

the plough

THE BULLETIN
OF THE
BRUDERHOF
COMMUNITIES

NUMBER THREE 1958



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Shepherd:

Beyond, when all was still,
the angel sang:
Leave your barren hill,
there where you live apart;
leave your lonely striving,
your need and pain;
For God would have a living
and loving heart.
Come, see his love made plain;
peace, peace in earth and heaven,
and goodwill toward men.

All:

O come within our hearts,
O love, come down!
Lo, where our hearts are empty
for God to come;
there,
there is Bethlehem!

from a Christmas play
by Eileen Robertshaw

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS
TO ALL FRIENDS OF THE BRUDERHOF

The Spirit of the Highest, like water from the mountains, seeks the lowliest places. It is impelled downwards. Its Church has a lowly, child-like spirit, which can come only from God. It is with Mary in the stable. It stands beside Christ at Golgotha. It treads the path of apostolic poverty.

The Word seeks to become real in deed and in truth. The means of revelation is the work of Jesus Christ—the truth and righteousness of the crucified Son of God. Man must suffer all three articles of faith in his own body, if he is to arrive at knowledge of the highest good. He must receive the whole, living Word into himself. The Word cannot bestow itself in parts. It seeks to become flesh and life through the Holy Spirit in pure and open hearts. But this only comes about with fear and great trembling, as with Mary when she listened to the angel proclaiming God's will. The Word must be born in us too; it cannot come about in any other way but through pain, poverty, and suffering, from within and without.

New birth brings new life. If the Word is born in us, if it becomes flesh in us, we live in love and goodness. And so ours hearts find peace.

The wise men from the East had heard the Word from within and seen the light from without. So they came to the Christ who had first to be born, but who was already born in their hearts.

Extracts from the writings of Eberhard Arnold.

WHERE DO WE FIND THE REAL JESUS TODAY?

Klaus Barth

A

PERSON who seriously wants to be a Christian must ask himself this question, 'Where do we find the real Jesus today?' and he must put it frankly and very personally to himself—that is, if he is really concerned about Christ and discipleship.

The overwhelming fact of God's Son among men must not remain merely historical, just a sentimental memory awakened once a year at Christmas. No, 'Christ now, in the present day?' must be the question. 'Christ among us today?' This is what we should ask ourselves directly. We should be filled with the reality of his presence, for it was in this same direct way that he sent his Spirit to the expectant disciples—the followers who shortly before had deserted him so miserably.

If we believe in Christ, his Spirit must work in the same way. If this is really so, then we shall understand his will today, we shall discover his footsteps in the present time, and his Spirit will become living and great among us, so alive and strong that it will fill our existence with a strength which will create a new order among men, the order of love.

Christ should not be just a myth for us, a legend, but a reality, a strength—the strength of love. But we are only too eager to avoid this reality. We resist the demands of Jesus, who wants us completely, with all our intellectual and physical abilities. We rebel against a power to which we must commit ourselves fully, because it is a leap into that reality which is strange and incomprehensible. We have become estranged from love and have to return to it.

We have estranged ourselves from Christ and must turn back to him. But men have such a strong tendency to make their own gospel! We seek out those parts of the Bible that promise us blessings, that are edifying and uplifting. How wonderful the beatitudes sound! But reading on in the Sermon on the Mount we come to the injunctions, 'But I say unto

you...' and we stop. Then Jesus' message becomes too real and we skirmish about until we find a loophole through these very clear demands. We want victory, resurrection, but we shirk the defeat, the unavoidable cross. Yet just here lies the real Jesus. There is no myth about the cross.

Where do we find the real Jesus today? What does the question mean? It is not a matter of giving a tenth, or doing social work, or not breaking the commandments, or just talking about Christ. Before we put this question, we must ask ourselves, 'Am I prepared to give my life absolutely into Christ's hands? Am I prepared to serve him with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my strength? If we can say 'Yes' to this question, taking into consideration the consequences, then we are already on the way to finding Christ who wants to be effective now. Then we shall come across his footsteps even in this dark hour of world history.

It is clear that such knowledge needs much courage, the courage to dare to leap and let go. With this leap all care and anxiety, but also all self-will, is taken away. Our only help is a blind trust. And with this we turn to seek for the real Jesus. But we do not find him except in surrender to our fellow men. That is the attitude with which we have to approach this question and the direction in which we must search.

The main emphasis of Jesus' message to mankind is concerned with men's relationships to one another. This relationship can prove how far we are prepared to surrender ourselves to Christ and how real his presence is among us. Christ creates a new order, the order of love, and the order of peace as a fruit of this love. But Christ makes the basis of this new order the relationship between man and God which is something that first of all has to be restored. 'Thy will be done.' He devoted his whole life to this. It was for this he allowed himself to be born in a stable 'between an ox and ass'. For this he became a helpless human being, equal to us in all things except sin, a man who had to grow in mind and body, who had to learn obedience, and who had to

experience the joys and sorrows of earth as we do. To restore this relationship between God and man, he worked, healed, and preached. For this he chose his disciples, taught them and sent them out. For this he went to his death.

If we recognize his will for our own day, then brotherly love will appear among us, because God who is the source of love has been discovered and recognized. This love represents God's will because it wills to return to its source. If it burns in our hearts, we seek only God's will both for ourselves and our neighbour, and we look for peace and justice from him. We cannot reckon with peace from men; human ideals do not lead to confidence and understanding. God himself creates the new order of peace, of justice, of trust and understanding among men, even today!

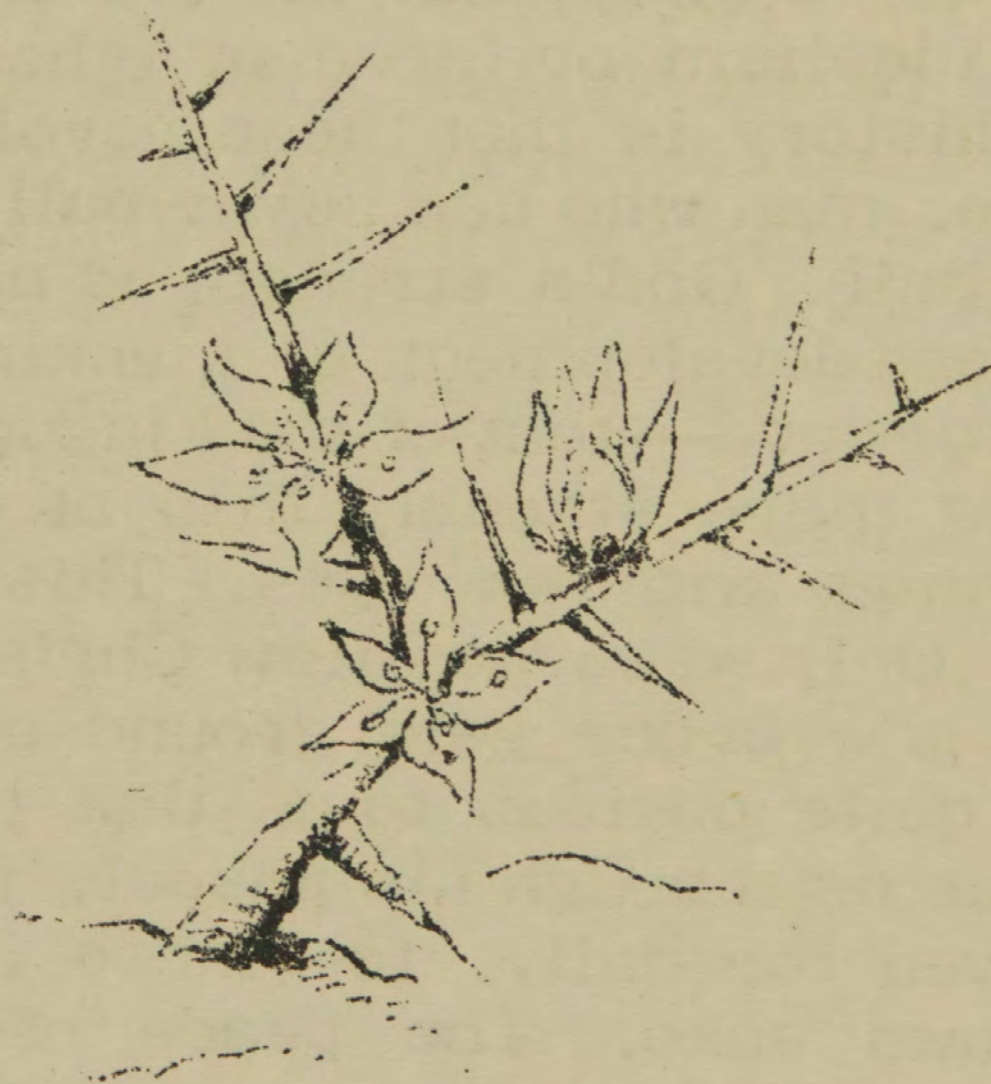
This new order can only exist if we ourselves plunge right into it and if we accept wholeheartedly the demands which Jesus makes to all men. The present order of society which the state has to uphold by force will become obsolete through Christ's new order.

Some may think that the striving towards this order is forestalling the kingdom of God—that is not true. Again and again a great longing for this order has arisen among men. They have tried to do away with the old and to create a new order by human idealism or force or other means of power. The tragedy of history is that these revolutions always put man in the centre, man who can never pull himself out of the mire by his own hair. God's strength is necessary for this. Alongside the great development of mankind another growth is going quietly forward—that of the kingdom of God. Sometimes it emerges more strongly than at other times. Men awake and see things with new eyes. This is the only thing that is any good. Only when we allow Christ to operate in the present can the new order gain ground as a reality among men. Now it is quite obvious to us that in the new order to which Christ calls us through his gospel, joy and peace grow if they are striven for daily, for there is no peace which exists for its own sake. The peace of God demands a

personal struggle towards peace and this can only be won by self-sacrifice. We find the way to the resurrecting strength of Jesus through self-sacrifice. He who offered himself for us men, who paved the way to the Father for us through the cross and death, he must become our way, our truth, and our life. If we suffer with Christ, we experience the resurrection. We experience it in the new order of love which creates new life in Christ from a despairing, confused, and sinful world. From Christ's work amongst men, there grows new faith, new hope; the strength of the resurrected Christ shows us a new and powerful life.

The future lies in the certainty of the resurrected One. The future for us men lies in complete surrender to Christ. Only in this way shall we be able to share in the kingdom of God.

If we look first above all towards his kingdom then Christ can become reality, a kindling reality among men, light of the world and salt of the earth. And the question to us is: Are we prepared for this sacrifice so that Christ may become a reality today? Then there can come among us the truth which the angels proclaimed at the first Christmas, 'Peace on earth', because God is really honoured amongst us and we do his will.



FORUM

From time to time we have received news of community groups in India and no doubt many of our readers will have followed with keen interest the movement of Vinoba Bhave. Last year we published a report of the Christavashram by K.K. Chandy and more recently we have made contact with other groups of Christians in India who are seeking a more radical basis for their fellowship. The following letters reveal something of the concerns and problems faced by such groups. As the Indian sub-continent faces the threats and dangers of mass industrialization, with its political consequences, this movement of the Spirit is of great importance.

The first letter is from a group in Cochin, India, and it is followed by a letter sent in reply by one of our members at Woodcrest, who was formerly at the Macedonia Community in Georgia. The third letter is from another group in India.

A Village Community in India

Though for over six months I have been concerned to start correspondence, your newsletter has given me a hint on the problem I am raising. You must have known enough of Gandhi's movement called 'Satyagraha', which emphasizes what I guess was the problem of your Georgian 'Macedonia' community which previously stood committed to a similar conception of 'love and truth'. You may also know of the 'Bhoodan' or land-gift movement of Vinoba, the successor of Gandhi. I have been postponing this correspondence as in my own mind, I have been struggling on the outlook most suitable for India, with a mainly Hindu community, with very old religious traditions, being revived in a new way, presumably attempting to appeal to the whole world through 'Sarvodaya'. One of my senior missionary friends from America has probably emphasized it, just as Macedonia used to before. But I am personally gravitating solely to the pole of Jesus as the one adequate centre.

Vinoba's movement gathered more and more strength in India, until in actual distribution of land and in the working natural difficulties have cropped up increasingly, arresting the tempo of progress. It is here that Sarvodaya seems to fail. Although Christianity has in its longer history failed at several stages, the person of Christ has a living appeal which is the real Life for us, enabling us to revive.... I am not a theologian, but I experimented earnestly with the problem and have begun to reemphasize the person of Jesus as against the Sarvodaya emphasis on the abstract philosophy of Truth. Gandhi had given occasional emphasis on a personal God, coupled with reverence for incarnations of Rama and Krishna.

It so happens that one of my Christian associates has taken over charge of a Gramadan village, with some fifty Hindus and fifty Roman Catholic families.... A sincere, bold experiment must give us new experiences and warnings for future guidance.

Now, for some eight years, I have been trying to develop a village community round a school. We started the work in 1954 with an I.V.S.P. camp. But the school had to be closed down on 1st August in face of difficulties in the atmosphere of a Communist state government.

My son and I with a few other Christians have a desire to launch on a bruderhof community in the village, where we could command the required land and some buildings.... We would love to have some foreign families to settle with us, in order to get the necessary Christian fellowship. The challenge of Jesus, according to me, cannot be adequately met except in the form of bruderhof communities, as the highest known expression of Christian discipleship.

In the midst of cold wars and competitions on H-bombs and missiles, the cause of Christ and world peace needs bruderhof communities in areas like India, if only we are humble before God and trustful in Jesus.

Cochin, India

P.M.M.

Our Experience My husband and I lived about twelve
in Macedonia years in Macedonia Community, which
nearly a year ago made the decision
to unite with the Society of Brothers. We felt very close to
the spirit which motivated Gandhiji, and during those years
of full-community living, in Macedonia, we felt that we were
founded in our life together on a faith in that dynamic,
humbling, creative spirit which surely appeared in Satya-
graha and, we believed, in some situations and people in all
ages. At first we did not even call that spirit, God, but we
recognized it wherever men worked for justice, peace, and
truthfulness in relationships. So we felt very interested in
happenings in India particularly, and kept as close as we
could to the Sarvodaya Movement.

What happened in Macedonia last fall when we felt with a
clearness that has never left us that Christ's Spirit is the
deepest that we were seeking, and that his judgment is ab-
solutely necessary in clearing our lives to free us to work,
and in giving discrimination between what is false and what
is true, grew out of our experience in trying to follow truth
and love, and came in spite of us. And when it became clear,
we also lost our fear that a Christian basis for our lives
would close us off from peoples of other faiths; on the con-
trary, he brings us closer to all men. The meaning of Christ
is somehow much greater than our imagination can picture.

So we are very grateful to read your letter and learn how
you have had the same leading in a search very similar to
ours, it would seem. The point now is, what next leadings
shall come clear to us all—that we may truly be used for the
Kingdom and not for any smaller viewpoint.

We now have two matters to share with you. One is our
great joy as we see you and others in India seeking a practi-
cal way of life in brotherhood. We are hoping and watching
for a longing for a new way of life to break through in many
parts of the world, and hope that all of us will be willing to
pay the price for a new way.

This leads to our second concern, which arises from our experience in Macedonia and in the rise and fall of many communities in this country, from things we read in 'Sarvodaya' and 'Bhoodan', and from some of our contacts in India. There are tremendous happenings in India, in the Bhoodan Movement, particularly, it seems to us, in the 'life-gift' (jivandan), and in the fact of whole villages giving over land to be held together. We know that where there is a mixture of motives, where some are in it who are unwilling to give up their personal pride or particular talent; where there is a covering-over of differences with a false peace, or where there is tolerance of what is partly evil—that the negative factors in time sour the whole mixture. When this happens, many people are deeply embittered and hurt and are not able often to think again of attempting a new way.

We sense from your letter that you would understand this need for discrimination of spirits, as we call it—a calling a thing by its name—the quality of love which has the cutting edge and tolerates no evil or self-centredness. It is truly a gift from God, and we hope for this very much for India as well as for ourselves, for we know that without it we are not capable of living a truly brotherly life together.

I cannot express adequately how we long to be in touch with you and how our hearts are longing that a clear single purpose be given in India, whose fruits are childlike humility, purity, sharing, and joy—for we have seen that there have been good seeds sown there, and movement such as has not happened in many places in our age.

Woodcrest Bruderhof, U.S.A.

M.W.

A Christian Fellowship From a missionary friend in India I have come to hear of you. I could not get any detailed information concerning you and your ministry. Therefore I write this letter with the expectation that you will be kind enough to let us have your bulletin, literature, or letters.... Ours is an indigenous interdenominational group of people banded together with the

purpose of evangelizing Indian villages where Christ has never been taken. We live here as a community of friends and believers in Christ. Though our membership is only six, five of whom are family people, including friends and all we are about thirty five people. We are experimenting our life as a community with the purpose of evangelism... News from you might help us in our planning and practice of this fellowship. Our group is purely Indian.

Rajnandgaon, India

P.T.C.

LETTERS FROM PRIMAVERA WORKCAMPERS

The following letters have been received from young people in South America who attended the workcamp at Primavera reported in Number Two.

I am not able to tell you all that my experience with the bruderhof meant for me. It is too great to express in words. I just want to thank you for what you are. I told Bruce I was never so sure of anything in all my life as I am of the results of this camp. I'm not so naive to think in what manner this result will take shape. But whatever shape it takes, in the attitude of expectancy we are in, we will recognize God's will. I have had the opportunity to talk about you and your testimony with those that come to visit me.

Rio de Janeiro

M.L.R.

It is with some longing that I remember Primavera... In Buenos Aires I gave some impressions of the workcamp. When I was finished, a great number of questions were asked. We made it clear that it is well worth while to have contact with you because we have much to learn... Here in Campinas I have to speak to the students and professors about our experiences there. I have spoken a little with Ricardo Schaul and he suggested that we should have some meetings with interested students to analyse the community life—the reasons for it, its challenge, its dangers, its testimony.

Sao Paulo

E.C.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

EUROPE

Wheathill

The most decisive event in the life of the bruderhof communities in England has been the branching into two groups, which are now living at the Wheathill Bruderhof in Shropshire and at Bulstrode, Gerrards Cross, twenty three miles from London. The community life and witness is being built up at both places and it is necessary to develop the economic basis according to the different environments. Whereas Bulstrode will concentrate for the maintenance of its group on the production of tubular steel gates and allied products, Wheathill is continuing primarily as an agricultural community. We have followed the plan of working a smaller area of farming land and so drawing the community closer together. We are glad now that more accommodation is available for our own members and for those who wish to visit us.

The harvest this year has been unusually difficult throughout the country and we at Wheathill are thankful that we have managed under the very adverse conditions to bring it all in.

The summer was a very active time as visitors began to come along at the same time as our members were departing for Bulstrode. Parties of our young people went on in advance and joined a workcamp of friends from the London area in order to scrub, clean and paint Bulstrode, which had not been occupied for fifteen years. At the same time help had to be sent to the Sinntal Bruderhof in Germany to support them in building up the work there.

Bulstrode

An especially joyful occasion was the Open House at Bulstrode in October to which neighbours and friends were invited to share the new beginning. We welcomed about 250 people who were able to inspect the house, school, kindergarten, and workshops.

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A talk was given about the aims and faith of the community and the children gave a simple entertainment of songs, dances, and a play.

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The closest coordination between the different centres has always been vitally necessary for the inner life of the bruderhof communities and in this connection we were very glad to have among us Heini and Annemarie Arnold from the Woodcrest community near New York and Emmy Arnold from Oak Lake in Pennsylvania. They visited all three bruderhofs in Europe and were able to share directly with us the experiences in America over the last few years. The meetings we had together gave a direction for the future.

The last weekend in October members of the Wheathill community joined with those at Bulstrode to celebrate the engagement of two of our young people and the departure of Heini and Annemarie Arnold back to the United States. We shared the thankfulness we all felt for the help that had been given to us by the American communities through the visit which has enabled us to work in closer cooperation with our other places. And we also expressed our joy for what had already been achieved not only through our own work but also by the work and gifts of our friends.

After their six years in Paraguay, we are very glad indeed to welcome Gwynn and Buddug Evans back to England. They joined the movement at the Cotswold community at Ashton Keynes nearly twenty years ago, when Gwynn Evans was a minister in the Congregational Church and Buddug had been a teacher. They have always shown a particular interest for work with young people and children and we look forward very much to the help they can give us in this and all our work in Europe. They will be living at Wheathill.

Sinntal Bruderhof

At last we have been able to go forward with the building work at the Sinntal Bruderhof. The first builders came in July and began work on a kitchen on the ground floor which we have since moved into. Next came a part of the main

building which is to be pulled down and re-built. The rough work of this should be finished before the winter really sets in. This will make room for twenty five more people. To finance some of this work we have sold part of the land.

Alongside the actual building work, the young men are occupied with a small box-making industry and also with the production of wooden animals and dolls in connection with 'Community Playthings'. These are the wooden educational toys which are produced at our three communities in the United States. The women's workshop is also busy making wooden dolls and toys for sale in Germany.

During the summer months we had many visitors so that at times we had as many as fifty people in the house. We were particularly glad about the visit of a Dutch family, who were seriously considering beginning a community in Holland, and also the weekend visit of two Mennonite representatives—an Italian and an American, who were very concerned with the problem of how Christianity can break loose from the traditions which bind it, and so find new forms and new power.

Although we have been very occupied with the building and the workshops, we have tried to keep in contact with other groups. Our young people spent a weekend with the young people of 'The Brothers of the Common Life' at Staffelstein. They read the play 'The Picture of Mankind' which described the struggle of the underground movement at the time of the Nazi regime and which led to the question: 'Have we Christians a political task?' They were united in feeling that we must never be indifferent to the world events. As young people wishing actively to serve their neighbours, they felt that they were able in a brotherly life to show how the separation which exists today between peoples, races, and individuals can be overcome.

Two of our young people took part in the Young Quakers Conference at Bad Pyrmont. The theme was 'The revolutionary message of Jesus in his day and what has this to say to us?' We became particularly aware of the tasks which have arisen through the tensions between East and

West. Seldom have we experienced such a communal seeking for the truth and for an answer to the present world situation. We are looking forward very much to a further meeting with this group either at their next conference in Berlin or at the Sinntal Bruderhof.

We were very grateful for an invitation to the tenth European Conference of Poets at Meisenheim. The theme of the conference was: Brotherly Thinking. We took part by giving a talk about a brotherly Christian life. The various lectures showed what a strong urge there is towards brotherhood and how important it is to show a way to true peace among men. The play 'We are the Others' reminded us very strongly of the social need as pictured in Dostoievsky's book 'Crime and Punishment'. There was the constant question: How do we find each other's hearts? How can we become brothers? The Protestant Bishop of Luxemburg, Nic. A. Housse, spoke in a very stirring way, pointing out that brotherhood could only be given through Christ. He challenged us, not to band together as members of separate confessions, but as Christians. The leader of the conference, Pastor von Schweinitz, always brought us back with a few short words to the basis of the Christian message. From his long and very difficult experiences in life he was able to say a word which indicated that eternity stood above all the things in time which harassed us so much.

SOUTH AMERICA

Paraguay

During the past year our contact with people in Paraguay has increased and all of us at Primavera and Asuncion have been concerned to devote more of our strength and time to this task of outreach here in South America. We have been glad to welcome Paraguayan guests in our communities, while many of our young people have been active outside the communities. A very friendly contact with neighbours around Primavera has been made through helping them with games and activities for the children.

In Asuncion at the beginning of September a new kind of outreach in the form of a play was presented by a group of our young people under the name 'Primavera Players'. About 250 tickets were sold. The play was called 'Cada Cual', a translation of Herbert Kuller's modern version of 'Everyman' entitled 'Jedermann 1956'.

Traindel Kleiner reports: As it had been said that the play would not fill out the whole evening we had engaged some musicians from Asuncion to play for us. Most of the players appear unexpectedly from the audience, so four of us bought tickets at the door and mingled with the people who had come to see the play. After the musicians had been playing for some time, people began to get a bit impatient. We joined in with this, and then as Michael suddenly jumped up and openly protested—which was part of the play—there was quite an excitement. Some tried to hold him back. This gave the play a good start. It went well and ended with a deep silence and all went quietly away.

A few friends who accompanied us home said what a challenge the play had been to them and how thankful they were. Many asked us to do the play again, but this was not possible.

The following Sunday we had an 'Open House' in Asuncion and we talked about the play and it was felt that this was a big step in making contact with people in Asuncion.

On the whole one can say that the play was a success and that through it our hospital (which was to benefit from the proceeds) has become better known here. I believe, too, that people really appreciated the effort we had made to produce something in Spanish which is a foreign language to us. It was a great experience for the group who produced it. We all realize how important it is for us to find new ways of speaking to the people of this country.

The drawing of the shepherds on page 35 is by Bella Vichon of Sweden.

THE PLOUGH PAMPHLETS

SPIRIT, TRADITIONALISM AND LIBERALISM

The first pamphlet in the series is now available. It is written by Gwynn Evans, who before coming to the bruderhof was a Congregational minister in London.

Go
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to guide man's unce
God the world is meaningl
inscrutable.

Throughout the Christian era mankind has been tormented by the swaying emphasis on hide-bound traditionalism on the one side and liberalism on the other. Both have led to the enslavement and oppression of the human spirit; neither has enabled him to achieve the purpose and destiny which God has set for him. The one has abstracted the love of God and has thus distorted the image of both God and man; the other has abstracted the love of man and, seeking to eliminate only through the Spirit that the love of God and human destiny realized in man's becoming a real child of God and a brother to his fellows.

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THE PLOUGH

is the English bulletin of the bruderhof communities. Similar journals are published in German, Spanish, Dutch, and Esperanto. The bruderhof communities are a group of people of twenty nationalities who live together in full community in Europe and North and South America. The journals aim to unite more closely those who seek to live by the standards of justice, brotherhood and peace.

The Addresses of the Bruderhof Communities

ENGLAND

Society of Brothers

Bromdon, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Bulstrode, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire

GERMANY

Sinntal-Bruderhof

(13a) Bad Brückenau

U.S.A.

Society of Brothers

Woodcrest, Rifton, New York State

Oak Lake, Farmington, Pennsylvania

Evergreen, Norfolk, Connecticut

PARAGUAY

Sociedad de Hermanos

Primavera, Alto Paraguay

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URUGUAY

Sociedad de Hermanos

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