

THE OXFORD GROUPS

REMARKABLE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

To the Editor of The Star

Sir.—The Oxford Group movement is part and parcel of South African religious life to-day, and its followers have been greatly enheartened by news of remarkable Group activities overseas. Given that its methods were sound, the process of spreading from person to person, town to town, and country to country was bound to issue in notable developments, especially as it seeks the "up-and-outs" in the belief that "key-men" (and women) are most worth winning in these days of world movements and conferences.

If the Groups needed social recognition and status they have received it by sympathetic reports given in three issues of the London Times last month, not to mention more than one leader in that organ declaring that "of late the Gospel ethic has justified itself in unexpected ways," and "to-day something very like that ethic is being widely acclaimed as the one form of politics that is practical." It reported a sermon of Dr. Dearmer's in Westminster Abbey in which he gave the Groups unqualified praise, and printed extracts of the charge of Dr. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, on the occasion of his diocesan visitation. The bishop declared that the Oxford Group movement was undoubtedly a call to the whole Church to-day and that its three principles of guidance, sharing and discipline were apostolic. Other newspapers, too, gave his charge prominence.

In the Daily Express Viscount Castle-rose, who edits the "Londoner's Log," wrote in very serious vein on July 10, declaring that society's "moral codes of honour existed no more." After declaring that "unmorality leads to inevitable social disaster," but that if "society" is an easy thing to sneer at, yet 'society' matters," he asks what the younger generation is going to do about it, and then at some length welcomes the counter-attack of the Oxford Group movement. He says he knows little about it, and, being a Roman Catholic, is himself "spiritually immobile," but states "all I know is that it is alive and gets into its ranks the young people who are fervid folks."

In another issue of the Daily Express, James Douglas writes of the Groups in enthusiastic vein, and in yet another Lewis Spence, commending the work of Judge Jameson, "the most popular man in Edinburgh to-day and whose chief interest for the last two years has centred in the Oxford Group movement," tells of the extraordinary work he is doing in that city by seeking to reclaim the criminals he has to sentence, and doing it by meeting them as man with man.

The Daily Telegraph, in company with other papers, gives a column-length review to a book "For Sinners Only," by Mr. A. J. Russell, who was formerly literary editor of the Daily Express and later manager of the Sunday Express, in which he tells how the Groups captured him.

There is no religious newspaper which does not refer to the movement in almost every issue, and at the Scottish Church Assembly earlier in the year, and at the Methodist conferences just concluded in England, it was found impossible to avoid constant reference to it. Finally, the leading theological organ, the Expository Times, had articles in its March and July issues giving a philosophical and theological rationale of the doctrines the Group leaders emphasise, and especially that of the guidance of God.

parties, which are the Groups' favourite method of campaign, have been held in America, Canada, Britain and some countries on the Continent, the last being at Geneva in July.

In this country one on a national scale is being planned for the end of September at Bloemfontein. It may be no unwarranted claim, then, that the spiritual revival which has been predicted from many quarters for some time past as the overdue protest against the mechanistic views of the universe which have played sad havoc with religious life has already begun, and that Dr. Buchman will probably be judged in generations to come to have been in line with Paul, Augustine, Luther, Wesley and Keble. The celebrations now being organised for next year's centenary of one great national religious revival, the Oxford Movement, will coincide with the beginning of another which bids fair to be world wide.

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