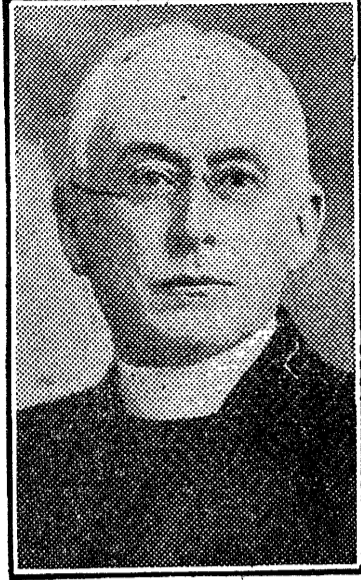


The Oxford Group



REV. J. W. H. MILNE, D.D.
Former Minister, Glebe United
Church, Ottawa.

SIN : CONFESSION : TESTIMONY

In the forefront of the Oxford Group movement is the question of sin. To those who refuse to face this issue it promises nothing, as its mission is for sinners only. It starts with a most exacting process of self-examination. Pretences, excuses and subterfuges must be swept out of the way.

Every sin—sins of omission: neglect of duty, indifference to the needs of others, failure to fulfill the promptings to higher things; sins of the spirit: conceit, pride, bad temper, covetousness, envy and censoriousness; sins of the flesh: coarse and lustful thinking, appetites that degrade, and habits that destroy; sins of the home: conjugal infelicity, unseemly wrangling, petty jealousies; sins against one's neighbor: unbrotherliness, injustice, dishonest dealing, everything that wounds and separates man from man; a brood of other sins impossible to catalogue—must be named, owned and confessed.

The demand for transparent honesty is inexorable. First, one must be honest with one's self. In the inner precinct of one's soul, each man must squarely and unflinchingly deal with himself; a self that is deceitful above all things and desperately evasive.

But this is not all the Oxford Group insist. A man must be honest with his fellow man: if he has injured a brother, he must seek forgiveness; if he has offended, he must apologize; if he has been untruthful or dishonest, he must do all in his power to make amends. Then, with open heart and mind, he must turn Godward, and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts."

There is one more step, confession or "sharing"—from which many shrink—must be made, not necessarily in public, but to the one who has been injured, or to some one who understands. The acknowledgment of one's sin may be overwhelmingly humiliating, but without it there can be no sure sense of pardon, no incoming of new life, no inrushing of new joy.

Herein is to be found the sanity and permanence of the Group movement. He who is convinced of sin is not likely to assume infallibility, or sit in judgment of his fellow man, or become the creature of religious vagaries. Rather, he will think soberly, and in this there is a guarantee of steadfastness and endurance.

Following this there comes another fact, which is rapidly making the Oxford Group movement a mighty revivifying force throughout the world. It is the fascinating, convincing, irresistible power of personal testimony. The pristine glory of the Primitive Church was the narration of the radiant experience that the disciples found in Jesus Christ. They could not but speak the things they had seen and heard, and daily there was added to the Church such as were being saved.

The Oxford Group movement is the things they have seen and of today something of the freshness, naturalness, directness, reality, and life-changing power of those early days.

Criticism there may be: but in times like these, when men and women and children are suffering: when fond hopes are being shattered: when there is a growing conviction that "a man's life consisteth not in the things which he possesseth: when vaunted pleasure has failed to satisfy: we should silence every adverse word, and welcome with gladness a movement so full of promise, not merely for personal but social salvation.

J. W. H. MILNE.