

The Gospel Witness

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AND IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

WHEN A ONE-TIME TENANT OF THE GRAVE WENT TO CHURCH

A Sermon by the Pastor, Dr. T. T. Shields

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto

(Stenographically Reported)

"Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

"But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death:

"Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."—John 12:9-11.

Calvary alone excepted, there are few places mentioned in the Word of God more attractive to the devoted believer than Bethany. This was the place to which our Lord frequently, of choice, resorted; and with the loved friends who made their home in Bethany He found fellowship, and I think we may reverently say, comfort, too. So I desire you to come to Bethany for a little while this morning, that we may think of this scene described in the chapter which we have read, and very particularly of him who had been the subject of the gracious power of our Lord, and of whom it is said that his presence brought the people to Bethany.

I.

That is my first observation, that, strange as it may seem, THE PRESENCE OF LAZARUS IN BETHANY SUPPLEMENTED THE ATTRACTION OF OUR LORD JESUS HIMSELF, if indeed Infinity can be augmented. There was something about Christ which attracted people to Him; wherever He went the multitudes thronged Him; and even when He sought leisure they outran Him, anticipated His coming, and gathered in great crowds in the wilderness. When quietly He made His way to the house of a friend, somehow or another the people found it out, and it was said He could not be hid. He was a veritable magnet; He gathered the people to Himself; wherever He went the multitudes assembled. And it is still true that the spiritual presence of our Lord is an irresistible attraction. He is not present in physical form, but He has given us His word of promise, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." He is present in the midst of His assembled people, and when His presence is recognized, and

His power is exercised, there is nothing in this world, even to-day, that can compete with the attractiveness of the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ.

And yet, strangely enough, this story tells us that there were some people who came to Bethany, "not for Jesus' sake only". *There is another attraction which, while not equal, is comparable to that of our Lord Himself.* They came that they might see Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead. And I venture to affirm that with all our advancement, the world has never yet surpassed that wonder. If one who had been raised from the dead were to appear among us to-day, anywhere, he would be a greater attraction than anything the world could possibly offer. He would empty all theatres and all places of amusement, and people would run by the thousands, and tens of thousands, to see the man who had been dead and was alive again.

The power of the resurrection is designedly the attraction of the church to-day. A moral and spiritual resurrection is not less a miracle in the lives of men than a physical resurrection. Once let it be known that a power has been discovered, and by some individual has been experienced, which has absolutely transformed the life, has lifted a man from the tomb to the Table of the Lord, and made him a new creature—let that be known, and people will be attracted by his presence. The gospel in itself, apart from the power of the Spirit of God, as a merely ethical system; the teachings of the Lord Jesus, telling men what to do and what not to do, would repel, because they demand of men the impossible; they set up a standard to which poor, bankrupt, human nature can never attain; and men who listen to it go away filled with despair,

for they say, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." But when the gospel is incarnated; when in a human life it is shown that it is possible for a man to be made a new creature in Christ, his presence will add to the attraction—I say it reverently—even of the spiritual presence of the Lord Himself.

And so, my friends, however a church may advertise, the best advertisement of any church is a man or woman who in his life incarnates and exemplifies the great principles of the gospel we preach. You do not need to talk about Jarvis Street, you do not need to tell people where you go to church. If there is so much of Christ in you that it is impossible for anyone to meet you without knowing that a miracle has been wrought, they will keep you under observation, and will track you to the place where we gather for prayer. You will find multitudes of people coming, not for Jesus' sake only, but for the sake of those who have been partakers of His grace and power, and whose lives have been transformed by His Spirit.

II.

Once more: Lazarus not only attracted people to the place where Jesus was, but HE LED PEOPLE TO BELIEVE ON CHRIST: "By reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." What sort of man was Lazarus? Was he a man of eloquent speech? We heard something in our lesson this morning about the limitations of human eloquence, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." I wonder what sort of speaker Lazarus was? If you search the Book, you will see that so far as the record is concerned, Lazarus might just as well have been dumb. The Bible does not report a single sentence he ever uttered. If Lazarus ever said, "Good morning", to his sisters, it is not recorded; not a word that ever came from his lips is written down. He was not a preacher, he was not a teacher, he was not a man who was known for any public service—and yet the text says that by reason of him, this man who was apparently all but dumb—by reason of him "many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus". Observe, not because of his reasoning; but *by reason of him—he was the reason why they believed on Jesus.* Not what Lazarus said, or what he did, but by what he was by the power and grace of God, men were convinced of the Messianism of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us examine that a little, and see what were the characteristics of this work of grace which had been wrought in Lazarus, and by means of which many were led to believe on Christ.

First of all, Lazarus had been made alive. A change had been wrought in him. It was an inward change. Wonderful to relate, but it is true—and mark it well—that every breath that Lazarus drew was a testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. Even when locked in slumber his heaving breast witnessed to the power of Jesus Christ. No word was it necessary for him to utter. They came, not that they might hear Lazarus, but that they might see him, and be persuaded of the genuineness of the miracle. When they saw him—not when they heard him, but when they saw him—they knew that he was alive, his heart was beating, his pulse was bounding, and the man who had been dead was alive again, therefore they believed on the Lord Jesus.

And so, my friends, it is possible for us by the involuntary expressions of life to witness for Christ. The life we live when we are offguard, the impromptu speech, the impulsive action, the sudden decision, the natural outflow of life in its involuntary expressions, just like the breath we draw, will be a testimony for Christ. I think it is something like that, that is taught in one of the Scriptures quoted in the prayer meeting last night, "Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven"; our manner of life is not according to this world, it belongs to another. Wearing the clothes you now wear, speaking your ordinary language, go to some place in the Orient, and people will not need to ask you where you came from: they will know you are not a native, they will know you belong to another country. Your whole manner of life would be so different from your surroundings that, without trying, you would be advertising the country from whence you came.

I think I will tell you an amusing incident about myself. During the war I was going up from London to Edinburgh, Scotland, on an express train,—the Eastern Flyer, I think they called it. It stopped at only a few places between London and Edinburgh, and somewhere up the line a young soldier came in. He came along the corridor and looked into each compartment; when he reached the compartment where I was, he came in and sat down, and said, "May I shake hands with you?" I said, "Certainly." Then he asked, "What part of Canada are you from?" I said, "What! How do you know I come from Canada? How did you know I was here?" "I saw you get out of the train at the last station, and walk up and down the platform for a little while." "Well", I said, "I did not say I was a Canadian." He replied, "I do not know whether you are a Canadian or an American, but you are one or the other." "But you", I said, "did not hear me speak. Was it the way I walked?" "No". "How did you find out?" He said, "By your clothes. Your clothes were not made in this country." I had not given him any information, I had not spoken to him; but he knew where I came from.

I believe, spiritually, it is possible for us to know the Lord in such a way that we cannot walk anywhere, that we cannot go anywhere, we cannot say anything, but people will find out that we are alive. I went into a crowded building one day to hear a great preacher. He was late in arriving, the people sang a while, and then at last he came. He said he was sorry to be late, but that he had been detained by crowded cars. In the course of his address he said, "When I had been on the car a while a lady got on. She stayed only a few moments, and then got off the car again. But as she came into the car she carried with her some rich perfume, and when she went out of the car she had left something behind. "And", he said, "I thought that ought to be true of every Christian, it ought to be impossible for us to go into any situation, into any company, amid any surroundings, anywhere, at any time, and go out again without leaving a savour of Christ behind us".

That was true of Lazarus. They came to see him; he said nothing, but simply sat at the table as though he would say, "Come and examine me." If they did it in those days, anyone who shook hands with Lazarus knew that he was alive, and there was a testimony in his handshake. I do not believe in the substitution of

sociability for spirituality; but I believe that social life may be spiritualized, and sociability may be energized by the Holy Spirit, so that when we take a man by the hand, not in what we say, but in some innate quality of it, it will make that man feel that in our touch there is, in some measure, the very touch of God; and we shall feel that we have been lifting him up to higher and better things. Lazarus thus testified to what was in him.

Young men and women, let me warn you our Lord said, "Here, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." It is your everyday speech, your ordinary conversation, that tells whether you are a Christian or not. Travelling the other day, a man came in where I was; and there was also present a trainman in uniform. I did not know the man, but he said to me, "I want to tell you a story." He uttered one word—and I said, "I cannot allow you to tell me that story." He replied, "Now, wait a minute, do not be over particular." I said, "My ears were not made for that sort of thing, sir", and walked out. Presently the train employee came to me and said, "I want to thank you for that rebuke. My uniform forbade my rebuking a passenger; but" he said, "I share your objection to such language." A Christian man can not listen to some things without dishonouring his Lord. The life that is within, if it be of God, will always protest against evil wherever and however it appears, and will prove that he has been with Christ, and is really alive unto God.

Then there was a change which was manifest to everyone in his external appearance. When Jesus said, "Take away the stone", you remember how horror-struck the sisters of Lazarus were. He had been dead four days, and they feared the awful stench of death; for the death that had wrought within, had now manifested itself without, and the loved form had become in their thought nothing but a reeking corpse. They said, "Do not ask us to look at him, do not open the grave!" But the grave was opened, and Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." And now he is sitting at the table with Jesus, with no savour of death, nothing of the tomb about him, his flesh like the flesh of a little child, wholesome and sweet. His sisters could sit beside him, and again lay their hands lovingly upon him, and call him "brother". He was not only changed within, but there was an outward change that declared the power of Jesus Christ to all who came to observe Lazarus.

I should be the last to underestimate the value of doctrinal instruction, of correct opinions, or, to use a deeper word, of true convictions of truth; but oh, the thing I am more afraid of than anything else is a dead orthodoxy. The one thing that dishonours Jesus Christ more than Modernism is an Evangelicalism that is divorced from the Spirit of God, that is purely intellectual, that is fond of argument and contention, and of fighting for the interpretation of a word; and yet has no spiritual vitality in it. That will drive people to hell as fast as any Modernism that ever was known, because it is a counterfeit of the real thing. If we believe the truth, and we know that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord, we must have it inside, by all means, we must have it inside, our

hearts must be right with God; but we must have it outside as well. We must be saved inside and outside—and on all sides, through and through. We must prove that we have been partakers of the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I need not elaborate that, you know very well what I mean. If the grace of God has found a place in our hearts, it ought to do something with our hands—and surely it ought to do something for our tongues. It ought to take the poison of asps from under our tongues, and the cursing and bitterness from our mouths. It ought to make our outward lives different in every respect because Christ has come in.

It has come to my knowledge on more than one occasion recently that members of this church are under special observation wherever they go; that in your place of business some of you have to endure a good deal because you belong to Jarvis Street Church. But you may expect that kind of thing. If I were to ask the young people here who work in departmental stores, and offices—and older people as well—who have had to endure persecution because they are affiliated with Jarvis Street Church, I should have an army on their feet. I know it. Some have gone down under it, they could not stand it. Well, let me tell you this, my friends: be it yours to show that something has happened, that Christ has come in and changed the heart, and changed the life, and made you a new creature in Christ. That is the best testimony you can give, to prove everywhere, in every relationship, that you are partaker of His holiness.

I would remind you that *the situation of this man was entirely changed*. Where was he? Yonder in the sepulchre. Sometimes they buried more than one together. He may have been in the company of others who were as dead as he was. But Jesus Christ did not merely say, "Arise"—He said, "Lazarus, come forth. Come out of your present situation into a new order of things." The sepulchre is appropriate for a dead man, but it is not a proper place for a living man; and Lazarus proved that he was alive by coming out of the sepulchre to sit at the table with Jesus. If you are a Christian your whole situation ought to be changed; the sepulchre is no place for a Christian. Lazarus owed his power to the fact that he was in an entirely new situation. I do not believe the crowds would ever have gone to the sepulchre to gaze into it and say, "There he is yonder. He is still in the grave—but they say he is alive." They would not have gone to the sepulchre, but when he came out of the sepulchre and went back home to Bethany, many came to see him. Everyone knew that he who had been dead was alive; and, seeing him, they believed in Jesus.

The measure of our power over men was not the measure of our conformity to their standards, but the measure of our difference from them. And in the measure in which the church ceases to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of its mind, individually and collectively, just in that measure will it have the power of Lazarus. If we convince men of the reality of the religion of Jesus Christ, their attitude will change entirely. In his companionships, instead of being among the dead in the sepulchre, Lazarus was among the living at the table of the Lord.

Oh, young people, let me warn you of the danger of keeping company with ungodly people. You young ladies, give the young man who has not put Christ first in his

life a wide berth. I do not mean that you should not meet him, and be polite to him; but let him be absolutely nothing to you until Christ is everything to him. Otherwise, you court disaster; you are laying the foundation for a life of misery if you link your life with a man who does not know Jesus Christ. And if you are going to have power over him, you must keep out of his company and let him know that you cannot meet him on terms of friendship and companionship until he has opened his heart and surrendered his life to Jesus Christ. The same principle applies to you young men. I have seen many a man ruined, absolutely ruined, so far as his Christian usefulness was concerned, because he was married to a worldly woman.

These are intimate matters, I know, but they are matters that need to be mentioned. Young people need to be advised. If we are going to have Lazarus' power to lead other people to believe on Christ, then we must be so separated from all that we were, that the whole world will know it. When Christ comes into a life He effects a revolution, He changes us inside and outside, and in every way.

But, best of all, I remind you that *Lazarus was in this situation by his own deliberate choice*. I remember many years ago getting a great blessing in studying this matter. At the grave Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go." They took the bands off, and not one word of direction did the Lord give; He did not tell him where to go, neither did anyone else. The Lord Jesus said, in effect, "Set him free. Let him do as he likes. Now that he is alive, let the life within him lead him wherever he wants to go. Do not put him in a straight jacket, do not hedge him about by saying, 'Thou shalt not', or 'Thou shalt'. Let him go where he likes?" I said to myself, I am going to follow Lazarus and find out where he went. So I read on, verse after verse, until I came to the twelfth chapter and read, "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they make him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." And I said, "That is where you chose to go, was it, Lazarus, to sit at the table with Christ?" Had he spoken he would have said, "Yes, that is my choice, I would rather be in the presence of Him Who brought me from the dead, than be anywhere else in the world. He is more to me than all the world." Likewise, when the true Christian is loosed and let go, he will deliberately choose the companionship of Jesus Christ and the association of God's people; and wherever they do honour to Christ, you may depend upon resurrected Lazarus being there.

III.

I have not time for the remainder, but it is a strange story, a story by itself. "The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." They sought to kill him. How foolish they were! What had Lazarus done? I wonder did they not like his "methods"? I wonder if they said to Lazarus, "Lazarus, you are all right, but we don't like your methods"? I think he would have said, "Do you not like the way I breathe? Do you object to my using both lungs? Or do you want me to use only one, or to breathe through my nostrils, or through my mouth?—tell me what is the matter. I am alive, and I cannot help living; with every

breath I draw, I proclaim the power of Jesus Christ." Or they might have said, "We do not like your 'spirit'!" And I think he would have had to say, "You will have to settle that with my Lord. He gave me my spirit, it is by His touch of life, by His grace, I draw my breath."

But notwithstanding all that, they tried to put him to death—but they did not succeed. I do not know how long Lazarus lived. I am inclined to think he lived to be an old, old, man, and probably fell asleep at last of old age. But anyhow, they did not succeed. You know the old, old, story. Go back to Exodus where the story is told of a babe being put into an ark and hidden in the bullrushes. You remember how the greatest power in the world sought to snuff out that little life. How easy it was for Pharaoh to kill Moses—was it? No, Pharaoh might have shown his power on all the nations of the earth, but he could not touch that little babe, because God's angels were looking after him; and at last they died "who sought the young child's life". Come into the New Testament and you will find it opens with the story of another Babe. He had done no wrong, yet wicked men sought His life. The world is ever inhospitable to Him, and, equally to the life He gives. But the life survived, and it was said, as it must ever eventually be said, "They are dead which sought the young child's life."

My message is this, that the life that comes from God will never find hospitality in this world. Pharaoh, or Herod, or the chief priests, or somebody else, will try to put Lazarus to death; the life that comes from God, however, is protected by Him; and He will lead us on in glorious triumph. As you trust Him, He will help you to withstand every temptation, and to bear witness to the power of the grace of God.

IV.

HOW IS IT EFFECTED? By believing His Word. If you had said, "Lazarus, how did you who were dead become alive again?" I think he would have said, "I do not know; all I know is that I was fast locked in the sleep of death, and somehow or other, I cannot tell you how, these ears of mine heard a Voice calling, 'Lazarus, come forth'. I could not hear Mary, I could not hear Martha, I could not hear anyone else; but for some reason that Voice penetrated my deaf ears, and my heart began to beat, my pulse to bound, and I was alive again—and I knew it. But I cannot tell you how: you will have to ask Him. Or, better still, listen to His word as I did, and you will live as I did. I cannot tell you how the miracle is wrought." Nor do I know how believing in the Son of God makes us new creatures, but I know it does so. This is the promise of the Lord of life, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life".

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"The British Weekly" and the Oxford Group Movement

With Comments by the Editor of "The Gospel Witness"

Toronto was visited by the Oxford Group for the first time in December, 1932, and representatives of the Group spoke in a large number of Toronto churches while here. We said nothing either for or against the Movement, but waited to see what it would accomplish.

About this time, and earlier, we obtained copies of all its available publications, so that we might study the teachings of those who were authorized to speak in its name. From our personal study we were convinced of the unscripturalness of the teachings of the Movement.

We studied, too, some of its effects. In a few instances the tree seemed to bring forth good fruit, and, mindful of the teaching of the Word of God, we refrained from criticism until space had permitted opportunity for a further study of its publications, and for a more general observation of its effects.

In our issue of December 22nd, 1932, we published the following editorial:

A Laboratory-Test for the Oxford Group

We have been much perplexed in trying to arrive at a scriptural appraisal of the message and methods of the Oxford Group. There is much about this movement which is attractive. Surely no saved man or woman can fail to be in sympathy with any message or movement designed to bring men and women nearer to God, and to effect a transformation of character.

We have read some reports in the newspapers of certain ministers who seem either to have been converted or brought into a new sense of fellowship with God which have led us to praise God. We long for a genuine Heaven-sent revival of Evangelical Christianity which will restore the Bible to its proper place in the thought of men as the word of God, and will effect the regeneration of individuals by the power of the Holy Ghost through faith in the crucified and risen Redeemer. If the Oxford Group Movement should prove to be God's instrument to this end, we shall thank the Lord and take courage.

Our misgivings have arisen from several considerations: from the fact that their message seems to lay but little emphasis upon the supreme authority of the Bible as the word of God; and that so far as we have been able to see, they say little or nothing of the guilt of sin, and almost nothing at all of the cleansing blood. If we are right in this, and we do not positively assert that we are, we should have no hesitation in saying that the movement is not of God. If we are wrong, then the Oxford Group ought to speak so plainly on these matters as to leave no possibility of doubt as to where they stand, and what they teach.

While there is an element of scriptural wisdom in their doctrine of "sharing"—that is, in so far as it means confession made to persons who have been wronged—we cannot find scriptural warrant for such public "sharing" as is practised by the Group. However, perfection will never be found in men or movements. The Reformation was undoubtedly of divine inspiration, yet because its instrumentalities were human it was full of defects. It would be unwise therefore to condemn a movement in its entirety because of some manifest errors associated with it. While we are far from being satisfied with the movement at the moment, we are hoping for the best.

Nothing has cast greater suspicion upon the movement in our mind than the whole-hearted approval given to it by Dr. Salem Bland and Mr. R. E. Knowles. If either of these gentlemen ever approved of anything that had even a semblance of Evangelical Christianity about it, their approval has escaped our notice. The movement has been approved equally by *The Observer* in *The Toronto Star*. We have been informed that *The Observer* and Dr. Bland are one and the same, but for the accuracy of this we cannot vouch. It was either *The Observer* or Dr. Bland who some time ago spoke on Russian Sovietism as the most perfect exemplification of Social Christianity the world had yet seen.

On the other hand, the press reports that the Editor of *The New Outlook*, the official organ of the United Church of Canada, unreservedly condemns the Oxford Group movement. While we are inclined to agree with the Editor in his strictures upon a certain meeting for ministers held a week ago last Monday, his wholesale condemnation of the Oxford Group is a high compliment to the Group; for we have never heard of the Editor of *The New Outlook* being anything but anti-evangelical.

In view of these perplexities we have wished there were some laboratory somewhere in which the principles of the Oxford Group could be thoroughly tested, and at last that laboratory has been found. The press informs us that the Group have gone to Hamilton by the invitation of Chancellor Whidden of McMaster University. The Group are expert reformationists, restorationists, and restitutionists; and we are still hoping they are regenerationists. That being so, we can think of no place in the world where their principles may be more certainly submitted to the proverbial acid test than in McMaster University. If, as a result of their work in Hamilton, McMaster University should begin to restore, and to make restitution, and if its Faculty and Governors could be really "changed", we should be half inclined to believe that the millennium was almost upon us.

By January, 1933, we had definitely reached the conclusion that any good accomplished by the Group would certainly be outweighed by the anti-biblical and anti-church reactions which it would leave in its wake. For months previous to that we had been receiving letters from our readers from many parts of the world, asking for some word of direction in respect to the scripturalness or otherwise of the Group Movement. We therefore decided it was our duty to give publicity to our conclusions, and delivered an address entitled, "The Oxford Group Movement Analyzed", Thursday evening, January 19th, 1933.

That great interest had been aroused by the visit of the Group was shown by the great crowd in attendance. *The Evening Telegram* of January 20th began its extensive report of the address with these words:

"Before an audience which filled Jarvis Street Baptist Church to its capacity, and made necessary the bringing in of chairs, Rev. Dr. Shields last evening for two hours discussed the Oxford Group Movement and its teachings."

The address was published *in extenso* in THE GOSPEL WITNESS of January 26th, 1933, and was subsequently issued in booklet form. There was an immediate demand for the booklet, and two further editions have since been published, making a total of thirty thousand. We have received orders for this booklet from all parts of the world, notably from ministers and missionaries.

It need hardly be said that our analysis was not favorably received by many of the Group leaders. It is a significant fact that although at the time of their arrival in Toronto we had neither written nor spoken a word about the Group, we were never approached by any Group representatives for permission to speak in Jarvis Street Church. We had been informed that some of their principal leaders had been given letters of introduction to us, but these letters were never presented. It appeared that their leaders instinctively felt that as soon as they were known, they would not be approved.

We received the usual stream of letters, many of them from disciples of the "four absolutes", and some of them; it would be no exaggeration to say, were full of vituperation, including most uncomplimentary epithets. We were called the servant of Antichrist, and we know not what

else, at the time. Even some who had long professed the warmest personal friendship behaved as though they had been bitten by a mad dog.

What results followed the several visits of the Group to Toronto? One minister called at our office to express regret for certain unkind things he had said, and to ask forgiveness. It was a decidedly Christian course he took. We told him we had not heard of his criticisms, and assured him of our warmest Christian regard. Another minister of the United Church found us one day in the garden. We had not met him before, but he had been "guided" to call in order that we might receive the benefits of the Group's message. We appreciated his interest, and told him so; and enquired what benefit he had derived from the Group's visit. The only definite blessing he was able to name was that he had been enabled to minister comfort to the family of a young girl who had committed suicide the year before. He had been dumb and without a message for the stricken parents at the time, but since the Group's visit, a year after the tragedy, he had been able to call and administer some word of cheer. We told him very kindly and sympathetically that such a confession from a Christian minister showed that he needed something. These two instances were the only good fruits that came directly under our observation.

We observed that the Groups were welcomed most warmly in churches that had been hostile or neutral toward any expression of biblical supernaturalism. We never heard of a single minister as a result of the Group's visit publicly expressing regret that he had cast doubt upon the authority of the Bible, and substituted various forms of human endeavour as a way of salvation, for the biblical message of salvation through the blood of Christ. We never heard of a single example of such "sharing". Notwithstanding, the apparent ultra-supernaturalism of the Group seemed to be welcome. That, in itself, to us, was significant of the real quality of the Group's message. Somewhere we read that of all places of the world, the Group had been most successful in Toronto. So far as we have been able to judge, and we have known Toronto intimately for now nearly twenty-eight years—its effect on the life of the churches of this city was practically nil.

Some time in the summer of 1933 *The British Weekly* published an Oxford Group supplement, and that supplement contained an article from a certain Toronto minister, in which he lauded the Groups, as we now recall,—we have not the article before us—in the strongest terms. We remember that he spoke of the benefits it had conferred upon him, and the effect it had had upon his church. Direct information was brought to us, without our seeking it of course, that not long thereafter the Sunday evening congregation had shrunk to less than a dozen people—and it was a large church—and some time later he gave up the pastorate altogether and became some sort of industrial chaplain, the protégé of a rich man who sent him travelling to study—we know not what. It seemed to us a kind of *movie* performance with a mattress spread for the actor to fall on.

We have been an attentive reader of *The British Weekly* for more than quarter of a century. We have sometimes wished it were a little more positive on some matters; but it is seldom that anything appears in its pages that is not well written, and we always

enjoy reading it. The Editor, Dr. Hutton, has proved a worthy successor to the great Sir William Robertson Nicol, and the page written by "Watchman"—whom we have always assumed to be Dr. Hutton himself—is an admirable substitute for the "Letters of Claudius Clear".

We must frankly acknowledge that we were somewhat surprised, and not a little disappointed, that *The British Weekly* should so staunchly champion the Oxford Group Movement. We do not mean that it strongly advocated it editorially, but it certainly played the part of a sympathetic friend, giving large reports of its meetings, and devoting from time to time columns of space to its general news.

Some time ago—we do not recall how long, whether six months or a year—we were especially pleased with certain articles in *The British Weekly* written by "Ilico", in which not a few questions were very kindly asked of the Group; and, as we recall, the purport of those articles was that in "Ilico's" opinion, common, ordinary Evangelical Christians, who had themselves a definite religious experience, already were in possession of anything in the Group that might be good, without some of its doubtful accompaniments. The articles were most kind, and could scarcely be called critical.

But now *The British Weekly* has assumed a somewhat different attitude. In the issue of July 15th, "Watchman" called attention to a certain happening at a luncheon at which the Group leaders were guests. We insert the article in full:

"WATCHMAN"

In "*The British Weekly*", July 15th, 1937

"IT'S AN ILL BIRD . . ."

The complete proverb is, "It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest". Like every real proverb, and a proverb may be accepted as real from the very fact that it has survived; there has been sufficient corroborative experience in each succeeding generation to keep it going,—like every real proverb, this one also has a wide and all-embracing application and reference. In the political region, for example, the proverb, "It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest," would point a finger of scorn at any man who, having, perhaps for sound reasons as they seemed to himself, left his own party, should proceed to make sport of that former party because in the interval it had shown signs of weakness or discouragement. A man will never be the same again in the judgment of his intellectual equals or superiors who cannot in the depths of his own soul look that proverb in the face and look it down!

"WATCHMAN" AND THE GROUPS

In the foregoing, I have as usual been sharpening my pencils, so to speak, my mind meanwhile turning over certain matters, or in this case a certain matter. I have been like one who hangs about a door before knocking, one who knows that his knock is sure to be answered, and that he will be under the necessity of opening up matters which he would have been only too willing to evade or leave to others.

The other day, a luncheon party was given by a famous book-selling institution to the Oxford Group movement in London. Sixteen hundred guests were present. The plan which was followed was according to precedent. Members of the team belonging to the Group Movement made their testimonies, their confessions of their former selves from which they had, with such gratitude and tokens of well-being, now been delivered. A lady was present, by profession an actress, and by the proofs which were immediately forthcoming an extremely able and understanding person. She was invited to speak. This she did. There was no denying the intellectual quality of her words. Nor was it possible to deny that the person speaking was one who had a conscious spiritual life of her own, the principles and atmosphere of which she was as concerned to defend and to safeguard as were the propagandists of the "Groups". There was a warmth and force in what she said; there was also

that style and absolute rightness which together were completely convincing. Those present were hearing a "confession" quite as authentic as any they had been listening to. And the point is, Miss Rawlings' confession as an unqualified protest against the whole method of "sharing," which means "sharing" in the exposure of ourselves to another or to others as the one sure way of reaching a condition of total sincerity and abjectness. To Miss Rawlings, this exposure of our personal life, in the presence of others, many or few, was in her view as shocking as it would be to her to see a man stripping himself naked in Piccadilly.

I was not present. But I need no ocular or oral witness that Miss Rawlings' speech must have had something of the detonation of an exploding bomb. And yet it was altogether undesigned and entirely without malice.

It is fair to say that the representatives of the Group (Dr. Buchman was present) behaved with admirable calm. They professed indeed that a movement like theirs which made everything of sincerity had no ground for complaint at such a sudden and contrary display of that very quality.

THE THING CANNOT REST THERE

Obviously the thing cannot rest there. Miss Rawlings has given further proof of her rare discretion in her refusal to lend herself to any continuance of the episode. But those who order the affairs of the Group movement seem to be under an obligation to vindicate the method which Miss Rawlings condemned, or to clear that method of the consequences which she (and by no means she only) fears for it. Certainly, I personally cannot but say something. *The British Weekly* cannot but say something. For *The British Weekly* I am at liberty to say, that we have written to the member of the Group whose two columns we give free space to week by week, asking him for an immediate reference.

But, for my own part, I must not pretend to myself that I have no responsibility.

MY OWN PART

Some years ago, in these very columns and over the signature of "Watchman", I wrote a long, sincere and happy series of paragraphs in support of what I hailed as the characteristic note or witness of the Group Movement. At that time, and indeed long before that time, I knew a good deal about the origins of the movement. In my own frequent visits to Conferences in America I had heard many opinions. I even commissioned a very able man to gather evidence in the universities of America with which he was familiar. I have a dossier on the subject, within a few feet of where I sit now. But I have only glanced at that dossier, and for this reason.

Like Gamaliel in the Book of Acts, I decided to "refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work were of men it would come to nought; but if it were of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God."

More than that, I decided to support the "Groups" but on the main issue, which at the moment I supposed was the complete issue.

I could here delay myself quite profitably by recalling the condition of the world and of men's souls about the time when the "Oxford Group" movement became noticeable. The sense of frustration and futility; the sense that the individual is nothing, with all the *sequelae* of that *malaise*. Life had become a bitter proverb; it was dismissed flippantly or sadly as "one damned thing after another." Not as the result of hard thinking, but for the most part as a hard-bitten acquiescence, the ancient doctrine which is the final heresy had begun to settle down—That life is a comedy for those who think, and a tragedy for those who feel, that life is a farce in the heart of a tragedy or a tragedy in the heart of a farce. Over millions of men and women these were perhaps never the necessary conclusions of their own; but such conclusions were in the air, and those millions were ready for them, even when the rumour which reached them as the order for a brave new World was simply "On with the dance!"

It was out of this milieu, or rather it was into this milieu, that the "Group" movement broke, with a protest which was so confident and hearty that it seemed to dance before the Lord and sing!

FATE AND FREEDOM

Against the dismal creed that (in a sense which Butler did not intend) "Things are what they are", that we live in a closed universe, that "tis little to gain old age when youth

is ruined"—sighs which have escaped from the soul, sometimes honourably, sometimes weakly and under the impulse of the flesh—against that view and its threatening consequences in human behaviour it seemed to me that this new movement was, as it were, a corps of "shock troops" which had broken from ancestral Christianity in obedience to forces which itself did not understand.

It was with this appreciation that I wrote my own most rollicking and gay *apologia* on the enduring evangelical theme, that "we are saved by faith," that, "Now is the accepted time," that, "There is forgiveness with God—that He may be feared" (which has always seemed to me a deep strategy on the part of God lest we should set aside some later overture from Him on the ground that we had set aside an earlier one. For there is no escaping one who will insist upon forgiving you!)

It never was an offence to me that this movement in the days of its emergence was full of gaiety and laughter and even extravagance. The Bible condemns Michal for laughing at David as he danced before the Lord. The disciples of John and of the Pharisees professed to be hurt at seeing His disciples behaving as though they were not quite sober, but looked rather as though they were coming home in the early morning from a wedding. To these sad and experienced men Jesus replied with a perfect understanding alike of them and of His disciples: "Let them have their day! They are young. They are fresh! They are still at the wedding-feast. The bridegroom is still with them!" The time will come, He added, when the bridegroom will *not* be with them; when they will not be so young as they are now; when life will test them to the very bone and marrow; that we are all in good hands; that then they also will have reason to come at God in the depths!

As His servant, Saul of Tarsus was to put the matter in a short and final form. There is first that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual. Or, as Simon Peter was to hear from the Master's own lips, "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and wentest withersoever thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not".

But I took no offence at their jauntiness and hilarity, though I had no envy of them for it. I had had my day! Soberly I have it still. I had always persisted that there is something corybantic in genuine faith. For what sort of victory would faith be if it never provoked a shout or a desire to shout!

A GRAVE THING TO SAY

For that and for that alone I hailed the "Group" movement and secured a place for its characteristic testimony in this paper.

At that time I knew nothing of its methods and in particular of this method which so offended Miss Rawlings as it would have shocked me to the point almost of paralysis had I been present at any gathering where anything like what she affirms was encouraged or even tolerated. The only rumour of this probing and prying method which reached me I rather approved *on my understanding* of it. I was quite happy to learn that there were abroad men and women, youths and maidens, who were not afraid to use language more direct and bolder than we old-fashioned people could have used, without embarrassment! I was glad to think so to put it, that men and women of the world were finding their match; that they were now encountering people who could be even as *rude* for God's sake as they could be against Him or in contempt of Him!

I liked immensely the rumour which reached me of their main thrust, which, not so wisely, they proceeded to standardize. For we all know, who have had to expose the same subterfuge in our own souls, how we can set up a defence mechanism against the thrust of every higher view of life, pretending to ourselves that we are in difficulties of a speculative and philosophical sort when the real fact of the matter is that what hinders us is some pet indulgence which we are not ready to abandon, or more poignantly, "some sin or fault of youth" which we have never honourably laid before God, confessing our sin utterly and refusing any help from man!

MY HOPE GONE

I was thankful, therefore, to learn that the movement had attracted to itself some thoughtful men, men of scholarship in the history of Christianity and in the rise and fall of the tides of the Spirit. For I had hoped that these would have been able to intrude without offence so as to steer the

movement past perils which they would have perceived even when they were no nearer than the horizon.

This very assault by the way of conscience may be overdone. There are also human souls in whom it is not *there* that the shoe pinches. When Eliphaz the Temanite set himself to answer Job (Eliphaz the Temanite being unworthy to stoop down and loose Job's shoe-strings)—when Eliphaz the Temanite set himself to answer Job, he said something which in all the circumstances was as low a thing as a man could say. For Job had lost everything—flocks, herds, home, children; he was mad with boils; and deeper than his physical agony, in an agony of distress about life. Job was contending for some ground for confidence that this was and is God's world, in spite of his (Job's) sea of troubles! And it was to a soul in this quite obvious agony that this cheap and inferior person had the coolness, the detachment, the cruel intellectual interest (real or assumed) to ask, "Is there any secret thing with thee?" To the glory of God the record stands that the Almighty condemned that "friend" of Job! I know that the Revised Version gives a various reading which saves Eliphaz on that point. But the low insinuation stands in our Authorized Version and is still printed in the margin of the Revised Version—indicating that in 1881 a bare majority of the Revisers was in favour of the reading on which Eliphaz is to be condemned.

I had hoped (the thing may have happened) that those in the movement with a deeper knowledge of the infinite variety of souls would have widened and deepened the general knowledge. For myself I will maintain that to put *leading questions* to a soul which is wrestling with God, may be an offence against that soul and against God. For it is the prerogative of God alone to touch the soul on the quick.

TWO OTHER MATTERS

On other main matters I had hoped that minds more exercised and cautious in the treatment of the Spirit would have qualified the practice of the movement and its claims; on matters of *personal guidance*. For in this region even the best, in the sense of the most scrupulous, of men may go astray. Here, therefore, if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Saul of Tarsus tells us that he never was more hopelessly and almost fatally wrong than on an occasion and with regard to a matter on which he was confident that he was right.

Balaam also is an illustration of something that may happen,—who went to pieces on his knees before God! He mistook his own strong feeling for the voice of God. He was sure he heard God say, "Go!" And he went. But the next words we read are that "God was angry with Balaam because he went!"

The other matter is this. There would seem to be no doubt that the "movement" does not in any positive and unequivocal way help the Church or the churches. "Groupers" are becoming a spiritual caste, not without the complacency, the self-sufficiency, the hauteur of a caste.

MY OWN ADVICE

Were my advice asked for as to what general or even precise direction this very notable movement should *now* take, I should have no hesitation in giving an answer. And it would be an altogether disinterested answer. It would also rest upon some knowledge of history; upon some knowledge of men whom God had greatly honoured; notably of one such. I have authority for saying that D. L. Moody, perhaps not quite from the beginning, but certainly from a very early stage in his experience as a "soul-winner" gave this invariable advice, or, it would be truer to say, issued this decree. To every convert he said, "Join up with the church!" If the convert asked, "With which church?" D. L. Moody was wont to say with equal peremptoriness, "Try the church where you belong!"

The foregoing article speaks for itself. We cannot but rejoice in it. We shall await with interest the Group's reply. We are inclined, however, to believe that there will be no reply, save as individuals may reply in personal letters to the Editor.

It is significant that in the same issue of *The British Weekly*, July 15th, on page three hundred and fifteen, there appears an article entitled, "Frank Buckman at a Foyle Luncheon". This apparently is the official

report of the luncheon. There is no reference to Miss Rawlings' attack, so that it was necessary apparently for the Editor to add a parenthetical note in italics at the bottom as follows:

"A feature of the luncheon not dealt with here was the attack on the Oxford Group by Miss Margaret Rawlings, the actress. This is discussed at length by 'Watchman' in page 302."

That is significant of the methods of the Group. It seems to be their settled policy to laud "Frank" and the Groups, and never to recognize or acknowledge any form of criticism.

"THE BRITISH WEEKLY" LETTER BOX

In *The British Weekly* of July 22nd, in "The British Weekly Letter Box", a number of letters were published, for and against "Watchman's" criticisms of the Movement of the week before, and following the letters, this editorial note:

[We have printed the above as representing evenly the quite large correspondence which "Watchman's" paragraphs on the Group Movement in last week's issue aroused.

There were many more, some on the one side embarrassingly approving and affectionate, on the other side some of a bitter and even ferocious quality.

We had the honour of a visit also on Friday last from a deputation of three leaders in the Group Movement. This was also the more appreciated by us because they came to see us entirely on their own initiative. Two of the deputation were friends of ours, in one case for a great number of years. We dealt with complete candour with one another and parted, we hope, without anything in reserve. On one thing, we for our part were insistent—that before a word passed between us at that interview there should be a complete disavowal by them of any charge against "Watchman" of malice or bad faith.

We had no difficulty on our part in pledging ourselves that as it never was our intention to hurt the Group Movement by permitting the reference, so there would be no occasion given for any further debate on that issue.

We repeated, however, that on any charge of *mala fides* on our part towards them we should have to open up the issue completely.—Ed. "B.W."]

It will be observed from the above notes that the "large correspondence" received by the Editor, included some letters of "a bitter and even ferocious quality". When we read that, we had to confess that the Group Movement was running true to form; for we have seldom met with any person capable of greater *bitterness and ferocity* when they were crossed, than the professed disciples of the theoretical "four absolutes". The Editor of *The British Weekly* was wise to add, "That on any charge of *mala fides* on our part toward them we should have to open up the issue completely." We fear, however, that such a charge is almost invariably made against those who rebuke anti-scriptural teaching.

And here let us remark that one may be safely and justly suspicious of the scripturalness of any religious movement that cannot be defended in good humour.

We are therefore not surprised at the tone of "Watchman's" article in *The British Weekly* of July 29th. We reproduce that article also, omitting only the last paragraphs which do not deal with the Oxford Group. The article was as follows:

"WATCHMAN'S" SECOND ARTICLE

In "*The British Weekly*", July 29th, 1937

MUSINGS ON A STORM

I will not say that man is a gentle creature. Neither will I, quoting the title of a play which in public places confronts me on the hoardings, say or exclaim, "What Beasts men are!" I am familiar with Shakespeare's immense ex-

travagance beginning, "What a piece of work is a man!"—a compliment which indeed puts us to shame. I am familiar also with other reflections upon man by the same creator, say, of Iago. Shakespeare therefore is not to be quoted on one side or the other. He seems to leave it at that—that man is a dangerous creature under the guidance of God and of reason. That is to say, under the control of the Christian faith and spirit, man is capable of reaching towering peaks of moral majesty and of sustaining himself through a lifetime upon a level which bears witness to his source and proper destiny. He is capable however of a disquieting descent into the abysmal, as though with little change in his physical appearance he might habituate himself to the behaviour of a worm, or of a tiger, or of an ape, or of a jackal. Hence most of us do well like Agag to walk delicately, when, as now, we are already on that fatal edge.

HUMAN NATURE

Here, as (I find) everywhere, the Bible has the first word, and it looks as though, despite all the new rhetoric of the bright ones in this brave new world, it was also going to be the last word, about human nature. The Bible in its simple way and as though the thing were incontrovertible to all who are not fools—the Bible says that man was made out of the dust. Out of the detritus and rubbish, out of the compost of wearing rocks and festering vegetation and the ooze of sinking ocean-beds! If that were all that the Bible has to say about our pedigree, all sorts of things would follow in our own minds. We might dismiss such a dismal account of human origins and say that it was the ignorant or discouraged idea of a sequestered people who knew nothing. And yet they were not an ignorant, neither were they a sequestered people, neither were they perpetually discouraged over life and over their part in life who first accepted the saying that man was made out of the dust of the earth. Through all the later treatment of the Text, through all the new assemblings and editings of the material, those who were responsible under an all-seeing Eye as they believed for the Bible as it has come down to us, passed that primitive insight or revelation and allowed it to stand in the context of Himalayan heights and depths. But the Bible says more than that man was made out of the dust. (The Bible is frequently saddled with sayings for which it is not strictly responsible.) The Bible says that God made man out of the dust. It says that God made man in His own image: that He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living soul.

THE GENESIS OF MAN

I do not know of any short saying which accounts for so many of the facts. I do not know any insight into human nature which explains so satisfactorily to our later reason man's inner conflict or man's historical career! Of course, words are words. We often preface what we may be about to say on some difficult matter by the phrase, "Humanly speaking." But there is nothing in such an admission which ought to qualify the value or authority of what we go on to say. After all, there is no other way of speaking. We must speak humanly, or for ever hold our peace!

What we who profess the Christian faith deduce from the doctrine of the Incarnation—the doctrine of the embodiment and manifestation in human flesh of the ultimate mystery of God—is that there is finally *one order of mind*; and that what Christ received from the Father, we may, nay we must, accept as the very truth for beings such as we are and placed as we are.

To leave as abruptly as I may this line, on which I meant to take only a step or two, I once again would like to put on record my own conviction, that just short of a hundred years ago when the new physics and biology seemed to knock the bottom out of any idealistic or theological theory of the human destiny, the Church in all its denominations lost a great opportunity! It is not yet too late. We should not be afraid to permit others, if they are indifferent to pedigrees, to accept the theory that man undoubtedly does seem to have a deplorable tendency to betray one or other symptoms of an extremely low origin. It would have then been the happy perhaps even the welcome, function and ministry of faith to proclaim the good news that this was by no means the whole truth about man; and that the whole truth is seen wrestling with the partial truth in man's indomitable dissatisfactions, in his "tears and agonies and cries."

TRUTH AND PASSION

I purposely interposed this quite sincere preamble in order to bring my mind, which was restive and fiery, under the control of reason, which is, so far, under the control of God; not of any demonic possession which we may mistake for God, but of the God whom we know in the teaching and discipline of the School of Christ.

For, here is another curious line of proof that there is something dangerous in the sources and make-up of us human beings so that any man is a fool who does not observe the recurring symptoms and take action upon them. It is this. We must take care how we regard warmth and heat as vindicating what we say. Everyone whose business mainly it is to write or to speak in public, knows how *passion* greatly improves his style. How fluent one becomes who is angry! To what words and to what sequence of words he seems now to have access! Why this?

DANTE'S GRADING OF SINS

Dante—in that marvellous architecture of the stages of the soul from the ice-bound cockpit of Hell to the Blessed vision of the Sempiternal Rose—divides those liabilities of our common human nature variously. Here is one of his divisions. There are sins almost purely of the *flesh*. These, in Dante's view, which seems startling to ourselves until we perceive that it has the very highest authority, are the least heinous. Then there are sins which are *partly* of the *flesh* and *partly* of the *spirit*. *Anger* is such a sin. So is *lust*, which is the sophistication of a natural impulse. The most heinous of sins, in the strict and theological sense of the phrase, the most damnable of sins are sins of *hatred*, culminating in the sin of *treachery*. These sins of treachery have in turn a gradation of their own. Here is the order of their infernality:

There is treachery against *friends*; against *benefactors*; and finally against *God*! Thus, when we complete the dark journey with our unflinching guide, when we reach the ice-bound centre of the abyss, we come upon *Judas* half-buried in the central mouth of Lucifer, Judas who took a sop from the hand of Christ and went out and betrayed Him. But my point is, that the most dangerous expression of ourselves which we can indulge is one like wrath or anger. For, in wrath, in anger, in resentment, we may be sincere, and the occasion may seem to us to justify us. Words also leap to our tongue, ideas, retorts—even designs. We may easily feel that we are beyond ourselves, and that this afflatus is proof that even God is with us. And yet the truth about us at such a moment may be, not that we are *beyond* ourselves, as St. Paul was sometimes, beyond himself and in sight of God. The truth about us may all the while be that we are *beneath* ourselves and that the lights on the horizon are *not* the lights of the Heavenly City.

SOME DIFFICULT DAYS

This is all to say that it would be affectation and a studied insincerity were I to conceal completely the wound which was inflicted upon me by some people last week. I was not prepared for such suspicions. Neither was I prepared for such ingratitude. In not a single one of the bitter letters which reached me was there any attempt to deal with the points which I raised. Every such letter was indeed of the nature of a threatening letter. Some reached me not directly, having been addressed to those who probably, had they been worldly men, might have *cast me to the lions*, as the honourable phrase has it.

But there: it would be a pity if, having fought a good fight against my insurgent mood, I should in these final paragraphs break down, or the Devil, in his usual form as an Angel of Light, should make his own use of me.

MY BONA FIDES

No! Far from that, I shall take pains so that those who write to me in bitterness may even yet write to me in shame.

For what I had proposed to write in last week's issue, in support of what I had written in the paragraphs which these resented, was—to call upon the Churches of this land immediately to copy and imitate and pursue, with their own much truer and more exact knowledge of the British Soul and the British History, those matters of technique in the approach to human souls, those methods and forms and occasions of intercourse and assembly which by general admission (my own long since declared) are the characteristic contribution of the Group Movement to the strategy of the army of the

living God. If "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," and if we live to learn, this will be my answer, and, at the same time, my duty.

Plans are forming in my mind which later, if God spares me, I shall urge from time to time. For what a gesture of "sharing" that will be, when this movement sets forth and offers to the Churches of the world the considered experience it itself has had of the many-coloured wisdom of God!

Let no one be offended if, in a word and a word only, I thank those who have written to me on the other side.

I have written, as I have written, quite freely, and free from the horrible weakness of fear. As one gets older, worldly security means less and less; so that one approaches, still indeed at a great distance, to the mood and outlook of our Master who could say, though still young and with everything before Him, "The world cometh and findeth nothing in Me!"

Which grace may God give to us all!

Now that our readers have read "Watchman's" second article, we call attention to the paragraph headed, "Some Difficult Days". Please read it again. He speaks about "the wound which was inflicted upon me by some people last week", and tells us he was not prepared for such suspicions or for such ingratitude; and that in not a single one of "the bitter letters" which reached him was there any attempt to meet the points which he raised. How familiar we are with this! And this also, "Every such letter was indeed of the nature of a threatening letter." We almost smiled when we read it, for we had passed through it all more than four years ago—and particularly the objections, made indirectly, by addressing the editor's friends whom, as he says, "had they been worldly men, might have cast me to the lions, as the honourable phrase has it."

We are profoundly grateful for the splendid piece of work thus done by "Watchman". His methods perhaps are a little less direct than ours, and possibly somewhat more gentle; but it interested us to observe that by far the greater part of his article was avowedly written in order to bring himself into a mood and attitude which would allow him to be gentle.

In the same issue which contains "Watchman's" second article, July 29th, there is an article entitled, "The British Weekly and the Oxford Group". It bears the initials, "P.H.W." We call attention to the second paragraph from the end, which for emphasis, we have printed in italics. It is a striking commentary on the quality of the "guidance" some of the members of the Oxford Group receive. Following is the article:

"THE BRITISH WEEKLY" AND THE OXFORD GROUP

*By the former Assistant to the Editor of the "B.W."
July 29th, 1937*

Absolute honesty is a quality about which we have heard much during the last five years. And let us hope that we shall hear more about it in the future. For it is a Christian quality—one of "the fruits of the Spirit."

This article, which is likely to be of interest both to those who have wondered why *The British Weekly* has given so much space to the Oxford Group during the last four years and to those who have wondered why *The British Weekly* has not given more space to the Oxford Group is an effort to reach towards that unattainable perfection, Absolute Honesty.

In the summer of 1933 *The British Weekly* was so impressed with the Oxford Group that we offered to publish a complete Supplement on the work of the Movement at the time of the great annual House Parties in Oxford.

It was natural that the writer of this article, himself closely connected with the paper, and at that time an assistant to the Editor, should be asked to undertake the editing and preparation of that Supplement.

Many readers will remember it. It was a great success, in that it gave good expression to the vital message of the

Group. It was easily understood. The regular readers of the paper were glad to know more about a movement on which they had only second or third-hand information, and the Oxford Group themselves were glad to have a paper with the tradition of *The British Weekly* to sponsor their cause and help them interpret their message, the practicality of the "life of Christ," to the world.

From that day on *The British Weekly* has hardly published one single issue without some news about the Oxford Group intended to be constructively helpful to the work of the Group. If it has not been helpful that is either because those who have written it have not expressed their news in a way to win the hearts of the readers, or because the readers have not wished to open their hearts to anything which might make such big demands on them as to upset the even working of their lives.

In a great many cases the Oxford Group News has been extremely helpful to readers. In other cases it has not, and for both the reasons mentioned above. Often the news has not been expressed in a style that could appeal to readers, and often readers have refused to consider the great surrender for fear of the consequences.

Any honest man will admit all this.

The reason why *The British Weekly* has had this continual flow of Oxford Group News is because there was one, to me at any rate, important result of that first Oxford Group Supplement. It persuaded me to go to a House Party where, to my eternal thankfulness, I came to a personal experience of Christ which, as it has grown, has become increasingly real.

It was natural that I should want others to find the same happiness and come to the same experience. Indeed, it was an urgent command which one could not and cannot gainsay. It seemed then, and it seems now, that one of the ways ready to hand was through the columns of *The British Weekly*. The Editor's loyal support and understanding prompted him to quick agreement, and from that day to this Oxford Group News has been a feature of *The British Weekly*.

There are many different ways of giving news. Ten papers report the same scene in ten different ways. And of nothing is this more true than of a religious meeting, because the tone of the report depends so entirely on the spiritual sensibility of the reporter at that moment to that particular meeting. We have all seen reports of the same Oxford Group Meetings in the secular press and in *The British Weekly*. If one had not known otherwise one would have assumed that they referred to two different meetings.

The Oxford Group reports in *The British Weekly* have always been unstinted praise. They have often reported, in fact, what those actually taking a leading part felt; or perhaps what they hoped other people felt. They have not been critical reports. And this has, of course, been of set purpose. It has been our intention to be wholly constructive and to bring in no criticisms of detail to take away from the positive Gospel of Christianity.

But this method of reporting has not been satisfactory. It has not, in fact, done the Oxford Group justice, for the simple reason that no person is ever infallible, nor is a movement nor an institution. And to imply invariable success is to ask for sceptical disbelief. It is not true to life. And no one's life will ever be influenced by something that is not true to life.

From now on, therefore, *The British Weekly* will be truer to its own traditions in its reporting of Oxford Group news than it has been hitherto. It will take more advantage of the freedom which it has always had but never exercised, to criticize whatever seems unlike Christ in the Oxford Group as in anything else. By so doing it will be more absolutely honest than it has been, and it will be doing the Oxford Group a greater service than it has in the past by simply printing their own reports.

Let me not be misunderstood. We are not refusing the Oxford Group something which they want. This feeling that the past method of reporting Oxford Group news cannot go on is mutual. The Oxford Group do not want their "official reports," which emanate from what has come to be their headquarters in this country at Brown's Hotel, to be printed in a paper which permits such critical articles as "Watchman's" of a fortnight ago.

They have, in fact, in a broadside of letters to the Editor and the Publishers of *The British Weekly*, demanded "a full retraction" of "Watchman's" article.

But "Watchman" is entitled to his own personal opinion whether we agree with him or not, and cannot alter it to orders. So a "full retraction" will not be forthcoming.

We are, however, still of the opinion that the Oxford Group, and thousands outside their influence, are rendering the greatest possible service by "insisting upon the necessity for listening in to God, to find His plan for ourselves and the world"—in the words of the Minister of Labour. And we will go all the way with Mr. Ernest Brown when he goes on to say, "Human ingenuity and human intelligence have not found solutions for the heavy problems resulting from conflicting interests and passions which the statesmen of the world are facing to-day. There are to-day more, graver and more complex problems than men have ever been called upon to face. We can only find the possible ways out in a Quiet Time with God."

There are a number of Oxford Group enthusiasts, among whom I am happy to number many close friends, who will nevertheless take this whole episode as a "cooling off" of religious fervour on our part, more particularly on my part. But they will be wrong. Christ means more to me now than He ever did before.

Some of these, and others whom I do not know personally, have already accused "Watchman" of malicious intent to retard the work of Christ in the world, just because he has given voice to the thoughts of his own soul on a spiritual matter very near to his heart, and in doing so has criticised certain aspects of Oxford Group work. I do not understand these friends of mine who profess quite honestly to follow the guidance of God, accusing, as they have, a man of spiritual insight, with whom they do not see eye to eye, of being the mouthpiece of the anti-Christ because he follows the guidance that comes to him from God.

And I hope that before they meet either "Watchman" or me face to face they will rise to the heights of a humility that does not come easy to any of us and apologise for an insult they can hardly have intended.

—P. H.-W.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

CANNINGTON—Rev. W. Lempriere. On August 1st the Cannington Regular Baptist Church celebrated its Golden Jubilee. A large number of former members and friends gathered to give expression to the warm feeling which they entertain for the church, and the services were conducted by the present pastor Rev. W. Lempriere. Present at the morning service, and assisting, was a former pastor, Rev. G. Bentley of Toronto, who brought cordial greetings and a message in song which was much appreciated. Mr. Bentley was accompanied at the piano by his daughter Miss Olive Bentley. Miss Hilda Broad, granddaughter of a highly respected charter member, Mrs. Thomas Gregg, addressed the Sunday school.

An honoured guest at the evening service was another former pastor, Rev. J. Greening of Galway, N.Y. Special music was provided at both services by Misses K. and I. Twiss of Toronto. Mrs. Cooper of Sunderland presided at the piano.

Following the morning service a happy hour of fellowship was enjoyed when the present members entertained their out-of-town guests at a delightful luncheon served in the schoolroom of the church. At this time Mrs. Thomas Gregg, the first charter member and for fifty years a faithful and active member, was presented with a beautiful basket of red roses. Mrs. Gregg also had the honour of cutting the handsome birthday cake decked with fifty glowing candles each set in a golden rose, which centred the luncheon table. Mr. Harris Evans of Toronto, a former member, spoke briefly, as did Mrs. William Allin.

From a brief outline of the church's history given by the pastor, it was learned that the first Baptist congregation in this place was organized on July 26, 1887, by Pastor Thom. About this time the Presbyterian congregation who had been worshipping in a little frame church decided to build a new and larger edifice. Their former church building was offered for sale, and three friends from the Manilla circuit purchased the building and presented it to the Baptist congregation. There, services were held until 1902 when under the leadership of the Rev. George Daniels the present edifice was erected.

GERALDTON—Pastor G. B. Hicks. "We are beginning to see men moved by the Spirit of God," writes Pastor Hicks. "A number are seriously considering their need of Jesus Christ. We have had some good heart-to-heart talks with a number. We had nine at our prayer meeting on Wednesday, a blacksmith from Little Long Lac Mine, a miner and his wife from Bankfield, a railroader and his wife from Geraldton, a medical doctor temporarily in Geraldton, a barber in Geraldton, a road worker, and myself. These represent a wide field where their influence for Christ will count."

STRASBOURG, SASK.—Pastor D. S. Dinnick. Recently the Union was privileged to assist the needy pastorate which is ministered to by a former Seminary student, Mr. Donald S. Dinnick. In answer to our letter he writes, "Little can you realize what joy and deep gratitude welled up in my heart when I received your letter last Thursday. May God richly reward you for the interest which you have taken in the work here."

"Last year I borrowed a model T Ford car and drove it up until Christmas. It was very cold, however, riding thirty and thirty-five miles in this open car, and especially when the wind was blowing. The wind is certainly cold out West, and there is little to stop it in its mad sweep across the country. I felt that I should have a closed car, and made it a definite matter of prayer, and in the spring I looked for my answer. As I inquired, I discovered that the postmaster here had a very good model A Ford which had been struck on the side with a truck. After careful deliberation I bought it for \$100.00. For over two weeks I worked on it getting it into running order, and after having it carefully checked over by a garage man, I have driven it well over two thousand miles. This car has proved to be a real asset to my work. I could not visit and conduct meetings at the outlying points without it. On Saturday nights I take turns with another young man and we drive a carload of our young people to a town thirty miles west of here and conduct open air services. We have well over a hundred people listen attentively every Saturday night. God is blessing both the messengers and the messages in sermon and song. On Sunday morning I drive around the country and collect all the children I can and adults for Church and Bible School. Frequently I have come into the school yard with thirteen in my car. I looked forward to a good crop this fall when I could assist the farmers and finish paying for my car, but this privilege has been denied because of the 90% crop failure in this district. A few minutes before your letter arrived at the station I had been talking to the postmaster and asking if he would extend my time for the next payment. What a joy, however, it was, after the mail had been sorted, to pay him in full for my car! I shall never forget this kindness which the Union has shown. I trust that the encouragement which has been received through this gift will be used in winning precious souls for Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us."

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Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 1 3rd Quarter Lesson 34 August 22, 1937

OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

CHRIST MANIFESTS POWER OVER DEATH

Lesson Text: Luke 8.

Golden Text: "I am the resurrection and the life."

—John 11:25.

I. Power to Teach—verses 1-21.

1. Preaching glad tidings—verses 1-3. Throughout every town and village in Galilee the Master went, preaching the good tidings. He was accompanied by the twelve apostles, and assisted by the ministrations of faithful women. Mary Magdalene is mentioned among the women at the cross (Matt. 27:56; John 19:25), at the tomb (Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47; 16:1), and she was the first to behold her risen Lord (Mark 16:9; John 20:1, 11-18). Joanna also went early to the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection (Luke 24:10).

2. Four classes of hearers—verses 4-15.

Compare Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20.

The meaning of the parable of the sower is explained by Christ Himself. The sower represents the Son of man, the field is the world, and the seed is the Word of God.

The four classes of hearers are described by the four kinds of ground. The seed sown by the wayside, the hard path trampled by many feet, can find no place to take root. It rests upon the hard surface for a short time, only to be snatched away by the birds. So does the callous one hear the Word without understanding it. He receives not the truth in the love of it; it finds no lodgement in his heart, and is quickly snatched away by Satan.

The superficial hearer is compared to the rocky ground with little soil, where plants exhibit quick growth of tops, but no roots to supply moisture or strength. He makes an outward show of receiving the Word with joy, but he has no strong foundation of character upon which the truth may rest. He cannot endure the test of tribulation and persecution for the Word's sake.

The hearts of some are pre-occupied, like the ground already thick with thorns which choke all other plants. The cares of this life, its deceitful riches, its pleasures and lusts, leave no room for spiritual interests.

Those seeds which fall on good prepared ground produce plants and fruit. The honest and good of hearts listen to the Word, hold it fast, profit by it, and patiently wait for it to come to fruition in their lives.

3. Taking heed how we hear—verses 16-18.

Compare Matt. 5:15, 16; Mark 4:21-25.

Knowledge is frequently spoken of as light (2 Cor. 4:6), and ignorance as darkness (John 8:12). A lamp is not to be hidden, but placed on a lampstand, in a position to give light to all (Matt. 5:16; Luke 11:33). God does not give spiritual knowledge to those who desire it for selfish enjoyment, but to those who wish to be a blessing to others. To the one who uses his knowledge of the truth, God will reveal more truth (Mark 4:24), whereas those who do not profit by what they know, will lose what they have. Muscles not exercised become useless.

4. Taking care to obey the truth—verses 19-21.

Compare Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35.

Spiritual relationships are more real than the ties of natural kinships. Disciples are as close to Christ as His mother and His brethren. Christ manifests Himself in a special way to those who hear and obey what He says to them (Luke 6:47-49; 1 John 2:5; John 14:21-24).

II. Power Over Nature—verses 22-25.

Compare Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41.

The Lake of Galilee is subject to sudden and severe storms. As the boat began to fill with water, and the disciples thought they were in danger, they forgot to show considera-

tion for their tired Master, and awakened Him with their cry: "Master, Master, we are perishing".

Christ had said, "Let us go over to the other side", and they should have trusted Him to perform what He had announced as His purpose. Their faith was overcome by panic and fear. Anyone can be calm when the skies are fair, but the Christian should show trust in God in the hour of storm (Psa. 56:3, 11).

In calming the sea and the wind Christ demonstrated His power in the realm of nature (Psa. 89:9; 107:25).

III. Power Over Demons—verses 26-39.

Compare Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20.

Christ had crossed the Sea of Galilee to heal this distressed man (compare John 4:4), whose body was tenanted by evil spirits. Notwithstanding his pitiable condition, he loved Christ, saw Him afar off, and ran to meet Him and to worship Him (Mark 5:6).

Constant antipathy exists between the holy Christ and sinful Satan and his emissaries. The request of the demons was granted, but their desire for safety was thwarted; the fulfilment of their request to be allowed to enter into the bodies of the swine contributed to their destruction.

In contrast to his former state of wretchedness, the man when healed in body, soul and spirit, was found clothed, and in his right mind. His attitude at the feet of Jesus betokens humility, gratitude, and the desire for instruction (Luke 10:39).

Though praying to go back with the Lord to Galilee, this man of Gadara was commissioned to stay and preach Christ in his own city. The people of this district were greatly in need of the Gospel testimony if we are to judge by the selfish cruelty they displayed on this occasion. They cared more for their swine than for the human sufferer; they bewailed the loss of their property, but failed to give thanks for the restoration of their fellow-citizen. They besought Christ to leave their coast.

IV. Power Over Disease—verses 43-48.

Compare Matt. 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34.

The healing of the woman suffering from a bleeding disease rendering her unclean in the eyes of the law (Lev. 15:19) illustrates the salvation of a sinner, unclean in the sight of God. She had spent all she had in vain attempts to find healing, just as the sinner seems to try all means of saving himself ere coming to Christ Who alone can save (Acts 4:12). By faith she came in contact with Christ, believing that to touch but His garment would bring healing. Multitudes may press around our Saviour, but no one is lost in the crowd, as far as He is concerned; every one who really comes to Him in faith will be saved. Though healed of her sickness by a secret touch, an open acknowledgment brought perfect assurance to her own heart, glory to God, and a testimony to all around (Rom. 10:9, 10).

V. Power Over Death—verses 40-42, 49-56.

Compare Matt. 9:18, 19, 23-26; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43.

Jairus, whose name is the same as Jair in the Old Testament (Numbers 32:41), meaning "enlightener", was a man of high station among men, but he realized his position before Christ, and bowed down, worshipping Him, as he besought Him to accompany him to the home where the daughter lay dying.

It would seem, at first sight, as though the Master had forgotten the sorrowing household when He allowed the crowd and the sick woman to detain Him, but His very delay was a token of His love (John 11:5, 6). Delays are not denials, and this interruption tested and perfected the nobleman's faith, while it also gave the Lord the opportunity to display His power over death.

The lamentations and wallings of the professional mourners caused a tumult which was not seemly, and prompted the Saviour to dismiss them. To Christ the maiden was asleep, but to the onlookers she was dead, and they laughed Him to scorn when He spoke of her as asleep (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:13, 14).

At the word of Christ her spirit returned to the body, and she was brought to life. Great indeed is the power of our Redeemer! He is the Resurrection and the Life. At His coming, the dead in Christ shall be raised, forever more incorruptible, and those living at that time will be transformed, forever more immortal (1 Cor. 15:51-57).