

---

# READER

---

## THE OXFORD GROUP

### A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

---

*To the Editor of The Star*

Sir,—Your timely reference to this body in the leading columns of *The Star* does not profess to enter into any controversy. I have attended meetings of the group in Johannesburg. History shows that mere controversy in religion is barren of results; and philosophy explains that this is necessarily so since, in the final test, religion and religious belief are affairs which involve and demand more than the simple exercise of the debating or logical faculty of the human brain.

It is for this reason that the Group discourages mere argument as an aid to the understanding of its principles and work. That there is a tendency in Group circles to carry this anti-argument policy too far is possibly a justifiable criticism and my own impression is that this tendency should be very carefully watched. Properly used, the free interchange of thought and idea are as necessary there as in other branches of the higher forms of intelligent effort.

When I first attended a meeting of the Group two years ago I had just succeeded in ridding my mind of an intellectual agnosticism which had taken years of effort to build up. But I claimed no real religion and had nothing to take its place. Consequently, I went to that meeting with a mind fully made up to resist to the last ditch any attempt to impose on my credulity. The one thing I wanted to hang on to was my independence of mind and, thus protected, if not actually prejudiced, I sat through the proceedings. I was a total stranger. Beyond introducing myself by name, nobody knew me. All I did was to listen to ordinary men like myself who spoke, calmly, quietly and sincerely of victories over evils which for years had poisoned their happiness and made their lives empty and useless and which happily, they had been delivered of. In some cases seemingly small faults had been responsible for much misunderstanding and unhappiness.

I think I have sufficiently indicated that I am not of the easy, gullible sort. Yet these men completely satisfied me that their evidence was true. For the first time I realised what opportunities I had lost in the past of a freer, fuller and more glorious life; and for the first time I caught a glimpse of the figure of Christ and sensed His presence; and for the first time in my life I realised my mistake of attributing mainly to the psychological value of the martyrdom the spread and influence of His gospel during the 19 centuries that have passed.

Now what does this experience mean? To gain in the short space of one hour a glimpse of truths which had been obscured from one's mental vision for a life-time is more than an ordinary achievement. Briefly, in so far as it concerns me, it meant a victory over self. Psychology teaches that the realisation of certain values in the mental process cannot be achieved while the intrusion of self is there, blurring the scene.

It really is surprising how little some of us see until we get the right lenses. Men will say—"How can these be had?" At this stage we get back to the opening lines of this letter. The lenses cannot be prescribed in terms of optic science. Science itself is not yet big enough for a formula which embraces all space and all time. But it is the job of the Oxford Group to endeavour to help all who are trying to find the formula and so do their bit in bringing about Christ's promise of God's Kingdom on earth.

Something has to be done to save mankind from itself, its machines and its idols of gold and clay, and it seems to me the Oxford Group, through Christ, is doing it.

JOHN MORTON.