

<b>THE . . .</b>	<b>Its Doctrines</b>
<b>OXFORD .</b>	<b>Its Practices</b>
<b>GROUP . .</b>	<b>Its Founder</b>
<b>MOVEMENT</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>

**OR**

**MORAL REARMAMENT**

*By*  
**A. J. POLLOCK**

Author of

“Modernism versus the Bible”

“Evolution, unscientific and unscriptural”

“Things which must shortly come to pass,” etc., etc.

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# THE OXFORD GROUP MOVEMENT

**T**HE Founder of **The Oxford Group Movement** is the Rev. Frank N. D. Buchman, D.D.,\* a Lutheran minister, born at Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. The Movement was first started in 1908, and its activities began among the large State Universities of America. It was first known as "**A First Century Fellowship**," or "**The Group Movement**." Outsiders dubbed it "**Buchmanism**."

In 1926 **The Group Movement** first definitely established itself in Oxford, where it had at that time a strongly organized headquarters and a band of full-time workers.

During a mission by a team of workers in South Africa in 1928, where it was remarkably successful, a Presbyterian minister gave it the name of "**The Oxford Group Movement**," by which name in this country it is widely known; though more recently the title "**Moral Rearmament**" has been adopted.

The Movement, however, has no official connection with the Oxford University; nor is it to be confounded with the Oxford Movement, or Tractarian Movement, which began, over a century ago, the Romanizing and anti-Reformation influence in the Anglican Church.

## SPECIAL CLAIMS DEMAND SPECIAL ENQUIRY

**The Oxford Group Movement** has drawn a number of young men and women within its influence, and claims to have changed lives in a very remarkable fashion.

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\* We shall designate Dr. Buchman as F. B. in this pamphlet.

It is very necessary indeed, to enquire closely into the teaching and practices of any such movements, and compare them with the unerring Word of God. In this we have an infallible guide.

The Apostle Paul challenged attention to himself in the words:— "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life" (2 Timothy 3: 10). The order of the challenge is arresting. His manner of life was governed by his doctrine. It does not do to say that doctrine does not matter so long as the life is right. We venture to assert that no life is right that is not governed by doctrine, that is not moulded and shaped by the teaching of the Holy Scriptures as taught by the Holy Spirit of God.

With this example before us, in connection with this **Movement**, we propose to describe

- (1) **ITS DOCTRINES,**
- (2) **ITS PRACTICES,**
- (3) **ITS FOUNDER,**
- (4) **CONCLUSION.**

We begin by enquiring what place **The Movement** gives to

### **THE BIBLE.**

No movement is of God unless it gives the Word of God its true place. Luther founded the glorious Reformation on an open Bible. He emphasized the great truths of the gospel. "Justification by faith" was the mighty battle-axe of that wonderful period, breaking down superstition and idolatry, releasing multitudes from their thrall, the blessing and fruits of which remain to this day. Luther was indeed a mighty "Life-Changer," but the Word of God was the weapon he used.

Let us enquire then as to **The Oxford Group Movement's** relation to the Bible. The writer has read with care a number of books and pamphlets emanating from and in sympathy with **the Movement**, and the plain fact to be

recorded is that the Word of God has very little place indeed in its literature. It is possible to find a stray allusion to the Bible here and there, but, we grieve to say, very little emphasis is laid on the Scriptures.

Emphasis is laid upon the life, and little importance is given to doctrine, in other words to the Bible. We read,

"I believe utterly in F. B.'s dictum, which indeed is not F.B.'s—'Look after the Practice and the Theory will look after itself'" ("Life Changers," p. 76).

This sentence is putting the cart before the horse. It is illogical and destructive of true living, especially in regard to spiritual things. Practice is always the result of belief. In the long run it will be seen that you cannot build securely on experience with little or no real foundation of Scripture beneath it. It reminds us of the verse, "Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up" (Psalm 129: 6).

An interested young man challenged F. B. to tell him why he could not get relief in the old way, by prayer and the reading of the Bible. He says,

"He told me that I had to get into the lives of other men, and that was all there was to it" ("Life Changers," p. 101).

What strange and unchristian advice to give to anyone seeking salvation! Of course it is quite possible that a leader here and there may emphasize the importance of the Bible, especially where such leaders have been soundly converted to God **before** they made acquaintance with **the Group Movement**.

We must judge, however, not by the exception, but by the rule. It is open to anyone to test the truth of our statement that little emphasis is laid upon doctrine, upon the Bible itself, in the literature of **the Movement**.

It is true that John McCook Roots, one of F. B.'s most prominent associates, writes of the Group:

"Bible study usually takes up an important part of each day" ("Life Changers," p. 174).

We may well ask, If this is so, why then does the Bible not take up an important part in its literature? The writer went to Group meetings, and in no case was the Bible read, or referred to, nor was a single copy of the sacred Scriptures seen in the hands of the leader, or in the hands of any of the young men, who thronged the place.

It is our duty not only to take careful account of what this **Movement** teaches, but also what it does not teach. There are vitally important matters, which it ignores, or else makes such scant allusion to, as to show little value is placed upon them.

Surely the Word of God has a supremely important and vital place in religious matters. It is our only source of information and authority in the things of God. We confess to very serious alarm as we think over this characteristic of laying little emphasis on the Bible which marks **The Oxford Group Movement**. No movement will stand that does not honour the Word of God, and give it the place it should have.

Let us now enquire what place

### NEW BIRTH

has in the teaching of **the Movement**. The Bible teaches us that the New Birth is an absolute necessity, if we are to enter the kingdom of God (John 3: 5). It further teaches that it is, and must be, God's sovereign act alone (John 3: 8).

How then does this new cult view the new birth? F. B. says,

"There is no fact so great in the experience of men, as the fact that a soul on the extreme edge of destruction can be **redeemed to LIFE** merely by turning round — sincerely turning round" ("Life Changers," p. 109).

Here we have redemption of life **merely by turning round**, new birth by man's own act, man his own saviour. Not a word in this statement as to new birth being God's sovereign act, nor of the necessity of the death of Christ before God can communicate life, for we read, "In this



was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him " (1 John 4: 9).

This new birth by auto-suggestion runs through the literature of **the Movement**. We read,

" How simply a man can be born again! One act of honesty. Reality!" (" Life Changers," p. 104).

. . . . .

" It does not matter, I think, what theological language is used to express the immense miracle of redemption. What matters is making it real to suffering men that directly they are absolutely honest in desiring release from the slavery of sin, God will flood into their lives, and they really will be **born again**" (" Life Changers," p. 106).

So according to the Group theology, man is **his own** saviour. It is **his** honesty, **his** turning round, and lo! the miracle occurs, and the man is born again! How far removed is this from the teaching of Scripture! How illogical it is. A man cannot bring about his second birth, any more than his first birth.

Along with this there is the denial that man is hopelessly corrupted in the innermost springs of his sinful nature. In the days of Noah God looked down from heaven upon men, and saw "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6: 5); and this is as true today as then.

Yet we are told that what gives F. B.

" his unique power is the mystical notion that in every man is 'a piece of divinity' hungering and thirsting for expression, a piece of divinity which best makes its presence felt to the soul in periods of silence" (" Life Changers," p. 26).

One of F. B.'s converts says,

This is my theology: God has left a part of Himself in each of us, and this divine part of our nature, in every moral crisis, recognizes the historic Jesus and the Christ of experience as its necessary complement" ("Life Changers," p. 156).

How different is the teaching of Scripture. "Dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2: 1). If dead, where is there room for "a piece of divinity hungering and thirsting"? A man dead towards God does not hunger and thirst for good.

We can only ask what kind of "new birth" do these converts experience under this system of religion by auto-suggestion? It certainly cannot be the new birth of the Bible, the being born from above, the being born of water (i.e., by the Word — Ephesians 5: 26) and of the Spirit. It can only be a simulation of the divine, a deceit of the devil, posing as an angel of light. Such teaching as we have been examining is simply **modernism**, to call it by its right name. Here and there an orthodox phrase is thrown in, but modernism is the characteristic of the teaching.

Three old women in Bedford were sitting in the sun. Their conversation was overheard by John Bunyan in his unconverted days. He tells us he was astounded and amazed by what he heard. He says,

"They spoke of a new birth, of how God had worked in their hearts to show them their lost state, of how they were once under the curse of God, of God's love in giving His dear Son to die for them, and how they were led to trust Christ, and found in Him rest and peace for their souls."

There is nothing to compare with this beautiful testimony in all the literature of **The Oxford Group Movement**. How satisfying and intelligent it is! It shows knowledge of the Scriptures, of the experience of new birth opening their eyes to their lost state, of the atoning death of Christ, and their being led to definite trust in the Saviour, and the resultant experience of rest and peace in their soul.

When we read that F. B.'s "unique power" rests on a denial of Scripture as to the utter ruin of man, we can only ask, What kind of power is this? It certainly is not of the Spirit of God. If not of God, then of what? The matter is serious beyond words.

This leads us to enquire what position

### THE ATONEMENT

has in **the Movement**. Atonement is vital to Christianity. It is its very centre and core. There is no gospel without it. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9: 22), is a refrain, insistent and loud from beginning to end of the sacred Scriptures. No system of religion can be sound that does not give prominence to the atoning death of Christ.

How then does **The Oxford Group Movement** stand in relation to this vitally important and fundamental doctrine? You may read carefully the literature of **the Movement**, and it is simply a fact that allusions to the atonement and redemption are conspicuous by their absence. It is possible to find a bare allusion here and there to these matters, but they are few and far between.

The late Harold Begbie, journalist and author, wrote a book, entitled "Life Changers," with the sanction of F. B. As F. B. himself writes no books, this is perhaps the most authoritative presentation of the views of the Groupers we can have. In it Begbie gives us the "conversion" of eight young men, largely made up of their own narratives. If we give the testimonies of these young men, who have been drawn into **the Movement**, we shall have a pretty fair idea of what **the Movement** stands for, and especially how it stands in relation to the atonement.

**Greats**, a young man of twenty-four, gives his testimony in 35 pages. "His narrative was written during a busy time in one of the German Universities."

In all these 35 pages he never once refers to Christ as his Saviour, nor to the atonement as necessary for his salvation. Christ as an **Example** is referred to. His conversion is summed up in his own words:—

"I came to recognize for the first time the place of the human Jesus in the Christian world-order" ("Life Changers," p. 75).

Then he went with F. B. to witness the Oberammergau play of the Crucifixion, and he writes of it as appealing

“to the most primitive and vital human emotions—the spectacle of a divine man taking leave of his friends and going consciously and in full faith to his death” (“Life Changers,” pp. 75, 76).

Nothing in this goes to the length of confessing the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. Indeed a Unitarian, who denies the Deity of our Lord, and the atoning character of His death, could go as far. It is the fashion to speak of “the divine man” nowadays, as men speak of the divine Shakespeare, etc., and even a Unitarian might say as much.

**Greats** girds at old-fashioned ideas, and to do so is indeed a feature of this cult. He says :—

“I do not believe in the mechanical repetition of pious formulæ about the atonement or anything else. That belief may come. My future is uncertain enough” (“Life Changers,” p. 76).

No true Christian believes in “the mechanical repetition of pious formulæ,” but we fear he girded at the real truth of the atonement.

The Rev. C. M. Chavasse, Master of St. Peter’s Hall, Oxford, has put it upon record,

“I have even known clergy and young laymen who were attracted to the Movement because they disliked, or would not teach, the Gospel of an Atoning Sacrifice; and yet saw in the Groups the means of exerting an effective ministry without it” (An address to the Clergy Home Mission Union, 7th November, 1932).

Again, the Rev. H. Booth Coventry, of Cape Town, who is associated with **the Group**, writes :—

“Some of us are Modernists and some Fundamentalists, but we do not quarrel. These differences simply do not count, for we read our Bibles in a third way—allowing its spiritual messages to speak directly to our own personal life” (“The Christian World,” 13th March, 1930).

But what is the difference between the Modernist and the Fundamentalist? Surely it is vital. One of the vital messages is, “Without shedding of blood is no remission”

(Hebrews 9: 22). Does that not count? It is like two doctors, who are discussing what to do with a patient. Says the Modernist, Remove his heart, and he will live. The Fundamentalist is aghast, believes the Modernist is utterly astray to give such monstrous advice, and replies, To remove the man's heart will ensure death. What would you say if the two agreed not to quarrel, proclaiming that their difference in judgment did not count?

Our illustration sets forth an impossible situation, but it faithfully illustrates what is, alas! possible in religious matters. When the everlasting destiny of precious souls is at stake we need to speak out, for everything depends on the atonement, and a system that can harbour those, who dislike that doctrine or refuse it, is **ANTI-Christian**, however much it may camouflage its real trend by pious phrases here and there.

. . . . .

**A Rugger Blue** is a young Irishman with "a turn of speed," which made him famous at football. His testimony occupies 15 pages. He never once mentions the Lord Jesus nor His atoning sacrifice. His idea of conversion is more than vague. It is thus described:—

"First, that moral chaos is inevitable where there is no singleness of mind; second, that the power which purifies, strengthens, and upholds can only become real to those who long for it, and open the doors of their cleansed hearts to receive it in silence; and third, that no soul, truly conscious of that power, can be satisfied with his own salvation" ("Life Changers," pp. 86, 87).

Can this be a real conversion where there is no mention of Christ and His atoning work? It looks like a conversion by auto-suggestion, and not by the grace of God.

**Persona Grata** was brought up in a small American country town. His testimony occupies 18 pages. We are thankful that his testimony is more explicit. He says,

I spoke of the Christ of universal human experience, the Christ who saves, the Christ who redeems, the Christ who has made all the difference to me" ("Life Changers," p. 107).

**Persona Grata** spoke thus to a Chinese teacher in one of the mission colleges, whom he described as "a complete hypocrite," who drank, gambled and was impure in his life. The teacher responded,

"How would I take that medicine?" and he replied,  
 "Will you pray from your heart, 'Jesus, if there be a Jesus, I want you to clean me up'?" ("Life Changers," p. 107).

The teacher returned the next day, saying that this worked, and his life was cleaned up.

So **Persona Grata**, commenting on this, says:—

"What strikes me most in all these wonderful experiences — for it is a wonderful thing to see a man born again — is their extreme simplicity. Directly a man is really honest the miracle occurs" ("Life Changers," pp. 107, 108).

So he evidently thinks a man by his own honesty can encompass his own new birth.

**Beau Ideal**, a young Etonian, at Oxford University, is the next witness. His testimony occupies 16 pages. In reading this over one cannot glean that he trusted Christ as his Saviour, but that he found in Him his **Beau Ideal** or Example. He writes:—

"The simple ethic of Jesus would work a healthy change. Honesty in commerce, sincerity in the Church, sympathy between employer and employed, purity and decency in social life, idealism and earnestness in political life — what a change would such things effect!" ("Life Changers," p. 119).

But all this could be carried out by a man with no living vital touch with Christ as Saviour.

However, he adds:—

"Something more was yet demanded of him than an intellectual acknowledgment of the ethical value of Christianity" ("Life Changers," p. 119).

What then is necessary for conversion? We are told,

"A complete submission . . . to the supreme ideal of human life, Christ Jesus, with an instant and rejoicing

readiness to make any sacrifice of himself and his fortunes at the call of the least of those whom he could help" ("Life Changers," p. 120).

What is this but blank Unitarianism? "The Supreme ideal of human life, Christ Jesus," not a word is said of receiving the Lord Jesus as a Saviour, nor of the value of the atonement.

**Princetown**, an agreeable American of twenty-five, is our next witness. His testimony occupies 11 pages. He does not once mention the Lord Jesus nor His work on the cross. We read,

"Directly, he says, a man feels that religion is a real power in human life, not merely a subject for theological discussion, he becomes interested in it. And directly he discovers that it can work a miracle in his own soul he seeks to understand it" ("Life Changers," p. 136).

One would have imagined that if a young man had been really brought to know the Saviour as his Redeemer, he would at least have mentioned gratefully the name of his great Deliverer.

**A Young Soldier**, who distinguished himself in the first great war by notable courage, is our next witness. His testimony covers 10 pages. Alas! not once is the name of Christ mentioned, nor His atoning work on the cross. The nearest account to a conversion that we can glean is as follows:—

"M. tells me that one of the greatest things F. B. did for him was freeing his mind for discussing this moral trouble with other men. An enormous change came into his life directly the sense of secret shame was dissipated. The evil lost its power. He found himself possessed of an altogether new strength. He was conscious of an altogether new liberty" ("Life Changers," p. 142).

Does this bear the marks of a soul truly converted to God? Is it remotely like the convincing testimony of the three old women in Bedford, sitting in the sun, and overheard by John Bunyan?

**The Virginian**, as his sobriquet implies, is an American, his home looking from "the hilltops of Chesapeake Bay to the rim of the Atlantic." His testimony occupies 13 pages. He says,

"This is my theology: God has left a part of Himself in each of us, and this divine part of our nature, in every moral crisis, recognizes the historic Jesus and the Christ of experience as its necessary complement. Of course the traditional, the ecclesiastical, the theological mind has obscured Him . . . What changes life is, first, a sense of sin, a haunting knowledge that the habits of sin have got one in their deadly grip; second, an experience of the *hilarity* [italics as given] of Christianity really lived, and third, the immense appeal of Christ's challenge to make a new world" ("Life Changers," p. 156).

It seems sad beyond words that there is no testimony of Christ as Saviour, no joy in the forgiveness of sin indicated. **The Virginian** speaks of "**the hilarity** of Christianity." What can this mean? We can understand Wesley's description of the gospel as sounding forth "the gladly solemn sound," but what does this **hilarity** mean?

. . . . .

We have gone over the seven testimonies given in "Life Changers." We are appalled by what is omitted. The speaking of Christ as a Saviour, of His precious blood as cleansing from sin, of His atoning sacrifice on the cross, are conspicuous by their absence. Christ as an Example, but not Christ as Saviour, is their theme. New birth and conversion by auto-suggestion and self-improvement takes the place of the new birth and conversion of the Bible. "Life Changers," though a book issued to praise **the Movement**, is in reality its most deadly condemnation.

. . . . .

As F. B. has hitherto written no books, we are bound to gather our knowledge of the trend of the teaching from the writing of others, who are prominent in **the Movement**. Perhaps the most prominent of those associated with **the Movement** is



## THE REV. SAMUEL M. SHOEMAKER, JR.,

Rector of Calvary Church, New York.

He has written a book "Realizing Religion." He says,

"Hardly a page but what has upon it the thought or the actual words of William James, who did so much as a great scientist to give the world a reassuring feeling about religion in general" ("Realizing Religion," p. 8).

William James is quoted in "Life Changers," by Harold Begbie, and in "For Sinners Only," by A. J. Russell, two journalists, who have produced their books with F. B.'s acquiescence. So we see this influence is strong in the movement.

What sort of teaching did William James, a Professor of Harvard University, put forth? We are told,

"The whole trend of his argument went to prove that 'Conversion,' as we evangelical Christians understand it, is a natural phenomenon, and that, what we experience in the way of conviction of sin, conversion and subsequent spiritual blessing can be equally experienced by Mohammedan dervishes, Hindoo mystics and anyone outside of Christianity altogether" (The Group Movement." J. Gordon Logan).

As a confirmation of this sadly necessary exposure, the disciple, Shoemaker, writing of "the wind bloweth where it listeth . . . so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3: 8), says,

"Sometimes it will take a highly original turn, perhaps driving him, who had it, into the wilderness, out of doors where Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, St. Francis, George Fox and many others had to go" ("Realizing Religion," p. 45).

One stares with utter amazement at this sentence. The blessed Lord Jesus bracketed between Buddha and Mohammed, men who founded heathen religions, fanatically opposed to Christianity — between Buddha, whose religion is polluted and debased by the immorality that goes on in its ten thousand temples as part of its religion; and Mohammed with his promise of a sensual paradise for the faithful!

With such influence at work we are not suprised to read,

“ Frank [Buchman] declines to accept the division of the world into two classes — saved and unsaved ” (“ For Sinners Only,” p. 147).

And this in the face of our Saviour’s words, “ He that believeth on Him is not condemned : but he that believeth not is condemned already ” (John 3 : 18).

Shoemaker has written a book, “ If I be lifted up.” He says:—

“ This book is about the Cross. It is in no sense a complete theology of the cross — not even as complete a theory as I believe in myself, and could write if there were time ” (page 7).

But it is not unreasonable to expect the central idea of the Cross to be emphasized in a book of 179 pages.

For an atoning work we need a spotless, sinless Saviour, One who never swerved to the right hand or the left in doing God’s will. We read,

“ He took His three intimates with Him, and in the Garden He fought out in terms, which it is not difficult for us to understand, the final unification of His own will with the will of God for the redemption of the world ” (p. 93).

To fight out the unification of His own will with the will of God suggests a struggle to do so. For His will not to have been at all times one with His Father’s would have been sin. In this sentence, then, we have lost a perfect Saviour, and a Saviour not perfect is no Saviour at all. True He said, “ Not My will, but Thine, be done ” (Luke 22 : 42), but surely that did not indicate a struggle, but submission to His Father’s will. Again we read,

“ Last night in Gethsemane He had struggled to keep His will poised toward the will of God, and He had succeeded ” (pp. 94, 95).

Here we have the same thought. Surely if this were true we have lost the Saviour. Again we read,

“ It was an awful temptation to Him to become a political liberator ” (p. 104).

Shocking words! Our Lord knew that the only way of blessing for poor sinful men was through His atoning death on the cross, so we read, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Blessed Saviour, in the exquisite sensibilities of His spotless humanity, He shrank from the fiery ordeal that lay before Him, but in the perfection of that manhood He cried, "Not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 12:42).

And what is Shoemaker's explanation of the three words uttered on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19: 30)? Surely here he ought to be clear as to meaning, that the work of atonement was completed, that our Lord had borne the fierce judgment of God against sin, and satisfied for ever divine justice. In a book of 179 pages surely there is room for this explanation—the very central meaning of the cross.

Shoemaker says,

"I think the thing which made Him say, 'It is finished,' was the knowledge that He had lived long enough to infect the world with a new principle" (p. 107).

"He must have said to Himself, 'This little handful, the whole fruit of My labours, is the one hopeful society in the world, the only true 'initiates' in the open secret of how to live, the vanguard of the new humanity. They got what I said. They saw the point. They dared to follow. They will carry on. 'It is finished!'" (p. 109).

"It was not the suffering of Jesus which saved us: it was the way He carried us on His heart and went to Calvary for us" (p. 145).

Note Shoemaker here says, "It was not the **suffering** of Jesus which saved us." Scripture says, "Christ also hath once **suffered** for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3: 18). Which are we to believe? Shoemaker's statement is modernistic and anti-christian.

Again he writes,

"This is the way in which suffering love goes on redeeming for ever. By this means, I say it reverently, you and I may be 'wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities: the chastisement of their peace may be upon us, and with our stripes, they may be healed'" (p. 149).

Shoemaker says he makes his statement "reverently." The truth is he makes it blasphemously. A book with such statements in it ought to be committed to the flames. It is a monstrous perversion of the truth.

In all these quotations we see how Shoemaker has no real understanding of the Cross. In writing a book of the size of 179 pages on the subject he is bound to speak of atonement, redemption, etc., did he really believe in them. But what shall be said of his utterly missing the meaning of "It is finished;" and his misunderstanding of the real atoning value of the Cross, in the judgment of God upon sin? He whittles away the true meaning of "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27: 46).

Again we read,

"The individual in whom redemptiveness is most incarnated will receive the most unrelenting blows of the world's scorn and hatred. Jesus before Pilate is the supreme image of this; but all His saints, and the wise of other folds, instance the same truth: Socrates drinking his hemlock, and Gandhi in prison for his own redemptiveness" (p. 144).

Is it not shocking to put our Lord and the heathen Socrates and the agitator Gandhi in one category as "redemptiveness" being "most incarnated" in them?

Whilst there are some statements in Shoemaker's book, which are true, yet evidently he does not put the same value and meaning on the words, atonement, redemption, etc., as evangelical Christians do. And what he gives with one hand, he withdraws with the other. There is the trail

of the serpent running through his book, modernism in all its destructive power to annihilate our true perception of our Lord and His atoning work on the cross.

. . . . .

## II.

Let us now come to the consideration of one or two prominent practices in the Oxford Group Movement.

### “SHARING”

is one of the most prominent, and is the foundation of their meetings. The **modus operandi** is as follows. A Grouper unfolds to another person, in many cases a complete stranger, his past history, in some cases entering into details concerning his sins public and secret, with the idea of breaking down reserve, and of getting the person so addressed to tell him his past history, his sins public and secret, and then urging the individual to surrender to Christ, who will give him power over his sins and enable him to live a pure life. Is this practice Scriptural?

Two bodies, the Roman Catholic and the Wesleyans, have something akin to this. In the case of the Roman Catholic it is not exactly a question of sharing, but of confessing to the priest. In the priest's hands it becomes an instrument of tyranny, establishing an ascendancy and power over the one who confesses. It is notorious that girls and women are horribly corrupted and polluted in their minds by the searching question the priest often puts, especially upon sex matters.

The Wesleyan class meeting is more for sharing spiritual experiences of the goodness of God, but the class meeting is more or less a thing of the past. Any spiritual exercise that is only dependent on **experience** is not likely to be permanent.

We are assured that the “Sharing” of **The Oxford Group Movement** is unscriptural, and therefore fraught with great dangers. But we are told it is Scriptural. If so, why has it not been practised all down the centuries of the

Church period? We have had pointed out to us, "Confess your faults [offences, New Translation, J.N.D.] one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5: 16). But this surely is limited to a Christian, who has committed a fault or offence against the one wronged, asking forgiveness; or to the heart, being burdened with some fault or offence, unburdening itself to some "righteous man," whose prayers are desired, for we read, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5: 16). It certainly does not inculcate a Christian confessing to an unbeliever, or confessing in a Group meeting, where many entirely unconverted men and women may be gathered.

Acts 19: 18 is quoted, "And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds." There is confession here, but no "sharing." They were anxious sinners, who came to Paul and his companions, confessing their deeds. They would do it once, and rightly so, but there is no hint of the system of "sharing."

The Apostle Paul's confession in 1 Timothy 1: 13 is a model. It is not "sharing" but a confession intended to extol the grace of God in reaching such a sinner as he was. Note his confession does not go into prurient details of an indecent nature. He confines himself to the opposition to God manifested in his blasphemy against God's truth and injury to His people. As to confessing sexual matters in public, Scripture emphatically forbids this. "Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Ephesians 5: 3). There is not a line in Scripture to support "Sharing" as practised by the **Group**.

The writer went to **Group** meetings, and listened to "Sharing." One man week after week told how he was intemperate, immoral and dishonest, and how he had been delivered from these things by surrender to Christ and allowing His power to control him. He told these things, apparently without shame, and we can think of nothing

more deadening to a sense of shame than the continual witnessing to the sins of a past life, again and again, before complete strangers in many cases.

**The Group** meetings I attended were not opened by prayer, no Scripture was read, nor did I see a Bible in the hands of anyone.

Young man after young man was called upon by his Christian name (a practice in the **Group Movement**) to give his testimony. They sauntered up to the chimney-piece, lolled against it with hands in their pockets, recounted in more or less detail their past history, sex matters bulking largely, told how they have surrendered to Christ, and their lives were changed.

However, in all these cases coming under our personal observation there was no confessing of Christ as Saviour, not even a stray remark about the atonement; they spoke of being delivered from the **power** of sin, but not of being forgiven the **guilt** of sin. They all told us how happy they were, but the only testifier, whose face really beamed with joy, was that of an old man, who said he had been converted to God, and knew Christ as his Saviour, fifty years before in a Primitive Methodist Sunday School.

As young man after young man spoke of surrender to Christ, there was no sign of the joy of the Spirit in them, no remark indicating that Christ was precious to their souls, and we wondered what they knew of Christ. Their testimony sounded more like shibboleth than reality. We feel sure if some had said they had surrendered to Buddha, their testimony would have meant the same thing. What can they know of Christ and of the way of salvation when they come to such a meeting, and the Bible is absent?

They put confession and sharing into quite a wrong place when **Persona Grata** says:—

“ I don't think it is too much to say that until a man confesses his sin to another man he can never really be spiritually vital ” (“ Life Changers,” p. 104).

Fancy not being saved till you confess to **another MAN**. What about confessing to God? The whole system of "sharing" is unscriptural and fraught with grave dangers. There may be one per cent good in it, but we are convinced there is ninety-nine per cent evil, and it should be rigorously avoided.

Writing of "Sharing" we read,

"In one sense the Psycho-analyst, with his splendid technique based upon exhaustive experiments, is simply bringing scientific verification to what the Church learned long ago under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" ("Sharing." J. P. Thornton-Duesbury).

It is sad when we are told that the Holy Spirit's teaching is simply the method of the psycho-analyst. The former is sane and sound and spiritual; the latter's methods may be fraught with danger, especially in the hands of unconverted people.

## GUIDANCE

Guidance is a very leading feature of **The Oxford Group Movement**.

"By 'guidance' is meant communion — communion with our Father, the Living God. 'Listening to God,' 'two-way prayer,' 'thinking God's thoughts after Him,' are all phrases often used in speaking of this experience . . . In listening to God the general movement is from God to man — not from man to God . . . Guidance is simply the experience of God, flooding into a man's life, to give him direction and power" ("The Principles of the Group." Sherwood Sunderland Day).

All this sounds very good on paper. For a Christian to have communion with God, the Father, is surely right.

But on enquiring further we find elements which arouse suspicion. The young converts are taught to have their "Quiet Time," to **relax** their bodies, and with pencils and note-books to await communications from God. Harold Begbie says of **A Rugger Blue**,



"He told them that in these times of silence he had learned to relax his whole body, and that with so simple an invitation as, 'God, come into my soul, and help me,' evil thoughts drained clean out of him, and he really did become vitally conscious of invisible power" ("Life Changers," p. 88).

Why should the whole body be **relaxed**? Where in Scripture do we get such instruction? We know that Spiritists are exhorted to let themselves go, relax their bodies, empty their minds of all thought and will, and listen in. We do not say that the Christian should not have a Quiet Time, we believe he should, but we do say emphatically that, with so little study of the Scriptures, so little knowledge of the true way of salvation, and in many cases, we fear, lives changed by auto-suggestion without any real conversion to God, and Christ known only as an Example and not as a Saviour, to inculcate the experiment of the Quiet Time in the particular way **the Movement** advocates, is really fraught with terrible danger. There is more than danger of evil spirits taking possession of the relaxed bodies, simulating what is divine, but being in reality Satanic.

The following description of guidance only tends to emphasize our warning. We read:—

"I asked one happily married man in the Group: 'How did you happen to marry Anne?'

"'Guidance,' was the answer. 'This was a new one for me. I knew that we had got beyond the stage where parents decided the question of their offspring. But my idea of nuptial bliss was catch-as-catch-can.'

"'You mean you fell in love and then God told you to go ahead?'

"'Heavens, no! There was more to it than that. I had known Anne for some time,' he explained. 'I knew she was the kind of person I wanted to marry. But one day during a Quiet Time on a railway these thoughts came to me: Would you like to marry Anne? Yes, I answered, if You think it's all right. Well, then, why don't you go ahead and try? came the clear but whimsical answer. I made up my mind I would. But before I committed myself I checked it with my friends,

as people in the Group are wisely accustomed to do. Their guidance confirmed my own. Take the chance, and see what comes of it. I did . . . We were engaged before the week was out, and it has been glorious ever since.'

"That is the Group secret of marriage, where romance never fades" ("For Sinners Only," pp. 275, 276).

Does this commend itself to any sober-minded Christian as being of God? Not only did this "happily married man" seek guidance for himself, but a whole group got guidance for him. I can quite believe a Christian should earnestly seek guidance in such a serious matter as matrimony, but to expect a group to have guidance as well, is strange. Further, to describe God's answer as "whimsical" makes one doubt the whole affair.

Another extract is to the point:—

"The weird and ridiculous messages such as are mentioned in an official publication of the Group, and written by Eleanor Napier Forde, where she tells of a three-year-old child receiving the 'guidance' from God when He is alleged to have said to her, 'You must eat more porridge in the morning,' and again when a convert publicly testified that while seeking 'guidance' she got the message, 'sausages,' by which she took it that God wanted her to get sausages for dinner that day. Without doubt this feature of the Oxford Movement is positively dangerous, and utterly at variance with the Scriptural doctrine of prayer and guidance" ("The Gospel Witness." Frazer).

That such messages should appear in "an official publication of the Group" speaks for itself. We fear the door is opened to an influence that is definitely not of God. The extracts, if descriptive of true Christian experience, which they are not, would tend to bring Christianity into contempt.

. . . . .

## III

We would now describe the founder of **the Movement**.

**F.B.**

To have considered briefly the teaching and practices of **the Movement** will enable us the better to understand what is written of Dr. Buchman himself, and come to some definite conclusion as to him and **the Movement** he has founded.

Harold Begbie has told us in his book written over twenty years ago,

“ In appearance he is a young-looking man of middle life, tall, upright, stoutish, clean-shaven, spectacled, with that mien of scrupulous, shampooed, and almost medical cleanness, or freshness, which is so characteristic of the hygienic American ” (“ Life Changers,” p. 24).

He was ordained a Lutheran minister at twenty-four years of age, laboured in Philadelphia for some time, visited the Near East for a twelvemonth, and in the year 1908 he paid a visit to England with the express object of attending the well-known Keswick Convention.

At this time he was feeling depressed because of the little power he had in his ministry. In this frame of mind he wandered into a little village church in Cumberland, England, where a woman preacher, a Pentecostalist, spoke to a congregation of seventeen people.

The woman preacher spoke of some aspect of the cross. It is really strange that F. B. cannot recall what aspect of the cross was emphasized, seeing it was the means of such a change in him. Nor does he know the name of the woman preacher, though he states her preaching “ personalized the Cross ” to him. Strangely enough he recalls how many made up the small congregation. But undoubtedly a great change took place. Begbie describes what took place, mostly in F. B.’s own words:—

“ He said, ‘ I remember one sensation very distinctly; it was a vibrant feeling as if a strong current of life had suddenly been poured into me. That followed on

my surrender. No; it came at the same time. It was instantaneous.'

"What followed on this sensation, was the dazed feeling of 'a great shaking up.' He sat for some moments in a certain confusion of mind, not trembling in the body, but conscious of a long vibration in his soul, as though it was still throbbing under the shock of this new experience. There was no immediate feeling of lightness, no rejoicing sense of deliverance and liberation. He was very conscious of a very mighty change in himself, but for some time could only think of that change in terms of its physical effects" ("Life Changers," pp. 29, 30).

Will the reader note the closing statement; for some time the change could ONLY be thought of in terms of its physical effects? We have read of such physical effects in the case of Pentecostalists, Holy Rollers and the like. What sort of conversion is this? We are not told what or to whom was his surrender. No word about Christ or confessing his sins or receiving forgiveness of his sins. If such had been his previous experience, there is no testimony here as to coming into these truths in a deeper or fuller way.

Begbie tells us, that in that little Cumberland church,

"There came to him [F. B.] very palpably and with a most poignant realism, albeit with no suddenness, no dramatic intensity, a vision of the Crucified.

"He was conscious at once of two shuddering realizations — the realization of a great abyss between him and the suffering Christ, the realization of an infinite sorrow in the face of the Master . . . A wave of strong emotion, rising up within him from the depths of his estranged spiritual life, seemed, as it were, to lift his soul from its anchorage of selfishness and to bear it across that great sundering abyss to the foot of the Cross. There he made his surrender to the divine Will; there he lost all sense of oppression and helplessness. It was the work of a moment, and a gesture of his spirit invisible to human eyes" ("Life Changers," p. 29).

Note, Christ is called "Master," a name greatly affected by Modernists, not Saviour, nor Lord; he surrenders to the divine Will, no personal name, such as God or Christ

as Saviour, is mentioned. Nothing is said as to his sins or their forgiveness. We stand in doubt of such an unsatisfactory testimony.

Why cannot F. B. write his own testimony, and give an account of the teaching and practices of **the Movement**?

It is certainly singular that the two volumes F. B. has authorized to be written concerning himself and his movement were written by two journalists—the late Harold Begbie (“Life Changers,” 188 pages) and A. J. Russell (“For Sinners Only,” 345 pages). We all know how journalists love the sensational, and to write down what makes “good copy.”

It would be well at this stage to enquire what sort of power F. B. wields. It is a very remarkable power. Is it of the Spirit of God, or of what? A. J. Russell styles him “the legendary Frank.” **Greats** says that “his influence is wholly independent of his theology,” a very serious statement to make concerning a professedly Christian teacher; for, if it is true, it means that his influence is not that of the Spirit of God.

**Greats** says:—

“F. B. is at least a remarkable personality, and as such possesses the gift of producing violent reactions in those with whom he come in contact. There are few men among those who know him at all well who do not feel either an intense liking or an intense dislike for him; who are not by turns surprised, admiring, disappointed, enthusiastic, disgusted, afraid or scornful of this apparently commonplace American” (“Life Changers,” p. 43).

Again he says:—

“He refused to preside at any of the meetings, but we knew without looking for him, whether he was there or not” (“Life Changers,” p. 61).

That F. B.’s influence is extremely strong is seen in **Greats** saying that he writes,

"As far as possible 'in a cool hour,' after living for six months entirely out of the range of his influence and out of the sound of his name" ("Life Changers," p. 43).

### Greats speaks of

"Some uncanny personal quality of the man, some quasi-hypnotic influence" ("Life Changers," p. 60).

We can only come to the conclusion that the above remark is true, only changing the word "quasi-hypnotic" to hypnotic.

Further, there is always the possibility of this strong influence being **Satanic**. We have the warning in Scripture of Satan being "transformed into an angel of light;" of "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ . . . whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11: 13-15). Scripture speaks of the attempt that will be made in the last days, when "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24: 24). It therefore behoves us to inquire very closely into this **Movement**.

We think the following experience of a Christian young man, well founded in the knowledge of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, and well-known to the writer, may assure the reader that our warning is true. He says:—

"At this stage I came into touch with 'a real live Grouper.' He was a divinity student and apparently the Groups had filled him with 'vital religion.' He had a purpose in life. He was frank — out for the highest, and as far as I could judge a true believer.

"One night he said to me as I was leaving his house, 'Let's have a quiet time.' We sat for some time in silence. Personally my feelings were mixed, but I quietly prayed, and yet strangely unquiet in spirit. I prayed that God would protect me from error and danger. Nothing particular occurred. His 'guidance' read quite tamely. My thoughts were quite typical and normal. If not from God, specifically, at least they seemed innocuous and simple.

"A week later we met, and in the course of conversation he remarked, 'Every morning guidance has come through to read the Bible more.' That remark helped to satisfy me as to the safety of guidance. Accordingly morning by morning I practised 'the Quiet Time' with guidance book, wondering whereunto it would grow.

"One day I was told during my Quiet Time to look out for someone, whom I was most unlikely to meet. I met him by apparent chance.

"This new field of work and adventure filled me with joy and a sense of well-being.

"At this juncture I became conscious that the sense of the love of Christ, the appreciation of His Godhead and Person, and of His work upon the Cross, had strangely receded in my mind. My sense of eternal values seemed altered.

"And I found this new type of personal work easier and more attractive than normal old-fashioned evangelism, and I began to ponder why with a certain amount of alarm.

"One morning 'guidance' refused to come, and I felt that I ought to spend more time in quiet to induce what the Group speaks of as the fruit of their methods of 'Quiet Time.'

"This and other considerations made me call a halt. I found that prayer had been strangely ousted from my life, although, mysteriously enough, I had not noticed it. I got down on my knees, and cried to God to show me whether I was on the wrong track.

"Within a few hours the answer came overwhelmingly through a dozen sources. Then followed two months of acute doubt and perplexity. Thoughts that I knew were from the evil one assailed me hour by hour. The presence of Christ, ever with me, gave hope in the midst of despair, courage in the midst of fear, and the comfort of the knowledge of His great work at Calvary gave me an anchor of the soul that would not drag.

"How thankful I was that my salvation and peace rested not on the quicksands of my own 'surrender,' nor on the quality of my character or life, but on the unchanging love of a crucified Redeemer, who had died for me on the cross.

"As I regained what had been lost (and I cannot doubt but that Satan was the angel of light who robbed me), I set myself to study and discuss and think under the true guidance of a loving heavenly Father, until the whole position became clear to me.

" Little by little it has become obvious to me that **The Movement** is far more subtle than it appears. My own judgment is perfectly clear, and I would earnestly warn every true believer to steer clear of the whole movement, even where it appears quite harmless and good."

#### IV

In examining the doctrines of **The Movement** as set forth in their literature, and the practices of the cult, and the character of its founder, we are now in a position to draw clear

#### CONCLUSIONS.

**The Movement** is decidedly modernistic in trend. No simple enquirer reading their literature can get a clear knowledge of the cross, of redemption, of the way to be saved. Here and there orthodox sentences are dropped in, but mixed up with them is vague teaching of a modernistic tendency as we have seen. Nor are its practices Scriptural, but fraught with danger and disaster to those who practise them. Further, the gospel received by the Groupers does not deliver from the world. It was said of a married couple, who had " surrendered " and become Groupers,

" Together they have begun to do great things for Christ. Although they go to dinners, dances, theatre parties, concerts with the old crowd, all their social life is permeated with the spirit of deeper understanding " (" Children of the Second Birth," p. 50. S. M. Shoemaker, Jr.).

Again we read,

" All alone in the quiet of her room one night scarcely realizing all that was involved in it, she surrendered to God. A terrible restlessness had been tossing in her soul; she lay there thinking rebellious and mutinous thoughts, and then she said to herself, ' I've tried my way and haven't found happiness, why not try God's way?' She did it there and then. All through the hours till morning she lay bathed in a wonderful Presence,



filled with unutterable calm and peace . . . A man she was dancing with, whom she had known for years, asked her, 'What makes you look so radiantly happy?' And with a twinkle she replied, 'I've got religion' " ("Children of the Second Birth," p. 165).

We ask, what kind of conversion is this? Believers are told, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2: 15). What stern language we read, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4: 4). A religion in which the offence of the cross has ceased is not the religion of the Bible. We note, too, how very seldom does the word "Lord" occur in the vocabulary of the **Group**. Yet we are told, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12: 3). Constantly we read "Jesus" and "Jesus Christ" and "Christ," but scarcely once does the word "Lord" appear. This is a bad sign indeed.

We are convinced that a religion founded on experience, and that experience not founded on the Word of God, is false and antichristian.

The conclusion of the Rev. C. M. Chevasse as to **The Oxford Group Movement** is the mature judgment of one who has had ample opportunities of examining it first hand. He says:—

"The Movement is Group-centred, not Christ-centred . . . Surrender is made to the Group. Witness is born to the Group. Loyalty is demanded for the Group. Guidance is checked by the Group. Inspiration is expected from the Group. Fellowship is centred in the Group. It is possible for a member not to believe in the Divinity of our Lord, and yet to be content . . .

"The Collective Guidance of the Group has become the accepted test of the guidance of each of its members. And it is well to remember that behind the many local groups there is the Inner Group with its head, which — I dare to affirm with deliberation and knowledge — can fairly be compared to the hierarchy of the Roman Church and an infallible Pope."

Where is the Spirit of God in all this, spite of their claim to His guidance in their Quiet Time?

What is our conclusion, come to reluctantly and after much thought and enquiry? We believe solemnly and before God that **The Oxford Group Movement** is one of the latter day delusions of Satan, posturing as an angel of light. Comparing the Bible and its own literature, it stands condemned. Its own literature, written in its favour, we repeat, is its own blackest condemnation. Every true Christian should avoid this cult, and warn any they come across, who are likely to be ensnared by its subtlety and evil.

We are assured that many true Christians are caught by it, and we trust many such will be delivered by this attempt to set things in their true light.

May God be graciously pleased to bless this effort, and use it for His glory and the spiritual help of our readers.

**By the same Author**

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THE TABERNACLE'S TYPICAL TEACHING  
THE AMAZING JEW  
" THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS "  
WHY I BELIEVE THE BIBLE  
and  
THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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