

REVIVAL IN THE STRAND

A SPRINGBOK TESTIFIES

AND AN ADMIRAL

By **HUGH REDWOOD**

*Absolute honesty,
Absolute purity,
Absolute unselfishness,
Absolute love.*

A THOUSAND people listened for two hours and a half last night to the personal testimonies of a dozen men and women who have found it possible, by their unqualified acceptance of the principles of first-century Christianity, to live their lives in accordance with these ideals—the ideals of the Oxford Group Movement.

Try to picture it. One of the Springbok forwards declaring that "Jesus Christ has become a reality." Telling how, in his own Johannesburg, in the gold-reef city, business men are forming the habit of meeting together to speak about the wonder of Christ in their daily lives.

An Admiral of the British Navy, with a breezy quarter-deck style, telling of spiritual experiences in Geneva; proclaiming the failure of human methods to cure the world's sickness, foreshadowing the day when there will be international conferences on a new pattern, when nations will meet to "share" their mistakes and failures and to acclaim the power of God to solve their problems by changing nations' hearts.

WORLD IN A BASEMENT

A London doctor's wife, with a moving story of God in the home and the nursery; an Oxford rowing man, former president of his boat club, to tell how his life had been changed because the coxswain of his college crew found God; a canon of the English Church, a Congregational parson, an American woman (who had also been to Geneva and had found that God can eradicate fear), a plain-spoken man from a London business house; a Fleet-street journalist, and others equally contrasted, equally characteristic.

And all this took place without advertisement, not in a church or chapel, or in one of the major public halls, but in the Strand, in the basement of Australia House, at the very gateway of Fleet-street, the street of news.

The room was designed to seat 400 people. Six hundred sat on chairs, three hundred stood, and a hundred or so sat on the floor or on the edge of the platform. They were men and women of all types and many nationalities. Some were in evening dress, some in ordinary workaday attire.

The Far East, the Far West and the Antipodes were all represented. Japs and Chinese, Indians and Malays were there, with English, Americans, Canadians, Australians, Germans and Scandinavians.

HUNGRY TO HEAR

And scarcely a mile away over a thousand people were crowded outside the locked doors of the Westminster Central Hall, unable to gain admission to the Salvation Army's great revival meeting, convened to witness to the self-same power.

The Oxford Groups have eschewed publicity, but they cannot escape it longer, and last night's experience is proof that they should not try. The crowd were hungry to hear them. There was no mistaking that.

Howard Rose, one of the pioneers of the movement in this country and South Africa, was in the chair, and told a little of the astonishing manner in which this movement has spread. We heard from George Daneel, of the Springbok team (who is a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church) how Christ is with him in the football field as well as in the pulpit.

We heard from Canon Child, of St. Helens, concerning the startling success of a "group" campaign in that town, the campaigners including, as someone else said, an admiral, a brigadier-general, an ex-Communist and a servant girl.

And Vice-Admiral Drury-Lowe, who told us that he "went to sea at the age of 15 and was still at sea, in more respects than one," described a ten days' "house party" at Geneva, a ten days' meeting of men desirous of bearing each other's burdens and spreading the news of the one great hope that is in the power of God.

It fell to me to sum up the meeting. I told them my own experience, which came to me not through the groups, but along exactly parallel lines.

I told them what I believe to be the fact, that a great movement is afoot, of which the Oxford Group movement is but a single manifestation; that the Press must play its part in it, because it is so true that "what the people want to-day is good news," and this is really the only news that matters; that the principal lessons we need to learn are those of consecration and surrender, which are at the very root and foundation of the groups and are the secret of their success.

A thousand people sat in silence for a few prayer-laden moments. Howard Rose pleaded with them to try the effect on their own lives of the daily practice of the "quiet time"—that early hour of the morning devoted to waiting unhurriedly upon God. Finally Bishop Taylor Smith, the former Chaplain-General to the Forces, rose from his seat below the platform and pronounced the Benediction.

He must have felt, I think, that it was on the New Armies that he was calling down a blessing.