

The hermit in the Ranft Part VI [Concluded]

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Brother Klaus . . . the man of peace

THE more people of today talk about peace, the more peace is threatened, because we all know only too well what the others have to do so that peace becomes possible, but have very little knowledge of what we ourselves should do or could do – and if we knew, would we be prepared to take the steps?

Over the years we have become real experts in telling what the South African Whites have to do, how to put things right in Chile and South America, what has to be done in India etc. We take part in big propaganda actions, make publicity and protest marches. And what is the result? Violence and terrorism have become worse – and we have not learnt to ask ourselves what is really wrong with us!

Brother Klaus has done this research – he has studied peace – has been involved in making peace all his life. First he did it as a justice of peace, as an army captain, as a councillor – and he failed. That made him worried, and he asked the only right question: “What is wrong with me?” He would not have been a man (and a Swiss), if there had not been anything wrong with him, in spite of his sincerity and deep piety.

So he went to war again – like in earlier times, when he had to leave his family at the risk of not coming back anymore – but this time it was a war against himself, and the risk of death was even greater. It is regarded as highly probable that he returned from Listal with a mortal illness. His entire digestive system was out of order, and he was forced to live without food for the rest of his life. That he survived is a historical fact. How he did it is still a scientific riddle. It certainly had to do with his strict discipline and spiritual concentration.

We do not have to postulate a “miracle” for it, but God’s guidance from within certainly helped him to activate still unknown resources of the human mind. He certainly was not a “holy drop out,” a disgusted politician who withdrew into the wilderness to nurse his grudge. He was the opposite. We could regard him as a lonely scientist, trying to find the hidden formula

for peace, first for himself, then for the world.

It is interesting that his features and his eyes show some similarity with those of Einstein, who found the relativity of time and space and of energy and matter. With his discovery he prepared the way to nuclear energy. Had stone age man watched the result of his theory in the first explosion of the atomic bomb he would have called it a miracle of the Wrath of God, had he survived. And he would have tried to appease this “God” with rituals and sacrifices. Scientists would probably smile at

By Father Paul Bossard

such useless attempts to ban the bomb. But from his experience Brother Klaus would say it is a step into the right direction, after all, sacrifice and prayer help to combat selfishness and egotism – and atomic war has a lot to do with that!

Is that not a bit far fetched? There are definite parallels. Like Einstein, Brother Klaus was a genius, not of natural science but of the science of the human heart. And he did discover the law of relativity of good and evil, of friend and enemy, because he discovered both in his own heart. It led him to the discovery of divine energy and of the truth in this same heart. And so he discovered the way to peace. How did it come about?

There are several reports that he had visions of the Devil on several occasions. He never made a fuss about them, but he was concerned. We know today that visions come from the depth of the heart, like dreams. They differ only in degree. Brother Klaus became aware of that too, but it took him long years of severe discipline, of critical observation and meditation. Then he found the Devil, the

tempter, was himself.

The pictures of friend and enemy was simply a projection of his good and bad nature, his selfishness and egotism. But he did not make theories and write books about dreams and psychotherapy, like his brother C.G. Jung 500 years later. But he acted on the same insight. At the base of all his troubles (and ours too) he found the fateful ego as his greatest enemy. This was illustrated in his *Pilatus-Vision* of which he gave the following account:

The great pre-alpine landmark,

Pilatus, a mass of solid rock, is opposite his home to the North West. He saw it disintegrate suddenly in a vision, an empty void remained and the entire world was open before him. There appeared a great mass of people. All had a huge ulcer over their hearts, like two clenched fists. Behind them, in a shining light, Truth appeared. All turned away in horror, because the ulcer – selfishness and egotism – irritated people so much that they could not stand the light of Truth, which seemed to them like unendurable flames of fire. In furious fear people moved around, forward and backward and then out of sight in outrage and disgrace. But the Truth remained!

This is often called a prophetic vision. Maybe, but it is first and foremost a vision of his own heart, his own selfishness and egotism burnt away, so that he could face the Truth. Of course this is also true of every human person, and who is not familiar with this ulcer over the heart like two clenched fists? Is this not in ourselves, and can we not watch it daily whenever we look at the news? Do we still wonder, from where he had this great insight

into the human heart and why so many people came to him for advice? There is nothing miraculous about knowing oneself – but it needs great courage and humility.

He put his insight to the test at the Diet of Stans in 1481. Contrary to legend he never attended a single meeting. The night before he and Heimo am Grund spent hours in careful deliberation, studying the desperate situation in prayer and meditation. Then he sent the priest back to Stans with strict orders not to discuss his message with single delegates but deliver it only before the full assembly. So the spark of truth was released into the hearts of the single delegates, bringing them to the critical stage of imbalance. Simple people thought of a miracle, but peace was established within two hours.

One year later, in a message to the federal authorities in Berne, on December 4, 1482, he put his formula for peace into the following words: “Peace is always in God, since God is Peace. Peace cannot be destroyed. War however will be destroyed!” This is not mere consolation for the “individual soul” or religious escapism. It is the breakthrough of an old truth in the political life of Switzerland through the life and work of its, probably, greatest politician. He has demonstrated that selfishness and egotism cannot bring about a lasting peace, neither in small family surroundings nor in a world context.

There is an energy in the human heart that comes to life, the more little selfishness to its finest roots is overcome, but only then. Buddha knew it, so did Laotse and Confucius. Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament had experienced it – after great suffering. It has been proclaimed by Jesus Christ with authority, experienced by saints and mystics inside and outside of the church. Unfortunately



Illustration from the Chronicle of Diepold Shilling, Lucerne (1507/13) showing Heimo am Grund in conference with Brother Klaus and his delivering the message before the delegates at the Diet of Stans.

Brother Klaus was one of the few who has discovered that Christ's word works also in politics and business, and that is why Switzerland still exists.

"If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself, take up his cross day by day and follow me!" (Luke 9,23). Nobody can renounce his "ego" in a direct way but only in the daily life of following Christ and carrying the little cross of sacrificing comfort. There is nothing masochistic about it, as long as it serves the welfare of those for whom we care, and are we aware that very often others have to pay for our comfort?

True enough, self discipline and sacrifice are no more modern concepts. Self-fulfillment and job satisfaction are slogans of today. Nothing can be said against them but that words create attitudes, and they create frustration and violence. Self-fulfillment cannot be achieved by whatever man does – it comes as a result of discipline and right living. One should therefore not talk about it.

Brother Klaus has condensed into a little prayer what leads to peace and to fulfillment. But it has to be exercised in the body, day by day – no amount of reasoning and discussion will

help to understand it.

"My Lord and my God – take from me, whatever distracts me from Thee!


My Lord and my God – give me, whatever brings me nearer to Thee!

My Lord and my God – take me from me – and give me entirely to Thee!

This is the way to peace – within yourself – within your surroundings – and within the world. And there is no other way. This has nothing to do with religion as something beside human life – it is the secret of human life!

Concluded

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