

THE PLOUGH

THE QUARTERLY
OF THE
BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

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

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THE PLOUGH

The Quarterly of the Bruderhof Communities

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HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.
MATT. 5, 6.

It is terrible when people think that a social conscience is something added on to the Christian conscience, a sort of work of supererogation. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: it is the *stuff* of the Christian life; and without it there is nothing but a sham. You can never say that you fulfil the requirements of the virtue of justice and that that is sufficient: Christianity is not justice alone, but love; and it is love that the gift helps you to express. You must have the love that is an insatiable desire for justice. You would have to have it at any time and in any period of the world's history: there is always injustice between men, there is always failure to realize in the world the divine will for the world, and for this you would always be bound to work and pray. But when you live in days which are filled with injustice so appalling as to be unimaginable, like the present; when the whole world is torn with the agony of men and women and children; when beyond and beneath the physical horrors there is the dead weight, the stifling pall, of hatred and cruelty and brute stupidity, and when all this is turned explicitly not only against humanity but against the Godhead, so that you have not only a failure to realize the form of goodness in the world but a furious lust to destroy what little of that form of goodness has in fact been achieved—then indeed you need to hunger and thirst after justice with insatiable desire, and you need the gift of the Spirit to save you from despair.

We must not think of justice only in terms of the rights of men: we must think of it primarily in terms of the rights of God, from whom all other rights are derived. Forget these, and your work for humanity will be likely to degenerate into sentimentality and lead only to confusion. It is not enough to have the will to serve humanity; you must

have the knowledge: you must know in what justice consists—and we have surely seen enough of man-made definitions of justice. St. Thomas connects this beatitude with the gift of fortitude: the fortitude which expresses an insatiable desire for the respecting of *God's* rights, and which will not be deterred from fighting for those rights, no matter what may come.

But we have to be careful here. This is not a question of 'militant Christianity'—of stridency and vulgarity, or of an attempt to preach the cross at the point of the bayonet. You fight for the cause of love and truth only with weapons of love and truth. Violence is a sin against love; wanton vulgarity is a sin against truth. The zeal for justice must be meaningless unless we ourselves are just: and to be just is to do just things justly—the manner is important as well as the deed, the means as well as the end. If you want to work for justice you must remember the beatitudes: you must work in poverty of spirit and meekness of heart. This fortitude of the saints is not a melodramatic irruption into the lives and affairs of other men and women against their will: almost you could say the keynote of it was a quality of quietness. The quiet refusal to betray their own integrity of mind for the sake of accommodation with their environment; the quiet refusal to swim with the current in matters of personal behaviour; the quiet refusal to let fear keep them dumb when unambiguous issues do arise, and a declaration is expected of them at least implicitly; a quiet and humble determination to help other members of the family* when it is possible to give help with courtesy.

Yet we must not think of this work of fighting for the rights of God in the world as a question merely of opposing what is evil: it is a positive thing, it is a question of working, with insatiable desire, to build up the life of the Church: to build up the vitality of its thought and its love, the integrity and beauty of its worship, the universality of its love in practice. For all these things depend on us. The qualities are there, the power is there, for the Church is the Christ-life on earth. But in another sense the Church is the community of the faithful, the communion of saints but also the communion of sinners: it depends on us whether the love and the power will be fully shown forth to the world. In this sense the vitality of the Church and of its thought and prayer depends on the vitality of our love and thought and prayer; its worship is diminished and degraded if we play our part ill; its love is stifled if we refuse to be filled with it and to allow it to shine forth from us to the world.

GERALD VANN.

*mankind.

LOVE DEMANDS ACTION

EBERHARD ARNOLD

Love is the mark of the kingdom of God. In Jesus' words and life, love sustains the far-reaching programme and full reality of the kingdom.

In Jesus, God's love brought its own kingdom close to every man. His death was its perfect demonstration, his resurrection the proof that since it is the power of God there is nothing it cannot conquer. When he had come to God's sovereign throne, Jesus poured out the living spirit of this love over the group of believers who were waiting for it in faith.

The original Christian church in Jerusalem was the embodiment of God's love, a factual portrayal of his kingdom, valid for all time. All through the intervening centuries and again today, this church has repeatedly been restored. Although it must always wage intense spiritual warfare against the weaknesses of its own members and against the whole prevailing mode of life around it, nevertheless it has been able to present to all a clear and undeniable picture of the living actuality of Christ's working. Those who follow this way leave the natural claims of ordinary life behind them, but this sacrifice of rights and privileges is overwhelmingly compensated by the joy of true fellowship.

The secret of this life lies in the joy of faith, in active love. This is Christianity in action. Working together with others is the quickest and surest way for a person to find out whether he has a living faith and is ready to live in real love and true fellowship. Work is the crucial test of the genuineness of a man's faith. When people live and work together for love, it soon becomes apparent where there is real life. The daily experience of the way in which vigorous and spirited work rises out of faith makes us realize that faith means life. True life is love. Love demands action. The only really valid action is work. The activity of Christian love is working together.

Besides the living Word of truth, faith has only one other defence against the corruption of present-day conditions, namely, the weapon of the spirit which is constructive work in loving fellowship. Here there are no words without action. Service under the Spirit is the love of work, because it is a work of love. It demands a man's whole life in ceaseless daily and hourly practice of his vocation. This highest of all vocations results from a calling by the Holy Spirit. A man who follows it by giving his whole life to the discipleship of Christ is compelled by love to leave his selfish desires, his own property, and the job that served his own interests. The work of real love calls for a life together in a discipleship serving the common interest of all mankind. The result is a brotherly relationship in which life, property, everything is shared, because in love, no other relationship is possible.

This sort of communal economy in true Christianity is an economy of free devotion. It rests on the loving spirit of a life together under God, and not on human obligations, much less on mutual demands. Every day the members are ready to throw in everything they have, first and foremost their working abilities. They never feel that their service to the common fellowship is either exacted under compulsion or the occasion for special praise. It is plain and simple Christianity which has resulted as an inner necessity out of the life-giving Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Appeal to Everyone

Extreme emergency calls for the extreme of love. More work calls for more workers. And so we address this appeal to everyone. Anyone who seriously wants to be a Christian, who wants to devote his short life to love, who wants to give up an ultimately meaningless existence and leave all worldly compromise behind him, who wants to follow Jesus and nobody but Jesus, will find a warm welcome among us. The few of us have much to do and many more hands are needed.

The church's communal work brings us closer to this life with every hour. And in the simple meals we eat together, we are also given an experience of fellowship now practically unknown to the general run of Christians—the experience of the apostolic early Christian love-feast. The evenings of all the weekdays, as well as the Sunday mornings, are filled with intimate encounters in faith where the living word of the Holy Spirit works to beget new life.

As a rule anyone who comes to us must pass through a fairly extensive trial period during which the foundation of the new life is laid in him and the experiences it offers are more firmly established. This applies even to that rare individual who has already really entered upon the way of Jesus Christ with firm and settled dedication. At the beginning we do not expect our guests to make a decision which will commit them for the rest of their lives. We want to offer them whatever service they most need at the moment. The seriousness and danger of our times should move us all to open our hearts to one another. The service we want to render is that each helps the other to open his heart at last to the pure spirit of God.

The present plight of the Christian world ought to put everyone on the alert to find out where he might meet a clearer message and a more consistent life than he has known before, which might finally show him more clearly who God is and what he wants and what the rule of his approaching kingdom means; which might at last teach him to know what Jesus, the commander of the Last Kingdom, is really like, and what justice and brotherhood, what peace and unity, what joy and love the Holy Spirit creates in Christ—to know, in fact, what the spirit of the Church of Jesus Christ actually is!

This hour ought to call forth an active waiting in faith for the day of salvation, a faith that is active in love. Love must finally be demonstrated for all to see in the form of complete fellowship. A ready faith ought to open our hearts at this late hour for the powers of the coming world, for the spirit of the 'Jerusalem' which comes down from heaven, so that the Church which is the City of God can once again be shown to men as the mother of new church life.

The world and everyone in it must take notice that the Last Kingdom is drawing near. They will do this only if the church of Jesus Christ really advocates the unity and justice of this kingdom and actually puts it into practice. Unity will be put into practice through faith whenever and wherever there is all-out and active readiness. Are we really ready to accept Christ and the spirit of his future in daily life? In this last hour, the word of truth is seeking again that embodiment which God has prepared for his Christ from the beginning.

God's own will is to send us his Holy Spirit again and again. Through him he wants to send us his Living Word, his present Christ, to send him to those who believe, to those who are very poor and very small. If we are ready to accept him as he is, without the least human alteration, he will certainly bring about the same thing in these last days as he performed in the church of the first Christians. The character of God's kingdom, the future of love and justice which Christ will bring with his return, must be shown through the power of the Holy Spirit here and now to be the same life—and church-community as was there in reality in the original church at Jerusalem. No matter how weak men are, if faith in Christ rules them, then God himself will act. He rules wherever he overpowers men in Christ and gathers them with his spirit into a new life together.

Jesus must be taken seriously

Jesus, the Jesus distorted by theological 'interpretations' and now almost unknown, must at last be understood—or at least be taken seriously. The church which calls itself by Jesus' name must at last turn to Jesus again, as in the time of early Christianity, as in the time of the Waldensians and the brotherhoods of the Reformation period. The church must finally begin to live again by the synoptic gospels and the writings of *all* the apostles, not leaving out Paul and including James and Peter and not least John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

A communion of Christian life can pattern its living only on the words and life of Jesus. There is no one else it can follow. A community of Christian living can be born only out of the overflowing divine love of Jesus Christ. In every time of history there have been brotherhoods of common life which rose from Jesus as their source; they have lived

the Johannine love of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Only with Jesus as its source, and Christ as its object, can Christian living be ventured upon.

It has been shown clearly enough that real Christian life can only grow, that an actual life together in fellowship can only be built, out of faith in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. All human efforts inevitably come to grief against the reality of unmitigated evil because they put their trust in the goodness of human nature or even the goodness of racial heredity instead of in Jesus and his kingdom.

Community can be shaped only by faith in the ultimate mystery of Jesus Christ. The faith in this ultimate revelation of God, which alone can be Christian faith, burst forth in undeniable clarity in Hebrew prophecy and in the original Christianity of the apostles' time. We confess to the coming Christ, to the same historical Jesus who was the son of Mary and who was executed in Jerusalem under the governorship of Pontius Pilate by the militarily and legally best government and simultaneously by the best religious nation of that time; we confess to his whole and very definite message, as the apostles presented it in his name; and hence we confess to the common life of the first apostolic Christians.

Community of Believers

We feel ourselves brothers to all those brotherhoods which have proceeded from Christ's original community of believers moved by the Spirit, brotherhoods which appeared in early Christianity in the first century and have repeatedly appeared in later centuries. Jesus himself founded this communality. Its way of living is governed by his life. When he was asked about the coming time of righteousness, Jesus pointed to his actions: sick bodies were healed, corpses were brought to life, devilish powers were driven out of tormented souls, the liberating news from God was brought to the poor. The invisible kingdom of God was a future brought close at hand in Jesus. In him it was reality. The Word was flesh: this makes it sure that finally at last the whole earth will be won for God.

In this faith the first congregation of Christians became a community in which several thousand people lived together. They had to be with each other, like the twelve disciples around Jesus, because the love of Jesus burned in them and held them together. Every problem in their interrelationships was necessarily resolved in a way of living which corresponded in all its aspects to the complete love and unity which were Jesus Christ's. The first Christians had everything in common. Anyone with possessions was filled by an urge to give them over to the management of apostolic love. No one had anything which did not belong fully and without reserve to the community.

And what the congregation owned was for the use of God and every man, as it had been with Jesus. Generous love can never be exclusive. The open door and the open heart were essential characteristics of this first group of *Jesus Christians*. They could approach anyone. They won the love and trust of others, although at the same time their unmixed spirit of love inevitably brought down upon them the bitter hatred and deadly hostility of all other powers. They were undivided heart and undivided soul; they were heart and soul for all. And so the many were *one* heart and *one* soul. They drew their life from the *one* Spirit of Jesus Christ which, free from any other spirit, entirely filled their hearts.

EVERYTHING

I remember during the time of my novitiate that there was a struggle within me which could be likened to a conversation something like this: 'Surely I can keep this, it won't get in the way'.

'No, that must go.'

'And what about this?'

'Everything.'

'This also?'

'Yes, everything.'

'But this I've depended on all my life; I don't know if I could live without it!'

'That, too.'

'But my life would not be worth living without this.'

'Life? You do not know what life is. The grain must be buried, must die, before the green blade of life can come forth. Only he who loses his life completely will ever find it. Die, and I will give you life.'

That is really what we can witness to. The answer to the call cannot be 'Yes, if . . .' or 'Yes, but . . .', it can only be a single 'Yes'. It must be a complete surrender, a dying, without conditions, and then new life, joy, and peace can come. But we must take the leap in faith. It will not come if we say, 'I will do this if I can be sure that I can do that later, if I can be sure that my life will be full and happy'. All that we can take with us when we make the leap is the trust that God will bear us up in his everlasting arms. And we who have done this can testify that it is true. H.B.

PEACE MUST BE DARED

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER (1934)

*Ps. 85, 8. I will hear what God the Lord will speak;
for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints.*

Between the rocks of nationalism and internationalism ecumenical Christianity calls to God and asks him for direction. Nationalism and internationalism are matters of political necessity and the ecumenical Christian is not so concerned about them as about the commands of God. These he shouts out fearlessly into the world. The World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches has, as a member of the ecumenical movement, heard God's call to peace and passed it on to the nations of the world. And so now our task is simply to hear this call as a binding command and not as something which is open to discussion. 'Peace on earth'—that is not a debatable point, but a command given us with the coming of Christ himself.

There are two ways of reacting to a command: either by obeying without question or by putting the hypocritical question of the serpent, 'Did God really say . . .?' This doubt is the mortal enemy of obedience and therefore the mortal enemy of all true peace. Doesn't God understand human nature better than that? Doesn't he know that there must be wars, that they are as inevitable as any other natural phenomenon? Didn't God mean that although we should certainly talk about peace we should certainly talk about peace we should not act upon it literally? Didn't God mean that although we should certainly talk about peace we should not act upon it literally? Didn't God really say that although we should definitely work for peace we should nevertheless have our tanks and poison gas ready just to be on the safe side? And then, what seems to be the most serious question: Did God say that you must not protect your nation? Did God say that you should deliver your neighbour to the enemy? No, God did not say all that, but he did say that there should be peace among men, that in the face of all this questioning we should *obey* him—that is what he meant. He who questions God's command before he obeys has already denied him. There should be peace because Christ is in the world, because his church is in the world. . . . This church of Christ exists in all nations and spans all natural frontiers, political, social and racial. And the command of Christ, heeded by the brothers of this church, binds them together more inseparably than any bond of tradition, blood, class, or language. All such relationships in the world are valid and should not be a matter of indifference, but they are not ultimately binding before Christ.

Therefore, insofar as ecumenical Christians remain in Christ, his word and command of peace are holier and more inviolable than the

(1934)

holiest words and works of the natural world, for they know that he who cannot hate father and mother for his sake is not worthy of him and is lying when he calls himself a Christian. These brothers in Christ obey his word without doubt or question; they keep his commandment of peace and in defiance of the world they talk unashamedly about eternal peace. They cannot level weapons against one another because they know that in so doing they would be levelling them at Christ himself. For them there is no escape from Christ's command that there shall be peace, no matter what anxieties and distress of conscience they may suffer.

How will peace come about? Through a system of political treaties? Through the investment of international capital in various countries, that is, through banks, through money, or even through a mutual, friendly disarmament which aims at securing peace? No, not by any of these means, for the simple reason that everywhere *peace* and *security* are confused. There is no way to peace along the path to security. Peace must be dared. It is the one great risk for which there is no security. Peace is the opposite of security. To demand security implies mistrust, and this in turn gives birth to war. Seeking security means wanting self-protection. Peace means to be at the mercy of God's command, desiring no security but faithfully and obediently placing the history of the nations into the hands of Almighty God and relinquishing all selfish desire to influence its direction. Battles are not won with weapons but with God—even where the way leads to the Cross.

Once more, how will peace come about? Is there anyone who calls men to peace in such a way that the world takes heed, must take heed, calls so that all nations are glad about it? The individual Christian cannot do this—certainly, where all are silent, he can raise his voice and testify to peace, but the world powers will stride on over him, unnoticed. Only one *great ecumenical council* of the HOLY CHURCH OF CHRIST in all the world can so proclaim peace that the world—though gnashing its teeth—has to listen. Then the peoples will rejoice because Christ's church strikes the weapons from the hands of her sons in his name, forbids them to make war, and proclaims Christ's peace in a raging world. Why are we afraid of the angry howls of world powers? Why do we not rob them of their power and give it back to Christ? We can still do so to-day. . . . Are we going to leave those who risk their lives for this message in the lurch? The world is bristling with weapons, and distrust peers fearfully out of men's eyes. The war trumpets could be sounded tomorrow. What are we waiting for? Do we want to incur a guilt greater than any before?

We want to give the world a whole message, not half a one—a courageous message, a Christian message.

We want to pray that we may be allowed to do this—still—today.

WHERE IS THE CHURCH NOW?

CONTRIBUTION OF THE BRUDERHOF REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ISERLOHN
CONFERENCE OF THE GERMAN PROTESTANT CHURCHES AND THE
HISTORIC PEACE CHURCHES

The Iserlohn Conference at the end of July this year was part of an ecumenical discussion that began quietly a few years ago between representatives of the German Protestant Churches and some of the Free Churches. The conference took place in the hospitable rooms of the Evangelical Academy at Iserlohn, and people came from many parts of the world to seek together for essentials of Christianity which have largely been lost. What is the meaning of the lordship of Christ over church and state? What is involved in discipleship of Christ? What is the Christian's position with regard to the state? Are there exceptions to obedience to God's laws?

Those who are in any way acquainted with the history of the churches over the last five hundred years—with all its chaos of persecution, intolerance, and controversies—will really be encouraged when they hear the purpose of this conference. It was to review the misunderstandings and prejudices—at least in a small circle of representatives from both sides, and to carry this further according to the result of the first tentative attempt at unity.

We found the striking thing about the conference was that the Historic Peace Churches, which had been ostracized for hundreds of years, were now invited to help the Protestant Churches at their invitation. To these Historic Peace Churches belong not only the Quakers and Mennonites, but also the Brethren from North America, and in a certain sense the Bruderhof.

Our representative ARTUR METTLER, was asked by the conference to prepare the statement that follows.

God has entrusted his revelation to a world which has fallen away from him. Here, as a holy gift, it is left unprotected against all the misunderstandings of the inventive mind of man. Nevertheless, God has not delivered himself into our hands. He allows himself to be found by those who seek him wholeheartedly and withdraws from those who believe they possess him.

No individual and no group may presume to say or believe: 'His will is fully recognized and practised by us'. And no people under the sun should think: 'He has withdrawn his hand from us'. Whoever has found him, from then on really begins to seek him in earnest.

We representatives of the bruderhof communities took part in the talks not just as onlookers but as those who felt the hour called for urgency. We did not wish to put forward our own concerns—although

they were very much on our hearts—but we wished to share in that very encouraging talk which blazed a trail between the German Protestant Churches and the Historic Peace Churches. In his lecture a representative of the former said something which still finds an echo in our hearts; he said, 'Unity is the sign of discipleship'. We felt what was once expressed by a church father when the church had departed from its first love: 'Your church is like the woman who approached Jesus to touch the hem of his garment saying, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole"'. *If the church recognizes its wounds*, then it turns to God for healing' (Ambrose). We, too, as individuals are ill and we show him our wounds knowing that he can heal them. But the affliction of the wound of which Ambrose speaks is much more serious, 'it is a wound from which she will bleed to death if he does not heal it. For it is her own wound.' This will happen to the church if the wound caused by disunity is not healed.

It seems paradoxical that representatives of a group of Christians who are critical of 'theology' should take part in theological discussions. But today many people know that knowledge of God is not acquired at universities. They know it is right to go to great lengths to obtain this knowledge and to strive for it every day anew. But along with this attitude goes the sharpest rejection of that 'theology' which exists simply to justify existing misunderstandings and which is not able to be self-critical on the basis of the gospels because it is tied to some church or other. But if by theology is meant an earnest and conditionless search to discern God's will for the world, the aim being that this will may really be *done*, then we must cooperate, for this doing of God's will is what we feel to be more important than anything else. In this sense a representative of the North American Friends said that he was thankful to the German churches for what might be called theological deliberation. He spoke for the rest of us.

No Exceptions to the Law

The law of God has received a double stamp: first, in the history of Israel in the form of the ten commandments (and in religions outside the Bible in corresponding laws), then—superseding the commandments, not undermining but rather fulfilling them—the second stamp in the form of Christ's 'new commandment' of love. Everything that was and is needed to preserve God's people is contained in this law. If anyone violates it he enters into the sphere of God's wrath. This wrath, however, as Luther once said, is 'God's strange handiwork' on men: his 'own' and real handiwork is love. For our part, love is the fulfilment of the law: what the law demands with threats and punishments, love does with a free heart.

Where, for instance, the people of God in the Old Testament had to protect their property so that the community did not disintegrate, the new people of God have the task of superseding private ownership by freely relinquishing it and by watching to see that the idea or practice of collective egoism does not creep in. The people of God in the Old Testament had to defend their goods, sword in hand, so that 'strangers' did not impose their authority on them and so that 'strange' gods were not victorious; but the new people of God must stand firm yet defenceless against the attack of the 'enemy'.

In the course of the discussions and lectures it has become clear that there are no exceptions to these laws of God. Should anyone—or any court or power—allow himself to make such an exception even in a single point then he has really opened the way to sin against *all* laws. This has become particularly clear where a state disregards the injunction not to kill: the violating of other laws soon follows. The danger of considering possible exceptions to God's laws in so-called 'borderline' cases was likewise recognized. Karl Barth's readiness to see such a 'borderline' case in the event of his Swiss homeland being attacked was rejected as inconsistent with the Lordship of Christ over church and state. Even in the very difficult circumstances of the resistance movement it was now felt that there was no law of God by which the death of one who was responsible for much evil could be justified.

The contribution of an English Quaker made it clear that the discipleship of Christ could never mean the protection or safeguarding of lawful rights. There will never be peace which satisfies all where each one is still concerned with his own rights. To abandon these will not bring injustices, on the contrary it gives the first possibility of a solution. Love finds a way even in the most difficult situations. It never needs to choose the lesser of two evils because it always aims at goodness. Perhaps we should say here that this way of relinquishing all personal rights so that love's solution can be found has proved itself as the only practicable way in our life together at the bruderhof communities. Of course we always have to seek it again and again, often with sacrifice, always whole-heartedly, and we have to be prepared to accept it unconditionally.

Attitude to the State

In talks about the Christian attitude to the state various differences became apparent. The German Protestant Churches, especially the Lutheran, see it as their way to co-operate with the state, even though this cannot be Christianized. But here too a limit is reached beyond which there must be a plain 'No'. Quakers lay great stress upon the non-political influencing of politicians; the Mennonites are even more

cautious in the way they work together with the state. Maybe we ourselves would emphasize particularly the difference between the tasks of the state and the church. But we should also represent that the state exists 'outside the perfection of Christ' (where it has its own value unless this is undermined from within). It is outside 'for the time being'. That means it can be appealed to on the basis of the gospels, but it does not mean that it has authority over the gospels.

There were many different opinions about peace and alternative service but we were able to come to an understanding and to find unity. The peace witness is essential to discipleship. After all there cannot really be alternative service for war can never have the first claim upon us. It is important to recognize this. We should lead a *life* of peace (as was formulated almost identically by George Fox and Jakob Huter), then time and opportunity for war would simply disappear. Recognizing this we must see too that it belongs to the reality of discipleship to discuss with members of the government how the matter of the *conscience* of the objector to war can best be dealt with and respected. Alternative service had the *tolerari posse* of all the participants of both groups—but at the same time it was given under protest.

The Issue of the Church

In one way or another behind all the statements was the question of the church. Here and there was heard, 'But where is the church now?' It became obvious that this question could not be considered in the abstract. If we are concerned about true discipleship it really means we are concerned about the church. In this sense we were united. The church is never 'there', the most that can be said is that it is always 'coming'. He who genuinely looks towards the coming kingdom, that is, whoever strives to make his life express something of this vision, belongs to the 'Church'. It is quite obvious then that such people will unite in a 'visible' community (but this is not the 'Church' which is meant by Christians when they say the creed). The original form of the church cannot be imitated, as we know when we try to follow Jesus. Just as Jesus cannot be imitated so the *ecclesiae primitivae* cannot be imitated. (At this point it might be good to remember the appropriate words spoken by Karl Barth against a too zealous imitation of the early church).

But what there is and must be is an earnest striving towards a true realization of God's will in our day—a striving that is not in any way influenced by the spirit of the times. Then may be there will come an urge to share all things as in the first church, but if the motive is not love then the community is threatened with destruction from within right from the start. Every forced collectivism and communism is the opposite

of true Christian community for this depends on the complete voluntary consent of the members. A self-sufficient community is worse than an individual who withdraws from a community, simply because it represents what is true, but in a wrong way. The church lives for the world, and where this fact is forgotten, the task is betrayed.

Unity

In the course of our discussions it was stated again and again how very little unity had been achieved among us although unity must belong to discipleship. It was even difficult to achieve this unity between representatives of the Historic Peace Churches in the acute question of peace and alternative military service. One result of much intensive effort was a pamphlet on this subject published by all three groups—Friends, Mennonites and Brethren. But in the conference itself many people who saw this lack admitted how very little unity had been achieved within the various groups themselves, a unity which really belongs to a common and effective witness.

Perhaps here we ought to bring the heritage of the anabaptists as our contribution to a common cause. In the 16th century when Menno Simons was trying to gather together the scattered and persecuted anabaptists from West Germany, Switzerland and Holland, those who were already living together in Moravia were concerned to present as their legacy the hard-won unity of all members—an exceedingly important testimony to the living Word. The struggles reported in the Hutterian History Book show the real desire for unity above all things.

It was a spiritual struggle which has few parallels in history. And this struggle repeats itself in miniature every time a new member draws near to the brotherhood. And we must say that we rejoice very much when this living will to unity-in-love awakes in other church groups.



Barriers

can fall

During his stay in England, ERIC PHILLIPS, a Primavera teacher, has given several talks on Paraguayan life. The following account of relationships between our members and their Paraguayan neighbours was given during a communal mealtime at Wheathill.

In our beginnings in South America we tried to get into contact with the neighbours, but although we had plenty of good will, it was quite clear we did not understand the background and ways of thinking of the people amongst whom we had come to live. Although we genuinely wanted to be friendly, there were many things that stood in the way. Language differences were soon apparent. Many of us knew or learned Spanish, but the real language of the country people is Guarani, an Indian language. We found out how much this really was the case when in later years our Paraguayan members went visiting with us. A deep talk starting in Spanish would invariably go over to Guarani at the critical moment. Another factor was that we were Europeans or *gringos* and accordingly we were mistrusted. This is understandable because the Paraguayans have been badly treated and exploited by Europeans in the past.

But the barriers were not all from the Paraguayan side. We on our part were afraid—especially in the early years when conditions were very primitive—of contracting contagious diseases. This kept us somewhat isolated, but it was not an unfounded fear because leprosy—often concealed—and other tropical diseases were and still are present in the neighbourhood. It is a custom in Paraguay to take *terraré*, which consists of water sucked up through a metal tube with a filter at the end immersed in a gourd containing yerba tea, which is the national drink. This is passed round and everyone drinks, but for medical reasons we were warned against doing this. The custom, however, is a social one

and therefore in refusing we often cut ourselves off socially, though in fact some members always did join in with the local people.

A further difference between us and the Paraguayans was the sheer style and standard of living. Although in the beginning our conditions of living were even more primitive than the one-roomed animal-surrounded ranchos, in a few years we had wood and brick dwellings, electric light, workshops, power units, hospital and schools, etc., bed linen, set tables, and oiled or polished furniture. This made us appear quite well-to-do in the eyes of our neighbours, and, looking at it comparatively, we were. We were prepared to share it all with them but they could not believe such a thing to be possible. We found out later that the idea had grown up amongst the Paraguayans who worked for us that you had to have a lot of money to join the community, and if you did, you would have to do all the dirty work—this in spite of the fact that many of us worked side by side with them doing the same work in or near the community.

A real hindrance to our efforts to make contacts was the lack of communications between our villages and the scattered ranchos round about, so that to visit and talk with two or three families would take a whole day. On the other hand, all through the years our work in Asunción and in the hospital especially has brought us into friendly contact with the people, although occasionally we have had our homes and offices broken into, our crops stolen, and have been shot at and injured. One must say that such events occur frequently in the neighbourhood among the people themselves. There was special danger during the civil war in 1947 when some Paraguayan families sought refuge with us, knowing that we stood for non-violence.

In face of all these things we did our best to approach the people, and certainly something was achieved simply by living as we did and working with and amongst them. They got to know us by observation, and in spite of our failings a mutual trust gradually grew up. We used to walk barefoot through the muddy campos because it is the most comfortable way of walking in Paraguay, and this was often noticed and remarked upon with the words '*Como paraguayo*' (like a Paraguayan). The Paraguayan folksong, sung by our young people to the accompaniment of a guitar, is often heard now in Primavera. Violins and pianos are costly and our young men have learned how to make their own guitars. One sees them sitting together with a group of Paraguayans on a free afternoon or evening so that as time goes on the two groups are beginning to share their cultures. But within the last few years we have also felt that a greater effort must be made on our part in Asunción as well as in the country.

So in both places we made visits and invited people into our homes. We explained at these little gatherings—often with translations

into Guarani—the basis of our life together and our longings to share completely with them and all men. Often there were quite far-going discussions, and some Paraguayans even came to live with us. I shared a room with one young man and experienced how deeply he struggled within himself to resolve questions of conscience. We wrote a short pamphlet in Spanish. Socially we tried to mix in and enjoy ourselves with our neighbours. They came to our weddings and we went to theirs. We gave a circus at a children's festival, which the local people really enjoyed. They invited us to present it again in one of their villages, the proceeds to go to the help of both schools—ours and theirs. About five hundred people came, and it was jolly, child-like fun. Then, when the hospital needed re-roofing, we sent out an invitation for people willing to help. Some of us were pessimistic and expected about a dozen men, but nearly a hundred turned up with several waggons and the whole job of removing the old roof and putting on a new one was completed in one day of enthusiasm and comradeship.

Another sign that trust was growing between us was that several families asked if their young girls of thirteen to fourteen could come and live with us for a time. This was often because their parents feared for them under the loose moral conditions which prevail in the country. These girls learnt English and German, European housewifery and the care of children, and they lived with our own girls.

Enthusiasm for Education

Some years back I attended a teachers' seminar for a week and there I met young girl teachers from the country. Their enthusiasm and desire to learn in order to do something under the often appalling conditions in which they had to work was quite touching. We had visited local schools with children's groups and saw a girl with only sixth class primary school education trying to teach forty-five children in a crude hut with almost no material or equipment. We felt we must help and so Wenceslao Jaime (one of our Paraguayan members) and I and a group of children went with wood and tools and a newly-painted blackboard to replace the two by three foot one they had, and set out to repair the 'school building'. Before long the local men were coming along bringing their tools and borrowing ours and soon ten to fifteen men had got the house patched up, the new blackboard was in place, and the old one repainted. One wonders why they don't do such things themselves, but it can be understood when one knows, for instance, that when some of them had clubbed together and collected money for school improvement, the man to whom it had been entrusted suddenly disappeared. We visited other schools and repaired them and made little improvements in each. One group of our young people

made big improvements and additions to the school at Rio Rugua, and another formed a workcamp and finished off a new schoolhouse in the near-by village of Carolina. This enabled the children of that village to get education to the fourth class instead of the second, as they had previously, and it also saved children of eight, nine and ten, a long walk alone through the forest to the next nearest school some miles away.

We felt we must speak more to the Paraguayans in their own homes and in a way they could understand. Some of us, usually with Wenceslao and Ramon, visited the homes of local people who we knew had an interest. This led to many wanting to visit. Such an undertaking, however, is not easy, for if people leave their homes unattended they may return to find them broken into and their crops damaged and partly stolen. Nevertheless, various people did come and after talks and discussions a few even come to live with us. The talks in the people's homes took place in an atmosphere of very warm hospitality. Pigs and chickens and the occasional cow were chased away to a more comfortable distance, *terraré* was prepared and handed round. We talked about the countryside, the crops, the cattle, local craft work, the weather, Paraguayan history, the latest world news, and gradually this neighbour or that joined the party, and then slowly, usually sitting on the outside of the circle, women and girls would join the group. At this stage the guitars would be brought out and maybe the whole afternoon would go by just singing folksongs, but sometimes we would get round to talking about deeper things, and also the Paraguayan attitude to living in the *Sociedad*, which is their name for the community. Then there would be the questions, 'Is it possible to trust your neighbour?' 'What is the basis on which men of different nationalities and races really share?' 'Is it possible to have a faithful marriage?' 'Is it possible to find a society where there is no violence and force?'

It can be said that our progress in getting to know the people of Paraguay has been slow. Thirty are now living permanently among us—counting the children of the families. The fact that there are not more is understandable when we look back over the years and realize how much has had to be overcome on both sides to make a contact possible. The experience has been a great and important one for us. We know that people of very different nationalities, races, and cultural background and upbringing can experience what makes brotherhood a reality. We know again it is true that God's Spirit can overcome all barriers.

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Toy Thanksgiving



Christmas was over, and all the children were mellow with the joy of gifts—giving as well as getting. At home they went through their toys, remodelling old ones and making new ones, so that by the Sunday before Three Kings Day they were ready to make a pilgrimage bearing gifts to the Paraguayan boys and girls at Rio Rugua.

As soon as the bell rang, the children, all agog, streamed into the dining room. Not one of them waited for the moment when he in turn should come forward and present his gift. No—just plump! and the gifts were there on the table, a lovely and mixed pile of children's treasures. Only a few of the very young ones hung on to their toys a little longer. Sergi brought his teddy bear having its last ride on his shoulders. 'Do you really understand that you won't be seeing Bearli again', his mother asked anxiously. 'Yes', said the four-year-old bravely, and a little later he went up to say a final farewell then turned and went home without a tear.

Margaret brought her fairy doll which had glistened on the very top of last year's Christmas tree. Eunice put down the ball she had bought at the river port when her family had been for an outing. Friedrich came struggling along with his big handsome cedar box which all the children thought would be most useful in a Paraguayan home. Stella, who was leaving soon for England, lovingly spread out her best doll tea-set, a rare china one, saying, 'They might never see such a wonderful thing again in their lives if we took it back to England'.

I told them then the story of the star that had wanted to be used by God, how he was told constantly to 'wait a little longer and grow stronger and brighter', of all the many adventures he got into because of his impatience to be important, and how he tried all by himself to light the way of lonely travellers on the earth a long time before God was ready for him. I told how at last the day came when he was ready to shine as he had never shone before, and how he was the star that led the shepherds and wise men to the stable at Bethlehem. After the story we sang many songs and during the last one a child slipped out quietly to bring in one more gift she had remembered—a four-wheeled waggon that had to stand on the floor for there was no more room on the tables.

Next day the bigger children helped to sort and pack the gifts for the one hundred and twenty-seven families at Rio Rugua.

On Three Kings Day, January 6th, the procession started off. First went the gift-waggons and with them the three boys and their herald who were to dress up in the wood as the three kings just before they reached the village. Then came the truck and waggon with food and drink.

The day was very hot and the paths dusty, but the way through the forest with its overhanging creepers was lovely. All along there were people who were going to the local school house. We picked up some of them, the first a granny walking with her family. She threw her pair of new shoes into the waggon and then came hopping up on to the seat herself. It is the custom among them to carry their best shoes to the party and put them on at the doorway after they have walked through the streams on the way.

Soon a couple of young girls, their babies astraddle their hips, came running and laughing behind the waggon. I called out to one, 'Here, give me your baby to carry'. She handed up her year-old tot who seemed quite content to ride with me. 'Goodbye!' I called out to the mother just to tease her. She laughed gaily and seemed to enjoy the joke. Most Paraguayans love jokes no matter how simple. A little later I changed places with the mother and went running along with two little lads down the hill at the edge of the forest. As there were many little rivulets streaming across the *campos*, I too was soon carrying my shoes.

When we arrived the teacher of the local school called the children together and in an informal way they commenced to sing some of their Spanish songs. We in turn sang Christmas carols, and so it went on until the three kings suddenly appeared, heralded by a small boy blowing his cow-horn. Everyone laughed and clapped and ran to the fence. The kings circled us twice and then the gift waggons drew up at the fence.

The distribution began. The school teacher and the head man of the village, Valentino, called out the family names one by one, and each received a parcel handed to them by one of the children. I helped by giving the parcel to each child in turn. It all took about an hour in the hot sun and when we had finished an old granny came up to me and said in Guarani, 'Eh, but you are hot my dear', and wiped my face with her black scarf.

After the distribution and while the local radio was going full blast we gave the children rides in the truck. The driver zig-zagged across the *campos* to the merriment of both children and himself. It was a jolly time for us all. But the parting came soon and then home we sped under threatening clouds, picking people up and dropping them off all along the way.

BELINDA MANLEY.

FORUM

A Guiding Principle in Life

Now, more than ever do I realize the overriding need of having only one guiding principle in one's life, to give unity and purpose to the community of man. It is clear to me after staying at your community that in society it is tempting to avoid responsibility and to live in compromise with one's principles.

That men must choose a principle to live by and truly live by this principle in community, I acknowledge. But that there is *no alternative* but to choose unity in Christ I am not ready to accept. This principle of unity must be greater than man, to be sure. But to limit the principle *a priori* to one of unity in Christ seems to me unrealistic.

Passive tolerance of other people's views, though, is not enough in the long run to establish peace and fellowship. There must be a positive effort to reconcile views by bringing men together in community with a common purpose. Only then by experiencing the real difficulties and advantages of living for a common unselfish purpose in community, will the real principle of unity *evolve*. It is our duty to seek after it, and I see the direction my life should take.

C.B.

Questions after a Visit

After a group of young Friends, Mennonites, and Brethren had visited the Wheathill Bruderhof from a conference at Woodbrooke College, one of the Dutch participants, Jan Wieringa, a grammar-school-teacher, reported his impressions in the monthly paper of the Dutch Mennonite Peace Group.

It was on a dreary January morning that we stepped out of the car into the mud of the bruderhof farm. Whatever we may have expected, the bad weather did not make conditions ideal and that was probably all to the good. Without sunshine, in all the bareness of the ploughed fields and the mud of the heavy English soil, the reality had to convince by its own inner strength. Our visit there was too short for us to see everything, so rather than give a description of what I experienced, I shall refer to some of the problems that were raised for me.

Life in community—without anything of 'mine' and 'thine', but where everything is 'ours', or rather 'This we use in Christ's name'—such a life must gain a new significance in our time. When Communism rules over a large part of the world, when historical materialism, fanatically defended or rejected, still has its imprint on present-day life, we cannot lightly pass over what is happening in Christ's spirit at Wheathill. Although in the course of centuries Christendom has turned to other ways, we must never forget that these ways were not Christ's and there is the danger of going astray. Community life has gripped my imagination for a long time and I have followed with interest the experiments in Israel at the communistic *kibbutzim*. This idea is, of course, an old one in Israel and there is a close connection between the Essene brotherhoods, the early Christian church, the modern *kibbutzim*, and the bruderhofs. A good part of our Christian conscience is being preserved at Wheathill and it was in great suspense that I went there. . . . My observations were not in the first place directed towards the economic advantages of this life. Whoever seeks an easy life, more comfort, riches, or luxury, ought never to take the country lane to the community. On the other hand, whoever calls this life poor, primitive, and therefore unattractive, speaks without knowledge. It is true that one would have to deny many of the comforts enjoyed by any middle-class family in Holland; but under such circumstances they live happily, in higher spirits than the precarious economic situation would suggest. How much better and more pleasant it would be if they had the money to improve these conditions—but even without it the bruderhof grows. For this struck me above all—the warmth going out from these poorly clothed people is so great that many who are far better attired would wish to live in their midst. This is the strength of the bruderhof, that all are conscious that they are on God's way—the way of love, mercy, and community.

Some people say that this is a community of 'idealists' and we all know what sort of idealist is meant. It is true that when one first visits the bruderhof the number of bearded faces seems to support this. It is the 'cracked' and the 'half-baked' for whom there is 'no place' in normal society, who withdraw themselves to build up 'their own lives' together. But in thinking like this one comes on dangerous ground. Does our society offer the 'normal' person so much security, such guarantees for a reasonable living, that we may see the life on the bruderhof as a 'flight from society' or even as foolish idealism because it is superfluous and therefore unpracticable? In a world so overflowing with displaced persons, war-orphans who will never have a home again, old soldiers unable to take their place in society again, refugees, deportees, we are also threatened every day with precisely the same fate—to be driven from home, ruined, never to be received back, cast out here, avoided there, at last hidden away in a camp. . . . My God, then let that camp be a bruderhof, where sense is given to life again.

Then comes the great question—am I myself willing to be accepted in this community? For a short time I was accepted, but then I went away again, to my own home, my property, my family. I was there, but I am no longer there. Would I, then, now be ready to hand over my property to the community, give up all that I have, give it to the poor? This is a question of conscience and I must confess that I dare not do it. Personally I would have been prepared to deny myself these things in order to get something else in return; now that I have a family I am no longer prepared to do it. Yet this question of conscience will not leave me in peace. I know that it *should* be done—and then objections, such as 'my place is elsewhere', 'I am called to some other service' sound rather like loopholes. It is so, however, that one person is gripped more easily by this brotherly life than others. With one the need of the world has loomed larger, the lack of peace has tended to draw him loose from the soil on which he first grew, and then it is easier for him to make new roots at Wheathill. Other objections to the community also sound a bit weak: don't they cut themselves off too much from the great world? In a lonely corner of England it is easy to forget what is happening elsewhere. Wheathill is not so shut off, however, and everyone who comes is acquainted with the world. The children go out, too, to widen their outlook; after that they are able to choose the world or the bruderhof. Most of them choose the latter. Then, too, in the same way, we can sometimes be cut off from the need of the world in our own family, if this need does not touch us in our own home.

Another difficulty is this: the brothers' community is entirely a rural community. To be capable of being universal the community should be able to exist in the middle of a great city as an industrial community. But the experiment of keeping such a community going in

the centre of society has never yet succeeded. Why not? It is primarily a task for economists to examine the possibilities in this direction. If the form of Christian life which has been realized in the bruderhof is really healthy, then it must be possible everywhere where men are gathered together.

My friends at Wheathill will certainly not take these words of mine amiss and may possibly be able to prove that a bruderhof is feasible even in a great city—but perhaps I put my requirements too high in order to escape the challenge to join them—a challenge that does not leave me in peace.

I will bring forward yet another danger for the community in its present form—danger which I believe is not now very serious: that of a fanatical and false idealism. In a restricted community, where people see each other every day and outsiders only seldom, boredom and routine can become a danger; but to avoid this monastic boredom by an equally monastic fanatical enthusiasm just won't do in such a community. I was glad to find there the matter-of-fact sobriety by which alone anything great can be accomplished. Only before the eyes of soberly thinking men can a plan take proper shape; only by the hands of sensible men can something durable be achieved.

I hope that in this article I have not given an unjust impression of my encounter with the bruderhof. A few hours are very short. If I am at fault, I hope to be corrected. Of one thing I am sure: I should like to go back to Wheathill once more. A considerable portion of our Christian conscience lies there, because I have never been anywhere where the fundamental principles of Christianity are more lived out than at Wheathill.

J.W.

The Word of Peace

I used to believe that it was possible to live according to the will of Christ in present-day society, but after considering your community life on the one hand and all that I have experienced in daily life on the other I realize that it is extremely difficult. And when I consider my past life during the war I see more clearly that the so-called Christian civilization of today is not in accordance with the will of Christ, but rather the will of men, and that it leads to strife. . . . I believe that if people really read the Bible, like children, as Philip Britts so rightly says (Paraguayan Reflections, THE PLOUGH, Vol. III, No. 3), they will find the word of peace which calls them to unity beyond the dogmas which stand as human barriers. I believe that the Bible is the basis of true community because it is the book of love just as it was the basis of the life of the early Waldensians. They did not found churches but in all humility sought to live by the love and will of Christ.

Turin, Italy. (Translated from Esperanto).

F.B.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

MACEDONIA—THE CHALLENGE OF CHRIST

During and immediately after the Second World War there were in Britain and the United States a great many small community groups that sought to live a brotherly way of life, giving up possession of private property and working together in service for the common good. Only a few of these intentional communities are left now; the history of one of them in the state of Georgia has been closely linked with the growth and work of the Society of Brothers in the United States during the past few years, and, as we briefly reported in the last number, the members have now decided to seek complete unity with us.

The Macedonia Cooperative Community was founded about ten years ago on six hundred acres of woods, pasture, farm, and garden. A woodwork shop produced educational play equipment for nurseries and schools. This, with the farm, provided the economic basis for the group.

Writing in *Liberation*, January 1957, Staughton Lynd, a Macedonia member, described the development of the group:

[In the beginning] the economic pattern was one of complete sharing, but there was no explicit life-time commitment; unanimous decision and an open-door policy were not consistently practised. Nor were complete honesty and direct speaking insisted on. When events drove the members to speak their whole minds to each other, they were astonished at the bitterness and resentment which existed under the surface of a cooperative life. . . . The group concluded that each one coming to the community brought within himself the seeds of all the evils in the larger society: the problem was inside as well as outside.

This experience . . . brought a further realization: that just as people had failed to share the dark side of the self, feelings of bitterness and resentment, so also there had been a failure to share the deepest aspirations, the things that keep one going in life. Some had attended local churches, others had formed a Quaker meeting, but this type of experience did not exist for the whole group.

The group began to meet regularly to share these deeper aspirations. . . . These crystallized in common recognition of the need for complete life-time commitment, all around the circle, if the community process were to 'go'. The commitment was expressed as being to love and truth. . . .

While all can describe our commitment as being to love and truth, each individual would add something to describe his experience of commitment. For some it is to the will of God and the coming of the kingdom of God on earth. For others it is less explicit, involving a sense of reality which seems to exclude a personal God. But we firmly believe that in our different words we are trying to describe

the identical experience. For us commitment expresses the desire to give oneself to life without reservation.

When members of the Society of Brothers from Primavera were in the United States with a view to starting bruderhof life there, they found a deep-going concern among the members of Macedonia, and the result of talks and experiences together was that about half the community decided to unite with us to form the nucleus for the foundation of Woodcrest in 1954. The main part of the woodwork industry was then moved to Woodcrest, leaving the farm and a smaller workshop to provide for those who chose to continue the community life at Macedonia. The relationships between the two communities were harmonious and there continued to be a great deal of cooperation between us.

The events of the past months which led up to the decision of the Macedonia community to seek complete unity with us are described in a circular letter which the members there have sent out to their many friends before moving to Oak Lake and Woodcrest, where they are entering into the bruderhof life.

Three or four months ago the members and provisional members began to read together in the New Testament. Several among us had begun to feel a new experience of Christ in their lives, and those of us who had not felt this believed they should expose themselves to it as best they could. As we read, we all felt a deeper understanding of Jesus' life and a fresh appreciation of its power and validity. We invited the Society of Brothers to send one or two of their number to join us in that reading, as we sought together to find the meaning of Jesus for our community.

This period of searching led to a deeper inner conviction on the part of one member and then another that he must find a way to give his life in community to Jesus. Slowly there grew among us the recognition that while we had encouraged each individual to follow his deepest calling, either we had not recognized, or we had not faced the need of some of us to belong to a circle gathered in Christ's name. This recognition brought on an intense struggle for us, as individuals and as a group. For some, it came as an imperative demand to follow Christ with all others similarly called; for others, it brought the harsh truth that the inter-faith basis of Macedonia during the last three years was not as strong and deep-reaching as we had supposed, and that it was not adequate to meet our needs. Each one of us felt driven to question his faith and commitment and strive to give his life more fully.

In the end, the full members and provisional members of Macedonia met, with no one else present, and each one said what he felt he must do. To our wonder, we all felt the same thing: that a new community should be formed based on Jesus, and that the Society of Brothers should constitute that community. There were marked

differences among us, in that some felt ready to ask for the novitiate in the Society of Brothers, while for others there were strong questions. But for each of us the next step was to live in a bruderhof community, that we might continue to expose ourselves to the challenge of Christ's life and teaching. At the invitation of the old Macedonia membership, therefore, Macedonia has become a community of the Society of Brothers.

This came as a shock to some of the non-members here, as it may to some of you, and we ask of each one of you, as we are asking ourselves, that we put our lives completely at the service of the spirit of love and the search for truth. Truly followed, these can ultimately only lead men together. We hope you will try to understand our experience, rather than explain it away.

BRUDERHOF NEWS

The letters we receive from *North America* reflect the thankfulness felt by our members for 'the inner moving and stirring in the hearts of people in every meeting'. A letter from *Woodcrest* says that the brotherhood is now quite outnumbered by newer people.

This same 'stirring' has also been felt in some measure at *El Arado* in Uruguay where in the last group of those who have decided for the brotherly life of the church-community, four were from the South American states of Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina. Roger Allain writes: 'We are very thankful for the movement which has been given to our small circle in a modest way. It is so difficult to convey to you who have not experienced how stony and arid the South American soil is what a tremendous victory it means when some *criollos* (natives of Spanish America) grow into our life; we are very much encouraged and at the same time conscious that we must do much more still in the field of mission.' Of one lad of twenty-five who has joined he says, 'he had an extremely poor and unhappy childhood and youth, having been abandoned by his mother and step-father at a tender age, and wandered in many places, including some years in Brazil, in a circus, in the Uruguayan navy, and in the underworld of Buenos Aires and Montevideo.' But it has to be said that *El Arado* is still very short of room and badly in need of capital for building.

At *Wheathill* in England, we are unfortunately not yet in a position to give a clear word about the property near London which we are seeking to purchase as the negotiations have proved very difficult and are not yet completed. We have moved together to Bromdon, and the farm-buildings to house the cattle and sheep from Cleeton Court are going up, but from the many conferences and meetings we have attended we are very much aware of a task that is waiting for us. There seems to be a growing concern among both Christians and non-Christians to find a real and true way in life, and among other things to explore the possibility of community living. We are therefore eager to make this new beginning and have been encouraged in this by a journey made by two of our members to Switzerland where they met

with open hearts and unexpected help from friends who wish to support this new beginning.

In the meantime, as we are now reckoning with having three places in Europe, we are holding a small conference at the *Sinntal Bruderhof* to discuss the future, keeping in mind a division of Wheathill and also the needs of the smaller bruderhof in Germany. Fred Goodwin writes from the Sinntal: 'Here after some quite busy months with many journeys and a comparatively large guest circle, we now feel the need for a time of gathering particularly in regard to the families who are hoping to come to us in December. We must be ready both inwardly and practically for this task which means permanent children's work and is a step nearer to a bruderhof in the full sense.' From Sinntal came the joyous news of the announcement of the engagement of two of our young people who have grown up in community, Heidi Zumpe, the eldest granddaughter of Eberhard and Emmy Arnold, and Klaus Barth, whose parents were the first couple to be married at the bruderhof. It has meant much for these young people that they have been able to celebrate their engagement at the Sinntal Bruderhof which is so near to the Rhön countryside where their parents first met and where Eberhard Arnold dedicated his life to the cause of Christian community.

Just at this time *Woodcrest* will also be preparing for the marriage of Hector Black and Susie Maendel, Susie brought up in an Hutterian community and Hector in an American home, and both deeply united in the service of Christ in the church-community. This will be a particular joy to the whole community as it is the first wedding to take place at Woodcrest.

BOOK REVIEW

SPIRITUAL AND ANABAPTIST WRITERS, Vol. XXV in The Library of Christian Classics, Part 1, edited by G. H. WILLIAMS; Part 2, edited by A. M. MERGAL. 380 pp. S.C.M. Press, 1957. 35s.

It gives food for thought to see the anabaptists in the rows of the classics. Will their testimony be heard at last, or is it just a matter of erecting beautiful sepulchres for the prophets who have been stoned? We are glad that our generation musters a courage for truthfulness which our fathers were unable to do. This is an attempt to make available in the interests of historic justice the concern of the 'outsiders' and so to give seekers an opportunity to find their bearings.

The selection is eminently suited to introduce material which is in itself strange. The historical sections are alternated with sections on teachings, and in this way the reader is soon plunged into a living stream of life. From here he can search deeper and learn about the beliefs which form the background to this life. It is particularly good that right at the beginning there is a chapter about the beginning of the

anabaptist movement in Zürich. This also has an important place in the Hutterian History Book, going back to the eye-witness account by the anabaptist leader, Blaurock from Graubünden. Then follows an important example of Thomas Müntzer's writing, and after this the moving letter of the non-violent group in Zürich that had formed round Grebel, a letter which speaks out clear indictments and warnings for the first time. Two important contributions to the question of freedom of the will follow on: the one by Hans Denk is of an inner nature and speaks straight to the heart across the centuries: the other is a more scholarly writing by Balthasar Hubmeier, the pastor of Waldshut who joined the anabaptists in Moravia and died a martyr's death in Vienna. Then comes another historical section: the court case and martyrdom of Michael Sattler who was the president of the anabaptist synod at Schleithem and was responsible for the first confession of faith, the so-called Schlatter Articles of 1527 (recently reprinted by the Mennonite Press). Next come a few 'instructive' chapters: a letter from Sebastian Franck to a Lutheran, an answer of Caspar Schwenckfeld to Luther, a longer article by Melchior Hofmann about God's order (a rare and particularly attractive writing about the brideship of the true church), then again an historical section on the decisive years of 1533-36 (events at Münster). Finally, two sections deal with the west wing and one with the east wing of the non-violent anabaptists: Dietrich Philips writes about the church of God, Menno Simons (the founder of the Mennonites) about the ban, and Ulrich Stadler (important representative of the Hutterites in the east) about sin, ban, and community of goods.

From Valdés, the mild and very charitable representative of evangelical Catholicism, three important writings are printed: Christian teachings in the form of a dialogue, a section under the title 'One Hundred and Ten Thoughts', and a further dialogue, 'The Christian Alphabet'. (Valdés lived at the time of the Counter-Reformation, from 1517-56, and was for Spain what Erasmus was for western Europe).

I have checked the translation, especially the part from Thomas Müntzer which is particularly difficult, and found it good. The introductions are also valuable. The reader is able to get a good impression of the left or radical wing of the Reformation, and we can strongly recommend this book.

A.M.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace. (JER. 6, 14)

Never at any other time of the year is peace spoken of more glibly than at Christmas and New Year—a time of promise and a time of hope. In a world where millions of pounds, dollars and roubles are spent on the development of ever greater means of destruction, equal millions of human souls long for the barest outline of peace. For peace does not consist of the status quo between heavily armed nations—a lull in the storm of battle. Before any war could start there had to be an idea in men's minds, a passion in men's hearts. Men had to be drawn together for a common cause—to destroy and exterminate. So, too, with peace—it can only come to reality through the minds and hearts of men, who have an idea and can put it into practice because their hearts are right. Their common cause is to build and create—and the basis of their unity is love.

In this number of *THE PLOUGH* we publish two talks—by Eberhard Arnold and Dietrich Bonhoeffer—first spoken during the fateful thirties in Germany. Barely more than a decade had passed since men had fought for a world of 'peace'. 'Extreme emergency calls for the extreme of love', said Eberhard then, while Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked, 'What are we waiting for?' It is for historians to argue about the events of the past—the call for decisive action now comes to us from Christ.

In the face of this, the disunity among Christians on the practical meaning of peace, apart from theological differences, is all the more tragic. Artur Mettler's statement following the Iserlohn Conference of German Protestant Churches and the Historic Peace Churches expresses our deep concern, linked with our joy to find a growing awareness of an attitude fundamental to Christian discipleship. In this connection, too, we are publishing an extract from the book *The Divine Pity* by the Roman Catholic friar, Gerald Vann, O.P. (by kind permission of the publishers, Wm Collins, Sons, Glasgow).

A more intimate aspect of peace is seen in the overcoming of prejudice and distrust between neighbours. After the emigration of our community from England to Paraguay during the last war, the barriers which separated European from Paraguayan seemed at times almost unsurmountable. But the seeds that have been sown have begun to bear fruit. Eric Phillips, a teacher from Primavera at present in Europe, has described our relationships with our Paraguayan neighbours, while in the news we are able to report the decision of several South Americans to join us at El Arado in Uruguay. The loving way in which children overcome these barriers is described by Belinda Manley. It is very encouraging and heartening to see these signs of trust and good will after such a long struggle.

The line drawings on pages 111 and 115 are by Leslie Holland of Primavera and Bella Vichon of Sweden, respectively.

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Society of Brothers
Woodcrest, Rifton, New York State
Oak Lake, Farmington, Pennsylvania
Macedonia, Clarkesville, Georgia

PARAGUAY

Sociedad de Hermanos
Primavera, Alto Paraguay
Fulgencio R. Moreno 132, Asunción

URUGUAY

Sociedad de Hermanos
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