

Santiago, May 13, 1952

Excerpts from
The Secret of Schoenstatt's Life

Das Lebensgeheimnis Schoenstatts
(Letter to Msgr. Joseph Schmitz)

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Major portions here as translated for Chapters 4 and 5 in
Schoenstatt's Covenant Spirituality

Other segments from *The 31st of May: The Third Milestone*

Other segments translated for the first time

{19} Dear Joseph!

In my answer to Rudolf's¹ report of April 18, 1952 about the history of the General Statutes, I promised to give my views in more detail as soon as the draft came into my hands. After taking a detour through Buenos Aires the report has now happily reached me. Father General² sent it to me. Rudolf wrote in your name; he will therefore not mind if I address my views directly to you.

At the top of the Statutes is the word "Draft." In other words, the final version has not been approved and examinations and suggestions from the right and the left, from above and below are both permitted and desired.

Our institute priests have been shaken up by this significant event. Both the general council and the members at large are engaged in a discussion of the future of the institute, of the priests' branch, and of the entire Schoenstatt Work -- on the level of organization as well as on the level of life. Rudolf has already pointed out on the basis of the written draft and its historical development the danger of a great {20} irritability, bad blood, and mutual recriminations. I also fear all this -- and it already seems to be happening.

We will therefore do well to begin by following St. Ignatius's method of discernment, and silence -- in the spirit of holy indifference³ -- every affect in order to become more able to grasp clearly God's plan, to free ourselves from the wish to defend just our own position and circle around ourselves, and then to apply ourselves without reserve for the fulfillment of God's plan.

¹ Fr. Rudolf Klein-Arkenau (1895-1963), at that time the rector of the Marienau (house of the Schoenstatt diocesan priests in original Schoenstatt) and member of the council that oversaw the community of Schoenstatt diocesan priests.

² Fr. Adelbert Turowski (1894-1959), General Rector of the Pallottines 1947-1953 and therefore Fr. Kentenich's superior at this time.

³ See St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, No. 23.

Topic of this Study

Towards this end allow me to briefly discuss *the metaphysical foundation of the entire Schoenstatt Work*. You may then see if you concur and see therein a key for unveiling a divine plan both in the overall structure of the Family and in its details. If we all begin at a commonly shared starting point, then it ought to be easy to clarify the confusion of opinions and voices, and be thus put in a position to use our entire strength to positively build up and expand the entire work. Just as I write these sentences a short note has landed on my desk:

“The most important thing: the Statutes are meeting with great difficulties among the bishops. They are not able to clearly see their way through the whole confusion, are afraid of so many paragraphs and are reluctant to give their approval to such a complex thing (...) (May 2).”

{21} If this is the effect on the bishops, many members of our movement must also be feeling the same thing. Only those who have in hand the key to the many locked doors of our enigmatic-looking organization, only those who hold the thread of Adriadne for finding the way with certainty through the labyrinth of individual determinations, only those who know the final principle from which all the paragraphs flow, only those who know the root from which the mighty and many-branched tree grows in which the birds of the sky shall make their home (cf Mt 13,22) can understand the richly entangled complexity of proposed draft and arrive at their own conclusions.

This is a new reason which can urge us on to penetrate from the periphery to the center, from the shell to the kernel, from the building to the foundation, from the tree to the root, from the general outward appearance to the final metaphysical principle of organization and life.

Reasons

I could actually wait with writing this study until I have the new draft in my hands, or better yet, until the final codification is complete. But for many reasons I think it is better that I carry out my resolution already now. When I wrote to Rudolf on May 8, 1952, I

already had this plan in mind. On page 6 one reads:

“Now would actually be the place to present to you in more detail the great inner connections of the guiding image which I have in mind. It would be important so as to help training [others] in the principles.”

{22} Here you have the first reason: Such a *training* is always important and commendable. This is especially true in an age of irrationalism, doubly and triply so when the issue is to extraordinarily complex and the serious burden of responsibility obliges [all sides] to work together to unravel the tangle.

With this I touch on a second reason: If we will be called to stand before God and history, if the entire work shall bear the features of our face and be formed from our flesh and blood, then we must do our part to assure its success. But that can only happen if we see and make our suggestions and decisions based on final principles.

It is only in this way that we can expect to achieve an interior spiritual unity, to speak together a convincing “yes” to organization and life. This can be booked as a third reason.

A fourth reason lies in the fact that when Rudolf wrote his history of how this draft of the constitutions⁴ came about, he presupposed that I was precisely informed. But since I did not have it in my hands when I wrote my response, all I could do was reconstruct from the few hints that he gave. But the finished draft has in many things a different face from what I supposed on the basis of his letter. If my answer is now completely on the level of principles and must therefore be viewed in a timeless manner, its application to the draft now before me will not be something everyone can do. What that means will become clear in the following pages.

{23} A final reason is the endangered existence of the institute⁵. To what extent my fears are justified is something you will have learned in the meantime. If you have omitted this, then I ask you to

⁴ German: *Satzungsentwurf*, draft of the constitutions. Although Fr. Ken-tenich switches from General Statutes to constitutions, the context makes it evident that he is speaking of the same thing: the proposed draft of the General Statutes.

⁵ The Institute of Schoenstatt Diocesan Priests.

make up for this as soon and as thoroughly as possible. (...) For you everything is at stake, depending on whether the German bishops intend to approve the institute or not. The General Statutes may take a generally positive stand on this question, but this does not yet say anything certain about the position of the bishops. The difficulties which have been raised can only be convincingly resolved if the final principles determine the goals and structure of the institute as such and in relationship to the federation and league⁶, as well as the German bishops. If time permits, I will later come back to this.

If I now fulfill my resolution, I wish in no way to take a stand on the question of whether the General Statutes might not be better if they were shorter or ordered in a more easily understood way. I write that with a sideward glance at the above-mentioned fear of the bishops at so many paragraphs and their reluctance to approve such a complex thing.

⁶ That is, the Federation and League of diocesan priests.

SCHOENSTATT'S LAW OF FOUNDATION AND CONSTRUCTION

{24} The starting point of the study is the current set of confrontations regarding Schoenstatt. At issue is not only its organization, but also its spirit and life. It is therefore appropriate that I give the metaphysically ultimate law of foundation and construction. It selects a form which simplifies for both sides [of the question] the application for all the relevant and attendant questions and the feelings of life. The key phrase is this:

An appropriately strong limitation or even reduction of power on the organizational-juridical level, connected with an extraordinarily rich plenitude of power on the level of life.

With that you have the metaphysics of Schoenstatt before you, whether you view it as a basic organization or as a living organism. The formula therefore stresses a double concept: "on the organizational-juridical level" and "on the level of life." The concern of the hierarchy is understandably focused on their own juridical plenitude of power, and that the main concern of the visitor⁷, as can be proven, is the full-scale reduction of power in Schoenstatt. I therefore use the word-pair: "plenitude of power on the level of life," and "limitation or even reduction of power on the organizational level."

The first part of the law of foundation and construction as formulated here points to the final principle of organization. The principle can be proven to have carried, inspired, and determined my organizational activity from the beginning of the Family's history and in all its stages. I always wanted only as much juridically anchored organization as absolutely necessary to {25} allow the whole work to function and prosper in all times, zones, and situations: whether it be the Family in its autonomy or in its belonging to the already existing hierarchical order. For me organization was always only a network of channels which, while certainly important, could not be spoken of as the main issue. My main attention and concern was always directed to the mighty current which flowed through it all. Organi-

⁷ Fr. Sebastian Tromp, SJ, the apostolic visitor from 1951 to 1953.

zation was secondary; organism – that is, spirit and life – was my main concern in all situations. This explains *the second part* of the formula of the metaphysical law of foundation and construction: “an extraordinarily rich plenitude of power on the level of life.”

Plenitude of Power on the Level of Life

To the extent that I have intervened at all -- whether from the foreground or the background -- in the current controversies, it has always been for the sake of saving, safeguarding, and expanding this lifestream. Hence the eternal struggle for the recognition and use of the extraordinarily rich stream of grace flowing from our Shrine – earlier we could speak about it as the “Secret of Schoenstatt”⁸ – for the education of the new man {26} in the new community and for our method of education. The General Statutes do not take an explicit position on this, although it mentions our Shrine, but it does not discuss its meaning and shows no further concern for its intrinsic value or its symbolic content. This position is only defensible if one feels as at home in our lifestream as a fish in water. One can defend the idea: organization is organization and life is life; keep them separate in formulation and descriptions. But this does not mean that the opposite position can not also be defended. In any case, the General Statutes [as drafted] only concern themselves with organizational questions.

(....)

⁸ The term “Secret of Schoenstatt” goes back to something which Msgr. Wolker said to a Schoenstatt priest in 1930: he had thus far not been able to get behind “Schoenstatt’s secret” (*MTA Magazine* 1931, p. 65f). When the high school boys in the Schoenstatt seminary presented a play about the secret of Schoenstatt on December 8, 1933, Fr. Kentenich picked up on it, also in parallel to DeMontfort’s “secret of Mary.” In the course of the visitation the term was placed under scrutiny and for a time was not allowed to be used.

DELIBERATIONS REGARDING THE SUBSTANCE OF THE LAW OF FOUNDATION AND CONSTRUCTION

Schoenstatt’s Principle of Organization

{30} You will not find it difficult to discover in the above-mentioned principle (...) a new form of our universal principle of organization. Our Family knows it as the old formula: “*Obligations (only, but also) to the extent necessary, freedom as much as possible, cultivation of the spirit, total and safeguarded, in every aspect of life*”⁹. You know that a large portion of our Family history and the struggles of our Family (...) are connected with this principle. The first two parts can clearly be found in the first half of the principle of foundation: *An appropriately strong limitation or even reduction of power on the organizational-juridical level*. The third part of the principle of organization, “cultivation of the spirit, total and safeguarded, in every aspect of life” is in the second half of the principle of foundation. It says: *connected with an extraordinarily rich plenitude of power on the level of life*. As I indicated above, the new form is determined by the present confrontations and the moods and sensitivities, fears and power concerns that resonate with it. (...)

Schoenstatt’s Principle of Government

{31} If you want to expand the radius of your research, then take our law of foundation and principle of organization and try to discover in them our law of government: “*Authoritarian in principle, democratic in application*.” Where are do you find the similarities and differences? To what extent are the present opposing currents of exaggerated liberalism¹⁰ and democratism {32} brought in harmony with the trends seeking overlordship through imperialism, totalitarianism, or dictatorship? To what extent do the dominant streams of thought of opposing eras touch and join in a loftier unity, thereby

⁹ German: *Bindung (nur, aber auch) soweit als noetig, Freiheit soeit als moeglich, Geistpflege auf der ganzen Linie in vollendeter und gesicherter Weise*.

¹⁰ Liberalism as understood in the politics of continental Europe: As much as freedom as possible for capitalistic endeavor, i.e. *laissez-faire* capitalism.

unfolding a strong formative dynamic in modern life and bringing the world and Church to the other shore? Deliberations of this kind are not superfluous for someone who wants to make an independent contribution to solving the problems currently being discussed about the Family. Not feelings and passions, but thinking and willing based on sound principles must set the pace.

(....)

The Measure of Cultivation of the Spirit

{41} When our principle finds its purest application -- such as in our institutes, especially the Institute of the Sisters of Mary -- these obligations are calibrated so that in the long run the institute cannot exist and be fruitful without an extraordinarily strong and organizationally safeguarded cultivation of the spirit. This is how seriously we take and strive for the ideal of the spiritually animated person. Earlier we often used to say: We want to be organized to such an extent that we cannot exist in the long run without spirit -- either we exist, and then only because it is with spirit, or we have lost the spirit and then we have lost our right to exist and can and want to perish. We are not utopians in this. The obligations {42} which we have are numerous and strong enough that they can hold the head of the Family above water for a longer period of time in the case of a decline in spirit and life. This gives the Family an opportunity to renew itself, from the ashes as it were, or to reestablish a complete building from half ruins.

But the other branches of the Family are also oriented in their own way to moderation in external obligations. This is only possible, however, if on the one hand the cultivation of the spirit is exceptionally outstanding, permanent, and at least to some extent safeguarded. This is what our basic principle means when it says, "Cultivation of the spirit as much as possible."

(....)

THE PRIMACY OF SPIRIT AND LIFE

{79} One does not have to be an expert in the philosophy of history or juridical psychology in order to discover the golden thread which winds through our history as it has unfolded according to the fundamental laws of its being, a thread which gleams to us at every corner, often even as a manifestation of great radiance. It is as if a skillful hand had been carefully spinning the thread from the outset, weaving it into a tapestry of great value. Even at first glance it is obvious that the entire network of our organization is determined and formed by [the cultivation of] spirit and life, indeed so much so that anyone can plainly see:

The current which dominates the history of the Schoenstatt Family is the current of spirit and the current of life. Organization, on the other hand, retreats so much into the background that it is nearly imperceptible.

With that we arrive at the first fundamental theorem which must leave its mark on our organizational development for all times to come. To prevent a misunderstanding in its application, let me state it in unequivocal terms:

Form and spirit must be united in such a way that spirit and life always retain the upper hand and stand above all else!

(....)

{80} All of this is doubly and triply important because all of us are in danger of turning the primary thing into a secondary thing; especially because it is so much easier {81} to set organizational machinery in motion and to maintain it than to foster spirit and life. To do this requires a rare mastery [of life] which is given by God as a charism, or which must be acquired through prayer, diligent study, and years of experimentation. (....)

THE COVENANT OF LOVE AS SCHOENSTATT'S SOURCE OF LIFE

{84} Such thoughts naturally lead to the questions: What does the current of life look like which has come about in our history? And according to which laws has it developed? A second theorem can help answer this, namely:

If you wish to preserve and increase the historical fullness of our spirit and life, then make loyalty to the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt your main concern and central interest at all times!

This theorem is rooted in a great and radiant world of joyfully and historically verifiable facts. Here a brief review will have to suffice. These facts should otherwise belong to our permanent reserve of favorite subjects for study and meditation.

The Covenant Act

First fact¹¹: *Our Lady has sealed a significant covenant of love with Schoenstatt and with all Schoenstatt children.*

That is the family's¹² faith-filled conviction, based on the laws of the "open door" and the "creative resultant". While the former showed us the way in discerning what God had planned for us, the latter provided the conviction that our decisions had been correct {85} and that Schoenstatt—precisely as it has historically come about and stands before us today—is neither a trick of the devil nor the mere fabrication of human ambition, but an outspoken *work of God*.

This conviction must be spoken of as the foundation upon which the entire edifice of the family rests; and it is backed up by the richly welling source of graces, source of strength, and source of life which continuously flows through all its members and branches. Those who

¹¹ Fr. Kentenich only mentions the first of these "three facts" here. From other sources we know that the "three facts" are: 1) Mary has made a covenant of love with Schoenstatt; 2) the two covenant partners have remained faithful; and 3) we have come to the covenant of love by way of the law of the open door.

¹² In almost all instances where Fr. Kentenich refers to "the family" in this and the following texts, he is referring to the Schoenstatt Family.

wish to reexamine the proof of that can do so in the "Key"¹³. The term "law of the creative resultant" is not expressly used there, but that is what is obviously meant when the criteria for the outspoken divinity of a work are mentioned and applied to the history of the family, namely the smallness of the instruments and of the means, the greatness of the opposing difficulties, and the depth, duration, and extent of the fruitfulness¹⁴. The term ["creative resultant"] comes from Wundt¹⁵. For us it describes a force of unmistakably divine origin, whose creative effectivity goes far beyond the effective force of the human components tangible in our history.

If Mommsen¹⁶ was hesitant in publishing the fourth volume of his history of Rome, "because the undeniable and extraordinary power of transformation with which Christianity permeated and restructured the thousand-year-old Roman empire {86} cannot be explained using historical categories," then that means that despite history's clear indication of a divine creative resultant, the author lacked the courage to call the child by its proper name. We are not afflicted by such feebleness. On the contrary! We gladly acknowledge as does the "Key":

Whoever applies these criteria to the history of Schoenstatt after having gained a deeper insight into all its details, whoever considers the lifestream with the eyes of faith, a lifestream which began from tiny rivulets and which grew into a powerful and irresistible current despite enormous difficulties on all fronts and the lack of humanly effective means and impulses, whoever is

¹³ *Schlüssel zum Verständnis Schönstatts* (Key to Understanding Schoenstatt), study written by Fr. Kentenich in Switzerland in October 1951. In: Günther M. Boll (ed.), *Texte zum Verständnis Schönstatts* (Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1974), p. 141-228, here referred to: p. 183-224.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid*, p. 222. See also Schoenstatt's Second Founding Document (October 18, 1939), No. 60, in: *Schoenstatt: The Founding Documents* (Waukesha, c.1975), p. 49.

¹⁵ Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), German philosopher and psychologist.

¹⁶ Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903), German historian best known for his five-volume *Römische Geschichte* (Roman History), of which volume four was never completed.

aware of how much heroism has been awakened in every walk of life, causing innumerable souls to offer up their lives and freedom to the Blessed Mother for her work, they will not find it difficult to believe in the credibility of our statement [that Schoenstatt is a work of God]. It comes naturally and convincingly to a *certitudo moralis* (a tenet of moral certainty)¹⁷."

The character and content of the covenant of love are already clearly recognizable in the Founding Document. For instance:

"*Ego diligentes me diligo*. I love those who love me. Prove to me first that you really love me. (...) Diligently bring me contributions to the capital of grace: by fulfilling your duties faithfully and conscientiously and by praying fervently, earn many merits and place them at my disposal. *Then* it will please me to dwell in your midst and dispense gifts and graces in abundance; *then* I will draw youthful hearts to myself from here, {87} and educate them to become useful instruments in my hand¹⁸."

The Covenant Partners

The covenant partners are Our Lady and Schoenstatt. *Our Lady promises* to dwell in Schoenstatt, to draw youthful hearts to herself from here, and to transform her Schoenstatt children, in her school of education, into the bearers of a great movement of renewal. *Schoenstatt promises* to give itself entirely to the Blessed Mother, to willingly and readily educate itself as her instrument and to allow itself to be formed, used, and expended for the purposes of world renewal.

The Blessed Mother made Schoenstatt for youthful, i.e. malleable hearts that can be enkindled for great goals and are joyfully ready to make sacrifices. Only these are of any use to her as instruments in revolutionary and tumultuous times which flee from God and pay

¹⁷ "Key to the Understanding of Schoenstatt", in: *Texte zum Verständnis Schönstatts*, p. 198.

¹⁸ First Founding Document (October 18, 1914), No. 11. The text here follows the 1919 version with slight variations and added emphasis.

homage to the devil. Only these are of any use to her as the official and permanent companion and helpmate of the Lord in the entire work of redemption; the kind, powerful, and wise educator of the nations; the great *Antidiabolicum*¹⁹, the *acies bene ordinata*²⁰. {88} All who join her cause and deliver themselves into her care, all those whom "she draws to herself", remain eternally young in spirit, even when the body is weary and our strength falters.

It is not difficult to draw corresponding conclusions from this first fact as we have briefly described and verified it. We are shown the way to it through the words of Sallust and Anaximenes: "*Omne regnum iisdem mediis continetur, quibus conditum est*" [A kingdom can only be sustained by remaining loyal to the principles upon which it was founded]²¹ and "*Per quas causas res nascitur, per easdem et dissolvi oportet*" [The forces which cause a thing to be born are the forces by which it is dissolved]²². These are words which have proved their wisdom down through the millennia. They are a vivid reminder of the poet's admonition:

"What you have inherited from your fathers,
acquire it to make it your own!²³"

These words are of particular importance for those who belong to the central committee²⁴ and the praesidium²⁵. They should consider it their favorite task to carefully engender in the leaders and the entire family the faith-filled conviction that Schoenstatt's history is an inbreak of the overflowing power of the divine, and to make the

¹⁹ The great opponent of Satan (cf Rev 12,1).

²⁰ The army in well-ordered array (cf Song 6,10).

²¹ Gaius Sallustius Crispus, aka. Sallust (86-35 BC), Roman senator and author. See also Second Founding Document, No. 96.

²² Anaximenes of Milet (c.585-c.526 BC), Greek philosopher.

²³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), *Faust*, Part I, Night Scene.

²⁴ The body responsible for coordinating the work at the league level of a diocesan, regional or national Schoenstatt Family; to it belong the moderators of the various league branches.

²⁵ The body responsible for coordinating questions concerning a regional or national Schoenstatt Family as a whole; to it belong the leading representatives from each of the secular institutes and federations and from the movement.

connection between this and the covenant of love.

The Covenant of Love as Schoenstatt's Leading Idea

Not only the history of the movement as a whole and of its individual branches, not only the flourishing interior life of the individual members, but even the majority of the prayers in *Heavenwards*²⁶ draw our attention to the fact that this {89} covenant was and is *the* preeminently original and fundamental form of our existence, *the* radiant and enflaming final goal for intellect, will, and heart, and the fundamental source of strength for the entire personality in every situation. It must ever remain what it was and is: fundamental form, final goal, and fundamental source of strength. If not, our family spirit will collapse, or at least lose the wealth of its fruitfulness and attractiveness.

In the Marian Sodality the idea of the covenant of love with Our Lady had long existed in the form of the *contractus bilateralis gratuitus*²⁷. We adopted it from the Sodality, but, in contrast to the practice of the Sodality, made it into the dominant and leading idea, namely (as already described) the fundamental form of our existence, our final goal, and fundamental source of strength. We have given it a unique place of its own, have developed it in a creative manner and formed it into a well-ordered system of education. Here, too, the words apply: That is how it must remain. What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!

(...)

The Covenant With Mary Leads to Christ

{94} Throughout its history, Schoenstatt's teaching and life have especially emphasized two things: the inner two-in-oneness of love of Christ and love of Mary – while nonetheless respecting the clear

²⁶ Book of the prayers written by Fr. Kentenich in Dachau. For the English translation, see J. Niehaus (ed.) *Heavenwards* (Waukesha, 1992).

²⁷ A mutual agreement based on the freely given yes of each partner. See *New Vision and Life* (2004), p. 100f.

differences between the two – and how in Jesus and Mary, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we come to the Father.

The first, the inner two-in-oneness, was of central importance to the family from the outset. It came to our attention through the "law of the open door". After all, Schoenstatt was founded in a time when mechanistic thinking believed it had to separate Our Lord from his Mother and hold them apart. Recall our difficulties with the liturgical wing from the *Jugendbewegung*²⁸, our confrontation with the Protestant influences and idealistic errors pervasive in German thought....

{95} Those who keep all of this in mind will understand what we mean when we say that the motto of St. Isidor²⁹, "*Ut sim servus filii, appeto servitutem genetricis*" [In order to be a servant of the Son, I strive to be a servant of the Mother], has become reality in the life of our family and the souls of its individual members in the fullest sense of the word. Our tender Marian love has permitted, to use a word of Pope Pius X, the "*intellectualis Christi cognitio*" (intellectual knowledge of Christ) to mature into a "*vitalis [Christi cognitio]*", a living knowledge of Christ³⁰. She is for us, to quote the same pope, truly the easiest, surest, and shortest way to a tender union with Christ and ecstatic oneness with the Father³¹. What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!

We are reminded of the two prayers which were written during the first years of our family's history: "Mother Thrice Admirable, Mother of Grace" and "Mother with your Child Divine"³². In the first, the purpose of love for the Blessed Mother is interpreted as follows:

²⁸ The youth movement of Germany between 1890 and 1933, especially in the 1920s. In Catholic circles, the *Jugendbewegung* became one of the initiating forces for the then budding liturgical movement.

²⁹ Presumably St. Isidor of Seville (c.560-633).

³⁰ Cf. Pius X, encyclical "Ad diem illum laetissimum," February 2, 1904; cf. *Papal Teachings: Our Lady*, No. 227-228.

³¹ Ibid, No. 224.

³² Prayers written by Fr. Kentenich in 1916.

"So that the world through you made new
pay to your Son his homage due!"

The second begins and ends with a reference to this inner two-in-oneness. It begins, "Mother with your Child Divine" and ends with the conviction that

"Mother and Child united in love
will restore it with grace from above!"

{96} The same thought appears in many of the prayers in *Heavenwards* as one of the key concepts. They are a documentation of the "prayed life" of the recent past. Let me quote a few of the classical passages in this regard:

"The permanent helpmate for the salvation of souls
may not fail to be present on your difficult way of the cross.
The Father *placed her at your side*
just as he once joined Eve to Adam.

"An ocean of sorrows wells *in both hearts*,
but nothing can reverse their decision
to resolutely accept the Father's will
and go the way of suffering *together*.

"As often as the fires of hell flare up,
you want *to use the One who crushes the serpent*,
shackling through the voice of a woman
the beast whose dragon-mouth is wide agape.

"*In union with her* you want to save souls,
binding them, like yourself, to the Father's will.
Mary is and will always be the lure and magnet

whom our hearts cannot easily resist³³."

Or:

"Those who overlook Mary,
who according to the Father's plan should always stand at
your side,
do not grasp the fullness of your task,
nor the entirety of its strength and light³⁴."

{97} Or:

"O Holy Cross, I fall before you,
and sing to you ardent hymns of thanks and jubilation:
On you our Lord completed the work
which made us children of God.

"I want to plant you deeply in my joyous heart
and constantly give you all my love;
my life's hope is built *on you*,
my crucified Lord, and on your Bride.

"Let me proclaim *you both* to those around me,
daring my life's battle for *you* each day.
Then *your kingdom* will be victorious everywhere
and extend its boundaries to the ends of the universe.

"Let me present *the cross and the picture of Mary*
to the nations as the sign of redemption,
so that the two who stand as one in the Father's plan of
love
may never be divided.

³³ *Heavenwards*, p. 68-69.

³⁴ *Heavenwards*, p. 85.

"Let Schoenstatt always be your loyal instrument inscribing *your names, together*, into human hearts, that Satan's realm may truly be destroyed and in the Holy Spirit the Father's glory be increased³⁵."

Those who wish to more closely investigate and interpret the aspects of Christ portrayed in *Heavenwards* should take the book of Revelation in hand – they can all be found there. There are six all together: the high-priestly God-King (cf Rev 1,12-16), the victorious Lamb of God (cf Rev 5,6-14), the almighty Word of God (cf Rev 1,16; 19,13), the all-just Judge of the World (cf Rev 15,1-16.21; 19,11–20,15), the One who mercifully perfects the world (cf Rev 21), and the gentle and tenderly loving Divine Bridegroom (cf Rev 19,7-10; 21,2.9; 22,17).

{98} The One "seated on the throne" (Rev 5,1) has allowed "the Lamb who was slain" (Rev 5,6) to look into the book of the destiny of Church and world. He has entrusted to him the execution of his plan of wisdom, love, and omnipotence.

Such is the fullness of spirit and life which has carried and animated the past history of the family. I repeat: What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!

In the end, our history – and *Heavenwards* is, after all, "prayed life" – is evidence of the fact that the covenant of love with Our Lady has become a multifaceted, warm, and fruitful covenant with Our Lord.

The Covenant with Mary Leads to God the Father

The same applies to the heavenly Father. Schoenstatt has an unusually patrocentric spirituality. An opportunity may later present itself to depict in more detail how Mary, the Woman formed by Christ and who forms others into Christ, led us to the Father in the Holy Spirit, and with which richness and depth.

Here it will probably suffice to mention the individual char-

³⁵ *Heavenwards*, p. 90.

acteristics of our image of the Father. From what we have already said, it will not come as a surprise when I declare: They resemble the great vision of the Father which the author of the book of Revelation sets down in Chapter Four (Rev 4). The things symbolically presented there {99} have come to light in our history as a condensed summary of the character traits of the One "seated on the throne" (Rev 4,2), from whom all life comes on earth and in heaven, and to whom all things return. He is the All-merciful, the All-holy, the All-just, the Almighty, and the All-knowing – the Lord of heaven and earth³⁶. We can therefore feel sheltered when we are near to him and in his hands, can unreservedly deliver ourselves up to him and speak a heartfelt yes to his wishes, making his plans our own.

In the past, mind, will, and heart have been drawn to God the Father, the significance of which can be seen in the recent developments surrounding our daughter shrines overseas³⁷. In many of them a "Father Eye" can be found which has a prominent place not only with regard to the sanctuary but also to the whole interior of the shrine. They have been given their place in the shrine with great solemnity in the presence of the whole movement. The great and solemn act can be seen as the end of a long development of struggle and blessing – which I will not recount here – and the beginning of an even more fruitful era in the future³⁸.

United with the picture of our Mother Thrice Admirable and

³⁶ In 1940 and 1941 Fr. Kentenich held a series of retreats on the topic "The Apocalyptic Priest". There he also provided an interpretation of the symbolic language of Rev 4,1-11, from which this list of divine attributes comes:

- jasper - the white of holiness, All-holy (v 3)
- carnelian - the red of justice, All-just (v 3)
- rainbow - the story of Noah, All-merciful (v 3)
- lightning and thunder - power, Almighty (v 5)
- eyes front and back - wisdom, All-knowing (v 6).

³⁷ Here as elsewhere in this chapter, "overseas" is used in the German perspective, namely outside of Europe.

³⁸ Fr. Kentenich is almost certainly referring to the installation of the Father symbols in the shrines in Nueva Helvetia, Uruguay (December 14, 1948), Florencia Varela, Argentina (March 19, 1952), and Bellavista, Chile (May 18, 1952), all of which were done during visits by the founder in these South American countries.

Queen, this symbol of the Blessed Trinity adds life to the sanctuary in all our countries overseas. Through it, our spirituality {100} is symbolized in its universal openness. It reflects the tone of our motto: *Per Mariam ad Jesum, per Christum in Spiritu Sancto ad Patrem* [Through Mary to Jesus, through Christ in the Holy Spirit to the Father]. Our spirituality is therefore not only Marian, but also Christo-mystical, patrocentric, and spiritipheric – or, if one prefers, because it is Marian, it is distinctively Trinitarian.

That may help explain why the prayers in *Heavenwards* address at one point the Blessed Mother, at others Our Lord, and at still others our Heavenly Father as the covenant partner and master former. I repeat: What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!

The Shrine, Schoenstatt's Place

From the very beginning, the conviction has lived in the family—and received generous confirmation—that the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother is an expression, means, and significant safeguard for the covenant with God. We are likewise convinced that the significance and fruitfulness of the covenant increase when it is sealed in childlike faith in our shrine, or at least in spiritual union with it.

The same sun shines everywhere, and yet, its rays are especially effective in particular places, as in health spas. A similar {101} effect is found with Our Lady. She seeks a nearness to the earth in a truly human and motherly way. She chooses "favorite places" for herself, somewhat like our habit to set aside a particular room in our own homes for the discussion of weighty matters and for celebrations. In certain places – called preeminent places of grace or, on the basis of an influx of visitors, pilgrimage places – she manifests her power, wisdom, and kindness in an exceptional manner through the distribution of unique and particular graces. She herself makes the choice of the place and the particular effectiveness. God's plan, her own free will, and the good of humanity determine her choice. It remains *her* concern, where and how and under what conditions she wants to reveal herself and her glories as a symbol of God's greatness.

One should recall how it was God's choice whether he wanted to grant the power of healing to the waters of the Jordan or to other, better suited rivers for the healing of Naaman (cf 2 Kg 5). It was he who also made Samson's indomitable strength dependant on the length of his hair (cf Jgs 16). A similar effect is at work in our case. The Founding Document and long years of experience show that the Mother Thrice Admirable gives covenant graces in an especially rich and effective manner in her shrines. The Founding Document literally ends with the invitation and call to seal a covenant in this holy place. The extent of the fruitfulness which has followed the acceptance of this invitation can be seen – as will be demonstrated by facts to be considered later – throughout the history of the family, {102} especially in the life and work of outstanding individuals, with perhaps none greater than our Joseph Engling³⁹.

The recently opened process for Engling's beatification and the much-discussed "Engling Act" redraw our attention to the heroic life of virtue of our young hero. Is it not remarkable that he already climbed to such religious and moral heights at the very beginning of our family's history, heights to which we look up to today with admiration, and to which we also aspire if that is where grace desires to lead us? Similarly, it is remarkable that he already grasped the lofty goals of the movement when his peers were unable to do so. In *The Educational Concept of Schoenstatt*⁴⁰ we read:

"The clarity with which Engling already grasped the ultimate goals of the movement can be seen in a letter written to his group while in the army. In it he thoroughly explains the idea of the movement. Because the entire letter would go beyond the scope of this paper, let it suffice to summarize its most important

³⁹ Joseph Engling (1898-1918), one of the founding members of the Schoenstatt Movement. The cause for his beatification was opened in 1952. For biographical information, see Alexander Menningen, *Joseph Engling—Master of Everyday Life* (Waukesha, 1982).

⁴⁰ Alexander Menningen (1900-1994), *Die Erziehungslehre Schönstatts* (Limburg, 1936), one of the first published studies about the Schoenstatt Movement. The study was primarily based on the life of Joseph Engling. The following quotes are from p. 77 in the German text.

thoughts:

"Faith in the God-willed vocation of Schoenstatt - starting point of a movement of renewal - Marian movement - lay movement - coordination of "elite" and pilgrim movement - the grace of being at home in the shrine - movement of grace - inner relatedness between apostolate and self-sanctification - community spirit."

{103} The author is right in adding: "These are the essential elements of the Schoenstatt Movement which only a later, almost twenty-year-long history would fully bring to light. If we would turn to this informed and critical Engling scholar and ask what the secret of Engling's life was, he would have to say it was the covenant of love and the grace-filled place where it was made.

Leading personalities have frequently been amazed at the extraordinary successes which Schoenstatt has made in such a short time. They have sought a satisfactory explanation for its mysterious power of attraction and its fruitfulness among so many people in so many parts of the world. Many answers have been proposed, but all either miss the point or only capture a fraction of the objective reality. The final explanation is to be found in the two points mentioned above—in the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt and in the fact that, in accordance with God's plan and wish, this covenant is sealed in the place of her particular effectiveness, in *her* shrine. This also explains the love which so many people have for this seemingly insignificant corner of the earth, which they enthusiastically call their "Schoenstatt land" and their "homeland", where they savor deep spiritual experiences and can experience the miracles of transformation, of which they jubilantly sing and pray:

"This wonderland is known to me—
It is the meadow radiantly lit by Tabor's sun,
Where our Three times Admirable Lady reigns
in the midst of her favorite children,
{104}loyally rewarding each gift of love
with the manifestation of her glory

and immeasurably abundant fruitfulness:
It is my home, my Schoenstatt land!⁴¹"

Their hearts feel urged to go there, and they like to withdraw there in spirit, going in pilgrimage as often as the opportunity presents itself. They are united there in daily prayer, coming together to the place of their love and longing. That explains the words of the "Morning Consecration":

"We are united in the shrine
where the flames of our hearts
beat for our Mother Thrice Admirable
who, through us, wants to build your kingdom⁴²."

We can understand why we gather there spiritually with all Schoenstatt children at the beginning of each "hour" [of the Schoenstatt Office]:

"In Spirit I kneel before your picture,
Thrice Admirable, strong and gentle Mother,
united with all who have consecrated themselves to you
and are ready to die for your realm⁴³."

It is not surprising that the Schoenstatt Office revisits all the favorite places of Our Lord and his Mother symbolized in the shrine – Nazareth, Bethlehem, Tabor, Golgotha, and the Cenacle⁴⁴.

What has developed over the years in original Schoenstatt has repeated itself in a relatively short time in our {105} daughter shrines overseas. In general, there is much astonishment at the pace with which they have become the focal point of a deep and wide-ranging movement of renewal in foreign countries with a foreign language

⁴¹ *Heavenwards*, p. 158.

⁴² *Heavenwards*, p. 13.

⁴³ *Heavenwards*, p. 47.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Heavenwards* p. 48 and 50, 49, 51, 53, 54.

and a foreign culture. We know the answer to this riddle. Only those familiar with the details of Schoenstatt's history and far enough along the road of discovering its root and source can explain such unexpected turns of events.

Schoenstatt's "Treasure" – Our Devotion to Mary

There is yet a third element which explains the enigmatic development, activity, and growth of Schoenstatt, one which is essentially bound up with the other two. All three belong together and presuppose one another. One cannot exist without the others and the others cannot exist without the one. That can be seen in the family's history. What I mean by the third element is the happy fact that, in the distribution of tasks undertaken by God in his wise government of the world, Schoenstatt has been given an extremely great, valuable, and fruitful mission. The last testament of Our Lord – "*Ecce Mater tua*" [Behold your Mother, Jn 19,27] – is addressed to us in a special way. To us, as to St. John, have been especially entrusted the Blessed Mother and the concern for her veneration and the fulfillment of her mission as the One who gives, bears, and serves Christ.

Moreover, Our Lady's apparent desire – as can be inferred from the development of our family's {106} history – is to set a visible sign of her power, kindness, and wisdom in and through Schoenstatt, in order to draw the attention of Church and world to the glory she wishes to reveal everywhere "on the other shore" of the future. This is the glory of the official and permanent companion and helpmate of the Lord in the entire work of redemption as mirror of the glory of God and the God-man, as the One who saves the endangered images of Church, man, and world.

I think I may add that the great Schoenstatt Lady has brilliantly fulfilled her task. The final thought which I could speak immediately before my exile – "*Clarifica te*"⁴⁵ – is a compact summary of Schoen

⁴⁵ Fr. Kentenich's last official function before having to leave Germany on October 22, 1951 was the closing talk of the 1951 October Week in Schoenstatt. This talk, with the words "*Clarifica te!*" (Glorify yourself!) directed to the Blessed

statt's past history and the most certain guarantee for the unsnarling of the tangled knots of the current situation.

Neither should it be seen as presumptuous if I have the courage to point out how our Schoenstatt history is an exact reiteration of St. John's reaction to his Marian mission. Of John it is said, "And from that hour onward, the disciple took her into his care" (Jn 19,27). The same can be said of Schoenstatt. We have also made every effort to give her our hearts and to build and extend her kingdom everywhere as fervent Marian apostles. Public opinion, as can be documented in the {107} press, is therefore not incorrect when it testifies that in the last few years we have provided the main support for the Marian movement in Germany⁴⁶, and that we have remained generous knights of Our Lady with courage, perseverance, and sacrificial spirit, who have spread her love "in spite of the number and might of the foe"⁴⁷. On occasion we did this for the Blessed among women in a general way, but especially and whenever at all possible, for her as the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. This is how it always was and how it shall always be! It is a sacred duty from which no one can release us. What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!

(...)

{109} Summarizing all three elements – *Schoenstatt's covenant*, *Schoenstatt the place*, and *Schoenstatt's treasure* – and contemplating them for what they are and how they relate to one another while weighing their significance, we gladly kneel in prayer and pray with

Mother, was held on the evening of October 19, 1951.

⁴⁶ Referred to is Schoenstatt's leading role in the upsurge of Marian devotion in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. One such mention in the German press came in an article by Carl Feckes in 1939: "The new blossoming of Mariological study has been followed by a new blossoming of Marian life. Belgium and Holland are marching at the forefront of this Marian movement, and in Germany the Schoenstatt Movement has especially unfolded a powerful Marian drive." In: Meyer-Neyer (ed.), *Gestaltkräfte lebensnaher Seelsorge* (Freiburg, 1939), p. 145.

⁴⁷ Allusion to the prayer "Mother Thrice Admirable, Mother of Grace", written by Fr. Kentenich in 1916.

all our soul using the words from *Heavenwards*:

"Hold the scepter in your hand;
Mother, protect your Schoenstatt land.
There you alone are Queen;
cause every foe to flee.

"Create a paradise for yourself there
and hold the dragon at bay.
Woman of the Sun, step forth with light
and ascend to the heights of the noonday sky.

"Build from here a world
which is pleasing to the Father,
as our Savior once implored
so longingly in prayer.

"May love ever reign there
together with truth and justice
and a unity which does not become mass-mindedness
nor lead to inner slavery.

"Reveal your power
in the dark and stormy night.
May the world see your active hand
and stand in admiration before you,

"so that it speak your name with love,
profess loyalty to your kingdom,
fearlessly carry your banner far and wide
and victoriously defeat every foe.

{110} "Let Schoenstatt remain your favorite place,
a stronghold of apostolic spirit,
a leader on the way to holy battle,
a source of everyday sanctity,

"a firebrand glowing for Christ,
scattering sparks of searing brightness
until the world, a sea of flames,
burns to the glory of the Trinity⁴⁸."

I wish to repeat what I have said so many times before, but this time with my voice elevated, my finger raised, and my eyes on fire: As it was before is how it must always remain. What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!

As I write all of this down, the words of June 14, 1914 ring in my ears and heart. It was shortly after the founding of the Marian Sodality in the house chapel up in the seminary:

"Will our sodality really produce a saint? We cannot know, but confidently hope so. One thing we know for sure, however: The generation which would permit this hard-won work – this work of Divine Providence to perish or waste away would bring upon itself a heavy responsibility and the anger of our heavenly Mother! Woe to the magistrate that would let things go so far! The just punishment will come swiftly!⁴⁹"

The Present Threat to the Covenant of Love

{111} We are living in a decisive hour in the history of our Family. Its fate is being decided. I am not thinking of the organization -- the danger it faces is not that great. What others want to concede to us in this regard -- after all, "something" must be remain after the beatification of Pallotti [in January 1950] -- will be quite enough. If I see things correctly, we do not need to fear a major organizational crisis. The opposite is more likely: an accelerated development and a quite healthy conclusion. Even if this does not come about, I will not grow any gray hairs over it.

But it is different when the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Then I want to resist like the lion who defends the life of his young when

⁴⁸ *Heavenwards*, p. 130-131.

⁴⁹ Talk to the Marian Sodality, June 14, 1914. See *New Vision and Life* (2004), p. 88.

they are threatened! The three elements -- *Schoenstatt's covenant*, *Schoenstatt the place*, *Schoenstatt's treasure* -- form the root of the Schoenstatt tree, and these -- not anything else, not something incidental, not something superficial -- are in danger! The men who currently carry the fate of the Family in their hands must know this. It is especially to them that the warning and threat of 1914 applies:

“The generation which would permit this hard-won work – this work of Divine Providence to perish or waste away would bring upon itself a heavy responsibility and the anger of our heavenly Mother! Woe to the magistrate that would let things go so far! The just punishment will come swiftly!”

{112} In such a decisive hour our salvation will not come from tightrope walkers or stunt riders, or from catlike instincts to land on one's feet! “When the fire begins to smolder, the hour will call for men! They will only become mature on the cross!”

In the life of the Apostles there were moments when the Lord placed grave decisions before them. He spared them nothing. Their nature wanted to resist, they might whimper or grumble. He remained firm. He knew no compromise. For him there was only an “Either-Or” – even if all would abandon him! Hence the hard question: “Do you want to leave me too?” (Jn 6,67).

The situation reminds me of the first introductory weekends after World War I. Right at the start, in the opening talk in the Shrine, I spoke as plainly as I could, that is, undiluted and calling a spade a spade – one time one way, the next time another way – the three roots of the Schoenstatt tree. The reaction of not seldom – especially among the lay academics – “This is a hard message, who can bear it?” (Jn 6,60). It was similar in the first workshops for women. The answer did not cover up anything, it firmly held to the supernatural nature of the entire work, it demanded a courageous, humble, all-around yes to the faith-filled conviction of the inbreak of God's power in the history of Schoenstatt. If I was unsuccessful, I opened the door of the Shrine wide and invited them to leave the holy place. She only has use for deep, supernatural builders, contractors, and architects. No one else would be given entry into a community which boldly proclaimed from the beginning that its aim was a “solemn

declaration of the importance of the spiritual life⁵⁰.”

(...)

{114} I just received a short communication from Schoenstatt. It says:

“Here in Schoenstatt May is currently in full bloom. Yesterday the large pilgrimage from Baumbach came again. This is the Sunday the parish comes every year to fulfill the vow they made during the war. They process from up on the mountain⁵¹ down along the bluff in beautiful order with brass bands and church banners. It was all wonderful and inspiring. The sound of the bell of the Shrine vied with the big bells⁵². On May 1 the Shrine for the South Province of the Sisters of Mary was dedicated [in Liebfrauenhoehe]. 3500 people were there. So things continue in spite of everything. Our Lady sees to it all. In such hours I am overcome with grief that all of this only came about because one faithful instrument, without whom nothing would have happened, responded to the plans of God. And this instrument is now in exile.”

To such concerns and cares and others like them a concise answer is quickly given: *If only the Blessed Mother is not forced to go into exile*, to flee to Egypt. That is my only {115} concern! If my homelessness is the price for the permanence of the dwelling-place of the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt in her Paradise land, in her Wonderland, in her favorite place, in her Sunlit Meadow,

“where our Three times Admirable Lady reigns
in the midst of her favorite children,
loyally rewarding each gift of love

⁵⁰ Fr. Kentenich, letter to the leaders of the Apostolic Federation, November 6, 1919, in *New Vision and Life* (2004), p. 201.

⁵¹ What is now Mt. Schoenstatt.

⁵² The Schoenstatt Boys Youth had donated a set of large bells for the future Adoration Church and these were mounted on the bluff overlooking the Bundesheim Retreat House. They would be rung for special events.

with the manifestation of her glory
and immeasurably abundant fruitfulness⁵³,”
then I joyfully renounce to the end of my life any kind of return or
communication. I know that I am not alone with this attitude. Many
are ready to pay the same price, as long as God accepts it. Only let
not Our Lady ever leave Schoenstatt or ever be abandoned by her
faithful ones, her favorite children!

Might not the danger of eroding faith -- from the side of her own
followers -- be greater than it appears? My greatest concern after
returning from Dachau was and is the danger of watering down and
generalizing our ideas. What did we read above⁵⁴?

“In House Wasserburg⁵⁵ someone is said to have commented:
Down below they proclaim our Marian secret much too strongly;
that is how Fr. Kentenich would have done it and that is why we
now have such problems with the bishops. And another made
reservations for a pilgrimage with the wish that this time the
message focus more on general love of Mary and not the specific
Schoenstatt themes.”

{116} This is the same spirit of false universalism and irenism, of
bargaining and haggling, of “work in the spirit of Schoenstatt” which
I have unhappily found blowing my way ever since 1945, which I
have fought everywhere with all means at my disposal, both in my
closest proximity and in the outlying areas. My focus was to snatch
back the Family from the gaping abyss with bold daring. This action
was done constantly and vigorously. As a result, our inner closed-
ness⁵⁶ has been salvaged and safeguarded, but we have also been
thrust into the present situation. It gives us all a new opportunity to
decide: Do you want to leave me too?⁵⁷

⁵³ *Heavenwards*, p. 158.

⁵⁴ On p. 22.

⁵⁵ At that time the house in Schoenstatt which coordinated the pilgrimages
to Schoenstatt.

⁵⁶ German: *Geschlossenheit*, closedness, cohesiveness.

⁵⁷ German: *Jeder moege an isch die Frage gerichtet wissen: Willst auch du
gehen?* Since Fr. Kentenich addressed Msgr. Schmitz in the “Sie” form, it is clear
that this is meant to appeal to the conscience of each member, asking that he or she

The closing passage of my great May letter from the year 1948
(written from overseas for the occasion of the May 20 erection of the
Sisters of Mary as a secular institute of diocesan right) was directed
to the eternally prudent, the eternal pacifists and accommodationists.
Then as now the axiom applies: *nomina sunt odiosa*⁵⁸. And so I did
not and will not name any names. (....)

{117} “The dark clouds on the horizon give us reason to fear
a new storm. Will God first demand that we prove ourselves in
a new time of storms? Either way we must prepare ourselves.
And so: Sound the trumpets to gather the troops, and strive un-
ceasingly and with organic onesidedness for the realization of our
old great ideals! And if no new war leads the nations of the world
to the slaughter? Even then the trumpet’s sound is correct. The
coming time is making people so dependent on each other that we
will certainly become its victim unless we weld our front together
into a single, impenetrable, indomitable block. *Universalism in-
cludes the danger of nihilism already in normal times.* How shall
we overcome this malignant cancer, which is the same as the
*annihilation of every vigorous personality, in a era of unpre-
cedented mass-mindedness?*⁵⁹”

(....)

{120} Another question is of interest in this context. Someone
said X. felt that we Schoenstatters should all work for the Fatima
Movement, that the mission of Schoenstatt would only be to make its
method available to Fatima. I assume that my information is totally
false. But suppose it were true. Then Schoenstatt would have been
robbed of its essence and root, its pronounced supernatural vesture
would have been torn from its shoulders, its divine power plundered;
instead it would be forced to be a movement of method only. Truly,

consider the question of Christ in John 6,67.

⁵⁸ Literally: “Names are odious,” that is, “It is unpleasant to name names.”
See Cicero, *Pro Roscio Amerino*, 16, 47.

⁵⁹ Letter from Nueva Helvetia, Uruguay, May 6, 1948.

one could not come to a more false or erroneous, superficial or distorted judgment of Schoenstatt; nor could one more seriously falsify its history, betray its identity and distinct mission, devalue its original covenant of love, dethrone its Mother and Queen, and fade and denigrate the glories she wants to radiate into the world from her Shrine. Our hero sodalists truly did not offer the sacrifice of their lives for a mere method – no matter how brilliant, remarkable, and promising – { 121 } nor did our company of death strike out into battle or Franz Reinisch submit to beheading [for a method alone]. For a mere method Joseph Engling did not pray:

“Dear little Mother, Mother Thrice Admirable, I give myself to you anew as your sacrifice. I offer you everything I am and have, my body and my soul with all its abilities, all my possessions and goods, my freedom, my will. I want to be totally yours. I am yours. Use me and whatever is mine entirely as pleases you. But if it can be reconciled with your plans, let me be a sacrifice for the aims which you have assigned to our sodality. In humility, your unworthy servant, Joseph Engling⁶⁰.”

(...)

{ 124 } For countless thousands Schoenstatt, with its Shrine, is a meaning-filled concept, a symbol, a program, a mission, a mysterious power. To whom do we owe all that? Who worked the miracle of transformation? Certainly not a cleverly devised method, much less a masterful organization, but rather *the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt*, or more precisely: *her covenant of love* with an insignificant piece of earth and with all those who give themselves to her *there* and place themselves unreservedly at her disposal as her instrument. Please keep this firmly in mind: It is the *covenant of love in and with Schoenstatt*, not in and with Fatima or Lourdes or in and with a replica of Fatima or Lourdes. With that I say nothing against Lourdes or Fatima. These are places of grace which have unfolded

⁶⁰ The prayer composed by Joseph Engling for the offering of his life to the MTA made on the battlefields of France on May 31, 1918.

according to their own laws. They should continue to do so.

If you take the root away from a fruitful tree whose branches spread far and wide it will soon die. Nothing will be left but dry, dead wood. This is how it is with Schoenstatt if one lowers it to a mere method or organization and takes away its extremely fruitful root.

(...)

THE COVENANT OF LOVE IN CONNECTION WITH FAITH IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The Threat to Christian Existence Today

{127} We have spoken of a threat to Christian existence. Meant is the hopeless tangle of incomprehensible events in the world today which threatens [to undermine] the root of Christian existence everywhere, namely faith as concretely expressed in a practical faith in Divine Providence. The *October Letter 1949* therefore speaks of the "bewildering insecurity caused by the seemingly insurmountable meaninglessness and incomprehensibility of contemporary events¹." In it we find:

"The whole world senses that the car of history, having begun to shudder alarmingly, is nearing a dangerous curve. No one knows for certain what is waiting around the corner. Is it a yawning, gaping abyss spewing death and destruction, or a steep mountain whose summit beckons to us with a piece of paradisaical majesty, or a peace-filled, fruitful plain? Who can presume to loosen this knot, this crucial and vital question for both individual and society?"

"*The best of every nation* instinctively sense that we are standing on the threshold of a new historical era, of a transformation of secular proportions. They sense that the lots are being cast which will decide the fate of the world for four to five centuries to come. And they sense that all without exception are called to make their creative contribution in forming the new world vision—if not as architects and contractors, then as the laborers. This explains the universal {128} and frantic groping and searching for an answer to the whys and whences so as to better grasp the wherefores, whithers, and hows. Isaiah knows of no greater punishment for the nations than to have them ruled by striplings [cf Is 3,4]. Today it seems, to many at least, that the

¹ *Oktoberbrief 1949* (October Letter 1949), letter written by Fr. Kentenich to the Schoenstatt Family for the October Week in Germany in 1949 (Vallendar-Schönstatt, 1970), p. 16.

Lord of the universe has lost his sovereign control and steady hand and has sunk into powerlessness and helplessness. It is as if he has simply left creation and history, like a stagecoach driver who has lost hold of the reins, to run wild or according to the wiles of cruel tyrants and the destructive fury of Satan. How else, they say, can the senseless atrocities crying out to heaven or the fearful tragedy of untold millions, both individually and as nations, be explained? Others see in these enormous catastrophes of our time extraordinary birth pangs. They, too, face many unsolved riddles²."

We, too, are children of our times. We, too, suffer under all these incomprehensible realities. After all, we are no mere spectators or bit players, but actors—and often with a central role—in the great drama, in the terrible world tragedy which is being played out on the stage of the world theater today.

The Covenant of Love's Answer to this Threat

That all this has not corrupted the root of Christian existence [in Schoenstatt], but rather made it even stronger and more resistant, is something we owe to our covenant of love. There are two reasons for this: [1] our covenant is carried by a practical faith in Divine Providence, and [2] our covenant is focused on the inbreak of the divine in the midst of the confusion of our times.

{129} Many Christians are familiar with the theory of the art and value of a faith in Divine Providence, of divine intervention in human history, and of the inbreak of the supernatural order into the natural one. They will also concede that these elements played a crucial role in forming the history of ages past. But they cannot see the connection to today, to the here and now.

Here we have a point where the covenant of love begins to quietly exert its marvelous and patient effectiveness. Its origin, as we well know, is rooted in a historical event which does not belong to the binding tenets of faith – the covenant of Our Lady with Schoenstatt.

² *Ibid*, p. 16f.

Its existence and meaning can only be grasped with the help of this practical faith in God's providence, which in turn depends on the interpretation of God's provision and intervention in my personal life, in the history of the family, and in the history of the world. We therefore speak of – in the sense of St. Paul – the "law of the open door"³. As a result, the covenant we are dealing with is not an anonymous one, neither is it an abstract theory. It is rather a concrete form rooted in a historical development which can only be grasped, accepted, realized, and reenacted in the light of this faith in Divine Providence.

(....)

{138} For the critical and informed historian, there are three facts which this analysis and much similar evidence makes perfectly clear:

{139} First: It was this practical faith in Divine Providence which discovered and helped translate God's plan for Schoenstatt into action.

Second: This practical faith in Divine Providence has withstood the trials by fire of all the past years.

Third: This practical faith in Divine Providence has been offered and richly bestowed as grace and charism on all Schoenstatt children who have remained loyal to both the family and the Mother and mission of the family.

From these facts it is not difficult to conclude: All those who have been *thus* led through the school of our unique covenant of love, those who have been *thus* victorious in the struggle with the God of life and the incomprehensibilities of his provision and intervention in their personal lives and the history of the family, those who have experienced God's wisdom in every hopeless entanglement, God's omnipotence in his seeming impotence, and God's love in all cruelty and injustice, will not find it difficult to place the reins of world history in the almighty, all-merciful, all-wise hands of the "One upon the throne" (Rev 5,1), even when it seems that the Driver has lost control. They will not have to fear the threat to the Christian

³ Cf. 1 Cor 16,9; 2 Cor 2,12.

existence.

Schoenstatt members have demonstrated this time and time again in the years gone by – on battlefields which were like hell itself, or in prisons and concentration camps in which death and the devil celebrated gruesome triumphs. In the recent testimony of a Schoenstatt member {140} who had to endure long years in Russian camps, we find a summary of the experience of many: "With great interest I tested the usefulness of our Schoenstatt way of mastering life in every situations. It passed the test with flying colors. As a result, Schoenstatt has won my permanent loyalty!"

We can only give such testimonies the proper weight and gain full clarity about the import of our unique "school" of the covenant by more closely examining our faith in Divine Providence and seeing it in the larger context.

The God of Life Today

As we have already noted, there are many Christians who are loyal adherents to all the defined dogmas. They believe in the presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist, in the mystery of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and much, much, *much* more. They can also repeat without problem everything they have learned about the meaning and significance of the Divine Providence. In addition, they know many touching and encouraging stories about how God intervened in the early Church and in the Middle Ages. The helplessness, darkness, and crisis set in when they are confronted with the incomprehensibility of history *today*. As long as they, peaceable and well-fed, have a seat at the table of theory and prosperity, they can more or less endure the awesome and terrifying spectacle of the gathering tumult and the immanent natural catastrophes, observing the blinding {141} flashes of lightning and menacing roll of thunder from a safe place.

The situation changes radically, however, the moment they themselves are swept into the storm and the gale, when they have lost the previous firm footing of life's accustomed security and the ability to master matter-of-fact situations, when they must stare an uncertain present and future in the eye and face up to the fact that at any moment they can be helplessly and irredeemably swept from the

iceberg they have managed to find in the terrible shipwreck—and be swept into the infinitely merciless and unfathomable deep.

It is not the God of Sacred Scripture and religious books, not the God of the altars, not the God in the distant heights of heaven or in the nearby shrine of the heart which has been suddenly put in question. Their problem, indeed *the* problem, is the God of life, *the God of life today*. It is the Lord who seems to be sleeping so tranquilly through the storms of *today*, who does not seem to be shaken from his slumber by all the urgent and painful cries for him to wake. All the prayers and pleading, all the calling and shouting of "Lord, help us, we are lost!" (Mt 8,25) seem to be in vain. He sleeps on and on and on. He does not see and does not hear; he is oblivious to what is actually happening—or at least that is how it seems. These are a people without a *practical faith in Divine Providence*.

It may not take long, and then they will lose their theoretical faith in God's wise and solicitous government of the world as well, their belief in the principle that [the world is guided] by {142} a great world plan, drafted and single-mindedly carried out by God. Once the root of faith has been infected in this manner, it does not take long for the germ to spread and destroy the entire root, making it incapable of supporting the tree of spiritual life. When a great storm comes it will be felled, becoming a heap of misery.

This is the sad fate of many Christians today, even of those who are well-schooled in [Catholic] dogma and who can often speak marvelously about religious truths. Their faith is only in their heads; it has not found its way into their hearts and lives. In short, it has not matured into a *practical* faith in Divine Providence. For that reason its roots could not grow deep enough, at least not deep enough to withstand the gale force winds of our present apocalyptic times. Those who have been formed by such a faith cannot be addressed with the words of St. Paul, "*Justus autem meus ex fide vivit*", "My just one lives by faith" (Rom 1,17; Gal 3,11; cf Hab 2,4).
(....)

The Meaning of Practical Faith in Divine Providence for Schoenstatt
{145} Such deliberations confirm the view of those who consider

an education to practical faith in Divine Providence one of the main pastoral tasks today. They stand adamantly opposed to all the false prophets whose teaching and life go no further than pale, abstract ideas, which—to repeat a quote from Shakespeare—"is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought"⁴ and separates faith from life.

Schoenstatt's history is a burning protest against such dubious and dangerous propositions, and they are especially dubious and dangerous today in a time when weakened faith must surmount unprecedented tests of faith. In Schoenstatt, our faith in Divine Providence has proven itself over the years as a first-class world power. From the very outset it showed itself to be a faculty, instinct, and drive which was more than just a "divine" seventh sense. It turned out to be a holy and insatiable yearning which saw and sought, sensed and grasped, embraced and held tight to the God of life always and everywhere at the pinnacle of all things and events, both the greatest and the smallest, the most significant and the least significant, the boldest and the shyest, in order to – as {146} the old masters of spirituality put it – live in "constant communion with the will of God"⁵, to effect the "consecration of the present moment"⁶, or to endure the "martyrdom of faith in Divine Providence". The tone is given by the words of Our Lord, "Every hair of your head has been counted" (Mt 10,30) and the brief statement which sums up the wisdom of the life and teaching of St. Paul: "For those who love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom 8,28).

With justifiable pride, [Schoenstatt,] the child of war, also calls itself an outspoken child of Divine Providence. It knows and has known how God and the divine have constantly sheltered and tended it, lifted it up and blessed it, guided and urged it on. Like Our Lady,

⁴ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3,1, line 85.

⁵ Among other authors, see St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II, 5.

⁶ Cf. Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751), French Jesuit, *L'Abandon à la Providence Divine*; in English: *Self-Abandonment to the Divine Providence* (London, 1959), summarized in: Alfred Squire, *Asking the Fathers* (London, 1973), p. 214-223.

it has never tired of keeping and pondering in its heart all the words which the Father has spoken through the mystery of his provision and intervention, the tangling and untangling of every difficulty, and the ontological structure of things and persons, and never shall—until the child is *entirely* at home in the undecipherable plans of God and is carried by a supernatural atmosphere even while keeping his feet on the ground, until the child senses the companionship of the powers of God and espouses his own weak strength and limited personal ability and desire with God, and receives the luminance and warmth of God's light—without therefore negating his own use of reason.

(....)

{162} Those who understand *Heavenwards* or have studied Schoenstatt's spirituality on the basis of its prayers and the development of its theology will not be surprised to find how carefully Schoenstatt has sought out and groped for *God's plan* again and again in every situation. They will be happy to see how consistently the family's entire inner and outer structure has been orientated on this plan, and will be astonished at the boldness with which things are daringly carried out when they are perceived to belong to the plan of God, even when they seem {163} novel and irresponsible or lead into dark chasms and demand the death leap of intellect, will, and heart. The "Key"⁷ attempts a demonstration of how this came about: "In this way – and in no other – has everything come about [in Schoenstatt], both great and small. Nothing, absolutely nothing owes its origin to mere human undertaking or self-made human plans." Over each exterior form of self-sanctification, over each knot in the network of our gradually unfolding organization, over each essential element of our spirituality are written the words which brightly shine for any who can read them: *This is the will of God!*

The sum of the entire investigation culminates in the statement: *Schoenstatt is a great and mysterious globe in the hand of God, planned from all eternity, gradually revealed in our time to his instru-*

ments through the "law of the open door", and entrusted to them for its realization.

When we speak here of a globe in the hand of God, we mean *God's work and God's plan*. For the sake of perfect clarity, the clause is added: a globe in the hand of God *planned from all eternity and gradually revealed in our time to his instruments through the "law of the open door"*.

(....)

⁷ The "Key to Understanding Schoenstatt" which Fr. Kentenich wrote in December 1951.

THE 31ST OF MAY 1949

{169} The 31st of May 1949 has thus far remained a great unknown for the Family. The current battles oblige me to remove the veil a little in order to give some insight into the mystery of that enigmatic day. I do so in the interests of the Loyalty Circle⁸. For them it is meant to be an act of gratitude for the faith-filled perseverance they have previously shown. But I also do so to calm the fears of those who are suffering from the confrontation I initiated with the German episcopate. They are afraid it was an undeliberated step taken while unaware of the extraordinary consequences it would have for the whole Family. It is best if we let the facts briefly speak for themselves.

The Dedication of the Shrine in Bellavista

I found myself at that time in Santiago, in order to dedicate the still unfinished Shrine on May 20. The situation was such that one Chilean expressed the greatest amazement and recognition in a jovial but expressive turn of phrase: "They have the plans of crazy people, but at the same time the trust of saints!"

(....)

The Event of the 31st of May 1949

{183} May 20 was followed by May 31, the day mentioned above and from which we want to remove the veil a little. That day we gathered once again in the unfinished shrine. It was to carry out a solemn act. All of us sensed it was an act which only happens very infrequently, like when a significant event is about to signal the start of a life-and-death struggle or when a battle in progress has reached a climax and is rushing headlong towards its deciding moment.

I was gathered with a small group of confidants in order to

⁸ The *Treuekreis* of Pallottines and Schoenstatt diocesan priests who were especially committed to Fr. Kentenich's vision of Schoenstatt.

present to the Blessed Mother the {184} first part of my 'response'.⁹ You are familiar with the document. At the time you were allowed to examine it in your capacity as superior general¹⁰. The work remained on the altar the whole night. It was meant to be a prayer to the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt to really show herself three times admirable in this case and not fail to give her special blessing and abundant assistance in the difficult battle now at hand, a battle for which I had been preparing myself for years and which, after long deliberation and much prayer and sacrifice, I now felt compelled to undertake. It was meant to initiate from here [in Chile] not only a parallel current [to Original Schoenstatt] but also a return stream¹¹ which would combat a certain kind of Western thinking in the home country of our Original Shrine. By this I mean a bacillus which, because of the influence Western civilization exerts on the whole world and because of the strong susceptibility of the modern soul, so noisily prepares to penetrate the whole world and wreak its devastation.

The talk which I gave on this occasion allows one to feel and relive the atmosphere of consecration which quivered through the hearts and room¹²:

"(1) There is something of home in the air tonight. It may even seem to us as if angels were in our midst, calling out to us: "Take off your shoes, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Ex 3,5). Yes, it is holy, and it wants to become *more*

⁹ The *Epistola perlonga* which he wrote in response to the report of Bp. Bernhard Stein, the episcopal visitor who had conducted a formal visitation of Schoenstatt in February of 1949.

¹⁰ Since 1945, Msgr. Joseph Schmitz was the superior general of the community of Schoenstatt diocesan priests.

¹¹ German: *Gegenstrom*.

¹² This version of the talk of May 31 reveals some interesting editing on the part of Fr. Kentenich, who tries to streamline the talk somewhat without losing its main points. For ease of comparison with the translation available in J. Niehaus, *The 31st of May* (p. 4-12), the paragraph numbers from the latter are inserted in parentheses.

*and more*¹³ holy—holy ground. Holy ground because the Blessed Mother has chosen this little piece {185} of ground for herself; holy ground because this little piece of earth is where saints canonized and uncanonized shall be allowed to prosper, grow, and become fruitful for years and decades and centuries to come; and finally holy ground because here is where holy, i.e. sanctifying tasks will be placed on weak human shoulders.

“(2) It is a historical fact that Schoenstatt has come to us. Old Schoenstatt has come to New Schoenstatt. Starting today, another fact shall become a historical reality¹⁴. Starting today, I think, it will be our task to help New Schoenstatt find its way back from here to Old Schoenstatt. The stream of graces which has swept from there to here in the fullness of the Third Founding Document—and continues to flow unabated—wants to return to its source bringing countless blessings. That could be the deepest meaning of today’s celebration. It is a happy gift and, at the same time, a heavy load. (3) We have gathered here in the still of the night to solemnly present Our Lady with the work we have written for her together. I say it is a work we have written together. While I was writing day and night, you were in the background, imploring for me the Holy Spirit in our Cenacle. You did not tire of increasing your sacrifices for the same intention. Above all, you made every effort to seriously live the *Inscriptio* in your daily lives.

“(4) With this solemn presentation we take upon ourselves a burden which human shoulders, left to themselves, are unable to carry. But we also expect a great blessing for the Western World, especially for our home country. It was there that we gave our ‘yes’ to being sent out as instruments in the hand of our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt to help realize the plans of Divine Wisdom and Love here. We have tried to do all we could.

“{186} (5) Is it not a return gift, an acknowledgment, an

¹³ Emphasis added for the letter to Msgr. Schmitz.

¹⁴ This sentence is added for the letter to Msgr. Schmitz.

honor for us, when we assume that she wants to use us, starting today, in order to gain a greater influence in the shaping of the Church’s fate in the Western World? When we hear the word ‘Western World,’ we always think first, of course, of Germany.

“(6) May I put into words what we feel in our souls? May I express what is alive in our hearts? We have come to give and to receive. We exchange with our dear Blessed Mother our entire helplessness, our entire readiness to help, and our loyal helpfulness. We give her our helplessness and she gives us her helplessness. We give her our readiness to help and she gives us her readiness to help. We give her our loyal helpfulness and she gives us her loyal helpfulness.

“(7) This parallel immediately reminds us of the central thought which always moves us, constantly drives us on, and instills an unshakable calm in every difficulty: the covenant of love. Now, too, it is foremost in our minds, providing an answer to all our questions. Now, too, the covenant partners who have been together for as long as we can remember are standing across from one another in our place of grace. What are the requests they have to make?”

The talk then interprets in detail what each side offers and accepts as its obligation. Let me especially underscore a few pointed thoughts:

“The helplessness of both partners primarily consists in the concern for the heavy, heavy task which is now entrusted and accepted in a new way for the Western World...¹⁵ At stake is (9) the exposing and healing of the root and ultimate germ of the disease which afflicts the Western soul: {187} mechanistic thinking. I have reasons enough to believe that God has placed a heavy load in this regard on the shoulders of the family. The ‘law of the open door’ has convinced me of it... Personal

¹⁵ This sentence is added for the letter to Msgr. Schmitz and summarizes the essence of the segment omitted.

struggles which I had as a youth point in the same direction¹⁶. (10) They permitted me to go through the same struggle which is shaking the very foundations of Western civilization today. (...) With the disease I was also allowed to abundantly experience the remedy in my own life...

“(11) Schoenstatt has a manifest mission for the Western World, especially for the country of its origin. It is a mission to counter collectivism, which is now progressing with such force that it leaves all rivals far behind, a wall that can only be breached if the said bacillus can be eradicated and overcome...

“(12) You too, in your own way, can help carry this burden and task given to the family. But we must expect that noble hearts will be hurt by what is written here, that it will arouse violent indignation and instigate hard and hardest {188} counter-measures against us. We should not be surprised if it welds influential men into a united front of opposition against me and the family. Humanly speaking, we must finally be ready to accept that the attempt may fail entirely. And still, we cannot consider ourselves absolved from the need to risk everything. Whoever has a mission must fulfill it, even if it leads into the darkest and deepest abyss, even when it requires one death leap after another. A prophet’s mission always includes a prophet’s fate.

“(13) We see Western civilization falling into ruins and believe that we are called from here to embark on the work of saving and salvaging, of construction and expansion. We believe that we must offer ourselves as instruments for a countercurrent which must flow back to the countries from which the nations here once received their culture and from which we too have received countless blessings... (14) Hence we summon our courage to join St. Paul in saying: *Non possum non praedicare* —‘I cannot do otherwise than preach’ (cf 1 Cor 9,16).

“You can sense how helpless we are in the face of such a

¹⁶ Sentence used to more briefly state what was in the original talk.

gigantic task. We feel like David facing Goliath (cf 1 Sam 17). In my mind is the death leap which I had to dare in 1942¹⁷, and I am aware that it is being repeated right now. If we could not count on Our Lady’s readiness to help, we could never dare to take such a perilous step.

“(15) On the other hand, if you understand what I am trying to say, I think I can rightly add: The situation does not only leave me, does not only leave us, but also leaves the Blessed Mother helpless. She is, of course, the interceding omnipotence at the throne of God, {189} but according to the plan of Eternal Love she is dependent on willing and docile human instruments. As the [Second] Founding Document states, she has taken on the task of especially showing herself from our shrine in Germany as the One who overcomes the collectivistic heresies¹⁸. Because of this – to use a metaphor – she is longingly in search of instruments who are willing to help her in this task. (16) What other choice do we have than to place ourselves unreservedly at her disposal in the spirit of our consecration and fulfill her wish that we renew the total giving of ourselves to her and entrust to her the responsibility for the great work in which we – dependent on her and for *her*¹⁹ mission – are allowed to co-operate, co-suffer, and co-sacrifice, and for which we pray?

“(20) We stand at a decisive hour in our family’s history. If we fail to break down the wall, the Blessed Mother will transfer the mission for Germany from the home front and attempt her rescue from our daughter shrines. She will remain faithful to the covenant. If parts of our family do not answer faithfulness with faithfulness because of cowardice and weakness, we may then assume that their mission will revert to us.

¹⁷ Fr. Kentenich’s decision of January 20, 1942 that it was God’s will for him to place nothing in the way of his pending transport from the Koblenz prison of the Gestapo to a Nazi concentration camp.

¹⁸ Cf. Second Founding Document (October 18, 1939), No. 79-90; in *Schoenstatt—The Founding Documents* (Waukesha, 1993), p. 68-72.

¹⁹ Emphasis added for the letter to Msgr. Schmitz.

“(21) Two thoughts should accompany us into the battle, two words standing as guiding stars over our lives. The first is: *Tua res agitur, clarifica te!* It is your mission, your task – glorify yourself and your work! The second is: *Mater perfectam habebit curam!* [Mother will take perfect care!] The Blessed Mother will glorify herself in a perfect manner! If we try to promote her chariot of victory wherever we can, she will take it upon herself to care for us and her Schoenstatt work and victoriously lead it through all battles, just as she did in the past years of persecution.”

{190} This is the history of the 31st of May together with the 20th [of May]. Both days historically belong together. This is why I have joined them together in this description. The 20th is the necessary prerequisite and preparation for the 31st. Without the dedication of the daughter shrine the following celebration with its deep content would not have been possible.

In our context, after enlightening and clarifying, the previous core question presents itself again: Does the described event actually correspond to a divine plan? Did God really open the indicated door, or might not human presumption have just bulled its way in? Has not, in the end, sick wishful thinking been tragically confused with God’s intentions? Must not the edifice collapse, sooner or later? Or, must one not at least speak, as before, of a regrettable misinterpretation, or a grave misstep? And again: Is there not conceit, pride, a misguided need for accomplishment and attention behind it? Finally: must one not even speak of *megalomania*? The comparison with the gods of the moment who ascend into the sky like a meteor one day and then suddenly burn out, crashing to earth, the next, is easy to make, especially when one thinks of Hitler and his ilk.

I hold such thinking, such ascendant doubt and speculation against no one -- just as I would not have been upset with anyone who held such a position and said so in 1914 after the first, in 1939 after the second, and in 1944 after the third founding document. The {191} distance between 1949 and today is too short to come to a convincing answer based on the historical development. We must

therefore wait for the judgment of history.

But many will say, already now: Everything which has come about in Schoenstatt has come about through the same law of the “open door” and has in essence proven itself later to be God’s plan, even if it was rejected and condemned over the course of many years. In the end we have reason enough to assume in this case too that a recognized supernatural “seventh sense” grasped things correctly, until the opposite is proven beyond all doubt. The reaction against [the 31st of May] which has broken out and which occupies highest offices of the Church, is no definitive or conclusive evidence of the contrary. It could just as easily -- as the history of related movements shows -- be seen as an argument in favor of the magnitude of the act. It could, in God’s plan, have the purpose of clearly pointing out Schoenstatt to widest circles, freeing and clarifying, and shortening the way to the goal in the interest of the catastrophes to come.

Father Wimmer was of the opinion: first Schoenstatt must be crucified by the human instruments of the Church’s authority -- just as political powers did so before -- and then it can begin its course of blessings in grand format, serving the world and Church according to the plan which God has inscribed from all eternity.

(....)

The Aftermath of the 31st of May 1949

{197} Three dates from the aftermath of the act need to be recalled. On Pentecost, *June 5, 1949*, that is, only a few {198} days after the solemn act, we crowned Our Lady in the daughter shrine in Chile. We did so, not least of all, with the intention to symbolically entrust to her the care for the coming difficult battle with the public circles of the Church. (....)

{199} *Mid-March 1951* Fr. General [Turowski] called me by telegram to come to Schoenstatt because the Visitor [Fr. Tromp] was there. He sent it to Chile, where he guessed me to be. But since in the meantime I was in Buenos Aires, the Regional Superior from Chile sent the telegraph after me. I answered:

“Thank you very much for the telegram. I am unable to depart until April 19. Until then I will have finished the tasks I have taken on. You can probably guess what is going on in Germany. The confrontation with the German bishops has come to a climax. What I have sought out for years must now come to pass. The battle to overcome the idealistic or separatistic humanism – which is becoming more and more prevalent in the leading circles of the Church – must be engaged; otherwise Schoenstatt will not be able to fulfill its mission in Germany. During the tertianship²⁰ I often pointed out the inner connection between the two. But even though it is a matter of life and death, you need not worry. After all, you know our “magic words”: *Mater perfectam habebit curam* [Mother will take perfect care!] (...) ²¹”

{201} On April 6, 1951, I wrote a short study for an ecclesial office. Among other things I said:

“To clarify two thoughts need to be briefly mentioned. The first is intended as a premise, the other as an application for certain of the practical questions.

“First²² the premise: Schoenstatt considers it its current task in the service of the Church to help overcome collectivism from within—especially in Germany—through the careful fostering of a pronounced organism of natural and supernatural attachments.

“{202} Explanation: Collectivism uses every means to willfully destroy all forms which are proven to be supportive of the ordinary organic fabric of life. It divides not only the natural from the supernatural, but also disintegrates the natural reality and tears apart the natural organism of attachments, oblivious to

²⁰ The tertianship for South American Pallottines which Fr. Kantenich held in Bellavista, Chile from February 2 to March 1, 1951 in his capacity as the General Delegate of the Pallottines for Schoenstatt.

²¹ Letter from Fr. Kantenich to Fr. Carlos Sehr, Regional Superior of the Pallottines in Chile, March 21, 1951.

²² Here Fr. Kantenich is quoting the first part of his study “Schoenstatt in the Battle of the Times” (Santa Maria, Brazil, April 6, 1951). Here he does not cite the second part, which is about the father principle.

the healthy attachments to places, people, or ideas that are destroyed in the process. The history of modern intellectualism has abundantly paved the way for this work of destruction. Materialism, vitalism, and existentialism have not been the only midwives. Philosophical idealism²³ – supported by Protestantism and the Enlightenment – has also contributed its share. This may help explain why any movement hoping to neutralize and interiorly overcome collectivism is meticulously concerned with saving the supernatural and securing the natural organism of attachments, and with their healthy interaction.

“Just as in his time St. Thomas [Aquinas] overcame Arabian philosophy for Western civilization through the Aristotelian teaching of secondary causes and helped save Christianity, modern Christian movements of renewal must overcome the tearing apart of all organic forms of life. It will happen as outlined above. That the task is incomparably greater than in the Middle Ages is plain. The tendency to want to dissolve all organisms can only be successfully countered by working in an integrated manner towards saving all of the aforementioned organisms [of attachment].

“Because to all appearances the future of collectivism²⁴ will be primarily decided in German Europe, I would like to see the battle undertaken in an enlightened spirit and fought to the very end. A guiding word could well be a watchword of Augustinus: *Utamur haereticis, ut contra {203} eorum errores veram doctrinam catholicam asserentes tutiores et firmiores simus*²⁵.

“It necessarily follows that a call to arms must be sounded

²³ That is, the philosophy of Kant and Hegel that gained much traction in the rationalism of 19th century and pre-World-War-I Europe.

²⁴ German: *Bolschewismus* – literally Bolshevism, which would refer to the Soviet-driven Communist quest for world domination, but in Fr. Kantenich’s language it also includes other collectivistic currents, including the modern mass-man of the capitalistic West.

²⁵ “Let us take advantage of the heresies, so that as we defend the true Catholic faith against its errors we gain greater certainty and firmness.” See St. Augustine of Hippo, *De vera religione*, 8, 15 (PL 34, 129).

against all such misguided modern outlooks, as well as their effects, both covert and overt, in the German-speaking world. To neglect or even condone [this mentality] means to paralyze Christianity's ability to resist its global enemy. It is therefore lamentable and perilous to the extreme that powerful remnants of philosophical idealism have found a hearing in the leadership of the Catholic Church in Germany and not infrequently taken on a religious veneer in the liturgical movement. They are – even if not consciously or deliberately so – the foot soldiers of collectivism and the grave diggers of Christian life.

“Furthermore, their mechanistic thinking which separates the Primary cause from the secondary causes and cannot see them in their organic connection, their separatistic thinking which tears apart idea and life, makes them incapable of giving a more profound Marian devotion its proper place in the battle against collectivism and in the full development of Catholic life. Again and again they fall prey to the fear that Christ and God might play second fiddle. This deprives consecration to the Blessed Mother of the very content – gained through a concrete history and proven by experience – that makes it fruitful. Why? Because one only wants to tolerate [the consecration] as an act of patronage, but not as a perfect giving of self. They maintain that such a gift of self can only be directed to God. Now that dioceses have consecrated themselves to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, one doesn't dare to pay a similar tribute to Our Lady. Many worry that this will be interpreted to mean Mary will accomplish in the renewal {204} of the dioceses what Christ was unable to. Such are the extremes of separatistic thinking, so foreign to Romanic thinking.

“Christian obedience is [also] torn out of its essential context. Primary and secondary causes are isolated from each another, so that the blind obedience of reason and the total surrender of the will [to an earthly superior] are seen as personally demeaning and human idolatry. God's transcendence is so strongly emphasized and his immanence is relegated so much to the background that the idea of God is in danger of becoming overly ethereal and dis-

appearing altogether. The same applies to our sense of belonging to Christ. It becomes a pale idea detached from the person of Our Lord and therefore essentially depersonalizes him.

“The danger of such an attitude and the urgency of a thorough solution demand not only consciously fostered countercurrents, but also clear scholarly investigation. This is especially important for the German mentality, which is naturally disposed to thinking in principles and making a principle out of every detail.

“Since 1912, Schoenstatt has consciously opposed all forms of mechanistic thinking and living and placed itself with both feet on the firm ground of the concept of the organism. It has therefore fought from day one against philosophical idealism. Until 1945 this took place in a more reserved manner and through the cultivation of an appropriate movement of life. After the return of the director from Dachau the method was changed. This seemed necessary because the world was in more acute danger and the idealistic strongholds in the German-speaking world became more entrenched.

(...)

{205} “It should not come as a surprise that in a confrontation between views of life which are so opposed to one another that some of the forms the we use are considered too extreme. In similar situations this has been the case all through history. Think of St. Francis and his poverty movement or Ignatius and his view of obedience. Spiritual movements must always reckon with such a fate in times of change. This can be expected to be especially strong this time, because [the change] affects life in its totality – natural and supernatural – not just the one or the other aspect or the one or the other process. Only later times can judge to what extent [the new view] is based on God's wish and will or on human self-deception.

“There is no doubt that Romanic thinking correctly interprets the term ‘God's representative.’ Germanic thinking, when it is infected with separatistic idealism, either gets hung up on the ideas or (voluntarily or involuntarily) creates an insurmountable chasm between the Primary and the secondary causes. This is

why it is so important for the German [mentality] – whether dealing with the Blessed Mother or another secondary cause such as in obedience – to draw the person in an appropriate way as close as possible to God, just as the early Church did in its self-evident, down-to-earth way²⁶. Otherwise, the spirit of the times and of the crisis of the times will not be grasped on a deep enough level or answered in a God-pleasing manner. From this standpoint, anyone familiar with the ... practical controverted points in question, will better understand Schoenstatt's way of acting. In any case it has always been consciously formed by the return stream which counters mechanistic thinking and acting, and by its profession in favor of the God-willed totality of thinking and living. In this, nothing coincidental or secondary has been allowed to run wild.

{206} “The dogmatic approach of leading German circles, which often give a strange impression, frequently has its root not so much in dogmatically grounded views as in a sick condition of the soul. What Christ says about the fruitfulness of the seed applies to every truth: It is not only dependent on the inner forces of growth, but also on the receptivity of the soil²⁷. German thinking is largely infected. The things which are so self-evident to the Romanic soul and which make it so receptive for the Catholic faith, are largely missing in the Germanic soul. Healthy nature knows a symbolic, organic, universal, and centered thinking. Many times all four characteristics are largely missing or only weakly present in Germans. One must keep that in mind when considering how to do such things as make Mary's role in the plan of salvation palatable to Germans. The obstacles which need to be removed are much more in the soul than in the object itself. In this way one can understand how earnestly Schoenstatt has fought to keep philosophical idealism from infecting religious and ecclesial life.”

²⁶ Cf. 2 Cor 3, 1-4.

²⁷ Cf. Mt 13, 3-8.

(....)

Schoenstatt's International Mission

{211} Let me conclude by adding a few thoughts. The material presented here spontaneously invites one to think through the issues in a deeper philosophical way. Even though [this effort] is {212} not complete, it still promises a rich booty. Here we must be satisfied with amplifying a single point.

As mentioned above, a return stream²⁸ should flow back from the daughter shrine in Chile to the Original Shrine, bringing abundant blessings to the German people and fatherland. The word [“return stream”] announces a significant change in the inner life dynamic, a change in the blood circulation, a change in the interaction of forces²⁹ within the Schoenstatt family.

For [Schoenstatt] abroad the alluded-to event means both an end and a beginning: the end of a one-sided guardianship and the beginning of a greater independence, even while maintaining the character of belonging [to the whole Family]. It is the end of the childhood and teenage years and the beginning of adulthood. It is the end of merely receiving and taking and the beginning of a selfless and abundant giving and sharing. Characteristic of the new situation is something which a young and fiery Chilean wrote home on May 5, 1952, shortly after the reception of his habit [as a Pallottine]:

“I feel totally at home in my new habit, I am a new man who is finally part of community life and now has the chance to receive and to give. My surroundings are such that I can *give more than I receive*.”

Until now Schoenstatt was in Germany, and Original Schoenstatt was simply the mother who gave and bestowed all things on all Schoenstatt children at home and abroad. All {213} life, all ideas originated there. This is no longer the case. Not only when it comes to the living stream of graces flowing from the Shrine, but also when it comes to the individual characteristics and effects [of this stream of

²⁸ See page 184-186, especially in the talk of May 31, 1949.

²⁹ German: *Kräftepiel*.

grace]. As it was with our Fathers³⁰ -- to the extent they remain one with Schoenstatt -- is how it was more or less with the other branches overseas, too, and how it was especially with our Sisters. They swam year after year not only in the stream of graces, but also in the stream of life and ideas as it flowed from our place of origin, and in the way it was proclaimed and determined there. That was doubtlessly good in the beginning. A child takes its orientation from father and mother for many years and along the way becomes aware of his or her unique originality. The awakening of the teenage years brings the awakening of healthy independence, although often connected with storm and stress. Applying this image to what we are discussing is not difficult.

The tendency to worldwideness, to internationality has been in our blood from the beginning. Some of the passages of the *America Report*³¹ discuss this and describe how it developed. Please read this passage; it is from the introduction. Let me include a sentence of it here and use it as a starting point for some recollections which are necessary for understanding the new situation.

“When God issues his directive, human shortsightedness must take the back seat – there is no place for the protest of human weakness and helplessness. There is only one proper response, namely the spirit and words of St. Paul: ‘*Non possum non praedicare*’³². Applied to our case: {214} A holy compulsion is upon me. I cannot do otherwise. I must proclaim Schoenstatt’s message everywhere. I must cast out Schoenstatt’s nets in all places – even where the obstacles seem insurmountable. God’s arm is stronger than every opposing might. Since January 1942 he wants to perceptibly glorify his Mother in the whole world through Schoenstatt. It is his obvious will that she set out on a march to victory throughout the world. The greater the diffi-

³⁰ The Pallottines.

³¹ The report which Fr. Kentenich wrote after his 3-month visit to the United States, June 5 to September 6, 1948. See J. Niehaus, *Visit to America* (Waukesha, 1999) for details and relevant passages from the *America Report*.

³² It is impossible for me *not* to preach (cf. Acts 4,20; 1 Cor 9,16).

culties, the weaker the instruments, the more obvious it will be that the victory is *her* doing. That is the context of the prayer:

‘Reveal your power
in the dark and stormy night.
Let the world see your active hand
and stand in admiration before you,

‘so that it speak your name with love,
profess loyalty to your kingdom,
fearlessly carry your banner far and wide
and victoriously defeat every foe.

‘Let Schoenstatt remain your favorite place,
a stronghold of apostolic spirit,
a leader on the way to holy battle,
a source of everyday sanctity,

‘a firebrand glowing for Christ,
scattering sparks of searing brightness
until the world, a sea of flames,
burns to the glory of the Trinity³³.’”

{215} “I must proclaim Schoenstatt’s message everywhere!” This is self-understood for someone whose heart is filled with Schoenstatt. This is how it was for us in Dachau. There we tried to set out into the deep and cast out the nets (cf Lk 5,5). Because of the favorable circumstances we saw it to be our task to make Schoenstatt at home among the nations represented there. (...)

{218} The exterior success was not much. There were two reasons for this: personal neglect and unfavorable circumstances:

³³ *Heavenwards*, p. 130-131. Entire passage: *America Report*, see *Visit to America*, p. 160.

“In your motherly kindness
forgive *the failings of our omissions*:
that we did not become greater or deeper
or more widely open Schoenstatt’s portals.

“Because of this, *the world* is not yet sufficiently mature
to banish the onerous curse of Adam’s sin
{219} or to raise you willingly to the throne
and place the scepter in your hands³⁴.”

Only a few of the seeds which were sown at that time seemed to sprout right away. Perhaps they will blossom and ripen later on. The work had one advantage in any case: the idea of the International became more certain in ourselves, so certain that it no longer lets us go. It urged us first to found the Brothers of Mary and the Family Work³⁵. Even when the first members left, the idea remained and was later picked up by others and realized. Then we as representatives crowned the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt as the Queen of all the nations represented in the camp:

“On their behalf accept our humble veneration
and look on our readiness to go to battle.
We present to you the nations living here
who share with us the fate of exile.

“Be their Mother and their Queen!
May they return home transformed—
a firm guarantee for peace among the nations
and for unity in the City of God on earth.

“Through our striving we want to replace
the love and faithfulness they deny you
through their flight from the cross of Christ.

³⁴ *Heavenwards*, p. 142, emphasis added.

³⁵ On July 16, 1942 in Dachau.

We want to live for you and your work alone.

“Rule over us as pleases God
and make us the salt and leaven of the world.
{220} Let us become one heart and one soul
as Our Lord implored during his earthly life

“and *despite each individual way remain united*,
dedicating ourselves to the Father as an ideal kingdom
and *overcoming all barriers of nationality*
even when hate infests the masses of the nations.

“*Increase the numbers* and depth of our family
and use us as your instruments forever.
May we fulfill the great mission which you have implored
for us
in accordance with the Father’s will³⁶.”

Or:

“*From all the nations* suffering here
choose the *best men for yourself for the expansion of your*
kingdom.
Take them into your hands as instruments
in order to turn the *destiny of the nations* to the Lord.
May the shoot which sprouts from Schoenstatt be fruitful
everywhere,
to your honor and to the glory and praise of the Blessed
Trinity.

“Accept the title *Queen of the World*
and let us glow with ardent love for you.
May the *whole world* be set afire for your service

³⁶ *Heavenwards*, p. 143, emphasis added.

so that *all nations* find their way safely home.
For your holy heart is the world's harbor of peace,
the sign of election and gateway to heaven³⁷."

We copied the last verse and gave it to anyone who was interested as a prayer to prepare the {221} simple crowning which took place on December 8, 1944.

Co-responsibility for the *international mission* of the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt was why, in 1946, we reenacted the Dachau crowning of the Mother Thrice Admirable as *Queen of the World*, making it the favorite intention of the whole Family and the object of the most tender concern of both covenant partners³⁸. We were carried by the conviction that the history of the crowning of 1939 would repeat itself – when we had declared Our Lady the *Queen of the Family*³⁹, giving us the inner certainty of victory in all the battles we faced in the time of the Nazis.

The same responsibility has carried me over land and sea, year after year, since 1947. Everywhere where it was possible, daughter shrines were erected. They are meant to be the strongholds for the kingdom of the Mother Thrice Admirable from where she can cast out her nets and do her educational work as *Queen of the World*.

(...)

{224} Think of May 31 and June 5, 1949! Do not forget what these two dates mean when they say "return stream⁴⁰". Both justify their interpretation of God's will using the "law of the open door."

³⁷ *Heavenwards*, p. 140f, emphasis added.

³⁸ The crowning in Schoenstatt was on October 18, 1946 at the end of the October Week. Two days later essentially the same crowning took place in Weesen in Switzerland; given the political and military isolation of Germany in the immediate wake of World War II, it was much more likely that actual work for the International mission could happen from Switzerland.

³⁹ The crowning of December 10, 1939 in the Original Shrine undertaken by the Sisters of Mary.

⁴⁰ German: *Gegenstrom*.

Both [sought to] assure God's special protection and blessing – by solemnly entrusting the "response" to the Mother Thrice Admirable and by crowning the MTA in the same spirit.

Allow me to give another reason which can strengthen our trust. You {225} already find an indication of it in the letter; it makes understandable why this important confrontation had to be initiated *here*⁴¹. It is the down-to-earth, firmly rooted organic way of thinking [found here in Latin America]. Not only prayer and sacrifice, not only trust in the kindness and power of the Mother Thrice Admirable, not only scholarly confrontation is needed to overcome the sickness. In addition, the Romanic and Germanic ways, untainted⁴², must be joined together in a creative espousal. The two known medical methods, allopathy and homeopathy⁴³, must be used simultaneously; it is only in this way that one can effectively combat the sickness. The homeopathy in this case is a benevolent scientific critique and clarification, the allopathy is bringing the two mentioned, and typically opposite, ways types together. If they unite to work together, if they strive with united forces for the same goal, if they do that in the service of the Mother Thrice Admirable, then the prognosis is good for us, for Germany, and for the nations which contribute their part in resolving the common problems. I call the problems *common*. The bacillus is already trying to penetrate the Romanic countries and wreck havoc. Although the Romanic soul has greater reserves to resist and regain its strength, it must nonetheless expect a significant weakening of the substance of its supernatural faith, and all the consequences that means for Christian thinking and living.

⁴¹ In Bellavista, that is, in Latin America.

⁴² German: *reinrassig*.

⁴³ That is, the strategies of healing through exposure of the infected organs to like (homeopathic) and unlike (allopathic) agents.

RECAPITULATION

{229} Behind us is a long train of thought, and we have now reached its final link. Element after element have come together in an inconspicuous fashion. It is now complete. Let us briefly review the entire panorama and all its parts. How does the fact now sound which we proposed on page 27⁴⁴? – *Our Lady has sealed a significant covenant of love with Schoenstatt and all Schoenstatt children.*

This fact now gains even more self-evidence for us than it had before. At the same time, however, we sense even more acutely how important it is for the salvation of Christian existence from the threat posed by the present apocalyptic age. To wit: Since the covenant of love in its concrete historical form can only be grasped and lived with the help of a practical faith in Divine Providence, since this faith in Divine Providence has taken on heroic proportions in the family and must always do so, since this faith has ultimately been given to us as a charism, hence it is a constant bulwark against blows to Christian existence today. Here we are thinking, as you know, of the incomprehensibility of God's enigmatic and mysterious government of the world.

Let me add for the sake of completeness, but without going into the details, that our faith in Divine Providence is all the more effective because of its Marian modality. Because of this it constantly sees how the Blessed Mother cooperates in the redemption and government of the world. {230} This faith sees her arm as the qualified extension of the arm of God's omnipotence, wisdom, and love. As a result, it grants her the place in practical daily life which is her due, even to the last detail, according to the *plan of God*. Since the created order is an incarnate thought and wish of God, our faith in Divine Providence tenderly, joyfully, and perpetually embraces this preeminent wish of God. That alone is voucher for a higher degree of pleasingness to God. That is especially true today, since God apparently wants to glorify his Mother in a special way. All

⁴⁴ As the pages were counted in the original transcript, see p. 84 (here: {84}) in *Das Lebensgeheimnis Schoenstatts*, Vol. 1.

those who offer themselves towards this end many consider themselves assured of special graces. Of course, although the Blessed among Women is at the center of Christianity, she is not the center.

We are ultimately motivated by Mariological truths which have not yet been defined. As a result, grasping them with a living faith demands a greater spirit of faith, which in turn makes it possible to live one's faith more easily and heroically. (...)

{231} This would now be the place to sum up everything which we owe to our dear Blessed Mother. I will pass this up. After all we are now touching a world in which we are all at home, because our daily meditation especially consists in the savoring of the Divine and Marian mercies of our everyday life. In its place I will close with a short prayer from *Heavenwards*. It is directed to Our Lady:

“Let me give thanks
and proclaim your praises
to every circle,
simply,
always,
and in the spirit of service.

“And filled with trust
my only wish
is to loyally fulfill
the Father's will,
even if the final judgment
be upon us.

“He will guide me
through every darkness
and lead me by the hand,
despite the turmoil of our times,
homewards
into the land of the Father.

“After every tear has been shed

he will unite me there
with those I love
and *have remained faithful*.
There we will see the Lamb
and stand in the presence of God. Amen⁴⁵.”

31 May 1952
(To be continued.)

⁴⁵ *Heavenwards*, p. 145, emphasis added.