

George L. Ligon
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Oxford Group

**IMPRESSIONS: REPRESSIONS:
DEPRESSIONS: EXPRESSIONS**

Impressions of the Oxford Group Movement are still difficult things to convey through printed words; not because those impressions are in any way hazy or blurred, but simply because they were so very vivid and devastating.

Human language becomes a poor medium in which to convey anything but the accidentals of an impression upon the spirit of man, and fails almost completely to convey the inherent property and quality of spiritual impressions. As an illustration, one can describe with forceful realistic detail the nature of a wound inflicted upon a human body, but no words of man will ever be able to describe the true content and sense of pain, consequent of the wound, only the human sufferer experiences and knows.

So it was with me, and impressions of the Oxford Group Movement. I found as others found, that only those who were prepared to stand within the realm of experience of personal contact with members of the Group, could be impressed (or marked upon) and understand with any degree of true appreciation, the pain and the real



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pleasure involved with those impressions.

One thing (to me) is quite clear. The Oxford Group Movement defies explanation along academic lines of discussion; for when one has analysed and has defined the analyses, for or against, according to one's own satisfaction, one finds an indefinable, intangible and indestructible Spiritual Something remaining, refusing to be classified under any other heading than that here is a genuine evidence of the Holy Spirit of God, revealing God to man and man to himself.

I write as one, who, for some years past was, both in mind and deed, in opposition to the whole scheme of Dr. Buchmann and his workers. I felt so violently against the Movement, that I took pleasure in securing printed articles in published reports against the Group and used such to hinder the extension of the Group Movement wherever possible. When the Movement arrived in Ottawa, I was still an implacable opponent.

All this bitterness and misunderstanding, so pathetic and stupid, and particularly so in a cleric, might have been prevented had I refused to have judged and condemned the Movement on academic and hearsay evidence only.

What impressed me much, as soon as I had placed myself within the region of personal contact with the Group, was, the devastating fact that they refused to treat me as an enemy, and felt rather sorry for me, and I soon found that like another ass, Saul of Tarsus, I had been kicking against the pricks, hurting myself unnecessarily in my personal bad temper and worse manners, because I was finding the Good God was working through other agencies than those I approved of as an Anglican parson.

I owe more than I shall ever be able to acknowledge to the coming of the Oxford Group Movement, for it brought to me a fuller and a growing appreciation not only of the rich heritage of the Catholic Faith, but a larger joy in the fellowship of sinners as corollary of the Communion of Saints.

I still have no argument usable for the Group Movement, but I have a very definite willingness to share with others seeking not an explanation of a system, but an understanding of the Spirit, which brings such purging pain and rebuilding comforts of deep experiences in the realms where men are trying to live with absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love.

For me, my impressions destroyed my repressions and repressions gone, got rid of depressions—depressions vanquished gave renewed expressions—and like "The Wild Knight" of G. K. Chesterton:

"So with the wan waste grasses
on my spear,
I ride forever, seeking after God;
... And in my eyes,
The Star of an unconquerable
praise;
For in my soul one hope forever
sings,
That at the next white corner of
the road
My eyes may look on Him"
—Herbert W. Browne