

THE PLOUGH

THE QUARTERLY
OF THE
BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

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THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT—IN OUR TIME

A NEW CREATION

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OUTREACH THROUGH A COMMON LANGUAGE

DERRICK FAUX

VOLUME IV NUMBER 2



THE PLOUGH PUBLISHING HOUSE
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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.

The addresses of the Bruderhof Communities are on the back cover.

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THE PLOUGH

The Quarterly of the Bruderhof Communities

New Series

1956

Vol. IV No. 2

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT—IN OUR TIME

The implications of the Sermon on the Mount in the world today provided the theme for a sharing of ideas, thoughts, and opinions during the Whitsun Conference at Wheathill.

Opening the first of four sessions, Bram Burger summarized the radical teachings of Jesus and then went on to say:

If we try to listen to what the Sermon on the Mount has to say to us, we begin to despair. We cannot achieve all this; we need a strength other than our own; we need a power from outside ourselves.

Now at Pentecost the Holy Spirit broke into the life of the disciples with such a power that they were changed, and then they started to live according to the Sermon on the Mount, in absolute trust in God, in absolute love to all. Although each of them was changed personally, each did not stay by himself. The renewed individuals were gathered to a Church-community, where the Sermon on the Mount was the rule—not as a law, but as a new spirit. This Church-community was not a cozy little clique: it was a city on a hill, a light that shone before men, a salt that penetrated the world.

We can look with great admiration upon the things that happened in those olden days and say, 'That is not for us today; things like that cannot happen in the modern world'. But one must admit that in the course of history there have been many similar movements of the Spirit, and, if we believe in Christ, should we not expect such a movement for our time as well?

It was with such a challenging question in our mind that we spent the weekend together with just over thirty guests, most of whom were concerned about the way of radical Christian discipleship. The two addresses printed in this number of THE PLOUGH were given by Hans Zumpe and Bram Burger on Whitsunday morning and at the close of the conference.*

*A more detailed report of the conference is given in the News of the Bruderhof Communities on page 61, but a summary of the talks and discussions has been duplicated and is available on request from The Plough Publishing House, Bromdon, Bridgnorth, Shropshire.

WHITSUN CONFERENCE AT WHEATHILL

Let us not be a petty generation under the impact of great things!
Let us grow worthy of the fact that we have been entrusted with a
great time and a great vocation.

EBERHARD ARNOLD

I. A NEW CREATION

Last evening it was asked, 'Is the Sermon on the Mount the right starting point for such a meeting as this? Is it not first a question of being born again? Must we not go into the quiet and listen for what God has to say to us? Are the demands of Jesus still valid today, and is it possible to carry them through?'

When we sent out the circular inviting our friends to this conference we were reminded of one which took place many years ago in Germany. The circular said it was that conference in 1919 which provided the last impetus that set many of us on the way which finally led to complete community. Perhaps I could say something about this. The people who attended the conference at that time acknowledged they had found salvation in Christ and had experienced a rebirth. For them the New Testament and the whole of the Bible was the starting point, and they were struggling to find the right way to follow Christ. They came to feel that all they had done so far was not enough, that God demanded more of them. They recognized that God, and Christ, had taken to himself not only the souls of men but their bodies also.

They saw that Jesus not only proclaimed a message but walked a certain path with his disciples. At that conference the people faced the questions: 'Has not our Christianity become too subjective? Have we not become too complacent about our salvation, too self-satisfied with our charitable works and giving of alms? Have we not been too willing to accept the disorder of the present world?' They were very conscious of the experience of the First World War and the collapse which followed it, and had to face the questions: 'Are we not guilty of what has happened? Should we have been silent? Should we not, as Christians, have testified to a different way?' It was a time when the social question was occupying people very keenly especially with regard to their attitude to Russia, their neighbour. They were facing the question, 'Have we not accepted too easily the view that we hold our property as stewards?' And they felt the events of the war and the collapse after it as a judgment that had come upon them, calling them to a higher way. It became clear that faith had to be active in love. The stronger our faith is, and the more firmly we are rooted in Christ, the greater must be our surrender and the greater our deeds in love. They

felt that the spiritual and temporal life belonged completely together, that Christ had to pervade the whole of life. They had to go the way Jesus took, a way which was open to all, and make possible for others what they wanted for themselves. It was, as someone expressed it at that time, as if Jesus himself were speaking anew to the people of the present day. What God had established on that first day of the first Pentecost was experienced afresh. They felt how the Holy Spirit at all times, even at the present hour, sought to do the same thing. It certainly would not have been right to seek to imitate something, nor could that have been achieved by a great straining of the will, but it was clear that one should ask and expect all things of God.

That was in 1919, and that gave the impetus which set us off on this way. Since then we have found a particular attitude towards property, towards violence, and towards the world at large.

Now it is not without some anxiety that I speak about all this, because the impression might easily arise that the purpose of this conference is to convert as many participants as possible into members of the bruderhof. Perhaps that was the reason why last evening a number of voices were raised against complete propertylessness, thus imposing a certain reticence on us all, because we do not want to discuss just this one thing, which for us is simply the logical consequence of Christian faith. Nevertheless, we cannot remain silent about a matter which has become of such decisive importance for us, especially on Whitsunday when we remember the occasion of the establishment of the first Church-community here on earth. And as I thought this over today, I remembered that all who have been invited and who have come to our conference know quite well that the invitation comes from a group of people who have found and are following a certain direction in their life. So we are thankful that you have all come, and that some have expressed their wish to hear more.

Now the question is, what do we expect from our being here together? I can only say from our side that we wish to join with you all in the expectation that God may speak to us, that we may hold ourselves open to what may be shown. Those of us who live at the bruderhof can only testify to the fact that we need to hear God speak to us through his Spirit each day. We are the same as other people and are exposed to the same dangers. Therefore we await again and again the power which comes to us from another world. It is perfectly clear that each one can only put into deed what the Light makes inwardly clear to him, but what he does should be done whole-heartedly. At the present time we await something not only for ourselves but also for the world. We feel from the signs of our present age, from re-armament, from the injustice which is getting the upper hand, that we live in an evil age, and that our time may be limited. Our deepest longing is that something

may happen on this earth, something which comes from God. We certainly believe that here and there, wherever possible, a life of example should be lived which may say something to people who are closed to mere words. I feel this especially keenly because tomorrow I return to our place in Germany, near to the frontier between East and West, where tanks thunder up and down every day, reminding one of the re-armament that is already under way. There especially one feels that peace should be not merely a word, but something that should be lived. I should like to close these introductory remarks with the wish that a word might be spoken to all of us, a word which would lead us to deeds and be significant in the present time, and that we might not exhaust ourselves in useless discussion, backwards and forwards, but that all of us at this conference might feel that we were being spoken to by God and called by him to a way of greater surrender and greater love.

The Time before Pentecost

Before we hear the story of Whitsun we want to remind ourselves of Jesus' life and of what preceded the events of Pentecost. Jesus began his public ministry with the call, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand'. It was the joyful message of another kingdom in opposition to the kingdom of this world, and it meant judgment and revolution for this world. He showed in the Sermon on the Mount the character of this new kingdom and its citizens. There is a revolutionary message in the Beatitudes themselves. They imply the turning-upside-down of all relationships. They promise complete peace in contrast to violence, harmony instead of conflict, God's righteousness in contrast to our apparent righteousness. Jesus brought this kingdom of God with its peace, unity, and joy nearer to us, not only in the Sermon on the Mount but in his whole life on earth. We see this teaching as a vision of a new reality in which the fullness of God's message is shown not just as a collection of verses and separate demands. The essence of the Sermon on the Mount is that God's will may be done on earth. As the Gospels tell us, when Jesus came on earth there came a power into this world which was stronger than all the forces of evil, of illness, and even of death itself. Jesus called men to him, to join with him in a life of wandering community and poverty, to testify to this new power on earth in word and deed. He came to set a fire alight and wished for nothing more than that it were already burning. He came to give an example of what was possible when the Spirit of God reigned in us. Jesus testified, 'Without me you can do nothing'. He said that the spirit of man was in opposition to the Spirit of God, and therefore there arose a demand for rebirth. If we look at the Sermon on the Mount it is evident that we are not dealing here merely with separate demands made upon

each one of us, but with a whole, new creation. And this creation of God can never be understood as the creation of man for it has nothing to do with the individual man straining his whole will. Certainly it implies a complete surrender of one's life, but this brings the happiness and blessedness of the citizens of the kingdom. Such a surrender can only spring from love, it cannot be compelled: either one feels it or one does not. It is a question of something really being created as one can understand from the illustration of a tree bearing fruit. This new creation is a work of God, not dependent on humanity. But with the coming of Jesus on earth came the assurance that God is able to do what man cannot do, and in this assurance Jesus gave authority to his disciples to represent in word and deed that the kingdom of God was near at hand and to carry this message out into the world.

As we know, it was not accepted by the world and Jesus was killed and completed his work of redemption upon the cross. His last words pointed to the fact that the Comforter would come, to support and stand by his disciples and to remind them of all he had said and done; his last prayer was that there should be complete unity amongst his disciples and amongst all those who were to be gathered. As we know, his band of followers showed themselves to be too weak, and they abandoned him at the most vital hour. But Jesus appeared to them again, during forty days, and spoke to them of the kingdom of God.

Then, as we shall hear from the first chapter of Acts, his followers obeyed the last command of the Risen One to wait until they were 'clothed with power from on high', and when Jesus left this earth a tiny band of people were gathered together in holy expectation. They were men who confessed their poverty of spirit without any reserve; men who were awaiting something, although they had no idea what was to happen; men who were open and ready, for whom neither the cross nor the resurrection was the end, but who believed that something new was to come to them. They were waiting for God to speak and act, and there was nothing left to do but remain together in this expectation, in the inner emptiness and readiness which was the decisive preamble to Pentecost. God seeks people who wait for him, for as Blumhardt says, God has no pleasure in coming to people who are not waiting for him.

Expectation fulfilled

And then their expectation was fulfilled. As we shall hear, the tremendous happening of Pentecost really transformed men, and the new reality, to which the Sermon on the Mount had pointed, came into being; the rebirth, the birth of the citizens of the kingdom, was realized, and all this was something that could never have been achieved by man's efforts. Then these same men proclaimed the great deeds of

God to all who were gathered together after hearing what had taken place, for whenever God speaks, it has significance far beyond the immediate environment. A momentous thing had happened, influencing all nations and peoples, and therefore it was not by chance that all those present heard the same message. So it was just during the days when Israel was celebrating the making of the Old Covenant on Mount Sinai that the New Covenant was established. The disciples of Jesus, who had been fearful and anxious of heart for a long time, now proclaimed what had happened to them. The men, who had met behind barred doors, now spoke openly before all. And Peter himself, who had denied and betrayed his Master, stood like a rock in the midst of the storm and proclaimed Jesus. The words which he spoke shook the hearts of the people so that they asked, 'What shall we do?', and the hearers were shaken all the more when they realized that they were really the murderers of Jesus. It was for them a life question, not, 'What shall we believe?' but, 'What shall we do?' So there followed a call to repent, and they made a New Covenant.

Love takes Shape and Form

Now we find it very significant that the story does not end with their baptism but that it went on to the actual doing of God's will. To them, this meant the complete surrender of their lives and all their property. It was quite a simple consequence, recounted as something to be taken for granted, just as it says in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, 'If ye are partners in the eternal, how much more are ye partners in the perishable?' Only in this way, as the consequence of an inner compulsion, can community be understood. It is the expression of love, the highest command of love. Love gives itself to others. How can we love God, whom we do not see, if we do not love man, whom we see? They felt the inner compulsion to love Christ with their whole hearts, and therefore to love men. They felt compelled to seek first the kingdom of God, and everything else would follow. That is why they gave up all rights and privileges as well as their own worries and cares, and there arose a brotherhood which was not confined to the spiritual sphere alone but which embraced the whole of life. There came into being that new creation which Paul later describes in his expressive picture of the body where Christ is the head and the brothers are members. And then the prayer of Jesus that his followers might become one, as he and the Father were one, became reality. This could never have been achieved by their own effort. According to the Bible, it was human endeavour which led men to build a certain tower and thereupon to separate in a confusion of languages. But here were people from many nations who were united.

So the Church-community has to be understood as love which has taken shape and form. Human effort was the measure for reward in the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant it was not man against God, but love entering human form and life. It had been said that the promised Holy Spirit would remind Christ's followers of all that he had said while he was on earth, and therefore this Spirit had to lead to the same form of life that Jesus had proclaimed, the life of complete love. We know very well that this was no closed unity, because all living things grow and spread, and this too had its effect far and wide all over the world. Christ showed his presence in the early Church by many a sign and powerful working; this witness shook the whole world and established a new order of society.

But what happened to Christ on the cross had to happen to the first Church. Like Jesus himself, the early Church was able to shine forth as the light of a new way only for a short time. Nevertheless, through the centuries, here and there, again and again, one hears how the Spirit leads to the same form. Again and again the community of believing men emerges. That is the working of the Spirit which makes the Word living. The Spirit of God comes down to man in his lowliness without man's deserving. The Spirit of God comes down from his throne upon a small gathering of men waiting in trust for him, and at such times a new creation always comes into being. The proclamation of the life and work of Jesus inevitably determines the form of such a new creation. It is always a matter of the undivided heart, and the single eye that looks to the kingdom of God. It means surrendering oneself and all one has to God's cause, to God's kingdom—this was the example Jesus himself gave. It is important for us to testify to the existence of a Spirit which is more powerful than the spirit of lying, of impurity, of hate, and of mammon, expressions which perhaps typify the spirit of the world and our time. We believe that through Jesus all these powers of darkness can be overcome. We believe that Jesus himself will create a new heaven and a new earth. We believe that our lives can be only an indication of what God wants to do; but we believe just as firmly that the world needs a new hope, it needs to be set up anew in this age of scepticism and despair. The world needs to be shown again a living example of the Spirit of Christ.

So perhaps we can hear again the story of Whitsun, and hear it as if we had never heard it before. (Acts 1 and 2).

HANS ZUMPE.

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

As we speak here of our relationship to God we are doing so in connection with the Sermon on the Mount. Thus much remains unsaid which of course belongs to this theme. I am thinking here especially of what Christ himself means to us, and one must keep this in mind as the silent background of what follows.

Another thought we should like to express at the beginning is that our relationship to God is not a matter of a separate relationship. *Everything* in our life has to do with this relationship—our attitude to the world, to our fellows, to the things around us. Our whole life before God is our relationship to him. We can put this another way. Our relationship to God is concerned with the kingdom of God. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom as something that will come—a world where there will be no more hate, or strife, or sorrow, no illness and no death. God will reign in all hearts and love will embrace all spheres of life.

Obviously, that kingdom is not yet here—but it will come. Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is near at hand". It is always near, so near that it touches the earth, so near that one can seek it. But whoever finds it does not find the whole kingdom, he only makes contact with it, or, to put it in other words, he is touched by the Holy Spirit. Then he has a share in the Church—the brotherhood in which he is united with others by the spirit. The Church-community is *not* the kingdom of God but it is where the kingdom of God touches the earth, and therefore it is in constant battle with the world and the evil powers which are always tempting it and trying to bring it to apostasy. In the kingdom, which will come one day, God's power will reign in us completely, but now in the Church the struggle is to find this love over and over again. Although our relationship to God has to do directly with the kingdom, with the Church and with other men, yet at the same time it remains a completely personal relationship to God; and although personal faith finds its true place only within the fellowship of the Church-community, nevertheless we each have to begin by finding this contact with God.

For most men a real personal encounter with God goes together with a consciousness of their own helplessness and guilt. In modern times man tends to think that he can do a great deal—and this is true. In the material and social sphere man has accomplished incredible things. The result, however, is not greater happiness but greater emptiness, lack of peace, and threatened destruction and, with all that has been achieved, there is still injustice and poverty. So a moment may come when a man begins to feel his powerlessness to effect any real change, or in his own heart there may come a feeling of guilt because he fails in the fight against himself, or he falls hopelessly short

in his duty to his fellow-men. Helplessness, life without meaning, guilt—whichever feels these knows something of poverty of spirit.

Now this is all negative. A man who has seen the evil in himself and in the world around him can become depressed and pessimistic, or he can become a stoic, taking everything as it comes because he can do nothing about it, or he can become a revolutionary, wanting to build a new world on the ruins of the old. But these are no true solutions; we must be poor—poor before God. Then perhaps we shall begin to pray.

Jesus tells us to pray to 'our Father'. He shows us in the Sermon on the Mount who God is—not an incomprehensible power, not an impersonal force of nature, but a warm, loving heart, our Father in heaven who knows our needs and gives an answer to prayer if we ask like children.

What should we ask for?

Although Jesus teaches us to begin by praying for the kingdom, that is usually not the first thing we pray for. A man begins with his own needs; he asks for forgiveness or for the fulfilment of his wishes, for healing, protection, help. One often gets letters from people who say, 'We are being inexpressibly blessed by God'. That is very fine. Jesus also says that God gives good gifts to those who ask him. But Luke goes deeper and says that God sends his Holy Spirit to those who ask him. That means we should ask for renewal, for love, for joy, for strength and guidance on our way—those things which only God's Spirit can give.

It is strange, though, that prayer appears so ineffective. We often feel so little of the Holy Spirit within us, so little renewal and strength. We know that countless prayers are offered throughout the world and yet things are not changed very much. Jesus gives various reasons for this. He says in the Sermon on the Mount, 'And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words'. Prayer is so often just a thoughtless, almost careless, speaking to God. Jesus says, 'Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you'. If we do not receive, it is because our praying is no real prayer, no real seeking, no real knocking. The trouble is there is so seldom real passion behind it; it is not Jacob's cry, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me'. Every prayer must be a struggle for the truth. Someone has spoken of the prayer which 'storms heaven' and one feels there should be something of this in every prayer.

In this connection another saying of Jesus comes to mind, 'Blessed are the pure in heart'. This means the undivided heart, a heart that is set on one thing, and it is a most essential element in our relationship to God. Our hearts are divided. We want to serve God, but dare not

let go of mammon. You *cannot* serve God and mammon. We want to serve God and at the same time to have all sorts of bad relationships with people. We even think we can combine serving God with taking part in war. Jesus says God does not accept your heart unless you are first reconciled with your brother. We want God to forgive us, but we do not forgive our brother. We want to do good to others, but at the same time we want them to honour us for it—but the divided heart has no access to God. If when we pray to him the inclination of our heart is divided, our prayer has no power. God is the all-loving Father, but his love is not soft—it is like tempered steel—it demands the whole heart, the pure heart.

Another reason why prayer cannot be answered is that it is lacking in trust. We do not really believe that God can or will help us, but he cannot if we do not trust him. People often think that they are very devout if they resign themselves to their lot—and naturally we must have patience in our faith and acquiesce in what is unalterable—but much more we should really have an attitude of expectation.

Jesus used two illustrations to awaken this trust. He says in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Or what man of you, if his son asks him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?'

The other example is that of the birds and flowers. They do not take care of themselves but are fed and clothed by God. Will not then the heavenly Father take much more care of us than of animals and plants? Of course, this does not mean that we do not have to bother about food and clothing because God will give it to us, but rather that in our concern for these things we should have no anxiety.

There is another reason why modern man has little trust and lives in fear and worry. He is in a position to produce so many material goods that he no longer has any need of God—he can manage very well by himself. But thereby he becomes a slave to material things. Possessions have the peculiarity of drawing the soul away from God. Men become anxious about their property and employ wrong means to defend it—and they let loose the dogs of war.

That is why Jesus tells us to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness and then our material needs will also be cared for. How are we to understand this saying? It has sometimes been interpreted in an individualistic way. In earlier centuries a poor person was often told, 'Trust in God, and he will help you through'. Today there are people who say, 'Put your business in God's hands and you will prosper'. To seek first the kingdom of God does not mean first to be a devout and pious man, nor does it mean, to wait until the kingdom comes, but

simply, to seek a living Church, where each cares for the other—where men are truly brothers. Then you can carry burdens together, trusting in God's fatherly care. He cannot be Father to one who only thinks of himself—he is Father of a family. Then it becomes clear that our relationship to God is not just a case of me and my troubles, but of us all—and not only that, but also a matter of God and his kingdom. In our prayer we must rise above our own ego. The individual self is not unimportant but we must be so overpowered by the greatness of God's cause that we can surrender ourselves to it completely—only then can we live for God, for Christ.

In the Lord's prayer Jesus teaches us to pray first that God's name may become great in the world—that his kingdom may come, the kingdom of brotherhood and justice. In that kingdom all will take place as God wills. But his will is also done through us. Our relationship to God is not only a matter of becoming poor and small and then asking for God's blessing—it lies also in deeds and obedience.

But there are hidden dangers, too, in the doing of God's will. The first is that we are always inclined to work for a reward, for personal satisfaction. It is true that God wants us to serve and help our fellow-men and the devout people of Jesus' time knew this also. On certain days they stood in the street and had a trumpet blown which was a signal to the poor that money was to be distributed. They did something good, but their goodness could be seen by everybody and Jesus said, 'They have had their reward'. 'When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.' That means, do not tell anyone—yes, you must not know it yourself—you must take it so much for granted that you are not even proud of it—then God will reward you. Although we are not likely to copy the practices of the pious Jews, we know very well how it pleases us if people think we are good fellows. 'All right', Jesus says, 'then you have had your reward. You won't get anything more from God'.

We have spoken of poverty, of an undivided heart, of singleness of purpose, of trust, and of doing God's will. Now we must speak of faithfulness and loyalty. The deeper our relationship to God becomes, the stronger become the temptations. 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!' Life with God is a struggle. There are opposing powers which want to lead us astray. We grow tired and find that our egoism persists. We want to get quick satisfaction for our feelings, but God often leaves us in the dark. Then, just then, we must remain faithful. Faith is not primarily a feeling of blessedness. It is an attitude of will and resoluteness and it is said that those are blessed who stand firm in temptation. Only if your life is built on a firm rock, a rock of fixed and resolute purpose, will it stand fast against the storms and floods.

BRAM BURGER.

SEARCH FOR TRUE FAMILY LIFE

AN AMERICAN WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE

'The whole of America's domestic economy, with its cans, packets, and ready-to-serve food, is designed to make the housewife's tasks as light as possible so that she is free to work in other spheres.' This sentence from the Masons' article in *THE PLOUGH** brought back a flood of memories, observations, conversations with close friends and neighbours, experiences of my own as an American housewife. I re-lived the conferences, retreats, prayer groups, PTA† meetings, concerts, literary groups, interracial groups, morning 'Kaffee-Klatches' with my immediate neighbours, and all the other activities making up the 'other spheres' for which I was freed because of the comparative easing of domestic life. In my mind I have stood again in the door of our suburban home and looked across to the families that lived around us, and have thought of the whole structure of our own family life at that time. I have remembered the struggles and the symptoms of struggle in our acquaintances, our own seeking for a life of deeper commitment within the present framework of the Society of Friends and our home Meeting. I have thought of all these things particularly in terms of the American woman and of necessity from the point of view of the American housewife and mother, since that is what I was. The vast and fundamental difference between my life then and now is clear to me; and as we were not an exceptional family, but only in most ways a typical one, that somehow felt called to a radical life, I have hoped it would be of service to set down my conclusions as to what the difference is.

I

Because we lived in a middle-income suburban neighbourhood, amidst average surroundings, it is not unfair to make certain generalizations about this large section of the population and culture of our society. As I always felt a certain distinction between those families that lived on our street and in the general neighbourhood, and those whom we knew more intimately through our religious associations, the two groups are described separately. Actually, this separation or distinction was one of the factors in our former life which disturbed us, as we saw no solution for it.

The homes around us (and our own) were pleasant though unpretentious, and considerable thought and time and expense was given to them. We had many of the modern appliances. The average number of children per family on our street was two. They were cared for

*American Trip (Vol. III No. 2.)

†Parent-Teacher Association.

conscientiously. Schooling was taken seriously. Medical care was the best. Great attention was paid to clothes. Without exception, the children were taken to Sunday School though the parents were in most cases inactive church members. There was a genuine concern for the children, though this was heavily coloured by self-identification. There was a strong feeling that more than two or three children was unwise, financially, physically, and emotionally. Our own larger family brought forth head-shakings and sighs of, 'How can you stand it!'

The fathers in these families came home late in the afternoon or early evening after a day in business. In our particular neighbourhood there was a surprisingly high incidence of ulcers in men so comparatively young. Their participation in home life was necessarily limited. Their recreations generally included golf, fishing, pottering around the house, bridge, and for some, civic activities. They all felt the financial pressure, increased by the material ambitions of the wife.

The mothers were friendly and neighbourly, for the most part. There was a fairly high percentage of nervous breakdowns in the group, and these seemed to stem from the tensions of bringing up children and of family life. There was a sense of confusion and bafflement in trying to deal with the discipline and the development of the children. They were to a certain extent looked upon as prized possessions, yet they were often resented or wished out of the way. There was very little else to fill the life of the mothers and one wondered what would claim their lives after the children had grown. Recreations included gardening, antiques, PTA, bridge, church work, and local politics.

One was always conscious in these homes of the impact of the modern press and advertising. American women are enslaved by the images of themselves presented to them by the women's magazines and other media of communication. As they spend most of the family money, they are played upon by all the winds of fashion, and their appetite for new gadgets, new foods, and new house-decoration is whetted constantly and consciously. Youth, glamour, healthy and charming children, a successful husband, a gleaming kitchen, tasteful and colourful rooms, if possible a split-level or ranch-style house, a wedge of culture, and a smattering of familiarity with civic, national, and world problems—all these more or less make up the ideal woman in the mirror of the press. One was always conscious of a struggle after these values. At the same time there were underlying feelings of emptiness and frustration, or clutching for security in material things.

The family as a whole, but especially the mother, was deprived of a sense of true creativity. The growing experience of child-bearing was limited and clouded by the nagging feeling that children were too much for one anyway. The realm of the creative processes in the home that used to claim our great-grandmothers, for all their drudgery, has

been whittled away little by little. There was very little sense of being related to the community as a whole. There was a real loneliness.

Our deepest associations were with those who had a sense of the necessity of orienting family life, indeed all of life, around a religious motivation, and had broken to varying extents with the accepted patterns around them. While these families and individuals exist in many other religious and humanitarian groups, we were drawn close to those in the Society of Friends, where we were active members.

Outwardly at least these families closely resembled those in our immediate neighbourhood. The children received the same care and attention, though there was more emphasis on and knowledge of current child psychology. The average number of children was slightly higher. The fathers, coming home from work in the evening and leaving early in the morning, were enmeshed in their work, whatever it was. Their participation in family life was fuller, though limited still by their work. Recreations were working around the home, gardening, photography, amateur theatricals, etc. They participated frequently and often to the point of exhaustion in committee work for Friends. Team-work between husband and wife was generally higher though the father was sometimes less deeply concerned with the 'spiritual values' than the mother, often to the point of tension.

The mother was for the most part characterized by intense seeking and a real desire to serve. She sought first of all to deepen her own spiritual life, feeling the responsibility to set the atmosphere for the whole life of the family. She took *herself*, therefore, very seriously, even in her concern for others. She also longed for a restoration of a sense of creativity and participation in a full life.

In her attitude towards her children she felt a deep responsibility. Out of her very desire to 'give them the best' and be the best possible mother she felt it necessary to limit their number generally to two or three. She felt acutely that her children would be products of her spiritual condition, thereby identifying herself with them and becoming anxious about them.

Her fear of the years after they were grown was often eased by her other interests centring on her Meeting and its many activities. Opportunities for work in prison reform, overseas relief, interracial groups, and other causes were always open. She also developed interests in gardening, theatricals, literature, and PTA, to mention a few. Her life was constantly busy, often crammed. Often also, she felt pulled in many directions and thought frequently of the problem of the simplification of life.

She also was a prey to the current images of modern women and family life in the press. While she succumbed less to material lures, the pressure was there. She was more vulnerable to a different type of

literature, the books on psychology and the inner life, which led her inwards to the examination of herself and all her relationships.

In many ways her life was satisfying and full. Her ideal of marriage as a deep partnership was often realized. There was a sense of purpose and real devotion. Under it all was still a feeling that life somehow did not proceed from the centre outwards, that more and still more was demanded, that an upheaval was required that could not be faced.

There are two books in enormous contrast to each other which together might serve to fill out a picture of modern woman. One is *Modern Woman, the Lost Sex*, by Werthem and Lundberg, appearing several years ago. This book, basically Freudian, points out the ways in which modern woman is disinherited and uprooted, has lost the prestige of her original rôle as woman and creative home-maker through the encroachment of modern technology on the domestic realm, through the victories of the feminist movement, and through a basic shift in attitude towards children. Modern woman leads a comparatively empty life, though filled with many things and with advantages open in many directions. In her deep-lying competition with men, she has deprived herself and them of a real sense of relationship.

The other book, a more recent publication, is Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea*. This has struck a responsive chord in innumerable American women. It is a lovely and sensitive account of women's search for maturity in the midst of the distractions and struggles of their present lives. Women must become 'whole', expanding the neglected qualities of mind, spirit, and heart, which are really feminine qualities. She points out the effort to mature the conception of relationships between men and women, indeed all relationships. She strongly feels the necessity for paring away much of the things that clutter modern life, of being alone in order to be renewed. In her concluding pages she also recognizes that we now have a 'planetal consciousness' which we must also reconcile to a concept of individual maturity. This book reveals the true awareness and deep searching of modern women who have been stirred by a sense of dissatisfaction and dismay by the state in which they find themselves and the world. It also reveals the inevitable *self-centredness*, the emphasis upon the individual, the sense of isolated struggle with the forces and conditions of life. One is left with a feeling of no real answer—only a vague hope, a courageous openness, a fluidity.

II

Shortly after the birth of our first child there had come an experience of a direct word from God, that somehow this child was put into our hands and we were to go forward with him in a life of togetherness. As our family grew and the years passed, this experience came again,

though not with the same vividness. I often thought of it with some puzzlement and sense of disappointment; I clearly remember one morning watching the bus take several of our children off to school and thinking, 'This is not it!' I also remember the nagging doubt back in a dark corner of my mind when I went off to a committee meeting or other worthy concern, leaving the family in the hands of a competent 'sitter'. It was not that I felt I should stay home with them. But something was radically wrong; some subtle shift in base was necessary to jar the whole structure of our life into its God-given place.

It was during our visit to the Bruderhof in Primavera that I discovered, not in a thunderclap but in a gradual realization, that this *was* it, and the meaning of the earlier vision came to me at last. Although we moved to the Bruderhof and joined for a number of reasons, a new understanding of the meaning of the family was not the least of them. Also, we had always been clear that the key to this life did not lie in the Society of Brothers or in any other society, but in the gathering of a people under God, committed to him. It is because such commitment is present on the Bruderhof that this way is possible.

This life is based on the premise that man is dependent upon God and that only through faith in him and his revelation in Christ can we find strength for the life of complete commitment that has always been demanded of man but has seldom been given. Coupled with this commitment to God there is the loss of the egocentric self, and a joyful linking of all of life with those who are equally committed. This brotherhood between those who have given themselves to God and to one another carries with it a sense of brotherhood with all men, since there is a keen aliveness to the fact that God seeks and speaks to all men.

When life centres on God and the doing of his will, the necessity of transforming life from the centre outwards *now*, not at some future date, becomes very real. All our relationships shift. For we should no longer be face to face with one another except in his light, and our togetherness is based on our united will to serve him. We are the unique individuals God has made us, but self-will and pride are still present and must be fought every day. There is a steady process of turning away from self. We become reliant upon God, not upon the self, and we accept from our fellow admonishment and help, knowing from where his strength comes. We seek for the development of the Kingdom, not of ourselves. We seek not self-discipline but the harmonious functioning of the whole group.

The family unit moves forward in the basic framework of the community. The community does not replace the family as the child's home. But the deeper God-given unit of the home, not standing alone, comes to have a deeper meaning for the child as it stands in the right

relationship to God, to the larger community, and to the world. The first impression of a bruderhof is of 'a plethora of children', as a guest of ours recently put it. I remember myself the vitality and happiness embodied in the children at Primavera, and with what interest I gradually sorted them out as we visited the different homes. The children were first of all part of the whole and then their individual backgrounds became distinct. Each of these homes, too, had an individuality and originality quite different from the standardized American home—there was unity and true expression, not sameness nor a compulsion to keep up with one's neighbours.

All the activities of the father, mother, and children centre in the united effort. There is no cleavage between the father's work and the life of the family, be it settling a legal problem or laying a sewer line. The children respond to this sense of unified activity and purpose, recognizing that they are an integral part of the whole experience of life together. They know themselves to be loved and wanted first by their own parents and then by the group, and this knowledge gives them security. All the learning processes are related to a complete life, as described in the article 'Teaching and Learning Together' by Anne Gale in the last issue of *THE PLOUGH*.

For the woman who grows into this life from a past of being part of modern culture, there is a great sense of freedom. There is a freedom from the images of woman so subtly and persistently imposed upon her formerly. There is freedom from the fear of older years; she can always be useful in caring for others, especially children, after her own family is grown, and life never loses meaning. She is free to combine family responsibility and absorption in other work, such as teaching, without conflict or uneasiness. She is free to love her children and yet, having relinquished them to God, she has strength not to identify herself with them. She is free to function as a woman, yet be the equal of men and not their competitor. The tendency to feel herself all-important in the life of the family must be corrected when it comes to light. The responsibility for the entire witness of the life is carried by all the members, and each individual family reflects the life of the whole. It is actually a great freeing to see one's self as small and unimportant, and this very realization brings with it the tranquillity and inner reconciliation one has struggled for previously through self-examination and over-conscientiousness.

The daily life of the family goes on. Our new baby was welcomed with deep joy and wonder. At the end of six weeks he was put into the charge of sisters in the Baby House for certain hours of the day while I went back to whatever tasks awaited me in the work of the whole group. While I look forward to gathering him up at the midday and the end of the afternoon, it is with gladness and trust that I leave him

there and go on to teach the children of my brothers and sisters. When, as a family, we are together during the day, we are free to enjoy each other. We all come home at night not from separate worlds but from the same world.

Over it all there is, and must be or we fail utterly, a constant looking outwards from the immediate task here to the needs of all men. Just as an individual or a family can become ingrown and self-centred, so can a group of people living together. In all our experiences and contacts, in all those who come through our household, in all our journeys and our seeking together, we are aware of the necessity of looking outwards, and we bring it home to the children.

Modern women have accepted the concept that the family is the basic unit of society and that if we have healthy families we have a healthy society. The family has become something that a man and wife create as expressions of themselves. Children are in a measure extensions of their parents. The family grows outwards from the needs and fulfilments of the parents. Much as we were formerly dedicating our family to God, it was within this framework.

One of our sons has brought home some birch catkins and put them in a vase for us all. After a long winter we are filled anew with the wonder of the awakening earth, and we share it together every day. It has come to me afresh how this life together as individuals, as a family, as followers of Christ, is a grace, a gift, an expression not of something we create but something God has created for us. The direction now is the other way. Whereas before I sought within myself for strength to create what I thought I could give to God, I now stand empty before him accepting from his full hand the double grace of the task and the gift of life in which to carry it out.

J.T.C.

THE CHILDREN

They are not mine, they are not really mine,
not even in the night when they cry out,
and I, half-stifled with the need of sleep,
stumble awake and go to quiet them.

Not by my grace or genius have they grown,
nor by my merit did I bring them forth,
nor by that sealed and deep-loved partnership;
the light that crowns them is none of my own.

And in my tempers and my discontents
when my own devil mutters and is bad,
I must remember still they are not mine,
not even to deny—but wholly Thine.

J.T.C.

OUTREACH THROUGH A COMMON LANGUAGE

DERRICK FAUX

Since the end of the last war we of the Bruderhof communities have looked forward to a time when we could reach out again into the lands of Eastern Europe through what has become known as the 'iron curtain'. This is now becoming increasingly possible through the medium of the international language, Esperanto. Two English Esperantists came to Wheathill two years ago and a number of articles about the Bruderhof communities have since been published in Esperanto periodicals in Holland, Germany, Sweden, Japan, Finland and other countries. These magazines are read by Esperantists on both sides of the 'iron curtain' and consequently letters arrive from readers who wish to know more about our community life.

A Polish lawyer has written: 'The cause of all the evil, hate, and distrust in the world is the greed for money and enjoyment. I am greatly attracted by the idea of such a Christian community based on brotherly love.'

His words have been echoed by a student in Czechoslovakia and a chemistry research worker in Hungary. A group of Tolstoyans in Bulgaria have told of their witness to a life of community. A Franciscan friar in Yugoslavia has testified to the true peace that can come in Christian discipleship.

All these, and many others, have shown a sincere interest in our life and we, on our part, look forward to a closer contact with them. Similar letters have come from Esperantists in the West. We published a letter last year (Vol. III, No. 2) from a Spaniard who told of his disillusionment with Christianity because 'in so-called Christian countries life was filled with hate, distrust, and competition'. A Waldensian in Italy pointed to the futility of violence and force in human relationships.

Several Esperantists have visited our communities and a German Esperantist who had lived in a Tolstoyan community in Russia has spent the winter at Wheathill. Two of our own members met many others when they attended the Christian Esperanto Congress at Reims, France, and the 40th Universal Congress at Bologna, Italy, last summer. A German couple and an Austrian family have decided to come to the Sinntal-Bruderhof in Germany. We found a sympathetic understanding and a keen interest among these many people who seek brotherhood through the use of a common language.

The first textbook in Esperanto was published nearly seventy years ago by a Polish oculist, Dr. Ludovic Zamenhof. As a boy, he had experienced in his Polish hometown the estrangement and interracial hatred arising from disputes due very largely to misunderstanding and

ignorance. It was this experience that prompted him to create a neutral international language. Consequently the ideal of goodwill and brotherhood has always been inseparable from Esperanto. Anyone who has attended an Esperanto Congress cannot have failed to sense the spirit of fellowship among these people from many nations. Now that resolutions favourable to Esperanto have been passed in UNESCO and the Council of Europe, the Esperantists, in both the West and the East, have become more optimistic about the future. In this optimism, there lurks a serious danger—the danger of believing that a common language alone can bring peace and harmony among men. The schisms and divisions that have occurred in their own movement are evidence enough that while a common language enables men to understand one another, it also enables them to quarrel more easily about their differences and rival ideologies. The value of a common tongue was plainly evident at the Universal Esperanto Congress when some 1,600 people from more than thirty lands met together for a week of talks, discussions, and conversation, along with plays, music, and social events. They did not, however, speak with one voice and sharp differences of outlook could be seen in the various smaller groups that gathered: the pacifists, the Protestants, the Roman Catholics, the European Federalists, the vegetarians, and many others.

Esperanto has been used for propaganda purposes by socialists and capitalists, communists and fascists, and if it became the official second language for the whole world, no doubt such propaganda would be greatly intensified. The Chinese government published a pictorial magazine in Esperanto; radio stations in Prague, Sofia, Zagreb, and other places have broadcast Esperanto programmes about the progress of communism in eastern Europe; before the last war the Nazi government used it to publish some of Hitler's speeches and propaganda against the Jews; it has been used by various churches, the Quakers, the Theosophists, and many other religious groups, as well as such movements as Social Credit, the Rotarians, the Co-operative Societies, and others; so that, although Esperantists have spoken freely one common language, they have remained disunited.

This is not an argument against Esperanto; among men of goodwill this language can be the means of contact and fellowship which may well bring them closer toward the 'one great family circle' of which Esperantists so often talk and sing. But in the experience of that fellowship they will certainly feel the need of a much deeper brotherly relationship than anything a language can provide.

We have found this further seeking for complete brotherhood in our correspondence with Esperantists, but if our hearts are truly set upon such a relationship between men, it is not enough to correspond and meet together to talk about it. A congress held in a different land

each year can rouse the emotions and stir the ideals, but unless it prompts men to seek brotherhood in a more lasting, practical, and radical way—a way that embraces the whole of life—it is in danger of leading men into a dream world. In whatever way men may come to realize that they are brothers, they will hardly rest content until all the barriers are down. These barriers are not arbitrary but deeply founded in the human heart and owe their existence not so much to the language problem as to self-will, personal ambition, and pride. In their common language, these Esperantists have an excellent means of coming together to experience for themselves the life of brotherhood. They cannot say that they do not know the answer; they cannot say that they do not know what else beyond Esperanto is necessary to bring them together in a much closer bond, for they declare it again and again at every meeting and congress they attend. Zamenhof himself gave them the key in the song 'La Espero' (Hope) which has become their 'international anthem':

Forte staras muroj de miljaroj
Inter la popoloj dividitaj;
Sed dissaltos la obstinaj baroj,
Per la sankta amo disbatitaj.*

THE READERS OF THE PLOUGH

Since the first number of this new series of *THE PLOUGH* appeared three years ago it has been read in every continent of the world. Most of the readers are in Britain, Germany, and the United States, but the English and German editions go much further afield, while many of the articles are reprinted in a Spanish edition in South America.

Recently copies have been sent into almost every country of Europe, including Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and even the Soviet Union. In Africa it is read in the Gold Coast, Nigeria, South Africa and other places; the Middle East—Saudi Arabia and Israel—and the Far East—India, Japan, Java, and Hong Kong—and the South Pacific—Netherlands New Guinea. Beyond the borders of Paraguay and Uruguay, there are readers in many other parts of South America.

In each number of *THE PLOUGH* we aim to publish articles of wide interest, with the underlying purpose of evoking thought and consideration about spiritual and social questions. Because of our inner conviction, our whole life is based on a practical application of Christ's teaching; but beyond keeping our readers in touch with the progress

*The walls of centuries stand firmly
Between divided peoples;
But the obstinate barriers shall leap asunder,
Beaten down by sacred love.

of our movement, we do not wish to use THE PLOUGH solely as a means of propagating our own ideas. The whole magazine is a forum and we receive many letters in English, German, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Esperanto, commenting upon the articles that have appeared. By copying this correspondence at each bruderhof and sending it on to all the other communities, we are able to extend this exchange of opinions and ideas.

Wherever possible our readers subscribe to THE PLOUGH, but at present it is not possible to send subscriptions from countries in eastern Europe. Many free copies are therefore sent to friends in those places and we have been very thankful for gift subscriptions that have been made available for these readers, but it is only possible to expand this part of our publishing work by the help of the donations which many readers have kindly sent.

FORUM

LETTERS FROM ESPERANTISTS

From a Tolstoyan Community in Bulgaria

In our book *The Way of Life* we read: 'It is God's will for his servants, his true sons, that they form one whole and be united in love. The laws which create and uphold the division of men into many classes are man-made.' It was in 1925 that our Tolstoyan farm community was founded. The farm consists of about 125 acres. All the members are vegetarians; there are thirty families. . . . Through reading the Gospels and the Epistle of St. James it is clear that true peace can only come when all men are born again in righteousness and love, when each will give up the use of force and violence in the exploitation of his brother, when each by his own hands and in free co-operation with his fellow-men shall work for his bread. . . . Today our founder and oldest member, Uncle Stefan, has been celebrating his ninetieth birthday. I used the opportunity to greet our whole brotherhood in your name and at the same time to read your letter and the article, 'Community, the Outcome of Christian Belief' (THE PLOUGH, Vol. II, No. 3). The joy of all the brothers and sisters here at hearing these was beyond description. I was asked in their name to send greetings to you and all members of the bruderhof. Your understanding of life is almost the same as ours. Your letters inspire us to greater faith and hope in the love of our true Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. They have also inspired us to vigour and courage in the living out of the Gospel in our life. May the peace and grace of Jesus Christ abide with you always. Love one another and go on helping one another as Christian brothers. Bulgaria.

S.B.

From Poland

The idea of Christian community appeals to me because it responds to my own feeling for universal brotherhood, although I have experienced that very often the most admirable ideas are crippled and only by the greatest effort can they ever be brought into practice. The higher the ideal, the greater are the barriers that stand in the way of those who would bring it into effect. Indeed, the teachings of Christ, which seem to me to be the basis of the bruderhof, in spite of two thousand years that have passed since his birth, still do not awake in men's hearts the response that one would expect. From the commandment, 'Love your neighbour as yourself', many have struck out the neighbour and left, 'Love yourself!' And what is the result? Exploitation of one's fellow-men, concentration camps, racialism, and economic and national rebellions.

Warsaw, Poland.

B.E.

From Austria

Yesterday THE PLOUGH arrived and I wish to thank you heartily for it. The article by Emmy Arnold about her return to Europe was very good. I was interested to read the articles by Hans Zumpe and Anne Gale and the article about children's art by Margarethe Böning. I saw several very pleasing water-colours by children last summer at Hohenstein and I think that it is not only the community life with its accompanying joy that influences the children's capabilities, but also the instruction in the school is important.

It would be interesting some time to chat with Margarethe and others who have an interest, in the first place in 'modern' art. For some years I have studied the modern 'isms', have tried to understand and often defended them, but in the end I have come to the following conclusion.

If a botanist dissects a flower to study the parts and afterwards shows us the pieces, then the flower, such as a rose or dianthus, no longer exists. He has destroyed the form and has robbed our eyes of the possibility of enjoying the flower. In the evolution of the sciences and the penetration into the internal systems of various objects, the contours and exterior, natural forms are lost. It is the same in art. Through psychoanalysis the scientists have crawled into the human soul; through physics they have explored the make-up of the atom—but what brings joy to people? Is it any nauseating picture from the dream-depths of the soul or the scheme of the hydrogen atom? Art certainly took the right course seventy years ago when it began to destroy the rigorous framework of naturalism, for the camera produced

naturalism without a heart, though more pleasingly. Impressionism with its abundance of colours and the joy of air and light made commendable progress. The reaction and return to conventionalism shortly before and after the First World War already showed that artists had lost their equilibrium. But expressionism, which does not cross the limits of natural forms, still means progress. Van Gogh, in my opinion, was the last true genius in art. The destruction of forms was the work of the intellect—no longer creating art by the whole heart, but acting by reason.

Now the most famous artists are 'stars' who reap great profits—they surprise and delude people to gain money. Art must not, of course, be controlled and directed as it was under Hitler or in Russia now, and it is wrong to compel artists to work on particular themes and in particular styles. The artist should not be merely an entertainer, only creating works that give happiness; the tragic theme which touches the heart can also be created by beautiful means. Rembrandt created many drawings and paintings with tragic expressions, but the divine beauty always remained, in gaiety and misery.

When expressionism, and often surrealism as well, reach an intolerable height of ugliness or nauseating cruelty, then they should be rejected. True art should make people laugh or cry, but by noble means. Abstract art is no longer art, but a game of psychological tests. A conglomeration of paints may quiet or disquiet the soul, but that is not enough for a painting. Eating eight eggs before I go to bed will disquiet me—even without Picasso. In this way art will completely disappear from human life and there will remain only ornaments on the walls of houses. We can certainly learn from children, who draw and paint from joy, uninfluenced by decadence; but in my opinion it is a mistake when adults try consciously to imitate the child's way of painting. Short pants do not make a little boy!

Vienna, Austria.

L.W.

WHITSUN CONFERENCE AT WHEATHILL

Impressions and Reactions

Memories and impressions of the weekend spent with you a week ago have been with me very much since I came back home, and will remain with me for a long time. I hope I shall be able to come again some day, for preference, in gloomy, depressing weather, when the community is at its normal work without a lot of 'outsiders'; the glorious sunshine, with orchard picnic and the delightful and gay frocks of the girls contributed so much to the pleasure of this visit, though I have no doubt that under grey skies the atmosphere of serenity and gladness, the

strikingly healthy and sane children and young people, and the spontaneous singing would be unchanged.

Although I had heard quite a lot about the Bruderhof, I found I had formed little general idea of the spirit of the community, and of the fullness and richness of your life. It would be an exaggeration to say that I feel as Lazarus must have felt, after a few days in paradise (or wherever he went) brought back to the everyday world to take up his previous life, but the general idea is something similar. I don't feel called, at present, to leave my jobs here and join you, but I hope I shall be able to transfer some of your witness with regard to possessions, simplicity of life, and unself-centredness to my own surroundings. Derby.

J.B.

It is now two weeks since I was among you at Bromdon, and I am endeavouring to record my reactions to my visit.

May I first congratulate you all on a most inspiring and well organized weekend. It is a memory I shall long cherish.

Perhaps my most sharp and painful realization is the almost dreamlike memory of your community, and the truths and very candid talking we all so ardently expressed, either at meetings or privately.

I'm afraid when I think of the things expressed by myself with the utmost sincerity then, and consider the application of the beliefs to my actual surroundings now, I realize what a humbug I really am, and not particularly happy at my weakness, either.

Nevertheless I'm sure I have derived spiritual benefit and courage from my short visit.

This I am sure of in my own mind, the things I said and expressed in the meetings and to individuals, were sincere and honest convictions, and I believe I was truer to myself then, than at most other times. I also believe one cannot escape the challenge of your endeavours to practise Christianity, even to having 'all things in common'.

Even so, although community life appeals to me very strongly and no doubt seems a 'utopia' to others too, it is in itself incomplete.

Without a strong faith in something or some one, community life could merely be an ideal or idea put into practice by a few like-minded people, more concerned with satisfying their own idealism, than a necessary step in seeking after truth.

I am convinced therefore of the absolute necessity of the surrender of one's will to the demands of Christ, before one could possibly contemplate such a step.

Bristol.

A.H.

Conference—important theme

I was very happy to attend the conference which seemed to me very important—also because it was from a similar conference that the community began. I hope that many who took part heard the call which the Sermon on the Mount addresses to people today just as yesterday—the call to a brotherly and loving life, which breaks through the barriers of the world.

I rejoiced that the theme of the conference was the Sermon, because the Sermon was the basis of the life of all groups of brothers who during the centuries—from the first Christians until now—such as the first Waldensians, the Hutterians, the Quakers—sought to live a truly Christian brotherly life.

The conference was important because the world urgently needs a true hope and we, if we truly want to follow Christ, must ask God for the strength of the Holy Spirit so that by our community life we can witness to the true Christian society which can save men. What has the so-called Christian civilization brought to mankind? Wars and social misery and hatred! Why? Because men have forgotten the Sermon and give more importance to their own individual affairs than to the complete sacrifice for the sake of their brothers, which is the most important teaching of Christ and also the only source of true joy.

Of course one can write many other thoughts about the conference, but I think the most important question which one must ask when one reads the Sermon is, 'Can one live by the teachings of the Sermon in the present-day society?' I think we must answer, 'No'. One cannot serve God and mammon.

Present-day society is still an idolatrous one, which no longer worships the old idols, but worships money, power, and especially itself. The law of this society is the law of suppression and competition—not the law of love.

The Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus himself foresaw, is always a revolutionary Sermon which just completely changes our present life—that is the real meaning of the new birth.

Personally I believe that we cannot live according to the will of Christ in true brotherhood in our own strength but only in the strength of the Holy Spirit and in full community. Therefore I heartily desire that your community may continue to grow.

Turin, Italy.

F.B.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

The last few months have been characterized in all our communities by a striving for inner clarification and a deepening sense of responsibility for a world task. It has been a time of sending out members, especially from Paraguay, to Germany and North America. In the United States there has been a continued growth in membership and a consolidation of the two communities. In Germany the group has been assessing the various possibilities of development. Wheathill has been sending some of its skilled members to help with the building work in Germany, while the mission task has been maintained in England. In Uruguay, although progress has been slower, there are signs that our small community there is not without significance in the life of a cosmopolitan city.

North America

Woodcrest and *Forest River* have been working out the problems which inevitably arise when a newer and an older movement come together. The finding of this way together has brought great joy to all. Hardi and Martha Arnold are now at Forest River, where they have been joined by six boys who have come up from Primavera to help with spring planting and to receive a good farm training. Hans Meier and Bruce Sumner have now returned to Paraguay.

The following letter was written by a sixteen-year-old California girl who, with her family, is now living at Forest River. She writes to a school friend:

I must say that all I can do is 'snort' at your, 'It is too easy'. You ought to come and try it! You would find it different in a hurry, especially at this community. It is very difficult at every place, but even more so here because of the clash, on a superficial level, of totally different backgrounds. The continual struggle in living in community is the struggle against the 'self'. Have you read *Anna Karenina*? You know Levin finds a faith when he discovers that it's not living for yourself, but for others and for good. If one wishes, it can be for God. I can't put it in words, but I felt it clearly when I read it.

We have especially realized, here in the last few months, what a struggle it is to live together in community. . . . We all came to realize that if something bothers you, you have to speak it out right then and there. Even though you might not get it settled right away it is better to bring it out into the open. Also—the most important thing—we have to remember constantly why we are living in community, and how. As human beings it is impossible. . . . It is only by the help and grace of God, something much bigger, which embraces everything, that it is possible. All this is by no means easy. I have come to hardly

any of it yet, other than intellectually. I'm still resisting it. . . . I've realized lately how the intellect gets in the way, especially pride in the intellect. To quote Levin again, he says intellectual thinking is unnatural. I'm coming to the conclusion that one's intellect is more of a hindrance than a help. . . . But if there were a way of getting rid of the intellect I don't know if I would. Well, enough of community not being easy. . . .

And I don't get what you mean by a 'closed community'. The bruderhof certainly is not. The door is open. . . . At Woodcrest, and Wheathill, there are guests constantly coming and going. This is not happening so much in Paraguay, because of geographical position. There are few guests here in winter because of weather.

Actually, every family and individual poses a problem, and something to be worked through. No one is perfect and it shows up, certainly, living as closely as we do in community.

You remark, 'I would be interested in communities that are self-supporting'. This remark is interesting. The seemingly eternal accusation is, 'You retire from the world'. This is a refreshing change. It is almost, if not quite, impossible for a community to be self-supporting when it is reaching out to call people to a way of life. One can deprive oneself of many things but not guests, unnecessarily. If it is necessary much deprivation can be undergone, as was done in Hitler Germany and in the early years in Paraguay, and still is there to a certain extent. The bruderhof feels that it must be 'in the world, but not *of* the world'. Also the bruderhof feels that this is a better use of their money, which is given freely, than the places it would go otherwise.

Talk about stagnation and diversity! I must say that any one of the hofs is less stagnated, and more diverse, than either the life our family had, or yours has now. . . .

The bruderhof also believes in the worth of the individual, but they are shy of it, just as they are of individualism. There is a great danger in it becoming egocentric. I think we have fallen into it, too. We have to realize that it's more important to live according to what we think is right, concentrating on doing as is said in the Sermon on the Mount, if we believe that is right, concentrating on that rather than being an 'individual'. I certainly agree with you in the worth of the individual, but it is part of the 'all these things shall be added unto you'. Also I've found more individuals in the bruderhof than out! As far as measuring the benefits of the society by the growth of the individual goes, you'd better come start measuring! You would be surprised, I think.

The bruderhof also believes in the family unit, quite strictly, too. Bruderhof families are much more 'family-conscious' than the majority of American families.

And having a broad or narrow base. (This comment is provoked by the following remark in the friend's letter: All needs are not the same, so society has to have a broad base; a community tends to have a narrow base.) There is only one real base possible, and that is in God. Everything else has to be secondary, as has been said here many times.

On important things unity is necessary in belief, and on unimportant things, diversity.

And you know if one person calls he can't be heard, but if a large group calls the call is much stronger. I should use your expression, 'leavening the lump'. If you put in too little yeast it doesn't do any good, but if you put in enough it does leaven the lump!

Woodcrest is again crowded and needing more living-space. Some twenty people have become members since our last report a year ago. They have included Brethren, Quakers, and Methodists.

There have been visits to other groups and communities in the past months. Hardi Arnold and John Maendel went to speak to a college group at Minneapolis, Stanley Fletcher spent several weeks at the Macedonia community in Georgia, while Heini Arnold has been to Koinonia.

At Westtown, Pennsylvania, a group of Mennonites and Quakers met during the Easter weekend to consider how they, with the Society of Brothers, could best work together towards 'the rebirth of the church as the gathered people of God'. Stanley Fletcher represented us there and took part in the open exchange of views which led to some deep considerations of the Pentecost experience. Proposals for community ventures in social work and among Quakers were put forward, but it was recognized that there remained the need for the unity that had been manifested among the early Christians. The hope was expressed that the three groups could meet again before the end of the year.

More recent happenings have included the sending of Tom and Florrie Potts, Walter and Harriet Alexander, and Burgel Zumpe to a nine-day Institute of International Relations at the Ithaca College Camp in upper New York State where the theme was non-violence and where there was lively discussion of racial, family, and international relationships. The bruderhof members had a place on the programme and were questioned quite searchingly by a number of people who expressed the hope of visiting Woodcrest.

Two of our young people have completed their courses of study outside the community—Jörg Barth at Pendle Hill, the Quaker graduate centre near Philadelphia, and Johannes Arnold at Westtown School. Jörg was invited to attend the Pendle Hill Summer School and the Friends General Conference at Cape May, New Jersey.

Europe

Some thirty people from many parts of Britain and from as far afield as Germany and Italy came to *Wheathill* for the Whitsun weekend. They had been invited to share with us their ideas, thoughts, and opinions about the implications of the Sermon on the Mount in the

world today. Among them were friends who had known the bruderhof for years, while others were making their first visit after reading magazine articles or our own literature. Several had connections with the Friends and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. There were two farmers, a doctor, a business man, a Bible college lecturer, an 85-year-old retired lay-preacher, a woman teacher of French, a university librarian, an archaeologist, students, and others. A young Waldensian came from Turin, Italy, while from Augsburg, Germany, came an office worker; they were both Esperantists.

All joined in the discussions which took us late into the night on Saturday and Sunday and through Monday morning. The conference was opened by Bram Burger, who until a few years ago was a pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church in Holland. Others who introduced the sessions were Hans Zumpe, who joined the bruderhof in Germany before the war, and Derek Wardle, who is now head master at our school at Wheathill. Two of the talks are published in full in this number.

Various aspects of bruderhof life were experienced by the guests during their stay. There was folk-dancing in the meadow after a picnic tea served by our young people. A short concert was given by the children's orchestra. During some of the communal meals in the dining hall we heard the guests introduce themselves and speak of their work and interests. While we all had breakfast together on Monday, the children sang and several of the bruderhof members gave a reading from T. S. Eliot's *The Rock*.

Following the conference several stayed on for the week, joining in the community life and work, and it is hoped that some will come again for longer visits. Of special significance to us was the visit of Federico Balmas, a member of the Waldensian church in Italy. He had accompanied two of our members to the Agape community near Turin last summer (see *THE PLOUGH*, Vol. III, No. 3). He spoke of the community life of the early Waldensians and the concern he shared with the members of Agape for a closer unity with all who seek a life of complete brotherhood.

It was not the purpose of the conference to reach any firm conclusions. As a sharing of a common concern it brought mutual stimulation to Wheathill and to those who came, and it is sincerely hoped that the contacts made during that weekend will continue.

The Whitsun conference was closely linked with numerous visits to Wheathill by people whose interest had been aroused by recent articles in British magazines. Several groups have made day visits and we were particularly glad to welcome students from Woodbrooke, a Quaker college near Birmingham. During the past years we have had a friendly contact with Woodbrooke and from time to time our members

have attended the International Forum there. Other groups visiting us have been the Wolverhampton Free Church Ministers' Fraternal and the Women's Section of the Sutton Coldfield Labour Party. We are looking forward to visits by a local Townswomen's Guild and a Zionist youth group.

The building work goes on at Wheathill with the completion of a milking parlour and a new Dutch barn to replace the one destroyed by fire last summer. A children's festival was held in early May, a joyful and fitting farewell to Emmy Arnold who was leaving for the United States, accompanied by her granddaughter, Burgel Zumpe.

Following on the articles in the last number (page 7) dealing with the situation of Conscientious Objectors in Germany we can report that Hans Zumpe, who left Wheathill immediately after the Whitsun Conference, Reg Lacy, and Llewelyn Harries have been much involved in discussion on this subject. They took part in a conference at Arnolds-hain with Dr Franklin Littell, Paul Krahé, and representatives of the Mennonites, Brethren, Quakers, the Lutheran Church, and the German government, to consider the question of alternative service. Llewelyn Harries gave a report there about the position of C.O.'s in Great Britain. As there are no large peace churches in Germany to give financial support to an alternative service, it was feared that it would come very much into the hands of the state. Complete exemption is to be found only in the English law and seems very unlikely to be considered in Germany. Hans Zumpe has commented: 'On the whole it was shown here and later at Bonn that there is a lot of unclarity on this question, and on the side of the government there is no definite suggestion of what is to happen. It is an absolutely new question for Germany and it remains to be seen whether the voices of the peace organizations will be taken seriously.'

A spring workcamp arranged by the *Nothelfergemeinschaft der Freunde* brought eight young men and seven girls to the *Sinntal-Bruderhof* for three weeks to turn an attic into sleeping quarters and to remake one of the small outbuildings.

South America

Primavera has been considering what should happen in the more distant future—how to support the mission work more adequately by sending more members to other places. Already since the first of the year, Migg and Hilde Fischli have gone to Germany for a period, Walter and Trudi Hüsey have followed with a more permanent task in view, Christian Löber accompanied his blind son to Germany and will stay for a time, and now Arno and Ruth Martin are to come to Europe to help in the work. Other moves to the United States have

already been reported. All this lays quite a burden upon Primavera where the hospital work continues to expand. The settlement of this long-term question awaits the inter-bruderhof conference which it is now hoped will be held in the autumn.

The mission task, building up, and facing the question of future development have also occupied the small group at *El Arado* in Uruguay. Visits have been made to Buenos Aires and a more extensive journey in Argentina is planned for the time when the political situation in that country has become more stable. Guests have included visitors from Argentina and Chile. A friendly contact continues with the young community of 'Canuteros' in Montevideo. A start has been made on the new dining room complex which will include a kitchen, pantry and store; the foundations have been laid.

The future in Uruguay is also to be a question for the inter-bruderhof conference. It is felt that the mission task in South America depends very largely upon the development of the work at *El Arado*, where already our small magazine in the Spanish language is bringing the bruderhof into contact with new people.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

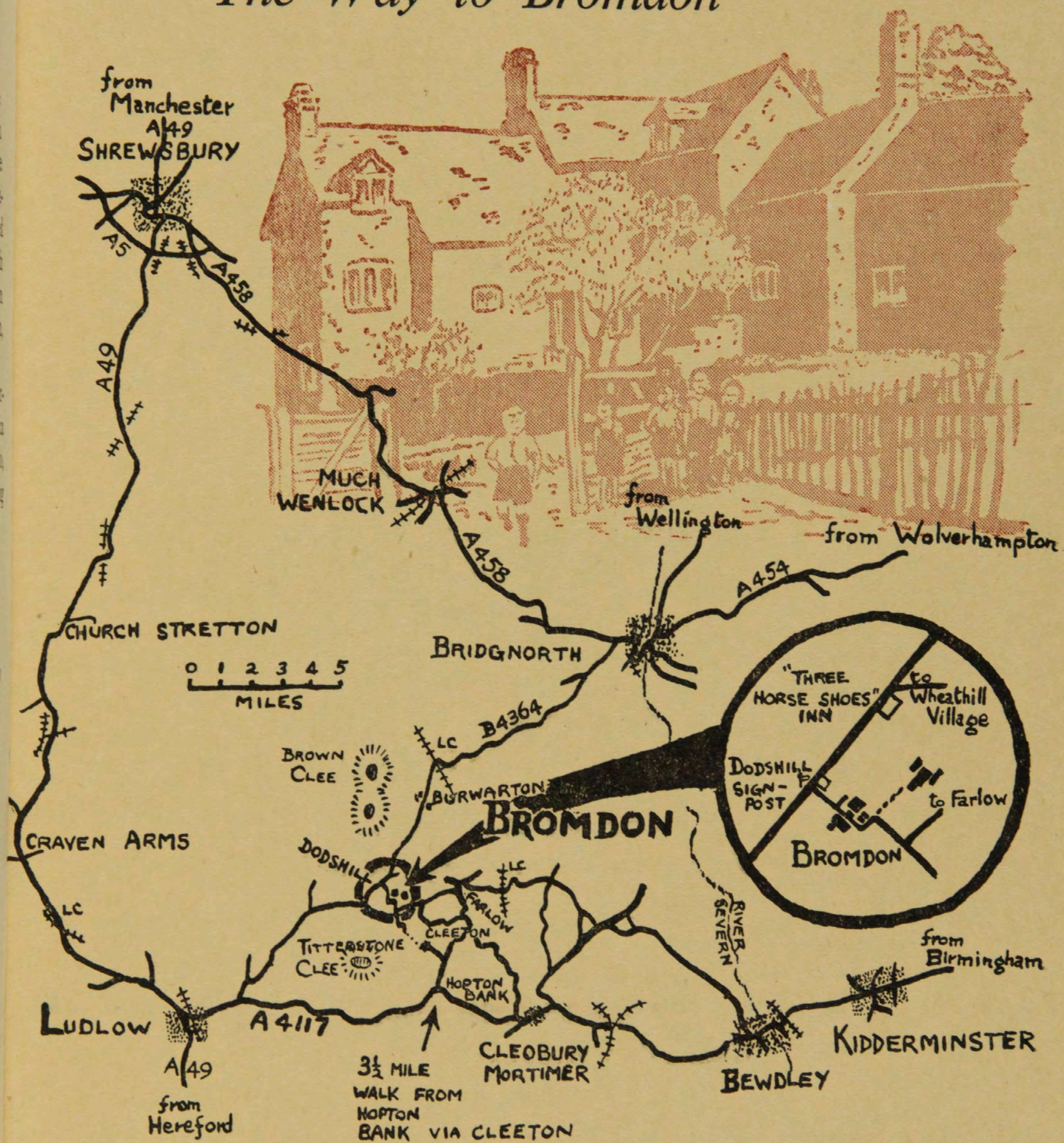
A weekend conference with a theme as stimulating and challenging as 'The Sermon on the Mount—in our time' does not end with the final session. It is inevitable that we shall all go on talking and thinking about the discussions we had together. That is one reason why we are publishing two of the talks in full in this number of *THE PLOUGH*, giving a short account in the News, and also making a more detailed report available to readers. We want in this way to bring the conference into a wider circle of friends. Just how stimulating the time was may be seen from the three letters in the Forum which we received from guests who were with us then.

The pressure of 'what is expected' socially and economically has troubled many American women, even when they have tried to resist it. One of our members contrasts her previous experience with family life at Woodcrest. Her poems have appeared before in *THE PLOUGH*; another follows her article in this number.

Derrick Faux has given Wheathill many unusual contacts through his knowledge of Esperanto, but his own experience among Esperantists has urged him to offer a little constructive criticism to those who may feel inclined to put their faith in a common language as the basis for peace and brotherhood.

The events of the past months at all our communities are reported in some detail, as our news pages were not included in the last number.

The Way to Bromdon



Readers of THE PLOUGH are invited to visit the Wheathill Bruderhof at Bromdon. Full details of local 'bus services from Bridgnorth and Ludlow are available upon request.

Because of our limited accommodation, visitors are asked to write to the Guest Warden before making a visit.

THE SOCIETY OF BROTHERS, BROMDON, BRIDGNORTH, SHROPSHIRE

The Addresses of the Bruderhof Communities

ENGLAND

Society of Brothers
Bromdon, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

U.S.A.

Society of Brothers
Woodcrest, Rifton, New York State

Forest River Community
Fordville, North Dakota

PARAGUAY

Sociedad de Hermanos
Primavera, Alto Paraguay

Sociedad de Hermanos
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