



The Oxford Group

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No student of organized Christianity can have failed to observe to what an extent its spiritual imperatives have been accepted as the consolation, inspiration, and reliance of persons who have found life difficult; the poor, the frustrated, the baffled.

The Founder of Christianity observed that it was hard for the well-to-do to realize the Kingdom. Their attention was pre-occupied with Things.

But, throughout the history of The Church, the well-to-do have considered it a necessary institution, and have been largely responsible for its material success.

The rich and cultured, however, have mostly viewed The Church as an authentic clearing-house for their philanthropies. As for its spiritual benefits, they have not been personally applied in the lives of the well-to-do as zealously as in the experience of the ne'er-do-wells.

The outstanding fact about the Oxford Group Movement is its candid appeal to persons of the highly privileged class. It hopes that the well-to-do will find, in the Christian inspiration and ethic, a spiritual dynamic of transforming capacity; not a mere narcotic for the pains and perplexities of the beaten and dragged.

To achieve this end, The Oxford Group Movement is required to stage its activities in the normal setting with which the highly privileged feel most familiar and at ease.

It is inevitable that the Movement should be peculiarly vulnerable to criticism, at this point; and if there have been a few tongues-in-cheek in regard to "a class-meeting in swallow-tails," the sour comment is to be expected. One only notes with amazement and satisfaction that such criticism is scarce and uninfluential.

There is no doubt about the genuineness of this Oxford Group Movement, or of the very substantial good it has the capacity to accomplish.

Like any cultus in its adolescence, this Movement probably has many mistakes to make. It must be willing to study church history. Its temptation to overlook a considerable amount of similar activity, through the ages, and forget a great deal of dramatic life-transformation that has occurred between the date of Paul's conversion and the rise of the Oxford Group Movement, must be steadily resisted.

It will be a pity if undue emphasis is placed on the tenet "witnessing" . . . in the sense of "sin-confessing." Not all people are of one mind in respect to turning themselves inside out for the edification of their neighbors, and the relief of their own burdened consciences.

On the other hand, many will find this easy, who may fancy they are doing themselves and the cause a great service by their confessions, while, if the psychology of the individual were taken into serious account, the confession might be discovered to be unpleasantly related to exhibitionism.

In the main, it is a great idea, and deserves fair trial, sympathetic appraisal, and honest support.

One thing is sure: if it is sound and time-worthy, no amount of criticism can detain it, and if it is a mere fad, a mere flash-in-the-pan, no amount of propaganda can keep it alive.

Whoever finds himself reluctant to co-operate will be well advised to reserve his judgment until a little more water has gone over the dam.

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