

INNOCENT MEN

BY

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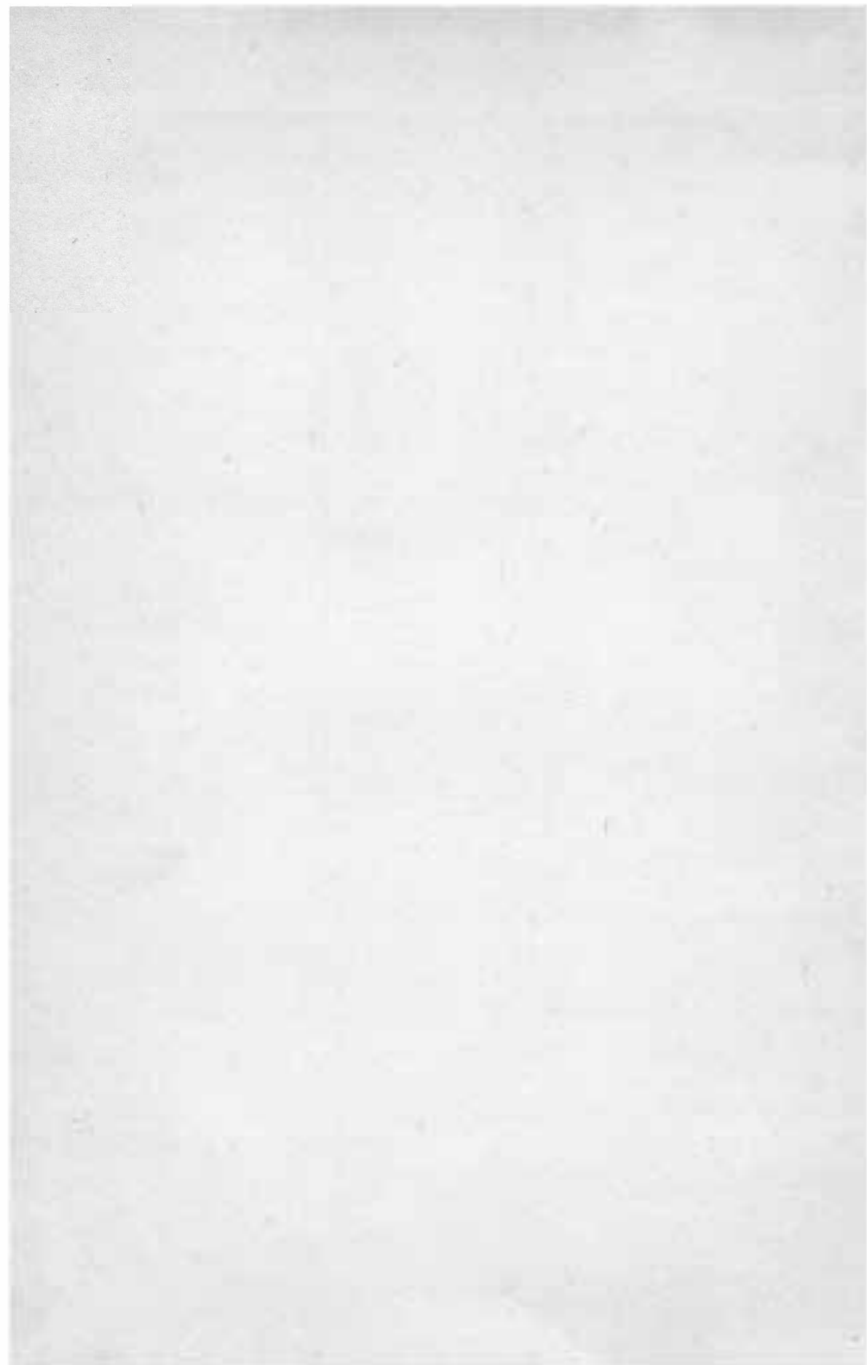
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PART I



CHAPTER ONE

PRELUDE TO ADVENTURE

I

THIS is the true story of an adventure which fortune put in my path. It is the account of an experiment which I am making.

That experiment is not yet ended. But already the results of my researches are so startling, the conclusions I draw are so exciting in their implication, that I am setting the whole tale down on paper. I do this for two reasons. First, as a man who depends on his pen for a living, I find my brain works better when I write than when I speak.

Second, I want other people to join in my experiment, to help me along the road with their own researches.

Most of my narrative is a simple record of events, and of facts about which there can be no difference of opinion. I set them down as they occurred.

But some of the story consists of the opinions formed about the various happenings, the judgments I pass about the goodwill and character of certain men and women.

So in order that my own capacity for judgment may be assessed it is right to give a short account of myself, to sketch out something of my background, and to describe the state of mind I was in when a few months ago my adventure began. Though you need not be disturbed. This book is in no sense an autobiography. I'll wait another thirty-two years (I am thirty-two now) before I subject you to that dose for your delight.

II

I WAS born with a lame leg. The fact must be made plain at the beginning of my narrative.

For many people suppose that the whole life-time of lame people can be influenced by this sort of disability, that a kink of mind develops as an appendage to the kink of body. It is proper, then, that those who read this tale of adventure should have the opportunity of dismissing the whole matter as a kink on my part, if they desire to do so.

So here is the account of the "lame leg" and its effect on my fortunes.

There was no reason why I should be born lame (my left ankle touched my left knee when I was born, the whole limb twisted in a circle. In infancy the leg had to be broken and straightened, the Achilles tendon taken away. So to this day I cannot point my left toe).

No disease was inherent on either side of my family and no lameness at all. I know now that my lameness was a tragedy to my father and mother, who unreasoningly but naturally reproached themselves for it, and loved me the more. But in my childhood my disability meant nothing to me. I learned to walk, I learned to play, and I was unconscious of my thin leg, except that it was a bore to have to get ready for bed ten minutes earlier than other children. For my nurse used to spend ten minutes massaging my leg with grease, hoping to strengthen the muscles and render them supple.

My father was my teacher. Patiently he persevered with me through days of joy and days of tears, instructing me in a way which I shall never forget and for which I shall always be grateful (though I was not so when it was going on). As the result of his toil I won the top scholarship to a public school.

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When I got there I was aware, for the first time, of my lameness. I was an abject figure when I went to school, grubby, untidy, and unwary of hostility, as much-loved children tend to become.

We used to bathe naked in the school swimming bath. The other boys asked me questions about my thin leg, and I soon came to suppose there was a shame and uncleanness in possessing it.

Rugby football was the great game at my school. I was unpopular. But I was clever enough to see that nobody who played Rugby football well at that place lacked admiration.

So for the sake of popularity (and also subconsciously as a demonstration to myself that my thin leg was as good as anybody else's leg, thin or fat) I became anxious to play Rugby football well.

I did not satisfy myself by my success. I only managed to get into the school football XV in my last year there. And I was not so good at the game as many others. I was not pleased with that at all. I wanted to be the best player in the school. But there were at least nine others who played better than I did.

I had now decided that Rugby football was not my game. Just the same this decision secretly disturbed me. Because of the handicap of my thin leg rugger was the game above all others at which I wished to excel.

The question now arose—was I to go to Oxford on leaving school, as my father had done before me? Or was I to go straight into an office to earn my living?

It was decided that if I got a scholarship or exhibition substantial enough, I should be sent up to Oxford. Otherwise, not so.

I began to work hard. Although I did very little work for my schoolmasters, I used to get up early, at five o'clock in the mornings, and do work for myself.

As a result I earned the objurgations of my teachers, but I also earned an open exhibition to Oxford (though not a very big one).

I planned, at this time, myself to be a schoolmaster. It seemed to me a nice, carefree life with plenty of long holidays. My headmaster suggested that I should apply to the Board of Education for a grant of money, to supplement my Oxford exhibition. Such grants are available to young men who mean to become schoolmasters and who, without the grant, cannot afford to go to the University. This was exactly my position.

One spring day, I set off for Oxford to be examined and interviewed by the Board of Education. A polite and charming Board of Education official asked me if I intended to become a schoolmaster. I told him that I did.

I then asked him what happened if, by some accident or wriggle of fate, I did not become a schoolmaster. The official said with a smile: "Oh, you can quite understand that as you now are under twenty-one, you are not under any legal obligation to repay the money, supposing we come to any arrangement."

It was then fixed that the Board of Education should pay me £70 odd a year to supplement my exhibition. So Oxford became possible for me.

When I went up to Oxford I had almost surrendered my Rugby football ambitions. I was fired with the idea of working like a mule, of becoming the most brilliant and shining scholar who ever had emerged from the precincts of the University. (Just the same, secretly I would rather have played rigger well than have read Euripides well.) Then an amazing thing happened to me.

One cold Thursday, a winter afternoon, when the Oxford University Greyhounds (the University Second XV) were playing Cheltenham, a member of the team fell ill. By a

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series of chances I was the person available to take his place. I was pulled in at the last moment.

Everything went right for me in that game. Next Saturday I was picked to play for the University.

I cannot describe the exhilaration which filled me when I heard this news. I telegraphed to my parents. All my hopes of justifying myself and my lameness before the world flew up again like fire.

I played for the University all through that season, until a fortnight before the University match. I felt sure of my "blue". All my friends—and it is odd how many friends a man has who is playing football for a University—told me it was certain.

Then I was dropped from the side. I heard that the captain of the team took the view that my thin leg might snap in the "Varsity" match. He would not risk it.

The decision seemed silly, as I had played in first-class rucker matches all the way through the season, two days a week and sometimes more, without my leg snapping. In any case, it was a terrible blow to me, and my pride bled and suffered.

III

My father and mother bore with me in these tiresome circumstances. I behaved very badly, becoming ill-tempered, venomous and surly.

My only hope rested in the following rucker season.

During the spring I thought of rucker.

During the summer I thought of rucker.

And when the autumn came I started training for rucker.

As I left my home to go up to Oxford and try to win my blue, my father and mother stood on the doorstep. We had always been close together as a family, in spite of the fact

that all three of us possess determined and potentially violent dispositions, hurting each other and sorry for it afterwards. My father said with emphasis: "Well, I hope to God you don't get your blue. That's all. You're too damned conceited already."

I turned and went away.

I know now that my father wanted above everything else in the world that I should get a blue. But he knew how disappointed I had been at my earlier failure. He dreaded that I might fail again. He was resolved that, if I did fail, I should not feel that he and my mother were also disappointed in me.

This is now plain to me. Not so at the time. I was wounded and resented the wound. I felt dislike for my father.

I got my blue. The days passed in a daze of delight. I thought no human glory could be greater than this.

Then, tuning in the radio one evening, I heard the announcer give the names of the players picked to represent England against Wales. My name was there.

The news threw me altogether off balance. I walked as a man like a god. I knew there was something godlike about me. Only men like gods were Rugby internationals. (Do not feel too harsh about me as you read this. It seems ludicrous and ridiculous to me to-day that I should have been in this state of mind over the achievement of playing Rugby football better than my neighbours. But it *was* my state of mind, and as such has its place in the narrative of my adventure.)

My first International match was to be played at Cardiff.

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The England team went to Penarth two days beforehand. "Are you coming to see the game?" I asked my father. "No, I shan't bother," he replied. "It's a long way to go, you know, and I think I'll stay at home."

I was angry that my father should not be willing to travel to the end of the earth, let alone to Wales, to witness the glorification of his son. So I packed.

At Cardiff the match was played. We were expected to lose. Instead we came away with victory perched on our banners. It was tremendous, exhilarating, triumphant. In addition to the success of the team I had the satisfaction of knowing that I myself had played well.

As I changed back into my ordinary clothes with the rest of the team, I was told someone was waiting at the dressing-room door to see me. There stood my father.

I hurried on my overcoat and we walked out together on to the Cardiff Arms Park. It was almost dark and round us we could see the tiered stands which before had trembled with cheers, but now were deserted except for newspapers and other bits of débris left by the crowd and flapping in the gale.

My father and I walked across the muddy, trampled turf, where half an hour before I had been rolling about, fighting, kicking, running and tumbling.

He told me he had taken a day excursion from London, that he had to go back very soon. Then he caught hold of my arm. He is not a man who shows his emotions easily. For the only time in my life I saw him burst into tears.

It was a terrifying and rending experience. I put my arms round him and tried to comfort him. "Whatever is the matter, my dear?" I asked.

"Oh, I can't tell you what this all means to your mother and me," he said. "Sorry—so sorry to make such a fool of myself. So sorry. But you know, you with your lame leg.

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It's always been sad for us. We've blamed ourselves for it. And now to see you playing for England, and the crowd and the cheering. I *can't* explain to you how much it means to us both."

Although I have had rows since then with both my father and mother, I have never from that day to this felt anything but a warmth of love for the two of them.

This strange incident on the Cardiff Arms Park had two other effects upon me. From that day to this I have never been troubled again about my thin leg. It has meant no more to me, good or bad. It does not matter to me in the slightest, one way or another.

And from that day I never felt the same fever for football. It is true that I played for England all that season, and all the next (I was picked to captain the side in the next season). But from the moment my father spoke to me, rugger fell into a proper proportion in my life.

The season after I captained England, though I was just at the age when rugger players are considered to be approaching their prime, I gave up my serious application to the game. I have scarcely put on a football boot since that time.

I must at this point share with you what at that time seemed to be a trivial matter. During my race to fame and glory on the rugger field, my scholastic hopes had been thrust away. I did not average one half hour's work a day during three years at Oxford.

Although I had my exhibition, I never took a degree at Oxford. Indeed, I left the University without sitting for the examination. So my plans for becoming a schoolmaster, which had been fading for some time, finally vanished.

IV

I CAME down from Oxford owing a great deal of money. My parents are not rich. I had conducted myself as though they were. But I kept many of my liabilities secret from them.

A job was something I had to grab quickly. Through personal contacts I heard of a boy who planned to go to Oxford next year if he could pass the examination. His parents offered me five pounds a week and all expenses to take him to Switzerland for six months and coach him.

This suited me well. It gave me the prospect of setting aside five pounds a week for the next six months and also would put me outside the reach of my creditors for the same period.

But it had another advantage which I could not know about until I was actually sitting in the sunshine of our hotel balcony at San Moritz, teaching my pupil how to discover if the hands of a clock were together at four and a half minutes past one at what exact moment they would next be together again.

For while I was tutoring this boy, I looked over the hotel balcony and saw a girl. She was playing tennis on the hard court below. I fell in love with her. Three days after I met her I had proposed to her. Three seconds later she had refused me.

Just the same, it is now eight years since Doris Metaxa and I married. We have three children.

My labours with my pupil were so successful that the boy passed his examinations, and so his parents had no further need of my services.

I still had Oxford debts to pay. Meanwhile my friend Harold Nicolson had appeared on the scene. He told me that British politics were in a shocking condition, that there was no longer any hope or help from the old parties in the State, that his comrade Sir Oswald Mosley, who had resigned from high office in the Labour Government on an issue of principle, had founded a New Party, and that it was my public duty to join it.

At that time (it was just before the 1931 election) public duty made no strong appeal to me, though I was flattered to imagine that men of the standing of Nicolson and Mosley should select me as a member of the patriot band to save Britain.

I was offered a total of £650 a year for my services. I accepted the job and the money.

These were the days when Mosley was declaiming his bitter opposition to Fascism and all its ideology. "We don't want any ice-cream from Italy," he exclaimed. Also he described British Fascists of that day as "black-shirted buffoons, making a cheap imitation of Italian ice-cream sellers."

All over the country I went with Mosley during the 1931 election.

Sometimes I had to stand and bawl at street corners to collect a crowd for him to address after he had finished his indoor meetings. Sometimes I had to get up and answer questions about New Party policy while Mosley hurried along to other meetings elsewhere.

I was mobbed at Reading, knocked down and kicked in South Wales, had my head cut wide open with a blow from a chair in the Birmingham rag market, and was slashed with a razor in Glasgow.

It was in Glasgow, with Mosley, that I had an experience which affected greatly my outlook on events and has added

colour to the adventure in which I am to-day engaged. I was sent to canvass a street in one of the Glasgow constituencies which a supporter of Mosley was fighting.

In the basement of a house there, I found a man living in a single room with five children. The eldest was about fifteen, the youngest near two. There was no window at all in this dugout. The place stank. On the faces of the children, except of the smallest, there were sore scabby places, looking like scum pox.

The man stood talking to me quite politely. He told me that he was not interested in politics and did not mean to vote in the election at all. "You see none of these fellows do anything for me," he said. I explained that the New Party was really a new party, it attempted to give expression to all the hopes and ambitions of men of goodwill, it planned to right the wrongs of the submerged millions of our population and to make a new Britain with equality of opportunity and justice and work.

The fellow was just not interested. "They all say the same," he said. Then, in a more forthcoming voice, because I was doing all I could to make him like me—and succeeding—he added: "You know, they none of them do anything for me, because they none of them can. It's all a hopeless muddle."

"Well," I said, "if you do change your mind and vote, vote for the New Party." "Maybe," he answered, grinning at my persistence.

"If the New Party was in power," I told him, "you'd get a better place than this to live in—more room." (Here was the time-worn electoral technique of bribery by promise. To do myself justice I believed at the time what I said to the man.)

He replied in ordinary conversational tones: "Oh, we were more crowded a week ago. There was another kid here then. She died down here last Friday." He gave me

this information exactly as if he had told me that he liked kippers for supper. Life had so beaten this fellow that he just no longer cared about anything at all.

I heard from his neighbours that the daughter, aged nine, had died down there among them all one night (she had ailed a day or so), and next morning the father had carried the corpse in a sack over his back to a place where arrangements had been made to bury the child.

This experience made me vicious in anger. I blamed the politicians, nobody else at all. Almost from that moment I began to build up in my heart a resentment of the rulers who could tolerate such happenings in their midst.

In fact I was seized with the same unreasoning and vain passion which makes some men believe they can cure all evil by assassinating a monarch or a Foreign Secretary.

Later I went in a car along the valleys of the Rhondda. Presently I saw a crowd of people, three or four hundred of them, squatting on a hillside, gazing at a pond. There they were on the grass, crouching down on their heels as miners do, like a flock of black crows against the green and grey of the Welsh landscape.

For two days before I arrived they had sat stolidly from dawn to dark gazing at that pond (the water was not more than fifty yards across). A miner bathing in the pond had been drowned. They were dragging the water for his body.

And *all* the miners from the village turned out and watched these operations. For they had nothing else to do. Nothing at all. They were *all* unemployed. For years the older men had done no work. Many of the younger men had never done a day's work in their lives. So now they spent their time watching the pond. It was their only occupation in life.

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I learned that they sat there for another whole day after I left the Rhondda, until the steel drag caught firm in the dead arm of the drowned miner, lying thirty feet below the surface, and hauled him into the daylight. When the ambulance had taken the body off, the unemployed miners went home. They had no excuse to watch the pond to-morrow.

This sort of experience, as I went around the country, made my brain hot with rage and moulded it to revenge. I blamed the politicians for all misfortunes, I hated them, I detested them.

I began to envisage myself as a sort of latter-day Lenin inflaming the country by my voice and pen, getting power with public acclamation and at once by drive and initiative righting these shameful wrongs.

Many of these things which made me angry I saw as I travelled the country with Mosley. Some I saw after I left him.

For soon the New Party was in difficulties. Funds were declining. Mosley's thoughts began to turn to Fascism, which Harold Nicolson—and I—detested. (There was plenty of talk about it and about. But Mosley's shirt darkened as day followed day.)

Presently Nicolson picked his hat off the peg, I was handed mine, and we both walked out of the New Party together.

I went into a lawyer's office. In order to bump up my income I got a job reporting rugger matches on Saturday afternoon for the *Sunday Express*. This gave me two guineas a time.

One evening an old friend of mine took me to Lord Beaverbrook's political club, the Empire Crusade Club. There I heard a series of speeches praising the principles of Empire Free Trade.

I got on my feet and gave my views with vigour.

Beaverbrook was in the audience. He came up, shook me by the hand, and told me he found my remarks interesting.

Later, I found a paragraph in the *Evening Standard* Londoner's Diary praising my abilities. A few weeks later Beaverbrook telephoned me at my lawyer's office and asked me to go and see him. I heard afterwards this was due to the kind thought of a friend of mine in the *Express*. As soon as I got inside Beaverbrook's room, he said: "I want you to write a political article for me, Howard."

After I had considered this proposition, I felt a great bubble of exhilaration burst within me. Here was my chance to put the country right, to tell the politicians where they had sinned.

I have been doing a political column in the *Sunday Express* ever since. But I am afraid the state of the country remains very much the same.

V

FOR almost seven years I have written about politics and politicians.

Now once a man named Begbie described the shortcomings of statesmen in a most candid fashion, concealing his identity under the title "*A Gentleman with a Duster*."

If I had had to choose a pen name for my own exertions as a political journalist, I should have called myself "*A Man with a Knuckleduster*."

My political journalism was of the most bludgeoning character. I quickly understood that many people rejoice to see their M.P.s abused and assailed. I learned that most political journalists are either hated and feared or liked and laughed at. I perceived that in Fleet Street attack is the easy highway to fame and fortune.

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I think that as a political commentator I was feared. I am certain I was hated. I am sure that in the eyes of Fleet Street I was successful.

There were certain political principles, some of them enunciated by Lord Beaverbrook, in which I came to believe with passion and sincerity. I fought for them against all comers with every gun I possessed. Beaverbrook took immense trouble over me. His instruction in the art of journalistic writing was unflagging, vivid and beyond price. For my part I make no bones in recording my debt to Beaverbrook for the long hours of toil and instruction which he gave me over those years. He drove me on unceasingly, illuminating the dark days with a ray of sunshine and stirring up the easy summer weather with a thunderbolt or two. And I shall always be grateful.

After a time in Fleet Street I developed a philosophy of writing.

My philosophy was that to attack public men was more amusing and of more service to the community than to defend them. When I punched, I punched to hurt. I believed that a man who set himself up as a public figure was there to be assailed.

Did I conduct feuds and vendettas? Certainly I did.

If I heard that anyone had criticised my employer or my newspaper, I would wait patiently for weeks, maybe months, until the moment arrived to hang my victim's hide on the fence and take vengeance on him.

If everyone thought a man was to be praised, I hit him hard, above or below the belt. If on the other hand people assailed a statesman or a point of view, I often sustained that man or viewpoint in my column.

I became mainly concerned with the success or failure of my own political column, and at the same time convinced that it was my duty to kick and curse the men who, in my

judgment, were responsible for the mess we had become bogged in.

Of course, I had a number of friends in politics. Some men I was drawn to, by claims of personal attraction and charm, or by their advocacy of some liberal policy I believed in. We used to dine together and in some cases to meet on a basis of real affection.

These friends I stood loyally beside. I defended them in their political adventures, I praised their activities.

And they gave me news for my column.

VI

ONE other aspect of my life must be discussed here before the account of my experiment begins, for it has a direct bearing on the story of my adventure.

I had no belief in God. I was in fact an atheist, rejecting with my reason any possibility of an intelligence or power greater than man's.

Years of compulsory church and chapel going, at school and elsewhere, made me think of religion as a routine to be avoided if possible. I found it dull.

But for some cause which I cannot name, I would never declare myself openly as an atheist. I always described myself as an agnostic, saying that I intended to live my life on this earth to the limit of my own capacity for enjoyment and pleasure. For after all, if there were to be another life after this one, we should all start off again level together.

I had what is called a healthy suspicion of religious people. The sight of any man reading the Bible in a railway carriage filled me with a distrust and contempt for him.

I expressed a just belief in the virtues of Christian philosophy and imagined myself to possess a fair share of these.

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Yet any man who openly professed a belief in God made me blush for him. I secretly regarded him as a hypocrite, mouthing out words either to bolster up his own spirit, or else to impress the less educated classes or the middle-aged spinsters of the community.

I had no real belief in the efficacy of prayer. It is true that in moments of depression and difficulty I used to pray and felt the better for it.

But I regarded this business as a kind of patent medicine, a pick-me-up for the soul.

I took a dose of aspirin when I had a pain in the head. I took a dose of prayer when I had a pain in the spirit. The effect of both doses I thought was the same—numbing and easeful. I explained the easeful nature of prayer as something the psycho-analyst could see and did understand—but certainly which had nothing to do with God.

A man should deny himself no pleasure and stand aside from no folly except on the grounds that his own future welfare or his present comfort might be endangered if he indulged himself.

Each man should make up his mind where he was going—and go there—ruthlessly. If an opponent strike at you, strike him back twofold. Stand on your own legs. Be your own friend. Rely on nobody but yourself. Always be pleasant to those who can be of use to you—jolly them along. Be as pleasant as you like to other people. But let 'em down with a bump if that suits your convenience. (Of course, in the case of a friend you loved, it did *not* suit your convenience to betray him. For you felt wretched afterwards.)

I was, in short, a materialist, handicapped by an annoying streak of affection in my nature, which in tough moments I derided to myself as sentimentality.

VII

WHEN war broke out, my thoughts flew to my income. That was an immediate reaction to events.

I began to keep a careful account of expenditure in my diary. Being fond of food and drink, I used to spend plenty on these commodities. They seemed to me the obvious things to cut down on. For a month I went on the water-wagon. I told my friends that I did this for the sake of my stomach. In fact I did it for the sake of my pocket. I was worried by the thought that my newspaper work might come to an end and that my money would be taken from me. Although some of us forget this now, many people shared this feeling at the outbreak of war.

As it happened the thoughts were ill-founded. I set them down on paper in order to display the fact that my reaction to war was what would be expected from a man of my philosophy. I felt all the time "How will these events affect *me?*" That was my principal concern.

In fact, events did not affect me very desperately. Newspapers went on. So did my job. Money came in as usual. I soon stopped writing down in my diary how much each meal cost me.

It is true that my household was split up, as my wife and children, who had been in the country all through the summer before war, stayed on there. We did not want to have the children in London when the raids came, but I visited them all at week-ends.

Meanwhile, as I settled down to war-time conditions, I found the return to bachelordom during the week after years of married life not altogether displeasing. I lived at my club, staying out late under the strain of war, dining, drinking and dancing. I took to myself a personal freedom, I indulged in selfish pleasure to an extent greater than ever before.

CHAPTER TWO

A LADY IN ARMOUR

I

I NOW introduce you to a middle-aged woman called Edith Ducé. At this time she was secretary of the General Manager of the *Express* newspapers.

For a long time I cherished a grievance against her. I drank too much at a party, and behaved badly there. Mrs. Ducé got to hear of this affair. She went around the office telling her friends of my misdeeds.

I detested Mrs. Ducé for this malicious gossip. Day by day, for months, we greeted each other with the frigid and artificial grin of mutual repugnance. I regarded her as a dangerous and distasteful person. I felt I had to mask my emotion and smile at her whenever we met in the lift or passed in the passageway because, after all, she was the General Manager's secretary, and being as I knew both a tattler and an intriguer, might do me some harm.

Much later on, when Edith Ducé and I became friendly, she let me know that my false faces had not deceived her for an instant. She knew I disliked her, she guessed why I disliked her, and she disliked me too on that account. For she had in fact tattled about me. And it is difficult in this life to do someone an injury and bear him no malice on account of it.

Presently I noticed a most remarkable change in Edith Ducé. Instead of appearing acidulous, she looked out at life with greater benevolence. She seemed altogether more contented and happy.

From various people I heard that she had completely abandoned her practice of using her position (as secretary to the General Manager) to distribute tit-bits of office news among her cronies. (Mrs. Ducé knew everything that went on in the *Express* office. If a man was given a job or fired, received a bonus or a reprimand, was being writted for libel or had quarrelled with Beaverbrook—she heard it all before anybody else except the General Manager himself.)

One day she stood still in the passage as I hurried past her with my determined grin, and called after me "Peter." It was the first time she had used my Christian name in addressing me; and I was indignant that a secretary, even the General Manager's secretary, should call me "Peter" inside the *Express* building. Edith Ducé asked me to come into her room. There, after some polite palaver in which I was on my guard and she appeared to be seeking for words to use, she told me that she knew that in the past she had tried to do me some injury by her malice and her tongue. She apologised for it and hoped we should be better friends in future. Then she said something like this: "I am a different woman from what I used to be. I thought it right to tell you why. I made up my mind that the only way to lead my life was on a Christian basis. Every morning before I leave home I pray and listen to God. I write down the thoughts which come to me, and, Peter, I want you to realise that this is the only thing in life that matters at all."

This was said to me by Mrs. Ducé in a matter-of-fact fashion, without embarrassment on her part. Its effect on me was shattering. I mumbled: "Thank you very much. Very interesting. Must tell me more about it some other time." Like a chicken I bolted.

I remember, as I went away, breaking into a run as I realised with ferocity that I had stumbled on a story about Mrs. Ducé which would make her seem far more ridiculous

and contemptible in the eyes of my fellow journalists than her account of my drunkenness had made me appear in the eyes of her fellow secretaries.

I went about the place telling everyone that Mrs. Ducé now suffered from religious mania. But she beat me to it. Many people had heard the story from her own lips already.

In any event, I had missed the best part of the tale. In the language of Fleet Street I had been "scooped." For Mrs. Ducé was not a common-or-garden Bible-puncher. She had actually joined the Oxford Group, and was to be known until the day of her death (she was killed by a Nazi bomb some time ago) as a Buchmanite.

She received much abuse and some persecution, life was made as hard as possible for her by some people, because of what were casually called her "pernicious doctrines."

II

I KNEW all about these "pernicious" doctrines. That is to say, I knew everything that had appeared in the Press, or had been whispered down Fleet Street (infinitely more damaging) about the Oxford Group.

I believed a good deal of what I heard. For by this time my whole temperament was attuned to attack. I sought for weaknesses in the situation of any person or company, I was not on the lookout for strength.

Just the same, I noticed two things about the attacks, the whispers and the assaults against the Oxford Group.

Firstly, they all could be traced back through the people who repeated them, to the same source and the same collection of people. It was quite a small band of men who spread about the tales of the pernicious Group deeds and doctrines. Most of these men can be named.

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And although they were and are for the most part men of brilliance and ability, and although their opposition to the Oxford Group persuaded many hundreds of others, myself among them, that the Group was bogus and baneful, none of these so far as I could discover had any first-hand knowledge of the Group—they appeared to slog at the Group merely for the sake of slogging—in much the same way as I slogged the politicians.

This minority of clever men (cleverness is often the enemy of truth) were very loud-voiced antagonists of the Group. Determined, they bitterly vilified the Group, while the larger section of the opponents of the Group simply repeated the arguments of the minority, like parrots. The small malignant body of men seemed to have a closed mind about the Group and grabbed at any story against it for the sake of attack.

I knew all about these allegations against the Group, and to some extent believed them.

Yet, at the same time, it is honest to say I had a curious admiration for a band of people who in this day and age preferred to endure this sort of criticism for the sake of an "old-fashioned" belief in God.

John Wesley told of how, when he was at Oxford as a young man, he and his friends decided to visit once a week the people in prison, and also to help the poor people in Oxford. "Soon after," wrote Wesley, "a gentleman of Merton College who was one of our little company, which now consisted of five persons, acquainted us that he had been much rallied the day before for being a member of *The Holy Club*, and that it has become a common topic of mirth at his college, where they had found out several of our customs to which we were ourselves utter strangers. Upon this I consulted my father in whose answer were these words: 'I can scarcely think so meanly of you as that you would be

discouraged with the "crackling of thorns under a pot." Be not high-minded, but fear. Preserve an equal temper of mind under whatever treatment you meet with from a not very fair or well-natured world. Bear no more sail than is necessary, but steer steady.' "

My attitude to the Group at this time was repulsion at their "pernicious doctrines," with a mild attraction to their guts.

I hated the course they steered (being one of the parrots, who repeated and believed the tales coming from the small, skilful anti-Group community) but I admired the way they steered steady.

III

IN May, 1940, Winston Churchill became Prime Minister and my master Lord Beaverbrook joined the Government as Minister of Aircraft Production. It would be bound to embarrass Beaverbrook immensely in his political situation if any Sunday morning you please he was liable to wake up in bed and discover one of his colleagues transfixed on the nib of Peter Howard's pen and held up, on the centre page of his own *Sunday Express* newspaper, wriggling and dangling and squirming, to receive the jeers and sneers of the populace.

So the blow fell on my neck. Mrs. Ducé called me on the telephone and said that the General Manager wanted to see me. I was, and am, on terms of friendship with him.

He said to me something like this: "Peter, you are not to write on politics or about politicians any longer—at any rate so long as our old man (Beaverbrook) is in the Government. I am sorry, but there it 's."

So I found that, because of Beaverbrook's entry into Churchill's cabinet, I was a political writer no more.

I had to start again from the beginning.

IV

ONE day, as I stood in the anteroom where Mrs. Ducé worked, waiting to see the General Manager, I was treating her to my opinions about some fellows who in my judgment were impeding the war effort. I said these men ought to be shot, like any other individual who, when his country was in danger, proved obstructive and unhelpful.

Mrs. Ducé stopped typewriting. She said: "You are quite entitled to say that, Peter, provided you are doing all you can yourself to help." I must have looked somewhat bewildered, for she then said: "Have you yourself been as helpful as possible here lately? Do you ever ask yourself that question?"

I replied that I thought I had. I then added that in any case there was a difference between a working man employed in a job vital to our war effort and a working journalist unloading stuff on the public which had small value either in peace or war.

Mrs. Ducé remarked with complete good humour that she did not think that a journalist's labours need be of little value, and that she believed journalists could serve their country with great effect if only they understood or troubled to face their responsibilities.

I went away from Mrs. Ducé, I remember, without being able to get in to see the General Manager (he was busy all the time).

But her remarks had stung me, and I reacted to them after I had pondered them, by reviving to some extent my old hatred of that lady.

V

THE next event which bears on my experiment or adventure

was the ringing of the telephone on my desk at about midday one Thursday.

"Are you free for a moment, Peter?" said Mrs. Ducé's voice.

"Yes," said I.

"Come down for a minute then, will you? I have something for you."

When I got to Mrs. Ducé's room, she said in matter-of-fact tones: "I had some guidance about you in my quiet time this morning." I was embarrassed and I pretended not to understand. I grinned and said: "I don't understand all your Oxford Group jargon."

"I think you understand all right," said Mrs. Ducé. "You know that we listen to God every day first thing and write down the thoughts he gives us. Well, I had the thought this morning to tell you to go and see Garth Lean."

Now I was in a sense flattered that Mrs. Ducé should have what she regarded as "guidance" about me, though I did not for a second share her belief that her thoughts came from a God. I merely regarded this manifestation as a token that Mrs. Ducé took interest in me.

Just the same I had no intention of getting mixed up with the racket, as I then regarded it. So I asked Mrs. Ducé: "Who is Garth Lean?"

"He is one of my friends in the Oxford Group, and I think he'll be able to help you," answered Mrs. Ducé.

"Very kind of you," said I, "but that's not my line of country as well you know. I am not a religious person. I am an agnostic and that sort of thing doesn't interest me much."

"That's a pity," replied Mrs. Ducé. I left the room.

When I got upstairs to my own desk, a new thought, potent and attractive, stimulated my imagination. Here, after all, was the chance I had been waiting for. Already

much of Fleet Street abused the Oxford Group, or Buchmanites as journalists prefer to call them, saying that they were racketeers, pro-German and all the rest of it. Nobody had yet dared to print the story in that form. The reason was simple. They had talked themselves into a belief about the Oxford Group, but they had no concrete facts with which to support it.

If I had been more alert and subtle at this time, I should have realised what a give-away this was. Had there been a basis of reality in the Press attacks on the Oxford Group, all the newspapers would have leapt at the chance of publishing facts in their columns to support what they now whispered in their pubs.

I reflected further. If I could take advantage of Mrs. Ducé's offer to introduce me to Lean, I might be able to expose the whole affair. (Already I saw myself featured on the front page of the newspapers.)

I went downstairs again to Mrs. Ducé's room. "I've changed my mind," I told her. "I'd like to see your friend Bath Green or whatever he calls himself, after all."

Mrs. Ducé arranged that I should lunch with Lean at a flat in the Temple that very day.

CHAPTER THREE

SHERLOCK HOWARD

I

GARTH and I are to-day close friends. So he will forgive me if I place on record the fact that at our first meeting he did not impress me very favourably. Physically he is a shaggy-looking sort of fellow, with a head that is going bald, and a laugh which now amuses me, but which then irritated me exceedingly.

Looking back on this interview, I can see that two things more than anything else impressed me unfavourably about Garth Lean.

The first was that he spoke about God with respect but without embarrassment. And at that time, as I have said, this prejudiced me against anybody. I loathed that sort of business.

The second was that, when I spoke of my problem of having to start and rebuild my newspaper column, he was not particularly sympathetic about it.

He said one thing which stuck in my mind like a fish-hook in a trout's mouth. "You see," said Garth Lean, "your whole trouble is really a personal and selfish one. It is the fact that YOUR column has been altered which really is upsetting you."

He said this as if he thought there should be things of more importance in life, even in my own life, than my column.

Garth Lean asked me if I ever prayed. I told him that I did so sometimes and felt better for it. But that I only

regarded it as a sort of soporific. "Let us pray together now," said Garth Lean. He knelt down on his knees against the sofa before me.

Feeling exceedingly uncomfortable, I looked out through the King's Bench Walk window to discover whether anyone could overlook us. Satisfied on that point, I knelt down too, with both ears wide open, ready to spring to my feet in a second if a footstep should sound on the stair, or the handle of the door rattle.

Garth Lean then prayed. But I cannot remember what he said, except that it had an adverse effect on my mind as indicating that possibly I might have to do something myself, might have to change my own attitude of mind to my problems, before they could be solved.

As we said good-bye, I felt that Garth Lean at any rate believed he had the solution to all difficulties. He was plainly sincere about that. And I knew that he was happy.

I grudged him both these emotions, yet at the same time wanted to see him again to know more about them.

We parted. With the idea of saying that I meant to expose the Oxford Group in a dramatic newspaper scoop if anyone challenged me about it still advancing in my mind, I suggested meeting Garth Lean again.

He urged me to listen to God each morning, and write down what He said. In order to avoid any difficulty with this man who seemed anxious to help me, and for other motives which I will soon disclose, I agreed to do so.

Soon after I arrived back at the *Express* office a small parcel came from Garth Lean. When I opened it, out fell a Moffatt New Testament.

I broke out laughing. But as I picked up the Moffatt, I looked quickly around to see whether anyone had noticed my present. Nobody had. So I slipped it in my pocket.

"What are you laughing at?" asked the News Editor.

"Nothing," said I, "why the hell shouldn't I laugh anyway?" "All right, old man, all *right*," said the News Editor and went back to work.

II

FIRST thing in the morning, on the day after my meeting with Garth Lean, I set myself to listen to God. I sat with a piece of paper and a pencil in my hand to record what thoughts I had.

My feeling was one of repugnance over the whole business. Something in me was set and firm against the affair. Yet I persevered for two reasons. I knew that Garth Lean would ask me if I had listened to God and what I had recorded. And I wanted to worm my way into the full confidence of Lean and the other Groupers, so that I could find out the whole truth about them.

At the most I looked upon them as bright red hedgeberries—attractive in certain lights, but probably poisonous.

Well, I sat and waited for God to give me a message. I was disappointed to find that the messages I received were of the most ordinary and pedestrian character. On my piece of paper I recorded as follows: "Write home. Write to Nanny George (she is my childhood nurse who now works in a Birmingham hospital). Try to be as helpful as possible in the office. You have no reason to be bitter. You are too ready to make fun of other people and gibe at them."

All this can be dismissed as the sort of thoughts which might come from a man's own brain who decided to sit and listen to God. Though it is certainly worth recording that at this time I myself was not at all convinced that I had not first-rate reasons to be bitter with several of my cherished enemies.

Then I had the thought: "Pay Sergeant Smith the five pounds you owe him."

Now here again this thought may be explained as a subconscious thought of my own. Yet as an experimenter I was beginning to get more interested than irritated by this business of listening to God.

The circumstances of Sergeant Smith's five pounds were as follows:

He was a little fellow who used to bicycle round the streets of Oxford in the early morning, when I was at the University, massaging the legs and backs of rugger players and passing from one to another all the rugger gossip. If a man got a blue, Sergeant Smith used to know of it as soon as anybody—for he was probably massaging the back of the captain of the Rugger XV at seven o'clock that morning and discussing the team with him.

Sergeant Smith charged five pounds a term for his services. I paid him the five pounds for eight terms consecutively. The ninth term he massaged me as usual. But I left Oxford without paying him.

He never, so far as I can remember, sent in a bill. I never gave the matter consideration for almost ten years until I had this thought about the payment of five pounds as I sat "listening to God."

Some people may explain it away as a subconscious thought of a debt which had been nagging at me all those years. I do not think so. I did not worry very much about £5 debts.

In any case, at the time when I listened to God that morning, I owed other debts, far bigger than the Sergeant's five pounds, which might have been expected to present themselves to my subconscious mind with far greater force.

I was a little startled by this message about the Sergeant's five pounds. But I was glad to have the matter recalled to my mind. I thought for several moments before I could remember whether I *did* in fact owe him five pounds.

Then I sent off a letter to a friend at Oxford asking if Sergeant Smith was still alive, and if so to forward me his address. When I got the answer, I dispatched a cheque for five pounds and a few days later received a delighted and friendly reply from the old Sergeant.

There, so far as I know, the matter ended.

III

SOME people in the Group have received the most remarkable and dramatic pieces of guidance from God. I have heard a naval officer describe, with obvious sincerity, how in the middle of a naval action he received precise guidance from God which told him which decisions to take and which helped him and his ship through.

Others record how they suddenly received guidance to go to a certain street and there met people who needed their help. I have no such dramatic experiences to offer for your consideration (though I must record that I accept absolutely accounts of such guidance by other people. I have spoken with them and I believe what they say).

I only set out two more examples of my own early experiments of listening to God.

When the air raids began, I was frightened, but foolhardy. Thus, although I felt alarmed, I goaded myself to stand out in Ludgate Circus and watch the bombardment when the first mass daylight raid on the London docks came our way.

Soon after promising Garth Lean to listen to God, I received a message that if I trusted myself to God there was no need to fear. But that to go about the streets unnecessarily when a raid was on was wrong.

Explain it as you like, I have not from that moment felt over-alarmed in air raids.

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Then during last autumn, when the invasion of this country by Hitler seemed imminent and the air-bombardment was in full operation, I was deeply worried about my family. My wife and children (three of them, all at that time under seven) were in Suffolk in a cottage. At any time of any day or night it seemed possible that the Nazis might attempt to land troops on our island. East Anglia was an obvious landing place.

I could not decide what to do with my family. I thought of moving them to Cornwall. Then to Cumberland. For a time I even played with the idea of shipping them to safety in America (I could have "worked" this through various contacts made in journalism, and I could have managed somehow to keep them supplied with money).

Garth Lean suggested that I should submit the whole issue to God. I felt this to be a faintly ridiculous suggestion. But anyway I sat, prayed for guidance and listened. Very soon came the thought clear and urgent: "Let them stay where they are. Let them stay where they are. Have faith. People are feeling jumpy everywhere just now. Other people in your Suffolk village cannot get away. It is up to people like you and your family to set an example of commonsense and confidence."

My family have been in Suffolk ever since. Whatever the outcome, I place this fact on record. From that instant I have not again had a moment of real anxiety and worry as to whether they should change their quarters.

IV

No difficulty was set in the path I had chosen. The members of the Oxford Group welcomed me into their headquarters at Hay's Mews, Berkeley Square, and treated me exactly as though I were a member of their fellowship, anxious like

them to surrender myself to God, and lead my life according to His guidance.

One fact soon became apparent to me. You might dislike the habits and ways of these Oxford Group people. Indeed, their method of talking about God as if He were a friend of the family exasperated me unreasonably. Moreover, I was full of resentment when, on one of the first occasions I spent a night at Hay's Mews in their company, someone suddenly said: "Peter, will you please read us out loud your favourite passage in the Bible?" I felt petulant, and shy. I felt that they were taking advantage of me.

But even if you disliked these people, you could not, if you surveyed the scene with an open mind, distrust them. Sincere goodwill one to another—and indeed to everyone—radiated every room and person in the dwelling. There was a stimulating air about the place.

It would be no use for me to record this as a matter of second-hand or hearsay evidence. From my personal, and at the time hostile, observation, I place these facts about the members of the Group on record.

Here I have one piece of evidence to offer which may be of value, as it shows my reaction to these people a few months after I first met them, and may dispose of the suggestions that my first impressions are now coloured by my longer intimacy with these people, *i.e.* that they have now got at me.

My evidence is an article which I submitted to the Editor of the *Daily Express*.

About this time views on the Oxford Group of a hostile nature appeared in William Hickey's column. Hickey's work as a columnist is highly paid. He states his views with immense force and pertinacity.

After reading what he said, it seemed to me fair that the other side of the affair should be written. I thought it best, in the interests of good journalism and of truth, that both

sides of the picture should be presented and that the public should judge between them.

Accordingly I sat down and wrote as follows:

“REPLY TO HICKEY

“All good cider comes from stinking apples. And some good things appear even out of the war.

“One clean thing emerging from the grime of this conflict is an increase of tolerance. Jews are no longer news in Britain. Anti-Semitic sentiment has faded. In addition, the hysterical hatred of all aliens which gripped the country not long ago is now relaxing.

“Many people have had a share in this transformation. And among the leaders of this crusade for fair play for Jews and aliens stands William Hickey.

“Much of the vigour of this man’s mind, much of the fire of his voice and the fury of his pen have been turned to the defence of these afflicted creatures. As an apostle of tolerance he has won the gratitude of hundreds and the admiration of thousands, including myself.

“So I am surprised and dismayed to behold him now entering upon a savage persecution of a section of our community on account of their beliefs. I refer to William Hickey’s sustained attack on the Oxford Group, or Buchmanites, as he prefers to call them.

“It seems plain that William Hickey has a set detestation of these folk. He makes black and bitter charges against them.

“There is nothing new in these stories. Plenty of people in Fleet Street mentioned them to me. I passed on the tales myself. And I believed them.

“But then I did something about them which, so far as I can see, few other people in Fleet Street have bothered to do. I made it my business to investigate them.

"I sought out the Oxford Group. I went to its headquarters. I made friends with the people there. I did my utmost to establish the truth or falseness of the charges laid against them by eminent journalists.

"Now William Hickey says that guileless simple people are deceived by the Oxford Group. That they 'have put it over them.'

"So I must set out my qualifications for the task of investigating the allegations against them. I do not regard myself as either guileless or simple. For years I have earned my living by dealing with politicians. I have interviewed them in order to earn my bread. My whole business in life has been to drag the truth out of M.P.s and Ministers of the Crown reluctant to disclose it. I declare that as a result of my experiences with politicians I never begin any interview without expecting that an attempt will be made to 'put something over me.' I am on the lookout.

"Having set down these facts, I must record that after several weeks of close investigation, by means of conversation, cross-examination as well as by asking for and being given access to letters and files, I have reached the firm conviction that there is no basis of truth in the allegation of pacifism or of pro-Nazism (conscious or unconscious) made against the Oxford Group.

"If I had found proof of pro-Nazism I should have disclosed it in the newspaper and given details to the Home Office. Instead, I regard it as fair to set out the conclusion I reached.

"Thousands of Oxford Groupers belong to the fighting services. Many of them are in the fighter squadrons at present engaged against the Nazi bombers.

"As for pacifism, this account of a sitting of the Conscientious Objectors' Tribunal before Judge Maurice Drucquer is taken from the *Oxford Mail* of May 28th, 1940:

'Mr. J. M. Robbins of 15, Norham Gardens, Oxford (who had previously pleaded conscientious objection to fighting) wrote to the Tribunal: "Since I came before the Tribunal on 30th April (1940) I have reached the conclusion that my place is with my fellow-countrymen wherever I may be needed. I feel that my objection was largely prompted by personal fear and I was helped to recognise this as a result of some talks with friends of mine in the Oxford Group . . . I am sorry I have wasted time and public money and I enclose my fare from Oxford to Reading and back. I now ask that my name shall be placed on the military register.'"

"This case is typical of the attitude of the Oxford Group to conscientious objection so far as I probed it. And I probed far and deep.

"Oxford Groupers in factories engaged on war production are striving to lessen friction between employers and employed, to settle disputes by friendly negotiation instead of by strike action, and to increase production in their factories. In many cases they are succeeding in a remarkable degree.

"It would be useless for me to present these facts to you as matters of hearsay or second-hand evidence. I have held in my hands and inspected confidential reports from factory managers, workroom stewards and ordinary craftsmen, some dated as recently as last week, testimony which in my judgment is beyond dispute.

"I place on record my considered view that the Oxford Group are exerting all their efforts to increasing the unity, strength and abilities of the country. And they are doing it well.

"Now the question will be put to me: 'Hey—Peter Howard—are you a member of the Oxford Group?'

"My answer is that I find the standards aimed at by the Oxford Group difficult of achievement by me. But I

should like to achieve them. I shall try to achieve them.

“Two of them are absolute honesty and absolute unselfishness.

“I cannot believe these goals deserve the flouts and gibes of anyone. Certainly they do not get mine.

“And it is a real sadness to me to see a man with the power and ability of William Hickey spending his forces in hatred of the Oxford Group.”

I have left out of this article a few parts of it which dealt with small and detailed charges of passing interest. Apart from these omissions the article is as I wrote it, and represents my attitude to the Group at that time. Although not ready to become a part of the Group I had seen for myself that most charges against them were inventions by the small band of anti-group malignants. My admiration for their guts, as well as my curiosity about them had increased and not abated.

This article, “Reply to Hickey”, never appeared in the paper.

The Group occupies a particular and peculiar position in the minds of men. It does not receive fair treatment from people who on other issues are fair-minded and liberal.

A first-rate example of this is afforded by an account of my dealings with the B.B.C. I was asked by them to broadcast to Canada. In the script of the broadcast I used the phrase “Moral Re-Armament.”

The suave and charming gentleman who managed the broadcast struck out the words. “Moral Re-Armament is

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too controversial a phrase for us," he said. Previously, Mr. A. P. Herbert was allowed to make a jeering reference to Moral Re-Armament in the course of a broadcast.

The anti-Group gossip and propaganda belched out by the small body of malignants in our midst has been so hot and fierce that it has affected the minds of tens of thousands of people who have no personal knowledge of the Group at all.

It has succeeded in closing the minds of men and women who on other issues are intelligent, sane and alert.

CHAPTER FOUR

KICKING AGAINST THE PRICKS

I

As you can see, when I sent my reply to Hickey I had made up my mind on two points:

1. *That the members of the Group were honest in their belief.*
2. *That if their beliefs were true, nothing else in the world mattered so much.*

But I was terrified to mention these matters to anyone at all. I was afraid of contempt or ridicule. It may seem strange to you that I should be ready to send in a written article to the Editor of the *Express* saying what I did, and at the same time shrink from speaking about the Group to anybody. But that was the case.

In the corner of my mind I had prepared a defence for myself if the "Reply to Hickey" article created any uproar against me by the anti-Group elements. I was going to say that, as a good journalist, I was not much concerned with the right and wrong of any matter but only with its journalist value. If the cold winds blew around my shoulders I meant to suggest that I had simply written "Reply to Hickey" as a journalistic stunt to promote a controversy on Religion—always good "copy."

So you see in what a state of cowardice and hesitancy I was.

I was perplexed and worried also to know what to say to my wife about the experiment and adventure I was now beginning. My first inclination was to say nothing to her at all about the matter. Indeed, for several week-ends I returned home and carried on as usual.

And my wife noticed no change in me. For although I had come to a point where I could admire the Group for the standards they struggled to attain, I was by no means eager to stretch out after these standards for myself.

I was like a spectator at a football match. I was ready to cheer for the unpopular side when I felt sure nobody was looking. I was even convinced that this side would have to win out in the end. But I was far too comfortable in my furry overcoat, with my flask of whisky and sandwiches in my pocket, to get into shorts and go out into the mud and clamour and join the game myself.

Even so, I had a compelling conviction that my wife must be told what I was up to. I had no fear of ridicule or contempt from her. She is not a contemptuous or sneering person.

But I did have the fear that somehow, some way, things might be altered between us before I got to the end of this adventure.

(I was right. Things have altered between us. The relationships throughout our family and household are changed—and for the better.)

At the time I did not want any alteration between us. We were happy. I loved her. She loved me.

But she loved me in the character of the tough, tempestuous, hard-boiled go-getter as I then saw myself. I did not see how my experiment in moral religion would fit in with this character of mine. I did not see whether Doë, my wife, would admire this new departure quite so fully as before. I was not ready to surrender this admiration from my wife, which was one of my most shining possessions.

So I let the whole business go. I went on seeing my friends in the Group. I went on leading my office and home life exactly as before, saying nothing precise about my adventure to anybody.

One day I had the compelling thought to ask Garth Lean to come and spend the week-end with us in Suffolk. Unfortunately for myself and my peace of mind I had this thought when I was with Garth, and blabbed it out straight-way. He accepted. And at once I could have kicked myself all over the city for being such a goat as to give him the invitation.

But there you are. It was done. On our way down to Suffolk Garth said to me, "Does your wife know about the Group?" "No," said I. And I felt hot and bothered, thinking, "Oh Lord, I suppose this fellow will tell Doë who he is and how I came to meet him and the whole business. Oh curse it, why did I have him down? Oh blast, I am in a muddle. What on earth will Doë say?"

The first evening in our cottage, nothing was said at all. I went to bed feeling a little easier in my spirit.

Next morning we all went to the farm. (Doë and I own a farm. We are both fascinated by the land and are trying to learn from it and to get the place into better order.) I set to work with a hoe, singling out swedes and kale on a seventeen-acre field.

It was a stewing day. I began to sweat. And I sweated more when, stopping work to wipe my forehead, I saw Doë and Garth Lean walking around the field of swedes together in heavy conversation.

"That's that," I said grimly to myself. "Now for it. Now we are in for the showdown."

And here is in one sense the most remarkable part of the whole affair. Garth had no need to tell Doë anything.

For I had brought down to Suffolk one week-end, a month or so earlier, a book by A. J. Russell, called *For Sinners Only*, about the Oxford Group.

Doë thought it was a thriller. She hates thrillers. So she had tucked it away in a shelf. One afternoon she had pulled

it out of her shelf and begun to dip into it. The story of the Group, its aims and ways and standards, gripped and fascinated her.

That very afternoon she had taken the decision to change her life and listen to God.

It seemed then and still seems uncanny that both of us, without the other knowing, should together after all these years, without so much as one prayer together, embark on the same adventure.

Doë told me that she had felt for some time that our marriage, while *outwardly* happy and *actually* happy was not so unshakeable as outsiders might suppose. The message of the Oxford Group answered her difficulties and made her see how we could build again—and better.

I am bound to tell you that it came as a deep and most unpleasant draught to swallow, when I heard my wife had been worried about our marriage. Everything had seemed all right to me. I thought she was entirely happy.

And to some extent at the time I blamed Garth Lean for the responsibility of that misfortune. It is hard now to see how I justified myself to myself on that proposition.

II

As I have said, by the time I submitted my "Reply to Hickey", I saw one thing quite clearly. *If the Oxford Group were right, then this was the most important thing in life.* I also had the knowledge, arrived at by my own experience that, whether they were right or wrong, the members of the Oxford Group I had encountered were certainly not frauds. They sincerely believed they had discovered the profound secret of the universe. They lived their lives on a more friendly, honest and Christian basis than any of their critics, or any other collection of people I have come across.

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With such conviction in my mind, you might suppose I pushed right ahead. That I took the decision to attach myself closely to the Group fellowship and with them try to change my life and surrender it to God—especially as my wife, I now knew, had taken this decision before me.

Nothing of the kind happened. On the contrary, soon after I sent in my "Reply to Hickey", I threw up the whole business altogether. Although I remained on good terms with members of the Group, I saw little or nothing of them for several weeks.

How did this come about? The main reason was a thought which kept on coming to me, luminous, persistent and highly unpleasant, in the morning whenever I listened to God as the Group had advised me to do.

Again and again and again I had the thought that I must go to my wife and say to her something which, the moment I had ceased listening to God, I knew I had no intention of saying at all. The piece of advice conflicted with my idea of worldly wisdom. It seemed quite plain to me that nothing but unhappiness could result in it for my wife and nothing but unpleasantness for myself.

So, although I dutifully wrote down this thought each day as it came to me, I firmly put it aside as soon as I stopped listening to God and started listening to myself again.

Something very odd happened then. I began to find I could get no guidance at all. When I listened nothing was recorded in my note-book except this ridiculous piece of advice and a few, very few, routine memoranda.

I told members of the Group that my guidance seemed to have dried up. They asked me if I knew of anything which stood in the way of receiving guidance, and I replied "No." Garth Lean at once said to me: "Well, if I were you, I should look back through your guidance note-book. You

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will find that there is some piece of guidance you have not followed out. That is usually the trouble if you cannot get guidance.”

I told Garth that this was not so in my case. Naturally I said nothing of the piece of absurd advice about speaking to my wife which I was so constantly receiving and so firmly disregarding. I shared this with nobody. And I soon became bored and annoyed and fed up with the whole situation.

III

ANOTHER reason drove me to slacken my interest in the Oxford Group and throw up the whole affair.

As you have heard, fear of ridicule and opposition had prevented me from telling any of my friends in Fleet Street or elsewhere what I was up to. I was terrified of people getting to know what I was about.

Now when my “Reply to Hickey” was given to the Editor, as you know it never appeared in the paper. But I soon had evidence that it had been shown around the office. People began to come up to me, important people and friends of long standing. They said to me: “Good God, Peter, I hear you’re a Buchmanite. What on earth is it all about? What ever possessed you to get mixed up with that bunch of middle-class hypocrites and gangsters?”

Well, I did not stand up to this at all. The camaraderie of Fleet Street, my friendships inside the office, and what other people thought of me, mattered to me immensely.

So I denied the whole Buchmanite charge with emphasis and heat.

As of old Peter denied that he had any knowledge of or friendship with Jesus when pressed by the enemies of Jesus, as he declared that the people who thought he had had

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anything to do with Jesus must be mad, so I, a latter-day Peter, denied I had any connection with or interest in the Oxford Group when pressed by the enemies of the Group.

I told my friends they must be mad to suggest such a thing. I told them, which was almost true, that I had been making a few enquiries about the Group in the hopes of discovering some unpleasant charge against them which I could publish and sustain with evidence.

I told them, which was surely untrue, that I had written the "Reply to Hickey" merely because I thought it made a good newspaper article and was a controversial subject, not because I had any sympathy with the Group at all. Good God, did they suppose I was ass enough to be caught up with religion at my time of life?

So I farked the issue. I ran out on the whole business.

And having had a dose of the venom which any new friend of the Oxford Group must expect to have thrust at him with sharp piercing hypodermic needles, I resolved to cut clear from the whole business, and carry on as before.

How would I explain this situation to the Oxford Group brigade? I reflected. Then I realised that there would be no reproach or abuse from that neighbourhood. For I knew that was not their line of country.

On the morning which followed this decision, I gave guidance the last chance.

I sat with pencil and note-book and waited in sullen, defiant spirit for thoughts to come to me. I remember grinning and saying to myself: "Ha, ha, the spooks take a long time to speak this morning," and also: "This is like playing with a planchette, spelling out names and dates."

I only had two thoughts that morning. One was the old ridiculous injunction to have this particular conversation with my wife. The other I copy out here for your benefit—

"You may desert God. God will never desert you." This made no impression on me. I shut up my note-book. I did not open it again for weeks.

"That's that—to coin a phrase," I said to myself.

I put on my coat and walked out into the sunshine to smell out once more the tracks of my old, robust, sane existence, as it then seemed to me to be.

IV

My first feelings, as I bounded once more along the old well-trodden primrose pathway, which for a little I had abandoned, were of relief, pleasure and satisfaction. It would be untruthful to pretend I had, at first, any regret at abandoning my Oxford Group adventure, or any feeling of self-reproach at my return to the familiar course of self-indulgence.

Once more I lashed out vigorously with my tongue, blaming everyone but myself for any misfortune, savaging the rulers of the State and sneering at anybody more successful than myself.

New exhilaration filled me as I strode out each morning, master of my own fate, answerable again to nothing but my own whim, ready to take life and bend it like a bar of lead across my knee to any shape I fancied.

Looking back on this episode in the experiment of mine, I should have been surprised that members of the Group did not run after me, telephone to me and chase me around the town. After all, I suppose a cynic would say that from their point of view I was a not inconsiderable capture. I was a journalist of some standing and success. They had felt me bite the bait; their float had bobbed down and down again; they would not want me to escape. They must be **anxious** to get me safe in their net. Yet at that point they

must have perceived that something had gone wrong. The big fish no longer tugged at the line.

Almost from one day to another they found that I disappeared from the midst of them; that, after a period in which I was round about them every day, enquiring about their finances, probing and practising their doctrines, attempting (apparently with enthusiasm) to grasp something of the meaning of the message they had for the world, I vanished.

Recently I asked a leading Oxford Grouper why they had left me alone during that period and if they had not wondered what was going on. "Well," was the answer, "we were surprised that you dropped us so suddenly, but our guidance was to leave you alone and not bother you. So we did not."

Once when this period of the experiment was under way, my telephone bell rang and my secretary told me: "A Mr. Garth Lean wants to speak to you."

My reaction to this news was unfavourable. "Oh Lord," I thought to myself, "now I am going to get a lot of syrupy reproaches and a whole shovel-load of silent rebuke. Why *can't* they leave me alone?"

As I had heard nothing from Hay's Mews for over a week, this last thought was not reasonable. My first inclination was to get my secretary to tell Garth I was out. Then both because I had formed a real affection for the fellow (coupled with a secret hostility at the challenge he gave me) and because I knew if he wanted to pursue me, he would ring again, I picked up the instrument.

"Hullo, Peter, how are you?" said Garth.

"Fine; how are you?" I said.

"Splendid," said Garth; then, after a pause, and with great cheerfulness he added: "I had guidance to ring you up this morning and find out if all is well with you."

"Yes, thank you," said I.

"Well, that's grand. I'm so pleased," said Garth.
 "Good-bye."

There the conversation ended. I am bound to say I felt in some confusion as I hung up the receiver.

V

PRESENTLY I began to think once more of the Group. The reason was this.

I did not suffer and endure any qualms of conscience, any goad spurring my soul when I indulged in my selfish pursuits.

But I found simply this. I did not enjoy them as much as I used to do. There seemed to be less time and less sense of freedom in a selfish way of living than there had been before I met the Group.

Looking back on this feeling, I realise it was because through my contact with the Group I had begun to develop a sense of sin. If my conduct defied one of the four standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness or Love, I felt it was a sin.

In fact, the whole difference between my life before meeting the Group and my life after meeting the Group was that I had learnt to apply in my inmost spirit standards to my conduct other than the single standard of what suited me best at any given moment.

At the time I only understood that the zest for my old way of life, though it blazed fiercely from time to time, no longer kept up the same careless, cheerful glow of the old days—sometimes it died away and almost vanished into cold smoke and embers.

One morning I sat down with a pencil and piece of paper. I listened once more to God. Here is the guidance I received—instantly, clearly.

“God will not desert you, though you desert Him.”

Then I received once more the old piece of advice about what I should say to my wife—the guidance which offended my reason and wishes and which for so long I had rejected. At the end I note these words on my piece of paper:

“Play fair. Be fair.

“The Group may be wrong. But you know that if they happen to be right, then that is more important than anything else in life. Isn't it worth giving that proposition a real test?

“You can't give it a real test if you only follow out the guidance you want to follow out. All or nothing. Have faith. Have faith that this advice is right, though you can't see why. Do it. You must do it.

“God is not man and His plans often seem unaccountable and foolish according to human reason.”

Explain these words as you choose. I have no human explanation for them.

A friend of mine interested in the psycho-analytical precepts of the late Dr. Sigmund Freud tells me that he thinks the words were simply a projection of my own mind which had placed itself in the position of this supposed God and was arguing on His behalf. I record his view for the sake of fun and fair play, but am bound to tell you I cannot accept it.

That morning I telephoned Hay's Mews and asked if I could come and see them all that evening.

I supped with them. At first I felt some unease at being greeted without any embarrassment at all by those whose company for a short time I had sought so persistently and then had dropped like a wasp's nest.

Later I felt I had come home.

CHAPTER FIVE

"Strip off every handicap."

—Hebrews 12, 1.

I

I HAD resolved now that if my experiment was to have any real value, I must carry it through with complete thoroughness.

With reluctance but resolution I journeyed that week-end to my Suffolk cottage, where my family have lived since war began. With doubts and misgivings, and personal pain—I spoke as directed.

The fact is that as a result of that conversation with my wife, a new relationship closer than ever before has sprung up between us. Our marriage, which I had always considered as the perfect one, as full of happiness as marriage can be, has expanded and taken on a meaning for us both deeper and more splendid than ever before.

One explanation, I think, is this. You cannot have perfect love inside a home if it is based on an imperfect knowledge. That is, a wife who only knows the best side of her husband's character (because that is the only side he wishes to disclose to her) is loving a man who is not there at all. She does not know the whole man. She is in love with a sham man.

And one fine day, the real man is going to pop out of the cupboard. Then the wife may get a shock.

Make no mistake. This argument cuts both ways. There are plenty of men in love with their wives—and having no real knowledge at all of their wives' true natures.

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Here is a letter I received from my wife, Doë, soon after I began to change my ways. I set it down with her permission, just as she wrote it.

“DARLING,—

“I find it a bit difficult to get used to you. I had so made up my mind that certain things you did would go on as long as we—making fun of me in public, getting drunk three times a year, making your angry face when I asked for money—that I can’t quite get used to losing them. It unbalances me. I had built up a technique to deal with them and this has collapsed and I’m a bit lost. Only don’t be too kind to me now. I only became tidy because you were untidy, I mustn’t get slack or pleased because you aren’t there to force me into better ways by your ways.

“DOE.”

I think you must see this letter. For one thing it is an essential part of my adventurous experiment. Certainly if Doë had hated me, the new Peter, you would have been entitled to know about that. Actually nearly all the people who know of my association with the Group at once ask: “What does Doë think of all this?”

Then I consider this letter is revealing because it shows how blind, how blackly blind, husbands can be. When I saw the negative side of my character displayed so candidly by Doë, I was astonished. As I thought over what she said to me, I recognised each item of the count.

Yet, after almost eight years of married life, in which Doë and I had been happy, it was a shock to have myself disclosed to myself so completely, though involuntarily, by my wife.

Finally, this is, I suppose, the kind of letter most husbands would want to receive from their wives. It is the kind of atmosphere of complete honesty between partners and real

peace and forbearance which is bound to be created in any home where the Christian principles of the Group are accepted and practised.

How has the Oxford Group worked out in our home? Come along and see. We thought we were happy before. Yet we had not touched real happiness. We thought our home was peaceful and quiet before. Yet we had no real knowledge of real peace.

Doë and I have three children: Philip, age 7; Anne, age 4; Anthony, age 3.

These children are not problem children or anything of that kind. But they are hearty, loud children, with the same sort of tempers and tantrums that prevail in most homes. They are difficult, as children are.

Philip is more self-contained and sensitive than the other two.

Anne is as tough as a bull, and in the old days used to howl herself into hysterics in efforts to get her own way.

Anthony is betwixt the two in temperament.

When Doë and I began to listen to God, it became plain to us that our children too must be given the chance of listening. So each evening we listen together, and our children have books of their own into which their thoughts are copied. (Philip writes his down himself.)

This system has made and is making a great difference to our children. The first victory came one morning when Anne refused to drink her milk. She yelled and yelled and yelled, and at last had to be left in the dining-room, yelling, with the milk before her, to finish it. Philip was in the next room playing with Meccano. He was absorbed in his toy and hates leaving it.

Also he never, until lately, has taken much interest in Anne, not liking her very much and being a bit jealous of her.

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Suddenly he left his toy and without saying anything at all to the grown-ups, went into the dining-room.

At once Anne's yelling stopped and in a couple of minutes she and Philip came back together. Anne carried the empty milk mug in her hand.

"I bet Philip has drunk up her milk for her," was the thought which came at once to my suspicious mind. Doë asked Philip what had happened. Philip said, quite simply, that while playing with his Meccano he had had the thought that it was his job and nobody else's to stop Anne crying. "I went in and said to her: 'Oh Anne, there's only a little left. Look, I'll have a sip,' " said Philip. "I had a sip, then Anne finished it up."

I recommend the Oxford Group way of life to those who really want their children to get a sense of responsibility for their own place in the household.

This evening, as I write, I have just been listening to God with my daughter Anne (aged 4, remember). She said to me: "Daddy, we had too many battles this evening and got too excited." (She and Anthony and Philip had had a few quarrels and had had to sit and have a minute's quiet before peace was made.)

I wrote down her thoughts in her book, then said: "Would you like to say a prayer, Anne?" (None of the children pray unless they want to do so.)

At once Anne went down on her knees and prayed: "Please God, make me a good girl and don't let the battle go on to-morrow."

Off to bed she went.

Now some people tell me that this sort of thing will not last, and that even if it does the children will grow up as prigs and prudes. I do not believe it. I think that sort of argument is put out by folk who have lost touch with God, with the simplicity of the message of Christ, and who do

not want to make it easy for others to travel the road they could not endure.

II

AFTER I had finally obeyed my guidance in the matter of speaking to Doč, my wife, I felt a great sense of relief. If you had asked me then whether I was of the Oxford Group, I should have said "Yes" (and believed it) provided that I knew you were sympathetic to the Group yourself.

If you had been a stranger, or, especially, one of my newspaper friends who I knew detested the Group, I should have replied: "Well, I am really very interested in them. I think they have been unjustly attacked. I don't believe half the things I hear about them," and so on, and so on.

But I would not come out into the open. As I have told you before, I had two sets of friends. And was terribly afraid to say where I stood to one set of them.

One evening a fellow called Kit Prescott was talking about the way he first came into the Group. Kit's elder brother was the fellow who kept me out of the Oxford rigger side my first year up there. His younger one followed me into the England side. Kit is a gruff, rough, sort of a man. If you have to use an adjective to describe him, you can say he is "ordinary." He is not a beauty to look at, but not so ugly that you would turn and stare at him as he passed by. He is not a fool, but I should not call him brilliant—in the worldly sense of the word.

Kit said he had led a fairly ordinary sort of life before he came into the Group. He had just wanted to have as good a time as possible, and sought for it in the usual kind of way. He told us how he had been changed.

I was not particularly impressed by this. He had just made up his mind to surrender his life to God. ("Like me," I thought.)

Then Kit said something like this: "Well, the next morning after I was changed, I started to listen to God. And I remembered straight away that I had a long-standing engagement to go next Saturday with a few old friends who had been beating up the town with me for years to a party and dance. We were all expecting to have a great time. Now I knew straight away that I should not keep that date." (At this point in the narrative I remember thinking to myself: "Hey, really, that is going a bit too far. After all, he had promised to go to the party before he decided to make a start at changing his life. Really I almost think it wrong he didn't keep his promise.")

"Well," said Kit, "although I knew they'd laugh and think it very odd, there was only one thing to be done. I sent a note . . ." ("Saying he had another date and was sorry," I thought straight away) . . . "saying," went on Kit, "that I had decided to surrender my life to God and that I was sorry I should not be able to come to the party because I knew I should now have other things to do on that evening."

What happened to me with these words said by the ordinary-looking Mr. Kit Prescott in an ordinary fashion in his ordinary voice? I can only say that in an instant I *saw*.

For the first time I saw what the phrase "to surrender your life to God" meant. The conception that one should really pause even at small social invitations to think whether or not it was right to go there, and to base your acceptance or refusal accordingly and on nothing else, instead of just saying "Yes" if you thought you would have fun, and "No" if the people were bores—at last I realised the immense demands made by this new way of life. I knew I must accept them. By the grace of God I felt ready to make the attempt.

I saw that up to this moment I had been like a man who

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studies the route of a journey on his map, but never sets out from the front door.

Or like a dirty man who wanting to get clean jumps into a bath, springs out again, dresses himself and believes he is clean once more. But when you look at his bath water, it is still pure and translucent.

I knew that I could never funk this issue again and be happy. For I could never funk again, and not know I had sinned.

Before I went to the office next morning, I listened. I dreaded that my guidance would be "Go and tell so and so, so and so, where you stand."

But I was ready to do it.

You can imagine my relief when no such demand was made upon me. Instead I was told: "Be ready. Force no issue. But face one if it comes."

A fellow-journalist and I had an old engagement for lunch that day. We set out together with things as usual between us. We have been personal friends for some time.

Half-way through the meal he said to me suddenly: "There was a discussion about you the other day. I said you were a Buchmanite. Is it true?"

With great joy I heard my own voice say, shakily but with conviction: "Yes, it is."

For the rest of the meal he told me his objections to the Group. I need not trouble you with the details of them. They were the same old procession of negative stuff which has paraded and circulated again and again and again.

Then he changed his ground completely. He purported to tell me just what his attitude to the Group is. He said he did not mind about it one way or another. But he was a journalist and that it is better journalism to attack than to defend anything.

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As we parted, he said: "Well, I admire your confidence, but it's hard not to be malicious."

I told him that malice was something I thoroughly understood. I had been at it myself for so long.

That afternoon I had a talk with a man in the *Express*. He was in great distress of mind. I felt it right to tell him where I stood. I knew he had been interested in the Group some time before. I knew also that if he had taken the right decision, months before, he would not be in his distress of mind at that moment. This fellow said to me: "Well, I heard you were interested in this business. I watched you. And I saw you carrying on much the same as before; sometimes I thought you were in the thing, sometimes I thought you were out of the thing. You floundered about like a half-inflated barrage balloon. If you'd stuck to your guns, you might have helped me."

Now I know this fellow was saying this to excuse himself to himself for not having done what he saw he must. Yet I guessed too that what he said was true—if I had faced the issue three months before, he would have been encouraged.

As I saw this man's misery and realised my cowardice had contributed to it, I say that I for the first time in my life had an inkling of what Peter of old felt when the cock crew for the third time.

III

ABOUT this time, I received a piece of guidance which I did not much care for. The guidance was "Write to Jacks. Write to Jacks. Write to Jacks."

Jacks is the name of my old Headmaster at school, M. L. Jacks, son of L. P. Jacks, the principal of Manchester College, Oxford, from 1915 to 1931, Editor of *The Hibbert Journal*.

M. L. Jacks and I were good friends when I left school and went to Oxford. Since then we had drifted apart and I had not thought about him nor written to him for a long, long time.

Almost all that I knew about him was that he had left the headmastership of my old School, and had gone back to Oxford. In fact, Jacks was now looking after the welfare and good spirits of the young men who intended to become schoolmasters and who on that account had received a grant of money from the Board of Education. The young men who were up at Oxford on the same basis as I had been.

At once the significance of my guidance, "Write to Jacks," became plain to me.

I knew I should have to pay back to the Board of Education the money which had been advanced to me all those years ago to keep me at Oxford when I intended to become a schoolmaster.

"Hey," said I to myself, said I: "there is no legal obligation at all to repay that money. This is just a piece of quixotic folly."

However, I knew what happened if you disregard guidance.

So I wrote to Jacks. I asked him how much I had had from the Board of Education, and to make certain, I asked whether I was under any legal obligation to pay it. I said I now thought I was under a moral obligation to pay back the money. Jacks answered that it was true that I was under no legal obligation to pay the money back, and that I had had £218 all told from the Board of Education.

After consultation with Doë, my wife, we sent off the cheque. It is strange how, before I met the Group, I would have worried and brooded and felt resentful for weeks if I had had to find and pay out so large a sum, even in payment

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for some self-indulgent luxury like a motor-car or a television set.

Yet I sent away that £218, under guidance, to the Board of Education—a debt which I did not *legally* owe, and which had not been on my mind or worried me since I came down from Oxford ten years before, without a regret or a hesitation. I was beginning to know that guidance was right, and that was all there was about it.

IV

How has my contact with the Oxford Group affected me, so far as other people are concerned? Do I seem to them the same as ever? Have I changed for the better or for the worse? These are questions I plainly cannot answer myself.

But I can speak of some things which the Oxford Group has done for me. You would make a mistake if you suppose that I now stand forth and present myself to you as an absolutely honest, absolutely pure, absolutely unselfish, absolutely loving person. Not so.

Sometimes I fall down on the job. At the beginning of each day I start out with the resolution (it is written again and again in my note-book): "Make this a day without failure." At the end of most days, I think back and regret actions, thoughts and words.

I must say this, however. So far, since my experiment began, I have not regretted doing anything I was guided to do or leaving undone anything I was guided not to do. Often I have, at the moment, resented my instructions and been saddened by them. In the end they have always been justified.

I still possess two sets of friends. They are, roughly, the new friends I have made through my adventure with the Group. And the old friends I made before I met the Group

and who have not yet heard of my adventure. I love my old friends (as well as my new friends). But I feel that I may lose some of them when they learn what has become of me. Yet I know that, whether I like it or not, my position must be stated.

No. My experiment with the Group makes many heavy demands upon me.

What has it given me? It has given me something which, for many years, I lacked. It has given me standards of conduct. I may go wrong. But at least I know when I have gone wrong. Nobody will understand the pleasure of this situation until they have experienced it.

I am now free from that driving, deadly feeling that my own success is the most important thing in life, that everything depends on my own efforts, and that I must claw my way upward, striking out right and left around me as I go. I have come to the realization that my own exertions are a very small part of the future of mankind—and that the future of mankind is more important than my own exertions.

I am stimulated to my work as never before. Again and again I write in my note book: "No work except first-rate work."

I have lost fear. Neither money, nor position, nor continued worldly success means so much to me. I am not afraid of the post when it comes in the morning. ("Bills, bills, bills. I wonder who is after me this time.") I am not afraid of being out of work, nor do my nerves jangle and jump when my Editor or the General Manager sends for me.

I have a sense of enjoyment of life which I never experienced before—and I feel (though this must be a matter of opinion, not of fact) that I understand life more than ever before.

With all my old friends, I often felt lonely. I do not feel

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lonely now, nor, if I stick to my adventure, do I believe I shall ever feel lonely again.

Finally, I have the silly but satisfying feeling that I have made a new discovery. I feel like Watt when he saw the kettle lid hop off, or when Newton beheld the apple fall to the ground.

The thing I have discovered, the truth about the meaning of life, the very heart of the whole body of creation, was there all the time—like the force of gravity or steam power. But I, I have got at the secret.

Will other people believe my secret? Not all of them. But I have been touched by a hand which I *know* is there even if others deny it or refuse to see it.

I have faith in the future of mankind. I believe that from this war, even during this war, new ways, finer and more splendid ways of living, can appear upon the earth.

Yet I know now that there is no hope at all for a better future in the world unless this message is learned by millions of men and women over the earth's surface.

Here is the only remedy for the ills of the earth. I believe these ills will be cured.

Here is the only light, the only glint or glow of expectation for the future. There are many reflections of light, many moons of delusion and delight. Here is the only true, blazing sun. This great light is being tended. A minority watch over it, cherishing its flame.

Presently that flame will spread across the whole earth, setting the stubble alight, blazing its swift path from continent to continent, warming the hearts and illuminating the dark corners of the spirits of men.

PART II

CHAPTER ONE

"All Things in Common."

—Acts 2. 45.

I

I LIVED at Hay's Mews for many weeks. I am bound to tell you that, even though my belief in the Christian philosophy of the Oxford Group was becoming riveted, I faced the idea of a long visit to the Mews with suspicion, doubt and a measure of hostility.

Looking back on the matter, I feel that I feared disillusionment. There is a difference between a theory of the desirability of leading one's life according to the will of God, and seeing that theory put into practice. I was now going to lay my bones with those who professed that they tried to lead their lives on the Christian ideal. I was afraid that the matter when put to the test of actual experience might seem a fraud.

And at the same time I knew deep in the cellar of my mind that even if I found the theory not working out in actual experience, I should never be able to return happily to my old set-up. I should always remember the phantom which had been almost within reach and then had slipped away.

No. I cannot say that I went to live with the Oxford Group in any very joyous, forthcoming or excited frame of mind.

One of the fears I had at this time was that I should discover everyone at the Mews to be rather "cranky" in some way or another. This fear I quickly lost. I found that in addition to that small number of people, men and women, of every class in the community, who were regular workers for the Group and worked whole-time at Hay's Mews, the place was crammed to the crop with scores of ordinary, everyday people from every corner of life.

There were business men, girl secretaries, plenty of Tommies, as well as Army officers, Naval officers, and Naval ratings, a Trade Union organizer or so, agents of political parties, fitters, riggers and pilot officers, several M.P.s, a couple of journalists, apart from myself, and some clerks and other rather dim City workers who came in at the end of the day's work and joined straight away in the life of the community.

This was a constantly shifting multitude. Every morning people were saying good-bye. Each evening there were new arrivals.

And what struck me was that while all this time these people maintained their interests in the outside world—indeed many of them only came to the Mews one night passing through London from one place to another—all fitted into the community life at Hay's Mews the moment they arrived.

Each one seemed to regard the Oxford Group as part of his whole life, not as something outside his ordinary activities.

Hay's Mews seemed to me when first I went there, as it seems to-day, the bustling, active centre of events. Members of the Group were working hard at their own jobs—above all at the constant daily struggle to change lives, to carry the message in which they believe, to the nation.

Yet at the same time, Hay's Mews impressed me as a sort of focal point for men and women in every part of our island

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and in every section of our life. Constantly people were arriving with personal or business problems to solve.

They never doubted that a solution would be found there. Several people would sit listening to God together. They would share the guidance they received. Nobody who sought a solution at Hay's Mews, fully determined to follow that solution through, went away disappointed.

When I lived at Hay's Mews, I found men and women who work as hard as any collection of people I have ever met (and believe me, I have met some hard workers in Fleet Street in my time).

Day and night, night and day the telephone rang. Hundreds of people who, if they had been ill, would have spent all they had on nursing homes, hospitals or surgeons, received, free and for nothing, expert treatment on their moral and spiritual ills. And may I say that those who can deal expertly with moral and spiritual ills are far fewer than those able to cure physical ailments.

Almost as soon as I arrived at the Mews, a business man (he can be named) telephoned. This fellow is one of the most prominent members of his own line of business, and represents his section of the industry on the Grand Council of the Federation of British Industries.

He said that some parts of his industry, as a result of the collapse of France, were confronted by doom. Raw material was crowding in at the ports and had to be paid for. At the same time millions of pounds' worth of contracts for finished products had been cancelled.

There was too much raw material in the country and the price had begun to slump. Banks were pressing for repayment of overdrafts. Firms were facing bankruptcy. Thousands of men in the industry were threatened with unemployment.

This big manufacturer, whose name is known all over

the world, brought this problem on the 'phone to Hay's Mews. He asked if he and his friends in the industry could come from the Midlands to London next day to meet some people from Hay's Mews and find a solution by listening to God.

This may seem to you an odd way of doing business. It certainly seemed rum to me when I was told what was going forward.

I felt satisfied that no solution would be found. This practical test was putting altogether too severe a strain on my opinions about guidance. But everybody else at Hay's Mews that night who knew of the circumstances seemed quite happy and confident that God would solve the problem.

Next day two Midland manufacturers, another representative of the trade from Merseyside, the Editor of one of the Trade papers, his representative in the Midlands, and two people from Hay's Mews sat down in the Euston Hotel together.

They discussed the situation. Then they listened to God together and wrote down what they heard. They acted on these thoughts. With the support of the Government Controller, meetings of representatives of all three sections of the industry were called. The programme which had come to these seven men in the Euston Hotel was put before these meetings for agreement. Agreement was reached.

The banks were approached and, after hard negotiation, accepted the principle which had been decided on by the seven men in the Euston Hotel. That was, the banks accepted a "gentleman's agreement" from the industrialists which had no backing of a legal guarantee at all. Not often do banks behave this way. But not often does a whole industry speak with one voice.

One month later I saw an editorial in which the solution of the crisis in this business was announced.

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And it was described as "A triumph of goodwill and unselfishness."

Now apart from myself and the industrial representatives who had gone to the Euston Hotel, only the people at Hay's Mews knew how this solution had been reached. They said nothing. Not a word of this story, the truth of which I state with authority, appeared in the Press.

You can imagine that this evidence of the power of guidance in practical everyday life made an immense impact on my mind.

This sort of thing, in a larger or smaller degree, goes on all the time at Hay's Mews.

At nights during the bombing the whole community sleeps in camp beds in the cellars of the house, in separate dormitories for men and women.

With the women sleep Alice and Lilian, the maids. I have heard many other households speaking of the equality of classes and declaring that all men are brothers and sisters together. But Hay's Mews is the only place I have been to, where the staff live on terms of real friendship with everybody and without embarrassment at all on one side or the other.

Alice and Lilian work well. They obey instructions. But when the community meets together to listen they are there.

When the Group sit down together to hear the nine o'clock news, Alice and Lilian are there sitting with us all, drinking their evening cup of tea.

Of course, this basis of good will and friendship between servants and mistresses, masters and men is made more easy by the fact that at Hay's Mews everybody joins in the housework. Washing up, bed making, cooking, cleaning, everyone does their share.

Whatever views you or I may have formed of the Group, one thing strikes me fair on the head. And here it is.

Do you know of any other body of men and women young and old, rich and poor—drawn from every class in society—who would succeed in living out this kind of life, all together for weeks and months on end, rising at 5.30 in the morning, working until 10 or 11 at night, sleeping underground in dormitories, without complaints, quarrels, feuds and rows breaking out among them? I do not. I cannot think of a family which will certainly survive this test. I can think of many families which surely would crack and crumple under the strain.

Yet this simple fact must be placed on record. Never at Hay's Mews while I lived there, did I hear one word spoken in anger, one quarrel or one complaint. These people, whether you like this message and these ways or whether you hate both, live together and still live together in harmonious good fellowship. They carry out their own principles.

II

ONE thought stuck in my mind like a bramble in a sheep's coat, all the time that I was living with these people, liking them more and more, beginning to understand their ways, and yet still rather on guard against them. And here it is: *Where did the money come from?*

I had heard the tale that God will provide, and that the labourer is worthy of his hire and all that sort of New Testament talk, but I simply could not believe that a body of men and women would really put the words of Christ and the instructions He gave His apostles to the test. That any collection of people would truly pray to God for their daily bread—leave it at that, and feel quite happy about it, knowing that it would work out all right. So I watched events at Hay's Mews with immense care, trying to discover

who paid the baker, the butcher and the telephone bill.

One odd thing I swiftly discovered after I had spent a few days at the Mews. Nobody asks you to pay. Indeed, when I first went to Hay's Mews I ate, drank and slept there for a few days expecting soon to have a bill presented to me. When nothing happened, I got a little uneasy. I did not want to feel under that sort of obligation to these people who were making such an upset of my life.

Finally I offered one of the Group £2 in payment. That seemed to me about the fair sum. Instead of taking the money, this fellow said: "Thank you, Peter, but are you quite sure that is right?" I then discovered that, without saying anything to me, another member of the Group had been paying for me. That was his guidance.

In some ways the most staggering thing about the Group is their approach to the money question. For they do carry out the New Testament principle. They do live by faith. And the most remarkable aspect of the whole affair is that it works. The members of the Group believe that God will provide all material resources for those who listen and obey.

The workers in the Group do not receive salaries. They may receive necessary help for expenses from such funds as are available. Each lives by his own faith in God. Those who have share with those who have not. No public or private appeal for funds is ever made. If someone comes to your house saying he belongs to the Oxford Group, and asks for money, you can take it for certain he is not of the Oxford Group. The Oxford Group are the only considerable body of people I know in the world to-day who put money very low in the scale of values. Money is necessary in order that God's work can be carried on. That is its only importance.

As a Fellow of an Oxford College said in a letter to *The Times*: "The Group are tasting the joy and certainty of a life which has no security but in God's provision. They

believe the call . . . to be His and that where He guides, He will also provide. This is not luxury. It is the highest economy. Some would call it poverty, but it is a poverty that maketh many rich."

Someone at Hay's Mews once went to endless trouble to help me. He encouraged me at a moment when my heart and courage lay in the mud. I asked about him. I heard then, having put the question point-blank, that this fellow had not the price of the next meal in his pocket. This man neither by word nor gesture nor hint drew attention to his situation. He was, in fact, unconcerned about it. He had prayed that morning for his daily bread. That was enough for him.

The Oxford Group live on a frugal basis, believing that any money which comes to them is held in trust, that each penny must be spent in a way which will give its full value to the cause of bringing men back to a love of God. I have noticed that they spend very little indeed on themselves. The only things they seem to buy are necessities. They are out to give and not to get.

In what kind of way does money come to the Group? When I asked this question first I was told that I could see their annual balance sheet, audited by Messrs. Price, Waterhouse and Company, any time I wanted.

I was surprised at this information. But when I pressed the matter louder, the people in the Group opened up their accounts and files to me.

The fact is that the Oxford Group is supported, like most pioneer movements, by the sacrifices of those whom it has helped and who believe in it. But there is a difference. Men and women in the Oxford Group spend their money only as a part of God's plan and under His guidance. If they give money to the Group it is because they are guided to do so.

A labourer, now in the army, sends 10s. a month to Hay's

Mews. A squadron leader with the Bomber Command has, for months, sent half his pay. I saw a letter to a full-time worker from a maid in a home in the area of the country where he works. She wrote: "Just a small letter to tell you I had guidance to give up my picture paper, which is 3d. a week. I felt as you are doing nothing only work for the Group you need that 3d. more, so I'm giving it each week, which will amount to 1s. a month. Although it doesn't seem a lot I'm sure it will be very useful. I do hope you are quite well, as it leaves all here at present."

III

MONEY. The Oxford Group certainly gave me a new line on that. For money had been a big factor in my life over many years.

What does Prosperity mean? Nothing either more or less in its present connotation than more money for everybody. That is in fact the main standard of our day-to-day life and has been for years.

Each man, each family, shoving, clambering, trampling on the faces of his neighbours to get more money.

The whole of a man's life, his success or failure, measured by public estimation on the basis of what salary he earns.

What is the result of this new Gold Standard we have established in our community almost without being aware of it, certainly without understanding its consequences?

Men drive ahead utterly careless of their neighbours' interest. Some men sit side by side in offices, they go out and drink together in pubs, they smile at each other—smile falsely. For all the time the fear of losing their jobs is upon them and the bleak suspicion that this fellow they are with may be after their job, anxious to climb up by doing them down.

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Some women live out their lives outwardly good friends, inwardly hating each other because the husband of one is managing director while the husband of the other is only chief clerk, earning less by £1000 a year.

The factory worker is resentful because he so ardently desires more money, the shareholder in the factory is bitter about the request of the factory worker so eagerly does he wish to obtain an increase in profit.

All sections of the people unite in a clamour to the Government "more money for us, prosperity, more cash, furs for the wife, bigger motor-cars, more cinema-going, better wireless sets, more money, more prosperity, more, more, more, more."

And this is going on in every nation in Europe and the world. So the Governments behave to each other, under pressure from their people, exactly as their people behave to each other individually.

They try to get preferential treatment for themselves in the markets of the world.

They bully.

They cheat.

They bribe and intrigue.

They scheme and threaten in order to win prosperity for themselves—and to hell with their neighbours.

That is the road to disaster. That is the road we all have taken, and it has brought us to disaster.

Prosperity is a standard which, in its connotation of "more money for everybody," must be challenged. Men must start thinking anew. They must realise that an increase of income does not necessarily mean an increase in happiness or well-being.

Health is as important as wealth. Men must be brought to realise that a life that is fully satisfying *is* available to everyone, and that it does not depend on getting more

money into everybody's weekly pay packet.

Simple guided principles have a tremendous, shattering impact on economic problems which seem formidable and so far have not been solved.

"There is enough for everybody's need, but not for everybody's greed. If everybody cares enough and everybody shares enough, then everybody will have enough."

These phrases of Frank Buchman's challenge the whole philosophy of the Economic Man.

Don't forget this policy is a defeated policy, to which men still cling, for they know no other.

Do you consider this is an over-simplification of the whole affair? Not so I. If all the people of all the nations, and therefore if all the nations themselves, continue to demand more and more for themselves, then the people perish.

We can only be sheltered from the tornado of another world economic breakdown when this war is over by the large-scale creation of a new motive for living for the individual.

Think what would result in a nation, in our nation, if we all would change on our money standards and accept new ones, a new set of values. If every one of us, you and I, rich and poor, beggar and baron, man on the dole and man on the pay-roll, were ready to examine the economic problems of our country in an unselfish, guided fashion, not eager to get more for ourselves as a result of our cogitations but resolved to plan a world in which the benefit of all would be the aim of everybody, even at a cost to themselves, what a revolution we should see.

First, all are agreed that every citizen who is willing to work and able to work should have work to do. That all people anxious to play their part in the life of the nation should have a decent home to live in. That all should have plenty of food to eat.

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These things are not only possible. They are certain. They can be obtained immediately if the whole of the people are ready to share their common heritage.

“There is enough for everybody’s need, but not enough for everybody’s greed. If everybody cares enough and everybody shares enough, then everybody will have enough.”

This philosophy implies that some people with too much must be ready to make the costly decision of having a little less money. It also implies that such people can be changed and ready to take part in the new life without being dragged to the lamp-post and hanged, without being driven in tumbrils through the streets and guillotined, without being shot and bayoneted in cellars.

Men can and must be changed. Nations can and must be changed. No man and no nation must be ready to enrich themselves at the expense of the well-being of any other man or nation. Unselfishness, not prosperity, must be the principle of the new economics. That principle may be costly to operate. The reward it offers is peace and a full life to mankind.

CHAPTER TWO

"The Weapons of Integrity."

—II Cor. 6. 7.

I

I NOW draw your attention to the story of the man cured by Jesus. You will find it in the ninth chapter of St. John's gospel. This man was born blind. Jesus gave him back his sight. The neighbours then asked the blind man how he had recovered his sight. He replied: "The man they call Jesus made some clay and smeared my eyes with it and told me 'Go wash in Siloam.' So I went and washed them, and I got my sight."

Then the authorities sent for the blind man. He told the authorities that Jesus had cured him. The authorities did not believe the tale. So they sent for the man's parents, and asked them if this really was the fellow who had been born blind.

The parents said that this was their son, who had been born blind. But the parents would not say how his blindness had been cured, because the authorities had already decreed that anybody who confessed Him to be Christ should be punished. They told the authorities: "Ask our son. He is of age, and can speak for himself."

So the authorities sent for the man again and told him to praise God for his cure, because Jesus was only a sinner.

The blind man replied: "I don't know if he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that once I was blind and now I can see."

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The authorities asked what Jesus had done. He replied: "I have told you that already, and you would not listen to me. Why do you want to hear it all over again?"

I tell this story because I find myself, together with thousands of other supporters of the Oxford Group, in the position of the blind man who was cured. People can tell me what they like about the Oxford Group. They can repeat all the envenomed gossip that they hear. They can assail and condemn, they can criticise and invent. They can furiously rage together. They can take any line at all that they choose. But I know what happened to me. I know what goes on every day around me. That is all there is to it.

Of course, half the people who kick and curse the Oxford Group do so in ignorance. They have, themselves, no personal knowledge of the facts whatever. They merely pass on the malice and lies put out so skilfully by a small body of men, most of whom can be named.

Why do these malignants bother to assail the Oxford Group? My answer is that if the Oxford Group were not assailed, it would be the first implacable Christian movement in history which had escaped the assault of the pagans. All through history, even before Christ came to earth, men who have based their lives on the guidance of God and have resolved to carry out His will without compromise have been crucified, bullied, stoned, imprisoned and maligned.

When the Oxford Group ceases to have knaves inventing lies about it and fools passing them on, then I shall know the Oxford Group has lost its cutting edge. So far its blade is keen and eager.

It is extraordinary how people, perhaps themselves challenged by the message of the Group, will exert themselves to the limit in efforts to detract a man from allegiance to it. They try flattery. "Peter, you are really too shrewd,

too sensible, too sophisticated a man to fall for that stuff." They try kindness. "Well, never mind, Peter old boy. It shan't make any difference to our friendship. You'll soon be all right again." They try threats. "Well, if you stick on this line, you are bound to run into trouble. You may lose your job. Then where will you be?"

And, of course, all the time they cook up and dish out false food for the appetites of the ignorant.

II

WHO is Buchman? What is he?

He is the 63-year-old American who founded the Oxford Group.

I have never met Frank Buchman. So I start equal with the scores and hundreds of people who have abused the man to me. Of the thousands of men I have come across in my time, Buchman is unique in this respect. Scarcely any of the people who make charges to me about the character of Buchman know the man at all, while not one of the scores of people I have met who know Buchman well have a word to say against him.

No doubt there may be people who know him and are his enemies. But they have not come my way.

Here is one argument incessantly given to me on the subject of Buchman. "But why does it need a Yank to do all this?"

The theory is, I suppose, that a man who is not an Englishman cannot possibly lead a great Christian movement.

On this basis St. Paul could be dismissed as a Yid and St. Francis of Assisi as a Wop.

This Yank, the Yid and a Wop obviously have no message for the British public.

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Here let it be said that those who take the "Buchman is a Yank" line are often the same who, while rejecting spiritual voices from America, are only too ready to receive destroyers, guns, tanks and food from that quarter. This sort of people at the same time grudgingly say to each other: "The Yanks are only sending the stuff because they feel threatened themselves—not for any love of us. And they should have sent it long ago anyway."

Anglo-American co-operation would be built on dusty foundations, if it depended on folk like these.

How can you build friendship on the basis that a friend's value must be measured according to how much you can get out of him?

In any event, what a cock-eyed argument it is to suggest that you should throw up the standards of Christianity, that you should abandon your aims of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love because the founder of the Oxford Group is an American. It is amazing to me that anyone should seriously believe nationality has something to do with Christianity.

III

SINCE the war began opponents of Buchman have hopped from one leg to another. The charge is not that he is a Yank, but that he is a pro-Nazi.

What are the facts?

On August 25th, 1936, Frank Buchman arrived at New York in a boat. He was interviewed by a reporter of the New York *World Telegram*. He was reported as follows: "I thank Heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler who built a front line of defence against the anti-Christ of Communism."

Now this interview is the source of the gossip about the pro-Nazi slant of Frank Buchman. I don't know whether the words were actually said as reported. I do know that although one half of the first sentence of the interview has been taken out of its context and repeated again and again, we never hear anything of the rest.

The whole tenor of the interview, which I have read with care, was to emphasize the need for a change of heart on the part of the dictators. "Think what it would mean if Hitler surrendered to the control of God. Or Mussolini. Or any other dictator," Buchman was reported to have said. We never hear anything of that part of the interview. Buchman was careful to register his disapproval of the persecution of the Jews. We never hear anything of that part of the interview.

I also know the newspaper game from crown to heel. I know it well enough not to be impressed by repeated references to a sensationally publicised and sedulously resurrected version taken out of its context of what Buchman is said to have said about Hitler in an interview four and a half years old.

Nor am I moved at all by attempts to gin the old dose up—for example, in the last few weeks some of the opponents of the Group have suggested to many people that Buchman made this alleged declaration only a day or so ago.

It is farcical to try and pin a political label on the Oxford Group or Frank Buchman. All the standards of the Group, allegiance to God, honesty, purity, unselfishness and love are the pinnacles which all forms of Government must attain, if they wish to become permanent and effective.

As for the Nazis, Mr. A. P. Herbert and his friends should keynote them about their alleged allies, the Oxford Group. For as soon as the Nazis got into Norway, they locked up the leading Oxford Group people on the grounds

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that these fellows possessed a pro-British orientation. The Hon. C. J. Hambro, President of the Norwegian Parliament, describing Scandinavian resistance to aggression, said in Canada on September 18th, 1940, that the tale that the fighting forces of the Baltic countries were weakened by religious groups who believed in passive resistance was entirely untrue. Hambro declared that the first Swedish volunteers who offered themselves in the fight for freedom were members of the Oxford Group in that country.

Which is the better method of judging a public man? By one half-sentence, torn from its context in a newspaper interview? Or by a study of his words and actions over a period of years?

Read these extracts from typical speeches of Frank Buchman. The first was made on August 9th, 1936, just sixteen days before the alleged New York interview. It was a Transatlantic broadcast. Buchman said:

“What is this Oxford Group? Well, a newspaper man puts it this way:

“It’s not an institution;
It’s not a point of view.
It starts a revolution
By starting one in you.’

“The world to-day presents the spectacle of nations losing their way—of nations losing their traditions, their character, their nationhood. Many of us are blind to the haste with which events are hurrying on.

“National and world problems remain the same because the root problem—human nature—remains unsolved. Until we deal with human nature thoroughly and drastically on a national scale, nations must still follow their historic road to violence and destruction. Three thousand miles of ocean do not change this fundamental problem—and will

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not save us if we fail to solve it. The symptoms may differ in Europe and America. The disease is the same.

“Now what is the disease? Isn’t it fear, dishonesty, resentment, selfishness? We talk about freedom and liberty, but we are slaves ourselves.

“There are only two possible alternatives to-day—collapse or God-control—and collapse is simply the selfishness of all of us together. Collapse or God-control. You and I, if we are selfish, are part of the disease; just as you and I, if we are God-controlled, can be part of the cure.

“Now the Oxford Group is a revolution of God-control, where God really guides you and your nation. Everyone is guided by something. What are you guided by? Is it your own desires? Is it your pocket-book? Your fears? Your wife? Your husband? Or what the neighbours think? If it is your own selfish plan, you are an enemy of the nation.

“What we must have is a world-wide Christian front against the oncoming forces of materialism.”

Again Buchman said:

“By a miracle of science men can speak by radio to millions.

“By a miracle of the Spirit, God can speak to every man.

“His voice can be heard in every home, every business, every government.

“ ‘When man listens, God speaks.
When man obeys, God acts.’ ”

“It does not matter who you are, or where you are. Accurate, adequate information can come from the mind of God to the minds of men who are willing to take their orders from Him.

“This is the revolution which will end revolution by changing human nature and re-making men and nations.

“People believe that their leaders should be guided by

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God. But the rank and file must be guided too. A God-guided public opinion is the strength of the leaders.

"This is the dictatorship of the living Spirit of God, which gives every man the inner discipline he needs, and the inner liberty he desires.

"Your security, the world's security, lies in God-control. No other social, political or economic programme goes to the root of the disease in human nature.

"Only God-controlled men will make God-controlled nations to make a new world. In this adventure every man can find his vocation, every nation its destiny."

In many of his speeches I have noticed that Frank Buchman quotes the words of William Penn: "If we are not governed by God, we will be ruled by tyrants."

IV

Now I am told that Frank Buchman, on a visit to Germany in 1936, made the acquaintance of Himmler and was pleasant to him. Whether this is true, I do not know, I cannot tell. Certainly I hope it is true. For I should think far less of Buchman if he went into Germany and only tried to find perfect Christians to consort with.

Certainly this was not the policy of Christ. He did not pick his company in this fashion. He was always being reproved by the Pharisees for mixing with sinners and He always answered that He was not anxious to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

The truth is that Buchman in particular and the Oxford Group in general were caught both ways by public abuse before this war. In Britain they were constantly confronted with the cry: "Oh, don't bother about *me*. Go across to Germany and change Hitler and his friends. That is what I'd like to see you do."

But if Buchman and the Group did go to Germany they were accused of being pro-Nazis. "We piped unto you and you did not dance, We mourned unto you and you have not wept." Whatever Buchman did, his opponents did not like it.

On June 18th, 1936, almost exactly the day when Buchman is alleged to have met Himmler, the Prime Minister in the British House of Commons said in answer to a question about a meeting between a British Air Marshal, then Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and Ribbentrop: "I should like to say here that I cannot understand the objections that have been raised. In my own view, in the present state of Europe, these friendly and social visits between such men are highly beneficial (cheers)."

If it were right for Ministers of the Crown to make personal contact with Nazis, how much more right must it be for a Minister of Religion like Buchman. Ministers of God are not supposed to pick their company among men God made.

One odd thing about this Himmler criticism. Some of the public men who make it were themselves having a joy trip round Germany before the war at Hitler's expense. He invited them and paid the piper.

It really is amazing that M.P.s who did this should at the same time assail Buchman on the Himmler issue.

And what does Ben Tillett, the eighty-year-old British fighter for freedom, say about this alleged enemy of Britain? In a letter published in *The Daily Telegraph* on March 12th, 1941, Ben writes:

"I notice that Mr. A. P. Herbert is renewing his attack on the Oxford Group and its leader Frank Buchman. I know something of the work of the Oxford Group and the leadership of Frank Buchman. My contact with him and his followers has been different from that of Mr. Herbert.

"I had a telegram from Frank Buchman when he was attending the recent Convention of the American Federation of Labour, where he and fellow workers conveyed a message from me and other British Labour leaders to my old friend William Green, the President of the A.F.L. That telegram revealed its author as a fighter for truth, justice and freedom and all the qualities which we are battling for to-day and which make life worth while.

"Dr. Buchman's family were liberty loving Swiss emigrants who fought in America's great wars for liberty. He carries on that tradition now and I am confident that he and his friends are striving for greater strength and unity between our two great English-speaking countries.

"I suppose it is inevitable that Frank Buchman should meet with opposition. In sixty years of public life as an agitator for the working classes, I have had to meet with my share. I know what it means and all the misrepresentation of facts that has to be faced.

"I would remind Mr. Herbert of the old saying 'Half the lies they tell about the Irish aren't true anyway.'"

And here is the view of a lady with a very different background from that of my friend Ben Tillet. I mean Louisa, Countess of Antrim. She was born at Windsor Castle, was Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Victoria and Queen Alexandra. When she heard I planned to write this book, she sent me the following note:

"Three years ago I went on a Mediterranean cruise. Dr. Buchman joined us at Athens and spent a couple of weeks in visits to Cairo and Alexandria, Constantinople and the Holy Land, leaving the ship at Beirut for an extended Near-Eastern tour. I had an opportunity of seeing Dr. Buchman's personal influence in every place we visited.

"He was greeted in each town by the principal people with appeals for interviews and meetings.

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"In Greece, the King and Ministers, the Head of the Greek Church and others in authority, welcomed and entertained him. In Egypt, Turks, Egyptians, Moslems and Arabs saw that Dr. Buchman's Christianity was offering a new vision for a God-controlled world.

"All who know Dr. Buchman must appreciate his quickness of mind, his deep understanding and sympathy, while his innate kindness and thought for others are a continual revelation.

"I was once asked if I liked Dr. Buchman? It seemed an unnecessary question, for in him I saw above all the realisation of a force which advances the Love of God, and this showed me how human personality is lost sight of in spiritual power."

And here is an American opinion. Mr. Charles Edison, the Secretary of the United States Navy, telegraphed to his mother, Mrs. Thomas Edison Hughes, widow of the great inventor, June 4th, 1940:

"Please convey to Dr. Buchman my birthday congratulations and my further congratulations for the splendid work he has done and is doing. All the ships and guns and material defence we could produce would avail us little unless behind them stands a united people—a people whose faith in God and in those moral attributes that have made America great remains militant and unshaken.

"Moral Re-Armament shares equally in importance with material re-armament in these critical days as always."

One more opinion—a cable received on April 1st by Sir Robert Gower from Rear-Admiral Richard E. Byrd, commander of the official United States Antarctic Expeditions and personal friend of President Roosevelt for many years. Admiral Byrd said:

"Random newspaper items here carry accounts indicating some question in the minds of what must be a misinformed

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minority in Britain about the regard and esteem in which Dr. Frank Buchman is held in this country. May I state, with some knowledge of public men here and abroad, that the consensus of opinion would seem to be, first, that if national leaders in every country where Buchman and the Oxford Group have been at work had lived out the principles for which he stood, we would not now be in the midst of the greatest world catastrophe mankind ever knew; second, that what is now being achieved throughout the democratic world, certainly in the United States, by Buchman and his friends in building public unity, fortitude and general morale, will immeasurably strengthen our countries in the face of dangers ahead; that, whatever the fortunes of war, Buchman's pioneer work for Moral Re-Armament is certain to provide indispensable support for any efforts towards world reconstruction after victory is won.

“Perhaps I may be forgiven a personal reference made some time ago in a public statement about my association with Frank Buchman and his friends: ‘I have been to both Poles and flown the Atlantic Ocean, but my first twenty-four hours with the Oxford Group was one of the most worthwhile experiences of my life. Moral Re-Armament, a fight for a new world, strong, clean and united, should fire the hearts of every man and stir their wills to action.’”

V

BUCHMAN has lived with persecution for years. As sure as the black crows and the white gulls follow the plough, so persistent persecution followed by triumphant vindication follow Buchman.

His enemies are constantly creating a whale of an accusation out of a whitebait of rumour.

For years Buchman worked at the Universities of Princeton (U.S.A.) and Oxford (England).

What was he up to in these Universities? I have gone through every piece of available evidence. I have spoken with responsible men who had a first-hand experience of that work. They tell me Buchman dealt with the students individually, available to them for interviews at all hours of the day and night, sometimes not taking off his clothes for twenty-four hours at a stretch, sleeping and eating whenever he could snatch a moment.

The fact is that Buchman had an immense success as a changer of lives at Princeton and Oxford, and many who came in contact with him as careless, non-churchgoing undergraduates received from him a conception of the Christian faith which has remained with them from that day to this.

The whole conception of religious teaching as brought by Buchman to the Universities was a revolutionary one. He did not stand up in a church and preach. He slipped quietly into the place and sat in a room. To that room men came, and went away again, after an interview lasting perhaps half an hour, with a religious experience which would last a lifetime.

It was a revolutionary conception of religious teaching because it was a return to the way of the first apostles.

At both Princeton and Oxford, as soon as Buchman achieved success, attacks were made upon him by a particular crowd of people. The attacks at the two Universities were based on alleged "emotionalism" in his methods and were so similar and were made by such like-minded folk as to suggest collusion.

Fortunately at Oxford that distinguished psychologist the Rev. L. W. Grensted, D.D., then Fellow and Chaplain of University College, cracked down on these charges with the statement: "I have seen a good deal of the leaders of the

Group and I should like to bear testimony not only to the general sanity with which they have organised their efforts but also to its real effectiveness. Men whom I have known—and they are only a few out of many—have not only found a stronger faith and a new happiness, but have also made definite progress in the quality of their study and in their athletics too.”

Even Mr. A. P. Herbert, writing in *Punch* at this time, had grudgingly to imply that there were Groups in every college. He failed, however, to interpret them. Begbie, in his book *Life-Changers*, saw something different.

At Princeton, when the opposition appeared, the President, Dr. Hibben, allowed himself to be quoted as saying that so long as he was President there was no place for Dr. Buchman's work in the University. It seems that Dr. Hibben had spoken before he got the facts. His lack of insight into the real character of Buchman's work is shown by the fact that the very committee Hibben himself appointed to look into the matter reversed his own judgment. But to Hibben's credit let it be said that he admitted his error and later participated with Frank Buchman in a service held in the University chapel.

E. S. Martin, the editor of *Life* magazine, the doyen of America's literary world, gives the right key. Writing on November 18th, 1926, in *Life* magazine he said: "One reads in the papers of an inquisition at Princeton University into the qualifications of Frank Buchman as a religious influence for Princeton students. There seems to be a doubt whether he is good for them. What Buchman seems to do is to give men new motives and driving power. It may be Princeton likes its students the way they are and doesn't want new men made out of them, or possibly it would be the parents who object. Anyhow these little scraps in the paper are interesting evidences of a state of mind, and one that is very prevalent in

this world, and always was. Men object to becoming different. Institutions adapted to them as they are object to their becoming different. Parents whom they represent and express usually feel the same about it, yet what this world needs most of anything is that a lot of people in it should be changed in many of their vital particulars. Our world needs to be born again, needs it badly, and is at least as reluctant to face that process as Princeton seems to be to have F. B. transmogrify any of her children."

The net result of the report of the committee set up by Dr. Hibben to probe the affair was that Buchman's work was vindicated in these words: "Princeton has been given a reputation for efficient and fruitful Christian endeavour which is certainly not exceeded at this time by similar work carried on by any other institution."

Mr. Alexander Smith, then Executive Secretary second-in-command of Princeton and secretary of the investigating committee, wrote the following letter: "Our report was a complete vindication and endorsement of the work that had been carried on. I can say without fear of contradiction that no evidence whatsoever of a discreditable nature has ever been brought against Dr. Buchman or his work. Through my own contact with the Oxford Group in recent years I and my family have found for ourselves a richer vein of Christian experience and truth than we have ever before known. I am happy to be fully identified with them now."

Smith was later Professor of International Relations at Princeton and has since worked with Dr. Buchman in many countries, and has frequently visited England with the Oxford Group.

Now although as you see, Frank Buchman was triumphantly vindicated as a result of this enquiry, the story of these false allegations has been repeated again and again.

Mr. A. P. Herbert as recently as 1939 quoted as follows

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in the *Sunday Pictorial*: "Dr. Buchman was forbidden to come upon University property by Dr. Hibben, President of Princeton University."

He did not say anything about the end of the story. Probably he didn't know it. I like to think he did not.

But that is the sort of way in which the false charges against Buchman and the Group get carried forward through the years.

VI

Do I believe Dr. Frank Buchman is a fraud, a knave and a charlatan? Though I have never yet met him, I answer with absolute confidence: "No. I do not."

My reason is this. I believe the New Testament.

There I read "By their fruits ye shall know them." I know the fruits of Dr. Buchman's works. I have lived among the Oxford Group, which is the result of his work, for many months.

In my time I have mixed with tens of thousands of people, poor and rich, well-born and lowly, the up-and-coming middle-class, the down-and-going upper-class. I have never yet met a more active, kindly, effective, loyal and self-sacrificing crowd of people than the Oxford Group. Hate it as you may, detest it as you will, that is the position. Frank Buchman was the instrument by which the Oxford Group began. I do not believe a crooked instrument could fashion so shining a mechanism.

Another thing I read in the New Testament. When Jesus was doing glowing Christian acts, casting devils out of men and changing their lives for them, the Pharisees said: "This fellow only casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons."

Jesus replied: "Any realm divided against itself comes to

ruin, any city or house divided against itself will never stand, and if Satan casts out Satan he is divided against himself. How then can his realm stand?"

There is no division in the Oxford Group. On that account, in the spirit of faith, it stands unshaken by the savage, malignant and false charges of its enemies.

Now those who hate the challenge of the Group wish to divide that house against itself. So they have invented the suggestion that, while the majority of the Oxford Group people may be decent honourable men and women, Buchman himself is a rogue.

That, in my opinion, is the whole explanation of these unjust attacks on Buchman, an attempt by malignants to divide and destroy the Group.

"The tree is known by its fruit."

I know many men and women who, before they began to support the Group, were useless, self-seeking, fourth-rate citizens.

I know that in many cases Frank Buchman himself brought a revolutionary change into their lives.

I know beyond a doubt that he could not do this if he were a rogue himself.

Face this fact. There are men in Britain who will do anything to prevent the extension of the ideals for which the Oxford Group are working. There have been such men on every occasion when a warrior for Christ strode out into the arena. Again and again and again people have told me Frank Buchman is not a very nice person.

Each time I have said: "Give me your evidence."

Each time I have found these people the foolish dupes of the enemies of the Group who have spread lying rumours without a splinter of foundation. Not one person so far has been able to give me one iota of evidence or concrete fact to prove to me that Frank Buchman is a rogue.

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I suppose I must have asked over one hundred people, journalists of high standing, Members of Parliament, ordinary folk: "You say you do not approve of Buchman. What are your grounds?" *In not one instance so far has a reason been produced to me which would satisfy any unprejudiced juryman.*

What sort of case do the enemies of Frank Buchman make?

It is really a contemptible business. They take refuge in the knowing leer and sly wink. "I would like to tell you, old man. But I am under a pledge not to breathe a word to a soul. But you can take it from me. I have *seen* a letter saying that Buchman is working for the enemy."

You say: "Produce the letter."

No letter is produced. The only letters that *can* be produced are those passing on an irrelevant mass of second-hand rumour. Anyone can write a letter.

I say nothing of the naïveté of the friends of Mr. A. P. Herbert who with one breath declare they know Buchman is working for the enemy, and with the next declare everything will be all right if Buchman says publicly he is not working for the enemy by denouncing Hitler.

My own position on this whole matter is quite plain. I think nothing of these innuendos and suggestions. They are inevitable, they are always made against warriors of Christ.

What did the members of the Government and the officials say of Jesus himself two thousand years ago, when they led him to Pilate (Luke 23, 2): "They proceeded to accuse him saying, 'We have discovered this fellow perverting our nation.'"

I do not say this proves Buchman is a Christian warrior. I do say it proves that this sort of charge is made against even the most virtuous and godly people.

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For my part I shall disbelieve all tales against Frank Buchman until some proof is given me. Neither innuendo, nor suggestion, nor hint shall influence me, however exalted the quarters from which they come. This is the least that any man who aspires to lead a Christian movement can be offered by the world.

This fact is plain. The Oxford Group in Britain stands or falls with Frank Buchman. It is united to him by bonds of affection, interest, loyalty and knowledge. The Group is the conception, life-work and inspiration of the man.

Those who try to divide the Group by attacking Buchman while at the same time declaring that the Oxford Group in Britain is a good thing, merely display by their activities ignorance of human nature as well as ignorance of the spirit of the colleagues of Buchman.

All would rather go down with Buchman than be allowed to stay up at the price of deserting him.

VII

OPPONENTS of the Group sometimes confront a Group supporter with the name of a man. "Aha," they say, "I know old So-and-so. He says he is a friend of the Group. Look at him. I don't care for him at all. And it is well-known round our way that he is a terrible liar. What do you say to that?"

The only thing to say is that people who believe in the potency of such an argument do not understand the Oxford Group at all. On the basis of such argument you might say: "Do you know of Judas Iscariot? He is an absolute scoundrel, a very unlikeable man—and he was one of the apostles. So what about your talk of Christianity now?"

That is just as reasonable. For my part I like and love the

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people in the Oxford Group more than most other people I have met.

But really the issue is not a question of whether or not you like Buchman or individual supporters of the Group. The question is: "Do you want to lead your life in accordance with the will of God? Do you believe in the four standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love? Do you think there is any permanent cure for the ills which grip humanity except an increased realisation by all men of their responsibilities towards their neighbours?"

That is the issue. It has nothing to do with people or personalities. It is an age-old issue, a battle of the years.

It has been on for centuries. And it will continue from generation to generation.

CHAPTER THREE

"Making Many Rich"

—II COR. 6. 10.

I

Now I proceed to give you some of the background of this Buchman. "Aha, Oho," I hear you exclaim, "Peter Howard says he never met the fellow. Now he is going to tell us about the fellow's background."

The answer is very plain and quite simple. The following facts I obtained by the examination of records which are available to all, and by hours of conversation with men who owe their experience of Christianity to Buchman and who worked by his side in many countries in the world over a period of several years.

Buchman's name is pronounced Bookman. His ancestors left St. Gallen, Switzerland, in 1740 to seek their future in America. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the ship *Rotterdam*. They settled in Pennsylvania. The family have been American citizens and in America ever since.

They have fought in all America's struggles for freedom.

One ancestor was with Washington at Valley Forge. Buchman's uncle was one of the first to enlist in the American Civil War and was killed at Bull Run. Buchman's brother was in the early batch of American volunteers to cross to France in the last war. He died there in 1917.

Buchman himself was born in 1878 at Pennsburg, Pennsylvania. His parents sent him to the nearby University of Muhlenberg. They also gave him the chance of study and travel abroad. On leaving Muhlenberg, an ordained minister, he went to work in the poor quarters of Philadel-

phia. His church was an empty shop. He lived in an attic over a stable.

There, amid the fumes of ammonia which seeped up into his room from the stable below, the drunks, the homeless and the unemployed came to him. He understood them. For like them he had no security and no fixed salary.

Garth Lean tells me that Buchman declares: "It was in that place I made one of the greatest discoveries of my life—where God guides, He provides."

In 1903, still in Philadelphia, he founded a hospice for orphans and destitute boys. Where did he get his staff? From those poor people whom he helped to a new way of life. The cook was Mary Hemphill; he found Mary broken and destitute after the death of her husband. She, like the rest of the staff, became a lifechanger herself. Buchman says that it was in those ten years in Philadelphia that he learnt never to be shocked and always to keep a confidence.

In 1908 the committee of the hospice suddenly demanded that Buchman should reduce the boys' rations. He refused. He resigned on the issue. He was bitter because he felt his life work was ruined, and left Philadelphia to go to England.

One day, walking in the Lake District, he went into a chapel near Keswick where a woman was preaching. There he had what he describes as an experience of the Cross of Christ, which altered his whole course. He came out of the chapel with all bitterness gone, resolved to surrender every part of his life to God. Above all he had a conviction he must restore for the past. He wrote notes to the members of the hospice committee apologising for his bitter feelings towards them. That very afternoon, walking round Derwentwater, he brought the son of the house where he was staying to a similar experience.

Returning to America, he began work in the Universities of the Eastern seaboard. He was at Pennsylvania State

College until 1915, and there began daily listening to God in the early morning. His work was spectacularly successful. The bootlegging janitor, the agnostic Dean and the President of the student body, who called himself a Confucianist, were three of the hundreds who changed their way of life through contact with Buchman. Bill Pickle, the janitor, was made a disciplinary officer of the campus.

For years Buchman did this work in many Universities. He also spent much time travelling in Europe, the Far East and throughout America. As he travelled he touched here a life, there a family, in what seemed an unplanned and unrelated activity. It would be a Chinese diplomat, then an Indian student, or a darky porter on the trains. To-day the web of new lives which he wove is the framework of the Oxford Group throughout the earth. Travel anywhere in the world and you will find these people who were in the Oxford Group before the Oxford Group began.

In 1921 Buchman was invited down to Washington to meet delegates of the World Disarmament Conference. On the train, as he weighed the situation in the world, the conviction came to him that he ought to give his whole time to "world changing through life changing." As the train rushed through the night, he lay considering what was involved—the renunciation of his pleasant Connecticut study, financial security and the hope of worldly advancement. Very real issues, for never since then has he had a penny of regular salary, nor more of a home than his suitcases. By the time he set foot on Washington platform he had decided. Six months later he was in Oxford, and around him was beginning to grow the leadership which has since carried the Group into sixty countries.

A fellow journalist, Arthur Baker, chief of *The Times* Parliamentary staff, told me many things about Buchman. Baker and Buchman have been close friends for six years.

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Buchman, says Baker, is hardly ever alone. He always travels and works with a team. They are in and out of his rooms all hours of the day and late into the night. He is always available to help with a personal problem, a point of policy or a prickly national issue. He has no private life except his few hours of sleep. By five in the morning you will find him up listening to God, getting strength and direction for himself and others for the next day. As he moves from life to life and from problem to problem he brings a sense of victory, which he has gained himself in those early morning hours.

Buchman has no home of his own, Baker tells me. All his possessions are carried in seven suitcases. His office and his home go with him wherever he goes. He wears without pride clothes given him by others. He will stay anywhere that makes his work possible. Sometimes it is in a worker's house, sometimes in a statesman's home, sometimes in hotels.

Some people ask why he uses hotels. Baker says, these folk haven't thought this through. Buchman's job is to bring his message to the ordinary man and the statesman. The hotel is the natural meeting place.

Besides, says Baker, Buchman often travels with a large team of workers. Once, when Baker was in Switzerland with Buchman, there were a thousand of them. Here the hotel was the natural headquarters. It provided, without extra expense, telephone facilities and space for meetings and for the hundreds of interviews which took place each day. When Buchman and his team moved on there were no costly overheads.

Further, Baker tells me, the modern hotel-keeper often welcomes Buchman as his guest because of the spirit of goodwill he brings to staff and management. The hotel-keeper sees the generous way so much help is given to so many with never a charge made and meets generosity with

generosity. Naturally Buchman cannot mention these special kindnesses. The myth that he is living in splendour is as unfounded as it is unfair. The truth is that he practises a maximum economy at the minimum expense.

This I can myself vouch for. I have inspected the receipts.

I also asked Baker to give me his personal impression of Buchman. Here it is:

“Frank is the most human man I have ever met. This is why he is always at home everywhere he goes, and his thousands of friends come from every class, race and creed. To him all are regal souls. He has the universality of genius. I have seen him joyfully sharing food and fellowship with his family of friends in the East End of London. I have also sat with him with Cabinet Ministers and other national leaders. For each and all his message is the same—‘New men, new nations, a new world.’

“Two years ago President Roosevelt sent a message to the Moral Re-Armament Assembly in the Constitution Hall, Washington, at which Frank Buchman was taking the chair. The President said that if Moral Re-Armament received support on a world-wide basis, it could not fail to lessen the danger of armed conflict. I believe that that philosophy still holds the one hope for the future if the world is ever to return to saner ways.

“Buchman went from our shores two years ago. He has given unstintingly to build up the strength of this country, and to teach people the meaning of true and practical patriotism. History may yet credit him with giving the philosophy for the total defence of Britain, a philosophy which may also prove adequate for the gigantic task of reconstruction. Now he is in his own country bringing the same message from coast to coast.”

Another of Buchman’s friends is seventy-year-old Tod Sloan who describes himself as “a watchmaker by trade and

an agitator by nature." He comes from the East End of London, where Buchman launched his Moral Re-Armament campaign three years ago.

When war broke out the first message the Oxford Group in London had from Buchman was to see that Tod and his family were moved to a place of safety. They were welcomed in the home of some county folk—"I used to 'ate 'em like 'ell," said Tod—who also owed much to Buchman. They too had lost their social prejudices. Bombs have broken down social barriers in Britain. Buchman has been breaking them down for years. His aim is a new social order.

I have seen a letter from Tod to Buchman. Here it is:

"Just a thought or two on 'Moral Re-armament,' and its implications are being taken up throughout the nation's life now, and we must see to it that its meaning is kept intact that it is a real laughing, living, loving obedient willingness to restore God to Leadership and not merely two words to be used as a slogan.

"These words are God's Property Coined for His Service and this is what goes into them there will be no more unmoral bargaining no more social injustice no more conflict. Chaos cannot obtain if we work live and practise Moral Re-armament.

"It will bring into being a new thinking thereby bringing into life a new social order a new hope with God as our Leader Guide and Strength.

"Frank this to me is the only revolution that matters the change of human nature and it does happen."

What is my own view of this kind of personal testimony to Buchman by people who have known and worked with him for years? I am more impressed by it than by the gossiping innuendos of folk who have either never seen the man or else once sat down to a public luncheon with him.

Criticism and attack for twenty years have been the lot of Buchman. They always have been the lot of men who in any age loom upon their times with a plan to remake the world.

But woe betide men of our day or any day who are trapped into a failure to evaluate and discount such criticism. Woe betide those who from indifference or credulity fail to weigh the real issues and are blinded by the attacks, forgetting that people who assail a Christian reveal themselves by their criticism and prejudices. Men and women should learn to weigh such criticisms—to make use of them as signposts to show where a powerful answer to our difficulties lies.

Persecution is the furnace which forges prophets. Buchman is its object in our day. For why? He has matched the ideologies of the age with the doctrine of a super-force that is the master of brute force and the final answer to all human ideologies.

History will assess this man rightly. We must do it in our own age and generation if we are not to make the appalling mistake of robbing the nations of the answer for which all long.

I go further. I ask myself: "What statesman of any country through the last tumultuous twenty years has so consistently maintained his friendship with all sorts and types of men in more than fifty countries around the globe?"

After each attack, he and his work have emerged stronger than before with old loyalties cemented, new ones found, faith renewed and a sense of humour unimpaired.

For my part I feel sure that if the message of this happy warrior is heard, he can become the man destined to point to us the way out of the hopeless chaos of our times. Buchman's message of God's power holds the answer to the fears and tepid idealism of the rival ideologies of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Amid Evil Report and Good Report"

—II COR. 6. 8.

I

Now I am sad to record that one of the chief anti-Group propagandists in Britain is Mr. A. P. Herbert, Member of Parliament for Oxford University. I do not know whether Mr. Herbert is one of those who genuinely and completely are misinformed about the Group. Certainly, to any admirer of his, that must be the only possible explanation of his conduct.

Here is his record in the matter. In June, 1939, the Board of Trade (Mr. Oliver Stanley was President at that time) exercised the power, which is of a quasi-judicial nature, conferred on the Board by the Companies Act, and gave Dr. Buchman's friends a licence to call themselves the Oxford Group. Mr. A. P. Herbert, senior Member of Parliament for Oxford University, opposed this decision with resolution, as he was absolutely entitled to do. He took the line, as he lobbied for support in Westminster, that while there was nothing against the work of the Oxford Group, it was merely the question of the name to which he took exception.

Here be it said that Mr. Herbert must have forgotten that he began this public campaign against the Group in Britain with an article he contributed to *Punch* on March 14th, 1928, in which he jeered, sneered and derided with high good humour the work of Buchman at the University—all this, years before any question of obtaining a licence to be called

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the Oxford Group arose. In spite of Mr. Herbert's lobbying, the Group got their licence. On June 13th, 1939, Mr. Herbert lost his temper in the House of Commons. No longer did he take the view that it was only the name of the Group he objected to. Here is an extract taken from *The Times* of what went on in Parliament:

MR. HERBERT: Is it not clear that Dr. Buchman and his followers have for ten years past been obtaining money under false pretences, and is it right now for the Board of Trade to condone those past activities and legalise them for the future?

MR. OLIVER STANLEY: Although I have no connection with the Oxford Group, I think a statement of that kind, that they had been obtaining money by false pretences, should not go out from this House. (Cheers.)

MR. MUFF: (Hull, E., Lab.) Is it in order for any member of this House to impute motives of such a nature, when it is well known that not one of the members of the Oxford Group receives a penny-piece salary—(cries of "Oh!" and cheers)—and they belong like magistrates to the great unpaid?

MR. GALLACHER (Fife, W., Comm.): Call it Hitler's Movement.

MR. HERBERT asked whether in the memorandum and articles of association of the Oxford Group Company it was proposed to include a declaration that the Group had no association of any kind with Oxford University or with the Oxford Society.

MR. OLIVER STANLEY: I am informed that the promoters propose to include in the Articles of Association a statement that the group has no official connection with Oxford University or with the Oxford Society.

MR. HERBERT: Is that not a final exhibition of the entire

dishonesty of these canting cheats? (Cries of "Oh!")

THE SPEAKER: The Hon. Member must not talk of people in that way. It is only likely to lead to trouble. (Hear, hear).

MR. HERBERT: I am looking for trouble.

MR. MATHERS (Linlithgow, Lab.): Does the Minister recognise from these questions, from the intervention of the Hon. Member on Friday, and from the statements that have appeared in the Press, that this has become a matter of personal vendetta on the part of the Hon. Member for Oxford University? (Hear, hear).

MR. OLIVER STANLEY: I have attempted to deal with this in a quasi-judicial manner, as I have to do, and I remain uninfluenced by these sort of statements, either on one side or the other. (Cheers.)

However, Mr. Herbert, in spite of incurring the rebukes of the Speaker of the House of Commons as well as the President of the Board of Trade, continued from time to time to express his suspicion of the motives of the Oxford Group in general and of Dr. Buchman in particular.

In February, 1941, he put down a motion in the House of Commons raising the whole issue again. Here it is:

"That this House, observing that the organisation led by Dr. Frank Buchman has made no public utterance in condemnation of Herr Hitler or other aggressors: believing that his activities have been harmful to the British cause in many countries and are now occupying in the United States a number of young British subjects who might be better employed in this country; and, considering that his official title to use the name of Oxford with the special privileges and exemptions provided by a section eighteen of the Companies Act is undeserved, misleading and dangerous, especially in the United States and the Dominion of Canada, urges the President of the Board of Trade to revoke the

licence granted by a former President to Dr. Buchman and his associates under that Section."

A counter motion was put down by Sir Robert Gower, Member for the Gillingham division of Rochester. Here it is:

"That this House welcomes the campaign of the Oxford Group for Moral Re-Armament with its results in heightened national morale, increased industrial co-operation and the strengthening of the bonds of friendship between this country, the Dominions and the United States of America."

Fifty-five M.P.s signed Herbert's motion (eight withdrew later). Up to date seventy-six M.P.s have signed Gower's counter-motion. And here let me say that every honour and all credit must be given to these seventy-six members who in the face of a hostile Press, supported by a whispering campaign, had the guts and sense and stamina to continue in the course they knew to be right.

Now in lobbying for the support of this motion the friends of Mr. A. P. Herbert adopted a double attack. One line of argument was to repeat the old tale that there was nothing against the Group except that it should dare to call itself the Oxford Group. Indeed, Mr. Herbert himself wrote on July 2nd, 1939: "I am ready still to agree with Dean Inge that the Groupers may have brought many young people back to Christianity." This same Mr. A. P. Herbert, mark you, who on June 14th, 1939, had said in the House of Commons: "Is not that a final exhibition of the entire dishonesty of these canting cheats?" The other line of argument was to whisper around the town that the real truth was that the Oxford Group was a pro-Nazi organisation. The old tale that the whisperers could not produce the evidence, but that actually they *knew*.

At the time I write this, Mr. A. P. Herbert, senior Member for Oxford University, has not raised this question on the floor of the House of Commons. But if he does so, I am

willing to bet a brass button that from some quarter of the House, some insinuation will be made, not backed by a shred of evidence, against the alleged Nazism of the Group in general and of Buchman in particular.

For why? Because in a time of war, when national hatred is in the forefront, the suggestion that those you do not like at home are friends of the national enemies overseas is the easy way to discredit them. And there is always some ill-informed but perhaps well-meaning dupe who can be persuaded without trouble to put forward that sort of stuff.

Returning to Mr. A. P. Herbert, Buchman has never answered him back. He has never, so far as I can trace, opened his lips one millimetre to attack his attackers. Perhaps, coming from the land of the statesman whose lesson he seems so faithfully to follow, "with malice towards none, with charity towards all," he believes that the miracle of change can come to statesmen and indeed to every man.

Why, we may yet come to the point when we read in our Sunday morning newspaper that in an interview with Mr. Peter Howard Dr. Buchman exclaimed: "I thank God for a man like Mr. A. P. Herbert."

Do you suppose I am too sanguine about the possibility of a change of heart on the part of Mr. A. P. Herbert? No. Not I. To-day he may present the appearance of Bleak House, but I maintain my Great Expectations. For I study the infinite variety and versatility of nature displayed by that remarkable humourist.

Why, as I write this day, March 31st, 1941, I perceive in the *News Chronicle* the following startling news item about Mr. Herbert's intentions (under the heading "Wants Group to Disown Dr. Buchman"):

"If the Oxford Group will 'disown its leader, Dr. Frank

Buchman,' and surrender the title 'Oxford' Mr. A. P. Herbert will be 'satisfied.'

"He will not then press in the House of Commons the motion he has tabled asking for cancellation of the Group's licence.

"The *News Chronicle* understands that the disowning of Dr. Buchman by the Oxford Group is considered by Mr. Herbert to be an urgent necessity.

"He is not so seriously concerned at the moment with the Group's use of the Oxford title, which is a legal title registered by the Board of Trade."

It seems plain from this item that Mr. Herbert has now abandoned the avowed object of his Parliamentary motion altogether.

He is now satisfied about the activities of these people whom he once designated "canting cheats." He is absolutely ready to permit the Oxford Group to continue to exist, if only they will disown the man to whom they owe so much.

I suppose he supposes that the cowardly "canting cheats" will now emerge from the air-raid shelter into which his bombardment, he expects, has driven them, with their hands up.

But I wonder? Why has Mr. Herbert now publicly renounced the desire he expressed in his Parliamentary motion only a month ago to take away the name of the Group? Perhaps he himself feels that Mr. Churchill's Government will not acquiesce to him, that they will not forthwith cry "Heil Herbert" and appease his demands.

So he may be on the run himself—running away from his own motion.

Anyway, what difference does it make? Rest assured of one thing. When the present assault on Buchman fails, we shall see a return to the "canting cheats" philosophy of life.

So the music goes round and round. And it often comes out of the same old hole.

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In any event, whatever the music played by critics, the Oxford Group will face it and continue the course they have set themselves. They will not dance to the tune of Mr. A. P. Herbert or anyone else of that kind.

To those who carp and curse the Group without a full knowledge of the truth and without any attempt to obtain that knowledge, I say just this: Gamaliel was a wise and liberal man. You will find his story in the 5th Chapter of The Acts of the Apostles. When, in his day, the same story of assault was being delivered against the followers of Christ, Gamaliel, who was a Pharisee, stood up and said: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

II

How did the Oxford Group get its name anyway? It is a simple story.

A dozen men were leading spirits at Rhodes University College, South Africa, in 1928. There was a brilliant rugger player, who drank a good bit more than was good for him, a poet who wore odd clothes and spoke in a tatty fashion—and so on. These fellows were, in fact, typical of the sort of undergraduates you will find outstanding in University life in most Universities in the world.

Now from Oxford to South Africa came a team of six Oxford University men whose lives had been changed after meeting Frank Buchman at Oxford.

They stayed near Grahamstown.

The twelve undergraduates from Rhodes University College went to have a look at these "Bible-punchers," some hoping to have a bit of fun, some genuinely curious.

A few days later they came back to Grahamstown. But they were different men. The rugger player came back sober. The poet had had his hair cut and tidied up his appearance.

Naturally the whole University now became anxious to see the Oxford men who had been responsible for this alteration. So they invited them to come to Grahamstown.

The Oxford team stayed for a few days and had an immense impact on the University. When they were asked: "But who are you?" the men from Oxford replied: "We are just a group of people."

The time came for the group of people to travel. A compartment on the train was reserved for them. The black porter did not know what name to write on the reserved carriage to show whom it was for. In the end he wrote up "*The Oxford Group*." Newspaper reporters saw it when the train reached its destination. They took it up. That was the beginning of the name.

A great deal has been said about the right of the Group to call themselves the Oxford Group. It is true, of course, that Frank Buchman, after he first knew it was his task to start a new, vital Christian movement, was guided to go to Oxford.

There among the undergraduates the thing began.

There the first team grew up. From there the leadership of the Group went out to most countries.

It may be argued that the University itself borrowed its name from the city where it began. But that is a small, puny point.

On the main point let me quote to you someone more disinterested than myself. I refer to the leader-writer of the *Daily Express* newspaper. That gentleman exclaimed on the last occasion when Mr. Herbert raised this self-same issue in Parliament (it was just two years ago): "The Buchmanites want to call themselves the Oxford Group. And why shouldn't they?"

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“Mr. A. P. Herbert seems to think there is a copyright in the word Oxford. Has he never heard of Oxford, Nova Scotia, or Oxford, New Zealand? Or Oxford in Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania?”

“Does he wish Morris Oxfords to change their name or Oxford marmalade? Or the style of shoe called Oxfords?”

“Oxford is associated with other things besides the University: Charles I for example once set up his court there. Perhaps Mr. Herbert would like to re-name Oxford Street.

“If there is copyright in the word Oxford who holds it? Not Mr. A. P. Herbert.”

I am bound to say I feel Mr. Herbert is treated a bit roughly. But on the proposition I could not express myself better.

Of course, the name is only a side issue. Whatever any group fighting for the implacable principles of Christianity called itself it would be assailed.

The real point is—do you believe in the Christian standards of the Group? If so, the name does not affect the Group very greatly one way or another.

Some measure of confusion has arisen from the name Oxford Group because in certain quarters of this country, as well as in the United States of America, enemies of the Group have put around the rumour that the Oxford Group has a connection with the Oxford Union's notorious resolution “never to fight for King and Country.”

Of course there is no word of truth in this malicious story. The Group and the Union resolution have no more connection than has Oxford marmalade and Oxford bags.

All the critics of the Group's name seem to assume that by the word "Oxford" only the University can be designated. Even accepting this narrowed sense of the word "Oxford" for the purpose of this case, I say, as an old Oxford University man that the Group is better entitled than any other set of people I know to the use of that name. Certainly the purpose of the Group is clearly in accordance with the proud motto of the University—*Dominus Illuminatio Mea*—The Lord is My Light.

III

What did others think of Mr. A. P. Herbert's renewed attempt to attack the Oxford Group in Parliament?

Here is a statement by the Rev. J. P. Thornton-Duesbery, Master of St. Peter's Hall, Oxford, relating to Mr. A. P. Herbert's motion, dated March 1st, 1941:

"Personally, both from the written evidence placed before me and from what I have myself seen, in this country, in the United States, in South Africa and in the Near East, I am convinced that the Oxford Group, by its campaign of Moral Re-Armament, is making a vital contribution towards the winning of the war and the creation and maintenance of that Christian civilisation for which the British Empire professes to be fighting.

"Seen in the light of that evidence, Mr. Herbert's motion appears to me to be not merely a rather petty attack on the Oxford Group, but an assault, disguised but deadly, upon the whole body of vital Christianity. Whether Dr. Buchman and his friends continue to hold 'official title to use the name of Oxford' is not the real issue—though as head of an Oxford society I am grateful to them for the honour into which they have brought the name of my University in so many parts of the world. The real issue is that a vote of the

House endorsing Mr. Herbert's motion would be widely regarded at home, in the Dominions and in the United States of America, as a defeat for the Christian principles of ordered freedom and moral integrity, and a victory for all those forces, whether Nazi, Fascist or Marxist, which oppose Christianity and are resolved to destroy Christian civilisation."

I do not think any reasonable or fair person will accuse Mr. Thornton-Duesbery, head of an Oxford College, of unfairness, stupidity or lack of patriotism.

Here is a letter from a Yorkshire business man on the same subject, written in answer to comments made in a weekly journal.

"17th March, 1941.

"SIR,

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"I happen to be a business man who went to the 'other end of England,' i.e. to the House of Commons on my own initiative and at my own expense in reference to the motions regarding the Oxford Group. I am therefore perhaps entitled to comment on your paragraph.

"What appears superficially to be a demand for the reversal of a decision by the previous President of the Board of Trade is actually an implied attack on the whole work of the Oxford Group—it is not just a matter of a name.

"You say you cannot understand what the motions have to do with Trade—I can tell you. It was my responsibility at the end of last year to write a review of the Oil Industry (copy enclosed). The observations I made seemed so significant that before they were published I checked them for accuracy with responsible men in other sections of the Trade. Having been concerned with some of the develop-

ments referred to I know what I am talking about and you can take it from me that the Moral Re-Armament programme of the Oxford Group has made a substantial contribution towards the present moratorium on industrial jealousy and fear which exists in my own industry, and the Board of Trade's present programme for the Concentration of Industry will need every bit of industrial goodwill that can be mobilised. An attack on the work of the Oxford Group is an attack on a basis of industrial morale. Personally, I call that sabotage and I am not standing for it.

"It was disconcerting at Westminster to hear of Members of Parliament saying something like this: 'What are you fussing about? You don't need to take this seriously, it is only a peg for publicity. We all know A. P. and nobody here takes this motion seriously.' We in the provinces who have to deal with real material and not just words *do* take seriously the actions of men sent to Parliament to represent us and it is intolerable that under present conditions the procedure of the House of Commons should again be used in this irresponsible way. It is perhaps suggestive that three of Mr. Herbert's friends have withdrawn their support, but I have not heard of anyone withdrawing from Sir Robert Gower's motion, to which incidentally you make no reference.

"Mr. Herbert's motion calls on the House to '*observe*' and '*believe*'—some of us have gone further than that, we *know*, and there is available to yourself or any other responsible person documented, verifiable evidence of the work of the Oxford Group which, to quote a recent publication, exists 'to create a panic-proof, single-minded, trained force at the disposal of all who put their country before selfish interests.'

"I am, Sir,

"Yours truly,

"FARRAR VICKERS."

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Finally, two cables. First from Stanley Lewis, Mayor of Ottawa, to Sir Robert Gower, M.P., London, March 14th, 1941:

"I welcome your Amendment to Herbert Motion. From personal experience I can vouch for the value of the work of Moral Re-Armament in this city and many other parts of Canada.

"In May, 1939, as President of the Canadian Federation of Mayors, I proposed a Resolution calling for the spirit of Moral Re-Armament throughout our communities as the need of the day. It was unanimously passed, and so spontaneous and widespread was the response that on the first Armistice Day of the present war hundreds of Mayors in cities, towns and hamlets unitedly issued a proclamation in English and French calling the Canadian people to apply this spirit of M.R.A. in all phases of the national effort, since war had intensified its need. The Minister of National Defence, the late Norman Rogers, stated publicly about the proclamation, 'I am convinced it will have the desired effect upon the morale of our people.'

"The effectiveness of both these acts was due largely to the invaluable work of Moral Re-Armament being carried on by the Oxford Group. I believe they are doing an essential work in uniting classes and sections of the people and strengthening links in the Empire chain. This moral force is essential here for maximum war effort, therefore trust your Amendment carries."

Second cable from the Hon. Martin S. Smith, Member of Congress, Washington, to Sir Robert Gower, House of Commons, London, March 13th, 1941:

"Representing as I do the State of Washington I have had exceptional opportunity during the last two years to observe the work of British M.R.A. workers at first hand.

Leaders of Labour and Industry up and down the Pacific coast are emphatic in praise of their achievement in strengthening the inner spirit of our people in face of the common danger and helping the defence machine run smoothly. The importance this takes, in view of the present critical situation, cannot be over-estimated. These British people have won a coveted position for themselves and their country in the hearts of Americans from coast to coast. They are not only directly aiding our national defence and armament programme which has just been enacted to aid Britain and ourselves, but they are also giving our people in the most effective possible way an understanding of the ideals for which both our countries are now making common cause to preserve Christian democracy.

"I am glad to speak on their behalf in the spirit of your Resolution and have recently on the floor, with unanimous consent of the House, made the following statement, which was printed in the Congressional Record of February 24th, 'Mr. Speaker, much is being said and written in praise of the wonderful morale and gallantry of the people of the British Isles. I believe that the secret is to be found in the Moral Re-Armament movement, which has helped to create this remarkable spirit and national unity among the British people. I have been deeply interested in this great movement since its founder, Dr. F. N. D. Buchman, and his associates made their first visit to Washington, D.C., in 1939. I desire to commend its Christian teaching and philosophy to our own people in this hour of national crisis.'

"Regards."

These bits of evidence are chosen from thousands of letters from people at home and from scores of overseas cables received on this subject.

For like it and love it, or hate it and curse it, the Oxford

Group, for good or ill, for worse or better, is known in tens of thousands of homes on both sides of the Atlantic ocean as a spearhead of Christianity and represents all those spiritual values in life for which it is declared we fight this war.

IV

HERE is a bit of fun which I know the senior Member for Oxford University will appreciate. He writes articles which I for my part read with enjoyment when they come my way. He has pulled my leg in them once or twice. So he won't mind, I know, if now I recall to his attention some remarks of his he is reported to have made to the London Press Club Ladies' Luncheon about the beginning of 1940. It is alleged that he said: "As regards that grand old neutral, or rather that chronic neutral, America, I will say this: by all means let America do what she will about the war, that is her right. But for God's sake don't let her have anything to do with the peace. Last time she left us with a large baby called the League of Nations, and now she is, I understand, busily engaged in dressing up its poor little corpse and calling it Federal Union. I have no doubt that once again after the war she would pop off home the moment the child began to yell. No, siree."

Now some of Mr. Herbert's friends declare that Frank Buchman does not help understanding between the United States and this country.

But on the basis of this utterance, my guess is that the leader of the Oxford Group has the edge on the senior Member for Oxford University so far as good understanding and good will between the two great democracies is concerned.

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To be serious and to get off the subject of Mr. Herbert, I cannot see any better foundation for real collaboration between Britain and America, or between Britain and any other country in the world, come to that, than a Christian group of people rising up in all these countries and trying to live their lives according to the will of God, tested by the standards of honesty, unselfishness and love.

CHAPTER FIVE

"The Labourers are Few"

—LUKE 10. 2.

I

AMERICA occupies a large part of the black canvas by which Mr. Herbert depicts the Group. The senior Member for Oxford University says that certain British Oxford Group workers have no business to be in the United States while their own country is at war in Europe. This point of view is an obvious one. It is the old "white feather" technique of the last war.

In order to balance our judgment on the matter about the men referred to in America, what are the facts? Some twenty British Oxford Group men are working in America. They did not skedaddle there after war started. They went there six months before the war began in order to further a Christian movement in America.

I do not imagine that it is the easy course for those workers to stay in the United States. I know that if I found myself in that position, the easy way out for me would be to come home at once and get into the Army. Men plainly must be deeply convinced and have clear consciences who continue in the course they have chosen in spite of incessant charges of cowardice levelled behind their backs in their own country.

Let me add this. In Africa, China, India and in many far corners of the earth men are working throughout this war to preach the gospel of Christ. We hear no talk of recalling

them and it would be outrageous if we did. Only to men of the Oxford Group in America does the cowardice clause seem to apply.

Of course, plenty of wise guys in this country profess to know more about the value of the Oxford Group work in America than the Americans themselves. But for my part, if I want to find out just what Americans feel on the subject, I prefer to take my views from *them*. I cannot see any reason at all why responsible American citizens should try to deceive us about their real views as to the value of the Oxford Group work in America.

Here is what the Americans think of the Oxford Group.

To the national meeting for Moral Re-Armament in Washington, at which Dr. Frank Buchman was in the chair, President Roosevelt sent this message:

“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 danger of armed conflict. Such Moral Re-Armament to be most highly effective, must receive support on a world-wide basis.”

The sponsors for launching the Oxford Group campaign for Moral Re-Armament in America included James Farley, ex-President Hoover, Cordell Hull, Mayor LaGuardia and scores more folk.

Then I here set out a message from Mr. Dalrymple, organiser of the heavy-industry Trade Unions in the State of Oregon (his American title is “Director of the Congress of Industrial Organisation for the State of Oregon”) sent me for the purpose of this book. “Since these men (the Oxford Group workers) have been up and down the West Coast helping to solve labour and industrial problems that daily take place in different industries, the assistance they have extended through their programme of M.R.A. has been

almost unbelievable. Personally, I believe that on the basis of honesty and unselfishness, the influence they have wielded through their approach to the industries they have contacted has been of great help, especially in preventing strikes."

I would call to your attention, for the attention of the "Fascist Dr. Buchman" school of thought, the fact that Dalrymple is the representative of the men, not the bosses.

Then here is a cable sent in March this year, 1941, by George Harrison, and Frank Morrison to the Chairman of the British T.U.C. when they found that the work of the Group was under fire and that some people were saying Oxford Group workers in America should be recalled to Britain. (George Harrison is Labour Representative of the new National Defence Mediation Board, Vice-President of the American Federation of Labour and Grand President of the Brotherhood of Railway Steamship Clerks, representing one and a half million railway workers. Frank Morrison was Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, American Federation of Labour, 1896 to 1939, elected to that high office un-animously for forty-three years.)

"Greetings from your friends of the American Labour Movement, who stand firm with British Labour in your nation's time of trial. One of the greatest forces binding our country with yours in this grave hour is the devoted work of British Moral Re-Armament workers in America who are helping us close our ranks and have won the confidence and affection of responsible leaders of all our major Unions. We feel confident that in the spirit of the historic Lend-Lease Bill just enacted by our Congress, Britain in her turn will gladly allow us to retain the patriotic services of these gallant British fighters for freedom. We are also confident that the springs of national vitality this movement represents on both

sides of the Atlantic are given free scope throughout your country and that through the sacrificial labours of your leaders of Moral Re-Armament it may continue in unimpaired force to strengthen your great democracy as it is strengthening ours."

Here are some other American views on the work of the Oxford Group people in the United States. I select them from scores of messages of a similar nature.

From the Hon. Harry S. Truman, U.S. Senator from Missouri, member of Senate Committee of National Defence:

"Greetings. Democrats of every shade of political belief are united by this election in giving all material aid to help Britain's gallant fight. You in turn can help our defence effort by enabling Jaeger and other workers for M.R.A. to continue their vitally important task in this country. They are effective ambassadors."

From the Hon. Arthur Capper, Senior Senator from Kansas, member of Senate Foreign Affairs Committee:

"America greatly needs industrial unity in organising maximum armament production. Oxford Group workers are invaluable for this objective. I feel sure I speak for the Republican leaders in expressing hope that they can remain with us."

In addition to these cables, General Pershing, who commanded the American troops during the last world war has departed from a life-time of custom to write the foreword to the Oxford Group booklet—*You Can Defend America*.

These twenty British Oxford Group men in the United States, assuming that Dalrymple's ideas of their usefulness are correct, and assuming that they have stopped even one

strike at even one factory producing munitions for us, have served Britain better than many batches of twenty serving soldiers get the chance of doing.

But the issue raised is far wider than this.

A recent newspaper paragraph referring to the Oxford Group workers in Britain, said: "Buchmanites have failed in an attempt to be further excused military duties."

The suggestion is, of course, that the cowardly Oxford Groupers are trying to evade military service by underhand influences.

The whole charge of cowardice laid against the Group is not very glorious in the eyes of the relatives of Oxford Group soldiers and sailors and airmen who died for their country at Dunkirk, over the Channel or in the cold maw of the Atlantic Ocean.

It is not much help to the thousands of Oxford Group people who to-day are serving in the Armed Forces of the Crown.

But the whole case for calling up the whole-time workers of the Oxford Group raises a more vital issue than the mere charge of cowardice against them. The British Government and the British people recognise that some duties are as important to the nation as serving in the ranks of the Armed Forces. Thus, there is a list of reserved occupations.

Journalists of some kinds are reserved.

Ladies' corset-makers are reserved. And so on. And so on.

If in the opinion of the Government and people men engaged in occupations like these are serving the nation as well by staying on the job, surely the work of God is equally important? Surely Christian-making is to be held as useful and important to the nation, either in war or in peace, as corset-making.

If you believe in God at all, it is hard to believe also that men who have undergone years of special training and have

pledged their whole lives to God's service would be better employed in ways of your own devising.

Make no mistake. The work these men are doing, whether in Britain or America, is not "social work" (though like early Christianity it may easily lead on to a social revolution).

Theirs is evangelistic work. A bringing of the gospel to hungry men and women. I can speak from experience. The men of the Oxford Group did not approach me on any basis of social service. They challenged me with the direct challenge—if you put your faith in God, you can find the answer to life. No other way.

As a result of my contact with the Oxford Group I, who was a near atheist, have to-day a living Christian faith and experience. I have had contact with scores of ministers of all denominations in my time. None of them ever gave me that.

This is what the Archbishop of Canterbury said about the work of the Oxford Group: "The movement is most certainly doing what the Church of Christ exists everywhere to do. It is changing human lives, giving them a new joy and freedom, liberating 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 them."

On Buchman's sixtieth birthday the Archbishop of Canterbury sent this message: "I would like to send a message of congratulation to Dr. Frank Buchman on the great work he has been able to achieve in bringing a multitude of human lives in all parts of the world under the transforming influence of Christ."

Tens of thousands of parsons are, for better or worse, reserved from military service. The whole-time Oxford Group workers in Britain number thirty-two (over two

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hundred and fifty whole-time and part-time workers of the Oxford Group are already in the Armed Forces—these quite apart from the thousands of rank-and-file Group supporters in the Services). These thirty-two are left to carry on the whole Oxford Group organisation throughout the United Kingdom. Ten of the thirty-two are already fully trained for ordination as ministers but for years have rendered their Christian service as whole-time leaders of the Oxford Group.

Day by day and every day men and women come to these thirty-two men for personal spiritual help which it has always been the task of a Christian minister to give. You can open a door in Hay's Mews and find business men on their knees—the first time for years they have been on their knees.

In addition, a multitude of people throughout the country look to the thirty-two for personal spiritual direction—which in these days they need as much as ever before in our history.

We are said to be fighting a war for Christianity. These people are the most effective Christian ministers I have struck. They are crusading, conquering Christians. You cannot be indifferent to them. When you meet them you either hate them, or love them.

Perhaps before long they will have been called away from their vital tasks. So their work, in its present form, will come to an end.

In that event, I, with my knowledge of these men and of the work they do, shall regard it as a sign that the nation has allowed itself to be chattered out of its sense of real values.

CHAPTER SIX

"Hold your ground, immovable"

—I COR. 15. 58

DID you ever hear the story of the two ladies who for the first time in their lives drank champagne? After half the bottle had gone, one leaned across the table and said solemnly to the other: "My dear, you must be drunk. *You've got two noses.*"

The psychologists call this manifestation "projection." You discern in other people the characteristic which is in yourself. I am brought to these reflections by the fact that sixteen times in six weeks the late *Daily Worker* attacked and assailed the Oxford Group on the charge that the Oxford Groupers were friends of Hitler and anxious to call off the war.

Soon after this episode the *Daily Worker*, official organ of the Communist Party, was suppressed by the Government for "systematic publication of matter calculated to foment opposition to the prosecution of the war to a successful issue."

The climax of the *Daily Worker's* abuse was when the Oxford Group workers began a campaign to help people to maintain their morale under air bombardment. This campaign met with much success. So the *Daily Worker* ran a column of abuse of the Group, ending with the suggestion, "Regular reading of this newspaper is the safest insurance policy against nerve strain or despondency in air attacks."

It is a token of the sort of treatment which the Oxford Group receives from certain organs of the national press (the

provincial press, on the whole, treats the Group fairly) that the *Daily Worker's* lying attacks were taken up by columnists in national newspapers and reproduced a day or so after they appeared in the *Daily Worker*.

Meanwhile, although the Communists denounced the Oxford Group as Fascists and pro-Hitlerites, the Blackshirts here seemed to have a different conception of the work of the Group.

For example, I find in Sir Oswald Mosley's official organ the following description of the Group after an uncomplimentary reference to Dr. Buchman: "Unwhipped youths at Oxford are left languidly picking their noses over Russian novels. . . . It is not surprising that these sensation hunters, after trying every novelty from Communism to cocaine, will ultimately switch back to religion, if it is served up to their taste. . . . It is to the great credit of Fascism that these same people are also those who chose to ridicule the significance of the Fascist movement in Britain . . . Let them keep that schoolgirl complexion, till the time comes for Fascism to wipe their tear-stained bourgeois eyes for them. One Fascist tough could eat up the whole boiling lot of them, and then ask for more."

(Strangely enough, the nom-de-plume chosen by the writer of this attack was "Lucifer".)

Well, there you are. Assailed by the Communists as being Nazis, assailed by the Fascists as being ex-Communists, ex-drug-fiends, invertebrates, the Oxford Group had to balance these matters nicely.

Another attack on the Group was recently launched by some of the servants of one Department of State. These fellows went about the country instituting a whispering campaign against the Group and warning civic authorities off it.

A Yorkshire alderman challenged an official from this Ministry to produce evidence for his insinuations. None

was produced. In the end the official admitted he had no tittle of evidence to back up his tattle.

The Parliamentary Secretary of that Ministry passed on the same slanderous whispers about the Group to a London M.P. (he can be named). The M.P. said: "Produce your evidence." Again none was produced. (It so happened that that Parliamentary Secretary had been a violent critic of the Group for years, long before he became a Parliamentary Secretary at all.)

Make no mistake about this matter. Here in our midst is religious persecution. This persecution of the Oxford Group is not new. It did not begin when the war began. The charges of cowardice and pro-Nazism, created since war began, are only new sticks to beat the old dog with.

For twenty years the Oxford Group has had to put up with a consistent campaign, initiated by a few knaves and passed on by many fools, of vilification, misrepresentation, scorn, bullying, threats to lose jobs on account of allegiance to it, and so on.

Do not delude yourselves. This is religious persecution, nothing more, nothing less. No man who goes out of his way to make it difficult for another sincerely to worship God in the way that seems right to him can point a finger of condemnation at, say, the Nazi treatment of the Jews. Persecution of the spirit can be as bad as persecution of the flesh—and worse.

This must be said about the bulk of the ringleaders of this systematic, deliberate campaign to persecute members of the Oxford Group. When you meet them you can see exactly why they hate the Group. They know its message. They are aware of the four standards—Absolute Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love. As you look into the faces of these fellows you can tell at which of these four points they are challenged to the heart.

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For my part I say this. When critics of the Group whose way of life is, on Christian standards, comparable with the standards of the rank-and-file of the Oxford Group step forward, I will pay respectful attention to them. As it is, I disregard them altogether.

Now here is a tribute to the work of the Oxford Group and also a tribute to the fundamental decency and good sense of many people in Britain. In spite of these attacks from all quarters, directed and sustained by a barrage of negative comment and innuendos from certain organs of the national Press since this war began, during the last eleven months over 250 Mayors and civic authorities in these islands have worked with the Oxford Group to run morale campaigns in their towns and districts.

Let two men speak to you about the effect of these campaigns. These two represent thousands of others in every corner of the country whose letters have been examined. The first man is John Martin. He was Mayor of Swansea 1939-1940. On March 15th, 1941, he wrote to the *Western Mail* as follows:

"As one entrusted during the years 1939-1940 with the civic leadership of Swansea, may I be allowed space to pay tribute to the inspiration and help given me during my time of office by the Oxford Group?"

"Their campaign for Moral Re-Armament was directed in a very practical way to meeting the needs of our community in war-time. . . . Just before my year of office ended the Mayors of Llanelly, Neath and Port Talbot joined me in publishing that excellent message, prepared by Moral Re-Armament workers, on 'Morale: How to Play your Part.'

"Swansea has since suffered cruel bombardment, and our people have shown a magnificent spirit. That spirit, we know, is rooted in generations of a deep Christian faith; but

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I believe no small part was played by the Oxford Group in pointing men and women back to those spiritual foundations of high morale."

The second man is a Liverpool tram driver, who drove a tram-load of men to work each day. One morning he missed from his pocket an Oxford Group book, written by Daphne du Maurier—*Come Wind, Come Weather*. In the evening, taking the same crowd of men back home (it was a workmen's car) he said: "Anybody pinched my book?"

One of the passengers said: "Yes, you can have it back too. It's all about God or something."

"You keep it and read it," said the driver. "You'll like it."

When the passenger gave the driver back his book a day or two later, he told him that as a result of what he read he meant to change his life. And indeed he did.

Before he had been so scared of air raids that he had gone into his shelter as soon as he got home and spent the night there, whether there was an alert or not. To-day he is an Air Raid Warden, out all through the blitz helping other people.

That is the sort of change in men's lives, the new spirit of the human heart, which the Oxford Group is struggling, not without success, to carry into every parish in Britain.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"The Whole Armour"

—EPH. 6. 11

I

ONE ingenious but false suggestion has been made by critics of the Oxford Group. I think it is best exemplified by this quotation from a newspaper column of August 21st, 1940:

"In 1938, a few months before Munich, Buchman was saying Britain's great need was to arm morally (i.e. not materially?)"

The bracketed innuendo means that in the columnist's opinion Buchman was urging the democracies not to re-arm materially against the might of Germany.

This same columnist continues the assault by saying: "On September 7th, 1938, at Interlaken, Switzerland, Buchman coined the slogan 'Guidance or Guns.'"

Again the suggestion is that Buchman's philosophy has been that guns were unnecessary for a nation's defence—why not rely on guidance instead?

First let us see precisely what Buchman *did* say on September 7th, 1938. Here are his words: "The world is at the crossroads. The choice is guidance or guns. We must listen to guidance or we will listen to guns."

Is it a fair interpretation of these three sentences to suggest Buchman was urging the democracies not to arm against Germany? Yet that suggestion is made again and again and again.

In fact, the message of the Group has never been that

moral re-armament of a nation would take the place of material re-armament of a nation. Always moral re-armament has been presented as a necessary corollary to material re-armament, if the nation is to become impregnable.

The Oxford Group message on this question is simply "Total re-armament for total defence." The message is well expressed in the Oxford Group pamphlet *You Can Defend America*.

This has been produced by Frank Buchman and his Oxford Group team within the last few weeks. It says: "Once China built a wall. She lived behind it. She laughed at her enemies. She felt secure.

"Soon an invader came from the north. Three times China found the enemy inside her gates. They did not storm the wall. They did not go around it. They simply bribed the gate-keepers.

"Yesterday France built a wall. The Maginot Line. Steel and stone. She felt secure behind it. She put her faith in it. Yet France fell.

"Why? Something was missing. There was a gap through which an invader came. That gap was not only in the wall. It was in the spirit of the people.

"To-day America builds a wall. A ring of steel. Ships and planes and guns.

"But is this enough?

"Does America have what China lacked? What France lacked? Does she have total defence?

"She builds her wall. Does she build character? Spirit? The will to sacrifice?

"Does she build men? Men who pull together?

"Before our eyes the world changes. Nations collapse.

"We in America ask: 'What can I do?' What can 130 million Americans do?

"Plenty!

"Behind ships, planes and guns lie three lines of defence.

"Sound homes—Teamwork in industry—A united nation.

"They fill the gap. They must be manned.

"You can defend America!"

You can judge from this how much truth exists in the suggestions that the Oxford Group urges a nation to leave itself defenceless before the onslaught of oppression. General Pershing, General of the Armies of the United States, was so impressed by the Oxford Group pamphlet *You Can Defend America* that for the first time in his life he wrote a foreword. He said:

"This little book is aptly titled 'You Can Defend America.' No patriotic citizen can read it without feeling its inspiration. None can fail fully to endorse its ultimate objective—the preservation of our precious heritage. It invokes the principles of good citizenship and the spirit of 'seventy-six and 'seventeen in this new emergency confronting our great democracy. How each of us can do his part in the home, in industry, in every walk of life, is indicated clearly and forcefully. I commend this message to every American."

Mr. William Green, President of the American Federation of Labour, on seeing *You Can Defend America*, wrote: "This handbook on national defence sets forth a programme in which Labour can wholeheartedly partake. It should do much to lift our people to a sustained level of self-giving and patriotism. It will, in my opinion, help towards that teamwork in industry and general morale which are essential if our Armed Forces are to have the backing they deserve, and if the spirit of our nation is to be united in support of what we hold dear.

"I hope *You Can Defend America* will be in the hands of

every Union man in the country and also reach the rank-and-file of our citizenry to strengthen their spirit for endurance and sacrifice.”

Here is the whole story of the Group’s attitude in the matter. It is given in words used by Mr. Charles Edison when Secretary of the American Navy:

“There is one ingredient in National Defence that transcends all others, and that is national character. A nation’s first line of defence is the moral and spiritual qualities of her people. Moral Re-Armament should therefore be the first concern of all who wish to make their country strong.”

“To build a citizenry,” he continued, “whose roots are deep in the fine traditions of our land—to form a national character that may some day lead the world back from chaos—to make our country impregnable both from within and without—is not the job of the navy, it is *YOURS*”—yours and mine, in Britain as well as America.

What higher form of national service can a man or woman offer their country than the surrendering of their whole life to the effort to build such a spirit in the hearts of the citizens? That is the work of the Oxford Group.

In some cases people have given up their life’s work, in every case they have abandoned personal self-seeking, in order to fight for these aims. With a faith in God, keeping constantly before their eyes the greater vision of a Britain and a world guided by God instead of guided by fear of poverty or of the wife or of what the neighbours think—these men and women have led disciplined lives for years, stretching out towards that greater vision.

I have lived with these people. I speak from knowledge. I cannot see a higher form of national service than this.

Total re-armament for total defence. Why is it that some people object to the idea that the building up of moral and

spiritual strength is an essential part of the re-armament of a nation? Is it because their own inner moral and spiritual defences are broken down, and would cost too much to rebuild? If this is so, they may well feel that they are not themselves the stoutest links in the chain of men and women who sustain these islands against invasion.

II

Now at this point a rude member of my audience may jump up on his chair at the back of the hall and holler: "Blah, blah, blah. Cut the cackle and get to the horse. What have these guys done? Tell us about their deeds, not their intentions." It would take a volume many times bulkier than this one, it would occupy many months of time to describe the work of the Oxford Group in wartime, the hard-won triumphs and advances in the face of a constant barrage of misrepresentation and abuse.

I think the best and shortest way to show you the sort of thing achieved is to tell you briefly a few personal stories of the changes made in men's lives after contact with the Group. These stories can be multiplied by thousands. That is the exact truth.

All the characters in these tales are real. All are living. Each one can be named.

First comes a fitter in an Aircraft Works. Here is his tale, written out by the man himself in a letter:

"In September, 1939 I was a keen Pacifist worker. I used to run meetings in my home and round the countryside. I co-operated in training men for C.O. Tribunals. Many of our gang with whom I worked were Communists. None had any Christian faith. We had marked success in influencing many young men in a dance hall where I sang. Labour Exchanges were picketed through hours

of registration and *Peace News* was sold at the town's busiest corners. Pamphlets were distributed to the men on the Council of whom many supported our cause. I registered as a C.O. and appealed against the Tribunal when I failed to convince it of my objections.

"Then I spent Easter 1940 with some Oxford Group whole-time workers. The trust they put in me to do my best for the country made me feel I could not go on with the old way. I withdrew my appeal and volunteered for service.

"With my change my closest friends changed from C.O. claims and registered for the Army. There was H.B.; he liked having me around because I was a good arguer for conscientious objection and convinced his friends. He joined the R.A.F. He had seen the new spirit of clean living in the dance hall parties and saw what an effect it would have on the Forces, and so he saw how he could do his best for the youth there. H. W. also saw how negative it was to be a C.O. and he registered for the Army because he thought he should do his bit. Then there was J. M., who was a Communist. He packed up his Communism altogether and began to join with us in the service of the town. He cleaned up his political views as he applied moral standards to his own life. He has since joined the R.A.F. We have influenced others also."

Next I present to you a very different kind of man. A member of the boss classes, he was the worst kind of bullying manager. He says so himself. Nobody contradicts him. He was known as a sledge-hammer, beating down with shouts any workman who dared to complain or to idle or to grumble, on one notable occasion almost having a stand-up fight with a Miners' Federation official.

That fellow would rather risk a strike of a month than yield an inch of his viewpoint. As he was, and is, in charge of a large part of one of Britain's mightiest industrial

undertakings, you can see that this fellow was not exactly an asset to the nation.

He met the Oxford Group.

A dispute arose about the employment of a non-union man. The workers' representatives met this manager. He, after hearing them through in silence, a thing he never had done before, asked if they would let him have five minutes to think it over. He told them he was going to listen to God. They thought he had gone off his nut.

He came back with a suggestion which was at once accepted by the men. The Trade Union organisers who were leading the deputation said: "We have been negotiating fifteen years with that so-and-so and never got agreement like that before."

Soon after war broke out there was trouble on account of wages and conditions. The old story—the men wanted more, the management did not mean to give way. This changed man of whom I speak was guided to place six points before the general manager of the Company. That gentleman agreed to the proposals if the men would accept them.

When the men's representatives arrived, the points were read out. They were accepted unanimously and the matter was amicably settled in less than fifteen minutes.

Now for a Trade Union organiser. He is district organiser of a most important Trade Union in an industrial district of England which is vital to production of machinery of war. At the beginning of war this fellow found subversive elements gaining much support among the rank-and-file of his own union and in the city council.

Now here is this man's own account of his actions, as a result of meeting the Oxford Group:

"When this war broke out I saw clearly as a result of listening to God that my duty was to throw myself heart and

soul into the national effort and to win the whole of the Labour Party in my city to co-operation with the national effort.

“When I first mooted this to the Party Council there was considerable opposition. This was probably owing to the influence of extremist elements. However, I persisted; and finally they passed a unanimous resolution pledging the support of the Party to the Government in its prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion, no matter what the consequences.

“I am perfectly sure that this could never have been achieved if I had not been strengthened and encouraged by the quiet knowledge that God was guiding me in this matter. Very probably I might have been found in the ranks of the extremist element myself.”

One other instance of this Trade Union organiser's work. All over his district factory buildings, warehouses, garages, etc., were requisitioned by the Government for the use of workmen engaged in manufacturing vital war material.

One large concern moved into the district from a place fifty miles away, setting up an improvised factory. Our Oxford Group Trade Union organiser made friends with the manager of this Company. He gave him practical help in obtaining a canteen and heating for the men.

Soon after he found that the manager was about to prosecute some of the men on charges of losing time. He saw that if this were done subversive elements in the district would stir up ill-will and possibly bring about a stoppage. On the other hand, the loss of time was serious and had to be ended.

This Union organiser discussed the issue with the manager on the basis of confidence previously established between them. It was discovered that much of the time was

lost because men knocked off early to visit their families left behind fifty miles away.

The billeting Committee, of which the organiser is Chairman, made every possible arrangement to accommodate the men's families in the district.

The time-keeping is far better. There were no prosecutions. And no strike. The management now consult this fellow on many issues as they arise.

Finally, the tale of the unemployed docker. It is an easy tale to end with. Most of it can be told from the many letters to a friend which he agrees shall be published. According to Labour Exchange officials in South Wales this fellow was unemployable. Years of unemployment had rusted the man's abilities away.

He met the Group. For a whole year he travelled the land with the Group workers, seeing the way things were moving in different parts of the country.

Then he went back to the docks. This "unemployable" man got a job in the docks there, has worked there ever since.

Last September, he was unanimously elected Shop Steward at the docks, after he had been able to settle a strike. Since then, though in many other dock areas in South Wales (and in other parts of the country) there have been stoppages and strikes, there has been only one stoppage in the docks where he works. The strike was settled in a few hours. (Before this Oxford Group docker became Shop Steward there had been continual trouble in this area.)

Here are extracts from his letters during the last few months.

October 27th, 1940. "I have shared my vision with three prominent Trade Union officials, and they are prepared to go all out with me, and agree that we have to start to give,

instead of always 'getting.' It is dawning on the fellows and then it will give a challenge to the management."

December, 1940. "Trouble started at the dock last Wednesday, a section of men came out on strike. I was sent for by the foreman. He was in a bad temper and told me he had stopped the men's pay from eleven o'clock, and would not employ the men again. I tried to persuade him but he would not budge, and threatened to go the whole hog.

"I then went and interviewed the men and they refused to do what the foreman requested. It so happened that the men were in the right. They were as determined as the foreman.

"It looked awkward and tremendous trouble seemed to be brewing, and I didn't feel happy about it, but I kept praying about it. To make things worse, the Union Secretary was away and wouldn't be back until late in the afternoon, and I had to 'hold the baby.'

"I held the men together and got the foreman to agree to meet the Secretary and myself when he got back. At four the Secretary and I interviewed the foreman and the two of them argued for a long time and seemed to make no headway. Whilst they were arguing I listened to God and it came that I should tell the story of 'The Pigs' which Will Evans of mid-Wales told at Oxford. Will is a farmer and kept pigs. Will said: 'Even pigs respond to kindness.' He was very unkind to his pigs, and one day it came to him that pigs had feelings and he had to be more kind to his. He began to be kinder and the pigs began to respond to his kindness and at once began to put on weight. Then I said we men were far superior to pigs and if the foreman would be kinder, we too would respond to him.

"The story went home and he reinstated the men and paid them in full for the time lost. He also decided to approach the men differently. Of course, it was the listening that did

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the trick. Everyone was surprised the next morning the way the trouble had been settled. They expected a stoppage the next morning and it was a miracle that there wasn't. There certainly would have been if I had not been Shop Steward. I have had the job three months now and have been used to settle every dispute. The Secretary told me on Monday that it was amazing the way things were going. He had just had an interview with the manager, who, he finds, is acting in an absolutely new way."

CHAPTER EIGHT

"The 'Foolishness' of God"

—I COR. I. 25

I

MY own experiences and adventures upon coming in contact with a group of men and women who in this twentieth century are attempting to live out their daily lives according to the severe standards of the early apostles, may be dismissed as trivial and of small importance.

Plenty of my friends, scores of people who read these words will take the easy way out. They will laugh and say: "Good Lord, fancy Peter Howard going religious." They will dismiss the whole business as an eccentricity, and not a particularly amiable one at that.

What they think of me is of little account. But the importance of this attitude to my adventure is that those who assume it evade the challenge, run away from the whole issue which the Oxford Group with such persistence thrusts forward for the decision of men.

If the Oxford Group are right in their belief

(a) That there is a personal God

(b) That by listening they can hear the instructions and plans of God, which He has each day for each one of them, then that discovery is more important than anything else on earth.

It touches the nerve of life.

There is nothing new in listening to God. Again and again in the Bible we read of men and women who listened and heard the voice of the Lord.

THE "FOOLISHNESS" OF GOD

In the New Testament we read how Jesus went apart to pray and learn the will of His Father. All through the ages, until this age, the virtue of silence, the insight to be obtained by listening to the still, small voice, has been recognised.

At the beginning of this century if I had told you that, without any visible connection or wire between two points two hundred miles apart, I could just the same see and hear everything that went on in a room that distance away from me, I should have been ridiculed as a believer in miracles.

To-day television is a reality. It is there. It is working. Everybody believes in it.

Everybody, even those who have never seen a television set or beheld a television performance believes in it.

Why? Because they accept the evidence of those who have taken part in the experiment of television, who have seen, at first flickering and then clearly, on their tiny screen the figures of men and women far away—who have heard their voices, their musical instruments and their conversations.

Listening to God is the same, except that it needs no expensive equipment. It needs only pencil, paper and faith in God.

As you have heard, I have tried out this business myself. Guidance, like television, is a reality. It is true. It is there. It works. I am speaking from experience, not from hearsay.

Does this mean that by listening to God you discover who will win this year's Derby, the month the war will end or the time when one will die? The answer is—that it may mean just that. It certainly means far more than that.

Men and women who for a long time have listened, who have lived lives of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love for many years, possess an insight into trends and tendencies of events which cannot be explained, at least by myself, on any human basis.

For ordinary people, guidance gives clear, absolute

indications of a path of duty and a standard of life. It cannot compel you to a course of conduct. But on all problems of life which arise, it indicates a course of conduct.

Guidance, when shared with others, and tested by the four standards of Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love, only fails to offer a solution to all problems and difficulties which confront the individual, when that individual has had guidance on some issue before, backed his own judgment or inclination against it—and passed by on the other side.

II

SOMETHING is wrong with the world. We are all agreed about that.

It is not right that, in the twentieth century, nations should spend their forces in bombing each other to bits, killing and maiming and destroying.

It is not right that in an earth which can produce enough food and clothing and warmth for all its inhabitants, there should be millions who have never known what it is to go through the day without anxiety about their next meal.

It is not right that in a world where many folk are starving, corn and coffee should be used to fuel engines or be thrown into the sea.

It is not right that in a world where slum homes are huddled together over vast areas, at the same time skilled bricklayers should spend months on the dole, bricks should mount up in the brick-yards in ever heightening mountains, and builders should be unable to make a start because they have not enough orders or credit in the banks.

One thing at least can be said without controversy. God cannot be accused of any share of responsibility for these misfortunes which now squat upon humanity.

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For we have lived ever since the end of the last war in an age of "reason." Mr. H. G. Wells has summed up with clarity and precision the attitude of the bulk of humanity towards God during the last twenty years.

"In the past," declares Wells, "men have had dreams of a God, they have invented one primitive God after another, they have talked very recklessly, foolishly, dishonestly about these deities. The true God, the God of truth, has yet to be found. . . . Truth and courage are God."

It is fair, I think, to say that Wells's attitude represents the modern attitude to God. It is fair, I think, to add that he implies by his words that the real truth is that there is no personal God, and that men should rejoice in the courage to face that "fact."

In some countries God has been banished altogether. In others, He has been tolerated provided He is prepared to recognise His true political status.

Inside Great Britain? Here, I am afraid, a more hypocritical attitude has prevailed. Lip service has never ceased to be rendered to God. Yet among many people God has come to be looked on with such suspicion and scepticism that any man or woman who frankly declares that God rules their life, is regarded as a "cissie"—as a creature not only worthy of pity but often of scorn and contempt. We declare we are a nation who believe in God. Yet how many of us give up five minutes of our day to Him or mention His name without embarrassment?

So to-day the air is filled with the tumult of quack remedies, all of them plausible, none of them getting to the root of the matter, which man intends to apply to his own world.

Some people say everything will be all right when the war is over, because we shall then march victoriously into Germany, kill the leading Nazis, emasculate the males of

Prussia, and divide up the whole Reich into tribes and small communities.

Some believe that a system of social credit will solve all evils—that by the manipulation of currency the banks will be able to provide poor men and women with the currency to purchase those goods they cannot produce or earn.

Some consider that Fascism is the reply to evil. That having beaten Hitler, we must perpetuate his system throughout Europe.

Some think that Communism will settle all difficulties—that Stalin has devised a means of bringing happiness to the millions.

Some point out that an International Police Force under a new League of Nations (which they think by a mere act of will they can make more effective and more united and less self-interested than the old League of Nations) can end every jealousy between nations.

Then there are the “experts” and the “planners”—people (always the same people) who meet once a fortnight to discuss plans for the future of Britain, and who in the intervals go about and about disparaging each other.

All the air clatters with the notes of one hundred million tongues beating against one hundred million palates as one hundred million remedies are propounded for the same evil which now grips the earth.

You can bruise your eardrums listening to the cries of those who have human solutions to our difficulties.

But at the end of it all, are you completely satisfied with the solutions you hear? In the secret places of your heart, do you really believe that men unaided, with their schemes and dreams, have any possible and effective cure for humanity? Can you think that if it is left to us, the old wheel will not yet again begin its horrid revolution, as soon as this war is over, and that after a period of depressed

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industry, international jealousy, strife and attempts to strangle our neighbours by economic means, the whole earth will not once more descend into a blood-bath?

I cannot believe it. I feel sure that if we reject God, if we back our hunches against His will, our reason against His word, we will chatter ourselves once more into catastrophe.

We have tried living as we want. We must now try living as God wants.

III

LET me be frank. Nothing has yet happened in this war which can lead an unprejudiced person to believe that when all the bleeding and weeping is over, the world will be a different or a better place than it was after the last war.

We need a new militant message, a new way of thinking which cuts across all the old ways or the old days.

Unless a new element is infused into this civilisation, this civilisation is doomed.

Social reform? Economic readjustment? They are first rate. But they are not enough. They do not cut deep enough. Remedies like these are like attempting to cut out a cancer by trimming the patient's toe-nails with nail scissors.

"You can't cure pigs
With Syrup of Figs."

The behaviour of mankind for some time has been of a piglike quality, greedy, stupid, selfish, sly and slothful. You cannot set that right with a mild aperient.

An entirely new spirit is needed. Something must emerge now, to-day, this hour, something which cuts right to the root of every part of our national life and brings about a deep change there. We *cannot* wait until the war is over, and then run the risk of being disappointed.

The Oxford Group offers the chance of at once beginning

this painful, beneficial operation to change the world. The first patient is yourself.

“Why don’t I change? There’s room for improvement.” That is the lyric of one of the Group songs. The Group believe that if you are to challenge others to change, you must back your challenge by new and costly decisions in your own life, shared with others and carried through.

The Group believe that each one must outlaw in himself or herself the sins of greed, falsehood, intolerance, hatred and bad faith which wreck the world.

The Group challenges everybody to cut drastically away every known sin and compromise.

It says that the change everywhere needs to be colossal and that it must and can begin now, this instant, in your own home.

Now many people minimise the need for change in ourselves first. “Oh,” they say, “let’s change the Government at home. Let’s change the Government in Germany. Let’s change the Government in Italy, or Russia, or Japan. Then we shall be getting somewhere.”

Anyone who minimises the need for change in *ourselves* first is doing this nation, in my opinion, the greatest possible disservice. Nobody supposes we are perfect. So it follows that each man of us has a task at hand which he can carry through. If he will not face the attempt, he has no right to abuse others for persisting in their own lines of conduct. Admit your own weaknesses—and cure them. That is national service. That is national common sense. Each one of us is part of our nation. Perfect our own part of the nation. Perfect our own part of the world.

This country must change. Nothing must be allowed to sidetrack that change. A fundamental, revolutionary change in our lives—nothing else is adequate, interesting, adventurous or really worth while.

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A great deal has been said about the sins of other nations. I am bound to place on record my detestation of the brutal oppression which is characteristic of the Nazi regime. I loathe the hypocrisy which allowed Russia to preach for years of the sacred rights of small nations and then proceed to devour so many of them.

But should we not be in a stronger position to speak about these things if we made it our business to see there was neither brutality nor hypocrisy in our own private lives, in our own treatment, as a nation, of people and events?

A great deal has been said about the sins of other nations. So be it. "Judge not that ye be not judged." "Thank God I am not as other men."

Victory over our enemies is essential. But when the victory is achieved we must fight against our inclination to forget that at least one of the factors needed for a new Europe has never yet been tried. It is a factor more readily within our grasp than others for which we bay vociferously and unceasingly.

This factor is a changed Britain. Not a Britain mildly idealistic—but a Britain changed from within, admitting her mistakes, resolute to fall no more into error, with happy homes, free from internal jealousy, strife and bitterness, an honest Britain—a Britain which sets aside her snobbery and her feelings of superiority (qualities of which, though we loathe them in other nations, we are the masters) with a vigorous spiritual life instead of a dull, numb, subservience to conventional altars and churches, ahead of the times instead of behind the times, not merely determined to build a new world but possessed of the moral fibre to make that dream a reality *now* in her island—that is the Britain which we must struggle to create as this war goes on.

How can we do it? By making this a Britain controlled by God, when millions of average men and women as well

INNOCENT MEN

as statesmen make doing what God tells them the normal habit and rule of their daily lives, instead of governing their lives on the old basis of selfish self-interest.

So shall we achieve our high destiny and earn the thanks of all humanity.

CHAPTER NINE

"*The Wages of Sin*"

—ROM. 6. 23

I

At this point I feel bound to recall to your minds the tale of the carriage and pair. The foolish coachman was driving along one day with his peppery boss inside the carriage. Presently there was a jerk and the carriage stopped. The coachman stuck his head in through the window and the angry boss said: "Well?" "Sir," said the coachman, "the weather is glorious, and the road is straight and even."

"Well? *WELL?*" roared the enraged passenger. "Sir, everything is in our favour, the day is cool and the dust on the roads was laid by the morning dew." "Be damned to you," yelled the passenger and caught his coachman a great clout on the snout, "now will you please tell me why we don't go forward on our way?" "Well, sir," replied the simple coachman, wiping the blood from his chin, "the fact is, sir, that one of the horses has just dropped down dead."

Now perhaps like the foolish coachman I should have straightway declared to you what it is that prevents us from going forward on our journey, to lead the world into a fresh way of life where every man and every nation possesses a fuller understanding of their duty towards their neighbour.

The reason is quite a simple one. It is just—*SIN*. Sin is an old-fashioned word, which most people shrink from nowadays. Psychologists like Freud, scientists like Bertrand Russell and Huxley, aided by writers like Wells, have done their best to abolish sin for us. It would have been splendid

for us all if they had succeeded. But, alas and alack, in fact all that these fellows have managed to do is to offer themselves and others human excuses for behaving exactly as they *want* to behave in this world, rather than behaving as their conscience tells them they *should* behave. It is part of God's mercy, and the most splendid hope for the future that, in spite of all the human explanations of misbehaviour, all men know exactly when they *are* misbehaving if they stop and listen for a moment.

Now why do I say that sin stops us from going forward into a more glorious age?

We in this generation have got a cock-eyed outlook on sin. We don't know what sin is. We seem to believe it is nothing except theft, murder or adultery—and that there are first-rate "Freudian" reasons for explaining away the importance even of these.

The truth is that sin can be defined as anything which gets between myself and God—or between myself and any other fellow on the earth. An angry look or an angry feeling (masked with a bogus smile) which certainly gets between me and the other fellow, is the same thing as cracking the man on the head with a log of wood. In the eyes of God there are no such things as good sins and bad sins. When I first met the Group their discourse on the subject of sin puzzled me a little. Then one of them (I think it was Lean) suggested that I should take a pencil and paper, write down on it the standards of Absolute Honesty, Absolute Purity, Absolute Unselfishness and Absolute Love, and against each standard set down where I fell short of it. This, said he, would give me a good line on my own shortcomings and indicate to me at which points my own life needed to be revolutionised.

Now I really recommend this, as a sort of game or experiment in seeing yourself as others see you, to every-

THE WAGES OF SIN

body, whether they like the challenge of the Group and mean to take it up—or whether they hate it. Nobody need see the paper when you have finished it. You can tear it up and throw it away. You need do nothing about it at all if you don't want to. But putting it on its most cynical human level, it is valuable to know what other people really think of you. Rest assured of this. I can pass it on to you as the fruit of sour experience. All the faults you discover as the result of your "four standard test match" (as I name the game I have described to you) will have been apparent to your friends, even though you may have been unaware of them yourself. Love, perhaps, is blind—but the neighbours ain't.

What did I find about myself in the "four standard test match"? Many, many things. I understood quite quickly what sin meant. The chief discovery was that for a long time I had been so anxious to win the goodwill of my fellow men that I had created in my own mind the sort of image of the man I wanted to be—tough, indifferent to praise or abuse, unsentimental, successful, realist. I had moulded all my actions and words on the basis of this sham man. I was not being *me* at all for very substantial stretches of the day.

I would seldom give people in the office my honest opinion of an article or edition if I knew it would conflict with what they wanted to hear.

I was constantly asking others, Doë, my wife, included, to give me their honest opinions of my own writings. Yet if they did so and their opinions were not eulogistic, I was mortified. The news that anybody in Fleet Street had expressed a negative emotion about my work as a writer turned me into a critic of that fellow, though I pretended not to care. The effect of all this was that I demanded flattery as the price of real friendship. I even demanded it at home.

The result was that as a unit I was not so effective as I should have been, either in the service of my newspaper or of the community as a whole. It seems to me to be somewhat of a reflection on the state of the nation that with these blinding limitations (to say nothing of scores of others) which I discovered by means of the "four standard test match," I should have been able to obtain so substantial a measure of worldly success.

But all the time I had been carrying myself along with the thought: "Well, I'm not so bad as old so-and-so." It is one of the Devil's most cursed tricks that if you look round you can always find someone who, in your opinion, behaves worse than you do yourself.

Tens of thousands of people in Britain base their lives on the human standards of the age they live in. They think that after all they are no worse than Jones round the corner, and a good deal better than several other folk they know.

This may be good enough for the pagan, but it certainly is not good enough for the Christian. Christ ended His Sermon on the Mount with the instruction—"Be ye perfect." He didn't say, "Be average—behave yourself well enough to get by with the neighbours." How often have I excused myself with the phrase "an amiable human weakness"? Amiable to men, maybe, who are weak themselves and therefore want weaknesses (another word, a euphemism for sins) to be amiable. Never amiable to God.

New life begins by repenting of the old life. In order to repent of the old life you have to know just what to repent. Good people find this difficult, not having absolute standards as their guide. The good is the enemy of the best. The good is not good enough.

II

ON this question of sin plenty of folk say this kind of thing to me: "Peter, I quite agree that some sort of better way of life is necessary in the world, but why do you have to apply the thing to yourself?" People like these seem to think that you could make the world a better place by advocating Christianity from public platforms, and continuing very much the same as before yourself. To folk like this I answer: "Well, it's like this. If fifteen tipsy men came and shouted outside your window one night that the hope of the world was temperance, they wouldn't make much impression on you, would they?"

Look around your own circle. Is there anyone there who is able to "wangle" a bit extra butter? To fix you up with more petrol than you are really entitled to? That sort of thing is going on all over the country. It is a sign of the times.

Do you think this form of sin is a small affair? It is precisely that attitude to life which in the opinion of French patriots delivered France to Hitler.

Everybody in France knew someone who could get them preferential treatment. It was looked upon as the normal thing to ring up someone in authority and get him to relax for you the laws and regulations. Make no mistake. It was this laxity which destroyed the loyalty and courage of the French people. They did not realise the terrible nature of their decline—until the Germans were in Paris.

Also, like us, the French had fostered over a period of years the belief that a man's private life, even a public man's private life, doesn't matter. It is his own affair. That doctrine in France, as in Britain, was invented by those who wanted to lead murky private lives themselves, without this

interfering with their ambitions. In France we have the amazing result of a statesman signing a state document because his mistress desired him to do so, and when his friends pointed out that this decision was not in the best interests of the country, explaining: "You fellows don't understand. A man will do anything for a quiet evening."

The whole of France's fate was endangered because of the unending quarrels and jealousies of the leaders, caused by ambition. Most people fail to understand this. Sin is the most wasteful thing in the life of a nation. Tens of thousands of working hours are wasted every day in Britain by nothing except sin. Think in your own life of the delay and inefficiency caused by losing your temper.

The strength of a nation, in the final trial, is only the collective strength of the men and women who make up that nation.

Our national character is neither less nor more than the collective characters of the forty-four millions of us in Britain.

If we grow slack and lead soft lives, will not our nation grow fat and lazy? Is it not possible that our national policy over the last ten years, that policy for which we now blame the leaders of those days so harshly, was in fact the policy which our own inclinations demanded at the time—self-contentment, laziness, self-interest coupled with inefficiency?

Be honest. It was the desire of the people over the last ten years to spend money on luxury rather than security, to tolerate injustice in the world as we tolerated it in our own community, to sit back and let everything slide, soothed and lulled by the drone of self-commendation, so long as people would not interfere with our comfort.

That *was* the desire of the majority of the people. That was the policy of those leaders who to-day are so bitterly condemned by most of the people.

Of course, public strength is related to private conduct.

Will a man who is constantly disloyal to his wife and children be entirely loyal to his country? Surely after years of justifying the one disloyalty to himself, the other will come a little easier to him?

Is the man who always wangles a bit extra on his butter or meat ration likely to put national interest before selfish interest when grave issues are at test?

Are political leaders—political writers for that matter—who have relaxed their own standards of conduct and done plenty in their own lives to abolish the gap between right and wrong, able to give events such clear and balanced judgment on moral issues in the world before them? (After all this war is being fought on moral issues.)

Not so. Private indulgence in food or drink sabotages good bodies and fine brains.

Private indulgence in pride, selfishness, avarice, sabotages good men and renders them bad citizens, not good ones.

Will a newspaper man who is in the habit of telling lies to his wife and friends be as scrupulous as he should be in avoiding exaggeration or under-statement in presenting news to the public?

Nowadays it is almost an asset in public life to have a family life which has crashed. It is silly to suppose that a man who is failing to make a success of his home life, is more likely than another to bring those qualities of self-sacrifice, of calm judgment and the lack of bitterness into national life and international affairs which this nation and all nations need.

Make no mistake. The movement advocated by the Oxford Group is a revolutionary movement. It demands a world-wide revolution, beginning in every individual heart and home, and ending by transforming the existing order of things in every capital and country.

INNOCENT MEN

Revolution means new men. New men can be the old lot changed, or a fresh lot altogether. As the new spirit begins to move inside Britain, the change in public opinion will not stand immorality in high places, or in any place where responsibility is found.

A rise in private standards of life will create a demand for higher standards of conduct among our public men and publicists.

CHAPTER TEN

"Choose You This Day"

—JOSH. 24. 15

WHAT is the Oxford Group after? It calls on you to become a revolutionary.

To carry out a revolution inside yourself. (And if you really desire to do it, from my own experience I can tell you God will give you power to do it.) That is essential. But it is not enough.

Then to help other people around you to carry out a revolution in their lives. That is essential. But it is not enough.

Then to carry out a revolution in the whole nation, making Britain a leader of the world in the modern style of God-controlled, unselfish living. That is essential. But it is not enough.

The final aim of the Oxford Group is to save a civilization which has crumbled. To carry through a world revolution. To establish here on earth the condition of things as God wants them to be, not as man has made them. To disregard the staves and sticks which beat on the heads of all revolutionaries but to march on towards the greater vision.

A lot of Christians don't like the word revolution. It scares them. That is where some critics are found—goose-fleshy Christians with arm-chair Christianity.

Are you the kind of Christian that is ready to carry his Christianity into his exertions and example? Are you out to save the world? Is that Christian? Is that the sort of thing you are going to do? Is that your programme?

That is the Oxford Group programme. All other programmes seem hardly worth-while beside it.

“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide.” That moment is here now.

To persuade our own nation and the world to take a super-national view of their responsibilities, to accept a super-national sovereignty based on the will of God. There must come an authority accepted by all men everywhere, the super-force that is the answer to all force.

The re-birth of a man—the re-birth of a nation—the re-birth of the world. We may never see the end of that work—but our children may. Ours is the chance to begin it, to join in the battle, to dare the dust in order to win the palm. The answer to burning churches is the church aflame.

The need of the nations is for true patriots with a personal experience of Jesus Christ who will bring about the greatest revolution of all time whereby the Cross of Christ will transform the world.

Jeremiah VII, 23, 24. “But this thing commanded I them, saying, ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.’ But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.”

That, for so long, has been our policy. Have we done so well by it? Isn’t it time to change the policy?

Elijah, the prophet of God, met Ahab the King. “You ruin of Israel,” said Ahab, “is that you?” But Elijah was not disturbed by the abuse which all bad men hand out to men who try to serve God. He replied: “It is not I who have been the ruin of Israel but you and your family by forsaking the orders of the Eternal and following Baal.”

CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY

Then Elijah said to the people: "How long will you hobble on this faith and that? If the Eternal is God follow Him. If Baal, follow him."

The people made no answer.

But to-day the people must make an answer. The fight, the real fight is on.

Are you ready to remain outside it—or are you in with us, a revolutionary to change the world for God?

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