

Eberhard Arnold

God's Revolution



Justice,
Community,
and the
Coming
Kingdom

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A Word to the Reader

What can I say about a book that has virtually turned my life upside down? At the time I first read *God's Revolution* I was part of a fledgling group of disenchanted Christians living together in inner-city Denver. We were tired of sermons and weary of professions of faith that went no further than personal edification. We were frustrated by the distinctions of class and rank that persisted in the church, despite Jesus' command to "give everything to the poor and follow me." We were sickened by escalating salaries of local mega-church pastors who preached the good life of the American dream instead of the gospel of justice, love, and the kingdom of God. We were disheartened that among so many "bible believing" Christians we knew, important social, economic, and political questions were dismissed as irrelevant, while at the same time communities, congregations, and marriages (including those of pastors) were falling apart. Finally, we were searching for a life where words could be matched by deeds – a community that was truly built on faith, hope, and love.

When I began reading *God's Revolution*, it was like experiencing redemption all over again. My heart literally pounded as I turned the pages. These were not just words, but a testimony based on experience. Arnold affirmed the certainties of my inward longing, and gave me hope that I could experience them as a reality in my life. His directness, especially, confronted me as I had never been confronted before: "So poorly have we Christians lived that the question must be asked: Are we Christians at all?"

The question still haunts me. For what does seeking the kingdom of God mean if we who call ourselves Christians are unwilling to “look to the future and shape our lives in accordance with it?” What is the gospel – the good news –and what difference does it make to go out and tell people about it, unless we can show the world what Arnold calls the “alternative reality” of the gospel in a viable, concrete way – a way that demonstrates “true unity among believers who are ready to live a life of unlimited, active love?”

Arnold witnesses to God’s uncompromising call to live *now* in accordance with the future kingdom of peace. To him, this call demands far more than simply praying and believing. He says that to be “faithful in our expectation of that day we must work faithfully toward it.” Such faithfulness implies constant change and constant struggle. The seeds of injustice, division, impurity, and all the rest lie in each one of our hearts. And the birth of God’s new order must be preceded by their death – by “the killing of selfishness, self-love, self-will, and self-importance.”

That is why Arnold’s book is such a challenge. For as badly derailed as this world is, and as irrelevant as so many of its churches are, I have to confess my own guilt for the confusion and disarray. What about the violence in my own heart? What about my own possessiveness, my self importance, my pet pursuits and good causes? Am I truly willing to become my brother’s keeper (and to let him become mine), and to submit myself in loving service to others? In short, am I willing to change?

As you read this book, be prepared to undergo a revolution; a transformation that “proves your readiness in the trivialities of daily life” and yet “does not stop at any boundary, least of all the boundary that divides the spiritual from the material.” Don’t read it cautiously, however, but expectantly, and embrace whatever upheaval it brings. Open your heart so that something entirely new and different can enter.

Charles Moore
1997

Introduction

Emmy Arnold stood outside her husband Eberhard's study, ready to face the Gestapo. Eberhard lay on the couch, his broken leg in a cast, watching his sister-in-law burn potentially incriminating papers in the stove. Meanwhile, 140 Nazi storm troopers and secret police were searching the little community in the Rhön hills for nonexistent arms and anti-Nazi literature. It was eight o'clock in the morning of November 16, 1933, in Hitler's Germany. Late that evening one of the Gestapo's big cars drove off full of books and papers.

We commemorate today the living legacy of a man whose work seemed smashed at fifty. Eberhard Arnold was crippled by a leg injury from which he never was to recover (his death came two years later from the complications of attempted corrective surgery). His ambitious publishing program was ended in midstream by the seizure of his office and the tightening coils of Nazi censorship. His energies in those last two years were to be drained by shepherding his refugee household into Switzerland, Liechtenstein, England...

But that was not the end. The Bruderhof movement, though decapitated, cut down, and scattered, did not wither away but grew up again, and again, in England, in Paraguay, in the United States...

That 1933 was not the end, but only the middle of a story, we owe not to the man but to his living witness. It is that witness which this book documents by gathering and ordering fragments, mostly previously unpublished, from his writing and teaching.

An introduction could seek to summarize what follows in the book; I shall not do that. An introduction could seek to explain why what follows is important, or why it is true. That I shall not do either. I shall attempt rather to locate Arnold, to put him on the map; to make understandable to American readers today what the causes and the cultural currents were which, in 1899 or 1907, in 1919 or 1932, fed into the new global vision which the following texts in this book exposit. Other narratives of the life of Eberhard Arnold himself and that of the Bruderhof are already available. We seek here only to recount enough so that the reader unfamiliar with their story can understand the world from which and into which Arnold came and identify the issues to which these texts originally spoke.

Eberhard Arnold saw himself as servant of a vision which he did not invent, herald of a cause incommensurably greater than his service to it. That vision had come together from many sources borne toward him by many people and movements. The reader who is less interested in backgrounds and origins may prefer to read Arnold directly, as he himself seeks to read the Gospel with unvarnished immediacy.

From before the First World War into the late 1920s, Arnold was a popular figure on the lecture circuit in Germany, serving universities, the Youth Movement world, and the student Christian world. Notes or outlines of many of these talks have been preserved in rough form. From early 1920 until his death in 1935 Arnold was regularly presenting teaching sessions for the members and the guests of his community. From many of these talks as well, rough notes have been retained. It is from these sources that most of the following materials have been drawn. The talks have been reconstituted and translated by the labors of the archive workers at Woodcrest, selected (with the advice of many others in the community) with a view to their not overlapping with the already available writings of Arnold and yet presenting an independently coherent picture of his teachings. In this process I have aided as “editor” only in an *a posteriori* and honorific sense, reviewing with

the Woodcrest staff their decisions as to which fragments to retain and as to what explanation is needed.

The texts we have before us are not the preferred point of entrance to the devotional or spiritual guidance of Arnold. That would be his *Inner Land*, written in the face of the spiritual crisis which Germany faced in World War I and expanded since then in several editions until his death. Nor are the following texts all the heart of his message. That, Arnold himself would probably have said, was his *Salt and Light*, his interpretation on the Sermon on the Mount, not because of any great originality but because of its simplicity and because he was convinced that his movement had its heart not in himself but in the person and teaching of Jesus. Nor can it be a survey of the breadth of things he taught and wrote about, which extended from secular philosophy, ancient and modern, into political economy and the arts.

What we have here is rather a selection of those dominant strands of Arnold's instruction which will most faithfully and adequately portray to the reader the source and rationale of the life of the community which has survived him for half a century by listening attentively to his both simple and prophetic pastoral instruction. That the selection is fitting for that purpose is guaranteed by the means used to prepare it. The initial choice of passages to reproduce was done by a wide consultation involving most of the senior members of the Woodcrest community. At least a half-dozen community members shared in the task of translating those fragments which had not already appeared in English. At least fifteen couples contributed to the process of choosing which texts they thought most distinctive and representative. The passages chosen were then honed and ordered by the team of several workers who -devote part of their time to the community archives. The resulting collections have also been reread in plenary assemblies. Thus while every word is from Eberhard's teaching or writing and over a half-century old, the text is also the living witness of the Bruderhof communities.

The topic choices and the judgments as to how much of which texts belonged in which place were made in that internal discipline of the community's own

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memory bank. An outsider might have selected other fragments as more original, or less familiar, or farther from the awareness of the reader. That selection would not have spoken in the same way of the living memory which is sustained by and which sustains the witness of the Bruderhof as organism.

My responsibility as editorial consultant has not included reaching back into the original texts, nor finding other texts in the untranslated sources which might be more interesting. I have merely reviewed some of the final stages of selection and translation, in order to help the original thrust of a text come through as adequately as possible. We have sought to have the voice be that of Arnold himself and not of his disciples a half-century later: yet we recognize that distinction to be intrinsically impossible. It is the people still living in the life which he founded who are most able to be custodians of his memory, even if the guardianship itself may unavoidably and usually unconsciously soften the differences between founder and followers. Such a telescoping of a man into his memory, as sustained by his followers' followers, happened to Jesus and St. Francis: my concern as editorial observer has not been to keep it from happening to Arnold.

Teenage Convert: 1899

Our picture of the religious heritage of most of Germany for centuries was of unrelieved established Lutheran orthodoxy, allying university, pulpit, government, and bourgeoisie in unchanging and uninteresting fidelity. That was all there, but it was not all there was. There was the heritage of the frontier American revival movement of Charles G. Finney, under whose impact Eberhard's great-grandfather John Arnold had come, resulting in Eberhard's grandparents, Franklin Luther and Maria Arnold, née Ramsauer, being sent from America to Africa as missionaries. For the sake of education Eberhard's father Carl Franklin was taken as a boy into an upper class home in Bremen, where the devotional heritage of pietist pastors Collenbusch and Menken was

honored. In young Eberhard's world in Breslau, the city to whose university his father was called as professor of Church history, there was the Salvation Army, whose workers' involvement with the poor struck him as more morally authentic than his family's social life. There was his "uncle" (husband of his mother's cousin) Ernst Ferdinand Klein, who as Lutheran pastor in a working-class community had sided with the workers of the weaving industry, in such a way that his critics had prevailed upon the church administration to transfer him to a small town in the outskirts of Berlin. There were members of the Moravian pietist tradition and of the new "fellowship movement" putting their fingers on the need for personal conversion.

From the outset, spiritual authenticity was linked in Eberhard's mind with awareness of economic injustice. His earliest memory of this linkage was his discomfort at his own confirmation ceremony; it struck him that he and the other youths of his class had beautiful new clothing for the occasion, while others had to wear their weekday best.

The seeds for a desperate struggle to find the living Christ were laid during a summer vacation at Uncle Ernst's home. It was here that Eberhard began reading the Gospels with the same excitement and fascination that had formerly been provided by Karl May's adventure novels. He needed to know who this Jesus really was. Back home in Breslau, he sought out a young pastor for guidance and was given the advice not to rest until he had found the answer.

Eberhard knew that there were areas in his life that were not Christ-like. It was a struggle for him to recognize Christ as Lord of everything: his superficial relationships with fellow students, among whom he had played a somewhat prominent role; his disrespect for teachers; and not least the newly aroused physical passions that assaulted him.

It was October 1899 when the sixteen-year-old, praying alone in the comfortable family parlor, reached both the inner assurance of God's forgiving grace toward him and the resolve outwardly to confess his new faith and

joy. Both the overtness of his piety and the bluntness of his social concern caused tension even within his own family. Most memorable was his daring to reprimand his parents for the partying which belonged to the duties of their class:

Father, I hear that the food and drink for this party costs more than two hundred marks. Those invited are almost all richer than we are. They all have enough to eat at home. They will invite you again and will offer you wine, roast meat, and ices, which are just as costly. I know of poor innocent families in the east end of the city, who have not enough money to provide their little children with sufficient milk. You know what Jesus said, "When you give a feast, do not invite your acquaintances and friends, who in turn can invite you; but rather go out on the streets and invite the poorest people who cannot invite you." You go to Church and hold morning prayers; but is this unjust life from God or from the Devil? (*Seeking for the Kingdom*, p. 27)

Decisive Commitments: 1907

Since the 1520s the agenda of spiritual renewal in Protestantism had seldom avoided surfacing the issue of baptism upon confession of faith. In the sixteenth century, the people who renewed the practice of linking baptism with the conversion or adult personal faith of the candidate were called "Anabaptists." Usually such action meant the creation of new church bodies, as had been the case for the "Ana-baptists" of the continental sixteenth century or the "Baptists" of the British seventeenth century. It however happened more recently in the context of pietistic revival preaching and pastoring that persons of solidly religious background and upbringing came to the conviction that they needed, as adults, to express the wholeness and joy of their newfound faith by requesting baptism, without creating a new Church body. They felt that the faith they had now come to know was of an utterly new quality contrasted to the way in which their "Christening" as products of established Christianity had made them participants in a culture but not in a faith.

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Eberhard was prepared along both of these lines to face the issue of baptism as a young adult. His father had already spoken to him of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement, whose nearly buried traces in Protestant history were just beginning to be rediscovered by historians. Eberhard met as well the representatives of the other strand: the lawyer-evangelist Ludwig von Gerdtehl (1872–1954, founder of the European Evangelistic Society), arguing that it is proper to express one's adult Christian commitment in the act of baptism upon confession of faith without intending that act to mean sectarian separation.

Middle-class circles in the city of Halle, where Eberhard had studied theology, were being shaken by von Gerdtehl's lectures and stirred by Bible study meetings held in homes. There Eberhard met the sisters Else and Emmy von Hollander, daughters of a professor of law who had moved to Halle from Riga to escape the Russification of the Baltic nations. Within a month Emmy and Eberhard were engaged to marry.

Eberhard was a frequent speaker in those Bible study circles. To the step of baptism upon confession of faith first Else, and then Eberhard and Emmy were led in 1908. That did not make them Baptists; even less did it make them Mennonites or Hutterites. It did not make them members of any local church. It simply committed them to a life of discipleship whose meaning in detail they would have been the first to say they were in no position to predict. Three quarters of a century later, with the perspective of Eberhard's further estrangement from established Protestantism and rapprochement to the heirs of the Anabaptist movement, we can speak in one way of these baptisms in 1908 as the first step on that path. Yet if the three young friends had been told that it was that, would they have taken it?

Eberhard was told formally, before his baptism, that it would disqualify him for the theological degree and pastoral office toward which he had been studying. He studied instead for a philosophical doctorate. His dissertation on the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche was accepted in November 1909, and

in December he and Emmy were married. He worked as freelance lecturer for the Fellowship Movement.

The Student Christian Movement

The Anglo-Saxon revival movement of which the American Dwight L. Moody was a major spokesman soon found a new form of organization befitting its social level and its world mission. Taking off from the similar “non-church” foundation laid by the Young Men’s Christian Association (German CVJM organized on a national level in 1883), the Student Christian Movement was able, thanks to its special social location, to avoid both antagonizing the established churches and being roped in by them. John R. Mott (1865–1955), the worldwide ambassador of the Moody revival, which had broken into the student world at Northfield (Massachusetts) in 1886, had visited Germany’s university cities in 1898. Its stated goals of “deepening Christian life through common prayer and Bible study as well as the fostering of Christian work among its members and other students” were pursued without direct attention to church structures.

The SCM was the context of young Dr. Arnold’s first public notoriety. As freelance lecturer he spoke at campuses on such themes as “Early Christianity in the Present” and “Jesus As He Really Was” – presaging his lifelong focus upon the Gospels and the earliest Christians. In 1915 he became editor of *The Furrow*, the periodical (soon a publishing house) of the SCM. World War I called the SCM into relief services and special publications in the interest of soldiers. Called to military service but discharged for health reasons after a few weeks’ service as a quartermaster corps wagon driver, Arnold had seen enough of war to begin moving toward what soon became a convinced Christian pacifism. It was his pastoral talks with soldiers in hospital that convinced him that war could not be right.

The SCM provided the constituency, the mix of spiritual simplicity and

intellectual seriousness, the meld of flexibility and organizational sobriety, which were to launch Arnold into the 1920s.

The “Religious-Social Movement”

It is not clear when Arnold came in touch with this most important stream of renewal concern within German Protestantism. At least by the end of the First World War he had become fully acquainted with its contribution. It had represented in the last quarter of the nineteenth century a set of dramatic new beginnings, some of which fed into the revitalization of the mainline churches, but several of which were not satisfied with that objective.

The movement represents a most unique synthesis of components which in the Anglo-Saxon experience are often not held together: pietism and social concern. By “pietism” here is meant minimally the readiness to use that term as a self-designation, or to accept it from others. This located the people I shall be describing within a two-centuries-old stream of minority renewal concern. More substantially, the term identifies the conviction that there is a dimension of reality in the encounter with the living God in prayer, guidance, and miracle, which can and must be affirmed rather than outgrown as we build community.

The ministry of Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880) had begun when as a young pastor he was participant, to his own surprise, in an event of exorcism which freed a young woman from a depressive possession. Under the motto “Jesus is victor” Blumhardt developed over the next half century a ministry of pastoral care to individuals coming from all over the country, in which he was succeeded by his son, Christoph Friedrich. Yet (in a way quite distinct from the individualistic or internalistic turn which such deliverance ministries can take) the proclamation of Christ’s lordship meant for the Blumhardts a claim laid upon all of life including the social and political. Christoph in fact became a member of the social democratic party and for one term a member of Württemberg’s parliament.

The spiritual and intellectual successors of the Blum-hardts arose not in Germany but in Switzerland; in a small circle of theologians calling themselves “social-religious”: Leonhard Ragaz (1868–1945), Hermann Kutter (1863–1931), and Karl Barth (1886–1968). These men differed among themselves – later they differed bitterly – about just how to connect Gospel faith and Christian social commitment; but for all three the link was essential, a matter of the Kingdom of God and not merely of debatable social analysis. Kutter was the first of the three to become known, with books like his *Justice: An Old Word to Modern Christendom* (1905). Arnold later said that the first half of his spiritual pilgrimage had led him “from Luther to Kutter.”

The Youth Movement

The collapse of a culture’s hallowed values is for no one more upsetting than for youth. What lost the war for Germany in 1918 was not just an imperial dynasty and a military command structure; it was a civilization, the proud self-confidence of middle-class urbanity. Their elders, though defeated and demoralized, went on living; but what should youth be looking forward to? Some turned to nihilism, some to political radicality of left or right; but a broad current of German youth took another path; they went walking. The movement was not a new invention; it had begun at the turn of the century under such names as “Birds of Passage” (*Wandervögel*) and “Free Youth”; they had taken on causes from anti-alcoholism to school reform. Thus by 1918 there was a backlog of “adults” waiting from the prewar movement and a new pool of thousands looking for new answers. What arose with a surge of new energy in the immediate postwar period, coming to be called simply “the Youth Movement,” was a new joy in nature, folk singing and dancing, walking and camping, non-politicized and non-eroticized friendships, and clean fun, overcoming class disparities through simplicity linked with disrespect for materialism and social stuffiness. Half a century later, American youth were

to call something like this “the spirit of Woodstock”; but there was in the German movement no generational anger, and no drugs. A decade later the movement was vulnerable to co-option in the Nazi “national renewal”; but there was none of that racist nationalism in the beginnings. Within the Youth Movement the specifically Christian witness of the fellowship movements found an open audience, whereas established parish religion (what Arnold was now calling the “world church”) had lost their respect.

Synthesis

What happened in 1919–1921 was the flowing together of “all the above” in a powerful new mixture, with Eberhard Arnold in the middle of it all. The first postwar Pentecost regional conference of the SCM was held at Marburg, June 13–15, 1919, dominated by Arnold’s charismatically clear and urgent expositions of the Sermon on the Mount and by his “Communism: Summons to Christianity”. A participant at the Marburg conference reported:

The focus of all that was said and thought was Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Eberhard Arnold burned it into our hearts with a passionate spirituality, hammered it into our wills with prophetic power and the tremendous mobile force of his whole personality. This was the Sermon on the Mount in the full force of its impact, in its absolute and undiminished relevance, its unconditional absoluteness (Erwin Wissman, quoted in *Salt and Light*, p. xiii).

That fall (September 22–25) saw at Tambach in Thuringia an encounter with the leadership of the Swiss “religious social” movement: Karl Barth was the most prominent of the Swiss speakers. Arnold became editor of the movement’s journal *Das neue Werk* whose subtitle, “The Christian in the People’s State,” expressed the vision that not only piety but also society would be swept into the Kingdom movement. The next Pentecost conference (May 21, 1920 at Schlüchtern, northeast of Frankfurt) multiplied the momentum, and by the following fall it was reported that “Schlüchtern fellowships” were forming in the major cities and universities.

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In addition to his traveling ministry of public speeches and his editing of movement periodicals, Arnold initiated an ambitious project of the republication of Christian sources, representing the vision of renewal over the centuries. Volumes were published from the writings of Tertullian, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Jacob Böhme, Zinzendorf, Søren Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, among others. Additional projects that included Bernard of Clairvaux, the early Anabaptists, Martin Luther, George Fox, John Bunyan, Fénelon, William and Catherine Booth, and Pascal, could not be completed. Arnold's own collection of testimonies from "the early Christians after the death of the apostles" (published 1926) was one of his major projects.

As is natural in such times of fermentation, institutional changes were rapid. Publications were initiated, renamed, divided. The leadership of the Student Christian Movement and its publication arm, *The Furrow*, divided. Old friendships were strained and new alliances sealed, some to break again.

Antithesis

Before there was time to be comfortable amidst this new power and popularity, Arnold was led to his next step, the creation of economic and residential community. The first nucleus began moving to Sannerz, near Schlüchtern, late in 1920. By mid-1922, when it faced its first internal crisis, the commune had grown to forty members, not all of whom were as convinced as Arnold of the possibility of complete community. Not all were ready with him to see "faith" as meaning not only current sharing but trusting that God would provide for all future needs. Again the publishing work was split up; again old friendships were strained. From that crisis came the Bruderhof life form which has since undergone no substantial change. Arnold had begun his second major shift, which he categorized as "from Kutter to Hutter."

Continuity

Already when Arnold was young his father had spoken to him about the radical Protestants of earlier European history who on the one hand, the father thought, were the only true Christians, and yet had been discredited by the fact that God had not blessed them with prosperity but had permitted their cause almost to die out. That had been Eberhard's introduction to the fact that there had been within Protestant history an undercurrent of more committed Protestantism than the one dominating Germany. In the Hutterian communities of the American prairie states and provinces Arnold found the descendants of those ancient movements.

The so-called "Anabaptist" movement of the sixteenth century had radicalized the biblical renewal vision of Luther and Zwingli to the point of rejecting religious establishment, warfare, and infant baptism. This movement had survived through the sixteenth century especially in the upper Rhine basin (there are Mennonites in Switzerland, Alsace, and Württemberg to this day) and in the Netherlands. From there, their descendants had migrated in the eighteenth century to America and to Russia. A third center survived even more effectively in Moravia, where the so-called Hutterian brethren created the commune pattern called Bruderhof. It was the heirs of this third group, all of whom emigrated from imperial Russia in the 1870s, that Arnold sought out in Western Canada in 1930, in order to ally his new beginnings with the heirs of the oldest beginnings.

Other radical Reformation phenomena also were known to Arnold. He in fact published new editions of the writings of some of them and planned to publish more. But the Czech Brethren of the fifteenth century had been wiped out in the seventeenth. The heirs of the Waldensians from the twelfth century had made their peace with Calvinism in 1534. It was therefore with the Hutterian movement that it seemed most fitting for the alliance of old and new disciples to be concluded.

Arnold spent a year in 1930–31 establishing that connection, visiting all

Bruderhof colonies existing at that time in the United States and Canada. In December 1930 at Macleod, Alberta, he was welcomed into their membership and commissioned as their missionary to Europe.

The commonality between the old and the new Bruderhof went beyond the basic Anabaptist convictions of believers' baptism and non-resistance and beyond the communal economic pattern of the Bruderhof. The Hutterian Brethren of the sixteenth century had been pioneers in the creation of elementary schools for all children; likewise Arnold's movement had since the beginnings at Sannerz taken advantage of the facilities offered by communal residence to operate an alternative school, not only for their own offspring but also for needy children to whom the Bruderhof provided foster care, and for others whose parents preferred such a familial and religiously oriented schooling. The Bruderhof regularly counted on members with qualification for teaching. Numerous of Arnold's writings (represented only minimally in this collection) were devoted to the values of familially based holistic education. They help refute the notion, current in some sociological circles, that Anabaptism is not concerned for culture.

Transition

The story begins to end where our account began. There was no chance that Nazism could tolerate the Bruderhof. After the Gestapo break-in of November 16, 1933, steps were taken to remove all children to Switzerland, so that when a new Nazi schoolteacher arrived in January 1934 there were no Bruderhof children for him to teach. Arnold contacted Mennonites in the Netherlands and Friends in England; some English members joined the Bruderhof, and the groundwork was laid for an English colony to be formed in 1936. But Arnold's shepherd-teacher ministry was ending. The near-daily devotional Bible studies and the discussions, from the records of which many of the fragments in this collection come, were coming to an end, as his wide-ranging popular lecturing had a decade before. The foundation had been laid.

From His Time to Ours

At times it seems hard to see how this world can go on. -Despite the end of the Cold War, the threat of nuclear catastrophe remains ever-present, even if unacknowledged. Technological “progress” continues, but each new threshold that is crossed opens not only new possibilities, but new potential dangers. Within each culture tensions between generations, sexes, ethnic groups are exacerbated. Again loud voices advocate desperate measures which are not solutions: violent insurrection, self-sufficient “survival,” suicide.

Then we remember how it was the collapse of national cultural self-confidence which freed German youth in 1919–21 to be seized in an unprecedented way by the power of Jesus’ Kingdom message. We remember how it was the collapse of democracy and the rise of Hitler which set in bold relief how different and how powerful is the corporate quality of spiritual resistance. We remember that it was in the desperation of the late first century that the Apostle John was given visions of how God’s saving purposes for the world are not thwarted but enhanced by that setting. Thus our discerning more frankly the wounds and the wars of our present world, which Arnold could not foresee, may once again set in relief the pertinence, and the promised power of the Kingdom way, the course already set for us, which the following texts so simply and so authentically interpret.

John Howard Yoder

**This Crumbling
World and God's
Coming Kingdom**

On the Edge of Catastrophe

We seem, to our horror, to be standing on the brink of a catastrophic judgment. It is so close that it can be averted only through God's direct intervention.

Sept. 1935

The human race has made stupendous technological progress, conquering time and space by means of automobiles and airplanes; but how many thousands of people are being killed by these very same means! There are amazing achievements in the big cities, yet most urban families die out in the third or fourth generation.

The most sinister powers of our civilization are the three mighty organizations – the State, the military, and the capitalist structure. These three organizations represent the highest achievement of the earth spirit. The tremendous edifice built up by a fallen creation is incredible. But it will end in death. How mighty is this power, how unquestioned its apparent worth!

Sept. 1934

The dark reality of today – humankind destroying and ruining itself in reiterated madness – must be opposed by a much greater reality: the light of tomorrow. In this light humankind is called to something that is the opposite of betrayal and deception, of murder and hate, of death and destruction. (1 Thess. 5:4–5)

But we will not find the assurance that the dawn is coming until we

have grasped night's darkness, its impenetrable blackness and bottomless suffering.

April 1919

The rule of evil affects all human beings. In our day it has reached massive proportions. We come across it in every form of government, in every Church, in every gathering no matter how pious, in all political parties and labor unions, even in family life and in our Brotherhood. It has a demonic power that shows up in every one of these structures, however different they may be on the surface. They are pervaded by the inclination to obstinate self-determination, the tendency to present what is one's own as the only thing that counts – one's own person, one's own nation, State, Church, sect, party, labor union, one's own family or community – or at least, one's own way of thinking.

1926

There has hardly ever been a time when it was as evident as it is today that God and His righteousness and love do not yet rule. We see it in our own lives and in current events. We see it in the fate of the hopeless, the millions upon millions of unemployed. We see it in the unjust distribution of goods though the earth offers unstintingly its fertility and all its potentials. There is urgent work that must be done to help humankind, but it is obstructed and destroyed by the injustice of the present world systems.

We are in the midst of a collapse of civilization. Civilization is nothing but humankind's orderly work in nature. And this work has turned into a disorder whose injustice cries out to heaven.

There are hundreds of signs that something is about to happen. Nothing in history takes place, however, unless it comes from God. So our plea to Him now is that He make history, His history, the history of His righteousness. And when God makes His history, we all have every reason to tremble. For as matters stand today, He can do nothing unless His wrath first sweeps over all the injustice and lovelessness, all the discord and brutality, that rule the world. His wrath will be the beginning of His history. First must come the

God's Revolution

day of judgment: then the day of joy, of love, grace, and justice can dawn.

But if we ask God to intervene, we must bare our own breasts before Him so that His lightning can strike us, for we are all guilty. There is no one who is not guilty of the wickedness in today's world.

1933

No one can deny that the revolutionary movements have aroused the human conscience, thus violently shaking humanity's soul. The conscience cannot find peace until its warning cry reaches into every person's life. The attack by socialism and communism on the status quo is a call to our consciences – those of us who consider ourselves Christians. This call warns us more strongly than any sermon that our task is to live in active protest against everything that opposes God in this world. So poorly have we Christians filled this role that the question must be asked: Are we Christians at all?

1919

Every awakening of humankind's collective conscience is of deep significance. There is such a thing as a world conscience, the conscience of humanity. It rises up against war and bloodshed, against mammonism and social injustice, against violence of any kind.

April 1919

At this eleventh hour hearts must be made ready, through faith, to receive the powers of the future world, the Spirit of the upper Jerusalem. (Rev. 3:10–12)

The final Kingdom is near, and the whole world should be on the watch. But the world will not take heed unless the Church of Jesus Christ puts the unity and justice of this Kingdom into practice daily. Faith will bring about true unity among believers who are ready to live a life of unlimited, active love.

May 1934

He has called us, not so that we love our own lives, not even the lives of our fellow human beings. In other words, we are called to live, not for people, but for

God's Revolution

The Kingdom Breaking In

If in all we do we have no other goal than this: that His Kingdom come, that His will be done on earth, then our prayer will be answered. (Matt. 6:33) God will prove greater than our hearts can grasp. Much more will happen than we dare put into words. His answer will surpass our boldest prayer. And so that we may be sure it is God who does it all, it will happen while we are yet praying or even before we have spoken our prayer. (Isaiah 65:24) Anyone who knocks at God's door and seeks God alone will receive what he asks for before he knows it. (Matt. 7:7–11)

1929

Let us ask God to send forth His Spirit with renewed authority. New thoughts must break forth from the depths of God's heart that go far, far beyond our own human thoughts and weak notions. Let us pray for God's mighty deeds, deeds that are completely independent of us human beings. Our prayer is that His rulership really breaks in, that His love is revealed, that His Kingdom becomes visible, ready for the Holy Spirit and Christ to descend. To this we will give ourselves, even if it costs us our lives. We will pledge our lives that this may come about for the deliverance of all nations.

Sept. 1935

The miraculous powers of God, the reality of His Kingdom, will be revealed in your midst; for it is the Holy Spirit who grips you and penetrates you and takes you into the sphere of God's coming Kingdom. (Acts 2:17–21) The

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount

We ought constantly to occupy our minds and hearts with the person of Jesus: who He is, what He said, how He lived, how He died, and what His resurrection means. We have to take in the full import of His words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) and in the parables, and we have to represent to all the world the same things He represented in His life.

March 1935

What the Kingdom of God means is made clear in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Lord's Prayer, and in the words, "Enter by the narrow gate!" This means, treat people as you wish them to treat you. This is generally overlooked. You will not be going the way of discipleship until you do for everybody all that you ask from God for yourself, that is, absolute social justice and the peaceable atmosphere of God's Kingdom. We are envoys of the coming Kingdom of God; we serve only one law, the law of His Spirit.

The Sermon on the Mount tells us what that means in practice. To anyone who is sincere about it, the way is plain. Of course, no one can go this way without grace. Jesus indicates this when He speaks of the tree and its vitality in connection with the Kingdom of God. He also speaks of the salt, meaning the entirely new nature bestowed on us in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "Unless your justice is better than that of the moralists and theologians,

The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God – what do these words mean? A kingdom or realm is a political system; it is the orderly structure of a people in the work they do and their public relationships. It is a national community held together by justice and solidarity. This is the kind of realm the prophet Isaiah had in mind when he foretold the Kingdom of God. (Isaiah 9:6–7) Such a realm exists only where people are living in a lasting, binding order of justice in all relationships, a new order given to our human condition.

What is unique about the way Jesus has shown us is that no one but God is in authority, no one else has the right to say anything. So it is quite right to speak of God's kingly rule. God alone has the rulership. He alone is King. That is the Kingdom of God.

We know, of course, that this Kingdom has not yet come on this earth. Not only God has great power; the mighty national governments have great power; lying and impurity have great power. Forces that are entirely opposed to God assert themselves. The Kingdom of God is not yet realized in our day. If it were, nothing else would count.

For God's Kingdom to come, the personal intervention of God through Jesus Christ is needed through the renewal of the world, the rebirth of the planet Earth. The Apostle Peter says that fire will melt the earth, and then the earth will be made completely new. (2 Pet. 3:12–13) And John the Evangelist says that in the new realm of God's kingship the earth will be so completely

The New Order Fleshed Out

The Church

The Need to Gather

The human race finds itself in such boundless misery because it has fallen into a state of hostility. It is split apart, lacerated. This cleft shows the disastrous degree to which coldness of heart and hostility has advanced in a divided humankind.

It was not always like that. The hour of humankind's birth was a time when people lived in peace with God and one another. There is simply no doubt that the cradle of humanity was Paradise. (Gen. 2:8–15)

What is Paradise? Paradise is peace. When all powers work together in one spirit, in unbroken harmony, that is the secret of peace. Peace is like a prism that gathers all the colors of the spectrum in the pure white light of the sun and refracts them as the resplendent hues of the rainbow. In this peace all powers and gifts are used to serve God. That is the peace humanity knew at its very beginning.

The Book of Genesis tells us that the man's task was to till and preserve the land, to name all creatures, and to be master over the animals. (Gen. 2:15, 19; 1:26–28) Humankind has not made any progress; in fact, the task set in Paradise is still not done. Yet from the outset humanity was given the task to live in harmony and peace, in community of work, in creative fellowship.

Sept. 1933

Everywhere the world is going to pieces. It is crumbling and rotting away. It is

Unity and the Holy Spirit

The Church community is to be a city on a hill, with light from its windows shining out over the land, so that all who see it will realize: There is a united city, a united Church! (Matt. 5:14) This is the call of Jesus in our time, that communal Churches are brought into being, whose light of perfect unity, of justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, shines out into the world.

Aug. 1935

Unanimity Is Possible

We are not optimistic about world politics. We do have faith that the Church can give witness to unity and that this witness is the best service we can do for the world. Full community, full agreement, is possible! It is possible through faith in God, in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. This is what our life is about.

July 1935

Unimpaired unanimity is indispensable for anything the community undertakes, building a house or whatever it may be. This unanimity is only possible because of our faith that God uses His Spirit to say the same to each individual. Mutual persuasion does not do it. God does it, speaking to us through the Holy Spirit. This Spirit not only assures us of our salvation – that He has accepted us – but His speaking to us also makes us certain even in the so-called “trifles” or small matters. He prompts us also in making decisions such as buying a meadow, or whatever it may be. Unanimity is the first sign.

Community

Community of Goods Grows out of Love

Jesus showed us what it means to love – that love knows no bounds and stops before no barriers. Nothing can stop love, even if circumstances seem to block the way. Love had, and has, faith for everything. (1 Cor. 13:7–8) So Jesus, prompted always by love, did not let property or possessions stop Him. When He came to know and love a young man who owned many possessions, Jesus looked straight into his heart and said, “You still lack one thing: Sell all your goods, give the money to the poor, and come, go with me.” (Mark 10:21)

1919

The first Church in Jerusalem distributed all their goods straightaway. As soon as Christ’s Spirit was poured out over them, nobody could hold on to property any longer. Love compelled them to lay everything at the apostles’ feet. With the help of the deacons the apostles distributed everything. (Acts 6:2–6) Christ’s love makes us want to give up our possessions and live in community of goods. (Acts 4:32–37) That strikes at the root of our selfishness.

May 1935

To give away your cloak as well when only your coat is asked for is truly in keeping with love. But to put in a second hour of work when one hour is asked for means much more. (Matt. 5:38–42) The fight against private property must be preceded by something deeper: the killing of selfishness, self-

Repentance and Baptism

What Is Sin?

Humanity's measureless estrangement from God is the root cause of their sinking deeper and deeper into depravity, physically as well as otherwise. (Rom. 1:18–32) To live means to shed everything that is death-bound. We are hopelessly sick in our sin and will really die unless we are freed from sin and evil. (Rom. 6:20–23) Hatred and murder, lying, cowardice, dishonesty, impurity, and degeneration in the sensual area are life-destroyers. Slowly but surely they smother the last flicker of real life in us, while dazzling us with the illusion of intense vitality.

1919

Is all sin a form of sickness? If we say it is, we run the risk of softening the fact that we are responsible. That is extremely dangerous. Humanity today is subject to death, and that is sickness; but Scripture shows us that the poisonous element in death is sin and that, if we were not in bondage to sin, we would not die. (Rom. 5:12) And sin is our own doing. By sinning we dissolve our fellowship with God and join in an evil fellowship with forces hostile to God.

Sin creates a bond with poison. Sin destroys life. It severs community with God – the living relationship with God, who is the life-giving Spirit. Even though we know that sin is connected with the sickness which is death, we are responsible for our sin; it is our action, our will.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is our way of expressing the central experience in Jesus, because we do not want to forget Jesus. How easy it is for us to forget Him! We need a very powerful reminder of Him. That is why we need the Lord's Supper; it is a Meal of Remembrance. (1 Cor. 11:23–25)

What does the Meal of Remembrance point to? That Jesus is not forgotten, that His death is proclaimed. In the Lord's Supper the united Body of the Church is set apart from any other body, any other organism, any outward association of people. In the Lord's Supper we acknowledge that this Body of the Church is alive, that it is of God, and that it belongs to Jesus.

June 1935

The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles was written down during the second century in an attempt to retain the earliest memories from the time of the apostles. It gives the following picture as part of a thanksgiving prayer at the Lord's Supper: The seeds of grain are scattered over many fields, and then comes harvest time. The grain from one field does not necessarily come together in one loaf. Mostly it is grain from many fields in different places that is baked together into one loaf. So we are many people; we have come together from many nations, from many different strata in society, from a variety of ideologies and traditions. (Rev. 5:9–10) We come from many different fields, but we are baked together in one loaf...

Before the bread can be baked, the grain brought together from the various

Worship

Silent prayer is a deep necessity for every Church community, especially in times when something sweeps over us, when God's wind blows over us, for it is important that we recognize what God wants to say. We need to hear His voice in the events around us and in our midst. We need to hear His voice in our hearts. And in times like ours, in the midst of the darkness that has descended on the earth, we need to see His light.

July 1933

Silent inner gathering for worship is an essential part of our common life. That does not mean that we have to spend a certain length of time together during which we may neither speak nor sing. On the contrary, we believe that words of faith and love and deeds of faith and love are born out of the common silence. When we are silent, we want to be silent before God. What we should silence is our own words, our own deeds. All that has arisen or may arise from our self-will should be laid down during silent worship.

March 1935

Our common silence is deeply akin to a Quaker meeting. In our meetings we long that God himself speak to us, that Christ's voice speak among us, that the Holy Spirit move our hearts directly. That is why the quiet and silence are so very important to us. Human talk often drives away the Spirit. But in the common silence God fills us directly. We testify to this as the deepest experience of our life together. When we listen to the voice of God within us, we

Mission

Now Is the Hour

The colossal need facing humankind in this hour of history makes it urgent to show a new way. The time is here for the communal Church to be a light on the lampstand, a city on a hill. (Matt. 5:14–15) The reality of the God-given life among us must affect many and finally all people. The time is here when the message of God's unity, justice, and brotherhood in His Kingdom must be spread abroad. But we are exceedingly weak, and our numbers are small, very small, when we think of the magnitude of this calling...

We cannot evade the call of Jesus or the impulse of our hearts. It is a call that goes out to all, especially to all the needy. And when the misery reaches such a pitch as we see around us today, the call of Jesus becomes all the more insistent and pressing – more so than ever before: “Go ye out into all the world!” (Mark 16:15) Go out, get to work! Call the people and gather them in! Now is the hour!

Summer 1932

A Mission to All Men

The great tidings entrusted to the Church of Christ must be brought to everyone without exception. Everyone should hear it. That does not mean that everybody is expected to join the communal Church of Christ at this particular moment in history. It does mean, though, that the message of truth shall reach

The Individual and the Community

The Body of Believers

Life in God means gathering. (John 12:32) God's life wants to gather us into an organism; He unites us in one living body, animated by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:13–14) So our unity in the Spirit and our bond of peace are the driving force in our daily, practical life, and that is where our unity becomes physical reality.

Aug. 1935

We believe that the Holy Spirit reveals His presence in the living Church community. This is where our Christianity differs from a purely personal one. True, the individual heart must be visited by the Holy Spirit. Yet the Spirit's actual working begins in the communal Church. When the experience of the individual heart is shared by the whole believing community, then, and only then, will the Kingdom of God be visible.

July 1935

If anyone asks us whether we, a few weak and needy people living in community, are the Church, we have to say no, we are not. Like all human beings, we are the recipients of God's love. And like everybody else – more so, if anything – we are unworthy and unfit for the working of the Holy Spirit, for the building of the Church, and for the mission to all the world.

But if anyone puts the question this way, “Does the Church come to you? Does the Church of God come down where you are, to people? Is the Church present in the Holy Spirit, who alone has the power to bring the Church

Leadership and Service

What Is a Servant?

There is no lord or master in the Church except Christ, there is no leader but Jesus Christ, who is the Head. We are all brothers one with another. We are all members, each one serving the others. (Matt. 23:8–12) We are living cells. Governing this Body with the power of the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God.

July 1933

In New Testament times, the days of Greco-Roman and Oriental slave culture, servants were not only those who served at table and acted as personal servants, kitchen boys, and house servants. Even scholars, poets, language teachers, accountants, business managers, and head stewards freely served their masters as slaves. That is what the apostles had in mind when they spoke of the Servants of the Church.[3] (Gal. 5:13)...

What does the service mean for all those who are appointed to be true Servants of the Church? The apostles gave the name of servant or deacon to all those brothers who were charged with important responsibilities in the Church. In our community life, too, servant is the best word to describe any bearer of special responsibility. Servants are those who, while carrying a heavy responsibility for a large part of the communal life, occupy the lowest place in the Church.

The place of the Servant of the Word is truly a burdened one – often

Admonition and Forgiveness

All Members of the Church Need Help

The **spirit of joy** is a constructive spirit, and the spirit of order and discipline is part of it. Order and discipline in the Church are of the Spirit; they cannot come from human law. It is not a matter of punishment imposed by one person's moral force on another against that person's will. That has become very obvious. Since this kind of correction is out of the question, there need be no fear of punishment. What one ought to feel is not fear but the sincere remorse or innermost pain that comes into the heart after one has failed.

As long as people live in the atmosphere of the Spirit, they will never of their own free will do evil, never deliberately do anything that could disturb the unity and order of what the Spirit has created. (1 John 3:6) But then how does it happen that we can commit blunders or go astray in ways we have not willed or even foreseen? We human beings are weak and stupid. Often we scarcely see the evil approaching. But to stop resisting evil as it comes closer is worse. And it is still more serious if we are resigned to growing disorder or even get used to it by almost imperceptible degrees.

Any member of the Church who gets into this kind of difficulty looks for help, knowing that all members are well aware of the same or similar weaknesses in themselves and are ready at once to help in any way. The entire

The Individual in the Community

Each Individual Is Unique

What we have all been looking for is a life where brotherliness is voluntary, where there is no artificial attempt to make people equal, but where all are of equal worth and are therefore free to be very different. The more original an individual is, the better we like it. We have found that the greater the differences between people, the closer they may come to each other inwardly. We affirm the individual personality: each person, adult or child, is unique, and we educate them as individuals. But this uniqueness, taken to the ultimate depths, must lead us to the Church. If we all go into the depths, we will all be united. The more original and genuine we are, the more fully will we all be one.

July 1935

Never push anyone in the area of faith and love. Wait patiently for God's hour for each person. These things need time to mature and unfold in God's way, and we must not act independently to interfere with His plan. One of the worst mistakes people in some religious circles make is to go blundering with their human will into the inner growth of something God is doing through Jesus. In each one of us this inner growth took time, and no human being had any business meddling or interfering with it. It needed to be clarified

Marriage and Family

Marriage Is Holy

Matrimony is a sacrament. (Mark 10:7–9) A sacrament is a holy act that helps us understand a basic reality, for instance, the Lord's Supper or baptism. Our whole life is a sacrament, giving visible form to a basic reality.

Aug. 1934

The unity and purity in marriage as taught by Jesus and His apostles are unique. They have nothing to do with the old nature. They belong to the new Church order, which as brotherly justice lets the Spirit of love rule supreme. Unity and purity in marriage do not belong to unredeemed human nature. They can be realized only in the new Church of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. They belong to the Kingdom of God. They are symbol and sacrament of that Kingdom.

Marriage is a mystery. The Apostle Paul says, “When I speak of this mystery, I speak of Christ and the Church.” (Eph. 5:31–32) To Paul the Church is something hidden. The Church does not throw holy things to the dogs. It does not expose itself. Its members do proclaim the Gospel to those outside, and this is as it should be. But the Church itself remains hidden for the great day. For she is the one Church of the one Bridegroom, kept for Him. (Rev. 19:7)

In the same way, every human being should keep his or her body pure for marriage, which symbolizes the unity of Christ with His Church. Marriage reveals the divine mystery that the spiritual unity of two, when their hearts

Education^[5]

The Bruderhof is an educational community, both humanly seen and in the sense that every one of us has to be taught by God. That process is never finished.

It is mainly a matter of awakening the inner life, of quickening it so that we are filled with enthusiasm for the Holy Spirit and for deep, living experiences. Then we will all learn to put the great things above the small and to go forward giving every ounce of strength.

Dec. 1932

How can we bring up our children now so that they become courageous fighters in faith and brave martyrs for Christ? How can we bring up our children to feel straightaway that they are being given to God? Children are not possessions; from the first breath they draw we consecrate them to the great cause of the future. They are consecrated to God even before they are born and after they are born, especially in the first years of life. Just then it is very important to guide their instincts in such a way that they do not pursue their own pleasure, but from an early age are encouraged to overcome themselves and give themselves to the cause.

Sept. 1935

The only true service to our children is to help them become what they already are in God's thoughts. Each child is a thought in the mind of God. We must not try to form a child according to our own ideas for his or her life. That

Living Naturally

In 1899 and the following years, the Youth Movement sprang up in different parts of Germany. We young people had barely emerged from childhood. We longed to get out of the untruthful conditions in churches and schools. The fight for purity and freedom took different forms in different places, yet was the same fight. We were driven by the longing to live as natural human beings, to live with nature.

The whole rigid system of tradition and class distinction seemed to us an enslavement of true humanity. We wanted to get away from our social surroundings to the highways, fields, woods, and mountains. We fled the cities as much as possible. What were we looking for in nature? Freedom, friendship, community. We went out together, not isolated like hermits. Together we sought life in the outdoors.

1922

Postwar youth abhorred the big cities as places of impurity for body and soul. They felt the cities were seats of mammon; they felt the coldness and the poisonous air. They found that people did not live as God wants them to live. Families had two children, one child, or in many cases none. The whole atmosphere of the city seemed to them saturated with murder and degeneracy. The cities were straying far from what God wanted for human beings. So the young people left the cities. It was not quite the same as Rousseau's back-to-nature philosophy, but somewhat similar. They wanted to return to places

Peace and the Rule of God

Nonviolence and Refusal to Bear Arms

What Does the Gospel Say?

“Thou shalt not kill” was said to men of old. Jesus goes further and says that words spoken in hate are like poisonous knife stabs. Whoever denies that a fellow human has equal rights is a murderer in the eyes of Jesus. And anyone who goes to war acts against the words: “Love your enemies.” (Matt. 5:43–48)

Dec. 1932

Before Jesus died, He said He would be delivered into the hands of those in authority: the pious, and the State. He would have to surrender, defenseless, to their power. And when His disciples asked, “Couldn’t we call down the powers at our disposal? We could make fire come down from heaven, we could make lightning come down from the clouds.” Jesus answered, “Do you not know which spirit you belong to?” (Luke 9:54–55) You have forgotten the Spirit! You have forgotten the cause, you have forgotten your highest calling. You leave the Spirit the moment you take up the cause of force instead of love, even if you call upon heavenly fire and heavenly lightning and heavenly miracles.

Oct. 1931

In the name of Jesus Christ we can die, but not kill. This is where the Gospel leads us. If we really want to follow Christ, we must live as He lived and died.

Attitude to Government

The Government Has Our Respect

We give our full consent to the government and its legitimate fight against sin and crime: lying, impurity, murder, and avarice. We are glad to cooperate with the authorities insofar as they try to do something constructive to counteract these horrible things. For we recognize the God-given supremacy of the government to the extent that it pursues the good and combats evil and does not overstep the limits set by God. (1 Pet. 2:13–17)

Dec. 1932

What does Jesus tell us? Show your love to those who represent the government. You are not to take revenge but to meet the authorities with love. Then too, pray for the government. (1 Tim. 2:1–2) It is utterly different from the Body of Christ, but it too serves God, though in a completely different sphere. The authorities are necessary; crime could not be kept under any kind of control without them. So you should recognize government authority but not become part of it. You are members of Christ, and Christ specifically rejected becoming a ruler. When they wanted to make Him a king, He escaped. (John 6:15) And when the Tempter came to Him and said, “Here, I will give you all the kingdoms of the world,” He refused. (Matt. 4:8–10) But He treated the authorities with respect.

Jan. 1935

World Poverty and Suffering

I Am Guilty

When we speak of a radical social revolution, of turning everything upside down, of bringing in the reign of God's justice, we can only do so if we are deeply convinced that such an upheaval will affect us all quite personally, you and me, every single one of us, as part of humankind. We ourselves have to be thrown over and then put back on our feet. We are all responsible for the social injustice, the human degradation, the wrongs people inflict on each other, both public and private. Each one of us bears guilt toward all humankind because we are deaf and blind to their degradation and humiliation.

1926

A whole web of guilt is spun round the earth, guilt that burdens our consciences...

One of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer is: "Forgive us our trespasses," meaning our guilt. (Matt. 6:12) We have all had to see that we are involved in the guilt of the world. We are co-guilty if a whole village in Russia perishes of hunger; if war is waged in South America over a river. We feel we have a guilt in all these things. We feel it most in the question of unemployment. I feel guilty because so many children have nothing to eat. I share the guilt of the British government for tolerating the terrible conditions in India. I feel guilty because prostitution exists as real slavery, because money rules over people. We are guilty for every child who dies tonight! Our guilt is millionfold because

This World's Revolution and God's Revolution

When someone asks us, “What is it like to live in community?” “How did you come to live in community, and how is your community organized?” we can only say that faith, quite specifically faith, is the seed from which community springs. We know that faith can move mountains. (Mark 11:23) That is the only help for humanity. Nothing else can help. Radical social revolution, idealistic back-to-nature movements, personality cults, pacifistic belief in the gradual improvement of the human race or in the power of good at work in history – none of these things can give humankind strength or show it the way. None of them can overcome sin, injustice, egoism, self-seeking, or greed. That is quite obvious, for example, from the words of members of the agrarian reform movement [for fairer use and distribution of land]. They say, “We take human selfishness for granted. Otherwise we could not stay in the reform movement.”

Faith does not take human selfishness for granted; it counts on doing away with it completely. Egoism is then replaced by what Jesus tells us: that if we seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness as the first thing, everything else will fall into place. Then there will be but one answer to all questions: God's rulership in Christ through the Holy Spirit. I am convinced that no problem will remain unsolved if we follow this way in earnest and if this seed truly

Endnotes

1. A reference to "dialectical theology."
2. In his *Journal*, George Fox refers to his meeting with Oliver Cromwell, who had been offered the crown of England. "I said again, they that sought to put on him a crown would take away his life; and I bid him mind the crown that was immortal." See *The Journal of George Fox*, with introduction by Rufus M. Jones (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1962), p. 170.
3. Authentic leadership in Christian community is service. Therefore the Bruderhof uses the old Hutterian designation, Servant of the Word, instead of minister or pastor. The words servant, deacon, and minister are all translations of the same word *diakonos* in the New Testament.
4. François de Fénelon, French Theologian, 1651-1715.
5. For this chapter extensive use has been made of Eberhard Arnold's *Children's Education in Community*.
6. Two members, coming home from the local bank, had been robbed at gunpoint of the week's wages for the Bruderhof-employed carpenters and workmen.
7. French Statesman, 1754-1838.
8. The Confessing Church was a movement of resistance to the nazification of German Protestantism. It sought to resist the take-over of Protestant Churches by Nazi leadership without withdrawing from the State Churches. Its most important single expression was the Barmen Confession (May 1934).
9. The first generation of the Protestant reformation was deeply troubled by a series of violent uprisings of peasants in many German territories, 1524-1525. The reaction of reformers Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli to this demand for social change was to commit their reformation movement solidly to an alliance with existing governments.