

DIVIDED VIEWS IN D.R. SYNOD

OBJECTION TO "SHARING"

A PROPOSAL TO "INFLUENCE" IT

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.

•CAPETOWN, Monday.—When the Dutch Reformed Church Synod met to-day the Moderator, the Rev. G. J. Hugo, announced that it would not be possible to deal further with the Du Plessis case, as had been intended.

"The answer we have had from Stellenbosch is neither yes nor no," he said. "It is the sort of answer which the moderatuur must have time to consider. The matter will be brought up when we have had the opportunity of discussing it."

THE OXFORD GROUP.

Divided views on the Oxford Group were expressed in majority and minority reports of a special commission of six clergymen, who reported on the matter to-day. Four members of the commission, the Revs. J. F. Marais (chairman), C. W. Alheit, W. J. Naude and Dr. A. J. van der Merwe, reported that there were dangers in the movement, but recommended that the Synod, instead of condemning the movement, should try to influence it in the right direction. The other two members, Drs. Jac. J. Muller and S. H. Roussouw (scriba), recommended that the church should support its own institutions and discourage movements outside the church which tried to do the work of the church and so undermined the "church sense" of the people.

"HELP ONE ANOTHER."

After detailing the origin of the Oxford Group, the majority report went on: "Your commission finds that it is not a religious organisation or sect, but simply a sort of spiritual 'help one another,' which is friendly towards all Christian churches. In this way the danger that the movement may draw members from the church is avoided."

The movement, like every other, had certain dangers. It stood apart from the churches. Sometimes too much emphasis could be laid on direct guidance from God, and this could easily degenerate into an exaggerated mysticism and subjective obsession. At the same time the Group, to avoid this, emphasised the Word of God as the medium through which guidance should be received.

"SHARING."

The report saw dangers in the Oxford Group "sharing" or confession which might lay too great a stress on emotional experience.

The minority report took appreciative notice of the earnestness of many of the followers of "Buchananism."

"We realise that the Oxford Group is a movement seeking a deepening of the spiritual life, but we recommend that the Dutch Reformed Church should not help in the formation, propagating or defending of the movement for the following reasons: (1) It is a movement outside the churches and not of immaculate origin; (2) it takes up a secretarian ideal of the guidance of God's Spirit which may easily lead to cultism and degenerate to an exaggerated subjectivism; (3) it practises an open confession (sharing) which is contrary to the scriptures and which in mixed meetings, especially of young people, often degenerates into an unhealthy exhibition of sins and a confession which is in strife with the traditional standpoint of our Church."

A lively debate followed the reading of the two reports, the Synod dividing itself very strongly for and against the group. The closure was eventually applied, the majority report being adopted by 150 votes to 117.