

Wednesday, October 4, 1933.

A BISHOP AND THE "OXFORD GROUP"

EXPERIENCES AT OXFORD

FIRST-HAND VIEW OF THE "GROUP" MOVEMENT

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING POST

Sir,—Considerable interest in the coming work of the Oxford Groups in London having been recently aroused, it may not be without interest to your readers if I set down simply the reasons which have led me to identify myself with the movement, and to take an active part in its undertakings.

What I had previously read about the Groups had led me, before reaching England in the middle of June, to express my desire to take part in a House Party, and I was invited to that which was to be held at Oxford from June 30 to July 17. Engagements had been made for me which precluded my attendance before July 12, but I hoped that in four days I might see and hear sufficient to enable me to form a just estimate of the value of the movement. Ultimately my stay was extended to eight days, to include the subsequent days.

I am a bachelor without any home in England, and few relations and friends in this country after forty-four years spent in India. I was feeling somewhat lonely in a strange land, so perhaps the first thing that struck me was the wonderful spirit of fellowship which characterised the group in Lady Margaret Hall, where I was lodged. This was one of four House Parties running concurrently, and numbering some five thousand people in all.

ONENESS

The spirit of goodwill and friendship seemed to permeate the whole company of some five hundred persons who were gathered at that time at Lady Margaret Hall with the single object of learning the secret of living the life which is life indeed, or of perfecting themselves in that art. Barriers of race and sect were broken down, and the oneness of believers in Christ was realised. A common aim and a common belief in the essential elements of the Christian faith, with all controversial matters ruled out, helped us to realise something of the joy of that unity for which Christ had prayed.

The meetings were characterised by a joyousness which was infectious. The language used was that which the several speakers were accustomed to use in the course of ordinary conversation. I frankly admit that my own vocabulary was enlarged in the course of the eight days that I spent with the Group, but it seemed to me natural that all should speak in the language which they knew and through which they could best express their meaning.

Though each meeting was in charge of a single person, who was more often a young man or woman than one of more mature years, the leader had at his disposal a team of five or more persons who each contributed when called upon to the presentation of the subject under consideration. This Team work struck me at once as most admirable. It ran through the whole arrangements of the House Party, and was as much in evidence in the Office as in the meetings. Everywhere calm, unruffled cheerfulness and an absence of worry or irritation. I soon discovered that the secret of this was twofold; the practice of

"Sharing," and faith in the Guidance of the Spirit of God.

"SHARING"

Sharing is one of the fundamental principles of the Oxford Group, and has the twofold function of Confession and Witness, but as applied to the securing of perfect team work, it is primarily the complete readiness to tell a fellow-member of any thought or feeling of resentment or disapproval regarding anything he may have done or said, or of jealousy for any preference or praise that may have fallen to his share. On the other hand, it means the frank criticism of a fellow-member of the team in the spirit of love, which robs it of any sting and ensures for it a welcome and ready attention.

This bond of fellowship is further cemented by the assurance that in the Quiet Time that preceded every meeting, the Guidance of the Holy Spirit has been received, and the part that each has to play in the combined work, is of His appointing, which none would for a moment desire to question. It is this assurance of guidance, which is one of the fundamental beliefs of the Groups, that gives to the whole team that spirit of hopefulness which animates them at all times.

God has His plan for the world and for each member of His Body, through whom that plan is to be carried out. Christ is the Head of His Body, the Church, and what can be more natural than that He should guide each member to a right understanding of what He wills him to do. He has promised His disciples that the works which He did should they do also, and, indeed, greater works than these because He was going to the Father.

"MIRACLES BEFORE MY EYES"

They expect Him to fulfil His promise and He does. During those eight days, and since then at the House Party at Cambridge, I have seen miracles happen before my eyes, and in lives redirected to the service of God and release gained from burdensome problems, I have found the evidence which has convinced me of the power and willingness of the living Christ to fulfil His purpose of redemptive love through those who will without reserve place themselves and all that they are or possess at His disposal.

That is, we believe, the hope for the world, God guiding those whose minds are open to His inspiration, and whose wills are surrendered to His obedience, in every department of personal, social, national and international life. The Groups consist of men and women who are united for this purpose, and who seek by means of personal evangelism to win their fellows to this service.

In order to have the opportunity of closer association with the Oxford Groups in London, I applied for and was granted a two months' extension of my leave before returning to India. The vision gained at Oxford was abundantly confirmed at the subsequent House Party at Cambridge. I look forward to the coming campaign in London with full assurance of faith.

FOSS CALCUTTA,
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