

1,000 Here Hail 'Groups' as New Religious Force

Christian Fellowship Holds Dinner; Testimonials on Power of Faith Offered

Personal Experiences Told

Social, Financial and Church Life of City Represented

Testimonials to the power of personal religious experience through conversions and surrender to Christ were given by a dozen speakers at a dinner last night at the Plaza, held under the auspices of "The Groups," a new religious movement described as "A First Century Christian Fellowship." The witnesses to the efficacy of the non-institutional, inter-denominational experiment in personal evangelism, which is the essence of "The Groups" movement, were men and women from New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Delaware, Kentucky and North Carolina in this country and from Oxford, England, and Aberdeen, Scotland.

More than 1,000 persons filled the grand ballroom of the hotel and overflow groups were cared for in adjoining rooms. Many persons prominent in the social, financial and religious life of the city were on the dinner committee and had reserved tables for groups of guests. The dinner was the first large gathering of "The Groups" here and served as a report meeting on recent campaigns which teams of the fellowship enthusiasts have conducted in Louisville, Ky., and Asheville, N. C.

Manning Indorses Movement

Telegrams of praise and indorsement were read from Bishop Charles E. Woodcock, of Kentucky, and also from Bishop William T. Manning, who was on the dinner committee but was unable to be present.

Although most of the talks took the form of "confession" reports of conversion and personal experience in the new brotherhood, several of the speakers saw in the spirit of the movement not only a release from personal boredom and perplexities of the present age, but a force for revitalization of the church, an escape from increasing spiritual lethargy and paganism, a moral equivalent for war and a solution for "the apparently insoluble" problems of international affairs.

Albert H. Ely jr. introduced the Rev. Ray Foote Purdy, chairman of the meeting, who predicted that the movement would effect a spiritual reawakening in New York City. "The experience which is felt by those who are influenced by the movement," he said, "holds the solution of the problems of the day."

Oxford Man Tells Experience

"Thirteen years ago we were mobilized against a foreign foe," he recalled. "Today we are unmobilized and the foe with which we contend is insidious

and not easy to find. Theologically, it is called sin, but by whatever name it is called it is within us and must be fought."

Frank Bygott, of Oxford, told the diners that two years ago he was captain of the boat club at Wadham College and that one day the coxswain of the crew came to him and told him he had found something more interesting than rowing.

"I thought he must have become temporarily insane," Mr. Bygott said, "but I asked him what it was. He said that the thing which was better than rowing was a personal relationship with Christ.

"I was bored—there are a tremendous lot of people at Oxford today who are bored—I knew fears and worries and was not genuinely happy, so I listened to my friend. I found that winning people to Christ is the greatest adventure in life. Christ is the master key who will fit each one of us."

Tribute Paid Organizer

Mrs. A. Cameron Wilson, of Aberdeen, Scotland, explained that before her conversion to the new movement her religion had been "a bargain with God," and that in times of crisis and trouble she had felt that God had not kept His part of the bargain.

"Now," she said, "I have attained a peace that material things, even loss of money, cannot influence. I know that nothing can happen to me that will make any difference."

The Rev. Samuel M. Shoemaker jr., rector of Calvary Episcopal Church, told of the early days of the movement and paid high tribute to its originator, the Rev. Frank N. D. Buchman, now in England.

Emphasizing the importance of introducing into religion the element of personal religion, he chided the pastors who are too busy to attend to the psychic ills of their church members, who, in consequence, "go to a psychiatrist and pay him \$25 for his advice."

"A barnacle," said the Rev. G. Floyd Rogers, of Asheville, "is a shell fish that attaches itself to something from which it gets no nourishment. That's a very accurate description of many church members today. This movement is doing much to remedy that condition of affairs."

Miss Jean Barker, president of the Junior League of Louisville, said that what had impressed her "terrifically" was the happiness, "real happiness, sharing happiness, not smug and self-centered," of the members of the group who came to Louisville.

Other speakers were Peyton H. Hoge, Jr., of Louisville; Major George M. Chescheir, polo player and officer in the Kentucky National Guard; H. Alexander Smith, formerly of the faculty of Princeton University; G. W. Hall Smith, of Brown Brothers, Providence, R. I.; Miss Margery Speakman, of Wilmington, Del., and the Rev. C. Scoville Wishard, of Summit, N. J.

The Rt. Rev. Arthur Selden Lloyd delivered the invocation, and the Rev. Dubois S. Morris, of Central Presbyterian Church, the benediction.

Among those at the dinner were District Attorney Thomas C. T. Crain, Curtis B. Dall, Mr. and Mrs. Percy J. Ebbott, Mr. and Mrs. William Fellowes Morgan, the Rt. Rev. Charles K. Gilbert, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert L. Satterlee, William J. Schieffelin, the Rev. Ralph W. Sockman, Bishop Ernest M. Stires and Dr. and Mrs. Edward D. Truesdell.