



The Inner Life

Eberhard
ARNOLD



INNER
LAND



The Inner Life

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**

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.

Heb. 10:23–39

Rom. 14:17

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;

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

Prov. 23:7

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 subserviencies

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.

Matt. 6:10

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

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

Rom. 6:4

John 5:24

Luke 17:20–21

Gen. 3:8

Wisd. of Sol.

13:1–9

Rom. 1:19–20

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

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.

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 his church, become a community of many.

Matt. 18:19–20

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

Eph. 5:11

Matt. 5:14–16

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

Acts 2:42–47

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.

Eph. 2:14–15

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 need as well, fully and completely, are cutting life into

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.

complete reversal of all things is sought – the reversal that brings his rule with it. His kingdom has no territorial boundaries.

We are not Christians (in the only sense in which it is possible to be Christians – in the inner sense that affects all outward things as well) until we have experienced in our own hearts these decisive words about the presence of Christ:

The righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down) or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

Rom. 10:6–8

But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart.

The Word comes into our hearts because it has come into the world. The eternal Word became temporal flesh; God’s Son became the Son of Man. Every time what you do is done sincerely, believed wholeheartedly, and confessed openly, the Word becomes again body and flesh in your mouth, in your heart, in the work of the believing church, in the loving, active community that is its organism. It is through the Holy Spirit that this comes about, just as it did when the Son came for the first time. In order to penetrate the life of humankind, the Word goes to our inmost hearts again and again. The kingdom has no time boundaries.

1 Thess. 2:13

John 1:1–14

2 Pet. 1:19

No eye can see light apart from itself, but only in itself. Light comes from outside, and its rays illuminate the inside. God’s morning star, his rising sun, draws near to us from the other world. When we believe this fact and when this news reaches our

inmost life, the morning star has arisen in our hearts. We are filled with light because the Light of the World has reached us from afar. So he gives light to every person who comes into this world. Seeing takes place only when the eye receives light rays in its own deepest depths. "Therefore you cannot grasp God apart from yourself. He himself must let the rays of his Spirit pierce deep into the depths of your heart to stamp his image there in order that you may know him." In Jesus, the image of God has appeared so clearly and so undeniably that from now on it is from him that we receive our calling into our hearts. The image of God that Jesus brings to us is love: love as the will to unity. We are called to be images of God, and through this calling his Spirit wants to rule all people and all things and form them into one united whole. The kingdom has no subjective boundaries.

We see God directly before our inmost heart as soon as the light is no longer eclipsed by all the busyness of our ego as it obstinately pushes its way to the fore. God shows himself to us as the beaming sun that alone can bring abiding life. He brings in the new day, his day that brings judgment on the dark life of self. He seeks to bring all people into redeeming light and unite them under his rulership. We find the focal point of our inner life in God, the central sun of our existence, because in him we recognize the central fire of all creation, of history, and of the history of the last things. Without him, collectedness of spirit in the depths of our soul will be cast to the winds again and again. Only through our becoming one with God in the depths of our being will it become possible. A battle can be won only when the field marshal and

his staff keep completely calm in the midst of all the turmoil. Similarly, we are able to cope with the demands of today's need and distress only when we have found an inner collectedness in God. And we shall find this only when lightning from the kingdom of God has struck and lit up the whole horizon.

Every bit of life must have a center somewhere deep inside it. Just as the earth without its glowing center would be no less dead than the moon, just as the inner core contains the life-strength of the fruit, just as a flower's beautiful petal-cups shield the organs of fertilization, in the same way there can be only one center for all life-energy: the hidden and the inner. The power of God's kingdom lies hidden in its innermost core, in the heart of God. It comes to light in Jesus, the hidden focus of all history. Jesus reveals this power at the very heart of faith to the simple and to children. It remains hidden from the wise and clever because only the childlike heart is able to grasp the plan of love. The only way our soul can know God and be known by him is for us to become one in our own inner depths with the center of all worlds and all life in them. The inmost core decides between life and death.

Matt. 11:25

Therefore, the most dangerous sickening of life does not halt at the external forms of life but proceeds with its decay and destruction to attack the innermost core. In fact, life could not really be affected by sickness if the core of our being were to remain untouched by it. We are sick, and we do fall prey to death, because we have become estranged from the fire that is the core of all life, the core of all that takes place. In this state of sickness we

Eph. 4:18

Gal. 4:9

understand nothing of God's judgment in his history. Through this sickening, our inner eye is blinded so that it cannot see the kingdom of God. Every weakening of inwardness strikes at the source of our life-power. Every strengthening of our outward existence that is won at the expense of inwardness squanders our vital strength and endangers our inner existence. Only wealth of life gathered in the innermost depths makes us capable of that quality of generosity which finds its happiness in giving. The innermost core of God's kingdom is the surrendering love and active sacrifice of the pure life.

2 Cor. 4:4

John 11:10

Eph. 5:2

In the same way, it is in the innermost core of our life that the love of the sacrificed Christ kindles the rich fire of renunciation, a letting go and surrendering of everything that is given us in the way of personal abilities and possessions. Every impoverishment and sickening of our inner being means a loss of warmth and depth, a loss that shows up plainly in all our efforts and activities. Every healing of the inner life leads to loving sacrifice, that is, to purer and more vigorous action.

Matt. 10:39

The hypocrisy of outward piety

Jesus has wielded the sword of speech more powerfully than anyone else against the danger that religion, our inmost treasure, becomes outward form. No one has stressed more than he did the vital importance of the actual state of a person's inner life. Because he is the heart of God, he brought the kingdom of God, and this kingdom seeks to gain authority over all things by touching hearts and changing everything, starting with the heart. That

Luke 11:37-44

Luke 17:20-21

- John 3:16 is why he seeks the inner life of all people. We know from him that even the most untruthful person, even the person who is furthest from God, has an inner being. God seeks with all the means of judgment and love to move the heart of each person: he wants the approach of his day, just as much as the effect of his love, to bring each one to look in his own heart and turn around. In this way, everything will be changed by being overthrown and set up new. And he sees our hearts as they are. All purifying or whitewashing of externals is in vain. “Inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” “Inwardly they are full of greed and self-indulgence, full of dead men’s bones and all kinds of rottenness.” Jesus hates the outward appearance of piety and holiness when the heart dishonestly boasts of spiritual values it does not possess and sinks further and further away from God. He himself said the most serious thing that can be said about this: “This people draws near to me with their mouths and honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from me, and they serve me in vain because they teach teachings that are nothing but the commandments of men.”
- Mark 1:15
- Ps. 139:23–24
- Matt. 23:25–33
- Isa. 29:13
- Matt. 7:24
- As a result of the war and the shock and collapse that followed, people should feel that God wants to use the heavy burden of our times to bring them to examine themselves. Again it is all-important that it is not with our mouths only that we promise to change, and not with our lips only that we honor the Ruler to whom alone all power is given. The will of the heart must be turned into deed if it is serious and sincere. Sincerity is decisive. Through the judgment of his earnest love God wants to bring about a real

transformation in all who are ready for it – a change of heart, a change in actual inner condition, and with that a change in their whole attitude to life.

Rom. 2:4

The darkness of the human heart

What glimpses into the dark recesses of the human heart have been afforded by the savagery of the war and the agitation it has stirred up: fear for existence, greed to possess, nationalistic fervor, and revolutionary passions! Our times have once more revealed the state of our inner life: we are filled with everything but God, who alone fulfills our destiny. And yet we still deceive ourselves.

People speak of dedication and sacrifice of life – their devotion unto death for the sake of brothers, friends, comrades, the homeland, freedom, or justice. What they mean by all this is the killing and plundering of all those they look upon as enemies of these things so precious to them. Just this is what makes Jesus give such a strong warning about those who come in sheep’s clothing, “but inwardly they are ravening wolves”! Their hearts are set on plunder and destruction because the essence of sin – unbroken self-seeking – rules in them as much as ever in spite of all Christian disguises and in spite of all quasi-prophetic banners of justice. The war and the opportunities for power politics that followed have exposed in an appalling way the gruesome violence with which man’s inner being is filled. Truly, man’s condition today appears just as in the words of the psalm on which the Letter to the Romans throws so serious a light: “Their heart is destruction,” destruction that we prepare for ourselves and others.

Matt. 7:15

Matt. 24:4–5, 24

Rom. 3:10–18

Ps. 5:9

Like the fate of countries devastated by the World War, people's inner being today can be compared to a deep mountain ravine: dark shadows of judgment are spread over it. Only withered trunks and bony roots betray to a discerning eye the fact that death did not always rule here. The water that used to be the life of this valley has been blocked. Stones and boulders fill the ravine and seem to have buried every hope. The deeper and more truthfully we see into the actual condition of our inner life, the more hopeless and desperate our fate seems to us. What amazement must have filled the Samaritan woman when the infallible mouth of the Messiah declared that her buried inner life was to be completely renewed and filled forever with fresh strength and rich content!

John 4:7–10

There is a life-giving water that today, too, transforms the darkest abyss or the most awful desolation into a place of joy and surging life. It is the Spirit of him who said: "The water I shall give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 4:14

From this deepest of all springs even the uttermost devastation that has come upon lands and peoples shall be transformed everywhere into a region and people filled with far-reaching peace, a place where the powers of God's future world shall be poured out through the Holy Spirit.

Isa. 32:15–20

God does not want our inner self to remain bleak and desolate – a dark abyss. He is able to change the storms of his judgment, which threaten the terrified soul, into the sunshine of undeserved love. He wants to bring peace and clarity to the heart where until now disruption and darkness have reigned. God's day of judgment threatens to smash

Ezek. 18:23

conquered and unconquered nations alike, yes, the entire mammonistic world economy. But once we renounce the kingdom of mammon, murder, lying, and impurity in order to belong from then on to the kingdom of God, his day of judgment, the day of the Lord, will become the day of *salvation*.

2 Pet. 3:10–14

The struggle within every heart

God knows how the inner fight goes on with deep pain in the hidden recesses of the heart. He knows that the conscience lives there, bringing its witness again and again to the heart’s awareness. He knows the hidden thoughts, how they accuse and excuse each other. He knows how many people wrestle in vain with inner ties that bind them to what is base. He knows with what lying power false demonic ideals and idols try to assert themselves. He knows that the ravening beast of prey confuses the conscience in the guise of an angel of light and so-called liberation.

Rom. 2:15–16

Rom. 7:15–25

John 8:44

2 Cor. 11:14–15

Ps 1:2

The inward person delights in God’s Law. We would so gladly live according to it. At the same time, along with the demands made by God’s justice, other claims stir our inmost being – the claims of our own life, of our nation, or of the oppressed classes. We would like to be free for God’s justice in both the inner life and outer circumstances. And we cannot. The Spirit draws us toward the heavenly city of God’s church and God’s kingdom. But we are bound by the heavy weight of the iron-fisted autonomy of those other things – bound to the earthly cities of human community and human sovereignty and their bloody interests. God knows that all nations and all people live in this inner struggle. For God has written the

Gal. 5:16–18, 25

- Rom. 1:18–21 Book of the Law on the hearts of even the remotest nations. Only he, and whoever is in unity with him in the all-discerning Spirit, can judge and discern the hidden depths of man. The Father sees into what is hidden. He delights in the truth that is within the heart. He wants to teach us to know the truth in the hidden depths, in the innermost recesses of the heart.
- Ps. 51:6 And only God's pure truth in his perfect love, as it took shape in Jesus and his first church, has the power to set us free. Everything else is lying and deceit.
- John 1:14, 17
- Rom. 1:18–21

The blocked stream

The fate of the countries so hard hit today brings to mind a remarkable story about a remote, parched valley, whose impoverished inhabitants vaguely remembered a time when it had been different and better. Once upon a time, a life-giving mountain stream had flowed there and brought wealth and happiness to the valley. But guilt, in which all who lived there had a share, had ruined everything; the great mountains began to move. Huge boulders plunged into the valley. It seemed as though absolutely everything was about to be buried under the debris. Neither buildings nor rows of houses were any protection. Then the hurtling masses of rock stopped. They halted in front of the houses. But the river was blocked. The life that had flourished seemed destroyed forever. Poverty and distress began their rule. Even memories of the past began to fade slowly away.

But a son of the valley grew up, despised by the others, who was moved by the fate of his people. Day and night he thought about delivering them, ready to attempt it. He knew about the stream and where

it was blocked. He accomplished the colossal task, moving the mountainous weight of rocks; but as he moved the last boulder, letting the water flow once more into the valley, he, the savior of his people, was buried under it. Yet he rose to life again, this man who had risked his life for their sake. He ruled forevermore over his people, who had had everything given back to them.

Acts 2:24, 33

It is Jesus who has moved the boulder of our mountainously heavy guilt so that the river of life can flow unhindered into our inner being. As Lord over our innermost being, Jesus brings riches and happiness to our inner life. And just as he healed the bodies of the sick and possessed, also now in this relentless catastrophe of world history he wants to set free the buried bodies and ruined workplaces and make a new life possible in his land. Our hearts cannot be set free from the deadening pressure of hidden sin until his liberating action, given as his gift, gains room in our innermost being. And when this experience has become ours, the essential thing is to allow him to take command and have more and more authority.

Rev. 21:6

Rom. 3:23–25

Rom. 5:20

Rom. 6:13

When his kingdom comes to us in this way, we live from within according to the spiritual laws of his kingdom, also in our work and in the communal order of our life. Even the outer shape of our life shall be in accord with the kingdom of God as his prophets portrayed it. When his word rules in us, when his nature unfolds in us, it is wealth of life undreamed of, which floods the parched depths of our inner being and pours forth from there into the world outside as living, active love. In place of the cloud of judgment that threatens everything comes the superabundant light of his revelation. This light shows the living way.

Already today, the church of faith and love gains the possibility of judging and ordering the innermost as well as the outermost details of life according to the justice, peace, and joy of his kingdom.

Gal. 5:22

In this light, the somber darkness of the World War with all its causes and consequences is revealed as that guilt which in many people causes the river of life to be blocked. Many forgot that Jesus is life. Because they sought life in other waters, everything had to be buried. God let this war come over us like a heavy landslide because it is his will to give inner help through such radical intervention. But it turns out as the Revelation of John foretold about the last times: “And those that remained, who were not killed by these plagues, still did not repent of the work of their hands. Neither did they repent of their manifold murders. Indeed, they blasphemed God in heaven instead of repenting of their deeds.”

Rev. 16:11

Rev. 9:20–23

Untold numbers turn sharply away from the way of Jesus. They seek out the way of idols so that they can continue to worship mammon all the more zealously – mammon, the murderer from the beginning, the father of lies, the prince of impure spirits. They endeavor to make themselves strong through impure streams of racial ties instead of at long last looking for the one pure spring. Through collapse on all sides, we are directed more earnestly than ever before to the one who took upon himself our poverty and distress to make us pure and strong in his Spirit. Every single person should have recognized at long last that no human, self-made effort can bring peace and life to the earth. Only the sovereign reign of God can do this. In the midst of the serious situation today, God himself wants to be the Savior and helper in our inner life and

Isa. 53:4–5

John 16:33

in every area of our life. There is only one gospel for all creation, one and the same gospel for everyone, for every class of people, and for every tribe and nation. Whoever represents a different gospel for himself, his nation, or his class brings a curse with him.

Gal. 1:6-8

2 Cor. 11:4-15

God alone renews our hearts

The reality of God is proved by the fact that he brings about the renewal and strengthening of our hearts that we cannot find without him. The unity of Jesus with the Father is the living reality of his divine sonship and the same as the unity of God and Christ with the Holy Spirit. This unity shows itself in our innermost life. For there his Spirit works the powerful religious and moral transformation that could never be attained without him. He is unity in himself and in us. Therefore his Spirit can represent and spread only unity and peace, also in outer life. He knows of only one way and one leadership. Jesus Christ, who is Lord and Spirit, goes no roundabout way and knows no separate mediator.

John 14:6, 20-23

1 Tim. 2:5

God gives himself in the certainty of direct contact. In him alone does the heart's need for security find the firm ground of the here and now, for which it must long continually. The presence of Christ is the wonderful gift of God in which we receive perfect unity with God in love and faith.

John 5:24

Gal. 2:20

Through this experience, however, the stark difference between his purity and our guilt dawns on us just as powerfully. We stand in the midst of disunity between people, classes, and nations, while he is and remains unity. It is precisely in this complete oneness that we become aware of the abysmal difference that separates our nature from his.

The writings of the apostles call this experience the illumination of our hearts by God. It brings the brightness of his glory into our inner being. God shines in Christ and in his countenance. Illuminated by the presence of God, the hidden recesses of the heart are revealed, so that we have to cast ourselves down and worship him. We are overpowered by the fact that the light of his incomprehensibly glorious nature makes us feel all the more deeply the darkness of our own being. If we accept the life of Jesus with his unmistakable words and deeds, if we accept them unadulterated and without any devious interpretations, our entire life, private and public, will be revealed as utterly opposed and hostile to him.

Only in Jesus can our inner being find happiness and inmost satisfaction: nothing else corresponds to what our innermost being is and should be, in the light of its origin. Only when our life is hidden with Christ in God do we experience our real, unique destiny, which without him has to remain buried in the dark. This destiny is to be God's image: to rule in his Spirit over everything through love and love's creative power. The more we experience his wealth of life, the more we long with all our heart to grow in this inner experience and this creative shaping of life. For the experience of God's gifts and the knowledge of his divine rulership over everything can never reach a conclusion in this life. It needs to be renewed every day.

The great commotion in the world today makes it more and more urgent to gain inner strength in quiet encounter with Christ. This will make it possible for us to remain under the rule of his authority. Since we are situated in the midst of such a terribly

unpeaceful world, we need constant nourishment for our inner life. It is important to look toward and think about that which is above external things and in direct contrast to the outward form they take today. Instead of following the weak and alien spirits of hate and of violence, of lying and of impure, greedy possessiveness, we are allowed to follow the one Spirit who alone is stronger than all other spirits. Only the strongest power of inner resistance can prevent our inner life from being buried by what is happening around us now on the earth.

John 6:48–51

Eph. 6:11–13

1 Pet. 5:8–9

Without a rebirth in our hearts, we will glean from fluctuating world events either a false meaning – based perhaps only on material considerations or on emotional or racial ties – or no meaning at all. The course of history is interpreted falsely by many people in the interests of their own nation, for example, or their own society. For most people, though, it never has any meaning at all. There is only *one* possible way of bringing this confusion to an end. One's whole person and the whole of one's life must undergo a complete about-face toward the kingdom of God. Rebirth is the only name we can give to such a radical change with its childlike trust in God's intervention and firm, manly expectation of it. This is the complete opposite of the former life. It is only through such a complete change that we – by going through judgment – can recognize in all that happens the approach and intervention of God's rule. We can never see the kingdom of God or have any part in it without a rebirth of heart that breaks down the whole structure of our life and then makes a new start, a completely different one. Only a new beginning that starts from the very bottom in the process

Matt. 6:33

Rom. 6:13

Luke 18:17

John 3:3, 5

Matt. 18:3 of becoming a true person, only the rebirth that starts at the very beginning, is able to prepare us for the kingdom of God. It must be a new beginning of our whole personal life.

Consequently, it is only through the Spirit who embraces all the powers of the future kingdom of God that this can happen. Only the Spirit of the kingdom of God can put a seal on the passport without which the door into this kingdom remains shut – the passport to God’s kingdom, which is meant to confirm that we already now live in the Spirit and in the order of the final kingdom. But just as a tiny, newborn baby is far from being able to master life, so too the rebirth brought about by the Holy Spirit is neither more nor less than the beginning of new life, which still needs to be strengthened and completed. For us weak people, however, this is possible only as a slow process of being made fit for God’s kingdom and his righteousness. Even after rebirth has given the first glimpse into the kingdom of God, our hearts still remain subject to the old inhibitions and restrictions epitomized as “flesh” by Paul, that methodical thinker of early Christian times. He testified of himself explicitly that his flesh had no peace, not only because of struggles from without but just as much because of fears from within.

Eph. 1:13

1 Pet. 2:2

Heb. 5:12–14

2 Cor. 7:5

Strength to overcome

Phil 3:12 What is incomplete in our existence gives the believer a powerful incentive to deepen his inner life constantly. It is of the utmost importance that in these serious and extremely menacing days we gain a growing clarity about our inner life. We must not

let our emotional nature deceive our hearts in these agitated times. Even when it has been touched by the Holy Spirit, our excitable inner nature remains weak. Our hearts are flooded as the blood circulates; our emotional life flows in this bloodstream and often continues as long as we live to be determined by its urges and feelings.

If those around us are gripped and swept up by the excitement in their blood, we often fall prey to it too, because we are not able to put up a true resistance born of the Spirit. The distress of our own class or our own nation has a particularly strong effect on us. Mass suggestion used by great national movements appeals to our blood ties and class solidarity and often works so decisively on us that we utterly forget the call to the kingdom of God and his Spirit, or we completely falsify it. Even if we continue to profess him, emotional ties and fear for existence have driven the Spirit away from us. In order to face all fears, and still more, in order to resist all the impure and bloody raptures of fanaticism, our consciences need a healing that steadily gains ground. This healing can come about solely through the holy, all-loving, utterly pure, and completely true Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who unites all good in himself. His objectivity is sober and clear.

Luke 23:21-23

Matt. 13:22

No experience, however agitating, and no shock, however violent or bitter, must be allowed to sweep past without this result: that the rule of Christ in us gains ground in our hearts and in our whole life. The aim of his rule is to fill our inner life with an objective clarity that cannot be shattered by any force of circumstance. His Word and his Spirit want

to work in us uninterruptedly as his instruments in order to make us strong in every battle and capable of the hardest work. The blessing of everything good shall conduct us so firmly and clearly on the way of Jesus Christ – the way that leads straight ahead – that neither successes nor failures in the world can make us swerve into false ways.

We have to follow the same way as Jesus; we must follow it just as Jesus did. Then no seductive call will

Matt. 16:24

divert us from this mission, which he left to us as

John 20:21

his mission. In just the same way as the Father sent

John 17:18

him into the world, he sends us: in just the same way,

with the same stand in life, completely free from

adulteration by other elements! Only in this way will

our life be fruitful. He wants all our gifts to come

to life and unfold in order to equip us for the new

tasks of the changing world situation. The rulership

of Christ denotes strength for the inner life through

inner gathering and consecration, and through this,

through this alone, also strength for an outer life with

a living influence in the right work or occupation.

To become strong in our inner being can mean

only one thing: that Christ lives in our hearts through

faith because we are being grounded and rooted in

love. We need Christ all the time in our inner being,

the Christ who was crucified for us, the Christ who is

alive for us. He invades us with his fullness, with all

the fullness of God, which wants to pour itself over

Eph. 3:16, 19

all spheres of our activity as the supreme authority

Col. 2:9–10

of love. God is love. Only he who remains in love

1 John 4:16

remains in God and God in him. God's rulership is

the kingdom of love. Love is his justice. Because his

kingdom knows no frontiers, his Messiah-King has

put the love of God to friend and foe into our hearts. Luke 6:27–31
It is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Rom. 6:13

Whoever betrays this by shutting out love to his opponents or to enemies of his class or nation drives away the Holy Spirit and delivers up his heart to deceptive spirits. Love wants to flood our private as well as our public life and rule over it in such a way that there can be no rival authority. Paul prays for this for all people because it is the true and the only strengthening for our inner being. In our inner life we need an experience of Christ that transcends all knowledge. This means that as king of the final kingdom he rules over our lives already here and now in exactly the same way as he will in his final kingdom. Phil. 1:9–11
Matt. 6:10

We need men of prayer who, like Paul, bend their knees and lift hands that are unstained with blood or any kind of impurity so that through the Spirit of God the believers may be strengthened powerfully in their inmost being – strengthened in their whole attitude to life. We need to be reminded daily that inwardly we must be renewed from day to day even if the body perishes in hunger, distress, and misery or is carried off and destroyed by persecution and death for the sake of truth. If in the storm of public opinion and the towering waves of chaos, we want to keep a clear, firm course instead of inwardly suffering shipwreck – then our hidden inner being needs daily the quiet haven of communion with God. 1 Tim. 2:8
2 Cor. 4:16
Rom. 12:12
Col. 4:2
Matt. 6:6

The Heart

The heart contains unknown riches

The World War brought a time of sharp testing and deep affliction. It has tested our endurance to its very limits, bringing in its train loss of national wealth and disruption of world economy, unemployment and impoverishment, mutual hostility and untold ills that shatter public confidence. Even the most indifferent must feel that whether they will pass the test or not depends on what their hearts are able to bear. Those who previously had nothing but a smile for demands made by the inner life now feel how important it is that their hearts are firm. The “morale of the troops,” the confidence of a people, the solidarity of classes, the faithfulness of true community, like that of individuals, are a measure of the heart’s energy to hold all good powers together and to ward off all destructive ones. We need the inmost strength of stout hearts in order to be able to bear the consequence of war or world crisis without permanent injury.

Suffering is an appeal to our hearts. It forces us to be on the watch for ways of finding the necessary

strength and courage, because the heart affects the whole person. Being the inmost core, the heart means more than anything else not only for the spirit, but just as much for the body. Even physical capacity depends on strength of heart. No feeling, thought, or motion of the will is without influence on the body.

Ovid recognized this even in those ancient days: “Even in the human body, the heart counts more than the hand; the strength that gives the body life is in the heart.”¹ Life radiates from the heart and preserves the center of its strength in this innermost core. The outer body perishes. The heart decides between life and death, for it is so closely linked with the soul and is meant to be so open to the spirit that it can and should have everlasting life.

Prov. 4:23

People who are guided by superficialities cannot stand up to any hard trial. They have too feeble a concept of what wealth of life and strength can fill the heart. The most important things in life are lost to them. Only events that have a powerful outer effect give them some idea of what power the inner life can have. The great, wide mouth of a mighty river once showed Columbus what riches must lie hidden in the interior behind the newly discovered coast. This coast could not possibly be mistaken any longer for the edge of a small island. And no one could possibly remain indifferent to the heart of a continent! The sun that shone over it was indeed familiar. Clouds could indeed be seen gathering over it. No one could from then on be satisfied with the outside edge, however – the beach strewn with shells and wreckage and pounded monotonously by the sea of the world

¹ Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, XIII.

outside. The discoverers could not rest until the unfathomable wealth of the interior lay before their astonished eyes.

The whole world shall recognize, by the stream of light radiating from the seven lampstands, what a land of light, what a part of God's kingdom is given to the church of Jesus Christ. The city of God as the city on the hill shall be visible to all lands far and wide so that all seeking people may have a longing to know the center of its inner life, the inner secret of its free citizenship and its church unity. All people over all the earth shall ask about the citizenship of the kingdom of God, about his embassy here and now, and about the future order it represents. They must recognize one thing above all, that they must become one with the heart of this church and city of God before they can enter its gates.

Rev. 1:12-13

Matt. 5:14

Ps. 22:27

2 Cor. 5:20

Heb. 12:22-23

Eph. 2:12-22

Rev. 22:14

The most recent world history shows us that neither foreign rule nor home rule will come to any good unless the heart of a country is won, for all wealth lies hidden within. Whoever does not learn to understand the heart of God in Jesus Christ, whoever will not begin to journey through all the outlying regions of God's world rule to the very center in order to become one with the ultimate will of God's heart, whoever does not seek the Holy of Holies, will never understand that God wants only one thing. He will never understand that in spite of the fact that in history God has appointed the secular state – a power of bloodshed and diplomacy that is anchored in the right to property – God wants only one thing in the end: love without violence, freedom from all possessions and property rights, simple truthfulness

and brotherly justice, community of all people everywhere without self-interest and property – that is, the kingdom and the church. Whoever keeps his or her back turned on the heart of God will be just as perplexed when confronted by the mystery of the human heart. For that is where the likeness of God shall be revealed. Such people will never be able to grasp

The greatest wonder in all creation,
Of time and space the masterpiece:
The heart of man with its elation,
The heart with all its ecstasies.²

The Bible, which speaks of the heart in such a rich and profound way, is of all books the only one that can satisfy the inner life and fill the heart. If it is not seen superficially according to its letter but deeply in its heart and soul, it witnesses everywhere to the heart as the innermost mystery. It even goes so far as using the Hebrew expressions for “heart” and for “that which is within” as synonyms. In the Bible the heart is the antithesis of superficiality and pretense. What penetrates to the inmost depths does not simply stay on the surface. What comes from the inmost depths is the noblest and sincerest of all. If a man’s heart is corrupt, nothing he touches remains incorrupt. But the outer life resists the inner life and strives against it. Only seldom is there harmony between them.

A corrupt heart hides behind lies

A pure, creative spirit expresses what is within very clearly and intelligibly by outward and visible signs.

² George Philipp Schmidt von Lübeck, 1766–1849, “*Das Menschenherz*” (The Human Heart).

Luke 24:32
2 Tim. 3:15–17

Matt. 23:25–28
Matt. 12:35
Gal. 5:17
Rom. 7:23

An impure and untruthful spirit, on the other hand, misuses the outward expression to falsify the true state of affairs. Then the outward appearance is only there to hide what is within, as public economy and politics reveal so painfully in war and in peace. We in our days have had to look on with horror while spirits who have fallen prey to hate and hostility, of whatever party or nation, have practiced the most hateful misuse of the spoken, written, and printed word. They all, every one of them, practice it to this day, dishonestly exaggerating and inventing failures and mistakes in the enemy's camp, and, just as much, exaggerating and inventing advantages and elements of truth in the home camp. Every honest person must be warned of the daily flood of printed matter that bears down on us: *Cave canem!* Beware of the dog! Here you will get barked at and bitten; there is no sense, no understanding, and no insight here because there is no justice. Pass by! Words desecrate the truth! Here the heart is cloaked in lies.

2 Cor. 11:14–15

In the scriptures, the heart is that part of man which is hidden in his inner being. The thought is even intensified by terms like the “inmost” heart and the “depths” of the heart. The secrets of the heart are known to the scriptures. In the scriptures, anyone is marked as unhappy who has to hide himself in an armor of lies and dishonesty because he wants to appear different from what he truly is. Whoever gets entangled in hypocrisy and deceit cannot open up and pour out his heart even before God – the very one who wants to make the heart glad because he loves it and because he wants to give it truth and genuineness.

1 Pet. 3:4

Ps. 44:21

1 Kings 8:39

Deut. 30

Ultimately, however, we cannot hide our innermost being, for we must *do* what is in our hearts. And even if we do not want to admit it, our *deeds* will finally reveal whether our hearts are right or wrong. The surprises in this direction that war and postwar times have brought for many should be stamped on our hearts as unforgettable warnings. We must not be indifferent to the abysses that have yawned in front of us: impure and unbridled passions, boundless lies and deceptions, the unrestrained fury of murder and looting, the loveless triumph of ruthless profiteering, the renewed increase of social injustice and oppression, and the deception of class hatred and racism! All of that, and still more, broke out with the most fearsome violence in the war and in the revolution and violent repression that followed it, in inflation, and in the heated political opinions that excited nearly everybody. The shock of these things must be engraved unforgettably on our memory. The dreadful nucleus of these events is something we have to recognize even when it tries to hide behind the glittering armor of the most idealistic words and goals. Not the program but the deed discloses what powers drive the heart and control it.

Gen. 6:5

All we do is bound to be powerless and evil if the heart is parched and diseased, burdened and faint, or worst of all, if it is hostile, filled with the impure fires and poisonous smoke of blind hate. Only an inner life that is recollected and that lives in the strength of concentrated peace, only a harmonious heart that does not disintegrate in quarrels and strife, can give proof of strength to act. For only good works are

Isa. 1:5

constructive. Everything else is destructive. We can see the outward effects, but God tests and knows the inner recesses of the heart. He wants to lead our hearts away from murderous demolition to the living work of building up. He alone knows how to guide them, just as we guide streams of running water to one place or another in our gardens. God wants to let all hearts flow together into *one* great garden, into the kingdom of his unity, love, and justice, where they all do what is good because their hearts move them to it and because the Spirit leads them and urges them on.

Luke 16:15

Rev. 2:23

1 Sam. 16:7

Isa. 51:3

In the Bible the heart is seen as crucial in our renewal. As the Bible sees it, everything of significance is decided in the inner recesses of the heart. From the heart flow not only the streams of blood that fill our veins but also the pure winds and waters of the Spirit. That can be seen in the contrasting statements about the heart in prophetic and apostolic writings: not that which enters the heart from *without* but that which comes from *within* the heart, from one's inner being, is what defiles one. It is false to maintain that one's nature can be influenced by food taken in by the body or by hygiene or gymnastics. This is in distinct opposition to the word and life of Jesus. It results in this thoughtless and deceptive saying, "You are what you eat," being set up in opposition to the truth of Jesus. The adherents of this opinion have themselves had to realize all too often that the defilement of our inner being lies deeper than in eating and drinking. The true food, the food of the Spirit, remains the decisive thing, though, to be sure, the abuse of eating and drinking through luxurious living can also burden the heart.

Ezek. 11:18-19

Mark 7:14-23

Mark 7:2-8

Rom. 14:17

Luke 21:34

In truth it is quite the other way around: a luxurious and voluptuous life has its origin in the heart. What people *are*, they *do*. There are deeper signs of this than diets and rules of hygiene. As long as we think first and foremost of our health and our own wellbeing, we remain unredeemed, with sick and self-seeking hearts. Because we love our life we lose it. Only when we give it up do we find it.

John 12:25

What has vital significance is what comes out of the heart to the light. Every sort of idolatry will inevitably be exposed. The words uttered by the mouth (the outward speech) come from the overflowing of the heart (the inner being). What we *speak about*, we *are* – that is, of course, provided we are speaking from the heart. Nevertheless, the sincerity or insincerity of a person's words cannot be hidden in the long run. A watchful spirit, clearly discerning the spirits, hears the tone of the heart and sees the light of the soul. All empty talk is useless, however lofty the words.

Prov. 26:23–26

Matt. 15:8

The heart is the center of our emotions

What use is all outward service to God if our inner being, our heart, stays at a distance? Only what we do for the Lord with all our heart has any value.

Deut. 15:10–15

What point is there in letting our feet take paths and steps if our hearts do not go along too? All that is done and carried out in imagined strength remains a mere nothing if the living heart does not beat and pulse in it. As long as our heart stays quick and alive, even the weakest people, those least capable of heavy work, can have the strongest influence. The heart is the inner core that does not rest even when the outer body is inactive. God does not look at the outward appearance but at the heart.

1 Sam. 16:7

Our strength and our weakness lie in our innermost being. Our inner attitude, although it can indeed be hidden or disguised on the outside, nevertheless makes all the difference to our character. Only that which passes through one heart to another has any value or strength, because it comes from the heart. Whoever has experienced how complete or almost complete strangers open their innermost hearts to one another will feel again and again the genuine heartbeat in each true word and will turn away from empty words in which the heart does not speak.

1 Pet. 1:22

The living church receives its unity and unanimity from the continual outpouring of the Spirit. It is there that the harmony of all hearts reaches its climax, for there all have become *one* heart and *one* soul. And this they will be over and over again, every time they believe in the Holy Spirit. Whoever wants to forgive with his mouth only or preach with his lips only can give us nothing but disappointment. “A preacher must have a heart that is on fire before he begins to preach.” With these words, Francis of Assisi revealed the secret of his fruitful life. “For anything that is to move hearts must come straight from the heart.”³

Acts 2:1–4

Acts 4:32

2 Chron. 30:12

The heart is rich in strength. What a wealth and diversity of lively emotions are embedded in the heart! Many people associate the heart only with feelings. And indeed, language does not go far wrong when it speaks so often of the emotional life as the heart’s affair. Our best and deepest feelings are seated in our innermost being, but just as much so are our most wicked and harmful ones. All true joy comes

Acts 5:3

³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749–1832, in *Faust*, Part II, Act 3.

Ps. 16:9 from the heart and fills it with jubilant exultation or
 Ps. 28:7 quiet happiness. All genuinely good deeds touch the
 heart. Every joyful hope has its life in the heart. The
 refreshing of the spirit, and not only that but also the
 refreshing of the body and soul, is a gift for the inner
 Ps. 104:15 life, for the heart. For the heart is grateful for every
 consolation that offers bread and not stones.

The heart really does have to fight against fear and
 Prov. 12:25 unrest and against pain and sadness. Our times have
 Ps. 73:21 shown us all too clearly that the heart does not burn
 Prov. 25:20 only with love and joy. All too often it plunges into
 the consuming fires of discontent and hate. We must
 be surprised to the point of being horrified at how
 for one reason after another passion causes the heart
 to flare up in rage and distress. What a catastrophe
 it would be for the heart if it were to exhaust all its
 Mark 2:6–8 wealth on its conflicting feelings! And how deluding
 these storms are even though they are often only big
 enough to fill a teacup! Strong impressions produce
 shaking emotions. Miserable lusts cramp the heart.
 Deep emotion alternates with very petty feelings. It
 can happen that unclarified, unconscious, and sub-
 Luke 3:15 conscious feelings lead to something good. But often
 they veil urges that are dangerously apathetic and can
 lead the heart to destruction.

The heart is the center of thought and attitude

It is not true that the heart can only feel. No, the heart as the inner core of a person is more than feeling: it is intention and will. It is the seat of all deep thoughts, which have meaning only if they move our inner being. “Great thoughts come from the heart.”⁴

4 Luc de Clapiers, marquis de Vauvenargues, 1715–1747, *Réflexions et maximes* (Reflections and Maxims).

Everything that is great seeks the living core. The heart is not only inner feeling: it is also inner thought. There is a speaking and talking going on in the heart that tries to bring inner clarity to all its thinking. Reason is not alien to the heart. To be sure, there are some unreasonable hearts who by their errors show nothing but folly. But what the sensible and understanding heart thinks out is wisdom. It understands how to know and how to recognize the best counsel. Just in the inconceivably heavy things that the war and its historical consequences have brought upon us all, just in the incalculable and unfathomable tasks that confront us, the heart needs the greatest and deepest thoughts. These God alone can give.

Prov. 20:5

Ps. 14:1

Prov. 2:1–8

Prov. 14:33

There are indeed thoughts that will always be alien to the heart. There are indeed hearts that hate thinking. But without a certain rich and deep fusion of thoughts there is no fruitful inner life. The whole wealth of life intended for the heart is available to it only when the heart is ready to open itself to the deepest thinking and reflection. It is in the nature of the heart to think and reflect. “Your heart is you yourself. Blessed are you if understanding always dwells in your heart.”⁵ Only the consecrated thoughts of a dedicated life lead to this deep understanding. True understanding is given solely in the thoughts of God, which turn his will into the holy “thou shalt.”

Matt. 9:4

Rom. 10:1–10

Jer. 29:12–13

The effect that thoughts have on the heart’s feelings provides a certain criterion of their value, though not always an infallible one. As Ruskin expressed it: “Literature, art, science – they are all fruitless and worse than fruitless if they do not enable us to

⁵ Friedrich Schiller, 1759–1805, “*Schöner Individualität*” (Lovely Individuality).

be glad, and glad of heart at that.”⁶ A heart that is truly alive passes a kind of higher judgment about those intellectual ideas that cannot fit into our life at the moment, and perhaps never will. “Like a sun, the heart goes through our thoughts and on its way extinguishes one constellation after another!” Jean Paul saw his inner life before him in this picture. All knowledge that is related only to the thinking brain is dead, including mere intellectual knowledge of biblical things. Such knowledge brings life into deadly danger unless the heart takes a stand and unless it is so moved and alive that it is capable of making a choice between light and darkness, bright and dark rays, evil stars and good stars. Only thoughts that have glowing warmth and strength penetrate a pure heart and stream out from it again. Mirza Schaffy’s search for a completely integrated inwardness comes to expression when he proclaims:

Head without heart breeds bad blood;
Heart without head is still no good.
For joy and blessing to last forever,
Heart and head must go together.⁷

This cooperation of two instruments demands an inner energy that can embrace and hold together what so often threatens to disintegrate. No heart is without energy. Yes, the heart is *will*. Just as God’s heart, being love, is the will that gathers and the will for his kingdom, and just as the heart of Jesus wants to gather in his outstretched arms everything that is

⁶ John Ruskin, 1819–1900, *The Eagle’s Nest*, Section 177 (following a German translation).

⁷ Friedrich von Bodenstedt, 1819–1892, “*Die Lieder des Mirza Schaffy*” (The Songs of Mirza Schaffy).

to be united in his church, so the human heart that is healed in him is the clarified will to gather and unite. Matt. 23:37
 If our inner being is not to let the precious wealth of truly great thoughts go rushing by, we must have a heart with a will that is active and glowing, able to accept words of truth and hold on to them firmly, just as Mary did. A will that is weakened by brooding and a nature that is ruled by feelings have never yet been Luke 1:26–38
 capable of anything great. Faith received the word of the Holy Spirit into the heart. This is the only way the Word can penetrate our life. Matt. 13:15
 Ps. 119:11
 Luke 8:15

The ultimate nature of the heart is in fact its inner desire, and its yet deeper will. This will is able to comprehend all that is said and to transform it into dynamic life-values. All intentions and wishes have their root in the heart. There is not only desire in the heart: deeper than that lie its intentions and resolutions. With its will, the heart holds on to the objects of its love and devotion. It is the inner disposition, the deeper direction of will, that makes the character of the heart what it is. Where a man's treasure is – the treasure that fills his inner life – there is his heart also. 1 Sam. 7:3
 Matt. 6:21

“There is something in every man's character that will not let itself be broken, that forms the backbone of his character.”⁸ This backbone that is inwardly so firm and stable is the moral, loving, and uniting will. Without a decided will there is no character. “Character is moral order.”⁹ It is all the elements of the heart, ordered according to the laws of divine and human morality, according to the will to unity, and therefore in the active spirit of pure and warm

8 Georg Christoph Lichtenbert, 1742–1799, *Sudelbücher*, Heft G.

9 Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803–1882, quoted in Samuel Smiles, *Character*.

- John 15:10 love. The backbone of this order is the will. As *will*, the heart is the school of character. True, it needs the stream of the world in order to grow strong. The will has to prove itself in work that is a product of active love by helping to build up a life that is consistent with the unity it aims at. It is steeled for this task in the hard struggle against all powers that are opposed to unity. But if our will is not rooted in our inmost being, in our heart, we will swim with the stream and cease to have character.
- 1 Pet. 5:8–9
- Ps. 78:37
- If it is true that character depends on personality, then personality has its life and strength in the inner will. Only in the inmost recesses of the heart does one become truly free. It is only there that a decisive attitude is taken, one that means either moral firmness or a spineless unfreedom. It is the direction the inner attitude takes that makes the personality. As long as this direction seeks nothing but itself, it will lead the personality astray. Personality is “the greatest happiness of earth’s children”¹⁰ only when the will no longer seeks itself but comes into action and sets to work for what is greatest of all – God’s unity in his kingdom and his church.
- James 1:6
- Matt. 16:25

Actions reveal one’s inner attitude

- Matt. 7:24–27
- In the last analysis, it is only in deeds that the personality reveals the inner attitude. Only those actions that require the concentration of all the heart’s energies can be called deeds. *The* true deed is the uniting of all genuine powers of each individual, bringing togetherness and community to all people: the kingdom of God among them is the concentration

¹⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749–1832, “Suleika,” in *West-östlicher Divan* (1819).

of all their powers in united deed. Only when we do not seek our own advantage but that of another are our deeds in keeping with the powers of God's Spirit at work in us: when in our deeds we sacrifice our own life so that community life may be established in unity, purity, truth, and righteousness.

The greatest deed of the strongest heart was accomplished by Jesus. When he died on the cross, his resolute determination accomplished it. Here an energy of the will is revealed, a fire of love, a steadfastness in carrying out the perfect will, such as can be found nowhere else. The struggle in Gethsemane and the cry of godforsakenness on the cross give a significant glimpse into what willpower was necessary for the heart of the Son of Man not to be broken by the anguish of his pain. Yet his love remained strong and unbroken till the end. In the very torment of death, the divine life in this heart was marked by will to unity, consummation of the work of unification, trust in the Father, prayer for his enemies, concern for a criminal, tender care for his own, and the commending of his spirit into the hands of the Father.

Just before that, his high-priestly prayer, as the most profound speaking of the heart, had once more proclaimed unity to be the first and last will of Jesus. "That they all may be *one* as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, so that in this, that they are *one*, the world may know and believe that thou hast sent me!" The farewell words of Jesus – those words with such an inexhaustible wealth of thought, spoken to those who were his disciples in community and mission work – also revealed the Spirit in this relationship of unity. This Spirit, the Holy Spirit, was revealed to be

Phil. 2:1–8

2 Cor. 5:15

Matt. 26:36–46

Matt. 27:46

Luke 23:34, 43, 46

John 19:26–30

John 17:21

John 14–17

the living representative of Jesus Christ, the advocate of his kingdom and his church, the personal power that thoroughly overwhelms in the conviction that the love that comes from unity is the truth. The Spirit of Truth is the one who calls to mind every word that Jesus said, including his last talks, which prophesy the approaching kingdom of divine unity. The quickening Spirit is the one who communicates the content and form of the future kingdom for us today. Last but not least, the significant symbolism of the Last Supper proclaims the death of Jesus as atonement and liberation; it proclaims his death as the living creation of the new body of Christ, which shall bring the whole of life into perfect unity.

1 Cor. 2:9–10

Matt. 26:26–29

1 Cor. 11:26

All these words and acts show, in a profound wealth of feeling and will, the invincible power of God's thoughts in Jesus Christ, the power to accomplish this deed, the most dynamic deed that ever a heart accomplished. As a revelation of God, this deed of Jesus demonstrates the concentration of all powers on the one goal that is their task. And this goal is nothing more and nothing less than peace, reconciliation, and uniting!

1 John 4:9–10

Eph. 2:14–18

The heart is the inner character. In Jesus it is so firm and clear that in the sacrifice of his life he accomplishes the greatest deed of liberation, uniting, and gathering that can ever be imagined. In Jesus, the accomplished deed reveals his inner perfection. In each of us, the nature of our deeds reveals our heart. Deeds reveal the character of the heart. If it is not clear and undivided, or "single," as Jesus calls it, then the heart is weak, flabby, and indolent, incapable of accepting God's will, of making an important

John 11:51–52

Prov. 20:11

decision, or of taking strong action. That is the reason why Jesus attached the greatest significance to singleness of heart, simplicity, unity, solidarity, and decisiveness. Purity of heart is nothing else than absolute integrity, which can overcome desires that enervate and divide. Determined single-heartedness is what the heart needs in order to be receptive, truthful and upright, confident and brave, firm and strong.

Isa. 1:5
Eph. 6:5–8
Matt. 5:8
Matt. 6:24
Ps. 119:2–3, 10

A divided heart

Yet the Spirit of Jesus is seldom accepted and the strength of character that comes from him seldom achieved. Weakness and dividedness of heart are to blame. How often the heart tries to overcome its own cowardice and faintheartedness through cold pride! The divisive callousness of pride is a weakness that destroys everything, making the inner self numb and stubborn, yet torn and disrupted too. The self-will that splits and divides itself has an arrogance that is the enemy of the love of God.

2 Chron. 36:15
Rom. 2:5

In vain the heart tries to close itself to the knowledge that it is too weak, too rotten and wicked, too disunited, too divided, and too hostile to help itself. For all its blindness to its own nature, and against its own will, the heart repeatedly has to uncover pride and arrogance, wickedness and cunning, ruthlessness and deceit, as the self-will and self-interest that continually divide it. Derangement of the heart can go so far in rigid obstinacy that all pretense comes to an end: God is tempted and cursed until darkness fills the heart's inmost recesses.

Mark 7:21–23

The heart, however, longs for the opposite – for a development of the inner life that leads to honest

self-recognition, single-hearted simplicity, and unfeigned humility. In this spirit of modesty, the consciousness of one's own smallness unites with the divine call to true greatness. Such a development, which is brought about by God, requires a penetrating insight into everything that is base in one's own heart, an insight that in fact means a revolution in the heart. No one has an innocent heart when faced with this radical revolution.

2 Chron. 32:26

Ps. 131:1

Eph. 4:1–4

2 Kings 22:19

Isa. 57:15–16

Consciousness of guilt and unfulfilled longing for God, however, may not only soften the heart but positively tear it apart and crush it. Many people have shattering things to say about the consuming fire of this longing of the heart. Many call it the deepest thing in them, the thing they want to gain a glimpse into.

In my heart there burns an eternal lamp,
 quiet and steady;
 only once in a while it flares up high,
 rises to a flame,
 to a blazing fire
 that rages and consumes and destroys –
 then I summon all my energy,
 only one wish have I then,
 only one hope,
 only one thought———.
 And the eternal flame flickers and smokes
 for a long, long time
 until it is appeased and becomes quiet:
 my eternal longing!¹¹

The blazing flame of longing is certainly there, but it will have to flicker, restless and unappeased, and remain impure unless the heart submits to the

¹¹ Michal Grabowski, 1805–1863, a Polish educator.

inner influence of the sharp, clarifying Word and the cutting wind of the Spirit of God. Then the impure blaze can give way to the perfect light of the “Christ in us.” Nevertheless, the heart is as weak as it is obstinate and only too used to its own divided and disrupted state, and it will not surrender lightly. It tries by every possible means to defend itself. It tries passionately to cling to self-chosen, human ideals, meant to bolster its self-will and hostile self-assertion – either alone or in community with kindred hearts who are equally selfish. But it is all in vain, even though the heart can cover up or postpone the decisive battle for a long time.

Heb. 4:12–13
 Matt. 5:8
 Rom. 8:1–2, 10
 Gal. 2:20
 Jer. 17:9

All mistaken attempts to lift the heart up in human, emotional “enthusiasm” for some god other than the Father of Jesus Christ have proved vain. In spite of every effort, all that the natural state of the human heart reveals is how far it has fallen away from God. Today more than ever this is unintentionally revealed by many movements. Those movements that arise from inflamed hearts pursue in vain the goal of unity and social justice by means of hate, injustice, and godlessness. Other movements pay homage (supposedly patriotic but in reality hostile and restricted homage) to a deity that is opposed to the Living God – a deity that is alien to Christ and inimical to him.

Hos. 4:12

The heart needs to be transformed

The veil must fall away – the cover that darkens the heart and restricts it to itself or to groups bound together by blood ties or a common lot. Nothing must hinder the outlook toward God. God the Father of Jesus Christ can be seen only by looking with a

Eph. 4:18
 2 Cor. 3:14–18

Jer. 29:13–14
 Luke 6:27–31
 John 3:5
 Titus 3:5
 Rom 2:29

resolute and unfaltering heart toward the perfect unity of his kingdom, a unity free from all arbitrary boundaries, having as its one goal an all-embracing justice – the result of the divine joy of perfect love to friend and foe. This free outlook presupposes and demands a complete liberation of the heart from every false emotional tie, yes, a complete change of heart by means of the new birth that takes place through the Holy Spirit. The heart must not be allowed to remain as it is. It must experience the healing transformation that frees it from all impure growth and all egotistical isolation of one or more persons – even of many people or groups of people – who set their own limits at will. The heart must be “circumcised,” purified, and consecrated if it wants to be truly free. It must be freed from all the rank growth of self-will and self-glorification.

The Odes of Solomon, an early Christian song collection of the second century, witnesses in a profound way to this circumcision of the heart:

My heart was circumcised and its flower appeared.
 Grace sprang up in it
 And brought forth fruit for the Lord.
 For the Most High cut me by his Holy Spirit
 And opened my reins toward him.
 He filled me in his love
 And his circumcision became my salvation.
 I hastened on the way of his peace,
 On the way of truth.
 From beginning to end
 I received his knowledge.
 I was firmly established on the rock of truth,
 Where he himself set me up.

The Lord renewed me with his raiment
And created me by his light.

From above he refreshed me with immortality
So I became like a land
That blossoms and rejoices in its fruit.
Like the sun upon the face of the earth,
The Lord gave light to mine eyes,
And my face received the dew;
My breath delighted in the precious odors of the Lord.

He led me into his paradise,
Where the pleasure of the Lord abounds.
I threw myself before the Lord
For the sake of his glory, and I said:
“Blessed are they that are planted in thy land,
That have a place in thy paradise,
That grow like the growth of thy trees
And have stepped from darkness into light!

“Behold, all thy workers are fair
And do good works.
From unkindness they turn to the strength of thy love.

“They cast off the bitterness of the trees
When they were planted in thy land.
For there is much room in thy paradise,
And there is nothing that is useless therein,
But everything is filled with thy fruits!”¹²

Therefore Fichte said: “As long as a man wants to be something for his own sake, his true nature and his true life cannot develop in him, and for this very

¹² *The Early Christians: In Their Own Words*, edited by Eberhard Arnold (Plough, 1997), 272–273.

reason he also remains cut off from blessedness.”

Fichte sees all selfishly isolated existence quite rightly as nonexistence because it is deadly restriction and

Matt. 5:20

a cutting off from the only true existence. It is only in blessed community with the Divine Being that

1 Pet. 2:9–10

the greatest inner freedom can exist, replacing the unhappiness of sensual self-love and the insensitivity

Rom. 8:13, 24

of moralistic legalism. Circumscribed self-love and heartless legalism are the enemies of the gospel of

Heb. 8:10

unity and freedom. The true freedom of a heart ruled by God does away with superficial legalism. An inner

Col. 3:14–15

urge that comes from perfect love replaces it: the impulse of the Holy Spirit that leads to the divine

order of a common life in complete community.

Here all isolation and all arbitrary limitations are so thoroughly overcome through the unity of the Holy

Spirit that the church and the kingdom are proved to be the only true existence, the only true life. For it is

God’s love that reveals itself in the unity of his church

Eph. 4:1–6

and his kingdom.

This experience of God is that decisive enrichment of the inner life without which even the most gifted

heart must starve inwardly. The inner acceptance of the Living One means rebirth for a dead heart, so that

Ezek. 11:19

it becomes a new, different heart. It cannot be a good and upright heart until it has experienced a complete

turnabout, a wholehearted conversion that leads it away from false narrowness within its own self to

Joel 2:12–13

true breadth, to the experience of God, who is greater than our hearts. The heart needs to be redeemed

1 John 3:19–20

from its stubborn self-life because only in community with the perfect life can it be restored to health. The

perfect life is love. The omnipotent breadth and

depth of God's greatness is revealed as love. In Christ and his Spirit, a complete uniting (as the church and the kingdom) is brought so near to us by love that together we are able to go this way of love. 1 John 4:16

On the path of faith, the heart is led away from the inner resistance it puts up against perfect love, and closer and closer to openhearted, voluntary obedience. The obedience that springs from faith opens up to the heart of God and to the heart of his kingdom. It is only through experiencing the free gift of God's love that the human heart can be purified of its stubbornness and despair. Only unfeigned love from the purest spheres can oust those hostile elements that are the opposite of love: self-will, which is wrapped up in itself, and impure passion of all kinds, which destroys, root and branch, its own life-energy as well as that of its victims. Rom. 6:16-18
Ps. 42:5

Grace gives strength unto death

The gift that comes from the purifying and liberating love of the Most High is grace. In this one short word, the Bible encompasses the wealth of God's heart, which wants to give itself to us in love. It is in grace that God draws near to us. The hardship of our times and the abundance of tasks it brings show us how forlorn we are in the world, and how helpless, without God. In judgment, grace becomes the deepest need of our hearts. It is only through the free, communal gift of the Holy Spirit to his church that the hardship of our times becomes an invigorating mineral bath, immersing us in the salty strength of the future kingdom of God so that in complete community we can carry out here and now the tasks Rom. 3:24:14-15
2 Cor. 8:9
James 2:13

of justice. The greater the need and distress become, the nearer draws the kingdom of God. The nature of grace is disclosed in the bitter fate of one who was

Heb. 2:9 crucified, in the way he sacrificed himself completely to the greatest of all tasks. When the heart experi-

Heb. 10:19–23

ences the freeing power of his death, scripture calls it being sprinkled with the blood of the Redeemer.

Taking firm hold of unity with Christ through his death, the heart puts the whole of life into militant action against those powers that put Jesus to death.

Consequently, this baptism of blood means not only being ready to die for him, but something even more immediate – being prepared time and again to

Heb. 12:3–4

risk life itself in the fight against those powers that

Matt. 20:22

oppose the kingdom of God. For us there is no other

basis for true peace of heart than this fight to the

bitter end. Right to the point of death by martyrdom,

the strength for this fight is gained from unity with

Christ in his death, from the direct nearness of God's

Phil. 3:10

heart. Only the cross brings perfect trust in God.

Here, in the sharpest judgment of his wrath over all that is evil, God reveals loving grace to all people as

his innermost nature.

God himself lives through his Spirit in a heart that is united in this way with the cross. His love is poured

Rom. 5:5

out in it. In the midst of murderous opponents of

peace and justice, a heart filled like this remains

Acts 7:60

joyful in love, in a love that includes all enemies. To

this joy and this love the martyrs of both early Chris-

tianity and the Radical Reformation have testified a

thousandfold. This fundamental strengthening of

character, proven at that time in death, lets the heart

unfold all its powers-to-be with the zeal of inner fire

in order that, in life as in death, they may make an impact on the whole world. The reason Christ died for all was so that those who live may no longer live for themselves but for him who died and rose again for their sakes. That the whole of life up to the very brink of death is meant here, life with all its capabilities and activities, is shown by the other word of the same apostle of Jesus Christ. According to this word, the same people who have just previously let themselves be used in the service of unrighteousness from now on give themselves to God in the service of righteousness. For this is the only way the work of the Holy Spirit can and will be continually built up anew as it once was in Jerusalem, no matter how often Jerusalem is destroyed and no matter how often his church is driven apart by violence.

Rom. 14:8

2 Cor. 5:15

Rom. 6:13, 19

This wealth of power and effective action up to the very threshold of death cannot be won unless, as in the primitive church, complete inner concentration and perfect accord prevail in the heart. We know from the history of war that the strongest political power is nothing but a helpless mass of people if a united will is lacking or has been lost. Such was the case in the World War. Such was the experience of cities and countries in times of siege. And so, too, the Protestant princes and cities were once “wonderfully favored by circumstances” for the Smalkaldic War: never, since the time of the emperors of Hohenstaufen and the Salian emperors, had the tribes of North and South Germany united in such a compact mass against the crown. At that time, too, a war council torn by conflicting interests was to blame for the inevitable catastrophe of defeat.

Acts 2–4

A decisive heart

Consequently, only when the heart ceases to let opposing interests split it apart can even the richest powers and gifts be a help and blessing to it. If the heart wants to win the victories of a faith that has courage unto death, it needs the wholehearted decisiveness of a unified will. We cannot serve

Matt. 6:24 two masters at once. We cannot pursue two ideals. We cannot seek two goals in two directions. The kingdom of God, as the final kingdom, does not tolerate in any heart any other kingdom besides itself. The way of Jesus is the only way that knows no byways,

John 14:6 no wrong ways, and no devious ways. However many roads may lead to Rome or anywhere else – there is only *one* kingdom, there is only *one* way: the complete uniting of all believers in all the activity that goes on in the heart and in life as a whole. Through the decisive outpouring of the Holy Spirit, all believers became so much *one* heart and *one* soul that they proved the uniting of all their powers, not only in the word of the apostles and in prayer, but also in the breaking of bread and in community – in full community of goods too.

John 7:17 Only when there is an integrated will that is decided for God and united with all similar wills can the heart profess to seek God and his kingdom. He will reveal himself powerfully only through those who have turned an undivided heart toward him. An undivided heart does not tolerate a divided life. Only those who surrender to God as their king with all their thoughts and feelings, all their powers, gifts, and goods in order to live truly for *God*, as integrated characters with an integrated life, are truly with him.

Rom. 10:10

Deut. 6:5–9

The whole heart has to be converted before it is possible to follow him. Where the whole heart is turned toward him, it means that a life that is undivided (with all the powers of the spirit and all the wealth and capacities of soul and body) devotes every area of its existence to his rulership and to the church. That includes professional and vocational activity with all the skills involved in it; it includes our worldly belongings and all our temporal possessions.

1 Sam. 7:3

Unless we stand firmly with God, we cannot carry out our service to him; it is possible to do his will in everything only when we love him heart and soul. No one can do this in his or her own strength. If we are going to give all our strength and goods, we need strength from the Holy Spirit. This strength does not proceed from us but is given to us in the word of the apostles and in the community of prayer and the breaking of bread. Whoever knows what it is to pray from a simple, undivided heart becomes grateful to God for his works and words and finds his happiness in worshipping the greatness of God and doing his will. Nothing will be impossible to one who prays this kind of prayer, the prayer that listens to God with heart and soul. Such prayer gives the inner life the boundless wealth of the truth of God. It leads the heart to the knowledge that truth is unshakable because it is the very essence of life. It has the power to accomplish everything. The impossible becomes possible. Unity is given a place in a torn world. Community in the fullest sense is created and built up, causing the unity of God's Spirit to shine out in our work and production as the reality of the church, as the city on the hill.

Mark 12:28-34,
43-44

1 John 3:21-22

Eph. 3:20-21

Mark 11:22-24

John 17:21

Matt. 5:14-15

If we want to wage the spiritual wars of Jehovah and to win the land for him, we must acclaim him with our whole heart! When his will rules in our heart, he will give our inner being a wealth of experience and action that it can attain only under God's rulership. It is only when our heart is filled with and ruled by Jesus Christ as our Master that we can be equipped and qualified for the great tasks that will inevitably confront us in the difficulties of these times and the hardships of the future. What these tasks comprise is nothing less than the call to the kingdom of God and the task of his church.

Eph. 3:16–17

Rev. 22:17

Matt. 6:33

Soul and Spirit

Life will prevail over death

The question of life and death is bound to concern us more than ever before: war has brought death to so many who were in the prime of life; hunger, unemployment, and shame have led to increased suicide; men and women have been killed in street battles and political conflicts; and crime against life has increased atrociously, as has crime against the life of unborn children. While the question of life and soul is one that people have wrestled with throughout the ages, the seriousness of the present time should make everything else drop into the background so that we can concentrate fully on what soul, spirit, and life mean to us.

Is it not one of the most astonishing facts that death should overcome life? Children cannot understand death. Least of all can they see how it is possible to kill people in the service of a higher cause. But even apart from this, to children the thought that human life can one day come to an end is always

unreal and contrary to the truth. The unnaturalness of dying is too remote from the simplicity of their affirmation of life. For the same reason, the heathen of old with their zest for life believed in the immortality of the soul. Likewise Goethe, who was very much akin to them, declared his life conviction to Eckermann: “I agree with Lorenzo de Medici that all those who have no hope for a life beyond are dead to this life as well.”¹ Life itself witnesses to its own invincible power. Hope is the hallmark of all living things.

1 John 1:2

As long as we want to deny that life is eternal, everything that belongs to life remains cloaked in tormenting riddles. Eternity remains the deepest longing of the human spirit. When we know that we are immortal beings, everything we experience is great and understandable; when we see ourselves as mortal, it all becomes dark and futile. If there is no other future and no other world (which is bound to be victorious because it is the better world), then the injustice that prevails makes nonsense of human existence by giving final victory to “the worst of all possible worlds.”²

Wisd. of Sol.
9:14–18

In the inner and outer circumstances of life, every living person can learn to recognize this other world. Fichte has declared that we only need to rise to the consciousness of a pure, moral character to find out who we ourselves are and to find out that this globe with all its glories, that this sun and the thousands of thousands of suns that surround it, that this whole immense universe, at the mere thought of which our sentient soul quakes and trembles – that all this is

Rom. 1:18–20

¹ Johann Peter Eckermann, 1792–1854, *Conversations with Goethe*.

² Arthur Schopenhauer, 1788–1860, *The World as Will and Idea*, vol. 2, chapter 47.

nothing but a dim reflection in mortal eyes of our own *eternal* existence, which is hidden within us and which is to be unfolded throughout all eternity. And the other way around, this is the truth given to humankind since primeval times: our so very small world can be nothing else than a likeness – bungled, it is true, but nevertheless recognizable – of a bigger, truer, and more genuine world that is not limited by time and space. Our small world belongs to this bigger one and must correspond to it once again. For all of us, there is “the moral code within us and the starry heavens above us”³ to bring home a living intimation of this fact of eternity.

Our life has its roots in eternity. Its nature presumes imperishability. In space, the human spirit goes far beyond all comprehensible limits. And similarly, the absoluteness of the moral demands it makes knows no limit. The most certain of all certainties known by our spirit is this: that the ray of truth, the power of life, and the demand of the holy “thou shalt” come to us continually anew from a living world that lies beyond all space and nevertheless embraces all space. With this energy that comes from absolute authority, the human spirit follows the stream of time long before the beginning and far beyond the end, going outside all boundaries. This is the spirit’s most crying need: the origin of all things before the beginning of time and the goal of the future at the end of time.

The thirsting soul pants for its original fountain-head and for the estuary toward which it streams. If it has awakened to consciousness of its true self and its

Wisd. of Sol.
2:23

1 Cor. 2:4–5

John 1:1–3

Rev. 21:6

Ps. 42:1–2

³ Immanuel Kant, 1724–1804, *Critique of Practical Reason*.

divine destiny, it perceives in death an enemy of life, an enemy that is unnatural and that fights against the very nature of things. And it sees the same in everything else that tries to sully and destroy the clarity and purity of the eternal. Everything in our present time and in our earthly space that opposes the soul's holy "thou must" and "thou shalt" must and shall be overcome (as the soul ultimately believes it will be) by the kingdom of God at the end of all ages and beyond all earthly things. The "heavenly kingdom" of the *other* world intervenes in temporal and earthly life as the power of the *future* world. It wants to transform life here and now according to the image of what is beyond and to come. This happens as soon as and as long as the soul lets faith rule in it, whenever and wherever that may be. This other life, which is already possible here and now, means freedom for the soul. But there will never be any such soaring of a free soul as long as an atmosphere antagonistic to life both robs it of its breath and obscures its view into the eternal and everlasting.

The freedom and power of a believing soul goes so far that it expects – with the prophetic Spirit – a holy transformation to justice and unity. It expects this also for every detail of material existence in space and time. It is in the hope of the kingdom of God that the soul discovers its life. To the soul, the end of all the ways of God is unity in a tangible and visible form. For that reason, the Bible traces the death of the body back to the fact that sin as separation – as division and isolation – has brought a fatal breach into the living cohesion of creation. To the soul, evil is a power hostile to life, one that carries with it the danger of

1 Cor. 15:26

Heb. 12:26–29

1 Tim. 4:8

Tit. 3:5–7

Rom. 8:11

Rom. 6:23

Prov. 8:35–36

Ezek. 18:4–13

eternal death by separating us from God and from one another. Sin is crime against life and love. That was the reason why the first son born to those human beings who separated themselves from God inevitably became his brother's murderer.

Gen. 4:3-16

1 John 3:14-15

Nevertheless, the ancient scriptures of truth maintain that it is impossible to extinguish the life that God has given us out of his own nature. From generation to generation, physical death comes to everyone as a consequence of separation from God. The body does indeed die when the soul leaves it. The body that is left behind without the soul must fall to dust. Death can never deny that its nature is to separate by division and disintegration, and this it has proved since the very beginning through man's separation from God. Yet death is not annihilation.

The writings of both the Old Testament and the New Testament speak again and again about the souls of the dead. Every living soul has a capacity for future life. All vital movements of humankind look to the future. Whenever the soul comes to new life in the Spirit, it waits for God's future. And even if the soul cannot believe wholeheartedly in the coming kingdom, faith tries to salvage this or that small fragment of the world-to-come and then clings to it all the more passionately. If people are not yet ready to fight and die for the final kingdom of love and justice, they cling to a communistic state of the future or a Third Reich of national freedom and racial alliance. And in the same way, a remnant of faith in immortality and the other world emerges again and again, even in the most unbelieving, and this they can never lose entirely. Something in our being is meant to

Rev. 6:9

Rev. 20:4

James 5:7-8

Heb. 11:13-16

Eccles. 12:7 continue as an active force forever. Our divine home calls us homeward. The spirit wants to return to God, in whom it has its origin. And though God himself is not yet recognized, there is at least an attempt to represent a little of his infinite significance even when it is done by idolatry.

John 6:68 Today, too, we have every reason to recall the faith in eternity and infinity that characterized the early Christians. If we want truth and seek it regardless of the unfounded prejudices of our time, we must and will recognize that here among the early Christians a glimpse into ultimate reality is given. In the face of this reality, no living soul can maintain its opposition. For here the soul is face to face with the life-giving Spirit of Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Jesus will live even though they die. And the day is coming when they will awake and arise to a perfect life in an immortal body. The spirits of the just who have departed this life are at rest in the Living God and wait for the day of his future. The character of this perfect life in the kingdom of God is shown by the parable of the wedding and its joyful uniting, by the comparison with the Meal of Fellowship, and by the establishment of the thrones; it is a life ruled by a love and a justice that bring about complete unity. In this kingdom, at the end of all things, the one Holy Spirit will master and pervade everything. What constitutes life now is the soul (that is, the life) in the blood, but *then* it will be the spirit, and instead of ruling over the soul's human body, the spirit will rule over a *spiritual* body.

John 6:63 In the kingdom, the blowing Spirit takes the place of the coursing blood. The Spirit does away with

fluctuating emotional ties and puts in their place a unity kept constantly alive, a unity that is just as active as it is perfectly clear. In such a body of unity, those who are at all times united in their Master and serve him under his rulership live in a radically different way from those who, far away from God, are going to ruin, body and soul. Because these last have rejected the unity of life, they themselves have chosen death and separation. But even this second death cannot mean annihilation: even this death must show that its nature is separation and division. No more dreadful fate for a living soul can be imagined than to be cast out for all eternity from the life that is in God.

Rom. 8:2–13

Dan. 12:2

To be excluded forever from the center of life is eternal death. Hell is nothing but the continuation of the lives of those who live for themselves. Their whole existence consists in the worm of decomposition and decay, the worm that does not die, the burning and consuming fire that is not quenched, and the judgment that means dissolution and separation. Simply because he had kept his riches to himself, the rich man – outside whose door the beggar Lazarus lay – met this eternal death. Ignoring the need of others, he had enjoyed his riches as his rightful possession. The only thing he had neglected to do was to give up all his goods to become one with the poor.

Mark 9:43–48

Isa. 66:24

Luke 16:19–31

Only the person who sells everything and gives it to the poor can gain treasure in heaven, which is none other than life in God. Jesus challenges every rich young man to this absolutely necessary action. Only in this way can he join the itinerant, property-free community of Jesus, the unity of those who follow him. Humanly speaking, to go this way is and

1 Tim. 6:9–10

Matt. 19:21–26

James 5:1–5 always will be quite impossible for young or old who own something valuable. But with God all things are possible. History proves it. Wealth is death because it isolates the heart from the need and distress of others and so isolates it from love. But God will and can give life even to the richest by calling them out of this death. He frees them from it by leading them to the love that surrenders everything in perfect trust.

The spirit God has breathed into us

How does it happen that God with his unlimited life takes hold of our limited existence and fills it? We must be perfectly clear about the answer to this question and all its consequences. God is life. Only in him do we live, move, and have our being. Physical life throughout nature, like all life, has its origin and being in God alone. God does not disown his creation. He will lead it through fire to a new day. But the soul owes its decidedly unique life in a very special way to a direct communication from God. It is from God that we have the breath of life. He is the Father of spirits. Just as he created the hosts of heaven with his breath, so on earth humankind received spirit from him in the same way.

Our life is not limited to the blood that courses through our veins. The blowing breath of God, breathed into us as spirit, is deeper. It is this spirit that takes up our calling in life. It is the spirit's calling that has to determine the life of the human soul. The blood must not be allowed to rule over this calling. It has to serve it. Otherwise it ruins it. It is not without significance that in the first pages of the Bible the word *spirit* and the word for *soul* interchange in describing God's act of creation that breathed his

breath into man. The breath we have from God is spirit *and* soul. For this spirit that was breathed into our soul is the soul's unique life, its deepest life.

1 Cor. 2:10–14

It is man's spirit that controls his soul and gives it distinction. Here is the boundary line between man and beast. Animals, too, have blood and a soul. What they lack is the spirit, which is more than reason and understanding. The shedding of the blood of animals is a responsible business, but anyone who sees the sacrifice of slaughtered animals as similar to killing people and can see only a relative difference between these two things – a difference of degree – has

1 Cor. 1:26–30

betrayed the spirit that God has given to humans, and humans alone, of all terrestrial beings. We have been placed above the animals. Our spirit is meant to rule over the animals. However, we can do so only under one condition, and we can accept the ultimate sacrifice from them – the sacrifice of their blood – only under this one condition: that our life is given to the tasks of the spirit and that, as God's image, we conquer the earth for God's kingdom. But whoever kills people lays violent hands on the countenance of God. He commits a sacrilege against the task of the spirit, for the spirit wants to bring all people together and unite them. For no person is without spirit.

Gen. 1:26

Gen. 9:6

When we cooperate with every breath of God's Spirit, it becomes impossible for us to fight with murderous intent and kill each other. We are given to each other to become united in life, because human spirit belongs to human spirit. The Spirit of God unites one human spirit to another by ruling over them.

Rom. 8:14–17

The human spirit is meant from now on to rule as the higher power over all lower powers of the soul and unite them under its dominion. This was known

Rom. 7:5-6

as early as in Aristotle's time. It is simply impossible for a mere product of the soul's lower faculties to be the distinguishing feature of the human soul. The spirit cannot deny its origin. Therefore to be ruled by the blood or to allow base or superficial things to satisfy us completely is unworthy of our calling. Everything that betrays and destroys community in the spirit is seen as base. Therefore we see as bestial and worse than bestial every debasement that takes place through the unbridled urges of the soul in the blood. More than any madness, it tramples our higher calling in the dust.

The human spirit separated from God

Isa. 14:13-15

2 Cor. 11:3

The human spirit has the very greatest of destinies: God and his kingdom. Like the satanic spirit Lucifer, however, this spirit with such a high destiny has turned away from the Highest and precisely for this reason has become a rich breeding ground for the antigod principle. Separated from God, we seek ourselves and our own kingdom. We profess what is high and noble but without the rule and unity of God. We strive for the exaltation of man without giving recognition to God's deeds. We live for human self-redemption without honoring and accepting the deed of Jesus Christ and his redemption. For the people of our own race and blood or our own class, we are ready to sacrifice human life, rejecting God's kingdom and God's people.

In these days of ours, it should be plain to everyone that all these ideals of the human spirit that are separated from God have come to nothing. They have come to nothing in their concept of world

peace without Christ. They have come to nothing in their efforts toward justice and freedom without his kingdom and his church. They have come to nothing in their illusion of an international unity without unity in the Spirit of Truth. Prosperity in a people united by race is founded on property and selfish advantage. In just the same way, the worldwide economic unity of high finance has been built up on the material prosperity of individuals and their mutual advantage. Even a proletarian Internationale composed of various elements has used its solidarity much more for material advantage in the present, for a fraction of the underprivileged (even if it is a large fraction), than for the justice of the future that shall embrace all people.

Now when in the face of all this, the policy of isolation makes nations try to close the frontiers of the earth in an effort to establish their economic self-sufficiency, they deny that the earth belongs to God. They deny that God's will is to be the God of all people and that the will of his kingdom is to unite all nations in mutual service and make the products of their work the common property of all. It is impossible, though, for humankind to become an integrated world society, a world community of the spirit, unless it allows God's Spirit to reprove it, judge it, and rule it. God's rule, however, means that no one seeks his own advantage anymore, that no one seeks privileges for himself anymore, and that self-preservation is nowhere placed above the Spirit's cause – that of unity.

Right up to the present day, there is no political element of worldwide importance that follows this

Ps. 24:1

Isa. 45:22–23

Isa. 25:7–8

Ps. 7:8–9

1 Cor. 10:24, 26

way of God's world-rulership. Consequently, every great movement with a hope for justice has inevitably met defeat again and again. In just the same way, every kind of national self-redemption has come to grief – and will repeatedly come to grief – because, in setting up an idolatry that is supposed to bring recovery to the world, it rejects and even spurns the very nature of divine liberation and healing. As long as the rulership of God and his kingdom are put in the background, efforts toward human progress of any kind will inevitably break down over and over again. All human efforts toward salvation are doomed to fail because, in their delusion, they presume to lead people to the heights – not with God, but with the power of idols. Faith in the masses, faith in blood, or faith in any other power that is without the Spirit of God, will be annihilated in the fire of the future. All kinds of false beliefs break down under the horrors of war, but annihilation in the fire of the future will be still more thorough.

Matt. 16:25

Human spirits unite in God's Spirit

However, what remains indestructible in all the waves of battle that surge around us is the spirit, which will be the first thing in us to surrender to God's will. Here and there in all parties, the inner depths of the spirit are already beginning to open up. The spirit is awakening. Its will is aroused. It is still blinded by a confusion of spirits. It is still benighted by separation from God. But the hour is near when the spirits of people far and wide will be gripped and called by the Spirit of God.

Joel 2:28–30

The fact that the soul is tied in two directions is the cause of all the confusion that hinders this call.

Through the spirit the soul is drawn to God on the one side, and through the blood it is bound to what is physical and material on the other side. In this dilemma, it remains dangerously exposed to unspiritual movements that continually attack it and try to sever it from the Spirit of God.

James 4:1–8

The physical and material is not the real enemy of the soul. It is merely the area that the soul has to bring under control as its task. Rather, the enemy of life is the corruption of soul that thwarts all efforts to accomplish this task. It is only since the soul has become degenerate that it has come under the oppressive power of the physical and material. From the beginning, it has been an accepted fact that body and soul pervade each other, but originally it was the spirit that was meant to rule over body and soul. Through repressing the spirit, the diseased soul has brought things to such a pass that the spiritual life nowadays is enslaved to physical conditions.

1 Pet. 2:11

Matt. 16:26

2 Pet. 2:18–19

Our turbulent times today show much more clearly than more settled times can how no human spirit and no movement coming from a human spirit can ever boast of being free and independent through its own efforts. People today are bound to the peculiarities of their race and nation; they are dependent on their economic situation and on their privileged – or underprivileged – education for their mode of life and physical strength; they are influenced by powers of suggestion coming from other people or from big national movements; not least of all, they are at the mercy of their natural disposition and their own psychophysical makeup; and they are bowed down on all sides, both within and without, under the power of forces that are hostile to the Spirit. All

this is in itself proof that only God and his Spirit can bring freedom.

2 Cor. 3:17

Gal. 5:13

Any other freedom is a lie. The only possible way for the individual consciousness to become free from its servitudes and for the nations and the masses to become free from enslavement is through the community of human spirits with God's Spirit! Without this direct oneness with the whole, the individual soul remains enslaved, impoverished, and limited, just as does the collective soul of a family group, or a nation, or a class, or any other combination. All other combinations of people and strength lead deeper and deeper into ruin through constant escalation of mutual hostility. The highest and the ultimate in true liberation and uniting will be given to us only when the highest unity in God takes

Gal. 3:28

possession of us.

The human soul is a subordinate unit of consciousness, which, in spite of all ungodly association with kindred lives, remains lonely and thwarted until it is bound to the superordinate unity of God. Fechner catches in people's seeking a glimpse of this highest unity of consciousness.⁴ He sees it as the truly eternal and unchangeable, as the One, always true to himself, who wants to be at work in rich variety and infinite diversity. Without God's Spirit we are changeable, inconsistent, and unstable – unbalanced, out of proportion, torn, and hostile within ourselves and among ourselves. Therefore it must be an experience of absolute unity and, at the same time, absolute disparity that unites the consciousness of the soul with God.

Rom. 3:10–24

4 Gustav Theodor Fechner, 1801–1887, a German philosopher and physicist.

With such an experience, eternity is born in us, and we have to consecrate our life with complete dedication. For this experience becomes new every day – a continual new beginning. As often as we lay hold of life in God, these new beginnings, these deeds and actions, are stamped with the seal of eternity. Eternity penetrates time. The spirit of creation seeks out the life of the earth. Being filled with what God's eternal will decrees can never result in alienation from life. On the contrary, the spirit of life can lead only to an unfolding of powers in all the diversity of all life's relationships. In our families and in our professional lives, in our work and in our whole sphere of activity, in society and in community, the creative spirit wants to shape life into a productive unity.

Rom. 12:1–2

As Jacobi has expressed it:

The spirit that aspires to God
 Must indeed lift himself from the dust.
 But if on *earth* he does not truly live,
 Neither will he live in *heaven*.⁵

Those who are gripped by God's Spirit turn to his creation with all the interest that comes from God's love. Their life has one goal: that God's kingdom shall come to rule over all people on earth, that his will shall be done in our world just as it is in the kingdom of heaven, that his name shall be honored in active recognition of his nature, that his holiness shall never be desecrated by any unholy action anywhere – rather, faith shall bring forth a love that makes God's nature recognizable through deeds.

Matt. 6:9–10

⁵ Johann Georg Jacobi, 1740–1814, "Gnome," in *J. G. Jacobi's Sämtliche Werke*, (1819), 150.

It is through being ruled more and more by God's Spirit, and in no other way, that the human spirit can get nearer to this high and final goal. Only the spirit that is ruled by God is able to see into the depths of revelation. Revealed truth was given to us on the basis of the prophetic word in Jesus Christ and in his apostolic church. God's Spirit wants to lead the human spirit into this truth in such a way that our lives become filled and determined by it.

1 Cor. 2:9–11

Eph. 3:14–19

The spirit's battle for the soul

The word of God pierces a person until it divides soul and spirit asunder in order to let him or her recognize without a shadow of doubt the unspiritual sensuality of the unredeemed life of the soul and in order to set the spirit, which thirsts for freedom, face to face with God's Spirit. If in our inmost being, the spirit (as the breath of God) does not stand out quite sharply and clearly in contrast to the soul (as the impure stream of our blood), we remain in the torpor of spiritual death. Those emotional people who allow the unpurified life of their soul to rule them are unable to receive the divine Spirit. There is no sharper contrast to the consistent wisdom that comes from God than the worldly wisdom of the soul, which inevitably gets entangled again and again in untruthfulness when it tries to bring some semblance of harmony to its contradictory aims.

Heb. 4:12–13

Rom. 8:9–14

Wisd. of Sol. 1:4

James 3:13–17

The way the world situation developed during the war and after the war should make it clear to the blindest of the blind that the natural life of the soul is diametrically opposed to the life that comes from God. People believed that they had all the life they

needed in human evolution, in patriotic efforts, or in the struggle of their class for justice, just as if they did not need God. They presumed to lay claim to things that are God's alone. They even wanted to decide over the life and death of people and nations. They forgot that it is the Lord who kills and makes alive. They scorned the fact that God is life. Yet he alone is Lord over life and death. Whoever honors him in Christ cannot kill any person or judge any soul. People lost all feeling for the fact that life lies in God's hand – that his decree alone has the right to determine the destiny of the soul. They lost all fear of him who can destroy body and soul, and stood before his judgment without awe. They lost all reverence for God.

John 14:6

Deut. 32:39

Matt. 10:28

We know that if the sun were extinguished it would mean instantaneous death for all life on our planet. We admit that an old riverbed will not have running water anymore once the stream has been diverted. It is clear to everyone that even the best water becomes a miserable slough if it has become disconnected from its source. Yet we have tried to deaden our conscience whenever it said that every lack of reverence wounds our soul with a mortal wound. We have wanted to forget that sin – violation of life – brings death to the soul: it is the destruction of man.

Unspiritual desires and the lies and deceit that go with them, hostility and the lust to kill, mammon and possessions – they all fight against life and soul. For these are the forces that constitute the power inimical to life – that power that has separated itself from God. The human spirit is bound up with the life of the soul: it cannot be pure if the soul does not live in God's purity, and every time the soul touches

Gal. 5:16–17

John 8:44

Isa. 52:11–12

the rottenness of impurity and allows itself to be contaminated, it is not living in God's purity. The spirit is then tainted along with the soul and therefore is incapable of redeeming it. The spirit lives in the soul. Everything that goes on in the soul influences the spirit and all the movements of the spirit.

Matt. 6:24
Isa. 38:15-16

We should not imagine that the spiritual life can work independently of the world of body and soul as if it were in splendid isolation on an island, untouched by all that the soul experiences on the mainland. It is the entire atmosphere coming from the whole of a person that influences his or her thinking. No vibration of the soul leaves our spirit unaffected. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the brain was thought to rule from an autocratic throne over the life of the spirit. Recent research has dethroned it. The brain does not determine the soul's character or our attitude as a whole with all our most important impressions, feelings, and emotions. A sick soul can have a brain that is completely intact. The soul can be healthy even when the brain is diseased.

Ps. 13:2

2 Cor. 5:3

Deut. 30:14-20

Prov. 15:13

The Old Testament is right in saying that the heart, the blood circulation with all the special organs belonging to it, and especially the different strains in the blood itself determine the character of the soul – the spiritual personality of a person. Blood and heart can disperse melancholy of soul and depression of spirit and provide the necessary constitution and frame of mind for the highest literary achievements and even for abstract intellectual ones. Granted, the brain is a very important organ for the intellectual work of comprehending, thinking, and remembering, yet it is simply one of the tools in the life of the soul and the spirit. It is only one of its workshops or

transmitting stations, which in a special way reflects the life of the soul and the life of the spirit; it is their place of action.

Job 32:8

We must not confuse the spirit with brainwork in general or with its more specialized intellectual functions. The human spirit represents much more the “practical reason” of the holy “thou shalt,” which, according to Immanuel Kant, makes its incontestable demands with the firmness of “thou canst because thou shalt.” The spirit is not to be found in any specific place in the body. The bearer of one’s entire soul is one’s whole body. The human spirit and the basic character of the spiritual attitude are breathed into the entire soul as its profoundest and most divine element. This spirit is able to prove itself extremely independent of the body, and superior to it, as soon as it has experienced a decisive liberation.

Ps. 19:7–9

The soul is the life of the body

Such a liberation remains an impossibility, however, unless it embraces all areas of the soul. The human spirit is inevitably affected by any lack of freedom and any defilement of one’s life. The soul embraces all manifestations of life. It is the bearer of everything that is alive in us. The soul is the total consciousness of the individual: the combination of all our sensual perceptions as well as the concentration of all our higher and spiritual relationships. There can be no other life for the soul than in this consciousness with all it encompasses. In this consciousness, all we experience with our feelings, thoughts, and will becomes reality and knowledge.

Wisd. of Sol.
9:13–15

The consciousness is that undefined place where all of a person’s functions and organs are to become a

1 Cor. 12:4–26 united whole. Unity of consciousness is the secret of organic life. Unity of spirit is the secret of our calling. In a person as a living whole, we can recognize the body by the finger of the body pointing outward, the soul by the finger of the soul pointing inward, but the spirit we recognize by the finger of God pointing to his kingdom.

Luke 11:20

The life in the physical frame – that which makes it into a living body – is its soul. In countless instances therefore, the translators of the old scriptures interpreted the word “soul” as “life.” The soul, being life, encompasses our spiritual existence just as much as our physical existence from birth to death. Whenever it is a question of preserving or risking life, of danger to life or loss of life, the word “soul” is used where we would expect the word “life.”⁶ That the soul is the life of an organism is testified by this scripture: “The life of the flesh is in the blood.” Just as our physical frame without blood has no life, the body without the soul is dead.

Mark 8:36–37

Lev. 17:11, 14

Deut. 12:23

Gen. 9:4

It is not by chance that the thought of blood that is shed is more horrifying to us than the thought of the graves of the slain. We could see this in our reaction to the news of the reddening of the Masurian Lakes in the World War. In spite of an obvious scientific explanation, the reddening of the so-called Lake of Blood and War in Siberia (which is said to grow a deeper red with every great bloodshed) also makes a deep impression on people’s minds. This is simply because blood and soul – the red of this special sap and the tremendous fact of life – cannot be separated. It signifies more to us to see life ebb away in a stream of blood than to stand in front of a corpse.

⁶ The author is referring to the traditional German translation of the Bible by Martin Luther (1545).

The physical body that has lost its blood has given up its soul. Mephistopheles makes Faust sell his life with a drop of blood because blood is streaming and flowing life. The evil spirit wants to have the whole of man. He wants his life. He wants his soul. For this reason he has to get hold of his blood. “Blood is a sap of quite peculiar kind.”⁷ Therefore, according to an old version of *Faust*, just as Faust is about to use his blood-filled quill to sign the contract with the devil, the blood congeals on his scratched hand to give a warning. It congeals in the form of the words “Flee, O man!” This cry to take flight is forced from the blood by the imminent danger of being gripped by evil. The divine life has an energy that demands more than the blood in its weakness does. The spirit demands that the soul resist to the utmost: “to resist to the point of shedding your blood in the struggle against sin.”

1 Pet. 5:8–9

Heb. 12:4

Resistance unto death is exceedingly rare because the blood is bound up through the soul not only with the higher, spiritual life but just as closely or even more closely with confused feelings and the basest impulses. There is something in the blood that weakens. Those emotional people in whom the blood is not ruled by the spirit are easily led in their sympathies, becoming weak and unobjective. Because of their lack of strength for vigorous action and their limp, unmanly compliancy, they are easily led astray. The more lost a man is on the false path he has begun to tread, the more does each successive emotional weakness cause his soul to wither away.

Rom. 7:15, 18–25

Gal. 5:18–25

An enfeebled soul is swept along whenever the individual or the nation is roused inwardly by an appeal to the blood or by an insistence on blood ties.

⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749–1832. *Faust*, Part I, line 1740.

That is why mass suggestion is so successful. Whether it excites sexual life into degenerate licentiousness, incites the masses to war or civil war, or shatters business habits of trustworthiness and entices people to luxury and extravagant living – whatever it does, the surprising result is explained by the weakness of the emotionally unstable masses. Each time such weakness of life stirs the blood, it reveals the tyrannization of the emotional life over the nobler element of the spirit – in actual fact, therefore, it reveals the ignoble servitude of our highest possession to our lower nature.

Matt. 27:21–25

Body and soul must be ruled by the spirit

An effective renewal of life can come about only when soul and blood are gripped and penetrated by the highest life, coming from the spirit. This new life must come from the spirit because only in the spirit can freedom and clarity begin. It has to penetrate into the blood-life of the soul if it is to be a reality in life. For blood builds up the human body. Without the soul or life in the blood there is no organic connection between the spiritual life and the physical existence of the body.

Rom. 8:11

For this reason, according to ancient mysticism, everything that has gained power over my blood has gained power over *me*. Here is the link between the inner world and the outer world. If we want to master things we have to pluck up courage and take heart: “Blood is the sap above all saps. It can nourish dauntless courage in the heart.”⁸ The soul reveals the fact that the blood is the natural element of all our urges

⁸ From an old version of *Faust* produced in 1690, quoted in *Goethe's Sämtliche Werke*, vol.14, (1902), 295.

and feelings, including – not least among them – the sensual ones. Because the blood communicates with every power center of the body, a state of excitement in the blood is often an indication of an unspiritual life guided by natural instincts and impulses. The bloodstream is the nitric acid that tests whether the spirit or the body has the rulership. Whichever of the two comes through this test has won the battle.

Gal. 6:8

However precious our blood is to us and however sacred our blood ties must be, we need a life that is not guided by our senses and our blood but determined by the spirit. The life of the blood can be as thoroughly decadent as it can be noble. It bears within it the seeds of corruption. Everyone who builds on the blood is building on shifting sand. Blood is unstable and perishable. Only the spirit remains alive. The storm of the spirit is stronger than any other wind. The life of the spirit alone stands firm when all other life is doomed to destruction.

Eph. 2:3–6

1 Cor. 15:50

A different homeland

In these critical times we need more than ever a testimony to the truth that God has given an eternal life – one that cannot ebb away with the blood because it is God's life and therefore independent of the blood and the senses. According to the true testimony of the Spirit, this life is in God's Son. It comes to us through the Holy Spirit. It gives our spirit testimony of another homeland, different from the land of our blood. It makes us so truly sons and daughters of God that we can represent no other interests save those of his heart and his kingdom. The Spirit leads us to a people quite different from the

John 6:27, 40

Rom. 8:16–17

people of our blood. God's eternal life unites us with the people of God whose bond is not one of blood but of the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet. 2:9–10

Only those who are prepared to risk life and blood can find this kingdom of the Spirit. The path this people treads is strewn with the dead, for others can and will not tolerate it that the spirit of this people conquers the land. By what he does to God's people, the god of this world has to reveal himself as the murderer from the beginning. The Spirit of Jesus Christ has never allowed his church to kill even one single person. His people, however, have continually been murdered just as Jesus himself was brought to execution by the best state (from the military and judicial point of view) and by the most outstanding nation (from a religious and institutional point of view), yes, even by the majority vote of those of his own blood.

Matt. 10:29

Rev. 6:9

Matt. 27:15–26

Today also, people and nations, the state, and the institutional church will not tolerate witnesses to divine truth. It is not only the state in the East that cries out, "Away with him!" Voltaire's "*Écrasez l'infâme*" is the cry of the West. Whoever wants to represent the witness of Jesus in word and deed must be ready for death anywhere. The reason is clear: witnessing to the truth tears down all the disguises that are meant to conceal the workings of the prevailing powers.

Matt. 24:9

John 16:2–3

Jesus has brought us a revelation that destroys all delusions. It exposes the true state of the world and its kingdoms, its principalities, its god and spirit, as well as the true state of every single human being. It is only under Jesus' influence that we become free of the

false idea that life consists in politics and economics, in power and property, in violence and the struggle for existence, in eating and drinking, in clothing and housing, in pleasure and variety, in honor and reputation. The body is more than clothing. The soul is life and therefore more than food. The kingdom of God is more than all the kingdoms of this world. The spirit is more than the soul. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he forfeits his life?

Matt. 6:25–34

Matt. 16:26

Life during the World War and its aftermath of escalating need and distress freed many from a narrow-minded, bourgeois misconception: that the creature comforts of a pampered mode of life (quicker transport and communication and a good income) are necessities of life. Moreover, many consciences have been awakened from their torpid sleep and kept awake as if by a constant thunderstorm, realizing that in the face of the increasing distress everywhere they have no right to hold on to a privileged way of life. People have to come out of their castles and open the doors of their villas in order to search out and bring in those who have become destitute in the storm, those who are without work or home. A true life of community with God encompasses the inmost fortification of our stronghold as well as the outer fortifications. When our soul has been awakened to the kingdom of God, the Spirit who rules from that kingdom will have to tackle our existence and shape it according to his will down to the outermost details. His will is toward brotherly love. This transformation will be so thorough and complete that very few people can imagine it.

James 2:14–17

1 John 3:10–18

However, before we can think of a new form for our outward existence, body and soul must be taken possession of by God and changed to accord with his image. We have experienced in the history of our times how impossible it is to reconstruct an outer existence and build it up when inner strength has gone into a decline. It is not only in the Russia and in the Austria of pre-World War times that we can see how little even such great empires signify when their inner character begins to break up. What is a kingdom that is divided in itself? “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet suffer harm to his soul?”

Rom. 12:1–2

Matt. 12:25–26

Mark 8:36

Col. 3:9–10

Eph. 4:22–24

Nothing is more necessary than an inmost renewal of life. In this renewal our destiny, independent of all alien influences, shall unfold like a seed growing into a strong, firm tree, allowing our soul and its whole sphere of activity to become that which is intended. It is not in ourselves that we find the strength, inner peace, and freedom for the growth of this true and genuine life. Still less do these prevail in the world around us. Only the Living One can give them to us. Only he brings life, its fulfillment, and with it the active inner peace of his works. Only when he has become the loving, caring overseer of our soul can it find the strength it needs for a new, free, and active life. Only he leads to a life in which the soul, freed from turning around itself and circling around false planets, can live and work from the center of life.

The sacred flame

This life is God and his rulership. The light of the life given in Christ shines more brightly on our weak, selfish existence than the sun into our night. And

just as the sun gives life and nourishment to this planet, Jesus alone gives us, his brothers and sisters, the strength and nourishment to begin a real life and build that up in place of our previous sham existence. Jesus is the bread of life for which we hunger. He has the water of life for which we thirst. His life, which far exceeds all other possible ways of living, merits our dismissing once and for all our own weak, selfish life and all ideals restricted and determined by our blood. We must turn away from all the will-o'-the-wisps that flit around churchyards. We must hold his burning light firmly in the hands of our heart because he wants to bring life into every grave. Nothing should be in our hands but his radiant life because this is victorious over all the worlds of death.

Eph. 4:15-16

John 6:35

Rev. 22:17

1 Thess. 5:5

There is a legend about a soldier who for a long time seemed to seek nothing but murderous battle and vainglory. He devoted himself wholeheartedly to war, and even when he joined a crusade, vainglory seemed to be all he looked for. It so happened that he was the first to scale the walls of Jerusalem. He had the privilege of being the first to light his candle at the altar of the Holy Sepulcher.

This flame transformed his life, though. He forsook the principedom that beckoned him. He took the candle. It became everything to him. He rode and traveled roundabout ways to bring this flame to his people without letting it go out. He was looked upon by many as a madman as he held the burning light in his hands wherever he went, never taking his eyes off it. In the depths of loneliness, fallen upon by thieves, in want and exposed to storms, in hunger and privation and mocked at by the crowds, he concentrated on one thing: he shielded the flame. From then on he

could never have another thought but to protect every tiniest flame of holy life. His life became a light of love in vigorously working for others.⁹

John 8:12 Whoever wants to protect this flame of God's love in the soul and guard the light of life will have to

show this same attitude. Once we have kindled our life from the flame of the Crucified One, his Spirit with all its powers expresses itself in an undreamed-of way that we could never learn elsewhere. It is the

John 16:13 torch of the Spirit that shows the way then. If we want

to reach the goal of our destiny we can only do it by letting his divine love unfold from within to without.

1 John 2:5-6

Wherever this fire is kept burning in people's hearts, it means life for the whole world. It becomes a light on a candlestick set up for everyone. It is only a uniting in complete community of faith that will bring light to the whole world as the city on the hill.

Matt. 5:14-15

Its innermost life gathers all members around the carefully protected central flame as around a camp-fire. Only he who protects this grail of the church knows what wealth of life God sends out into all lands from his city.

God's Spirit wants to dwell within us

Once we have come to recognize God as the only element of all true life, all inner powers of the soul seek to unfold in order to come fully and completely into action, concentrated on him. The soul that is

Ps. 16:9-11

filled with God embraces the whole of life with all its activities, inner and outer, intellectual and physical.

Eph. 3:16-19

In order to bring life completely under the authority of God's vital power, its inner aspect must be brought

⁹ Selma Lagerlöf, 1858-1940, "The Sacred Flame."

under his influence first of all. The power of infinite life sinks its roots into the inmost depths of the soul before it has a strong and active influence on external life. The confession “Thou givest my soul great strength” can be made truthfully only when this strength has begun to reign in our inner being. Ps. 138:3

The inmost heart of the believing church, in which God dwells, is like a well-watered garden, full of quiet, peace, and security. Enemies cannot find the way in. A living wall of tall trees rooted in fertile ground protects it from the storms raging outside. Isa. 58:11
 The noise of the world outside does not penetrate into the secluded center of this garden, in which God’s heart has its dwelling. And yet the gates of the garden stay wide open so that all that is living can go in. They stay open because all the powers and capabilities of the soul are sent out to share in all people’s distress and bring them help wherever possible. Ps. 46:4–7
 Rev. 21:25–27
 Isa. 61:1–2

When we speak of the life of the soul, we usually think only of the innermost part of a believing spirit. But we have to remember that the soul embraces the whole of life. Then we shall understand why profound thinkers of all times have spoken about the inmost recesses and depths of the *soul*, about the bottom of the *soul* and the center of the *soul* rather than about any other seat of life.¹⁰ The apostles of Jesus Christ exhort the believers to become new in mind and spirit. What the believers have to do is to search their innermost being because their life in Christ shall be hidden in God, so that from the bottom of their hearts they can say, “I live, yet now it is no longer I but Christ who lives in me.” The spirit is our inmost Eph. 4:22–24
 Col. 3:3
 Gal. 2:20

¹⁰ Where German idiomatic usage has *Seele*, or soul, English more often has the heart as the center of life.

treasure. When it is illuminated by God's Holy Spirit,
 1 Cor. 2:10-12 our spirit, and only our spirit, knows what is in us.
 When it is led by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the spirit
 and only the spirit can become the lamp of God that
 Prov. 20:27 searches all the innermost parts of the body.

By and large, the heart embraces the inner aspect of a person. Therefore we find the manifestations of life in the heart – the thinking, feeling, and willing, the disposition and the character of the heart – ascribed to the soul as well. For the soul, as the life of a person, by its very nature includes the heart as the inner core of life. We can imagine human life as concentric circles of different colors superimposed on each other and enclosing each other. Our external, material body, part of nature as a whole, forms a comprehensive gray circle. A blue circle denoting the organic life we have in common with plants is just as big. The third circle, a red one, has the same dimensions and stands for the life of the soul in the blood, which, as a human person, embraces the whole consciousness. This last circle of life is characteristic of the animal kingdom as well.

With the smaller circles it is different. In contrast to the large perimeter three times covered, the heart forms a smaller concentric circle, perhaps best indicated by fiery coloring. This confines itself to the life of inner feelings and thoughts and activity of the will, that is, the deeper part of our character. This alone is enough to distinguish humans from all other living creatures. The human spirit, however, forms the center that dominates the whole. It is a secluded, inner circle, which in view of our destiny should be colored white. This spirit is given solely to human-kind. Schiller refers to this when he says: "Once I have

searched the core of man, I know what he wants and what he is doing.” It is this core that is all-important. God’s Spirit wants to make his dwelling among us, beginning in our spirits.

Ps. 51:12, 17
Isa. 57:15

The right relationship of soul and spirit

The higher will of the soul is spirit. The spirit is the active and creative genius. The spirit is reason working constructively to meet the demands made by religion, ethics, and society. It is the spirit that directly perceives and experiences what is divine in the human heart. The soul, on the other hand, gets its feeling for life more through what is physical and determined by the blood. It includes all our desires and longings and also that in us which is purely receptive. The whole reception of all the outer stimulations of life takes place in the soul. It remains more sensual, more closely related to the body, more strongly rooted in the body, and more firmly bound to it than the spirit. The spirit lives in the activity of the highest and freest relationships and aims of the will. It dwells in the most royal of all the chambers of the consciousness. For the spirit, the highest destiny is to be infused with divine Spirit, to be united with the Holy Spirit.

Ps. 77:6

1 Pet. 3:4

The consciousness of the soul is a living mirror of all the relationships into which human life is woven. The influence of these relationships varies greatly according to their intensity. It is in the life of the soul that the decision is made as to which feelings, desires, ideals, and thoughts we allow to cross the threshold of our innermost being.

Prov. 25:28

As long as the feelings of the soul in the blood (which work in darkness) are controlled by the power

of the spirit ruling in our hearts, they cannot grow into base intentions or evil deeds. Yet we see in all the excitement of our times how these feelings wait for a moment when the image of God and his influence grow weaker in us. From that moment on, the lusts and false ideals of the blood (allied to other powers of darkness) can cross the threshold of our heart. They become the will to do evil, and then they unite in evil action. Sin has come. “Lust when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.”

Gal. 6:1
Matt. 26:41

Ps. 78:8
James 1:15

Joyless lust for murder and hate, poisonous readiness to accuse one’s opponents and use lies to disparage them, loveless joy in property and all personal privileges, impure and unspiritual lusts of the body – all these lie in wait for the will with insatiable greed. They have to capture the will with the dazzling temptations offered by stolen and pseudo-spiritual virtues before they can work their evil.

The soul is able to ward off these temptations only when the will’s strength to resist has found a firm foothold in the spirit. The will can reject all the enticements of seductive mental images; it can overcome all the temptations of murky ideals and aims; but it can do this only when – through being constantly reminded by the Holy Spirit – the soul’s consciousness is firmly and clearly ruled by the unity that comes from the heart of God, by the unity of all the thoughts of his love, by the unity of all the pictures of his future kingdom and its powers, and by the image of Jesus with all his words and deeds. “Strength of character depends on this, that a definite unity of images and ideas continually occupies the

1 Pet. 4:2
Phil. 2:1–4

conscious mind, weakening any opposing images and not allowing them to enter.”¹¹ If the seductive powers of other aspirations are not to gain admittance and rule over our will, then the innermost chamber of our soul must always be filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The chamber where our spirit is enthroned must always be filled with all his thoughts and with his will, that is, with every impulse of his heart.

Heb. 6:19

John 14:6

In such agitated times as ours today, the enemy of our soul has a powerful band of accomplices that wants to shatter and destroy it. But in the hush of night God speaks clearly and unmistakably to our soul to draw it away from destruction and make it his follower. He awakens the spirit and shows us the way to life. He wants to fill the awakened soul with his peace so that dark powers have no room. When the soul cries out for God, driven to do so by the distress of our time, it will be led to the goal – to the church and to the kingdom – if by the will it is lifted up to Jesus Christ and remains concentrated on him alone.

Isa. 55:3

Prov. 7:2

Luke 10:25–28

Rom. 8:6

Ps. 62:1

Ps. 116:4

Ps. 143:8–10

¹¹ A summary of the thought of the philosopher and psychologist Johann Friderich Herbart, 1776–1841.

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