



A Testimony to Church Community

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF EBERHARD ARNOLD

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eberhard arnold

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introduction

The little stable in Bethlehem was the place where God's love broke in. And the mysterious men who came from the land of the rising sun followed the star and discovered the place where the secret of love was laid in the manger of the animals, wrapped in swaddling clothes, in the helplessness of a human baby. They discovered the place where God's love broke in.

This is the most important thing for every man, that in his time, at his hour, he discovers the breaking in of God's love, and that then he follows the star which has fallen into his heart. Let King Herod come then, with his threats, and drive those who follow the star and who come to the star of love, from the country, indeed drive the divine Child himself out of the country—it means nothing for those who follow the star.

And the angel of the Lord will protect the revelation of love in the midst of times of the greatest hatred and of the heaviest darkness which has spread over the earth.

Eberhard Arnold

With this witness to the power of God's love, we want to introduce this little volume. We bring it out on the eightieth anniversary of Eberhard's birth, glad to be able to share these words by him, by his wife Emmy, and by his friends. Eberhard is our beloved brother, and we hope that through this book many more can become acquainted with him.

In these recent years especially, we have seen again and again how we hinder and oppose that very love we long to serve and that Eberhard served. It is an overwhelming and tender witness to the wonderful mystery of unity, that in just this recognition that we are a hindrance to God's love, we have felt closer

to Eberhard himself and to the life and the Spirit to which he gave his life as witness. As his witness come alive for us, we long to share it with others.

The brothers and sisters of the Bruderhof Communities
Christmas 1963

fire song

Radiance descend! Radiance descend!
Thou, Sun of all love eternal,
Let every impulse infernal
Sink to the grave! Sink to the grave!

Fire consume! Fire consume!
All that to Death is given,
All that with envy is riven,
Fire consume! Fire consume!

Light of the Heights! Light of the Heights!
Sun of all-glowing rays and brightness,
Stars in unnumbered, countless lightness,
Light of the Heights! Light of the Heights!

Break to us now! Break to us now!
Power of eternal radiance glowing,
Pour forth in flaming flood o'erflowing,
Surrender now! Surrender now!

Radiance on high! Radiance on high!
Thou resurrected life, giving
To us eternal power living.
Radiance on high! Radiance on high!

Strahle herab! Eberhard and Emmy Arnold
Easter 1926

eberhard arnold's life & work

by emmy arnold

Eberhard Arnold was born in Königsberg on the 26th of July 1883. He was the third son of Carl Franklin Arnold, who was a high school teacher at the time. His mother, Elizabeth Arnold, nee Voigt, came from an old family of scholars. His paternal grandfather, Franklin Luther Arnold, was a missionary of English and American descent, and pastor of a Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Eberhard had a brother and three sisters. When he was five, the family left Königsberg, since his father had been called to Breslau as professor of Church history. Eberhard was full of wild ideas and boyish pranks which left him little time for school. Because of all his mischief, he was not always in the good graces of his teachers and his classmates' parents. Even as a child he objected to social inequality and made friends with the very poor and with tramps. He found more warm-heartedness and genuine humanity in them than in middle-class people. Once on vacation he was staying at his uncle's country parsonage. He was strongly impressed by the inward religious warmth of this man, particularly because he took the part of the poor and oppressed, which aroused the hostility of the rich members of his congregation. It was in his uncles' house that he first met a member of the Salvation Army. The brotherly way in which his uncle spoke with this man while Eberhard was there was a powerful impulse to him in the direction of a genuine Christian love, which

shows its strength precisely in love of the very poor. So Eberhard, then sixteen years old, experienced a radical inner change. He told his parents and teachers that his life was going to take a completely different direction from then on, but they did not understand him.

In his search for people of kindred spirit, Eberhard made connection with a number of groups that had been stirred by Christ. A group of other students gathered around him, seeking through Bible study to find a deeper realization of the way of Jesus. The Salvation Army had made a great impression on him. He went with these devoted people into the darkest haunts of Breslau in the urge to free men from drink and filth. He went with one heavy drinker to and from work every morning and evening, because the way went past a bar. Profoundly shocked by the misery of the poor in Breslau's East End, he found the social life of his middle-class parents increasingly hard to endure. Thinking of the misery of the poor, he refused to attend a certain social function because he found it wrong to spend so much money in one evening to entertain the well-to-do, whereupon his father confined him to his room. His parents by no means consented to his new activities, and certainly not to his attitude on the social question.

When Eberhard had finished school, his parents insisted that he study theology, although his own opinion was that he could be of more service to men as a doctor. In Breslau, Halle, and Erlangen, he studied theology, philosophy, and educational method, concluding his years at the university with a doctoral dissertation on *Early Christian and Antichristian Elements in the Development of Friederich Nietzsche*. While he was in Halle he became intimately connected with the German Student Christian Movement, and worked for several years in close cooperation with Ludwig von Gerdtell. Both of them worked in the midst of the revivalist movement which was stirring so many spiritual seekers at the time.

It was during this time, in 1907, that we met. After some profound and earnest talks together about the nature of Christian discipleship, we were en-

gaged, though we had known each other for only a few days. From then on, we went our way together. We were married in 1909. During the first years of our marriage, Eberhard was much sought-after as a lecturer. He spoke in various German cities, such as Halle, Leipzig, Berlin, Dresden, and Hamburg about the crucial problems of the time. Some of his subjects were "Early Christianity in the Present Day," "Social Distress," "Freedom for Every Man," "The Distress and Enslavement of the Masses," "Present-Day Religious Struggles," "Jesus as He Really Was," and "Nietzsche's Criticism of Christianity."

It was then that Eberhard's conflict with the State Church began, brought on chiefly by the question of baptism. Eberhard saw that the Church was on the wrong foundation because of its connections with the State and with property. This realization made a decisive difference to our lives. Eberhard was baptized and left the State Church. He consequently could not accept a post in it. Stimulated by the writings of the Swiss religious-socialist pastor Hermann Kutter, he increasingly took the part of the proletariat and all other oppressed classes. His declared attitude to the working class and to the State Church resulted in numerous disputes with his parents and with the Church authorities.

In 1913 Eberhard contracted a serious illness of the lungs and larynx, and therefore our little family moved to the southern Tyrol, where we were able to rent a cottage near Bozen. This time gave us the opportunity for thorough meditation which led to deeper clarity. It was then that Eberhard wrote the first chapters of the book *Innerland* and a series of important essays, such as "Love to Christ," "Love to the Brothers," and "The Power of the Life of Prayer." He also made a thorough study of Anabaptist history; and figures like Hans Denck, Balthasar Hubmaier, and Thomas Munzer made a great impression on us during these months. At this time, it became increasingly clear to us that our life had to take a radical and active direction. From this time onward, my sister Else von Hollander lived with us, and took a very lively share in everything that concerned us. While I was very much taken up with Eberhard and caring for the children, she helped him in his scholarly work as

his secretary. She was one of those who began to live in community with us, and after that was of great help to Eberhard until her death in 1932.

The First World War broke out in 1914, while we were in the midst of these inner experiences. Eberhard was drafted into the army and served for several weeks as a driver in the Service Corps in eastern Germany. He was soon discharged because of his poor health. From then on he was constantly preoccupied by the military question, though it took some time for him to arrive at a clear solution.

Then we lived in Halle for a while, until 1915, when Eberhard was called to Berlin as literary director of the *Furche-Verlag* (Furrow Publishing House). Our family stayed in Berlin until 1920. Besides its periodical, *Die Furche*, the publishing house issued a series of books and art-folios for the use of prisoners of war. Eberhard was severely shocked by his frequent visits to hospitals, and he grew increasingly opposed to the war spirit.

after 1919 we found a current of new life coming to us from all sides. At Whitsun that year Eberhard spoke in Marburg to members of the German Student Christian Movement. Jesus' words came alive for the people at this meeting, showing us in the Sermon on the Mount the perfectly clear solution to the problems of war and social injustice.

Erwin Wissman, in reporting on this Whitsun conference in *Die Furche*, wrote: "The focus of all that was said and thought was Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Eberhard Arnold burned it into our hearts with passionate spirituality, hammered it into our wills with prophetic power and the tremendous mobile force of his whole personality. This was the Sermon on the Mount in the full force of its impact, in its absolute and undiminished relevance, its unconditional absoluteness. Here there was no compromise. Whoever wants to belong to this Kingdom, must give himself wholly and go through with it to the last! To be a Christian means to live the life of Christ. We are obligated by a burning challenge: the rousing summons to love, and the ominous, "He

that takes the sword shall perish by the sword.' The beginnings of a decisive spiritual revolution depend upon us...it is up to us to do the deeds of Jesus in His Spirit, to help men in body, in soul and spirit. This is the only way we Christians can follow today as envoys of the Kingdom of God and as the vanguard of the only politics that is possible and necessary—the politics of Christocracy.”

This Marburg conference was the beginning. It was here that we saw the vision of future things. The fruits of this experience became more and more apparent, until out of the vision life itself gradually assumed a new form.

It began with discussions, when we held open house in Berlin. Often as many as eighty or a hundred came, people from the most various groupings of opinion—members of the Youth Movement, workers, students, atheists, evangelicals, anarchists, Quakers. The question burning in us all was, “What shall we do?” The discussion centered around the Sermon on the Mount. Everyone knew that life had to be changed. There had to be action at last! No more words! We want to see action!

This radical attitude led to controversy with the directors of *Die Furche* and the German Student Christian Movement. In various conferences like those in Bad Oeyenhausen and at Saarow, the struggle went on over crucial questions such as: “What is the Christian's attitude to war and revolution?” and, “Can a Christian be a soldier?” Eberhard's answer was an emphatic “No.”

A report on these conferences says: “Eberhard Arnold was glad to admit the necessity of personal rebirth, but said that the ethic of Jesus should be part of every evangelization. Jesus did recognize the power of the State, but characterized the Kingdom of God as something entirely different. The Christian represents a continual corrective within the State, an arousing of conscience and a strengthening of the will of justice, a leaven, that is, a foreign body in the sense of a higher value. But insofar as the State uses force, the Christian must refuse to cooperate. Hence he cannot be a soldier, executioner, or policeman. It is our duty to testify in word and action that nothing in the words of Jesus

may be distorted. The demand is always absolute: 'We must obey God rather than men.' We feel we are in the world as a corrective to the norm."

Now new ways had to be found and taken. We answered the call of friends of the "New Work," a group of religious socialists, and the summons to the "original Church" that reached us from Schluchtern. First we and some of our friends proposed a Whitsuntide conference in Schluchtern. About two hundred people, most of them young, came from all parts of Germany with an urge to find an answer to the burning question, "What shall we do?" How can we find true humanity, true freedom, and a genuinely dedicated life? Under the stimulus of a visit to the Free German Youth settlement, Habersthof, we realized that our way would have to be one of brotherly community life. We regarded private property and possessions as one of the most evil roots of war and all the wrongness of human life.

But where to begin? In the city, or in the country? What is the best way to relieve the misery of the masses? The answer our working-class friends gave was, "Go into the country." From the start, it was clear to us that community life would have to be a life of unity in faith, and of community of property and work in voluntary poverty. Particularly the writings of Gustav Landauer turned us in this direction.

In the summer of 1920 we rented three small rooms at the back of an inn in the village of Sannerz, Kries Schluchtern. Nobody was thinking of starting a community with a new philosophy of life; we only wanted to put into practice, together with all who wanted to come and help, the things that had become clear to us. At the time we were only seven adults and five children. From the very outset the little group was sought out by many guests who so often arrived unexpected that we used to repeat the lines, "Ten were invited, twenty have come. Pour water in the soup, and bid them all welcome."

We had many discussions with our guests, struggling for clarity about the questions that concerned us and them. These went far into the night, but of-

ten after lively debate a powerful experience of fellowship was granted us.

Some extracts from a talk by Eberhard Arnold, "The Essence of our Development," give a good idea of what was begun in those days, not by human beings, and not willed in human strength by individuals. It was begun and established by the Spirit, and this is the only reason it has lasted.

The important thing in the beginning of such a communal life is the inner situation, the inner atmosphere. The first period at Sannerz was surrounded by a flood of spiritual movement. There was a certain direction in the wind that filled the sails of the departing ships and blew them toward a specific destination. It was as though the stream of events had rushed in upon us from outside and was seeking its culmination and crystallization, its vortex of force, in our community life. It was possible for a person to spend a week with us at Sannerz without seeing the point of it at all. But whoever really had the vision that saw into the depths and could look deep into men's hearts, inevitably realized that here there was a spiritual mission of the Gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ, a mission station right in the middle of a Germany, a central Europe, that was pagan and yet under the visitation of God. Among all of us, among those who came to us and those who were already there, the Holy Spirit brought about the mutuality of our meeting before the face of God. The rooms in Sannerz and at the Rhön Bruderhof in the early days were filled by a power that did not come from us who lived there, nor from those who came to visit us: it was a power that came from God and visited us. This power was an invisible fluid surrounding us. So we could understand Pentecost as the rushing of the Spirit that surrounded the waiting Church community with its visitation. In this wonderful mystery, community came into being, for here no will or word that was merely our own could assert itself, neither the word of a so-called leader nor the word of a so-called opposition. The voice comes out of the cloud, and man is still. But this does not at all mean that only those who confess Christ, who declare that they are converted and reborn Christians,

are touched by the cloud. Quite the contrary is the case. We have seen it happen again and again that the hidden Christ is revealed in men who insist they have no faith. Christ visits all men, long before they have found unity with Him. We sense that the light of Christ comes to all men who are born into this world.

In 1922 there were many changes. Many of our friends turned back to the old life. They were disillusioned: they said that people today were too individualistic to be able to give themselves up to the extent of being capable of community living. We felt the same incapability in ourselves, but we had heard the challenge of community life so distinctly that, for all our apprehension, we were determined to go through with it. Only seven ventured to begin again; all the rest went away. Objectively, the chief reason for the separation was the issue of faith versus purely economic reasoning. In a talk with some of our guests later on, Eberhard said of this time of crisis and new beginning:

When the call first came to us, we felt that the Spirit of Jesus Christ had driven us and charged us to live in full community, in communal solidarity, with an open door and a loving heart for all people. It was the Word of Jesus Christ, the reality of His life and the fact of His Spirit, that gave us the strength to start firmly and certainly on this way and to keep on though our steps were short and feeble. When we had traveled only a short way on this path, times came upon us that put this power to the test, hostile times of trial, when friends we knew well and whom we had grown to love deeply, suddenly reversed their position and became enemies of the way, because they had turned away from freedom and unity, because they wanted to go back into ordinary middle-class life, to normal private life and their own pocket-book. At that time, the movement was led into bondage again through the middle-class influences of capitalism and its business and professional life.

But though most of our friends left us, though whole groups had deserted the flag of unity and freedom, though well-meaning friends might earnestly advise us that the way of freedom and unity would lead us to a lonely and ineffectual end, that could not change anything. With our own children and those we had adopted, we had to push through toward the goal.

Materially speaking, the new beginning was just as hard as the original start two years previously. Full of gratitude and courage, though somewhat hesitant, we set to work. Now we were living in a larger house at Sannerz and the size and tasks of the community were growing slowly. An important part of our work during these years was publishing, together with the education of underprivileged children, who grew up with our own children. The farm and garden work developed gradually.

the place at Sannerz was soon too small and we looked around for something else. In 1926, with very little capital, we bought the Sparhof in the Fulda district, a very poor and worked-out farm. It took some time to complete the move until we were all together again there in 1927 and could proceed to build up our communal life. It was quite different when we had a place that belonged to the community entirely. We wanted everything we did to symbolize the divine and the evolving Church. The children's community as an integral part of the whole, the garden and farm, the building, the craftwork and publishing, as well as our work with guests and with the poor, could now be reestablished and expanded, as far as we had the ability and strength to do it.

The full responsibility for all practical and spiritual activity was borne by the brotherhood which assigned to various members certain specific aspects of the work. Eberhard's chief task during those years was to stimulate, deepen, and clarify the life of this "socio-educational community of work," as it was called, particularly in thinking through the problems of the various departments of work. Meanwhile the community was constantly growing. Young people came and devoted themselves and all their energies to the cause and the tasks facing the whole community. It was not long before they could take over the responsibility of directing certain branches of the work.

During these years we spent at Sannerz and at the Rhön Bruderhof, Eberhard was also giving lectures in various cities in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and took an active part in conferences of the Youth Movement and

of pacifist and other groups. His book *Die ersten Christen nach dem Tode der Apostel* (*The Early Christians After the Death of the Apostles*) appeared in 1926. It was an attempt to express the power of the Spirit which had animated the early Christian Church and which had played a fundamental part in the beginning of the Bruderhof community. He dedicated the book to his parents, grateful, in spite of the many disagreements and struggles he had had with them, for the influences of his home and for the growing understanding they showed as time went on for the life we had chosen.

Eberhard took a special interest in the care and education of the children, having a profound reverence for them and a realization that adults have much to learn from them. As a teacher, he knew how to arouse a lively interest in the children for the past and present history of mankind and in man's hopes for the future. Both old and young took part in the work on the land, particularly in sowing and harvest time. There was plenty of work to do and the times when the whole household worked together were an important part of the communal experience, for us and for our guests. The day was spent in work and the evening in discussions in which either the whole household or only the brotherhood took part. We went on hikes together and tried to find contact with neighboring peasant-farmers. We used to sit under the village lime tree, singing and playing folksongs. Eberhard would read a story or legend, the peasants brought us something to eat and were drawn into our common experience. Occasionally we gave plays in the neighboring villages and tried to present a simple message. Or else we took long walks by starlight and gathered in the vaulted cellar of the Steckelsburg, the ancestral castle of Ulrich von Hutten, and sat around a roaring fire while Eberhard told us of Hutten's times: "It is a delight to be alive, the spirits are awaking!..." Then home again in the darkness.

Since the group kept growing we were always busy building, and mostly without enough funds. Eberhard was extremely interested in the planning of the houses. We wanted them to express the spirit that inspired us, with

its characteristic simplicity. All took part in determining the way we built. Modesty and simplicity, but bright colors, like God's creation in all its diversity—that was what we wanted in our houses.

Another thing we always laid great stress on was craftwork, especially artistic crafts. The design for every candlestick or bowl that our woodturning shop intended to make was communally appraised and decided. Eberhard always said that precisely this kind of work, in its simplicity of form, should testify to the way we felt as a community.

We later added a printing shop to our publishing house. Eberhard emphasized the beauty of the printed page and the neat execution of setting, printing, and binding. The producing of each book or article, even of some letters, was a matter that concerned the whole community. During communal work, for instance sorting out the potatoes, manuscripts were discussed and proof sheets read. In this way the members of the community gained a thorough knowledge of the books of our "Source" series, such as *The Early Christians*, *Francis of Assisi*, *Novalis*, *Zinzendorf*, and of other publications like the book *Innenland* which we revised.

In the mornings we met for a silent meeting. Our common mealtimes were a symbol for us of the coming Kingdom of justice, love, and peace. Our food was always simple, often poor, but we ate it from our earthenware bowls in an atmosphere of devotional fellowship in the well-lit dining room with its paneled walls, its green tables covered with red linoleum, and its seven-armed candlestick in the center.

On summer evenings we often gathered under the big beech tree on the hill overlooking the community. Here, with our guests and those who were working with us, we sought for the true inner liberation of the individual from himself, for true peace and the just society. This often developed into an earnest discussion of the kind of life that rises from the power of the love of Jesus. We repeatedly won through to a genuine experience of fellowship which led many who were there to a commitment of their whole lives.

In our meetings Eberhard strove to give us a vital appreciation of the most important spiritual movements of history. For example, we all studied the rise of Quakerism and the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century, giving special attention to the origins of the Hutterian communities in Moravia. We sensed that the same spirit that had led us together had been at work in this movement. Knowledge of the thousands of martyrs, who had sealed with their deaths the lives they had devoted to following Christ, strengthened our faith, conscious as we were that we had not yet persevered to the end. When we learned that there were still Hutterian Bruderhof communities in America, we contacted them and a lively correspondence followed. We had never had any desire to be a group on our own and had always sought unity with other movements and communities which were led by the Spirit. In 1930 Eberhard went to America and stayed almost a year with the Hutterians, visiting all their communities.

In spite of the fact that the Brothers, who had lived in community for four hundred years, had different views about some things, which were then and still are a matter of discussion between us, we decided to join with them, since they were closer to the early Christian Church than any other groups known to us at that time.

When Eberhard came back from America, an intensive time of spiritual and numerical growth was given to us. Many new people from Switzerland, England, Sweden, and Germany joined us, including some from various groups which were seeking unity just as we were. During this time people from the Werkhof near Zurich and from a community not far from Eisenach came to us. During the years that followed, other similar groups joined us.

We had some sharp disputes in our discussions with the guests in those days, because the spirit of National Socialism had begun to spread through Germany. When Hitler came to power in 1933 the progress of our work was stopped and we saw all the more clearly how hostile the spirit of National So-

cialism was to ours. The government issued restrictions which made our work in Germany increasingly difficult. In November 1933 the Bruderhof was taken over by the Gestapo, the S.S., and the police, and our school was closed. We were refused permission to receive guests and our social work and the sale of our books was made practically impossible. During the raid every member, in particular Eberhard, who was in bed with a broken leg, was exhaustively questioned. When the detachment left, they took with them a whole car full of books and papers which they confiscated.

We had been told that a State school with a Nazi teacher would be set up at the Bruderhof. We decided, therefore, to take the school children, about twenty in number, to Switzerland without delay. When the teacher came there were no children to be found. The young people over school age also went to Switzerland.

Eberhard and I went to look for a new place, which we found in the little principality of Liechtenstein next to Switzerland. Here we rented an empty summer hotel at Silum in the Alps at an elevation of nearly five thousand feet. This was a venture in faith since we had no money at all with which to fit out a new community. Help came though, just when we needed it most. In March 1934 the children and young people reached Liechtenstein by various routes. After several families had also come from the Rhön Bruderhof, we founded the Alm Bruderhof. During the months that followed, Eberhard and I made frequent trips back and forth between the two settlements, each time never knowing if we would return. Those were times of danger when many people were being arrested and thrown into concentration camps.

Germany was arming. In the spring of 1935 we were faced with the difficult question of whether the young men of the community who were eligible for military service should stay in Germany and witness against war and the spirit of militarism, or apply their energies to building up the new community in Liechtenstein. After some profound consideration by the whole Brotherhood we saw that our witness is not merely the rejection of war and injustice, but to

a greater extent our life's work is to build for peace. So the young men went to the Alm Bruderhof which soon had grown to a hundred people, children and adults. The number soon increased by an influx of new members from England. Eberhard had made a trip to Holland and England in the spring of 1935, giving talks, and, incidentally, investigating the possibility of a better location for settlement in England in case the Alm should turn out to be only a temporary home.

Only the Swiss, English, and Swedish members, with very few Germans, stayed in Germany after that, and difficulties multiplied.

In the midst of this situation, when the community was living in a state of inorganic separation imposed from without by political conditions, Eberhard had to submit to a surgical operation on the advice of a medical friend. It was hoped that the operation would help his broken leg to heal. After this operation he died quite suddenly in the Elizabeth Hospital in Darmstadt on November 22, 1935. To the last he bore witness to the way and direction which must be demonstrated to the whole world, today as then: the brotherly life in peace and justice.

A few days before his death, Eberhard Arnold wrote the following:

All Bruderhof members must be won for the greatness of our cause. We have still not arrived at a real missionary activity; it is becoming ever more urgent to ask for it.

The most important thing of all is the faith in God's greatness, in the supercosmic significance of Jesus and the future of the universal Kingdom of the Spirit. This is the context in which repentance, forgiveness, faith, certainty, personal dedication, and all the rest belong, and nowhere else.

From the standpoint of this greatness, we should always answer movements of the times without being infected by them.

My heartfelt wish for our future is that the Bruderhof communities never grow narrow and intolerant toward young people but should always help them find to a joyful new beginning of true life.

God and His Kingdom are the most significant facts for everything that has significance. God and His will have such great meaning for everything that nothing else, no matter how great its significance, can stand comparison with it, and yet everything else finds its true meaning for the first time in this light. How small is the life of the individual in itself; how small [is] the family life a man, his wife, and their children; how small is the circle of friends bound to us by personal sympathy; and finally, how small [is] the whole Sparhof [former name of the Rhön Bruderhof] with all its little people. But how great are God and His Kingdom! How great is this historical hour of world crisis, world distress and world catastrophe; how much greater still is God's hour of judgment of the world and the Christ-hour of liberation that is coming! How burning our desire should be to know all these things more and more deeply and to share in them; how fervently we should expect and long for the day itself, the coming day that will bring freedom and unity!

a personal word by eberhard arnold

spoken on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday
July 26, 1933

On this day I have been especially conscious of my lack of ability and of how unsuited my own nature is to the work I have been given, remembering how God called me when I was only sixteen years old and how I have stood in His way, with the result that so much of what God must have wanted to do by His instruments has not been possible. It remains a miracle that His work of the Church community and the Holy Spirit is nevertheless revealed and mightily testified to, in us feeble human beings—not through our merits, but because we are accepted time and time again through the grace of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins.

I have had to think of the Shepherd of Hermas, how he describes the building of the great and mighty temple of marble, and how he keeps referring to the many stones that must be thrown away. The attempt is made to fit them into the building, but if they cannot be used, even after their corners are chipped away by stern, sharp strokes of the chisel, then they must be thrown away—as far away as possible. But even the stones that are used must be chiseled very sharply before they fit and can be set into the wall. When we look

back on the years that Emmy and I have been seeking, so that the Church community might be gathered—it is a miracle that we may still take part in it; this is only possible through an infinite Power—then we become very serious, thinking of the many people who for years have been intending to seek this way. I have received a list of all the friends who felt called to join us or believed in the necessity of entering into the work of our common life. A lot of these stones that seemed for a while to be possibilities have been thrown away again. That is very painful. It troubles and pains me to think of all these stones that have been thrown away and I wish the day might come when one or another of them would be taken up once more to be chiseled.

Another thing concerns me very much: the powerlessness of man, even of man who has been entrusted with some task. Only God is mighty; we are completely powerless. Even for the work that has been given us, we are wholly without power. We cannot fit even one single stone into the Church community. We can provide no protection whatsoever for the community when it has been built up. We cannot even devote anything to the cause by our own power. We are completely without power. But I believe that just this is the only reason why God has called us for this service: we know we are powerless. It is very hard to give an account of or tell how it has come about that all of us, especially we older members of the Brotherhood, know we are so completely powerless. It is hard to describe how all our own power is stripped off us, how our own power has been dropped, dismantled, torn down, and put away. What I should wish for our younger Brotherhood members too is that this dismantling of their own power might be carried out to its full extent. That is not attained so easily and does not happen through a single heroic decision. It must be done in us by God. This is the root of grace: the dismantling of our own power. Only to the degree that all our own power is dismantled will God go on effecting the results of His Spirit and the construction of His cause through us, in us and among us—not otherwise. If a little power of our own were to rise up among us, the Spirit and authority of God would retreat in the

same moment and to the corresponding degree. In my estimation that is the single most important insight with regard to the Kingdom of God. How it actually happens is hard to say. It is as hard to speak of this as it is to speak of the mystic Source of all things. The only thing that can be said is that the Holy Spirit produces effects that are deadly for the old life and that at the same time have a wakening and rousing power for the new life which comes from Christ and His Holy Spirit alone.

Let us use this day to give glory to God. Let us pledge to Him that all our own power will remain dismantled, and will keep on being dismantled among us. Let us pledge that the only thing that will count among us will be the power and authority of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it will never again be we that count, but that God alone will rule and govern in Christ and the Holy Spirit. That means we declare our dependence upon grace. This is the testimony we are required to give. Everything we have is the unmerited gift of God. God can give this unmerited gift only to people in whom their own claims and special rights have been dismantled. And for this reason we acknowledge and ask for the grace that appeared in Jesus Christ and that comes to us in the Holy Spirit.

from lectures and writings of eberhard arnold

the character of love

God's love is eternal and imperishable. It is the greatest and final revelation on our earth of God's universe. Greed and vanity, possession and property must perish because they are worthless for the eternal. Even the highest gifts of language, knowledge, and prophecy belong to time and will perish with it. Love, however, is simply life itself, life in every sense, full and everlasting life.

Hence the love that is *Agape*, in contrast to the intrinsically sick *Eros*, bears the character of Him who literally pours it out over us. It knows no bounds of space and time. It destroys nothing. It is the strength of unconquerable perseverance. It is steadfast faithfulness and therefore is equal to every task.

Agape, as genuine kindness, alone knows what is right for each person in every situation because it is free of the passionate stirring of naked Eros, which seeks by all the wiles of jealousy to win or to hold what it supposedly loves. It clothes the energy of our love in the divine light of inexpressible purity, which can never be unseemly or ugly and can never injure the modesty or sensitivity of the soul. Being God's love, it is free from all inflated arrogance, from all pretense, from all presumption for its own advantage.

Agape seeks and demands nothing for itself because it lives completely in the object of its love. It knows nothing of rights, for its nature is to abandon and forget the standpoint of rights, to find its happiness in giving. Vanity and

envy are beneath it, therefore it can never be made harsh, never be thrown into excitement, never be provoked to bitterness. Agape sees the essential nature and potentialities of the other one; thus it does not take into account what may still be evil in him. Yet it has nothing to do with injustice. It concentrates its joy completely on the real, the genuine, the true in the soul of the other person.

Agape sees through everything which still delays the holy calling of a soul. It has the strength to be a protection, to endure and ward off all dangers that threaten to obstruct a person's destiny. It can do this because it is one with faith and hope, because it is completely in God, because it lives in the final fulfillment of man's future. For this reason alone, it is able to stand firm everywhere and to endure everything.

July 15, 1921

the old creation and the new

the creation, overpoweringly mighty to the human eye, is the sublime spectacle in which God comes to meet the little heart of man. The childlike heart of the ancients never confuses God with nature. But the childlike man does not experience the might and greatness of God apart from nature. He cannot disregard the creation when he stands before the Creator. In the mysterious interconnections of the created worlds, the believing creature senses the might of the Creator who gives greatness, life, coherence, and unity to everything created. The man with a sense of awe feels an ultimate mystery in everything that lives. He grows aware that the living creative Spirit must be greater than all created life. Man stands amazed and awed before the tree in the might of its life, before the living, bubbling spring, beneath the life-giving rays of sun and stars, and amid the fertility of the earth and its life. Into a heart shaken and moved by all this there falls the demand that above all this mighty life, the great God of creation must rule in undisputed power.

Innenland, p. 184

a testimony to church community

Whoever receives the Spirit of the new creation, which hastens on the end of all time, receives the eternal powers of the one God, who formed the first creation in the same spirit. The future strength of God, in its all-transforming expectation of the end, lives as the Spirit of strength in the present aging creation. The new dawn has begun in it already. Everyone must see—a new creation is arising! Its Gospel is meant for every creature.

Innenland, p. 383

This material world is a creation of the Spirit. The cosmos is destined for the unity of spirit and matter. The division that makes the spirit struggle against matter and matter against the spirit is contrary to nature and opposed to the actual character of the creation. For this reason the time must come when the whole of matter stands in the service of God without the poisoning of life, without death the destroyer.

It was Jesus who asserted this ultimate and final affirmation of life in His mission. He proclaimed that Heaven and earth must become one. With this proclamation Jesus brings the true divine life down into practical, everyday existence. His concern is with daily and hourly life. His concern is the soul and hence the body as well.

The appointed task of man, since the primeval origin of his life, was considered to be the cultivation and keeping of the garden which had been given to him. But even the believing man of the Old Testament saw—the garden has not been kept; its cultivation has been disturbed by the Enemy who has sown weeds in it. The vigorous believer must rise all the higher out of the depth of this disappointment. The garden must be won back for God. God himself will conquer and rule it. But men must be ready to accept this rule of God. The Kingdom of God has the same earthly sound, the same earth-color, as the vanished Paradise. Sin, the destroyer, which has kept us from rejoicing fully in the earth, must be overcome. Not man, renewed by God, but the Enemy of God must leave the earth.

Jesus und der Zukunftsstaat, 1919

a testimony to church community

Let us pray fervently to God that our hearts, so moved now, might always keep finding new stimulation in the good thoughts that are God's in the greatest facts; that we might think along the greatest lines, not in terms of continents or planets only, but in terms of the greatest stellar expanses; not merely in terms of the cycle of years, but in tens, hundreds, and thousands of years; in the dimensions of God's thoughts, in the great curves of God. That should be our prayer, such an earnest one, because the events of recent times have presented us with this special challenge.

Let us not be a petty generation under the impact of great things! Let us grow worthy of the fact that we have been entrusted with a great time and a great vocation.

A D V E N T 1 9 3 4

the rule of the spirit

“Christ in you” is the secret of life in unity with God for him who is led through love from the death of isolation into the life of community. When God's Spirit dwells in us we are released from a life centered in and around ourselves, and born into a new life centered in and around God.

Freedom is redemption of the spirit, a call summoning a man away from his own lowly and ugly path, to be released and lifted up and away from the unspeakably hard struggle of the heart, the struggle between good and evil, spirit and flesh. We realize immediately that this freedom can never be produced by external measures. It can be brought into being only by the law of the Spirit and only when the Spirit of the Lord rules on the whole earth. Since Jesus came to the earth, since He died on the Cross and rose again from the grave, went to the Father and sent us His Spirit—since that time, the Kingdom of the Spirit has been present here in the midst of the country of man. We live in the country of man, and we do not want to leave this country of man as long as God would have us here. But at the same time, we know we are

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citizens of a foreign Kingdom, a Kingdom of the Spirit, and, in the midst of the country of man, we represent the holy interest of our Kingdom, to which we belong in body, soul and spirit.

The beast in us must be governed, and the beast in us fights against the rule of the Spirit. The beast in us is not our final destiny. We can sense that our higher destiny points toward the Kingdom of the Spirit and longs for the rule of the Spirit. We must stop and turn our eyes inward so that the inner Kingdom can be built. We must recognize the fact that freedom is not the arbitrary whim of the isolated soul. Only love is unity with eternal freedom.

Thoughts must become actions! It is time we realized at last that thoughts are the giants, and actions are their offspring. Fate is decided in the world of our thoughts. In our aspirations and reflections we decide matters of time and eternity. Those that are in the flesh think of things of the flesh, but those who are in the Spirit think of the things of the Spirit.

As long as our mental life revolves about the axis of our own ego, the magnetic attraction of this ego draws us and holds us so that we cannot be released; as long as we are bound to our own egotism we cannot be freed. Only when the soul can successfully be released from this thinking and brooding about itself is there freedom, freedom of the Spirit. "You have been dearly bought," the Spirit calls to us, "Do not become the slaves of men." If I wanted to please men I would not be a servant of Christ. The more we think about ourselves, the more we are committed to others. There is only one way to get free from slavery and that is the liberation from self. Freedom in the Spirit means freedom from oneself. This freedom has its life in God, in Christ. The mind of the Spirit is freedom, because its reflections are on God.

From lectures on the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. 1918

peace and justice

the grave guilt of those who have called themselves Christians is that they have restricted Christianity to the subjective question of the solitary redemption of the individual. That is the grandiose misunderstanding of the historical Jesus.

1921

There is no reconciliation with God without reconciliation with all men. There is no subjective Christianity in the sense of exclusive attention to one's own little individuality in its isolated relationship to its personal God, because there is no such thing as an isolated individuality, and God does not see a man out of the context of his relationship to other men. To become a Christian, to see God, to share in the Kingdom of God therefore means at the same time mercy to all; it means hunger, unquenchable thirst for a justice that includes everyone, for love that serves and for nonviolent dedication.

1921

When Jesus says, "Love God above all things," and adds that the other saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself," is equal to it, he expresses the fact that the social element is equal to the religious, and that the religious element, as people call it, is only then genuine if it is active in the social element.

October 18, 1933

Without justice there is no peace. Unless the earth's land is given back to the poor, justice remains lost on the stolen earth.

Peace belongs to all who do only good, in that they dedicate their all to love, and it belongs to them only.

Innenland, p. 219

We know that even the discarding of armaments still could not mean a real state of peace in the world. We know that this would not mean the overcoming and abolition of hostility among men on this earth. Peace can mean only one thing: that all hostility is overcome, all hostile feelings stopped, all gaps

a testimony to church community

bridged, all obstacles pushed aside, and all restrictions broken down. Where can such hostility be overcome? Where can the struggle of competition and the envious strife of business, and all hatred and envy, be overcome? We testify that these things can be overcome only in Christ.

1917

When we speak of peace, we mean more than is commonly understood by peace of mind and the inner content and satisfaction of the individual. We certainly do believe that community with Christ also puts a man in unity with himself and within himself, whereas before he had been full of conflict. The will of God reveals itself as unity, down into the tiniest of worlds; but the peace we mean goes further. It is God's will to unity, which, from spiritual unity, brings all relationships, all material things and all actions into the unity of the Kingdom of God.

January 13, 1933

In all areas of personal and public life the Church community must of necessity radiate the peacemaking power of love, the power of Christ who is alive within it.

1921

Unclean spirits are the really murderous spirits that govern in the air. And if all wars were done away with, pacifists would be forced to realize that the spirit of murder is not done away with so long as the atmosphere in which millions live is filled with impurity. The same thing applies to Mammon.

January 8, 1935

Because Jesus himself radiated in His nature the organic unity of all the characteristics of the coming Kingdom, no one can try to tear one of the principles He announced out of its organic framework and set it up as a law in itself. Whoever sets up pacifist work for peace, or purity of heart, or any single moral or political demand for itself alone, and demands and sets up the new cause

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from this standpoint, is on the wrong path. To be sure, without purity of heart, without active peacemaking, there can be no sharing in the Kingdom of God, but if the good tree is not planted the good fruit cannot be gathered. If the change does not extend to all areas, it is a lost cause to try to follow Christ's lead fervently in *one* principle.

1920

from private property to community

The poisonous root of private property is disintegration, death and corruption. Private property arises through self-isolation, through the self-seeking of the covetous will. Private property brings a curse with it: there is a lack of relationship of individuals one to another and of the individual with God, who is the root of all life and being. Humanity lies in agony, on the verge of death, and the most obvious sign of its mortal sickness is private property.

Private property is the root of murder, the cause of war and the cutthroat competition of business life. Prostitution and marrying for money, which is no different, feed on it. It is the cause of dishonesty in business and of every kind of lie in human relationships.

"Business is business," men say, but when business is free to form a code of conduct peculiar to itself it means in fact that egotism and private property are framing an independent code. Our entire economy is based on greed, on the profit motive, or the individual's urge to self-preservation and his craving for greater power. Jesus once said: "If the kingdom of Satan were divided against itself, it would have fallen long ago." For this reason our highly developed capitalist economy does not fall, because the demonic forces let loose by greed and the profit motive work hand in glove with each other. They all follow the same line. The possessors thus become the possessed—possessed of demons. When one sphere of man's activity is permitted to frame its own laws irrespective of all other aspects of life, it becomes an idol, and man is ruled by demons.

Life is rent apart and torn into shreds. That is the curse of our century, and we all fall down and worship such idols, especially where money and economics are concerned. Defending their collective egotism, men say: "I don't want my property for myself, I want it for my wife and children. I don't in the least want to go to war to protect my own personal property, but I'm going to fight for all." A man who loves wife and children loves his own flesh. Not only love for one's own family, but preservation of the clan, loyalty of tribesmen or settlers one to another, defense of nation or state, and still more civil war and war for one's own caste or class, is collective egotism.

Let me speak frankly: I oppose nationalism and patriotism; I oppose the class war of the proletariat; I oppose the class rule of the property owners; and in addition I oppose the laws of inheritance. I assert that egotism rears its head wherever there is any question of protecting common interests. I oppose the party system. The whole of our public life has fallen under this curse. Why are there armed forces? Why are there law courts? Why is there a militia? Undoubtedly they exist simply for the sake of property, that isolated thing which has become detached from all the rest, and which is doomed to death. We must break through this atmosphere of impending disaster. We are lost as long as the main factors in life are man's covetous will, his struggle for existence, his selfish claims and his selfish rights and privileges. We have fallen into a state of disintegration; we have fallen from God. This curse that lies over us, this ruined life, has become a commonplace fact that we take for granted. We must wake up and hear the Gospel which will free us from the curse of this life without spirit and without God.

Let us look at nature as a relief from these terrifying pictures. What maintains life in us, our natural life? We are kept alive by the sun, by air, by water, by the earth and its resources, by our own power to do strenuous physical and intellectual work and to take advantage of nature's potentialities.

To whom was the sun given? To everyone. It was given to *everyone*. If there is any one thing that men do have in common, it is this gift of sunlight. But

from eberhard arnold's letters

You know from the history of God's Church that there have often been such communities as ours, among the Moravian Brethren, in the Korntal, in the Baptizer communities and in those founded by Jean de Labadie, in Russia, Palestine, and other places. The essential consideration is not the economic form which the community idea has assumed. We are filled with the faith that the living Spirit of Christ is once more pressing toward the formation in our time of numerous small focal points, where there is not only the edifying community of a congregation, but real community of life, of productive work and vocation. It is to be taken for granted that the decisive question is the one of the people who form such a community. Certainly we shall have to endure many hard experiences. And certainly not all who come to us will want to stay permanently. But we are certain that among those members of the Free German Youth Movement who have been gripped by Christ, among working-class people who feel attracted by Him, and among those in the German Student Christian Movement and the *Treubund* whom Christ has set free, we have people in whom love and the community spirit will overcome all disturbing and hindering instincts.

April 27, 1920

letters from friends

recollections of eberhard arnold

It has been said of Hudson Taylor, the great missionary of the China Inland Mission, that as a child he was a “sensitive little boy” with a loving heart. The same applies to Eberhard Arnold’s childhood. Our father called him fondly his “David,” David being described in the Bible as being “ruddy, a lad with fine eyes, and a handsome appearance.” We other four were all blond and blue-eyed. It was his big shining eyes that captivated his mother. He was an extremely courageous little fellow, staunch in enduring pain, with a great sense of humor and a happy enterprising spirit in our games outside in the garden or in the house in wintertime. Of course, I cannot say what was going on in the depths of his heart during these years of childhood. In our house, in which a strong and living fear of God ruled, it was just not the custom to speak of one’s religious life. I cannot recall that our parents ever gave us religious exhortations, and yet even in childhood the sense of being responsible to God for all our actions was deeply implanted in us. This we owe to the example of our father, whose whole being was actively infused by a profound fear of God and a holy reverence of the Bible as God’s revelation.

But did not the very fact that God and His Word were taken so seriously lead inevitably to much unsatisfied longing?

Preconfirmation lessons and confirmation brought Eberhard nothing that could still the hunger of his spirit. But he had not long to wait until God met

songs and poems

God is Bond.
Take the hand!
Unto God make firm your vow,
Make it now.

Close the ring!
Joyful sing.
Garlands of flowers take for the dance.
Radiance!

Spirit-gripped.
Move as one.
Circle round, circle round,
Center bound!

Stars in dance!
Light advance!
Hear the music of the spheres,
Heaven to our ears!

God is song,
Light—Sea—Throng:
Hear and see, hear and see
Harmony!

