

EDITORIAL

BUCHMANISM, miscalled the Oxford Group Movement, is a pathetic and even tragic attempt to satisfy a widespread craving for a less materialistic existence. Though it is not recognized as such, this craving is expressive of the needs of men who are "naturaliter Christiani." Religion for the many, in this industrial and mechanized age of ours, has become conventional and therefore futile and distasteful. The Incarnation is God's revelation of the practical implications of religion; Christianity which is not practical Christianity is a mere counterfeit. But, on the other hand, Christianity which appreciates the appeal and practical value of Our Lord's human virtues, yet fails to pass on from the visible things of God to the invisible, is tragic in its futility. The Incarnation is not merely a revelation of man; much more importantly, it is a Revelation of God and of man's relation to God. Buchmanism has had an amazing success, but to the children who ask for bread it has given a stone. "Practical Christianity," we read in a popular Sunday paper, "as advocated by the Oxford Group, is making great changes in this resort" (the correspondent writes from Bournemouth), "changes often conceived, but never realized, by political idealists. Great businesses in this beautiful and prosperous town are being run on what is described as a 'God-guided' basis—and they are running more smoothly and more successfully than ever." The House Party at Bournemouth represents "the nation-wide campaign which has been launched to let Britons know of the power and beauty of practical Christianity." We are told further that "one of Bournemouth's best known business men, who is interested in some seventeen progressive businesses and who controls no fewer than five hotels, is one of those who is running his affairs on the God-guided basis." It is not our present concern to develop the case against Buchmanism (this has already been done in BLACKFRIARS, for example December, 1930), still less to question the sincerity of the "change" it produces in its converts; our purpose is to urge again that *the fields are ripe for the harvest* and there are husbandmen abroad who are not of the household of the faith. We do not say this in any spirit of bigotry and jealousy, but from a simple recognition of the fact that the

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supernatural faith and morals of the Incarnation, preserved and taught by the Catholic Church, alone can satisfy the craving of which we speak, and of the fact that we do not yet seem to be completely alive to our opportunities and our obligations in the matter. The will for self-sacrifice and "uplift" which is attracted, but cannot be fulfilled, by Buchmanite "changing" is an instinctive movement of the soul seeking God. Here are "men of good will" ready to hear the "good tidings" of the Incarnation which the Catholic Faith alone can bring them, and *woe is me if I preach not the Gospel*.

We recognize the futility of thus echoing the call to Catholic Action unless we can suggest, at the same time, some means whereby it may be brought within the sphere of practical politics. Happily we are in a position to do this. There is a scheme afoot, we are informed, sponsored by a group of priests and important lay Catholics and encouraged by approval from a member of the Hierarchy, to develop what may be called the "social approach" to the conversion of England. The many who show evident interest in the "better things," and yet have no particular use for "religion" in the formal sense, cannot be reached by our priests through the ordinary channels and so remain in ignorance of the great and eminently practical truths of the Catholic Faith which could, if they only knew it, give them just what they are looking for—a philosophy and explanation of life. Tentative experiments on the part of certain zealous lay Catholics have already shown that in a friendly and social atmosphere the barriers of shyness, bigotry or reserve melt away and sincere discussion of Catholic truth is welcomed. The Buchmanites have adopted this method, and it is their mode of approach, much more than the half-truths of Christianity they inculcate, which explains their sweeping success. To that extent, surely, we may learn from them without becoming suspect; we have, at any rate, the example of St. Dominic in Languedoc to encourage us, who did not fear to adopt the methods of the Albigenses to save the people from their false teaching. Any of our readers who wish to know more of this truly apostolic proposal should apply to Miss Kessler, Templewood, Chalford, Glos., who is in a position to supply information concerning it.