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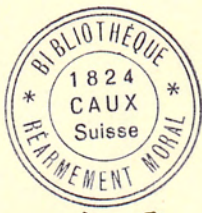
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LIFE BEGAN
YESTERDAY

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LIFE BEGAN
YESTERDAY

BY
STEPHEN FOOT



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*This book is dedicated in gratitude
and affection to Dr. Frank Buchman
and to that world-wide band of care-
free, hate-free, God-inspired men and
women, known as the Oxford Group,
who are bringing new life to a
troubled world.*

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PREFACE

THE last five years since I wrote this book have shown more clearly than ever that the great problems of the world, political, economic and social, are at their roots moral problems of fear and selfishness. Thousands of writers and speakers have pointed this out, and have suggested that the only hope for the future of civilisation is a change of heart in enough individuals to affect the thinking and acting of the world.

The unique contribution of Dr. Buchman and the Oxford Group is that they have demonstrated in more than sixty countries how this change can come. They produce the evidence not only of men and women whose lives have become different, but also of international, national, industrial and family situations that are different as a result.

This has prepared the way for the world-wide campaign for Moral Re-Armament. Some idea of the progress made can be realised through the messages sent to the National Assembly for Moral Re-Armament held in Washington on June 4th, 1939.

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President Roosevelt wrote:

“The underlying strength of the world must consist in the moral fibre of her citizens. A programme of Moral Re-Armament for the world cannot fail therefore to lessen the dangers of armed conflict. Such Moral Re-Armament to be most highly effective must receive support on a world-wide basis.”

This meeting was sponsored by five members of the United States Cabinet, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Democratic and Republican leaders in both Houses. A cable was sent to the meeting signed by Lord Athlone, Lord Salisbury, Lord Strathmore and other representative members of the House of Lords, also from 238 members of the House of Commons, from leaders of Industry and Commerce, from Trade Union leaders including the Chairmen of the T.U.C. for the last three years, and from men and women in similar positions of leadership in many other countries.

The first two signatures on the cable from British business men were those of Mr. Peter Bennett, President of the Federation of British Industries and Sir Granville Gibson, M.P.,

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President of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce. This message was :

“We British men of business send greetings to American business men on the occasion of the National Assembly for Moral Re-Armament now meeting in Washington.

“Realising that the true function of Industry, Commerce and Trade is to supply the material needs of mankind, we desire to co-operate with you to abolish economic warfare, to establish the standards of Moral Re-Armament in commercial transactions, to restore confidence in the machinery of business, and thus to build on sure foundations a saner and a kindlier world.”

Speaking on this occasion from Washington by Radio Telephone to a great meeting in East Ham, Dr. Buchman said :

“To-day we celebrate the first anniversary of a God-given thought—Moral and Spiritual Re-Armament. This great truth revolutionised the thinking and living of millions. You in East London are the vanguard of this new thinking, this new philosophy, this new leadership that every-

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body wants. Thank you for the master pattern you have given throughout Britain and Europe to the land of my birth.

“We are grateful for the master-pattern you in Britain and Europe have been able to give to the Cause of M.R.A. in home, business, industry, civic and national life. We need to go forward this year with a master-passion to bring in the new era—the new type of personality and the new civilisation which everybody wants.

“We are glad we must battle for peace. Chaos is the stoutest opponent of this battle for peace. Chaos opposes Moral Re-Armament. It is unfortunate but in battle you find people on the other side, on the wrong side. A true patriot is the man who brings his country under God’s control.”

My own personal experience during the last five years has completed my conviction that our only hope is to make contact with the creative dynamic Power Whom we call God. The results of such contact are described in this book; the growth in the body of evidence confirms my own experience that there lies the truth and the way.

June 16th, 1939.

STEPHEN FOOT.

CHAPTER I

LIFE BEGAN YESTERDAY

CAN you say that? Can you look back on a certain day and say with confidence—"Yes, then I began to live, and now I know what life really is?"

There was recently published in the United States a book with the title *Life Begins To-morrow*, and that represents the state of mind of millions of people at the present time. Life is always just going to begin; it is the Will-o'-the-Wisp that we are going to overtake some time, round the next corner, when we mount the next fold in the hill; but we pass the corner or mount the false summit, and there is our elusive phantom of life still dancing on ahead.

To some people, life is going to begin when they leave school, or start work, or get engaged to be married, or when they are married, or when the children grow up, or when they can retire—each period comes, and passes,

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with life still not begun. Deeds accomplished, triumphs won and missed, love found and felt, friends made and lost; all these are part of life—but *life itself*, reality, conscious living as part of the great scheme of the Universe, being of the potter and not only of the clay; when did that begin?

* * * * *

I have had three great ambitions in life. The first was to succeed in business, the second was to come through the War alive and undisgraced, and the third was to do something for education. Before the War I was in Mexico as manager of the Shell Oil Company's interests in that country, and soon after the War was over I was sent abroad again to be manager of one of the Shell subsidiaries in Venezuela. From there I came back to England in the autumn of 1920 to teach; rather an astonishing transition from manager of an oil company to assistant master at a Public School.

Why did I do it? Looking back thirteen years later I found it impossible to give an answer, but in April of last year I was in New York and met two friends who had travelled with me across the Atlantic in 1920. I asked them the

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question. They remembered perfectly; we had frequently discussed it on the voyage. My conviction had been, they reminded me, that it was only through education that we could prevent another war, and so I was prepared to devote the rest of my life to education. I was convinced, apparently, that those of us who had survived the War had a great responsibility towards the next generation, and I wanted to take my part. My friends were right—that was my motive. Not long ago I came across confirmation in the shape of an unfinished essay, planned on ambitious lines, entitled, "War and Education." That essay will never be finished now—I have learnt during the last fourteen years that we need more than education to prevent war. Beyond this, I have learnt that if we continue to rely on education alone, then we are more than likely to be overwhelmed while we wait for our results. Educational processes are slow, very slow; men's passions and hatreds are quick. Jealousy and fear are still abroad in the hearts of men, and these twin incendiaries may at any time start a conflagration in which our civilisation will be swept away.

These were the thoughts that were gradually

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taking shape in my mind in the early summer of 1933, and it was then that I resolved to tear myself out of my sheltered life as a Housemaster in order to begin afresh. I wanted to do something which would have some more direct influence on the question of the future—War or Peace. But where could I find that opportunity? Would it be in broadcasting, or in writing, or in Parliament, or in Holy Orders, or with the League of Nations?

It was along these lines that I was thinking in December, 1933, when I received a letter from an Old Boy of the School, telling me that the Oxford Group were holding some meetings in the town, and suggesting that I should go. The letter itself was rather surprising, as the writer had not been at all the kind of fellow at school whom one would expect to find writing such a letter, particularly to someone like myself, who was not even his Housemaster.

I knew nothing about the Oxford Group except by hearsay, and as a result of that I was definitely critical, even hostile; but I thought it was better to find out something about it direct instead of second-hand, and so I went off in a patronising way to give the Group a look over.

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One of the first people whom I met was Mr. C. J. Hambro, President of the Norwegian Parliament, a man who had represented his country at Geneva for several years, exactly the kind of man whom I was interested to meet. My patronising air, however, began to disappear when he remarked to me that he was quite certain that the Oxford Group was doing the most important work that was going on in the world in the cause of peace. And then in the meeting I was confronted with a number of men and women who quite clearly had a quality of life different from, and superior to, anything that I had ever known before. How did they get it? They spoke of listening to God and getting guidance from Him—a new idea to me. My prayers had always been on the basis of “Listen, Lord, Stephen Foot speaking. . . .” It was a new idea to me that I should remain quiet in the attitude of “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

But they certainly put it to me very logically; they spoke of God having a plan for the world—well, I had always believed that. They followed it up with the idea that God had a plan for every individual in the world, a plan for me, but it was of my free will to

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choose whether I should follow or reject it.

They went a step further and suggested that if God had a plan for an individual, then it would certainly be very foolish if God were unable to let the individual know what that plan was. That idea was new to me, and I was inclined to balk at it, but it certainly seemed logical. Like most people, I had a vague idea that God could, and did, guide me in the major issues of life; but I had pictured the guidance as rather elusive, somewhat indefinite, a vague kind of background to the canvas of life, that showed one in a general way how God's purpose worked. Quite frankly, I had no faith in the possibility of God being able to show anybody, day by day, the tasks that He wanted him to do. I began on other people's faith, the experimental method; but now I know that there is nothing more certain in the world than that if man listens God speaks.

Apart altogether from the experimental test, the more one thinks about it, the more obvious it becomes that if, as many scientists now agree, there is an all-knowing, beneficent, purposeful, mathematical Mind, whom we call God, at the back of the Universe, then that

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Divine intelligence must have some plan for His creation, and He must have some way of communicating to each of His created beings their part in that plan. What would one think of an admiral who was unable to communicate with the units of his fleet, or of a general who could not get messages through to his army; but in both cases signallers must be on the alert to receive them.

Let us return, however, to the story. An obvious preliminary to receiving messages from God is that one should spend time in listening to Him. A less obvious, but equally important condition is that we should be prepared to obey the message when it comes, however difficult that task may be. And what will bring us to the point where we are ready to obey? A realisation of inadequacy and a vision of how God might be able to use us if we were wholly surrendered to Him.

I came to the first of these as a result of challenging my life on the four standards of absolute Honesty, absolute Purity, absolute Unselfishness and absolute Love. It was rather a shock. The Oxford Group had suggested to me that I should not approach this task in the usual way, with myself as assessor, but that I

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should ask God to show me where I fell short on each of these four standards.

I began with the first. I felt sure that would be easy, because I was a very honest person; my position as Bursar and a former business man made it certain that I should be all right there. And almost instantly there came into my mind the school prospectus. What had that got to do with absolute honesty? My name was there, of course, described as an Exhibitioner of my College at Cambridge. It looked very well in print, giving encouragement to parents and raising one's prestige among the boys. Very nice indeed.

Unfortunately in my case it was not true. While still at school I had tried for an exhibition, but I failed. During my time at Cambridge, however, I was awarded a Choral Exhibition, a very different matter, and it was this that had salved my conscience up to that time. That would not pass muster under the standard of absolute honesty, and I saw that I should have to face a difficult piece of restitution in getting that half-truth corrected.

With my confidence somewhat shattered, I continued the process of asking God to show me what was wrong. And then I realised that

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I was a liar. Not always, nor even very often, but on certain occasions in connection with certain things. Chief among them was my capacity for organisation of which I was inordinately proud; so proud that I could never admit the possibility of anything going wrong with my arrangements. I remembered certain occasions when the Headmaster had tackled me about something that had not been done. "Well, I'm pretty sure I told him," would be my reply, although I knew quite well that I had not. Again unpleasant restitution was looming up ahead in that direction.

Luckily the next standard was going to be an easy one; after all, I was a very respectable Housemaster, so that there certainly could not be any difficulty about purity. But there came into my mind a certain verse in St. Matthew which implied that thoughts were just as bad as deeds, and I realised that if, at certain times, my thoughts had been flashed on to a screen for all the world to see, then I should have been more than a little uncomfortable. And I also remembered certain books I read, encouraged thereto by a review which included some such phrase as "Rather a daring treatment of a difficult subject." How I had bluffed myself

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by saying that I ought to know the kind of thing that parents and senior boys might possibly come across. Absolute purity?

The challenge on absolute Love was equally devastating. There were many people I disliked, there were others about whom I was accustomed to say "I can't stand . . ."; but Christ could, and so long as there was a barrier between me and any other person in the world, then there was a barrier between Christ and me—a barrier not of His making, but of mine. I remembered a certain passage, also in St. Matthew's gospel, that even though one was actually at the altar, one must go off and try to effect a reconciliation. No, my standard of absolute Love was certainly not good enough.

There remained absolute Unselfishness, but here I felt myself to be on safer ground. I was well known as a very unselfish person; parents had often said so, even the Bishop of the Diocese thought the same, when he noted the willingness with which I tackled any task to which he called me. No, I was all right on unselfishness.

But I put it to the test, and asked God to show me whether there was anything wrong in that direction. Why did I do these things? was

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the question that God asked me in reply. I began to think, and slowly it dawned on me that Self was at the bottom of many of these actions. I was trying to be the ideal Housemaster, ready, it is true, on many occasions to put the boys' interests ahead of my own comfort or convenience, but often with one eye on the effect produced, careful that others should know of what I had done, glad to overhear the comments made—in fact, "I had my reward." Self was also in the centre of the picture in my Diocesan activities; it satisfied my self-importance, gratified my pride, and pleased me that the Bishop should think well of me—precisely, "I had my reward."

Gradually it became clear that all my life was bound up in two things; credit-snatching and blame-avoiding. No wonder performance fell short of intention; I was still in bondage to fear, jealousy, irritation and anxiety; Self was the centre of my life, not God. For the first time I had now begun to follow the advice of the Greek philosophers, "Know thyself." Was it to stop there? Was this self-revelation to be followed merely by a wave of self-pity, a feeble distrust of myself for the future, a refusal of these absolute standards as too high for me

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to aim at? Or was this process, thus begun, to be followed by action? Calmly, clearly, dispassionately, I reviewed the situation. The idols of my life were shattered; little bits of self-conceit, self-satisfaction, self-indulgence, self-deceit, lay about in heaps, exposed for what they were. Rebuilding would be slow; there would be failures, set-backs, misunderstandings, ridicule. Was it worth it? Why not be content with the old life tidied up, put straight here and there, renovated in certain places, brightened and varnished? After all, these absolute standards were not for everyone; I would do the best I could in the old way. So spoke the Devil, but I could not rest; the night was nearly over, sleep still failed, then God broke through. I surrendered my life to Him.



Some people come to a decision of this kind very quickly, some after months of deliberation; but once you have seen a vision of what life might be, it will haunt you or hold you. When Christ comes you may refuse His challenge, but you will never be the same as you were before the challenge came.

The important thing about a decision to

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surrender one's life is that it should be a real decision, reached after facing all the implications and consequences, thought out calmly and reasonably, and then translated into action. The first action is mental action, it is a decision of the will to make a decision—one decides that one has not controlled one's life particularly well hitherto, and therefore it had better be put under new management. One man drew up a legal document, since that was the most solemn and binding contract that he knew; another made his decision on the top of a bus; a business man sometimes expresses it in the language he knows best, "I'll buy it." But in every case the intention is the same—it means, "For the rest of my life I surrender everything I have to God for Him to use; I will challenge my thoughts and actions by Christ's standards; I will ask God to show me His purpose for my life and claim from Him the power to carry that purpose out." It is then that life begins and all Christ's words come true. It is a literal fact that having lost your life, surrendered it to God to use, you find it.

The first step for me was to be honest with God, the next to be honest with men. Some people stop short at the first step and think that

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is enough; it was not enough for me. If I was now to restart my life on the standard of absolute honesty, then I had first to be honest about my life up to that point. God can show a man who is the person with whom he should be entirely honest about his past, and can give him the courage to perform the task. The cleansing, antiseptic effect of this process has always been recognised by psychologists, and there is no doubt about its value. When for the first time in my life I had been completely honest about myself, with another man, I felt like Christian when the load rolled off his back. The relief was indescribable and I began at once to get victory in areas of my life where previously I had always been defeated.

Why was that?

Looking back now, I think that there were two reasons which made this so much more effective than my previous confessions to God alone. The first was that by being honest with another man I had faced humiliation, and, through this, God gave me victory over pride. The second reason was that I had now registered a definite, cold-blooded, calculated decision that there was going to be a change in my life, and by God's help these things were for the

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future to be left behind. This was for me the start of that change in human nature of which this book speaks.

Certainly that was my experience. Once brought to the surface and exposed to the light of day those sore-spots, hidden and festering before, were cleansed and healed; fresh tissues grew, strength developed, a new and real life had begun. Problems, insoluble before were solved; worry and anxiety began to go; peace came. Life began to be free and fine and purposeful. Not all at once, but step by step, does progress in this new life come; and even now I feel that I have only just begun. This book marks a milestone, not the end; but I write it now, while these things are fresh in my memory, in the hope that it may help others on this way. To wait until experience ripens, life develops more, needs less courage, not greater, and I put this story forward now, conscious that my message is groping and halting; but, as I believe, for that very reason it may help those who are groping and halting too.

Life for me began with a surrender of all that I knew of self, to all that I knew of God. It goes on, as one grows, to a realisation that there

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are more and more areas of one's life that need to be surrendered. How does growth in this new life come? Like all growth, unconsciously, steadily, as the life is given food, light, air and exercise. Contact with God is the necessary fundamental condition, and that is made through prayer and listening, by sharing with others the new life that He has given, by worship and fellowship, by learning how in the past He has dealt with men.

There is no doubt that an unhurried time of quiet in the early morning is the right start to a God-guided day, and for this time a pencil and note-book are useful. At first that seemed to me rather fantastic, but now I realise that it is simply common sense. God can show us what He wants us to do. Once get that clear and it is obvious that we should write it down. Sometimes when guidance comes it may be something that we should be very pleased to forget; it may be some restitution that we have to make, an apology that is overdue. Whatever it may be, once written down it is difficult to evade.

If no guidance comes, God can show us why. It may be some new area of our life needs to be surrendered; it may be some guidance in

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the past has been ignored, some resentment, some personal barrier, self-effort in place of self-surrender.

Two thoughts were worrying me in early days—the first, a lack of faith; I feared that I should lose this new life before it could take firm hold; and then if not much guidance came the thought that my Quiet Time had been a waste. I know now that God is always there and that starting the day in this way is an essential part of a guided life; it puts right one's attitude to the world.

Unwillingness to share my spiritual experience was another stumbling-block; that such things are too sacred to share was an excuse. Yet Christ shared. How otherwise do we know of His temptations, and His agony, unless He shared them? Sharing is not only a way of discipline, but a way of growth. I find the truth of what Dean Inge says in his distinction between material and spiritual things.

With material things:—

- (a) One man's gain is another man's loss.
- (b) They perish with using.
- (c) They are strictly limited.
- (d) They may be detached from the user by death or misfortune.

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Whereas spiritual things:—

- (a) Are increased by sharing.
- (b) Do not perish.
- (c) Are unlimited.
- (d) Cannot be detached from the user without his consent.

Then there was the stumbling-block of being identified with the Group. Of course, that was simply fear. Here are some of the forms it took—fear of ridicule, fear of what my colleagues would say, fear of my family, fear of back-sliding after taking a stand, fear of being thought superior, fear of the eyes that would watch one night and day, fear of what one might be called upon to do. Well, was I sincere in my decision to surrender my life to God and to challenge it for the future by the standards of Jesus Christ; absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love? That was the real test. If I meant it more strongly than anything else in the world, then I should lose my fear of acknowledging it.

In my case the test came within a few weeks. Was I prepared to go to Canada with an Oxford Group team in the Easter holidays? I went. That settled for me the question of identification and did many other things besides. Per-

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haps the chief among the things I learnt was what the quality of life in a team should be, and how far I fell short of that standard. Here was a team spirit based on a common experience of Jesus Christ, a common purpose to carry out God's will, a common standard represented by the four Absolutes and a willingness to give—not only material things or good advice, but oneself and all of oneself, as God directed. All fellowship is based on a common way of life, but if it is to be the deepest fellowship it must be based on the highest way of life we know.

From among all the things I learnt in Canada I select the following:—

- (a) How hungry men and women are for something vital in their lives—how they long for a religion that works!
- (b) How true it is that Christ has the answer to every problem and can satisfy every need.
- (c) How quickly a whole nation can catch the significance of the message of the Oxford Group.
- (d) How rapidly the work grows as changed lives lead to other lives being changed.
- (e) How youth is longing for this message. I saw again in their eyes the same light and fire that I had seen in 1914. Both

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then and now it was the light of readiness for sacrifice, but what a difference—then it ended in destruction, now it was for the work of reconstruction.

It was in Canada that I learnt what fellowship really meant. If there is one thing absolutely certain it is that the Oxford Group is not a mutual admiration society. Nor is a Public School, and certainly not the Masters' common-room; I knew all about putting other people right, I was an expert. It is part of the job of a schoolmaster to correct the boys and point out where they are wrong; I went a step further. As Bursar, Housemaster of the largest house, and as a much-travelled man with experience of the world, it became my self-appointed task to point out to my colleagues where they failed. In Canada I had the new experience of being checked myself. What made the experience even more unusual was that the checking would often come from a youngster half my age; the first time it happened it came from a woman. The occasion was at Toronto, our first day in Canada, and I had spoken in the afternoon at a meeting for educationists, where we had been welcomed by the Premier of the Province. After tea we started

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ought to have a Quiet Time about it.”

He went away and I had a Quiet Time; the conviction came quite clearly that I had been making a fool of myself again.

For my soul's good and for the spirit of the team I had to get clear about the matter. At the team meeting that afternoon I apologised. I said that I realised now that the brain-wave had not been a guided thought, but was simply due to a conceited desire to show off. Sometimes, as in this case, the process of being honest may be very humiliating, but I am sure of its value in getting rid of self.

Last of all, in Canada I first learnt the meaning of forgiveness, and so I came to the knowledge of what God's Love can really mean. Those sordid shameful things, buried in the past, but not forgotten; how do I know that they have been forgiven?

Simply by this—that God has taken those things, touched them with His redeeming Love, and given them back, cleansed and purified, to be used in His service to help some other sinner.

There is the Love of God, made manifest, great and all-embracing, a reality, able to save, to deliver and to use.

* * * * *

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Looking back now over the last fifteen months, I know that life has begun; real life began on that day in December when my life was changed. Some of the results from similar changed lives will be seen in later chapters.

For me this new life has meant a new freedom, a new victory, a new courage, a new hope, a new confidence, a new joy, a new power, a new peace. That is what we should expect. Christ said: "Behold, I make all things new."

CHAPTER II

THE SOLUTION

IN April, 1933, I started writing a book called *Three Lives*, an account of my experiences in oil, war and school. One page of the manuscript of that book never appeared in print; it was a page containing an explanation that my principal motive in writing the book was to decide whether there should be a fourth life.

On the same day that the book was accepted by the publishers, December 8th, 1933, the reason for writing it became irrelevant; the question had already been answered—the fourth life had begun. In the pages that follow will be found some account of what has happened and is happening in that fourth life.

I have found that I was living at a lower level of happiness and effectiveness than was intended for me; but that there was waiting a quality of life, capable of producing a peace of mind, a joyfulness of thought, and a radiance of living that can only be described as new life.

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I know, moreover, that this new quality of life is not only within the reach of all, but that we can acquire the power of passing it on to others.

If that were all, this book would not be justified, but much more lies beyond. I have seen for myself that as this new life spreads among individuals, so do we begin to find solutions to the world's great problems such as war and unemployment. It is gradually being realised by many thinking men and women that these problems are moral problems; they have their roots in human nature, greed, jealousy, selfishness and fear in the individual man.

There is at work in the world to-day a Power that has for many generations been neglected by masses of mankind, a Power that can change human nature—that is the message of this book. It is like the great power of the Niagara Falls, which existed for milleniums before man inhabited the earth. Then for thousands of years man lacked the knowledge to use the power and so it ran to waste. To-day, harnessed, it is bringing light into thousands of homes.

So with this Power by which human nature can be changed. I have felt it in my own life and seen it at work in the lives of others; it is

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at work all over the world to-day, and through this Power problems are being solved. This book gives some account of how solutions have come to the problems of personal and family life, social, industrial and international relationships. The illustrations of how these problems have been solved are not necessarily the most striking that could be quoted; but in practically every case they are about people whom I know personally, and events of which I have had first-hand information.

I am going to suggest that, fundamentally, what has happened to upset the equilibrium of modern life has been the gradual development of the material beyond the moral side of man's nature. The amazing progress and revolutionary changes that have taken place on the material side of life have not been matched by similar progress on the moral side. A gap has been formed, and during the last hundred years that gap has ever been widening.

Consider for a moment how changes come about in the material world, how sweeping, how complete they are, how quickly effected. Candles and oil-lamps that have been used by mankind for thousands of years are swept out of existence in a few short years by the dis-

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covery of gas and electric light. Systems of transport on land and sea that have served since the birth of history, are scrapped in a few decades by developments in the use of steam and petrol.

Or compare the range and killing power of modern weapons with that of even fifty years ago.

Such changes as these have been startling, convulsive, revolutionary, compared with the slow movement which characterises man's progress in his emotional and spiritual life. Man's development during the last hundred years can be likened to intellectual rapids and spiritual backwaters.

Let us now examine the result of all this. Has rapid progress on the material side of life meant that greater demands have been made on the moral side than the latter has been able to fulfil? Undoubtedly. The enormous increase in the material comfort of life offers greater temptation to self-indulgence, and therefore man needs much greater control over the urge to acquisitiveness. Man lacks this greater control. The greater danger to others caused by the speed of the motor-car means that man must be much more unselfish than

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formerly. Unfortunately, man is not more unselfish; the toll of the road measures the failure.

The devastating horrors of modern warfare threaten the very existence of civilisation, and it is imperative that mankind should unite in friendship to throttle the dogs of war, in the same way as isolated farmers would combine if their district were overrun by wolves. But alas, individuals, and therefore nations, are still in the bondage of jealousy and fear, which separate and make for strife.

So one might continue, noting all the time that the problem comes down to the individual, whose moral development has been too slow to enable him to grapple with the difficult problems presented by revolutionary changes in his material surroundings. How can man make peace in the world when there is no peace in his own home, no peace in his own heart?

Consider the industrial world.

A few weeks ago a certain Member of Parliament wrote to his local paper to point out the following facts:—

- (1) That nearly all the unemployed men in the town were bricklayers, plasterers, concrete mixers, plumbers, carpenters—

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men from the various branches of the Building Trade.

- (2) That there were in the town several hundred families who needed houses. On account of the shortage of houses, many of the families were living in such conditions of overcrowding that it was almost impossible to bring up their children decently.
- (3) That the builders' yards were heavily stocked with bricks, cement, timber, etc., in fact all the materials required for building houses.

If the situation had not been tragic it would have been ridiculous. There was an urgent demand for houses, a demand, moreover, that ordinary common-sense consideration of the needs of the growing generation should lead to it being satisfied; alongside the demand there existed all the materials required to build the houses, much of it having lain idle in stock for years, waiting for just such an opportunity as this; and yet the men who had been trained to build houses were unemployed, leaning up against the street corners, applying daily to the Labour Exchanges with growing despair, because there was no work for them to do.

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One must rub one's eyes to make sure that one is not dreaming. Let us make it even clearer by transferring the scene to an island, where the survivors from a shipwreck are taking refuge. What should we say on visiting the island a few weeks after the shipwreck, if we found the women and children dying of exposure because they had no shelter from the sun and the rain; while the carpenters and other able-bodied workmen, complete with the tools required for the job, were leaning idly up against the trees, instead of cutting them down and making huts.

We should think they were mad—and I often think that this would inevitably be the opinion of anyone who could look at this world from outside and study some of the things that have been happening during the last twenty years.

There is a widespread demand for new systems, but if we are to have new systems new men are required; it is human nature that needs to be changed: and the change must come quickly if mankind is to avoid disaster.

But can human nature be changed—changed in the same revolutionary way as the circumstances with which man is surrounded? Can a

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man whose nature is greedy become disciplined; can the selfish become unselfish, can the fearful lose their fear, and the bitter learn to love? Fifteen months ago I should have answered "No." Now I know better; the correct answer is "Yes." I know this, moreover, not only because I have met hundreds of men and women whose nature has been changed, but because of even surer evidence—I have found my own nature change.

The story which follows will give some account of such changed lives, and what happened when these lives were changed. And in all these cases, here described, there will be found this thing in common, that a personality, divided within itself, uncertain, often fearful, has become unified and integrated. That is the miracle that needs to happen; the Oxford Group have shown us that it can. Here is the solution to the world's problems. World-changing by life-changing. Man's nature can be changed.

* * * * *

When the economic world threatened to tumble in ruins five years ago, there was hardly a man or woman who did not have the thought,

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“If we ever get out of this mess, then we will take steps to ensure that such a thing can never happen again.” Much the same thing was said during the years 1914 to 1918, and some of the best brains in the world set to work to lay foundations that would ensure such a disaster could never occur again. They failed; that must be admitted. Nervous tension in international affairs and threats of war to-day are very similar to what they were in 1914.

For the moment there is a respite which provides us with an opportunity; let us make sure that we use that opportunity. The machines of war are waiting and once started they are well-nigh impossible to stop. When the military time-table begins, war is inevitable, the forces of destruction have taken charge.

And while the diplomatists juggle with the crises, some small accident might cause disaster—an unfortunate incident on a frontier, a sergeant the worse for drink, a policeman turns his weapon on the crowd, and in the present state of popular feeling there might be war.

CHAPTER III

FEAR

WHEN I was a boy I suffered greatly from shyness and self-consciousness. So do most boys; but the feature that made my case somewhat unusual was that I was shy even in our own family circle. As a boy aged sixteen it was impossible for me to walk across the drawing-room at home without suffering serious anxiety as to whether I was appearing natural, even when the only people present were my father and mother with three or four of my brothers and sisters. Somehow or other I had acquired a dread of seeming awkward and, though it was a complete delusion, I felt that everybody in the room was looking at me with critical eyes. My only solution was to act a part. Before starting out on the trip across the room I would work out the number of steps necessary to arrive at the door naturally, with my right hand in position to turn the knob, and frequently I would think out some gesture, such as picking up a

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book or photograph from a table, which would make the movements appear natural and self-possessed.

This inner life of mine, surrounded by fear of what people were thinking of me, persisted for years, and though it became second nature with me to act a part successfully, yet the conflict and strain remained until just over a year ago I never entered on a conversation without that same feeling of anxiety as to what impression I was making and, naturally enough, this added considerably to the strain of my life as a Housemaster. When I met a parent for the first time my object was to give him the impression that I was the kind of man that I imagined he would like his son's Housemaster to be; rather a difficult task sometimes, and involving rapid changes from the broad-minded tolerant man of the world to the type of man for whom religion is of prime importance. I was like an organist pulling out the stops which I thought were likely to please. The whole business was the result of fear, mainly a fear of inadequacy. It may have been started by the feeling of inferiority which I had towards my twin brother, but however it started, the fear was there, governing my thoughts and speech, an

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intolerable strain under the surface of what appeared to be a completely self-possessed exterior.

I began to lose that fear the day I made the surrender of my will to the Divine purpose, as a calm, resolute, intelligent and reasonable act of submission to the Power controlling the world.

People generally think of fear as an incentive, a spur to action or a motive force that urges one to undertake some positive deed. More often the exact opposite is the case. Fear may be the great paralysing agent; its effect a negation of action and not a stimulus. Fear may make us run away from a situation, or prevent us from taking action; fear cramps and hinders us, entangles our feet, enmeshes our arms, keeps us in ruts, dulls our imagination, and it is only love that can set us free.

In the War the fear of being shot for cowardice rarely spurred a man on to gallant deeds—it stopped him from running away. Fear of the consequences of action leads us to inaction, though we frequently camouflage it as our cautious instinct.

On one occasion in 1916, in the Armentières section of the line, I sat in a trench, with my

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Colonel and a few men, under a heavy bombardment. Shells burst all around us; some in the trench itself just round the next traverse. One burst on the parapet behind us, as we sat on the fire-step, and spattered us with lumps of mud. I was terrified, my teeth were chattering from fright, and I put my pipe in my mouth to have something to bite on. I couldn't move, but I acted a part and talked quite calmly. That was one solution, here is another.

A few months later, on the Somme, a Colonel drank rum to calm his fears on the night before an attack; by early dawn he was quite prepared to fight the German Army single-handed, and he did, in fact, fight the escort that took him under arrest behind the line; fear was paralysing him, rum gave him a false release.

It is appalling to realise the extent to which most men and women are governed by fear in ordinary daily life. There is a gnawing fear of the past through which a man lives in terror lest something should be discovered that happened long ago. Some men are terrified lest they should talk in their sleep; others are afraid to go under an anæsthetic for fear that their secret should escape.

Not long ago, a friend told me that he

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had cheated in the Scholarship Exam., as a result of which he had won a scholarship at his Public School. Think of his feelings as a boy at school with that secret on his conscience—the constant fear that it might be discovered! He could never forget it and it would have haunted him till his dying day unless he had owned up to it in the way he did. Now that he has faced it, and has made up his mind that as soon as possible he will pay the money back, that fear has left him and his life is free again.

Then there is the fear that we shall be inadequate to the situation which we have to face, and it is that which, more than anything else, drives men to suicide. Fear of what people will think of us, fear of ridicule, fear of being snubbed, fear of being misunderstood, fear of failure in the task that waits us—how many men and women lead miserable and ineffective lives for just such fears as these!

And the irony of it is that so often it is the fear itself that leads to failure. The fear of failure makes us fail. It is the fear that we shall not be equal to the situation which makes us ineffective. That well-known phenomenon “exam. fright” is a clear case in point. A student, well-prepared, thoroughly

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equal to the task that lies before him, gets stage fright in the exam. and fails to do himself justice. He fails—not because he is unequal to the task, but because he fears that he will fail. Overnight he has fears that he will not be fit for the exam., and next morning he wakes with a headache; in the middle of the exam., he is afraid that the examiner will not be able to read his writing, and instantly his writing becomes illegible; he is afraid that he will not have time to finish the paper, and at once his rate of working drops; he fears that he will make a careless mistake and starts working so carefully that he makes no progress; And so we could go on; if fear wins, man fails. The illustrations could cover all of man's experiences, from games to Greats or hearth-rug to the Woolsack.

Fear, fear, fear, from concern to worry, from worry to anxiety, from anxiety to foreboding, from foreboding to terror, and terror to collapse. As an experiment let a man or woman look back at the end of a week and calculate how much time and nervous energy has been expended on thinking in advance of mishaps or misfortunes that might happen in the future. Many people spend a great part of their conscious life anticipating trouble, worry-

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ing over trifles which may or may not happen in the weeks and months, or even years, that lie ahead. What will happen—if we miss the train, if I lose my job, if the rates go up, if the children get ill, and all the rest of it?

I well remember that as a young man, still at the University, I was deeply worried by the thought that some day I might be unemployed. I pictured myself going from office to office looking for a job, with my clothes and boots getting more and more worn, till finally I ended up on the Embankment, so ragged that my last chance of getting a job had vanished. So real was this foreboding that I made up my mind that, with the first money I earned, I would buy a Gladstone bag and a new suit of clothes. I would then pack the suit with a five-pound note in a pocket, and place the bag in the National Safe Deposit vaults, a place in London to which I had paid a visit with my father. I never actually carried this project out, but the fact that I had such an idea illustrates my anxious state of mind, and I only lost this sense of foreboding about the future a few months ago.

Fear of the past, fear in the present, fear of the future. How are they to be overcome?

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Here is what John MacMurray says in his excellent summary of the modern dilemma given in his book, *Freedom in the Modern World*.

“Our feelings are bound and we must set them free—but how? How does one set about developing freedom of feeling, and rid oneself of fear? I must confess that if there is an answer to that question, I do not know it. I do not think that there is one, unless it is a negative one.”

That is what I should have said just over a year ago. Now I know that there is an answer, a complete answer, a universal answer—Christ gave it. It is possible to cast out fear; it is possible to take the anxious “if” out of “life.” The way is Christ’s way; He must put there instead the certainty of love. Paradoxically the way to victory is by surrender. If fear is to be overcome, or hatred, or jealousy, or any emotion which holds us bound, then we must surrender our wills to a greater Will, and that will set us free. Surely we have always known this.

A great unswerving purpose, a passion, a devotion to this Will, love for a Person, great enough to demand the whole of self—that is the means through which fear is cast out and

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self is dethroned. Christ's spirit floods in, and real life begins. So we can claim and expect new power, not only over fear, but over all the other poisons of our life.

Must one wait to begin? No—you can begin to-night. Does it require enormous effort? No—self-effort is a drawback, not a help. Must one be a special kind of person to catch this wondrous power? No—not at all; it will work with anyone who goes this way. There is more than this. Multiply by millions the men and women you know whom fear holds in the grip of bondage—there you have whole nations in the grip of fear, and where fear is, hatred grows. It is fear that demands security, and security in modern days spells arms, and though one nation may seem secure, because of that the next will feel unsafe. Hate bred of fear lets violence loose. We think by law and pacts to break the vicious circle: we think in vain.

CHAPTER IV

INTERNATIONAL LIFE

It is fitting that this chapter on international life should follow closely on a discussion of the subject of Fear; they are linked together by powerful chains. In a recent speech General Smuts analysed the tension between nations as being due mainly to the fact that they are in the bondage of fear; fear of war, fear of being attacked, fear for security, are between them creating a condition of affairs in which war may occur. Fear of war may create war.

And as long as nations, or individuals, are in the bondage of fear, they will behave irrationally. Fear creates conditions in which the reasoning power of human beings fails to operate normally. Silly, queer, senseless things have been done, and are being done, by governments and statesmen because they are in the grip of fear.

Once upon a time there were two neighbours, A and B. One day A, walking in his garden,

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noticed that B could look down into his garden from the top windows of the house next door. "This will never do," said A, in mortification to think that his private garden was no longer private. So he raised the height of his wall by several feet. "Hullo," said B. "What is A doing that for? Of all the unfriendly acts I've ever known, that is the worst. Building up that wall is simply an insult, obviously aimed at me"; so he set to work and built another storey on top of his house in order to be able to look over the wall.

"What is this?" asked A, and promptly built his wall several feet higher still.

"Another insult," thought B, as he raised his house another storey.

And so they went on, A raising his wall and B building more and more storeys on his house. But all the time A was not really afraid that B would sit in the window and look into his garden; as a matter of fact, at the start he would not have minded very much if he had. Nor, on the other hand, had B the slightest wish to look into A's garden; yet they went on getting more and more angry, while the wall and the house grew higher and higher, till finally both collapsed in ruins.

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So with security. Mankind has really passed the stage of development when predatory expeditions and forays into other countries were part of the glorious adventures of life; there are still a few people who think they are, but very few, nothing like such a number as the few would have us believe. To ensure security armaments are increased, but that at once raises fears in the minds of neighbours, who see their security threatened, and in turn increase their armaments. "There you are," shrieks some of the Press in headlines; "that proves it. The threat is real and urgent." And as this senseless competition goes on we are all throwing away the possibility of security we claim to seek.

But how to begin to solve the problem will be the question. The answer is simple, it must begin with persons, not policies. It is not new methods, but new men in the sense of changed men that we need.

Let us start with honesty; so long as we are not absolutely honest ourselves we cannot believe in the honesty of others.

In September of last year I was at Geneva and attended several meetings of the Assembly of the League of Nations. In the Assembly Hall were gathered many of the leading politicians

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of the world. And as I watched and listened strange thoughts came to me. The technical efficiency of the arrangements was amazing; on each seat a pair of head-phones was provided, and in front of me there was a little switch to be turned, according to the language to which one wished to listen; speaker after speaker mounted the rostrum, the microphone and amplifiers reproduced their speeches so that they could be heard in the farthest corners of the room; shorthand writers took down their words, and one knew that within a few hours the world would read them—and yet I felt that something was lacking.

I imagined an invention, some electrical arrangement, a head-piece that delegates would have to wear while they were speaking; and this headpiece was equipped with three lights, like the traffic signals—red, green and yellow. It would be an extension of the idea behind certain apparatus which doctors sometimes use to record the blood pressure and heart-beats of patients they examine. My electrical device would show what the speaker was really thinking; no matter what words were being said with his lips, the lights would show the emotion in control of his heart. If it were hatred, the red

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light would flash out, if jealousy, green, and if fear was the controlling factor, then out would come the yellow. One can imagine a speaker in the middle of a glorious peroration stopping suddenly, "Confound it all, there goes that Green Light again!"

What a breath of honesty would blow through that chamber!

I was dining that night with one of the delegates and told him of the idea. "Why, you would make a million francs out of it," he replied, "not by selling it, of course, but people would pay that to keep it off the market." Just imagine it, if all politicians were not merely outwardly honest, but *absolutely* honest. What might happen then?

Another thing occurred while I was at Geneva. At my hotel was a deputation which had come to protest against the indignity offered to their country, by the suggestion that foreigners should be present to supervise a Plebiscite. The atmosphere was likely to be heated when the deputation appeared before the Committee of the League; an acrimonious discussion might be expected. I suggested a different course; in fact, I went so far as to compose a speech that the leader of the deputa-

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tion might deliver : it began something like this :

“Gentlemen,—We have come from our country to assure the League of Nations that we wish to co-operate with you in every way, to make certain that the voting in the Plebiscite shall be absolutely fair and scrupulously honest. We shall welcome the presence of representatives of other countries, who will be able to bear testimony to the correctness of everything that is done. We shall be glad of this opportunity of getting to know members of other nations, and we look forward to making friends with them.”

I could not hope that the delegation would adopt my suggestion though they discussed the possibility of doing so. Is it unreasonable to suppose that the situation might have been altered if they had come in that spirit?

I believe more and more strongly that if we begin with an attitude such as that we should achieve friendship between nations. Sometimes if the atmosphere is right, the big problems come right, and an atmosphere of friendliness is often created by openness, acts of thoughtfulness and trust.

I would invite the reader to cast his or her mind back, over the last seventeen years since

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the war, and ask which act on the part of Germany has done most towards creating a spirit of friendship and goodwill between her and England. If I were asked this question, I would suggest something which may not even be recorded in the history-books. Before writing down the answer I put the question to a young friend of mine who was born within a month of the Armistice. He gave exactly the same reply as I should—the return of the Drums of the Gordon Highlanders. It would be interesting to know the name of the German who was responsible for that act of statesmanship; it would not be surprising to learn that it was the work of a single individual, who had love in his life instead of hate, trust instead of suspicion.

Such acts as this, if multiplied, would create the same kind of friendly atmosphere between two countries as existed between Chili and Argentina after 1902, when Argentina gave to Chili the cannon she had purchased to bombard her. I believe that the mass of mankind is ready to respond to such gestures as these, and that the principal reason why they do not occur more frequently is that the leaders are afraid. A few of the leading men in Europe acting on

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such principles as these could raise the whole question of international relationships to a higher level.

Is it possible that men and women can be so changed that they are released from the bondage of racial fear, jealousy and hatred? Yes, certainly; here are a few examples:

The first is a man, who was a bitter and cynical agnostic, occupying an important University post and also economic adviser to the South African Government. He was one of the leaders of the militant section of the Afrikaans party, working with the avowed aim of making Afrikaans the language for the whole University.

He was a man whose bitter feeling made him a sore spot from which spread infectious enmity in all directions, creating strife between Boer and Briton. The hatred was not an occasional outburst, it was continuous; in his own words, "My blood used to boil every time I saw in the University a notice printed in English." He had vowed never to speak English in public again.

His wife had met the Oxford Group and had been changed two years before, while his attitude was one of hostile cynicism. All the same,

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his wife managed to persuade him to come to a meeting. What happened? I asked him that question last year when he was over in England travelling with an Oxford Group team. All he could describe was the result—for the first time in his life he found a view of life that made sense. That night, with every fibre of his superficial hardness in revolt, he had faced the truth, and after a night of sleeplessness he made a decision to surrender to God.

His first step was to apologise to one of the English professors, and shortly afterwards he spoke in English to a crowded audience, urging co-operation between Afrikaans and British. One can imagine the hostility created among the more violent members of his old party, but in spite of it he fought on and succeeded in introducing a new spirit into the University.

The political life of a whole country can be affected when religious awakening brings a new spirit.

Writing from South Africa at the end of December, 1934, Mr. Norman Price, Advocate of the Supreme Court, says:

“I attended the great fusion Conference at

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Bloemfontein, when the new fusion party was launched, and the spirit was different from anything we have seen in this country for a hundred years. Instead of the usual struggle between English and Dutch, there was the utmost goodwill. I have seldom seen such a spirit in a political meeting. There were about 1,200 delegates. It was almost like a meeting of the Oxford Group. The proceedings opened with prayer, and concluded with the Lord's Prayer in which all joined, and I believe that we are in for a period of peace and goodwill such as this country has never known. Now that there is a real spirit of reconciliation between the white races, our task is to begin to break down the hostility and suspicion and fear still rampant between a certain section of both the White and the Black races."

It is when such a new atmosphere as this has been created that a solution to the questions between two countries will become possible.

Not long ago I met a Frenchman, and a German woman. Before the Frenchman came into contact with the Oxford Group and was changed, he had three great hatreds in his life. In his own words: "I hated the Germans, the Jews and my mother-in-law."

He found that when he apologised to his

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mother-in-law not only did that hatred go, but he also got release from both the others. Since that time he has worked on Oxford Group teams in many parts of Europe in perfect harmony with Germans. Here is one of his visions for the future: "I look forward with confidence to that day of supernational repentance and thanksgiving when a service can be held in German in the rebuilt Rheims Cathedral, and in French amid the ancient ruins of Heidelberg Castle."

And now go across the frontier for the story of the German woman, a former head-mistress of a school in Silesia. This lady is a member of an old Prussian diplomatic and military family, a cousin of a famous flying officer; had lost by death no less than twenty-eight relatives in the War; was daughter, wife and mother of Prussian soldiers, and served in the War herself as a nurse. Beneath the surface of her life there was an under-current of bitterness towards the former enemies of her country. She came to an Oxford Group House Party nearly three years ago, to give a lecture on Education, and, while there, was changed. Love, driving out bitterness, has created a new nature that has in the last two years been used by God to bring

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this same message to others she has met when travelling with the International Team. In Toronto she was able to meet in real friendship, the Air Force officer who was responsible for her cousin's death.

It is vital changes like these that can break down national barriers. This was seen in the large number of changed lives that came about during the house-party held a few months ago in Alsace and attended by some four hundred French and Germans. Many of these men and women are now themselves being used to change lives in their own towns and villages. Potential enemies of the cause of peace are changed into powerful allies—it is like capturing prisoners, giving them new uniforms, and sending them out into battle again as friends instead of foes.

What is liable to happen to a man who is merely inoculated with an emotional urge in the cause of Peace? He goes to a meeting, listens to a great orator, and comes away filled with disgust for the bestiality of war and full of ideas about the blessings of peace. Unfortunately, next day, he has a row with his wife, or with the man next door, or with someone in the office, and into his heart again come

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all those feelings of jealousy and hatred which poison the system, and which, when multiplied by millions, make a nation unfit to withstand an international shock.

Consequently, when there is some incident on a frontier and people are killed, our friend burns with rage at the insult to his country, and is quite prepared to encourage reprisals which may involve the lives of hundreds of women and children. The picture becomes out of focus; we fasten on to a whole country the blame which belongs to a few individuals. It would be almost as reasonable for Lancashire to send a few bombing planes down south to teach Sussex a lesson, in revenge for the murder in Sussex of a man from Manchester.

A man converted to ideals of Peace needs also to get rid of war in his heart or war in his home.

The work of the Oxford Group is building up all over the world changed men and women, no longer in bondage to the emotions of fear and jealousy, and these will be a barrier against the threat of war.

All power to the Peace Societies, let them go ahead in creating a more peaceful atmosphere;

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but it is a more revolutionary change in human nature that we need to save us. That is what the Oxford Group is working for, changed lives, God-centred in place of self-centred, and the change continuing every day under the guidance of His Holy Spirit.

Nurse Cavell died saying: "Patriotism is not enough"; it may well be that this civilisation will pass away with the epitaph, "Idealism is not enough." How true that is! Idealism would have man persuaded into good behaviour, a merely human process. To rely on it is to invite disaster. We have done so in the past, but in the past material progress moved at the same slow pace. Now there is a difference; material progress is moving at a vastly greater rate, like the tide off the coast of Normandy, faster than a horse can gallop. Idealism is not enough—it is changed lives that we require: a change of heart.

Recently there went from Oslo to Copenhagen a small party of Norwegians to apologise for their part in creating bitterness between Norway and Denmark. Does that kind of thing often happen? Why did it happen? Because those men were changed, part of a great and growing band in Norway

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who have accepted the challenge of Christ put to them by the Oxford Group.

Such things are unusual; small wonder that the paper *Dagens Nyheder* put in a headline "Oxford Effaces Norwegian Hatred of the Danes," while the *Berlingske Tidende* of Copenhagen devoted nearly a page to the news, headed: "Interview with Norwegian Editor and Supreme Court Advocate, who two months ago were pagans and now are Christians." We shall see other news like that in the coming years.

One of the things we learnt in the war was the powerful influence of evil propaganda. I had a vivid illustration of this when I went out to Venezuela in March, 1919. Soon after I arrived, there called on me in my office in Caracas an Englishman, to welcome me to the country. We were discussing the subject of the lifting of the blockade against Germany, and he was horrified at the idea of such a concession being made. I pointed out mildly that women and children were suffering on account of a shortage of food, but the idea did not upset him at all. He suggested that if the soldiers who had been fighting were asked their opinion, there would be no question of any weak-kneed policy.

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When I told him that General Plumer, then in command of the Army of Occupation, had telegraphed to the War Office that the British soldiers were giving away their rations to the Germans, he stamped on the floor, burst out with, "I don't believe a word of it—you're no better than a pro-German," and left the room!

It was then that I realised the power of false propaganda on the human mind, warping, distorting, poisoning with hatred, jealousy and fear till it was incapable of using any longer the divine gift of reason.

That is why the Press has such a heavy responsibility, and why changed journalists are a vital necessity. It is the way in which news is presented that makes the vital difference—the news may be the same, but in one newspaper it may be poison, engendering hatred, in another it may be the antidote. Not long ago there was a journalist whose messages about international affairs were circulated to a great number of papers throughout Europe, and because he had bitterness and hatred in his own life, all his messages were tinged in the same way. He met the Oxford Group, was changed, was freed from the bondage of bitterness and hatred, and in consequence his mes-

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sages became instruments for creating understanding instead of hatred. A source of infection for evil was turned into a force for Christ. Honesty and goodwill are as infectious as resentment and suspicion.

Finally, in International life, what will be the incentive of nations and for what ends will they compete? Surely it must be how best can the nation serve the world?

Recently a little Norwegian cargo steamer was in grave danger; her rudder was smashed, her lifeboats had been carried away, the cargo had shifted dangerously, she was waterlogged. Ships of four other nations steamed at top speed to her rescue. Working together, sheltering each other and the battered ship, they effected a rescue, and of the crew all but one were brought to safety. It was a German ship that launched the life-boat, and German sailors whose gallantry and skill enabled them to accomplish an almost superhuman task. A thrill went round the world when news of the deed was known, and not a few thoughts went back by way of contrast to the events of eighteen years ago. How great a victory as compared with those, a victory of love and not of hate. Germany felt it too, and Herr Hitler in-

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terpreted the thoughts of his countrymen when he went by special train to meet the returning rescuers, and thanked the life-boat crew in the name of the German nation for their bravery.

* * * * *

This then is the message of the Oxford Group⁻¹ for International life—that to seek peace, to make peace or to keep the peace we need peacemakers, men and women, under God's control, at peace within themselves, a fellowship rising above the barriers of race and nation, an army of life-changers demonstrating the friendship of a new world order. This army of peace is being mobilised with all the self-sacrifice and demand for daring in the work of reconstruction that was ever asked for in a bloody war of hatred and destruction. This is the army which is capturing the imagination of youth.

The Oxford Group has no subscription, no badge, no axe to grind. It is a way of life, and anyone who is living in that way of life cannot help working for peace because the motive of his being will be love. It is changed men that the world needs, not merely changed opinions.

CHAPTER V

INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL LIFE

STAND at one of the barriers in Waterloo Station, and watch the faces of the men and women going to, or coming from, their work. You will arrive at one conclusion—there is something wrong with the world of business.

Man was not born to live a life of worry and anxiety, and the fact that so many men do this shows that there is something wrong, not with life, but with men.

What is the basis of all this activity? Men hurry backwards and forwards, very busy, with harassed faces and looks of preoccupation; what is it all about? Ask someone and he will reply: "What am I doing it for? Why, I'm earning my living, of course." Suppose one pursues the question a little farther: "What are you earning your living for?" If the man could get over his astonishment at such a question, he would probably reply that he was earning money so that he could live himself and sup-

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port his family. Presumably also the reason for supporting the family would be that, later on, each of the children should be able to earn a living and in turn support a family.

If this is all, it hardly seems worth while; all the fuss and bother, all the worry of life—for so little.

Has Christ got a message for the modern world of business and industry? "Perhaps," would have been my reply in 1933. Now I would say with certainty that it is because God has been left out of business that things have gone wrong and the world is in a mess.

A short time ago a special Committee of the Canadian Parliament was sitting in Ottawa considering various phases of modern business. Before this Commission the President of a leading Canadian Bakery gave evidence. He had been speaking about the changes that had been made in his business as a result of meeting the Oxford Group and the following is an extract from the official minutes.

Chairman: "But do you mean to say, Mr. M——, that you are mixing religion with business?"

Mr. M——: "Yes. Why not? We've tried

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everything else in the bakery business—and look at the business!”

As a business man myself, I know the importance of being practical, and you will find therefore that the things discussed here are those which have actually been put into practice and found to work.

First let me relate a story of a business deal that occurred when I was out in Mexico as manager of an oil company.

On one occasion there were two men trying to sell us the lease of a property for the sum of \$80,000. My chief geologist knew the property and reported that it was not worth anything like this amount. It did not seem as if the negotiations would lead to any result when, suddenly, these men went behind my back and cabled direct to our head office in London, with the result that one morning I received the following message:

“We have received the following cable from . . . and . . . (begins), ‘With reference to the . . . property your manager Foot agreed to purchase on your behalf for eighty thousand dollars (full stop) now he is trying to back out (full stop) kindly cable him instructions to complete deal’ (ends).”

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And now followed the comment from the head office:

“We do not know if this is true, but if you have passed your word on our behalf, whether it is in writing or not, you must see it through and we will back you up.”

Not a bad cable from the great Shell Royal-Dutch Company to their youngest manager.

Luckily I was able to produce copies of letters which showed that the accusation was quite untrue—and then, a few days later, we found that the men did not really own the oil rights in the property they were trying to sell—their title was bad.

“Whether it is in writing or not.” I know, of course, that there are many concerns where that standard holds, but would it be true of all? Now let us go a step further. Can we apply to all the transactions of our firm the standard of absolute honesty? Are we prepared to sit quiet and ask God to show us if any practice in our business code falls short of the absolute standard? It is an interesting experiment, and the past must be included as well as the present. A man in Canada made that experiment one day, and as a result he paid

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\$12,000 to the Customs. Some men in Norway started thinking things out in that way, after they were challenged by the Oxford Group Team and, a little later, various sums were repaid to the Tax Department in Oslo.

Mr. M—— put the methods of his bakery business to the test of absolute honesty, and found that there were no less than ten practices which could not stand up to this test, and consequently had to go.

Here is another illustration, taken this time from the world of advertising. Not long ago in one country a man was changed, and faced up to a certain practice in his advertising business which invited methods that were not absolutely honest. He persuaded his firm to supply invoices showing exactly how money entrusted to them had been spent, and this arrangement automatically checked dishonest methods; this one decision had far-reaching effects throughout the advertising business.

In one firm I know, there was a regular practice of sending out certain accounts in the hope that they would be paid a second time. If the fraud was discovered a standard type of letter would be sent, thanking the customer and assuring him that the mistake would certainly

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have been discovered at the quarterly audit. A friend of mine, a youngster of nineteen, who had been changed a few months previously, had guidance to discuss the matter with one of the directors. It meant risking his job but this novel method of double entry was stopped.

How many of those men whom we saw at Waterloo Station have that anxious, worried look because of something in their business life that is not absolutely honest? It may be something that happened in the past, and the fear is that it will some day be discovered; it may be something going on now, or it may be something projected for the future. Whatever it is, there is no possibility of making a start in this new life until it has been faced and restitution made.

And then we may begin to see business, not only as an opportunity for men and women to earn their living, but as a part of God's plan for the world.

Think of it for a moment. A man working in an office, co-operating with God, being used by Him to carry out His plan for the world. God, the senior Partner in the firm.

Does the idea seem fastastic? There are thousands of business men now, throughout the

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world, who regard their work in exactly that way. There are groups of business men, not only in London, but in New York, Paris, Johannesburg, Philadelphia, Edinburgh, Oslo, the Hague, Zurich, Capetown, Montreal, Shanghai, Vancouver, and hundreds of other cities in forty different countries, groups of business men who meet to ask God to show them the solution to their problems. They are men who have faced those four standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, love, first of all in their personal lives and then in their business.

What is the result of this on a firm's relations with rival firms? Here are a few of the things that have happened recently; some of them very surprising, when judged by ordinary human standards, but not at all unusual when the test applied is the standard of Christ. A brush manufacturer discovered a new way of making brushes, so that the cost of manufacture was greatly reduced. He promptly passed on the reduction to the consumer and lowered prices to the extent the saving justified. A rival manufacturer, imagining that this was just a competitive move, came to complain that he would be ruined if price-cutting continued.

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When he realised that it was a new process that had made the difference to the cost of manufacture, he promptly suggested that the price should be kept at the former level, pointing out the extra profit that would be made on each brush. In a Quiet Time with some changed members of his staff, it came to the first manufacturer that he should share with his rival the secret of the new process that had effected such a striking saving in manufacturing costs. The rival was invited to come and inspect the process, put it into operation in his own factory, and the consumer again benefited by the reduction in price which followed the reduction in costs.

Quixotic behaviour? Possibly; yet I venture to prophesy that within the next few years such co-operation as that will be common instead of rare. Here is something that happened quite recently in a manufacturing town in England. A certain factory, already working full time, was offered another contract at a time when their rivals had not enough work to keep all their men employed. Guidance came that they should refuse the contract, but suggest that it should be offered to their rivals, and this policy was carried out. On any other

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basis than that of listening to God the first factory might have worked overtime and taken the opportunity to freeze out a dangerous rival.

There may be less profit in the guided business, there may be more; but certainly there is peace of mind and hope of progress.

Co-operation instead of insensate competition—is it an impossible dream? Well, up and down England, and throughout many other countries in the world, this policy is actually being put into operation. The world has worshipped competition for so long that such ideas seem revolutionary, but the Oxford Group has shown that false gods and old fetishes can be cast down as soon as men and women begin to put themselves under the direction of God.

“Competition makes for efficiency,” is a popular idea. Is it true efficiency? Certainly competition is responsible for many of the evils at present common in our industrial and commercial life—such things as bribery, spying, suspicion, sharp practices, false weights, adulteration of goods, all come directly from competition fostered by greed in man.

One sees in the creation of recent organisa-

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tions that modern business developments are in the direction of a new motive in our industrial life, the motive of service to the community instead of the drive of competition. More and more, people are beginning to realise that competition, as it has developed in the modern world, is poisoning life, fostering a spirit of hatred, breeding a spirit of fear and suspicion, and within itself producing the seeds of decay.

One sees this, moreover, if one turns to other branches of human activity. It is competition that is responsible for trade restrictions that breed strife; it is competition that brings futile rivalry in society, so that even children's parties may be spoilt by the desire of hostesses to outdo each other; while in some parts of the world the competition of rival churches has brought the name of Christianity into contempt.

I believe that before long we shall see clearly that if this modern civilisation is to continue it will depend in the future on whether we choose co-operation or competition; a spirit of service or a policy of grab.

It was along these lines that a manufacturer settled two problems last year. The rival works had a breakdown owing to some technical fault, and they had to cease work. The manager of

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the other factory, in the course of a Quiet Time with his foreman, was guided to go with him to assist his rival in putting things right, so that the factory could be started again. On another occasion, this manufacturer was guided to offer his services to settle a strike in the rival factory.

Here, then, we have a challenge for the twentieth century, echoed again by the Oxford Group for the world. Our job, whether it be in business or society, is to serve the world as God shall direct.

And now let us consider the new relationship between employer and employee. Of course, we will assume that every employer feels some responsibility for those working under him; during working hours every day his word is law, and his influence on the employee must inevitably be very great. But though he feels responsibility, how far does the feeling extend? Does it extend to a consideration of whether the people under him are underpaid? What is the criterion for the wage scale? A forewoman, working in a factory, was changed and went to her employer, not to complain about her own salary, but to tell him that some of the girls in her department were underpaid.

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She knew she was risking her job, but instead of sacking her, the employer got out the wage book and raised the wages of ten girls at once. Recently the same forewoman refused to work her girls overtime without pay, and said that she would rather resign. The result was that she got permission to engage another girl to do the extra work and avoid the necessity for overtime.

When a man is changed and his life becomes God-directed, then his attitude towards the business or factory becomes one of stewardship. Moreover, the employer will feel a sense of stewardship not only with regard to what his firm produces, but also for the people he employs. A few years ago the owner of a tweed-mill was facing the alternatives of selling his business and retiring on the proceeds, or putting more money in and accepting the responsibility in the bad times that lay ahead. He chose the latter and moved with his wife into one of the workmen's houses to live when the depression started. One of the results of listening to God in that business was that all of the three hundred employees were kept on right through the depression. Another man, a City councillor, the head of a business with an

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international reputation, attended a House Party, and was so struck with what he found there that he returned next week-end with two car-loads of his employees. His business is now run under guidance. The chairman has witnessed to the fact that, working with his employees on this basis, although he is well past fifty, he has been given a new lease of life. New efficiency in their work and a new spirit of co-operation among the employees have been other results.

Picture business life with no barriers between manager and staff, where any employee is allowed to challenge any of the practices of the firm that do not accord with Christ's standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. These things are actually happening in business to-day, through groups of efficient, practical people meeting regularly to seek the guidance of God for business.

A year and a half ago I would not have believed that; now I have met the men who are doing it, and who are finding that God can guide a business as well as create a world. As the head of a firm said the other day at a meeting for business men, "We wish to see the Holy Spirit as Chairman of every Board of Directors,

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controller of every asset, author of every transaction and auditor of every Balance-Sheet."

Here is evidence of the result in the words of one of the leading poultry farmers in the South of England:

"In less than a year, on the basis of putting God first, I have found the solution to business worries and pessimism. In the sphere of agriculture, conditions are no different than they were before I was changed. But the acquisition of a new quality of life has resulted in a revaluation of business standards. Beginning with my employees on a sharing basis, both spiritual and material, master and men working as a team, have developed a policy founded on mutual trust and fellowship, resulting in enhanced efficiency and loyalty. Our motto could be said to be: 'God's Guidance as a basis for sound business.' The wide gap between employer and employee will only be bridged by a co-operation promoted by the fundamental teaching of Christianity—when masters and men obtain that peace of mind and freedom from worry, and the courage to share together the responsibilities of business life."

It is a very natural question for the employer to ask, how does getting changed affect the employee in the detailed routine of his work.

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Well, here are some of the things that were cut out of the lives of employees when they were changed; every employer will recognise some of them as among the minor problems with which he has to deal in his own office:—

Doing work in a slipshod way.

Jealousy of other employees, leading to friction and inefficiency.

Selling information about the business to rival firms.

Cheating in expense accounts.

Charging as overtime periods spent not on the firm's business.

Taking bribes in order to influence business.

Stealing the firm's notepaper, india-rubber, pencils, etc.

Arriving late in the morning, slipping away early in the evening.

Reading novels concealed in desk.

Wasting time smoking in the corridor.

Slipping out for a drink at odd times during the day.

Spending part of the morning in arranging bets on races.

Spending part of the afternoon with newspapers to find out which horses won the races.

These are the ordinary things, of which some or all happen in every office. Some of them may

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seem trivial and yet, as any employer knows, they indicate tendencies that may have serious results for the business. It is not uncommon for firms to find that goods, sometimes articles awaiting sale, disappear in a mysterious way; indeed, some firms in London spend hundreds of pounds every year paying detectives to watch their employees. One man in Canada, when he was charged, had to confess that he had completely tiled the bathroom in his house with the stolen products of his own firm!

Then there is the common question of jealousy and friction between the sales force and the factory. It seems almost impossible to prevent bad feeling, each party blaming the other when things go wrong. It seems sometimes as if each side of the business wants to score off the other, so that it becomes a matter of professional pride to be able to boast: "Yes, I got the works to do this job three days ahead of the time they quoted"—quite oblivious of the fact that the works' programme may have been completely thrown out of gear by unnecessary insistence on the urgency of a job.

All these are things that poison the atmosphere of an organisation, destroy good feeling,

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prevent team work, and waste energy unnecessarily. They are the first things to disappear when lives are changed.

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The Oxford Group's message for Industry is helping to bring about a new quality of life in offices all over the world. This is not some vague illusory dream that might come true in a hundred years' time; it is actually working out in hundreds of business houses to-day. There is new hope for business on this basis, and new hope both for employer and employee. And as the message spreads one sees, sometimes quite suddenly, the disappearance of dishonesty and subterfuge that poison life, of fear that paralyses life, of jealousy that cramps life and of lethargy that causes life to stagnate.

Instead of these things we have a new basic idea—God working out His purpose through the lives of men and women surrendered to His will, and the great machine of industrial and business life working smoothly and efficiently for the betterment of mankind.

CHAPTER VI

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Reporter: And now, Mr. Life-Changer, I shall be grateful if you will tell me whether the Oxford Group has any social message?

L.-C.: Matthew v.

Reporter: Really; that is most interesting. I will look it up when I get back to the office. In the meantime I am sure that our readers would be very interested to have the views of the Oxford Group on certain specific problems. For instance, to what do you attribute the present economic depression, with its terrible results in unemployment?

L.-C.: Sin.

Reporter: Is that so? We don't often mention the subject so openly as that in the paper, but it would certainly make a good headline. May I ask you another question? What do you think is the real cause of the social unrest that seems to be leading inevitably towards a class war?

L.-C.: Just sin.

Reporter: Dear me. Now let me press this point a little bit further. Do you regard the

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upper or the lower classes as primarily to blame; that is to say, to whom specifically do you attribute the sin that is responsible for the present state of affairs?

L.-C.: To me and to you.

Reporter: Good gracious; this is most disturbing. How do you suggest that we may arrive at a solution of these difficult social problems?

L.-C.: Through changed lives.

Sin is anything that separates individuals from God or from one another.

The message of the Oxford Group is that each individual is the social problem; that in so far as he has failed to get clear in his own life from the bondage of snobbery, acquisitiveness and exclusiveness, so far is he part of the disease from which our social life is suffering.

On the other hand, once freed from this bondage he can become part of the cure which will provide a new and higher life for all of us.

In the Oxford Group we have seen how men with this new quality of life create new social relationships. New standards of life appear and thus changed lives lead to changed social life.

Here is an illustration quoted in the words of a friend of mine:—

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"I am the owner of some houses in the north of England, in an industrial district which to me was ugly, dirty, dull and uninteresting, and with whose people I found little in common. I therefore rarely went there. A few months ago, when listening to God, I was shown the sin of my indifference, and I was told to go there in order to get to know my tenants and to take a personal interest in their houses. Some of the people did not even know who their landlord was.

"I have a vision now for every landlord and tenant up and down England, not only knowing each other, but working together on a life-changing basis and taking responsibility for solving the many problems of housing."

When people are changed they begin to look out on life with a new kind of vision and see things that they had never perceived before, because they had not looked for them. An owner of property down in the South of England, living a placid contented life with her three children, came into contact with the Group and something happened to her. She found Christ and began to see life with a different vision, looking at things as He would have looked at them, Who came; "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives."

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She had guidance to go and see the occupants of one of the cottages on her property and found that she was the owner of a slum. The result of guidance was that the owner sold out capital to pay for the rebuilding of the cottages, keeping many of the villagers employed throughout the winter.

The political revolutionary aims at getting rid of the people who are in charge of the present system as a preliminary to changing the system. The Oxford Group has an aim that is even more revolutionary; it is nothing less than a complete change in individuals, so that they become powerful allies in changing the system.

Here is what a former Communist says:—

“I am a World Revolutionary: I have been one for thirteen years and have lived, suffered and worked for it; I have lost name, position, and sacrificed my economic security for it. Now I am a Revolutionary for Christ.

“Twice I have been in Oxford. Two years ago, I entered it with my wife, pushing a perambulator with three children, and slept in the workhouse that night. This time I came down as a member of the Oxford Group House Party, my life really changed, ready to go anywhere, do anything, suffer anything for Christ

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and for the World revolution that will bring His Kingdom here.”

There is now growing up a body of men, drawn from all sections of the community, who are above class; they are convinced that the force of God's love, when it is allowed to be effective and infectious in one's personal life, is stronger than physical force, and is in any case the only intelligent answer to world problems.

Any political theory is “dope” if it does not take count of the primary factor in the world situation. Political theorists may face the facts of economic and international breakdown, but theirs is a quack cure so long as they fail to take into account God's very existence. The only solution lies in His power to change lives and give intelligent guidance to national leaders in all spheres of life.

It may be that the solution of the economic problem will involve monetary reform, the removal of trade barriers, a greater measure of industrial co-operation, a redistribution of wealth, or some combination of these remedies. God alone knows, and He has His own planned economy; but one thing is certain. Changed lives alone are producing the spirit in which

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these remedies can be put into operation.

But in the meanwhile, waiting for the working out of this solution, we have the individual unemployed man. Has the Oxford Group any message for him? Listen to one of them, a young man not yet thirty, broadcasting at the end of February, 1935.

“When I first went to the Labour Exchange, I slunk in shamefacedly, wishing I were invisible, avoiding everybody’s glance. Now, I go in openly and unashamed, for it is not my fault I go there! I would work if I could. It is not my shame, it is the shame of the State and its system of civilisation that allows so much material, so much manhood, healthy, vigorous manhood, as fills the labour exchanges up and down the country, to grow up and grow old in idleness, losing its self-respect, eating its heart away, gnawing at the heart of the nation. I tried to get work, of course, and still do, but what a tragic, heart-breaking task it is. Rebuffs at factories, long waits with hundreds of others outside places where one or two jobs are available, no replies to letters; everlasting walking, waiting, writing, everlasting failure; it saps the spirit; it breaks the self-respect of the stoutest; it turns men gloomy, morose, bitter. I tell myself there are others much worse than I; there are. I am single. I try to imagine what a

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married man feels with a wife and family, living on a few shillings a week. He sees the world going luxury mad, with its motor-cars, aeroplanes, radios, fur coats and extravagant pageantry, while his children go to school ill-clad and ill-nourished, and he can see no relief. There are two million odd unemployed; add their wives, families and dependants and the total is probably one-fifth of our population. What is to become of them?

“Is it to be wondered at that I doubt the sanity and common justice of mankind when I read of goods and foodstuffs rotting in barns and warehouses, and even being destroyed.

“In every phase of life I see the same absurdities, cruelties and contradictions; a mad scramble after the false gods of money and power; a blind belief in the shattered principles of a bygone age, principles that cannot include, much less control, the vital, powerful and deadly forces of this new world. Science roars at us unleashed and unchecked from every street and building, making us luxuries we are unable to buy, sapping away our existence by hounding such as me out of work; raising our standard of living, but destroying the essence of our lives.

“Cannot two thousand years of civilisation produce anything better than this? Must we of my generation take over these conditions, as an inherited birthright, and carry them on in

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the same old way as best we can with their unemployment, fear, discord, science gone mad, with the people distressed and dazed, but mainly not comprehending? We live and have lived for so long in a world of greed, of self-seeking and of cruelty; surely it is time now that we realised that there is a greater God, a haven of peace and happiness for every person born on to the earth. I do believe the time is coming when this change will be not only possible but inevitable. It will be a change that must start and grow in the hearts of men themselves, and in their actions before it will affect the system under which they live.

“I believe this change has already started; I believe that many people, especially young people, are to-day looking towards the socialism of Christ, not only as an ideal, but as a longed-for reality; a reality where nation will speak unto nation, not over tariff walls, but over the planks of common interests and common progress, where the whole human race will be united in one brotherhood of goodwill.”

There is the vision of an unemployed man who sees a changed world brought about through a change in the hearts of men. Now let us turn to another unemployed man who has been working for nearly two years, being used by God to change lives and thus bring the vision nearer.

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This man has been a lecturer in History and Political Science in connection with a County Education Committee and he has recently been Chairman of the County Unemployed Association. He writes as follows:—

“I know from my own experience how long-continued unemployment destroys ambition, aspiration, self-respect, and produces a sense of frustration and hopelessness. To my mind, the most pressing problem to-day is not merely to get men back to work, but to help them to use their leisure in the most constructive way possible. If the country declared war, every able-bodied man and woman would be mobilised to see it through. There would be no unemployment. This is precisely what the Oxford Group are out to do. They have declared a spiritual world-war which offers to every man and woman instant enlistment and full-time employment. For myself I know that surrender to Jesus Christ solves the personal problem of frustration; my change enabled me to recapture a belief in the existence of God, it cleaned up my life and gave me release from habits of many years, with the result that I got a new perspective on life.

“I am convinced that the introduction of the Spirit of Jesus Christ into social and economic problems is the only hope the unemployed man has.

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“I have done research work in unemployment and have studied the subject in nine countries. My conclusions are that the problem is not only one of social need, but also of individual need; unemployment is more than a social disease, it is an expression of spiritual poverty as it may be a cause of spiritual decay.”

And now let us go to the East End of London. What happens when unemployed men are changed?

Here is one man who used to lie in bed until ten o'clock and kick his wife out to get his breakfast; he now gets up at six to light the fire and give her a cup of tea before meeting with his friends to listen to God.

A man who used to carry a knife intended for the Public Assistance Officer now walks several miles to change him.

The leader of an East End gang of illicit bookies, reported by the police as the toughest people in the district, is not only changed himself, but working with a team of the Oxford Group to help change his friends. This man's father was a paper-hanger; the son said that he would need a fourteen-foot roll of wallpaper on which to write out a list of his restitutions. The most difficult beginning for him was own-

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ing up to half-a-crown stolen from his mother.

An unemployed man's wife came along the other day and said to one of the team in East London that she was worried about her husband, who had been out of work for several years. Since he had been changed he had been working such long hours at life-changing that she was afraid he was not getting enough sleep.

The new sense of being employed when one is surrendered to God is one of the most important psychological factors in bringing back a man's self-respect. This is what one of them writes about himself:

"I used to be dirty, dilatory and lazy, because I had no hopeful outlook on life. When I gave my life to Christ I was guided to give up smoking, and my wife and I papered the kitchen with the money we saved in this way. I began to take more care of my personal appearance, and I saw it was no use clearing out the slums and putting people into new houses unless the atmosphere of the slums was taken out of their minds as well. I became good friends with my brother and we work together to change other lives, because we find that this is the solution to the problems of others as well as our own. Full time employment can be found when God

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is guiding, because all the hours you are awake you are looking for some one to help."

The international character of this experience is emphasised by the following statement by a Danish working man from Copenhagen, quoted in the *Berlingske Tidende*. In reply to a question as to whether he thought that the Oxford Group Movement would have social consequences, he said:

"Yes, decidedly, but don't take it that we have joined the Group for political reasons. One of our chief words is 'Sharing'; and that cannot mean merely conversations about spiritual matters, our personal defeats and victories. It must have a social application, and if we do not want that, all the talk about sharing is only a phrase. But let me make clear that the word 'sharing' has absolutely no connection with philanthropy or charity. We are not advocating that—but we do believe that the Group will bring the new spirit which is to succeed the spirit of Cain that allows a man to excuse himself and dismiss responsibility by saying 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Church people have often hidden behind some such phrase, and tried to escape the social implications inherent in Christianity."

The next question put to him was:—

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“What makes you sure that the spirit of the Group will accomplish this in Society?” To which he replied:

“When the Group can adjust all class-differences as completely as I have seen it do on a smaller scale, then, as it grips a larger part of the population, it can gradually develop into a united front in the cause of social justice. In this way that cause will become something other and more than a class struggle. For in this struggle for social justice which we are talking about, and which must advance through ‘changed lives,’ Christians of all ranks in society will pull together. Of course, it will be of the most benefit to those who are suffering from the present unjust conditions. As working men we do not weaken our cause by basing our demand for justice on ‘the great commandment of the Law.’”

“Do you mean that the class-war can be avoided?” was then asked, and the workman replied:

“We are not visionaries; we want to stick closely to the facts; but the man who insists that we must necessarily go through a destructive class-war in order to obtain justice is, in my opinion, off the track. Naturally, when you only see the development of Society in the light of economic law, you cannot come to any other

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conclusion—but more and more of us in the Labour world are coming to believe that there are other forces than the economic ones—we are beginning to reckon with God. We have gone as far as we possibly can by political means. Now it is high time that we gave the control into God's hands and devoted ourselves to achieving such thorough-going changes in Society as no revolution has hitherto been able to accomplish in any sense. If that does not happen then I, too, foresee a great social catastrophe as unavoidable.

“The Oxford Group emphasises strongly the individual's responsibility towards God and this may well take a firm hold upon the workers. At all events it comes at a time when there is a hunger for religion in the Danish labour world.”

The way in which municipal affairs are conducted may affect very materially the lives of thousands of men and women in towns and cities. Do we find it possible for Christ's standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love to be put into operation in that sphere of our social life?

Here is a telegram that was despatched in April last year to describe what happened in a city on the East Coast of Canada, as a result of a visit from the International Team :

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“Queue 100 yards long eagerly awaited admission meeting to-night. 4,000 people, including acting Premier packed two theatres and a church to hear miracles including among 50 speakers theatre manager, Mayor, wife and son, Mayor’s recent opponent in Mayoral election, leading surgeon, Provincial Director Vocational Education, prominent young and older business men and wives, former president Canadian Manufacturers’ Association, leading society hostess, younger athletic group, ministers all denominations. Mayor witnessed to deepest personal change and stated, ‘the spirit of this movement means clean, pure administration, civic, provincial and federal.’ ”

And this interest was not aroused by any emotional appeal sweeping through the city, but by plain matter-of-fact statements from men and women who had surrendered their lives to God and spoke of the victory that this surrender had brought. It is clear that the effect on the city administration must inevitably be to raise standards of civic life.

At a meeting held in February of this year the Mayor spoke of what had happened during the last ten months. The following is the report published in the *Montreal Witness*:—

“The Mayor expressed in unqualified terms

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his gratitude to the Oxford Group and his complete identification with all that it is. He had faced many difficulties during the past year in administering the city's affairs and he hesitated to think how he would have come through them if he had been without the directing hand of God and the fellowship of the Oxford Group. He had been given the power to face the arguments of opposing factions with no desire to strike back, and simply a readiness to express the facts fearlessly and without malice when the occasion required it. At a meeting in the evening the Mayor gave expression to the vision of a citizenry which lived on a basis of loyalty to God and to one another. He told how in his office he frequently prayed for guidance in the direction of civic affairs and how he realises that prayer and belief are greater forces than legislation or the force of arms. It was freely admitted by business men, that the life of the city has been noticeably changed since the visit of the International Team last year. In business relations, in church attendance and in the re-direction of individual lives, the power of God has been abroad in a vital way."

The Mayor of another city was recently elected by a record majority on a platform of the four standards. By a proclamation on January 2nd of this year the Mayor set aside

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the following Sunday as a day of "Service, humiliation and prayer," and invited all aldermen, civic department heads, legislators, judges and magistrates, all other persons in authority and all loyal and law-abiding people to assemble in their places of worship that day.

Bearing the heading "An Invitation for a Day of Prayer," the proclamation began as follows:—

"Our city is endowed with the choicest bounties of Heaven. We possess unbounded opportunities for unparalleled achievements and should be able to look forward with confidence that the years to come will be blessed with order, peace and progress. We have fallen upon evil days because we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which has preserved us in peace, and has multiplied, enriched and strengthened us in the past. We have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior system and virtue of our own.

"Intoxicated by the success of a purely material prosperity, we became too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of rendering and preserving grace; too proud to pray to the God who made us. It behoves us then to humble ourselves, to confess our civic sins and to pray

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for clemency and forgiveness. 7

“Because of these facts and the many requests I have received from those who devoutly recognise the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in the affairs of men and cities, and believing that it is the duty of cities as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the over-ruling power of God Almighty, and to recognise the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures, that those only are blessed whose God is the Lord. . . .”

Then, after the invitation to prayer there follows a passage in which the Mayor puts forward his vision for the city as:—

“A city of justice where none shall prey on others; a city of plenty where vice and poverty shall cease to fester; a city of brotherhood and happy homes, where all success shall be founded on service, and honour given to nobleness alone: a city of peace, where order shall not rest on force, but on the love of all for the city wherein we dwell.”

Can one picture all city administrations governed by the same spirit as these two cities? Is it an impossible dream? Certainly not; it is merely the result of changed lives among those directing civic affairs, lives which are God-centred.

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Finally, has the Oxford Group got any message which will break down class prejudice between people? Had Christ? His message is of all messages the one which provides the answer to the problems of snobbery, class-consciousness, pride of family, pride of place, pride of race, and other barriers of a similar nature that separate people from each other. His message is challenging, complete and effective, if only we will accept it without reserve—the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

I cannot do better than quote my own case. Before my change I was quite definitely a snob; there was a difference in my feelings and in my behaviour towards titled people and those without titles, bishops and those who were rank and file clergy, generals and subalterns, professors and undergraduates, headmasters and assistant-masters. Moreover, the difference in my attitude to these people was not a matter of the added respect due to age or experience. Not at all, it was merely a snobbish feeling that had as its root an anxiety to impress important people, and a feeling that certain people were better worth cultivating than others.

Now so long as a person has feelings like that he is not fully surrendered to God, whether

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he is a professor of divinity or an errand boy. Furthermore, I was class-conscious in that I was ashamed of the fact that my grandfather was a farmer, and I had a feeling of superiority which resulted in awkwardness if I was in the company of people whom I considered to be my social inferiors by birth or education or occupation. So long as I had feelings like this it was impossible to attach any reality to the idea of the Fatherhood of God or the Brotherhood of Man.

Foreigners, of course, and people of other races I simply regarded as inferior beings. In an expansive moment one might be anxious to do something for them, to help them along a bit towards the position that we had attained, but the idea of equality simply never entered my head. I was a mixture of pride, condescension, patronage and racial superiority.

Here, then, in myself were samples of all those things which go to make up barriers and lack of understanding between different classes in the community; multiply it by several millions and you have one of the world's most difficult problems.

And as a result of contact with the Oxford Group I and thousands like me have found a

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solution to the problem. These old prejudices have so nearly disappeared that it would be correct to say there has been a complete change in my reaction to these questions.

One of my pleasantest recollections of last year was a Quiet Time with a couple of stewards and some stokers in the baggage-room of s.s. *Europa* at 6.30 a.m. together with some other members of the Oxford Group team on our voyage out to Canada.

Thousands of other people have had a similar experience since being changed and in many households now it is the usual thing for the staff to join with the master and mistress in a Quiet Time every morning. On one occasion recently while I was staying with some friends the Quiet Time was led by a young housemaid who did it most naturally. Why not? There are some households where the first person to be changed was the cook, and as a result of that the whole of the family and the staff have been changed also.

* * * * *

When God directs social and civic life a new quality of friendship draws mankind together; we learn the art of living above the differences

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of class and education. More than this, these very differences cease to be barriers and provide the richness of diversity so essential for society.

A new World is emerging—it has been foreseen. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

CHAPTER VII

EDUCATION

WHAT part can, and ought, Education to play in helping towards a solution of the world's dilemma? Clearly education has triumphed in developing man's intellect; has it failed in its attempts to free man's moral nature from bondage? Has education attempted the task? Undoubtedly; and with much greater persistence in the last few years. In many ways also real advance has been made, but I am convinced that we have not yet got to the heart of the problem. We realise that the task of education is to teach boys and girls what life is, and to show them how to live it. So far as I was concerned, however, I was merely groping towards a realisation of the significance of life; and I could not find it until I myself had learnt how to live.

Let me say at once, therefore, that the key to the situation lies in the teacher. So long as I had fear in my own life I could not possibly

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show a boy how to get victory over fear. While I could, and frequently did, help boys towards the control of themselves in the area of impurity, I could not speak with certainty of the way to complete victory so long as I was defeated in that area myself. How could I really be doing my job as Careers Master, even though it appeared successful, so long as I was not clear as to the ultimate purpose of life itself?

Now I can say quite definitely that I have found through the Oxford Group, not only the answer to my own personal problems, but also the solution to those educational problems with which I have been wrestling for so many years.

Looking round the world one finds mankind largely controlled by fear, and suffering from a wastage of effort due to lack of a definite purpose. Do we find the same at School? Certainly we do; fear and futility are the twin devils of adolescence no less than of grown-up life. More than that, we can in many cases trace quite clearly the psychological beginnings of a man's emotional conflicts; they began in childhood, either in the home or in the school.

The message of the Oxford Group for educa-

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tion is simple, practical, definite, and capable of universal application. Let me illustrate it by a story.

There was at a Public School a boy, aged about eighteen, a School Prefect, in the 1st XV. and 1st XI, strong, well built, and with an excellent character. He was due to go to the University in a few months' time and to all appearances his future was assured. Unfortunately this boy was a prey to fears and doubts about himself that were sapping his confidence and, unless overcome, were liable to poison his whole life. He had fears about his health, anxiety about his mental capability, and mistrust of whether he would be able to tackle the career that lay before him. Moreover, these fears were getting worse. The boy went to the School Doctor and said he was afraid there might be something wrong with his heart—a fear that examination proved to be absolutely groundless. Then he became anxious about tubercular trouble and in conversation with the Matron admitted that he was afraid of it because a relative had suffered from that disease.

Finally the boy suggested to the Housemaster that it would be better to go for an Ordinary Degree at the University, as he was

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afraid he would not be good enough for Honours.

The School Doctor, the Matron and the Housemaster were all very concerned about the boy and were considering what action they ought to take, when the problem was solved. An Archdeacon, who had recently been in touch with the Group, came to the School Chapel to preach one Sunday evening. The subject of the sermon was that God had a plan for each one of us, that real life began when we surrendered our wills to God and started to carry out the plan which He could show us.

The following evening the Housemaster sent for the boy in question to have a talk. They were discussing the problem of the fears and worries from which the boy was suffering when the Housemaster asked him suddenly, "What did you think of the sermon last night?" The boy replied that he thought it was the best sermon he had ever heard and then added, "Rather a queer thing happened last night. After Chapel I went away by myself and sat quiet to listen to God."

"What was the result?" asked the Housemaster.

"It was rather remarkable," replied the boy.

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"A message came and I wrote it down. Would you like to see it?" he went on, and out of his pocket he pulled a piece of paper. With the boy's permission the Housemaster made a copy—here it is, exactly as the boy wrote it down, except that the names are left blank:

"GOD is the WAY the TRUTH and the LIFE.

"God has shown me the way. He would not plan that I go to . . . and . . . if He did not think I could carry it out. God will be constant to me. I will do my best to carry out His plans. He has shown me His life—let me follow it.

"He would not have shown me this plan if He knew that I was not destined to lead it. Therefore I shall not accomplish His object if I succumb through accident or disease. It is His will that I should live and I shall live to carry out His will. Only have Faith."

Here was the result of an initial experiment in listening to God. A few weeks later the Housemaster asked the boy, "By the way, what about all those nervous fears about your health; how is that getting on?"

"Good gracious!" replied the boy, "I clean forgot about them."

I believe that listening to God is the most

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natural, sensible and practical thing that any man can do; and unless education teaches a boy that, then education has failed in an essential task.

Here is another story, which not only illustrates the principle of guidance, but also that of sharing, which, of course, is only another name for being honest.

It was the same boy, now "Head" of the house. He came to the Housemaster one evening to say that there was a lot of swearing going on in the House, and he was proposing to take some steps to stop it. The Housemaster suggested that they should sit down and try to think out the reason for the outbreak of bad language. After a time of quiet a certain thought came to the Housemaster; but in view of the boy's superlatively good character he hesitated to share it with him. "What came to you?" he asked instead. "Well, sir," replied the boy, "the thought that came to me was that I was somewhat to blame."

"That came to me also. Is it true?" said the Housemaster.

"Well, yes, I'm afraid I have been rather

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slack about it," and then the boy added naïvely, "I've generally been careful that there shouldn't be anyone else except the other two prefects in the study when I let out an oath."

The boy went off with a caution from the Housemaster that in whatever steps he took in the matter he should be absolutely honest with the rest of the House.

Now the kind of thing that usually happens in a case like this is that after Prayers one evening, when the Housemaster has gone, the Head of the House addresses the boys along the following lines:

"There's been a lot too much swearing going on lately. It gets the House a bad name and it's jolly well got to stop. In future, any offender will be severely dealt with."

On this occasion the Head of the House made quite a different speech. He said: "I want to apologise to the House, as I'm afraid I've rather let you down about swearing." He then went on to explain why swearing is rather a silly habit, and ended up with: "I've been rather slack about this in the past, but I've made up my mind to chuck it, and I hope that everybody else in the House will do the same."

The effect on the boys in the House was

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electrical; probably a greater effect than had been produced on any previous occasion as a result of a speech from the Head of the House. Swearing stopped completely, even in the case of a boy who had been notorious for his bad language. On the following day this boy dropped a case of type which he had just finished laboriously setting up for the school printing machine. The type was completely scattered, and one can think of few things more annoying; but the boy remembered—no outburst followed.

That was a case of a boy sharing honestly with other boys. Here is an illustration of the value of a Master sharing with a boy.

The boy was quite a youngster and had been less than a year in the School. He was very small, a plucky footballer and everything was going quite well except that every now and again he seemed to be trying to get a reputation as a dare-devil. Masters reported that he was obstreperous in Form, would throw things about, was cheeky and inclined to be a serious nuisance. His half-term report showed clearly that something was wrong. The Prefects reported the same; the boy appeared anxious to be known as a "tough customer." And yet the

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Housemaster was sure that this was not the boy's true character. On the contrary, his view was that underlying all this obstreperousness was a boy who by nature was rather nervous. He became convinced that the boy's behaviour was, consciously or unconsciously, due to some hidden fear that the boy was anxious to conceal.

A talk with the Matron confirmed this opinion and also provided the valuable clue as to what the special fear might be. From certain things that she had noticed during his first term, the Matron thought that the boy was afraid of being ill. Now what should the Housemaster do next? The only way to get release from that fear was for the boy to share it by expressing it out aloud. But with youth the greatest fear of all is that one should be thought to be afraid. Challenge the boy with such a fear and he would deny it indignantly, with the natural result that the fear would be repressed more deeply. Leave that fear to grow and fester and there is a danger that later on in life there will be some quite dangerous result. No doubt some medical treatment on psycho-analytical lines might clear up the matter, but that is certainly to be avoided except when the case is really serious. The release from a bondage of

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that kind is also more effective if the boy can get it off his chest to somebody with whom he is in real sympathy. How is it to be done?

Here is what happened in this particular case by the application of the principle of sharing.

The Housemaster sent for the boy and, seated in a couple of easy chairs, they started talking in friendly fashion about the boy's career. A little later the Housemaster turned the conversation round to the subject of childish fears. "I remember," he said reflectively, "that when I was about your age, or a little younger, I was terrified of heights. There was one occasion in the Isle of Wight when we were walking along a path at the side of a cliff. There was no real danger, as the path was over a yard wide, but there was a pretty steep drop, and for some reason this fear came over me. I was completely overcome and crouched on the path, panic-stricken, unable to move either forward or back. I had to be carried."

He went on to speak of another of his childhood fears, and then remarked casually: "I wonder if boys have fears of this kind nowadays."

There was a pause: "Well, you know, sir . . . I'm sometimes rather afraid of being ill!"

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Out it all came; the boy's father was a doctor and the fear had started some years before but it had been bottled up completely ever since. Moreover, the Housemaster was able to relate this old fear to the present unsatisfactory conduct, and the boy realised the reason why he behaved sometimes in an unnatural way. It was interesting to note the amazing difference between that boy's report at the end of the term and the one he had been given at half-term.

I believe that the whole basis of education in the future will be one of sharing. The Schoolmaster on the pedestal will have to go, not much of a loss; and there will develop a new relationship between master and boy, in which they are together learning from God the Holy Spirit, Who is the great Teacher. The master will be sharing his life, intellectual and spiritual, with the boy as he develops, step by step with complete honesty and openness.

A year ago, when I began facing up to these things on the basis of absolute honesty, I realised that my sins as a schoolmaster were exactly the same as the sins of the boys. It was only a few weeks ago, however, that I realised that I had not gone far enough in my

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thinking. I was discussing the subject with a young undergraduate at Oxford when he remarked: "Yes, that is true enough, but you have got it the wrong way round. You should say that the sins of the boys are the sins of the schoolmasters."

Alas! it is true; at any rate, it was in my case; and when one gets talking honestly with boys one finds they knew it all the time. Have I never gone into Form with my lesson not properly prepared? yet I was liable to be angry with a boy if he had not done his prep. Have I never had to ask the senior mathematical master to show me how to do a problem, and then given the solution as if it were my own? and yet woe-betide the boy who got assistance from another without reporting it. Have I never pretended that I knew something that I did not really know? yet such a thing from a boy would be most reprehensible. How unsatisfactory a state of affairs when there is a feud between the boys of different houses; yet how often have I been jealous of another house-master!

But all the time some of the boys, and some of the time all the boys, know all there is to know about us, and suspect much more!

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There is a good story of the Headmaster of a Preparatory School, taking a form of small boys in geography, a subject in which he was weak himself. There was a map of Australia on the wall, and he told a small boy to go to it and point out Sydney. As soon as he had asked this question the Headmaster realised that he himself did not know the exact location of Sydney. He scanned the map anxiously, and luckily spotted the place just before the boy caught sight of it; then he proceeded to reprove the boy for having taken so long to find it. A moment later his new standard of absolute honesty came to his mind, and he at once told the class that he had not himself known where the place was. A small boy at the back of the class put up his hand. "Please, sir," he piped up, "I saw you looking for it."

Now all schoolmasters have not got the same sins, nor have all boys. But what a responsibility is ours who are in contact with these boys for so much of the early years.

If education is to play its part in building a world fit to live in, then I suggest that we must begin to apply more drastic standards to ourselves; absolute honesty, absolute purity, abso-

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lute unselfishness, absolute love. It is, however, by listening to God that we shall see where to begin, and I am convinced that this is the basis of all education. One listens, guidance comes, and then action must follow; that is why writing it down is such a help, and telling someone else about it helps still further.

An emotional uplift as a result of a sermon is positively harmful to a boy unless some action follows. Impression without expression leads to depression. It is necessary to spend time listening to God, asking Him what we ought to do about it.

I look forward to the time when the Chapel services in all our schools will include a time of listening to God, and when it should be as natural for a boy to write down his guidance as to take notes in the classroom. It is only then that we shall get clear of the introspection, so common among modern boys, that leads to no action, but results in a dangerous form of morbid self-pity. God is practical; He wants us to do things, and when we have done one thing He will show us the next.

Real life is doing God's will, and education must show a boy what life is; its task therefore is to put the boy in touch with God.

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As this message begins to penetrate into education it is possible to see more and more clearly how freedom from bondage comes. I saw it in Canada, where I had an opportunity, not only of studying the immediate effect of accepting Christ's whole message, but also of observing the after results in those who had accepted it when the team first visited Canada in 1932. The evidence was overwhelming; release from fear, and freedom from a sense of futility were the most noticeable of the primary results; but the secondary results were even more striking. We had the evidence of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, school-teachers, University professors and their pupils, young and old, who testified to victory in their personal lives, improved home and family relations, a new harmony in the school, higher standards of conduct in school life, valuable influences at work in the Universities; in fact, what one might expect as the fruits of the Spirit.

I have suggested that listening to God should be an essential part of the ordinary routine of educational life; but it is even more essential when a crisis comes. The shock of a sudden bereavement, if not dealt with by the great Physician, may leave a scar that never dis-

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appears. It is in times like these that God can be very near, and if we listen He can show us what to do and say. One last story will illustrate this.

On a certain Saturday a boy had his fourteenth birthday. He was at school at the time and his father was away on a voyage. The father sent the boy a cable of congratulations; it was almost the last thing he did before being taken seriously ill; forty-eight hours later he was dead.

The boy's home was separated from the School by more than half the length of England. His mother telephoned to the Housemaster asking him to break the news to the boy. Together, Housemaster and boy prayed that God would show them what to do, and together they listened for the answer. To the boy came the thought that he must do everything his father would have wanted him to do, and now he would have to look after his mother. To the Housemaster, guidance came that the boy should write to his mother before he went to bed. He did so, and that letter is one of his mother's most precious possessions; it began:

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Dear Mummy,

I am writing to encourage you.

That night at 2.30 a.m. the Housemaster woke with the feeling that God had some message for him. He listened, and this thought came—he wrote it down :

“Send for the boy after breakfast and say, ‘Now, old chap, you’ve got to go out and face the world, but with courage and head held high. Just because of what has happened, a bit more courageous, a bit more ready to tackle your work, a bit more ready to go hard at work and games ; and a bit more ready to look around and help somebody else.’”

It was while he was saying this to the boy that the Housemaster realised how essential those few words were, and how difficult is that task of facing the world again when one of the props of your own world has fallen. To go into Form, to meet other boys, to play games—and all the time the thought: “My father is dead.” But that was what the boy felt his father would have wanted him to do—to face the world courageously, and that is what he did. Surely a crisis so faced becomes an asset, not a

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liability. That boy is stronger, braver and more determined, and that result is clearly shown by the way in which he now faces life. More than that, his real education has begun; life has disclosed to him one of its secrets; he has come face to face with God.

* * * * *

Finally, if it is the task of education to liberate from bondage, let us ask ourselves what is the task for which we set youth free? Is it an easy time for which youth asks? No, not when he has found the answer to his fear and greed. Youth asks for a task that takes the whole of him, something for which he can sacrifice everything—that is what Lenin, Mussolini and Hitler have proved. No easy road, no sheltered path, but really new worlds to conquer. How often have I said in the past about our system of education. “We realise its defects, but unfortunately we have to train our boys for the world as it is, and not for the world as we would have it be.” I see now that is nonsense. The real task of education is not to train boys and girls to fit into the world as it exists to-day; it is to train them to build the world anew. That is the great task that is waiting; to co-operate

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with God and to ask God to make us fit for Him to use.

Throughout the world the Oxford Group has been demonstrating the way that this is done; thousands of men and women now are doing it. Education must be His instrument. But the task begins with us, the teachers—that warning is urgent, insistent, definite. What a wealth of material is there, available in the teaching profession; the idealism that is the background of so many masters' lives; the capacity for self-sacrifice, the sympathy, the unselfishness, the love. All these are there, and more than these, waiting for God to use. One thing remains, complete dedication. If that lacks, all lacks. It is we who must first surrender our wills to Him; ask Christ to apply to us His standards and show us where we fail, rid us of fear, greed, anger, anxiety and lust, so that we may be free to listen for His voice.

CHAPTER VIII

FAMILY LIFE

WHY do marriages fail?

A man schemes and works and saves till at last he can afford to marry. Married life starts for him in bliss, goes on with tolerance and finishes with disaster. Why? As a bachelor, greatly daring, I am going to suggest a common cause of failure.

There are certain things about which the husband is not open with his wife, and certain things about which she is not open with him. Sometimes not tragic, important things, that might justify the divorce court, but little silly things that happen every day—little prejudices, slight resentments, small concealments, a drawer kept locked, petty jealousies, thoughts that exist but are not shared. These are the things on which the barque of marriage founders; these are the beginnings from which estrangement grows. Two lives grow up together, to all appearances in harmony. Their

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friends and neighbours regard them as a happy married couple—in fact they so regard themselves, though somehow they find they are not getting quite the happiness they expected out of married life. Outwardly they are one, inwardly they are living separate lives. The unreality grows until all their relationship is false, and then the crash comes. . . . Who would have believed it? says the world. Another disaster; husband, wife and children with a broken home.

Consider another instance. By a process of intellectual reasoning the husband knows quite well that there is no need to be jealous of the man with whom his wife was playing golf. He knows also that if he asks about the golf in a certain way, using a certain tone of voice, his wife will be annoyed, their evening will be spoilt, and seeds of jealousy and resentment may be sown that will bear disastrous fruit later on. And yet he does it. All his thinking faculties warn him of the danger, and yet he does it.

In the same way the tone of voice in which he asks for coffee at breakfast, the way he shuts the door, his quickness in switching on the wireless, stupid little things like these are the

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result of impulses that are not under control; there is no connection between the husband's intellectual conception of the harmony and love which should govern their married life, and what actually happens every day.

I have suggested that the tragedies of separation and divorce are the result of these little actions, and God knows there are enough of these fatalities nowadays. But the list of divorces in the newspaper only tells one fraction of the story. For every case that ends in that column there are hundreds of men and women who just avoid it. They live on together, united yet estranged, conversing with their lips but not with their hearts, keeping together for the sake of the children, leading muddled, fruitless, ineffective lives.

Parents and children, as the latter grow up, present us in modern life with another picture of make-believe. The only son, outwardly loving to his mother, the grown-up daughter submissive on the surface to her life at home, the father, fearful lest his children should suspect the life he leads. An unreality of relationship, a pretence, a sham, a fog that covers thought, an imposture of which each may suspect, but dares not speak.

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"Did you have a good time last night?" asks the fond mother, thinking of the elderly clergyman her son had told her he was visiting.

"Oh, quite good, thanks," replies the son, with memories of a baccarat party about which his mother must not know.

"Would you like to read to your father tonight, darling?" asks the mother of her daughter, whose life has been sacrificed to looking after them. "Very much," replies the elderly spinster, with her thoughts boiling within. Unreality, make-believe, dishonesty of thought and intercourse; how can we get rid of these in family life?

Now I am going to make a revolutionary suggestion. It is that if a family wants to live together in harmony then there must be absolute honesty in the home.

"Is that all?" you ask. "There's nothing very revolutionary about that. We are always honest with each other in our family." But, please wait a moment—I suggested *absolute* honesty. Are you sure about it?

Have you heard the story of the newly married couple starting on their honeymoon? The bridegroom preferred to face towards the engine, but he dutifully asked his wife on which

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side of the railway-carriage she would like to sit. Now the bride always travelled with her back to the engine, but for some reason she had got the mistaken idea that her husband preferred that side. Feeling very noble and newly-wed, therefore, she thought she would sacrifice her own feelings for the sake of her husband's comfort, and chose to face the engine. He sat on the other side and felt nobly uncomfortable in having given way to his wife. And so they travelled like that for the whole of the rest of their lives, each suffering martyrdom for the sake of the other, all the result of an unselfish deed that was not absolutely honest.

As a matter of fact, it is clear that the story is quite untrue, since the newly-wed always sit next each other in railway-carriages, but it illustrates the point.

Husbands and wives, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters. What is your standard of honesty? Is it an absolute one? Is the honesty absolute with regard to motives? "Why were you late from School?" I remember my twin brother and me being asked when we were about ten years old. "Oh, we were late in being let out of School," we replied. It was true, we had been kept back for a couple of

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minutes by the Master. But the real reason why we had been late was that we had wasted nearly half an hour on the way home by stopping to play cribbage with some cabmen in their shelter.

"My children tell me everything," says the proud parent. Do they? Ask the children.

A youngster aged nineteen had breakfast with me a short time ago. He told me his story so far as it concerned his relations with his family.

He hated School, but never said a word about that at home. He was no good at games, and hated them, but he kept that secret to himself. He had no friends at School, but was terribly anxious that nobody should suspect this at home. He took to photography as a hobby, because he could do that by himself and it gave him the excuse for solitary walks. He hated meeting strangers because he never knew what to say to them; he used to try to think out remarks beforehand and then used to forget them. His parents used to ask him why he didn't talk more, and that made the feeling worse. He began to stammer, and that got worse and worse; he went for treatment, but got no better. The stammering became a refuge for him as it

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gave him an excuse for not asking questions. His thoughts about other people, including his own family, were always as to what he disliked about them.

He was one of four brothers, and quarrelled with them all. Church was a refuge for him because he did not have to talk there. He had a fear about the future, always picturing himself in situations where he would fail because his stammer would prevent him answering questions. Fear, anxiety, inward conflict, resentments, a complete mal-adjustment to life; and all these things concealed inside, a close secret, most of all to be kept from his parents.

A few months ago he came into contact with the Oxford Group and was changed. He shared with his family and got release from all his fears and hatreds. His stammer has so far gone that actually I did not even realise that he had one; he is a new person, facing life joyously and thinking out his future in the terms of what God is wanting him to do. This is the kind of work that the Oxford Group is doing for families.

Here is another story of a family. Neither husband nor wife had any use for religion; they

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were married in a Registrar's Office, and none of the children was baptised. This married couple were typical examples of post-war youth. They were young, good-looking, popular, their financial situation was comfortable, they were fond of their children; yet they were unhappy, disillusioned, dissatisfied with life, and at the time they met the Group they were on the edge of divorce. The husband was successful in his business, had many friends, was deep in the political movement by which he hoped to change the existing order of things, but he got changed himself instead. The wife was unhappy and afraid; unhappy because to her the world seemed senseless and life had no real meaning; she was afraid of the divorce and the consequences it might bring to her and the children; afraid of the kind of world she had brought the children into, a world hemmed in and circumscribed because there was always the blank wall of "You can't change human nature." This young couple proved the falsity of the saying, first of all by getting changed themselves, and since then by being used of God to change other people. I met them a few weeks ago and heard their story; they still have problems, but they know that listening to God

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is the way to solve them, and it would be difficult to find a couple more radiantly happy.

How many families fail to live together in complete happiness because each member has his own point of view! There is the father, whose point of view is that he is the breadwinner, he pays for everything, and therefore the children owe him more consideration than he gets. He loves them all right, but admits to his friends that he finds the new generation difficult to understand. He has definite ideas about the careers that are suitable for his sons; certainly he will let them choose, but within certain limits; he will retain a casting vote. Of course, some careers are out of the question, not the kind of thing our family has ever done. Sometimes the father hopes to satisfy his own thwarted ambition by persuading his son to adopt the career that he himself would have chosen but for his parents' opposition. Sometimes he wants his son to be the kind of boy he himself was at School, and a quiet, unathletic, artistic youngster is cajoled or bullied by his father into trying to become a hearty, athletic bruiser. Such cases are more than likely to lead to disaster, and I would warn most earnestly all

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fathers against all sentences beginning with: "When I was a boy. . . ." If the story is one of failure, shared with the youngster to create understanding, well and good; but if it is the beginning of some story of your triumphs, and designed to spur the boy on to emulation, then be careful—it may be dangerous.

The mother, of course, has her own point of view. Very loving, sometimes too loving, not looking forward to the day when the children will be grown up, sometimes even dreading it. She has her own views about education, and secretly thinks that her husband is rather mean about the amount of money he spends on the girls as compared with the boys. Nothing, of course, would induce her to mention this to her husband; but she nurses the idea secretly and sometimes speaks of it to her own mother or sister. Naturally she has her own view about the boys' careers, but here again she doesn't speak about it because she is prepared to agree that the boys are the father's concern. Sometimes the mother has ambitions for her sons that satisfy her pride; she would like to be able to speak to her friends about "My son, the Doctor, or the Vicar, or the Solicitor": all of them perfectly legitimate aspirations, provided

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that they are not allowed to influence the choice. There are many mothers who think that they want to give their son to God, but their real wish is to see him in clerical garb.

The children, again, have their points of view. First of all, as children, with the point of view of the young as opposed to that of the old, and then with different points of view from one another. In a general way they regard their parents' generation as out of date, incapable of understanding things going on to-day, and very muddled about the relative importance of things. "But, Father, you simply can't": "Oh, Mother, I simply must," are common expressions representing youth's revolt against the lack of understanding in their elders.

Then the children see no particular reason why they should be grateful to their parents; they didn't ask to be brought into the world; they were not particularly anxious to be educated. There are exceptions, of course, but as a rule, the claim made by parents for gratitude on the part of their children evokes practically no response—frequently it provokes resentment. The children have their own views as to who should be invited to the house; they have passionate views as to how the holidays

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should be spent, and sometimes they nurse secret ambitions about their careers that wild horses would not force them to disclose.

Sometimes also there are relations; uncles, aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, who all have their own points of view that have to be considered: but even without these there are quite enough divergent views that have to be balanced. Here are a few more subjects which are liable to disrupt the harmony of any family—use of motor-car, time of getting up in the morning, time of going to bed, hours of meals, use of garden, noise, the wireless or the gramophone, times for baths, tidiness, muddy boots, pocket money, care of clothes and behaviour to servants.

On almost any question there are at least three and sometimes four or five different points of view. How are they to be reconciled, who is to decide? In the unguided family decisions are sometimes made by authority, sometimes as a result of weakness, sometimes influenced by tears, sometimes postponed while the question at issue remains a bone of contention.

What a difference when a family is changed! I have now met hundreds of fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers who have had experience of

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two kinds of homes, the unguided and the guided. They all speak of an entirely new atmosphere, a joy and radiance, a fellowship and trust in the home life that makes it an entirely different place. Nor am I referring here to the kind of home where family life was poisoned by a drunken father or a dissolute mother. There are plenty of those with which the Oxford Group have come into contact, and the change that can come about there may be described, as it often is, as a change from Hell to Heaven.

No, I am referring to homes about which one of the family would probably say: "Oh, we don't get on too badly. There is an occasional row, but on the whole we rub along pretty well together." For a home like that there is waiting an entirely new quality of harmony, something that really transforms it, and makes it a place in which visitors instinctively recognise that the Spirit of Christ is there.

It begins with absolute honesty, with an owning up to all those hidden things that nobody must know, certainly not the family. How ridiculous they seem when once one has got rid of them; bogeys magnified in size like shadows on the wall. Ask God to show when

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and how to share those things of which you are most afraid. What misunderstandings, suppressions, fears, old rankling sores, deep disappointments, old jealousies, get cleared out of the home when once the family start to share!

And then the surrender of each individual will to God's Will—to listen to Him as well as to pray to Him—what a change that brings in the atmosphere of the home! How easy the solution of problems, how surely the right decisions come! There is no longer the usual argument followed by rebellious silences. What is God's Will? Let us listen to Him together.

The problem of choosing a career becomes immensely simplified when children and parents are absolutely honest with each other and then ask God to guide them.

A short time ago a young fellow came to consult me about the question of his career. All the family are changed, but the father and mother are out in Africa, and for some reason the youngster had always taken his career for granted. He was studying to be a Doctor, but had not yet actually embarked on the medical

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course. He told me all the facts, and together we listened to God. The thoughts that came to him were:

- (a) That there had been certain times in the past when he had had qualms as to whether it was the right thing for him to be a Doctor.
- (b) That one of the reasons that was urging him towards the medical profession was a desire for security. He felt that as a Doctor he would always be sure of earning a living.
- (c) That there was a good opportunity for farming waiting him in Africa.
- (d) That there was a great need of life-changing in the neighbourhood where his father lived, and they would be able to work together as a team.

The thoughts that came to me were:

- (a) The difference in the tone of voice in which he spoke of farming showed clearly that this was what he was really keen on.
- (b) The fact that in my experience, if a boy was keen on becoming a Doctor he was nearly always *very* keen and prepared to stand out against everybody to maintain his choice.

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It was clear from this that he was embarked on the wrong career, and he wrote at once to his father telling him what had happened and asking him to cable after he had asked for guidance as to what should be done.

The simple, logical, straightforward sense of listening to God in family problems can easily be tested by experiment. To those who are interested in small children I would recommend most strongly a book by Olive Jones entitled *Inspired Children*. I have met some of the children there described. Would that all children were like them.

But if you start to experiment, don't reject the thoughts that come even though they seem out of place. Not long ago a young man who was changed persuaded his mother to have a Quiet Time with him. She was very sceptical to start with, and still more so at the end of a couple of minutes, as the only thought that had come to her was the single word "Rubbish." It certainly seemed rather baffling, but the son persuaded her to try again. "No, it's no good," she said, at the end of a further period of quiet. "The only words that come to me are "Rubbish rubbish, rubbish."

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"Perhaps that is the message," replied her son. "Let us see if God can show us what it means."

They tried again, and slowly it dawned on the mother that the reference was to a quantity of old family stuff stored away upstairs; theatre programmes, newspaper cuttings and similar junk that were relics of the past. It also came to her that she was storing away, in a spirit of false sentimental attachment, heaps of old toys that her family had played with as children. The act of packing these up and sending them to the Church Army for children who needed them, cleared out of her mind much that was causing her to go on living in the past, wistfully remembering her babies and wishing they were babies still.

New power and new direction came to her when she started listening to God. One interesting secondary result was that the sick headaches which in the past had invariably come on when she had to support her husband at some public function entirely disappeared!

Finally, let us expose as a fallacy the old idea that bad temper and irritation are mild failings or harmless weaknesses that one naturally expects to find occasionally in every home.

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They are not mild failings; they are serious sins. Theft seldom affects more than two people, and as a rule it is an operation that is quickly over; it may be compared to the removal of a tooth. A bad-tempered man, however, may poison a whole household for years, a kind of perpetual drilling machine that always hovers near the nerve.

Here is what Henry Drummond says on the subject:—

“No form of vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself, does more to unchristianise society than evil temper. For embittering life, for breaking up communities, for destroying the most sacred relationships, for devastating homes, for withering up men and women, for taking the bloom off childhood; in short, for sheer gratuitous misery-producing power, this influence stands alone. Temper is significant not only in what it is, but in what it reveals. This is why I take the liberty now of speaking of it with such unusual plainness. It is a test for love, a symptom, a revelation of an unloving nature at bottom. It is the intermittent fever which bespeaks unintermittent disease within; the occasional bubble escaping to the surface which betrays some rottenness underneath; a sample of the most hidden products of the soul dropped involuntarily when

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off one's guard; in a word, the lightning form of a hundred hideous and un-Christian sins. For a want of patience, a want of kindness, a want of generosity, a want of courtesy, a want of unselfishness, are all instantaneously symbolised in one flash of Temper.

“Hence it is not enough to deal with the Temper. We must go to the source, and change the inmost nature, and the angry humours will die away of themselves. Souls are made sweet not by taking the acid fluids out, but by putting something in—a great Love, a new Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Christ, the Spirit of Christ, interpenetrating ours, sweetens, purifies, transforms all. This only can eradicate what is wrong, work a chemical change, renovate and regenerate, and rehabilitate the inner man. Will-power does not change men. Time does not change men. Christ does.”

CHAPTER IX

CACKLING

WHEN Rome was threatened it was not the cackling of the geese to which Manlius paid attention, but the danger to the Capitol. Certainly these geese had performed a service, but Manlius did not waste time throwing them crumbs to keep them quiet; on the contrary, he got on with the job of saving the city. But geese will cackle—I cackled myself; so let us have a chapter for the cacklers.

Let me say at once that much of the cackling answers itself by showing venom and bitterness so clearly that most people feel instinctively that it lacks truth. The next point is that any vital challenge must expect to provoke criticism and even hostility. It has always been so throughout history, and I would go so far as to say that if ever the day arrived when the message of the Oxford Group were accepted with mild amiability, that would be the day when the Group needed burial; it would be dead.

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In order to get a complete analysis of this question of criticism I am going to divide the cacklers into different flocks. Let us first consider the flock which consists of those people who have actually had some contact with the Oxford Group, either at a series of meetings or at a House Party. They are few in number, but very vocal. Frequently they are the victims of a form of projection. This is a well-known psychological phenomenon and consists in projecting on to some other individual, generally quite falsely, the particular fault which is our own besetting sin.

The book *For Sinners Only* quotes a good story to illustrate projection. There were two ladies, one of whom had been imbibing rather too freely. She turned to the other and said accusingly: "My dear, you're drunk. You've got two noses."

It is projection that is generally responsible for stories that suggest that something has been said at a meeting that has given offence. I have found in the case of every story that I have heard, either that my informant was not present at the meeting or else that he had been so deeply challenged that he had imagined

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all kinds of things that were never said. A good illustration of this is the experience of a lady who went to a meeting with her son. Afterwards she told a friend that she had been very much shocked by things that had been said by the speakers. This friend made enquiries from other people who had been present, and found a unanimous opinion that nothing had been said which could possibly shock anybody. A few days later the true reason for the discrepancy transpired. The lady who had been at the meeting with her son had been so challenged in her own life that she imagined things that were never said. The boy was her son all right—but the man she called her husband was not his father.

The best evidence of all as to how cackling comes is furnished by men who face up to things honestly and then speak of it themselves. Three such examples come to my memory, all of them of men whom I heard speak myself. The first is a man whose life has been spent in teaching and who is now a Headmaster. He apologised in front of a thousand people for his hostility towards the Oxford Group during the previous twelve years; he had found when he faced up to the four standards that the fault lay

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in him, and not in the Group.

The second was a man who had for years been the Director of the religious side of a big social movement. He had opposed the Oxford Group on hearsay evidence when a team first visited Canada. It was only when his daughter was changed that he came himself to a House Party to meet the Group at first-hand. He realised then that it was his own pride that was wrong, and I shall never forget the occasion when he acknowledged his mistake and apologised for his previous action.

The last instance happened only recently at another House Party. A parson got up and apologised for his past hostility to the Oxford Group. He told us of how he had criticised his Bishop for having associated himself with the Oxford Group. The Bishop had only smiled. After a visit to a certain cackling cleric, this parson came to a House Party with the idea of getting ammunition for further attacks on the Group. I give the description of what happened in his own words, spoken in front of several hundred people. They were: "I came, I saw, Christ conquered."

Sometimes one hears cackling about the Group from people who come into contact

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with some youngster recently changed and form a hasty judgment. Of course, young people will sometimes do things that older people would not do; it is good that it should be so. Possibly they may sometimes do things that are impulsive and which they might regret after maturer judgment. But that is not the fault of the Oxford Group; it is one of the characteristics of youth and you will find the same thing happening in all young people's activities, from sun-bathing to cocktail-drinking. But here let me bear my testimony that in this fellowship of young and old, the old have much to learn from the young. I have heard fathers and mothers speak of what they have learnt from their sons and daughters, directors of firms testify to having learnt from junior employees, heads of households speak quite naturally of what they have been shown by their own servants, University lecturers who have learnt from their pupils; in one case the lecturer was a Senior Wrangler and the pupil a man he had ploughed in his exam. To all these I would like to add my personal witness to the fact that I have learnt more about the art of living in the last year, mostly from young people half my age, than

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I learnt during the whole of the rest of my life. In the fellowship of the Group both young and old get the corners rubbed off, and develop deep friendships in the process.

Now, what about the back-sliders? Of course there may be some people who come a certain way and then stop; the parable of the Sower taught us that we must expect that. What about their cackling? They are the people who speak of having "tried" the Oxford Group and then given it up. Why do they give it up and why do they sometimes become hostile to a way of life on which they themselves once started? The answer to both these questions is usually the same, and again I will give it as I have heard it from men and women who went through a stage of separation, but have come out safely on the other side. It is due to a challenge in their own lives that they are not willing to face. It may be a relationship that they are unwilling to break, even though the relationship is clearly unguided; it may be the pride which prevents a man working with a team; it may be another form of pride that fears the possibility of being checked by others whom he regards as inferior to himself;

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it may be a fear of certain consequences that open identification would involve ; it may be an unwillingness on the part of a man to surrender his own ambition ; it may be an unwillingness to surrender his wife's ambition for him. Along these lines will be found the answer ; there is some sin which acts as a barrier.

And, of course, he will criticise the Group—the only alternative would be to criticise himself, and that he is not prepared to do.

I remember a young theological student who told me that he had tried the Oxford Group and had given it up: he had plenty of reasons, he was full of criticism. A few months later I found the real reason. He was in debt and dared not tell his father.

There are, however, two cheering features about the back-slider. The first is that as a rule he doesn't slide right back ; he seldom gets to the back-stop which marks the position where he was before. The second is that the back-slider, particularly if he keeps quiet and prays, usually gets into his stride again and goes ahead. It is a difficult process and rather humiliating, but having once seen the vision of real life there will be no real happiness till he finds it again.

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Then there may be cackling which arises out of some genuine misunderstanding due to a mis-application or mis-interpretation of something that has been said or done. I can give a very good illustration of this out of my own personal experience.

It was my first House Party, less than a month after my change, and though I had certainly been changed, yet I had not got very far. I was still full of critical feelings and had bristles that would insist on coming out on frequent occasions. Some of them appeared on the first evening just before we went to bed. I was sitting at a table in the lounge of the Hotel with Ray Purdy, who was leading the House Party. Just before we got up to go, one of the older members of the Group passed our table, and as he went by I saw Ray hold up the five fingers of one hand and three of the other, indicating the number eight. Nothing was said, but a cold shudder came over me. Here they were, at the same old game which I had met before in religious work; they had been counting scalps. I brooded furiously. Luckily I had got far enough in this new life to know that I should have to share those thoughts with Ray direct, and not confess his sins to someone else.

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On the way up to bed, therefore, I told him that I thought it unfortunate that the attitude of the Group should be one of credit-snatching on account of numbers. He asked what I meant. I replied that I had noticed his signal that eight had been the "bag" for the day. Ray looked at me and said quietly: "Did you really think that was what it meant?" "Yes," I replied. "Wasn't that the meaning?" Ray smiled, perfectly good-humouredly, but a queer uncomfortable feeling started up my spine. "No," he said, "I was just letting him know that there would be a Quiet Time at eight o'clock tomorrow morning." What a fool I felt! But suppose I had not gone to him direct about it and had left the House Party with that complete misconception. I might quite easily have been spreading the story and criticising the Group for the rest of my life under a completely honest misunderstanding.

Finally we have the cackling about the practices of guidance and sharing. They are both scriptural enough, so that cannot be the grounds of objection, and we have to fall back on the idea that guidance and sharing are dangerous.

The cacklers are quite right: guidance may

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be very dangerous; it might urge a man to do something that he had never done before! If a person suggests that guidance is dangerous, the only thing to do is to ask him how he runs his own life. I know that my life before I was changed was much more dangerous. In the old days I was nearly always guided by selfish desires or by fear—not very trustworthy guides. There is much more hope of finding out the right thing to do if we ask God to show us what is right, and then test the answer by the four absolute standards. If that is dangerous, then I suggest that it would be a good thing if many more people were living in the same dangerous way. When I used to criticise guidance the reason for the criticism was simply that I was afraid of what I might be guided to do. I felt sure that it would be something unpleasant, and when I tried guidance I found that my surmise had been quite correct. All the same, I thank God daily that I did try it.

Much the same thing is true of the criticisms of sharing. I am quite certain in my own case that my objection to sharing, and criticism of the practice, was simply due to fear. I would make a suggestion to anyone who finds him-

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self very critical about sharing. Let him retire by himself to some secluded spot where he cannot possibly be overlooked, and there let him write down on a piece of paper a rough précis of what he would have to share if he were rash enough to be completely honest. For the sake of secrecy, if he likes, let him write it down in his own private shorthand; but the experiment is more likely to be a success if he does it so that anyone could read it. Then, having written these things down, let him examine his feelings about sharing again and ask himself whether he is as critical as before. If he finds that a little bit of his critical attitude has disappeared, then let him take the further step of actually reading the paper out loud, being careful, of course, that there is nobody within half a mile of him at the time. If he survives that experiment, then let him take his courage in both hands and ask God for guidance as to whether he should go to his wife or some other trusted person, and read out what he has written. I have now met some hundreds of people who have tried this idea of honest sharing, but so far I have not come across a single person who had criticism of the practice *after* he had done it himself, whatever he may

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have said before.

Criticism divorced from actual experience is useless and may do untold harm. Christ reserved His strongest condemnation for those who put stumbling blocks in the path of spiritual children, and a thoughtless word may destroy a life that is just beginning. If love is the motive, and criticism is based on life-changing experience, then it may be constructive, and that is what we have within the fellowship itself.

We all need to grow and become more effective, I most of all; come with us and show how we can make ourselves better able to help a troubled world.

CHAPTER X

RELIGION. THE CHURCH

WHAT is religion? A wash-out, replies the pagan; a system of ethics, says the philosopher; an aid to keeping straight, says the schoolmaster. Perhaps it will help if I give as faithfully as possible my own transitory stages towards what I now believe is the true answer to the question. Let me say at once that I am full of gratitude for my Christian upbringing; I am thankful that I was brought up in a Christian home, and I rejoice that I never lost complete touch with the Church. During the War I am afraid that I lapsed almost entirely from my duties as a member of the Church, but for the last fourteen years I have been a very regular attendant at the ordinary services, and as a member of the Finance Committee of a Diocesan Council I tried also to take a useful part in Church Administration. Such was my background when I came into touch with the Oxford Group.

Looking back now I realise that there have

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been three stages through which I passed in my religious experience.

The first stage was what may be termed the Banking Religion. I was converted at about the age of nine, and passed through a very real religious experience, though I realise now that it was very largely emotional in character and consequently not lasting. During the next few years I built up for myself a religion of debits and credits. If one did a good deed, then one scored a good mark, while a bad deed resulted in a bad mark. Going to Church on Sunday was probably worth a couple, while the early Service might perhaps score three. And then there was some mysterious process known as "saving a soul," at which one looked rather wistfully, since that was a real coup, a sort of bull's-eye with something like twenty points attached. Later on, one looked forward with considerable dread to a settling-day when the debits and credits were added up: if there was a credit balance one got a prize called eternal life, but in my own case I always had an uncomfortable feeling that I should have an overdraft which would result in eternal damnation. Over the whole transaction, however, hung with misty unreality the hope that some kind

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of death-bed repentance would happily result in a blotting out of most, or even all, of the debit entries; but I always had a fear that somehow I should miss that chance, and for that reason I prayed very fervently when we came to "sudden death" in the Litany.

Reading this through it sounds like a travesty, but I am quite sure that it represented my feelings about religion when I was a boy, and I believe that it would be quite a fair description of the religious convictions of many boys. Not that I suggest necessarily that this was the teaching either in the Church or in the home, but, no doubt as a result of my own stupidity, that was the religion which I caught.

From that stage, by way of certain periods before and during the War, when I lost touch with religion almost completely, I developed into what may be termed the Insurance Religion.

For the next thirteen years, except for an occasional spurt as a result of meeting some saintly person or hearing a stirring address, my ideas of religion were that it was something that kept one straight; it was an insurance against evil, or at any rate against the worst kinds of evil. One went to Church,

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said one's prayers, and read the Bible, because these practices kept one in touch with religion, and prevented the spiritual side of oneself from dying of stagnation. Religion was a department of life, specially active on Sunday—God was kept in Church and one visited Him there; with the result that there was a feeling of unreality about trying to make contact with Him outside the building. Apart from the singing, I am afraid I was bored in Church, not so much by the sermons, which were generally good, but by the prayers and canticles (especially the Te Deum, which is so much longer than the others). An hour seemed a long time at a Church Service, and sometimes it went terribly slowly, though I was comforted by the thought that it was doing me good. It seemed queer sometimes that one went away from Church with a feeling of relief, and the effect of the Service somehow failed to prevent irritation, jealousy and bad feeling arising almost immediately after the Service was over.

I used to talk about religion to boys in my house just before they were confirmed, though the Chaplain was responsible for their official preparation; and I was quite sincere in what I said. Unfortunately my talk only reflected

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my own attitude—that religion was a pendulum that regulated life and kept one from the grosser sins. I would urge the boys to keep in touch with religion, as otherwise the spiritual side of them would be liable to stagnate and decay; but I felt that it was necessary to give this reason as justification for what the boy would almost certainly find rather a dull habit. Speaking about the Holy Spirit somehow made me feel rather uncomfortable. Generally it was with a sense of strain that I started on my round of Confirmation interviews, and there was a very definite feeling of relief when they were over.

A shocking picture perhaps; and yet I don't think there was any real hypocrisy there. I may possibly have conveyed the impression that religion meant more to me than was really the case, but I do not think that was failure. I was trying to pass on what I had found—a religion that was an insurance, something that helped to keep us straight—the failure was that I had not found very much, and a religion that keeps us straight may become merely a dull habit.

“And then I met the Oxford Group.” How often have I heard those words during the last year, from men and women of every class and

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every shade of religious background. The words are the preface to the personal story of a pagan who has had a completely new experience, or a Churchman whose faith had gone, or a Parson whose life had become ineffective; in every case a story of something lacking which now was found. It might be a purpose in life, or a victory over personal problems, or a power to win souls for Christ; but it was always a story which carried conviction because it was the sharing of a man's own experience. I have realised that if we want people to believe us, then it is no use speaking of what ought to happen, but of what *has* happened. People in the world to-day are hungry to hear that message, so old and yet so new—that Christ has the answer to every problem. What people want to hear is not what happened in our lives twenty years ago, but what happened last week, what happened yesterday; they want to hear of a Christ that lives, and how His Holy Spirit is at work in the world to-day.

This account of my experience is at the same time restitution, confession and a challenge. I owe it by way of restitution to those whom I had hoodwinked with my religious life in the past, a life of religious exercises, regular

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Church-going, Bible-reading and saying prayers to God. That is what I had presented as religion. So it was—but it was not the religion of Jesus Christ. I was one of those written about by Paul in a letter to Timothy: “Though they keep up a form of religion, they will have nothing to do with it as a force.”

Now I know that real life begins when Jesus Christ is not only a force in life, but *the* force, the driving power, the challenging, ever-present Person in Whom we live and move and have our being.

I read again that 23rd chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, and realise how like I have been to the men therein described. Christ spoke of the religious people of His day, of how they “talk but do not act,” and again: “All they do is done to catch the notice of men.” Exactly; I talked as though I had accepted the challenge of Christ, that challenge He gave in the Sermon on the Mount; but I was one of those “who profess and call themselves Christians,” who had never realised the extent of that challenge. Worse than that. Christ also spoke of those religious people who “shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men, neither going in themselves nor allowing others to go in.” Exactly;

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I was presenting to those around me a religion that was a sham, a counterfeit and an inoculation. They tried it all right; many of them gave it quite a good trial; but then they abandoned it for two reasons—first, because they found it did not work; and secondly, because they were bored.

That, indeed, was one of the reasons why I was forced to recognise the fact that there was something wrong with religion at School. Boys left at the age of eighteen or nineteen with habits of religion but not religion; they went to Church, were regular Communicants, read their Bibles, said their Prayers, and would have been horrified at any suggestion that they were not Christians. Their religion was the same as mine, and I should have been very much upset if anyone had suggested that I was not a Christian. Two years after leaving School, however, as many old boys told me, a large number of them abandoned all, or almost all, of their habits of religion. Who was to blame? First of all I blamed the boys from other Schools, thinking of them with insolent superiority as being not so well prepared for life as our boys, and therefore a debasing influence; then I blamed the parents in the homes

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from which the boys came. "What can you expect?" I asked. "How can these boys keep their religion if they get no help from their parents?"

Sometimes I used to comfort myself that young manhood was a stage of life when everyone went through a period of stagnation and doubt about religion; I felt that these young men would probably come back to it again in later life.

Finally I used to blame the clever agnostics, pseudo-intellectuals in positions of responsibility, with whom these boys had perforce to come in contact, and who had sapped their faith.

It was only when I was changed that I realised that I was the person to blame—the boys had caught from me the religion which I myself practised, an easy let-down that cloaked the avoidance of Christ's challenge to complete surrender.

Now I know the truth. There is a religion that does work. Christ's life attracts, as it always has throughout the centuries. Youth can catch His message, youth is hungry for it; and with this message youth can capture the world.

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Here, then, we have the answer to the question with which this chapter opened. Religion is life—not a part of life, still less a theory about life; but life itself. Religion is not a pendulum regulating life; it is the mainspring from which all real life and action come.

“You must be born again,” said Christ, and now I have learnt the truth of that. I believe that a man finds this experience when he makes up his mind that he will do God’s Will, not occasionally, but always; not on Sundays only, but on every day and every night. [He decides that all of himself shall be surrendered; his time, his money, his sorrow, his mirth, his wife, his family, his career, his security, his hopes and his fears. Then when he has thrown away his life he begins to live.] That is the religion which Christ preached, and nothing less will do.

Victory follows, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of others as soon as God can use us. If we are part of the Divine Plan, God can show us what to do.

Let it be clear, however, that self-surrender is not merely an emotional experience that fades as time goes on; it is an act of the will undertaken deliberately, with all one’s reason,

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with all one's intelligence, all one's common sense and, most of all, with a complete sense of the insufficiency of self.

Naturally, then, one wants to go to church, not as in the old days merely to try to please God, still less to set a good example and insure against disaster; but because the heart overflows and one cannot help giving thanks and praise in fellowship with others.

The new life grows—by being in touch with God we grow in His spirit; by reflecting Christ's Love is how we grow in love. We begin to share with others, not because we ought, but because we have something worth sharing; we are prepared to face humiliation, ridicule, hardship if it comes, the loss of friends, the slander of enemies, and with it all rejoice as Christ told us to rejoice.

The words of the Prayer Book take on new life, the Bible has new meaning; words that were mere words before suddenly come true. Even the hymns sound different. I remember singing, "Thy Way not mine, O Lord," and realising that for the first time in my life I meant it. "Choose Thou for me my friends." Yes, I really meant it—My life for God to use.

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I believe that in these days we are seeing the revival for which the Church has prayed so long; it is Christ's message interpreted anew, a message of victory for the twentieth century. In the past, in England, at any rate, most men were prepared to accept the authority of religion and then, if their emotions were touched, religion might become an effective force in their lives. Now the conditions are changed. Neither old nor young are prepared to accept religion unless it satisfies not only their emotions, but also their reason and experience. As Canon Streeter puts it: "In the old days the difficulty was to make men keep the Ten Commandments, nowadays the difficulty is to persuade them that they ought to be kept."

It is useless for the clergy to think of revival as something external to themselves; it must come from within, through men and women whose lives are so revived and filled that other lives are touched, individually, one by one. We cannot think of the Oxford Group as something different from the Church—it is the Church in action—it is the Church reviving. As the Archbishop of Canterbury said recently: "This Movement is most certainly doing what the

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Church of Christ exists everywhere to do. It is changing human lives, giving them a new joy and freedom, liberating them from the inhibitions and strains which have hindered them, from the faults of temper, of domestic relationships and the like which have beset them, and giving them a real ardour to communicate to their fellow-creatures what God has given to them."

Or as a well-known Bishop said to me: "Christ's Church is wherever the Holy Spirit is working, and it is clearly working in the Oxford Group."

The revival therefore begins with ourselves.

What ought we to expect in the way of new Church life?

Expert authorities within the Churches tell us that not more than a tenth of the people in England attend services regularly. This does not necessarily mean that 90 per cent of the population are completely indifferent to the things of God, but it certainly signifies that this number no longer see the value of corporate worship.

And now let us observe what has happened in certain parishes within the last two or three years.

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The first is the story of a Parish in South London with a population of about six thousand, drawn largely from a business community. The Vicar took over the Parish three years ago at the request of the Bishop, who was anxious about the falling attendance. At the first meeting of the Church Council the new Vicar, who had done much work previously with the Oxford Group, announced that he regarded his main duty to be that of life-changing, and that every Christian should be a life-changer.

At the conclusion of the meeting one of the Church Councillors said that he must resign, owing to his own inadequacy, and what he considered to be the impossibly high standard that had been set before them. Afterwards he had a long unhurried talk with the Vicar, and withdrew his resignation when he saw that he had been limiting God's power. He determined to go all out for the highest and not to allow the good to be the enemy of the best. Here is the witness this man gave at a meeting held a few weeks later.

"All my life," he said, "I seem to have been building up a structure on sand; now I have begun to build on the Rock. The old structure

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has been knocked down—shattered, but in its place there has been placed a Cross, and through that Cross I have entered new life and received something of Christ's resurrective power."

This Church Councillor and others are now united in a team to assist the Vicar in the work of the Parish. Life in the Church has grown, spread and deepened in a splendid way during the last three years.

Life-changing leadership developed throughout the community, business began to feel the impact of a spiritual force issuing from the Church, and the growth of interest led to a campaign throughout the district. A leading part in this campaign was taken by the District Council, the Chambers of Commerce, and City business men, many of whom came to reside in the district for that purpose.

The Church is meeting a very real need in the neighbourhood, solving the vital problems of men and women, while helping them to find a new reality and joy in living.

And here is the description of a Parish on a newly developed Housing Estate with a working-class population:

While in Australia the Vicar came into con-

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tact with the Oxford Group through interest in the books of the Rev. S. M. Shoemaker of New York, author of *The Conversion of the Church*. He started his present work in England without even a church or a vicarage. The Vicar's aims for the new Parish were: "That it should become a centre of life-changing in a world whose only hope is in the power of God in Christ to change men and women."

That has certainly been the result of the first years' work and this Parish has become a corner of the Kingdom of God where lives are being changed.

There are many stories of deliverance from the bondage of gambling, drink, immorality and bad temper. In one home where a bricklayer's mate had been changed, for the first time in their married life he and his wife had a Christmas clear of drunkenness.

Here is evidence from three members of the congregation:

"For several years I had been a back-slider, and in my unhappiness turned to the ways of the world to quieten my restlessness. Surrender to God has now brought the joy and happiness and peace I was in search of, and with this came a totally different outlook on life. I was

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changed, and happiness and peace have taken the place of fear and unrest."

"People find it difficult to believe in God in the twentieth century, and it is only when one has had an actual experience of Jesus Christ that one realises that there is a living God Who gives power and peace and freedom. God has changed me from a restless, impulsive, mis-directed woman to one who has now a calm, confident outlook and definite purpose in life."

"The Christian life is a new thing to me since I learned the joy of sharing. In this fellowship I have found victory over the deep-seated sin of pride which was blocking my usefulness to others. I have learned that with God there is no age limit to His power to change lives if we will only surrender them to Him fearlessly and absolutely."

The next story is that of a quiet country Parish away from the strain and stress of modern industrial life:

The Rector and his wife came into contact with the Oxford Group at a House Party just three years ago. The Parish at that time was to all outward appearances thoroughly successful. The organisation and finances of the Church were all in sound condition; a large sum of money had been raised for the restoration of

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the historic old church; a village hall and a new senior central Church School had been built: the Rector was popular with the leading people in the neighbourhood. But lives were not being changed, men and women were not coming to the Church for the solution of their vital problems, and though the Church Services were appreciated, yet they were not appreciated enough to draw people from the ordinary week-end round of games and motoring.

Not long after coming into contact with the Group, the Rector and his wife caught a vision of what the Parish might become. They went with a team to the United States, where they saw the work being done at Calvary Church in New York. From there they went on to Canada and saw the widespread effect of the work in that country. Since their return to the Parish many things have happened, and their Rectory has rapidly become the central rallying-point of an ever-increasing army of life-changers drawn from the surrounding counties.

During some weeks last year teams went out to various districts in that part of the country. and one of the results of this campaign was a service in the Church on January 1st when three hundred and fifty people assembled to meet the Bishop of the Diocese; the Clergy to renew their ordination vows, the laity their confirmation promise, and the Free Churchmen

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to associate themselves in a corporate act of dedication to God in the New Year.

The team, which assists the Rector in the work of the Parish, meets regularly in the Church or Rectory for a Quiet Time of listening to God. Amongst those in the team are the village schoolmaster and his wife, a cook, a gardener, a chauffeur and his wife, the organist and several of the Sunday School teachers.

To sum up the situation, the Parish Church has become not only a spiritual home, but also a life-changing centre for the Parish itself and the surrounding country.

One most distinctive mark of first-century Christianity was fellowship, and it is this fellowship which is a striking feature of the Oxford Group to-day.

There is an old saying, not strictly true, but containing many germs of truth, "If you want to lose your best friend, travel with him." Certainly the inevitable annoyances, discomforts and petty irritations of travel are a real test of friendship. Soon after being changed, I went with a travelling team to Canada. The party, drawn from ten different countries, was the most complete cross-cut through society imaginable—there were such varying types as an Irish Archdeacon, a Latvian Baroness, a leader of the Unemployed, a French Architect,

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an English Bishop, a German girl, a Master of Foxhounds, a newspaper Editor, the Vicar of a London Parish, some Dons and undergraduates from English, American and Canadian Universities, a former Cabinet Minister, an ex-Communist, the President of the Stock Exchange of a great city, and many others. This team was travelling about, working under tremendous pressure, with meetings and individual interviews throughout the day and generally far into the night, often with hurried meals and little sleep—and yet, throughout the whole time I was with them I never heard a single word of vexation, disappointment or regret.

I heard, moreover, wherever we went, from clergy of all denominations, of the new unity which they had found. They witnessed to bad feeling and jealousy towards brother clergy in the past, now happily overcome; while they spoke with joy of the new spirit of fellowship in which they now met together to find God's plan for the extension of the Kingdom.

I have experienced to the full the fellowship of home, the friendship of school and the comradeship of War; but I never knew what fellowship could really mean until I met the Group.

CHAPTER XI

THE BIBLE

HAVE you ever been bored with the Bible? If so, this chapter is intended for you. Let us go on to the further question. Are you generally bored? If so, why do you continue reading it? Perhaps you don't. I read the Bible for years and I was nearly always bored. Recently I have been asking myself why I went on reading, and I've come to the conclusion that it was due to two reasons:

- (a) I thought that reading the Bible would do me good.
- (b) I often advised boys to read the Bible and I had to be prepared against the possibility that some day a boy would turn round and say to me—"Well, do you?"

I see now that these two reasons exactly reflected the main motives that governed my life until fifteen months ago—credit-snatching and blame-avoiding. What an absurd situation,

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and yet I have a strong idea that some of my readers have no better motives for reading the Bible than one of these.

Many of us have felt in the past that the Book had small significance for modern life.

How often in the past have I made this kind of remark about the Sermon on the Mount: "Magnificent, simply magnificent; the sentiments represent the finest ideal that has ever been put before the world. Unfortunately, it can only be an ideal. Put it into practice in the modern business world and a man would be bankrupt in a week." And along comes the Oxford Group to persuade hard-headed business men to put these ideas into practice, and they have not gone bankrupt in a week, or in a year, or in several years. On the contrary such firms have not only continued, but the directors and employees have been experiencing an altogether new quality of life, with real fellowship and new co-operation. Of course, they were prepared to go bankrupt if God could not use that business, and the whole basis of their work has changed, but they have shown quite definitely that the Sermon on the Mount provides a practical and sensible business code. Moreover the Bible begins to live,

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particularly the Acts of the Apostles, when one finds men and women actually living, and working, in the same way as men and women did then.

Most important of all, however, for me, was the wholly new way of looking at the Bible. I realise now that the Bible is mainly a story of how God works in the lives of ordinary men and women. It is first of all a story of men, not morals. It gives a picture of men who are working for the Kingdom of God on Earth, and of others who are consciously or unconsciously resisting the Kingdom.

These ideas altered my whole conception of the Bible and every day I am finding a new fascination in the book, now that I study it on this basis.

Let us illustrate these ideas by taking a few examples of how men became leaders under God, and for a start consider the case of Moses.

Here was a man who in early years may have been extremely intelligent, but he was certainly not a great success as a leader, because he was not himself under control. He was hot-headed and impulsive; no doubt you will remember the result of his first efforts at leading—the man was an Egyptian, Moses killed him. And then,

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after a period of quiet to think things over, Moses had a vision of God. You will find it in the third Chapter of Exodus. To begin with, Moses had to turn aside and look for God—a very necessary start if we are to find out what message God has for us. Then Moses received a shock—God wanted the whole of him, not occasional bits of his time and energy, but the whole of them. And, most disturbing of all, God had got a job for him, a very difficult job. Watch Moses trying to wriggle out of it. What are his excuses?

Verse 11.—I'm not an important enough person. Pharaoh wouldn't listen to me.

Verse 13.—What is the good of going to the people of Israel and telling them that I have had a vision of God? They will never believe me.

Chapter IV, verse 1.—(Still unconvinced.) It is no good telling them that I have been guided to come. They won't believe me, or even listen to me.

Verse 10.—Then another thing. I couldn't take on this job because I'm a poor speaker; in fact, I should certainly make a hash of it, probably do more harm than good.

Verse 13.—No, I'm not really the man for this task; you ought to get somebody else.

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Now please reflect for a few moments as to whether you have ever known anybody who gave all, or some, of these replies when God asked him to tackle some difficult or unpleasant task. I am quite sure in my own case that I have frequently given answers like these; they were really excuses to cover up my doubts or fears.

But in the case of Moses his resistance was overcome and he made a definite decision that he would carry out God's Will. Let us see what happened to him. Was he perfect all at once? Good gracious, no! His start was definite enough, but he made many mistakes in his early days. Look at Chapter V, verse 22. Moses is impatient; he is discouraged because it doesn't come right at once. How like us. "I don't believe I've done any good at all—in fact, it is quite likely that there has been more harm than good." Querulous, almost resentful, as though it were God's fault, not ours. And how patient God is—then and now. Chapter VI shows Moses failing again and God still patient. Gradually, as the change in Moses proceeds, one finds less and less the self-effort which fails, and more and more God's power using him effectively.

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What happens when Moses is fully under God's control? There emerges one of the great figures of History; Moses the judge, the law-giver and the leader.

Turn to some of the other great figures in the Old Testament. When God calls them they make just the same excuses as people make to-day; but once they surrender, then God's power can fill them with strength.

Gideon wanted to start with an experiment, to have a test; he wanted to be absolutely sure that it was guidance before he followed it.

Jeremiah said that he was quite keen on the idea of doing God's will, but thought that he was too young. Here it is, in Chapter I, verse 6 —“Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child.”

And God's reply was: “Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.”

Then Jeremiah was evidently frightened of the black looks he was likely to encounter from his friends and relatives, since we see in the next verse, “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee.”

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Habakkuk was told to write his guidance down.

Samuel's new life dated from the time when he began to listen to God. It was the time when he said: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." That was the turning point in his life.

Compare these with the following account of something that happened a few years ago. A Canadian girl in Oxford saw that God wanted to use her for His work in her own country. Her first thought was that she was only a girl. Her second thought was that she had but few friends and they would not be likely to listen to her. In spite of that she went back to Canada and through her and others of the Oxford Group was started a work for Christ that has spread throughout the nation.

One of the most interesting stories of how lives are changed by the power of God is that of the Woman of Samaria. It occurs in the fourth chapter of St. John's Gospel. To begin with, we need to get a clear picture of the significant points in the story. Getting water from the well outside the city must have been a regular task for the women, and no doubt there was a great opportunity for gossip, as the

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women waited about. I asked a form of boys recently to suggest something that would be the modern equivalent. I thought that the best suggestion was: "Eleven o'clock coffee while shopping in the town."

Jesus began the life-changing conversation in a perfectly natural way by asking a favour. He didn't ask her, "Are you saved?" He asked her for a drink of water. The woman is interested at once: a Jew, asking for a drink from a Samaritan. Jesus ignores her reply and starts to witness to what He has to offer. She tries to make this seem like presumption—her reply is similar to the modern equivalent of; "Do you set yourself up to be better than the parson?" Jesus witnesses again to the value of what He has to offer. She is more than interested; she is now definitely seeking something. "How can I get this new life?" she asks. Jesus at once challenges her on the subject of the kind of life she is leading. Here we see His power of spiritual diagnosis.

The woman is convicted and she admits the truth of the challenge; but she immediately tries to head off the conversation into a theological argument. It is a well-known red herring—do you think the centre of our religious

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life should be Jerusalem or Samaria? Jesus witnesses again of what real worship ought to be.

True to modern life—she wants to postpone her decision until later. Jesus witnesses again and the battle is won. She has found real life and in her joy she even forgets the water-pot as she goes off into the city to tell her friends. Such a thing happening to a woman of her reputation made a great stir in the city; the effect must have been similar to that produced a short time ago, when the pagan son of a well-known public official was changed. In the Bible story one sees something of the effect produced in the fact that some of the men came out to the well in spite of the glaring sun of the afternoon in the East. No doubt her face was changed, in the way that I myself saw a similar change take place out in Canada last year in the space of six hours. It reminds one also of the story from the East End of London of something that happened during the Oxford Group campaign there last year. A little girl opened the door to her mother, gave one glance and ran out to the scullery to say, "Daddy, come quick; Mummy's got a new face."

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Compare the story of the Woman of Samaria with the following:—There was a motor salesman in Canada whose methods of selling cars can be judged by his own statement that “After a party with him, many a man would wake up in the morning to find himself the owner of a beautiful new car.” His “well” was a hotel in Quebec where, in his own words, “every pillar in the hall was a personal friend because each one had supported him at different times.” On one of his visits he found himself talking far into the night with somebody he had just met for the first time. There is no record of that conversation, but the result was the same as in the case of the Samaritan Woman.

Peter makes a fascinating story. The early contact with him prepares us for something interesting. Jesus begins by asking a favour; He borrows Peter’s boat for a time while He is talking to the crowd. What a pity we haven’t the substance of that talk; there is only one sentence about it—“He sat down and taught the people out of the ship.” I think Peter must have been listening and no doubt much of the talk was directed at him. In view of what followed it is clear that Peter was tremendously interested. Otherwise he could not pos-

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sibly have fallen in with the strange suggestion that he should start out again and do some more fishing. Just imagine it happening to an experienced fisherman at Yarmouth, a man who was senior partner in a firm that owned two or three boats. He has been out all night, he is tired and rather despondent about their lack of success.

But Peter carried out the suggestion; a fine experimental start in following guidance—and it worked!

There were three stages in Peter's development:—

- (a) When he was attracted.
- (b) When he was willing to associate with Jesus so long as He was successful, but unwilling to associate with Him when things were going badly.
- (c) All out, willing to be persecuted.

How well I know that second stage. One is prepared to be in the Christian team while things are going well; but if a mistake is made by somebody, or criticism comes, then one sheers off instead of standing by and sharing the blame.

Identification means standing by for twenty-

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four hours of the day, even when it involves blame or misunderstanding or slander. That was the kind of team that Jesus was building up, and it could only be done on a basis of sharing victories and failures as well as food and money.

Jesus taught that lesson when He shared with His disciples the temptations in the wilderness, and Peter showed that he had learnt it when he shared with the others his failure and thrice-repeated denial. But what a force Peter became when he was changed. There, in the very place of his defeat, a few weeks later, he stands up and faces the crowd he feared before. That is the kind of changed life that carries conviction.

Let us look at some more things that happen to men and women when their lives are changed—the Acts of the Apostles tells the story. At the same time let us compare these things with what is happening in the world to-day. To begin with, of course, the early Christians lived under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Nearly every chapter in the Acts contains at least one story of guidance, many of the chapters have several stories. The

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Oxford Group have recaptured for this generation the old truth that real life is the guided life.

There are people who do not believe in detailed guidance. Nor did I, until I had experience of it; but I had no excuse for disbelieving it in the face of the stories of Philip, Ananias, Cornelius in Chapters VIII, IX and X of the Acts.

We may expect guidance in details, as the early Apostles clearly did, and when we follow it we find similar results.

These men were in the habit of confessing their own faults to each other as St. James puts it in his Epistle; to-day the Oxford Group follow the same principle when anyone feels he has done something that let the team down. And the custom was the same with regard to the faults of other members of the team; when Paul thought Peter had done wrong, he had it out with Peter face to face. My own experience in the Oxford Group is that this results in a splendid openness which welds people together. It is the exact opposite of the disintegration caused when a person confesses the sins of somebody not present, instead of talking to him direct.

Look at the calm way in which those early

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Christians would attack strongholds. One gets the picture of Paul starting out under guidance with a small team to win Antioch or Corinth for Christ. But the same things are happening to-day in many countries of the world.

Of course, the Bible becomes interesting when read in this new light, and one constantly comes across things that exactly correspond to one's own experience. I am a beginner and have not got very far, but I don't get bored now when I read the Bible.

One can understand now why the Bible is still the world's best-seller; and why it was that all the bookshops in Oslo were sold out of Bibles during the first few weeks of the visit of the Oxford Group team to Norway.

CHAPTER XII

ACTION

I HAVE finished my testimony. I have described things which are actually happening in the world around us, practical proof of a Power at work to-day; and in the last chapter I have tried to forecast what I believe may happen through changed lives. I have given the evidence of men and women who have been changed, and now, each in their own sphere, are working for the reconstruction of the world. World-changing through life-changing; a chain of changed lives is being forged across the world.

What are you going to do about it?

I will tell you what I did when first I met this challenge. It was the first meeting of the Oxford Group that I had ever attended, and in the course of it we had a short time of Quiet. A thought came to me—I had no notebook, but I pulled an envelope out of my pocket and there I wrote it down. These are the words, "Join the Oxford Group."

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I learnt then, of course, that you cannot join, nor can you resign; but you can learn, and I am learning still. You cannot join, but you can belong. We are a band of men and women, of every age, and every class, from more than fifty countries, who are moving on together, sure in our direction, a great and constantly increasing company, weaving living threads of friendship across all human barriers. What will be the pattern? That is in the mind of God. He asks you to listen and obey.

And what is your part in this picture?

First on the personal side. There is a plan for you in the mind of God. Is there something in your life which blocks that plan's fulfilment? Listen to God and He can show you what it is. How petty it seems when matched with God's eternal purpose. If God's will is your will those feeble falsities will disappear, and there will emerge a new you, the personality which God can fashion, so that you work for Him and with His power. What can be greater than that? Compared with that, how futile is the thought of the same old ruts for another twenty years?

What is the first step?—it may be quite a small one. Naaman had to wash in a small river. For you it may be to apologise to some-

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one you dislike, to pay back something that you owe, to be honest about yourself in your own home. It is the first step that counts, provided that we witness to the reason why we take it. The start is when we deliberately ask God what is His will in everything, and choose it in preference to our own. Of course, it will involve humiliation, of course it will hurt our pride; but that is the way of the Cross, and it is the way in which men come to God. A refusal is the Great Refusal, to turn one's back on Christ. And all the time real life awaits you; if you knew all the facts as God does you would be running breathlessly to do His will.

So much for self, but what of others? Around you as you live you are touching other lives. Are they in need of help? God knows they are, and when you are ready, God will bid them come to you. In family, in business, among one's school friends, throughout the daily life, there are others looking to you for help, and if you fail them their problems remain unsolved. They have their place to fill in the pageant of life; it may be God needs you to show them how to find it.

If you have followed all that I have tried to say, you must have seen something of the tasks

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that lie around. Will you go on another twenty years and then look back on the vision you rejected? What will your thoughts be then?

The call of Christ is that lives should be changed. Are you doing that work yourself? To approve is not enough; to patronise is not enough; to influence is not enough.

The need is urgent, even the minutes count. There is someone in desperate need waiting for you to help. It is as if children were drowning before your eyes and you could save them. Will you forgive yourself hereafter if you should stand by now and complain that there are no life-belts, or that a boat must be provided? You must take the plunge yourself.

Finally, let us look out into the world around. Has God some part for you to play? God alone knows. To sit still is to fail Him while there is work to do. Are you prepared to do His will, let the cost be what it may? That is surrender. Surrender of all one knows of self to all one knows of God.

The need is urgent; there is no time to lose. The world is arming. There are at this moment thousands of machine-guns pointing at the hearts of the coming generation. What are you going to do? Be sure of one thing—let it dis-

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turb your sleep—to do nothing means that your fingers are pressing on the trigger.

“But,” you say, “what can I do?” The answer is “Nothing.” You have asked the wrong question. The only question is, “What can God do?” He has a plan. What is your part in it? Will you listen to Him?