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Moral Re-Armament and Filipino Catholics

RALPH B. GEHRING

IN April 1957 His Excellency, Msgr. Rufino Santos, Archbishop of Manila, wrote an Easter Message printed by the public press in which he stated: "We cannot subscribe to the strange solution to the problem of Peace, which goes by the name of Moral Re-Armament."

Moral Re-Armament, the solution referred to, is variously described as a movement, an ideology, a way of life.¹ Its initiator is Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman, an American of Swiss descent, born 4 June 1878. After graduation from Muhlenberg College, Pennsylvania, he attended the Lutheran theological seminary in Philadelphia and was subsequently entrusted with a parish. Disagreement with the parish board of trustees led to his resignation and he went to England. There, while listening to a simple woman speaker during a Methodist convention at Keswick in 1908, Buchman had an intense experience which convinced him that he was spiritually changed and that he could become the instrument of spiritual change in others. He returned to the United States, beginning his work of changing men while engaged in YMCA activities at Pennsylvania State

¹ Assertions made in this and the two following paragraphs are based both on Moral Re-Armament publications and others, but Edward Duff S.J. "Verdict on MRA" *Social Order* VI (June 1956) 274-290 deserves special mention. The figure 2000 for MRA's full-time workers is taken from *Color, The American Negro Monthly* (January 1955) p. 6.

College. This period of his life was followed by two tours of the Far East as an evangelist, and by appointment as extension lecturer at the Hartford (Conn.) Theological Seminary, a training center for missionaries. Wherever Buchman went, it seems that his evangelical efforts awakened strong personal loyalties from some and strong complaints from others. For this reason perhaps, about the year 1920, he decided to become an independent evangelist.

In 1921 Dr. Buchman was back again in England and went to the universities. Cambridge rebuffed him, but at Oxford he inspired many of the undergraduates, meeting with them in groups for informal discussion of religious and moral topics. These groups, and similar ones organized by Buchman in the United States in the early Twenties, styled themselves "A First Century Christian Fellowship." Some of their members—returning South African Rhodes scholars and other Oxford students—propagated Buchman's ideas in South Africa in 1927 or 1928, and the South African press dubbed them the "Oxford Group," a name by which the Fellowship was generally known till World War II. In 1938, however, speaking at the East Ham Town Hall, London, Buchman appealed for a world program of Moral Re-Armament, and it is as "Moral Re-Armament," often abbreviated to MRA, that his ideas and his movement have spread across the globe.

The number of sympathizers with Moral Re-Armament is impossible to estimate. It relies chiefly, however, upon the efforts of some 2000 full-time unsalaried militants, trained in its "ideological centers" at Caux (Switzerland) and Mackinac Island (Michigan U.S.A.). MRA's publications run to millions of copies. Its ideological plays, films and "missions" have traveled around the earth, and its "world assemblies" have been attended by persons prominent in government, business, labor, etc. Its message, as the message of the Oxford Groups formerly, is one of change—change in individuals and in nations, change based on open admission of and apology for past faults, and on subsequent practice of four virtues: absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love, all under the guidance of God. Such guidance, according to MRA, is

given to every man who is willing to listen to the Voice of God speaking to him, and with such guidance uniting them, men of goodwill will be able to remake the world according to God's plan, healing all divisions due to class, color or creed.

THE FIRST ASIAN ASSEMBLY

The immediate occasion of Msgr. Santos's statement regarding Moral Re-Armament was MRA's first assembly to be held under the auspices of its Filipino adherents.² Prominent among the latter and acting as hosts to the assembly were Senator Roseller T. Lim, Dean Vicente G. Sinco of the University of the Philippines, Dr. and Mrs. Aureo Gutierrez of Far Eastern University, and Roberto S. Oca, president of the Philippine Transport Workers Organization. The avowed purpose of the First Asian Assembly was to bring together peoples of all countries in order to foster better understanding and find an ideology stronger than either capitalism or communism as an answer to the world's problems.

The assembly opened in the Pines Hotel, Baguio, on the afternoon of 29 March 1957. Some 100 delegates representing twenty-three Asian and Pacific countries were in attendance. Dr. and Mrs. Gutierrez led them in a one-minute silent prayer for Ramon Magsaysay, recently deceased, after which various delegates extolled the late President, recalling their reception at Malacañang in 1956 and Mr. Magsaysay's "wish to unite the nation through moral ideology."

At this opening session the following message from U Nu, Prime Minister of Burma, was read:

I am glad to know that an Asian Assembly on moral rearmament is going to take place at Baguio in the Philippines. Dr. Buchman

² Assertions made in this section are based upon articles in the *Manila Bulletin* (March 29 and 30, April 8 and 10, May 9) in the *Manila Chronicle* (March 30, April 6 and 7) and in the *Manila Times* (March 30 and 31, April 1, 2, 6, 9 and 10). Confirmations and some additional details have been found in *New World News Pictorial Quarterly* No. 16 (Summer 1957) and in a special reprint of a speech and report by Hon. Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin in the Senate of the United States, 15 April 1957 (*Congressional Record*, 85th Congress, First Session).

has presented to the world an ideology which is above race and class because it seeks to answer the needs of the heart. This ideology seeks to change men, their ideas, their motives and their aims. Its moral standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love form the cream of all religious beliefs. As one who believes in the value of these standards I wish the assembly every success.³

At this same session of the Baguio assembly, former Secretary of Commerce Cornelio Balmaceda, "guest speaker" but a previous visitor to Caux, declared: "We really need the force of this idea to unite the world. . . . We must make Baguio the center of a positive ideology for Asia." The next day, March 30th, General Ho Ying-chin, chairman of the military strategy committee of Formosa and head of the MRA delegation from that country, warned the delegates against communism. Dr. Douglas Cornell, executive officer of the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, said that the hope of the world lies in the principles of MRA, a moral ideology of freedom superior to communism and materialism. On March 31st Niro Hoshijima, a signatory of the Japanese peace treaty at San Francisco and veteran member of the Japanese diet, recalled his visit to the Philippines with an MRA ideological mission in 1955 when he apologized for the wrongs committed by his countrymen during the last war. On the present occasion he apologized not only to Filipinos but particularly to the Korean MRA delegates. He was supported by K. Sumatomo, "ranking Japanese industrialist," who praised MRA and said: "We responsible leaders of our nations must commit ourselves to a living of a moral ideology." Dr. Luigi Rossi, editor of *L'Informatore* of Sesto San Giovanni, Italy, told the assembly that after being a communist for thirty years he witnessed the MRA play *Vanishing Island*, whereupon he left the communist party, apologized to a priest he had bitterly attacked in his paper, returned to the Catholic faith, and devoted his newspaper to spreading the ideology of Moral Re-Armament. Governor Marcos Malupa of Batanes also spoke on March 31st, as well

³ The message is quoted as it appeared in the *Manila Bulletin* March 30 and in the *Congressional Record*. Its second last sentence is omitted in the May 9th issue of the *Bulletin* and in the Summer 1957 issue of *New World News*.

as Governor Bienvenido Ebarle and an unnamed board member of Zamboanga del Sur. The two latter said that twenty-four hours at the Asian assembly had transformed their outlook and that they would return to their province "to make absolute moral standards the moving force" of their administration.

Testimonials such as the preceding continued throughout the sessions, and apologies also. On April 1st, Yoon Sung Soon, chairman of the foreign relations committee of South Korea's national assembly, said that an exchange of MRA spirit would help resolve international tension.⁴ Soichi Akutsu, executive member of Japan's National Farmers' Federation, told of the "love and light" which an MRA meeting brought to his village. Governor Malupa, again taking the floor, asked forgiveness from the Japanese people for the ill-will he had borne them and invited Mr. Akutsu "to bring the answer you have found to the farmers of the Philippines." On April 5th, Willard Johnson, an American Negro and president of the student body of the University of California at Los Angeles, told the assembly that "only the ideology of moral rearmament can answer racial prejudice because it is the only force that can challenge both black and white people to change and build a new world." Dante Calma, of the office of the President of the Philippines, said on the same day: "Moral Re-Armament has proved a turning point in my life and for the first time I have become part of my Catholic faith." One day later, Senator Emmanuel Pelaez, chairman of the Senate committee on national defense, said that "for practical reasons" he wanted MRA to take root

⁴ On 30 April 1957 Prime Minister Kishi of Japan stated that he withdrew the "Kubota statement" which had caused the breakdown of Japanese-Korean negotiations in 1953, and that he had no intention of holding to previous legal interpretations of Japanese private property claims upon Korea. These statements were made in reply to questions from Senator Shidzue Kato who, with Mr. Hoshijima, had pledged herself at Baguio to work for these objectives in order to facilitate the reconciliation of Japan and Korea. The efforts of Senator Kato and Mr. Hoshijima in Japan were seconded by the South Korean MRA delegates who reported favorably of the Baguio conferences in the South Korean parliament. Cf. *Manila Daily Bulletin* 9 May 1957.

in the Philippines: "MRA, although it is a spiritual force, can, from the standpoint of national security, be a very practical and realistic bulwark against the infiltration of communism." Dean Sinco, addressing the assembly on April 8th, by which time it had gathered 250 delegates from twenty-seven nations, told his audience:

I have been overwhelmed by the decisions which men and women have made at this assembly to take this ideology to Asia and the world. The spirit of greed, falsehood, impurity, and selfishness exists even where there is no communism. With MRA these forces will not become dominant in our nation. Only in this way will we have peace and unity.

Of particular interest was the participation of President Carlos P. Garcia in the meeting at Baguio, whither he went to "fulfill the speaking engagement of the late President Mag-saysay," who had been "a close supporter of the movement." Mr. Garcia arrived at the assembly at 9:45 A.M. on April 6th and left some three quarters of an hour later. His party included Mrs. Garcia, acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs Raul S. Manglapus, Executive Secretary Fortunato de Leon, Press Secretary J. V. Cruz, Senators Francisco Delgado, Domocao Alonto and Roseller Lim, Congressman Angel Castaño and others. Speaking extemporaneously, President Garcia stressed morality, the general lack of it, and the great need for the re-establishment of moral principles as a guide to living. He said the world must unite to correct a tendency to forget spiritual values and emphasize material things, and he professed himself "glad that Moral Re-Armament was born. It is sounding a chord that will certainly find responsive hearts the world over."

The first Moral Re-Armament assembly under Philippine auspices ended on the night of April 8th with the delegates unanimously expressing their opinion of great things accomplished. A cable, signed by Senator Lim for the Philippines and by MRA delegates from Formosa, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Ceylon, Malaya, Burma and India, was sent to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and to the chairman of the U.S. Senate foreign relations committee, to the following

effect: "The ideology depicted in the film *Freedom*⁵ is the ideology Asia wants. It is the only true basis on which East and West can unite. Where diplomacy has failed, Moral Re-Armament is succeeding." On April 15th, the Hon. Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin spoke briefly of the Baguio assembly in the United States Senate and inserted a long account of its proceedings in the Appendix to the *Congressional Record*.

All accounts of the Baguio assembly agree that the three Colwell brothers, former Hollywood TV and radio stars who are now devoted to Moral Re-Armament, contributed greatly to the success of this year's MRA activities in the Philippines. They sang to President Garcia at Baguio, to Mrs. Magsaysay in Quezon City, to Senate President Eulogio Rodriguez on the floor of the senate, to the Philippine Constabulary at Camp Crame, to the people in the streets of a town in Pampanga. They "helped to create the atmosphere with their songs and stories that culminated in enemies becoming friends."

THE ARCHBISHOP AND MRA

It should be clear that the first MRA assembly held in the Philippines was an impressive affair. The sincerity and high idealism of the many excellent men who have supported MRA cannot be doubted. Considering the publicized achievements of the Moral Re-Armament movement, its avowed aims, and their public endorsement by influential persons, it is natural to expect that any ecclesiastical reserve or disapproval

⁵ *Freedom* is an MRA production. "At the Asian premiere in the Philippines the heart of Asia warmly responded. Filipino farmers, students and army officer cadets mingled with visitors from twenty-three other nations in the crowded Pines Theater of Baguio City. . . . Mayor Brown of Bazilan [sic] and Mayor Climaco of Zamboanga [photographed at the left] thoroughly enjoyed the picture. 'I went into the theater a difficult man and came out a different man,' said Mayor Climaco and his colleague remarked, 'MRA will go like wildfire through the Philippines.'" *New World News* (Summer 1957) p. 24. On 13 April a special showing of the film was presented to the members of the Congress of the Philippines and "the morning session of the Senate was delayed for an hour to enable Members to attend" (cf. reprint from *Congressional Record*).

would greatly surprise, perhaps even shock and anger persons sympathizing with the movement and sincerely trying to build a better world. It is time, therefore, to examine the position taken by the archbishop of Manila in his Easter Message.

The message first reminded Catholics of Christ's divinity and His will to redeem men through the Catholic Church He founded, giving her power to teach, to govern and to sanctify for that purpose. The archbishop's message then continued:

Hence it is that we, Catholics, do not believe in other formulae to obtain the much longed-for peace that are not based upon and do not find their inspiration, in those eternal and solid principles taught and practised by our Catholic doctrine. That is why we cannot subscribe to the strange solution of the problem of Peace, which goes by the name of MORAL REARMAMENT.

The best that can be said of this movement is that it confines itself to a vain attempt to produce flowers and fruits by ignoring completely the tree and root that would naturally make them sprout. How could we achieve the absolutes of probity, purity, mutual understanding and universal love that MORAL REARMAMENT vainly seeks to establish in our society, if we ignored the basic principle, the fertile root of moral conscience and the sense of duty, namely God and His visible organ, the Catholic Church, which He founded as the exclusive instrument of salvation, regeneration and true Peace?⁶

Prescinding from the claim to divine foundation and an exclusive spiritual competence for the Catholic Church, there is still much in Msgr. Santos's words to which many adherents of Moral Re-Armament might take exception. They might, for example, affirm that their formula for peace actually is based on eternal and solid principles taught as Catholic doctrine. They might ask why MRA is a "strange solution" to the problem when it seeks to change men by having them practice four absolute moral standards (absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love). They might say that MRA is not a vain attempt to produce fruit, since it has often resulted in communists abandoning their party, capitalists co-operating with labor, enemies being reconciled, even in lapsed

⁶ *The Sunday Times*, Manila, 21 April 1957; capitalization and italics of the newspaper. The archbishop's message appeared also in *The Sentinel*, Manila, 27 April 1957.

Catholics returning to the profession and practice of the Catholic faith. They might vehemently deny that MRA ignores God, and adduce a thousand printed instances of their insistence upon divine guidance. And finally they might reply that they have not ignored the Catholic Church but have repeatedly sought her endorsement and co-operation, and have sometimes had both from individual Catholics, clerical and lay. In short, they might contend that something much better could be said for Moral Re-Armament than what the archbishop had said.

The archbishop would not be much perturbed by such a reaction to his Easter Message. For one thing, he knows that he is not alone among the members of the Catholic hierarchy to disapprove of MRA for Catholics, nor was this the first time that he himself had done so. Already, in a statement dated Manila, 18 June 1955, while admitting that MRA was non-sectarian and while conceding the honesty of its intentions, he noted its "ambiguous religious principles" and that it "excludes religion itself from its scheme." He noted also that:

For the few non-Catholics in the Philippines, this movement may serve a useful purpose. Catholics, however, who compose the majority of our nation, will find nothing in this movement which is not already contained, far more perfectly, in the doctrine of Jesus Christ as interpreted by the Catholic Church which He founded.⁷

THE MRA'S 1955 VISIT TO THE PHILIPPINES

It is possible that this pointed reference to Catholic participation in MRA activities came to the attention of the MRA mission which arrived in Manila on 27 June 1955 with the cast of *The Vanishing Island*. At any rate, Catholic members of that mission made a determined effort to secure the archbishop's support and, after repeated requests, were received on a courtesy call during which the members individually testified to the beneficial influence of MRA on their Catholic lives, and

⁷The full text of Msgr. Santos's 1955 statement is given in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* XXIX (Julio 1955) 420-421 under the title: "Statement on Adherence to Religion." Excerpts were printed in *The Sentinel*, Manila, 25 June 1955.

the archbishop for his part reiterated his stand on the movement. Whatever good impression these Catholic Re-Armists made upon the archbishop was completely destroyed a few days later. One of his visitors gave reporters the impression that the "Catholic hierarchy of the Philippines" had "recognized" the movement, said recognition being "illustrated by the warm reception the Catholic members of the mission received from the Archbishop of Manila." Another of the visitors made public declarations for which two fellow-Catholic members of the same MRA mission apologized by letter to Archbishop Santos, and said that those declarations contained "dogmatic errors, offensive estimations of the Catholic Church and of the Hierarchy, and do not even correspond to the Spirit and practice of Moral Re-Armament."⁸

If it be true that the offensive declarations did not correspond to the spirit and practice of Moral Re-Armament (and the present writer thinks that much can be said to support this claim), it is equally true that Msgr. Santos's strictures on MRA in his Easter Message of this year were not motivated by a mere desire to be consistent with his former stand nor by the unpleasant memory of his former experience. His objections, on both occasions, were of a doctrinal character. The question is: were they justified? Or, to put it in another way, the question is not *who* is right, but *what* is right.

BAGUIO RE-EXAMINED

There is no doubt that the Baguio assembly was a genuine MRA assembly. There is no evidence (at least in *our* possession) that any Baguio delegate, Catholic or non-Catholic, made remarks derogatory of the Church or churchmen. Moreover, in all published accounts of this particular assembly, there is frequent mention of Moral Re-Armament's ability to heal divisions between race and class, but conspicuous omission of divi-

⁸ Cf *The Sentinel*, Manila, 9 July 1955 for text of the letter of apology. Its signers were Dr. Oskar Leimgruber, sometime Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation and Dr. Fausto Pecorari, vice-president of the Italian Constituency. The letter is dated 30 June 1955. The offending Catholic visitors were Joseph Scott of Los Angeles and John McGovern, member of the British Parliament.

sions between creeds, and the only known Catholic participants from foreign countries are converts to MRA from communism—converts who, through MRA, allegedly returned to the practice of their Catholic faith. The Baguio assembly, one is tempted to say, was particularly careful to say or do nothing offensive to Catholics.

The assembly's record, however, appears somewhat different upon closer examination. The message from the Prime Minister of Burma, as originally reported by the Manila press, stated that the "moral standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love form the cream of all religious beliefs." Now the Catholic Church does not consider these standards to be the cream of all religious beliefs. They are simply moral virtues. They are not by any means to be classed with a belief in the Incarnation of Christ, for example.

Similarly, many Catholics would hesitate to say with Mr. Balmaceda that "we need the force of [Moral Re-Armament] to unite the world. . . . We must make Baguio the center of a positive ideology for Asia, as for the rest of the world." For many years the Church has looked upon the largely Catholic Philippines as a possible center from which Filipino missionaries might spread the Catholic faith in Asia. The Church, besides, is quite confident that she, and she alone, is capable of uniting the world as God wishes it to be united, and she has long maintained that any movement failing to recognize her divine credentials is incapable of bringing peaceful unity to the world, precisely because it ignores such credentials and therefore the will of Him who gave them.

This claim of the Church, of course, runs counter to many of the assertions made in favor of MRA at Baguio, where speaker after speaker stated that *only* MRA can save the present situation. Thus, according to Dr. Cornell, MRA is "the hope of the world." According to Willard Johnson, MRA is "the only force that can challenge both black and white people to change and build a new world." According to Dean Sinco, MRA is so important that he feared what might happen "to our community, our country and the world if MRA did not exist."

Finally, to quote the cable to Washington, MRA's ideology "is the only true basis on which East and West can unite."

IS MRA A RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT?

It may be objected here, however, that the Baguio delegates, when insisting on Moral Re-Armament's unique competence to save the modern world, were speaking merely as civic, not religious leaders, and that they did not wish to question the claims or competence of the Catholic Church in the religious sphere. Moral Re-Armament, its adherents assert, is not a religion: it is an ideology, and compatible with all religions; it urges all men to a change of heart in accordance with its unimpeachable moral absolutes and under the guidance of God, and in many cases it has resulted in greater devotion to the practices of the various religions, including Catholicism, which its adherents individually profess with perfect sincerity.

Indeed Msgr. Santos in his 1955 statement stated that MRA was non-sectarian and that it excluded religion from its scheme. It should not be forgotten, however, that in the same statement Msgr. Santos also said that MRA had "ambiguous religious principles," thereby implying that MRA, though not perhaps a religion or a sect, is nevertheless a religious movement in some sense, and its leaders the leaders of a religious movement. Is this implication justified by fact?

Little justification for it can be found in the *words* of the Baguio speakers, as reported by the Manila press while the assembly was in session. A month later, however, on May 9th, the *Manila Bulletin* printed a four-page "Supplement on Moral Re-Armament: Special Report on Asian Assembly, Baguio" and the Summer 1957 issue of the *New World News Pictorial Quarterly*, an MRA publication, was devoted almost entirely to a report on the Baguio assembly. In these two items there are definite indications of the religious character of the movement, and indications that this religious character was not absent at Baguio. (It is quite possible that some persons present did not recognize it as such.)

Thus, in the Supplement, Roberto Oca quotes Dr. Buchman's well-known words: "Before a God-led unity, every last

problem can be solved." Luis Puig, Guatemalan labor leader, affirms that MRA led him "to listen to the voice of God in my heart." Raja Ram Shastri, member of the Indian parliament, is quoted as telling the Baguio delegates: "Asia and the world need a new type of man who through his faith in God, living on the basis of absolute moral standards . . . will lead people to lasting peace and build a new society." Senator Wiley, reporting on Baguio in the U.S. Senate, says: "Freedom has its ideology. Absolute moral standards give it firmness. The Spirit [capitalized] of God gives it life."

Similarly, in the pictorial, Masahide Shibusawa states at Baguio: "The people I met in MRA—Africans, American teenagers, Oxford men, businessmen—all believed that if a man listened, God would speak to him. Well, I did not believe in God. But I decided to try it." And in the same pictorial appears the text of a speech delivered in June of this year by Dr. Buchman himself, in which he calls MRA "a God-given idea" and after recounting its successes at Baguio concludes: "Ideas are God's weapons for a new world. And man has the capacity to receive ideas from God. When men act on these ideas they find new direction [i.e. guidance] for themselves and their nations. . . ."

In the light of the above statements—which can be duplicated by hundreds of others in MRA literature—it is clear enough that the movement is not merely civic nor merely moral but religious as well. It is religious at least in the sense that it recognizes the existence of God, seeks and professes to possess divine guidance, and claims to be God-inspired to lead men to change their lives and thus build a better world.⁹

DR. SCHOLLGEN AND MRA

For Catholics, however, the question is not exactly whether MRA is a religious movement, but whether or to what extent it is a movement *compatible* with Catholicism. Catho-

⁹ Other critics, both Catholic and non-Catholic, have labeled MRA a religion, a sect, a heresy. These are more severe views of the movement's religious character than either Msgr. Santos or the present writer have taken to date.

lics already connected with MRA are very interested in this problem of compatibility and, to the degree that MRA has personally benefited or convinced them, they naturally welcome any Catholic statement in its favor.

One such statement was made two years ago by Dr. Werner Schöllgen, dean of the faculty of Catholic theology at the University of Bonn, Germany, in his book *Actuelle Moralprobleme* (Moral Problem of Today). Dr. Schöllgen's opinion of MRA is expressed in a chapter entitled "The Basic Problem of Education in Morals."¹⁰ The problem is posed by modern man's spiritual blindness, resulting from widespread naturalism. The problem itself, "the true basic problem of the science of moral instruction," is illustrated rather than formulated by Dr. Schöllgen. He appeals to Kempis's words, "I would rather feel compunction than know how to define it." He asks whether St. Paul, in Romans 2.14, was "speaking merely of a common faculty of reason" or rather "talking about the living Conscience, about the Voice of God in the heart of man." If one answers in favor of the Voice of God, says Dr. Schöllgen, one's attention cannot but be caught "by a widespread effort which is having great success in appealing to the modern heathen, i.e. the people who are no longer reached by the Christian churches." This effort is Moral Re-Armament, a "religio-ethical way of life of a purely practical nature," which of course "leads beyond itself to intellectual conclusions and unquestionably contains within itself a very definite concept of the world," but which "refuses to formulate this intellectual side of its work," referring each person to "his own religious convictions." How, then, does Moral Re-Armament work? By surrounding each man "with

¹⁰ Both Spanish and English copies of this chapter were distributed in the Manila area about the time of the Baguio assembly. They state that permission to translate and reprint was given by Dr. Schöllgen and his original publisher, Patmos Verlag, Dusseldorf, Germany and that *Actuelle Moralprobleme* received the Imprimatur of Teusch, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Cologne, on 26 September 1955. The Spanish reprint has an Imprimatur from Mexico, 16 March 1957; the English reprint, printed in the United States, has none. Only 7 of the 20 pages of the English reprint deal specifically with Moral Re-Armament, and their section headings have been inserted by MRA.

the reality of a way of life, founded upon goodwill, the spirit of sacrifice and the moral code of the four" absolutes. Dr. Schöllgen is of the opinion that "the great strength of Moral Re-Armament . . . lies in the fact that it is restoring tangible sociological effectiveness to the Christian moral code." This alleged success is comprehensible to anyone who believes that the Apostle of the Gentiles was talking about the Voice of God speaking to the heart of man, for MRA expressly teaches its friends to listen to this Voice. Moreover, "Moral Re-Armament, besides its strong influence upon modern man, can also . . . claim great effectiveness in reaching the leadership of the colored peoples. This gives rise to great hopes and indicates one function for Moral Re-Armament, namely, to act as a bridge to a full Christianity."

At this point Dr. Schöllgen takes up the problem of Catholic participation in the MRA movement. It is best to let him do so in his own words:

The decisive question, however, still remains. May the Catholic cooperate and work with Moral Re-Armament at all? Does he thereby become guilty of "communicatio in sacris activa?" [Translator's note: "Active participation in sacred functions (of other faiths)."] We must pose this question seriously and frankly. We must, at the same time, remind ourselves of the important fact that not only is it the pastoral duty of the Church to protect the faithful from heretical movements, but also it is in the last resort solely up to her judgment to evaluate spiritual movements from the tactical point of view, that is to say, their advantageousness to the Church's position in the constantly changing conditions of different lands and different times.

A few points must be briefly mentioned. The *decisive one* is that Moral Re-Armament rejects any legal or institutional set-up. It is not a church. It is not a sect. No one can join it. No one can resign from it. As a result therefore, its activity is not directed against the churches with a view to replacing them but concerns itself with the furthest forward areas of the ideological struggle. It aims to build a defensive front of all men of good will. . . .¹¹

Dr. Schöllgen then warns against "the constantly repeated error of taking statements of Moral Re-Armament, written throughout by people not using our language, and interpreting them

¹¹ "The Basic Problem of Education in Morals" p. 15. Italics inserted.

mechanically without any consideration of their origin and inter-connections." He stresses the necessity of uniting all positive forces against Bolshevistic communism. He takes lightly the suggestion that Catholic Re-Armists will reduce their religious life to a minimum, and concludes as follows:

Moral Re-Armament is clearly incomplete in three important points. It has no form of worship or institutional framework. Its ethics contain only a teaching of personal attitudes, not principles concerning the objective content of the rules of social life. It puts forward no scientific and systematic confirmation of its ethical content. . . . Its great calling and also its great achievement—this I especially emphasize—seems to me that it speaks to the "little ones in Christ" and feeds them with "milk not meat." (I Cor. 3:1 f.)

DOUBTS AND DANGERS

Dr. Schöllgen's position, therefore, is that Catholic participation in Moral Re-Armament is not only permissible but desirable (at least in most countries), and his presentation of this position is admittedly persuasive. Unfortunately, it is also misleading. Dr. Schöllgen gives the impression that Catholic opposition to MRA has been confined to relatively few and unimportant persons—mostly "intellectuals." The Catholic opposition, however, has included no less than five Cardinals (one a German), as well as Rome's highest ordinary committee on orthodoxy, the Holy Office.¹² All of these have expressed either disapproval of MRA or of Catholic participation in MRA or of both.

Moreover, Dr. Schöllgen gives the impression that the question of participation can be quite simply and decisively answered in the affirmative because MRA "rejects any legal or institutional set-up." This is simplifying the problem a great deal. It also seems to imply a surprising obtuseness in

¹² Cardinals Hinsley of Westminster (England) in 1938, Frings of Cologne in 1950, Schuster of Milan in 1952, Van Roey of Belgium in 1953 and Pizzardo, Secretary of the Holy Office, in a letter to the Apostolic Delegate of Canada, released with the publication of the 8 August 1951 decision of the Holy Office. The decision itself can be found in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* XXIX (Agosto 1955) 502 where it is quoted in "Catholics and Moral Re-Armament," radio address of fr. Antonio Piñon O.P. over DZST, 3 July 1955.

MRA's Catholic critics, who apparently have remained ignorant of MRA's alleged rejection of such a set-up or who, aware of it, have failed to see so facile a solution.

THE DANGER TO THE CATHOLIC

But the present article passes over other ecclesiastical pronouncements against Moral Re-Armament: we are concerned only with MRA as it revealed itself this year in the Philippines and with the statements of the archbishop of Manila. With these statements Dr. Schöllgen would in part agree (for example, with Msgr. Santos's statement that MRA is non-sectarian), but it is clear that Dr. Schöllgen finds in Moral Re-Armament no "ambiguous religious principles" and no danger to the co-operating Catholic.

Such ambiguities and danger seem to exist, however, even if one judges only from the literature distributed in the Manila area about the time of the first Asian assembly, specifically, from the special MRA issue of *Color*, *The American Negro Monthly* for January 1955 and from the New Year 1957 issue of MRA's own *New World News Pictorial Quarterly*. Like the Baguio speakers, these two publications insist that MRA is the "only" thing capable of changing the present world, and that it can do so because it possesses a "superior ideology." The ideology's "superiority" is usually affirmed over communism or some other form of materialism, but at times it seems much more universal. Thus in the *New World News* Dr. G. Lake Imes writes: "[The play *Freedom*] deals with the fundamental problems of mankind—personal, domestic, social and national—that transcend race, class, nation and religion." In *Color* we read: "When men commit themselves to the absolute standards—honesty, purity, unselfishness, love—they rise above the low limits of race, color, class and creed." *Color*, again, quotes Dr. Paul Campbell of Edmonton, Canada as follows:

Moral Re-Armament is the biggest idea in the world today . . . MRA means living so that the other race, creed, class, nation finds a faith that satisfies. We need a faith that breaks through every barrier, a faith that helps us to live what we know to be right, to which all

men respond and which is so powerful that it changes men and conditions . . .¹³

Each of these statements touches upon religion. Each is religiously ambiguous and dangerous and could well make a prelate hesitate to approve of the religious principles of its author and publishers. How precisely do Dr. Imes's fundamental problems "transcend" religion? Is there any problem more fundamental than the problem of man's relation to God? And what are those "low limits of . . . creed" above which Moral Re-Armists allegedly rise? Does the Catholic creed have such low limits?

DR. CAMPBELL'S STATEMENT

But let us examine in detail the statement of Dr. Campbell: it is the longest of the three, and it possesses peculiar authority since it comes from a man long associated with MRA and co-author (with Peter Howard) of *Remaking Men*, one of the movement's most important books.¹⁴

"Creed" in Dr. Campbell's statement does not seem to mean a belief or beliefs but a church or sect, a body of believers. If this be so, what does Dr. Campbell mean by "faith"? He can mean "belief"; he can also mean the believer's response to a belief, his "spiritual attitude" (a common enough Protestant meaning of the word "faith"). If Dr. Campbell is using "faith" in the sense of belief, he is saying that MRA means living in such a way that a non-Catholic Moral Re-Armist, for example, thereby helps a Catholic who is not a Re-Armist to find a belief which this Catholic does not yet possess. If Dr. Campbell's belief is a religious belief (and MRA is a religious movement), the undesirability of such help seems evident enough: Catholics already have the one true faith and want no doctrinal additions to it.

¹³ *Color*, *The American Negro Monthly* p. 6. The preceding quotation from *Color* appears on p. 10, part of the same unsigned article. Dr. Imes's statement is part of his own article in *New World News* p. 4.

¹⁴ London, Blandford Press, 1954. Sixth impression August 1956. 120 pp.

It is more probable, however, that Dr. Campbell is using the word "faith" in the sense of spiritual attitude, i.e. a believer's personal, subjective response to an objective, doctrinal belief. In this case Dr. Campbell may be saying that, for a non-Catholic Re-Armist, MRA means living in such a way that a Catholic who is not a Re-Armist may take up a new attitude toward Catholic doctrine itself, or at least toward those elements of Catholic doctrine which coincide with the ideology of Moral Re-Armament. Giving this new attitude the best possible interpretation, the non-Catholic Re-Armist would thus be helping the Catholic to live up to his Catholic beliefs, instead of giving them a mere notional assent. This is precisely what MRA claims to have done in the case of many Catholics who either fell away from Catholic practice or were remiss in it, but subsequently grew fervent because of their MRA contacts.

Would this second possible interpretation of Dr. Campbell's statement be acceptable to the Catholic hierarchy? Theoretically, perhaps it would; practically, it almost certainly would not. To bring a Catholic back to the practice of his faith or to induce him to live it more perfectly, the non-Catholic Re-Armist must usually win the esteem of the Catholic and must win it precisely as a Moral Re-Armist, that is, as one dedicated to absolute moral standards under alleged personal guidance by God, in a movement which does not, either officially or unofficially, recognize the claims of the Catholic Church.

TRIPLE DANGER

In spite of Dr. Schöllgen's sanguine assurances, there seem to be undeniable dangers involved in such a contact between a crusading non-Catholic Re-Armist and the Catholic he inspires by converting him to the ideology of Moral Re-Armament. There is, first of all, the danger that the Catholic's new-found fervor may cool again when he reflects that his non-Catholic but unselfish friend gets along very well—to all appearances—without the burden of practices specifically Catholic.

Secondly, there is the danger of the Catholic's defection from specifically Catholic beliefs: his non-Catholic Re-Armist

friend does not share them, perhaps considers them erroneous or even worse, certainly thinks at best that they are matters of indifference to the task of morally changing men and the world. Moreover, if he is absolutely honest (as MRA bids him be) it is difficult to see how he can refrain from expressing his opinions to the Catholic when occasion arises.

Thirdly, there is danger of the Catholic's defection from obedience to ecclesiastical authority, for his esteemed Re-Armist friend acknowledges no obligation of obedience to the Catholic hierarchy in matters affecting faith and morals, nor indeed to any man; he "lets God tell him what to do" but he does not let His Church.

Are these dangers illusory? Some Catholic adherents to Moral Re-Armament showed scant respect for ecclesiastical authority after visiting the archbishop of Manila. Some Catholic Re-Armists echo the cry that "only MRA" can save the present world and bring it union and peace. Some, though presumably Catholic for years, experience what looks very much like a revivalist conversion after only twenty-four hours acquaintance with MRA. And all Catholic converts to MRA are potential recipients of its literature, which at one time quotes the Pope on peace, and at another says that Mohammed lived honesty, purity, unselfishness and love "in an absolute way"—a statement that unfortunately casts doubt upon MRA's absolutes themselves.¹⁵

Finally, the point made by the archbishop of Manila is worth pondering—a point expressed in a peculiarly apt metaphor: MRA seems to desire the fruits and the flowers without taking into account the tree from which alone the flowers and fruit can come.

The flowers and the fruits are indeed desirable: the peace and harmony of nations through individual conversion to the

¹⁵ *New World News* No. 13 (New Year 1956) quotes Pope Pius XII beside a Madonna scene from *The Vanishing Island*; No. 15 (New Year 1957) p. 26 contains this tribute to Mohammed.

practice of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love. A high ideal, worthy of the saints. But this ideal—like sanctity—cannot be achieved in this fallen world except through Him who redeemed it. Personal sanctity is possible only through the grace of God won for us by Jesus Christ and dispensed to us through His Sacraments.¹⁶

¹⁶ As we go to press another book on MRA, recently published, is being advertised in London. It is entitled *Enigma: A Study of Moral Re-Armament* published by Longmans and written by a distinguished Catholic layman, Sir Arnold Lunn. From press reports we gather that the book is favorable to MRA, but as no copy of the book has yet come to hand, we cannot comment on the position taken by Sir Arnold.—Editor