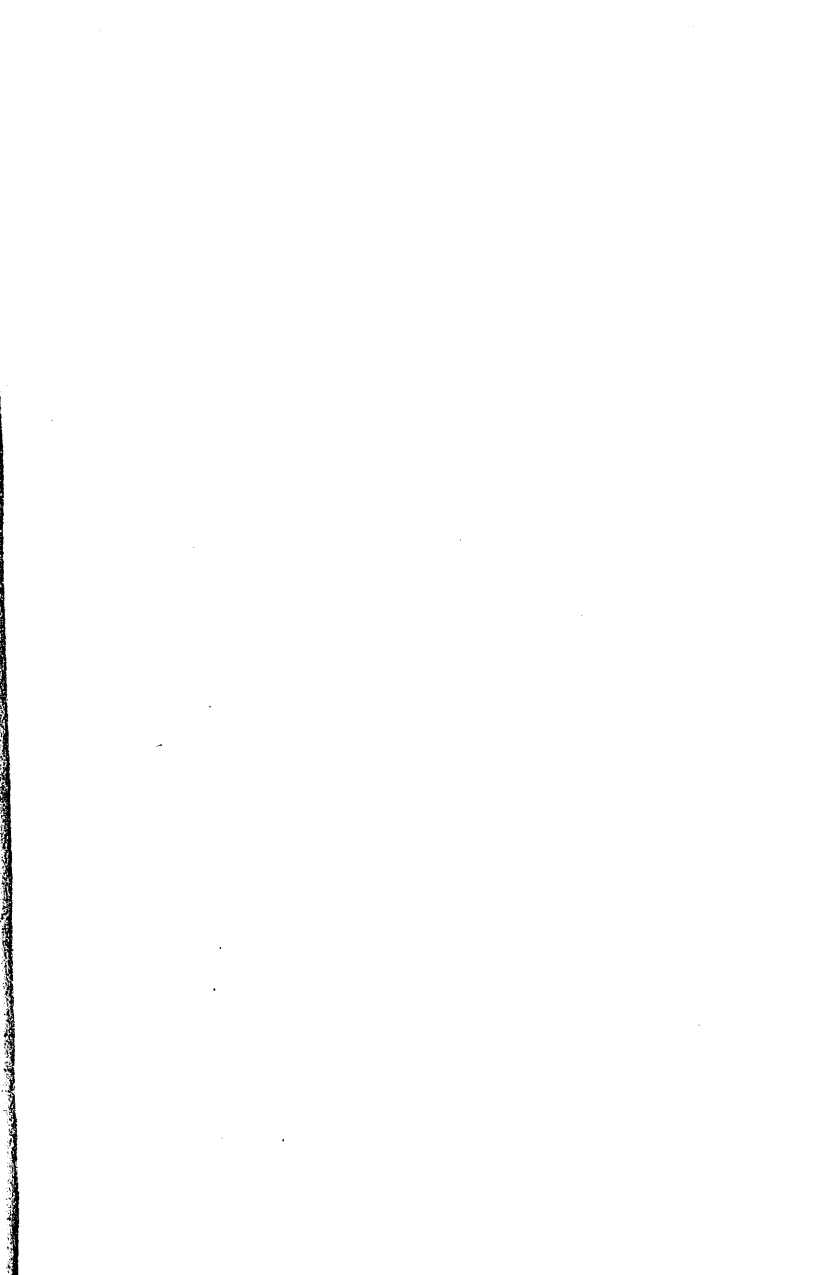
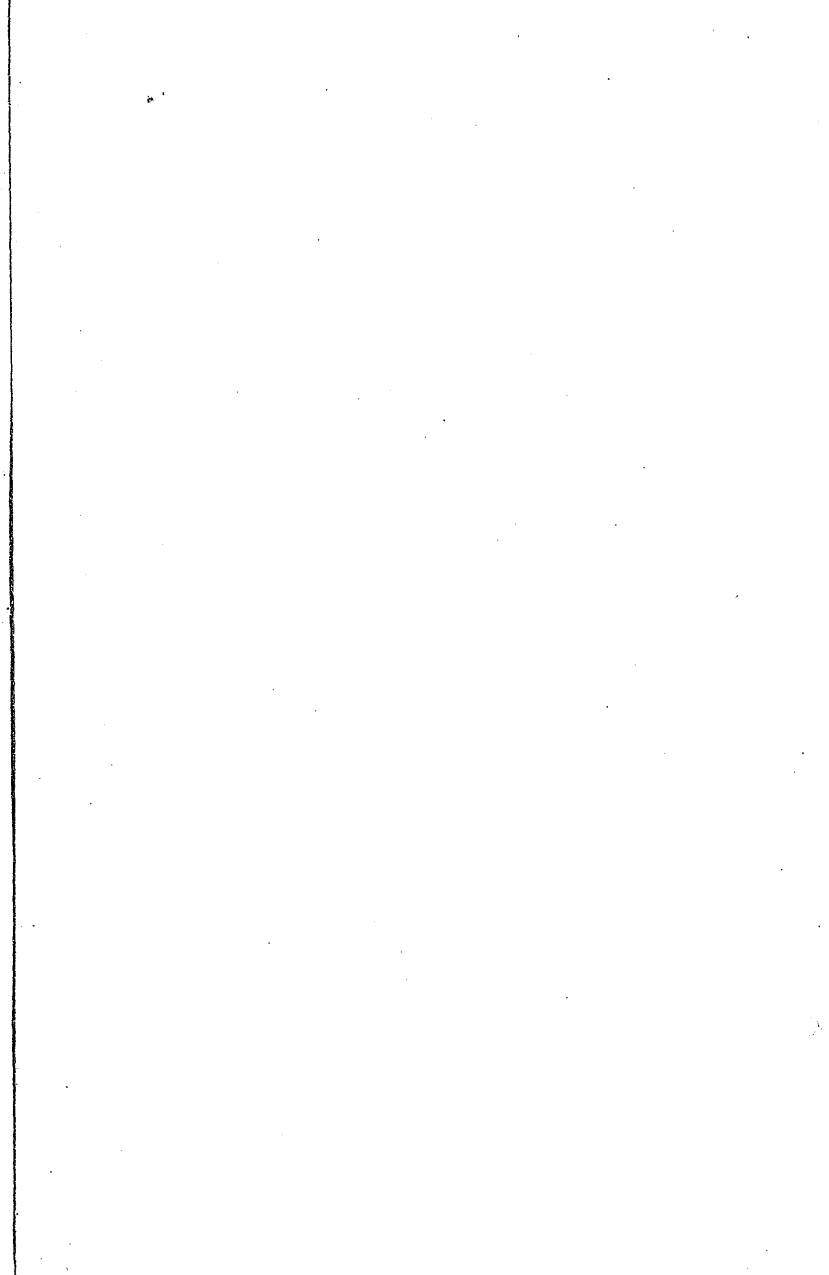
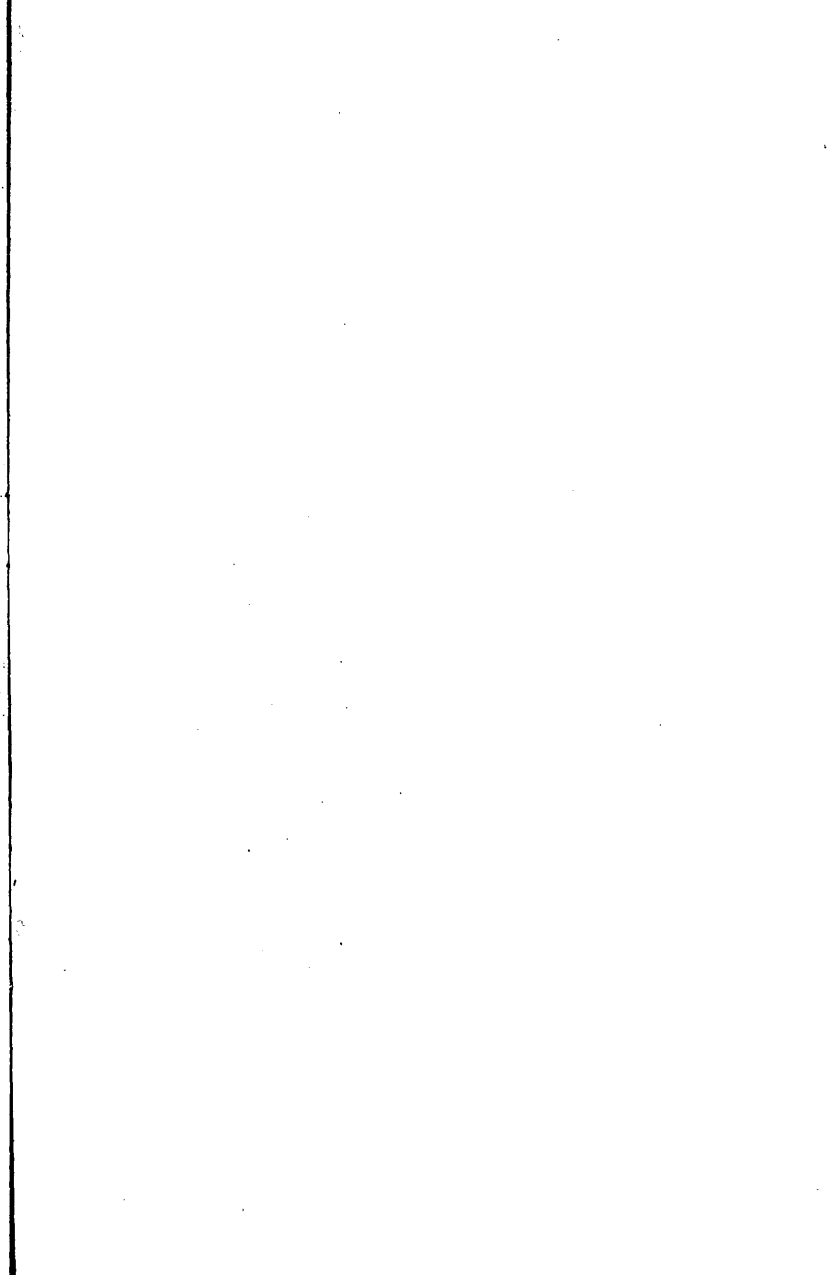




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# OXFORD AND THE GROUPS



# OXFORD AND THE GROUPS

*The Influence of the Groups  
considered by*

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## PREFACE

THE Group Movement has aroused world-wide interest and has already accumulated a considerable literature of its own. This consists in the main of indiscriminate eulogies on the one hand and of equally indiscriminate criticism and animadversions on the other. The advocates of the Movement are apt to turn a blind eye to its failures and to be impatient of criticism, while the critics are equally blind to the real good that the Groups are doing and to their immense possibilities. Therefore there should be a warm welcome for such a book as this which seeks to review the whole Movement dispassionately both from within and from without. It is altogether good that two of the acknowledged leaders of the Groups should have consented to co-operate in the work, and their articles will do much to correct the misunderstanding and allay the suspicions which are still rife in many quarters. The other writers do not hesitate to criticize, and that sometimes severely, but it is always in a friendly spirit, constructive rather than negative. Most of the criticism is so sane and well-informed that all who are concerned with the Groups may well take it to heart.

The general impression which this book produces is to the effect that we have in these Oxford Groups a real and effective work of the Spirit of God. Their value lies in a re-emphasis on certain vital but often overlooked aspects of the Christian Gospel, and in the definite challenge to the whole Church of

Christ which this re-emphasis involves. There can be no question that the Groups have met a felt need and they may well be content to be judged by their fruits. But the book inevitably raises the question of their future. Here certain points emerge to which the present writer has already ventured to call attention.

In the first place the Groups aim, and rightly aim, at conversion, and they are singularly successful in making converts. But are they wise in insisting that every changed life shall become a life-changer, and in putting the delicate work of soul-surgery into the hands of inexperienced novices? In any case, human nature, even adolescent human nature, is so infinitely varied that a method or technique that is successful in some cases is not necessarily so in all. There is danger here of a psychological error against which all who have to deal with sick souls know that they must be on their guard. The leaders of the Groups are, no doubt, fully aware of it, but it still needs to be impressed on the rank and file.

Secondly, this book raises once again the question as to the intellectual and theological background of the Group Movement. We can well understand the impatience of ardent evangelists who urge that they are out to save souls, not to teach theology. But it will not do, and sooner or later their converts will be called upon to give a reason for the hope that is in them. Here analogies with previous evangelical movements do not help us much. There has never been a time quite like the present, and it is not fair to young Christians, especially of the student class, to leave them to fight their way through the present intellectual chaos without guidance or instruction. How such instruction is to be given may not be

clear, but the splendid fellowship of the Groups ought to make it possible, and some of the Churches, at least, have the machinery if the Groups can supply the men.

Finally this raises the important question of the relation of the Groups to the Churches, and we hope that the article on that subject will be read and pondered. It is hardly too much to say that on the solution of this question the whole future of the Groups, and it may be even of the Churches themselves, humanly speaking, depends. The responsibility which rests on the Churches is great. Can they and will they absorb and use this new life to which the Groups are giving birth? For a long time they have been unanimous in voicing their need of revival. It may be that the way of revival is at hand for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. One thing to be thankful for is that the Groups are making Christian reunion a reality. In face of the demands and assurances of a vital Christianity denominational differences sink into their proper place. The only real bond of union among Christians is not identity of organization or of doctrine, but love based on a common spiritual experience. Group members seem to realize this among themselves. If they can extend it to the whole Christian Church some of the older ones among us may sing our 'Nunc Dimittis.' Meanwhile no one can read this book without becoming alive to the potentialities of this great Movement and the gravity of its challenge. There is an opportunity here which men and women of goodwill should be eager to make use of and turn to the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.

W. B. SELBIE.



## INTRODUCTION

**M**ATTHEW ARNOLD once called Oxford 'the home of lost causes.' To-day, in the minds of many, she has lost even that glamour of the fight against odds for the weaker cause, and has become a secluded refuge where young men, if they are lucky, enjoy the best four years of their lives, useless knowledge is gathered for its own sake, and burning problems of politics or social ethics are shown to be theoretically unreal. Ineffectual Idealism and pure learning are, we are told, a stage which a young man should go through before entering on the serious things of life, and Oxford is the place where this higher education can be gained.

And yet the summer of 1932 saw the coincidence of two events in Oxford which would seem, in one sphere of life at least, to give the lie to this pleasant picture. They were the centenary celebration of the Oxford Movement, and the great Group House-Party at which five thousand people came together intent on 'World Revival.' One hundred years ago the Movement which woke the Church of England from its slumbers was set in motion by the parish priest of the University church: to-day Oxford is again the centre-point of a religious awakening—though this time imported from across the Atlantic.

It is not without careful consideration that I have compared these two movements. No one now, least of all their critics, can afford to deny the importance of the Groups, and events seem to show that present-day Oxford is avoiding the worst follies which an earlier generation indulged in, when



faced with the beginnings of a religious revival. To-day we find, among men of all parties and denominations, a spirit of common endeavour and an effort to explain, criticize, and evaluate the Groups. Instead of a warfare of pamphlets and sermons, and a noise of unseemly wranglings, an attempt is being made by the leaders of the Movement to explain their point of view to the critics, and by the critics to remind the leaders of those other aspects of life, those complexities and problems, which a young movement, with a simple gospel and a belief in 'action at all costs,' tends too often to forget.

Of this spirit of co-operation this book is at once symbol and proof. It is written by men and women of widely different creeds—by Catholic, Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical, Congregationalist, and Unitarian: by Conservative, Liberal, and Socialist: by traditionalist and revolutionary, and, last but by no means least, by old and young. But they are bound together by two ties; they are members of this University and they are all of them 'educators'—though their notion of what education means would vary, I fancy, as widely as their creeds. The common ground upon which the book is built is thus a purpose shared by all—to prepare the coming generation for the task of rebuilding a society shaken and battered by war and crisis—and a readiness to welcome any helpers in the task who are willing to submit themselves to that constructive criticism of which our Universities are or should be the chief exponents. And thus it is only natural that a book on the Group Movement should come from Oxford: it was to Oxford that the Groups first came, from Oxford that they took their name, and in Oxford

that they still have their headquarters. We may be gratified or ashamed of it, but we cannot get away from the fact. To some degree the Movement *is* an Oxford movement, and it is therefore of very special importance for Oxford to define its attitude to the Groups. Indeed, to everyone who believes in Education they must be a matter of vital interest. They have the vigour, and sometimes the crudity, of all those political and social 'awakenings' which, deprived of the guidance and leadership of the generation destroyed by the war, are struggling to replace outworn traditions with new or refurbished loyalties. Like those others, the Groups use a new language and new symbols, like them they attack an Evil and a System. Customs and institutions deeply venerated by the older generation receive scant respect from them.

But this violence and rawness should not blind us to their significance. Their success is proof enough that something *was* wrong with society and with organized Religion, though it does *not* show (as is often claimed) that their remedy is the right remedy, far less the only remedy. It is the purpose of this book to try in the first place to give a picture of the Groups and their growth in Oxford, and for this reason by far the longest essay is that in which Mr. Allen traces their history and expounds their message. This first section sets the problem, and the other two sections endeavour to indicate answers to two sides of that problem which cannot be kept rigidly apart: (1) can the Groups play a part in solving the social difficulties which face us to-day? To this question are devoted the essays of Mr. Maud, Miss Gwyer, Mr. Morris and Mr. Auder..

(2) What contribution can the Groups make to the life of the Churches? This is the theme of the essays in the third section by Dr. Jacks, Father D'Arcy, Mr. Wand, and Mr. Micklem. It is obvious that no ready-made answer to two such questions can be discovered in these pages. The reader will find numerous disagreements between the views of the various writers, and no attempt has been made to avoid this. It was felt to be far more valuable to show the variety and complexity of the problem, than to reach platitudinous agreement by the method of the whittling down of differences. But in the concluding essays of each section, by the Editor and Professor Grensted respectively, an effort has been made to sum up the results achieved.

In conclusion it may be worth remarking that all the contributors have had first-hand experience of the work of the Groups. Two of them are leaders of the Movement, three are heads or past-heads of Houses and two are deans of colleges, who in their administrative work have had considerable opportunity of studying the effect of the revival upon the undergraduate. The others (with the exception of Mr. Auden who is a schoolmaster as well as a poet) are all college tutors. Much of the criticism is severe, but none of it, I believe, is merely negative: and the very fact that two leaders of the Movement have actively co-operated in this book shows that the Groups are now willing to undergo the intellectual discipline of hard and outspoken criticism which alone will render them fully capable of playing their part in that work of 'World Revival' which they, like so many others, feel to be their vocation.

Oxford, January, 1934.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN.

## THE GROUPS IN OXFORD

BY THE REV. G. F. ALLEN

### I. *The need to be met*

A UNIVERSITY exists to train the minds of men and women into the knowledge of truth. It seeks that the minds of its members may become stored with the knowledge of facts, and enlightened with the understanding of theories and of laws. This is not its only purpose, but it is the purpose which most obviously accounts for its existence and structure. No one would deny that the universities, in their present form, achieve this purpose with considerable success; no one who works in them would deny that far greater success might be desired. Many students who come to the university seem to lack either the inclination, or else the ability, or else the discipline of will, needed for intellectual work. They take the necessary examinations with indifferent success; their motive seems to be rather to pass examinations with the minimum of trouble, than to acquire learning for its own sake; they have lost or never found the genuine curiosity of mind, which would lead them to take pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge. The university may provide the fountains of learning in library and lecture in richest store; it is a vain provision, unless it also learns to revive the thirst for knowledge in those who come to drink. To revive this thirst must involve treating students as human beings, with instincts and feelings and powers of decision, and not merely as intellectual machines made to absorb

facts and reproduce them on paper; it will involve a far deeper understanding than we have yet found of the structure of human personality, and of the laws of its liberation into full health and vigour of mind. I do not wish to indulge in negative criticism of my own, or any other university. It is, however, necessary that we should become penitent with regard to present practice, in order then to grow into the fuller work, which God would have us perform.

In the field of learning, there is obvious room for improvement, yet the standard may be considered already high. Contact with older minds who enjoy their field of study cannot fail to awaken in others, in some degree, a like enjoyment. In the field of the training of character, the standard leaves far more to be desired. The average student scarcely expects to grow in character through his university years, and little occurs to awaken any such expectation. The development of character is at present mainly left to conventional rules of university discipline, and to the chance forces of the conflict of personalities in a crowd. It may be said that this is the best or, indeed, the only possible method of training. The results show its inadequacy. The individual needs far more delicate aid in his growth into maturity. He has to learn to develop individual strength of character, and at the same time to adapt his individual independence to the necessity that he shall be a self-giving and not a self-seeking member of the community. At present, to an extent which reflects very seriously on our whole educational system, men and women come up to the university with inward feelings of inferiority and fear, expressed in an outward shyness and self-consciousness of

manner; and all too often they leave the university as ineffective in character as they come. The system, both in schools and universities, encourages initiative in the few who lead, at the cost of leaving an inhibited and repressed nature in the many who are led. The over-shadowing of life by vague unfaced fears hinders in turn intellectual efficiency. The shy refrain from asking for information, for fear that those in authority over them will blame their ignorance, rather than approve their curiosity; the same fear of betraying ignorance makes them nervous, hesitant, and ineffective, when their knowledge is tested in examinations. As students need, and, to a large extent, fail, to find help in overcoming their latent inferiorities and fears, so more deeply they need help in the realm of sex, which is becoming increasingly dominant for them in their university years. The conventional, foolish, prudish policy draws a veil of silence over this sphere of education; the old dare not make the adventure of sharing from their experience, and the young dare not make the adventure of asking for aid. The healthy development of sexual instincts is brought under the shadow of a wholly unnecessary sense of shame. The repression leads to tragic confusion of thought and of action; and energy of mind is wasted in inner conflict, which should be utilized in outgoing constructive work.

It is a task of the university, not only to train individuals, but also to provide and develop fellowship amongst men. The individual finds here in miniature the community life, which he will afterwards find in the work to which he goes. Men and women, old and young, theologian, classicist,

scientist, historian, meet together in one society, that each may contribute their highest vision to the one community of which all form part. For this end of social life and social responsibility, Oxford, like most universities, provides the outward framework of society and club and meeting in far greater quantity than is necessary; the inward spirit of sincerity and love in far greater poverty than is necessary. The poverty of the one is perhaps the cause of the excess of the other; men wander from meeting to meeting, and in each generation create new meetings, in the vain search for a fellowship, which they can never find, until they themselves as individuals are released into fuller powers of life. My own experience as an undergraduate in Oxford after the war is probably representative of very many others. I joined societies until every night of the week was occupied, and essays had to be started late at night, and finished in the small hours of the morning. Despite these societies, the barrier of my own reserve and shyness shut me off from any real intimacy with my contemporaries. Like most men, I owe to my time in college more than all else a few deep and lasting friendships; yet even with my most intimate friend, though we talked often round a night fire or on vacations together, our talk remained theoretic and divorced from our real lives. Never till long afterwards did we come to the point of acknowledging to one another the actual places in life, where we ourselves were lonely or defeated or ashamed. The place in life, where men most need the encouragement of friendship, is the place where through pride and through fear they never acknowledge their need of friendship. The failure to learn the art of sincere

fellowship in the university is, for many, the reflection of a still deeper loneliness in their homes. At this age there commonly comes a vague yearning for freedom; a vague sense of being misunderstood in one's home; a knowledge of thoughts and desires which are fettered and cannot find expression. The greater liberty of the university after the discipline of the school, does something to satisfy this quest for freedom; it is apt only to exaggerate the unspoken sense of restraint in vacations at home.

The love of God is as poorly learnt as is the love of man. For many, God remains the mental representative of the authority of school and parent, against which they are in revolt. There is a vague sense of a realm of unpleasant and, on the whole, unnecessary duties, for which the institutional religion of chapels and chaplains stands; there is the certainty that services and Church doctrines, as so far understood, are entirely unrelated to the realities of life; there is the determination to seek for a new philosophy of living, amid the food and the drink and the sport of which present living is made. In the years immediately after the war, in Oxford there was a momentary zeal to find in Christ the founder of a new world order. The first enthusiasm for reconstruction was built on too shallow foundations, and quickly fell; in the following years, churches and chapels and religious societies became increasingly neglected. The attendance at college services, and especially at the Communion Service, still reflects very seriously on the degree to which reverence for God, and a deeper personal enjoyment of the presence of God, are made a reality to men and women in their schools. The majority care little for these things.



They have learnt to seek an immediate pleasure in the satisfaction of the more elementary desires of their nature; they are beginning to learn the wistful discontent, where men are drawn this way and that by conflicting human motives, and have not yet found their one sure purpose in the knowledge of God.

Even amongst the minority, who in the post-war years turned towards the realities of religion, there was much search for God, but little experience of God. For some of these I can speak, having myself been an ordinand in Oxford from 1921 to 1926. I had begun then to travel the road of personal communion with God, though I knew but the barest beginnings of what a life of prayer and worship might mean. I found a real encouragement of soul, through fellowship with other seekers for God, in such societies as the Student Christian Movement. The religious thought of those days was mainly speculative or historical; Barth had not yet risen, demanding that theology should return to her proper task, and become once more a pointer to the living reality of God. With those of my contemporaries who shared my interest in religion, we discussed why we were doubtful of the evidence for New Testament miracles; and why we could still count ourselves Christian, though preferring the evolutionary philosophy of Bergson or Lloyd Morgan to the myths of Genesis. The liberty of mind to explore, and, where necessary, to reconstruct a Christian philosophy sprang from a true instinct of inquiry; and personally, I am grateful that I was encouraged in that liberty. Nevertheless, such discussions as these, though they seemed very important at the time, did not meet our real need. They

served to make it possible to take ordination vows without too great a strain on intellectual integrity; they awoke a sufficient interest in Christian philosophy, to enable one to make that philosophy interesting to others, whose taste already inclined that way; they did not serve to reveal Christianity, not as a mere matter of interest to the interested, but as a thing of healing and of power for the world. In the light of more mature experience, I am amazed at the fact that I could pass through university training as an ordinand, and never learn the most elementary truths of Christian pastoral psychology. It was possible to attain some success in moral philosophy, without ever discovering in experience that inhibiting shyness sprang from latent inferiority, and that perfect love could cast out fear. It was possible to take honours in theology, yet never to meet the elementary truth, that the forgiveness of God in Christ could work subjectively in the release of sex instincts from repression and perversion into natural health. Without pre-judging that any particular theories or practices are necessary for revival, at least it is certain that the work of education in these years needed to be refreshed and enlightened and revived.

## II. *The leader and his work*

Amongst the many meetings of those university years, one stands out in my memory, which impressed me more than a little at the time, and to which later events have given a vastly increased significance. It came almost at the outset of that movement of revival, to whose history we now turn. Some time about 1922, a senior undergraduate in University College invited me to come up to his

rooms at night, to meet and hear a visitor. That evening, Frank Buchman talked to a small group about some of his recent experiences. He interested us, because all that he said in theory about the Christian life, he could immediately illustrate from some actual fact in his own life. He told us stories from all over the world of the lives of men being changed into Christ-like character. As I look back, this wedding of Christian principle to the actual change in individual lives appears far more important, than at the time I understood. He talked, and perhaps made us a little restless by talking, about the necessity of absolute sincerity of mind with one another, if we would know the mind of God. He talked of learning the will of God, as though that were a practicable possibility; and both his sincerity and the facts of which he spoke, made it evident that it was. At his suggestion, before the evening closed, we sat together for a short time in silence, to let the Holy Spirit speak in our hearts. The possibilities of confession were too costly to be immediately accepted; the possibilities of life under divine orders became from that time a permanent part of my theology, from the unanswerable evidence of the life of one man who thus lived.

For many years after that meeting I did not see Frank Buchman again, but in the last two years I have frequently worked with him and have come to know him well. Three things impress me most in his character. He has a great and rare insight into the nature of human personality, and a deep, sympathetic power of aiding individual people into strength and health and love. He has a rare blend of vision and initiative, with close and courteous attention

to detail. The nature of his work is shown by such an incident as came to my personal notice; he broke into the urgent and complicated planning of a continental house party, to make sure that a comfortable room had been provided at it for my mother; and the comfort of her room, after a long and tiring journey, enabled her at once to feel at home and take her part in that gathering. Thirdly, he has a rare blend of leadership with humility; the vast growth of his work is very greatly due to the way in which he himself continually retires into the background, in order to delegate leadership to others, and to train in others his own powers of initiative. Like all who are militant in the service of God, he has made enemies from those who do not like his militancy, and has suffered from their slander. He has learnt more than most men, and, being human, will learn even more fully still that last quality of Christ-like character, the forgiving love which looks only for the good in others, when they are unfairly and unjustly looking for the evil in us.

Frank Buchman was trained at a Lutheran theological college in America. His family crossed to that country from Switzerland in 1740. An ancestor, Bibliander, had been the successor of Zwingli in the chair of theology at Zurich; in his house, English students used to meet, as to-day people from many nations have come to meet in house parties, to aid one another to know and follow Christ. When Frank Buchman left his college, he began his ministry working up a dead and difficult town parish; and all his early work was amongst the poor. In 1908 he visited England, and received that vision of the Cross, which revolutionized his life and

his work. Like many others down the ages, he recognized under its shadow the selfishness and pride and ill-will which separated him from the Christ; these evil powers were then killed within him, that Christ might live. Henceforth he became one with those who have appropriated the forgiveness of God; what for others of his generation was still a theory and a theology, divorced from life and practice, had become to him a transforming experience. Our sins against God are also sins against our fellow-men. If we have been jealous or bitter in heart, we have offended against the God of Love, and we have also offended against the men whom we have envied or despised. We need to acknowledge our sin to God, and to seek and claim His forgiveness in Christ; we need also to make restitution by frank and open apology toward the men whom we have wronged. If we are unwilling to make such apology, we show that we have not really taken to heart the fact of our need of divine forgiveness; if we make it, we both establish our own communion with the Christ who forgives, and proclaim His forgiveness to those to whom we acknowledge our own need of forgiveness. As one immediate result of his vision of the crucified Christ, Frank Buchman wrote letters of restitution to six men against whom he had long borne a grudge. With these six letters of apology for nursed resentment, a stone had been thrown in a lake, whose ripples can still be seen in widening circles; very many such letters have since passed through the mails, as person has passed on to person the new-found secret, that our heart must be cleansed, through confession and apology, from sin, if we are to come into communion with the living God.

For the next seven years, on the recommendation of J. R. Mott, Frank Buchman was leading Christian work in a state university in America. His aim was to lead men to a rediscovery of that quality of life, which was lived by the first generation of Christians. His method was to win individuals for Christ-like life, and to regard no individual as won, till he had the power of winning the lives of others. Such individual work, though at first slow, bears rich fruit in the time of harvest; after a few years there were fifteen hundred men seeking the secret of the New Testament in Bible study groups. From 1916, Frank Buchman held the position of an extension lecturer at Hartford Theological Seminary. The post left him half the year free for travel, and the travel was used for missions of evangelism throughout the world from east to west. His work is mentioned in a report of the China Continuation Committee; a Bishop in China wrote of it, that the work Frank Buchman and his team did in the far East had meant more for forming a Chinese Christian leadership, than any other single movement during his twenty-eight years in China. In 1918, in China there was held the first of those House Parties, which have since become a regular feature of the work of the Group. The description by J. M. Roots, the son of the Bishop of Hankow, at the end of *Life Changers*, might have been written of many similar later gatherings. All types of people were there, 'missionaries, pastors, statesmen, business and professional men. They were together for two weeks, talking about the deepest things in their own experiences, acknowledging frankly where life had been a failure, and seeking to find whether it held

more in store for them than they had already found.' A few years of further experience strengthened Frank Buchman's conviction that the one hope for the world lay in the individual change of life of its individual inhabitants. It is vain to hope to build a new world order on the shifting sands of unredeemed human nature; the first need is that the evil forces of self-seeking and fear and pride should be rooted out of the character of individual men and women; and this miracle can happen in Christ. From 1923 he resigned the Hartford chair, to devote his whole life to this one end; since then he has travelled through the world, where God has led, trusting that God will provide for those who live wholeheartedly in His service, and finding that God has never betrayed that trust.

### III. *Development in Oxford*

We cannot follow the story through the world; in this essay we must now limit our attention to Oxford, only casting an occasional glance beyond the university, as men from the university have taken the message of the power of Christ to other towns and other lands. Early in 1921, Frank Buchman visited Cambridge at the request of two Anglican bishops in China, to tell their sons his vision of a life dedicated to God. Three men who gave their lives to Christ, and received the gift of Christ-like life, came over with him from Cambridge to Oxford. He spoke in a room in Christ Church, and told the stories of men whose lives had been changed, from selfishness and lust to purity and service. Naturally, there was some opposition. Frank Buchman had spoken of the masks behind

which men usually live, and of the need of the removal of these masks if we would learn to know God. As when these truths were first proclaimed, 'every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd.' But if 'some mocked,' 'others said we will hear you concerning this again.' Amongst those who were at once interested and soon converted was Loudon Hamilton, who has from that time been one of the leaders with Frank Buchman in the work of world evangelism. The immediate effects in Oxford in the summer of 1921 were such, that thanks were given in a pulpit in the university for the illumination which had come to Oxford. The work through the summer term was consolidated at the first of the English house parties, held at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, in August. The life of love and sincerity was passed from those who had learnt to live it, to others who till now had not learnt to live. Some thirty or forty men, who were little accustomed to study the religious life, on this occasion all prolonged their stay, because they saw that life in a form so genuine and joyful and real.

From 1921 to 1925 the work spread steadily, with occasional small house parties, where person told person of their new-found way of living. In April of 1922 a house party was held at the Hostel of the Quakers at Beaconsfield. Throughout, the work of the Group has simply meant the bringing to life in the experience of living men and women of truths which are enshrined in the rich and varied heritage of the Church, but which the modern world had lost. The trust that God will guide those who wait before Him in fellowship and quiet is no new



discovery; it is the rediscovery of the realities which all Christians have in a measure believed, and which the Quakers especially have practised. At these meetings in the Quaker meeting house, Loudon Hamilton decided to leave a mastership at Eton to which he had meanwhile gone, and to visit America, to co-operate with Frank Buchman in the work of whole-time evangelism. In the following August a House Party was held at Wimbledon, with about forty men present, mostly from Oxford and Cambridge. Harold Begbie's presence at these meetings led to the publication in June of 1923 of his book, *Life Changers*, the first of the published works about Frank Buchman's work. Not till six years later, when it was no longer possible to preserve his anonymity, did Frank Buchman allow his own name to be mentioned in it. During these years the small circle whom the latter had collected round him toured in India and Australia and on the continent. We have yet to realize what may be the full effect of such international missions of evangelism. The world has tried for many centuries to order the affairs of nations and races in the ways of peace; it has yet to try the experiment of changing the individual character of individual leaders of the nations into the likeness of the Prince of Peace.

In the autumn of 1925 a step was taken which led to the gradual and later rapid expansion of the work of the Group in the university, and hence also to the wider influence of the university in the work of world evangelism. At this time Loudon Hamilton came back into residence in Oxford, and did whole-time work in the university. Shortly afterwards,

Howard Rose was appointed to the Oxford pastorate. Through their influence small groups of undergraduates began to meet together for quiet and meditation and prayer in different colleges at the beginning of each day. The corporate life of the Church has everywhere suffered for lack of such fellowship; it is everywhere enriched, as those who meet together for worship also aid one another in informal fellowship, to cast out evil day by day from their lives, and to discern and follow the purpose of God. From this time a small group of leaders began also to meet weekly for quiet and for prayer, that they might aid one another to bring the power of the living Christ into the life of the university. Amongst these leaders was Julian Thornton-Duesbery, who was at this time a chaplain at Wycliffe Hall and later became chaplain of Corpus Christi College, and who was the first of the senior members of the university to become actively associated with the work of the Group.

In the autumn of the following year, a very important step forward was taken quietly in the university work. At the beginning of the new academic year, Frank Buchman visited the small group of leaders, and shared with them his guidance, that when they were really united with one another, things would begin to happen in the university. The principle is essential to the life of the Group, and we may pause for a moment to reflect on it. To put the principle in its most general terms, conventional reserve leaves outward living on a level of trivial superficiality; the mutual trust that drops these barriers of reserve leads to a qualitative enrichment of life, both for ourselves, and for those whom

we are willing to take into our confidence, and for the wider world whom we then may aid. Wherever men engaged in pastoral work meet together, their work would be enriched through such fellowship. If clergy in local or central conference confine their discussion to Church organization and finance, they give the inevitable impression to one another, and to those amongst whom they work, that such things as these represent the widest orbit of their interest in life. The work of the Church would be immeasurably enriched if they would share with one another the deeper things of their spiritual life, alike their peaks of inspiration and vision, and the sins and temptations which they are facing. Through such trust they could aid one another in victory over sin, and in a deeper personal consecration to Christ. Through such trust they would know where each had experience of sin and victory, and where each saw most clearly the vision of God's purpose for the world; they could then with open knowledge seek one another's aid for preaching and for pastoral work. Through such team work in evangelism, the work of the Group in Oxford began to advance.

From the autumn of 1926 open meetings for witness were held on Sunday evenings. Those who had experienced the power of the living Christ to free them from temptation, and to liberate their characters into His gifts of love and joy, shared with others who came to hear the secret of their new life. The witness of unanswerable fact, now as in the first days of the Church, is far the strongest weapon for spreading the good news of the power of God; the revival of this weapon has been one of the main causes of the spread of the Group; it is only

necessary for its use that we should first suffer Christ to forgive our sins, and be humbled to acknowledge where He has needed to forgive. In January the leaders in Oxford were strong enough to conduct a campaign from Oxford in a provincial town. Meetings for witness were held in the local cinema at Worthing. The speakers were all from Oxford; and the truths of Christianity were proclaimed, where they should be proclaimed, not only in the church where men gather for worship, but also in the market-place of the modern world, where men need and seldom learn to pray.

In the following year before the summer term, some thirty men and women met for preparation at Wallingford, which has since become a frequent centre for small meetings from Oxford. Regular Sunday evening meetings continued to be held, and permanent weekly meetings of the inner group of men's and women's leaders were held. A further stage of expansion is marked with the mission to America in the summer of this year. A South African Rhodes scholar was led through prayer, with the agreement of his tutor, to postpone his 'Finals' for a year, and to go on this mission. The event is interesting, since it gave rise to the popular generalization, as erroneous as most rumours, that when men came into touch with the Group, they received convenient guidance to go abroad on the eve of their schools. In point of fact, the person, whose decision to follow Christ gave rise to this rumour, took a good medical degree the following year; he has worked in co-operation with the Group ever since, and has done distinguished work in medical research. The decision is also interesting, in that it brought the

realities of following the guidance of Christ into new prominence before the university authorities. The mission to America led to a House Party of 250 visitors, at which the team from Oxford were greatly used; there, too, the Rhodes scholar saw the vision of a similar mission of revival to his own country of South Africa for the following summer.

The next year, 1927 to 1928, was a period of very great expansion, both in Oxford and in wider missions through the world. The meetings at Wallingford before the beginning of term, at which Frank Buchman was present, were attended by about 120 undergraduates. Howard Rose, now priest in charge of St. Peter-le-Bailey, had a congregation of this number or rather more undergraduates, at the weekly Sunday morning service. The work was, as always, bound to New Testament life and doctrine; a series of special Bible readings were held two or three times a week in the Michaelmas term under the aegis of the Group, and these were also well attended. In the New Year larger meetings for public witness were held in the Randolph Hotel. These meetings were the first to attract widespread notice in the press, and also less fortunately to attract the controversy which is apt to follow notice in the press. The work of the Group, in leading men to face their sins, in order then through penitence to find forgiveness and conquest over their sins, achieved the dignity of notice in *Punch*. 'Organized match play has not yet begun,' a writer there said: 'but teams of eight from two different colleges will meet informally in a neutral room, and confess against each other, sin for sin. Balliol, I hear, has a

second team. Indeed, there were great tales of a sensational match between Wadham and Balliol II. After seven heats the scores were level, but in the final heat the Balliol captain defeated his opposite number by a narrow margin. The Wadham captain made a generous speech, in which he freely admitted that the worst side had won.' At this time the *Isis*, one of the university magazines, began its policy of ridicule; in Oxford, the excess of criticism has probably driven its readers into sympathy with the movement it attacked; outside Oxford, the policy has been unfortunate, as the articles have sometimes been quoted in papers in London or America, and received for their judgment a respect which they did not deserve. A more serious estimate of the work of the Group was given by Professor L. W. Grensted (as he has since become) in a letter with which he checked the controversy in the daily press. 'I have seen a good deal of the leaders of the Group,' he wrote; 'and I should like to bear testimony, not only to the general sanity with which they have organized their efforts, but also to its real effectiveness. Men whom I have known, and they are only a few out of many, have not only found a stronger faith and a new happiness, but have also made definite progress in the quality of their study and in their athletics too.'

The expansion from Oxford outward was marked by meetings in Holland, at the close of 1927, at which some fifteen of the leaders were Oxford men. At these meetings a number of men were converted, who have since consistently led the work of revival in that country. In these days of a rising tide of nationalism, the work may well prove of inter-

national importance for the whole welfare of modern civilization, that many groups of people in many different nations should learn to see beyond loyalty to their nation, the common loyalty to one Lord and Saviour in Christ. As the work has spread into nations, through the small beginnings of friend convincing friend, so also it has spread into the sore places of the relations of races. In the summer of 1928, Howard Rose took a small group of people, six of whom were Oxford men, on the first of a series of tours to South Africa. As a result of their tour, a leading paper of Cape Town wrote on October 12: 'In their meetings the members of the Oxford Group have not had any truck with emotionalism or sensationalism . . . and there is much evidence that they have made a great impression on many with whom they have come into contact.' It is worth while at this point to pursue the South African adventure a little further. The following year another travelling team visited that country. This time a Cape paper pictured the possible political effects, of such acts of apology and restitution as have from the start characterized the work. General Hertzog was represented as writing to General Smuts: 'As one general to another, I have to confess that deep in my heart I consider you the finest politician in South Africa. Sometimes I lie awake at night and wish I could handle a situation as tactfully as you do. I wish I could look at things in the same big way, and review matters in the same calm and thoughtful manner. I have been reading your book on Holism, and I have more than half a mind to base some of my future speeches on certain of the bulliest passages.' Words spoken in jest are

sometimes closer to truth than their writers imagine at the time. Later years have seen these two antagonistic leaders and their followers combined in a national government; the *Manchester Guardian* has since written that the calming of racial bitterness was due in no small measure to the religious awakening, which has taken place in the country.

We must return to Oxford. For a moment let us notice that we have quoted the title 'Oxford Group' in the course of one of these newspaper quotations. The name, like the names of most similar movements in history, was first given by onlookers, and only then used by its bearers themselves. Its use has been criticized by those who dislike the association of the work of the Group with Oxford University. Those who care for the quality of life will not quarrel over its name, provided that sincerity and penitence and fellowship continue to spread through the life of individuals into the life of nations and races; those who dislike the pain of sincerity with personal sin will continue to dislike it, by whatever name it is called. Future historians will judge whether or not Oxford played a great enough part in meeting the need of the world at this time, to justify the contemporary press in giving the name of Oxford to this movement of world revival.

The year which lies next ahead marks the beginning of one regular event, which has since been of immense importance in the work in Oxford itself. During the summer term, Professor Grensted had taken a service in St. Hugh's Chapel, at the request of the Group leaders, for parents who were in Oxford for Eights Week. In October, regular weekly services were begun in St. Mary's, and from



that time Professor Grensted has been responsible for these services, and has almost always taken them. They have been of very great value to the life of the Group in Oxford. They have also helped to provide a bridge over which men and women, converted to Christianity through the work of the Group, can then cross into the corporate life of the Church. The inauguration of these services also marks a further step in the co-operation of senior members of the university with the rising tide of revival. At the same time a step in this direction was taken in the appointment of Julian Thornton-Duesbery to the chaplaincy at Corpus. During his chaplaincy, meetings for open witness were generally held on Sunday evenings in his college. The work of expansion from Oxford as centre developed slowly; it was marked in this academic year by two campaigns conducted by Oxford teams in town parishes. The policy of the leaders has been, on the whole, to work for world revival, at what is perhaps the most difficult and certainly the most influential place; they have felt that the surest way to help the masses was through the conversion of their leaders in industry and politics and Church. It is not true to say, as is sometimes said, that the Group has no message for the less-educated classes; apart from the very important indirect effect of the leaven of Christian influence amongst those in positions of leadership, there has been constant attention to evangelizing campaigns in industrial centres. These will naturally develop further, as the leadership develops which is competent to conduct them and consolidate them. As this book goes to press the Groups are undertaking a campaign at the invitation

of the vicar, in what is known as the largest parish amongst the poor in London.

Steady personal work through the year 1928-29 bore fruit in a period of rapid expansion in the year 1929-30. The spring of 1930 was marked by the conversion of the Motor Club, the story of which has been told in the book *For Sinners Only*. The record of one of these undergraduates is sufficient to refute another popular misrepresentation, that the effect of the Group has been detrimental to the intellectual work of those who come in touch with it. One of them was a scholar, whose life was falling into moral and intellectual ruin. The conventional treatment of university discipline might have sent him away from the university to prevent his influence on others; it would have had no answer for the saving of his personal life. Through the work of the Group he was converted to Christianity, trained as an ordinand, took a first in theology, and has since been doing whole-time evangelizing work. There is, doubtless, pretext for the complaint that the Group has in some cases hindered and not helped academic work. Negative criticism has generally some objective pretext, on which it is focused; unkindly critics then exaggerate these defects in second-hand rumour instead of using their influence for giving constructive aid, to those in whom they have discerned defects. If an undergraduate has turned all his energies into intellectual work, and has never learnt the healthy development and control of the æsthetic and intuitional and instinctive sides of his nature, contact with other people who are alive in spirit on these sides will lead him to the liberation of his own latent powers. Such liberation may then

involve a spiritual crisis, in which energy is for the time deflected from the earlier intellectual work. To regret such deflection is to show poor insight into the nature and growth of human character; ultimately the liberation into health of repressed instinctive forces means the enhancement of all the varied powers of personality, intellect included, in the new harmony of personality. To liberate a person from inner conflict and fear is to liberate him for a new alertness of mind; incidentally, there also comes to those thus liberated, as many in the Group have found, a care-free effective enjoyment of university examinations. The choice that lies before all educational authorities is this: on the one hand, to train the intellect alone, to remain blind to spiritual ill-health in sex and fear instincts, to turn out men equipped with a modicum of knowledge and lacking the powers of initiative and moral judgment which would make their knowledge fruitful; on the other hand, to train the whole personality, to run the risk in some cases of a slight deflection of energy from the intellectual field, and to turn out men who have powers of leadership, and can put sound learning to good use. There can be no doubt which will result in happy and strainless living for the people themselves, and in effective service for the community.

Two events in this year are landmarks for the influence of Oxford leadership in wider spheres of revival. In March 1930, there was held the first big city campaign in Edinburgh, and about fifty men from Oxford and twenty from Cambridge took part in it. Professor Grensted preached at opening services in St. Mary's Cathedral. The Provost of the cathedral received the leaders, and both then and

ever since has joined with them in their work, and a number of churches in the city were opened to receive them. A little earlier, some articles by the Provost in the Church of England newspaper began the invaluable policy of consistent positive appreciation, which that paper has always shown. In June there was held the first of the vacation House Parties in Oxford, to which men and women have since come in growing numbers, from all parts of the world, to find there liberation from the fetters of personal sin, and a new direction in individual, social and international life.

Thus the work has advanced in growing expansion and in growing power. In the summer of 1931 three large contemporary House Parties were held in the three women's colleges; about 700 attended, and special meetings were held for senior members of the university. During the next winter there were six or eight senior leaders resident in Oxford during most of the term. It was a time of slow consolidation rather than of great expansion. Another House Party was held in Oxford in December, mainly for the training of leadership. I myself attended these meetings, and my impressions at this time are perhaps worth recording, for the sake of others who come with a like approach. I found that my opinion was often asked by others about the Group, and I therefore decided that it was illegitimate to circulate second-hand rumours, and necessary to form a mature judgment on first-hand evidence. There was much that I saw that I did not like. In particular I thought some of the witness was egoistical; I thought there was a tendency for individuals to come too much under the influence of the crowd,

and to repeat phrases which did not represent their own sincere mind; and I thought that some of the younger individuals were arrogant towards others in their own new-found experience. These were very likely genuine criticisms of actual defects. They are defects such as are common to human nature, and defects which within the fellowship of the Group are recognized and cured. As a minister and a teacher I ought myself to have aided in that cure, through quiet personal work with the individuals in whom I had discerned room for further growth. Instead of that, for the moment I focused my attention on the defects, and omitted to notice that a life-changing work was in process, for which I myself as yet lacked the power. I became uncomfortable and irritated, and went on my way. The reason was that, whatever small defects I had discerned in them, there were vastly greater defects in my own personal life, in realms where they had found the ways of health. I could not co-operate with them, learning where I had to learn and teaching where I was given things to teach, until I had first paid the costly, humiliating price of becoming sincere with God and with myself and with them, over the spheres of life where my own conscience was defeated and ashamed.

Through the coming months the fact was borne in upon me, that the men associated with the Group in Oxford, though in most cases many years my junior, and without my theological training, were living a standard of life far more truly consecrated to God, and far more healthy, and far more effective in pastoral and evangelizing work, than mine. The logic of this uncomfortable fact led me to the

experience of conversion, of which I have spoken in my book, *He that Cometh*. This book appeared in the autumn of 1932, slightly after the appearance of A. J. Russell's *For Sinners Only*. It was perhaps fortunate that they were published together; their message is the same; and their widely different form and treatment has meant that many people have received that message, whom the more popular style of the one, or the more reflective presentation of the other, might otherwise have repelled. The very wide circulation which both books obtained, and their translation into several foreign languages, is symptomatic of the tremendous interest which the Oxford Group had by now aroused throughout the world.

From the spring of 1932 I can speak of the work of the Group from first-hand knowledge of its inner teams, and from first-hand experience of the quality of spiritual life to which it has led. My own period of association happens to coincide with a period of further rapid expansion. The House Parties in Oxford in this summer were followed by campaigns in many parts of the country; and in these campaigns Oxford undergraduates played a leading part. Local House Parties were held during the summer in many provincial towns. The challenge of the Group to a life of absolute love was taken to spheres of life, where a new sincerity will ultimately prove of urgent importance, for the whole future history of nations and of civilization. A beginning was made of an impact on political and economic leadership in London, with a lunch for Members of Parliament, where witness was given to the healing power of Christ. The further spread of the Group on the continent was made through a House Party in

the autumn, on the shores of Lake Constance. The presence at these meetings of a leading continental theologian, and a leading Swiss psycho-therapist, marks the healing of the foolish gulf that has arisen in the modern world between dogmatic theology and its practical application in the cure of souls. Further afield, the message of the Group was taken across Canada and the United States, by the large team which left in the autumn to tour those countries. Three senior members of Oxford University crossed to Canada for the winter vacation, to add their support to the work of revival there. The further recognition by the Church, that the Group does represent the revival for which the Church has been waiting and praying, was shown in the Service of Commission for the team, which was held in Liverpool Cathedral to send them on their way.

In the last half-year, as I write, the further expansion has been miraculous. The numbers who passed through the Oxford House Party in July rose from six or seven hundred in earlier years to four or five thousand. Amongst these there were many hundred clergy. The revival of the Church is coming, in the only way in which it can come, through a new personal consecration, a new penitence for personal sin, and a resulting new discovery of personal vision and power, in the individuals who lead the Church. At the moment of writing the leaders, including many from Oxford and many now from all parts of the world, are at work in London. Their work there has been started by a welcome from the Lord Mayor in the Mansion House, a reception from the Archbishop of Canterbury and a service in St. Paul's Cathedral, and the Metropolitan

of India has been taking a leading part in it, before he finally left for his postponed return. A meeting has been held in the House of Commons, at which nearly a third of the House attended. House Parties are being held through the winter in England and Germany and Canada; groups of varying size are coming into being in Church and city round the world.

#### IV. *The ideal and its realization*

We have told the record of a growing movement, and of a movement which has vast potentiality for further growth. It is relevant, as we close, to ask, is this the revival for which we have been looking? Are lives in the Oxford Group being trained and educated into Christ-like character, in a way which fulfils the need, of which we earlier spoke? Has something happened in Oxford far bigger than Oxford yet realizes? It is relevant also to ask, whither are things now moving? Nearly five thousand men and women came to Oxford last summer; many more may come next summer; what is their destiny ten or twenty years ahead? The questions need asking, and they need defining with a little care. The name Oxford Group can be used in different ways, and only confusion can result from unclear and ineffective thinking, as we use that term.

Those who are working in fellowship with the Group will naturally tend to think of the Group, first in terms of the ideal for which it stands. We shall use the name for the complete consecration of individual and social life to the one task of learning and obeying the purpose of God. Through such



waiting on God to learn His mind in concrete detail, all the development in the work of the Group has come. Thus interpreted, few will refuse assent to its work. People may question whether it is always easy to discern the purpose of God with simple accuracy. They may suppose that some, who think to live under the guidance of God, are still a little more under the influence of their own personal hopes and prejudices, than they themselves imagine. It *is* a striking symptom of the weakness into which Christianity *had* fallen, that most Christians would find it difficult to express, how exactly in their own personal life they do give practical content to their prayer, 'Thy will be done.' Whatever our doubts and questions about the method of learning the mind of God, we must welcome the reassertion that it is our task in life to discern and obey His will. It is for each individual to grow himself into such obedience, before others are criticized or blamed for their endeavour to obey. The challenge of the Group here is absolute, and it conveys a note very much needed in contemporary religion. There is a living and a loving God. He has purpose for His world and the power of self-revelation. To know His purpose, we must be willing to subordinate all selfish desires to the one central motive of fulfilling the will of God. In such consecration to the one central motive of the divine will, and only therein, we shall find health and harmony of soul, and the enjoyment of all the faculties of our God-given nature, in their due proportion. We remain fallible beings, liable to be led astray by foolish impulse; to discern and eliminate such impulse, we do well to seek the mind of God, not merely as individuals, but in close fellowship with

other human beings. These are central religious truths; and a university which has a religious foundation, and which bears as its motto: *Dominus illuminatio mea*, if it is true to its tradition, cannot but rejoice in their reassertion.

We may secondly think of the Oxford Group, not so much in terms of this general loyalty to the purpose of God, but rather in terms of the quality of human character into which such loyalty leads. Here again the Group has provided both a valuable challenge and a valuable promise, in the midst of a world grown stale and tired. The goal of human life is to be seen in the character of Christ. In setting forth this character, frequent use is made in the Group of the four standards used by Henry Drummond. These standards are a complete self-giving love; an honesty, which involves radical sincerity with those with whom we live; a purity, which is not to be confused with prudery; and an absolute unselfishness of soul. There is nothing new in these standards; they are as old as the New Testament; the only new feature is that men in the modern world are once more beginning, not merely to preach, but to practise them. The practice of sharing in the Group is simply a question of radical loyalty to sincerity in human relations; the issue is simply whether we are or are not willing to let those amongst whom we live know our real minds. To the challenge of these standards there is then added the promise of their possibility. The acceptance in trust of the forgiveness of God in Christ makes honesty possible; we can let thoughts, of which we should otherwise be ashamed, be known when we are humbled to accept forgiveness, and when we

acknowledge these thoughts under conviction of sin, pleading forgiveness from fellow-men. Those who are willing thus to be humbled find that now, as in the first days, Christ can change our vile nature, and rebuild our character, and make it like His glorious nature in purity and love. The Oxford Group is made up of people whose lives have been and are being thus changed. Here what the onlooker thinks of the Group is really irrelevant; the question is rather what does he think of this challenge and this promise; or more deeply, what does God think of his life, when judged by standards such as these? The question for each individual is whether he is clinging to a life that is self-seeking or impure, or whether he is willing to suffer his life to be changed into the Christ-like character that God would have him have. It is not for us to begin by looking for petty defects in those associated with the Group, or, indeed, in any other fellow human beings. It is for us in all humility each to be loyal to our own vision of God, and to seek the aid of other men in that loyalty as we may; and, more than probably, those who are best able to aid us will be those who have already suffered their own lives to be changed.

In the third place, we may use the term Oxford Group, with special reference to the process of sanctification of character, and the steps by which it is achieved. We may dwell on the specifically evangelizing side of the work, the steps by which those who have built their lives round the false focus of self-will are induced to see that life will be more profitable for society and for themselves when rebuilt round the new focus of love of God. We may dwell

on the more pastoral side of the work, the process of deep cure, by which a sex complex is cured, or an inferiority complex released into the perfection of love which knows no fear. In this science and art of cure of souls, the whole work of Christendom is immature, and ludicrously inefficient, when contrasted with our skill in cure of body. There are vast undeveloped resources in human personality, which the conventional superficiality of life left unexplored, and which we are only just beginning to know and unfold. The work of the Group in this respect shares in the general immaturity of Christendom. The Group does not claim perfection; it has room for further growth; but within its fellowship lives are being won for Christ-like character, in a world which had lost the art and even the hope of conversion. Miracles of the cure of sick souls are happening, as in the first days of the Church. The Group has relearnt the faith and the love that can change lives. Its leaders may have more to learn; but it is foolish for those who know little or nothing of the art of cure of souls to criticize the work of those who know much. Those ministers or teachers whose office makes them responsible for training the character of others, and whose present highest vision is limited to crude or conventional rules of discipline, would be well advised first to learn from those who have in a large measure rediscovered the art of cure of souls; then together we may advance to learn far more deeply, how to grow and to lead others into the love and faith and power of the character of Christ.

As we think in terms of loyalty to God, and the growth of character into that loyalty, so with a

closer touch with actual life we may think of actual men and women who give that loyalty. Here at once let it be said that the Oxford Group claims no monopoly of surrender to the will of God, or of Christ-like life. The Group is merely growing into what should be the normal life of every Christian Church, and what has been the normal life of many Christians. Moreover, it is evident that in recent years many people not associated with the Group have been similarly growing into a deeper personal consecration, and into a consequent revival of personal joy and power. In some cases this revival has been an indirect result of the Group; men have been challenged by the standards of the Group, and rather than associate with it, they have followed its way of living within their own religious societies. Those who are associated with the Group will not, if they are wise, regret or blame this indirect influence; they will rather rejoice wherever in any way men and women are growing into the standard of Christ-like life. But just in so far as this happens, there can be no ultimate division. The standards are such, that they must bind men into fellowship. Either men are released into the freedom of sincerity, and willing to make known their thoughts to other men; or they are prevented from this sincerity by those motives of pride and fear, which they probably call to themselves by the kinder name of reserve. Either men are pledged to absolute love, and as such regarding with positive appreciation all that is good in other men, or else they are separated off from other men by barriers of suspicion or jealousy or fear. Those who claim to have the life of the Group, while deliberately rejecting close fellowship with the Group,

would do well to ask themselves a little strictly, what motives withhold them from such fellowship. There is only one Christ, and those who are completely released into His quality of all-embracing love can know no barriers to fellowship with any, but are bound in forgiving love towards all, and must ultimately find fellowship with all.

More closely and more commonly, we may use the name of Oxford Group for particular individual men and women, who have identified themselves with the present revival, and who are willing to bear that name. In this case let us be clear, whether we belong to the Group or not, that we are now no longer using the name of an ideal, but are using it of a number of imperfect and fallible human beings. We are using it of men and women who have inwardly pledged themselves to give absolute loyalty to the absolute standards of Christ; we are using it of men and women, whom we can expect to seek the purpose of God with full sincerity over every decision; we are using it of people who are, in point of fact, commonly consecrated and released in character beyond the majority of their fellow-men. But, as they would generally be the first to admit, we are using it of men and women who, because human, are sometimes all too human. Just in so far as they are Christ-like, they will reject any proud sense of moral superiority to other men. They will know that they receive the Spirit of God into vessels of earth; and that, however earnestly they seek the mind of God, it is always possible for them to be misled, through sinful motives in their own nature, of whose existence they have not yet become aware. It is urgent, for the continued growth of the Group,

that those associated with it should continue to keep rigorously before them the necessity of an ever deeper sanctification, and that they should not make the mistake of thinking themselves saints before their time.

Because they are imperfect fallible human beings, it is quite possible that others may discern in them defects of fear or arrogance or self-will, to which God has opened the eyes of their critics, and to which they as yet are blind. If so, let the critics beware lest they evade the challenge of the good the Groups are doing, by a loveless criticism which falls far short of that good. It is not an act of love for the critic to defame others behind their backs; it is not an act of love to dwell on the defects of others and ignore their virtues; it is an act of love in deep humility to suggest to a brother who is taken in a fault, some step whereby he may grow into greater closeness to the Christ he serves. Let critics see to it that their criticism is not the destructive slander which hinders progress, but is the constructive suggestion which builds up the fellowship in love. Let them then further recognize that to discern defects is no reason for withholding positive co-operation and association. There is a curious assumption, to whose pride men are frequently blind, that we can only identify ourselves with a society which is perfect. When we are humbled to recognize our own actual state, then we shall recognize that it is precisely a movement like the Oxford Group, which is composed of imperfect people who from day to day face their imperfections, with which we ourselves should be associated.

As we use the name Oxford Group of those who

bear that name, so also we may use it of certain outward marks which tend to distinguish them from other men. In this sense it is important for the further growth of the movement, and for its relation to the Church, to distinguish those outward marks which are essential to the life of all real Christianity, from those which are merely a temporal outward embodiment of that life. The faith in God; the belief in the guidance of God and the quest to receive and obey that guidance; the belief in the forgiveness of God in Christ; the penitence which discerns sin and calls it sinful; the humility which accepts forgiveness and is not ashamed to acknowledge having done so; the transformation of character through the power of Christ; the fellowship which comes with the transparent sincerity of the forgiven; the receiving of a new Spirit of Christ-like love and joy and calm of soul; these are elements vital to the whole Christian tradition, and elements which the world had largely forgotten and needed to re-learn. The use of particular new phrases for the experience of salvation, such as 'change' and 'share' and 'release'; the very valuable but not essential use of pencil and paper as an aid for meditation; the recommendation of particular pamphlets and books; particular set times and places and customs of meeting; these are temporary outward manifestations through which an eternal quality of life is expressed in a new awakening. They are valuable as presenting old truths in new forms to a modern world; they would cease to be valuable the moment they were regarded as essential, and made the mark of a new orthodoxy.

Those who have known Christ-like life before ever the Group arose must learn to recognize an old



quality of life in a new dress. Those who have found that quality of life for the first time in this new dress, must learn to distinguish what is essential from what is temporary and accidental. Through this distinction, those who are associated with the Group will learn to find their spiritual home, not amid the new forms and phrases where some of them have come to know Christ for the first time, but amid the old-established creeds and sacraments, which have borne witness to His presence and His power through the ages. Thus they will take the leaven of a revival of personal religion into the broken churches of Christendom. The present members of the Churches on their side will be called to a renewal of that absolute allegiance to Christ, which should characterize all Church membership. The broken churches will then come into a reunion of inward spirit, and, as God guides, into a reunion of outward organization, through the rediscovery in the lives of their individual members of the gift of the One Spirit of God. To put it concretely, we hope ultimately to see everywhere parishes which possess those qualities of radical penitence for sin and effective cure of souls, which the Group has in common with New Testament Christianity; we hope to see the distinguishing name of the Oxford Group become no longer necessary, because all the essential qualities for which it stands have become once more the normal life of every Church; we hope to see the various Churches find a new union of inward spirit and outward order, through the individual consecration of their individual members to the one living God.

The aim of the Oxford Group is not that people

should be drawn off from the worship of the Church into Group meetings; it is that, through the deeper fellowship of Group meetings, they should learn to find a deeper spiritual life within the fellowship and in the sacraments of their church. The aim is not that people should learn to use the new phrases, which the Group has specialized from modern speech to proclaim its message; it is that they should forget these phrases, as they learn once more to affirm, not with their outward lips, but from reborn hearts, the traditional creeds and doctrines of the Church. The aim is not to make some whole-time Group workers, and some Group members; in the present state of the world, many men and women may well be called by God to a temporary ministry of whole-time itinerant evangelism; but the aim of such evangelism is that all men in their ordinary professions and in their homes should learn to live a life of perfect purity and honesty and love, and that many should join the ministry of the Church. This revival in personal religion will then mean a peaceful revolution in the outward framework of the economic and political and religious order. If honesty should prove incompatible with prosperity in the present world of industry and commerce, those who hear the call to honesty may have to face their cross of adversity, in order that through their cross a new economic order can come into being, wherein honesty shall reign. If, as is certainly the case, absolute love is incompatible with the present social injustice towards the homeless and unemployed, the God of Love will call some of those who listen to Him to dedicate their time and their learning to the rebuilding of a social order, wherein

righteousness shall reign. The cleansing of individual lives from acquisitiveness and fear will condition and make possible the reconstitution of the economic order. Similarly, the revival in personal religion will send men and women back into the ordinary life of their church. The impact of their new life on the Church will then result in the breaking of such ecclesiastical routine as was adequate for the expression of the life and worship of unredeemed personality, but which is no longer adequate for the new vision and the new love of newly liberated hearts.

Step by step, through the individual obedience of individual lives to the God of Love, a new order will come into being, wherein righteousness shall reign with peace in industry and politics and Church.

And here is our ultimate goal. We started with a world in need; we have sketched the outline of a revival; our final word must be that the revival for which we have been waiting is in our midst. Within the general life of the Group, fear, and the shyness and lack of initiative which spring from fear, are dying; men and women are growing into a new strength and calm of character. Sex is becoming rescued from its two fatal travesties of hidden shame or open scandal; a new freedom and a new simplicity are making possible the education of men and women in the sanctified use of their God-given instincts. Men are becoming freed from acquisitive greed into stewardship of property; they are becoming freed from the stagnation of the instinct of curiosity into a new enlightened stewardship of mind. The training in initiative and leadership and strength and health of character is taking place,

which is the task of the university and the Church; all too many contemporary teachers and pastors had lost or never found the art of the work they were supposed to be doing; those who have not yet found it must come through individual penitence to learn it from those who have. God is once more calling the world into Christ-like life; God is once more showing the world that lives can be changed into Christ-like life. These are the final realities for which the Church down the ages has stood. These are the final realities for which the Oxford Group in these days is standing. Once more in the world these realities are being proclaimed by men and women, to whom they are no mere theories, but who from their own experience can bear witness to their truth. Of course there are dangers. Life is always dangerous. The cure for dangers is not to fall back into spiritual stagnation, but to advance into further and fuller life. The ultimate issue before each individual is not whether or not he approves of the Group. The ultimate issue is whether or not he is himself absolutely loyal to his highest vision of God, and aiding others from day to day to overcome evil with good. If he is, he will take his place amongst others in the Group, freely learning from their life, and freely teaching where he sees room for further growth; if he is not, he will become uncomfortable and irritated and retreat from their presence. Each man must start the path into Christ-like character with himself, at the place where he is standing; those who thus start travel together in glad company, aiding one another into Christ-like freedom, and joy, and purity, and power, and love,

## UNIVERSITY AND GROUP IDEALS

By JOHN MAUD

IN this chapter it is not proposed to discuss the much disputed *nominal* connection between the Group Movement and Oxford. A more profitable field of inquiry is opened up by leaving on one side the question of names, and asking what, if any, essential relationship can be discerned between the two. An attempt will therefore be made to draw attention to certain characteristics of the Group Movement and compare them with what seem to be the corresponding characteristics of Oxford.

There are two obvious difficulties to be faced at the outset. In the first place, how can one say, with any degree of certainty, that this or that is characteristic of the Groups? Most Groupers have reached the stage of individual self-consciousness, but the Group Movement has not. It takes pride in affirming that it is not a sect; that it has no organization, no theology, no programme, political, social, or economic. It can hardly be justified in all these affirmations; for in fact it cannot insist (as it does) on the necessity of such an act as 'surrender' to God without having (if not consciously, at least unconsciously) a certain conception of the nature of God. So, too, by using the question 'how many lives have I changed?' as a test of good living, the Groups, do in fact, make certain assumptions about the nature of the good life. In other words, they do hold certain opinions about the nature of God,

though they believe that opinions about the nature of God are relatively of no importance; and they do think certain kinds of action good and others bad, though they also believe that good action is action guided by God and that no more need be said about it. They have a theology, and a certain conception of the content of the good life; but their dogma is deliberately unexamined, and consequently very difficult either to express in words or appraise at its proper value. All that the observer can do is to consider, as objectively as possible, what individual Groupers do and say, and in those particular actions and words attempt to discern the general implications of the Movement.

The second initial difficulty is hardly less formidable. What are the characteristics of Oxford, and who on earth can give them expression in words? Clearly there can be no agreement on the former of these questions, and it is asking for trouble to put forward even the most tentative suggestions in answer to it. But the attempt must be made if this inquiry is to proceed at all, and it is a fact that, as compared with the Group Movement, Oxford has certain fairly definite characteristics. No one interpretation of these characteristics can claim to be authoritative; certainly what follows does not. It was said above that Groupers are individually self-conscious; and it could hardly be claimed for Oxford men (or women) that *they* lack self-consciousness. But just as one of the difficulties in discussing the Group Movement is that as a Movement it is not self-conscious, so too it is most characteristic of Oxford that it never dreams of attempting to formulate its aim or purpose. When, therefore, I speak of

Oxford, all that I mean is what I think Oxford stands for; and so too when I speak of the Group Movement.

Two of the most characteristic questions which the Groups ask every man to answer are these: Looking back on my past life, what ought I not to have done? What change is called for here and now, and what must I do next? They challenge the individual (that is to say) first to look at himself, as he is and as in the past he has been, and judge himself by considering what he has done or not done; and secondly, to look ahead—not too far ahead—and make up his mind what he ought to do in the immediate future. Further, the Groups believe that these are quite simple questions, about alternatives which differ as obviously as black differs from white; the answer can be given, and therefore should be given, with complete certainty and confidence; what needs doing can be done quickly; and the results will be visible and conclusive.

Accordingly in the first place the Grouper thinks he knows what particular things were wrong with him, and thinks that in consequence he knows all he need know about his sin. Argument, he believes, is always evasion; to have doubts about the good life is always wrong; it would be worse than waste of time to ask myself whether there is not sin in me (of which I am not immediately aware) more serious than any of the particular visible blemishes that I am determined to change—the sin, for instance, of which I am guilty as a member of Society, committed against people I may never have met. Secondly, he thinks he knows the *cause* of all evil—namely, the deliberate selfishness of individual men and women,

He has no time to reflect that ignorance is one root from which evil springs; that suffering and not only sin, is a form of evil; that not only men but such things as slums and other kinds of bad environment are vile. Thirdly, he knows that Christ is the cure for sin; that that conviction is enough, and he need not attempt to conceive *what* the Christ is, or reflect that the spirit of Christ may be not only a cure for sin, but also the spirit of intellectual activity and artistic creation. And fourthly, when he has 'surrendered,' he knows what is now right in him, just as certainly as he knows what was wrong with him before. The idea that sometimes, when the soul has been swept clean of one devil, other devils of spiritual pride and hardness of heart, seven times worse than the first, are found in possession, seldom occurs to him, and if it does seems quite irrelevant. He recognizes in himself the direct and visible results of Christ's handiwork; and knows that his plain duty is to tell the world.<sup>1</sup>

Oxford, on the other hand, can more easily be conceived as asking at the outset some such questions as these: Into what fullness of life can this man grow, and what is he ultimately capable of creating? This approach resembles that of the Groups in so far as it is made to the individual and is concerned with his or her particular circumstances, but in other respects it is strikingly different.

In the first place the question is not a simple one that admits of a definite answer one way or the other, and to ask it implies a belief that life does not simply consist of a series of decisions between

<sup>1</sup>cf. The Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, page 180, for a further treatment of this subject.



easily distinguishable alternatives. Rather, life is regarded as a creative activity, and fullness of life as implying the development of many different faculties, all of which are 'capable of divinity.' The end can be described in terms of Beauty, or Truth, or Goodness, but these are only names for different aspects of a rich, complex ideal which is wider than any or all of them. There can be no formula in which to express the content of the good life, no short cut to a vision of its fullness, and no rule of thumb by which to test the goodness of any particular person.

Secondly, far from being a matter about which any man of goodwill can be quite certain, to know what has been wrong with one's life in the past is exceedingly difficult, for it implies not only goodwill and sincere intentions, but a trained habit of self-examination (since it is motives and not only acts that have to be considered); and this can be developed only after long practice by those who have (among other virtues) profound humility, lively faith in the power of reason, and a healthy fear of self-deception. Nor can a man know where he has failed or succeeded in the past, unless he has a standard of excellence by which to judge his performance; and this standard he can only know in so far as he knows the highest of which he is capable—something, that is to say, outside and beyond himself as he is now. Unless, then, he looks forward as well as back, not only at himself but away from himself, he cannot hope to know either where he has sinned, what changes are needed, or what he ought to do next. As against the Groups' conviction, then, that everyone knows what sin is, Oxford (I

suggest) would insist that my self is the last thing about which I can claim to have easy or certain knowledge; 'sin' is much more than the particular past acts which I regret, or indeed, than any number of separate 'sins'; motives are worthier of examination than actual performance; and my past is only significant in so far as it tells me something about my capacities and the special dangers of which I should beware.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, whereas the Groups trace all evil to one cause, the selfishness and ill-will of individual men, Oxford (it may be said) lays emphasis on the foolishness and ignorance of man rather than on his knavery. By taking thought man cannot add a cubit to his stature, but unless he thinks he will never grow to his full height. Man cannot live by bread alone, but he has physical needs, and their satisfaction, though largely dependent on goodwill among men, is at least partly conditioned by the progress of science and increase of knowledge. Much suffering no doubt is due to the hardness of men's hearts, but no less certainly much suffering can only be relieved by the skill of various kinds of scientist. For the conquest of evil many types of worker are needed; the discoveries of the scientist can be turned to destruction by man's perversity, but they are indispensable, and goodwill is not enough. Further, it is only the open and inquiring mind, conscious of the difficulties but believing in the limitless possibilities of knowledge, that can progress towards the truth. To say, then, that discontent can never be divine is blasphemy; and to depreciate the reason or encourage those who

<sup>1</sup>cf. page 196 for an answer to this.

have the faculty of intellectual effort to think mental discipline unimportant is to sin against the light.

Fourthly, when the Grouper says that the voice of God has spoken to him that morning, Oxford may reply, plitudinously enough, that truth and error are each often accompanied by the same feeling of certainty. Those who have had the longest training and are most expert at listening to the inner voice are the readiest to admit the fallibility of their judgment, and the need of testing the validity of what they think they have heard or seen, by reference (for instance) to the evidence of history, and especially to the tradition of the churches and the saints. Again, the Grouper's suggestion that it is only directly and through 'Guidance' that God's will is made known, can be contrasted with an opinion characteristic of Oxford, that God's nature and will are to be perceived by those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, not only in those parts of heaven and earth which are commonly called sacred, but in nature, in history, in art, music and literature; and he who would know God cannot afford to neglect any part of creation which he has the faculty of understanding.

Finally, when the Grouper claims that he can point to visible results as evidence that he has been changed by God, and when, because he believes that the speed or numerical magnitude of them are particularly conclusive signs of grace, he loses no opportunity of giving these figures the greatest possible publicity, then is the time for Oxford to affirm certain other articles of its faith. Popular success (it may say) is useful evidence of a kind, as showing what people like; but it tells us nothing

about the value of what is popular. Again, examinations are a convenient form of objective test, so long as the limitations of what they can measure are borne in mind; but the evidence of speed or of numbers or of the convert's social distinction is totally irrelevant (or rather, positively misleading) when the matter under examination is a spiritual quality of life. The production of such facts in evidence is, at its best, a foolish appeal to the world's standard of success and, at its worst, a travesty of the Christian gospel. Besides, it is hard to say what has caused a particular result, when that result is a change of character, since there has usually been a multitude of influences at work together. Nor can it be affirmed of any change that has only recently occurred that the change is certainly for the better. Moreover, there are some kinds of work whose virtue goes out of them when they cease to be done in a spirit of disinterested effort, which disregards immediate results. This is the work which Oxford, rightly or wrongly, thinks more worth doing than any other.

So far we have been considering certain assumptions underlying the general position of the Group Movement and Oxford respectively, and their different means of approach to the fundamental questions of the nature of God, the nature of evil and the nature of man. We have compared the unquestioning simplicity of the one with the emphasis that the other lays on the complexity of the ideal and the difficulty of reaching it. We can now look more closely at the characteristic insistence of the Groups on the need for immediate action, and the corresponding attitude of Oxford.

There are at least three points on which the Groups naturally insist in consequence of the fundamental convictions discussed above. First, it is action in the immediate future that matters most; to do something is better than to do nothing; things are bad as they are, and any change is likely to be good; we all know what we ought to do; and now is the time to start. Secondly, it is only by an individual's action that things get done; all that you need do, then, is to surrender your individual will and let God direct it from moment to moment. Thirdly, 'whole-time work for God' is the only job worth doing, or, anyhow, very much better than any other work; and that means changing lives.

To the first of these contentions Oxford's answer would probably be that however insistently people ask 'Men and brethren what shall we *do*?' very often the best advice they can be given, especially if they have only just left school, is to postpone action until they know *what* to do and have fitted themselves to do it fairly well. What you do next is, of course, important, but to do whatever work you have continuously to do over a period of years as well as you possibly can is at least equally important; and it may easily happen that if early in life you miss an opportunity of training your mind and disciplining your character by continuous application to a specialized course of study or profound immersion in a particular subject, and if you prefer instead to seize every chance of changing lives in various parts of the world, that opportunity will never recur and, in the long run, you will be of less use to your neighbours than you might have been.

Secondly, Oxford emphasizes the fact that one

individual's action is quite ineffective for certain purposes unless it is correlated with that of others. To achieve anything in the economic, social, or political spheres of action, it is obviously necessary for men to work together; and for this to be possible there must be organization, a programme, and individuals who can be relied on. If, therefore, men are to act effectively over a period of time, they must almost invariably be prepared to agree on plans of action, to promise part of their time and money in advance, and to carry out the terms of their contract scrupulously. Quite apart from these kinds of activity, no one can live in organized society (or even out of it) without making himself an infernal nuisance to his neighbours, unless he shows enough consideration for other people's convenience to make up his mind in advance on a number of comparatively unimportant matters (such as the date of his visit and the length of his stay), and stick to his plans. The Grouper, on the other hand, glories in having no idea what he will be doing<sup>1</sup> or where he will be next year, or even next week, and claims for himself a special standard of unreliability and inconsiderateness, on the ground that he is doing 'whole-time work for God.' Further, he feels, and often expresses, something very like contempt for those who use programmes and committee meetings, or publish financial statements, and believe that these are at least some of the ways by which God's work can be done.

Thirdly, Oxford objects strongly to the assumption that any one vocation is intrinsically better than the rest, and still more strongly to the identifi-

<sup>1</sup>*cf.* Mr. Micklem's criticism of 'just so' guidance, Section III, especially p. 141.

cation of 'whole-time work for God' with the 'changing' of lives (in the sense given to the word by the Groups). The good life requires the work of the butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker, and all these vocations are 'capable of divinity.' God's work is, no doubt, more difficult to do in certain walks of life than in others; moreover, some people are called to give all their time to preaching the gospel (though many of them would rightly deny that their principal function is to 'change' lives); but everyone alike, whether out of employment or in employment, has the capacity (and therefore the duty) to do a certain part of what may be called God's work.

The last part of the Groups' position to be examined is their view of the proper relationship between man and man. What do they mean by saying that the touchstone for judging the goodness of a man's life is the question, how many lives he has changed? They seem to mean, first, that the good life consists in behaving properly to those whom you actually meet; and secondly, that proper behaviour towards all the people you meet who are not Groupers means changing them, by direct and deliberate action. In other words, I know who my neighbour is; I know what he ought to be; I know my duty is to change him, unless he is a Grouper already; I know how to change him; and I know by certain infallible proofs (for instance, his public confession to certain old sins which he now feels that he has conquered) that I have done my duty and that he is changed.

Oxford has much to say to this. First, it may be asked, are there not activities, of outstanding goodness, in which the element of personal relationship

is comparatively irrelevant to their goodness? In the creation, for instance, of works of art the artist is not primarily concerned with influencing, still less with changing, anyone's character. No doubt people are influenced and changed, but it is not by facts such as these that the artist should be judged, nor is he interested (as an artist) in them. It would be absurd, in fact, to exclude artistic activities from our conception of the good life, or to say that their goodness consists simply in the moral effect they have on character.

Secondly, can it be assumed that the only neighbour who has a claim on me is the one I know personally? The other citizens of the State to which I happen to belong (to take one instance) may have a claim on me though I never meet them or know their names. If I profess to be a Christian, I have no business to pray 'Give us this day our daily bread' unless I recognize my share of responsibility for the economic, social, and political maladjustments which allow any human being to go hungry.<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes easier to play the part of the Good Samaritan and recognize the claim of a neighbour in someone casually met by the roadside or in the house party, than to recognize the permanent, continuing claim that certain members of the human society have upon others. After all, then, it may not be easy to know who my neighbour is. Nor, thirdly, is it much easier to know what my neighbour ought to become. Is it not conceivable that some Groupers ought to cease to be Groupers, or that some who are outside the Groups ought to remain outside?

But, in the fourth place, is it always my business

<sup>1</sup>*cf.* Mr. Morris' essay for a special treatment of this point.



to inquire what my neighbour ought to be? If I am going to try to change him, it certainly is (otherwise the last state of that man is likely to be worse than the first); but is the proper attitude of one man to another invariably an attitude of eagerness to cause a change? Here Oxford would insist that there can seldom be a proper relationship between two people without a mutual respect of each for the other's personality, and a mutual readiness to learn. The ideal which Oxford has in mind is a society in which men of different opinions and various interests enjoy each other's company; and the ideal can never be realized so long as any member of the society insists that there is only one kind of good life and only one form in which the truth can be expressed, and therefore refuses to learn the language in which the others speak or to tolerate their ways of life.

Further, when the relationship is between people of different ages, there are at least two kinds of special danger to be avoided, of which the undue influence of an older person over a younger is one. 'Availability' is one characteristic of the ideal don; he is at the service of the undergraduates who wish to make use of him, but he does *not* consider it his duty to go out into the highways and byways of the College and compel them to come in (except for the specific purpose of pursuing a particular course of study with him); under no circumstances will he encourage them to sit at his feet or become his disciples; what he wants them to learn is to stand on their own feet and to think for themselves; and though in fact he may influence them considerably, he does not set out with that intention; he feels, indeed,

that it would be definitely wrong to force upon them his own opinion of the good life, however convinced he may be that his opinion is not only right, but also applicable to them.

The other kind of danger is impertinence on the younger man's side. With the best will in the world, the undergraduate who feels it his duty to change the lives of all who are not Groupers, however much older or wiser they may be than himself, avoids this danger (if he does avoid it) only by the narrowest margin. Two possessions of which he stands in greatest need are qualities that Oxford ranks high in the list of virtues: sense of humour, to show him the ridiculousness of his self-importance, and a reverence for learning, to give him a proper respect for those who have learnt wisdom with the years.

Lastly, Oxford would suggest that those who feel called to teach their neighbours, must recognize the need for training before they try, if their gospel is to have the best possible chance of being understood. The Grouper says, 'One thing I know: I have been changed and you must be changed too. I know that that is all I need tell people, and that I have no need of special training; for look at the results of my witness.' But the appeal to visible results is in this context particularly inappropriate; for apart from the 'casualties' who fall by the wayside after seeming at first to be the most notable converts, no one can ever say how many people are not alienated from Christianity in any shape or form by their disgust at a particular presentation of it which they see to be inadequate. These results are as real as the good results, though they cannot be reckoned or published, and the evangelist is at

least as much responsible for them as for the others. It surely stands to reason that if you are going to tell people that you live by the guidance of God and they should do so too, you *must* make the attempt (however well you know that it can never be wholly successful) to conceive God for yourself and find language in which to describe that conception. If so, you must let time elapse between your 'conversion' and the beginning of your ministry, and submit yourself during that interval to the most rigorous mental and spiritual discipline.

These are some of the points at which Oxford might criticize the Group Movement, and some of the reasons for saying that, whether or not the historical connection is sufficient justification for the use of the word Oxford to describe the Groups, there are great spiritual differences between the Groups and Oxford, which make the description actually misleading. But it would be ridiculous to suggest that these differences are all in Oxford's favour. There are several aspects of the truth which the Groups emphasize and Oxford does not.

First, the Groups, at their best, have limitless faith in the power of Christ and in the ability of man to be possessed by His spirit; they believe that there are absolute standards of conduct, in sharp contrast with those of the world; and they hold that the good life can be lived in prosperity and adversity alike, on the Cross as well as on the Mount of Transfiguration. Secondly, they emphasize the need for changes and the conquest of selfishness in the life of most individuals: the truth (in other words) that so long as Ananias and Sapphira keep back part

of the price, the good life will not be lived, no matter what changes take place in the structure of society. Thirdly, they believe that one man can help another. However much can be done by indirect and unconscious influence, and whatever the dangers of attempting to bias immature minds, there are times when a man is not disqualified either by difference of age or scant acquaintance from helping another by direct and deliberate action. And, fourthly, they recognize the danger of too much organization, the deadness of a religion which has become stereotyped, and the sterility of a man who cannot get out of his rut. There is indeed much virtue in their readiness to run risks and change plans, and in their consciousness of the need for immediate action.

The matter can be summed up by saying that in many respects the Group Movement resembles osteopathy. Groupers, for example, have an oversimplified theory of the causes of evil, and are therefore unnecessarily often at fault in their diagnosis of particular cases; they do not insist on a sufficiently rigorous course of training for their practitioners; and they do not publish their failures. On the other hand, they probably do an immense amount of good, and they certainly receive a great deal of undeserved criticism, especially from some orthodox workers in the same field of activity. If only these spiritual osteopaths recognized the limitations of their method and were not so often prevented by their over-confidence from listening to criticism or cooperating with other men of goodwill, their usefulness would be enormously increased, and orthodoxy would have no excuse if it did not

welcome them as allies in a way in which at present it cannot.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand there are certain aspects of the truth emphasized by Oxford and not by the Groups, which can be summed up as follows. The first is faith in man, and especially in his intellectual and artistic powers of creation. The good life is many-sided, requiring the growth and development of several different faculties, and since the standard of excellence is always advancing, it is impossible to be justifiably self-satisfied. Yet man *can* come nearer to the truth; he can create beauty; and it is only because he has these faculties that the standard at which he must aim is so high.

Secondly, there are difficulties at every turn, which man cannot overcome by refusing to recognize them, or pretending they are not there. The powers of the intellect, for instance, cease to be useful when their limitations are ignored. Specialization, patience, and discipline are the conditions of real achievement, and there is no short cut to any kind of excellence.

Thirdly, man can never know for certain what measure of real success he has attained. He may call the standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love by which he tries to judge himself absolute (as the Groups do), but they are in each case his personal interpretations of an absolute standard, and the more he denies their relativity the less likely he is to interpret them correctly. Further, even if his understanding of the standards were adequate, he would still have the infinitely difficult task of know-

<sup>1</sup>I have developed this point in an article which appeared in *The Listener* on October 11, 1933.

ing himself. Here again the less ready he is to admit that being unselfish and feeling unselfish are two quite different things, which can only be distinguished with the greatest difficulty, the more likely he is to deceive himself. So, too, he may think that in asking the question, 'how many lives have you changed?' he is applying an objective test; but it may well be nothing of the kind, especially if he thinks that reading another man's soul is easy, and expects that the results of spiritual changes will be immediately and recognizably visible.

Fourthly, Oxford believes that men who hold the most widely divergent opinions and live the most different kinds of life, can work together and love one another without either pretending that they all hold the same opinions or feeling that each ought to persuade the others to his own way of thinking. Men of different shades of opinion can tolerate one another not merely because otherwise life would be insufferable, nor yet because they think it does not greatly matter what opinions people hold, but because they feel it to be good that men should seek the truth by many different ways, and because they believe that the ideal of a common life can be realized without uniformity of either opinion or practice, by men who are whole-hearted in the sincerity of their own desire to see the truth and are prepared to believe in the sincerity of those who disagree with them.

As might be expected, then, there are many lessons which the Groups might learn from Oxford, and many which Oxford might learn from the Groups. But at least on two matters of great importance,

both Oxford and the Groups are in substantial agreement. They both believe in the ultimate importance of the individual; and they both believe that men are neither pawns on a chess-board nor cogs in a machine. In spite of appearances something can be done—whether (as the Groups say) by a change of heart, or (as Oxford says) by taking thought—and man has no excuse for taking refuge in any form of fatalism.

Since they agree in these two respects it is not surprising to find that they have two corresponding vices in common—excessive preoccupation with self, and lack of humility. These vices take different forms at Oxford and in the Group Movement, but they are the same diseases. At Oxford the one appears as introversion, and the other as intellectual arrogance; in the Groups, one of them makes a man talk too much about himself and too little about Christ, the other turns his confidence in Christ into a quite un-Christian cocksureness about his own infallibility.

The truth, we may conclude, can seldom be expressed except in the form of paradox, and neither Oxford's conception of the good life nor that of the Group Movement is paradoxical enough. The Groups emphasize the simplicity, and Oxford the complexity, of the good life, whereas in fact each of these conceptions is wrong unless it is held in conjunction with the other. Some Groupers, for instance, make the truth ultimately more difficult to discover by crude over-simplification of the issues; while Oxford often errs on the other side, and perhaps must admit, in the words of W. B. Yeats:

The fascination of what's difficult  
 Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent  
 Spontaneous joy and natural content  
 Out of my heart. There's something ails our colt  
 That must, as if it had not holy blood,  
 Nor on Olympus leaped from cloud to cloud,  
 Shiver under the lash, strain, sweat and jolt  
 As though it dragged road metal.

Here the truth seems to be that the good life is in one sense simple, as the lives of some children are simple; but once man has ceased to be a child and begun to grow up, there is no way back; what he must then do is to go forward, believing (if he calls himself a Christian) that in so far as his desire and reason are consecrated and he comes to love the thing which God commands, he achieves such singleness of heart that in some sense he does indeed become a child again. It is true that many people, inside and outside the Group Movement, never grow up; and some of these, either from lack of intellectual capacity, or because they possess some special quality of natural goodness which makes intellectual effort unnecessary, are perfectly justified in remaining children. But it is no good for those who do start growing up to pretend that they are still children or to deny that the way to the second childhood is long and difficult. It is not easy to know oneself, to know good or to know evil; but all these things have to be attempted, once the first childhood begins to be left behind; and Oxford does well to assert that this is so.

And yet to insist on the length and difficulties of the way is to say only half the truth. When vision is vouchsafed, it is direct and simple, as, for instance, in the appreciation of a work of art; and it is missed



by those who exceed in taking pains. So, too, it is right to have a sense of proportion, to see things in their historical perspective, and observe what tradition has to teach; but that does not mean that enthusiasm, or even a touch of madness, is always out of place.

Finally, Oxford rightly has faith in man; for in every operation of the spirit there is obviously a part which man must play. The Christian, for example, is right to use all his intellectual and other faculties in trying to conceive God. And yet he only makes this attempt because he believes, paradoxically enough, that the God, whom he can in some sense know, is also beyond space and time or any of the rational conceptions of man. This is the basis of truth which underlies the Grouper's conviction that he hears the voice of God directly without active intellectual effort on his part. But the good life requires of man the offering of himself not only as a holy but also as a reasonable and lively sacrifice to his God. It appears, indeed, that neither faith in God, such as the Groups have, nor faith in man, such as Oxford has, can be complete unless each implies the other. Nor can either be justified except by a confidence which is rooted and grounded in humility.

## COMMENTS OF AN EDUCATIONALIST

BY MISS B. E. GWYER

THE writer of these comments is aware that the continuity of ideas and practice in English education is apt to generate in its exponents a body of assumptions, which may or may not be accepted by readers. The principle fundamental to true education is conceived as follows. Instruction and discipline, both essential as supplying the framework within which the process goes on, are yet not education itself; which is, what produces the development of a *person*. Such development is best assured when the capacity for independence and for social co-operation grow *pari passu*, due balance being maintained all the way between the opportunities of the subject as individual, and as social creature.<sup>1</sup> What he is ultimately to become it is not the business of the educator to decide in advance; the outcome of their joint adventure lying, if anywhere, hidden in the Creator's mind.

The undergraduate, therefore, should find awaiting him in the community an atmosphere of frank and friendly interchange, free from the least suspicion of surveillance; undeviating mutual respect, expressed in a refusal to apply even the lightest pressure, whether open or concealed, in the delicate spheres of opinion and feeling; discouragement,

<sup>1</sup>Christianity, which is a way of life rooted in a spiritual *Koinonia*, will always invest the life of Community with a certain measure of eternal significance. Yet, because of its unequalled sense of the supreme value of individuals as the subjects of an eternal destiny, it can never acquiesce in their being sacrificed. . . . (The *Relevance of Christianity*, by F. R. Barry, page 303.)

especially in official quarters, of the kind of familiarity which makes the foregoing principle difficult or impossible of application; and embracing all, a common aim (happily defined for us here as 'true religion and sound learning') which creates for members a worthy fellowship, and in the light of which all differences, as they come to the surface, may be examined, its true nature being more and more revealed with each joint constructive effort to transcend them. On such a background—maintained at its best, of course, by recollectedness and restraint, not less than by deep-seated mutual devotion, among all members—the community lives its life; and on that life the wind bloweth where it listeth, expressing itself (as always) in forms manifold and unforeseen.

It is right to say that the number of undergraduates in my own Society who have been influenced by the Group Movement has always been, and remains, very small.<sup>1</sup> Larger numbers have found awakening and growth through the ministry of other Christian teachers, notably of course at those churches where the undergraduate is made a special object of care. But from a succession of enthusiasts, even if limited in number, when known and loved, much may be learned; and the comments of others, attracted or repelled by what they have seen, supply proper additional material for the forming of a judgment.

We are asked to write 'constructively.' This is not easy for one who, whatever the *differentia* of the Group approach to religion may be proved to

<sup>1</sup> Though I have no exact information I believe the same may be said of the majority of the one-and-thirty colleges and halls.

achieve for older people, continues to doubt if it is not, in nine cases out of ten, misplaced among the inhabitants of the Oxford junior common room. Sophisticated and confident undergraduates, sceptical of the truth that 'the wickedness of the world is not wisdom,' are by the very conditions of entry to Societies (not to mention those of remaining in them) a small minority; for the rest, ordered and gradual development, above all objectivity of teaching and tranquillity of atmosphere, are more helpful than commotion. Restless spirits, 'maladjusted' from family tension or other more personal cause, should least of all become the quarry of unofficial or wandering ministrations. Fortunately in Oxford we have 'discreet and learned' people, physicians both of the soul and of the body, who can be called into consultation by the individual or by authority in all such anxious cases, and who know their work well.<sup>1</sup>

A sensible letter in the *Times Educational Supplement*<sup>2</sup> (by one of my cloth though, I think, not in petticoats) remarked, 'What is sauce for the goose is not always sauce for the gosling.' It may indeed be unkind, even priggishly unkind, to grudge to unhappy, anxious persons of middle or of any age, the relief of outpourings, or to criticize the Groups for encouraging them; but what of the effect on very young people, whose main concern for the few short years of their college life is the training of the intelligence, of listening repeatedly to all that, or (worse still) imagining they have the experience or the penetration to deal with the subjects concerned? I do not suggest, though

<sup>1</sup>For a different view, cf. page 33.

<sup>2</sup> October 7, 1933.

others have done so, that the matter itself of these outpourings is what educationalists call 'questionable'; but I contend that for undergraduates to spend time in such a way is radically mistaken, and that it leads almost inevitably to being 'thrilled' (a favourite term, by the by) in a 'questionable' manner. The exciting pursuit of some eager or half-reluctant soul, the exaltation of being in at the death of some long watched-for and now publicly declared 'surrender,' can be destructive not of time only, but of that equally precious thing, reverence;<sup>1</sup> and the doctrine that no one has a right to keep anything to himself, in its true sense undeniable for the Christian, may mean, in the hands of those whose first reverence for each other and for holy things has gone, something detrimental to the purposes of their own University life and others' too. 'These bishops and people who write to the papers, they ought to *live in the same house* with a Group person,' was a reminiscent young M.A.'s *cri de cœur* in my hearing, 'then they'd know what it was like!' Nor is the persecution to which she alluded confined to domiciled neighbours. Another undergraduate, of less robust nerves than the above speaker, I was obliged to send out of residence for a period as the sole means of escape from an older woman, not connected with the University, who could not be induced to leave her alone. Remonstrance, whether of victim or parent, falls

<sup>1</sup>That this is impossible in the presence of those whose own attitude reflects the deep seriousness of the religious quest is of course obvious. But the purport of a question once put before leaders as to the management of meetings in the remoter peripheries of the Movement, was so little understood as to elicit only the reply, 'There is always a chaperon present'

on deaf ears, when 'Dictatorship' (significant term) from an unimpeachable source has assumed undivided possession of them.

It is, perhaps, inevitable that a minority, especially when their Movement has been made the target of unjust and even malicious criticism, should develop into something of a mutual admiration society<sup>1</sup>. But for the undergraduate the centralizing of some absorbing and exclusive interest outside his college is a loss not easily counterbalanced; a defective sense of proportion, even a serious confusion of standards, are apt to result. Love of admiration and importance, if already a temptation, may receive an unfortunate stimulus; but, apart from this, the one period in life when, unhampered by professional or other etiquette, the free, realistic and relentless criticism of one's unregenerate peers is most richly available, ought to be used to the full. 'Sharing,' pursued by the immature among the immature, can offer no boon so valuable as this, and when constantly practised may even develop some of the qualities of a drug.<sup>2</sup>

Is it the case that neophytes are taught to view our civilization as something of a replica of that of Rome in the first century, and the Group's present and future experiences as parallel with those of the Early Church? I have been struck by the superior fascination the study of the Acts seems to have for them, in comparison with any serious attempt to understand the 'Mind of Christ' from

<sup>1</sup>Painfully incongruous was the impression left by the address heard at a much-advertised marriage service in Oxford: innocent alike of praise to God and exhortation on the holy estate, it consisted of flattery, almost fulsome in tone, of the (without question very charming) young couple themselves.

<sup>2</sup>For a defence of the Groups against this charge, see pages 197-8.

the Gospels. The 'maximum experience of Jesus Christ,' as it is called, seems to be identified with readiness to be 'changed.' To what extent devotion to His Person, or intelligent study of His teaching, is afterwards inculcated, is less clear<sup>1</sup>. Be that as it may, 'saviours of society' take a psychological as well as a spiritual risk, and in any case the undergraduate has other fish to fry. Again, the continual emphasis on certain prescribed virtues ('absolute truth,' etc.) is, for certain temperaments especially, a sort of return to the bondage of the Law. Are not 'my station and its duties,' by faithful worship daily hallowed anew—rather than concentration on particular forms of goodness, which can hardly fail to bring self and consciousness of self back again into the middle of the inner stage—a young Christian's first and sufficient concern?

My own 'constructive' contribution takes a somewhat paradoxical form. It is that the Movement should sell all that it has and give—perhaps it does not much matter to what, so long as the resources go elsewhere. For the connexion between all that is most dubious in policy where youth is concerned, and the extraordinarily efficient, expanding and expensive organization of the Movement, lies open to the eye. The uneasiness as to finance voiced by certain critics has, I think, been misunderstood. No one has suggested that money is got or spent illicitly; no one doubts that those who give, those who take, and those who defray expenses on their own account, all alike think that they do God service. But do they?

<sup>1</sup>It was maintained in my presence that to try to understand the ideas underlying the religious terms used by Our Lord was waste of time for a 'changed' person. Cf. for a fuller discussion of this point, pages 178 ff.

Ungrateful indeed is the task of sitting in judgment on any aspect of an activity wholeheartedly commended to us by men from whom, within the limits of their ministerial or professional commissions, no undergraduate can receive anything but good. But we teachers have also our responsibility and, as we believe, our commission. In the earlier period of the Movement it was widely stated that the field of Dr. Buchman's work and aspirations lay in the Universities. At the present date a calm observer cannot but ask whether the enthusiasm of University men and women, adolescent as well as adult, has not in fact been utilized as a lever for the fulfilment of far more sweeping ambitions.<sup>1</sup> I have no quarrel with these, which are not my concern, except in so far as they are pursued at the expense of what is of equally vital importance. Movements are made for men, not men for Movements; and though exploitation is a hard word—hardest of all perhaps on the lips of one of the writer's calling—the activities undertaken with such eager docility by the immature in years and mind are, none the less, open to criticism because their own leaders seem blind both to the immediate and to the ultimate results. Those of us who have seen simplicity replaced by glib and complacent assurance; who have watched the undergraduate of reserved or reflective disposition being alienated, perhaps permanently, from all forms of evangelical religion; who have heard indifference to every claim, every grade, of human fellowship, and every appeal of human need, except in the one category, not condoned as a lapse but defended as a sacred principle, cannot accept

<sup>1</sup>*Cf.* pages 14, 20, 22, etc.



the view that the house young people are being so confidently urged to build possesses foundations laid exclusively upon the rock.

And—surely—all for want of a little poverty! For it is money which makes possible the placing in quasi-official positions, undefined as to functions and scope, but in close touch with undergraduates, of persons totally unqualified by years, training or experience for the responsibilities they assume; to whose influence, as convinced exponents of ‘team guidance,’ must supposedly be attributed the strange travesties of Christian teaching that from time to time reach our ears. It is money which maintains, or subsidizes, those members of the corps of travelling evangelists and platform speakers not aware of any call to earn a livelihood otherwise: a situation in which, so far as young and undeveloped characters are concerned, progressive advance in depth, objectivity of mind, or independence of judgment would be miraculous indeed.<sup>1</sup> It is money which beats the resounding drum, and pens the insinuating card, or paragraph, of advertisement; to such confounding effect that, to the ear of inexperience, propaganda and the uncontrollable movement of the ‘wind’ do seem at last to become one and the same thing, and the volume and velocity of the spiritual current measurable in terms very much of this world.

‘But think of all the good Dr. Buchman and his followers have done! Is it not a little out of proportion for you to frown so on a few by-products of the Cause?’

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Lennard (*Nineteenth Century*, November 1933, page 602) prefers the status of man to that of heavenly body. The status of heavenly body’s satellite commends itself as little.

Perhaps. It may even be that all revivals, not excepting this, must accept the verdict, πολλοί τοι ναρθηκοφόροι, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι. But the Christian educationalist must be allowed a counter-question. Is not loyalty to a human leader, however sure of his own aims and convinced of his own inspiration, purchased dearly when it brings men within measurable distance of the condemnations of Matthew XVIII?

## THE GROUP MOVEMENT AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

BY C. R. MORRIS

THERE can be no genuine progress in the good life of a society except by the rebirth of the individuals who compose it. Unless we are each of us born again, we shall not build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land—though we may, perhaps, demolish the satanic mills, and replace them by garden homes of industry. The recognition of this truth is not the monopoly of one type of thinker or teacher. It has been the gospel of all the great philosophers and sages since the world began. Secular writers, no less than religious preachers, have taught again and again that advance on any other terms is no more than a snare and delusion. 'The early doctrine of *laissez faire*,' says a distinguished political writer of the New World, 'was Utopian because it assumed that unregenerate men were destined somehow to muddle their way to a harmonious result. The early socialism was Utopian because it assumed that these same unregenerate men, once the laws of property had been altered, would somehow muddle their way to a harmonious result. Both ignored the chief lesson of human experience, which is the insight of high religion, that unregenerate men can only muddle into muddle.'<sup>1</sup>

Even in the nineteenth century the most powerful secular teachers taught that, fundamentally, confidence must not be placed in political and economic

<sup>1</sup>W. Lippmann, *Preface to Morals*, page 250.

machinery. Man cannot be made good by legislation, and no great thinker has ever held that man can be happy without being good. Least of all can a whole society be happy unless its members are good. It may well be the true reading of the cause of the present discontents, that our fathers trusted too much to machinery to secure for their children the full freedom of the world and all there is in it. They built up a vast organization for the removal of certain obvious hindrances to the good life, and gave their whole soul, at least for six days a week, to their work, perhaps too much taking it for granted that the enriched generations of the future would without set-back enjoy the full fruits of their labours. Inspired by the work of emancipation, which was the obviously pressing task before them, they did not need, in order to galvanize their energies, to contemplate the detail of the millennium for which they were working. So, in the earlier times, though they did not understand the structure of the kingdom of heaven upon earth, they did not feel the loss of such understanding. Nor did they see that they might be building for a world in which 'poverty amid plenty' would be far more than a merely economic problem.

Of the very real spiritual poverty in our world there is evidence all about us:—'in the brave and brilliant atheists who have defied the Methodist God and have become very nervous: in the women who have emancipated themselves from the tyranny of fathers, husbands, and houses, and, with the intermittent but expensive help of a psycho-analyst, are now enduring liberty as interior decorators; in the young men and women who are world-weary

at twenty-two; in the multitudes who drug themselves with pleasure; in the crowds, enfranchised by the blood of heroes; who cannot be persuaded to take an interest in their destiny; in the millions, at last free to think without fear of priest or policeman, who have made the moving pictures and the popular newspapers what they are. These are the prisoners who have been released.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps this is an over-bitter picture of the outcome of that striving for emancipation of all kinds which seemed in the latter part of the nineteenth century to promise so glorious a future. Perhaps, too, the picture is now a little out of date. But at any rate it is clear that in the nature of things, those who work for a true revival of the life of the spirit are, to-day especially, the proper allies of social and political reform. Indeed, they build its only sure foundations. Especially, therefore, at a time when even young people seem to feel little real hopefulness about the ability of vigorous constructive action to improve the state of affairs, a movement like the Oxford Group might reasonably expect a welcome, even from secular reformers of society. Certainly the latter ought to think very carefully before they turn away from any movement which shows the ability to tap some of the reservoirs of spiritual life which have so long been dammed up. And yet many people, who give their energies to doing what they can in the social and political fields, undoubtedly feel that the influence of the Group is not, from their point of view, in the right direction, and even that it is a hostile influence.

We may allow at once that a religious revival

<sup>1</sup>*Op. cit.*, page 6.

need not, and perhaps ought not, to include within itself an orthodoxy of political and social doctrine. We rightly view with suspicion those who can read between the lines of the New Testament one clear and detailed picture of the political and social machinery of the perfect industrial society. We shall not therefore look to the Oxford Group to play a part comparable to that, for instance, of the Philosophical Radicals in the early nineteenth century. For though the latter school were, perhaps, uniquely successful in stirring the more generous emotions and enthusiasms of a considerable part of the nation, the moral and spiritual content of their teaching was negligible; and its poverty in this respect was not without its influence on the future. Philosophical Radicalism was a great reformist movement, but it did little to deepen the spiritual life of its adherents, except indirectly—that is, by the incidental but effective means of making them devote their energies to the service of other people. It made use of intellectual persuasion to make them work: and so long as their inspiration sufficed to keep them in full work in pursuit of a real good, they were at least not greatly aware of unsatisfied spiritual needs.

A religious revival is a different matter. Looked at from the point of view of a detached observer it may be said to start from the opposite end. The man whose life is 'changed' by a religious revival is not regenerated by the effect on himself of disinterested work for others. The faith comes first; the works come afterwards. It is not that he finds himself so busy working for the production or promotion of something which he knows to be good

that he does not find any personal spiritual needs to provide a problem in his life. It is that, on the contrary, he finds himself spiritually changed, re-born within: he discovers within himself an intense spiritual need intensely satisfied. And his satisfaction urges him to testify, and to seek to bring a similar beatitude to others. His faith drives him to works.

But, naturally, the fact that regeneration comes first, and works afterwards, exercises a vital influence on the character of the works. If the man who is newly possessed of the spirit knows that to him neither hunger nor thirst have any power, since he lives in the spirit alone, it may well be that he will not find himself vigorously driven towards feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. If he knows that, to the saint, class distinctions are neither here nor there, having no power of heaven or hell, he may well not devote his life to the struggle for a classless society. He is more likely to feel a vocation to testify that to those who are regenerate these things do not matter, and to attempt to make his neighbours strong in their superiority by faith to the pains of hunger and thirst—and even, I suppose, of watching their children hungry and thirsty. Convinced that in a regenerate world hunger and thirst will not matter, the re-born man will seek to go straight to the root of the evil, and will simply work for regeneration. Like many a father, or elder brother, who argues that if a young man is discontented and money-conscious on £1,000 a year, he will be equally discontented and money-conscious with an extra £200, the regenerate man finds that the fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves; and he seeks to

make other souls find their own strength from within themselves by the flowering of the inner spirit, quite independently of external circumstances. If we can support life, he says in effect, we can support the spiritual life. The spiritual life is made possible by an inner activity of the soul, and starts with an inner act of self-surrender; it owes nothing to external circumstances. The one and only solution to all problems is to 'change' lives.

It is most important that those of us who find ourselves unsympathetic with this point of view should not misrepresent it. I have no doubt that a man, who finds himself suddenly living up to the best that is in him, rightly sees all the reasons that he has given to himself in explanation of his not doing so in the past as 'excuses'; and I have no doubt that that is what they were. We all know that, when we say that it is easier for certain other people to do their duty than it is for us, we are deceiving ourselves. As soon as we come to set for ourselves a high standard in the matter, as soon as we expect ourselves to be really actively and strenuously good, instead of being satisfied with a mere colourless absence of badness, we see that no change in external circumstances can add a single inch to our moral stature. We know that all references to external circumstances are self-sophistication, and, as far as they go, are symptoms of that hollowness within, which is the root of the moral damage. No doubt the man to whom it is given *suddenly* to find the strength to live up to the best that is in him sees this truth in an especially clear light.

It is but a short and easy step from this to conclude that our whole duty lies in drawing the attention



of our neighbours to this essential truth. What was true of us, we say to ourselves, is true of them. The only thing we can do for them, the only thing that is of any value to them, is to bring them by the same act of self-surrender to the same capacity for living to the highest. The end does not lie in the non-spiritual facts of life, it lies in the attitude of the spirit to those facts. To change the non-spiritual facts will get us nowhere; what is needed is to change the spirit.

We must even, I think, go one step farther. We must not only allow that this conclusion is an easy and a natural one to draw; we must also grant that there is considerable evidence in experience that the conclusion is true. The greatest revolutions in the history of man have been revolutions of the heart and soul. It is these that have really affected human destiny for the better. And these have been accomplished by one man, or by a small body of men, appealing straight to the hearts of those they met, taking the opportunity offered by ordinary direct human relationships, and for the most part affecting people one by one. It can hardly be maintained that there is a single movement in the whole of human history which has gained spiritual fire as it grew larger. The pure energy of the spirit is at its keenest when movements are young and small, and it seems inevitably to sink and grow feeble as the movement expands and the institutional machinery becomes more complicated. Actually, the deepest religious movements have been able to grow large at all only by receiving within their folds persons who assented superficially to some of the practical injunctions which followed from their teaching, but never

caught the authentic spirit of their inspiration. The churches which have gone farthest as institutions have been those which have best known when to compromise with the man of the world. And this was bound to be so. The most that can be hoped of a growing institution is that it may save the fire of its life from growing too dim, and that it may not become so rigid in its mechanism that it prevents new flames from springing up here and there within its system. It seems to be inevitable that the spiritual energy of a movement diminishes as we approach the circumference of its ever-widening circle. It is certain that in human associations new energy can never be brought into being by the multiplication of machinery, but will spring up again, if it springs up at all, where two or three are gathered together with direct access to the inspiration of the spirit. The new leaven will in turn gradually but inevitably lose its power in the growing of a new movement; but by then it will have done some work.

In a word, wide institutional movements derive their power for good from the canalization of spiritual energy which, in its full integrity, their institutions can do little to increase or intensify and must do much to diminish and eventually destroy. And this spiritual energy is called into being in the last resort by an individual, or small group of individuals, working by non-political, non-institutional means, and having the effect of leaven.

Let it be said again then, and with emphasis, that if those political and social reformers, who believe that something more than mere personal goodness

is necessary to produce a kingdom of heaven upon earth, set themselves in antagonism to such a spiritual revival, they cut away from underneath themselves the ground in which they must lay the foundations of the buildings which they hope to raise. Anything which galvanizes the spiritual fire of man should be welcomed by such reformers; for this spiritual fire is the very life-blood of all real progress in the organization of human relations. If a religious revival has the genuine root of the matter in it, it will create energy for the strenuous pursuit of all the legitimate ends of man. And it will make that energy *available*.

Here it should be said in set terms that it is difficult to believe that the Oxford Group is making energy available for any thoughtful progressive attack on social and political problems. It has already been said that if such a revival has the real root of the matter in it, it will do this among other things. It is not for the present writer to judge what conclusions should be drawn about the Group on other grounds. Anyone who is not within such a movement can only judge as one who is without; that is to say, he must rely upon external signs. It is not for us here to consider any external signs except those which concern our present purpose. And as regards these, that is, as regards the attitude of the Group to the prosecution of an organized attack on the social problems of the day, there seem to be grounds for grave misgiving.

Many people will think that the position has already been wrongly stated. It is not, they will say, that the Group does not exert an influence in social and political matters, but rather that it is a

positive hindrance, in that it creates a new fund of energy to be added to the forces which are arrayed against social and political change of any kind. And this criticism is worthy of serious reflection.

Even if we disallow considerations, which are, perhaps, only ephemeral—as, for instance, that the Group is predominantly a group of middle-class persons, who from their experience of grouping themselves together are not very likely to find much encouragement to step outside the ingrained social and political predilections of the middle class—we shall still find that in existing circumstances it is very likely to prove a hindrance to active reform. The Group is a movement, whose chief inspiration is the attack on sin by direct assault on the individual soul. It is a backward-looking movement rather than a forward-looking movement, in the sense in which modern Marxism is so often a backward-looking movement. It teaches that if certain evils are destroyed, the spirit will flower. It does not point forward by offering a clear picture of the flowering. It looks behind and shows that nothing good can be expected to flower in the midst of evil. To a generation which asks for a sign, it replies that a man with a guilty conscience could not see a sign, though it were there. Its sole inspiration is the exorcising of evil. It is implied of course, that some picture of the flowering of the spirit can be obtained from the New Testament, just as the Marxist understands that some picture of an ideal society can be obtained from the writings of Marx. And both claims, in their different degrees, are well founded. But it is also maintained that only the pure in heart have

ears to hear the heart of the doctrine. Meanwhile it is necessary to concentrate on the attack on evil.

But the evil, of course, is in the heart, that is, in the heart of the individual. And it is the first rule of the attacking party that nothing must be allowed to conceal or stand in the way of the real object of attack. The root of all evil is individual sin. No good is achieved unless there is a real change of heart. Any suggestion that any other kind of change can produce genuine good of any kind must be clearly and emphatically repudiated. Changes in wealth, social conditions, or even health, are in the end neither here nor there. What matters is that people should be regenerate; not that they should have more to eat. And the possession of more or less of this world's goods is irrelevant to the condition of the soul. One of the main enemies of religious movements is the general belief that economic and social improvement means spiritual improvement. The Oxford Group insists that nothing can produce spiritual improvement except the 'changing' of individual lives.

Thus it is an essential part of the attack on sin, to destroy utterly the belief that a state of sin is in any way dependent on material or even on social conditions. Nobody must be allowed to lay to his soul the flattering unction that when he is richer or more successful he will be better; that in his present depressed condition he cannot be expected to be good. This putting off of the day of self-surrender is the greatest stronghold of sin, and it must be stormed at all costs. Every man must be brought to see that the root of the evil is within himself.

Thus the Group, like all religious movements, is

called upon to resist the belief that economic and social reform can of itself bring spiritual progress. But has the Group asked itself whether in doing this it may not, like many religious movements before it, be standing in the way of reform itself? Or does it think that it is impossible to destroy ill-judged beliefs about the efficiency of reform without opposing the reform? And does it therefore deliberately call off its members from work in such movements, and devote them to the special ministry of the assault on sin in the individual heart? Does it hold that any movement for social and economic change so powerfully encourages false hopes about the life of the spirit that it is the inevitable enemy of any religious revival, and must therefore be destroyed root and branch?

I do not know of any clear pronouncement on this subject by the Oxford Group. But I can conceive of possible answers the Groups might give to the question. The first is that if the Group go on 'changing' the lives of individuals they will sooner or later 'change' the great of the earth, who will then with their new-found grace put the world right. The second is that nothing will solve our problems except the regeneration of man; and that when all men are regenerate there will be no problems to solve. The first answer implies that social and economic affairs present intellectual problems in any conditions of society, but that no one can solve those difficulties unless he is regenerate. This view is in principle not unlike that of Plato's *Republic*. The second answer implies that in a world where everybody is a genuine Christian the organization of society presents no

problems at all. This view is philosophically indistinguishable from the 'society without government' utopias of Philosophical Radicalism in the early nineteenth century.

It is very difficult to believe that the Oxford Group can really hold the first view, though it may well carry weight with some adherents who have not thought about the matter very much. It is quite likely, of course, that the lives of many who are in important positions in politics and in business may be 'changed'; and it is certain that such 'change' would have some influence on the public lives of the men concerned.<sup>1</sup> That is not the difficulty. The difficulty is to believe that the Oxford Group, if they believe that there are in these matters real problems to be solved, can possibly hold that their duties and responsibilities in this direction begin and end with the 'changing' of distinguished politicians. If the application of Christian teaching to the organization of human society were held to be a matter of intellectual difficulty, the Group would make its members face this fact, and set themselves, among other things, to understand the difficulties. It would further use its group technique to enable a number of regenerate people to think out the main lines of a policy which solved them. If the Group do not do this we may take it, I think, that it is their view that when politicians and public men join the Group, all they have to do is to live as members of the Group and the world will automatically be put to rights. If they live in accordance with the Four Principles, and constantly testify to their fellow-statesmen and fellow-directors that it

<sup>1</sup> Compare Mr. Allen, pages 20 and 39

is simply because *they* are not really and actively Christian that the world is in such a mess, then everything will have been done that it lies in man to do; they will have done the only thing which is capable of contributing any genuine improvement in human affairs.

This, I think, is really the position of the Group; and this is the effect which membership of the Group appears to the outside world to have on its converts. They find that their 'self-surrender' gives them a new sensitivity to the demands of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love, and also a new power to live up to those demands; their membership of the Group enables them to remain true to their 'changed' condition; and they discover that their whole duty to others consists in testifying, and in seeking to induce a similar change in them. Thus membership of the Group involves a tendency for the member to be unable to put his heart and soul into co-operation in any other organization whatever: for his heart and soul is given to the Group, whose sole immediate task is to attack sin.

We have then finally to consider this view, that co-operation in the Group's assault on the individual sinner exhausts the whole political and social duty of man. Make men good and active Christians, this view maintains, and the problems of society will solve themselves.

This doctrine must in the end, I think, mean any one of three things. (1) In a society of which all the members have been 'changed' no organization whatever is necessary, but everyone naturally and without regulation lives together peacefully and



in perfect co-operation, simply by the grace which is in them: (2) there is one form of organization which is proper to truly Christian people, and a society of 'changed' people would set up this organization and live under it without friction: (3) while some form of organization is necessary, it is totally indifferent to 'changed' people what form of organization they have, since the life of the spirit is totally unaffected by such things—just as it is indifferent spiritually whether traffic passes on the right or left-hand side of the road, provided there is a regulation dictating the one or the other.

Actually one and the same consideration seems to make it impossible to maintain any of these three things; namely, the consideration that Christian people do not agree about the proper form of society. Nor is there any reason to suppose that they ever will agree. Consider, for instance, a matter to which we have already had cause to refer, namely the question of wealth. Let us, for the sake of the present argument, take the highest line about it. Let us suppose for the moment that to the life of the spirit the possession of wealth, or even of sufficient food to eat, is irrelevant. Does this mean that we should absolutely refrain from any interference with the distribution of wealth, and concentrate our whole attention on keeping before the eyes of ourselves and other people the truth that these inequalities of wealth are of no significance? Or does it mean that we should in the meantime try to produce an equitable distribution, so that everybody may then pay far less attention to it? Again, if a woman pleads that she cannot live the good life if she is brought up from childhood in an

overcrowded house, ought we to tell her that if she were 'changed' she would live a good life anywhere, and if she is not 'changed' she will not live a good life anywhere? Or ought we to try to improve the housing conditions? Or ought we to do both? Ought we simply to tell her that 'no man can save his brother' and that in the end her own salvation must be worked out by herself? Or ought we also to start her on her way with a good meal?

If the Oxford Group takes the austere possible line about these things of the body, then we know where we are. And there is, no doubt, some precedent for reading the teaching of Christianity in this way, though such an interpretation is hardly likely to commend itself to the ordinary reader of the New Testament. Nor will it commend itself as moral teaching to the common man in what is on the whole a humanitarian age. But if, as is more probable, the Group is not committed to absolute austerity in this matter, what stand does it take? It is difficult to see how in a twentieth-century world it can be maintained that, while something must be done about social and material conditions, neighbourly treatment as between individuals will accomplish all that is necessary. To-day it is clear to everyone that nothing but organized action can prevent starvation and want from raising their heads from time to time in one part or another of the community. But if so, what organization? And how is it to be brought into being, when so many of the nation are indifferent to the need? Is there not at least a duty to work for the removal of the indifference, and for the creation of a general goodwill towards the necessary reorganization?

It is difficult to see how a genuine religious revival can fail to impress some at least of those who are 'changed' into working towards the understanding and solution of these social problems. And yet all the appearances are that the Group leaves its members at most vaguely and ineffectively interested in these things. It makes them all interested in 'changing lives'; and it allows their interest in the immediate work of the Group itself to stand as an effective obstacle against any enthusiastic service elsewhere. And yet the Group claims to have a message, not simply for those who have a special vocation to a certain kind of ministry, but to all sorts and conditions of mankind.

Either, then, the Group must hold that a man's social and political duties are exhausted by his activities within the Group for the preservation and extension of the Group; or else its inspiration is grounded on so narrow a foundation that man's social and political duties are never even considered.

If either is the case, the Group is, and must continue to be, a serious obstacle to all organized social reform. Like many religious movements before it, it will stand as a hindrance to simple but necessary improvements in the common affairs of life; and its hindrance will be the more formidable because it is a movement which claims to stand on the highest possible ground.

## THE GROUP MOVEMENT AND THE MIDDLE CLASSES

BY W. H. AUDEN

WHETHER by accident or by design the Group Movement has appealed principally to the middle classes. Its success with the working class has so far been negligible. Nomenclature is never accidental, and terms like 'Oxford,' 'House party,' and 'spiritual bath' indicate the kind of social world in which most of its members would prefer to dwell. It may not be unprofitable, therefore, to examine the present status and wants, both spiritual and material, of this class, and then to consider the Group Movement in relation to their satisfaction. The moment a religious movement has gathered more than a handful of converts, it becomes a body within the state with whose support or hostility politicians will have to reckon and, if possible, control. The moment it reaches the stage of having an organization, it needs money, and those who supply it will expect special considerations. There have been few assumptions less based on fact and more unedifying in their results than that of the divorce between the things of God and the things of Caesar. It may be compared in its effects to the psychological repression of an instinct. It has led, not to a purification of the religious life, but to its rationalization in the interests of material wishes, which, denied overt expression, have remained at a crude and infantile level. The

speeches of bishops on the Factory Acts in the last century, and on the Great War at the beginning of our own, are only two examples; the history of the Church is strewn with its scandals. In the past there has been the excuse that unconscious hypocrisy was barely suspected. In private, at any rate, you knew what you believed. But to-day the light which has been shed by Freud and Marx on the motivation of thought makes it criminal to be uncritical, and no movement, secular or religious, which is afraid to examine dispassionately and to acknowledge openly what self-interest would make it want to believe, is worthy of anything but contempt.

How then does the middle class live? What has it been taught to believe and how has it been brought up to behave? What does it think it wants? Take first, religious upbringing. This will, of course, have varied from family to family; but it is not, I hope, too rash to say that for the vast majority it was liberal and individualistic, ethical rather than mystical, emotional rather than rational. The human side of Jesus was emphasized rather than the divine.

The child was not much terrified by hell fire<sup>1</sup> or perplexed by definitions of the Trinity; he was given, instead, many references to Truth, Goodness and Beauty. The good will was more important than the orthodox dogma. Further, religion was something you didn't talk about in public. It belonged to mother's bedroom; in some cases it was what father did. Its aim was to produce good individuals rather than a good society. You were all here on earth to

<sup>1</sup>The sense of guilt under which every human being suffers was not, of course, lessened by the fading of hell. It was only transferred to medicine. The hospital and the asylum became the punishment for moral offences, particularly the sexual.

help others; what on earth the others were here for you didn't know.<sup>1</sup>

Of much greater importance to him, and—though often given a religious justification—capable of independent existence, was the conception of the good man as the man of character, character not personality—Mr. Baldwin rather than Lloyd George.

Belief in character presupposes a belief in the superiority of the will over all other mental faculties, that is the conscious will, the will of the ego. It involves a doctrine of dualism, of the higher and the lower self, and a policy of actively resisting evil without too much thinking, for thinking by threatening the initial premises may bring the whole structure down in ruins.

Culturally, his training may have varied greatly in degree but not in kind, and in his complex of ideas, various strands may be distinguished. Firstly, those of the Renaissance, e.g., the importance of the individual, the ideal of scholarship (disinterested knowledge) itself a secular derivation of the medieval contemplative ideal, and of games (disinterested action) an adaptation of the more practical exercises of the feudal aristocracy to the new leisure of a more peaceful and numerous class. His hero is the Blue who takes a first in Greats. His idea of Greece and Rome is a Renaissance version, Plato the philosopher, not Plato the politician.

Secondly there are the ideas of Rousseau and the liberal humanitarians of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with their belief in the funda-

<sup>1</sup>For another account of religious upbringing see the first section of Mr. Allen's essay.

mental goodness of man, in nature as the kind indulgent mother, in the superior virtues of children and animals, and with their dislike for political authority and reason. Peter Pan is a typical manifestation of the spirit on the negative side, child welfare and birth control on the positive.

Thirdly, there is the impression made on him by the success of the scientific method with its combination of theoretical reasoning and practical test. Though, as a class, he has resisted its advance in each successive field, he has in every case been forced to give way, and his rueful admiration or sad acquiescence conceals a deep and genuine hostility.

The very ease and rapidity of its success in applied technics, coupled with his divorce from the actual process of production, has made him take its material benefits, telephones, cars, and the like, for granted, and he is aware only of its threat to undermine his confidence in the rightness of his world, a threat which has recently become immeasurably more serious; for science, which in the last century was concerned with the visible material world, has now turned its attention to the inner world of subjective experience, that in which he has put all his trust. If he can't trust that decent feeling, where is he?

As a social animal he has depended on the family group for his satisfactions. During the last century the Victorian family was large enough to provide variety and lessen the intensity of parental relations, and small enough to provide emotional security. Its defects were that it was non-equalitarian (there was always economic and spiritual dependence

on the parents), and that it recognized no larger units outside itself, which defect became worse as, under economic pressure, the family became smaller. Owing to this dwindling and to the increased ease of travel, the family is rapidly ceasing to be the natural social unit, but he is still looking for a group of the same kind. The Totalitarian state is a family image.

Lastly, there is his economic position. For a long time now the middle class has been the dominant one. Its material wants have been satisfied without difficulty. It seems to be generally true that physical or material needs have to reach a certain threshold value before they are recognized by the mind as such, as something that can only be satisfied by certain material objects outside the mind. Until they reach this intensity, their fluctuations are only experienced as fluctuations in subjective feeling of value.

Further, that we do not think until we are defeated, until the power of action is taken from us. The sustained comfort and power of the middle classes has led them to value things and ideas for the subjective benefits they confer, the feeling of rightness they give, rather than for the material gain or loss they represent: their criterion of truth that which allays the feeling of doubt, not necessarily that which is experimentally demonstrable.

This tendency to exalt feeling above reason has been stimulated, not weakened, by the growth of scientific knowledge, which on the one hand has forced the Protestant churches more and more to water down their dogmas, or to explain them in subjective terms, and on the other, by obliging its



own students to become specialists—experts in one tiny corner taking the rest of the enormous building on trust—has deprived the individual of a coherent and intelligible world-picture to which he can relate all his behaviour and beliefs. The areas of truth which it is possible for him ever to explore experimentally have miserably shrunk.

And though still comfortable, the economic position of the middle class young man is deteriorating. Taxes and cost of living have reduced saving power. There must be many families like my own, whose members, two generations ago, had substantial incomes from investments, who are now entirely dependent on the salaries they earn.

Middle class unemployment has not become the terror it has in Germany, but it is there in the background like a bad smell. There is more competition than there was and the consequences of failure are more serious, though mental rather than physical. The unemployed young university graduate is unlikely to starve, but he will have to live at home, ask for his pocket-money, and endure the mutely resentful anxiety of his parents.<sup>1</sup> Thus insecurity threatens him from within and without: within, his belief in himself and his world, and without, his material situation.

Like every human being he desires security: security of belief, social security, to be surrounded by the faces of friends, to feel he is a valuable person, and material security, to be certain of his

<sup>1</sup> This decreasing sense of security manifests itself as a wish to spend more rather than save for the future, and in an expressed lack of ambition. I do not suppose there are more or less ambitious individuals now than forty years ago; but the attitude has changed. Then it was thought dreadful to have no ambition; now 'Careerist' is a term of abuse.

next meal. Peculiar to him, however, is his conception of such security. Long the dominant class, and still the most powerful, he puts his material claim last. He has been taught that material claims are selfish and bad, and that he should not question the motives behind idealistic claims or scrutinize their results. He has not been taught intellectual discrimination, to distinguish between one ideal claim and another. To him all ideal claims are good, if accompanied by that subjective feeling of rightness which is the only test he knows. Socially, he can only think in terms of his own class, the only group he knows is the family or the school-team. Ethically, associations have been made between general moral concepts of the good character and quite peculiar attributes of the athletic gentleman, so that he cannot see them apart. In his economic, social, and ethical ideals, he has not changed. Trust in the intellect he never had. What his changed environment has, however, destroyed is his belief in the efficacy of the conscious will. It has failed to do its job, to make him a man of character. For character being a state of tension, though designed to make a man superior to circumstances, is sustained only by social pressure. Extremely successful when the environment is familiar or favourable, it becomes useless and dangerous when they are not. Just as a bee dies if removed from its hive, the character is lost in a changed world; he cannot adapt, or should he attempt adaptation, he has in reserve only those elements in his personality which he has repressed, and which have therefore remained infantile. The Spartans, as the ancient world knew, when they got away from home, could always be bribed.

Two courses are open to him, Liberalism<sup>1</sup> or Irrationalism, blind belief in the Unconscious. Liberalism involves faith in reason and he has never had that. His Liberalism has always been Utopian, emotional, feeling indulgent and full. It has always disappeared very rapidly when his position was threatened.

No, he can only exchange one dictatorship for another, that of the conscious for the unconscious.<sup>2</sup>

The Group Movement offers this. The ideal—to be perfectly loving, perfectly honest, perfectly pure—the demands of the spirit to transcend the material, which always become insistent when the material needs are too easily satisfied—we have heard of before. The lack of rational criticism or a *Weltanschauung* is not new either. What is new is the emphasis on guidance, on the inner voice, the voice

<sup>1</sup>Modern Liberalism recognizes the power and importance of the Unconscious, but while admitting the weakness of reason, believes in its necessity and value. Metaphysically, it holds the doctrine of law as immanent, that 'the order of nature expresses the characters of the real things which jointly compose the existences to be found in nature. When we understand the essences of these things, we thereby know their mutual relations to each other' (Whitehead: *Adventures of Ideas*). Ethically, it manifests itself as a reverence for life. Politically as socialism, scientific, not Utopian. As typical Liberals of this kind, I would mention Freud (see Thomas Mann's essay in *The Criterion*, June 1933) and Schweitzer in the world of thought, Nansen in the world of action.

<sup>2</sup>There have, of course, been other movements beside the Group Movement with this aim, but they have been confined to the intellectual *avant-garde*, those who have not fitted in with the mass of their class. Surrealism and D. H. Lawrence are two examples. The former, whose technique of writing bears striking resemblances to that of the groupers, is professedly communist, but communism is a rational movement. Lawrence's doctrines of the importance of the body and its instincts, throw the emphasis on the personal relations of individuals; as he himself admits in his letters, he had no political or social programme to offer. The Plumed Serpent is a day-dream. It is noteworthy that his hero, the gypsy or the gamekeeper, is dependent, even in a sense parasitic, on the middle class. As a specifically religious movement, there has been that of Barth in Germany, with its insistence on Grace.

of the unconscious, and the technique, the quiet period of contemplation, the discharge in a small group. Neither of these, of course, is really new, but they are new for this class, and their results are one more witness to their importance.

Leaders of all mass movements are aware of the fact that they do not flourish unless the unconscious is tapped, unless the 'heart' is touched. It is the author of good and evil alike.

'Not Creator, nor creature, was ever without love, either natural or rational; and this thou knowest. The natural is always without error; but the other may err through an evil object, or through too little or too much vigour. . . . Hence thou mayest understand that love must be the seed of every virtue in thee, and of every deed that deserves punishment.'

To those brought up on repression the mere release of the unconscious is sufficient to give a sense of value and meaning to life. The sweeping away of 'Hemmungen' is a vivid experience, but it is not guidance, which is an act of the intelligence. That the Group Movement succeeds in a number of cases in their release, there can be no doubt. The light in the eye, the sudden increase in energy, the missionary zeal, the intolerance of rivals; all the signs are there. To point to cases of hysteria as a proof of the worthlessness of the movement is silly; they are further evidence of its power, of a force strong enough to produce character mutations, all of which we cannot expect to have a positive survival value; there will always be throw-outs. If a movement is important, there will be scandals. What can, however, be said is that other movements are

capable of producing the same effect. Anyone who has spoken to a young Nazi or Communist convert will know that they exhibit the same symptoms. He will tell you likewise that his movement has given him back his soul. As far as the feeling of the individual is concerned, ideology matters very little, except as a defence against hostile critics.

Further, it will be noticed that these movements use the same technique, the formation of the cell or small group, periodically visited by missionary officials, and the periodic gathering of cells for sudden public demonstration. This technique is the opposite of the individual preaching to large public crowds (one might call it the democratic method) employed, for example, in the Methodist revival or in the movement for the abolition of the slave trade. It is much more like the early Christian Church or the Quakers.

Its appearance and success in different and even contradictory movements suggests that the psychological importance of the small group is beginning to be realized. Only in a group of very moderate size, probably not larger than twelve,<sup>1</sup> is it possible for the individual under normal circumstances to lose himself, for his death instincts to be neutralized in the same way as those of the separate cells of the metazoa neutralize each other in the body. What the individual is after has been well expressed by Mr. Gerald Heard in *The Social Substance of Religion*.

‘The gospel is not salvationist. It is not a cautious, far-sighted calculation of the indivi-

<sup>1</sup>The Middle Class are well aware of the satisfactions of this kind of group from team games. Those who have complained of athletics in schools as a religion, were right in their diagnosis, but have made no attempt to supply a better substitute.

dual's chances, a contemptible repetition of Noah's saving of himself and leaving the rest to drown. It is the opposite. It goes below any equal sharing between each, to the only possible settlement, the fusing in a cause of love of all separate selves into a common being. It is an overwhelming wish to be saved altogether, a determination to be saved by the very fact of being together. . . . Those who were swept by the gospel, were attempting nothing so cold, individual and intellectual, as the saving of their own souls after death. They threw aside personal salvation and, starting back, they found salvation in throwing away their concern for it for themselves. They found real salvation from the lust for self-salvation in complete devotion to the group, to the new, small, intensely beloved community of like believers.'

Such a catharsis is threatened, on the one hand by competing loyalties to other groups such as the family, a rivalry which would seem, for example, to have injured the Quakers, and on the other, by missionary success tending to increase the size of the group beyond the proportions which provide the right psycho-physical field, until the more self-conscious remain unabsorbed. This difficulty has been met in the Churches, by the use of Ritual and a dogmatic framework of ideas, a rationalistic justification for behaviour which was originally self-sustaining. There are signs, however, as we have seen, that this dogma is failing to be efficacious, partly under the assault of science, but much more because it has remained officially non-political; its dogmas have included no social doctrines

other than relief-works, and therefore its politics, for a large body in society, have been those of its governors; it has been used as a class-weapon. It is permissible to doubt whether any large-scale organization which professes no political programme, is likely to command wide interest in the near future.

The problem of all modern communities, where the size of the psychological unit bears no relation to that of the economic, is of finding for the masses as a whole a suitable object on which to focus the life-hostile, destructive death instincts, or rather of placing these at the disposal of the life instincts, as they are for the individual, for instance, in the sexual act.

So far mankind has only discovered one method, war. Given a suitable hate-object—the Kaiser, Marxists, Bourgeois, we can feel really loving towards the neighbours who share it. As André Gide has said, 'A friend is someone with whom one does something discreditable.' Those who are aware of the horrors of war will fail in their efforts if they do not recognize its enormous psychological benefits, and find a more efficient substitute.

The Group Movement is reaching the stage where it is imperative for it to recognize this.<sup>1</sup> To talk as it does of being perfectly loving, is folly unless it is fully aware of the ambivalency of love. If to be perfectly loving means that hate is abolished, it is nonsense: it is only true if it means that hate is to be used constructively (as a sculptor hates the marble block), that death is to be swallowed up by life.

If the Movement fails to realize this, if on the

<sup>1</sup>For a further treatment see the first part of Dr. Jack's essay.

one hand, it allows its groups to increase in size (a house party is already too large unless its members are all 'classy'), and on the other, fails to find something useful for its members to do as one whole (and this means a definite material and political programme) something in which the small group can themselves be lost, it will fail, and there are plenty of others waiting outside to provide a devil. Which devil its middle-class members are likely to choose it is not hard to guess. A grouper has said that Fascism is preferable to Communism because it appeals to ideals, to self-sacrifice rather than self-interest. This is a warning. Unless in immediate physical need, the psyche responds to ideals, whatever the motive, because they keep it in good conceit with itself. Schoolmasters and rulers depend on this. Ideals can very easily be only a method of persuasion. None of the accounts of group meetings (e.g., that of Margaret Roper in the *Church Times*) inclines one to believe that the Groupers realize the extent of human conceit.

The Movement has certainly succeeded in effecting a psychological revolution in many people. That is no test. So have many others. Idealist and non-political, it has reached a size when it is becoming of material and political importance. Irrational, it lays itself open to having its thinking done for it by more intelligent and less scrupulous people. Middle class, given a crisis of real importance and a compulsory choice, it would seem likely to choose Fascism. At the recent London meeting there were several German Christians.



## SOME CONCLUSIONS

BY R. H. S. CROSSMAN

IT was the aim of the four preceding essays to find an answer to one question: what contribution can the Groups be expected to make to the life of the community? Three aspects of this question have been considered. Miss Gwyer and Mr. Maud discussed the relations of the Groups to the University, Mr. Morris their contribution to the solution of social and political problems, and Mr. Auden their effect on the individual self. It is under these three heads, the Groups and Psychiatry, the Groups and Social Problems, and the Groups and the University that I shall attempt to summarize the results so far achieved. It is clearly impossible, however, to tabulate any cut-and-dried conclusions, and the reader should treat this essay as a purely individual assessment of the case argued by Mr. Allen and his four critics.

It may seem surprising that a specifically religious movement should be so rigorously scrutinized from this angle. Why, it may be asked, should we suppose the Groups to be able to contribute anything to the solution of such problems? And, secondly, are those interested in their solution competent to understand and criticize the Groups? It is, however, only necessary to read Mr. Allen's essay carefully in order to find the answer to these questions. The Groups, he claims, are the beginning of a 'world revival'.<sup>1</sup> The phrase is used repeatedly and it is meant to be taken

<sup>1</sup>See page 21.

literally. The Grouper considers his Group activity not as *an* activity among others, but as the whole of life: he believes surrender, and the guidance resulting from it, to be the answer to all problems, social, political and educational, the key to the perfection of society and of the individual. Thus in the first section of his article, Mr. Allen points out the deficiencies of Oxford education and shows how the Groups are filling the gap.<sup>1</sup> On page 33 he claims for the Groups a knowledge of psychiatry sufficient to warrant severe strictures on many of those at present in charge of the training of character. On page 20 he illustrates their effect on political history, and on page 22 claims that they are training men for leadership of industry and of the State. Finally he seems to find<sup>2</sup> the solution of our economic problems in the conversion of our captains of industry, and even (page 14) suggests that international difficulties are susceptible of similar treatment.

It is just in so far as the Movement makes such claims and convinces its young converts of its competence to fulfil them, that it becomes imperative to treat it as a matter of more than Church significance. The fact that some thousands of young people believe that they, or their leaders, have in their grasp the key to all the problems of mankind is bound to be of very great interest to every thinking man. For these young men and women—as Mr. Allen and Mr. Auden agree in pointing out—belong for the most part to that class in whose hands are the Civil Service, the Law, the Medicine and the Universities of this country. We must consider them not

<sup>1</sup>See particularly (page 7) his criticism of the School of Theology.

<sup>2</sup>See page 39.

merely as so many thousands among the 46,000,000 who make up the population, but as a considerable proportion of those who will or should become its leaders. If Mr. Allen's hopes of world revival were to be realized even to the limited extent of a national middle-class revival, the results would be incalculably great—for good or bad. It is therefore of very great importance for all who are interested in the welfare of the nation to consider the effects of the Groups upon the student and estimate their value.

1. *The Groups and psychiatry.* As Mr. Maud has shown<sup>1</sup> the Groups believe that individual unhappiness and ineffectiveness have their roots in selfishness and the suppression of guilt: the way to individual health lies in confession and surrender, in becoming 'Groupish' instead of selfish. The Groups claim further that they are developing a technique for accomplishing this result; and the fact that any and every convert has as his primary duty the task of making additional conversions suggests that this technique is not difficult to learn for anyone who has made his surrender. It is unquestionably true that a great deal has been actually accomplished by the Groups. Mr. Maud<sup>2</sup> compares their work very aptly to that of the osteopaths. Both practice more by the light of nature than by text-book: both perform miracles: in both cases we hear more of the successes than of the failures.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Auden has analysed so fully the instincts released by Group-surrender and the character of the 'discharge' that no more need here be said upon this

<sup>1</sup>See page 44.

<sup>2</sup>See page 57.

<sup>3</sup>The osteopath, however, does not claim that all doctors should become osteopaths. The analogous claim is often made by Groupers.

subject. But certain features may be noted. (i) The appalling danger<sup>1</sup> of giving such specialized pastoral work to young people of no experience.<sup>2</sup> There is no training among the Groups comparable to that of the Catholic priest, and the Grouper, though he admits his psychiatry to be still in its infancy, and acknowledges his debt to Freud, all too seldom has studied what little can be known of the subject. (ii) The risk of the release, when achieved, being of short duration, and of a relapse following upon it. In their recent American tour, the Groups on at least three occasions—at Detroit, Louisville, and Phoenix—found the work of conversion far harder *in towns where they had previously worked*: still more significant, at Louisville, where two years previously hundreds had made their surrender, they found only eleven who had remained in any sense active members. (iii) The dependence of the convert upon the Group for spiritual strength. This is a mixed blessing and is perhaps not quite so good a training for leadership as Mr. Allen would have us believe. (iv) The irresistible temptation<sup>3</sup> to collect conversions, and to magnify past sins for the sake of the effect they create. It cannot be healthy for a student month after month to rehearse ‘the story of his life B.C.’ before large audiences. Truth in the end is bound to be sacrificed to effect, and, on off-days, acting must be substituted for sincerity. (v) The urgent need—noted by all the contributors—for

<sup>1</sup>See Miss Gwyer, page 65.

<sup>2</sup>Professor Grensted, in answer to this charge (page 205) points out that other Christian Societies use students for mission work. But the parallel does not really hold water. It is one thing to preach a sermon, and quite another thing to act as Father Confessor to a sexual pervert, or an elderly *roué*.

<sup>3</sup>See Miss Gwyer, page 66.

conversion to be followed, not by a headlong rush into the conversion of others, but by intellectual training and (if immediate action is desired) social work of a constructive kind.

Thus, while fully agreeing with Mr. Allen that more attention should be paid to Psychiatry, and acknowledging the valuable aid given by the Groups in pointing out how little it is practised, I cannot feel confident that the methods of the Groups are at present sound, or that their results, upon the healer or the healed, are more likely to be good than bad.

2. *The Groups and the University.* The first charge Mr. Allen makes against the University is its neglect of character-training. On page 24 he writes as follows: "The choice . . . is this: on the one hand to train the intellect alone, to remain blind to spiritual ill-health in sex and fear-instincts, to turn out men equipped with a modicum of knowledge and lacking the powers of initiative and moral judgment which would make their knowledge fruitful; and, on the other, to train the whole personality . . ." If these were indeed the alternatives before us, no sane man could be in doubt; but in fact we have to decide, not between barren intellectualism and the training of the whole man, but whether or no we approve of certain methods advocated by the Groups. It is no exaggeration to say that no country in the world has paid more attention to education of character than England. Indeed, our foreign critics usually assert that we concentrate upon it to the exclusion of all else. It is not more, but a better quality that we need, and above all a better quality of *intellectual* training. It can never be the duty of a university to cure

neuroses! The tutorial system does make it possible for those teachers with a special aptitude for it to help their pupils in the intimate difficulties of their lives, but the tutor who *can* do this is a far rarer phenomenon than the tutor who thinks he can do it. No one can deny that sex-education is often deplorably inefficient, but it is a terribly difficult job and it is best done at home—and the same is true of religious instruction. The university is not *primarily* a school for future leaders, but a home of learning, and it must demand of its students that they come to it with a sufficient strength of character to stand the strain of that individualist way of life which pure learning demands. But to say this is not to deny the validity of Mr. Allen's criticisms: although perhaps his own experiences were unusual (few undergraduates find quite his difficulty in unburdening themselves to friends) it *is* true that shy and retiring students, and, at the other extreme, dissoluteness and depravity, are too often neglected. The best cure, however, that the university could offer would be—not to introduce the intimate mutual confession—but to see that the tutor was always *a Teacher*. It is seldom that students who are really interested in their work find themselves in need of the assistance of the Groups, and it is in the co-operative effort of research that the tutor most naturally finds contact with his pupil. The reading party, perhaps, though less assuming, creates a healthier relationship than mutual confession.

To turn to Mr. Allen's second charge: there can have been few readers who did not deeply sympathize with his contention that much of what is called education is in fact a barren exercise of the

brain. The revolt from the intellect which he and Mr. Auden both analyse is enough to prove the truth of his contention; for such a revolt only occurs when reason has become dogma, and tradition is petrified. There are many at Oxford who would wholeheartedly agree with the Groupers' strictures on much of the teaching in the Humane Faculties, and lament the remoteness of—for example—philosophy and theology from living issues. If the intellectual scoffs at the Grouper's criticisms, he is courting the fate of his comrades in Germany; for youth is stronger than age, and Reason can rule only if she is alive. The test of her vitality is her power to compel attention.

But are the Groups really helping Reason to regain her contact with life? Doubt on this point is the very kernel of Mr. Morris' essay, and comes out time after time in all the contributions. To confuse barren intellectualism with reason, and then to revolt from both, is to surrender to the unconscious—and that is just what too many Groupers do. To know God's will for them is too easy a task. Mr. Allen quotes as 'a striking symptom of the weakness into which Christianity had fallen' that 'many Christians found difficulty in saying "how *exactly* in their own personal life they do give practical content to their prayer, "Thy will be done"'.<sup>1</sup> But surely to learn God's will *is* a terribly difficult task, to know fully its practical application to life, an impossibility, to try to see it, the work of a lifetime. It is one of the tasks of a university to show the beginner how easy it is to have the feeling of rightness, how difficult to know, how perilous to

<sup>1</sup> See page 30.

condemn. The assurance that the feeling of being guided is the test of truth and solves all problems, is something which a university must no less rigorously prune, than the equally fervent belief of the Communist or the Nazi that he has 'seen the light.' Surrender can become as rigid a dogma as theology, Guidance as lifeless as intellectualism.

This truth has been expressed for all time by Plato in the *Republic*, where he represents mankind fettered in a cave, its eyes fixed upon shadows playing on a wall. The shadows are the appearances with which we are content, our selfish pleasures, our illusory 'knowledge,' the whole content of a materialist society. Not till a man, loosed from his fetters, has turned his back on the shadows and, with infinite labour, has stumbled up the path of intellectual training into the sunshine of the spiritual world, can he know Truth or Beauty or Goodness. When he has learnt to know them, he can return to the cave. *Then, and not till then, can he give any help to his fellow-prisoners.* Plato too was convinced that conversion is essential to 'world-revival,' but he was equally convinced that conversion is worse than useless unless followed by intellectual training. In this conviction he founded the first University, and founded it as a bulwark against the barren intellectualism of his day. He did not fight that intellectualism by a call to immediate action, nor did he demand of the neophyte the conversion of others. The prisoner who first turns to the light is dazzled, and cannot even see the shadows: not till the intellect has been rigorously trained can he apprehend that spiritual world in the light of which he will be able to see society, as it is, and to reform it. If the newly-



converted tries to reform others, he will do more harm than the hardened materialist whose eyes are still fixed upon the shadows.

This conception of education has been the life of the University from Plato's day till our own. In times of sloth and decay, revival has always come through a return to it, and has brought not a reaction from intellectualism, but a resurrection of the living reason. The Groups have stressed to a tired world the essential part conversion must play in any real education, and for this we acknowledge our debt. But we cannot rest content with this alone, we must demand the second stage as well. The undergraduate who is vividly aware of his years at Oxford as a training for the part he is to play in the community, not merely as the preparation for a career or for earning his bread, is living in the true tradition of the Platonic Academy and of the English University; and the more such students there are, the fewer 'cases' there will be for the Groups to treat. Group methods, in fact, should not, to my mind, be considered as part of education proper at all, or as suitable for anyone except educational failures, and even here should be employed only by experienced and carefully-chosen teachers. To disseminate among normal people the ecstatic happiness of 'release' which 'surrender' brings, the confident trust in the feeling of rightness, the 'contempt for everything B.C.' which one of my pupils expressed to me, or even the 'care-free effective enjoyment of University examinations' which Mr. Allen<sup>1</sup> extols—all this is not quite as self-evidently excellent as some Groupers imagine. The divine discontent of the searcher

<sup>1</sup>See page 24.

after truth is not easily combined with the careless rapture of the converted: the happiness of the enquirer is never complete in itself; his joy is not in release but in *endeavour*. To encourage all men to look for release is not to increase the efficiency of our leaders but to decrease it, and is to run the danger of widening the cleft between the intellectual and the rebel instead of bridging it.

3. I come now to the last question, the appraisal of the contribution of the Groups in the sphere of social and political problems, and here again we find that the Movement has been right in the diagnosis of the disease, but incomplete in its treatment of it. The whole trend of Mr. Morris' essay was to stress the urgent need for a 'change of heart,' and the influence which a small group of 'changed' men can have on the community. He might disagree with Mr. Allen's claim<sup>1</sup> that this is a new discovery of the Groups, and point out that all great thinkers and religious teachers from Plato onwards have seen this at least as clearly as the Grouper, but that is a matter of small importance. What is significant is the agreement that organization and material improvement are not enough. The Groups have done a great work in making young men and women willing to think and feel and act *for a cause*.<sup>2</sup> And yet Mr. Morris and Mr. Maud both come to the conclusion (though they are both reluctant to admit it) that the Groups have not only neglected social prob-

<sup>1</sup>See page 14.

<sup>2</sup>Other movements in Oxford have, however, accomplished this. The Grouper sometimes talks as though, apart from him, everyone in Oxford were individualist and repressed. It is only necessary to think of the work of e.g. the anti-war movement and the Socialist Party (to mention two instances where it would be difficult to find a single Grouper) to see how one-sided such a view of Oxford would be.

lems but have actually given their members a bias against taking an interest in them. If this is so, it is a disastrous thing, and that it really is so, is suggested by Mr. Allen's article. On page 39 we find his fullest reference to social problems. He is talking of the revival the work of the Groups will bring and goes on as follows: 'If honesty should prove incompatible with prosperity in the present world of industry and commerce, those who hear the call to honesty may have to face their cross of adversity, in order that through their cross a new economic order can come into being, wherein honesty shall reign. If, as is certainly the case, absolute love is incompatible with the present social injustice towards the homeless and unemployed, the God of Love will call some of those who listen to Him to dedicate their time and learning to the rebuilding of a social order, wherein righteousness shall reign. The cleansing of individual lives from acquisitiveness and fear will condition and make possible the reconstitution of the economic order.'

It is vital to see the truth in this statement. Such a conversion *would* bring with it an attempt (whether successful or not depending on the intelligence of the statesmen) to rebuild society. If it were possible, few would choose any other way, and it is just because it is not possible, that social and political problems (and the state itself) exist. The Groups' attitude here is the exact antithesis of that of doctrinaire communism. The latter believes that, once the world-economic order were changed, men would be perfect: the former, once individuals were changed, the system would be perfect. And so both busy themselves exclusively with the methods of

bringing the change about—the Marxian with methods of world revolution, the Grouper with methods of world revival—and meanwhile men starve and social injustice continues unchecked. To be honest, we must admit that there is even less chance of world revival than of world revolution, or at least that belief in the coming Millennium is no excuse for forgetting the needs of to-day. It does not excuse us from our social obligations to assert that we are working for world revival and therefore concentrating on conversion, though it often eases our conscience. The Grouper needs training not only in psychiatry, but also in elementary economics and politics. He needs to know not only the diseases of the Soul but of the State. Without a knowledge of the Means Test or the housing problem, how can he hope to help a single working man? Yet he is confident he knows everything necessary to realize the Millennium! It is the same defect that we mentioned above. If the convert is to take 'immediate action', let him do some social work, under the strict supervision of a non-Grouper, and forget about conversion for a time.

4. And this brings us to our final problem, a problem which takes up into it the three we have so far discussed. Mr. Allen distinguishes between the Group as an Ideal, and the actual Group, and it is with the former that we have so far dealt. But a few words must be said about the Groups as they are, their personnel and organization. It is difficult for someone outside the Movement to speak of this, but this much at least must be said, that the picture given by Mr. Allen of the leader of the Movement is one with which, even among those who are sympathetic,

there would be many who could not wholly agree. I understand that Dr. Buchman dislikes the name Buchmanism, but it is useful as indicating to what extent his business and organizing ability, and his personal magnetism have made the movement what it is. Without him it would probably soon cease to maintain its unity, and would certainly not have the money to spend that it now has. There are at least thirty whole-time workers living, and living comfortably, on contributions. It has been calculated that the last American tour must, on a conservative estimate, have cost more than £25,000. It is this money and Dr. Buchman's organizing powers which support these professional evangelists and the young men and women who are sent out on foreign tours, and their economic dependence on those in command cannot but influence their opinions and actions to a considerable extent. The publicity of splendid unearned living may be an inevitable adjunct of American revivalism—that its effects are not always approved of is indicated by the decision of the Princeton authorities which terminated Dr. Buchman's mission there—but in England its effect is unfortunate upon the Grouper no less than on his audience. The remark made by one young evangelist, 'I always wanted this kind of life: big hotels, comfort, powerful cars, and the best people—and as soon as I get changed, God gives them all to me!' is *not* mythical, and it is a warning. If the Oxford Groups could forget their place of origin, and become naturalized, it would increase their possibilities of useful work in England to an incalculable extent.

For it is their hope, and the hope of all their critics, that they will act as a leaven to the Churches,

that they will lose their distinctive character and work in and through the traditional organizations. But there is a grave danger that this will not happen. Through their writings and their talk runs a strain of exclusiveness, a certainty that they alone have the secret, and that any critic who really criticizes is not 'absolutely honest,' is criticizing only 'to put a smoke-screen over his own sin.' Mr. Allen, for instance,<sup>1</sup> cannot see how those who discern defects can, if they are honest, withhold co-operation. 'It is for us,' he says,<sup>2</sup> 'each to be loyal to his own vision . . . and *more than probably, those who are best able to aid us will be those who have already suffered their own lives to be changed*' (the italics are mine). This smacks of an arrogance which would seriously impede the good work of the Movement. The Truth is not the exclusive possession of any group or society, certainly not of Oxford or the Groups. And yet it can be asserted by a leader of the Oxford Group<sup>3</sup> that 'Future historians will judge whether or not Oxford played a great enough part in meeting the need of the world at this time, to justify the contemporary press in giving the name of Oxford to this movement of world revival.' Is it really the only part which Oxford can play in meeting the needs of the world to join the Groups *en masse*, or is it just possible that, outside the Groups, there is still something worth doing to be done? The chief accusation levelled against the critic of the Groups is spiritual pride,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Page 36.

<sup>2</sup>Page 32.

<sup>3</sup>Page 2.

<sup>4</sup>Borrowing from Psycho-analysis the notion of 'projection', the Group often consider criticism directed at them to be an unconscious attempt of the critic to avoid admitting his own sin. They seldom apply this doctrine to themselves.

but is exclusiveness so very different a sin? It will be a tragedy if a movement which has awakened in so many a real spirit of self-sacrifice, which has cured so much unhappiness and unfettered so much creative energy—if such a movement founders on the two rocks of exclusiveness and denial of reason.

The concluding essay of Professor Grensted will do much to alleviate these fears. Professor Grensted sees the Groups as one among many movements, admits its grave neglect of social problems, and is urgently aware of the dangers of mechanical guidance. There is as much difference between the two accounts of the Groups in this volume as between any two of the criticisms. If the Groups develop as Professor Grensted prophesies, there is great work for them to do and they stand a great chance of doing it. It is against the other side of the Movement, traces of which are to be found in the first essay, that many will feel it their duty to level some sharp criticism. The future of the Groups depends in fact upon the high command. It is earnestly to be hoped that Professor Grensted and his allies may not only play their part as ambassadors to foreign powers, but may gain the controlling voice on the general staff.

## GROUP UNITY AND THE SENSE OF SIN

BY DR. L. P. JACKS

**I**N the political philosophy which rose to the ascendant a generation ago the moral authority of society was highly exalted, even to the extent, in certain quarters, of almost deifying its embodiment, the State. Society, we were instructed, was 'the individual writ large,' a large paper edition, as it were, of the moral nature more obscurely printed in the small type of the individual conscience. Reading in the large type of that book was the readiest way to learn the principles of good citizenship and of the good life in general.

This philosophy, of which the roots go back to Plato, is by no means extinct. But the Great War, with which it was not unconnected, involved it in considerable discredit, and there was much apostasy from the faith. The War, as an illustration of State morality in action, seemed to suggest that the individual was a far more decent fellow when written 'small' in the characters proper to his individuality than when written 'large' in the characters of the State. From that time onwards we may observe a growing distrust of State morality and, indeed, of group morality in general. A widespread feeling arose in consequence that it is better, on the whole, to be at the mercy of an individual than at the mercy of a group, a feeling reflected in the rise of dictators.

The political and the religious movements of an age almost invariably spring from the same root and manifest identical tendencies. Accordingly it is not



surprising to find the authoritarian tendency in politics repeated or echoed in the current proclamation by the Group Movement of the Dictatorship of the Holy Spirit. On the face of it, the Group Movement would appear to be an attempt to reconcile, in the spiritual field, the two ideals of dictatorship and group life, of 'guidance' and 'sharing,' which is precisely what some exponents of Fascism have claimed for their own experiment.

It seems worth while to inquire into this synchronism. A preliminary glance at the political field will facilitate the inquiry.

## I

About two years ago there appeared in America a book which was making a considerable stir among religious people when I was last in that country. The title of it is *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, and the author is Professor Reinhold Niebuhr, of the Union Theological Seminary in New York. In this challenging but perhaps not unanswerable book the author argues, in a realistic vein, that morality, in the form of altruism or unselfishness, has but a limited range in the conduct of individual human beings, and becomes more limited as we pass from the individual to the group, until in the largest and most powerful groups altruism virtually disappears. It disappears, that is to say, in the relations of the group to other groups—disappears as a *group* virtue. The individual members of a group may still practise such altruism as they are capable of in their relations with their fellow members, but the collective action of the group in its dealings with other groups grows more and more selfish in proportion

as its power increases and its organization becomes more defined. The consequence is that, as members of a group, individuals are liable at any time to be involved in unmoral or immoral group actions to which, as individuals, they would never be parties, finding themselves, for example, under orders from the national group to kill Germans while their individual consciences sternly forbid them to kill anybody. War is indeed the outstanding instance of this deep-seated conflict between the less selfish morality of the individual and the more selfish morality of the group. All group relations *inter se* tend towards war of one kind or another, that is, towards the use of power (of which there are many kinds) as the only means of settling their differences.

This thesis, which, if it be true, would fall as a wet blanket on current international idealism, is mainly applied by Professor Niebuhr to the action of political and economic groups and illustrated by many examples from that quarter. He says next to nothing of its application to Churches and to religious groups in general. On the political and economic field it looks as though he had, at least, a presentable case. Taking the nation as the largest organized group now in existence, one can easily find in the record of any civilized government instances of what may be called internal unselfishness, like that of Great Britain, for example, in liberating the slaves or in putting the Dominions on a footing of political equality with itself. No small part of modern legislation, moreover, is directly aimed at curbing the selfishness of minor groups in the interest of the major group constituted by the nation as a whole. But all this, according to Professor Niebuhr,

is only one side of the process by which the major group seeks to put itself in a powerful position relative to the other major groups, i.e., foreign nations, who are doing the same thing and thereby threatening its present advantages. What this betokens is not the approach to universal brotherhood or altruism, but the emergence of larger and more powerful national units, fewer in number, perhaps, than those now in existence, whose mutual relations become progressively more selfish in proportion to the increase of their power, wealth, and size.

Where indeed can an instance be found of a great nation, British or other, definitely sacrificing some political or economic interest of its own for the good of a foreign nation or for the good of the nations as a whole? Or of a powerful economic group doing the same thing? Self-sacrifices of this type are not uncommon on the field of individual morals, but they become fewer as we pass from the individual to the group and disappear completely in the most powerful groups of all. 'No State,' writes the German author, Johannes Haller, 'has ever entered into a treaty for other reasons than self-interest. . . . A statesman who has any other motive would deserve to be hanged.' Nor are these sentiments confined to German authors. 'In every part of the world,' said Professor Edward Dicey, 'where British interests are at stake, I am in favour of advancing these interests, even at the cost of war. The only qualification I admit is that the country we desire to annex or take under our protection should be calculated to confer a tangible advantage on the British Empire.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Niebuhr, page 84.

To the international idealist utterances of this kind are, no doubt, shocking enough, the shock being due to the fact that group morality (or immorality) and individual morality have here met in a head-on collision. But the international idealist will judge the authors of these sayings unfairly if he thinks of them as more wicked than others who dwell in their Jerusalems. They have merely made themselves the mouthpiece for the time being of group instincts which are active in all ages and which, operating on the scale of international policy, render the nations, not only unwilling to act unselfishly in their relations one with another, but incapable of doing so. If we try to imagine some great nation, British or other, voluntarily surrendering an important part of its possessions on the ground that, while the sacrifice would demonstrably inflict damage on itself, it would demonstrably benefit the nations as a whole, we can hardly fail to see that such heroisms are out of the question in the world as we know it. Individuals are capable of these sacrifices, but nations are not.

When similar problems arise on the field of individual conduct, the conditions are altogether different. The individual, unlike the group, is not incapable of genuine self-sacrifice. One of the best things we can say about human nature is this: that whenever a situation occurs which can only be solved by an individual 'laying down his life for his friends,' some heroic person is certain to come forward sooner or later and offer himself as the victim—a Curtius to leap into the gulf, a Socrates to drink the hemlock, a Christ to get himself crucified on Calvary. In famines and

pestilence, in shipwrecks and mine disasters, these phenomena are constantly recurrent. But when did one ever hear of a group consenting to its own destruction that the other groups might remain undestroyed? Nothing can better illustrate the conflict of individual and group morality than the capacity of the one for self-sacrifice and the incapacity of the other. Of course, a group may be formed for the express purpose of cultivating self-sacrifice in its members. All ascetic communities have that basis. But that is a very different thing from the self-sacrifice *of the group*. Indeed, the two are incompatible. Is it not obvious that if the group is to cultivate self-sacrifice or any other virtue in its members, its own existence must never be brought into the field of self-sacrifice but preserved and strengthened by all the means available? Self-preservation is the law of group life. It never reaches the point, probably the supreme point of human virtue, when the cause for which it is willing to live is one for which it is equally willing to die—unless we admit the paradox that war is an exception.

## II

It is at this point that the fundamental danger besetting group life, and especially those forms of it which aim at moral or religious objects, comes full into the light. Dominated, as all groups are, by the necessity of maintaining their own existence, mostly in competition with other groups similarly motivated, the danger is that, in spite of their moral or religious aim, they may be driven by the force of circumstances to push their fortunes *as groups* by methods

which are neither moral nor religious, or at least by methods which belong to a much lower level of morality than that they set out to promote. The history of the Christian churches abounds with examples of this very thing. None of them can claim to be wholly free from the vice of institutional selfishness, the precise analogue psychologically to the political selfishness of nations, and attended by results which, if less bloody, are hardly less deplorable. Founded, as all of them may be said to be, for the purpose of saving men from their sins, their group policies have nevertheless been characterized in all ages by motives and qualities which would certainly be considered sinful if manifested by an individual. Or, if that statement be considered too strong, let us say more gently that in most of them<sup>1</sup> their task of promoting individual virtue and religion has been carried on in an atmosphere of corporate self-seeking and worldliness. When group ambition enters, religion withdraws. 'Fling away ambition . . . By that sin fell the angels.' Nothing has contributed so much to weakening the moral and religious power of religious movements. It was the basis of George Fox's crusade against 'the steeple-houses.'

Whether the Group Movement will be able to overcome this danger remains to be seen. If it does, a step forward will have been taken towards reconciling the conflict between individual and group morality which, more than anything else I can think of, is hindering the progress of mankind at the present day. If it does not, its history will mainly repeat the history, not always an inspiring one, of

<sup>1</sup>I think an exception might be made for the Society of Friends.

the many Group movements that have preceded it—and still go on.<sup>1</sup>

For there is no branch of the Christian Church which might not be very properly defined as a Group Movement in its origin, its policy and its fortunes. And the same is true of the Christian Church as a whole, which originated, in the admirable phrase of a recent writer, as 'a union of those who love for the sake of those who suffer.' What we observe in all these Group Movements is, first, the hunger for human friendship and sympathy, due to one or more of the innumerable forms of suffering and frustration that fall to the lot of man; second, the satisfaction of this hunger by bringing the sufferers together on a footing of fellowship which assures the sympathy they seek; third, a religious revival as the inevitable outcome of the love-bond thus established, and, lastly, a gradual decline to a lower level under the influence of the group ambition to win for itself a place in the sun. The new Group Movement seems to be reaching the third of these stages. Will it avoid the last?

### III

Some light may be thrown on this question by the literature of the Movement. If we may judge from the title and contents of the book *For Sinners Only* the Group Movement is, in essence, a new phase of the Christian attack upon sin, or, let us say, a revival in a less formal environment of traditional methods of attack. Whether the attack upon sin is the most likely way to achieve a revival of religion and to make it the dominant factor in human life, many are

<sup>1</sup>Compare Mr. Auden's treatment of the subject on pages 99 ff.

now inclined to doubt. It is certainly a point on which a difference of opinion is conceivable among thoughtful people. No reasonable person, indeed, would venture to criticize another for waging war on sinful tendencies, his own or other people's, or for seeking to ally himself with whatever power, divine or human, may help him to victory. At the same time it must be admitted that the avenues of approach to the spiritual life are many, and it may reasonably be doubted whether the warfare upon sin is the best line for group action in promoting religion. As we have seen above it is the nature of groups to contract peculiar sins of their own, especially when they become large and successful, with the result of considerably impairing their power of dealing with sin in individual lives. Moreover, it may be questioned whether any movement which addresses itself to human beings primarily in their character of sinners is likely to evoke that response from the *whole man* on which the continuance of his reformation depends.<sup>1</sup>

However that may be, there are religions other than the Christian—and the non-Christian religions, after all, have something to teach us—which adopt different methods. We read, for example, in Mr. Fielding's admirable book on Burma,<sup>2</sup> that when a man is known to be dying, and about to face the judgment of God, it is the custom in certain parts of that country for his friends to gather round him and remind him one by one of all the good deeds he has done in his life. No matter how great a rascal he has been, it is not that side of the poor man's record,

<sup>1</sup>For a different view, see Mr. Wand's essay, page 164

<sup>2</sup>*The Soul of a People*, page 318.



but the other (generally to be found with little trouble) to which these simple Buddhists recall his memory as the end draws near. This is probably the most humane method of dealing with sinners to be found anywhere in the world, and the exact opposite of the method practised in Christian countries. Unfortunately, we Christians have contracted a habit of regarding our sins as the most important and interesting facts about us, and we assume that God takes the same view of them. It follows that, when a man comes to die, our first thought is to induce him to confess his sins, than which a more ingenious method of making death horrible could hardly be conceived. Similarly, when we start a new religious movement, our sins are made the growing point of all the rest, and even when 'sharing' is chosen as one of our principles, it is the knowledge of our sins that must be shared before we think of sharing anything else.

I say the *knowledge* of our sins—not the sins themselves, nor the guilt of them, nor the punishment or other unpleasant consequences which follow them. Thus, a person who has led a dissolute life will tell the Group all about his vices, or as much as he deems necessary, but the injury to his health which has resulted from them remains his own—there is no question of sharing *that*, and cannot be.

But though the sharing extends only to the knowledge of our sins and stops short of their painful consequences, it must be a great relief to many persons to get rid of their guilty secrets in this way, especially when one's fellow members are known in advance to be friendly, warm-hearted and charitable people who can be safely trusted to be

tolerant and forgiving towards anything we choose to tell them, and who, when occasion arises, will repose the same confidence in us that we have reposed in them. It would clearly be extremely unwise, if not impossible, to share the knowledge of our sins with people known in advance to be hard and censorious, or treacherous and evil-tongued; and the difficulty would be almost as great if there was a danger that these tolerant and forgiving fellow-members of ours might, in a careless moment, pass on our self-revelations to scandalmongers waiting outside the doors or to the censorious world at large. I think the Groups are to be congratulated on having secured in their membership a type of personnel which can be reasonably trusted in these matters.

At the same time the situation is not without its difficulties. The cases of sharing to which the Groups are able to give publicity, in the records of the good work they are doing, are precisely those whose general character is too trivial to make a very deep impression on the reader. One looks in vain through these records for a self-revelation likely to damn the maker of it in the eyes of the world or get him into serious trouble—such as that of a bigamist to having two wives, of a poisoner to putting arsenic into his wife's tea, of a gangster to a bank robbery or the head of a foreign office to the lies that he has been telling for his country's good. The picture, for example, of Bismarck owning up at a House Party to his falsification of the Ems telegram, is one which the imagination has great difficulty in constructing. The leaders in the Groups are evidently conscious that such difficulties exist. "The question

of *just how much* to share' [italics mine], says Mr. Thornton-Duesbery in his pamphlet on *Sharing*, 'must be left to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.' The point of the remark is readily understood. It strengthens the impression gained from the literature alluded to above that the sins shared are, on the whole, those that can be safely shared, and that the Groups are not recruited from the worst class of sinners. But perhaps the Groups have 'secret archives' which, if they could be revealed, would prove this impression to be unjust.

## IV

Many persons, of whom I must admit that I am one, have a strong feeling, which is probably instinctive, that our sins, whether great or small, are not a proper subject for publicity, not even for the limited publicity involved in the disclosure of them to a group known to consist of the charitably disposed.<sup>1</sup> No doubt a case could be made out for construing this feeling as a form of cowardice, though I think it would be fairer to call it a sense of decency, due in part to consideration of the effect which the practice of such sharing would have on ourselves, but still more, perhaps, of its effect on the audience. There is something in many of us that shrinks from spiritual nudism—a name I have heard applied to the practice of the Groups—for much the same reason that we shrink from physical nudism, or from the romantic nudism—commonly called 'realism'—now so extensively cultivated by novelists and playwrights. It seems to us, moreover, that the reasons are obvious for wearing the seamy side of

<sup>1</sup>For a defence of this practice, see pages 195-8.

life next the skin, in spite of the irritation caused by the seams. Guilty self-knowledge is, no doubt, a painful possession. But may it not be that the pain, sometimes amounting to agony, of these corroding secrets is the just reward of our misdoing, which a truly repentant sinner should be more willing to suffer in solitude than eager to escape from in publicity? This feeling it is which has moved many sinners to declare that, if they confess their sins at all, they will confess them to God only, who created them naked and has known them in their nakedness all along.

Evidently the Roman Church takes the same view of the matter. It ordains confession as obligatory on its members, but it treats the matter of the confession as an inviolable secret, whispered in the ear of the priest sitting in his confessional as the representative of God. And Mr. Thornton-Duesbery, in his pamphlet on *Sharing*, shows himself not unaware of danger at this point, for he is careful to lay it down that the 'sharing' in the Groups is confidential, though apparently without restriction of the number or quality of the persons in whom confidence is reposed, beyond the fact that they are all members of the Group and believe themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. On these terms the guilty knowledge still remains a secret; but the secret of the Group to which it has been confided. I am far from suggesting that the members of the Group are likely to betray it. But is it fair to expose them to the temptation? And is it wise, in view of the possibility that some of those who are members of the Group to-day, and receive our confession in the strict confidence enjoined by Mr. Thornton-Duesbery,

may not be members of the Group a year, or ten years hence, and so no longer under the guidance it affords?

It will probably be agreed that when sharing the knowledge of our sins with other people, we ought to be careful in selecting the people with whom the knowledge is to be shared; careful also in selecting the sins to be revealed; and careful again in adapting the one selection to the other. What may be a fitting confession for elderly persons to hear may be highly unfitting for the hearing of the young; and, perhaps, *vice versa* might be added. Again, when a sinner has found the right company for receiving the confession that he has falsified his income-tax returns, it does not follow that his breaches of the Seventh Commandment can be safely confided to the same audience. In spite of the engaging frankness which has recently manifested itself in the conversation of the two sexes, there still remain a few topics which are better not discussed 'in the presence of ladies' and some others which might well be reserved for them alone. But in making these reservations it seems hardly necessary to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, one's common-sense being generally sufficient for the purpose.

I am informed on good authority that great discrimination is actually exercised. This, one can well believe, for it could hardly be otherwise in any company of self-respecting people. One would like to know, however, on what principles, if any, this discrimination, said to be 'great,' is based. Does it mean that certain types of sin are excluded altogether from the mixed assemblies, or that the graver instances of sin, in any variety, may be withheld at the

discretion of the person who has them to confess? And are there any arrangements for hearing, so to speak, *in camera* what is not revealed in public? Whatever the method may be, it is obvious that by introducing discrimination into the sharing a considerable difference is made to the significance of it. A partial and guarded sharing is one thing; a complete self-exposure is another. The partial or public type would certainly not go to the root of the matter in the case of a person with a heavy burden on his soul, and might be difficult, moreover, to reconcile with the standard of absolute honesty, honest enough as far as it went, but not *absolutely* honest. And might it not be that the holding back of darker secrets from the mixed assemblies would induce in the Group life a light-heartedness greater than the facts really warrant? On all these points more information seems desirable.

In the Roman Church these difficulties are overcome by official guarantees of the competence of the confessor; he is a man; he is of mature age; he has been highly trained for receiving confessions; he deals with them under an authoritative technique based upon vast experience; he is under a vow not to reveal them; he has attributes, as a priest, which place his *bona fides*, at least in the eyes of the believing penitent, beyond suspicion. These are imposing guarantees, but not more than the situation requires. In the Groups, if I understand the matter rightly, their place is taken by a general assumption that the individual sinner who makes his confession and the mixed audience which receives it are together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This, if accepted, would contribute a guarantee of competence in the

Group not less imposing than that of the Roman Church and, psychologically, at least, identical with it. But some may feel that this mode of meeting the difficulty is too summary, too sweeping, too violent, too dangerous. Instances are known of persons taking courses of action under what they believed to be the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with results which either prove their belief to have been mistaken or discredit the holiness of the actuating spirit. Such mistakes are, of course, inevitable on any terms, and it would be unfair to stress them against a movement which is known on the whole to be doing good. It is fair to mention them only when extravagant claims are put forward.

Extravagance, however, is not generally characteristic of the testimony borne by members of the Movement to the good it has done them—at least I have found very little of it in the testimonies that have come my way. There is no extravagance in the claim that a 'quiet hour,' spent in the hope and expectation of good impulse or disposition, will yield precisely what is hoped for and expected. There is no extravagance in the stories of people hitherto immersed in the imbecilities of a pleasure-seeking life, or in the vices of a dissolute one, and inclined accordingly to regard the virtues as dull and unattractive, suddenly realizing that a pure, unselfish and honest life in the genial company of the Group is vastly more to be desired than its opposite in the society of contemptible people and to the invariable accompaniment of mean tempers and irritating frictions. There is no extravagance in supposing that a solitary-minded person, spending his life in bondage to a round of small duties and

oppressed by the sense of their triviality, will experience an immense liberation, and seem to himself almost a new man, simply from breathing an atmosphere where joy abounds and the currents of sympathy are running strong. To create a human atmosphere where these wholesome discoveries are readily made is to do a great thing. The churches often fail to do it. But the Groups appear to be succeeding.

## v

The whole question of confessing our sins is beset with enormous difficulties, and I greatly doubt if anybody has yet been able to solve them. It is all very well to maintain, as anti-Romanists and opponents of the Groups so often do, that we ought to confess our sins to God and not to man. But if we assume, with most religious people, that God knows our sins already, and knows all about them, what remains for us to confess? All we can tell Him is that we know them too, though not as well as He does, and repent of having committed them. But even that will not be telling Him something He didn't know before and had to wait, until we told Him, to find out. How can we impart information about ourselves to the Searcher of Hearts? Like our first parents in Eden, we are all nudists before God, and it is as vain for us, as it was for them, to hide ourselves 'among the trees of the garden.' In confessing to God, it is true, we have the advantage of being sure of a competent Judge and of just judgment on what we have to confess, which we can never be sure of in confessing to man—a being more likely



to be in the condition, both individually and collectively (especially the latter) where a sound thrashing would do him good, than in a condition to hear the confessions of his fellows. But being sure of a just judgment at the hand of God is a very different thing from being sure that we shall be judged leniently, or let off. *Per contra*, we may be making a mistake equally serious if we construe the friendly way in which the Group receives our confidence, as a just appraisal of what we have to confess. Once again the only way of getting assurance on the matter is to assume that we, in making our confession, and the Group, in their manner of receiving it, are being guided together by the Holy Spirit. It is a dangerous assumption, but there seem to be some who have the courage to make it.

All these difficulties arise from the insistent habit of regarding our sins, and supposing that God regards them, as the most important and interesting facts about us. Important and interesting they may be, at least some of them, but the *most* important and the *most* interesting they certainly are not. And, as certainly, they are not the most edifying. I cannot but think that our difficulties in dealing with them would be greatly lightened, and the cause of virtue considerably promoted, if we could introduce into our moral consciousness a touch of the Buddhist quality alluded to above. It would rectify a false emphasis. What more, indeed, can a man say to God about his sins, his virtues, or himself in general, than this: *in tuas manus, Domine, meam animam commisi?* What more *need* he say? If more, it is likely to spring from spiritual egotism; if less, from spiritual blindness. And having said this to God, might we not be

well content to trust Him to guide or to leave us unguided, to punish us or to let us off, to be severe or lenient as He deems best—and then accept the consequence without further outcry. ‘Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?’

## GUIDANCE

BY THE REV. E. R. MICKLEM

**T**HE secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.—*The Psalmist.*

Καὶ γὰρ ὑμῖν λέγω, αἰτεῖτε, καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν· ζητεῖτε, καὶ εὐρήσετε· κρούετε, καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν.—*Jesus Christ according to St. Luke.*

\*Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν πᾶσαν.—*Jesus Christ according to St. John.*

\*Ὅσοι γὰρ Πνεύματι Θεοῦ ἄγονται, οὗτοι υἱοὶ εἰσὶν Θεοῦ.—*St. Paul.*

Optimus minister tuus est, qui non magis in-tuetur hoc a te audire quod ipse voluerit, sed potius hoc velle quod a te audierit.—*St. Augustine.*

He allows his own feelings and wishes to govern him, sometimes his reason, and sometimes his passion; he bows to custom, and to the opinions of his fellow-creatures; but of bowing to God, and being under law to Christ, he will not hear. He is holden by the chains of his own darkness, but he calls his darkness, light, and his chains, liberty. Behold, the melancholy picture, and take warning! For so it is with the creature, who, in the perverse-ness of his will, says of the Lord's Christ, 'I will not have this Man to reign over me,'—I will reign over myself.—*John Pulsford.*

## I

Christians have a curious belief that there is a God, whom they insist on designating as He rather than It. They speak to Him and they believe that He 'hears', and even that He 'answers', though, with the late Harvey Wickham, they would not, perhaps, have thought of mentioning Him were it not that they had been born, and they found themselves somewhat puzzled by that 'trifling fact'. They believe that their life has a meaning, a purpose, and that that purpose is to be found in His 'will', which He has not left them entirely without means of ascertaining. Indeed, they imagine that the doing of His will is their highest good.

This faith is not exclusively Christian. It was held even before the rise of Christianity, notably by the Jews. It was a conviction which dominated the life of a man named Jesus, dominated it so thoroughly that it shines not only through all his recorded teaching but through all his recorded acts.

Psychiatrists tell us—accompanying their statements with painful illustrations from life—that the more strongly a delusion obsesses a man, and the more it dominates his responses to his environment, the less capable does he become of maintaining himself in the 'real' world of human relationships, and the more imperative grows his need for a 'keeper'. Jesus does not conform to this picture. On the contrary, there is no figure in history who has impressed men as He has done with the power of restoring to 'reality' the deluded mind, of making whole the disintegrated personality. So true is this that even in the present age of enlightenment doctors, who themselves professed no belief in

God, have been known to set their neurotic patients reading of Jesus. Can it have been with the hope of healing a neurosis by the aid of a prince of neurotics?

We have not, of course, summed up the Christian faith. There is a distinction between Christian theology and Jewish theology, and the ground of it is the fact of this same Jesus, whom men called the Christ. But enough has been said to remind the reader that to be a Christian implies the belief that we are called to do the will of God and that if we sincerely seek the divine guidance we shall by the divine grace be led into the divine ways. It may also serve to remind the Christian reader that the adherents of the 'Groups' are doing true service to the Church in recalling her members to this their plain duty of seeking to find and to do God's holy will in their daily lives.

'Sober-minded people, attempting to use their native intelligence and other gifts to the best advantage, may think the claim to receive guidance from God not only silly, dangerous, and intellectually distasteful, but worse: blasphemous.' (Vide, a letter to *The Times* of September 27, 1933.) Perhaps; but let there be no mistake, a Christian by reason of his profession is committed to this 'folly' and 'blasphemy'. Moreover, he is bold enough to believe that the wisdom of the 'wise' is founded here upon false postulates.

## II

If we have been created to be rational and moral persons, then God's will for us must be relative to our capacity to recognize it, and thus discovering

His will must be for us an affair of growing insight. Waiting on the divine will we come to see that this particular situation demands such and such of us, and we act accordingly because this action represents what we must do if we are to be true to the stage of spiritual insight which we have attained.

It should be a first principle of any Christian theory of guidance that God wills us to act on our insight, for it is only as we stand on our own feet in moral freedom that we can attain to the personality which is His purpose for us. That is manifest in the teaching of Jesus and in His manner of dealing with men. God will not coerce; Jesus never coerced.

This principle leads to the conclusion that any theory implying that God has a fixed programme for us for the day involves a wrong conception of His providential ordering of life. His will is for the good of all His children. That good is increasingly achieved as they grow in understanding of the implications of the divine love and find their freedom in the open-eyed submission of themselves to the dictates of that love in all the occasions and relationships of daily life. But the really important thing is that they should be true to what they see, and that the sensitiveness of their vision should grow through faithfulness in act to the insight already achieved. God's will for a man at a particular time is thus not primarily that he should do a particular job which is as it were on God's 'standing orders' for the day, but that amidst the calls and opportunities which the given circumstances of the day bring, he shall seek to fulfil the divine purposes of love as he can discern them, and that by obedience

to the vision attained, even though it may be blurred and distorted, he shall proceed to an ever increasing clarity of insight.

This principle constitutes an objection to looking for what Dr. Bartlet calls 'just so' guidance (vide., a letter to *The Times* of September 28, 1933), i.e., dictation by God of specific acts which are to be performed.

### III

A wholehearted attempt to live your life on 'just so' guidance<sup>1</sup> should quickly reveal its unsatisfactoriness and, indeed, its absurdity.

It is unsatisfactory because in the last resort it implies a denial of God's providence overruling all life (a belief which one does not need to be a complete Determinist to hold); for it tacitly assumes a conception of God which is anthropomorphic in the worst sense, namely that which treats Him as an individual set over against His creation, so that it is not the circumstances of life which are the means of His communication with His children, but rather He can impose Himself on His creation only by finding a servant now here now there who is able and willing to carry out His behests in relation to certain specific occasions and events.

An illustration of how this may work out in practice will make the point more clear.

The successful corporate life of a college (or of any other community, for that matter) depends upon a co-operation of its members in its various activities which is at once willing and to be relied on. Whether it be the concerns of the Junior

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Professor Grensted, page 202.

Common Room, of clubs and societies within the college, or what not—the members whose community sense is such that their support can be confidently reckoned on are essential to the well-being of the common life. They are people who can make promises, and do make them, not necessarily explicitly, but at all events by the principled regularity of their lives.

But this is something which an out-and-out believer in 'just so' guidance does not feel able to do. He will not undertake beforehand to fulfil what the ordinary man would regard as the common obligations of membership in a particular society, because he cannot tell beforehand what God's 'orders' will be for him on a particular day when he waits for guidance during his early morning quiet time. He is in danger of forgetting that his whole life is, and always has been, in God's hands, and that the first place to look for God's will for him is in the context of the special place in the world which he occupies at the time and in and through the obligations which belong to one who occupies that special place. Thus while he remains a member of his college there are many plain duties belonging to his college life which are already 'given' and do not need to be sought in prayer and waiting upon God. In regard to them what he does need to seek is the divine illumination which will give him greater insight into the way a servant of Christ should carry out those duties. To deny this is really to deny God's overruling providence—faith in which must not be taken to imply that every event in life is the direct expression of God's will, but that there is no event in which He is not to be found and no set of



circumstances where He is powerless to give the victory.

It may be allowed (and presently we shall turn to this aspect of the question) that a man may sometimes be called of God to action which is inconsistent with the fulfilment of the duties which normally belong to the given setting of his life; but it is one thing to obey the call from Macedonia when it comes (especially if you happen to be on a missionary journey), and it is quite another, if you are a citizen of Troas, to refuse to serve on local Trojan committees, because as a Christian you must wait daily for instructions about where in the world you are to go.

To put the point in another way: The eternal God is not a general who has to plan his campaign as best he can with the limited forces available. There may be sense enough in speaking of the Church militant, but to think in terms of God militant is sadly to misconceive the Object of our worship, as though, having created the world, He had created powers which required all the support He could muster to keep them under control. But belief in 'just so' guidance implies such a theory, for it implies that God has 'just so' plans which either are or are not carried out, the desirability of which is independent of the insight of the instruments of His purpose. If you can achieve complete consecration, so the argument seems to run, then you will be able to learn exactly what God wants you to do. Either you do or you do not discover the appointed task. But who is sufficient for these things? And how does God make any headway in view of the well-nigh universal frustration of these assumed schemes of His?

No, it would be far truer to say that God's will for us is our consecration—the consecration which leads to deeper insight and carries with it obedience to what is seen. This insight may take the form of awareness of a particular something which we must do, and it is then guidance to particular action. That, doubtless, is the will of God for us as it bears on the special situation. But there is a whole world of difference between this will of God for us which is relative to our spiritual perception and a will of God which works 'according to plan' and which we may or may not succeed in apprehending.

It is our duty, in the quiet of meditation and prayer, to look for the definite, concrete activities which should follow from our vision, and the Groups are sound in urging that guidance may be, and should be, to specific actions. They fall into error, however, if they infer from this that there is always only a single series of specific acts which constitutes God's will for the individual in any given period of time, and that the individual's prime duty is to discover the series. His prime duty is nothing of the kind: it is to love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, and strength, and his neighbour as himself; and there may often be times when there are divers series of activities open to him all of which may be equally compatible with the fulfilment of this duty. Certainly he must act; but he may act in a variety of ways all of which are equally in accordance with the divine will.

That leads to a second important defect in a 'just so' theory of guidance. It may easily promote behaviour which, while religious in intention, is yet largely lacking in spiritual significance.

If we try to follow guidance which does not arise out of our own heightened awareness of the claims of God's love as they affect our relations to our environment, we are submitting ourselves to an authority of an essentially irreligious nature—an authority not of free insight, but to be blindly accepted. To look daily for intimations—subtle promptings—which indicate the tasks God has in mind for us, rather than to look for illumination on the way of grasping the multifarious and obvious opportunities of service which our ordinary daily life presents, is to attempt to live in a world of mechanical responses rather than of personal relationships.

This, perhaps, sounds an unfair statement. Are we not of our own will seeking the will of a personal God? And is not that to be in a world of personal relationships? Up to a point, yes; and yet only superficially, because a God who gives us specific instructions without awakening our insight into the inherent right of what is demanded is in that not treating us as persons but merely as suitable instruments. His relation to us there is essentially impersonal.

In the Groups it is the practice to seek guidance in fellowship, and the man who has looked for guidance in his solitary communion with God will, at least in important decisions, attempt to 'check'<sup>1</sup> what he thinks he has received by submitting his concern to the guidance-seeking fellowship.

The corporate sharing of Christian experience and the corporate seeking of God's holy will are thoroughly Christian enterprises, and the Groups

<sup>1</sup>For a different treatment of check guidance, see page 166.

are doing a service to the Church in calling Christians back to the duty and the privilege of genuine and intimate fellowship in the deepest things of the spirit. To its immeasurable impoverishment the Church has constantly been forgetting what the early Church meant by *fraternitas*.

It must, however, be said that to regard the Christian group as a more delicate instrument than the individual for receiving 'just so' guidance, and to employ it for that purpose, is to treat it as it ought not to be treated. All the objections to the search of the individual for such guidance apply to the search of the group, and, moreover, the individual by submitting to the results of group receptivity is divesting himself still further of his moral and spiritual responsibilities. Whereas, acting on his private 'just so' guidance, he was acting on an inner monition which came to him, whether rightly or misleadingly, with an accent of compulsion, now he is to act on the inner monition of others. Such a practice for a would-be moral personality is just about as bad as it could be. It would not be good even if he acted on the spiritual insight of the group if that insight had not kindled his own.

There should hardly be need to add that any practice of relegating questions of personal guidance on matters of great strategic importance to some upper or inner group of which one is not a member, because it is held to be of more authority (whether from degree of consecration or from whatever cause), should be repugnant to the Christian conscience. This is not said in the interests of a rank individualism. There is, of course, a proper authority of the Group to which adherents

will rightly bow; e.g., if the Group is undertaking some corporate enterprise in which the individual judges himself called of God to join, then he will properly submit himself to the directions of those who are accounted leaders.

It will be understood that the objection is to corporate '*just so*' guidance. That a man in desiring God's guidance should turn to the wider and richer experience of the Christian *fraternitas* is altogether fitting. He misunderstands the Christian religion if he refuses to do so. The Group Movement cannot urge this truth too strongly. But that fellowship can help him here only as it is able to awaken his own insight.

#### IV

We said that a wholehearted attempt to live one's life on '*just so*' guidance would prove not only unsatisfactory but absurd. The absurdity is revealed in the fact that you cannot logically draw a line anywhere between the things about which guidance ought to be sought and the things which are too trivial. If the whole of one's life is to be God-guided there cannot be anything too trivial.

Now if we mean by the call to live a wholly guided life that our Christian profession may and ought to colour all our choices, we mean something which is not to be gainsaid; but if we mean that God wills us to put on a particular tie in the morning or to consume a particular brand of marmalade at breakfast, we are attributing to God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, a pettiness which we should not dream of attributing to our human parents; and, furthermore, if we attempt to

carry out the implications of this faith in all departments of life, we shall be taking a short way to qualifying for residence in an asylum.

Let this not be misunderstood, however. The point is not that God is so great that He will concern Himself only with large issues. On the contrary, we may say with St. Augustine: *ex te quippe bona omnia deus*,—even (so we may paraphrase the context) marmalade and the desire for marmalade—*et ex deo meo salus mihi universa*. (Conf. i, 6). Nor is it that trivial things are always of trivial significance to the individual concerned. Little things are often symptoms of grievous disturbances of the soul. No, the point is that the belief that we should seek 'just so' guidance in all departments of life implies that God may be presumed always to have a definite will about what tie we should wear or what marmalade we should eat. If He has, it is our business to find out what that is. The enterprise starts by being hopeless; and to fancy it should be undertaken means the framing of a conception of a God who in littleness of mind would exceed the least imaginative human being.

To think of God as having a prevenient will, concrete in its particularity, regarding all our choices, and to suppose, as we then must, that it is our duty to discover what that will may be, is to conceive an appalling nightmare. This, no doubt, will be generally conceded. But it is of urgent importance that those who seek, and rightly seek, to live a guided life should realize that they are driven to this position if they believe it is their duty to look to God primarily for specific direction, and not rather for enlightenment in respect of life's oppor-

tunities and for clearer vision of what it means to co-operate with His purposes of love as they bear on these opportunities. Such illumination will, no doubt, often in effect lead the sincere guidance-seeking Christian to see that he must do this or that particular thing, and he will say, and say quite justly, that God has guided him to do it. In obeying he is doing the will of God; but—and this is the vital distinction—the will of God for him is not primarily that he should do this particular thing, but that he should be such a man as to see that this particular thing requires to be done by him, and seeing should obey.

This principle should be determinative of the right methods of seeking divine guidance.

## V

The foregoing arguments will be objected to not only by many members of the Groups but also by some other faithful Christians on the ground that they are vitiated by the plain fact of 'just so' guidance.

Probably most Christians who have sought to live their lives faithfully as servants of Jesus Christ have had experiences, if not so startling and vivid, at all events similar in kind to that of St. Paul when he had the vision and audition of the man from Macedonia crying to him to 'come over and help us'. They have obeyed the call, not because it seemed reasonable—sometimes it has seemed completely irrational—but because it has had a compulsive quality about it, and, though they could not have told why, they have somehow felt it to be of God.

Moreover, events subsequent upon their blind obedience have confirmed them in their assurance that it was certainly of God. The sceptic may argue as he will, but they know that here was the guiding hand of God, and that for them to entertain a doubt of it would be to play with the integrity of their souls.

For brevity of discussion let us call such experiences 'Macedonian' experiences (with a warning to the theologian to dissociate the phrase from a certain heresy).

Are these Macedonian experiences God speaking? Is obedience to them an obedience to the will of God? Those whose experiences they have been will answer both these questions affirmatively. And most fellow-Christians listening to their accounts will agree.

Was St. Paul called of God to cross over to Macedonia? Yes, surely of God. But to say this is not necessarily to think of God as (we put it crudely) seeing the situation at Philippi and saying to Himself, 'I must get into touch with my servant Paul and tell him to go there'.

It would be presumptuous to pretend to explain all that is involved in an experience of this kind. We are in the presence of that mysterious spiritual world touched most often by those quiet souls who could speak if they would of the wonders of intercessory prayer. But let us put the issue this way.

When a Christian sees a human being in the sorry condition of the man who had fallen among thieves on the road to Jericho, he is called of God to go and relieve the sufferer. The man's need cries out, It is according to God's purposes of love that



he should receive succour; it is according to God's purposes of love that the helper should be a 'godly' man who responds to the human need which meets him. God speaks to the helper through the victim of robbers. Because this helper is a godfearing man, grown in grace through seeking to work the works of God, he does not pass by on the other side like the priest or the Levite, but he accepts God's call, which is embodied in the victim's plight.

Now it seems that in God's gracious ordering of things a person who is isolated from his fellows topographically is not thereby entirely cut off from communication with other persons. We cannot pretend that we understand the mode of this communication. All we can say is that, now and again at least, it manifestly takes place.

Suppose our good Samaritan had started out from Jerusalem in order to go not to Jericho but to Samaria, and that he had then been moved by a strong but unaccountable impulse to change his course and take the road to Jericho, and that it was after obeying this impulse that he came across the man in trouble, he would say, and we should probably say too, that he had been guided by God. Yes, but we are not bound to infer that the guidance was more directly the act of God than it would have been if he had been travelling to Jericho in the ordinary course of business. If it was, and if God Himself issues such 'just so' instructions, one would have thought that it would have been more consonant with His will of love if He had directed the good Samaritan to the Jericho road a little earlier and in time to help ward off the thieves.

In these Macedonian events there usually seem to

be on the one hand a person or persons in need, and on the other a person or persons qualified to bring relief, and incomprehensibly sensitive to the appeal of that need, so that they act upon a blind compulsion, but appropriately. They are moved by an urge which will not give them rest until it is obeyed. We may surely say this is of God, a part of His gracious ordering of life, for through faithfulness with their experience they are enabled to serve the interests of His Kingdom and are blessed by an increasing knowledge of His ways.

Through such experiences, then, God's will may be done. But it is a mistake to regard them as characteristic of His method of speaking to His children. They are not more direct communication with Him than is to be had through the more ordinary events of the day. Indeed, in them God speaks much less clearly than through the comprehensible circumstances of ordinary life, because they cannot be recognized as of Him until by acting upon the impulse the Christian is brought to discover the opportunity of service which has been opened up to him. He acts because he must (and there is no virtue in that), and it is only when he discovers the man lying by the roadside that he realizes for certain that God was in this thing, though he knew it not. And it must be remembered that there are irrational compulsions which, when acted upon, do not lead to special opportunities of service. The vision, audition, or monition of whatever sort is not self-authenticating as the word of God.

Consequently we are in error if we assume that the guided life is the life full of Macedonian experiences. They may or may not come. There is

nothing exceptionally God-given about them when they do come. If we look for them as the means of ordering our daily lives we are seeking to live not as men but as infants, whose obedience is uncomprehending.

God's guidance for His grown children is a Word which is a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path, and not a dragging blindfold hither and thither. For us practically there is all the difference here between the consulting of familiar spirits and looking into the face of Jesus Christ.

## VI

There is one aspect of divine guidance which does not fall under the heads already discussed, but which must not be left out of account. It is a mystery, and a blessed mystery.

Someone comes to you for help, and you do not know what is the right word to say. You speak because you must say something, but you seem to yourself to be speaking foolish things, or at any rate largely irrelevant things. Afterwards you discover that in the course of conversation you said just the needed word, although you were entirely unaware that you were saying it, and you lift up your heart and give God the glory. This happens in individual work; it happens also, *mutatis mutandis*, to the preacher.

How are we to receive this guidance? It is not a monition, it is not insight. We cannot answer except to say that the conditions of it seem to be a recollected mind, a looking towards Christ, and a genuine unselfregarding care for His children.

## VII

Faith in divine guidance raises profound theological and philosophical questions. Neither sage nor saint, let alone the writer of this essay, would pretend to fathom all the mysteries of it; yet the experience of the Church shows that it may be of serious moment what form our faith in it takes, and therein must be the justification of this brief attempt to draw out some of the implications of our common Christian belief that the aim of the Christian man should be, in the words once more of St. Augustine, *magis magisque vivere apud fontem vitae, et in lumine eius videre lumen et perfici et inlustrari et beari.*

## THE GROUPS AND THE CHURCHES

BY THE REV. J. W. C. WAND

'SIR, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing.' This was the heavy rebuke administered by Bishop Butler to John Wesley in a personal interview, and it may be taken as typical of the way in which 'religions of authority' habitually react against 'religions of the spirit.' The Groups, as a matter of fact, have been singularly fortunate in this respect; they have had to put up with very little concerted opposition on the part of authority. Not so long ago they might have met with a very different fate. In the days of the Evangelical Revival, the University could drive Methodist students out of S. Edmund Hall, and in Tractarian times it deprived Ward of his degrees, suspended Pusey from preaching, and did its best to condemn Newman. Nowadays, however, we are told that Oxford is no longer a Christian university, and indifference has the solitary advantage that it is generally found consonant with toleration.

But if the University is no longer representative of authoritarian religion, it is certain that all the 'Churches' are in some degree. They represent Christianity organized under the threefold authority of creed, discipline, and ministry. Most, if not all, of them have their rites of initiation and membership, they have their officials and governing bodies, they have their elaborate systems of organization

and finance. This may not seem to be very spiritual nor to have much to do with essential Christianity. But in point of fact it is inevitable, and it is all bound up with the deepest spirituality—so deep, in fact, that it is sometimes lost to sight. Christianity is a religion for the whole man, body as well as soul; the inner life of the spirit must be expressed in the outward life of men; and corporate religion must mean organized religion. There is not one of these churches that does not believe itself to be in some sense the official and accredited representative of its Divine Head.

In the midst of these bodies there has appeared a new portent, a portent apparently so new that it has had the greatest difficulty in finding itself a name. It is not a body; it claims to have no organization; it has no ministry, no rites or ceremonies, no discipline, no authority; and yet it claims to be in a very special sense a confidant of the Christ whom the Churches represent. We cannot marvel if, on the part of the Churches, there is some hesitancy and suspicion. The efforts to understand the new phenomenon have been almost pathetic in their eagerness and anxiety. Is this friend or foe, original Christianity or a parvenu, an eagle teaching fledgelings the flight to God or a mere cuckoo in the nest?

Not to mix our metaphors any further, let us say at once that essentially the Groups are a more or less fortuitous collection of people who meet together to share their religious experiences and so increase their own zeal and arouse it in others. They have drawn into their circle members of all the churches from Quakers to Roman Catholics, and many who belong to no Church at all. But this

very fact demands that their relation to the various Christian bodies should be made clear. So far no Church has officially condemned them, and none has officially opened its arms to them. There is thus still time to consider the position in principle and in detail. It would be a happy thing if such consideration should enable us to avoid the clash of interests that many fear and some regard as inevitable. No good Christian could possibly wish to see repeated the unfortunate antagonism between Butler and Wesley.

## I

History, of course, teaches nothing: nevertheless, we can teach ourselves a good deal if we take heed of its warnings and examples. The Christian era is strewn with instances of conflict between zeal and authority. Sometimes a split was inevitable in the nature of the case, but more often it has been produced by sheer unreasonableness on the one side or the other. New wine and old bottles have proverbial difficulty in adapting themselves to each other.

The first noteworthy example of this discord occurred as early as the second century, when, under the leadership of Montanus, illuminism made its first great attack upon institutionalism. Here indeed was a claim to extraordinary gifts and graces of the Spirit. The ordered life and discipline of the Church seemed very poor and thin in contrast with the excitement of the 'prophets.' The virtues of ordinary Christians were commonplace in comparison with the heroic fortitude of those who were so possessed. Very soon it was claimed that there was

now being given to a privileged few a revelation that ought rightly to supersede even that given in the gospels. What did it matter that Christ had spoken a hundred and more years ago in Palestine, if His spirit was now speaking once again in men's hearts? It was the present message that was really important.

For churchmen who themselves believed in the presence and power of the Spirit, this was not an easy situation to meet. But they did wrestle with it, and out of the clash of opinion certain fundamental principles were made clear. Thus it was obvious that the Spirit could not stultify Himself. What He said long ago could not be opposed to what He was likely to say now. Therefore, if the utterances of the Montanists contradicted the recorded teaching of Christ, they could be no true revelation of the Spirit. It was, indeed, possible that they who believed themselves the passive instruments of the Spirit were in fact giving utterance to their own diseased imagination. In any case, they invited suspicion by being unable or unwilling to submit their utterances to the process of ratiocination. And thus Miltiades wrote to proclaim that 'a prophet ought not to speak in ecstasy.' This is epoch-making. It sets a ban on anything like automatism in divine guidance; it asserts the value even in religion of commonsense; and it acclaims the right of the Christian society to test the *bona fides* of any member who claims to impose upon it any new rule or doctrine as if it came from God.

We need not stay now to point out possible parallels between this situation in the ancient Church and that which faces us to-day: such may



become clear in the sequel. We pass on to consider another historical phenomenon, which is even more interesting from the point of view of our discussion. This is the case of the Moravians, the meagre remnant of a heroic and persecuted church, whom Count Zinzendorff received and housed on his estate at Herrnhut. It is well known that in thus affording them protection the Count had not the least intention of perpetuating or forming a sect. He not only fought to win them a place in his national Church, but inaugurated a plan by which they might become a means of infusing some of their own zeal and spirituality into Churches that were conspicuously lacking in both. Not all adherents of the Moravian body were retained at Herrnhut, little groups of them were stationed in widely scattered towns, where they set themselves to the task of quickening into new life the moribund religion of their neighbours. This 'Diaspora' was intended to act as a kind of leaven, which, it was hoped, would one day permeate the whole of the contemporary Churches.

It was a noble ideal, but in the long run it proved impracticable. The Moravians at first encouraged those whom they influenced to remain, or to become, faithful members of the Churches of their original allegiance. But that meant that their own numbers could never be increased. Soon a proud and noble society, which had behind it a great history and possessed a roll of martyrs that has seldom been excelled, found itself slowly dying of inanition. Such a fate could not be endured, and after much struggle Zinzendorff found himself compelled to acquiesce in the permanence of the Moravian

Church as a distinct society. To-day although the Diaspora lingers on here and there, the *Unitas Fratrum* is universally recognized as a separate denomination.

These two examples illustrate the dangers that beset a new method of belief and a new method of ecclesiastical organization, when they come in contact with the authority of the Church. If they seem to conflict with established order in creed or ministry, it is certain that they will be looked upon with suspicion, if not worse. The two instances given are all the more instructive in that neither was an extreme example of heresy or schism. Montanism taught no new doctrine, the Moravians desired no new form of Church government. Yet both were led to strive to perpetuate themselves in a distinct and separate body. Where this happens it must, as a matter of course, involve also a conflict with the third organ of ecclesiastical authority, namely discipline. It must always be the aim of discipline to keep its members on the right road, without depriving them of the proper exercise of freedom. Discipline must therefore be flexible without being lax. It is the part of ecclesiastical statesmanship to know how far to give the rein to new ideas and experiments, and when to call a halt. It will always try to retain what is consonant with the character and purpose of the Great Church and to restrain whatever seems to be running contrary to that purpose. Two illustrations leap at once to the mind.

Monasticism was in its origin a lay movement. It represented a revolt against the growing worldliness of the Church in the fourth century. It was not,

as some ridiculously affirm, a sign of cowardice: it was a token of considerable courage. Now that the Church had conquered the Empire and there was no more persecution, it seemed that the post of greatest danger for any Christian was out in the deserts where lay the special strongholds of the demon hosts. Ascetics who left the haunts of men went to wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual foes who were far more terrifying. For success in such a struggle there was needed all the austerity of which the very greatest athletes were capable. But this very need placed a premium upon individualism, and the consequent independence of hermits and coenobites was for long a sore trial to the episcopate. It was only through much effort that the bishops succeeded in placing themselves at the head of this particular movement. In some cases indeed, as in Ireland, it may be said that for a time monasticism overcame the bishops; and later in the Roman Church the Papacy had to take over a control that the episcopate was powerless to enforce. But, in any case, the ecclesiastical organization did succeed in forming within itself a channel along which this fervent piety could flow. It would have been a first-rate calamity in the history both of religion and civilization if monasticism had split off from the Church.

It is a thousand pities that the wisdom displayed by the ancient Church in its treatment of the monastic movement was not shown by the Anglican Church in its attitude towards John Wesley and his followers. It is well known that Methodism started as a kind of High Church pietism within the boundaries of Anglicanism, and it has often been

pointed out that the Wesleyan ethos is much closer to the essential character of the Church of England than some other elements that she has succeeded in retaining within her ranks. No doubt John Wesley's association with the Moravians made a great difference to his outlook and method, but it was largely the eighteenth-century intolerance of 'enthusiasm' that was responsible for the attitude of authority towards his work, and his own presumption in taking upon himself the right to ordain completed the severance (in spirit if not in fact) from that type of organized Christianity within which his movement had begun.

These then are the historical parallels that seem most valuable for our purpose in considering the relations of the Groups with the Churches. But before going on to the discussion of those relations, it may be worth while to point out why we have not mentioned one instance that is often adduced as a possible parallel. The Student Christian Movement<sup>1</sup> seems to us to be ruled out by the fact that it is not primarily a new evangel, but an organization for study. Its only condition for membership is 'the desire to understand the Christian Faith and to live the Christian life.' This emphasis on 'understanding' inevitably gives its work an intellectual character, and its activities are seen at their best in the 'study groups' that are so conspicuous a feature of its programme. It is careful to recognize the existence of the Churches and scrupulously avoids taking any step which would compromise its members with the respective organizations from which they are drawn. The Groups, on the other hand, aim definitely

<sup>1</sup>Compare Professor Grensted's view on page 206.

at conversion, and in order to preserve the results of conversion they are impelled to frame a common religious rule by which they encourage their members to live. In other words, they are definitely aiming to do better what the Churches have always done. The question is whether they can continue to do this without arousing any legitimate distrust on the part of the Churches, and without becoming themselves a new 'Church.'

## II

That many possible causes of friction may arise is only too obvious. If we enumerate some of them here, it is not out of any carping spirit of criticism, but in the knowledge that dangers foreseen may in many cases be avoided. It is important that we should distinguish between those difficulties that are naturally inherent in the situation and those that arise from individual indiscretion. In dealing with any religious movement one has to separate what is essential from what is accidental. Every movement has its wild men, and it is not fair to attribute to the leaders the mistakes and follies of their followers. Nevertheless, the accidental may be both important and annoying, and it cannot be altogether omitted from a consideration like the present. However, we will begin with those possible causes of friction that may arise out of the natural, if not inevitable, development of the Groups, and then, perhaps, what we have to say about private idiosyncrasies may drop into its proper relative unimportance.

One of the complaints that are most commonly brought against the Groups is that they care nothing

for history or theology, and many attempts have been made, by those engaged in an investigation of their claims and methods, to induce them to state the doctrinal background of their system; when the attempts have proved unavailing the failure is regarded as a grievance. It is always possible that the leaders may yield to this pressure so far as to give some kind of rationale of their practice. But it cannot be too strongly affirmed that the moment they do so they will be in grave danger of coming into conflict with Church authority on its doctrinal side. This, of course, is not to say that there can be no dogma at all behind the work of the Groups. It is sufficiently obvious that the members believe in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and in salvation. These beliefs are held, indeed, in a singularly rich, vivid, and realistic manner. But there has been so far no attempt at an intellectual formulation of them. Consequently there has been no antagonism on such ground from any of the recognized Christian bodies, for such beliefs are held in some sense by all Christians. But let one step further be taken, and there will certainly be opposition from some quarter. A significant incident has already made this clear. The Groups as such recognize at the moment no distinction between the various denominations into which Christendom is divided; they know neither Papist nor Protestant, Catholic nor schismatic. All alike are invited to contribute their experiences to be shared by the members as a whole. Yet, in a recent meeting during the London campaign, when certain Anglicans had reason to refer to the benefit they had received from sacramental confession, an outcry immediately arose

among some visitors (not members) that 'this was a Protestant movement.' It seems clear that so long as it is desired that Christians of every type shall retain membership of the Groups, the leaders will be well advised to avoid any official statement that can be interpreted as touching upon any of the matters upon which Christians differ.

This brings us naturally to a subject which is of the greatest importance in dealing with the Groups, namely, their attitude to sin and recovery. To the present writer it seems a very grave mistake to say that the members are too much preoccupied with the question of sin. One is not concerned now, of course, with their fondness for talking over past sins in their meetings—that has been dealt with faithfully enough in other essays in this book—but only with their belief that sin is mainly responsible for frustrated lives and unrealized ideals. A horror of sin the Groups share with every other representative of Christianity. Yet Christianity has never been preoccupied with sin. One might just as well complain of a doctor that he is preoccupied with disease, when the real care of all medicine, whether curative or preventive, is the restoration and maintenance of health. Christianity is, and always has been, a religion of salvation, and it has to take note of sin because that is, quite obviously, the great obstacle to salvation. On the ground of this fundamental belief there can be no opposition between the Groups and the Churches.

Where conflict may possibly occur is in the method of dealing with the sinner. The historic Church has built up, by slow and painful degrees, a method of character-formation through the private

training of the penitent. The 'sharing' of the Groups represents in some respects a throw-back to the primitive practice of public confession which is now only observed in some parts of the mission-field. It is doubtful how far it can be adapted to the more sophisticated conditions of modern western society. Certainly, if the age-long experience of the Church counts for anything, it cannot be entirely satisfactory alone. For the training of the penitent, a more private method is necessary. In the various Groups it can never be guaranteed that there is wise and expert direction for those who need it. From one's own experience of Group meetings, one would venture to doubt whether such problems as those of scrupulosity and recidivism are always adequately realized, much less clearly faced. Here then, there is a very real difficulty. The clergy could not possibly countenance any mishandling of their penitents, nor can they lightly dispense themselves from their own responsibilities in such a matter. Fortunately there are some among the Group leaders who are fully competent to deal with cases that call for spiritual direction. A sympathetic attitude on the part of the clergy and a readiness to lend their services, if called upon to do so, would, no doubt, be a valuable reinforcement, and might solve the difficulty altogether. Certainly, where that has been forthcoming up to the present time, the tendency has been for members of the Groups to be directed towards the confessional rather than to be deflected from it. As long as this continues there is not likely to arise the kind of controversy that disturbed the relations between the parish priests and the friars in the thirteenth century.



It goes without saying that the warning we have ventured to utter would apply with equal force to any attempt to set up 'guidance' as of equal authority with churchly discipline. We are not thinking here of such guidance as the individual may believe himself to receive direct from the Holy Spirit. The tension between the individual and the community is one that is felt to some degree in every Christian Church, and not only in the Church, but also in every type of secular society; it is a difficulty inherent in the natural constitution of humanity that we can therefore leave on one side. We are thinking rather of the system of 'group' or 'check' guidance which appears to have grown up recently. It arose, no doubt, partly out of the desire of the individual to have his experience in prayer confirmed or checked by that of the Group as a whole. Partly also it may have served to restrain the eccentricities of some individuals who were in danger of confusing their own disordered imaginations with the leading of the Spirit. There can be little doubt that in such cases the submission of what one may believe to have been one's own guidance to the guidance of the Group will have very salutary results. But there is a danger. If the system is extended so far as to put the guidance of the group on the same level of authority as that of the Church, or, worse still, if at any time the guidance of the Group should appear to supersede the standard of faith or morals already established in the Churches, issue would inevitably be joined on that matter. The historical parallel of Montanism may here be studied with particular profit. We would venture to suggest that just as the guidance of the individual should, in

some cases, be submitted to that of the Group, so that of the Group may well be submitted to that of the Church. There need be no hesitation about this if we believe that the Holy Spirit has been active in the Church of the ages. After all, it was to a very representative and authoritative body that the Antiochene community submitted its own guidance on a famous occasion, and it was the former that first dared to say, 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.'

Such then seem to be the chief respects in which danger of a clash with the threefold authority of the Church may arise from the nature of the Groups themselves. We must turn for a moment to dangers that are accidental and arise from the idiosyncrasies of individuals. Foremost among these we place an assumption of superiority amounting in some instances almost to exclusivism. Certainly the Groups have no monopoly in the unlovely vice of spiritual pride, and their members might well retort upon certain members of the Churches with the same protest. Nevertheless, it has sometimes happened that Christians who stand outside the Groups have been given to understand that, unless they become members of the Groups, they cannot be in any real sense Christians at all. This is certainly contrary to the belief of the leaders, who are quite ready to see that the experiences of others may be as genuine as their own. But they suffer from the indiscretions of their followers, and it will be necessary for them to infuse their own humble and charitable spirit into the Groups, as a whole, before they lose the unpopularity that has fallen to their lot in some quarters.

A more mundane and, perhaps, more easily remediable difficulty is that which arises from the clashing of times for the holding of services and meetings. No doubt ideally every minister of the gospel ought to be willing to yield pride of place to another, and to care nothing for his private success so long as by any means Christ is preached. But if he believes that he is the agent of a divinely authenticated organization, it is sometimes hard to see without protest his faithful congregation drawn off at the very time of his own ministrations, to the meetings of a new and momentarily more popular movement. In Oxford itself the Groups have generally acted with circumspection in this matter; but the hours, particularly on a Sunday, when undergraduates can be collected together in large numbers, are few, and some overlapping is almost inevitable. In the provinces, however, there is not the same congestion, and it may be hoped that as far as possible Group meetings will be made to fit in with parochial arrangements and not run counter to them.

There is an especial reason for this caution. One of the religious needs which the Groups do not and cannot supply is that of worship, that is to say, worship in that full sense in which it has been observed and practised in the historic Church throughout the ages. Such worship is essential for the complete spiritual life and no Christian should be withdrawn from it. It is best for the individual to practise it in and with the assembled congregation of his own Church, and it will be a very happy thing if the Groups can persuade all their members to participate in this most healthful and necessary activity of the spirit. 'Neglect not the assembling

of yourselves together,' or 'neglect not your own assembly,' was certainly intended to apply to congregational worship. Whichever way we interpret the command it is one that we must all obey.

### III

It is a relief to turn from these criticisms to point out how far the Groups have already found it possible to work in complete harmony with ecclesiastical authority and organization. What they have done is to lay a new and fresh emphasis upon certain basic truths of the Christian religion, which had become dim through long familiarity, in the minds of many who professed them as a matter of course. They have conferred a great boon upon us all by thus 'restoring commonplace truth to its first uncommon lustre.' It is not too much to say that under their influence the gospel has begun to live again for many to whom it had ceased to have any practical importance, and that God has become again a reality to many for whom, as to the American deacon, He had ceased to be much more than 'a vague oblong blur.' However one looks at it, there can be few more thrilling experiences than to feel that one is in direct communication with the Ruler of the Universe, and is guided immediately by Him in every detail of daily life. And there are probably few of us who would not be benefited by such an experience.

The result of this intense vivification of essential Christian truth has been threefold. In the first place it has made some Christians into better Christians, and has turned some members of the Churches into

more fervent members. In this respect the Groups have done exactly what the Moravian Diaspora was designed to do, and if the dangers outlined above are avoided, there seems no reason why they should not continue to do it with a success that was denied to the Moravians. It must be admitted that in Oxford there are two opinions about this. Some chaplains complain that Groupers have declared their dissatisfaction with the services of the college chapel, and have ceased to attend them. The more general experience is that members of the Group have tended to make more rather than less use of the chapels. This would certainly be the wish of their leaders, and when Groupers, as a whole, have realized that the college services are intended to meet not only their own needs but also the needs of people with a religious background far different from theirs, they will learn to give the chaplains all the assistance in their power.

A more disquieting result of the intense emphasis upon the possibility of divine guidance has been to repel many, some even to the point of inducing them to abandon the very profession of Christianity. It is so unlike anything that such men have ever really believed or practised that, once they are convinced that it is consonant with essential Christianity, they have felt bound to dissociate themselves from such a religion altogether. Long ago in somewhat similar circumstances, Clement of Alexandria said that a faith so easily lost is better lost, and our Lord Himself warned us that He came not to send peace but a sword. Every religious movement brings with it a judgment between a dead faith and a living faith. Yet the value of religious faith, even

when weakly held, is so great that it is to be hoped that members of the Group will never lightly offend those who cannot see eye to eye with them. It should at least be one of their main concerns not to extinguish the smoking flax.

The third and most important result of their presentation of the Gospel message has been a work of evangelization for which we must express our unstinted admiration and gratitude. Self-propagation is one of the prime duties laid upon the Church, but the more entrenched our position and the more stereotyped our services, the more difficult is that duty to fulfil. The liturgies of the various representatives of historic Christendom have an exquisite beauty for those who understand them, but such understanding demands long custom or expert knowledge. The Groups with their simple witness of what Christ has done for them appeal not only to the ignorant and unlearned but also to many for whom conventional Christianity has no meaning. The benefit to society at large has been inestimable. Ineffective lives have been filled with new power and wastrels have been turned into valuable members of the community. The Groups have thus done work for Christianity which the organized Churches have in large measure failed to do. But the Groups will not be satisfied merely to retain their converts. They recognize all that the Churches, with their worship and sacraments and carefully developed means for the spiritual training of character, can do for the perfection of those whom they have won to the love of Christ, and they will encourage them to seek and use that help. Thus the Groups are in effect the benefactors of the Churches

and the Churches are likely to become the residuary legatees of all that the Groups distinctively do. Or, perhaps, we should rather say that where both work together in sympathy and mutual understanding, they will assist each other in furthering the cause of the Kingdom of God.

## THE GROUPS AND THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP

BY THE REV. M. C. D'ARCY, S.J.

THE Group Movement professes to be undenominational, and therefore, to be free to assist without prejudice all, no matter to what Christian body they belong or should belong. In making this claim the Groups limit their pretensions and at the same time enlarge the scope of their work; for it would seem that they hope for recognition from all the Churches as an auxiliary force, and are confident that they can vitalize all with whom they came into contact and return them to their church or chapel charged with a new power and also with a new fidelity. An ideal such as this appears disinterested and deserves respect. If, then, I begin this essay with a criticism of their intentions it must be understood that it is not the sincerity of the intentions which is questioned, but the truth.

This criticism is one which will naturally leap to the mind of any Catholic. So long as the Groups could be thought of as a devoted band of men and women outside the Catholic Church, united in the high purpose of vivifying religion where it had decayed, the Catholic could look upon them with mixed indifference and benevolence. Revivalist movements—and this is not meant as a sneer or criticism—have been a feature of Protestantism. The Protestant view of conversion and salvation, and the experience of grace is more tolerant of



such movements than the Catholic, though for reasons into which I need not enter, the leaders of them have at times had to suffer persecution and been disowned. As, therefore, belonging to a form of religion which is not Catholic, the Catholic might regard them with indifference in this sense, that they took place on a land which was not his, like a prairie fire in a remote part of the world. On the other hand, he would view it with benevolence in so far as it contained truth and helped to revive in men and women a knowledge and love of God. If then the Groups had set themselves up as a sect or a body working within the beliefs of Anglicanism or Nonconformity, it would have been, perhaps, more seemly for one like myself to have stood apart and to have kept silence. But as they would wish to include Catholics among their members and well-wishers, and so would find room within the Catholic Church, it is necessary to say something of their claims.

Besides busybodies, there are always a number of good and naïve people who are for ever looking for lame dogs to help over stiles. Whenever things seem to be going badly they rush in, confident that they can mend matters, and, moreover, without taking sides. In their simplicity they do not realize that it is generally impossible to offer help without taking sides and that their supposed neutrality may be a criticism and a point of view. As a result they are more likely than not to be forced into an extremist position themselves. The Groups feel that they have a mission; they see around them many who would be all the better for living on Christian principles, and they have a strong suspi-

cion that everyone would benefit by their method of holy living. Hence their zeal and confidence. But they do not always ask themselves whether their method can be separated from other Christian teaching nor how far it commits them to a definite standpoint. Many, to judge from the available evidence, so far from examining this question seriously, regard it as irrelevant, as smacking of logic or logomachy, and therefore irreligious. Such an attitude is already partisan, and indeed, it ought to be clear that the question must be faced. They must present their credentials to teach, especially at a time when we hear too often men saying : 'Lo! Here is Christ or there'; when we are being told by some that Christ is love, and by others that Christ was a revolutionary. The Buchmanites on their part tell us that the substance of the message of Christ is dedication to the will of God and that fidelity to that will can be ensured by guidance and sharing. Was this all that Christ commissioned his apostles to teach when he said to them: 'Go ye forth and teach all nations. . . .' ? If not, then the Groups stamp themselves as a sect and are unconsciously advocating a method on false pretences.

To this criticism they might make the following kinds of answer. What they teach is a primitive and perhaps, purer form of Christianity than that which we behold in the Churches. What these latter contain may, indeed, be very good but not all is necessary. Or again, the straightforward and simple formulas they have adopted scarcely deserve the name of beliefs, and are so obvious that they should be readily accepted by every denomination; or

lastly, the teaching of the Groups bears on the essentials of all religion and can serve as the groundwork of every form of belief. Of these answers the first is the least plausible and it is not, I think, now put forward by any responsible member of the Groups. By such a defence the Group Movement would confess itself a sect, and this is just what it does not want to do. Furthermore, few scholars would now accept the once popular theory of a simple and primitive, undogmatic community. If we know one thing about the early Church it is that great store was made of orthodoxy, that is, a definite set of truths. As Epiphanius wrote: 'There is a King's Highway, and that is the Church of God and the pathway of truth.' When the Groups emphasize orthodoxy, it will be time to discuss whether they are like the early Church or not. In point of fact they resemble, at least superficially, the Montanists. 'Behold the man is like a lyre, and I dart like the plectrum. The man sleeps, and I am awake.' It is useless, however, to press the comparison, as the Groups have no wish to break away from the Church.

What then of the second alternative? If all the various Christian bodies were prepared to accept the Groupers as allies and to dismiss the question of beliefs as irrelevant, they could without any qualms call themselves a militia at the service of all camps. The fatal objection to this is that the Christian bodies are not so agreed. There is no common formula, no garden, public to all, and though conferences at Lausanne now show a desire for a united Christendom, the creators of Protestantism and their followers in former centuries would have

indignantly refused such a suggestion. Moreover, whatever others think now, the Catholic Church is as inexorable as ever and holds that the Christian faith must be accepted integrally and cannot be sorted out into parts, one more essential than the other. This being the actual state of Christendom, the Groupers cannot hope to be accepted as a separate movement outside all factions. To refuse a particular allegiance is tantamount to being banned and treated as a schismatic or heretic. They are asking the Church to revise the judgment of Solomon and give over the child to both mothers as their common offspring.

Their justification must accordingly rest on the last alternative,<sup>1</sup> which is to the effect that there is a core of religion, a fundamental attitude of mind, often seen in conversion, and it is to this that they attend. If it has to be stated more accurately, it would be in some such terms as the following: that human beings stand, by the necessity of their nature, in need of God, and that they can only satisfy this need and become truly human and happy when they face this fact and dedicate themselves wholly to the will of God. In consequence the Groupers have as their main aim to bring their friends to a recognition of this truth, and after having added this new quality to their lives to show them a simple method, by guidance and sharing, of living the truth to which they have been converted. This is by far the most successful of the pleas which have so far been suggested, and it is well worth examining.

All attempts to make men and women realize better the implications of Christianity, and to put

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Mr. Allen's essay, pages 36-40.

belief into practice must be looked at sympathetically by a Christian. 'What matter? In any case, one way or another, for motives true or false, Christ is being proclaimed.' What St. Paul says here we should all admit, I think, in the case of a private individual who by conversation happened to stimulate another to do something which the latter had felt in his heart of hearts that he ought to do. If, again, Socrates had continually tried to make his young hearers reverence the gods, the most captious theologian should have been pleased. There seems, therefore, to be sound reason in this claim of the Groupers, but it would be more logical if they left out the word Christianity and limited their campaign to the bare minimum of obeying the will of God. Every theist stands committed to the belief that in some sense God's will is our peace as against the so common belief in a fate which makes man its shuttlecock. To this the Grouper may reply that he cannot leave out Christianity, that for him and all those around him it is the only concrete living form of theism, and that in fact the great religious truth that our lives should be consecrated to God and the carrying out of His will is best expressed in Christ's teaching. Let us grant this for the moment and consider to what it amounts. The Groupers have assumed that the core or central point of all religion is to be found in complete surrender to God and that this surrender is best described in the Christian religion.

Much might be written round the question whether this surrender or dedication is rightly called the core of the religious attitude, and again it is open to grave doubt whether the Christian

religion can be reduced to the simple statement of it just made. St. Ignatius of Loyola in his book of the *Spiritual Exercises*—a book which has probably been the most influential treatise on the spiritual life since the Renaissance—certainly takes the will of God as the starting point of all he has to say. Now these *Spiritual Exercises* were written to make a man reform his life and lead him along the paths of holiness, and it is interesting to find that when the knight, Ignatius, turned undergraduate and saint, proceeded to try his exercises on fellow students in Spain, he was viewed with great suspicion by the authorities and was called up before them. They wanted to know how he, a man untutored in theology, could teach a good method in sacred matters, and they asked him in particular what he meant by his distinction between mortal and venial sin. This shows that the authorities regarded it as very important that the teacher of a spiritual method should be intellectually sure-footed—and that they should have fastened on the point of serious and light wrong-doing is especially interesting when we recall that the Groupers seem to call smoking, taking part in cocktail parties and fornication as all alike, vices. The Exercises of St. Ignatius, however, survived the tests applied to them and became in time a most powerful instrument in changing men's lives; and if we look at them we see that he agreed with the Groups in taking as his fundamental principle that man was created by God to obey God, and be united with Him. But he differs also from the very start because he does not assume this principle. His desire is that the exercitant should convince himself that it is true, and he will not allow

the exercitant to proceed any further till it is as plain and practical a truth as that we must study a subject if we wish to pass an examination in it.

There is, then, a likeness and a difference in the way in which St. Ignatius and Dr. Buchman start. The former holds that the way and the truth must be as clear as possible before the will can be trusted in its decisions, and there can be no doubt that this is the Catholic tradition and that when confronted with the fidgets and outbursts of enthusiasm it has always behaved like an experienced nurse. Nothing is more contrary to its spirit than that the soul should run in blinkers. We know from the writings of St. Augustine that, no sooner was he converted, than he went into retreat at Cassiciacum to think out a clear answer to the doubts which in the old days had assailed him, and the fact that this incident has puzzled modern critics only goes to show how far we have departed from the old view of faith as an intellectual virtue. The method of the Groupers in this shows a wide divergence from the Exercises of St. Ignatius, and the divergence grows. The latter immediately after the first exercise, proceeds to give flesh and bone to the idea of the will of God by making use of the chief doctrines of Christianity and the teaching and example of Christ. Moreover, he gives detailed advice how to avoid illusions and apparent inner guidance, and his chief aim throughout is to lay firm the foundations of humility.

From this comparison we can see that the method of the Spiritual Exercises differs from that of the Groupers in two ways; first it relies on intellectual conviction and is kept firm throughout by definite

beliefs, and, secondly, it ploughs a deep furrow of humility. I am not saying, of course, that the Groupers neglect humility; it is a question rather of what should take precedence in the spiritual life. St. Ignatius lays some stress on interior lights, but he has no confidence in them until humility and belief have guided them. That this is a wise precaution I am sure the leaders of the Group Movement would now admit,<sup>1</sup> and there are signs that they are advancing in this direction. We might well ask, however, whether the method will not have to be changed radically in the journey. Clearly one of the advantages which St. Ignatius possesses is that he is quite sure in his own mind of the nature of man, his meaning and end, of what God has shown to be His intention, and so of the whole philosophy of life embodied in the Christian religion. The belief in Divine Providence expands into a majestic scheme as in the *Divina Commedia*, and the concluding sentence of God's 'will being our peace' and of 'the love which moves the sun and other stars' is no vague expression but the epitome of a philosophy clear in all its parts. Ought not, then, the leaders of this new movement to define for themselves what they believe, and ally themselves to some Christian denomination?

The answer to this I expect would be that the opportunities of doing good would be greatly limited if some such step were taken, and, moreover, the function of the Groups is to kindle the hearts of men and nothing more. Once men have been set on fire with the love of God it is for them to find their own place among the differing Christian

<sup>1</sup>See Professor Grensted, page 201.



bodies. Of the effectiveness of this answer something has already been said, but granted an element of truth in it there are other reserves to be made. It is a commonplace among the great writers on the spiritual life, that every step in that life casts its shadows, and that one is in continual danger of the counterfeit. This danger is present even in the initial act of surrender to God, and it shows itself particularly in two ways. The act of conversion tends of its very nature to be of the 'all-or-nothing' type of decision. If the act be one which is predominantly intellectual there is little to fear, but if the decision be based on a high-pitched experience, the convert may well come in after life to rue it. The romance of burning one's boats can be overdone, and one should not give all one's money to the poor until debts have been paid. So many have found after making this all-or-nothing choice that they have overrated their strength, and thus it comes to pass that the better is the enemy of the good. The leaders of the Group Movement are aware of this danger and their efforts will, no doubt, lessen the toll of those who fall out from their ranks with 'broken heads' and shattered nerves. Even the best system in the world cannot avoid failures, and I have no intention of criticizing the Movement because it has had its failures. My criticism is that it is difficult to discover in the Movement sufficient safeguards to protect its members from illusion and exaggeration. Von Hügel would have said that they should be made to pass into the cold zone of thought, and the better psycho-analysts are of the same opinion. The convert is, after all, a mere novice suffering from all the temptations that go with

immaturity. He has to be shown that he makes a very silly figure, like a colt, all legs and no body, and his sudden zeal for proselytizing is one of the sure signs of that immaturity. But so far from this being the direction he receives, it would look as if he were encouraged to regard himself as a vessel of election or a pipe played on by the Holy Spirit.

Other essays in this volume have dealt directly with the subject of guidance and sharing. It will suffice therefore to mention only one or two reasons why they do not seem to provide the control so necessary for the welfare of the movement. If the condition of a convert is one which tends of its nature to be unbalanced, self-guidance is the worst possible remedy to offer. The habit, too, of talking about personal experiences at this stage is equally bad. Even with the healthy minded it is bound to invert that right order which is essential to religion. The part of religion is to direct our minds to God and make us think in terms of Him and not of ourselves. That is why worship which is communal, which involves rites that do not immediately excite personal devotion, is so much needed. Some may think that this is a small point. They are grievously mistaken. Since God is invisible and does not by His presence focus our attention upon Him as does a friend by our side, it is fatally easy to slip into the habit of thinking of Him in terms of our own feelings and wishes. We serve Him because it does us good, because it gives us a motive in life, because we now feel strong whereas before we were weak, because, in short, our happiness is insured. In the meantime we have lost sight of the Almighty God before whom we are as nothing, who is praised in

the truly religious language of the Psalms. Here is the note which is unmistakable in all the great religions; it is what gives such force to the Institutes of Calvin, however much we may dislike some of his doctrines, and it has been restored in the teaching of Karl Barth. There are some who speak as if the Group Movement resembled the teaching of Barth, but, so far as one can judge, they have scarcely anything in common. Indeed, the views of Dr. Buchman, as belonging to the democratic, emotional, and evangelical tradition, are precisely those which Barth declaims against. He is convinced that this tradition makes far too little of the transcendence of God, that it is not sufficiently theocentric, and it would look as if, carried away by his sense of the insufficiency of this type of religion, he has reacted to an opposite extreme. Barth puzzles most of his critics, and the reason probably is that he has exaggerated the apocalyptic and eschatological note in the Christian teaching, and, despite the novelty of his view, is still unconsciously affected by the severance which Luther made between faith and reason. Luther to him is the hero, whereas Descartes is the villain of the piece, 'the fountain head of the current of thought which has made man the centre of interest and displaced God from His due place in human thinking.' So long as he does not revise these prejudices it is no wonder that his doctrine looks as if it were suspended in mid air.

That is not to say, however, that Barth is not an admirable corrective to the tendency to estimate religion by the chart of one's spiritual temperature. As a writer to the *Hibbert Journal* expressed it: 'No period stands more in need of this astringent

and wholesome abasement, this stark reminder, precisely because of our advances in so many other directions. The moment that the sense of "creatureliness" and of "sublime dependency" is blurred, religion cheapens into something else and forfeits that aristocratic title. The best part of religion is spiritual manners, and manners here consist in the creaturely virtues of bowed deference, of awe toward a Creator and liege Lord.' Barth certainly does call on us to remember the vision of the Lord 'high and lifted up' seen 'in the year that King Uzziah died,' and it is not easy to find the same spirit in the Group Movement. I do not wish to be unjust, and it may be that members err through simplicity in talking so much about their new sense of vocation and the fun and adventure of their new life, but I wish all the same that they would meditate on the profound saying of Augustine that 'it is one thing to be God, and quite another to be a humble partaker of God.'

I have said that every stage in the spiritual life has its shadow and specific difficulty, and the one peculiar to that of conversion is conveyed by what has just been written. So intense a feeling of liberation excites the convert that it may divert his attention to himself instead of sending his mind soaring in 'high humility' to God. Not only that, but the cause of the excitement may become indistinct, and may be, in fact, quite inadequate to the emotion aroused. Even the well-balanced mind can be stirred to enthusiasm by what may turn out to be meaningless cries, and 'if in the green wood they do these things what shall be done in the dry?' The smallest spark can kindle a great fire, and we

have only to think of the influence of words when an orator has gained his audience, of flags and shibboleths and battle cries, to realize that enthusiasm can be out of all proportion to truth. Since then on certain occasions, the emotions of men are so inflammable it is of the first importance that the significance and value of the cause adopted should be clearly understood. The early followers of Mahomet were so intoxicated by the teaching of the prophet that no army could stand against them, and if they had succeeded, the West would have become as desolate as the landscape of modern Greece. The fascination of a half-truth is so great that at the beginning few can resist it or judge it in reason, and for a while the effects may be so salutary that it may seem almost wicked to hold aloof and criticize. We forget, when we look back at history and wonder at the follies of former ages in following will-o'-the-wisps, hastening after pied pipers, and building Jerusalems in marshy lands, that momentary success must have been present and that we are just as apt now to fall victims to an illusion or error.

God forbid that I should say that the Group Movement is all illusion and error, but it wishes to be judged by the highest standards, and it is essential that those who have the interests of human beings at heart should turn the full light of truth upon its gospel. The evidence goes to show that it has done good, and there are too many sincere and high-minded men now in charge of it for anyone to have the right to despise its work. It claims to have fulfilled a need, and if it be content with playing the precursor's part and so preparing the

way, its activities will be accepted as admirable by many. We are threatened by too many dangers to neglect anything which can be of real help, and 'he that is not against you is with you.' We must not forget, however, that if the multitudes have turned in hope to political and social ideals, and sneer at religion as dope, one reason is that religion has been presented to them in a form so emasculated that it is bound to excite derision. What degrading exhibitions one has seen in Hyde Park, what nauseating verbiage one has read in books and pamphlets! A saint can talk platitudes and breathe into them something of the beauty of his own soul; the listener can realize that the simple sentence is the key to a vision of plenitude. But with others, the clichés are a sign of a distraught mind. There is no order, no perspective, nothing of the wisdom which Christianity attributes to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. The Group Movement has obviously been saved from becoming a cheap and much-advertised recipe of holiness; it has learnt from experience and taken counsel, and if, intermingled with the language of the Gospel, there can still be heard a note too like that of an auctioneer, this may well be due to transatlantic customs and not to any inherent ugliness. But it is not enough that it should be free from the defects which have harmed so many revivalist movements; we need a religion which breathes the majesty of God, which is complete and many-splendoured, which knows what is in human nature, illumines the earth from end to end, exalts man above all that he has ever thought worthy and ideal, and takes him beyond to unimaginable splendours of truth and beauty.

Anything fussy or tawdry or sentimental or cliquish or doping, anything which is ready-made or invites to short cuts, which beats the big drum or cymbal, is feverish and over-exalted, and too sure that God is an accomplice of wishes and interior experiences, must be put aside as but the counterfeit of a true religion. We are so introspective now, and find such emptiness, such a waste land within, that we are liable to take any form as the shape of truth, a Perseus come to rescue our Andromeda.

Charles Lamb said once that he hoped that his virtues had done sucking. There is a period during which the virtues of religion need, perhaps, to be suckled, when, like babes, converts need the comforts and the joys and the fun. But such a stage must give way to adolescence and manhood when fear and ignorance can no longer be condoned. A fully-grown religion will lend its aid to every activity of the self, will sharpen the mind, strengthen the will and deepen the soul in truth and humility. There are so many problems which press upon the conscience—the correct way to worship God amid the infinite number of ways which have been tried, duties to self and neighbour, the mystery of one's own weakness and strength and, allied with that, the degree to which the pleasures of the senses and the enjoyment of nature should be permitted, the place, therefore, of the body in human ideals, of asceticism and sacrifice. These and many other kindred problems must be faced, and they form the judicious beliefs of which Sir Thomas Browne speaks, which serve as 'scales and roundles to mount the pinnacles and highest pieces of divinity.' The revivalist as well as the revolutionary is inclined to neglect the

lessons of history and to forget that the beliefs and practices around them are the result of the slow thought of the centuries built out of an experience which he has not yet touched. There is a wisdom which it is folly to ignore, won by labour of thought and sweat of tears, by the patience of a Plato and Aristotle and Augustine and Aquinas, and saints and theologians, without number.

The Christian religion came to man as a divine command, and as a revelation which could uplift him. It is God's speaking and not man's contriving; the logos must be opened out like a volume and not run away with, like an Aladdin's lamp. All the best that man has should be used to understand and express and carry out what is contained in Christ and his message, the best which philosophers and scientists and artists can provide. Christianity has a religious philosophy of life to offer to those who come seeking; it will not shirk any question; it will not deny anything which enhances man's dignity, and it sets in a divine pattern the divided threads of human belief and striving. If one word must be used to describe it, it is glory. To the opening episode of the Gospels there is an accompanying chorus of Glory be to God in the highest, and the story ends with the ascent into Heaven. Even in the dark places of the earth, such as the catacombs, the inscriptions and the scenes depicted are tinged with a colour that can only be called glorious, and the same glory surrounds the saints in the medieval paintings of a Van Eyck and Fra Angelico. The Passion itself of Christ is regarded in the light of the Resurrection morning, which gave wings to the feet of Peter and John and



warmed the heart of the Magdalen. Indeed, there can be no better image of the meaning of Christianity than the light of dawn which creeps over the hills and transfigures the countryside. There is nothing of the epileptic, or the phosphorescent in its effect; it is no naphtha flare, no delusive enchantment, no drug to excite tired nerves and benumbed mind. If the Christian religion be what it claims to be, the authentic form must be preached. The Buchmanites say that each one must face the challenge of God. That is excellent because it suggests that each one should stand his trial before a standard of absolute perfection as realized in Christ and so give himself to the highest. But if this is to be a proper act it must be accompanied by an understanding of what the highest means, and one's thought should stay on God and not the self, on the surpassing majesty of the divine Master and Lover and the wisdom which moves from end to end and disposes of all things sweetly, 'on the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Considering that this wisdom is, as all Christians hold, divine, and its terms, therefore, vitally important, and that man has in his history shown himself so lost in that intermediate space between himself and God—'a silent soul led of a silent God towards sightless things led sightless'—moving *en attonnements* if happily it may find Him, is it to be wondered at that we are anxious about the effects of this movement. The past is strewn with matches of religion which have spluttered and gone out, faith without works, works without faith, faith without reason, and reason without faith, mysticism and adventism, forms without life, and militarized

organizations. They lack what Von Hügel called the rich complexity which must belong to any high religion; they are all heart and no head, or they are interior and have no exterior. No more than man himself can a faith endure if it eschews the joy of the senses, the colour and music and liturgy wherein they find satisfaction, the social life of exterior worship and communion, the urge of the emotions and desires and the intellect which keeps counsel with truth and directs all to the far-off end seen as well as desired. A city set on a hill is the description in the Gospel and in the culminating vision of the Book of Revelation. When the Group Movement has fully recognized what is worthy of God and what He has in fact set up upon earth, no slum dwelling, no attic, no small house where parties can meet, but an everlasting city in which there are many mansions, of which 'the Lord is the glory,' it will be able—if it keeps its ranks—to face any criticism and march on the highway of truth.

## CONCLUSION

BY PROFESSOR L. W. GRENSTED

IT was originally intended that this final chapter should take up and deal with the various points made by other contributors to this volume. For various reasons this has become impossible. I had only been able to see five of the preceding essays in full, and short synopses of three of the others, before unforeseen emergencies called me away from England, pursued by an urgent demand from the editor that I should forward my contribution as soon as I could get it written. I thus find myself in an upland Swiss chalet, with no corner free for writing, trying rather vaguely to remember what impression was made upon me by the essays which I have read, and, almost equally vaguely, trying to recall the Oxford which now seems so astonishingly remote, and the vigorous life of the Group in which so very recently I was playing an active part, soon, I hope, to be resumed.

But it is perhaps not without its advantages that I should write in this more detached manner, not attempting to relate my own judgments and hopes too closely to the preceding essays. As these essays stand they have the value of independent impressions, the impressions made by the Oxford Group upon a number of competent, and not unfriendly, senior members of the University. Apart from the historical material which Mr. Allen has brought together in the opening essay, showing to what a great extent Oxford and Oxford men have actually

been at the heart of this movement of the Spirit to which the name of Oxford has come to be attached in every part of the world, all the rest of the essays are strictly individual, and it would be quite unfitting, even if the other contributors were willing, that I should try in any sense to sum them all up into a single whole. Such an attempt could not in any case be successful in summarizing Oxford opinion about the Group, even if I could escape, or wished to escape, from my own point of view, a point of view sufficiently expressed by my willingness to identify myself with the work of the Group in Oxford itself and in its campaigns, both in England and overseas. For, indeed, one of the things which this volume will have made obvious to every reader is that there is no single and definable Oxford opinion upon this matter, as anybody who knows Oxford must already be well aware. There is no possible answer to the question 'What does Oxford think about the Oxford Group?' any more than there is an answer to the question 'What does Oxford think about Communism, or War, or modern art?' Oxford has no corporate opinions, but a great diversity of individual views held with a freedom and a loyalty of fellowship which is perhaps her greatest gift to her sons. The whole strength of her great tradition is bent to the end of setting those who pass through college life free to have opinions of their own, and to maintain them worthily.

In that sense, and in that sense only, this book is characteristic of Oxford. It sets out, with frankness and with ability, the opinions of certain Oxford teachers, some lay and some clerical, and therewith it indicates, not unfairly, the fact that if twenty

further essays had been written there would have been twenty more impressions, more or less divergent, and that that would be the case upon whatever subject such a book might happen to be compiled.

One thing, however, emerges clearly from the very fact that responsible people in Oxford should have cared to make their opinions known in this volume and elsewhere. The Oxford Group has become a topic of which not only the world of affairs but the inner world of Oxford life, with its intense intellectual sincerity and its deep sense of responsibility in its task of education, must needs take account. For the Group has played an active part in undergraduate life for some twelve years. It is one of a number of religious organizations, partly arising naturally from the idealism and enterprise of undergraduates themselves and partly inspired and fostered from without, which have come to be an accepted part of our small Oxford world. Little would have been heard about the Group at all if it had not suddenly become the active centre of a revival of personal religion which has had remarkable results within and outside the organized life of the Christian Churches, and which has everywhere aroused interest, hostility, and hope. That hope and hostility should go together has been the mark of every effective movement of the human spirit, and not least of Christianity itself.

It falls to me, then, to add one last impression, writing positively and not controversially. It will, I trust, appear in passing why in some of my judgments about my friends in the fellowship of the Group and their activities I am prepared to take a less cautious line than some of the writers in this

volume. So far as I can judge from the essays I have seen, there is little in their positive and constructive outlook with which I should disagree. In some things I believe that the Group, as its life develops, will come to appreciate more fully and to reinforce more actively the principles which these essays set forth. What I can say most usefully falls, perhaps, into three parts. First, I will try to indicate those elements in the practice of the Group which constitute its fundamental strength, as distinct from those which make only a superficial appeal. Second, I will give reasons for my own belief that a movement of this kind is not without a rightful and even a necessary place in Oxford as it is to-day. And, third, I will venture, very briefly, to prophesy, setting forth my vision of the possibilities which such a fellowship of Christians who take their Christianity seriously, even though their understanding of that Christianity may as yet be very incomplete, holds in store for itself, for Oxford, for the Churches, and for the world.

The essential character of the Group is that it is a company of people who are prepared to make the adventure of living out in open fellowship the Christianity in which they believe. The primary demand which they make of themselves and of one another is a simple and direct honesty which cuts away pretences and shams, an honesty which is as much an honesty of each with himself as of all with all. For to be prepared to live openly in one's own sight is to be fore-armed against the judgment of men and to be humbly willing to meet the judgment of God. It is, I am sure, this attempt to achieve a radical honesty which has so greatly intrigued and

so often offended a world which is prepared for almost any heroism save that. Honesty often expresses itself in strange ways. Few of us are without small scruples, apparently trivial, at some point of our daily routine, and all of us know a higher standard than that which actually expresses itself in our lives. It is not unnatural that the witness given in meetings of the Group should very frequently concern itself with such apparent trivialities, by no means trivial in their real significance for character, but perplexing enough to those who do not easily read their true meaning, or understand the cost alike of the experience itself and of the testimony which seems to be given so lightly. One of the outstanding achievements of the Group is that it has succeeded in making practical for everyday life a recognized and familiar principle of ethics, the principle that the act has no moral worth as event, but only as the outward symptom of a disposition which determines its own moral choices by its own free law. That testimony should be concerned with affairs sometimes trivial, and sometimes grave, and that there should be an apparent irrelevance in the degree of importance attached to different parts of the testimony, is both natural and right, for it means that the moral judgment is passing beneath the surface to the things that really matter. But there is no harder lesson for the world, even for so enlightened a microcosm as Oxford itself, to learn. Yet was not Browning right when he made the risen Lazarus unable to distinguish, so far as importance was concerned, the mustering of armies to attack his city and the passing of a mule with gourds? Is it not true of all of us that the decisions that have

meant most for character have by no means always been concerned with some heroic sacrifice or with the acceptance of some high ideal or life-long purpose? There are few indeed who do not know the humiliation of being defeated by some elementary and crude temptation, or by some testing of our faithfulness in little things, and who have not realized with shame that it is sometimes easier to meet the great occasion than the small, and that the larger heroism is no excuse for trivial and recurrent failure.

Most of us have come to accept a decent reticence in such matters as the line of least resistance, both for ourselves and for others. The Group is a fellowship within which there is reticence indeed, for it is no part of honesty to talk about oneself all the time, but a reticence which seeks only the good of others, and which is at once laid aside where that good demands openness of life and of speech. Nobody pretends that this sharing may not sometimes be practised with a mistaken freedom and a lack of understanding of the effects of what is said. None can be more aware of mistakes made than those who have worked loyally in Group teams, and have seen how readily such mistakes have been challenged and their lessons accepted in team meetings. One of the most striking features of the fellowship, surprising though this may sound to those who do not know its life from within, is the simplicity and directness with which its members receive the criticism of their friends, recognizing the good-will in which the criticism is made, making no excuses in self-defence, and turning at once to seek the mind of God, that the truth may be clear



and all cause of offence avoided for the future. It is this strong and intimate solidarity of the fellowship which provides the necessary check upon the possible dangers of this openness of witness. The strength of the Group is the strength, not of an individual and possibly irresponsible experience, but of a corporate life, within which the individual is trained alike in initiative and in self-restraint.

In this connection it is significant that the leaders of the Group have come more and more to see the dangers of emotionalism and to guard against them. Emotion there must be wherever any body of people are gathered together with a strong common interest. Broadly speaking it is true that without emotion there can be no action. But emotion that is controlled and rightly directed, allowing free play to reason and aware of the ends to which it is directed, is a very different matter from emotionalism. The laughter and commonplace speech at meetings of the Group, the refusal to use the dangerous aid of hymn-singing, and exhortation, and the tenseness of the typical prayer meeting, have been consciously adopted to guard against this danger. A good deal of criticism has been directed against the Group by those who cannot accept religion without emotionalism, and who miss the familiar cover of hymn and prayer beneath which they can usually escape the challenge of outspoken honesty.

But all that has been said hitherto only marks the Group out as one manifestation of a spirit which is very widespread among students and young people generally at the present day. The Communist movement in Russia and elsewhere, the Nazi movement in Germany, and various 'youth movements'

of different kinds, all have this same general character. They represent a reaction against the individualism and self-sufficiency which was the ideal of the Europe that fell into ruins in 1914. The Oxford in which most of the writers in this volume were trained was not the Oxford that now is. The whole student life of the world has set out upon a new adventure, the adventure of group-heroisms and group-loyalties, in the service of ideals, some higher and some lower, but all alike a challenge to systems and selfishnesses that have had their day. We are seeing whole nations remade, and though there may be pain and tragedy and sometimes sore injustice in their remaking, there is idealism and self-sacrifice too. Everywhere we see young people willing, as we older people were never willing, to look for leadership, and to accept discipline and sacrifice in following those who will lead the way. What is specific about the Group, as about some other movements, and notably the Student Christian Movement, the earlier history of which shows closer parallels to the Oxford Group than is sometimes realized, is that it takes Christianity seriously and very literally. And while it has doubtless much to learn, and its individual members are at every possible stage of understanding and owe allegiance to all manner of different Christian communions, it stands definitely for the essential belief that the purposes of this world are the purposes of God and not of man, that those purposes are definite and concrete and particular, and that if we are willing to submit ourselves to God's guidance we can not only find that our own lives are changed so that we become instruments of His purpose, but also bring

that same change into other lives as well. The Group accepts the purpose of 'life-changing' as its main objective, and awkward as the phrase may be and even unpleasantly arrogant in its sound, it is nevertheless impossible to avoid recognition of the fact that Christianity has from the first had this same character. Apart from evangelization, or conversion, or life-changing, it would be impossible to recognize Christianity at all.

The whole practice of the Group, its belief in concrete and particular guidance, its stress upon the quiet time in which the will of God may be known, its continuous campaigning, its direct challenge to the individual and its very secondary interest in more general questions of political or social concern, all spring from this main conception of its objective. There may be all sorts of difficulties in the way, difficulties not all by any means solved in the activities of the Group as they are at present developed, but it is hard to see how there can be any serious difference of opinion upon the main point. In the fellowship of the Group, Christians of many different traditions and communions are trying to recover for themselves an essential quality of the Christian life. Hostility to the Group is not always hostility to its supposed methods or to alleged 'unfortunate incidents.' It is often enough hostility to Christianity itself, though it only recognizes itself as hostility when Christianity is sufficiently aggressive to be recognized as Christianity.

It would be impossible in the space of a short essay to attempt to work out a reasoned philosophy of guidance, or a detailed and practical psychology of 'the quiet time' and of sharing. These are the three

main points upon which criticism has been directed, and it may be at once admitted that much of the criticism is pertinent enough. I have come across good and sincere people whose conception of guidance was mechanical and even superstitious, a seeking not for spiritual insight but for external and trivial signs and leadings and coincidences. I have met others whose only idea of a quiet time seemed to be confined to a kind of 'listening-in' to their own emotions and unregulated impulses. And I have met those who have tried to develop a kind of legalism in sharing which would, if allowed, make of the Christian freedom a bondage not to be endured. But these things are no more characteristic of the essential spirit of the Group than the extravagances and misunderstandings and superstitions and obscurantisms of some Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics and Modernists are characteristic of the Church of England as a whole, or, for the matter of that, of those three great movements within it. And over the period of some seven or eight years, during which I have known the fellowship of the Group and its leaders, I can say with assurance that I have seen the growth of the forces that make for strength and sanity. There is wise counsel within the Group as well as welcome criticism from outside, and I am wholly confident for the future, if those in the Churches who, care that the challenge of Christianity should go abroad in the world, will work, as opportunity offers, with the Group, instead of offering from outside advice which is only too likely to be based upon misinformation and misunderstanding. Criticism based upon actual fact is another matter. Whenever members of the Group make the

mistake of resenting such criticism they deny their own fundamental honesty and destroy the value of their own witness. That this mistake has occasionally been made it would be idle to deny. To plead provocation is no excuse, but the efforts of certain sections of the press to create scandal where none exists have been so persistent and in some cases so malignant that I am not surprised to find a certain tendency to this resentment in some Group circles. And again I believe that, as the work develops and experience grows, this particular lack of balance is being naturally corrected from within.

But in closing this attempt to outline what I believe to be the strength of the position of the Oxford Group, I should like to make my belief plain. It seems to me that in a day of vague Christianity and of broad ideals which do not touch life in its essentials, it is wholly a good thing that there should be a fellowship which is prepared to put Christianity to the test of actual practice in the affairs of daily living. There is much preaching about prayer and even about prayer for divine guidance, but here are those who not only seek it but believe that they receive it, and are ready to put that belief to the test of acting upon it. How else should a belief be tested? If we are asked to abandon belief in what Mr. Micklem calls 'just so' guidance,<sup>1</sup> we are, I believe, asked to surrender something essential to Christianity itself. In the end it means giving up belief in a God whose care for His world is so concrete and so particular that not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge. I simply do not

<sup>1</sup>See page 140.

believe that we are meant to manage nine-tenths of God's world for ourselves and to leave a rather dubious tenth in His hands. The relation between our reason and His guidance can, if we will, be closer and not so absurdly arithmetical as that.

My other two points can be taken much more briefly.

It seems to me perfectly clear that such a movement as this is in itself a typical outcropping of University life and that it takes not only a natural but a very necessary and desirable place in Oxford itself. That it has a certain aggressiveness which often gives offence is a character which it shares with other undergraduate organizations. The only features which at all complicate the situation are the wide range which is now covered by the activities of the Group, and the fact that some part of the stimulus which keeps the life of the 'team' in Oxford fresh and vigorous is derived from Dr. Buchman and the body of workers which he has gathered round him. In this latter respect there is very little real difference between the Group and other Christian organizations in Oxford. For good or ill we have been forced to accept the position that the devotional system provided by the college chapels does not adequately meet the needs of the undergraduate. The demand for outside organizations which have a wider outlook than Oxford comes in fact very largely from the undergraduates themselves. The University Church has now come to take a position which makes it much more than a centre of University devotion. It is the link, through the great evening services promoted by the Student Christian Movement, with the main stream of the

life of the Anglican Communion in all the world. The missionary societies, the Pastorate, St. Aldate's Church, Mansfield College Chapel, Pusey House, and the Cowley Fathers, and a whole series of other evangelistic forces, make their appeal to the undergraduate, and try to win him for Christianity as they conceive it.

My own belief is that this is entirely to the good. I have never believed, and after twenty-five years of teaching believe less than ever, in hot-house systems of education. If they were practicable they might be right, and it would simplify matters enormously, and for everybody, if we could train men and women within a closed system up to the time of their final examination and then turn them loose to deal with a more or less compliant world. Oxford might wish to have it so, and I believe that in her heart of hearts that is what Miss Gwyer really would like. Nor do I doubt that Miss Gwyer, with her great educational skill and her fine ideals, would develop such a system to a very high degree of perfection. But the difficulty is with the young people themselves. The most striking feature of Oxford is the abundant and prolific energy with which the undergraduate breaks out in experimental efforts of every kind. There is not only the Union, now almost as ancient and respectable as Parliament itself. There are journalistic ventures, dramatic societies, with the O.U.D.S. extending the range of its productions year by year, and political societies which attract attention far beyond Oxford itself. The scientists now even organize Arctic expeditions for young explorers. American fellowships and Alpine holidays are encouraged. In every way young Oxford looks

out to the world, and increasingly it refuses to be caged within college walls.

It seems to me entirely clear that, granted the Christian hypothesis, as needs we must in a University with *Dominus Illuminatio Mea* as its motto, this adventuring of the Group in the world is a proper field wherein some Oxford men at least, and Oxford women too, may find not only a challenge to their own lives, but a training in Christian adventure which will stand them in good stead later on. There is no reason whatever why this should not be combined with entire loyalty to all that is good both in the college system and in the general life of the university. But we older people, who are concerned with colleges and with the ordered scheme of university teaching and examinations and discipline, owe it to the young that we do not make the system more important than character, and that in setting as high as possible the challenge to intellectual achievement we do not obscure, or postpone until too late, the challenge to that achievement of the spirit which matters most of all. To say that definite evangelistic work of this kind is inappropriate for undergraduates is to ignore the fact that missions of many kinds, religious and political, are already arranged by various bodies and that undergraduates take part in them without question.

That men and women in their student days should be in touch with a movement of world-wide range and interest, and should have some part in it, not as responsible leaders but in a fellowship where they may learn from those of greater experience, seems to me to be of the very greatest educational



value. If, as in some other religious and political movements, enthusiasm leads to bad work in college or inability to take a proper part in college life, that is a matter capable of correction both on the side of the college and of the Group team. Experience shows that this danger, though occasionally real enough, is not more serious in the case of the Group than of some other movements.

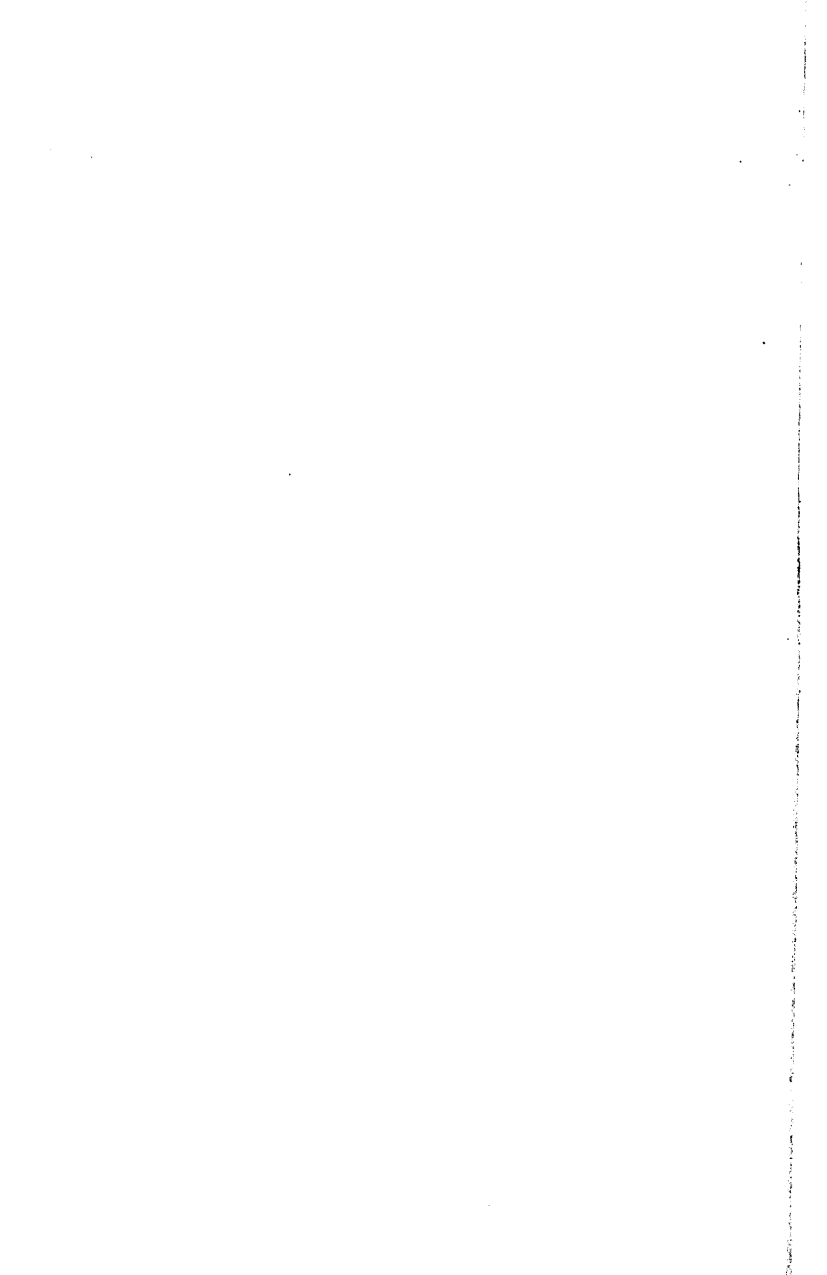
Finally, what of the future of the Group? Obviously it is impossible to predict its course of development with any accuracy. Unlike its precursor, the Student Christian Movement, which has developed equally widely but in other ways, it has rapidly become an evangelistic force of remarkable and sudden growth all over the world. Oxford men have carried it to South Africa and to Canada, and at the time of writing there is developing a campaign in London which is having striking results in regions seldom reached by any ordinary religious revivals. It has been characteristic of the work that it makes its appeal directly to individuals. As a Group it has no clear identity, and a minimum of organization. It has no particular theology, since its members are loyal members of Churches—the more loyal for the experience that has come to them in the Group—and no opinions about social or other questions. In this its development is so like that of the Student Christian Movement in its early days that a parallel may be drawn with some likelihood of accuracy. It took the Student Movement some fifteen years of personal and evangelistic experience before, as a movement, it became seriously concerned in social problems. The discovery was made in a formula which has become classical,

and which might well have been a formula evolved in the Oxford Group. 'We are the social problem.' I believe that the future of the Group will show a definite awakening in two directions. In the first place, individuals endeavouring to place their lives under the guidance of God, will more and more be drawn to see the challenge of the social and industrial and political need of the world, and will know that their task is first to acquire the necessary knowledge of the facts and then to give their lives to that particular cause. And, second, there will develop a much fuller and deeper sense of all that the Churches represent and are, despite the imperfections of their life as seen in some particular area of their work, and there will be a far richer sense of consecration to real membership of the living Church, in all its sacramental meaning.

But at present the work is a work of new beginnings, and perhaps in Oxford that must always be the case. For in Oxford each year brings its freshmen, and each year the leaders of the year before are gone. As, again, the experience of the Student Christian Movement shows, it is impossible to develop undergraduate work beyond a certain point. I do not myself think that in the Group that point has yet been reached. We shall learn more about co-operation with other Christian bodies. We shall get a stronger footing in 'Senior Oxford' and learn more clearly what part we who are older ought rightly to take in the work. We shall come to understand better the relation between the direct moral challenge and the challenge of the intellect, and of art, and of the simple appreciation of the world that God made. But in principle a beginning

has been made, as I believe, upon right lines. The essential challenge to complete honesty and complete love does not change, and each new generation must face that challenge for itself.

And some of us, of an older generation, must face it too.



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