

## THE OXFORD GROUP MOVEMENT

No. 2

(By Rev. A. Sims.)

In this article we give by permission the experience of Rev. H. T. Commons, pastor of First Baptist Church, 17 South Marion Avenue, Ventnor, Atlantic City, New Jersey, who was formerly an adherent of the group and who gives full, first-hand information as to its character, as he sees it.

"For the benefit of many earnest inquirers into the nature of Buchmanism I gladly send out this testimony of my own experience and subsequent analysis of the movement with the prayer that the Lord will open the eyes of all who read it.

"In my early Christian experience in Williams College (1923-1927), I was actively associated with the group for over three years, taking part in many 'house parties.' I came to know all the leaders of the group intimately, including Frank Buchman, Sam Shoemaker, Sherry Day, Ray Purdy, Cleve Hicks, Ken Twichell, Loudon Hamilton, Sciff Wishard, Howie Blake, Charles Haines and many others, a list too long to name. I have been a close observer of the workings of the movement for over eight years, and feel that I can speak with authority. After three years on 'the inside' I finally severed my connection with the group out of loyalty to my Lord, for I realized that it is actually far removed from the real New Testament Christianity.

"At first acquaintance it seems to be what its name indicates, a revival of first-century apostolic Christianity—emphasizing personal evangelism, guidance for daily living, the reality of sin and the necessity for a clean break with sin, etc.—all of which seems like real, true Christianity with the dynamic behind it which is so often lacking in our modern churches. This is what makes it appeal to so many Christians. It seems so practical and vital. If the above things were built on the right foundation I would support the movement one hundred per cent. But here is the trouble.

"1. The movement cares not what a man believes but how he lives. This is salvation by works instead of by grace through faith. The New Testament teaches that without correct belief the best moral character in the world will not inherit eternal life (John 3:3).

"2. The movement shares the fundamental fallacy of mysticism—an experimental religion. Everything is based upon experience. And experience can never be trustworthy foundation for religion, despite the popular belief to the contrary. Satan can give one all kinds of experiences. Revelation alone, as we have it in God's infallible Word, is the only sure foundation.

"3. Both modernists and fundamentalists, believers and unbelievers, are welcomed into the fellowship on the basis of a common experience of sin, confession and surrender. No questions are asked as to belief. And while some claim to be fundamentalists, doctrine is never mentioned and there are many open modernists in their ranks.

"4. This doctrinal weakness or indifference is further illustrated by the lack of Bible teaching and instruction in the Word characteristic of the house parties. While it is recommended that the Bible be read during 'quiet times,' there is very little real Bible study, and no instruction as to the way of salvation, justification by faith, or any of the cardinal truths of redemption.

"5. There is much stress laid on 'surrender.' But in all the talk of surrender there is no

mention made of an atonement for sin. This is something entirely foreign to the New Testament, which stresses from beginning to end and substitutionary death of Christ and His blood shed on the Cross for our sins, for 'Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.' In this respect Buchmanism differs not a whit from Mohammedanism, the very heart and core of which is surrender of the will to God without an atonement. In all the meetings of the group I have ever attended or heard about there has never been any mention of the blood of Christ in its expiatory character.

"6. It follows from this that the 'changed lives' of the group are nothing more than moral conversions, in no sense corresponding to the new birth of the New Testament, which designates the passing of a soul from death to life by the acceptance of Christ's atoning work on the Cross. Anything that omits God's one remedy for sin (1 John 1:7) leaves the human soul still guilty before God, regardless of how many moral conversions the person may have gone through.

Note: Frank Buchman's Five "C's" for the sinner supposedly cover the whole ground. They are: Conviction, Contrition, Confession, Conversion and Continuance. Every one of these is possible on a purely moral basis—know you are a sinner, feel sorry for your sins, confess them, turn away from them and continue on the new way. But if, in addition to all this, there is no faith in the blood of Christ and no acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Substitute and Savior, then the guilt of sin still remains and the soul is unsaved.)

"7. Then, while rightfully stressing the reality of sin, the method of open and public confession of sins is a very questionable procedure. It produces the desired psychological effect in the meeting, but it incites undue emotionalism, and also tends to lower the standards and to produce a sort of fellowship on the basis of sin that seems to me very undesirable. Specific sins, after continued open confession, seem not quite so terrible as they were at first. I well remember a statement of one of the leaders that 'the fellowship of sinners is more real than the fellowship of saints.'

"8. Finally, their idea of 'guidance' is false to scripture. All Christians believe in God's guidance and being led of the Holy Spirit to make right choices and decisions. But the practice of the groups in sitting down with paper and pencil in hand and letting the mind go absolutely blank, and then writing down whatever flashes across the mind as God's orders for the day, is beyond anything promised or sanctioned in Scripture. Indeed, this 'passivity' of mind is a very perilous condition to be in, for it is precisely at such moments that Satan gains control and does his devilish work. This is one of the fundamental errors of the mysticism that pervades the movement. True guidance comes through the Word of God, through God-given conviction after prayer, and through circumstance.

"Many truly born-again Christians have become attracted to the movement because of its deceptive appearance and its use of many old familiar terms and orthodox expressions. Many others have seen its fundamental errors and have either never gone into it or else have severed their connection with it as soon as possible. My prayer is that this frank testimony will enable many others to see that Buchmanism is another one of the many counterfeits and delusions of the 'latter days' (I John 4:1; 2 Peter 2:1 and 2; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:3).—The Free Methodist.

Toronto, Ontario.

A moralist says if you have any grudges against any one dig a grave in your deepest heart and bury it all there. Why not? Why vex your own spirit by holding revenge? We go farther than he and say, If we have in us the old man that harbors slights and insults let the Holy Spirit slay him and bury him forever in your deepest heart and enjoy freedom from those things that irritate and weaken your inmost life. To nurse and coddle that spirit is to do as the man does who has a thorn in the flesh and keeps pressing it deeper. Why make the wound fester? It was bad enough when inflicted without making it worse. Why cherish poison instead of having it removed? Why make the poison worse by adding your own gall to it?—Christian Witness.

## SUPPOSE

Suppose Jesus, your Lord, should walk in some day, in person, and begin inquiry as to your interest in missions. Suppose He should say:

"Did you pray this morning for My workers, submerged in the dark, heathen field?"

"If you were over there wouldn't you want the home folks to pray for you?"

"If your son or daughter were serving in a darkened land, on a meager salary, with no home friend near, would you be as indifferent to your own blood kin, as now you are to the men and women who are over there?"

"Did you give, with heart interest, and with a passion for the lost, when the last offering in your church was taken, or would you have been just a bit glad if the pastor had forgotten to take the offering?"

"Do you really love Me, your Lord and Savior?"

"Do you know that you cannot give Me literal food, and the only way you can feed Me, is to feed 'one of these my brethren'?"

"Did you, then, feed Me reluctantly?"

"Did you know that the records of heaven are keeping a careful account of all your reluctances, and hesitations and indifference, and that some day I shall be compelled, as your Judge, to call your attention to them?"

What answer can we make?—Sel. *The Church Herald.*

## TRUTH IN A NUTSHELL

By Bishop Joseph F. Berry

Boycott the devil. Begin on the Sunday paper.

Have you ever regretted sacrificing a pleasure for a duty?

Plain preaching is one thing. Pulpit scolding is quite another.

No church is in such need of a revival as one that does not want it.

The rolling stone gathers no moss, but it picks up a lot of experience.

Starch is good in a laundry, but serves no useful purpose in a church.

You can love the man you hate more readily than the one you despise.

Perfection is made up of trifles, but it is no trifling matter to be perfect.

Things seem to come to some people, but the majority of us have to go after them.

You have no heresy in your head, did you say? Good. But, perhaps, you have it in your heart.

Some people have outgrown the old-fashioned notion of a personal devil. But let it be observed that they have not gotten rid of him in their lives.—*The Way of Faith.*