

GROUPS AND THE CHURCH

Times 2, 5.11.35

THE CAMPAIGN IN LONDON

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—In the midst of the strife of tongues about the Group Movement one fact is plain. In a few days between four and five hundred men and women will as a company or as a team begin a campaign in which they will do all they can to pass on to people in London the vision of the mercy and power of our Lord which they have received. Many of them are members of the Church of England. Some of them are priests. One of them, the Bishop of Calcutta, Metropolitan of India, will give the address at a service in St. Paul's Cathedral, at which the Bishop of London will send them on their way. No one should think that the Groups and the Church are two separate bodies standing over against each other. Here are some members of the Church (the word is used now in its widest sense, for they are of many denominations) who, being quickened with a great zeal, are burning to proclaim the good news of the Gospel and the Sovereignty of Christ. This alone is a remarkable fact. Such knowledge as I have of the Groups makes me welcome their brave adventure.

A year ago in the summer holiday I went to a house party at High Leigh and stayed there for five days. There I experienced and saw unmistakable signs of the presence of the Spirit of God; in the clearness and directness of the moral challenge; in the insistence of the need of complete surrender to our Lord; in the reality of the fellowship; in the conviction of sin which came to many, with resulting penitence and earnest resolution to amendment of life.

Of course there is nothing new. There can be no new Christianity. There may be re-emphasis of neglected truths and risk of revival of old errors. The Groups see plainly that the Church is in the world to bring people one by one to our Lord, and that every one must take his part and bear His witness. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." No one can tell how or where spiritual renewal may come to a soul. It would be startling indeed to find a carefully phrased and thought-out theology among those who, for the greater part, are young men and women. They believe they are called to share the riches they have found in Christ, not to teach the doctrines of the Church.

Last week I accepted an invitation to be present at Eastbourne, where the team was preparing for the London enterprise, although I was only able to stay for one day. I did not hear anything said which belittled the Church. On the contrary, the leaders to whom I spoke were clear that if a fresh Christian experience comes to anyone, it must be conserved and built up within its corporate life. I am, &c.,

G. VERNON WILLESDEN.

65, Hendon Lane, N.3, Oct. 4.