



The Oxford Group

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Religion in the ball-room of a fashionable hotel, clothed in tuxedo coats and evening gowns, accompanied by bursts of laughter! It is startling, to say the least, but few of the thousands attending the meetings had any doubt about its sincerity and reality. What was even more unusual was the absence of hymns, prayers, scripture reading, and the other accompaniments of religion. One thing, however, was there in such evident manifestation that the multitudes were moved—and that was the spirit of God. Who could listen to the striking testimony of transformed lives without realizing that something vital and dynamic had entered the lives of the witnesses? The Oxford Group movement has brought religion out of the cloister into the drawing-room and social areas of life. It has stripped off the theological and ecclesiastical vestments and arrayed religion in the garments of ordinary life. It has revealed religion as the most radiant force in human experience, instead of the solemn, sombre, sad-eyed thing that most people have thought it.

There is a ring of genuineness about this Group that cannot be denied. They have got hold of something that will change the face of the world, if it can be multiplied in individual lives. What is the power that has wrought this mighty change, that has turned worldlings into passionate pilgrims of the Way of Life? It is the old, old power, the eternal, unchanging, all-sufficient grace of God. Religion is a personal, vital experience—that is the rock foundation of the Movement.

It is no new doctrine but it has been made real in the lives of the Group. It involves the surrender of the life to the will and purpose of God. It believes in the guidance of God, the control of life by the Life-Giver. That has the right ring about it—there is hard, common sense in it and when a person has experienced that spiritual power in his own life, he is bound to share his experience with others. When one has found the way ought he not to tell others exactly how he found it and what it has meant to his own life?

This movement begins with oneself—that is where anything ought to begin—but it can only find its full scope and destiny when it reaches out and touches others. Here is the secret for solving all our problems. Get the individual set right before God, and how swiftly would our domestic, social, national and international problems be solved! Convert the individual and send him back to his family and to his community to witness there to the reality of his own changed life. That is the programme of the Oxford Group.

Let us not be too concerned with the accidentals of one Movement, with matters of form and dress and place; let us fasten our attention upon its fundamental principles of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love for the individual life, and then seek to make it effective in all social relationships. This movement is in the final analysis spiritual, and strikes insistently upon a note that has been strangely lacking in our modern life—the presence of a Power that can transform the world, if we will but give it a chance.

The churches ought to welcome the Group, support and encourage it, for it may become the most powerful ally in parochial life. It knows no denominational barriers, it recognizes no ecclesiastical walls. The Movement is not a system, nor an organization, nor a sect—it is a spirit, a way of life, a sharing in the deepest experiences of the soul. Its victories are the evidences of its power; its achievements are the proofs that religion works. Therefore, let all thoughtful men hail it with gladness and set it forward in hopefulness.

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