

THE PLOUGH

THE QUARTERLY
OF THE
BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

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VOLUME V NUMBER 1



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THE PLOUGH is the quarterly journal of the Bruderhof Communities in Europe and South and North America, a group of people of fifteen nationalities who live together in full community. Its aim is to unite more closely those who seek to live by the standards of justice, brotherhood and peace.

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THE PLOUGH

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD as a new order, a real, material order, will break in on this earth. This earth will become like one land, one garden, where one righteousness and justice and one joy, one truth and one purity of mutual relationships, hold sway, so that only then will joy really begin on this planet. This planet, the earth, must be conquered for a new kingdom, for a new order, for a new unity, for a new joy. This joy must come to us from the God who is the God of love, who is the spirit of peace and of unity and community. That is the message Jesus brings. And Jesus has the faith and the certainty that this message can be believed today, and that we can live today in accordance with it. Seek first and last this kingdom of the new order, which comes from God. The future of God is all that matters. Nothing else need concern me, for at the right time that will also be given.

Of course, this great re-formation of the earth includes the personal call to personal renewal. If one is not born anew, one cannot see this kingdom of God. This new order, this transformation, this new creation of all things and all relationships, is what matters. But these new relationships can only come when the new men are there. If the new men are not there, no one can see this new order of all relationships, still less experience it. But if new men are really begotten of the Spirit, if they are really born anew as the new life that comes from God, then these new men shall tread upon the devils of mammon, murder, lying, and impurity. As those who march onwards, they are permitted to enter into the new life. They should and must even now proclaim and live the new kingdom. For the new kingdom is no castle in the air, no purely spiritually blessed state beyond death. It is not a case of our becoming Utopians, of a future which never comes. It is a case of this certainty of the future being a force now, in the present.

EBERHARD ARNOLD

THE ESSENTIAL CONFLICT

PHILIP BRITTS

No man is wholly good or wholly bad, but every man is *inclined* towards good and towards bad. Rather, man stands in a battle where forces of good and evil strive for the mastery.

These forces are struggling for mastery throughout all creation and in many different forms.

The highest knowledge man can attain is the recognition of the oneness of these forms of conflict in the final issue between life and death. The different forms of this one conflict may be seen in the struggle between creation and murder, love and hate, truth and lying, purity and licentiousness, self-seeking and self-dedication.

The highest revelation that can be made to man is the realization that this conflict surrounds him everywhere without and invades him within, that he is like a field where the battle is waged, but that he is free to throw his weight on the one side or the other, that this is the one essential conflict, and that all his words and deeds serve one or the other of these forces—life or death. The final victory will be won in man as the head of creation. Thus all a man's actions are a matter of life and death, in that they serve either the one cause or the other.

The highest faith that can be given to man is the certainty of the ultimate victory of life over death. Before our eyes we see the alternating triumphs of life and death in nature, but the certainty of the ultimate victory of life has no outward proof. Everything on the earth passes away and is replaced by new life. We cannot know whether the starry universe is either infinite or eternal. The certainty of the victory of life can only be experienced within, by the voice of eternity, by the inspiration of the eternal One who is Life, saying in our hearts the undeniable I AM.

One aspect of the essential conflict between life and death takes the subtle form of the conflict between worldly knowledge and simple truth.

Knowledge appears so powerful, so virile, that man sees in it an attribute of life and pursues it as one of his greatest hopes. Knowledge thrives and multiplies. Knowledge of one thing leads to another until a mighty apparatus is built up which apparently brings the whole creation under the power of man.

It has been seen and said by wise men in many ages that all this is vanity. Never did it need saying so much as today. With the harnessing of atomic energy as the latest triumph of knowledge, the potentialities for destruction are so vast and so imminent that a climax in human history is approaching out of all proportion to national or racial climaxes.

Not that knowledge serves only destruction, nor is technical knowledge the only knowledge which has been set up as a god. Religion

has been clothed with many veils of knowledge: philosophy, psychology, sociology, and the like. And these are delightful to the mind of man, and all bring their own reward. But just these regalia of human knowledge so often hide divine truth. Truth that is simple and direct is surrounded by a maze of human speculation, and we wander interminably through the maze, admiring the roses, and not finding our way to the fountain of life-giving water in the centre.

When we attain to seeing that all creation and all knowledge is a battleground between the ultimate forces of life and death, or good and evil, in which we stand free to give our lives to one or the other, then all knowledge is valued only as a path which leads to the forces of life.

This is the dilemma of the scientists who sincerely feel that their quest of knowledge is a quest of truth and therefore good. They do not realize that knowledge as such is an instrument which can be used by either of the two spiritual powers, that the final result of knowledge is determined by the spirit it serves, and that it will serve the spirit into whose hands we place it.

By their fruits ye shall know them

Before we seek or employ more knowledge, then, it is vital that we first acquire that knowledge which will teach us to see the universal conflict and to distinguish between the opposing spirits, and our first task is to place ourselves with all our strength and faculties on the side of life against death. Only when we take our stand each day anew in this one essential conflict can we know that our knowledge is serving life and not death.

Any knowledge, technical or religious, which obscures this conflict or confuses the issue or blinds us to it is already serving death, for death enrols all that is neutral.

To be neutral or passive is to be dead, for all that is of life is active, virile, decided.

Let us test all knowledge before we accept it. Does it conceal or screen off the essential conflict? If so that knowledge is a weapon of the forces of death and we should have nothing to do with it.

It is not always easy to distinguish between the power of life and the power of death. To death belong lying and deception (he was a murderer and liar from the beginning) and therefore death likes to appear most in the form of life. All men hate death and desire life, and therefore in his aggression against men death puts on deceptive guises. Knowledge as we have just spoken about it may be such a guise in which death tries to appear as an angel of life. But he may also wear the disguise of love as a wolf in sheep's clothing.

This is often a soft and sentimental love causing the lover to be indulgent of things in himself or in another which in their turn serve death. The spoiling of children, impurity in sexual relationships, 'my country right or wrong', are but a few of the many expressions of this false love.

Love also must be tested to see which spirit it serves. True love serves life and only life. Therefore it can have nothing to do with untruth, impurity, or the harm of any other being. Where these are found the spirit is a counterfeit of the truth.

The forces of life and death can be distinguished only by testing their fruits.

To life belong love, truth, purity, and sincerity; to death belong hate, falsehood, impurity, deception. But love which is of life embraces all life and gives itself to all life, because the nature of love is giving, not taking. Therefore love that is exclusive is false, and to the attributes of life can be added self-surrender, while to the attributes of death can be added self-seeking.

A house divided against itself . . .

All selfishness serves death because it separates the individual from the rest of life in everything that competes with its own satisfaction.

He who seeks his life shall lose it.

Separation and division are also forces of death.

Division of opinion is often regarded as a sign of mental life, because it is evidence of mental activity. But this is knowledge serving death because it is allied to self-centredness (however disguised this may be), thereby leading to separation.

Its effect is to deny the existence of any absolute truth, and to make truth relative to circumstances.

But above and beyond human opinion there is an absolute truth which is one with absolute love. There is an objective truth which is valid for all. There is an objective best which is best for all, which springs from the absolute life which we call God.

Therefore the work of the spirit of life creates unity amongst those who follow the one truth; the work of the spirit of death is to bring in division by proclaiming relative truth and relative good.

Unity therefore is an attribute of life, and division an attribute of death.

Absolute values are values of life and relative values are values of death. Division brings death through desolation. (A house that is divided against itself. . . .)

A vital part of the essential conflict becomes a search for unity and absolute values. This involves the fight against self-seeking, the

continual watch against the false posing as the true, or against the relative posing as the absolute.

Where people are generally united there is truth, but this unity must penetrate their whole lives. It is no mere acquiescence in the ideas of others. That would be fake unity, deception, a weapon of death.

True unity is where each one has taken his stand in the essential conflict, and disregarding self finds agreement with others on the objective best.

However high the cost

We never have to choose between two evils.

However hard the circumstances and however high the cost, the choice is between what finally serves life and what finally serves death.

The dilemma arises from the things which apparently serve life, and are thereby attractive.

The test is the test of absolute values.

In life there is no shadow of hate, falsehood, deception, impurity, or selfishness. If any of these are found, it is death and not life.

In all circumstances this is the ultimate choice. Even if the choice to serve life means the loss of all wordly goods, of the life of the person himself, it is good and not evil. In all circumstances, trivial or tragic, to make this test, to make this choice and to act upon it, is the essential conflict.

It can be waged only in the inward certainty of the ultimate triumph of life, the victory of God.

Even in the issue of this certainty, the conflict is waged between life and death, for life speaks to us of hope, and death of despair. Man stands in the conflict, and life whispers of courage while death shouts of fear; life brings joy to the heart and death brings misery.

This joy may contain sorrows and pain and bitter agony, but it is not misery or despair, and it is not afraid.

But although these spiritual powers surround man and fill his life, he is not the helpless victim of fate over which he has no control.

As long as he sees himself in this light, as the fatalist does, he has simply surrendered to the forces of death and is allowing himself to be used by them. But however much he may be bound by hereditary or environmental factors, as the psychologists teach, he remains free to make the ultimate choice between good and evil.

Even if he is not mentally able to discriminate in some things, as may happen in cases of mental disease, he is able to decide in which direction he will set his will.

This is the final responsibility of man: the freedom of will. No matter how weak this may be, it is the primary condition for being helped to sanity and life.

If a man sets his will towards life, the nature of the essential conflict can be revealed to him. It may be revealed in different degrees to different people. What matters is that, in the degree to which it is revealed, he sets all his being on the side of life regardless of the consequences to himself.

It is a characteristic of life, and one of the indications of the final victory of life, that once this tremendous step has been taken, and taken without reserve, the nature of the essential conflict is revealed more and more in its true light.

We never cease to learn new aspects of this essential conflict and new ways of applying our lives in the fight for life.

This is wisdom and is the guide by which all other knowledge can be rightly employed.

It is only when we have taken this first tremendous step and given ourselves with all the little we have, with all our little light, to the cause of light, that we feel in our hearts the certainty of the victory of life which alone gives us strength to go on.

This is in itself the inward proof which creates that highest faith, the faith in the incredible, the hope of the hopeless, the passage of the camel through the eye of a needle.

The first step is man's

The first step is man's, a step into the darkness of battle, a throwing of ourselves into the hidden cause of life in a way which seems so much like a step to our own death.

This is our freedom and our responsibility.

Only when the step is taken, behold, we find rock beneath our feet, and a path, very narrow but firm and straight before us.

To express it in the simplest and most concrete language: to each man at some time comes an insight into a choice between two possible things. Then, if he is ready to choose that which serves life regardless of his own advantage, he has taken the first step towards seeing the relationship of all things in the one great war between good and evil.

If he is ready to go on regardless of consequences to himself other steps appear before him. Always he is free to choose and he is faced with the choice between what leads to unity with others, to peace, truth, and life, and what leads to division, strife, deception, and death. Always he will be offered the weapons of faith, hope, and love for the one, and scepticism, despair, and hate for the other. Always he will be free to choose between good and evil, no matter how many steps he has taken, to go on or to go back, but he cannot fight for the cause of good with the weapons of evil.

Always he will be in terrific tension between the one and the other because the one will demand his whole service and his very life and the other will promise the kingdom of the world if he will but fall down and worship. But the promise is false—as false as the promise made to Eve, for the one who promises is the father of lies.

When life demands our very lives this is only a returning of the water to the source.

He who gives receives a new life. He is born again and becomes like a little child.

A little child cannot understand death, cannot believe in death. The reborn man with the childlike spirit believes in life, not because he is convinced of the story of the Garden of Eden but because he experiences the victory of life within him. Rather, this experience alone can truly convince him of the truth of Eden and give him an understanding of life in the whole creation, of birth and death and resurrection.

This inward experience of life reborn within him is his final and decisive instrument for discriminating between what is truly life and what is death in the guise of life. The fact of this experience is his certainty of the victory of life, and his strength for the essential conflict.

BEGGAR poor and weak?
Is that for which we seek
Becoming dulled beneath a thousand petty cares?
Security destroyed
And only empty void
Replacing firm ground underneath our feet?

One golden shaft breaks through
And hope returns anew
To wayward trembling human hearts.
Let Love's all-powerful glow
Kindle in my heart too
Some dim reflection of the eternal flame,
That here in time and space
We moulded are through Grace
And that eternal pattern of supremest sacrifice.

GORDON WRIGHT

HEAVEN AS PATTERN OF EARTH

DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY

ARTUR METTLER writes: *The thoughts sketched in the following essay come from life, not from literature. It became clear to me during my reading of Dante that he spoke from his own rich experience and had something to say about the 'good life' which is seldom heard. I was struck with the different human relationships depicted in the three main parts of the Divine Comedy. Meanwhile I found an article in an American magazine which illuminated this line of thought from quite a different angle. (Compare Irma Brandeis, 'Metaphor in the Divine Comedy', Hudson Revue, Winter 1956, pp. 557-575.) This strengthened my conviction that a true experience pierces to the deepest strata, and that one can study a poem like the Divine Comedy from the most different points of view and yet strike on the same truth, if there is only an openness for it. Every generation finds new values in Dante. He wrote for the people of his time, but since he drank from the spring which supplies every age, he has something to say to us as well.*

Dante's work is not easy to grasp. One comes near to it only when one takes it as a whole. His many references to happenings of his time, and to the things of the past which are lost to us, only too easily distract from this unity. Here one must break through the underbrush and, like Dante himself, stride ahead energetically. Behind and above the tragic interlacing of human fate—self-inflicted—stands the inexorable power of the eternal law, for the sake of which Dante created his tremendous work. Justice with her more than human standards is here at work. Here Dante is prophet. His all-embracing love for mankind never deserts him, even in the darkest night of Hell. The ray of eternal light falls on the confusion of human suffering and points the way out of sin and misery. Popes and emperors, artists and statesmen, the great saints and the great sinners, those who love and those who hate, the enthusiasts and the indifferent, his personal friends and his enemies—Dante sees them all in the places they have 'chosen' by their own doing. This is the law of justice which is woven like a thread throughout the whole work. But he does not pass through the world like a judge pronouncing sentence. With the warmth of his sympathy he accompanies those who are suffering and struggling in the different spheres through which he travels. He has a fellow-feeling for people in Hell and does penance with those in Purgatory. Even in the bliss of Paradise he is unable to forget the misery of his native city. And so not only believers but all who have justice at heart love him.

It is hard to know what to admire most in Dante—the breadth of view which seeks to include all the creation known to him, the warmth

of heart which does not allow him to exclude any aspect of man's being, or the incorruptible judgment which does not permit him to treat enemies differently from friends and fellow-thinkers. He boldly uses the amazing expression 'the half-hearted, who live without glory and without blame'—the great sinners are rated above them (*Inferno* III, 34 ff.). This quotation resembles Jesus's saying, the full meaning of which is understood by so few, that tax-gatherers and sinners enter before the 'just', and the other saying in Revelation, 'Because thou art lukewarm . . . I will spew thee out of my mouth'. The strength of human passion, even when it goes astray, is nearer to conversion than anaemic weakness. He who hates strongly may come to love with equal strength; he who can neither hate nor love is lost to both worlds.

Mankind at the Bar

The search for man's true destiny occupies the central place in Dante's thinking. This quest becomes the more urgent the farther the wanderer emerges from Hell's darkness. There, in Hell, sin appears in frightful forms. All the vices, sins, and transgressions, the fearful aberrations of human nature, pass before us in bodily form. Hell's torments, arising as a consequence of personal action, almost cause earth's misery to be forgotten at times. In Purgatory the memory of it awakens with redoubled strength. But only in the peace of Paradise does it return in full force. The nearness of God, radiating light, makes the shadows of earth stand out clearly for the first time. Man not only commits sinful deeds—he *is* a sinner through and through. This comes out with particular force as Dante leaves the Mount of Purification. He is now cleansed of all the individual gross vices which stick to him as they do to others. He has to pass through all the bitterness of penitence. But even in Paradise he is not through with it.

This overall view of mankind is beginning to dawn on us again at the present time. Not *one* thing—not bad deeds—but the whole of mankind is at the bar. Behind the single faults stand the deeper-lying evil tendencies which burden the whole race. The 'seven sins' and the 'seven virtues' are but the development of one theme, of the way in Hell leading ever further away from God, the way in Purgatory leading back ever closer to him. These are not actual places. Hell is opposition to God, consciously and firmly adhered to, the dawning but unrepentant recognition that 'one can no longer love' (Dostoyevsky).

In Purgatory Dante makes the guilt of the individual penitents his own—an unheard-of thought! He climbs upwards from the heaviest guilt to the lightest. The seven deadly sins are printed on his forehead as seven signs. He is to pass through the places of purification; he is not to feel superior towards any single sinner. Are not the natural tendencies

to every kind of evil present in us all? The marks are erased once he has completed his courageous passage (IX, 114).

It is a difficult path. At the beginning he is able to walk by himself but more and more he needs grace to enable him to continue. 'Our own wings can never bear us up.' It is only through humility arising from self-knowledge that the soul becomes prepared for the working of grace. This is a weighty recognition—written about by mystics in all ages—that man is freed suddenly, but his deliverance must prove itself by years of struggle. This is Purgatory—the purification of those striving towards God, and this, from at first being a desperate uphill struggle, is changed more and more into a letting-oneself-be-borne-upwards.

But even in Paradise, where the blessed spirits come ever nearer to the greatest light, the traces of evil still remain, clouding their joy. The fact that the gross sins are blotted out does not yet make man worthy to stand before God. Even Dante, who has now lost all the marks of the 'seven sins' from his forehead, needs the courage of open confession and the washing in two rivers in order that the last memory of his guilt might disappear. He has still much to suffer and endure before he can bear to look at the light without a shade over his eyes. He has to learn by his own suffering that not blind fate but a righteous God holds man in his hand (*Purgatory* XIV, 151). First in Hell he has an inkling of this, but understanding comes fully in Paradise. Only here is he freed from all the veils of earthly blindness and all the bonds of wickedness. (Both are sin: blinding of the understanding and perversion of the will, and man must be redeemed from both.) Man, says Dante, is to strive towards the light; this law governs the whole creation, but only the completely purified person is able to live in accordance with it. Only he is able to give up his ego and to journey on with others.

Collective versus Community

If one leaves out the pagan sages who, after all, do not belong in Hell, the inhabitants there have nothing in common except torment. But even their torment does not unite them; on the contrary it separates them more than ever. (The criminals in Tolstoy are united by the fact that they despise their companions; in Dante the sinners are concerned with nothing but themselves and their own fate.) They are the exact opposite of true community—a great collective. Even in Purgatory the individual is still mainly concerned with himself; he stands alone before God in his struggle and scarcely has time to concern himself with his fellows. Not until Paradise can he look at others. Nor until then can individuals become united because then they are one in the good. (No true unity is possible in the evil.) The grandiose figures of the Inferno

who attract us even in their aberrations are chained to the barriers of their ego and their particular sin. When they are great they are so only through the rank growth of their one-sided power. He who penetrates no further than Purgatory misses the goal. The way upwards is hard but there is no other.

'God does not want to rob us of pleasure; he wants to give us pleasure in wholeness', says Suso. Dante knows that there are other than earthly allurements. Heavenly things, if only seen purely, have a power of attraction far beyond that of earthly things. 'The saints cling to goodness like bees to honey', says Simone Weil. Nothing is unworthier than the boredom with which we modern people invest Heaven. Dante's power of presenting characters does not decrease but increases the higher he climbs. It is not his fault if many of his readers give out too soon. The person who is determined to follow him will discover with astonishment how greatness is transformed. Those in Heaven have not the 'dramatic' power of the 'heroes' of Hell. But what they lose in dramatic tension they gain in depth. They lose their one-sidedness, but they have exchanged something greater for it—they have gained a 'delight in wholeness'. They have been freed from the convulsive effort of self-preservation; they are united and whole in themselves—in their striving after the good. Thus they have grown able both to see others and to love them. He who is at one with himself, and he alone, can also be at one with others. They are healed of the distorting effects of one-sided passion and freed from the self-glorification which has led them astray. They have found their 'centre' and thus they are able to form a 'circle'.

The power of the inhabitants of Hell is no real power. To be sure, they are in a position to 'desire'. But they have nothing in mind but their own greatness. True power, however, thrives only when self is forgotten for the sake of the cause. Only in Paradise, that is, in conjunction with the eternal power, the good, does man develop all his possibilities. He becomes, as it were, all-powerful because he has allied himself with omnipotence. The original image in which he was shaped and from which he fell is able to shine through him once more. 'The hateful grub begins to unfold its wings' (*Purgatory* X, 121 ff.). To be sure, even 'there' the individual person has his limits—but he does not hold on to them in Promethean defiance but places himself at the disposal of others with everything that he is and has.

It is essential to understand that not only 'up there' is everything possible. Francis, to whom Dante feels attracted and whose love to 'Lady Poverty' he celebrates in a hymn, lived on this earth. Beatrice, who has the task of introducing the poet into the secrets of Paradise, is his earthly beloved transfigured. In the peace of Paradise she is mindful of the struggle on earth. She cannot forget the distress of the church (*Paradise* XXVII). Dante himself is obliged to undergo washing before

he is ready for community with the heavenly ones. This washing, however, means not a last anointing, but baptism which may not remain a mere sign of grace but must completely change the person who undergoes it. The same is true of the Lord's Supper. Dante makes the eagle which represents Christ say, 'I left such a reminder behind me *on earth*' (*Paradise* XIX, 16). 'Wicked men' have misused it. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two great signs of earthly community; baptism symbolizes the entry into it and the Lord's Supper the ever-renewed reminder of the Lord of community. The two belong inseparably together, like the beginning and the continuation of a good course.

The Symbol of Light

In Hell Dante recognized evil by its frightful consequences, in the twilight of the Mount of Purification he joined in the suffering and penitence, in Paradise he recognizes evil by its striking contrast to the light. So Hell becomes the contrasting picture to true earthly community, just as Heaven is its pattern.

Hell is inhabited only by many isolated *I*'s. There one finds no common goal and no bond of love which is able to unite them. In the regions of the Mount of Purification the meaning of the true 'we' dawns on the single penitent 'I'. But not until Paradise does it become real. (True, the individual must stand completely alone before God; people cannot come before God *en masse*.) In Hell there is no true 'we'. This feeling sleeps, perhaps forever. Where it dawns, on the circuit through the 'you', the path 'upward' is already entered upon. In Purgatory the 'we' makes itself noticeable in the individual by light wing-beats. Not until Paradise is it there in its entirety. Night isolates, but the light unites. Virgil uses symbol to tell the inquiring and confused Dante something about community. Where the light is working, the apparently absurd thing happens that the more the light is shared the stronger it grows.

*'However far love may extend,
It grows in strength and power eternal,
Wherever men agree and love
There's more to love. So each loves more,
And, mirror-like, exchanges with the other.'*

Purgatory, xv, 40 ff.

Dante, still much too enmeshed in 'earthly' endeavours, does not yet understand these associations, although he has a presentiment of them. It is not without deeper meaning that it is the 'pagan' who must say this to him, the Christian. Many things were clear to the people of old which they understood from their association with Nature. So it is given to Virgil to lead Dante a good distance forward. The natural man

prepares and upholds the Christian. Only after Virgil has done his service does he withdraw and give over the lead to Beatrice.

Clinging to property, Virgil explains, stems from a 'lack of love to the highest sphere'. There everything is shared, and yet it becomes not less but more. The more people say 'our' the more each one possesses. This is hard to understand. Those who are ensnared in the earthly cannot comprehend it. The circles of Hell are full of souls who did not understand it or acknowledge it. Dante now comes to know the secret of the light. But not until Paradise will he understand it completely (cf. *Paradise* XX, 65 and 88 ff.). He learns from the eagle (Christ) that 'we' and 'our' are meant where he says 'I' and 'mine' (XIX, 11 f.).

Here Dante himself expresses the truth that it is not only 'above' that this holds true. For the eagle (Christ) says 'on earth' he held his Last Supper. Certainly—and this Dante makes undeniably clear—purification must precede the sharing in the meal. As there is no shadow in God, so it must be with those who unite with him. He who comes to Christ joins himself to the light. His good works 'shine' because the One who does them is the source of all good.

Dante uses still other symbols. Lucifer and those who are his—a 'community' by compulsion—lie in the stiffness of 'ice'. In Paradise there rules the warmth of love and the movement of the power of love. Below, the eternal winter of lovelessness; above, the eternal springs of love's glow. Below, the isolated 'I', with its own distorted efforts; above, the 'I' of God who is love. Around him, attracted by his love, circle 'the sun and the other stars' (as the last verse of the *Comedy* says). Around him revolves in eternal, living motion everything that lives. The rose of heaven, formed by the blessed, united by the sight and praise of God, is the 'picture' of this highest community. It represents the 'circle' around the eternal 'centre'. So the stars group around their suns, the disciples around their master, the blessed around their centre, from whom and for whom they live. Thus the birds of passage gather in spring and autumn in search of eternal summer.

In Hell there rules the 'community' of suffering, in Heaven the community of joy. Suffering isolates; joy unites. 'In adversity people shrivel up, in happiness they revive' (Christoph Blumhardt). In Hell a sound of woe, a lament and accusation, rises as the one sign of community. In Purgatory the accusation is against oneself and one's own guilt. In Hell resounds the discord of the damned; in Purgatory there breaks out from time to time a hymn of joy from those doing penance. What here arises from the soul after hard struggle—the common prayer of the 'Our Father' (XI, 1 ff.), the common praise of the Creator (IX, 140 ff.), the common *Gloria* after the earthquake (XX, 136)—changes in Paradise into the ever-ascending flame of praise to God, for Heaven is the place of pure joy. Thus it is the pattern for earth. What so

far has been given only to a few will one day embrace all—'here', not merely 'there'. The harmony of the blessed will one day be the harmony of earth (*Paradise* XIX, 19 f).

As Beatrice, answering Dante's question, explains the essence of that eternal motion around the centre, his thirst is stilled. He has understood (XXVIII, 52 and 79-87). Now he has 'seen' what before he had only 'blindly' believed. He sees the spheres circle around the centre, and he comes to know the 'everlasting spring' (100 and 116). Here speaks the spirit of all spirits 'with one voice'. The poet gazes to his heart's content at this picture. He has received and recognized his task. With this in his heart he turns back to men. He is to lead the 'living in this life' out of misery into happiness. Thus he himself expressed his mission.

PRONOUNS

The Lord said,
'Say "We"';
But I shook my head,
Hid my hands tight behind my back and said,
Stubbornly,
'I'.
The Lord said,
'Say "We"';
But I looked upon them, grimy and all awry.
Myself in all those twisted shapes? Ah, no!
Distastefully I turned my head away,
Persisting,
'They.'
The Lord said,
'Say "We"';
And I,
At last,
Richer by a hoard
Of years
And tears,
Looked into their eyes and found the heavy word
That bent my neck and bowed my head:
Like a shamed school-boy then I mumbled low,
'We,
Lord'.

KARLE WILSON BAKER.

VISIT TO A LEPER COLONY

MAUREEN BURN

We have had the joy of welcoming at our community in Paraguay the first household member to come from a leprosy settlement, and the joy has been increased by the fact that this has meant the reuniting of a family separated for fifteen years, the husband and son having joined our life some years ago. At first, Maria lived in an isolation house near the hospital, but now that it is established that the illness has been checked, she is able to live among us normally. Her coming has meant not only a widening of our sympathies but first-hand acquaintance with one who has shared the lot of a people 'living without the camp'.

Maria invited me to accompany her when she went to settle her affairs before coming to us for good, and so I had the red-letter experience of spending a few days at the colony at Sepucaí, forty miles beyond Asunción. Peter Mathis, one of our members, accompanied us from there. On arriving at Sepucaí we found no sign of the transportation promised for Maria and so had to do the last six miles in an ox-wagon—some three and a half hours' journey at a slower than walking pace. The journey was marvellous in the moonlight, yet I could not help feeling what a 'Way of Sorrow' it was as the road wound so beautifully up among the wooded hills. Folk in the few cottages we passed peeped out with a kind of fear, knowing the fate of so many who pass along to the colony, leaving their homes and friends for good.

We finally arrived at the leper colony. There was nothing to indicate it—no high wall or barbed wire. All we saw was a light fence, like the boundary to a ranch, and the gate was open. A young man at the director's house greeted Maria warmly. Soon we entered a wooded belt which separated the healthy part of the colony from the sick part, and as we came out of it we began to see little huts with gardens—some poorer and some better—the houses of the patients, built by themselves. Maria shouted over the fence to one or two women who came out at once when they heard her voice, and they gave her such a welcome! We took her to her own little house, after which Peter went to the soldiers' quarters and I was taken in with the family of a male nurse.

The next day was Sunday, and as we walked over to see Maria we heard, coming from the Catholic church in the colony, a haunting music, probably a Guarani melody, that made us slow our steps and pass on in silence. It seemed to express a sense of longing, of yearning upwards. Going by the hospital we noticed a strong smell of sulphur but the prevailing odour in the colony was that of wood-fires, and as we approached Maria's house we were greeted by the strong sweet scent of the 'rosa blanca' whose flower petals are valued as medicine in the colony.

We met Maria's immediate friends and neighbours. An elderly couple, José and Maria Velasquez, cook for the young men, two of whom were about thirty, one a student and evangelical and the other a genuine agnostic to whom Peter took a great liking. Maria had said of him that he could not be hypocritical and would have nothing to do with any religious observance in which he did not believe. Both have suffered for their convictions in not being able to get jobs or to marry.

All Maria's friends were of this type, despising those who attended church because it helped business or gave them preferment in job-hunting. I was sorry not to be able to meet Pablo Berg, known as the 'prophet', one of the most vocal of these folk. Maria had left him in charge of her house when she first came to us and he had died, passing the key to one of the young men.

We also met an elderly woman who belonged to the small group of evangelicals. On asking Peter and then me if we read the Bible and receiving a 'yes' from each, she said, 'Shake hands, brother; shake hands, sister'. I felt ashamed to think how easy it is for us to read the Bible when they have to do it at a cost.

There was also the agnostic who had welcomed Maria to his house fifteen years ago on her arrival at the colony. Maria had broken down and said she just could not live with the noseless and fingerless women in the common dormitory. So he and his common-law wife took her in and cared for her during the long period when she wished only to die. (He had a wife outside who was so scared of the disease that she went away, taking the children and leaving no address.) When I spoke of the kindness he had shown Maria he waved it aside and said, 'Oh, that was nothing. It is a very hard time for anyone who comes here first and is put in among the advanced cases.'

Next day when we visited Maria we found she had been trying to sell her cow and calf and one or two other belongings. She was giving away things like her cooking-pot and her axe to some very poor people. She told Peter that she wanted to sell her house and give the money to the brotherhood, but we felt we could not take money from such poor folk and arranged to leave it with them in the name of one of the young men.

Peter and I met a nun when we were getting our permits stamped. We asked where she came from and she said, 'Havre in France'. We said, 'You are far from home'. 'Yes', she said, 'but that is better for our kind of work'. She was a young woman, obviously well-educated, with golden brown eyes and a dignified reserve. I felt that both she and another nun were happy and had found fulfilment in their work. The Sister Superior is spoken well of by all non-conformists. The nuns look after all the bed-ridden patients and everyone says, 'The nuns are not cowards. They do not fear for themselves.' Belonging to the Little



VIA DOLOROSA

Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul they dedicate their lives to the care of leprosy patients.

Maria took us on Tuesday to see Apolinario Caceres, at whose house the few remaining Protestants meet. We zigzagged along many little paths bordered by pikes to keep out cows. The houses are built

anywhere on a level spot or where there are shade trees or where a termite heap will make a suitable oven. The patients prefer a little house, however poor, to the institutionalism of the hospital or big dormitories. Apolinario's was a little house of the poorest variety, with one room. He was sitting on the veranda dictating something to another man when we arrived. Both rose to greet us and we noticed how advanced in the disease Apolinario was, yet how his spirit rose above it. A few gathered when they saw us come, and all were particularly glad to see Maria. They pointed out some stones, explaining: 'That is all that remains of our meeting-house. Pastors from both North and South America used to come and preach there and help us.' I asked where the little bitter orange tree was which Maria had told me they used to make into a Christmas tree by sticking candles into the fruit. 'Oh, it's much too big now for that, but see, it is the shade-tree for our benches when we meet.'

As we left I took a final look at the group on Apolinario's veranda. Some of them were very, very ragged, and I remembered what Maria had told me—that those who met there did not come to look at each other's clothes.

We were quite impressed by the mutual aid practised by a few of Maria's friends and neighbours. They fed Maria during her visit without any question of pay. On the final evening she had her last two hens cooked as a little farewell party.

Next morning while Peter went off to arrange a wagon for our return journey I went on to Maria's and found her friends all there. With them was Don Federico, a patient not in Maria's circle of friends, who had come to get news of the world. He was a well-educated man with an intellectual bent. He asked me if I had read any worth-while Spanish authors. I said yes, Ortega y Gasset's *Rebellion de las Masas*. 'Yes', said he, 'Ortega said some worth-while things. "It is illogical to guillotine a prince and replace him by a principle." That's what dictatorships do.' This man seemed to have kept abreast of the leprosy literature of the world so far as he could get it. He had read *Who Walk Alone* and knew all about Carrsville. He quoted some leprosy patients as having said, 'A world within a world is a world without the world'. 'That is true', he added. 'That is the hardest part of my isolation here. I try to keep in touch by reading and the radio. If I had money I could get out but as it is I can't, and I live in fear that any of my children may come here as patients. Better never see them than that.'

At this point Peter returned, having fixed up a wagon for us. The owner was a patient who employs as driver a healthy man living in the colony. I asked, 'Why does he live in the colony if he is healthy?' 'Oh, he has no possibility of life outside. For a time he was a patient here. No one will believe he is free of contagion, and he can't get work. He has tried it and come back.'

All this time Maria was looking for something she had lost. The young liberal who had kept her keys was helping her, and in the hunt he unearthed an old pair of shoes which delighted him until he found they were held together with wire. 'Oh', he said, 'those are Pablo Berg's'. I said, 'I am so sorry I never met him'. 'Yes', said Eugenio, 'he was a real character. Folk said he had a screw loose, but he knew a lot that they did not see, and he was fearless in saying it.' 'Yes', said Marina Velasquez, 'he spoke straight at the rich and bossy, but he never refused to do a service to the poor'. 'His clothes were just rags', said José, 'and his shoes were held together by wire'. 'But he used to say he lacked nothing', added Marina. 'That is because he said the angels were with him', put in Maria.

'He was one who advanced very fast in the disease', said Eugenio. 'Others at the same stage and getting the same treatment got better just as quickly. I think it is just fate.' I then asked if any of them knew how they had got the disease. 'No one knows', they said. 'I don't believe all the stuff they write in books', said Eugenio. 'They say young children are most likely to catch the contagion, but we have quite a number of young women here who were born and bred in the colony in the days before there was a preventorium, and now they are married to patients, but they are all still fit and healthy. If you are fated to catch the contagion you will catch it.'

Don Federico then started to talk of the Eastern and Western blocs. The student put in, 'Both are rotten. The one talks about equality and uses men as a means to accumulate material wealth, and the other talks of democracy but one man uses his fellows as a ladder to climb to success.' 'That is why we try a third way', interjected Peter. 'Yes', said the student, 'yours is the true communism. It can only come in love and brotherhood.' 'The only brotherhood we have here is brotherhood in the disease', said Eugenio. 'It may look like a little Paradise', said the student, 'but in reality it is a very big hell. People may appear happy but it is only superficial.' 'Yes', said José, 'the folk have a kind of pride and shout, "Viva Fulano!" when it is Fulano's birthday, but deep down they may be feeling very unhappy.'

Just then the wagon arrived. As we were saying good-bye the young liberal said, 'It would be nice if you could be a kind of *madre dolorosa* for us'. I inquired of Maria what he meant and she answered, 'He wonders if we could take on some of their needs'. We asked them what they most lacked, and they said footwear, underwear, and white rags for bandages—or indeed any clothing. We said we would see what we could arrange. I noticed both young men had newspaper in their shoes.

The young liberal walked with us as far as the entrance gate. Maria had often told me how bad his feet were with ulcers and how he used to come to her after his work on the land and beg bandages. When she had

no more old clothes to tear up for him he used to scoop the mud out of his wounds with his penknife till the blood ran. But he walked with us without a limp and without a hint of the state his feet were in. It was just part of the courage life demanded of him.

When we got to Asunción and took letters from Maria's friends to the Salvation Army people, a woman there was most interested to hear we had met Apolinario. She said she had got to know him more than twenty years ago when she was a Salvation Army lassie and he was a soldier wounded in the Bolivia-Paraguay war. She had had long talks with him as he said he was searching for a direct way to God without any priest or other man coming between. She had given him a Bible and some of their literature, and after a terrible inward struggle he had said, 'I have found the faith I have been seeking and now I want to put my life straight. I have to confess I have leprosy but have been hiding it.' The result was that he had to leave his wife and children and go to the colony. Ever since, he has been teaching people to read so that they could read the Bible and find a faith such as he had found, which would give them victory in all circumstances.

My visit to the colony taught me a lesson in courage and faith. I was reminded of Dostoyevsky's saying that he had found 'lovely goodness amid the utmost degradation and despair'. Perhaps it takes hard times to call out these qualities in stronger measure, just as it takes a furnace to refine gold.

FORUM

Non-Violence and the Demands of Justice

Several pacifists have felt the foundation of their pacifism shaken by the happenings in Hungary. At least one has been accused by his relatives of treason because he feels he cannot take up arms and fight communism. What bothers him is that although he is still convinced that those who follow Christ can have nothing to do with violence, he thinks now that this is a weak attitude which cannot help oppressed people. In this connection, Paula Thijssen replies to a Dutch reader.

Dear W.,

Your letter telling about the inner conflict you feel between the certainty that non-violence is taught by Christ and the doubt whether this attitude does not contradict the demands of justice, was not the only one on this subject that we received recently.

Does not the whole difficulty lie in this, that often pacifists do not look realistically at their own position? This is nothing new. If you read the New Testament, it was exactly what the disciples did. They expected Christ to use his power in order to defeat his enemies and establish a kingdom where peace would reign (and in which they were to have the best places). Peter remonstrated fiercely when Christ explained to them his way of surrender to suffering and abuse. And for this Christ called Peter 'Satan'; he must have thought at that moment of the devil's offer to give him all the kingdoms of the world if he would but worship him. Most probably with a moderate use of police force he could have kept the world in a reasonably peaceful condition without any sacrifice on his part.

Now in theory we pacifists proclaim that we understand why he accepted the other way, the way of apparent defeat, the way of the cross. But in practice we keep telling him that because *we* propagate his principles in this world *he* should do his part and establish peace on earth at last. And if he does not do what we expect of him, then we begin to ask ourselves whether it would not be better to take things into our own hands and try to do it with weapons. That is the terrible thing: every time Christians doubt their non-violent attitude they are in reality telling Christ he has failed and that his way has proved a failure.

It is we ourselves who are the failures—not Christ! He followed this way of sacrifice in obedience and humility until it brought him to the agony of the cross. His 'natural man' could not understand it, just as we cannot understand all the horrible things that happen. But he said, 'Not as I will but as thou wilt'. We say we want to follow him, but in our heart of hearts we say, 'Not as thou wilt, but as I will'.

Talking about our own hearts reminds me of the time when Holland was occupied. I was something between an atheist and an

agnostic before the Nazis invaded our country. I came to believe in Christ because I suddenly had to see (right through my fierce aversion to the violence and injustice that were thrust into our midst) that this evil was in my own heart. I can tell you it was a terrible shock to discover such a thing, because up till then I had lived under the illusion that I had no part in all the horrible things that man does to man, and that there would certainly not be war if only everybody thought and acted as I did. But the fact is that the great struggle in the universe between righteousness and unrighteousness goes right through your heart and mine. Every time we doubt that Christ's way is the right one we worship violence and hatred. And we do this because we try to bring peace and brotherhood through strife, and love through bloodshed. Instead we should accept the fact that only God's spirit can bring about a kingdom of peace, and we should ask every day, every hour, that his will might be done in us. P.T.

'We shall encourage one another'

In a circular letter to the workers and friends of the Agape Community in Italy, Tullio Vinay writes:

I feel urged to write to you by the dreadful times in which we live. It looks as though we are going back to that atmosphere of hatred and overbearingness which gave rise to the last war and kept it going. In what direction are men walking today? Will the fear that rules, where love is lacking, make them lose control of their own responsibilities and lead them into hopeless situations?

I think how, after the last war, in building Agape, we used to say that we wanted to raise up a great cross in the midst of Europe, that it might remind men of the only way that is given us in order that we may still live together: the way of the love of Christ. And this cross has certainly been raised, as an appeal . . . to reconciliation with God and men! But the sky is once more growing dark, and it is not the way of the cross that is followed, nor the way of brotherly service, of help to the weak and the poor, but rather the way of overbearingness and the asserting of one's rights, of acts of force and ruthless repressions. In this particular situation, the task of Agape is clearer than ever, more urgent and true than ever before; we must preach to all and everywhere, with power and the serenity of God's peace, that Christ alone is the way, that there are no other ways beside him, neither parallel ways, nor shortcuts, nor subsidiary roads.

I am writing you this, that we may be united in our witness to Christ, our only way, our only true redemption. For, if systems and ideologies pass away, his reality is coming. And if the times are worrying, we at least do not lose sight of our trust as believers. In gathering

you together and receiving you, Agape has wished to beg you to perform this work of reconciliation through voluntary service and through the word of love. The circumstances now require it, of people who are pledged in all earnest, in every social and political sphere, in every way: this is no time to think only of ourselves, of our little affairs, of our careers. There are some who believe that with the Gospel we cannot solve international or social problems, but we have every reason to think that it is just because it has put the Gospel on one side that the world has no solutions for its problems and rushes headlong towards destruction. We do not set up any claims, we who are small and mediocre, but we must only obey *our* government, that is Christ's, that we have accepted by faith and recognized as the only true one. And the laws of our government and its measures, even its emergency measures, are of love, in work and thought, for in love there is no fear and in love there is protection and strength for all.

Frontiers and all sorts of barriers separate us and will separate us, perhaps increasingly, but they must not weaken our work as 'fifth columnists' of the kingdom of God, under the government of Christ. Rather, if new barriers are raised, our unity must be ever firmer and truer: and we shall encourage one another knowing that everywhere, in neighbouring as in the remotest countries, there are brethren who, like us, fight, pray and faithfully witness to the kingdom of God. . . . We understand then that, if Christ has called us 'friends' (John 15, 14), he has also made us 'friends' among ourselves and that this bond of 'friendship' in Christ cannot be destroyed by different historical situations. One day, speaking about the Russians and the chances of a war against them, a foreign camper said to me: 'but these are not brothers, but cruel barbarians'. . . Then I said to him: 'A few years ago you might have said the same of me, or of a German, both citizens of Fascist and Nazi countries! But today, as you know me, you see that we are "friends", that we suffer and struggle as you do.' And Christ has 'friends' also beyond the Iron Curtain, friends who are worse off than we are, but nevertheless 'friends' of Christ, who hope in his freeing power, . . . who need our love, our prayers, our brotherly solidarity! *Our* government requires that we should announce it right to the ends of the earth, so that its law of love may be established. Let us not forget, overwhelmed by our own particular circumstances, this calling of ours, nor the authority from whom it comes, an authority we have recognized and who is constituted over us: Jesus Christ.

During the last war I used to write many letters to soldiers stationed on the various fronts, comforting them with the news of the kingdom of Christ, and for this service I was cautioned by the police and called to account for my work. 'I do nothing but preach the love of Christ', I said. And the officer answered: 'We cannot carry on a war with love, but

with hatred: to preach love is defeatism'. Now if the governments of our countries, in a more or less hypocritically veiled form, demand of us this fuel for their politics, and if their propaganda tries to increase it and spread it, our own government on the contrary demands of us that we tell of love and reconciliation, in the pathway of sacrifice and of the cross. Have we recognized *this* government? Or do we accept its rules only within the closed circle of our parish halls and homes? Do we really want to recognize it in our world? This is what is required of us today.

Let not the fear of events and of the very darkness of the world weaken your walk and change your opinions. Let it not make slaves of you, drawing you away from your Christian vocation, because this is a danger often present in history. In Christ there is no reason to fear; besides, the Lord is coming and this government of his announced to-day in the preaching of the Gospel must be manifested from East to West, to the glory of God the Father.

One more word: as we have met and loved each other, let us keep united in prayer in the daily service we must offer, forming a vast spiritual community of love. I should like us to be one in this above all: (a) in the meditation over the Word, not as an act of solitary spiritual devotion, but as an act of seeking and witnessing as brothers, for the edification of the Church of Christ; (b) in our work, no more only as a way to produce for our well-being, but as an act of human solidarity and service in the love of Christ; (c) in prayer, not only as private requests, but as an act of brotherly fellowship of faith and love in God our Father.

Workcamp with Life Membership

Before we went to our M.V.S.* camp last summer we were both Christians and I (and A. also I believe) had very fixed ideas about our religion (I am a member of the Church of England). After our experience at Fontette, however, I realized that something very important had happened in my attitude to religion and to life as a whole.

I believe you said that life in a bruderhof is like living in a workcamp but extending the workcamp for the rest of your life; well, that is just what I felt like doing when our camp was over last August. It seemed such a pity that all of us, from so many nations and creeds, could not stay together and carry on the work which we had started there without the worries and limitations of the outside world. As you will perhaps remember from the film, our camp was in the middle of a country district, and so we had done all our own entertaining, and above all we had not needed to worry about money. . . . You will see that, for me at least, M.V.S. is a wonderful, ideal way of life which we should

*Mennonite Voluntary Service.

try to carry on after the camps are over. You will perhaps see now why I was so interested in what you had to say about the Society of Brothers. (followed by questions)

Durham.

R.L.

Young member replies:

Don't worry about asking questions, our community is here to be questioned. We have in fact come together to find the answers to the problems of living.

I compared the community to a workcamp, and that comparison stands, but it has its limitations. Members of a workcamp give their best to the group, but they don't give everything to it—it is not even expected because after all the time is limited and the purpose of the camp is too.

To build up a 'workcamp with life membership' requires more than human goodwill; it requires complete dedication—all or nothing! The first thing is to dig the foundations and get the groundwork firmly established (old buildings have to be pulled down and rubble carted away!). You spoke of such a life as a wonderful ideal; it can also be a wonderful reality, but it is a hard way, it means facing up to life without flinching, it means giving up everything, losing everything, your own ideas even your own will, to be part of a people waiting to do the will of God.

In one sense of the word we are free from the daily worries and strains of modern life. We often experience hard times but we experience them together and that is different! On the other hand the whole purpose of the community way would be lost should we just sit back enjoying our peace, our work, our comradeship. It is there for everyone. The concern of the world must be our concern—Christian discipleship is never escape.

J.H.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

INTER-BRUDERHOF CONFERENCE

A conference of the bruderhof communities took place in Paraguay during November and December. Besides the brotherhoods of Loma Hoby, Isla Margarita, and Ibaté, which make up the Primavera community and the major portion of our members, five delegates were present from the communities in North America, Europe, and Uruguay.

Since 1953 when the last general conference was held, also in Primavera, three new places have been established—Woodcrest and Forest River in North America and the Sinntalbruderhof in Germany. Such growth had brought its problems, and at the same time other possibilities for new communities had loomed up, and so the time seemed ripe to consider the present state of affairs and discover the lines of future development. The Suez crisis and the revolts in Poland and Hungary added a further challenge to our planning.

The twofold nature of the community life came clearly before us as we worked out our plans. We realized again that we are called first of all to a life of brotherhood in the midst of a world of strife, so that a genuine testimony to the fact that people can dwell together in peace, holding all things in common, can be seen. To this end it was necessary that all communities be well founded and strongly built and at the same time maintain a real inter-bruderhof unity. There should also be in each a good mixture of the different nationalities, age groups, and skills. In the second place we felt that we have to proclaim the life of brotherhood that springs out of a Christian faith, and challenge people to commit themselves whole-heartedly to such a cause. And we seek to build new communities with all who respond to such a challenge. In this light we examined our nine communities—what are their inner weaknesses and strengths, what possibilities have they to carry forward the outreach to people in their respective countries? Most opportunities lay in the United States, Europe, and the more populated parts of South America, whereas the greatest number of members is still in Paraguay. Therefore a central concern of the conference became the question of how the work in other countries could be strengthened by moving members there from Paraguay.

Reports were given about the different places. Amongst other things it was said that Germany had made the most striking recovery of all the European nations engaged in the last great war, and the glitter, abundance, new buildings, rising production indices there give a surface impression of economic health. But the older people carry the scars of two world wars and the fear of yet another haunts them. The windows of the house at Sinntalhof shake with the rumble of army tanks roaring along the highway; the thin-faced, prematurely-aged soldiers of World

War II just returning from ten years in the Russian prisoner-of-war camps meet the uniformed youth in the new German army. The memories of Nazism with concentration camps, refugee centres, and crowded and regimented housing make unpalatable any talk of community living. In spite of these difficulties we feel that the work of the Sinntalhof must be carried on and so we shall maintain the group there and use the house as a centre, speaking outside where we can and opening our doors to as many guests as will come to us, and working in the direction of building up a full-sized community. In contrast to the hesitations among older people many of the youth are open and unburdened, and among many of them there is a strong opposition to military service. These facts made us keen to send some of our youth from Primavera to seek out such young people, and as a result two brotherhood members have already arrived in Europe.

England, we realized, had been neglected somewhat in the work of outreach because we had concentrated on Germany. The setting-up of Sinntalhof was a strain on Wheathill, which had carried the work alone until a year ago when Primavera sent three families to help. Interest in community, which flourished at the time of World War II, died down in following years, but the Suez crisis and pressing economic difficulties in the whole nation are causing questioning and seeking to revive. The young people at Wheathill have taken an active part in workcamps and youth conferences, and have also carried through workcamp projects at Wheathill. Many voices were heard during the conference recommending a second community in England near a large city, or even a house within a city. Our first step, however, is to strengthen the brotherhood at Wheathill so that its work can go on more strongly and a clear direction be found for the future. We should like to send several families and individuals to Wheathill within the next few months for this purpose.

The seeking movement in Germany after the first world war, which gave rise to our original community and which came alive in England at the beginning of World War II when our membership doubled, is now evident in the United States. Woodcrest is overflowing summer and winter. Forest River in North Dakota is also full to capacity, and it was thought we could look for a more suitable place in the Middle West or Northeast, with more room. Considerable interest was also shown in the possibility of founding a third place in Canada, but the actual planning for this will have to wait. A year ago it was decided to send two families from Primavera to the States to help in the work there, and arrangements were completed so that both families were able to re-settle at Forest River during the time of the conference itself. Two other brothers and a young person have now gone up to help for a time, and it is hoped that still other families and individuals may move up later.

In South America we have been slow in finding the key to an effective outreach among Spanish-speaking people. Our contacts have been mainly with German-speaking groups. The brotherhood in Uruguay has made real progress in developing Spanish as the language of the community—not that we have any illusions that this alone will solve the problem of outreach but it is a big help. The situation is promising and so we plan to build up this community to a group of fifty to seventy. Three brothers left soon after the conference to prepare for the arrival of their families and others.

A concern was expressed by our doctors to study some of the later developments in medicine in Europe, and one of them has been sent to England and Germany for this purpose.

The Primavera hospital is seen as a focal point for outreach among our Paraguayan neighbours, but in general Primavera will seek to work much more closely with El Arado than it has in the past, seeing the task as a whole and carrying on joint journeys into Brazil and Argentina as well as in Paraguay and Uruguay.

The conference ended on New Year's Eve. We had had to recognize in many ways our failures to do what we should have done, and we realized all too well that the weaknesses underlying those failures were to a considerable degree still with us. We had also seen a challenge that was great, and before this challenge we knew ourselves to be small. Nevertheless we know that there is a power not our own at work in the world, and in the knowledge of the existence of this power we can have hope and faith that new centres of living brotherhood may be given. Thus we were able to start the new year in confidence and joy. F.H.

FIRE AT WOODCREST

Early in February one of the largest houses at Woodcrest was completely destroyed by fire. The building contained the dining-room, kitchen, bakery, clothing store, offices, and some accommodation. The fire began in the basement but because of the dense oil fumes and smoke it was impossible to enter the house to save more than a few pieces of furniture. We feel very thankful that there was no loss of life and no one was injured in the fire. A description of the scene and an account of the way that friends and neighbours in the district came to our assistance are given in a letter from Burgel Zumpe.

You will have got my letter from the middle of last week giving you news of the terrible disaster we had here a week ago.

The whole thing still seems like a nightmare. It was a terrible sight to see the whole huge house burning—such a roaring fire and such terrific heat. Nothing was left after just a couple of hours. Now, afterwards, one thinks of so many things that were in that house—not of monetary value but of value to the group and individuals—

things that cannot be replaced. We feel it so much as an attack of evil, trying to destroy everything which might be and was essential to our life: mission—all the addresses, letters, files gone; meetings—all reading material destroyed; inner gathering—the place where we meet just not there. And yet the evil power didn't gain an inch. As soon as the fire started we got to work again and we haven't stopped since. We are now settled—'sort of'—in the schoolhouse, and although it is extremely crowded we are able to gather together. Tonight will be the first meeting. We haven't been able to have one for lack of space, but we shall crowd into the schoolroom somehow, as we all feel the urge and need for an inner meeting right now.

All last week we tried to sort out where we are, and we have found a way to solve some problems. The men have done an enormous amount of work on the ruin already by carting out the junk and dirt almost day and night. Tomorrow they will start on the new dining-room. So you see how fast things go. We hope to have the dining-room up *soon*. Forest River community is sending food and men—the men to help us and the contractors get the building up quickly. Otherwise we still live on food given by the Red Cross and our overwhelmingly generous neighbours. I have never experienced such concern and generosity from neighbours. Food, clothing, kitchen utensils, furniture, come in almost by the truckload. Last night a man delivered three refrigerators, an adding-machine, and a filing cabinet—this of course is not a usual example. But it has seemed such a terrible thing that people just do everything and anything they can think of. The telephone goes all day with people calling up wanting to know how best to help us and whether anyone was hurt. Some saw the fire from the 'thruway' and called up, others saw it in the papers, and also word got around very soon. It even appeared in the *New York Times* and a friend of ours made a dramatic programme on the radio about it—all without our doing anything. We are very moved by how much people, including other communities in the States, are helping us. Of course this doesn't replace half the things needed, but it is so unexpected that it means twice as much. The housemother's store is already crowded with stuff which people bring in—clothing, toys, boots, coats, suits—just piles of it. The kitchen has so many fancy and 'ultra' cups and plates and so forth that those who work there hardly know where to turn because they step on each other's toes anyhow in that little place.

This all in brief. Our postmaster at Rifton has done most of all, I think, by telling others about our needs and urging them to drop their stuff at his place, and then he brings it up here.

Although it was a terrible loss we feel very challenged by the friendship and concern of neighbours whom we had never got to know in the years since Woodcrest started. I am sure it will mean a lot to us in the future.

From my window I see a black mess of old bricks and dirty paper lying in the mud and filth. Pipes and stoves and typewriters

are all on a huge, black, horrible pile waiting to be picked up by the junk-dealer tomorrow. We all thought very much of the last war when so many homes looked just like this one centre building—and no help was rendered. You can't imagine what it is like. Woodcrest looks really crippled and bare.

There is so much one could say about the fire and what has happened since that it is just impossible to write about everything specifically. This is just to give you a taste of the whole thing.

Reconstruction work is well under way. In addition to the members from Forest River, six carpenters sent by the Mennonite Central Committee have been helping in the building work. The dining-room is to be one third larger than the old one.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERN

All our communities and especially the young people were much moved by the events in the Middle East last autumn and felt a deep concern for young people in Germany facing the question of conscription this year. It was therefore decided to send three of our young men on a four-weeks' circular tour in Germany to visit old and new friends, but especially youth circles. Claus Siewert gives his impressions of the meetings:

'What shall we do then?' a young girl called out during a meeting. What shall we do? This was the question that lay behind all the meetings we had with young people in Germany,—so that the answer always had to be in the nature of a decision.

That was really the concern in all these meetings. It was not a question of one more discussion about conscientious objection to war, nor a more or less interesting report on the community movement. No! It was always a matter of deciding for or against a cause—not for or against the bruderhof, but whether one should follow Christ's way with one's whole life. What consequences this would have for the individual was another matter—we could only say what consequences it had had for us.

But most people did not want to make a decision—it is much more comfortable not to. One course is considered good and the other not bad. But such an attitude can't be maintained forever, for it is really not an attitude at all. In our meetings it always cost a struggle to break through this indifference, this don't-care attitude.

Perhaps it was the radical character of the Christian message we proclaimed which startled people. Many who seemed complacent and unmoved suddenly became wide awake as we told how none of us had money of his own but everything went into the common purse. They moved restlessly in their chairs when we spoke of how love seeks to

express itself in the whole of our lives, so that, for example, participation in forceful measures of any kind, whether in relation to military service, competition, nationalism, or race, no longer comes into question. Life is devoted to truth and peace. Well, of course, that often stirred people up.

'But I say', one young person burst out; 'does that really mean that I should give up all my property—everything I possess?' 'Well, it's not for nothing that the Sermon on the Mount says, if you have two suits, give one to him who has none. It is a question of sharing everything with brothers.' 'But you can't do that on your own—you would suddenly find yourself with nothing.' 'You are to live in community with your brothers, and not just community of belief or interests but in community of life as well.' 'Yes, but what would become of all the people who have no faith if all of us Christians withdrew into community? Don't we have to stay scattered in the world for the sake of others?' they kept asking.

What impression do you think it would make on non-Christians if love for our brothers should drive us Christians to such a practical unity, a unity which overcomes all unbrotherly barriers? Should we then differentiate between classes as we do now? Would it still bother us if our brother did not have a white skin? Should we join in the dreadful dance around the golden calf which is going on in Germany and elsewhere? Should we still obey the State rather than God, and join in making these murderous wars?

Oh no! Much would change, indeed a whole new order would come about, if Christians followed the call of Jesus to unity as brothers! The light of the church-community would stream out into the world and light up and reveal the darkness, and the mission to which we are always called would have quite a different power.

Conversations like this, about key questions, took place in most of our gatherings, and we were very thankful for this. Naturally each meeting was a story in itself, and there were many other questions. People wanted to know everything imaginable about the bruderhof, from our attitude to the State to the care of babies. It was always important to us to have as free an atmosphere as possible where everyone would say what he thought. Sometimes we showed coloured slides and frequently we sang international folk songs as we do at the bruderhof. In everything it was our concern to point to a true life. This can only be achieved if we allow our whole life in every area and relationship to be determined by Christ.

'What shall we do then?' was the question.

Will there be a decision? Or will life go on as usual at the same old jog-trot?

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

The 'new world order' has been the vision of idealists, religious and political, in an ever-growing intensity over the past decades. The blueprints and charters that have been outlined would fill many a filing cabinet. In most of these there has been a genuine seeking after brotherhood and peace, but few have got beyond the paper on which they were drafted. If men turn to the teachings of Christ, they will not find any theoretical plan for a socialist society or a world government, but they can discover the key to a source of power which, if they are ready and willing, can transform their personal and social lives. Only from the new relationships of peace and love that result from that transformation can the new order begin to take shape.

Several features in this number of *THE PLOUGH* are related to this theme. The short extract from Eberhard Arnold's *God and Anti-God* on the first page gives a clear word to the visionaries of today. It is followed by a penetrating appraisal by Philip Britts of the point at which each one of us must stand in the conflict between good and evil, discriminating between that which is of life and an order of peace and that which is of death and chaotic strife. Then, Artur Mettler has contributed a timely study of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, drawing from it an account of the journey of the human soul in its relationship to others as it passes from darkness to light. The poem, 'Pronouns', is from *The Burning Bush*, (Yale University Press, New Haven).

Maureen Burn, long-time laboratory assistant at the Primavera Hospital, tells of a visit made to a leper colony in Paraguay along with a former patient who has now come to live with us.

A Faithful and True Witness

A clear witness to truth was given by our sister, Rachel Maendel, who died at Forest River Community on February 4th, 1957. 'Rachel Basel', 'Cousin Rachel' as she was called in the Hutterian manner, was born on the 30th of August, 1899. She was daughter of David Hofer and his wife Rachel, who is still living in James Valley, Manitoba, Canada, aged eighty. Her father was well known to those who were living at the Cotswold Bruderhof, the Rhoen Bruderhof, and the Alm Bruderhof, when he visited the three communities in 1937 with Michael Waldner. Rachel Basel had nine brothers and sisters, most of whom are still living. In 1921 Rachel Hofer married Jacob Maendel, a brother very concerned with the important things of the true Church—the unity and peace among its members, and mission work. He died in 1944.

Rachel Basel desired to bring up her children in the fear of God and as true fighters for Christ and his way. Through her father she always felt a great love for the new beginning of full community in Germany. She was much occupied with the future of the Hutterian communities and the witness in the world. She was thankful for the efforts being made in this direction as a result of the conference in Paraguay, and was especially glad for the participation of youth in the work of outreach. Through her very serious illness she maintained to the end her interest in the inner concerns of the church community. When she passed peacefully into eternity her death brought a deep and sharp challenge to dedicate our lives more fully—so long as the time is granted us—to the way of Christ.

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