

THE PLOUGH

THE QUARTERLY
OF THE
BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

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THE PLOUGH is the quarterly journal of the Bruderhof Communities in England and South 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

The Quarterly of the Bruderhof Communities

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TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD . . .

To transform the world, to recreate it afresh, men must turn into another path psychologically. Until you have become really, in actual fact, a brother to everyone, brotherhood will not come to pass. No sort of scientific teaching, no kind of common interest, will ever teach men to share property and privileges with equal consideration for all. Everyone will think his share too small and they will be always envying, complaining and attacking one another. You ask when it will come to pass; it will come to pass, but first we have to go through a period of isolation.

Everyone tries to keep his individuality as apart as possible, wishes to secure the greatest possible fulness of life for himself; but meantime all his efforts result not in attaining fulness of life but self-destruction, for instead of self-realisation he ends by arriving at complete solitude. All mankind in our age have split up into units, they all keep apart, each in his own groove; each one holds aloof, hides himself and hides what he has, from the rest, and ends by being repelled by others and repelling them. He heaps up riches by himself and thinks, 'how strong I am now and how secure', and in his madness he does not understand that the more he heaps up, the more he sinks into self-destructive impotence. For he is accustomed to rely upon himself alone and to cut himself off from the whole; he has trained himself not to believe in the help of others, in men and in humanity, and only trembles for fear he should lose his money and the privileges that he has won for himself. Everywhere in these days men have, in their mockery, ceased to understand that true security is to be found in social solidarity rather than in isolated individual effort. But this terrible individualism must inevitably have an end, and all will suddenly understand how unnaturally they are separated from one another. It will be the spirit of the time, and people will marvel that they have sat so long in darkness without seeing the light. And then the sign of the Son of Man will be seen in the heavens. . . . But, until then, we must keep the banner flying. Sometimes, even if he has to do it alone and his conduct seems to be crazy, a man must set an example, and so draw men's souls out of their solitude, and spur them to some act of brotherly love, that the great idea may not die.

FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY.

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY: THE ROLE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

ARTUR METTLER

What follows, based on the testimony of contemporary Israelites, Mennonites and Quakers, is not intended as a debate with or criticism against these groups which are related to us in spirit, but as a challenge to all who wish to belong to the people of God, first of all to ourselves. We would welcome an exchange with any one of these groups, if it should result from this article.

I

Until the First World War, the opposition of liberalism and orthodoxy held the limelight of religious controversy. This was the case in the field of Jewish religion as much as in Christianity. The orthodox faction sought to remain true to the inherited faith regardless of the changed historical circumstances. The liberals took account of the new historical situation and endeavoured to reshape the inherited faith correspondingly. Both factions were influenced by the spirit of the times, though in different ways and to varying degrees. We are all acquainted with these disputes. They were not always waged with bitterness, but often with a passion which to-day we can scarcely understand. Our interest these days is so intensely devoted to social and political questions that the old line of dispute seems to be obscured.

In all the controversy, a third voice attempts to gain a hearing. It speaks in new tones, but its meaning is old; it points to the old faith, but its programme is new. It is denounced by liberals as orthodox and by the orthodox as liberal, and yet it is fundamentally something different, something far more all-inclusive and radical. It might be called the prophetic spirit, since it has much in common with the prophets, especially God's claim to the whole man on Sundays and week-days, in his relationship to God and to his fellows. It does not mean only the social and moral aspect of prophecy. Nor does it mean setting up a practical programme which will permit every member of the congregation to lead an 'ethical life' in a changed world. That is an essential part of the prophetic message, but not all of it; it is too near to the pure liberal line. Neither does it mean an exclusive emphasis on the spiritual life, on faith, including the admission of our human weakness and incapability and motivating us to turn again to the 'objective word', which is not contained in our natures, but in God. That too is an essential part of the prophetic message, but not all of it; in spite of all the emphasis on life, it remains too much inside the orthodox line.

Neither the radical philosophical reinterpretation of spiritual heritage, nor its gradual watering-down into pietism, nor the return to the ancient words can secure the penetrating power characteristic of the spirit of prophecy. This spirit draws on the primeval store of faith, but

at the same time it is a new and living word, a challenge which must be heard now and at no other time. It appears as a completely new relationship to tradition, but at the same time leads back to springs of action which lie deep in the early history, particularly that of Israel, the Christianity of the first century, and the movements of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe.

The demand of the prophetic spirit is distinguished by its call for a *people*: the Hebrew people of God of the Old Covenant, and the Christian people of the New Covenant and its conscious revivals. 'The Holy People' are to be set apart from the surrounding world. The peace-minded Anabaptists of the sixteenth and the Quakers of the seventeenth century saw themselves as the revival of the all-inclusive prophetic demand to form the core of the future people of God and to take up the battle with the world in new and changing forms. That was a tremendous demand. It is no wonder that later generations were not equal to its greatness, and turned off into the domain of personal salvation; that they attempted to reinterpret the words of prophecy in philosophic or pietistic terms and in other respects adjusted themselves to the evil world to the best of their ability. Essential to all these adjustments was the underlying feeling that the world around them was no longer fundamentally 'different', with the result that they no longer had any special message or mission to give to it. The only thing left was to protect themselves against the threat of internal disintegration and to make further adjustments to the world by altering the meaning of the words one still continued to use. This could be done in diverse fashions.

II

M. N. Kaplan* details how the twelfth-century Maimonides did the Judaism of his time the dis-service of recasting the prophetic writings in the terms of philosophy without tampering with the literal text of the Old Testament; the Law was to be seen through the eyes of Aristotle and thus brought into harmony with the changing historical climate. Men were still obligated to carry out the prescriptions of the Law, but philosophical understanding was more important. The devout individual usurped the position of the people of God. The Jewish people became one nation among many. Maimonides succeeded so well in justifying his aberration that it was not even recognized as such, but was accepted from then on as a valid interpretation of the inherited religion, although a modern authority speaks of it as so 'diametrically opposed' to the essence of the original as to form 'two such radically different senses that they seem to be moving in different worlds of discourse'.

* M. N. Kaplan, *Judaism in Transition*, Bloch, New York, 1936.

It is no mere chance that in modern times those very values which Maimonides took such care to explain away have been declared to be the distinguishing mark of the genuine Jewish position; that Berdyaev* can describe as elements of the true historical thought of Israel such conceptions as the messianic hope for the earth, the personal God who hears the prayers of men, the emphasis on the people rather than on the individual—in short, the kind of thought which is not concerned merely with the needs of the soul and its fate in the world beyond, but with a radical reconstruction of earthly life. The concern of prophetic Judaism is nothing less than a new earth which shall be the dwelling-place of justice.

III

Robert Friedmann† describes a similar development in the history of the Anabaptist movement, particularly that of the Mennonites. The change was not carried out under the high-minded auspices of philosophy, but it is apparent that the gradual transition from Anabaptism to pietism likewise involved the disintegration of the people of God into groups of individuals. There were not many who saw it, but it eventually became obvious that the original radical line had been forsaken and a path of less resistance chosen which guaranteed the individual his salvation without burdening him with the struggle against the surrounding world. The same words, such as *peace*, *cross* and *conversion*, which in the sixteenth century had had their position within the acutely sensed opposition of Church *vs.* World, were progressively narrowed down until they were only expressions for states of the individual soul. The early Anabaptists carried on a struggle against all evil in their own flesh and in the world; the pietists let the world go on being the world; the only social concern left to them was, as Spener said, 'the wretched condition of the church'. They were preoccupied first and foremost with the subjective experience of salvation and only secondarily with their relations to their fellow man; and they wanted nothing whatever to do with a radical transformation of the world. For the Anabaptists, the cross was the symbol of their ostracism and persecution for Christ's sake; it became for the pietists the symbol of an emotional experience. The Lord's Supper was the Anabaptists' symbol of radical obedience; for the pietists it was a 'having, feeling and enjoying' (Zinzendorf). The Anabaptists preferred to speak of the 'bitter Christ'; the pietists talked of the 'sweet Saviour'. The Anabaptists emphasized the fear of God, the discipleship of daily

* Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, New York, 1949.

† Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*, Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen, Indiana, U.S.A., 1949.

struggle; the pietists laid the stress on divine bliss, edification and peace of soul. Many other such contrasts could be indicated.

Thus pietism became an impoverished version of Anabaptism. The visible people of God became one religious group among others and the salt lost its savour.

IV

The analogous transition in Quakerism, as shown by Lewis Benson,* was again assisted by philosophy, this time the Platonic rather than the Aristotelian variety. The 'Inner Light' of the first Quakers was interpreted by nineteenth-century Friends according to the understanding of the mystical Cambridge Platonists. Here too the emphasis shifted from the people of God to the individual. The stormy attack upon the world by a separate people of God was replaced by quiet and peaceful submission to the order of the world. Quakerism became one denomination among others. To-day, in wide areas of Quakerism, it is the private conscience of the individual which rules instead of the single will of God, which should set the norm for human life. God is no longer the personal God of the prophets, who can be prayed to, but 'the Heart of the Universe', often equivalent to natural law. The 'Inner Light', the central doctrine of the first Quakers, is no longer 'The Christ in us', the 'Inner Teacher', who must constantly renew from above the gift that enables us to know God and ourselves; it is made an inborn faculty of the natural man—which it always was to the Platonists. The history of the Friends was rewritten in the last century in this sense, 'reinterpreted'; indeed, Benson goes so far as to say—falsified.

This misunderstanding, he says, is more than an incorrect theory. It has enormous consequences. This is why it must be 'exposed'. Everything depends on this insight. Everything is at stake.

Benson shows the effects this reinterpretation had on all areas of life. The waiting for God, which characterized the first meetings and furnished the basis for clerical accusations against George Fox, became the silent church service of the self-cultivating soul, which only needs to descend into its own depths to get into the proper mood. The circle of people waiting for God became a loose group of meditators who, as Maimonides puts it, have the 'ability to contemplate the nature of God who is eternal, infinite and unchanging'. The humble elder who knows he has nothing in himself that would enable him to say anything important, unless Christ himself teach him, is replaced by the self-assured speaker who exhibits a brilliant intellect. Fox said of this sort of leader that they were nothing but notionists, and not in possession

* Lewis Benson, *Prophetic Quakerism*, Friends Home Service Committee, London, 1951.

of what they talked of', that they 'had the Scriptures, but not in the same light and power'; that 'nothing should be uttered but what is in the power'.

The true church or congregation, gathered from among all peoples 'through the power from above', giving testimony in its inner and outer life to the power of Christ over weak men, was able to give the world a 'picture of true community' because the one Spirit had led it to unanimous witness and concerted action. But this church-community became a form of church, which in spite of good will and considerable external development in various works of love, was no longer capable of assailing the 'organized opposition of the world'.

The theocracy of the early Quakers has become a spiritual democracy; the gathering of the individuals is no longer the indispensable bond which guarantees that the testimony of the spirit will remain alive at all times; it is now only a bond loosely connecting the devout, giving the individuals the opportunity of finding self-perfection with more certainty than if they were alone. The solidarity of the church has become a mystical brotherhood which has joined together for mutual benefit and advantage and for the support of the needy in the world. But even the deepest group mysticism is still not unity in the Spirit.

When the individual conscience is made the dominating principle, obedience to the will of God is replaced by moral relativism. This is why the body of Quakerism is no longer able to present a united witness for peace, why it is even possible for some Quakers to extend 'that glorification to the consciences of those whose idealism sends them forth to war'.

'The apparent survival of the Quaker form of church organization', says Benson, 'might be compared to a certain Quaker meeting house. This meeting house stood for many years in an unused condition and passers-by observed no noticeable change in its appearance until one day the whole thing collapsed. It was later discovered that it had been eaten by termites, those little insects which eat the load-bearing part of the wood and leave the outside surface untouched'. Perhaps a metaphor of the old Jewish Chasidists, handed on to us by Martin Buber, fits the situation even more exactly: 'The house does not collapse. Everything remains as it was, the servants sweep the room and polish the furniture, people come and go as always, they pray and are silent and speak just as they used to do . . . "The wheel goes on turning, only the tiny point at the centre is missing'.

W. W. Comfort's *The Quaker Way of Life** could be used to document the accuracy of Benson's analysis at every point. Here the Friends are praised for their ability to fit in with their surroundings. The radicalism and apocalyptic state of mind of the early Quakers is

* Pendle Hill, 1941.

treated with a smile; Quakers are praised 'not for their theology, but for their deeds'. It is emphasized that silent worship helps a person 'to rise to the best that is in him'. The fact is deplored that Quakers still try to be a 'peculiar people'. But probably worst of all is the assertion that the peace witness of the early Quakers was 'essentially negative', and that only the modern method of practical aid is a positive witness for peace. But Comfort himself quotes a sentence from George Fox which bears thinking about; Fox said that he lived 'out of that life and that power which makes all war impossible'.* Practical aid is a good thing; the parable of the Good Samaritan is not in the bible by accident. But one could at least ask whether the testimony of the Friends was not stronger in the early days when it cut at the root of war and could show the pattern of a people whose life had such deep foundations that it gave the world a witness of the power of the Spirit in the sphere of social life; when it showed on a small scale how the world could live on a large scale, if it really made every effort to do God's will, and not its own.

To summarize, one must say that the samething happened in all three movements—the conformity to the spirit of the times, making it possible for the individual who had grown away from tradition to go on living in the bosom of his religious community with a good conscience. At the same time, mostly without his knowing it, this meant a relativizing of his standards of life. The will of God was replaced by the conscience of man, radical discipleship was replaced by subjective experience; unquestioning obedience to God was replaced by meditation and rational exegesis. And the idea of the people of God was replaced by the less dynamic concept of the devout group united for the purpose of doing good.

V

Rainer Maria Rilke wrote of Germany in the years after the First World War that it 'could have startled the world by an act of repentance. But Germany only wanted to evade this instead of preparing for a miracle. It wanted to endure instead of changing'. These words fit the problem that concerns us here. Certainly, to expect repentance of a natural people is to expect too much—but from a people of God? This would seem to be the position of the 'peculiar peoples' we have described: they want to endure, without changing; they would rather get through somehow than prepare for a miracle. We must have a high regard for human honesty, and no one should be sneered at who belongs to one of these peoples, and yet no longer finds it possible to espouse the old values with all his heart. Still, the question addressed to us is so insistent

* George Fox, *Journal*, 1651, Everyman edition, p. 36.

that there is no avoiding it any longer: Are you going to content yourself with conforming to the changed conditions of the world, to the spirit of the times and the spirit of the merely human, and thus insure your survival—or will you turn again and put yourself into the hands of the Spirit, to be used according to God's will? Not survival, but revival; 'not patchwork—only a whole work' (Buber) will meet the needs of these times.

The old conflict between liberalism and orthodoxy is, as far as we are concerned, over and done with. What we are confronted with is the question of the spirit of prophecy, which cuts across all factions. Do we dare to take the easier way, in the face of the fact that the world is waiting for our 'united witness' (Benson), for our 'radical obedience' (Friedmann), for the pattern of true community in the Spirit? Do we still dare, in face of the terrible power of organized evil in the world, to consider the requirements of our personal salvation and our own spiritual perfection? Do we still dare to withstand God's summons to help the world, not merely with a philanthropic sharing of our surplus, but with a total dedication of ourselves? 'To be in harmony with the world' means 'to lose the opportunity to influence the world' (Friedmann). 'There is (for the Anabaptists) an inherent antagonism between the world and the true Church. If this antagonism should cease, they would take it as an indication that the Church had fallen from her first estate', says John Horsch, the Mennonite historian. Kaplan reminds us that the prophets said of Israel that its justice would be so apparent that the nations would come to worship its God. Pennington spoke of the Quakers as 'a people gathered by the life and power from on high', and Barclay anticipated that this spirit would restore the golden age. The old Anabaptists, like Peter Rideman, knew that God had set a people apart to attract others to the love of God. The issue to-day is no longer purity of doctrine or human honesty alone, although these have their place, since both these approaches remain on a merely human level and cannot lead us out of our need and distress. There must be a 'summoning-up of the powers of the primeval word', as Buber puts it; a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The question before us is whether Christ came to bring a religion—or a revolution, the only revolution which has the authority to stand up to capitalism and communism alike, because it is not founded on human strength and even less on human force, but on power from above. Here we are faced with the real concern of primitive Christianity and primitive Judaism, a concern which is the same as that of the early Anabaptists and the first Quakers; the coming of the Kingdom which does not consist in words, but in power. Whether this is understood or not will be decisive for the future of the world.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND CHRISTIANITY

HIS ATTITUDE TO THE CHURCH

Nietzsche was right in asserting that the church is compounded out of the opposite of the Gospel as 'an abominable agglomerate of Greek philosophy and Judaism, asceticism, hierarchical rank, etc.'. 'Each time Christianity spread out among broader and cruder masses it became more imperative to vulgarize and barbarize it.'

Nietzsche rightly recognized that four foreign elements have assumed mastery over Christianity as a world-religion: Judaism, Platonism, asceticism and the mystery cults. During the period of early Christianity an orderly church life of members with equal rights, able to develop all their gifts and powers freely, was the rule. But as early as the Old-Catholic period (up to A.D. 180) a well-established class of priests and a moralizing legality had been formed which inevitably nullified and cancelled the vital effect of Jesus at its root. The early Christian writings had kept completely free of Greek philosophy. Later, Origenes (185-254) completely dissolved Christian thought in Platonic conceptions, but even before that, Justin (d. 185) and his apologists had completely identified Christianity with philosophy.

In the apostolic churches baptism and the Lord's supper were simple avowals of an active faith in the death of Jesus and the unity of his Church. But it was not long before a magical and sacramental church service and a ceremonial piety had been formed under the influence of pagan cults like Mithraism and the mysteries, so that conversion and the practice of Christian life were progressively pushed from the scene. These cults were also the source of the negative mood of asceticism and other-worldliness so completely alien to early Christianity with its concrete hope for the earth and its sense of the commitment of the body.

Thus it came about that 'Christianity consists in moods and ceremonies' but in real life 'acts just like everybody else', so that through 'this despicable mendacity' we have earned 'the contempt of Arabs, Hindus and Chinese'. It must be admitted that the Reformation undertook to liberate men from these preponderant non-Christian powers of the church in almost all the points mentioned and to return to apostolic Christianity. But it is obvious to all that it remained fixed in its feeble beginnings and accomplished nothing more than a kind of reformed Catholicism, never having won through in real freedom to primitive Christianity. Down to this day Judaism prevails in all the churches as moralism and the priestly class. Even now the primitive Christian world of thought is still perverted into its opposite through the Platonism of theology. The sacraments of priests and parsons with their

mood-magic of organ music and incense still triumph over the necessity of a real Christian life and the realization of a Church of Christ set completely apart. And perhaps worst of all, even among serious Christians the Christian ideal is asceticism and self-castigation instead of a joyful, virile mastery of the world.

'Christianity should not be confused with this one of its roots. The other roots were far mightier.' It is not just that Protestantism is 'the partial paralysis of Christianity', 'an impure and tedious form of decadence'. Much more important is the insight that Christianity can tolerate no alliance with politics and governmental tactics, that it simply cannot be a national religion. Instead of working toward this hypocritical phantasm, the first and true witnesses of Christ centred their attention solely on the saving and radical reconstitution of individuals, who could be tolerated in the Church only when this had been completed. Any sort of fellowship with the worldly masses, particularly in religious matters, was out of the question. The transition to the later church-system, this negation of Christianity, was made possible only through the sudden corruption of the early churches, against which even Paul and John had to fight.

This fact does not mean that Christianity has cancelled itself; on the contrary, it affords historical proof of what Christ and the apostles said. The great reactions of history which, for all their one-sidedness and error, have drawn from the only spring of Christian truth, demonstrate down into modern times that the elemental power of real Christianity, in spite of all distortion and persecution, has never been extinguished. One need only refer to the Eiro-Scottish Church, the Waldensians, and the peace-minded Anabaptists.

HIS PHILOSOPHIC AND ETHICAL INDICTMENTS

Nietzsche knew the tremendous strength of his opponent, knew that he had to exert himself to the utmost if he expected to defeat him in what he called the 'righteous duel of equal strengths'.

He believed himself in possession of weapons which no man before him had ever wielded: the *Transvaluation of all Values*. The core of his indictment, the actual spearhead of his attack, is contained in two phrases: *decadence* and *negation of life*, pathology that has reached the stage of a hatred of life—these are the fundamental factors which he tries to demonstrate as the origin of the entire Christian movement.

If Nietzsche had stopped to notice the astonishing abundance of spiritual power presupposed and demanded for the composition of any one of the apostolic writings, if he had reflected on the high spiritual level necessary for the understanding of these writings—unfortunately so rare in our times—he could never have spoken of a party of 'low-brows and misfits'. It was true enough that in the eyes of the world

there were not many noble, not many wise who dared to belong to the Church. In the face of the severe persecution of the Christians, it required an eminent maturity of determination and strength of character to occupy such a vulnerable social position and still to dare to make the fateful declaration of loyalty to Christ. The relative scarcity of such personalities, though there were quite a number of them all told, seemed to Paul to prove that in most instances worldly wisdom and power are, in the eyes of God—that is, in truth—foolishness and weakness. Or, to put it in the words of Nietzsche, they appear as pronounced decadence.

This fundamental insight accounts for the fact that genuine Christianity seeks out, from among the wealthiest and the poorest, the most brilliant and the most stultified, the most robust constitutions and the most feeble invalids, only those individuals who have the real will, and hence in Christ the potentiality of being reconstituted into strong and victorious personalities.

It was not, as Nietzsche supposed, part of early Christian faith that everything that happens is sent by divine Providence and ultimately turns out for the best. This faith asserts the conviction that there are two opposed principles locked in combat for a certain time in the sphere of the earth. It explains the powers of death on earth as evidence of the destructive frenzy of Satan, conceived as the prince of this world in revolt against God. It sees Satan's hand in all the vile and lying tendencies which distort and choke out life, which threaten to drag everything down into filth and destroy it. The only thing which primitive Christianity regards as of the devil is death and its treacherous powers of destruction, whereas it tries in every way to affirm and exalt life.

All the qualities and traits damned and excluded by Christianity are such that the stamp of death is written clearly on their brows. Are not cowards and adulterers, drinkers, fornicators and effeminate, swindlers and sorcerers the same refuse, so poisonous to life, which Nietzsche attacks? What Christianity rejects is rottenness of character, whether it be in licentiousness and debauchery or in half-heartedness and weak character. These are the factors that make for the destruction of life. Christianity is the most consistent condemnation of all the powers of death.

This realization clearly illuminates Nietzsche's great fundamental error, which was to see Christianity as a moral religion, a system of morals. Obviously, true Christianity offers its members practical instruction on how to act and how to live. But the great Immoralist, in spite of the maxims for living which he himself erected, overlooks the fact that there is a difference as between night and day whether it is a moral law or a vital power which determines a man's action. 'Only

whole personalities can love.' 'Ah, my friends, put your whole selves into what you are doing, let that be the value of your virtue'. 'A man must have a firm hold upon himself and stand staunchly on both feet, or he cannot love at all'. In words like these our Antichrist identified himself with the Christian ideal of the free, strong and whole personality. This is how the life-relationship which Jesus demands, the power and directives which he offers should be understood.

Before there can be any thought of a generalized love of our neighbour, or any talk of a whole-hearted love of God, there must be a rebirth of character, a concentration of the self into the totality of undistracted, unbroken relationship to Jesus. 'Whoever does not hate father and mother is not worthy of me.' 'Let the dead bury their dead, and come and follow me.' Jesus is so far from seeing 'the value in itself' in the 'unselfing morality' and 'depersonalization' of the generalized love of one's neighbour, that he actually summons the individual to leave all this feeble and ephemeral human love and to win the strength of his own self in his own personality. The person who devotes himself and everything he has to Jesus, who accepts Jesus with everything he is and says, has won that relationship to him which means being born again.

Nietzsche himself once rightly saw that, originally, altruism is not Christian. The initial thing in the Christian life is the egotism of completely concentrating oneself on the saving and reconstitution of one's own personality through Jesus. But once one is firmly standing on both feet, once one has become whole, then one can and must love.

What primitive Christianity affirms is the life of self-contained healthy strength in effective help for others and in dominion over nature. Primitive Christianity was never monastic or hostile to nature. Jesus did not even oppose the drinking of wine, as Nietzsche did. He was no vegetarian or ascetic, nor did he despise the body or the earth. He not only showed how much he himself loved nature and all its gifts, but actually promised his followers that they would inherit the earth. Primitive Christianity is so completely free of asceticism and monasticism that Jesus was called a glutton and wine-swiller. And Paul declared: "All things belong to you"—through the fact and in the sense that you belong to Christ. However critically the Christian sees through the ceaseless fraud and bankruptcy of culture, everything is his which, without staining himself, he can use to the glory of his Lord.

Marriage is another aspect of life which loses none of its natural dignity through anything which either Jesus or Paul said. On the contrary, the words of Jesus emphasize its transcendent consecration and profound significance, and Paul exalted the relationship between husband and wife, bride and bridegroom through the most sublime comparisons. It was only as a *charisma* for the purpose of a special

service that he mentions celibacy, and Jesus imposed the obligation of utmost severity only in cases where it should be necessary to avoid gagging of the spiritual life and destruction of the personality. It was his high conception of this area of life which caused him to voice the profoundly meaningful warning, in the Sermon on the Mount, that a single glance can desecrate and dishonour. What Christ willed and what primitive Christianity knew in its experience is the harmonious dominion of the spirit over the body and its desires.

It is even less comprehensible how anyone could think that the unclear and generalized other-worldliness of the Christian world has the least bit to do with the realism of the Scriptures. Since Nietzsche so correctly recognized Platonism as a primary factor in the churchly distortion of Christianity, it is curious that for all his intensive study of the Scriptures, he never saw how definitely and exclusively they speak of the salvation and restoration—not only of human souls—but of the whole earth. The God of the Old and New Testaments means not the negation of the world and the earth, but in the mightiest and deepest sense their affirmation, salvation and vitalization.

The Christianity of the New Testament never chose *memento mori* as its motto, nor did it despise the body and regard the last hour of human life as the most important one. Even if we twist the original writings of primitive Christianity around to make them depict the living God, the dead, and those of God's creatures outside the earth as dwelling in a 'Beyond', the purpose of this Beyond would still not be to make filth of this world, but rather to purify the whole material cosmos and the earth in particular and free them of all the powers of death, of all poison, affliction and vileness. Such a Beyond could mean only the liberation, renewal and vitalization of the material world which is now saturated with poison and corruption.

But the church lost no time in declaring its opposition to the 'fleshly' doctrine of the earthly kingdom of Christ*, especially through Augustine's assertion that the church itself is this Kingdom, this City of God. Thus it set itself, more or less consciously, squarely against the expectation for the future which the whole of primitive Christianity owned and which is expressed particularly in the Book of Revelation.

Not Dionysus, but primitive Christianity is 'the religious affirmation of life—of the whole, not the half, of life'. It is primitive Christianity which waits expectantly for 'a kind of deification of the body' and publishes the watchword, 'Our will is set on the realm of earth', 'that the earth might some day belong to the super-man'.

The way to these mighty earthly objectives is clearly designated in the words of Jesus and the apostles: the bodies of those who have

* Clement and Ignatius around 120, A.D.; Gaius, 180; Dionysus about 250; Origenes, died 254.

been reborn, which even now must be guarded and cared for as 'the temple of the Holy Spirit', are to be transformed into bodies with invulnerable resources of vitality. With the aid of these rulers of the earth, Jesus himself, as a political king, will subject every part of the earth to his government. And the final fate of our world will not be destruction, but rebirth to a new earth free of the powers of death and darkness. Christianity is actually the healthiest sort of affirmation of life and material reality, the most consistent condemnation of all the powers of death.

AN ECONOMY OF SURRENDER

ROBERT WILBRANDT

A few months ago our friend Robert Wilbrandt, Professor of Economics, died in his seventy-ninth year. He had intended to write an article for THE PLOUGH on the subject of An Economy of Surrender. It was a theme which had concerned him for decades since the time that he first heard of the 'Fellow-Workers' who lived in complete community of goods in the last century at the Homes of Gustav Werner. The first time Wilbrandt met a Bruderhof member he said: "Your life is exactly what I had imagined when in earlier writings I tried to describe the highest moral form of economy, and it is what I meant by such a conception as an Economy of Surrender (*Hingabewirtschaft*)."

He dedicated his book, *Economy: Thoughts about the Philosophy and Sociology of Economics*, to the Bruderhof. The author said to us at that time that in this book he had made the first attempt to put down his thoughts on this subject but that the whole theme should be worked upon more thoroughly.

In the second part of the book Robert Wilbrandt describes the various economic forms which exist parallel to each other to-day. He shows how the changing mutual relationships of men rest upon such economics, and he analyses them from the point of view of their efficiency and failings. These three existing forms are: Individual Economy (Conservatism), which is dependent upon force; Barter Economy (Liberalism), which is dependent upon money and must satisfy self-interest; and Communal Economy (Socialism), with its co-operatives and trade unions.

At the end of the observations and comparisons of these three forms, Professor Wilbrandt comes to the conclusion that their deficiencies are to be found within the heart of each individual, and that only when there is a change of heart, followed by a corresponding development of mind, can this lead to a fourth form of economy which would supersede the existing forms. We are printing extracts from the last section of this book, describing the conditions necessary for such an Economy of Surrender.

CO-EXISTENT WITH OTHER FORMS AND AS A BASIC PRINCIPLE

The conception of an Economy of Surrender is an unusual one and must not be confused with charity in the sense of caring for the poor. To give one's property for the free use of others without any kind of

compensation, that is, to surrender one's own rights in favour of others, or in favour of a 'good cause' or a 'good purpose', is quite different from almsgiving, where the donor controls the use of the gift. Charity has the reins firmly in hand; *one* directs the management in which others are included; the goods are not there to be freely disposed of, in fact, they are not at the disposal of the poor at all, but are made available only to alleviate need which may become a public danger—this is the idea behind public assistance. In other words, the purpose for which the money is to be used is determined by the one who dispenses it as though he were a father or guardian: the receiver is not capable of managing it for himself; therefore he is in need, therefore he must be treated in this way. This is the humiliating implication of public assistance.

The opposite is true of an economy of surrender. Here, everything is given away unconditionally, free of charge, maybe to the detriment of one's own economy. Just such an economy may lead to one's own penury. Anyone practising such an economy is only to be understood, or perhaps even respected (in economic terms), if he is acting from the following motive: not that he is seeking to avoid a scarcity of things for himself and his dependents, nor even for a communal economy, but that he is doing it only for the sake of a cause—a cause to which he gives precedence, placing it above himself and everything else, a cause for which he gives without wanting to receive, without even seeking a joint advantage, a cause to which he surrenders something, or dedicates himself.

This may find expression in a dedication to others, or a religious dedication as in a sacrifice, or dedication to a cause. (There can be such devotion co-existent with the other three forms of economy). Or such a dedication can be thought of as the basic principle of a social order: a potential fourth form of economy. This would be the solution to the problems of communal economy: to dedicate oneself so that, through example, others may also be won for the cause.

In this way, for the first time, communal economy finds the complete solution to its inner difficulties, a solution which goes further than just joint economy. This economy of surrender is an economic form which must mature and be systematically developed as a leaven within the social order—not just alongside it as a supplement—if communal economy is to be a success.

Such a leavening from within is brought about by the influences upon a man's development from his birth onwards, so that, finally, as a producer, he realises his fullest capacity by utilising all his latent talents; and, as a consumer, he wastes as little as possible by modestly limiting his own consumption. In short, he becomes a factor which raises the economic standard of the whole.

This presupposes that he is cared for, educated, chooses the right occupation (which implies being given good advice regarding it); that he is trained, and that his work takes place under such conditions as will enable him to enjoy it. But all this demands a real concern for his individual welfare, and for that of all individuals, a concern such as is alien to *Authority* (Conservatism), homeless in the system of *Barter* (Liberalism), and not implicit in *Communal Economy* (Socialism), and which can only be practised in the spirit of dedication.

If, then, through mutual devotion, the circle of 'dedicated economy' is closed, it acts no longer as a mere supplement, correlate, and correction of the other forms of economy, but is a new form, a complete principle in itself.

AN EVALUATION OF THE ECONOMY OF SURRENDER

Dedication, or surrender, is authority inverted, therefore its correlation: to be devoted to the one above us ('I will not direct, but you'.) Surrender is not, however, the correlate of authority alone, but it co-exists with barter, which by itself would be unbearable (to give not only in order to receive but also for the sake of giving—this in a way counterbalances the sins of the barter economy, in which those who have little to exchange are exploited). Above all it is surrender which makes a communal economy practicable (to devote oneself in some way or other to the common weal so that the good of the whole becomes one's motive, and to induce others to do the same by example). Dedication, or surrender, is a principle in itself. It is the dignity of all those who live for a cause, completely forgetful of themselves and therefore truly 'personalities', finding their fulfilment in being wholly surrendered to others. It is not ethics which makes such an evaluation but sociology, and therefore we take sociology as our starting point in order to reveal the underlying economic reasons for such a high evaluation.

Let us, once more, become clear about the essential character of this order of 'dedicated' economy. The *other* person is freely (without constraint) and gratuitously (without demanding contract, exchange, or compensation) given the right of disposal so that he becomes the disposer; not with joint property as the basis, but more than that: he alone is to have the right of disposal; there is no question of joint disposal. 'Not I, but you; I would rather that *you* disposed'. That is the meaning of surrender, or dedication. In this way, external goods, money, materials, monetary values, property—these can be given as well as inner things, such as strength and time; or one can surrender oneself, either in isolated efforts or wholly (as in the case of 'Father' Werner's fellow-workers).

The striving to give as much as possible makes all such devoted efforts into a successful 'dedicated' economy.

In appraising it, one is led to ask, what is its economic advantage?

In the first place, for the whole of society, it means a maximum of achievement, for each exerts himself and develops his talents to the utmost. It also means a minimum of friction, contrariness and hindrances; rather there is a striving to work for each other, to give as much as possible, to do as much as possible, to help in whatever way one can, and also to sense where there is a need, anticipating a want or lack.

Correspondingly, for the individual it means a timely relief, indeed, the prevention of every need, so that no basic want or lack may have a chance to develop cumulative and fatal effects. Think for example of a disease eating its way into the body and finally rendering it permanently incapable of work; or of a case of naughtiness or perversion in a child which later has disastrous effects. Such things must be checked at their source.

For these reasons the economy of surrender must be acknowledged as the highest level of economy. Indeed, it must be seen as the only possible one for all that is best. Those with the highest attainments have always had to face the same predicament—prophet, educator, philosopher, artist—all are bound in an outer way to methods of the *other* forms of economy which, from an inner point of view are intolerable and impossible for them in the very nature of their work. They live in another world, if they are what their activity suggests. They are out of place in the world because, as Socrates says of philosophers, in their hearts they do not belong to it. Therefore they are ridiculous, yet sublime, despised, yet themselves full of contempt for a form of economy to which they are strangers. The inner difficulties resulting from an attempt to apply the methods of these other forms of economy to such people—compulsion, remuneration, dependence on majority decisions—show clearly the inner impossibility of such an attempt, an impossibility which is sensed by most people.

Ruskin has shown that the fire of devotion is also the strongest driving force behind the 'lowest' as well as the 'highest' services. In fact, one senses that the attitude of which we speak is regarded as the highest. For this reason it is generally esteemed, and people strive for it and feel contented when they have it. Such an attitude has further effects: example stimulates, challenges, reminds us of similar potentialities lying dormant within us all. It leads to discipleship which strides beyond religious awe to a religious dedication to him whose example one seeks to follow and, through this, to a devotion to others which alone can be passed on through the centuries. Reverence (in its original sense of bringing gifts of honour); thankfulness (in its original sense of thinking of some recompense); these are the real ways

of establishing a mutual relationship when confronted with the services of an economy of surrender—services which cannot be required. It is the dedication of the individual which lays the foundation for such an exchange of services unconditionally rendered—an exchange which follows its own inner laws. This dedication can have the effect of an object which, when thrown into the water, produces ever-widening circles. By challenging, awakening, educating, the organiser of a movement is able to win new adherents to enlarge the circle of such dedicated people. Such widening effects can be seen in the case of great personalities and their circle of followers. Jesus, for instance, sent out his disciples with the direction to dedicate themselves to others in the confidence that others would serve them in return.

Apart from the *devotion* of the individual, *love* and *friendship* must be regarded as foundations of an economy of surrender, also *companionship*, which is well known to all of us, but not utilised economically. The cultivation of companionship is economically significant inasmuch as a devoted relationship (having become second nature) is carried into occupational relationships, rendering them easy and harmonious through mutual aid. And lastly, comes simple *courtesy*, which is nothing else than an accepted practice of a certain minimum of 'dedicated' economy.

Within the orbit of this order, the State is superfluous, because law is superfluous. Here, everything that is economically necessary is done as a matter of course, and so there is no need for public law. There is no antagonism, and therefore no need for private or criminal law.

It is conceivable, in fact it must always be the case, that such a society develops its relationships, its interchanges (in the sense of division of labour and specialised types of work which supplement each other), its co-operation, without compulsion, without pressure, and without subjections: in other words—freely! Freely, because everyone does what is necessary voluntarily and wholeheartedly and so brings about what is economically best; freely, and yet within a *society*; no isolation from it, no relapse to the very first stage—the individual economy—and therefore no loss of the economic advantages of society.

What lies behind the anarchist's criticism of socialism? It must be more than the wild revolutionary dreams of using violence in the service of non-violence, or preaching unbridled egotism, or fanatical hatred of the State. It can only be that his idea is to strive beyond socialism towards a true freedom within society by transforming economic relationships into an economy of surrender.

[To be concluded]

A JOB IN THE COMPETITIVE SYSTEM

A question we are often asked is whether the Christian witness cannot be made more effectively in conventional society. One of our members recently took a position in the commercial life of a large city, and the following short article tells of his experiences and conclusions.

After nearly fourteen years of working entirely within the Bruderhof Communities, I experienced once again for almost two years what it means to have a job in the usual competitive system. Previous to joining the Bruderhof I had undergone my training in London, where for a period of eight years I served my articles as a junior audit clerk, eventually qualifying as an accountant. A few years ago, because I had this qualification I was sent out by the community to find a job in one of the largest South American cities, in order to help finance a new branch of our work.

What were my reactions on finding myself once again in the ordinary commercial system, upon which I had turned my back some fourteen years ago? Incidentally, nearly five of these had been in the backwoods of Paraguay, scarcely a fitting preparation for the hustle and bustle of a modern city. Yes, my mind and body needed quite a lot of adjustment, and this took time; but in the end I got accustomed to the twenty mile bus ride each day to work, with the vehicle crammed to overflowing in the usual South American style; I got used to the noise, to the constant vibration and movement, to the smell of petrol, and to the almost complete absence of nature. (Actually the snakes we encounter in our communities in Paraguay are far less of a menace to life than was the traffic in that big city).

These more superficial aspects are not what need concern us. To avoid any kind of misunderstanding, I should like to make it quite clear from the start that it is not a question of a comparison between *people*, those living in community and those in conventional society. I found exactly the same kind of people as workmates in the city as in our communities, men of goodwill, friendly and helpful, but with the usual human weaknesses. It was abundantly clear to me that the difference was not in the *people* as such but in the two *systems*, and by system I do not mean just the outer mode of life, but the whole way of life.

One of the most terrible things of which I was aware was the part gossip plays in people's lives. This is world-wide, and destroys human trust and mutual understanding, poisoning every relationship. I heard things said behind people's backs which made me shudder. I knew that we in our communities were also not exempt from the attacks of this curse, but there was this difference: We were all resolved that whenever and wherever gossip was found amongst us, it should be ruthlessly exposed and uprooted. This was a fact to which our thirty-two years

of community life could testify. Unfortunately during my experience in this job, I never found such a radical attitude on this question, nor did I find an openheartedness or understanding which could have led to a new attitude. The difference lay, to repeat, not in the people, but in their attitude to social evil.

Quite obviously community life is nothing if not working together, inwardly and outwardly, for the common good. It was to be expected, therefore, that I should miss this aspect of life, for in varying degrees businesses are staffed by individuals seeking employment for their own needs and those of their families. This is not to judge individuals, but rather is it the system that decrees this cruel struggle for existence, the system, albeit, as a product of our human egotism and selfishness. Thus I never experienced that joyful working together on a common task for the good of the whole. It was not possible, for instance, to make suggestions for improving the work as a whole, and to be able to say to a workmate, "Look, these improvements would mean more work for you personally, but in the general interest could we not carry them out, and then try to find a way whereby someone else could relieve you of some of your work in order to even out any differences?" Just as in the question of gossip, so here, too, and in many other ways, the intimate open relationship that is the basis of community life is missing. It is not possible to go to one's 'superiors' or 'inferiors' in the work and say, "That is wrong, it is gossip," or "That which is being done is against love". There are many such questions which come up, but to ask them would result in one being regarded either as a fool or as a pharisee.

There is, however, for many people a more fundamental issue. They see mammonism, injustice, lying, impurity, and isolation of the individual in the economic system. They see evil both within the individual and the system, and yet they differ on the way to overcome this evil. They ask, "Is it necessary to withdraw from the world and its daily struggle? Would it not be better for each member of the community to take on a job somewhere, and there, in the midst of the 'world', to witness to love, purity, justice and co-operation amongst men? Should we not seek to change men and society from within?"

After nearly two years of 'return to the world' my answer would be a most emphatic 'No!' True, it is possible for any individual to live and witness, as an individual, to the standards of love, purity, and truthfulness, provided he has access to the source from which they spring. This is possible in whatever circumstances a person finds himself. Often he will become extremely unpopular and hated, in proportion to the radicalism of his attitude, and in certain cases he will find it quite impossible to carry out what is asked of him, if he is to remain true to his conscience.

So far I could have agreed with our questioners without any difficulty. Have we, however, touched on the whole of life? Can we be satisfied with the picture of life as a number of individuals each living a good moral life? Is not life much more than this? Just here the 'good' individual breaks down. He can only represent himself and his own 'light', or that which he has received. Our goal as human beings must be a new society of mankind; not simply new men, but a new humanity. Our immediate task must be to see that the society which we envision is already in being; if not world-wide in extent, then as a living cell at work as leaven within the whole.

My experience in this job was that the very fact of community life gave 'hands and feet' to my words. This knowledge gave me courage and certainty, so that, where it was possible, I was able to speak of peace and brotherhood, not as a theory but as reality. I think most serious people are rightly tired of mere words.

The reason so many advocate living, as they say, 'in the world' is that they still hanker after the will o' the wisp of political action and mass conversion. It seems too slow to live as a brother with others, and often it is not very 'heroic' either. I found, however, that because I could say to people, "Come and see!"—not this or that personality, but a life; not just words, but deeds—this came to people as a challenge. It was quite noticeable how much more interested people became as soon as they heard that there was community life actually being lived not far away. Therefore, I was profoundly thankful, on being confronted by so much aimlessness and frustration in this big city in which every imaginable panacea is offered to men, to be able to speak simply of a healthy, purposeful way of life.

FORUM

Extracts from Letters

We just received the exciting little mimeographed sheet sent out from Macedonia. It is indeed a moving story. I am sure it was a very deep experience for all of you participating in this six-week period of discussion. I wish very much that I could have shared it with you. The time in the next few months will, I am sure, be equally exciting and challenging. I hope you will find, or have found, a satisfactory farm for a community. I wish I were doing something to help. I know the Spirit is with you in this venture. More than ever at this time of such widespread alarm regarding the destructive potentiality of the H-bomb one realises that the time that is given us to turn to the Kingdom is short—shorter, perhaps, than we realise. I, too, have a growing sense of the importance of the choice before us all. I become more and more aware,

as I carry on in a more or less conventional life, of the basic fact that Christ must be followed by believers *together*. Individual holiness is not enough. He came to found a Church, a body of believers, a household of faith, with himself as the foundation. The concept of personal acceptance of Christ, stressed so heavily by our evangelical churches, is of utmost importance; but it cannot stop there. It must lead to full brotherhood, even as it did in Jerusalem.

U.S.A.

C.H.

The following was written to Paula Thyssen in reference to her statement in the Winter number of *THE PLOUGH*.

After receiving your letter and reading your statement in *THE PLOUGH*, I understand that you consider material possessions to be the chief hindrance to the way of the cross. I have no doubt that you are right, and I am sure that the Hutterians can teach us many things. I have of course never been persuaded that community of goods is the only way in which the cross life can be lived with respect to material goods, but I am ready to concede that it is one way, and certainly better than the kind of private property—capitalistic type of life that one often sees. Strangely enough, I am at present writing a series of lectures on the way of the cross. One lecture is to be entitled, 'The Way of the Cross in Economic Life'. Do you think I can talk about it at all in a capitalistic setting? When this lecture is finished I'll send you a copy and I'd be glad to have Wheathill tell me what they think about it. After all, the Hutter-Rideman group was the only 16th century Anabaptist group that had community of goods. Were Menno Simons and his followers mistaken? Or if their way was good for the 16th century, is the 20th century so materialistic that the Hutter-Ridemann way is the only possible way of the cross to-day? I want more answers to this question than I now have. I'd appreciate any help you people can give me.

U.S.A.

G.F.H.

From a Kibbutz Community in Israel

I really must apologize, as it is now almost a year since I received your letter. The fact is that all the 'Kibbutznikes' suffer from lack of time; work has to be done in a very hot and exhausting climate—then family life, community affairs, cultural events, etc. The day is crammed full. After studying your letter and the pamphlets I came to the conclusion that our forms of collective life have much in common, but that there are also pronounced differences in the various ways of life. Of course the love for our fellow man is also the underlying principle of our life, but not the only one, as with you. With us, community life for the first 30-40 years has almost exclusively been a tool for achieving national

goals, and only in the last years has begun to be a value for itself. May be that our form of life was shaped not so much by our wishes as by the objective needs of our people and country. A people scattered throughout the world, unproductive and hated, and a long-lost fatherland, barren and under foreign rule—this was the background to the beginning of the kibbutzim. Now add the disappointment of the Jewish youth after World War I to the search for a new way of life, and you will have most of the factors contributing to the establishing of kibbutzim.

The state of Israel could not have been established and prepared for without the kibbutzim, and that means about 200 of them, comprising about 80,000 people in many political denominations, from ultra-orthodox to left-wing groups. Of course this summing up, as I tried to do in a few lines, is done over and over on festive occasions, but in reality life is much simpler. When your tractor ploughs a furrow, you do not think about the Jewish question. Kibbutz has become a form of life which has—as we hope—come to stay, and is already rearing its second and even third generations. A few weeks ago, the settlement I live in, Givat Brenner, celebrated its 25th anniversary with a big celebration, including a nice exhibition and a 120-player performance in a 15,000-seat amphitheatre of a play about the Maccabees.

Now I have some questions to you. Are all your decisions taken unanimously or by simple majority or by a two-thirds majority? Here, the supreme authority is the members' General Assembly, which elects the officials (Secretaries for inner and outer affairs, Treasurer, the Secretariat and Executive Committee), sends people to the inter-kibbutzim organizations or government jobs, selects and approves candidates for teachers, etc. But as there are plenty of problems, great authority is given to the elected Secretariat in everyday matters, so that not every business transaction has to be brought before the Assembly. The higher instance is the Executive Committee, where matters are brought which could not be decided in the Secretariat, and also broader problems such as, for instance, the building programme for the whole year, etc. Matters of principle or those which would not be decided elsewhere are brought before the Assembly, which must also confirm any decision of the Committee. Decisions are by majority and made openly, i.e. by hand-lifting, while secondary matters, as elections of officials, are voted by time-saving secret ballot. As for contact with the individual member and everyday work, there are committees for the various competences as education, culture, membership, defence, etc. This system, which is really democratic, works quite well. How is your system of 'government'? How do you spend your free time and what cultural activities does your community provide? How and where do you school future teachers, nurses, etc.? Have you already grown-up children? Are you getting new members?

Which language(s) do you speak and have you an 'official' one? You see I am quite curious, and it is the everyday questions that interest me most, as on principles we seem to be agreed. It looks to me most extraordinary to imagine that many thousand miles from here lives a community in its life almost identical with mine!

Israel.

R.E.

From a Christian Community in France

Greetings from unknown brothers came just as we were planning a new step ahead, to increase our activities; for we are the only French Christian community of workers still carrying on.

Our little factory is developing in a good way, and we are looking for a social and legal form of Society which would preserve the mutual spirit. It is very difficult to hit the mark, but we also think that men are not alone.

We know of your life and should like to talk things over with you, and if you or any one of your brothers gets the opportunity to cross the channel you may be sure of a French home—a poor one, but yours!

Our special experiment concerning Christian factory work has been blessed, but now we are struggling against a team of bankers who want to get into our community. We think of forming a Company by means of shares, but, since the last war, trustworthy French shareholders or bankers are still unknown or deeply hidden. We have been looking for an American supporter, but does 'Uncle Sam' exist? We need so little money, he would laugh at us. We write about these daily problems because we need advice from elder brothers.

As perhaps you read in our little quarterly, *Recherches et Liens*, we have selected an old French district generally known as the Christian French Desert, with a similar ancestral history to your own—in this part of France Huguenots and evangelical Christians in the past knew a 'blood-and-jail community' for one and a half centuries. Formerly there were Christian villages here, but since the silkworm industry was destroyed by the introduction of new technical methods they are becoming ruins, and we are working to rebuild them. Because of these facts we thought it would be possible for us, as daily working witnesses, to give back a sense for the common life.

We believe that true community certainly can exist, because it was so in the early Christian Community; but we ourselves have not centuries behind us, and we are, as a matter of fact, 'poor little fellows'. France is becoming a materialistic country and the Frenchman more individualistic than ever. Ordinary French people fear life and themselves. What a tremendous work it is to capture their spirit and soul even for a little while! They live like 'robots'. They have no more

patience with preaching, or evangelical talk, but only heed men of action working in a new way. Only facts interest and impress them. So we work first to show community life, and then, if we are asked, give explanations.

In our little hamlet every Thursday we hold a meeting with 25 villagers, but our lack of means—not of good will—compels us to remain at home. We do not even possess an old car or truck! However, we took to the road last summer, on Sundays, and showed that our products are cheaper and better than those produced by competitive methods, and talked about our way of life at eleven public meetings or shows. We always say that we cannot speak about results under ten years. We are, however, becoming counsellors of men searching for a common life and spirit. But how shall we advise when we ourselves need counsel? For example, did you know that there are 250 former Roman Catholic priests who are living in poverty because they cannot get some worthwhile work? Among them, some are very courageous and good men, having a feeling for community life. We want to increase our factory production of special plastic and synthetic materials for tubular chairs in order to finance the purchase of a farm, perhaps in the south of France. We work hard. A year ago we began our community with £500, and three families initiated this work. At the present time, we have eight village women working with us.

We should like to give you more details and keep in contact with you and your friends. Your quarterly periodical *THE PLOUGH* is very interesting and we would like to get the American issue because we are lonely in our pioneer work.

France.

R.F.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

New Bruderhof Beginning in North America. Mention was made in the Spring issue of *THE PLOUGH* of the proposed new beginning in North America. We are now able to report more fully about the developments which have taken place since our members arrived there from Paraguay in the autumn of last year.

On arrival in North America our little group of members visited Koinonia Farm in Georgia before passing on to Macedonia Co-operative Community in the same state. In both places they were very warmly welcomed and the wish was expressed for a closer uniting in the cause of community. Our members then visited Kingwood Community in New Jersey where they were being eagerly awaited following on the visit of one of the group, Francis Hall, to the Primavera Bruderhoefer in the summer of last year. (His impressions of the visit are contained in an article in the Winter issue of *THE PLOUGH*). The Bruderhof members stayed at Kingwood until the end of January and then, at the

invitation of the Macedonia group, moved to Macedonia with five members from Kingwood 'to explore together the inner basis and practical structure of full community'.

During the succeeding weeks very many discussions centred round this subject of the true basis of community life, and in a report issued jointly by the three groups last March the following was written:

The life and teachings of Christ are the source of strength and clarity in the life of brotherhood as practised by the Society of Brothers. This centrality of the Christian faith is well known to all who have become acquainted with the Brothers here in the States, either through personal contact or through their literature. From the very beginning of our life together here at Macedonia it was made clear that the Bruderhof pattern of life and some of its structure may be variable while the inner basis is essential. At one time we all hoped that everyone, with differing commitments perhaps but with a sincere openheartedness, might move forward into one community, either as helper, novice or brother.

Yet this was not given. Six of the Macedonia group felt a calling to give themselves to a community that does not have as its basis a common religious faith, a community that is open to all faiths. In a meeting of all it became clear that two communities will now come into being—the Bruderhof in the North-east and a continuing group here at Macedonia.

Hence it happens that we are now engaged in working out the practical details evolving from this decision. At this point we are glad to say that each group is keenly sympathetic with the problems of the other as it begins its new community life. So in good spirit we seek to come to unanimous decisions in all the specific details of the separation.

The consequence of this decision was that a group of twenty-two adults and eleven children began to look for a community home in the North-east. Already it was clear that a number of other people, including some families, wished to share in the community life as guests as soon as a beginning was made. Brothers were sent out to search for a suitable place. In the arrangements for separating into two groups it was decided that the new Macedonia group should take over the land and stock and some of the workshop production, whilst the group associated with the new Bruderhof would continue with the main workshop activities. It would therefore be desirable for the place chosen for the Bruderhof to have suitable buildings for installing the machines and resuming immediate production of the educational toys. The requirements should also include accommodation for at least sixty to seventy people, with possibilities for expansion. The search has carried our brothers through many of the North-eastern states and now it appears that the choice lies between three properties in New York State within an approximate distance of one hundred miles of New York City.

Whilst both groups were still at Macedonia, a conference took place in connection with the Fellowship of Intentional Communities. Twenty-three representatives from various community groups, some as far distant as California, joined those at Macedonia for a long weekend and there was a very full series of meetings. Reports were given of

the conclusions reached at Macedonia, and it was recognised the time of deep searching there had its significance for the community movement in North America. Among the people at the conference were a number who expressed their wish that their groups might find closer co-operation and interchange with members from the Bruderhof. There really does seem to be some definite movement towards a closely integrated form of life in North America at the present time.

Community Attempts in California. Two of our members, George and Gertrude Vigar, have been in California since October of last year and report the following:

California is the home of more attempts at community than any other state in North America. From the very beginning of our stay we met people who were concerned with community. Among these a surprising number have been involved in an 'experiment' at some time or other. Many of these attempts have failed but in spite of disappointment the idea continues to haunt people and, though they have learnt caution, the spark still lives. There is an organisation called the Rural Community Conference where those who are interested in community in its broadest sense can exchange ideas. Its purpose is to foster rural living and to create a bond between those who want a natural, healthy life.

In May this year the annual gathering of this Conference was held at Oakhurst, not far from the famous Yosemite Valley, where a group of several families are seeking to develop along co-operative lines. A member of this group visited Wheathill two years ago.

We were welcomed by a number of groups whose members were seriously concerned to find a communal expression for their life together. Near Modesto in the San Joaquin Valley, once semi-desert but, now that it is irrigated, one of the most fruitful places of the earth, is a community called Tuolumne Co-operative Farm. It was founded by two Congregational ministers who had given the question a great deal of thought and began community according to a definite plan. It was to be an attempt at communal living and was also to have a social and educational programme that would draw wider circles. This latter did not materialise although the group is well known and has many friends and visitors. We made a visit in November on the occasion of the annual gathering of friends when there were sixty or seventy people present. We were glad of the opportunity to meet so many people interested in community. They were nearly all members of the Rural Community Conference. We conveyed the greetings of the Bruderhof communities and a great part of the meeting was taken up answering questions and talking about the work in Paraguay. They were very anxious to learn more about us. At Tuolumne at present there are four families and some single people. Each family is a unit and has its own house. Each receives a share from the income of the farm, partly in cash and partly in kind. Over the years there has been a considerable change in membership. Although the people are very hospitable there is no open door in the Bruderhof sense. Each

member is expected to give his reasonable working time to the community. It seemed to us that it was the devotion and determination of the members to see it through that held the group together. We felt very much at home with them and look forward to returning and having more time with the group itself.

Northward from San Francisco, near Gridley, is another community. After the war a number of families got together at this place to run a co-operative farm. This failed, but one family still felt it was the right way of life and, although it burdened them financially, they held on to the property in the hope that another group would form. Last year four families came together and in their seeking reached a general agreement about what they wished to achieve. Their aim is to establish an ordered life to which members commit themselves completely, pooling all their property and having a common purse. They do not want to live for themselves or to see their life as being just *their* solution, but to stand as representatives of a new way of life, challenging the order of society to-day.

People are alarmed at the general trend of the world to-day, and although feelings fluctuate with the day to day happenings of the political scene there remains a profound disquiet. This arises from men's own personal experiences and will remain even when for a while international tensions become less marked. This is certainly true here, in California.

Swiss Journey. At the time when the Alm Bruderhof was in Liechtenstein from 1934-38 our brothers often went travelling around Switzerland. After the emigration to England and later to Paraguay it was not possible to make regular journeys. Occasionally short visits were made from England but these were usually combined with some particular task so that there was not much opportunity for personal talks and discussions with our friends.

For this reason we were very glad that last year two brothers were sent from Primavera to travel in Switzerland. Peter Mathis, who came originally from Celerina in Engadine, was in Switzerland for nine months, visiting old friends of the Bruderhof and making new friends. He attended the Conference of the Religious Socialists which was held at Flumserberg in October last. Dr Hugo Kramer, Dr Nikolaus Koch, Professor Emil Fuchs, Pfarrer Arthur Rackwitz, Albert Boehler and others all spoke of various aspects of world peace. Emil Fuchs from Leipzig spoke on 'Christianity in the East Zone and Work for Peace', representing the Religious Socialist position which is a complete acceptance of the order of the State and an endeavour to work as 'yeast' within it. Dr Kramer took his usual very definite stand against all forms of militarism, analysing the dangers of cold war and pointing to ways in which a stand could be made for peace. In personal talks both he and Dr Koch expressed a wish that the Bruderhof would make a beginning again in Germany.

As is well known to our friends, the Bruderhof Communities in Paraguay have a hospital which serves a very wide area with a scattered

population of 30,000 people, mostly without means. This social task goes far beyond the financial possibilities of our community and therefore we have to ask for the help of all our friends. Peter Mathis made contact with the Swiss Red Cross and a number of pharmaceutical manufacturers who generously helped our work in the backwoods of South America with donations and gifts of medicines and serums for which we should like to express our thanks here.

In the first and last weeks of his travels Peter Mathis was accompanied by Fritz Freiburghaus, who comes from Berne. Both brothers were very warmly received by our friends and often invited to speak at meetings. They were glad to note how challenged people were by the witness of a community life on the basis of primitive Christianity, so much so that some have resolved to visit us at the Wheathill Bruderhof this year. Hans and Jeanette Rudolf expressed the wish to go to Primavera and after sharing our communal life at Wheathill for some months left England for South America in March of this year.

Travels in Germany. In February and March of this year we at last began the intensive work in Germany which for a long time we had been hoping to do. During these months Hugo Brinkmann and Walter von Hollander from the Wheathill Bruderhof travelled around the Rhein-Ruhr district trying, in various ways, to get into touch with people who were eager to hear about a brotherly way of life. They report:—Apart from meetings and discussions with individual people we had about twenty-two meetings in various groups. We also had the opportunity of taking part in two weekend gatherings, the annual conference of the Freideutscher Kreise Rheinland, in Ratingen on 6–7th March, and Professor Hans Ehrenberg's 'Jedermannsfreizeit', in Hemer on 13–14th March, where the theme was 'The Conversion of the Church'. At both places we were asked to speak about our way of life and also had the opportunity of showing the coloured slides of the Primavera Bruderhof communities.

The groups and circles with whom we came into contact on this journey were very varied indeed. There were the different branches of the old German Youth Movement as, for instance, the 'Deutsche Volkschaft' and the 'Freideutschen'. We were glad to meet members of the 'Neuwerk', a movement which had been very closely connected with the beginnings of our own community, and to exchange thoughts and recollections with them.

The search for teachers for our Bruderhof school in Paraguay brought us into touch with a number of young men who are interested in such work. They wish to find a field for their activities as educators—not merely as teachers—where there is a healthy, harmonious atmosphere. Some of these teachers intend to visit us at Wheathill this summer to get to know the practical side of Bruderhof life before making the long journey to Paraguay.

There was a very good and deep understanding for what we had to say in the Quaker circles at Cologne and Oberhausen, and the same could be said for the groups from the International Fellowship of

Reconciliation and the War Resisters International whom we got to know mostly at Cologne, Bergisch-Gladbach and Dortmund. We found our meeting with Dr Nikolaus Koch, the Catholic fighter for peace whom Peter Mathis had already met in Switzerland, very stimulating indeed. In his lecture, 'The Struggle for Peace in World Politics', Dr Koch says, "The traditional ideas of a violent revolution fall away before a new revolutionary knowledge: I can begin a revolution alone, I need not wait for others, I need no conspirators; the 'Self-help' which I practise has no secrets and no violence, my circle and I are already realising the order of to-morrow." In this sense Dr Koch and his co-workers are trying to build up a 'Cell of Self-Help' in Witten-Bommern, where the totalitarianism of cold and hot war can be overcome through the restoration of 'living totality'.

On the whole the groups we met were mostly from the German Evangelical Church, whether it was Youth Groups, Bible Study Circles or, as in Duisburg, Hattingen and Dortmund, regional groups of those who had been members of the Student Christian Movement. At such meetings the discussion was often very lively and there were some heated arguments about the way of the Christian in the world. Now and again we met old acquaintances and friends of Eberhard Arnold who retained very living impressions of him. We very much enjoyed our meeting with the members of the circle connected with Professor Hans Harder (Wuppertal). They were mostly ministers who are concerned with a radical 'Conversion of the Churches' from a narrow conception of the 'purely religious' to a 'massive divine materialism' (in the sense of the prophets of the Old Testament) which must take shape in the congregation of those who live in peace, love and unity. Here hearts were very open to what we had to say.

From the Wheathill Bruderhof. At the time of writing this news report, we are experiencing the beginning of the stream of guests expected during these coming months. In the last Bruderhof news we reported that we were not getting on with our building work as quickly as we had hoped and therefore we ask all who wish to visit us to be sure to let us know in good time. Friends who are acquainted with our life know that we do not have guests in the usual sense of the word but as co-workers because we feel it is very important to experience also the communal work. This is the same at all our Bruderhof communities. Co-workers, who ask for no extra privileges, are always welcome, and just now we especially need skilled workers to help us with our building.

Along with our building-up and developments in various directions, we have felt it to be an inner necessity to send brothers out. The reports of the last few months printed above give some impression of this work. We also have other representatives in Holland at the present time. As we intend to continue with this work we should be glad to know which groups of people would like us to visit them and at what places so that this can be taken into consideration when journeys are being planned.

Two of our members took part in the German Evangelical Church Conference which was held in London on 24-25th April. It represented on a small scale that which has come to expression for some years now at the Annual Church Conference in Germany. As one of the promoters expressed at the end, there are many questions to-day to which the churches can give no answer, but the significance of such a gathering is to find a direction in which to seek and question further.

At various meetings Bishop Jacobi, Oldenburg (previously Berlin), and Professor Martin Schmidt, from the Kirchliche Hochschule (Theological Seminary) Berlin, spoke about the situation of modern man. Among other things Bishop Jacobi pointed out how man to-day has lost the centre of things, how he has lost the faith and certainty that is found in the attitude of the Psalmist, and how the 'collective man', the man of the masses, is caught between the mill-stones of life. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the man of our day longs for love, and it should surely be the task of faith to want to make his life more beautiful and less burdensome, that is, to offer freedom to our neighbour through the sacrifice of our own time, love and money, just as Christ gave all he had for us. He emphasised that what is expressed in church services—that we should all be brothers—must be carried out in daily practice, and for this reason comes the warning that we Christians should not confront our contemporaries, who are seeking love, with 'Christian' oppression and tyranny. On the contrary, powers of love and faith should stream out into the world from the Christian Church.

Martin Schmidt reminded us of the sort of men, powers and forces that are moving the world to-day, of the statesmen and scientists, philosophers, poets and artists who mould the character of our age, and of the forces of love, lust and vice which stir men to deeds. Then he reminded us how absolutely different from all this 'movement' is the experience of overcoming the world, something which can only be given by Christ. We must experience this conquest anew through Christ and remember that it can never happen without opposition from the world. In fact such opposition is a sign of discipleship.

The members who took part in this conference were very glad to hear the problems of our time taken up and discussed with so much earnestness and without the usual stereotyped answers being put forward, also to notice here and there a deep understanding for the meaning of Church-community. At the Wheathill Bruderhof, following the conference, we have been making an intensive study of the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and in this connection we should like to recommend to our friends his book, *Gemeinsames Leben*, which was published in 1938 and will probably appear in English next year under the title, *Life Together* (S.C.M. Press). We hope to write about this book in a later number of THE PLOUGH because it contains thoughts which are decisively important for us as a guide and direction.

Whilst this issue of THE PLOUGH is in the hands of the printers the good news has come from our members in North America that an agreement has been signed for the purchase of a property of approximately ninety acres, with buildings which can be adapted to accommodate seventy to eighty people. An additional advantage is that a substantial workshop is included in the purchase, which is suitable for our production of educational toys.

The new Bruderhof lies eighty-five miles north of New York City and ten miles south of Kingston, in beautiful surroundings, at Woodcrest, Rifton, New York State.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

The first article in this number, 'The Spirit of Prophecy—The Role of the People of God' is concerned with the prophetic message which is the main content of the Old and New Testaments, and particularly it is the message of the Sermon on the Mount. It is just this prophetic element which has been disregarded, and a subjective attitude to all that Christ taught has been substituted in its place. Artur Mettler, who is a member of the Brotherhood in Paraguay, seeks to recapture the original spirit which animated the three movements described in his article, the same spirit that has inspired so many of the radical movements from the time of the Early Christians up to the present day. How vitally important it is that the true spirit of prophecy should be preserved and find expression in a 'People of God'! It is this message and its practical working-out in daily life, that we want to stress again and again in THE PLOUGH.

For this reason we are publishing further extracts from a writing of Eberhard Arnold on Nietzsche's attitude to Christ and the Christian Church, for Nietzsche also saw what was false in Christendom, and his charges against the churches need to be carefully considered. We shall welcome comments on both these articles, for publication in The Forum.

The article by Robert Wilbrandt throws light on the place of community in the structure of social life, and can be read in connection with the contribution of Oscar Pfister in the Summer 1953 issue of THE PLOUGH. It is striking that both economist and psychoanalyst reach similar conclusions as a result of their studies.

We are especially glad to give further news of the beginning in North America, and will publish a description of the new Bruderhof with illustrations in a later issue. The reports which reach us in connection with our work in the western states are also very encouraging for the future of community in North America. In the next issue we shall give information about groups who are seeking for community in other countries.

EBERHARD ARNOLD

FROM HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS
A WITNESS TO COMMUNITY

The Autumn 1953 number of this periodical was devoted to a selection of writings of and about the late Eberhard Arnold, commemorating what would have been his 70th birthday. The extra edition of this issue includes a collection of his own writings, a biographical sketch by his wife, and early recollections from friends who were in personal contact with him.

It was in the period following the oppressive years of the First World War that Eberhard Arnold, seeking to bring about a *living* expression of true Christian brotherhood, guided the beginning and the growth of our first Bruderhof community.

Now, when preparations for war threaten a third world disaster, more terrible than can be imagined, we feel that Eberhard's prophetic words can be an inspiration and a guide.

A friend writes from the U.S.A. 'I've never read anything that touched me deeper and lifted my spirit more than some of those extracts from the writings and lectures of Eberhard Arnold in the last Autumn issue of your little magazine. He seems to sum up nearly everything I have learned, or thought of, or even wondered about'.

From Switzerland: 'The lectures and writings in the third issue of DER PFLUG which you devoted to the life of Eberhard Arnold were a great encouragement to us, appealing deeply to both heart and spirit'.

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