

The background of the poster is a vibrant, abstract oil painting. It features a deep blue sky filled with textured, white and light blue clouds. Below the sky is a layer of green and blue brushstrokes representing foliage or water. In the foreground, there are more detailed, colorful strokes of green, yellow, and orange, possibly representing flowers or a path. The overall style is Impressionistic and expressive.

The Inner Life

Eberhard
ARNOLD



INNER
LAND
■ ■ ■ ■ ■

The Inner Life

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Inner Land

A Guide into the Heart of the Gospel

■ □ □ □ □ **The Inner Life**

The Inner Life

The Heart

Soul and Spirit

□ ■ □ □ □ **The Conscience**

The Conscience and Its Witness

The Conscience and Its Restoration

□ □ ■ □ □ **Experiencing God**

The Experience of God

The Peace of God

□ □ □ ■ □ **Fire and Spirit**

Light and Fire

The Holy Spirit

□ □ □ □ ■ **The Living Word**

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Volume 1

The Inner Life

Eberhard Arnold



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*Dedicated to my faithful wife,
Emmy Arnold*

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For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

Preface

Born to an academic family in the Prussian city of Königsberg, Eberhard Arnold (1883–1935) received a doctorate in philosophy and became a sought-after writer and speaker in Germany. Yet like thousands of other young Europeans in the turbulent years following World War I, he and his wife, Emmy, were disillusioned by the failure of the establishment – especially the churches – to provide answers to the problems facing society.

In 1920, out of a desire to put into practice the teachings of Jesus, the Arnolds turned their backs on the privileges of middle-class life in Berlin and moved to the village of Sannerz with their five young children. There, with a handful of others, they started an intentional community on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, drawing inspiration from the early Christians and the sixteenth-century Anabaptists. The community, which supported itself by agriculture and publishing, attracted thousands of visitors and eventually grew into the international movement known as the Bruderhof.

Eberhard Arnold's magnum opus, *Inner Land* absorbed his energies off and on for most of his adult life. Begun in the months before World War I broke out, the first version of the book was published in 1914 as a patriotic pamphlet for German soldiers titled *War: A Call to Inwardness*. The first version to carry the title *Inner Land* appeared after the war in 1918; Arnold had extensively revised the text in light of his embrace of Christian pacifism. In 1932 Arnold began a new edit, reflecting the influence of religious socialism and his immersion in the writings of the sixteenth-century Radical Reformation, as well as his experiences living in the Sannerz community. Arnold continued to rework the book during the following three years, as he and the community became targets of increasing harassment as opponents of Nazism. The final text, on which this translation is based, was published in 1936. Arnold had died one year earlier as the result of a failed surgery.

This final version of *Inner Land* was not explicitly critical of the Nazi regime. Instead, it attacked the spirits that fed German society's support for Nazism: racism and bigotry, nationalistic fervor, hatred of political enemies, a desire for vengeance, and greed. At the same time, Arnold was not afraid to critique the evils of Bolshevism.

The chapter "Light and Fire," in particular, was a deliberate public statement at a decisive moment of Germany's history. Eberhard Arnold sent Hitler a copy on November 9, 1933. A week later the Gestapo raided the community and ransacked the author's study. After the raid, Eberhard Arnold had two Bruderhof members pack the already printed signatures

of *Inner Land* in watertight metal boxes and bury them at night on the hill behind the community for safekeeping. They later dug up *Inner Land* and smuggled it out of the country, publishing it in Lichtenstein after Eberhard Arnold's death. Emmy Arnold later fulfilled her husband's wish and added marginal Bible references. (Footnotes are added by the editors.)

At first glance, the focus of *Inner Land* seems to be the cultivation of the spiritual life. This would be misleading. Eberhard Arnold writes:

These are times of distress; they do not allow us to retreat just because we are willfully blind to the overwhelming urgency of the tasks that press upon human society. We cannot look for inner detachment in an inner and outer isolation. . . . The only thing that could justify withdrawing into the inner self to escape today's confusing, hectic whirl would be that fruitfulness is enriched by it. It is a question of gaining within, through unity with the eternal powers, that strength of character which is ready to be tested in the stream of the world.

Inner Land, then, calls us not to passivity, but to action. It invites us to discover the abundance of a life lived for God. It opens our eyes to the possibilities of that "inner land of the invisible" where "our spirit can find the roots of its strength." Only there, says Eberhard Arnold, will we find the clarity of vision we need to win the daily battle that is life, and the inner anchor without which we will lose our moorings amid the mass emotions and follies of the modern age.

The Editors

Introduction

The object of the book *Inner Land: A Guide into the Heart of the Gospel* [of which this volume contains only the introduction and the first three chapters] is to make an appeal in all the political, social, and economic upheaval today. It is an appeal for decision in the area of faith and beliefs, directed to the hearts of all those who do not want to forget or lose God and his ultimate kingdom. Using the events of contemporary history, this book attempts to point out that God's approaching judgment is aimed at our hearts, that the living Christ wants to move our innermost being through his quickening Spirit. Through this Spirit, who moves and stimulates everything, we are meant to gain, from within, a life that outwardly demonstrates justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, as a form of life shaped by God's active love.

In contrast to the path generally trodden today – one that tries to reach the inner life from the outside – this way must shine outward from within. Our spirit, received by the first man as God's breath, must first of all be at home in our innermost being;

Heb. 10:23–39

Rom. 14:17

Rom. 8:2

Gen. 2:7

our spirit must find the living roots of its strength there before it can press on to the periphery of life. Yet its calling is just this: to gain that mastery over all external things which to a large extent it has lost in the world of today. Man has lost his rulership over the earth and the just use of its wealth and resources because, through deep inner revolt, his spirit has been estranged from the breath of God and from his love.

Gen. 1:26
Gen. 3:17–19

This book, then, should bear witness to the way into the inner land of the invisible; it should bear witness to the way to God and to the Spirit and to love renewed again and again as the innermost experience of faith; and starting from here (for only then is it possible) it should bear witness to the best way to be effective as Christians.

Already before the [First] World War, several voices challenged Germans not to forget their mission to lead to the inner land of the invisible, to God and the Spirit. Out of an inner urge for fulfillment, they should point the way to new love, a way which is in accordance with humankind's calling. This urgent call, from Friedrich Lienhard and others, expressed the views of wide circles in Christian revivalism and in the German Youth Movement. Yet this call did not strike home. Therefore today (1932) at the eleventh hour it must find a voice more urgently than ever before. In the nationalistic fervor to exalt Germany's calling again, as it was more than a century ago, it must not be forgotten that the highest and the ultimate calling, even of Germans, is to become true men and women. This book is meant to help us consider that calling.

In this we may go along with Fichte (and all movements that are national in a true way) when he says:

Blessed for me the hour when I decided to think about myself and my destiny. All my questions are answered; I know what it is possible for me to know; and I have no worries about what I cannot know. I am satisfied; there is perfect agreement and clarity in my spirit, for which a glorious new existence begins. What the whole of my destiny will be, I do not know: what I am to be and will become is beyond my comprehension. Part of this destiny is hidden from me, visible to One alone, the Father of Spirits, to whom it is entrusted. I only know that it is secure, and that it is eternal and glorious, as he himself is. But that part which is entrusted to me myself, I know thoroughly, and it is the root of all the rest of my knowledge.¹

In recognizing this destiny, which the Father of Spirits alone sees quite clear and open before him, Fichte came progressively closer to the Bible. For him it was the book of those witnesses who were filled with the spirit of all good spirits, the book in which God's Spirit has found the deepest and purest expression. *Inner Land* is meant as a guide into the heart and soul of the Bible. The heart of the Bible is more than the letter. Even with the Bible, literal interpretation leads to spiritual death, to innermost untruthfulness. Only the Spirit who fills the heart of the Bible can lead us to its heart in spiritual freedom. Then the Spirit can lead us through that to the holy bond of a divine calling. The path this calling is to take starts in the human soul. Yet not for a moment

Rom. 7:6
John 5:39–40

2 Cor. 3:2–6

¹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 1762–1814, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*.

must this calling draw the soul away from God's history in the whole of humankind, away from God's calling in the world outside. *What is said in the Bible about the stirring of life in the soul, about the workings of the soul, and about its goal is to be interpreted and clearly presented in a concentrated form here.* With this, the book's task and its limitations could be considered well enough described. And yet *Inner Land* is not meant to serve some purely abstract purpose. Rather, as with the prophets and apostles of the Bible, its real task is to take hold of life vigorously and master it. Its aim is not theoretical discussion but something much more important: witnessing to an inner energy, an inner urge for practical expression, for work that is vital and has visible results.

At this point we cannot speak simply about the outward effects of this work: about the community life that arises out of it and the public responsibility involved. First of all, we have to speak about what is individual and personal – precisely this land of our inner being. Then it will become clear that a soul filled with the spirit of love cannot get stuck in individualism (which is the starting point), let alone in the private sphere of subjectivism. This soul, impressed by events in God's history, will gain power in its innermost depths from the Holy Spirit to intervene in history, making God's kingdom a reality.

For this, however, the deepest feeling, thought, and will of the soul must be enlightened and clarified. The conviction basic to this book is this proverb: "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is." Our attention should not be arrested by the dreary mixture of those outward habits, relationships, and subserviciencies

with which the life of an unfree soul exhausts itself. What is not clarified cannot lead us to God's kingdom either in inward or outward events. Only the pure Spirit of God can do this through the true human nature to which our innermost destiny calls us, hidden or buried though this true nature often is. It is with this final nature, the nature of the spirit created by God, that we must encounter God's Spirit, who calls us to his kingdom.

My earthly deeds flow away in the stream of time, perceptions and feelings change, and not one can I hold on to. The scene I set up so easily for myself vanishes, and the stream always bears me on its steady wave toward new things. As often as I turn my gaze back into my inner self, though, I am immediately in the kingdom of eternity; I look upon the work of the Spirit, which no world can change and no time destroy, which itself creates world and time first of all.²

I do not share the point of view implied in these words of Schleiermacher, that the depths of God and the depths of the soul are one and the same depth; or that humans are part, breath, and motion of God's Spirit. Even the outward events of world history point to God's kingdom; and in any case our inner being is never to be placed on a level with God or seen as a part of God. I am convinced that there is a way to get rid of this conception, which is given new emphasis nowadays and leads in the end to making the soul into the creator of God or into a nascent Christ.

There is, however, only one way. It must be taken seriously that our highest calling is to have personally, in our inmost hearts, a common will with the

Matt. 6:10

² Friedrich Schleiermacher, 1768–1834, *Monologen* (1801), 24..

inmost heart of God. When God enters my innermost being, life comes to me, the all-embracing life of God

Rom. 6:4

as the life that has become mine, the life that now I

John 5:24

myself may live and must live. The approach of God's kingdom in his mighty, world-embracing history is bound up with the penetration of his Spirit into my

Luke 17:20–21

heart. Consequently my life is so completely transformed from within to without that, as it goes in the direction of the coming kingdom of the last times, it comes nearer and nearer to it in outward form.

Pascal therefore was right in saying, "Knowledge of the true nature of man, knowledge of his real happiness and true virtue, as well as knowledge of true religion, are inseparably bound together."³ Before man broke his community with God, God himself was to be found on all the paths of the soul's inner land. And at that time he encountered man in the

Gen. 3:8

garden of creation. It was meant to be preserved and built up by the hand and spirit of man for God's kingdom, yes, penetrated in all its parts, named, and mastered as well. Today, the deeper the way leads us into the hiddenmost recesses of the inner land, the more we are bound to come across the recollection of God and the longing for a renewed bond of life with him. It is in these innermost regions that God enters

Wisd. of Sol.

13:1–9

into the soul anew and from there wants to win over and penetrate our whole life. The book of nature, of visible creation, remains our task just as much as the book of history and of history's end – these gifts laid

Rom. 1:19–20

before our eyes and given to us by God through which we can recognize him even though they often seem still sealed with seven seals. Yet nature and its origin,

Rev. 5:1

³ Blaise Pascal, 1623–1662, *Pensées*, No. 442.

history and the end of history, eternity and infinity, the beyond and the future, the kingdom of God – all these should light up for us not only in an outer way but just as much, and even more, in an inner way.

Ps. 19

From all this, it follows clearly that this book has nothing to do with discussions on psychology and least of all on experimental psychology, which deals with the physical senses. The efforts made by researchers need to be mentioned only where the new psychology of religion and modern psychoanalysis touch on the deepest areas of the life of the soul. In spite of all recent work, the hidden ways into the inner land of our being remain so similar in the most dissimilar people and times, and so hard to describe, that part of the task of this guide must be to recall those precious old tablets set up hundreds and thousands of years ago.⁴

Every great and deep experience must lead to the deepest self-examination. Then, from within, we will be equal to the onslaught of unaccustomed events. The war was a challenge to inwardness in the sense of self-examination because the developments that led up to the war led us further and further away from the roots of all strength. The increasing prosperity of the country and the abundance of work that was achieved were significant outer blessings for which we cannot be thankful enough. But they lose their value entirely and turn immediately into a ruinous curse as soon as they begin, like a top-heavy load, to crush the inner life. With precipitous speed, we are being deprived of the inner blessing of our human calling by the outer blessing of our rapid development. Our

⁴ A reference to the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1–17).

public life has lost its human character, and inwardness has been damaged, as a result of the rush and hurry of all the work there is to do on the one hand, and on the other hand by the luxury, excess, and feverishly accelerated pleasure-snatching that has become part of life.

The distress caused by the war can help us forward only if we remember our divine calling, only if instead of haste and excitement we learn to seek the roots of strength again: an inwardness founded in God. Already before the war God awakened spiritual movements in Germany and neighboring countries that wanted to turn away from what is false in our corrupt civilization and seek a more genuine life, which was to be more truthful, more inspired, more inward, human, brotherly, and communal. Since the war, however, the intoxication of a superficial existence has led us again from one injustice to another, from one soulless action to another, from one spiritual murder to another, from death to death.

Without a deep inner uplift at the heart of the people, we will not have the staying power to cope with the effects of war. Without an examination of our hearts in the light of God's kingdom, we will continue to fall prey to new errors, expecting the nation to be lifted up by a human kingdom devoid of God's Spirit.

Jesus saw into a time when the earth was to experience the horrors of universal war and bloody revolts, severe privations and plagues. In close connection with these things, he predicted that love would grow cold and lawlessness and injustice would increase. The truth of this prediction has been seen in the

Matt. 24:6–13

preparations for every war and in those who wage war. The disturbances of our time now permit the increase of disorder, lovelessness, and injustice of all kinds. All the events that have followed the World War – seemingly only outward events – will develop into the most terrible judgment that has ever fallen on humankind. All inwardness will be destroyed if our love to God grows cold with icy fear for our individual or collective existence and so-called security. If we no longer love God and if the glowing love to brothers and sisters, as well as the radiant energy of love to our enemies, is drowned because of unchecked sin and the struggle for material advantage – both so coldly calculating yet so madly passionate – then all inwardness will perish. Further, it will be the end of all inwardness if greed for power and violence gain the upper hand once more; for they are born of hate and are severed from the depth of the soul, and the Spirit of God at work in it, and seek only external things, exhausting themselves in superficialities. And such destruction of inwardness means destruction altogether.

Rom. 14:17

In the same context in which Jesus spoke about war among all nations and kingdoms, about lawlessness, and about love growing cold, we hear from him about enduring to the end, about a movement truly born of God, about mission, and about the working of the Spirit throughout the world. In hard times like these, nothing but a thorough and deep-going revival of our inner life, nothing but a great and full awakening to God and to his all-determining rulership, can bring it about that the gospel is carried to the whole world – the joyful news that Christ alone matters. For that to happen, however, the life of a

mission church must be given: a life from God that is in keeping with the kingdom of God from its core to the last detail of its outer form, as peace, unity, and community and as love and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This hour of world history is a challenge to inwardness because it means a challenge to be at work in the world, because it implies tasks that are literally boundless. Therefore it is high time that we gather ourselves for serious thought, going deeper and deeper, in order to gain clarity about our inner life. We have to know the foundations and laws of inwardness. Then we will also gain more and more clarity for the whole shaping of life – in what divine order, under what rulership of Christ, and under what decrees of the Holy Spirit we are to set about this shaping of life and how to carry it out. Most of all, it is important that we experience the power of God in our inner being because only then can we be made capable of standing firm and holding out in the storms to come. Only when our inner life is anchored in God can we gain the strength to take up the enormous tasks of the immediate future with the courage of faith. When unity and clarity bring order in our innermost being, then, and only then, can our life attain the warming and radiating power of the light on the lampstand. Then, representing the unity and freedom of the city on the hill, it becomes a light for the whole world.

Matt. 5:14–16

The Inner Life

Inner detachment leads to community

Before the war, the will to power asserted itself in the most diverse forms.¹ It ensnared people in the bustle of outer activity and used up all their energy to increase material possessions. Today again the will to brutal self-assertion and ruthless power expansion lashes our nation and other nations like a raging tempest. This gives a new impetus not only to national independence and to providing work for the unemployed; it also gives a new impetus to collective self-will and personal property and ousts everything else. With increasing unrestraint, the will to live our own life as a nation or as an individual lays claim on our whole being for the upkeep and improvement of our material existence; it is not able to provide a deep inner foundation. On the other hand, a will for the innermost life and for the all-commanding power of God's kingdom as love and justice – a will

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844–1900, coined the term "*Der Wille zur Macht*" (the will to power) to describe what he believed to be the main driving force in humans.

Matt. 6:10 for God – forces us into an inner detachment. In this detachment, the solitariness of the soul with God should become a community of two, and then, with Matt. 18:19–20 his church, become a community of many.

This is why Eckhart (who in many ways knew the inner life as few others have) said: “Nowhere is there perfect peace save in the detached heart. Therefore God would rather be there than in any other being or in any other virtue.”² This saying, however, is true only when detachment is a separation from the unfruitful and dead works of darkness, when it leads to the living building up of the city of light. In this city of light, the nature of the kingdom of God will be revealed to everyone as unity in all the diligence and courage of the loving works of community. Wherever God is, his kingdom – the final kingdom – draws near. He is the God of peace, whose presence brings freedom from all inner restlessness, all dividedness of heart, and every hostile impulse. However, Eckhart forgets all too easily that the Living God is action just as much as he is peace. His peace is indeed the deepest unity of heart, the harmonious accord of the great diversity of all the gifts and powers of the soul. But on this foundation he brings into being as the goal of his creation an outer unity of all action, a unity that rejoices in every object of love, brings justice into operation for all people, and builds a material world that makes peace a reality on every front through the Holy Spirit. God wants to bestow an indestructible harmony upon our inner life, a harmony that shall have an effect outwardly in mighty melodies of love. Power to act results from the energy born of

¹ Thess. 5:14–24

² Meister Johannes Eckhart, c. 1260–c. 1327, “On Detachment” (Tractate 9 in Pfeiffer’s edition).

inner gathering. The gathering of hearts leads to the gathering of a people who show in their industrious work that the kingdom of God is justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 14:17

With respect to this life-task – this call from Christ – it is important to emphasize once more today that our capacity for work is sure to become exhausted and mechanical, our strength sapped at the core, if no deepening is given to the inner life in stillness and quiet. As soon as inner quiet is lost, the holy springs of the inner world that bring life-giving water to our spiritual life must fail at the very source. Like a man dying of thirst, the overburdened people of today long for their inner life to be strengthened and quickened because they feel how miserably they will die otherwise. The inner strength that comes from the Source and in tranquil silence lets God himself speak and act, leads the believers away from sinking in death to rising in life, to a life that flows outward in streams of creative spirit, without losing itself in externals. This strength as “active stillness” leads believers to work for the world in such a way that they do not become “worldly,” and yet they never become inactive.

Ps. 42:2–3

These are times of distress; they do not allow us to retreat just because we are willfully blind to the overwhelming urgency of the tasks that press upon human society. We cannot look for inner detachment in an inner and outer isolation, as implied by Eckhart’s sayings (which are liable to be misunderstood, to say the least). We are thankful that the highly mechanized nature of world economics today does not allow this pious selfishness anymore, for it gives

us more protection from self-deception than we had in earlier times. But the lack of vital and effective action shows us when our striving after detachment has not penetrated to the inmost springs of creative power. Where this power is at work in us, there is a detachment that is a thorough letting go of self and therefore a freedom for the hardest work; this gathers believing people into the most living kind of community. Their love to all people now presses forward out of all isolation to the ends of the earth, and yet they will never be able to give up the common gathering at the focal point of strength.

To those who are responsible in their consciences, the only thing that could justify withdrawing into their inner selves to escape today's confusing, hectic whirl would be that their fruitfulness is enriched by it. It is a question of gaining within, through unity with the eternal powers, that strength of character which is ready to be tested in the stream of the world, the strength that alone can cope with the demands of this age. Not flight but gathering for attack is the watchword. We must never withdraw from the rushing stream of present-day life into a selfishness of soul that makes our love grow cold in the face of need and the countless paths of guilt connected with it. Our detachment, turned into coldness of heart, would then reach such a height of injustice that it would exceed the injustice of the world. Unless we share the distress and guilt of the world, we fall prey to untruthfulness and lifelessness, to eternal and temporal death. And those who are prepared to share only the inner need of others, and not their outer

2 Cor. 4:16–18

James 2:13–17

Matt. 25:35–46

halves. They are thereby losing the inner half of life, the very part they were supposed to be gaining or preserving. For they have forgotten Jesus Christ, who took on outer need just as much as inner need: in his eyes the two are inseparably one. It is possible to share lovingly and militantly in the life of our times only when we respond with every fiber of our being to the work demanded, when in every drop of our heart's blood we feel the distress, and want to share in suffering it and thereby in actively overcoming it. It is in quietness that we find the way to give this help.

Matt. 9:4–7

Gal. 6:2

The kingdom of God within

Jean Paul³ describes a raging tempest in which the surface of the water is broken up in jagged and foaming confusion while the sun still shines on it, without being hidden by turbulent clouds. The mirror of our feelings also cannot help becoming stormy and agitated sometimes with all the seething activity in which we are obliged to live and carry on our work. Yet our hearts know of a heaven with a sun that in radiant quiet preserves an untouched and inviolable strength. This heaven is the rising sun of God's approaching reign. Jesus Christ, the morning star of the future, not only proclaimed it to us; he also brought it close to us in his life and death, in his word and deed. The following words of Fichte will be understood by anyone who sees this heaven: "Do you wish to see God face to face as he himself is? Do not look for him beyond the clouds; you can find him everywhere, wherever you are." The kingdom of God draws near over all the earth. God is near wherever a

Rev. 22:16

Matt. 5:8

³ Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, 1766–1825.

