

# The hermit in the Ranft Part V [to be continued]

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## The man of prayer and meditation

MEDITATION becomes popular in our times, and there are people who spend large sums of money in order to learn how to meditate themselves out of existence.

There is no harm in relaxation techniques offered by TM (Transcendental Meditation) but everything else propagated by it deserves serious doubts.

Brother Klaus was an expert. He instructed hundreds of people in this art of prayer yet he remained poor, never accepting money. He gave us a picture and a guide of immense value, a work of 20 years discipline, renunciation and meditation.

The picture can be explained by intellect, with grandiose theology, as it has been done time and again but it will leave you completely unmoved.

It will not yield its treasure because it is a picture of Brother Klaus himself and of his life. It will begin to work in you too, only as far as it becomes your own picture and your own life. It needs to be worked with, to be meditated, to be translated into a daily exercise in practical life.

Its origin is the shattering of a "divine vision", this piercing light with the human face which showed him the reality within himself and left him stunned, frightened and threw him to the ground.

With the help of the "Sunwheel" and its six spokes he began to recognise himself in the outer circle – his body, what he saw, heard, felt, what he thought, desired, wanted. It was his superficial personality, his "ego", but not his very self. There was something deeper to his person.

It was a great unknown space leading to the smaller circle. Here he was helped by his "dreams and visions" and discovered things he did not like to see: bad memories of the past, injustice, lust, revenge and violence.

And there was the desire to be more than others, temptations to abuse his powers and his insight. In short he found the "devil" within himself. The piercing light has made it visible to him – a terrible experience! It was the "valley of darkness and death" he had to go through to reach the light.

The inner circle had to do with the "light", its source was from the centrepoint and it had a human face. To see his own darkness was frightening, to be in the light was peace, stillness, no fear and it had nothing to do with

"ego". It showed the common ground he had with other people, with every living thing, with the whole creation.

Was it the depth of his own soul or was it more? He could not say, but he sensed that this was his real self. And it was more.

He needed guidance and received it from friends like Heimo am Grund, who helped him to find the correct words to put the experience into proper

ing inward and outward, he could explain as divine communication in the Holy Spirit into his world and from the world through his heart into the depth of God. That made it clear to him that he and every human being carried the image of God within, as the Bible said: "God created man in the image of himself" (Gen. 1,27).

This was real and made it clear to him beyond any doubt that real peace could only come from

**By Father Paul Bossard**

language. It was the dogma and the teaching of the Church that translated everything into his daily life. It was a difficult task. Often he told his friend that his theological knowledge was no help at all, then the priest gave him pictures of the suffering Christ. This, he found, was useful. It was practical and showed him what to do.

So he slowly became aware that it was the face of the invisible God, the face of Christ, which was the source of the piercing light. The six spokes, rays point-

within man into the world. That is how God works.

With six outer circles he began to integrate his experience into his entire experience of life. They represent the "Our Father" combined with "works of charity", the way of exercising the prayer into one's body and into daily life-practice.

"Our Father in Heaven": Heaven is within — it is not the sky. This was his experience, represented by the centre of the picture.

"Hallowed be thy name": God

has created the world and keeps it going from within himself. Everything gives silent witness to God's glory but the human person must do something too. There is a mug on the picture: "Give water to the thirsty", meaning use the things of this world as steward, helping others. Only then will this name be glorified by you.

"Thy Kingdom come": The birth in Bethlehem, the holy Child points to the heart of God. So does every child. This is God's kingdom. It must be born in me; it wants shelter in me. There is a walking stick with a purse – the lonely wanderer – the holy family that had no shelter.

Such is the practice in the body: Give shelter to the child of God. Every human person is such a child. Only if we do it can the kingdom of God go down with us.

"Thy will be done, as in Heaven so on Earth". The picture of the Annunciation with the reply of Mary: "See the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to your word". Whenever duty, however small it is, calls us and meets with the same reply, something will happen that comes from within: As in heaven so on earth.

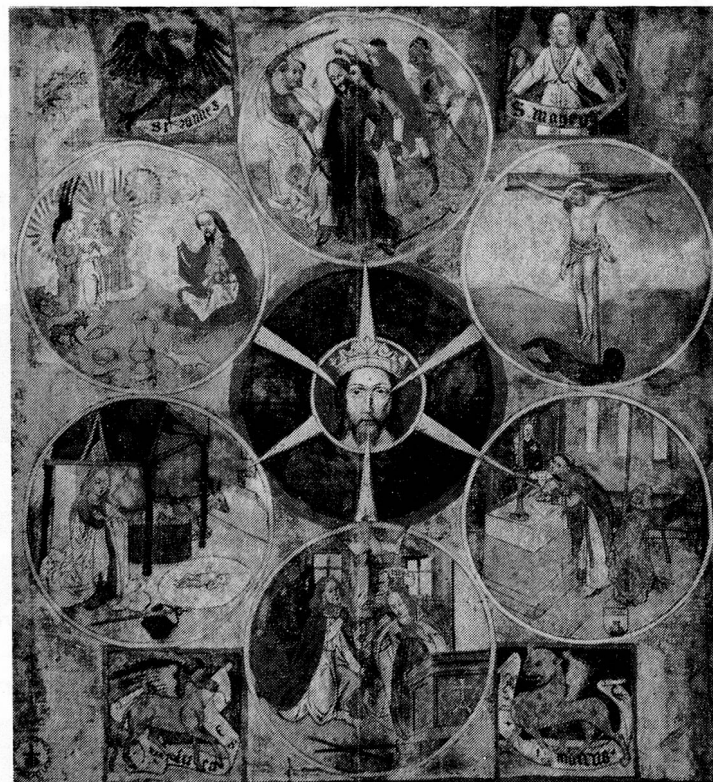
There are crutches in the picture: Duty comes in many ways, sometimes on crutches, the handicapped, wherever help is needed. Practice in daily life: Not my will, thy will be done.

"Give us this day our daily bread": Holy Mass and Holy Eucharist point into the heart of God. Something will happen to you whenever you celebrate in obedience what Christ has told us to do in "Memory of Him". This supports your life, and there is a small hint at the secret of his fasting.

There is a coffin behind the priest: Give reverence to the body, even in death. It is the house of God. Let everything you eat and drink point towards the heart of God. Let your whole body do it. God is within it.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us": Crucifixion, the greatest crime in history, has been turned from within God to the source of salvation and given us the power and the privilege to forgive sins.

The cloak of Christ in the picture points to the daily practice: Cover the shame



Brother Klaus's 'Sunwheel'

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# If you're thinking of returning to Switzerland

"FROM long experience we know that a Swiss citizen abroad who intends to return home has to plan his repatriation very carefully if he is to be spared unpleasant surprises."

That was the theme of a talk given in Manchester last month by Mr Benito Invernizzi, manager of the Berne-based Solidarity Fund for the Swiss Abroad.

And he added: "It is well known that things often turn out different to what one expects and there can be many disappointments."

In the case of a young married couple with children of school age, although children were generally able to adapt more easily to new surroundings than their parents there could be problems because of the differences in the two countries' educational systems.

Individual educational establishments had the right to accept or reject foreign examination certificates, and in some cases entrance exams would have to be taken in one of the Swiss national languages.

If either the father or the mother had Swiss citizenship there would be no difficulty in obtaining a residence permit, although certain formalities would have to be carried out. They were not included in the very restricted quota of foreign immigrants, neither were they likely to have problems in finding

work.

But registration with the civil authority in the new place of residence had to be done within a fortnight. And those liable to do military service had to register with the military authorities within eight days. A young man under the age of 21 might find himself ordered to go to a recruiting school.

Turning to the Swiss labour market, Mr Invernizzi said the latest figures showed unemployment had increased, so it was vitally important to investigate the situation beforehand, unless there was the firm offer of a job in Switzerland.

However, despite the warning about more unemployment, the figure quoted by Mr Invernizzi turned out to be very modest compared to the situation in Britain – just 0.4 per cent!

Certainly a qualified worker under the age of 40 would have little difficulty in finding a good

position, providing he wasn't a watchmaker moving to the Bernese Jura, where a number of watch factories had closed down.

On the commercial side there were plenty of opportunities, especially for managers. Single people would find things easier than couples, not least because of the housing situation, which could cause problems in urban areas.

The Federal Office of Industry, Trade and Labour was ready to assist people from abroad in finding jobs.

The best advice for anyone contemplating returning to Switzerland was not to hand in their notice until they had found a new job.

For older people wanting to return to their homeland to retire their main worries were over matters relating to old age and sickness insurance.

Switzerland had signed an agreement with Britain and many

other countries which gave greater security to Swiss citizens overseas because it meant their pension could be paid in Switzerland.

Those who had contributed to the Swiss insurance scheme would be entitled to the benefits of this as well as their British pension. However if the period over which contributions had been paid was not the same as that of a compatriot in Switzerland of the same age, then only a partial pension would be paid.

Mr Invernizzi's final world of advice: "Remember that in changing from one country to another you need a great deal of patience and good humour."

● *Because so many of our readers are concerned about the problems they might have to face on their return to Switzerland, the Swiss Observer is to start a series of detailed articles describing the pitfalls – and how they can be overcome.*

## THE HELPFUL FUND

*IN Northern Ireland a Swiss who had an electrical business there received immediate payment of lump sum compensation from the Solidarity Fund for the Swiss Abroad when a bomb planted by the IRA destroyed his shop.*

*This example was given by Mr Invernizzi to counter the view held by many people in the United Kingdom that they were*

*so far removed from political unrest that they did not need the same financial protection as their less-fortunate compatriots in more unsettled countries.*

*The fact remains that since the fund was launched nearly 24 years ago it has paid out Sfr. 6,520,000 to 486 members – mainly in Africa, where 430 members received a total of*

*Sfr. 5,505,000.*

*In Europe only eight members have benefitted, to the tune of just Sfr. 60,000. Yet of the fund's 10,585 members, 7,528 live in Europe.*

*Mr Invernizzi said that it was the only cooperative organisation for Swiss residents abroad whose activities stretched out to every country in the world.*

## The man of prayer and meditation

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exposed to you – the nakedness of crime, the weakness of poverty, the defenceless back of your enemy.

"And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Brother Klaus did not seem to see temptation in sex but in the "Kiss of Judas", in his frustrated public life, betrayed by foe and friend, even by his eldest son. This can turn you away from God in bitterness. May it open the way into the heart of God. This is deliverance from evil.

The handcuffs on the picture point to the daily practice:

Freedom and bondage; I am a prisoner; a culprit and have no right to accuse the other. I can set him free. How? I must find out for myself.

The symbols of the four evangelists – at the same time the symbols of the four elements – simply express that this truth represents the four pillars of the world and the Gospel of Christ.

Thus the meditation of Brother Klaus is not an escape from the world but a direct confrontation with its problems. Though meditation does give insight and opens the inner eye for truth, if it is not practised in the body it remains sterile. Both in combina-

tion will change a world.

If a catholic theologian in April 1981 could say over the Swiss Radio: "I am convinced that it is of no help to make people better Christians. The system is at fault and we have to change that", Brother Klaus would shake his head and send him home to do penance for saying such a nonsense.

"Why", he would ask, "do you accuse the people near and far? Are you afraid of becoming a tool in God's hand through prayer and self-discipline?"

And there is something else. There is a lot of talk about "experience". Brother Klaus had

plenty of it. It was the integration of experience into his entire life, its assimilation with hard discipline that gave it value and helped him to become the man he was.

He has walked the way, put down the signposts which we can safely follow without being shattered through terrible experiences as he was. Do not go for religious experience if you can avoid it.

There is no short cut. Prayer and daily practice is, after all, not a luxury for pious people but a necessity for anyone who wants to become truly human.

*To be continued*