirituals.²⁹

Leaders of both movements articulated, to some extent, an expectation that students practice devotion individually, away from the context of organized events. SCM

²⁵ University of British Columbia SCM Song Book, [ca. 1930], SCM UCA, box 10, file 2.

²⁶ “Pioneer Melodies,” IVCF songbook, [ca. 1960]. Although this Inter-Varsity songbook was published three decades after the SCM book, the selections used here for comparison with the SCM pre-date the 1930s and were most likely sung by Inter-Varsity groups long before they were collected into this volume. The book contains bracketed notes next to song titles which indicate that all three of the hymns listed here were taken from an earlier hymnal.

²⁷ Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 16 November 1937, IVA, box 3, file “Jim Forrester, W. Canada,” 4.

²⁸ “A Book List to Supplement the Study Group Material,” attached to “Courses for Study Groups Recommended for 1935-36” (SCM of Canada), [1935?], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 7, file “Archives 1935-1936.”

leaders suggested that students study privately in preparation for group studies.³⁰ In addition, in 1934 a committee of the SCM National Council asserted that the SCM's success on campuses depended on the genuineness of members' religious lives; in part this genuineness would result from "regular private devotion on the part of the individual member of the SCM."³¹ Four years later a committee on worship expressed again to the National Council their conviction that "as individuals worship should become more real for us through constant and disciplined 'practice of the presence of God'" and suggested a number of worship materials which could be used for "personal devotions," including books of hymns and prayers.³² Similarly, IVCF staff encouraged students to pray and study the Bible individually. Howard Guinness, when travelling across Canada in 1928-1929, taught the students he met to practice the "Morning Watch," a time of Bible study and prayer at the beginning of one's day.³³ At an IVCF conference in Toronto in 1933, leaders implored those present to pray individually; the general secretary, Arthur Hill, noted in his report that the "power" and the "lasting effects" of the conference depended on "the private devotions of individuals and little groups who were there."³⁴ The SCM and IVCF, then, placed value on time spent in personal devotional activity as essential in training students for Christian service.

Leaders and members of both movements also occasionally discovered that a gap

²⁹ Programme list, 1935-36, SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 16, file "SCM student activities 1935-6."

³⁰ For example, one leader, most likely Henry Burton Sharman, stated that "private study" was "absolutely essential" in an SCM study group. [Henry Burton Sharman?], [1933 or later], SCM UCA, box 84-132, file "Dr. Sharman."

³¹ "Report of the Committee on the Impact of the SCM on the University," SCM National Council minutes, 1934, app. A, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 14.

³² "Report of Commission on 'Worship'," SCM National Council minutes, 1938, app. B, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 18.

³³ Arthur Hill, "Early Days of the IVCF in Canada," [ca. 1965], IVA, unlabelled box, file "A.H. - 1933-34," 3.

³⁴ Arthur Hill, "Thoughts Concerning the IVCF Conference at Toronto, Sept. 15-18, 1933," [1933], IVA,

existed between the ideal and the reality of devotional life, and expressed concern about spiritual declension. The SCM diagnosed busyness as an impediment to the spiritual life; students needed to learn to step out of the fray on occasion. Retreats were seen as especially conducive to counteracting this impediment. One purpose of an SCM conference at Elgin House in the Muskoka region in the 1928-29 school year was to "escape from the rush and whirl of ordinary life, with leisure for unhurried thought and reflection, in company with others of like desires and aspirations."³⁵ Leaders of the University of Toronto SCM announced in 1937 that the Hart House Chapel, always open for private meditation and prayer, could be "a place of real quietness and strength" where male students might "retire for a while from the hurry and confusion of University life to be alone with God."³⁶ Likewise Ernest Dale, in his reflections on the first twenty years of the SCM in Canada, perceived the need of students to "find time for fellowship in prayer and worship."³⁷

Another cause of spiritual stagnancy, sometimes linked with busyness, was the haphazard or ritualistic performance of devotional activities. The many distractions of student life could interfere with one's concentration. IVCF evangelist Howard Guinness described one prayer meeting at McGill as "somewhat stiff" and added that no one interjected "Amen" during or after a public prayer, a sign for him that the participants were not as involved spiritually as they could have been.³⁸ The SCM had its own forms which could undermine spiritual vitality. Of the SCM's 'Sharman method' of Bible study

unlabelled box, file "A.H. 1933-34," 2.

³⁵ Elgin House Conference brochure, 11-19 September 1929, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 20.

³⁶ "Student Christian Movement in the University of Toronto News Bulletin," 2, no. 1 (November 1937), SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 15, file "SCM in U of T News Bulletin."

³⁷ Dale, *Twenty-One Years A-Building*, 38.

³⁸ Howard Guinness, diary, 7-8 March 1929, IVA, unlabelled box.

in the SCM. Ernest Dale recalled that for some people, having “question after question with the answer withheld, or at least held long in suspense, resulted in a negative attitude.”³⁹

A final cause of spiritual declension expressed by leaders was a failure of devotional methods to include or influence everyone. Both the SCM and IVCF, attempting to be interdenominational organizations, realized that, since the style of worship varied from one church to the next, it was especially difficult to design occasions of worship in which all Christian students would feel at ease. For example, IVCF’s general secretary Noel Palmer noted in 1931 that one student in a prayer meeting might participate by “interjecting unrestrained hallelujahs and amens into another’s audible praying” whereas another student might be more comfortable with a formal, liturgical style.⁴⁰

Considering that in their self-definitions both the SCM and IVCF viewed each other, somewhat disdainfully, as having counteractive purposes, the above similarities in their devotional practices are remarkable. But devotional practices also held within them profound differences. First of all, though both groups emphasized study, topics diverged between the SCM and IVCF. The Bible studies of both movements did attempt to direct students to the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. But SCM’ers almost exclusively focused on the Gospels through the aid of Henry Burton Sharman’s books; there is little evidence that they studied other books of the Bible. An SCM spokesperson, likely Sharman himself, stated: “The most important part of the Bible for an SCM is contained in the life of Jesus. Other parts are valuable in varying degree, but these records are of primary importance to any student interested in religion or in a satisfying kind of

³⁹ Dale, *Twenty-One Years A-Building*, 31.

⁴⁰ Noel Palmer, “Our Purpose, Programme, & Problems,” Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file

life. . . ."⁴¹ IVCF, on the other hand, studied a wide range of biblical books, themes, and characters. The "United Bible Study" guide published by the British Inter-Varsity Press in 1939 focused on specific characters and books of the Bible from both the Old and New Testaments, on themes such as the biblical history of Israel and the miracles and teachings of Christ, and on the biblical basis for IVCF's doctrinal statement inscribed in its constitution.⁴²

Essentially the respective approaches parallel the differences between higher and lower criticism of the Bible. IVCF studies assumed that the Bible was the inspired Word of God; this doctrine was not up for discussion. Moreover, the Inter-Varsity student, whether studying the reign of King David or the gospel of John, was expected to be able to draw practical application for life in the modern world. The SCM, in contrast, assumed the conclusions of the higher criticism; the study of the Bible, as an essentially human compilation of various accounts of God and religious experience, necessitated scrutiny by modern scholars. Underlying the 'Sharman method', so prominent in SCM study groups, was the belief that the real character of Jesus had been obscured. To recover the most accurate portrait of Jesus, one needed to sift through the dust of human accounts of Jesus and the clutter of church traditions, discarding what was deemed unnecessary. For the SCM, in contrast to IVCF's traditional approach, the Bible was simply one of a number of sources of religious inspiration. In 1932 a professor addressing the SCM at the University of Toronto contended that even Jesus had seen Scripture as a beginning point which

"History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 2-3.

⁴¹ [Henry Burton Sharman?], untitled document, [1933 or later], SCM UCA, box 132, file "Dr. Sharman." In 1939 Sharman candidly admitted that he lacked familiarity with most of the Bible due to his concentration on the New Testament Gospels: "Certainly it is a decade since I read anything else in the Bible, and I don't know how much longer it is since I read any of the rest of the New Testament. In fact, I am not altogether sure, although my doctorate is in the New Testament field, that I have ever read all of the New Testament until the last few months." Henry Burton Sharman, speech transcript, 1939, SCM UCA, box 84-10, file 37.

could eventually be surpassed.⁴³ Elsewhere it was proposed that Bible-reading should be a situational rather than a habitual exercise.⁴⁴

One could argue as well that SCM studies were more intellectual in nature than IVCF studies. Again, the goal of both was a commitment to Jesus; but whereas IVCF leaders emphasized faith in Christ the redeemer, for SCM leaders the key object appears to have been correct thinking about Jesus, the founder of Christianity. The SCM assumed that if its members were able to see clearly who Jesus was, then commitment to Jesus, or assent to his teachings, would follow.⁴⁵ Thus for the SCM a commitment to Jesus was primarily intellectual and volitional whereas for IVCF the commitment was experiential and volitional.

An example of an IVCF Bible study serves to illustrate this difference. In 1939 an IVCF Bible study guide included a five-week series on the life of Peter as found in a number of New Testament books. Study questions consistently related aspects of the disciple's life to the modern Christian's situation. To illustrate, in response to the account of Peter's being given the power of the Holy Spirit the question was asked, "Where does our power fall short of that of the first disciples, and why?" The study ended with a challenge to consider three things: "(a) the greatest thing Christ has done

⁴² "United Bible Study."

⁴³ B.W. Horan, quoted in "Authority of Bible Lies in the Appeal Made to Humanity," *Varsity*, 51, no. 88 (25 February 1932), UTA, *Varsity* microfilm.

⁴⁴ "Syllabus & Reference Material for Discussion Group Leaders on Student Problems, Elgin House 1928," pt. 3, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 25. It was proposed that since it was not customary to read a chapter of Shakespeare every day, constantly asking how the chapter was applicable to life, neither should the Bible be read in this way. Rather, it should be read to meet a specific need or to answer a specific question.

⁴⁵ [Henry Burton Sharman?], untitled document, [1933 or later], SCM UCA, box 132, file "Dr. Sharman." One SCM leader active in the late 1920s and the 1930s, Gertrude Rutherford Brooks, apparently witnessed students making this step from a clearer understanding of Jesus to a personal commitment to Him: after H.B. Sharman's death she recorded that many students were indebted to Sharman for "his persistent focus and emphasis on the centrality of Jesus in the work of the Movement" and "the excellent materials which have been and will be of inestimable value" which contributed to their "discovery or re-discovery of Jesus" and "the dedication of their lives to the will of God as revealed through Him." Gertrude Rutherford

for you in change of character; (b) the most recent experience of His power you have had; (c) your greatest need for further character transformation?"⁴⁶ Whereas in the SCM the study of the New Testament gospels led to incisive analysis of current social, political and economic trends, IVCF studies guided students towards a personal relationship with Christ and an enthusiasm for Christian living.

The SCM's range of study topics was much broader than IVCF's. A national SCM list of twenty proposed studies for the 1935-36 academic year consisted of seven which focused on the life of Jesus, three on life experiences, three which compared traditional Christianity with modern demands, five on socio-political problems, and two on missions. The category dealing with 'life experiences' also had a devotional nature: beyond discussions of Jesus' life and teachings and other aspects of Christianity, the SCM also sought to promote spiritual development through studies dealing with issues of personal character and daily living. These included themes such as relationships, the maturing process, morality, and personal religion.⁴⁷ Although studies of a personal nature were not numerous, leaders ascribed a great deal of importance to them. In their view effective study and work in the fields of religion and society could only be done when students had "attained personal freedom," meaning thereby the personal morality and character exemplified by Christ, and gained through loyalty to him. These study

Brooks, letter in appreciation of Henry Burton Sharman, 10 June 1954, SCM UCA, box 84-10, file 11.

⁴⁶ "United Bible Study," 22-23.

⁴⁷ "Courses for Study Groups Recommended for 1935-36" (SCM of Canada), [1935?], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 7, file "Archives 1935-1936," 4. Leaders noted the special challenge of relationships between men and women in the university context; the National Council articulated that "particular care should be taken in the preparation of material for this study, and in the selection of leadership." "Report of Commission on 'Study'," app. A, SCM National Council minutes, [1938], UCA SCM, box 84-94, file 18, p. 2. At the University of Toronto, SCM members heard addresses on the development of personal character; often addresses of this nature were delivered to gender-specific audiences. For example, female medical students listened to a talk in the fall of 1935 on "Friendship between Men and Women," in 1938 women met during a noon-hour to hear about "Women as Citizens," and in the fall of 1937 male students listened to an address

groups “should eventually bring the student to face the Christian challenge to the whole of life.”⁴⁸ IVCF, while it may have had a latent concern for personal issues, did not explicitly in its studies confront themes such as relationships or maturity.

Furthermore, in contrast with the SCM’s prayer and worship times, which often employed liturgy or other prepared materials, IVCF’s devotionism was much more casual and impromptu. In 1933 the IVCF general secretary, Noel Palmer, described an evening meeting at which five university students had talked about their experiences of Christ as “informal, spontaneous, and radiantly vital.”⁴⁹ In Manitoba in the spring of 1938, an evening hike with some IVCF students ended with an unsolicited time of singing hymns and praying.⁵⁰ At a prayer meeting of the University of Toronto IVCF in its first year of existence, prayers were said, according to a *Varsity* reporter, “as the spirit moves.”⁵¹ General secretary Noel Palmer was pleased at an Inter-Varsity conference in 1933 with the use of “sentence prayer” – successive short prayers by various students.⁵² The underlying convictions concerning prayer were that students should spontaneously express themselves to God and that such direct and personal prayer, rather than following liturgical forms, was most potent.

Profound differences existed also in the songs of the two movements, notwithstanding some common songs and themes. IVCF members sang about their belief

on “The Case for Chastity,” after which seventy-five remained for discussion. SCM lists of student activities, 1935-6 and 1937-8, UTA SCM, B79-0059, box 16.

⁴⁸ “Report of Commission on ‘Study,’” app. A, SCM National Council minutes, [1938], UCA SCM, box 84-94, file 18, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Noel Palmer, “Report from the Colleges and Schools,” February 1933, IVA, box 1, file “History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36).”

⁵⁰ Cathie Nicoll, report, 4 March 1938, IVA, box 3, file “Cathie Nicoll, Winnipeg.”

⁵¹ “Sincerity Marks Meeting of Intercollegiate C.U.,” *Varsity*, 42, no. 71 (30 January 1929), UTA, *Varsity* microfilm.

⁵² Noel Palmer, “Report from the Colleges and Schools,” February 1933, IVA, box 1, file “History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36).” Palmer added that the prayers were “wonderfully real, pointed, humble and

that "He [Jesus] is Coming Again," whereas the SCM chose songs which concerned "life in the present world in contrast to a 'better land' of the future."⁵³ Moreover, the SCM avoided hymns employing military language, a practice reflecting their pacifistic sentiments and abhorrence of 'muscular' Christian language. Meanwhile IVCF sang "A Mighty Fortress is our God" and "Soldier, Soldier Fighting." IVCF's inclusion of hymns such as "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" stands in contrast to the SCM's exclusion of the "saccharine variety" of songs. And while IVCF embraced traditional hymns, the SCM claimed to have eliminated from its hymnbook songs with outdated images of God, Jesus, life and salvation.⁵⁴

Both the SCM and IVCF experienced and recognized fluctuations in devotional life: but while reports of these fluctuations within IVCF came most often from specific units, the SCM's leadership at times questioned the movement's ability to meet the devotional needs of students nation-wide. SCM leaders looking back on the 1930s perceived that Bible studies and corporate worship across the country seemed to have lost some of their earlier vitality between 1935 and the early 1940s. In response to this general decline in devotional activity, national leaders attempted to revitalize Bible studies, prayer and worship in the SCM programme.⁵⁵

consecrated."

⁵³ Murray Brooks, article in *The Canadian Student*, quoted by Dale, *Twenty-One Years A-Building*, 32. Brooks assisted in the compiling of one SCM songbook, entitled "Songs for Worship," published in 1930 and reissued as "Hymns for Worship" in 1939. "How Much Do You Know About the Canadian SCM?" 1947, SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 5, file "1947," 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ In 1943, the SCM National Council responded to the perceived spiritual stagnancy by recommitting the Movement to the Christian faith. "The implications of our decision," the Council stated, "... are that our action as a Christian group must have its roots in life-related Bible study and worship." "How Much Do You Know About the Canadian SCM?" 1947, SCM UTA, box 5, file "1947." The criticism of the SCM's devotional life coincided with the aforementioned waning of idealism and shift towards a more conservative theology. It seems most likely that, in response to diminishing enthusiasm for 'building the Kingdom of God', the SCM's leaders sought to revitalize the movement through a greater emphasis on spiritual, rather than socio-political, concerns, and thus showed a more profound interest in devotional

On the practical level of devotionalism, generally IVCF appears traditional and the SCM culturally innovative. Richard Ostrander's suggestion that conservative Protestant devotionalism in the United States was analogous to the charging of a 'battery' seems fitting for IVCF: Bible study and worship (including prayer and singing) were 'terminals' through which students received spiritual power. SCM'ers, true to Ostrander's 'windmill' model for liberal Protestant devotionalism, believed that God's power infused all aspects of life. Worship and Bible study were important parts of the SCM's programme, but they did not have as central a place as they did in IVCF. Rather, in the SCM a variety of activities gave students access to a God who was immanent within human society. Thus characterizations of IVCF and the SCM as conservative and liberal, respectively, are in many ways accurate.

Yet these terms do not do justice entirely to each movement's practical expression of its beliefs. The SCM's use of liturgy in worship and prayer seems strikingly conventional and, conversely, IVCF appears radical in the spontaneity of its devotionalism. Moreover, the important position given in the SCM's programme to the Bible, specifically the Gospels, lessens the force of a 'windmill' model. Here was a clearly prescribed activity which, in the minds of many SCM'ers, formed the foundation of the movement. Finally, in contrast to Ostrander's 'pietistic fundamentalists' who stressed *morning* devotions so as to recharge for the day, IVCF allowed for flexibility in such programmed activity under the pressure of student schedules.⁵⁶

All of these exceptions serve to draw the SCM and IVCF closer to a moderate

activities and conservative doctrines. This should not be construed as a shift in the mandate of the SCM so much as an attempt to re-energize the movement so that 'building the Kingdom' might continue.

⁵⁶ A few voices did consider timing to be important. One student, the president of an IVCF group, reported that the Fellowship had demonstrated to him "the vital importance of starting the day, every day with Him."

position. Even more importantly, this comparative study reveals key points of contact. It illuminates first of all the shared devotional character of these movements. Members of the SCM and IVCF alike were encouraged to pray, worship and study the Bible with the intent to be more attentive to Jesus Christ. Leaders translated this expectation into structured activities and the teaching of personal devotion. Moreover, the practice of devotion was seen to be an essential precursor to the evangelistic activities of these movements. Worship and study fuelled liberal attempts to change the social order as well as conservative evangelistic efforts to change the individual.

CHAPTER 4

SAVING SOULS OR SAVING THE SOCIAL ORDER? THE STUDENT EVANGELISTIC IMPULSE

The Student Christian Movement and Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship each hoped to reinvigorate Christianity and to influence society. They began by focusing students' attention on Jesus, through either the study of the Bible or prayer and other forms of Christian worship. For example, in 1933 SCM leaders were asked to leave aside the application of Christian principles to "social and missionary problems" until they had ascertained each student's "personal situation with reference to Christ."¹ Both movements assumed that a clear understanding of Jesus Christ and a commitment to the principles which he taught must come before involvement in active outreach. But leaders were convinced that devotional activities should produce a desire among students to evangelize – to share their understanding of Jesus with other people, beginning with the university community and expanding to an international scope. Both movements had grown out of the nineteenth-century transatlantic student enthusiasm for missions; between 1928 and 1939 their memberships maintained a desire as individuals and as Christian communities to transform – essentially to 'Christianize' – their world.²

¹ "Report of Committee on Study Groups," app. C, SCM National Council minutes, 11-13 September 1933, UCA SCM, box 84-94, file 13, p. 3.

² This ongoing interest among students to evangelize reflects a wider evangelistic interest among Canadian Protestants in the 1920s and 1930s, as noted by Robert Wright in *A World Mission: Canadian Protestantism and the Quest for a New International Order, 1918-1939* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 4. Wright focuses especially on the mission boards of the mainline denominations.

The actual shape of this evangelistic desire expressed itself quite differently for the SCM and IVCF. Members of the SCM sought primarily to address societal issues through the precepts of Christianity. Specifically, they believed that Jesus' life and moral teaching offered solutions to current political, economic and social problems. Thus they diligently studied these problems and involved themselves in social activism both locally and internationally. For IVCF members, on the other hand, society's problems could only be solved through a vibrant personal relationship with Christ. Thus IVCF leaders taught members how to lead others into this relationship and encouraged them to be involved in local and foreign missions.

But both the SCM and IVCF included in their constitutions a commitment to spreading the Christian message: the SCM sought "to share with others the values discovered in Jesus Christ and to join with those of like mind in all lands and of every race and rank in the creation of a world-wide order of society in harmony with the mind and purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ,"³ and IVCF sought "to witness to the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and God and to seek to lead others to a personal faith in Him."⁴ Naturally, then, leaders encouraged students to follow through on these commitments. They reiterated their evangelistic vision in a variety of statements, and they offered practical suggestions, often surprisingly similar, concerning how this vision might be carried out. Thus, in terms of both emphasis and method, some overlap existed between the two groups.

For SCM leaders such as general secretary Murray Brooks, who attended an international missionary conference in Jerusalem in Easter of 1928, the missionary task

³ SCM Constitution, revised 11-13 September 1933, SCM UCA, box 84-15, file "National Office Printed Materials Scrapbook, 1920-34," 8.

had changed since the latter decades of the nineteenth century but was still considered to be very important. At the 1928 conference, delegates evaluated the character and the effectiveness of missionizing efforts. John R. Mott, the premiere statesman of student missionary activity, issued a challenge, in Brooks' words, "to adventurous thinking and to courageous action."⁵ But what had been an essentially religious task in the late 1880s when Mott and others had established the Student Volunteer Movement was now complicated by a variety of cultural issues, and new questions were being asked:

What is to be the Christian attitude towards war? Towards the protection of missionaries by gunboats? Towards the race question? Towards the modern economic situation? Towards the prevalent materialistic philosophy of life? Are the non-Christian religions adequate to meet the needs in their own countries? Can Christianity really be adapted to the Orient? What is to be the future relationship between the older western churches and the younger eastern churches now desiring a larger measure of freedom and self-determination? Has religion any concern with the political and economic life of peoples?⁶

Also, much more than in the late nineteenth century, the missionary impulse now found expression through the work of doctors, scientists, agriculturalists and teachers; moreover, modern missions called for a deeper sensitivity to the host culture.⁷ World mission did indeed remain an emphasis of the Canadian SCM – the movement believed

⁴ IVCF Constitution, 1935-36, IVA, box 3, file "Executive Committee Canada (Fellowship Constitution)."

⁵ Murray Brooks to SCM friends, 21 April 1928, SCM UCA, box 84-136, file 28.

⁶ Ibid., 1. Robert Wright views the Jerusalem conference as a turning point in Anglo-American missions, especially in its new consideration of the relationship between the Western and Eastern churches. Wright, *World Mission*, 165.

⁷ A number of historians have contributed excellent analyses of the changing nature of missions from the nineteenth century into the twentieth. William R. Hutchison, in *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), observes, in chaps. 4 to 7, a transition among American liberal Protestants from the starting point of late-nineteenth-century enthusiasm for personal evangelism and foreign missions (encapsulated especially by the Student Volunteer Movement's motto, "The evangelisation of the world in this generation") to their support of 'civilizing missions' infused with the social gospel and ultimately, in the 1920s and 1930s, to collaboration with other faiths and indigenous mission work. British scholar Timothy Yates, in chaps. 3 and 4 of his *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), gives credibility to Hutchison's conclusions on a wider international scale. He notes that liberal thinkers following the 1928 Jerusalem conference included education, medicine and agriculture as essential to missionary work and that between 1928 and World War Two these thinkers focused on the relationship of Christianity to other religions. These books further elaborate on the personalities and topics of the 1928 conference.

that the message of Christianity crossed all borders.⁸ But the SCM perceived that the missionary task had been altered substantially.⁹

The new missionary impulse now found expression also in concern for social, and not simply individual, 'salvation'. Jesus' precepts brought "the full realization of life," meaning that the missionary offered spiritual freedom, but also economic, social and political freedom. The movement's concern for social issues emerged naturally from its religious beliefs. The presence of "poverty, war, social inequality, race prejudice, class conflict," and other societal ills proved to the SCM that "our present society in effect denies God." A godly society would allow its members to live equally and completely.¹⁰ The SCM, informed by its theology of Jesus as God incarnate, intended to reclaim modern society for Christ by offering Christian solutions to its problems.

Like their predecessors in the student world who had sought "the evangelisation of the world in this generation," SCM leaders approached their social gospel task with a sense of urgency.¹¹ General secretary Murray Brooks perceived the world's desperate

⁸ SCM National Council minutes, 1937, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 17, p. 4.

⁹ On the topic of changes within the Anglo-American missionary enterprise, see Wright, *World Mission*, especially chaps. 4, 5 and 7, on the Canadian context and Hutchison, *Errand to the World*, especially chaps. 4 to 6, on the American context. Both of these authors trace missionary effort from cooperation, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, between liberal and conservative Protestants in building Christian civilization through conversion, to the dominance in the 1930s of the mainline mission boards which espoused the liberal commitment to establishing indigenous missions and dialoging with host cultures. Wright contends, however, that Canadian mainline Protestant missions, unlike their American counterparts, were able to maintain a balance between the pursuits of evangelism and social service (110-111).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ Phyllis Airhart, in an article on the Methodist/United Church support of the social gospel in Canada, contends that Methodists, in response to the perceived failure of revivalistic methods to bring Canadians into the church, embraced a new "Kingdom of God evangelism" in which individual salvation was a secondary result of the primary task of building God's Kingdom in the fabric of Canadian society. According to Airhart, social gossellers considered themselves to be 'evangelists' but construed 'conversion' as a person's decision to serve God through social action. See Airhart, "Christian Socialism and the Legacy Of Revivalism in the 1930's," in *A Long and Faithful March: Towards the Christian Revolution, 1930s/1980s*, ed. Roger Hutchinson and Harold Wells (n.p.: The United Church Publishing House, 1989), 30-40. Similarly, David Plaxton argues that at least into the 1930s the United Church maintained a concern for constructing God's kingdom through both evangelism and social work. Eventually, he contends, this relationship broke down as the two pursuits began to compete for the loyalties

need of people who would channel their understanding of Jesus into “the expression of his ethic in all the relationships of life.” In his view the SCM was the best-equipped Canadian group to respond to this need. “In fact,” he claimed boldly, “I feel that we are called of God at this time to be his messengers to society. . . .”¹² Mediating Jesus’ teachings to society, then, was a divinely-commissioned task of SCM members. With this in mind Brooks appealed to SCM’ers to take more risks. “The Christian can never play safe, nor demand security,” he said. “The call of Christ is unconditional. His followers must abandon all and go forth. Only a challenge to a new adventure will call forth a response from students and capture their allegiance.”¹³

This adventure, it appears, was to confront intelligently the great problems of modern life. Thus education was a primary task of the SCM: students would be better prepared to face the modern world after having carefully studied both the life of Jesus and political, social, and economic issues. The SCM’s central educational tool was its study groups. In the minds of leaders, study was not a precursor to action, but rather was already a participation in the building of a Christian society.¹⁴ The leadership recognized the danger of studies becoming only intellectual exercises and encouraged local groups to be as practically-minded as possible. The practical importance of study was articulated by a report of the SCM National Council: “We see study as the means through which the student may find hitherto undiscovered resources which lead to the full realization of life

of church members. For example, in the early 1930s the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (FCSO) highlighted social service to the neglect of evangelism. David Plaxton, “Evangelicalism and the United Church of Canada,” 111-117.

¹² Murray Brooks, memorandum, [1931?], SCM UCA, box 84-14, National Office Letter Book, 1921-34, p. 128.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ For example, a “Commission on the SCM and the World Situation” recorded its belief that the study of international issues was “a form of action.” SCM National Council minutes, 1937, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 17.

in harmony with the mind and purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ."¹⁵

As a result of this interest, SCM leaders encouraged students to study the subject of missions. According to one reference, missions were a way to relate the Christian message to peoples' lives "at home as well as abroad."¹⁶ In 1932, SCM leaders suggested as one topic "To an understanding of Jesus as a Missionary" and strongly encouraged local units to read and discuss *The Present Day Summons* by Dr. John R. Mott as a good introduction to missions.¹⁷ A 1935 list recommended two book studies, one which offered a modern perspective on missionary methods and another which dealt with the task to build God's Kingdom through an international Christian fellowship.¹⁸ Profoundly aware of the impact of modernity, leaders believed that an examination of the changing nature of the missionary enterprise was an important precursor to student missionary activity.

The SCM's missionary purposes could also be served through studies which analyzed social issues and related them to Christian principles. After all, to be aware was an important step towards the transformation of society into the Kingdom of God. A committee explained to the SCM National Council in 1935 that social action was "only justified after thorough study of the issues."¹⁹ Moreover, this type of study could serve to interest students in Jesus. The National Council perceived that many students were attracted to examine Jesus' life "through a previous study of social, economic and ethical

¹⁵ "Report of Commission on 'Study'," app. A, SCM National Council minutes, 1938, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 18. Note the allusion to the SCM's constitutional statement of purpose.

¹⁶ SCM National Council minutes, 14-17, 20, 22, 24 September 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 12, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁸ "Courses for Study Groups Recommended for 1935-36" (SCM of Canada), [1935?], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 7, file "Archives 1935-36."

¹⁹ "Report of the Committee on Social Action," app. B, SCM National Council minutes, [1935], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 15.

problems under leaders holding a Christian point of view.”²⁰ Thus social-issue groups had a dual aim: to prepare students to apply Christian beliefs to the world-wide construction of God’s kingdom, and to interest students in the life and teachings of Jesus.

Suggested studies covered a wide variety of issues. In the early 1930s, the SCM emphasized the study of political movements such as nationalism/fascism, Marxism and capitalism and the challenges which these movements presented to Christians.²¹ In 1935, leaders considered a number of other questions to be particularly urgent:

- (1) What is the Christian conception of property, and what bearing has it upon private ownership, the use of wealth and the control of the means of production and distribution?
- (2) What is meant by the class struggle and what is the Christian attitude to it?
- (3) Granted dissatisfaction with the present state of society and the fact that change of some kind is inevitable and is actually taking place, what is the Christian method of social change?
- (4) In a situation in which practically throughout the world, whether under capitalism or socialism, the individual is being sacrificed to the community, what part has Christianity to play in re-affirming the value of the individual? In what way does true Christian community differ from the collectivities which make up society?²²

Practical study should also occur on the subject of peace and war. This could take shape in terms of considering the implications of Christian ethics, identifying the various causes of war, and outlining the methods of peace propaganda and the activities of peace movements.²³ Five of the twenty recommended studies for 1935-36 focused on aspects of the world’s social and political problems.²⁴

The most immediate social community to be studied was, of course, the college or university campus. Leaders recognized that this setting, as a microcosm of society,

²⁰ SCM National Council minutes, 7-11, 15, 18-19 September 1935, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 15.

²¹ SCM National Council minutes, 14-17, 20, 22, 24 September 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 12, and “Report of the Committee on the Impact of the SCM on the University,” app. B, SCM National Council minutes, 11-13 September 1933, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 13.

²² “Report of the Committee on Social Action,” app. B, SCM National Council minutes, [1935], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 15.

²³ “Report of the Committee on Peace and War,” app. C, SCM National Council minutes, [1935], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 15.

²⁴ “Courses for Study Groups Recommended for 1935-36” (SCM of Canada), [1935?], SCM UTA, B79-0059,

increasingly reflected “the conflicts of the social order.”²⁵ They encouraged SCM study groups to direct their attention to a plethora of local problems, such as inadequate student housing, fraternities, various forms of discrimination, student unemployment, government restrictions on academic freedom, faculty-student relationships, and problems of student government.²⁶

These many concerns reflected the SCM’s desire for a relevant and progressive Christianity and demonstrated its optimism in Christianity’s ability to provide real solutions for society’s problems. In the view of SCM leaders, the study of social concerns should be complemented with practical work. One report elaborated that the SCM aimed to “develop a Christian social conscience” in its students through study and subsequent action. According to the report, even ‘study’ was a type of action: it should involve “personal contact with social situations including social service projects and political activity” in addition to reading and discussion. Essentially an indivisible bond should exist between study and action: effective social action would occur only when complemented by education concerning social circumstances, and, conversely, genuine study included “contact with concrete situations through social service.”²⁷

It is likewise clear that the method of study was nearly as important as the content: if studies were to bring students to a deeper understanding of Christian faith and action, then they must be conducted in a certain way. One report listed a variety of specific requirements. Every participant should be encouraged to contribute to

box 7, file “Archives 1935-36,” 1.

²⁵ “Report of Commission on ‘Study’,” app. A, SCM National Council minutes, [1938], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 18, p. 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, and SCM National Council minutes, 7-11, 15, 18-19 September 1935, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 15.

²⁷ “Report of the Committee on Social Action,” app. B, SCM National Council minutes, [1935], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 15.

discussions with no fear of being slighted. The format of a study should be open; an overly directive structure, it was assumed, would stifle creative discussion. Whenever possible, study groups should include men and women. Leaders should be chosen carefully, with an awareness of their experience with youth, their ability to communicate, and their understanding of the nature of student study groups. Social occasions, such as ‘firesides’ or supper parties, should complement study time. SCM’ers also should personally invite others to join studies. Finally, successful groups should submit reports so that other SCM units might benefit.²⁸

A personal invitation to participate in a study group was viewed as a key method to spreading the SCM’s message. For example, the SCM printed a five-page document, entitled “On Inviting People To Make A Study of The Records of the Life of Jesus at a Summer Seminar,” which gave practical suggestions on how to approach students and even how to answer objections or excuses.²⁹ It was noted that students typically did not attend a study simply to gain academic knowledge. Rather, friendship was considered to be a very important factor:

Perhaps the most important cause of attendance by anyone is that his friends ask him to, and recommend the study. The other reasons for attendance all depend on this. The person who has not made the study must depend for his knowledge of it upon his friends. He must accept (or reject) their estimates of its value, its interest, its charm, its challenge, its possibilities. If enough of his friends recommend it strongly enough he will go.³⁰

The SCM’er should be as tactful as possible in this personal contact; depending on the prospective member, convincing reasons to attend could range from the deep religious

²⁸ “Report of Commission on ‘Study’,” app. A, SCM National Council minutes, [1938], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 18, pp. 2-3.

²⁹ “On Inviting People To Make A Study of The Records of the Life of Jesus at a Summer Seminar,” [1937-38], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 7, file “Archives 1937-1938.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

value to the beauty of the seminar's location and its potential in offering a "glorious vacation."³¹

In addition to its study groups, the SCM promoted other means by which its mission could be accomplished. As has been noted above, the SCM expected social service projects and political action to complement study. Societal problems had been multiplied by the general economic depression of the 1930s. While universities for the most part endured the financial hardships, many other Canadians were less fortunate, and the SCM sought to address their needs.³² The National Council encouraged students to assist local social workers in addressing problems of family welfare, settlement houses, juvenile delinquency, and marginalized segments of society.³³ Groups concerned with such projects and with missions or international issues should, as recommended by one report, voice their discoveries to other students and to churches. Moreover, they should cooperate with other college groups. For example, study circles concerned with international peace should associate with the Student Peace Movement.³⁴

SCM leaders advocated a variety of student gatherings through which to accomplish their purposes. One report to the National Council suggested "Religion and Life" weeks, noon-hour addresses, supper meetings, special lectures and firesides by which to attract the interest of, and communicate their ideas to, a wider audience.³⁵

Retreats and camps, such as the summer seminar on the life of Jesus mentioned above,

³¹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

³² On universities and the Depression, see Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 19-21. Axelrod observes that many educational institutions underwent severe fiscal restraints and relied more heavily on student tuition fees to compensate. Ironically, student enrollment continued to increase through the 1930s, though at a much slower pace than in the 1920s.

³³ "Report of Commission on 'Study'," app. A, SCM National Council minutes, [1938], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 18, p. 3. See also SCM National Council minutes, [1937], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 17, pp. 3-4.

³⁴ SCM National Council minutes, [1937], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 17, p. 6.

³⁵ "Report of the Committee on the Impact of the SCM on the University," app. B, SCM National Council

also served to promote discussion and enrich fellowship.³⁶ Finally, conferences were recommended as events which allowed students to focus on one issue from various perspectives and to connect with their peers. The importance of summer conferences was demonstrated in 1929 by the statement that they did “more than any other single element to capture the students for the Kingdom of God.”³⁷

Another educational tool advocated by SCM leaders was literature. The SCM general secretary appealed in the early 1930s that the movement should embrace “the best scholarship,” especially in regards to religion and education.³⁸ As noted earlier, leaders recommended various contemporary books either to be studied by SCM groups or to be made available through individual distribution or through their placement on designated shelves in college libraries. In this process the SCM national office was to serve as a clearing house, from which new publications could be sold to local SCM units.³⁹ The SCM leadership also recommended various student magazines, including the SCM’s *The Canadian Student*, published from 1918 until 1938 (adopted by the SCM at its inception in 1920-21), and desired that the WSCF’s *The Student World*, published from 1908 until 1969, be placed “in every SCM room or library.”⁴⁰

In practice, the SCM taken as a whole appears to have adopted its recommended programme. Study groups proved to be the core activity of local SCM units and an analysis of their topics in 1935-6 shows these faithfully followed national directives. Nor

minutes, 11-13 September 1933, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 13.

³⁶ “Report of the Committee on the Impact of the SCM on the University,” app. A, SCM National Council minutes, [1934], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 14, p. 1.

³⁷ [Murray Brooks?], letter, 7 October 1929, SCM UCA, box 84-14, file “National Office Letter Book, 1921-34,” 96.

³⁸ Murray Brooks, memorandum (confidential), [1930 or 1931?], SCM UCA, box 84-14, file “National Office Letter Book, 1921-34,” 128.

³⁹ SCM National Council minutes, 14-17, 20, 22, 24 September 1932, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 12, p. 8.

⁴⁰ “Report of the Committee on the Impact of the SCM on the University,” app. A, SCM National Council

did the programme change drastically from year to year.⁴¹

Besides study groups, other prescribed programmes were implemented. The SCM's missionary concern also translated itself into the formation of a Missionary Education Committee in 1933 (renamed the Missionary Council in 1936) consisting of students, SCM secretaries, and representatives of the SVM and the mission boards of the Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian and United denominations.⁴² Its stated task was three-fold: to educate students about international movements and the world-wide Christian fellowship; to inform students about specific mission projects and opportunities with mission boards; and to unite students committed to foreign missions. To assist in fulfilling this task, the SCM designated one leader as a Missionary Education secretary.⁴³

The SCM's international concern also took other practical forms. The national SCM in 1932 presented a petition signed by 10,000 students to Prime Minister R.B. Bennett encouraging the government to support the reduction of armaments at the upcoming Geneva disarmament conference, and in 1936 the Toronto SCM conducted a

minutes, [1934], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 14, p. 2.

⁴¹ See, for example, the study group outlines of the University of British Columbia SCM in 1935-36 (SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 7, file "Archives 1935-1936") and the University of Toronto SCM in 1938-39 (SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 7, file "Archives 1938-1939"). An interesting comparison can be drawn between the 20 recommended topics in 1935-36 and 98 actual studies conducted across Canada in 1932-33. Studies of a specifically Christian topic recommended in 1935, listed under the headings "On Study of Life of Jesus," "Religious Concepts and the Christian Faith," and "Missions," constituted 12 of the 20 studies (60%). This closely corresponded with the actual studies from 1932-33, listed under similar headings – "Studies of Jesus," "Jesus and Life Experiences," and "Miscellaneous Religious Topics" – which totalled 60 out of 98 (61.2%). Studies on modern societal problems corresponded almost exactly: 5 of the 20 studies (25%) in 1935-36, and 24 of 98 (24.5%) in 1932-33. Beyond these topics, it is unclear whether the 3 remaining recommended studies in 1935-36 on "The Art of Living" (15%) related thematically to the 14 "Miscellaneous" studies (14.3%) in 1932-33. The only significant variance in specific topics was between recommended studies of the life of Jesus, totally 7 of the 20 (35%), and actual studies on "Studies of Jesus" and "Jesus and Life Experiences," totally 51 of the 98 (52%). "Report of Committee on Study Groups," app. C, SCM National Council minutes, 11-13 September 1933, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 13, p. 2, and "Courses for Study Groups Recommended for 1935-36" (SCM of Canada), [1935?], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 7, file "Archives 1935-1936."

⁴² SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 18 April 1933 and 21 May 1936, SCM UCA, box 84-56, files "1933" and "1936."

⁴³ SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 21 May 1936, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file 10.

peace service which was attended by seven hundred people.⁴⁴ Canadian SCM'ers joined with other students under the umbrella of the WSCF to raise money for the Chinese victims of the Japanese military presence in Manchuria from 1931 into the 1940s and the Spanish Civil War in 1936.⁴⁵ In relief of students in China, the Canadian SCM established a committee in the fall of 1937 to inform students and to raise funds. By January 1938, a total of \$1630.36 had been received, a large portion of which had already been sent to WSCF headquarters in Geneva.⁴⁶ Similarly, towards the end of the decade when the threat of war in Europe accelerated, SCM leaders discussed the formation of a Student War Relief Committee.⁴⁷

SCM units across the country also hosted various camps and conferences. In 1933, SCM groups at six universities ran "Setting-up" Conferences for leaders and committee members before the beginning of the fall term in order to plan the year's programme and rekindle enthusiasm.⁴⁸ Also, every region of the nation held spring camps. Executive Committee minutes from 1937 recorded that successful camps had been hosted by UBC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Queen's, McGill, Western Ontario, and one or more schools in the Maritimes. In addition, SCM groups in Montreal and Toronto hosted "City

⁴⁴ Gidney. "Poisoning the Student Mind?" 10.

⁴⁵ "Report of the Commission on the SCM and the World Situation," SCM National Council minutes, [1937], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 17, p. 6. Regarding the conflict in Manchuria, the SCM adopted the view of the WSCF that Christians shared responsibility "for the injustice and inequitable distribution of this world's resources which are basic causes of most acts of military aggression"; but this did not "make evil less evil." Therefore, although aware of circumstances in Japan, the WSCF was convinced that Japan's military action was "a denial of God" and was subject to His judgment. In response, the student federation committed to do all it could to assist: it would aid those working for peace, and it would pray for "all sufferers on both sides." SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 6 October 1937, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file 11, pp. 1-3.

⁴⁶ SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 6 October 1937 and 25 January 1938, SCM UCA, box 84-56, files 11 and 12.

⁴⁷ SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 10 October 1939, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file 13.

⁴⁸ "Report of the general secretary for 1933-4," SCM National Council minutes, [1934], SCM UCA, box 84-94. The six universities were Dalhousie, McGill, Queen's, Toronto, Manitoba and Alberta.

Seminars” which addressed industrial and social conditions.⁴⁹

At conferences and other events, leaders distributed literature recommended by the national office. In the 1930s, the Canadian SCM itself published very little, but rather relied on other publishers. A significant portion of books were products of the British SCM Press, which, in the words of the Canadian general secretary, had “become one of the largest and most influential religious publishing houses in the world.” In 1934, the general secretary observed that annually over the past twelve years the SCM had sold an average of \$1052 worth of books. Since sales had dipped in 1933-34 (no doubt as a result of the general economic depression), the general secretary noted that this emphasis of the SCM might need more attention.⁵⁰ In addition to books, the SCM circulated copies of *The Canadian Student*. By mid-decade, the SCM published six issues annually, twelve hundred copies per issue, for a net cost of \$381. While the SCM acknowledged that students and graduates valued the magazine, it also questioned whether it was worth the time, energy and money spent. The magazine persisted until 1938, when student representatives finally agreed that *The Canadian Student* did not generate much interest on campuses. They decided to replace it with locally-produced ‘News Bulletins’.⁵¹

Before concluding this extensive discussion of SCM activity, it is helpful to focus briefly on one unit, the SCM at the University of Toronto, which in the latter 1930s kept detailed records of its programme events. An analysis of activities from two years, 1935-6 and 1937-8, helps to illuminate how the movement expressed its convictions to students

⁴⁹ SCM National Executive Committee minutes, 14 June 1937, SCM UCA, box 84-56, file 11.

⁵⁰ “Report of the general secretary for 1933-4,” SCM National Council minutes, [1934], SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, and SCM National Council minutes, 8-12, 20 September 1938, SCM UCA, box 84-94, file 18.

at the local level.⁵²

Numerous events were intended to attract students to this SCM unit and give them space to socialize with their peers. In early September 1935, University of Toronto students joined those from other Ontario universities at the Central Area Conference at Lake Couchiching. A month later, students from Victoria College went for a hike and then returned for a "folk-dancing party." In the fall of 1937, the SCM hosted an International Tea to welcome foreign students. Some events combined food and socializing with a presentation or discussion. Towards the beginning of each academic year, college groups hosted a "Freshies' Tea" for new students, at which someone would introduce the SCM's function in the university. Other teas or dinners throughout the year included talks on themes such as "Christianity and Peace," "Religion in the Modern World," and "Negro Spirituals." Activities early in the semester such as selling candy (1935) or running a book exchange (1937) further increased awareness of the SCM's presence on campus.

The U of T SCM organized a plethora of addresses by influential speakers who shared the SCM's agenda – professors, church leaders, missionaries, city and university administrators. Addresses dealt with religious issues, such as "The Bible as Literature," "The Reality of Christianity," "Some Aspects of the Christian Doctrine of God," "The Church and its Worship," "The Meaning of the Cross," "Prayer," and "Christianity and Poetry." In early December 1935, likely in preparation for an upcoming SVM Convention (which ninety-five Toronto delegates attended), SCM meetings concentrated on the theme of missions. At one meeting students spoke about their "Mission Experiences." The next day an address was given on "The Moslem World," and the following week medical

⁵² SCM lists of student activities, 1935-6 and 1937-8, SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 16.

students heard a speaker from Africa talk about “The Lure of Medical Missions.” Other addresses throughout the two years related Christianity to aspects of society such as the modern state and the labour movement.

Various speakers also confronted a wide range of social issues. Some concerned the student world, such as the student’s relationship to the community or the student’s place in a world of “Communism, Fascism and Student Movements.” Others focused on civic issues such as prison systems and Toronto’s slums; particular attention was given to the latter issue in 1935 – within the month of November the SCM hosted two addresses on “slum clearance” and invited Toronto’s reform-minded mayor, James Simpson, to talk about “What Toronto is Doing About the Housing Report.” SCM addresses also reflected the movement’s international outlook. In the fall of 1935 the SCM conducted a series of three lectures on world peace: “Prospects of Peace in Abyssinia,” “The League of Nations.” and “Sanctions and Pacifism.”⁵³

A few events sought directly or indirectly to correct societal ills. The national SCM drive to raise funds in relief of students in China was begun at the University of Toronto in 1937 with a tea at which Dr. T.Z. Koo, a leader of the Chinese SCM, spoke. The SCM also worked to correct the more immediate problems of Toronto’s poor by occasionally ‘entertaining’ unemployed persons in a local house.

Finally, every few years the U of T SCM employed a much more traditional method of evangelism: the campus mission, also known as ‘Religion and Life Weeks.’⁵⁴

⁵³ Other talks in 1935-36 and 1937-38 concerned Africa, Abyssinia [Ethiopia], race relations in South Africa, students and Christianity in China, the British relationship with India, and the threat of war in Europe. In November of both 1935 and 1937 a leader of the Chinese SCM, Dr. T.Z. Koo, addressed large student assemblies organized by the SCM in the University’s Convocation Hall.

⁵⁴ According to Douglas Johnson, this method of presenting Christianity to students originated at Cambridge in 1882 when the evangelical student group brought in the American evangelistic team of Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey; from this point on, student groups at Cambridge and other British

In 1939 the SCM at U of T deemed that since four years had passed since the last campus mission, another was overdue if the SCM was to communicate Jesus' message to every U of T graduate. The event's expressed purpose was clearly evangelistic: "To confront the undergraduates with the claims of Jesus Christ, and to win their allegiance to Him."⁵⁵ Elsewhere the week's aim was described to be "to lead undergraduates to a vital faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Lord of life and to a thorough personal commitment to his cause in the world."⁵⁶

This task was to be accomplished in a variety of ways. The week began with a Sunday service in Convocation Hall, attended by seven hundred and fifty people, predominantly students. A visiting speaker preached on "The Vision of God," based on the verse "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Throughout the week, male students heard talks on personal religion: "I Believe in Christ," "I Believe in Prayer," "Christianity and Inner Power," and "What Religion Means to Me." Female students listened to addresses concerning womanhood, relationships between women, men and God, and "What Christianity Means to Me." Space and time was also provided for quiet prayer.⁵⁷

As part of the mission, the SCM conducted a survey of fifteen percent of the student population concerning their religious attitudes. The results, published in the university newspaper, may have been surprising to SCM'ers: the survey revealed that

universities commonly ran missions every three years. In Canada, campus missions were introduced only as colleges drew away from the control of Protestant denominations. Johnson, *Contending for the Faith*, 54-56.

⁵⁵ Report of the Religion and Life Week committee, [1939], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 23, file "SCM, U of T, Religion & Life Week 1939."

⁵⁶ "Student Christian Movement in the University of Toronto News Bulletin," 3, no. 2 (March 1939), SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 15, file "SCM in U of T News Bulletin."

⁵⁷ Report of the Religion and Life Week committee, [1939], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 23, file "SCM, U of T, Religion & Life Week 1939."

religion and specifically Christianity remained a pervasive force on campus. For example, 74 % of students considered themselves religious, 51 % described Jesus Christ as a teacher, 49 % as divine Saviour, and 40 % as the Son of God, and 74 % believed in prayer and 57 % categorized it more specifically as “communion with God.” The newspaper report gave no statistics concerning God but stated that students characterized God more often as a benevolent Father than as intelligence. Non-traditional responses were minimal: 10 % of students surveyed considered religion to be “an illusion, opiate and intellectual suicide.” 21 % described themselves as agnostics and 5 % as atheists, 7 % characterized Jesus as a legendary figure and 1 % as a religious fanatic, and 18 % described prayer as “wishful thinking” and 17 % as “auto-suggestion” (this term, connoting prayer as a psychological effect, was not explained).⁵⁸

In the task of this university mission, the U of T SCM invited the cooperation of the local Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship group. IVCF representatives stipulated that the week’s purpose must be “the winning of souls for Christ,” and the keynote leader of the mission should be evangelical, one who would sign IVCF’s statement of faith. After some discussion, the two groups could not agree on a leader; therefore, the SCM officially sponsored the mission and requested that two IVCF’ers sit on the planning committee.⁵⁹

One would think, in light of the mission’s purpose, that IVCF would have been eager to accept the SCM’s invitation. The SCM’s intent to win students’ “allegiance” to Jesus Christ appears to have corresponded very well with IVCF’s emphasis on “the winning of souls for Christ.” However, Inter-Varsity must have perceived some real

⁵⁸ “Student Christian Movement in the University of Toronto News Bulletin,” 3, no. 2 (March 1939), SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 15, file “SCM in U of T News Bulletin.”

⁵⁹ Report of the Religion and Life Week committee, [1939], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 23, file “SCM, U of T, Religion & Life Week 1939.”

differences of philosophy which precipitated their refusal to co-sponsor the mission week. This raises the question, was IVCF's activism sharply divergent from the SCM's?

From the beginning, IVCF had determined part of its approach to Canadian students through comparison with the activity of the SCM. In 1931 the first IVCF general secretary, Noel Palmer, noted the common hope of both movements for a practical Christianity but believed that the SCM's focus on social and political issues was too self-conscious. Inter-Varsity members, in Palmer's view, should be aware of "the great questions of the day" and should participate in solutions, but this practical concern should flow automatically "like a fragrance" from a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Palmer encouraged IVCF students to communicate Christianity to others not through social activism but rather through evangelism – the verbalization of one's belief in and experience of Jesus. ". . . Christianizing the nations," asserted Palmer, "has ever been the inevitable but mighty by-product of evangelizing them."⁶⁰ Likewise, C. Stacey Woods, the general secretary active from 1934 into the next decade, also interpreted the SCM's philosophy to be "that if one could only change the world and its environment, this would inevitably result in changed men and women." In contrast, said Woods, IVCF reversed the order of this process: "the ultimate salvation of society" would be brought about primarily through "the salvation of individual men and women."⁶¹

IVCF leaders, contrary to many SCM leaders who embraced the liberal emphases of higher education, considered the college or university environment to be part of the society in desperate need of Christianity; thus they encouraged IVCF members to take advantage of opportunities to evangelize their peers. One leader described the Christian

⁶⁰ Noel Palmer, "Our Relationship to the Student Christian Movement," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 3.

student as “a privileged evangelist among a significant and needy class” and urged churches not to over-involve student members in church activities but rather to “fling every resource” into the “vital and pregnant mission-field” of the university.⁶² Similarly, in 1938 a secretary wrote to a prospective Queen’s University medical student that “a Christian Student has a real opportunity in what I believe to be the most difficult field in the world,” and characterized the university as a place “not conducive to soul saving work”; lectures, for example, were often “detrimental to spiritual things.”⁶³ IVCF leaders were convinced that evangelism was the most efficient way to communicate the Christian message on a secular, and sometimes hostile, university campus.

As a result of this conviction, a primary role of IVCF leaders was to educate students to evangelize their peers. Where SCM leaders educated their members about the life of Christ and the application of his teachings in the modern world, IVCF leaders taught about the importance of having a relationship with Christ and seeking to tell others about him. This basic message was communicated to IVCF students through a variety of means.

In 1931 IVCF’s general secretary wrote a document entitled “Witnessing for Christ,” to be used as a basis for discussion at the annual conference, in which he outlined various personal characteristics necessary for effective evangelism.⁶⁴ The most obvious need, in his mind, was courage, since Christian students were, quite naturally, nervous about making “a firm stand for God” on their respective campuses. Complementary to courage was faith, a conviction that the Christian message was sound and that Christ was

⁶¹ C. Stacey Woods, *Growth of a Work of God*, 94.

⁶² Report, [early 1930s?], IVA, box 1, file “History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36).”

⁶³ Charles Troutman to Claude Vipond, 23 September 1938, IVA, box 3, file “Charles Troutman, QC.”

⁶⁴ Noel Palmer, “Witnessing for Christ,” Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file “History - the Rev F.

at work “behind the scenes.” Moreover, students needed to be patient in the task of evangelism. The secretary suggested that individuals keep a record of whom they were seeking to evangelize and leave a space to write in the date on which the person chose to become a Christian. In addition, students must ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom in regard to what to say in a witnessing opportunity. They should also be honest, humble and friendly. Finally, Christian students should have a vital spirituality, which essentially meant a moral strength gained from the “indwelling” of Christ in one’s life. Indeed, all these characteristics the secretary traced to a relationship with Christ. Genuine Christians, in his view, would naturally experience opportunities to share their convictions because others would be drawn in by their winsome character.

It should be emphasized that for IVCF leaders devotional activities necessarily laid the groundwork for evangelistic activities. Evangelistic success would come, according to one IVCF representative, not through “clever campaigns” or “the most orthodox theology” or “the most exact training,” but rather through a vital relationship with Christ.⁶⁵

Leaders recommended a number of specifically evangelistic events. One of the most successful was the “squash,” a casual student gathering in a private residence; the concept had originated in Britain, and was named thus because rooms were often filled to capacity.⁶⁶ An IVCF general secretary described a typical squash:

Private invitations are given out, usually by word of mouth, and when the day arrives each guest is introduced to the hostess, while the company get mutually acquainted, and so on. Refreshments are often served, first if the hour is afternoon, or last if it is evening. Quite naturally and without any appearance of being forced, choruses or hymns are introduced, and a brief pointed testimony and message are given by

Noel Palmer.”

⁶⁵ Judson H. Merritt, “Our Missionary Prospect,” TMs, 1936, IVA, unlabelled box, file “C.S.W. 1934-41,” 2-3.

⁶⁶ Troutman, “Backgrounds of Evangelical University Witness,” 76.

some professional man or other suitable speaker. This may lead to other *ex tempore* testimonies, or discussion, and prayer. Always prayers. The meeting breaks up as informally as it began, gradually slipping back into a pleasant social occasion, while the guests take their leave in the usual way. But it may frequently happen that a few will have been deeply touched, and opportunity should be unobtrusively given for such to remain and talk things over seriously with some of the leaders.⁶⁷

Thus careful attention was given to make students feel important, through private invitation, and comfortable, through meeting in a home, serving refreshments, and allowing for time to socialize. A certain element of planning the event was necessary, but some freedom should exist for spontaneous testimonies or further conversations between leaders and interested students. Through the squash, leaders hoped to arrange a context in which students would not feel threatened but where at the same time there would be a clear Christian message and an opportunity for students to respond.

IVCF also encouraged local units to conduct campus missions. These also had been developed by evangelical students in Britain; a speaker was brought in to deliver a series of addresses over the course of a few days, and Christian students were trained to follow up contacts made during the mission. As was the case with the SCM's campus missions, IVCF encouraged its units to lead a campus-wide evangelistic effort often enough that every student generation be reached (typically every three to four years).⁶⁸ As outlined by the Canadian general secretary in 1931, speakers in these campaigns were to be carefully selected, the addresses were to be advertised well through both print and word of mouth, and students were to pray in preparation for the mission. After each meeting had concluded formally, Christian students were to approach others in order to

⁶⁷ Noel Palmer, "Our Purpose, Programme, & Problems," Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file "History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer," 4-5. Some comparisons could be made with the "house-parties" of the Oxford Group in the early 1930s, which likewise issued personal invitations, aimed for a relaxing, comfortable atmosphere, and gave prominence to personal testimonies. See Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith*, 216-217.

⁶⁸ Troutman, "Backgrounds of Evangelical University Witness," 76.

“in a friendly way see if any immediate spiritual help can be given, or decisions reached.”

Experience had shown, he stated, that either immediate or eventual conversions occurred as a result of these talks.⁶⁹

Literature was yet another means of training students and spreading the Christian message. But in the inter-war years, literature useful for evangelical students was in short supply. By this time most universities and colleges had become more secular, and the voice of evangelical scholarship on campus had become muted.⁷⁰ This had resulted in a militant response on the part of fundamentalist writers. One IVCF secretary recalled evangelical books published in the 1930s which vilified the universities as bastions of secularism, books with eye-catching titles such as *Crucifying Christ in our Colleges: Poison Peddlers; The Vanishing Virgin; or The Slaughter of Innocence*.⁷¹ Rather than using these, IVCF leaders resigned themselves to make use of a few second-hand or library books which dealt with evangelical topics; usually these dated from the nineteenth century. Moreover, IVCF turned to the British Inter-Varsity Press (IVP), which had only recently been set up to publish evangelical literature geared towards students.⁷² In 1936,

⁶⁹ Noel Palmer, “Our Purpose, Programme, & Problems,” Ms [draft], [1931], IVA, unlabelled box, file “History - the Rev F. Noel Palmer,” 5.

⁷⁰ On the secularizing shift within Canadian colleges and universities, see Gauvreau, *Evangelical Century*, and D.C. Masters, *Protestant Church Colleges in Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966). The displacement of evangelical scholarship from mainstream culture was also evident in the corresponding emergence of a string of alternative evangelical institutions, typically training schools for Christian workers rather than academic centres, in the 1920s and 1930s. See Wright, “Canadian Protestant Tradition 1914-1945,” 164-167, and Robert K. Burkinshaw, “Evangelical Bible Colleges in Twentieth-Century Canada,” in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. Rawlyk, 369-384. On Prairie Bible Institute see Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism* and on Toronto Bible College and the London College of Bible and Missions see Austin, “History of OBC.” The same trend towards the rejection of evangelical scholarship in the universities and the founding of evangelical schools is noted on the American side by Noll in *Between Faith and Criticism* and *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994) and by Marsden in *Reforming Fundamentalism*.

⁷¹ Troutman, “Backgrounds of Evangelical University Witness,” 158. It is unclear whether the books were published in the United States or Canada. Troutman worked with the Canadian IVCF in the late 1930s before concentrating on American universities.

⁷² The Canadian IVCF’s evidently British orientation corresponds well with Mark Noll’s argument

the national IVCF office became the official Canadian distributor of IVP books and magazines, in the hopes that not only religious bookstores but also students and leaders would avail themselves of this more relevant material.⁷³

Leaders also hoped to foster an awareness of foreign missionary activity. One IVCF'er noted, in a report written in 1936 on IVCF's missionary programme, that actual mission-related events might vary from campus to campus, depending on "local needs." However, missionary prayer meetings, "first-class" missionary speakers, literature, and specific discussion groups were considered to be essential activities. In addition, some form of contact with foreign missionaries, at least one missionary study group per term, and a small library were strongly suggested. Somehow, appealed the report, mission-minded students should be coordinated into a type of fellowship, such as a weekly meeting for prayer and discussion. Beyond these, local groups could exercise their creativity. Moreover the report issued a clear call to missionary action: giving money was a good start, but needs were great, especially in areas such as China and Africa. These consisted not only of financial demands but also of the desperate call for "specific and well-informed prayer" and an awareness that "the evangelisation of the world is not just the mysterious calling of a few, but the responsibility of every Christian."⁷⁴

In practice, IVCF units across Canada supplemented the above with other evangelistic means. One idea was the "News Team," practiced by the Church Army of the Anglican Church in England and applied by students at the University of Toronto in

concerning American evangelicals who during the 1930s likewise imported British evangelical literature. See especially chaps. 3 and 4 of Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism*. On the British Inter-Varsity Press, see *ibid.*, 82-85 and 101-102, and chap. 18 of Douglas Johnson's *Contending for the Faith*.

⁷³ C. Stacey Woods to Douglas Johnson, 7 May and 11 June 1936, and Douglas Johnson to C. Stacey Woods, 18 May 1936, IVA, box 3, file "1935-36 British IVCF." Johnson informed C. Stacey Woods (18 May) that the British IVF would supply literature at cost (except for shipping, and this was hoped to be done inexpensively through the regular transatlantic shipments of the Children's Special Service Mission).

1937. In an article published as a Canadian entry in the *British Inter-Varsity's* magazine, a student leader explained that students were not always interested in listening to an exegesis of a biblical text. But an account of one's personal Christian experience was "always news to others the first time they hear it." Thus Christian students who were "able to witness to a vital experience of Christ" and were "eager to win souls" banded together to form a "News Team." At the University of Toronto, the team planned a meal at a popular student cafe near campus, and each member invited a student who "did not profess to be a Christian." Dinner was followed by brief testimonies by four team members of Christ's influence in their lives and an informal discussion about Christianity. According to the student leader's report, guests responded with questions such as "What is your idea of God?" "What difference would it make to the Christian religion if Christ did not really rise from the dead?" "How can the death of Christ save us?" and "Why do you insist that the Bible has divine authority when it contradicts itself in some places?" The student leader felt that in answering these questions, team members were "able in a general way to preach all the essentials of the gospel."⁷⁵ These students were convinced that an anecdotal, personal presentation of the Christian message was a more effective evangelistic method than formal addresses on abstract religious concepts.

Student testimonies were also features of larger meetings and rallies. A 1934 poster displayed at Huron College in London, Ontario announced: "Hear 3 Varsity Students speak on What Christ Means to Me."⁷⁶ A representative of the University of

⁷⁴ Judson H. Merritt, "Our Missionary Prospect," TMs, [1936], IVA, unlabelled box, file "C.S.W. 1934-41."

⁷⁵ Stanley E. Smith, "A 'News Team' in the University of Toronto," *Canadian Supplement to British IVFEU magazine*, 5 April 1937, IVA, box 3.

⁷⁶ Poster, 17 November 1934, IVA, box 1, file "History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36)."

Western Ontario IVCF group explained in 1934 that at their Sunday evening evangelistic meetings, held once or twice each month, students spoke except for "on special occasions," because "it has been found that the witness of a student to the saving power of Jesus Christ, even if delivered in weakness, is usually more impressive to his fellow students than the most eloquent sermon delivered by a minister."⁷⁷ Apparently testimonies could result in immediate conversions. A general secretary described one unidentified meeting at which a number of students talked about "the power and reality of Christ in their lives," followed by informal discussion in groups of two or three. Five students, he reported, "decided for Christ."⁷⁸ Testimonies by IVCF members were also an important part of evangelistic student rallies on campuses across Canada.⁷⁹

IVCF secretaries shared responsibility for evangelism in a variety of contexts. In addition to their teaching role, they sought to be practical evangelists. The first general secretary wrote that he and other leaders had been very successful in converting students on an individual basis.⁸⁰ IVCF leaders also considered public addresses to be evangelistic opportunities. One secretary was aided in his evangelistic appeal at Mount Royal College in Calgary by the principal, who, after the secretary spoke at a college chapel service in 1938, challenged students personally to answer the question, "What think ye of Christ?"⁸¹ Other evangelistic attempts were more indirect. One secretary aimed in a series of talks to counter the conclusions of psychology in regard to Christian experience. The last

⁷⁷ Coggan, ed., *Christ and the Colleges*, 167. The author (or authors) of the chapter dealing with "The Canadian Universities," undoubtedly from a Canadian perspective, is unnamed.

⁷⁸ Noel Palmer, "Report from the Colleges and Schools," February 1933, IVA, box 1, file "History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36)."

⁷⁹ See, for example, Ross O. Young to C. Stacey Woods, 12 March 1937, IVA, box 1, file "Material of Historic Interest (1937-39)," and Belva Atkinson, weekly report, 28 March - 2 April 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Correspondence Belva Atkinson, ON."

⁸⁰ Noel Palmer, "Report from the Colleges and Schools," February 1933, IVA, box 1, file "History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36)."

address in the series was planned to be “a very plain presentation of the Gospel.”⁸²

Another secretary discussed “Vital Problems on the Campus” with a group of female university students.⁸³

Student conferences, on either a local or national level, were also popular means to advance IVCF’s message. A Winnipeg student conference in 1938 resulted in a number of conversions. The programme consisted of an afternoon message, followed by discussion groups, an informal supper, then student testimonies and an evening address. The key evangelistic address, delivered by a prominent Canadian professional, emphasized the centrality of Jesus in the Christian faith.⁸⁴ From its outset, IVCF organized annual national conferences. The 1936 conference, in Guelph, Ontario, had a programme similar to the Winnipeg conference: devotional messages, studies on Jesus’ resurrection and its implications, free time for recreation, and evening fireside discussions and missionary addresses. Planners hoped to bring in three influential and educated outsiders, perhaps to speak or to lead the studies on Jesus. It was clearly stated that any university student was welcome to attend, regardless of whether he or she had previously been involved with an IVCF group.⁸⁵

In addition to such forms of witness, IVCF fulfilled the wish of its national office to distribute literature. According to the general secretary, in 1937 IVCF worked to establish an IVCF book shelf in each university (presumably those campuses on which an

⁸¹ Jim Forrester, report, 16 February 1938, IVA, box 3, file “Jim Forrester, W. Canada.”

⁸² Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, reports, 30 December 1937 and 19 January 1938, IVA, box 3, file “Jim Forrester, W. Canada.”

⁸³ Belva Atkinson, weekly report, 23-30 October 1937, IVA, box 3, file “Correspondence Belva Atkinson, ON.”

⁸⁴ Cathie Nicoll, report on “Winnipeg Conference,” 26 February 1938, IVA, box 3, file “Cathie Nicoll, Winnipeg.” The speaker was R. Hall Glover, medical doctor and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

⁸⁵ Newsletter, 1936, IVA, box 9, file “University Chapters (Cdn.) ‘36-‘42.”

IVCF unit existed). "It is hoped," said the secretary, "to make available the best in Christian Evidences, Apologetics and Missionary Endeavour to Canadian university students." Beginning in the mid-1930s, the British Inter-Varsity Press shipped numerous books and leaflets. Some of these were of a devotional nature, such as a guidebook for devotions. "The Quiet Time." and a bible study course. "Search the Scriptures." Others concerned the subject of evangelism, such as a leaflet entitled "Evangelize to a Finish" and a book entitled *Effective Witness*.⁸⁶ To encourage the missionary endeavour, IVCF distributed five hundred free copies of an Inter-Varsity Press biography of a well-known English cricketer and student, C.T. Studd, who had devoted his life to Christian missionary work in China.⁸⁷ The Canadian IVCF also circulated the British Inter-Varsity Fellowship's student magazine.⁸⁸ Occasional reference was made in IVCF study groups to books by British "outstanding evangelicals" such as Ambrose Fleming, Rendle Short and Basil Atkinson.⁸⁹ Leaders also handed out the pamphlets of the prominent McGill scientist Dr. W. Bell Dawson in which he challenged the conclusions of evolutionary theory and the higher criticism by arguing that scientific findings confirmed rather than subverted the Bible.⁹⁰ At least one IVCF unit, at the University of Alberta, placed Bibles in the local university library, courtesy of the Gideons.⁹¹

IVCF members demonstrated a missionary interest in other ways besides reading

⁸⁶ C. Stacey Woods to Douglas Johnson, 27 September and 16 December 1935, and D.H.A. Christie-Murray to C. Stacey Woods, 11 November 1935, IVA, box 3, file "1935-36 British IVCF."

⁸⁷ C. Stacey Woods, general secretary's report (1936-37), 30 September 1937, IVA, unlabelled box, file "34-41."

⁸⁸ In 1939 the IVCF Board of Directors recognized that a more indigenous publication needed to take the place of this magazine but considered the Canadian office ill-equipped to take on this task. IVCF Board of Directors minutes, 19 January 1939, IVA, filing cabinet, binder "Minutes, Board of Directors, 20 Jan. 1936 - 16 Oct. 1954." Beginning in the 1940s, the Canadian movement circulated an American IVCF magazine.

⁸⁹ Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, 20 January 1939, IVA, box 4, file "Correspondence: Jim Forrester (Western Canada) 1938-39."

⁹⁰ C. Stacey Woods, general secretary's report (1936-37), 30 September 1937, IVA, unlabelled box, file

books or listening to missionary speakers. One such means was to keep in contact with students who had gone away on foreign missions. In 1935 IVCF established Missionary Secretaries in a number of universities in order to act as a liaison between students and missionaries and to organize those interested in missions. According to one IVCF'er, by 1936 at least sixteen former students (presumably from the entire national movement) had become missionaries. Letters kept Canadian IVCF members informed about the international scope of evangelism. In addition, Inter-Varsity groups hosted different forms of meetings on the theme of missions, such as discussion and study circles, addresses by missionaries, secretaries or other visitors, prayer meetings, and informal gatherings over a meal.⁹²

As with the SCM unit at the University of Toronto, a closer examination of one IVCF group, at McGill University in the latter half of the 1930s, helps to illuminate how the movement expressed its convictions at the local level. The fall semester of 1936 began with a Sunday evening tea, a type of meeting corresponding to the "squashes" described above. It was reported that over one hundred and twenty students attended. The main speaker, Dr. R. Hall Glover, a medical missionary and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, gave a talk on the Christian faith, followed by an informal account of his personal Christian experience and a description of missions opportunities in China.⁹³ The varied content of Glover's talk and informal discussion, which ranged from an appeal for students to follow Christ to an elucidation of missionary needs, suggests that this type of event served multiple purposes. Personal anecdotes and an exhortation to

"34-41."

⁹¹ D.E. Cameron (University of Alberta librarian) to Gideons secretary, 10 March 1936, IVA, box 1.

⁹² Judson H. Merritt, "Our Missionary Prospect," TMs, [1936], IVA, unlabelled box, file "C.S.W. 1934-41."

⁹³ "Missionary Head Addressed IVCF Meeting Sunday," newspaper clipping [likely the *McGill Daily*], 10

study Christian precepts would have been directed at students who were relatively unfamiliar with the Christian faith. On the other hand, Glover's call for students to be missionaries in China would have been directed to Christian students. Through this evening tea, then, IVCF leaders hoped to present the Christian message to seekers and to awaken Christian students to the worldwide missionary endeavour. On the heels of the evening tea the IVCF group planned to host a luncheon at which a missionary-explorer who had recently returned from interior Brazil and the upper Amazon would speak.⁹⁴

The following year, the McGill IVCF included similar events in its programme. For example, the Sunday evening "squashes" continued.⁹⁵ Likewise, the IVCF group continued to invite professional and missionary speakers. A.J. Nesbitt, a prominent Montreal businessman, one-time governor of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and financial supporter of IVCF, gave an address at McGill on "Christianity and the Student." He encouraged students in the midst of a darkening world to remember that cheerfulness and peace could be found in Jesus Christ. Cheerfulness resulted from Jesus' promise of forgiveness and relief from suffering. In response to the threat of war in Europe, Nesbitt expressed his belief that obedience to Christ was the only remedy.⁹⁶ In December 1937, a missionary from French Equatorial Africa spoke at a breakfast meeting, attended by twenty-six people (including sixteen newcomers), and at a Friday evening meeting, attended by thirty-five. At the Friday meeting the missionary showed slides and talked about the sociological features of the region; announcements of this event in McGill

October 1936, IVA, box 4, file "Troutman Corresp. 1939 [?]."

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Charles Troutman, "Inter-Varsity and Inter-School Christian Fellowship Secretarial Information, P.Q. 1937-38," [1937-38], IVA, box 4, file "Annual Reports - C. Troutman."

⁹⁶ Newspaper clippings, attached to Charles Troutman, reports, 1937-38, IVA, box 3, file "Correspondence: C. Troutman, Quebec." A.J. Nesbitt was the president of three companies: Nesbitt, Thomson & Co., Ltd., the Canadian Northern Power Corporation, and the Power Corporation of Canada. He also sat on the board

sociology classes brought eighteen sociology students to the meeting.⁹⁷

Despite the evangelistic efforts made in 1936-37, in the next academic year the McGill group determined to be even more diligent in evangelism. The year's programme included a mission to be conducted by Howard Guinness, the British Inter-Varsity evangelist who had given impetus to the formation of the Canadian IVCF in 1928-29.⁹⁸ In addition, the group planned to publish a series of articles on the Bible in the *McGill Daily*. Various tracts were collected to aid Christian students in their personal contacts. Generally the IVCF group aimed to focus on personal rather than corporate evangelism. Perhaps to this end, the unit discontinued campus church services which it had led in the past.⁹⁹

Moreover, the local secretary listed various Inter-Varsity Press publications which he planned to sell to students. These almost exclusively dealt with issues of practical Christian living and evangelism. Included were *Effective Witness* (author unknown), Robert Wilder's *Valiant in Fight*, and *Sacrifice* (1936) by Howard Guinness. The latter book was an urgent and bold appeal for students to hold nothing back in their service to Christ.¹⁰⁰ Others listed were a book of Christian apologetics entitled *Why the Cross?* and the history of the British Inter-Varsity Fellowship by F. Donald Coggan, entitled *Christ and the Colleges* (1934).¹⁰¹ Norman P. Grubb's biography of a well-known British sportsman-turned-missionary, *C. T. Studd, Cricketer and Pioneer* (1935), was added to

of directors of numerous Canadian public utilities firms.

⁹⁷ Charles Troutman, report, 13 December 1937, IVA, box 3, file "Charles Troutman, QC."

⁹⁸ In the end Guinness was unable to come to Canada to conduct the McGill mission.

⁹⁹ Charles Troutman, "Inter-Varsity and Inter-School Christian Fellowship Secretarial Information, P.Q. 1937-38," [1937-38], IVA, box 4, file "Annual Reports - C. Troutman."

¹⁰⁰ Guinness, Howard W., *Sacrifice: A Challenge to Christian Youth* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1936).

¹⁰¹ Charles Troutman, "Inter-Varsity and Inter-School Christian Fellowship Secretarial Information, P.Q. 1937-38," [1937-38], IVA, box 4, file "Annual Reports - C. Troutman." F. Donald Coggan taught for a few

the McGill library in the 1938-39 academic year.¹⁰²

The McGill IVCF's activities and emphases clearly reflected those of the national movement. Students understood the priority which IVCF gave to evangelism. To this end they hosted squashes, lectures, and casual gatherings at which IVCF's evangelical message was voiced. Moreover they emphasized student testimonies as an effective method of evangelism. Leaders also distributed Christian tracts which could be handed on to friends and books which taught students about missions and evangelism. Other types of events suggested by the national leadership, such as the campus mission, were not attempted by the McGill group. This reveals that the movement gave freedom to local units to be creative as long as IVCF's basic aim to evangelize was carried out. The varied outreach activities of the McGill IVCF demonstrated the members' enthusiasm to communicate their experience of Christ to others, either within the university context or in distant lands.

Some key similarities emerge from a comparison of the SCM's and IVCF's evangelistic efforts across the country. First of all, leaders of both movements occasionally acknowledged a lack of success in the attempts to convey Christianity to others. An IVCF secretary at a western university lamented in 1937 that evangelistic methods had "not been such as might appeal to the campus mentality." "I found evidence of last year's attempts," he illustrated, "in tracts containing mutilated portions of Scripture, signed IVCF, and distributed freely amongst the students. The bulletin board announcement too was scrawled out in poor handwriting upon an odd scrap of paper." Such observations led him to conclude that the membership suffered from "an inferiority

years at Wycliffe College in Toronto; he went on to become the Archbishop of Canterbury and then York.
¹⁰² C. Stacey Woods to Jack Burgar, 20 January 1939, IVA, box 1, file "Material of Historic Interest (1937-

complex."¹⁰³ One SCM member reminisced that despite all the effort to be relevant, the SCM's activities had been "too often remote from the actual realities of community life, abstract and somewhat hypothetical."¹⁰⁴ While respectively their core understandings of Christianity did not vary considerably over the years, both IVCF and the SCM recognized the need to be continually innovative in the presentation of these understandings.

Thus, while purposes differed fundamentally, often the methods of the two movements were comparable. Both ran events which blended social and educational elements. For example, the Toronto SCM's "Freshies' teas" and the McGill IVCF's Sunday evening teas and "squashes" equally sought to attract student interest in their respective activities. Likewise both the SCM and IVCF conducted camps, conferences, public addresses by prominent professionals, campus-wide missions and various events of a purely religious or social nature. Moreover the roles of the SCM's Missionary Education Secretary and IVCF's Missionary Secretary were similar. Finally, the national offices of both organizations distributed books and magazines to local units. Often this literature was British in origin; American or Canadian works were more prevalent in SCM circles, but IVCF did find a few to be useful.

Both movements likewise showed an awareness of current issues. Again, responses to these issues diverged sharply, and it could generally be said that the SCM's knowledge of social concerns and interest in providing Christian solutions to them ran deeper than IVCF's. Nonetheless a comparison of the two movements' activities reveals that both were aware of, and responded to, current events. For example, in the second half of the 1930s, a parallel concern existed between the SCM and IVCF for China and

39)."

¹⁰³ Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, report, 29 October 1937, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada."

Africa. While SCM'ers raised money for victims of oppression in China and listened to talks on China, Ethiopia and South Africa, IVCF'ers listened to missionary and sociological reports from Africa and heard about mission opportunities in China. Obviously the two groups differed over whether social or spiritual welfare was most important: however contact with social problems heightened the urgency of both movements' campaigns.

Also, SCM and IVCF leaders emphasized the responsibility of individuals in the evangelistic task. SCM concern for members personally to invite others to study groups was not far removed from IVCF concern for 'friendly' evangelism. The difference between personally convincing a student to become a Christian and drawing the student into a context in which Christ could be discovered was in the end a subtle one. Moreover, the SCM's attention to each student's "personal situation" and its belief in the pervasive relevance of Christ to all facets of life were comparable to IVCF's emphasis on individual conversion and submission, or surrender, to Christ.

The connection between the two lay in the fact that both the SCM and IVCF were fundamentally interested in leading individuals to belief in Jesus Christ. For IVCF members this would be accomplished primarily through personal evangelism and missions, both on campus and in foreign lands. Present Jesus to people, and the world would be changed, they asserted. SCM members adopted a different method: through informed social service they would create a healthier context in which people could understand Jesus. As Phyllis Airhart has argued for Canadian Methodists of the early twentieth century, focusing on "saving society" did not end concern for the "cure of

¹⁰⁴ Wilfred F. Butcher to Ernest Dale, 25 August 1941, SCM UCA, box 84-11, file 1.

souls.”¹⁰⁵ The belief was that if people were given food and shelter and clothing, then they would be better able to consider the claims of Jesus.

Both movements also emphasized the development of Christian character among members as an important and a necessary precursor to evangelism. For the SCM, social activism and the ultimate task of building the Kingdom of God blossomed out of a study of Christianity – specifically of Jesus, the Bible, the church, missions, and the Christian responsibility in regard to modern issues. Social gospel historian Richard Allen has gone so far as to argue that the study of Jesus’ life, an emphasis which emerged in the 1920s, was in itself a new form of evangelism.¹⁰⁶ In a similar way, IVCF believed that successful evangelistic endeavours resulted from the strengthening of students’ relationships with Christ through prayer and worship, Bible study, the reading of evangelical literature, and fellowship with like-minded students.

Finally, the SCM and IVCF on occasion actually cooperated or at least attempted to cooperate. At the University of Toronto in 1935, SCM and IVCF students joined in sponsoring and attending at least two addresses, one on “The Church in the World” and one on the subject of medical missions.¹⁰⁷ And, though in the end unsuccessful, the SCM did seek the support of IVCF in its “Religion and Life Week” at U of T in 1939.¹⁰⁸

Certainly important differences between the evangelistic efforts of the SCM and IVCF existed. The SCM approached Canadian students overwhelmingly through the intellect, whereas IVCF stressed experience. In comparison with the SCM’s incisive analysis of social, economic and political issues, IVCF appears to have been largely

¹⁰⁵ Airhart, *Serving the Present Age*, 125.

¹⁰⁶ Allen, *Social Passion*, 219.

¹⁰⁷ SCM list of activities, 1935-6, SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 16, file “SCM student activities 1935-6.”

¹⁰⁸ Report of the Religion and Life Week committee, [1939], SCM UTA, B79-0059, box 23, file “SCM, U of

ignorant of the forces at work behind world events and social problems. Alternatively, the SCM's rephrasing of Christian principles in modern language contrasted sharply with the traditional Christian language expressed in IVCF circles.

But each movement formulated clear plans by which it would spread the ideals of Jesus Christ. Whether through soul-winning or through the social gospel, IVCF and the SCM each aimed to apply Christian principles to the ultimate salvation of the world. For IVCF, the world would be changed as individuals came to recognize Jesus as their Saviour. For the SCM, the process of transformation had a different point of departure, namely the application of Jesus' teachings to the social, economic and political crises facing modern society. Having probed many differences and similarities, a number of conclusions arise.

CONCLUSION

Was the SCM's and IVCF's parallel presence on many Canadian campuses evidence that modernist-fundamentalist tensions extended into the 1930s? Could the SCM be best characterized as 'modernist' and IVCF as 'fundamentalist'?

There certainly did exist key differences between the self-definition and activity of these student movements; this suggests that a significant divide did separate them. Their theologies especially diverged. The SCM sought God in the midst of modern society and viewed Jesus as God's human reflection. Moreover the SCM emphasized Jesus' teachings as holding solutions to the problems of the modern world; God's kingdom on earth would be established, it was hoped, through moral, social and economic change.

The SCM's leaders shaped programme events around these convictions. They planned study groups which would allow students to discover for themselves through the higher critical method a Jesus hidden in the text of the Gospels; this discovery would in turn facilitate discussion of how he was relevant to the solution of modern crises. In other activities they sought to educate members on the issues of the day. In addition they offered practical opportunities for students to enact change, be it by feeding and clothing Canada's unemployed, petitioning the government about military disarmament, or raising funds for student victims of foreign wars. And, at varying levels throughout the 1930s, services of worship and prayer, for the most part liturgical in nature, gave spiritual depth

to the movement's social gospel concerns.

IVCF, in contrast, emphasized the divine nature of Jesus and sought to promote an understanding of him as Saviour or Lord of one's life. More important than Jesus' humanity were the implications of his death for the sins of the world and his rising to life again thereby bringing hope of eternal life. IVCF further recognized the Bible as inspired by God and, subsequently, as the authoritative religious source.

In practical form, IVCF leaders sought to nurture students' relationships with Christ. For students who already claimed to be Christians, IVCF facilitated opportunities in which they could deepen their faith through Bible study, prayer and worship. And out of this spiritual deepening, it was believed, would come a greater enthusiasm among members to share their experience of Christ with others. IVCF's programme, then, fostered this evangelistic process. Members were taught how best to witness to their friends and were encouraged to support or to go on foreign missions.

A divide was also evident in the contrasting networks of people and organizations with which IVCF and the SCM associated. IVCF's contacts were almost exclusively evangelical; that is, IVCF rubbed shoulders with those individuals and institutions holding essentially the same beliefs as they did about God, Jesus, the Bible, and the importance of evangelism. Representatives of churches and missionary organizations and evangelical professors and entrepreneurs figured prominently in IVCF's associations. Even so, IVCF seemed somewhat protective of its identity through its avoidance of official connections with other organizations. The SCM, however, freely engaged in a wide assortment of contacts, both Christian and otherwise. To be sure, the SCM's associations also often followed lines which buttressed rather than challenged its agenda: the movement would

sooner connect with student governments, peace movements and liberal theologians than with representatives of traditional Christianity. But overall the SCM's external connections demonstrated more breadth than IVCF's. This reflects the fact that the SCM was closer to the 'mainstream' of Canadian society and specifically of university life. IVCF, intent to promote an evangelical agenda, associated with like-minded individuals and organizations which, in the previous decades, had gradually been pushed to the periphery of cultural influence.

And yet points of contact which existed between the SCM and IVCF suggest that the divide was not as great as it might appear to some. Both movements perceived their historical roots to be planted in evangelicalism, specifically in the revivals and evangelistic movements among students on both sides of the Atlantic in the late nineteenth century. And both maintained vestiges of this evangelicalism. Both movements shared associations with churches and the YM/YWCA's. They also shared, with some methodological differences, an emphasis on the study of the Bible and on the practice of Christian devotion. Ultimately, these two Christian movements aimed essentially to broaden students' understandings of who Jesus was and to translate this into practical ways in which Jesus continued to be relevant to life in the twentieth-century world. In this the SCM and IVCF carried forward the evangelistic enthusiasm which had characterized Christian student groups decades earlier.

Another common element was the posture that the SCM and IVCF maintained towards society and towards the church. Both identified themselves as mediators between on one hand, a growing secularism characterized by irreligion and materialism, and on the other hand, Protestant churches characterized by mediocre faith and

dogmatism. Their responses differed. The SCM grappled intellectually with secular issues whereas IVCF fought secularism through the promotion of Christian piety. IVCF sought to transform the perceived abstract and cold doctrines of the church into vibrant, committed Christian living, whereas the SCM attempted to replace the old with a more culturally relevant and socially concerned Christianity. But essentially the two movements hung together in the balance between the two worlds of church and society; both were intent to maintain a strong religious presence in the midst of growing secularism and to renew Canada's Protestant churches through Christian activism.

Notwithstanding these similarities, they for the most part avoided any real partnership on Canadian campuses. The SCM and IVCF were not often able to recognize the ground they shared. SCM'ers, perhaps protective of what they saw as their rightful place as the religious voice in Canada's universities and colleges, on occasion described IVCF as fundamentalist and enthusiast, as representative of the outmoded and anti-intellectual nineteenth-century orthodoxy against which the SCM was reacting, and they failed to see what was fresh about IVCF's approach to students. Reciprocally, IVCF'ers equated the SCM with modernism and even atheism and overlooked the inherited evangelistic zeal and the insightful thinking which the SCM applied practically to social issues.

If a 'great divide' existed, then, it was as a mental construct which shaped the two movements' opinions about each other. But the presence of significant common ground and the fact that on occasion the SCM and IVCF attempted to cooperate indicate that the divide was not as impassable as it may have seemed. Moreover, the formation of IVCF should be seen not so much as a direct contest with the SCM but rather as a choice by

students to focus on the devotional aspects of Christianity over the intellectual. Interestingly, as Canadian student attitudes became more conservative with the graduation of war veterans and the onset of the Depression,¹ the SCM opened its programme more to traditional Christian elements while still hoping to preserve the radical social Christianity which had characterized the movement in the 1920s. Other students, some of them with former SCM roots, decided to apply themselves more specifically to the fostering of a traditional yet vital Christianity within IVCF. That IVCF emerged in Canada precisely at a time when the SCM was beginning to show a greater interest in traditional religious practice cautions against a characterization of these movements as fundamentally opposed to each other.

Indeed, one conclusion of this study is that these movements are not easily pigeon-holed as either fundamentalist or modernist. Certainly these categories applied to elements within IVCF and the SCM, respectively. But both movements found some success in attracting an interdenominational and theologically variegated membership, a point that more general histories have rightly noted. The testimonies of former SCM'ers agree with Paul Axelrod's observation that the SCM was composed of a wide spectrum of socialist radicals and Christians seeking to integrate their beliefs and social reform.² In a similar fashion IVCF was, as John Stackhouse has suggested, a meeting-place for Christians from mainline and more sectarian conservative churches and those with little church experience.³ In addition, Canada's geographic expanse and the fact that the student body changed from year to year resulted in considerable variety between regions.

¹ Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 98; Kirkey, "Decline of Radical Liberal Protestantism," 26-27, 29; Gidney, "Poisoning the Student Mind?" 8-11.

² Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 130.

³ Stackhouse, *Canadian Evangelicalism*, 90.

Some SCM units, such as those in Saskatoon and Guelph, contained higher percentages of evangelical students than others. In IVCF's western units fundamentalists were more prominent than in Ontario and Montreal.⁴

Rather than pigeon-holing the two movements with the terms 'fundamentalist' and 'modernist', the SCM and IVCF could be better described, using Grant Wacker's revisionist analogy, mentioned in the introduction, as 'children' of the mainstream Protestant consensus of the late nineteenth century.⁵ Together these siblings sought to counter lifeless religion and to articulate their respective renewals of Christianity to students and to secular society in general. Both, in turn, can be viewed as making a departure of sorts from the parent nineteenth-century evangelicalism: the SCM rejected its theology and redressed traditional practices such as prayer, Bible study and evangelism, and IVCF considered the traditional evangelical legacy to be in dire need of revitalization. In their theologies and to a lesser extent in their practices the SCM and IVCF were rivals, but both nonetheless bore resemblance to their forebears and to each other. At certain moments they crossed paths, and either called each other derogatory names or attempted cooperation: both forms of interaction, one negative and one positive, demonstrated their relatedness. But outside of these times the two siblings kept to themselves, content to live out their beliefs within the same physical context but in relative isolation.

From our own vantage point of the last few years of the twentieth century, at a

⁴ On the SCM's regional variance, see Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, reports, 30 December 1937 and 2 March 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada," and Belva Atkinson, report, 25 February 1939, IVA, box 4, file "Correspondence: Belva Atkinson (Ontario) 1938-39." On IVCF, see C. Stacey Woods to Ross Young, 6 November 1936, IVA, box 1, file "History of the IVF in Canada (1931-36)"; C. Stacey Woods to Cathie Nicoll, 11 November 1937, IVA, box 3, file "Cathie Nicoll, Winnipeg"; Jim Forrester to C. Stacey Woods, 28 January 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Jim Forrester, W. Canada"; Cathie Nicoll to C. Stacey Woods, report, 3 March 1938, IVA, box 3, file "Cathie Nicoll, Winnipeg." Paul Axelrod notes that, generally speaking, campuses in western Canada tended to be "more informal" than those in the East, which may have catered to evangelical practices. Axelrod, *Making a Middle Class*, 164.

time when the post-modern perspective has begun to create a new appreciation for viewing religion as important in its own right,⁶ this backward glance at student religion in the 1930s raises questions about the process of secularization in Canada. The fact that the church-sponsored religious activities led by the YM/YWCA's and the religious curriculum of colleges and universities disintegrated in the early decades of the twentieth century does indicate that higher education experienced a degree of secularization. The modernization of higher education shifted the impetus of Christian concern to a level which operated outside the immediate control of university and church leaders; in terms of student activity, this change made Christianity one option among many. But did this correspondingly indicate that, to echo sociologist David Lyon's question, "religion was a shrinking, collapsing or dying phenomenon," an "epiphenomenon of other social processes"?⁷ On the contrary, as this study demonstrates, under the guises of the SCM and IVCF Christian beliefs and practices persevered and even flourished among the student population. Although both of these movements sought to conserve aspects of Christianity in the face of secularism, they also sought to be innovative and held positive religious convictions that were not simply defined by external, hostile forces. Indeed, in the 1990s many have realized that, in the midst of modern Canadian society, religion is still very much present.⁸ IVCF and the SCM are part of this continued presence. IVCF established itself more strongly after World War Two and has for decades been one of the largest religious groups on Canadian campuses; today it is active in 48 universities and 13

⁵ Wacker, "Holy Spirit," 60.

⁶ David Lyon, "Religion and the Postmodern: Old Problems, New Prospects," in *Postmodernity, Sociology and Religion*, ed. Kieran Flanagan and Peter C. Jupp (Houndmills and London: Macmillan Press Ltd.; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸ See, for example, the Angus-Reid poll results in "God is Alive," *Maclean's*, 12 April 1993, and George Rawlyk's subsequent analysis in *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour?*

colleges.⁹ The SCM, which underwent a period of decline from the 1950s onward, has in recent years made a comeback, especially in western Canada, and is currently active on 15 campuses.¹⁰

In the final analysis, it is evident that Protestant Christianity maintained an important voice on Canadian campuses throughout the 1930s. Moreover, a comparison of the SCM's and IVCF's self-definitions and practices suggests that these Canadian Protestants were closer together than has been portrayed. In the midst of an up-and-coming generation of Canadians, both the SCM and IVCF promoted their visions of God and the world. Two siblings, inheritors of an evangelical Protestantism, each attempted to bring the principles of Christianity to bear upon personal and public life on university and college campuses, and in so doing asserted their conviction that Christianity was to remain a vital force in twentieth-century Canadian society.

⁹ Other fields of Inter-Varsity activity are its high school work, Inter-School Christian Fellowship (ISCF), active in 175 high schools, and its 5 regional "Pioneer" camping programs. Rob Regier [Communications coordinator, IVCF national office], telephone interview by author, 9 March 1998.

¹⁰ Rick Garland [SCM national coordinator], telephone interview by author, 12 March 1998, and Rob Shearer [University of Toronto SCM coordinator], telephone interview by author, 10 February 1998.

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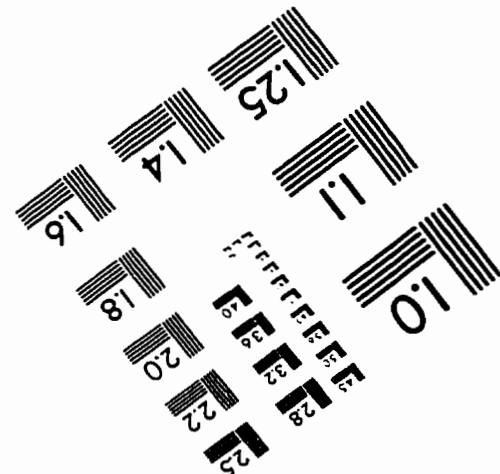
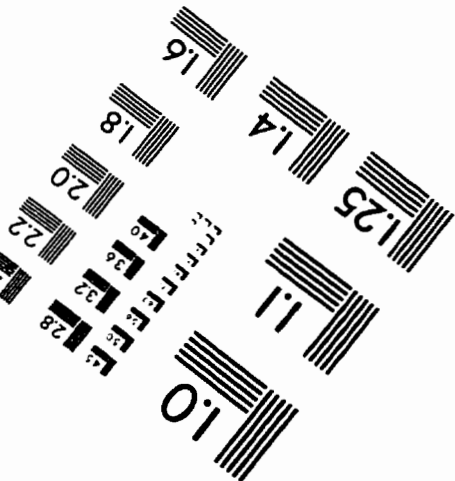
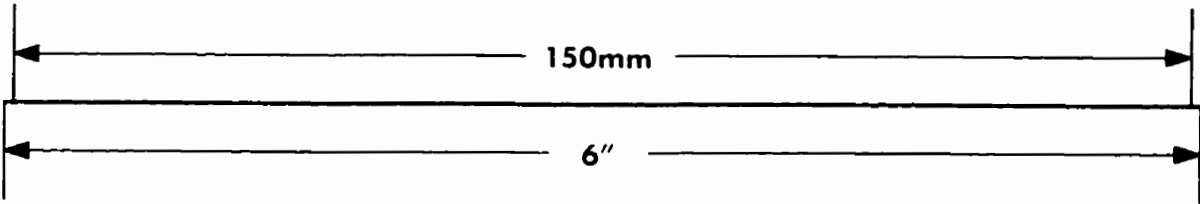
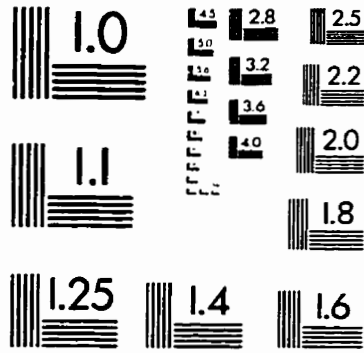
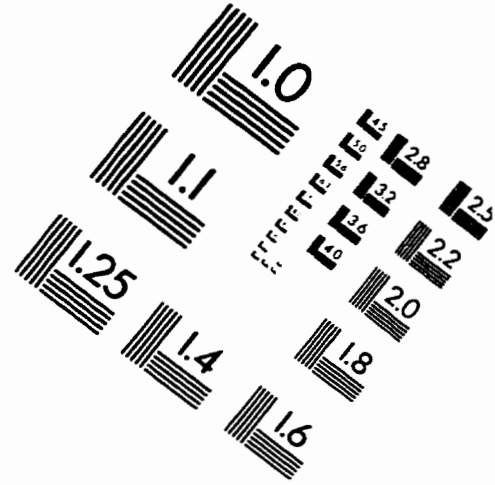
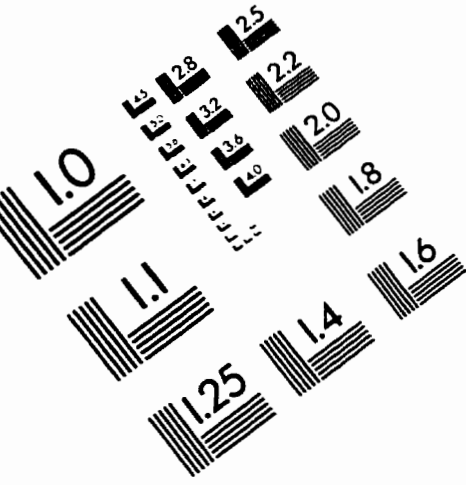
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