

THE PLOUGH

THE QUARTERLY
OF THE
BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

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A NEW DIRECTION IN LIFE

NEW MEMBERS

REPORT OF THE CHRISTAVASHRAM

K. K. CHANDY

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

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THE PLOUGH

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BRITAIN AND THE 'H' BOMB

Through the series of nuclear tests in the Pacific Ocean Britain has entered the select company of the Atomic Powers and re-established herself as a 'Great Power', whose pronouncements are backed by the most destructive weapon the world has known. Prominent voices have been raised in protest against the use of such weapons, but it is noteworthy that a positive word has not been forthcoming from the Christian churches in this country. It is true that some individual churchmen have felt moved to express their deep conviction that the use of such weapons cannot in any circumstances be justified—Dr Greer, Bishop of Manchester, said recently: 'It would be better to be defeated than to engage in H-bomb warfare, for when the last bomb has exploded you have lost what you were fighting for.' But such voices are few. Against the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the British Council of Churches passed a resolution to '*deplore* the Government's decision to carry out nuclear tests in the Megaton range'—a cautious word carried by a majority of only three votes.

Dare we renounce the bomb? This is the crux of the problem not only for Britain but for all those countries which seek 'security' behind the great power blocs.

Dare we put our faith completely in God and not in men and their creations? This is the question to which so few church leaders the world over give a clear and courageous answer. The Pope, while condemning the use of nuclear weapons, still leaves the way open for a 'just war' and disapproves of conscientious objection. The Conference of Bishops in Hamburg in May, accepting the dilemma in which modern man finds himself, 'either to lose freedom and human values in the struggle of the world powers or to be wiped out in the horror of an atom war', went on: 'We should not

put our trust in a self-made security either in the possession of atomic weapons or in renouncing these weapons,' but should overcome our fear and find comfort through faith in Jesus. Prof. Thieliicke, the well-known German theologian, pleaded for a realistic view of the world in its present imperfect state and declared that the Christian 'may never demand the absolute'. Is this really all the Christian has to say?

Here we must state categorically that Christ does indeed make an absolute demand on those who would be his disciples. He requires them to put their whole trust in him and to find not just comfort but the courage to follow him whatever the consequences. This must mean for a Christian at least the repudiation of all forms of violence whether in the nuclear or traditional category. Is it not abundantly clear that the horrors of warfare are completely incompatible with the gospel of peace? How can Christians, in face of the known consequences of atomic warfare, entertain the thought that God's will can be achieved by such means? Or do we not expect God's will to be done among fallen mankind any more? That living this gospel of peace may mean material defeat, that it demands sacrifice, is clear from Christ's own life. The Christian must face realistically the possible oppression of his homeland by a foreign power. Yet this threat can never justify his use of force, any more than Christ and his disciples sought by violence to free their people from the domination of Rome. There is, unhappily, in the statements especially from religious leaders concerning war and atom-war, a constant confusing of the Christian way and political expediency, often under the guise of a realistic approach to our fallen world. Moreover, the individual feels helpless in the face of the great political machinery which relentlessly follows its predetermined course.

Yet just in this situation each one has to make his choice. Let us as Christians proclaim complete repudiation of such terrible weapons, and let us unite to surrender our lives more fully to Christ and his way of brotherhood. Let us be prepared to allow his Spirit to change all our life-relationships—not only personal, but social and economic. Then fear will be overcome by Christ's Spirit of love and peace and this will be our assurance and security.

DEREK WARDLE.

THE PROPHETIC SPIRIT

GWYNN EVANS

World War II came to an end twelve years ago, but these twelve years have been characterized by social restlessness in many parts of the world, and with the restoration of peace there has been no corresponding restoration of confidence or sense of security in international or social affairs. The formal establishment of peace has not brought with it joy or hope or freedom. On the contrary, man has emerged from the Second World War into a strange, incomprehensible, new world—a world oppressed by mighty, impersonal, uncontrollable powers, which threaten to grind him and his vainglorious civilization to powder and to divest life of every particle of meaning.

Since the war several countries have shown remarkable economic recovery, but, behind all the political activity and the insatiable quest for industrial prosperity and personal wealth, lies a deep, gnawing uncertainty. Lacking inner certainty and assurance, men are seeking to supplant them with material securities.

Since the Renaissance humanism has been a growing power in the moulding of human life and thought, but in our age it is being increasingly realized what a terrific toll humanism has taken of men. It gave men, in the first instance, an amazing vision of the potentialities of human endeavour. Indeed, it has achieved much in freeing men from the bondage of superstition and ignorance, but finally it has left them the victims of the same fears and dreads from which it once promised to release them. Humanism offered the vision of a new mankind freed from war, suffering, destitution, and need, gaining more and more conquest over the jungle of life, and the confident assurance that everything would eventually be brought under the sure control of scientific order and precision. But we, in our age, have lived to see that the vision was a mirage. The great humanistic vision which so proudly promised to save mankind is now threatening man and his civilization with demolition, devastation, and possibly extinction. This applies to the outer world, but in the inner world the consequences have been even greater. Man has lost the key to the meaning of his own existence. Agnosticism and nihilism, in various forms, have become the prevailing ideas, at least in the Western world. Man's own worth and purpose on earth have been seriously called in question. His true human image is threatened with defacement, and he himself is left bewildered, indeed somewhat frightened, in face of the things which are happening to him and all around him.

Ours is an age full of strange anomalies and contradictions. It is an age when, through the agencies of the psychological sciences, we know more than we ever have before about the forces that fashion human nature and the motives that direct it. How extraordinary it is,

then, that we seem to be more baffled by it than men were apparently in previous ages and that we should be so impotent to bring it under the direction of a unifying purpose. How anomalous it is, too, that just in this age of scientific progress and glamour the barbaric elements of human nature are increasingly revealing themselves. Humanism has alienated man from the primary source of life—from God, who is the source of life—leaving him the victim of evil forces. And so the great age of humanism threatens to degenerate into an age of inhumanism and a startling index to the trend of the times is provided by the recent occurrences in a country like Hungary.

Suspicion, despair, and hatred have arisen with renewed power in the contemporary world to shock men out of any lingering complacent belief that humanism is able to provide an effective antidote to human ills. Idealistic expectations of a new world have been shattered on the rocks of human intractability. Human nature still remains the insuperable obstacle to the realization of peace and prosperity in our time. Men need a new faith and the recovery of a sense of purpose in life.

Greatest Need of our Age

The greatest need of our age is deliverance from its anguishing doubt and agnosticism. Arthur Koestler has called it 'the age of longing' and has depicted it as desperately seeking liberation from the sense of meaninglessness in human existence. Where is this liberation to be found? Where is mankind to find a key to the meaning and purpose in life?

It is the prophetic message of the Old and New Testaments that present us with a clue; for the meaninglessness and doubt under which mankind is at present labouring can be met effectively only by the spirit of prophecy. Mankind is in need of a new age of the spirit which truly proclaims a message of release and deliverance, and this is the essence of all true prophecy. 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.'

The spirit of prophecy, however, makes inexorable demands upon men. Its impact upon the world is always revolutionary, transforming. It offers no ambrosial comforts to a decadent world order, but on the contrary pronounces its inevitable doom. It will not countenance the compromise, exploitation, falsehood, and deceit by which the world lives, for the world is guided not by truth but by conveniently camouflaged falsehoods under the guise of truth. The prophetic spirit of truth requires an uncalculating whole-heartedness towards life, based upon the assessments of the kingdom of God—and this is not compatible

with the norms and standards of a fallen world. The prophet will not countenance any modification of or tampering with the absolute requirements of the gospel. The priest, with his ritual and sacrificial offerings, tends to accommodate his office to the ways and practices of the world. He is content with symbolic expressions of the truth. He requires, in the main, only conventional outward recognitions of righteousness. But not so the prophet, for the prophet demands genuine righteousness and sincerity in every aspect of daily life. He spurns and condemns the shams and duplicities of an apostate, erring society which contents itself with a mere token adherence to lofty spiritual principles. For this reason the prophet is always a solitary figure, misunderstood and rejected by a faithless, superficial world, and his outspoken protests against the follies of his time are met with calumny and vilification. The prophet, by the very nature of his calling, has his vision fixed on the future, his concern for the present or the past being confined to its impingement upon the future. He can never view the present with contentment; indeed, he can never relax until the present has been utterly transformed, reconstructed from its very foundations.

Vision of the Prophet

The prophetic spirit is a discerning spirit; it is as sensitive to the spiritual atmosphere as an aspen leaf is to the physical atmosphere. It pierces to the very heart of the evil which is corrupting human society and looks with confidence to the emergence of a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. The anticipation of God's immediate intervention in the affairs of men, the expectation of Christ's coming kingdom, is one of its primary characteristics. The prophet yearns for the rule of God in every context of life. His is the inexhaustible source of spiritual vitality in the life of the world, for he cannot endure anything which savours of torpidity or formality in religion or in society. He himself derives his life from its original sources and he cannot relax until that quality of life dominates every aspect of the life around him. He cannot abide the stagnancy and indifference of conventional life, with all its petty hypocrisies and shams. He finds it oppressive, stultifying. He yearns for the fresh mountain air of the Spirit in which alone he can breathe and live. The prophet is possessed and driven by the unrelaxing insistence of his vision. He sees the world transformed, its stifling atmosphere dispelled by the free wind of the Spirit.

For this reason the prophet foreshortens history. For him 'the End' is always at hand and he calls men urgently to respond to the impact of the Word of God upon their own sinful lives and upon the world. He has a view of history which would be impossible apart from the vision

which absorbs and possesses him, for he knows God to be the Lord of history and, therefore, nothing can happen in history which can obliterate his vision or the assurance of the triumph of those values his vision has revealed.

The prophet does not seek to shirk the burdens of the world's misery. His is not the life of a recluse or a solitary mystic. He shares his people's fortunes, yet he is fully aware of the catastrophic destiny that awaits them. He condemns the errancies of their ways, though he places himself, too, under the judgment which he knows will inevitably befall them if they do not repent and amend their ways. Thus the prophet is filled with a kind of divine discontent; he arouses the hostility of the very people whom he seeks to help and whom he loves with anguished longing. He lives his life at the very centre of the stress and turmoil of human traffic, and knows no rest. He has no interest in the salvation of his own soul apart from that of his fellows; therefore he does not seek to abandon the world to find for himself the peaceful meadows of spiritual meditation. He seeks the transformation of all mankind, not merely that of the individual or even the sect. He longs for the re-establishment of the wholeness of life—the penetration of all things by the Spirit of God. The prophetic spirit is always a revolutionary spirit. It is possessed of an insatiable longing, a divine unrest. Nothing will satisfy it until the whole world has been transformed into the likeness of the City of God. It sears the world and its life with a scintillating, consuming light, against which the world seeks constantly to protect itself, not being able to endure it; yet without it the inner life of the world would perish. Our world is desperately in need of the prophetic spirit to awaken it out of its lethargy and set it free from the fears which torment it.

Domination of Fear

Fear has been and still is a tremendously potent factor in the life of mankind; especially has this been the case during the last decades with the development of atomic energy and the resurgence of the barbaric in the political affairs of men. Contemporary literature gives generous confirmation of this. Fear, however, stands in direct contrast to the prophetic spirit, which is characterized by undaunted courage and bravery. The prophetic spirit is in fact typified by utter fearlessness, and without it man feels himself to be at the mercy of the elements and is robbed of the sense of security which comes only when he derives his life from eternal sources. Fear issues from man's separation from God, his feeling of loneliness and abandonment in an indifferent or even hostile world. It derives from the perversions to which sin makes us heir; thus it dominates great tracts of our life and thinking, both in personal

and public life, insinuating itself into our philosophies and religious beliefs as well as many of our social customs and institutions.

Fear is a quality which comes from man's obsession with the temporal and transitory. It arises from the threat or imagined threat of an earth-bound fate or catastrophe, from the anticipation of sickness, penury, pain, or suffering, deprivation of possessions, separation from friends and relatives, danger of war or strife, dispossession of human rights or even of life itself. Fear exercises an insidious power in human life, enslaving and torturing the spirits of men and depriving them of all moral and spiritual criteria. Craven fear is capable of dehumanizing a man and can lead him to betray all that he has held dearest and noblest in life, even his closest friends and his most exalted principles. In our own time we have had ample evidence of this in the stories recorded from Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and more recently in the United States of America in the hysteria for 'investigation'. Fear humiliates and depersonalizes, and this fear has been used with great skill and astuteness by the heads of State and leaders of the people in order to achieve their will. In our age many millions have been so terrorized by fear that their consciences have lost the capacity for moral evaluation and assessment. This has been directly or indirectly the cause of much of the mental and emotional unbalance that today affects not only individuals but great sections of the world's populace. Men have been so oppressed by the monstrous inhuman forces of the State and the impersonal drives of modern technical development that they have been deprived of first-hand, original impulses and reactions. Their consciences have lost contact with God, who is the source of life, and thus they have become victims of the primeval forces of the underworld, which are the source of death. The totalitarian states of this century provide us with ample evidence of this. History can show us nothing worse than the horrors of which modern man is capable. The forced-labour and concentration camps, with their brain-washing and other devilish techniques, affect far wider circles than those unfortunate ones whose lot it has been to suffer in them.

Primitive man's life was dominated by fear, and a great deal of religion has been, and still is, an attempt to ward off the threats of the evil unknown—little more in fact, than enlightened superstition. But science had a similar origin. Medical science, which has advanced directly in relation to the fear of death, is an instance. In spite of its great benefits to mankind, it has often had the effect of making men earth-bound instead of relating them to the heights, which is the true source of healing. The same applies to other aspects of science. Science, which sought to rid men of primitive fear, and which certainly has brought enlightenment, is now threatening them with the same, or even worse, fears.

Men have sought in various ways to free themselves from bondage to fear and its torments. One method commonly adopted is that of indifference or complacency, through which a man allows himself to be content with a meaner, more commonplace state of existence, immune to the heights and depths of spiritual experience. The cult of indifference has been highly developed in our modern civilization—it has become a dominating characteristic of the Western world, a concomitant of capitalism with its essentially materialistic interpretation of life and its deliberate damping-down of the fires of the spirit in the soul of man. It is, in fact, the counterpart to the liberal attitude towards life which civilization tends so strongly to induce. Indifference is the condition which arises when a man allows himself to be immersed in the temporal and transitory, deliberately immunizing himself against the call and challenge of the Spirit, or permitting only so much of the spiritual world to penetrate his own as will not disturb his equanimity on a purely mundane plane. The indifferent man seeks the comforts and consolations of religion but tries to defend himself against its totalitarian demands. In its extreme forms indifference entails treating religion as a soporific—the cessation of all yearning for the incisiveness of the Spirit or of feeling any awe before the celestial mystery. Rationalism is closely akin to the mood of indifference because through rationalism a man feels able to banish the discomfiting sense of mystery that always lurks at the heart of the universe, convincing himself that it will ultimately yield up its secrets to the advancements of reason. One of the greatest temptations to which the human spirit is exposed is that of seeking the flat plains of experience where he can live in complacent satisfaction.

Shield of Indifference

Indifference is the shield which a man uses to hide from his view both the terror and the challenge of life. Modern man, especially in the Western world, has become an adept in this use of indifference as a shield. He has sought to find his contentment and peace of mind by escaping the inward depths of experience and living on the surface, satisfied with what this material world of ours has to offer. A great deal of modern Christianity is immersed in the cult of indifference. It seeks to protect man from the realistic recognition of the tragic battle between good and evil, to save him from the despair to which the fact of evil threatens to expose him, and from the spiritual heights of experience to which the prophetic spirit would lead him.

The prophet is often such an apparently tragic figure because he enters life at its most acute point—at the very point where the struggle between good and evil, life and death, is being fought out at its fiercest. Thus he strides into this field of indifference and complacency with a sword of fire to proclaim its falsity and its fraud. He seeks to tear down

the veil of illusion and deception behind which man would hide himself from the essential conflicts of life. He reveals the unrealities and seeks to bring man into direct contact with the source of all being, to bring him again into contact with God, who alone is the source of life.

The prophetic spirit is the spirit of expectancy, the spirit which truly awaits Christ's coming on earth and which truly anticipates the transformation of all things, stirring mankind out of its lethargy and indifference into a recognition that men are citizens of a kingdom which is not of this world and yet according to whose values they are called to live even in this world.

Several of Jesus' sayings awaken this sense of expectancy. Think, for instance, of the thief who came in the night when he was least expected, or of the prince who went away from his land and gave the territory over to his assistants, entrusting each with the care of part of his estate. Each servant is expected to administer the property in such a way that he can give an account of his affairs at any time, for the prince may return unexpectedly. Therefore Jesus warns his hearers not to be taken unawares.

Absolute Life of the Kingdom

So, too, the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is for those who live in accordance with the spirit of prophecy—who really expect the coming of this kingdom on earth. The Sermon on the Mount reveals the *absolute* life of the kingdom of God. It proclaims a message which is the opposite of the *relative* life of this world. Christ brings fire down on earth, and everything which men esteem, their vaunted civilizations with all their paraphernalia, perish in that fire. What Jesus proclaims entails the most thorough-going reassessment of values in the whole of history. It literally turns the world's values upside down, and requires a 'wholly other' basis of life.

Jesus calls those blessed who know that all things must be given them as a grace, those whose entire longing is for righteousness, those who are full of love and mercy, those who are resolute, single-minded, and pure. These are they whom he sends out as salt in the world, as light to shine in the darkness. These are they in whom the prophetic spirit is embodied.

The world needs liberation from its bondage—from its abject fears, its indifference, and its complacency. Men need to be summoned back to the recognition of their calling as children of God. But only those can help to transform the world who die to themselves that Christ may live in them and speak through them. His is the prophetic voice which the world so desperately needs in our day.

LIFE-COMMUNITY

A POWER WE SEEK

EBERHARD ARNOLD *spoke the following words in 1933 when the brotherhood at the Rhön Bruderhof in Germany was considering the character of the church-community. We believe it throws light on what was experienced by those who joined the community this Easter-time twenty-four years later and whose statements appear in the next article.*

Our community has a special task, a life task. We are not simply a colonizing society, intent on founding a new village settlement, as if without a new one being started there were not enough villages where people stand in just the same relationship to each other—close or distant—as anywhere else. We do not aim at a general community of mankind that would bring all men together in community *as they are*. If we had wanted to found a community based on interrelationships, each of us could have stayed where he was, for there are people to be found everywhere. And we find here people who are no better than elsewhere—and no worse. We find people here, and we found them there. If we had thought that community was merely fellowship among people, then we need not have come to the bruderhof. We could have found that anywhere. But we should also have failed anywhere, for all attempts founded on the present state of men must fail. Such attempts are bankrupt right from the beginning; they are not capable of true community.

Even the smallest form of community, that between husband and wife, arising from the love of a young man for a young woman, proves itself in only the rarest instances to be a true spiritual community continuing into old age. This is an established fact among all deep-thinking people. How much less possible is it then to find true community, unity, true brotherhood, mutual help, and a sense of the common task in a larger group of people where the bonds of Eros are lacking. It will be impossible. As it is now proving impossible with National Socialism, so it was previously with Socialism. As long as interests coincide, things will go all right, but as soon as conflicts arise through the self-seeking spirit, the masses will be against the bosses, the bosses against the masses, the masses against the masses, and the bosses against the bosses, so that we are presented with the shocking picture of society as it is today. We don't want to repeat this in our community life. Our community doesn't exist to bring about a merger of human relationships based on the present state of mankind and of human nature. . . .

What we believe in is a religiously based community, one that rests not upon human character and human 'being' but upon the eternal character of the Divine Being, a community which is fed by divine strength and which comes to true unity in God not by reason of individual strength or by the collective strength of many, but through power given from above, from the divine world. That is our faith. . . .

No one can enter such a community just for the sake of friendly associations. It won't work. It is impossible. It will definitely fail. A person can enter such a community only if he is searching for its spiritual secret, if he loves and seeks it with his whole heart, with his whole soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength. It is not necessary to understand this secret, for when you really get down to it, no one can do that. Understanding and being able to express everything are not required. Only one thing is necessary: to seek this spiritual secret with one's whole heart and with one's whole love.

The Power of Love and Unity

It is a simple fact that many who have come to us have not understood anything of religious terms, but they have understood the social element of the life. True social justice, true brotherhood, true unity, true social uniting have been their highest concern. In this sense they have longed for it with their whole heart and have sought for its spiritual secret. And they belong to us in spite of the fact that they could not accept religious terms. It is not any kind of dogma, a stringing together of religious precepts, that we have in mind, but a power which we all have to seek together, a primary power. We must feel what the essence of this power is, namely, love and unity, the love and unity which reach out to the frontiers of life and creation and work. The person who is seeking for this with his whole heart should stay with us. . . .

The person who lives among us seeking his personal happiness, his personal blessedness, his personal salvation, will not stand firm. Only he will stand firm who desires above all things the cause of justice, love, and peace for all peoples, the cause of brotherhood for all classes and all conditions of men in all parts of the world. Only he who wishes to see the victory of the reign of God as the reign of love and unity, and who has lost himself completely in this desire, will be able to remain true to the Church of Jesus Christ. Such a man will be able to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and in him will be fulfilled the words, 'and all else shall be added unto you'. For the kingdom of God does not consist of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

A NEW DIRECTION IN LIFE

At Easter this year twenty-two members entered the brotherhood in our various communities. Of the eight who joined at the Wheathill Bruderhof, three were children of the community between eighteen and twenty years of age, the others ranged from twenty-five to fifty-eight years. By nationality, they were American, English, Dutch, and German. The following statements, which were made at the Easter morning breakfast held in the Wheathill dining-hall, express something of what this experience meant to them.

Claus: This morning those of us who have recently been accepted into the brotherhood would like to say what has urged us to take this step. When eight people take this step together—eight different characters, very different indeed, from different nationalities, different backgrounds and ages—when they all find the same way, look towards the same goal, have the belief that they must go the way of the Church-community for the rest of their lives, then it is an occasion of great joy for us. And so it would be good if each would tell what has urged him to take an entirely new direction in life.

The Gospel in daily Work

Ulrich: My childhood and youth were probably very little different from those of children in any well-to-do family in Germany. By calling I am an agriculturist. I have worked in Germany and in Central America, and during the war I was a soldier for some years. I was never attached to any church and never had affiliation to any Christian people. Before, during, and after the war I saw much social need and misery and I often thought about it, wondering why it was so and what the solution was.

The time after the war was particularly decisive in my life as I recognized that there were people who, in spite of shattering experiences, were still able to hold firmly to each other—people who still had hearts and were ready to help. Having had to leave my farm and property in the East, I was then living in Frankfurt-am-Main and, with everyone else, was under the materialistic pressure and influence of the ever-increasing masses in the big cities, all struggling to establish an economic basis for their existence. In this situation a call came to me from another world—that is how I can describe it today. I read a newspaper article about the bruderhof. It was a short article, mentioning the communities in England and South America, and it spoke of a life in unity, a natural life where folk found their way together in the manner of the early Christians. Through a friend of mine I then got in touch with two of the members of the bruderhof who were in Germany at

that time, and later I decided to go over to England for a visit. It was entirely different from anything I had experienced before, and it took me some time to get adjusted, but the warm interest and participation in my life-story as I told it one evening at table broke down all barriers and I was soon able to understand enough of the basis of the communal life to say that I wanted to come and join. I came back with my wife and family next summer, and we soon noticed that there was much more than I had experienced in my first visit. I found that it wasn't just that the basis of the life was proclaimed at the common meetings but that each one sought with much earnestness to carry out the precepts of the Gospel in his daily work. This was such a wonderful thing that I decided to ask for the novitiate—after I had experienced the usual ups and downs that everyone goes through who comes here. It was a hard decision because I knew it was a final break with the old life and there was no going back. But today I can say that the time in the novitiate was a fine time because of the help we received to understand the basis of communal life more deeply. I should also like to say how really thankful I am that I have been shown this way. These are no empty words for I do not think it was just a coincidence that I found that newspaper article. I believe it was a leading, and I hope that the strength will always be given me to lead this life to the end.

Born in Community

Clare: I was born in the community, so that my way to joining the church has been somewhat different. When I was nine or ten years old, a group of us children in the Primavera community in Paraguay, got together to try to do what we believed to be right and good, for instance, if someone was being untruthful we tried to get it clear amongst ourselves. We also used to read things together, and at one time were quite stirred by the fairy-tales of Ernst Wiechert. A few years later I felt very much that I wanted to take more part in the experiences of the Church-community and so I asked if I could go to the inner meetings.

We enjoyed our children's group very much and we all left school full of enthusiasm to help in the practical work. At that time I used to think about such questions as: What is community; what should be the centre of our lives; what is the aim of our community? I discovered that Christ was at the centre of the Church-community and I thought a lot about the fact that community can exist only if each person lives wholly for Christ. It was then I decided to ask for the novitiate. The last two lines of the song we sing: '*Es zieht ein Brausen durch die Zeiten*' ('A gale is raging through our times'), became very important to me just then:

*He who, dying, interceded for us,
Now, living, shall be our Master.*

At that time there was a lot of talk in the community about sending people out on mission and a great deal of this was actually done in North America. I felt that we young people ought to try to take on more responsibility so that the older people could be freed for mission.

The eighteen months I spent in Bristol, where I began my nursery-school training course here in England, was a great experience for me. This was my first real contact with the world and although I can say I did not experience anything I was not prepared for, yet many things did shock me, particularly with regard to my work. The children came from very poor circumstances and most of them were illegitimate. The experience I had had as a girl of fifteen returned with renewed force at this time. The social need made Christ very real to me, and that is why, at the beginning of this year, I decided to give my life completely to the way of the Church-community. In these last weeks before Easter I have felt very strongly that Christ is our centre and must always be.

Change of Purpose

Claus: When you have joined the community and look back you are amazed at the devious ways you have travelled to get here. If you come from outside to the community, you usually have had quite different ideas and thoughts about life, and about your own life and the way you want to go. For instance, when we were in Germany with the Brothers of the Common Life, just over a year ago, Alfred and I thought that about this time we should be somewhere in the Far East! Or, if I look further back to my time as a school-boy and student, I used to say to myself: 'See to it that you make the best out of your life; you must enjoy all the beauties and greatness of it as a young man should'. So I chose my profession where my work was to play! I became a 'cellist. I thought that I should have the most interesting friends, read the best books, see the best plays, hear the best concerts, and try to see as much of the world as possible. Up to a certain point I managed to do this, but really I achieved nothing, for I found myself adding one desire after another and so I ended up in boredom and dissatisfaction.

Then something new and strange happened in our family. My sister, who up till then had had the same ideas about life, suddenly gave up all this outer seeking and found something quite new. She discovered for herself the purpose and goal of life and gave herself completely to following Jesus Christ. My first reaction was, of course, the usual ridicule, but her attitude to this, her real conviction and her love showed me how small were the things for which I was striving and how great was that which my sister had found. I often thought, 'What is this power which has made her so different—so new?' And through the answers she gave me I was led to the New Testament and to faith in Christ. Then I joined with the Brothers of the Common Life and

found what the vision and the breadth, and also the practical expression and working-out of the life of discipleship of Jesus really meant.

The culmination of these two factors in my life, the personal example of my sister and the influence of the Brothers of the Common Life, I believed prepared the ground in me so that when I came here I was able to accept the message of the bruderhof-community. I was able to see that it was not idealism nor anything of an outer, material nature which led men to community, but that it really was the power of the living Spirit of Christ which changes men and makes it possible for them to live together. It was then through the picture of the community—the unity in all life-questions, the complete will and determination that God's will should be lived out among men in all their human relationships—that I recognized that this Way was also my way. But, finally, one feels, over and over again, that it is only because the living Christ gives us his Spirit and wants to make us completely new that we have the strength to follow this way. So lastly we all have to thank him alone.

The Struggle to become whole

Rachel: I was sixteen when I first made up my mind to go this way for the rest of my life. It is difficult to explain this step—I simply knew that it was right. It was the rightness of the way that convinced me rather than a reaction against any other way of living. I studied one year at an art school, which was quite an eye-opener, and although I enjoyed the work thoroughly I decided to follow it up with two years at a domestic science college. There I found the day-to-day life rather dull and so spent much of my scanty leisure time reading. I wanted to learn about other people's lives and was surprised to find how many authors had similar thoughts about the purpose of life. John Steinbeck wrote in the *Grapes of Wrath* about a poor country parson who '... says one time he went out in the wilderness to find his own soul, an' he foun' he didn' have no soul that was his'n. Says he foun' he jus' got a little piece of a great big soul. Says a wilderness ain't no good 'cause his little piece of a soul wasn't no good 'less it was with the rest an' was whole.' Even Van Gogh seems to have had a similar vision when he tried to live communally with his painter friends, although it was a miserable failure. Wolfgang Borchert was almost in despair because of the terrible experiences he went through in Germany during the last war, and he wrote feverishly right to the end of his short life—he died when he was only twenty-six. But in his last essay, written in hospital, he made an urgent appeal to build up something positive and whole in place of all the separation and destruction. He wanted us to say, Yes, instead of, No. Then there was also Laurens van der Post, who from his experience in Africa felt how all the separation between men comes to its crudest

expression in the antagonism between white and black. But he felt this need not be, but that if only men would find God they would find each other.

I, too, had a similar experience, just momentarily. I was out on a walk near college when suddenly I came across a beautiful fir tree—the sun was just setting behind its branches. It was perfect, and I felt forcibly that men by nature really jar with creation, and that creation hasn't found its fulfilment. I felt very strongly that one day all creation will be in harmony, and this will include all men. I realized then that it isn't sufficient to give up one's life and property but it is essential to become whole and single-minded and in harmony with God's will.

I must admit that I found college life rather unsatisfying and half-alive. But it was just through this I began to realize that, although on the surface it was all right—the girls were very kind—underneath there was a basic splitting-up, one person against another.

It was very much under the impression of this struggle to become whole and single-minded that I came home after I had finished my training. I have realized particularly lately, in our talks together and in the inner meetings we have had, that Christ's way is one that demands one hundred per cent commitment—even ninety-nine per cent is not enough. Only this can lead to unity with God and men, the fulfilment of creation. It means suffering, but God will always be with us and will bring about this uniting and wholeness in his creation. And to this I want to dedicate my life.

Community with a Task

Alfred: I was seventeen when for the first time I was moved to think more deeply and to seek in some way as I had not previously done. This was the time in Germany after the war. I was an atheist, having been brought up in this way by my parents and also having experienced the Hitler regime, but I felt there must be something greater and deeper behind and above all this. Up till then I did not even believe that God existed. I had been opposed to Christianity and thought that it was something for elderly folk who were looking for consolation towards the end of their lives. The church interiors always struck me as being so dark! Like my friend Claus I had felt that life was something to be enjoyed, to do something with, and not meant for going to church and missing everything interesting. But, as I said, when I was seventeen I experienced something different. During the flight from the approaching armies at the end of the war, several times I experienced a preservation from death and injury which I could not explain naturally. Also, during this period, I lived in an isolated village in Bavaria where there was practically nothing going on; there were no pleasures—no cinema, no books, in fact nothing of that which so far I had been seeking. I had

nothing but my own resources and Nature around me. Then I began to think about life and realized that a life which consisted merely of work and earning one's living had no meaning or content and could never satisfy. About this time I met some young people who were really convinced about Christ and were seeking for some deeper content to life. They seemed to have something I hadn't. I came to accept their faith in Christ, but then I was not satisfied just to carry on with my old life, earning my living, living for myself. I began to think a lot about mission work.

Then I met the Brothers of the Common Life and decided to join them. Before this I had heard of a place where families lived in community, but no one seemed to know where it was. In a certain way I found what I was seeking in the communal life of the Brothers, but I was more interested in mission than in community life. So Claus and I came to Wheathill a year ago, but only to learn English. The first things we noticed were the outer things—how natural and genuine everything was, how lacking in artificiality. But soon we realized there was more, that the basis of the life was the discipleship of Christ and that everyone was very much in earnest about this. I must admit that to begin with I did not feel challenged. I thought, 'These people have the same recognitions as I do, but I see the way differently'. I thought people here were living in community just for themselves, without a task.

But it soon became clear that the Bruderhof community had *the* task. Then we really began to get to grips with the message that was being proclaimed. After a further week we began taking part in the inner meetings, and we often talked together long into the night. What impressed me most was the thought that a communal life can be not just for a few but for all conditions of life. I must say that only in these last weeks have I understood properly what Jesus meant when he said, 'Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple', and also understood the story of the rich young ruler and the life of the early Christians. I realized how incompletely we had thought about our mission task—that we certainly wanted to share everything with one another, but did not see this as an essential condition for Christian discipleship. What has been very important for me is the deep sense of unity here which comes to expression in the practical life of faith, the fact that everyone really knows everyone else and takes part in everything. I could say a lot more—that here the important thing is the Church-community, that here you do not just believe with your heart and otherwise take part in the competitive struggle for existence. We have seen here that this is the Way to which Christ has called us and all men. I must say that now I see the task as greater than I ever saw it before.

Complete Surrender to Christ

Mary: I see how different we are, those of us who have come here. That is why it is such a miracle.

I learned to know Christ at a very early age because I had believing parents who taught me their way. Now, on this Good Friday, I have promised to be faithful to the way of unity and community. . . . When we read that day Jesus' words of farewell to his disciples—where he says that if in faith we ask anything in his name he will do it, then, at that moment, it was as if all the years between had fallen away, for when I was very young I prayed a prayer in Jesus' name and asked him to make it possible for me to follow him fully. And it moves me deeply that now he has really answered this prayer and brought me here, because, although I always tried to follow him, there was never the possibility of a complete surrender to Christ and his Church in present-day society.

I too can remember a moment like the one of which Rachel spoke, when I saw a beautiful sunset which moved me deeply and re-awakened my love to Christ so that I promised to surrender to him even my dearest wishes. Not that it was really I who kept this promise—I don't believe we human beings can—but I do believe that Christ has held me to it, and that is why I feel so strongly it is he who has brought me here.

In Holland I belonged to a group of 'brothers' who said they wanted to live like the early Christians. . . . They certainly understood much in the Bible and I learned a lot about it while I was with them. But when I grew up I saw that their life was not in accordance with what they taught. As they did not actually live in community there were differences among them, some were rich and some were poor, and they had no real unity. I wanted to be in the Church of Christ like the early Christians.

During the last years of the war and afterwards, something happened in the Reformed Church in Holland which did not happen in our group. A new movement arose because many of the Christians had been together in concentration camps and there had experienced the coming of something new into their lives. So they started a movement, 'Church and World', which was concerned with home mission, where youth leaders and social workers and even evangelists were trained, and there was really new life in it at the beginning. So I went to work there for some years and joined the church, and I really have the best memories of it. But it happened that I, who thought I should always remain there and felt I belonged there, lost my job because the new matron did not wish to work with me. That shows what was wrong—there was no real life-community. It was here I heard about the *bruderhof*.

It has still been a long way to the day before yesterday when I became a member of this Church-community, for it is not an easy life, and it is very difficult to become completely free of oneself. I kept thinking I belonged to Christ already and he had helped me throughout my whole life, and so why must I go to the bruderhof community? I was also very afraid that I might be disappointed again and I watched critically to see whether I should find here a group that said it had the truth but didn't practise it. Therefore I left after my first visit of half a year, but the thought of the bruderhof never left me. I said to everyone, These people do what they say. So after much correspondence I returned here last year. This time I came with the idea of really becoming a member and not looking back any more. But I must say, although I had resolved to join, my resolution has gone up and down. I know, however, that throughout Christ has remained victor and has now given me the certainty that this is the way he wants me to go with his Church. And I hope that the strength will be given me to remain true to the Church and to follow Christ with a joyful heart.

The Way of Fulfilment

David: So, the time is getting on now. That is very convenient as my life isn't so long. I came to the bruderhof through no choice of my own, but I am very glad that I came!

The first struggle I had to face to join in with the community was at the age of twelve or thirteen. In the bruderhof school, our class, which was quite a mixed bunch, tried to form a group like the one Clare mentioned. It seems to be rather characteristic of bruderhof children. We didn't know, of course, they were doing the same thing in Paraguay—it was entirely off our own bat. Our aim was to be together harmoniously and if there were difficulties to get them out of the way. It wasn't always easy and we often had rows, but it was very worth-while.

When some years later I asked for the novitiate it was almost a step in the dark. I knew the way was right but I couldn't see it very clearly at the time. When I went to college things began to go home to me and I saw the way much more clearly. The boys there didn't seem to have any real aim in life and seemed only concerned with farming. This was something I couldn't stand, I wanted a purpose in life. I used to talk to the boys about our way of life at the bruderhof but it was mostly a matter of curiosity on their part. They were very friendly but it was not possible to get down to things. Religion was a thing to joke about and they didn't take it seriously, so I held back.

I was asked in these last weeks whether I should like to have a farm of my own, but that doesn't appeal to me in the least—it is the last thing I want to do. I want something that can really fill my life so that I can work for other men as well as myself. And that is what the bruderhof

has given me—I am glad it is here and I can give my life to such work. The way has certainly been shown to me and I feel I have found a real fulfilment of what Christ wanted me to do. That is why I am here now.

Concern for Social Need

Mary Ann: I think it is not only the bruderhof children who come together. While in America I experienced coming together in many groups, but each for a different activity, and the members were for the most part unknown to each other. There was nothing to tie all those people together, and I felt unsatisfied. No one activity was sufficient to surrender oneself to wholly, not even the family. I was giving my energies in many directions but never with a sense of complete fulfilment of whatever purpose there might be in living. And this showed itself in a restless change of activity and a seeking for more real satisfactions in life.

I was concerned about the social need in the world. Economically, the most serious need is surely in countries other than America, but there too are very poor and very rich, and the racial problem is severe. These things concerned my husband and me very much, and it was in groups that sought to relieve social distress that we felt some hope of fulfilling our own lives.

Among other things I worked in nursery schools with groups of mothers who were trying to care for their children in the right way. The trouble was that there wasn't any such thing as 'the right way'. Everyone agreed to disagree. They—and I—thought that truth was relative. I remember a course at the University of California in which the professor tried daily for twenty weeks to persuade us that the good was in the end to do what you yourself wanted.

Nonetheless, after getting disillusioned over all the idealistic ways of service tried so far, we found ourselves, along with a lot of other young people who were trying to find a new way, in a 'cooperative community', and in California it appeared that many people were interested in such projects. We got together with them in talks, visits, conferences, and even—through a duplicated letter—tried to keep in touch with similarly concerned people all through the United States. In this paper at one time there was a long letter from the Wheathill Bruderhof, and this I didn't understand at all. It seemed too mystical. But finally, after an unsuccessful community experiment that we entered with other families, we were going to try to find our way back into 'ordinary life'. But before doing that we decided to visit Wheathill.

I was terribly discouraged at the thought of returning to the old ways and was very happy indeed to find new hope, for here I saw a new relationship between people, one that was so different and so genuine that I felt that I must really find out how it was done. I found they

believed that there was a final truth which was real and which had its expression in the way of love, that this was taught us by Jesus, and that his message really encompassed our every need. I had a lot of economic, sociological, and other intellectual baggage with me, and this had to be brought out to test the new ideas. But nothing seemed to give answers to the important problems in life as this way did. There was no doubt that all these other kinds of knowledge did help, but they were not an end in themselves but to be used in the service of something—something so great that it is worth giving one's life to.

I began to realize that Americans, at least, don't seem to like looking at anything but the potential good in man, and tend to ignore the evil motivation that comes out of each one. It is only when we face up to this squarely that we are prepared to see life realistically, not idealistically. This was another important thing I learned in community.

I think that is really all I wanted to say except that I am very, very thankful that I have come and that we are on our way together.

THE GATE

No one compels you, traveller;
this road or that road, make your choice!
Dust or mud, heat or cold,
fellowship or solitude,
foul weather or a fairer sky,
the choice is yours as you go by!

But here if you would take this path
there is a gate whose latch is love,
whose key is single and which swings
upon the hinge of faithfulness,

and none can mock, who seeks this way,
the king we worship shamelessly.
If you would enter, traveller,
into this city fair and wide,
it is forever and you leave
all trappings of the self outside.

J.T.C.

BROTHERHOOD IN INDIA

Many political and large-scale attempts are being made to tackle India's great social problems, and at the same time small groups of Christians have begun to witness to the uniting power of Christ. The *bruderhof* has always felt a close tie with such communities and this has been strengthened by the visits of a number of Indian friends to Wheathill and an active correspondence and exchange of publications. Among our friends is K. K. Chandy, a founder-member of a community in South India and editor of *Arunodayam*, recently become the organ of the Fellowship of Reconciliation as well as being the voice of the Christavashram community.

K. K. Chandy visited Wheathill five years ago on his way to the United States, where he made a lecture tour for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. During his short stay with us he told something of his boyhood days when he was already concerned about the things that separated man from man. Indians and Europeans, he saw, worshipped in different buildings of the same church. He was aware of the many social evils that existed and later in his student days he felt he should devote his life to helping the uncared-for waifs so numerous in Indian cities—children who were nobody's responsibility, who lived as best they could, eating from dust-bins and refuse heaps, who were wild and distrustful and therefore difficult to approach and befriend.

Chandy's concern led to the foundation of the Kerala Balagram, a home for destitute and delinquent children, in 1934. The home is now run by the Christavashram and he told us how hard the beginnings had been and that often they had not known where the next meal would come from, but even so the children would go without their mid-day meal once a week in order to provide something for others in need.

The following is based on a report from K. K. Chandy giving some account of the Christavashram community with its combination of social and spiritual message.

The Christavashram began in 1940 in the Kerala State of South India. Now there are eight *Sevaks* (Members) and nine Associates, who have committed themselves 'to witness to Christ's message of the kingdom of God through worship, study, work, and service.' The celibate life of the Indian Ashrams with its emphasis on meditation, prayer, and intercession is a part of the life, but besides the unmarried members there are several married couples and they 'seek to offer a social pattern in which the ordinary temptations and difficulties of the average householder in conforming to the standards of Jesus in a work-a-day world are met and overcome in Christian community living. While the Ashram strives not to be "of the world" it seeks to be concerned about the world in the spirit of the incarnation of Christ.'

'The Christavashram believes that the church of Christ in India can render the ministry of proclaiming the gospel effectively only by

commending itself as the undivided body of Christ and by seeking to realize the unity of the spirit through the corporate witness of its members belonging to various denominations. In a setting as in India where social, economic, and religious barriers divide man from man, and poverty and suffering is rampant, the Ashram wants to function as a centre of reconciliation and healing. At a time when youth is carried away by anti-religious and materialistic programmes and philosophies, the Ashram seeks to help young men and women by harnessing their energies to the ends of God's kingdom and his righteousness. The spirit of the early Christian church which was characterized by its love and unity of spirit and which had all things in common, its attitude of detachment to possessions and concern for each other, and its emphasis on truth and non-violence give inspiration to the community.

'The boys' home is run by the Ashram, helped by an advisory committee of Christian, Hindu, and Muslim friends. There are fifty boys, including ten senior boys who are on a colonization project on a fifty-acre plot given by the Kerala government. Each of the three cottages at the home has a "family" of two wardens and about fourteen children. The younger boys attend a nursery school which is open to the children from the nearby village. After nursery-school age, the boys go to schools outside. There is an industrial school run by the Balagram with ten looms for cotton weaving. There is scope for agriculture and cattle-raising and each cottage has a poultry farm attached. Emphasis is given to community living—common worship, community work, study and common meals. About 250 boys have gone out trained. Interest is taken in after-care and contact is maintained as far as possible with boys discharged.'

An activity planned to begin this summer is the *Gurukula*—a training centre 'for Christian life and work in an Ashram setting especially for young people. The study outline based on the general theme "The Kingdom of God" is to consist of biblical, historical, and social studies. Besides the study programme, there will be participation by the trainees in common worship, community manual labour, social service activities and parish visits. It is hoped that the *Gurukula* will help young people to have a vocational attitude to life and enable them to dedicate themselves to life and work in Ashrams or as groups to venture out on fellowship lines for Christian witness in different parts of India and outside.'

In conclusion, K. K. Chandy expresses the Christavashram's unity with the Inter-Ashram Conference in the urge to make the standards and values of the kingdom of God relevant to present society. This year at the Christu Sishya Ashram, Tadagam, the following message was adopted by a conference representing ten Ashrams.

A Message from the Inter-Ashram Conference:

In a world setting wherein conflict and tension characterize the relationships between nations, races and cultural groups, the prayer, 'Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven' assumes a new meaning and offers a challenge to all who are committed to the leadership of Jesus Christ and His way of love. The Christian Ashrams are called to be cells of the kingdom of God in India. We, the representatives of these Ashrams, are aware of our own failure to rise up to this great calling and to give of our love and fellowship to the Church and to be passionate for righteousness and justice especially for the poor.

We are also aware of our failure as members of the church of Christ and in his ministry of reconciliation. The inequalities and class-distinctions that characterize society as a whole often go unchallenged within the Christian churches. In the graded systems of pay among the clergy and workers, the lack of concern for the landless peasants and the unemployed, 'the respect of persons' on the basis of caste or social and economic status are all factors that make impossible the church being a leaven of the kingdom of God in society. While the churches, in their attachment to treasures on earth, are bereft of their prophetic fire (and often in the throes of litigation) God is raising persons and movements from outside their ranks to secure justice for the poor and to do the work of love and peace. At a time, when under the leadership of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, our village communities are concerned with the giving of their entire landed possessions for the common good and for the promoting the common life of the community the attitude of the church to property and possessions seems a far cry from the spirit of the 'community of goods' of the early church. We would urge for the serious consideration of all the fact of the movement of Vinobaji in our midst, and in particular would urge that the leaders in the church in south India and Kerala co-operate with this national movement for bringing about through love a juster social order. This would be all the more relevant in a context wherein communism may not hesitate if it considers it opportune to call the masses to violent revolution. . . .

We are thankful that the Spirit of God is moving Christian people in various parts of the world—China, Africa, America, Europe, Australia and Asia—to form themselves into various types of co-operative and intensive communities. We feel one with them in this urge to make the standards and values of the kingdom of God relevant to present society, and hope we may be growingly linked with them more vitally in a great world-wide, pioneering community of the Spirit.

FORUM

A Visit to Woodcrest

These are some of the pictures I carry away with me. . . .

Pictures of happy work, nowhere made so graphic as in the crayoned murals and cut-outs done by children of the primary grades now displayed on the walls of the schoolroom, which is serving also as the dining hall in the present emergency after the fire—murals of a wonderful gray building going up fast, with workers everywhere, on the roof, bending over to hammer, climbing ladders, carrying planks, and using various tools and equipment. The children have caught the spirit of the whole thing, with colour and vigorous action. The joy of hammering is somehow shown by the extended arm of a workman and the angle of his cap. The substantiality of the building is the outward and visible sign of another kind of building going on at Woodcrest that children sense and convey.

Then there is the 'Baby House', and what a place that is. You look into a room and see the plump rosy-cheeked members of the next bruderhof generation in their cosy world, learning the business of growing together and raising their voices in song. I went away humming 'Fingerlein'. . . . Later I saw Sarah Maendel, her black hair flying, pulling a wagonload of one-year-olds along the road to the main building . . . five babies in one wagon! Who ever saw a wagon that wide and sturdy and substantial? No one, outside Woodcrest. It was made in the workshop, home of Community Playthings, especially for these important members.

To live in community is not to deny the family. This one feels immediately in visiting families in their own units. The living-room is not a shrine to things. There are growing things, however—branches brought in from the out-of-doors, arrangements, a moss-garden, a pet chipmunk, a beleaguered but philosophical hamster (the one I saw spent part-time at school and part-time at home, doing his bit in each place). . . . But the most significant growing things are the family members as they spend their time together, warmly and naturally, without the barriers of adult status and preoccupation.

Another picture from Anne Gale's schoolroom may help to show what I mean, here. When children come in for the day's work they go to their activities without waiting for the adult to set the tone or the task. Three children came up to me, one to show me a lock and how it worked, two to have me see the white mice. A mouse was placed in my hand, and another one on my shoulder. I looked into the friendly eyes of their keepers. These eyes did not say, 'You are a grown-up and we hope you will scream', but, 'Here are our dear little mice, and isn't it

interesting how they feel to the touch, and what they will do?' Later these same children went to their desks, on their own initiative, with no apparent 'transition' necessary.

The fellowship of work-time, in the laundry, and of teatime with friends, was caught up again for me at the common meal-times, in the singing, and in so significant a way in the evening meetings, that I want to express further the meaning of this final 'picture'. To come in for a brief visit to the bruderhof is to become aware, immediately, of an atmosphere of community that is challenging on so many fronts at once that it is difficult to merge into this in an unself-conscious way. One brings along many habitual ways of responding that seem inappropriate or at least 'in the way'—the urgencies, little autonomies, plans and preoccupations of the outside world. These would probably cling to the 'outer man' long after the 'inner man' had opened doors to different ways of being, giving, and receiving.

There are also 'counter' ideas and thoughts that develop fast and contend with the ones posed by the experience of the bruderhof. The evening meetings make a place for the use of these ideas. The effect of this interchange is to begin to decrease, on both sides, the gulf between the smaller world and the larger one. It does this by creating a basis of wider community that exists wherever people are committed to seeing meanings together and admitting the 'unfinished' aspect of the whole of their spiritual strivings and social growth. At least this appears to me to be so about Woodcrest. If it were not so, you would not foster these situations where questions and ideas from many sources are given a place in your definition of community. This openness to change, or to assimilative fluidity, has something to do with the uses of diversity, and with our common ground of seeking and of humility.

It is a privilege, too, to be able to hear from visitors who bring information and modes of thinking from such diverse places as Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Forest River, North Dakota, and the Koinonia Community in Americus, Georgia. . . . Thank you for giving me these pictures, these 'unfinished' thoughts, and good fellowship, all making up an acquaintance that is much more than passing.

Connecticut, U.S.A.

A.K.

Heaven as Pattern of Earth

I was very interested in the article on the *Divine Comedy*. So much has been written on Dante (more, I believe, than on any other single writer not excepting Shakespeare and Goethe) that it is difficult, if not impossible, to say anything that has not been said somewhere before; on the other hand, there is a sense in which the works of great writers may be said to be always revealing themselves in a fresh light.

Unfortunately for me, I didn't 'discover' Dante, but studied him

as compulsory reading in the course of my Italian studies, so that it would be presumptuous to comment much on an article written by someone who has so obviously been moved by his genius. To my mind, though, Artur Mettler does pass rather lightly over Dante's rigid, mechanistic classification of the sinners in Hell—that is, that aspect of Dante which one might call 'Dante the medieval Catholic' (although admittedly more than one Pope is to be found there!). Then there is the sentence 'He has a fellow-feeling for people in Hell' which would seem to me to need some qualification—I can think of at least two incidents where his attitude to the sinner seems harsh, if not cruel. But all this is mere carping, for as Artur Mettler says, one must take the work as a whole. It is certainly refreshing to read an article on Dante which is not a mere scholastic conceit or intellectual exercise, and it has made me resolve to read the *Divine Comedy* again—which is perhaps the best that could be said for any article on Dante.

Edinburgh

L.M.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

NORTH AMERICA

A lake-side hotel not far from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has become the new home of our Forest River Community. At the inter-bruderkhof conference in Paraguay at the end of last year the future of our work in the United States was considered and it was realized that for a number of reasons it would be better to move from Forest River in North Dakota to a larger place in the Middle West or the Northeast. The new place, now known as Oak Lake, stands at a height of some 2,200 feet in 112 acres, mainly woodland, including a large lake.

The change will mean quite a new way of living for the members from Forest River. On the prairie of North Dakota they farmed 7,000 acres and those who had been members of the Hutterian colony came from families who had been farmers for generations. In this new community there is a boathouse on the lake shore adequate for a workshop and it is planned to use this to extend the manufacture of Community Playthings at present carried on at Woodcrest. This will facilitate coverage of a wider area, including Chicago and Pittsburgh.

Forest River was too remote from the main centres of activity in the United States and the accommodation was already full to capacity. The work proved to be too time-consuming during summer months—the only time when guests could come because of the severe winter.

At the end of June, members of the Forest River Community who had moved temporarily into an hotel near New York joined with the group at Woodcrest for a love meal of thanksgiving and hope for the future. The new task at Oak Lake began on July 15th.

THE RHÖN BRUDERHOF

After ten years of legal negotiations, a settlement for compensation for the former Rhön Bruderhof property in Germany was made in June this year. In the following article, HANS ZUMPE recalls the final chapter in the history of the Rhön. It was twenty years ago that community life came to an end on the property and the events of that time are described in a statement by DR O. S. EISENBERG, a German lawyer, who, in Nazi times, helped Jews and others suffering under persecution. He was present at the auction of the Rhön Bruderhof.

The End of a Chapter

Exactly ten years ago I set foot on German soil again after years of life abroad. The Bruderhof community was planning at that time to help German war orphans and over a hundred displaced persons from the East. We felt impelled to do our part to overcome the distress of the post-war period because, in spite of our losses in Germany and our emigration with all its difficulties, God in his goodness had not only preserved us all but had allowed us to continue uninterruptedly in different countries the community life started in Germany. Other people who were not made to leave the country lost their lives in concentration camps or gas chambers. It was just at this time that the law was being drafted for the restitution of Christian and Jewish properties confiscated by the National Socialist State.

Since then, year after year, negotiations have taken place to get back the property stolen from us by the Nazis. Whereas the specifically Jewish communities had almost no difficulty in getting their property returned promptly, our case was postponed again and again, and the authorities at Kassel concerned with the case brought forward remarkable objections. It would take many pages if I were to go into the details of these ten-year-long negotiations. Actually, the situation was well expressed on the 14th of December, 1955, in the debate in the *Bundestag* on the restoration of confiscated property. (I quote the summary given in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of the 22nd of December.)

'Doubtless many of the discrepancies we have deplored in the application and interpretation of the law have their origin in technical mistakes in drawing up the statutes. This is no reproach to the ability or conscientiousness of those who worked at it, but we have to consider that never in history has a mass crime carried with it restitution on such a scale. . . . In spite of all the precise and unequivocal wording of the law, can we guarantee that bad will, indifference, and lack of love will not ruin what was intended in good faith? . . . Of course, this hangs together with the fact that it is not pleasant to look at the evidences of crime committed by one's own people. Yet one might have expected that after the breakdown of the National Socialist State the feeling of millions of Germans would

have been much more sympathetic towards the victims of persecution, and that rather than talking so much about their own suffering from nights of bombing and the misery of having to flee, they would, in the first place, have commiserated with those who had had to suffer terrible adversity through our guilt and criminal action.'

After negotiations lasting over a period of years, and following an inspection of the former Rhön Bruderhof property, we have recently decided to come to an amicable settlement with the present owner of the land, that is, to be satisfied with a small sum in compensation, thereby renouncing all future claims. This proposal was agreed to by both parties, and thus the whole subject of restitution was finished with for us. But we are very glad that in the negotiations it was clearly stated by the court that right was entirely on our side, and that it is now proved that we were victimized by the National Socialist State.

The Rhön Bruderhof was founded thirty years ago, following the community's first years in Sannerz. Twenty years ago the dissolution took place, and it has taken ten years to realize a sum of money so trivial that we could not even build a dwelling-house with it, whereas, after all, the Rhön Bruderhof had housed and provided occupation for up to 150 people. However, we are glad that this regrettable business thereby comes to an end, for we have been hampered again and again in all our plans in Germany, because we had reckoned with the possibility of being able to start there anew. . . . Of course we were conscious of the fact that the Rhön Bruderhof, like the present Sinntalhof, was relatively far from the centres of industry, and that consequently it would be difficult to come into regular contact with our friends except in the holiday period. For a long time we hoped to set up the present Sinntalhof together with the place at the Rhön to serve our common task. After the negotiations which we have reported we are faced with quite new considerations.

Since the time we were driven from the Rhön Bruderhof we have often had to start again, and have realized more and more that the common life is not tied to a definite place. Ever since then we have been fond of singing in our meetings an old German student song of the year 1819:

*We built up a house
that was stately and strong,
and there in God we trusted
in spite of wind and storm.*

*We lived there in friendship,
united and free,
the ill-disposed maligned us,
we lived too faithfully.*

*They lied and they sought
to deceive and ensnare,
they threatened, cursed, and slandered
the young seed, green and fair.*

*The life that God gave us
the world laughed to scorn,
and even good men doubted
the unity they saw.*

*They called it a crime
but deceived themselves sore.
The form—that can be shattered,
but love will still endure.*

*What though the house be ruined,
we count not the loss,
the spirit lives among us
and our stronghold is God.*

H.Z.

Legal Pretext for Dissolution

After the seizure of power by Hitler there were certain groups of people in Germany who had to reckon constantly with getting into difficulties with the authorities. These were the people whose principles made it impossible for them to follow the party line, either in inner or in practical matters. The members of the Rhön Bruderhof soon realized that the National Socialist government could not long tolerate their mode of life, simply because of their religious beliefs.

The first step towards the restriction of their intellectual and economic freedom was to close down the children's home and the bruderhof school, a step which was ordered after a search by the Gestapo from Kassel. As early as 1934 the remilitarization of Germany foreshadowed ill for the bruderhof since the government knew that the brotherhood was absolutely opposed to military service. This had been made quite clear in a written statement presented to the ministry from the members of the bruderhof in 1933.

Subsequently the publishing house was put under surveillance and the sale of books fell off accordingly, trade licences for the sale of wood turnery were refused and thus considerable extra income from these departments was lost. So from this time onwards the community of 150 people living on the sterile soil of the Rhön district had to depend on the produce of the land and on gifts from abroad. But as friends of the bruderhof in other countries did not want to keep pouring water down a hole, there was very little hope of receiving larger sums from this source. In particular instances the authorities also refused permission for the transfer of credits.

From this time on the bruderhof felt economically strangled, and then some of the mortgages were called in, even one which in the normal run of things was not terminable.

There was an attempt to bring about a forced sale of the property, but this was warded off by monetary help brought over from England. In the spring of 1937 the Gestapo aimed the decisive blow at the bruderhof. They made one of the main creditors sign a statement declaring that he felt himself defrauded because of an outstanding debt for groceries. At first he refused to do this, but he finally gave way under pressure. Consequently the members of the bruderhof council of management, Hans Meier, Hannes Boller, and Karl Keiderling, were arrested, taken to the court at Fulda, and imprisoned.

At the same time the Gestapo dissolved the Rhön Bruderhof under the law for the 'protection of people and State'. Strengthened by the local constabulary, they compelled the members to leave the place within twenty-four hours. They were allowed to take only hand luggage for themselves and the children. No consideration was shown even for mothers with tiny babies, and the costs of transport had to be borne by the community.

The members were taken under police guard to the Dutch frontier and regularly pushed over the border, although many were of German nationality and had never been guilty of any legal or political offence.

The situation of the men left behind in prison remained the same until a Dutch businessman, Frank Gheel van Gildemeester of The Hague, concerned himself about the matter at the request of Hans Zumpe. He had had extensive experience in the methods of releasing people who for political reasons had got into conflict with the governments of the day. He had worked successfully in this way in many European countries freeing those who, through no guilt of their own, had been caught in the political gristmill.

Van Gildemeester went to Hanau and succeeded in obtaining an interview with the state prosecutor. After convincing him that a political game was being played with the bruderhof representatives he got permission to visit them at the prison in Fulda. But before he did this he sought out the creditor concerned who explicitly withdrew his earlier statement signed under pressure and declared that it was only a question of money owing him and that he did not consider himself defrauded. Thereupon it was possible to get the judicial warrant of arrest rescinded so that the three men were set free. Meanwhile the Gestapo confiscated the furnishings of the Rhön Bruderhof, using them for their own purposes. After recuperating for a few days in Taunus away from the Gestapo headquarters at Kassel, the three freed members tried to get over the border as quickly as possible. They crossed the frontier secretly at a place which Gildemeester had described to them in detail.

Following this, the Rhön Bruderhof was put up for auction. The sale took place at the district court at Neuhoef. A member of the Gestapo sat beside the judge's table, a procedure which, even under the National Socialist regime, was quite unusual. The court set a very low price, but it would have been useless to protest. The Gestapo followed the procedure of the representative for the bruderhof very closely indeed, the more so because an objection had been raised against the auction.

The place itself was then parcelled into three single farms and the various lots went to different people who later took possession of the property. The outcome of it all was that a place which had been built up and equipped for 150 people began to fall into neglect because, of course, it had been originally planned for a community and not an ordinary farm.

DR O. S. EISENBERG

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

During these past months statements have been made by political and religious leaders, peace movements, and churches in the face of the threat of nuclear warfare. Have words ever been used in the past to such an extent to jolt the conscience of mankind? Have idealists ever been faced with such apathy before what they see to be impending mass suicide? Derek Wardle has expressed our attitude to the use of nuclear weapons in 'Britain and the "H" Bomb', but it is our conviction that only a revolutionary change in the lives of men and women can give any lasting witness to true peace and brotherhood. The practical significance of this change and the source of power that will make it possible are pointed in an article by Gwynn Evans, a former Congregational pastor who joined the bruderhof before the last war.

We feel it important to devote the greater part of this number to this theme, and we have linked these articles with the statements made by a group of new members in which they tell of their varied experiences which brought them to that radical change in their own lives. The basis of their new-found unity was aptly defined by Eberhard Arnold nearly twenty five years ago when the Nazi regime was in its beginning. In these last days Wheathill has had the joy of welcoming a further group of eleven new members—young and old, again of widely different backgrounds and nationality.

From time to time we have published articles about Christian communities in various parts of the world. In a report from India, K. K. Chandy now describes the foundation and life of the Christavashram.

It is only as we go to press that in the United States the move has been made from the Forest River Community in North Dakota to a new place near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A short news item is given in this number but a more detailed report will be published later.

The Great Article Book of the Hutterian Brothers was written by Peter Walpot in 1577. It presented the main principles of Hutterian belief and practice, point by point, and was substantiated by extensive quotations from the scriptures.

TRUE SURRENDER AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF GOODS

In the third Article, *Concerning True Surrender and Christian Community of Goods*, the sharing of property is shown to be the outcome of a brotherly love where no one withholds anything from another. This is not then a fetish, a special tenet of an extremist sect. It is the logical irresistible consequence of the overflowing love of Christ which motivates his disciples.

It has to be remembered that the sixteenth century was the time when the Bible was being newly discovered and was being searched with great eagerness for fresh revelations of the truth. Therefore the beliefs and practice set forth in this article are argued with a great forthrightness and zeal, which although it occasionally overreaches itself in finding Old Testament evidence of community of goods is in refreshing contrast to the indecisiveness of much Christian proclamation today.

The Article was published in the U.S.A. in the Mennonite Quarterly Review (January 1957) and has been reprinted for the Plough Publishing House. The translation is by Kathleen Hasenberg of Primavera, who has rendered the original German into the English style of the Authorised Version of the Bible. There is an introduction by Robert Friedmann.

Copies of this reprint (48 pp.) are available, price 1/—, from:

The Plough Publishing House,
Bromdon, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, England

Price in North America is 25c. from:

The Society of Brothers, Woodcrest, Rifton, N.Y.

The Addresses of the Bruderhof Communities

ENGLAND

Society of Brothers
Bromdon, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

U.S.A.

Society of Brothers
Woodcrest, Rifton, New York State

Society of Brothers
Oak Lake, Farmington, Pennsylvania

PARAGUAY

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Primavera, Alto Paraguay

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