


worthy to have us among you any longer.

Therefore woe to you Moravian lords forever, that you have given in to Ferdinand, the awful tyrant and enemy of divine truth, that you have agreed to drive those who love and fear God out of your lands. You will have to pay dearly for it and will have no more excuse than Pilate, who also did not want to crucify and kill the Lord Jesus. But when the Jews threatened him (by God's plan), fear of the Emperor made him condemn an innocent man. You do the same, using the King as your excuse.

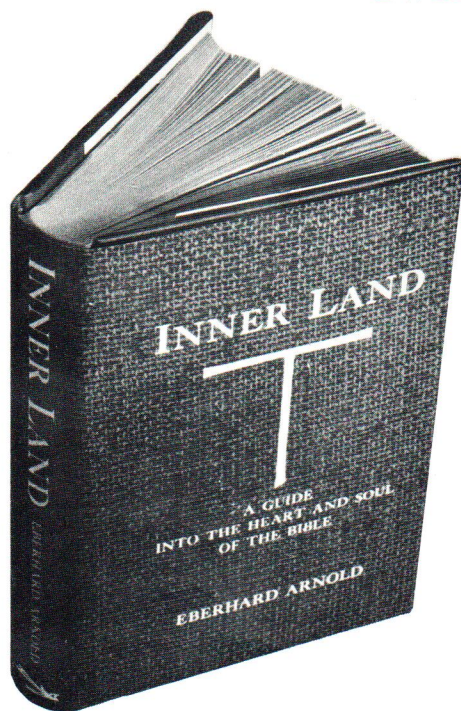
God has made it known through the

mouth of His prophets that He will avenge innocent blood with terrible might on all who stain their hands with it. This we declare to you and to all who sin against God.

We wish you could escape this judgment and that you and all men might be saved with us and inherit eternal life. For the sake of God we plead with you to accept His Word and our warning and to take them to heart, for we testify to what we know and to the truth of God. And we do this from a pure fear of God and because we love God and all men. 

Books

Twentieth Century Apocalyptic



INNER LAND: A Guide to the Heart and Soul of the Bible, Eberhard Arnold, Plough, 1976, 588 pp.

THE OBJECT of the book . . . 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.

With these words we are ushered into the world of Eberhard Arnold as disclosed in the most comprehensive and seminal of his many works. The style of these opening lines is that of a man with a message; it is direct, abrupt, and almost strident in tone. It is twentieth century apocalyptic written as was the writing of a Daniel or an Isaiah to challenge its hearers with a message of impending judgment and the absolute necessity of radical repentance. But also like the apocalyptic literature of old, it is, in the final analysis a message of hope—hope in God's power as the ultimate Lord of history, hope in His goodness, and above all hope in His final *hesed*, His loving kindness for His people.

To understand this work, one must

understand the context out of which it came. Written in the 1930s in Germany, *Inner Land* was created at a time when Europe moved inexorably toward war. Strained by widespread economic disasters, crazed by promises of power, filled with greed and nationalistic fervor, Europeans during that decade endured the uneasy peace established by "the war to end all wars," and watched as a new breed of dictator arose: Lenin and Stalin in Russia, Franco in Spain, Mussolini in Italy, and in Germany the man who was able to take the strengths of the German people—their love of the Fatherland, their disciplined strength, their romantic aspirations, and their technical inventiveness—and enslave them to his own demonic lust for power: Adolf Hitler. Between 1919 and 1932 Hitler skillfully built up the political base of his Nazi party, winning a majority of votes in the popular elections held that latter year. In 1933 he was named Chancellor, and later that year, after a fire destroyed the Reichstag, he suppressed all opposition and emerged as Führer. Through a skillful campaign he built support, utilizing methods from the Youth Movement and, most effectively, the mass rally. William L. Shirer, the American journalist who later wrote *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, attended a September 1934 Nazi rally in Nuremberg, along with nearly a half-million Germans. He had come to Nuremberg to see firsthand what it was about Hitler that made him so popular. In describing the five-day rally he turned repeatedly to religious language to express what he was seeing. He told of being caught one night in a mob of 10,000 hysterics jammed into the moat outside Hitler's hotel. When the Führer appeared, the crowd went into a frenzy:

I was a little shocked at the faces, especially those of the women. . . . They looked up at him as if he were a Messiah.

their faces transformed into something positively inhuman.

The pageantry used by the rally planners conjured up for Shirer suggestions of "the mysticism and religious fervor of an Easter or Christmas Mass in a great Cathedral." Hitler preached a message that called for surrender of individual concerns for the good of the nation. He spoke of community and providential mission of a coming

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millennium, of a destiny for Germany. "Under the mystic lights and at the sound of the magic words of the Austrian they were merged completely in the Germanic herd," shedding their individual lives for a new corporate identity free from personal responsibilities and ready to follow their leader with pietistical devotion. To this spectacle of mass persecution, militarism, rabid nationalism, and hate-mongering the established Christian churches responded, by and large, with silence at best and outright complicity at worst.

Eberhard Arnold uttered an absolute no to all this. He chose a prophetic alternative to the madness he saw all around him, a madness that the established churches seemed happy to accept. He found himself comfortable only with the radical Anabaptist approach to the Church-State question, and thereby rejected the Nazi claims that they were God's special agents doing His providential bidding. His strenuous refusal of all attempts by the government to use religion for its own

ends was a witness of unmistakable clarity and strength.

Throughout *Inner Land* Arnold is constantly countering and correcting the Nazis' attempts to capture the souls of Germans. The future, which Hitler was painting as a time of new greatness for Germany, Arnold referred to as a time of "God's approaching judgment." Here his apocalyptic style is most evident. He warns of impending suffering and doom; no good can come of the insane militarism, of the expansionism and avarice, only sure destruction. Whereas Hitler was hailed as a new King of a glorious German empire, Arnold spoke uncompromisingly of the "ultimate Kingdom" which was only God's. History pointed not to the rise of Germany but to God's Kingdom as the great Omega point. The German people's mission was not to rule the earth as a new super-race but "to lead to the inner land of the invisible, to God and the Spirit . . . to show a way to new love." Instead of yielding up their wills to their political leaders, Arnold urged his countrymen to pay heed to their consciences. He devoted two entire chapters to a discussion of the conscience and its role in aiding the individual to clearly discern the difference between the Holy Spirit and the evil spirit—a difference that the Nazis were expert at blurring.

In the face of a national call to join the Nazis in their new German nation, Arnold offered a different picture of community. His community was to be characterized not by a superiority, but by an awareness of the essential unity that unites all people. In place of concupiscence, he offered self-giving charity that expressed itself in voluntary poverty. By giving oneself to this community—this Church of Christ, this Kingdom of God—one emerged, not as a peon of the State, whose will and conscience had been silenced, but as a mature person, restored to the image of the Creator, free to live and free to love.

Inner Land evidences not only the political context out of which it came, but also the rich sources on which Arnold drew. The famous 14th-century Dominican mystic, Meister Eckhart, is a favorite inspiration for much of the book's doctrine of detachment. This Rhinelander had a sense of the mystery of the Godhead, of the importance of emptying ourselves of all possessions and attachments to this world



before approaching the ineffable God, whose ways appear to us as "darkness." But Arnold grows uncomfortable with Eckhart's stress on the passive dimension of the contemplative life and shows himself once again more the prophet than the mystic. An "active stillness," he writes, "leads believers to work for the world in such a way that they do not become wholly 'worldly,' and yet they never become inactive." In fact many of the great contemplatives of the Middle Ages like Eckhart were anything but inactive, and one senses that it is Arnold's prophetic urgency more than the all-too-common evangelical prejudice against Catholics

that led him to neglect this; his writing is filled with irenic appeals for unity and shows an animus for no one, except those who would misuse the Gospel to their own ends. He stands rather as a balance, a middle way, between the contemplative and activist traditions. On the one hand he repeatedly insists on the primacy of the inner life. He speaks of "the heart," "the soul," and "the spirit," in addition to "the inner life": all are overlapping terms, each is merely another linguistic tool he uses to dig deeper to the core of the human experience of God. He emphasizes the need for grace, and for the power of God. On the other hand, he rejects a radical passivity, whether based on an appeal to mystical experience as we have seen, or on a Reformed doctrine of total depravity that would minimize the power of the will as a force for good or the importance of good works. Action was a moral imperative for Arnold—and here one sees the impact of Kant on his thought. The ideal of Christianity must take form—tangible, concrete form in the present.

This same incarnational realism that so permeates *Inner Land* informs Arnold's understanding of revelation. The book is subtitled "A Guide to the Heart and Soul of the Bible," a title that by one way of reckoning seems out of place, since the work spends relatively little time talking about the Bible, *per se*. The subtitle is, rather, a hermeneutical statement; it implies that

this book is what the Bible—not a certain chapter or verse, but the whole of it—means for today. This is what God's word means for those who would hear it now. This is the word made flesh. Here again Arnold appears as prophet, delivering his "thus saith the Lord" to his countrymen. But it is not as a self-proclaimed Teutonic Messiah, but merely as a witness to the truth that he comes.

It is that witness with all its intensity and ceaseless scrutiny that makes this book extraordinary. That witness was a product of a time when the issues of life and death were writ boldly on the face of history. *Inner Land* shows us clearly that the forces of horror and inhumanity that wartime manifests are grounded in the heart. But it shows us also that the capacity to respond to God's Spirit and counter those destructive powers that would threaten to engulf us lies there as well.

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