

CHRISTOPH BLUMHARDT

JESUS IS VICTOR!

Sermons and Talks  
from the years 1880 to 1888

Numbers 61 through 81

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## 61.

## WAIT FOR GOD!

Psalm 62:5: For God alone my soul waits in silence  
for my hope is from Him.

We must learn to wait for God. It is easy to ask God for help; to wait for Him is hard. This is because we do not receive anything when we wait. At least, we do not receive that which we have in mind; that seems to lie in the future. Yet still we pin our hopes on these things which have not yet been given to us.

I often take pains to make people understand that when Jesus Christ surrendered His life on the Cross, giving up everything to wait, with suffering, upon God, it was something totally different from the resignation we sometimes speak of. The resignation under the burden of suffering which many Christians believe they must have in the name of God, is not Christian. That is why I cannot quite agree with the text often hung up in the rooms of sick people: "I must suffer, I can suffer; I am allowed to suffer; I want to suffer." This is not true--I do not want to suffer! It is a distortion of the truth. The Saviour never said that; He said, "I surrender myself." But in this there is a quiet protest. This is waiting. It is said more in the sense of, "Well, yes, for my part, I will suffer, but one day suffering will be vanquished." Thus in small matters as in large, we can be people who wait for God without,

for the moment, having anything of what we long for, but also without relinquishing this in any way. A person may have some disease, perhaps an incurable cancer, and he quietly resigns himself to it; he lies down like an animal and dies. That is not waiting upon God! Waiting upon God means seeing the meaning behind such a sickness. Even though incurable, the sickness must be overcome. We must expect healing and must cling to God as the One who heals. We must include everything in our waiting. Whoever can wait, in small or large matters, without in any way resigning himself, although always surrendering to God and allowing God to act, will draw down help from Heaven.

However, this is not the main issue, although it is important for us personally. It is our confident waiting for the Kingdom of God and for the coming of Jesus Christ that is of such tremendous significance. But people do not understand this at all. They say, "Yes, the apostles were mistaken in believing the Kingdom was coming soon--but we are under no illusion about that, His coming may still take another hundred years." They ignore it because it will not happen tomorrow and resign themselves to its not coming at all. Suppose David and the prophets had thought like this! They spoke as if it were almost within grasp, depicting the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the Messiah very realistically in all its glory. I would like to know which theologian would today venture to use the language of the apostles and prophets! We use a completely different language and gloss things over.

Our pious words have no resemblance to the language of the Bible, and this makes our Christianity so dull that it is possible to go to sleep or do whatever else we wish, for finally we no longer believe in the goal set before us. As a result we are no longer able, independently and in our own strength, to wait expectantly in the sense of the Scripture! But we must hold fast to this as something certain, something we will experience soon. We may have to be prepared to see nothing for the moment, but we should hold to it as being of paramount importance before which everything else fades into insignificance.

May this be given to many people at this time of Advent, for it is of the utmost importance! It is not our present-day Christianity which is most important, but the End-times, the appearance of God on earth, the Day of Jesus Christ. This is what is important. Of what use to me is all our Christianity and the most wonderful religious doctrines, about which we become so enthusiastic, if ultimately we forsake God and Christ! We must be very careful that we do not ignore God's great deeds and hold up our own self-made, present-day condition as being of more importance than anything God has to offer. How zealous we are about our Christian affairs--and we ignore the Saviour! He stands in the corner and looks on: "What are they doing there? Yes, they do miracles in my name, and glorify themselves!"



Well, now, let us learn to look at God's cause from the point of view of the Bible and really understand what is written there. let it be our hope and let us wait confidently for it, even if we do not receive it right away. That is the view of all men of God. It is not a question of my "religion" but of how I stand to God; whether I put my trust in Heavenly things or in the things of this earth; whether I put my hope in God or in a pious world which nevertheless remains worldly.

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Matthew 25:34: Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!

There are some who are blessed of the Father but do not know it. They are saved without knowing why. They probably did not believe very ardently; otherwise, they would have said, "Ah! That is the reward of faith." Instead, they are surprised to be regarded as being good.

How does this come about? Ever since the Saviour was on earth a sharp watch has been kept upon the whole of mankind to see who is touched by the Gospels to allow his nature to become gentle. Powers emanate from the Gospels which rebuke the coarseness and arrogance of our hearts; they make us humane. He who permits himself to be made humane and compassionate will know that the gracious eye of the Father is upon him, and he will resemble the Father. I am glad about the times we live in because people learn nowadays to be a little more compassionate, or, I would say, humane towards everyone else. There are people who, quite unobtrusively,

have a warm heart for others, particularly the lowly; they do not think about it at all but are kind toward them. These are blessed by the Father! On the surface they may not be at all devout; but there is something of the spirit of the Father working in them secretly. Finally, at a decisive moment, they take their stand on the right side. We have to see very clearly that it is not what is in our head which will one day help us in the face of judgment, but what we have in our hearts. The heart is what matters. A true heart, a pure heart, has merit before God.

62.

## THE COVENANT

Genesis 17:7: And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

This comes from the time of Abraham. In this name we see the beginning of the first real step forward in the history of our human existence. A new race comes into being, so to speak. It is like a bright ray of sunshine shining through the mist of a world that lay in darkness. To be sure, there were at that time some very intelligent people, enterprising people; but in respect to the highest goal of mankind, the peoples and nations lay completely in darkness. They would have fallen into ever greater darkness but for this ray of light which came through Abraham.

It is well known that Abraham is a puzzle to theologians. They do not believe he was an historical personage; but the divine spirit which appeared in him is undoubtedly historical, and it was certainly an actual person in whom the light first appeared. Every logically-minded person must recognize this. Even if it is not historical in the way we can today study the nose of a Napoleon, it is nevertheless a fact that the concept of God has become history--and not just the concept of God, but life in alliance with God which began with Abraham. In any event, whether we call it a revelation of God through Abraham or whether we say Abraham was the founder



of a religion, the nature of the religious precepts which have been handed down to us through the Bible represents a glorious achievement. Even from a human standpoint we can find here the deepest thought, something which can influence our lives profoundly towards what is true, good, and just.

Here a covenant is striven for. Within this covenant lies the recognition that man himself can accomplish nothing; he is quite incapable of determining or molding his fate in such a way that it will come to a satisfactory end. He holds firm to God because without God, without a direct relationship with Him, he can do nothing. That is the first thing.

The second recognition contained within this covenant is that there is no religious system at all. It is quite characteristic of the people of Israel that they never founded a religion. Certainly they are religious; that is to say, they have a relationship with God, but not in the sense that certain doctrines and beliefs had been laid down for all time. There is freedom. Men are simply to be bound to God, united with Him, but are otherwise free. That is the second thing.

Thirdly: It is not only that I make a claim upon God; God also makes a claim upon me, and I must do my part too. This is characteristic of the Bible. As can be seen in Abraham's whole life, it is man who has to ally himself with God; it must come from man.

Still today men are helpless; nothing, whether great or small, works out satisfactorily. A man can do nothing unless he joins forces with what he wants to achieve. He must make a covenant with something good, however small this may be, or he will achieve nothing; he must be welded, as it were, to the good he wants, or he will come to grief. That is why we can call this covenant to the attention of men by the example of everyday life. A man cannot become a good carpenter unless he makes a covenant with the master carpenter. Men achieve nothing, nothing whatsoever, except through a covenant. Men do not become morally healthy except through a covenant. They do not become honest, sincere, upright, without a covenant. Often a few scraps of morals will float around in even the most wicked, but these will not become strong and firm unless a bond is made with something true; without this it is not possible. But once there is a covenant we can feel reassured. If we know that a person is resolutely bound to something, we can let him go wherever he wishes; in whatever company he finds himself, he will not be harmed. It is quite wrong to think that the companionship of good people is absolutely necessary for a person to remain good. I would send a person who has made a covenant with good into the very worst society; it would not affect him; the good power works in him and makes him firm.

This is also the case with religion. You will receive nothing from Jesus except through a covenant. The cause



of God in Christ will have no real foundation upon which one could build a house, unless there are people united through Christ with this God--with this same God who declares Himself in definite principles. That is the bond we must make, the pledge we must make. Then I would allow a student of theology to study whatever he wanted--Strauss, Renan, Harnack, Ritschl, all of them--it would make no difference; perhaps he would learn more from these men than from Luther! People always say we must instill faith into theological students! It is shameful that Christendom has come to think that professors who themselves have faith are able to give theological students faith. Every drop of my blood revolts against this! Is it we who give people faith? Unless it comes from within me, unless I commit myself to God, then it is of no value and can never be anything. It makes a mockery of the covenant to believe we can bring about the Kingdom of God through man-made institutions. We have no conception of the strength we would need for this, a much greater strength coming from a spiritual union with God.

Today, in Christ, the bond is even firmer than it was in Abraham. In Christ the covenant is much more important and more personal. The seed of Abraham could be encompassed by certain laws, and an ordered justice could be established; but this was set aside by Christ. Now there is to be no compulsion any more; everything will now be done by the individual in the awareness of the covenant. Each one must now voluntarily unite with God's laws, in awareness of the

covenant. There is no longer anything like a religious state--no sacrifices, no festivals--Christ has done away with all that. Praise God!--now there is freedom. Unfortunately we have turned away from this; we have taken refuge in a church and there we have re-instituted all kinds of laws and dogmas. When, however, a covenant is made there will be many people who have bound themselves together to stand for the truth of God's Kingdom. This makes them free, bound only to truth and justice as revealed in their own hearts. They are not bound and do not bind other people, there is nothing of the former condition. The covenant is very significant in this respect; except in this covenant, this bond, there is no clarity, no unity, on the basis of the Kingdom of God, through the name of Jesus Christ.

And in this covenant we must do our part. Nothing is forced upon us, although this often brings about painful situations. Many people ask why God does not intervene in this or that situation. But God gives freedom, and even after being offered something from Heaven, we will achieve nothing unless we ourselves act. Men must now take action. It is quite wrong that Christendom has been told, "We ourselves can accomplish nothing." Unless today we act, nothing will happen. It is true that God has given us a foundation which we can call the grace of Jesus Christ, but we must do our part and build upon this foundation. God will not in any way compel us to do anything. We must

commit ourselves, and in this commitment we must take action. We must fight for God, we must deny ourselves for God's sake. Without this effort nothing will happen. We will achieve nothing in heavenly matters unless we exert ourselves, just as we will come to nothing in our work or trade unless we make an effort. That is how it is in this world: we must strain ourselves to the utmost; we must work hard for the Kingdom of God. It will not happen by itself. Even if we gathered together as the most devout people and formed a communion of saints, as has been tried already by the Moravian Brethren and by other sects, yes, if we could find saints from Heaven who sat down and said they were a holy band, it would all be a lie. In no time at all there would be many injustices unless they were diligent, active and strong in deeds.

Now, in the present condition of a creation in which we men dwell according to our pleasure and destroy so much, our utmost exertion is required; the utmost faith is required; for faith implies action. But please--the right action! Only action for the covenant! No building of houses for God according to some kind of human plan! We must hold firmly and steadfastly to the goals of God's Kingdom in Christ, in a spirit of faithfulness. We must carry out only what God clearly shows us to be true--nothing else. Nothing human will then be undertaken, built of wood and straw, but all we do will be founded on eternal things. And this takes a great effort!



When we do exert ourselves, however, we will achieve something. Abraham was promised something eternal--that is, a world and powers of a world which go beyond this physical existence. We, of course, have been promised much more of eternity. Actually, we should live completely for eternity; we must bind ourselves to eternity as it was revealed on earth in Christ so that it may endure and be fulfilled. Eternity, mark you, not our eternity, is what must be fought for in the first place. We must fight for and be faithful to the eternal that was in Christ; and when this has been won, we will also be gripped by it. We, too, will then enter into eternity.

It is the eternity of Christ we enter into, and it is therefore nonsense to say that we are taking care of our own salvation. In yourself you can't find salvation--at most you can fight for the salvation given in Christ. And if you find bliss, it is the bliss of Christ; you yourself do not have it, for it belongs to God and Christ. That is why we must sacrifice ourselves for what is in Christ and then we will also receive what we need. Then we shall be children of God in Christ and shall lack nothing. But we must stand up for this, fight for it, give up everything for it. Then the world will be enlightened and men will not only say, "Jesus died for our sins," but also, "Jesus lives!" He will live, and in His life we will sense true life from which springs all wisdom, all knowledge and power of Almighty God. And we shall be able to hope that all of

creation will be brought into a new, glorious light.

That is how it is with this covenant. God grant that a great many people will feel this and that a great many remain faithful to it until all the people of the earth are permitted to join in the covenant.

## 63.

## BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

Revelation 21:5: And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."

"Behold, I make all things new." This word of God shall accompany us on our way out of the year 1886.

It shall not be in vain that His voice was heard on earth. For when God steps forward and speaks so that He is heard on earth, He comes close to this world. Even if at first only one person hears it, through him all of us will hear it too and finally the whole world.

The Almighty stands on the heights while life goes drifting by like a river whose currents threaten to engulf all men. And when the Almighty speaks, weak man can grasp hold of Him through His word. Then we can say: "Flee, ye years! Perish, thou earth! We no longer belong to you! We hold in our hands the rope by which we can swing ourselves up into Heaven, whence we heard the voice."

Even in our day we are allowed to hear this voice. This evening we know that it is by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are able to hear the Almighty speaking to all of us, He who made Heaven and earth. Therefore it is to Jesus that we give our whole hearts tonight, in gratitude, love, and trust. He brings the Almighty God to us that we may share in the throne of God for our life, which truly needs a throne, a government. One glance at our

wretchedness makes us long for a firm support which will never disappear. This firm support is Jesus Christ who has come near, who has entered into our flesh. We can feel Him, grasp Him, take Him into our hearts as our brother, in order that we may have the support of Almighty God in this world. It is good if you want to go on like this from year to year. Then the earth can turn any way it likes, whatever happens our trust is in the throne of God.

But I would like to ask you very seriously: Are you aware that, transcending time and circumstances, the Almighty God now offers Himself to us in the Lord Jesus, so that we may enter into His everlasting Kingdom and escape from all that is mortal and of the earth? This is still lacking, dear friends. When we realize that this is lacking just among Christians, it almost seems as though the Bible had been given to us in vain. So few people grasp to the full the meaning of God in Christ, of being in God through Christ and no longer in the world in our own strength.

The best thing we can do this evening is to take refuge in this word of God and ask Him to protect us and keep us in it. There are many sayings, that we all know. We do not need to search for them, for since our youth we have been taught how to understand the Living God through them. But the greatest word, which crowns all the others, is still this one: "I make all things new!" This saying is especially fitting as a support and comfort when we become aware of how fleeting our life is and how quickly everything passes away and becomes



dust and ashes. All things new, dear friends! This is the God who cannot endure anything corrupted or harmful, but who seeks to restore it. Today we can and want to enter into this consolation from the Living God.

Of course, this comfort is only given to us through repentance. Many people do not consider sufficiently all that must become new. They think about all kinds of things around them, often giving no thought to what needs to become new in them. If they do think about themselves, they only want to have certain things changed so as to be able to carry on more comfortably. They never consider that everything must become new, everything in and around them, everything in the whole world and in the whole of creation. We should be deeply humbled to see that there is actually nothing which does not need to be made new. If I were to take a close look at each one of you, it would be clear that all of you must become new! Everything is wrong! Yours is a lost cause!

Of course, there ought to be something of which we could say it is already new and doesn't need to be changed. After all, do we not have Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, through whose grace we can be born anew? Of course we have Him, although to speak frankly, it almost looks as though we did not have Him. All we see of men gives us the feeling there is still a lot that has to be made new. Even where something has begun to change, it is often so mixed up with man's own, old nature, that, in spite of something



new appearing, we feel like saying, "Away, away with it all; everything must become new."

This is how things are, you dear ones. A darkness has come over Christianity especially in regard to this matter of renewal. We are so easily contented and so quickly satisfied with a Christianity which turns us into slightly more respectable people. That is all we want. Yet, if we think about it, we have to say, "This surely cannot be all!" No, dear friends, what we have is not all. Everything, everything must become new! Not just a little taste of something new, but everything new--first of all, in you! Oh, that we all might at least feel the longing for something new to be given again. How long have we been meeting together; how long have we been preached to; how long have we been hammered at; how long have we let ourselves be admonished again and again! Still there is no break-through to something new! Just consider: what are our villages like or our towns, our families, our own hearts? Things just will not become new!

This could depress us very much. Instead, today it should unite us in repentance, which means turning with our whole hearts to the Word in which the Living God pledges Himself. We should call on this God and say, "Yes, dear Father in Heaven, all things should become new through our Lord Jesus, but just look--nothing happens! Why do people not change? Why do they not receive the strength to resist sin? Why do they not break away from evil, from the Devil's cunning, power and temptation? Why is it that nothing happens?

And when something does happen here or there, when You even give us a sign and heal or free someone from the Devil, why is it that then nothing changes? O, Lord our God, this is a terrible calamity; nothing becomes new in us! Have mercy on us, our Saviour Jesus Christ!"

That should be our cry, dear friends, and I say this also to you in my house. Or do you feel we have something? There are people proud enough to think this. And what have they? Nothing! Certainly there is a show of Christian virtue, but each one thinks to himself that it is in him, that he has it! But I have yet to experience that someone has been re-born. You are still the same as you were ten, twenty, thirty years ago. You aren't new yet! But we must become new; otherwise, our house will also stand on shifting sand and that will be the end of us. Our cause will be lost. This is a matter of life and death, dear friends, which must become clear soon: either all things become new, or everything comes to an end.

This is true for each one of us. Unless you are renewed you will perish, and then you can join in the stream of death which the whole world follows. But as Christians, dear friends, as disciples of Jesus, we should shudder to have to swim along in this numbing stream of death. You must resist! Overnight Satan comes and seizes one after the other; in your misery you will lie in the dust, and what will you do then? If you have not become new, you will perish like everyone else! Oh, that I could open

your eyes, and that you might help me cry out! Oh, that you could see that we are bound, and are in chains; that all our customs and conventions only serve to carry us along the same old monotonous paths until finally we are laid in the grave. Then, when a man dies, people throw earth over him and return home to continue living in the same dull and superficial way. They are not one bit different than they were fifty years before; they remain just the same and do not really want to be turned around.

Therefore, my friends, turn to God! What did Israel do in days of old when the Ark of the Covenant was gone? Foolishly, they allowed things to drift for a long time. But then some among them rose up and cried out, "O Lord our God, renew us! Let your glory come over us anew. We want to be your people, to be one fellowship in you through the Holy Spirit. Bring this about--renew us! O, Lord our God, we are afraid; for if this does not happen soon, what will become of us?"

"Behold, I make all things new!" God speaks, and we want to believe it. In order to believe, we have to repent; without repentance we had better leave it alone. If your eyes are opened to what is lacking, then believe! It is God who says these words, and we want to put our trust in them completely and carry them in our hearts, however bad things may look now. He does not say, "Perhaps, if possible, under certain circumstances, I will make things new, but I must think it over." No, He says quite plainly, "I make all things



new. It will be done, even if much patience is needed. I will certainly make all things new!" So again and again we have reason to think that He will do it. And if we surrender ourselves, a beginning will one day be made with us.

This promise belongs to our time as well as to the future and to the past. Heaven always waits to renew anyone who wants to become new, who is ready to give up his own affairs, who does not push his own person into the foreground and does not love his own life. For such a one the Word in Heaven is always ready to bring about a renewal. Let us believe in this now--perhaps one or the other of you will be renewed! Try it! Go completely into repentance and then fully into faith. It can happen; I do not give up hope. If even just a few become new, it will still be something. Finally, of course, there should be many who are made new.

We can, in faith, depend upon this promise in the face of judgments which have come upon us and which may still come upon us. You know very well how things are among the nations. The murder weapons are ready. The powers of darkness have risen and want to drive things to the point where the earth, especially Europe and doubtless Germany, becomes a pool of blood. Satan knows quite well that if this happens, it would mean the end of preaching the Gospel. Then the Lord Jesus might as well leave. People will be thinking of the war and will be completely swept away by this.

We are faced with a desperate situation. Must we let it go on like this? I don't think so. Let us all help. Think of these words in faith, "I make all things new." Must there always be war? If that were so, God could not make all things new! I could not believe this word. If we cannot pray for the time to come when God's almighty arm will hold up warring armies, then it is not true that He makes all things new. Yet it is true that He makes all things new; therefore, I believe there is something we can do to stop such things from happening.

But of course if everything is to be made new, something must break in which does not come from us, but from Heaven. A new deed of God must take place; something living and real from the Lord Jesus must break into the physical world. It must become clear that Jesus really lives, that Almighty God really exists and will not let Himself be pushed to one side for ever. But it will mean a hard struggle, dear friends, until finally something becomes new; for people simply do not believe that God will act from Heaven. They certainly say, "He guides the destinies of the nations", but they call everything God, even when it is the Devil at work. Nobody believes that God will really intervene. Much would already be new with us if only we could believe that He will truly, personally intervene in our physical world, and that the time must come when we shall be able to pray that such threatening dangers as war may be averted, and our prayer answered.

There are other things which threaten us. Even if war does not break out, disasters still rain down upon the whole world, only we don't see them all at one time. What masses of people have perished during the past year through all manner of judgments, such as tempests, landslides, explosions below and above the earth, earthquakes, epidemics, and all kinds of accidents which are to be expected in the hectic life of our time. Along with this there is an enormous amount of sickness of body and soul. How much sighing there is in hospitals, how much misery in the mental homes. How many people are wasting away with the most horrible diseases. How many are being killed, some slowly, through envy, through hatred, through the maliciousness of people toward each other. It would make a great mountain if all the people murdered during one year were gathered together. There is not even need for guns; people perish anyway.

Every family must be prepared for something to happen suddenly to disturb its peace. Then one must believe and pray that the judgments may be turned away; that something new may be given to you, your family, and to the whole world, indeed to the whole creation, something from the Heavens above. When God fulfills His word, you dear ones, we can stand up against anything, especially if we ourselves already experience something new! You should also take a new stand now and then! Try it! God often attempts to start something new with this one or that one, but they do not seize upon it, they remain apathetic. But rise up and



direct your steps towards what is new! Pray for it! Something new must begin, coming from Heaven to strengthen our trust that the whole world will be renewed through the almighty power of God.

That is what Jesus Christ wants. That is why He is the firstborn from the dead. He does not want this wearisome situation to continue forever. He wants to have things new! For this Christ was born; for this He died and arose; for this He is sitting at God's right hand. Draw near to this renewal that it may soon come about!

This is how we must believe, and consider what is new. But what is this "new"? What does "new" mean? "New" means what Jesus is, what is in Heaven, what God is. It means what is as old as eternity. Strictly speaking, we in our sins are "new." Sin is not the oldest thing; it came in as something new. God is the Old One, the Eternal One, who was from the beginning and remains in all eternity. We are insignificant newcomers. Therefore, the "new" things are really the old; they are in Heaven, are eternal, and have no beginning and no ending--they are in God Himself! And so the earth must become like Heaven; all that is earthly must become eternal; temporal things must be transformed into the divine state which was at the beginning. Just think, dear friends, what it would be like if things could only begin to become really divine, if physical and material things were no longer corrupt but became godlike! What happy people we would be then!

But when these heavenly things take place, look out! We cannot go on burdened with our wickedness, we shall have to go through judgment, through fire. We must be purified and become gold, not wood. We must give up everything; give up all that is false. We must become completely genuine as Heaven is genuine, as the Lord Jesus is perfect and genuine, as all the angels are genuine, and as is God Himself. In other words, we must become new.

It is comforting to know that this "new" is not something unheard of. It is at our doorstep. It is already on earth and not at all incredible. I have already seen something new. Whoever has a little to do with the Saviour sees something new; therefore, I can well believe that all will become new on earth. Yet, although I preach this, people still do not see the signs of Heaven in Jesus Christ. How much became new in the apostles! How many new powers came with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when natural forces had to yield to the new, the heavenly, the eternal! It could cause one to die of grief to see what little effect this has had upon us! There is so much that is new, yet it has no effect. It is always at our door, yet nothing comes of it; we see so little of it.

Perhaps, dear friends, if you know that to become new means to become heavenly, as Jesus was heavenly, you will be able to grasp that it can easily happen as soon as we find life in Jesus. The gates of Heaven are quickly opened, especially if we gather in greater numbers to call upon God.



Then the Devil will be alarmed, for he knows that the heavenly state is the old, original state, and that our sin and death are new, wrong things which have come into the world but do not belong there at all. And if we are faithful, the heavenly state will belong to us. God and Christ will be ours. Everything else is of the Devil and is none of our business.

Now you know it dear friends and can grasp it in faith and in repentance and can reach out for heavenly things. Love the Saviour! Believe in God! Seek His word and keep it! Be zealous, be faithful! Jesus Christ is our brother. Being at the right hand of our Almighty God, He hears us and can quickly answer. Oh, that it may come to pass in this New Year!

## 64.

## THE COMFORT OF THE PEOPLE!

Isaiah 49:13: Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted His people, and will have compassion on His afflicted.

This is one of the words that speaks of the great comfort for the people which the prophets have so often foretold. This comfort for the people goes very deep; and when comfort penetrates so deeply, its effects can also be felt physically; bodily ills disappear. In such times of comfort the greatest miracles take place, readily and naturally. The physical side of life emerges as a secondary matter which can quite easily be brought in order when the higher, inner being is comforted and restored.

Men have already experienced such times of comfort. They have had a foretaste of those things the prophets depicted as coming in the last times, encompassing the whole world. Through this they are made aware of what will finally come about in the most widespread way. The time of Jesus was a very special foretaste of the final great time of comfort for all the people. The Spirit of God was so mightily at work in Jesus in the comforting of souls that the physical condition of people around Him was affected to the strongest degree. These are the miracles of Jesus.

These miracles often give rise to some misconception. If a person reads about them without understanding, he might believe that the Saviour was demonstrating parlor tricks and might compare them to the illusions of a conjurer in which one appears to stand before a miracle. But the Saviour's miracles were of a completely different nature. They were a part of His very being and the Spirit which He radiated, and were in keeping with the fervent expectancy which vibrated in the soul of the people at that time. The mood of the whole populace, more or less, had been uplifted by the person of Jesus and the preparatory work of John the Baptist. So it seemed quite natural and did not attract much attention when bodies started to sing for joy, so to speak. That is why it could come about that Jesus' miracles were not so much noticed by unbelievers as we would think. We can say that the miracles of the Saviour, of Almighty God, take place where there is a corresponding inner comfort. And we can also say that only those who have experienced inner help can understand such miracles and accept them as natural. It is simply something tremendous when God restores souls and creates a new spirit; then the physical body can be quickly healed and we have a miracle.

Similar things have been given in this Christian era. We, too, experienced something in Möttlingen at one time, which we still cherish. But even now many people do not understand it---least of all those who draw the conclusion that prayer can be used as a cure-all for the body. But to



talk of comforting the body as a means of making the soul sing for joy is to put the cart before the horse; it is not the right way. According to the Bible, God takes care of the inner man; then, of its own accord the body sings for joy at the healing which comes as a consequence. If we turn this around, we run the risk of great disappointments. The time when all creation will be refreshed will not come by curing the outward ills of the world first, but the other way round, by "comforting" the world inwardly, in its soul, so to speak. Only then will creation be renewed outwardly.

The great mistake made by many unhappy people who groan under the burden of all kinds of evil is that they always look to the evil and believe that if this were different, they would feel easier inwardly. But they should remember that if nothing more than physical healing happened, they would still not be comforted. Jesus has often helped in some outward matter, but it has not affected us inwardly. On the other hand, when, in spite of afflictions, God's comfort penetrates the soul, things more easily improve outwardly, and should a miracle take place, it will be understood rightly and will be a light for all our life.

But here people are divided into two categories. The first look only at the outward or material aspect and want to tackle everything from that side. The efforts of the world are directed toward improving outward conditions in the hope that men will be inwardly more content. But what

is achieved by all the people's striving? Does it lead to true comfort, to the soul's rejoicing? For those who have not grasped deeply the essence of human nature, it is an obvious and remarkable fact that however much is done for unhappy people who have come down in the world, they find no lasting joy. And how much care is lavished upon people nowadays! There has perhaps never been a time in which men have made such great efforts, with such sincerity, to remedy the universal distress and misery. Still people are not contented, and without any hesitation some quite openly take advantage of their benefactors. On the other hand, if in a small way we succeed in bringing the comfort of God into a soul, everything will be right. Even in evil days people will be contented, and the smallest kindness will be received with great joy because inwardly they stand right.

This brings up something we often experience when people write to us. Sometimes people will say, "I have a severe illness (or, I have difficult circumstances to cope with; or, dark temptations beset me). I have prayed about this for many years now, more and more intensely, but it seems that the more I pray, the worse things become." Here we stand before a mystery. We could wonder very much about this, but I want to say only one thing: we can pray in an outward manner and look for inner help to come from the outside--that is wrong; or, we can pray in a spiritual way and seek comfort of the soul from God--then things will improve. If someone always cries about his personal troubles when he prays and

only has his own need in mind, then the evil which besets him sinks deeper into his soul and spirit, in spite of prayer. It is possible to rise up from prayer in a darker frame of mind than beforehand. Selfish prayer can even lead to derangement, as we have often experienced. Another person goes into his room and says, "I will not allow my troubles to come in here with me, I want to be alone with my Saviour. Dear Saviour, now I come to Thee; speak to me of something other than my affliction!" Something of Heaven sinks into a man who prays like this. When he comes out of his room, he feels a power, and even if the affliction has not diminished, the misery of it cannot gain the upper hand. If our inner being is lifted up by heavenly powers, it cannot be weighed down by the need and death of our outer man. And so, in prayer, I can either attract or repel evil things. Mark this well, all you who would pray because of the ills that beset you! Do not bring all manner of evil into your souls!

This is why the Saviour, who knows us foolish people, says, "Do not chatter so much when you pray! Must you babble on and on like the heathen?" But whatever Jesus says, men simply will not obey. When someone prays for an hour without ceasing, he thinks he will have a special reward in Heaven!

We could also think about this when we come to prayer meetings and remember the main issue is not to pick out all the evil of the world in order to pray about it. It is more



important to seek Heaven and a power from Heaven by which, strengthened by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we can meet all ills. We must remain in the Spirit; then Jesus will have means enough to comfort us, to free us, and also to make us well, if He so desires. Yes, the man who remains in the Spirit and seeks comfort of soul through the Saviour will very soon find things easier in the physical realm as well.

Whoever experiences and understands this will also understand the prophets, who even go much further. They hardly think at all of comfort for the individual, but promise comfort for the people as a whole. Just read the Old Testament: a promise is made to an individual only insofar as he is part of the whole. We can use the Bible very wrongly if we apply all the texts to ourselves in an egotistic way. In the Bible the comfort of all the promises pertains to the larger whole, and you can also reckon yourself to be a part of this whole. All prophecy amounts to this great thought of God: "I will comfort my people, comfort the wretched, comfort all men--all flesh; all the world shall behold the glory of God!" This must take place through the Spirit of God which shall sustain all flesh. The people shall be given a new heart and a new spirit. By this we can see that the restoration of the soul of mankind as a whole is foreseen, and linked to this is the renewal of bodies, up to the point of resurrection. New hearts, a new spirit, and the Spirit of God shall be given; then all things

will be made right. That will be a real comfort for the people! Already we feel something of this in the works of the Saviour; to some extent they always have an effect on the common people as a whole. With the Saviour we can have nothing for ourselves alone. He can never belong to you alone; you must always include other people, and also include others in your thoughts. Otherwise it might happen that Jesus is not with you at all. The comfort of the Gospel falls today upon the great community of nations; and the final, decisive comfort will also be showered upon the great community of all nations.

Even in this present time we can feel the powers of this comfort at work. These powers awaken hope that a time of great grace will come upon all men to the extent that the Gospel will be preached to all nations. How otherwise will this come about? How many righteous hearts lie hidden beneath the wretched conditions of this sinful world, and they will not come out of these conditions except by an express deed of Almighty God! And this deed will not fail to appear. If even now some people can find complete comfort, how can our merciful God allow others, who are no worse, to remain in eternal misery? He does not do that! The Saviour grieves over the people. He wants to gather them together as His sheep, and the end of these times will bring this great grace. Then the earth will sing for joy. Even the trees will break forth into singing and the mountains will exult. The curse will be broken and the life of all



nature will become new. That will bring forth jubilation. Then it will really be true that "Every breath of air cries out for joy: Christ is born!"

And so the renewal of creation depends upon the advance of the Kingdom of God. Upon the freedom of the children of God depends the freedom of all the other creatures. We have absolutely no conception of what it will be like when the universe sings for joy once more because man has become free. At present everything lies under a continuous oppression. No man flourishes as he should; no animal, no plant, is what it could be. Corruption, seen and unseen, affects the bodies of men mightily; it strikes the grasses and all the plants and animals; everything lives in perpetual fear. But when the weight of the word "You shall die" is taken away, everything will rejoice. Then there will be life, fully and completely.

This is what the Saviour wants to bring about. From within the secret chambers of the human soul He wants to fight sin, to drive it away, destroy it, and bring a new creation into being. The great moment will come when we can say: The old has passed away, a new creation is here, in every person and in the whole world.

## 65.

## "IN THAT DAY..."

Isaiah 11:10: In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a banner to the peoples; Him shall the nations seek....

This is a remarkable word. Again and again we are reminded of "the day"--"in that day." It stands always before the prophets as a day of Christ; all their hope is in "that day." But we should not think that all at once a brand-new time will come after a long, long time in which nothing at all happens. No! This time begins quietly and secretly and will grow and grow until at last the climax is reached. And so, when the Pharisees asked when the Kingdom of God was coming, Jesus answered, "Why do you ask? The Kingdom of God is already here, in your midst, and you can take hold of it and enter into it."

The time in which the nations were to seek the root of Jesse came very quietly. The wise men from the east really did seek at the time Jesus was born, but who paid any attention to that? The coming of strangers who suddenly arrived and inquired about a king was an inconspicuous event. People were startled and for a moment there was a fear of God, but this soon passed; the carpenter returned to his plane, the smith to his anvil, the writer to his desk. After three or four days everything was back to normal, and the momentous seeking for the root of Jesse was forgotten. Still, it did happen and has never ceased since then. Later, Greeks also

sought, and of course at the time of the apostles, seeking really began in earnest.

Thus, very quietly, the day dawned and the great cause, God's banner to the peoples, stood there. Until this very day, though, there are people who deny it as if it did not exist, and they go on wondering if it is worth looking for. Yet from year to year, century to century, this banner is sought more and more by all the nations. Slowly, quietly, but also wonderfully, "the day" moves towards its climax.

And that is how the Kingdom of God comes; that is how it will come completely--just remember that! You will not see it coming, however, unless you have spiritual eyes. To be able to see the beginning of the Kingdom of God today and to expect a continuation tomorrow and fulfillment the day after, means one thing: participation. The unfolding of this final time will certainly also take place quietly. There will be things happening which will be spoken of loudly for a time, but then they will be forgotten and no longer talked of. The world will go its own way again, however tremendous the events which have taken place.

I also am not satisfied about how signs of the times are looked upon nowadays, even in believing circles. We are not sensitive enough to such happenings because they take place so imperceptibly. How often do we groan about our poverty in the Kingdom of God, even when many deeds of God take place before our eyes. Who, for example, pays any attention to the beautiful light we now see in the heavens



every day? Later we shall find out what all these things mean, but very few notice them when they occur. The man who does not value these signs of the times, these manifestations of the Kingdom of God, will not find peace. If I want first to be filled inwardly with all sorts of emotions and stirrings before I at last lift up my eyes and look, how can I be given anything?

Miracles also take place today, both true and false miracles, just as in the time of Jesus there were also false appearances and miraculous events. A time of miracles has broken in today; nobody can deny that! It happened very suddenly. Before 1843 nobody thought of such things, but now, very quietly, they have come among us. Lectures are given about "the power of prayer," and when people are sick they write to or hasten to visit certain men, seeking comfort, health, and strength. And rightly so, for this belongs to the time we live in. Before 1843 nobody thought of such things. Yet who pays any attention to them? Who takes them as a sign?

That is why I always say that Bengel\* was right in his predictions. Even if he did not hit the right year, nevertheless the last thirty years have seen the beginning of developments which have changed Christendom inwardly and outwardly. On the other hand, the many inner struggles are hard, but on the whole, there is light and life everywhere

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\* Johann Albrecht Bengel, a leader of the Swabian Pietist Movement, who died in 1752.

for those with open eyes. The times are marching on, and before we know it, such deeds of God will take place as at the time of the apostles. If I think only of what I experience in a year, if I gathered together just the main letters I receive--what a story that would make!

Many things were experienced in earlier years, of course, but there was never the feeling that we were going toward the last times. The idea of the Kingdom of God was never quite clear. Now the most mistaken movements write "Kingdom of Jesus" on their banners. In the Salvation Army, for example, we see a caricature of the Kingdom of Jesus. All this goes to show that we are moving toward the goal.

Therefore, have joy in the Kingdom of God and forget yourself a little! Do not keep looking into your poor, burdened heart; do not get caught up in your own affairs! Some people walk around as if they were the only ones who existed. They are only interested in the worthless rubbish of their hearts; they are completely involved in it. The Heavens above may open wide, and still we go on peacefully absorbed in our own affairs! It is a pity to have lived through a time like this, only to become aware much later what a tremendous time it really was! Therefore, pay heed, oh man! The nations will seek the banner! Pay heed --and seek it too!

66.

## A BATTLE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 12:11: And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives unto death.

This is an episode out of the story of a battle which is waged, not on earth, but in Heaven. It is a remarkable story. There is a conflict in Heaven, and God's armies move out, the Field-Marshal, Michael, at their head. On the other side is the prince, Satan, with his hosts. It seems as though Satan will win. Yes, one has the impression that he has been winning for a long time. Why has Christendom become so dark since the time of the apostles? It becomes darker and darker! But why? Was not a Saviour born? It is true that rays of light break through here and there, but on the whole this has been a dark and difficult time. That is a sign that the battle in the atmosphere is not yet at an end.

Ultimately it will come to an end, and Michael will be victorious. The delay comes about when Satan points a finger, as it were, at the Church of Christ and says, "What about these people?" And when Michael and the angels of God, who have been instructed according to God's justice, look down, they have to say, "Yes, that is true; we cannot do anything about them!" In heavenly warfare there are none of the violent or crude attacks such as men make on each other; in heavenly warfare God acts justly even toward



Satan. There is no question of raining blows upon Satan just because he is Satan; where he has a right, even God yields to him. It will never happen that God simply smashes Satan. Thus, in this struggle, if Satan can truly say, "It is not going on down there as it should," then the Church of Christ will have no special protection (she has this only when she fulfills certain conditions), and the protection of God and Christ will have to be withdrawn. Thus Satan can be victorious for a long, long time. Men have the saying: "The Devil cannot harm us; he has been vanquished." Oh, how stupid! He will be victorious for a long time yet!

There is another remarkable thing here: men intervene in this heavenly battle, and human strength is made use of. There are people who step into the breach for the Church and say, "Things may look very bad in the Christian Church and the Devil may be quite justified--but Christ is more justified and we belong to Him; the whole world belongs to Him." Of course, with this sort of attitude it is not a matter of saving a few people, as some people think, it is an out-and-out attack against the Devil. The Devil must be silent. He has no authority. The blood of Jesus Christ cries out for us; He is the Lamb of God, who bears the sins of the world!

These people step in and also testify that it is Christ who counts, not our sins. And all this talk about our being lost is a lie--none of this is significant. Only Christ is significant! They are attacked violently because of this

and are sorely oppressed. But even if it costs our lives, these things remain true. Why did Christ die? Not in order that misery continues for ever! So, finally, these people who step into the breach will be of vital importance before the throne of God. And Michael will be victorious.

Then something else remarkable will be seen. When this victory is won, it will become pitch black on earth. People think that after the victory there will be a shouting for joy, but the victory will have been won in Heaven, not on earth--not by a long way. Upon the earth, as it says here (Revelation 12:12), "The Devil has come down...in great wrath." It is not written what will happen then; you will have to imagine that for yourself. It will be a hard time, though. Yet, I think we shall manage to come through. A wise person will know how to come through. Believe nothing of what is preached about damnation--that is all of the Devil! But believe everything good you can of the Saviour. Everything else is lying. A sensible man will heed this, but it must be believed.

Is Heaven already rejoicing in Michael's victory? Just look up into the Heavens! For some years now all the Heavens have changed, but people do not look, nor do they read the Bible. Yet if men were to pay attention, they could see everything! In Heaven there is already a shouting for joy; but on earth life has certainly become very hard, and will perhaps become much more serious. And this applies to our house too; what there was of comfort there is gone

and is in Heaven. I cannot be sad, however, for I know that they all rejoice in Heaven. But hard and painful times can come. Nevertheless, we have begun in the sense of this verse, and whoever wants to can continue with it. I want to see that many persevere!

NOTE: A translation of No. 67 is not included in this volume.



68.

LORD, GIVE EAR TO MY VOICE!

Today is the birthday of Pastor Zündel\* of Winterthur. We must beg for a great deal to come down from Heaven because we are asking not for one man alone but for very many. We must lose sight of him among all the people he is called upon to serve.

Psalm 141:1-2: I call upon thee, O Lord; make haste to me! Give ear to my voice, when I call to thee! Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice!

That, of course, is how a pastor must cry out night

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\* March 26, 1887, Friedrich Zündel's birthday. See Lejeune's remarks at the conclusion of this book for more about Blumhardt's friendship with Zündel. After his mother had died, Blumhardt felt closest to Zündel in the tremendous events which had burst forth in Möttlingen and Bad Boll.

Later, at Zündel's death in 1891, following the words of the Psalm: "I will sing of thy steadfast love, O Lord, for ever; with my mouth I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all generations," Blumhardt was to say, "Till now we two have done this together, but now I must do it alone. Nobody should be offended by my saying 'we two.' There are others here, of course; but in a very special way we two were together and now I am alone."

Zündel's well-known books sprang out of this close relationship between Zündel and Blumhardt, as the following remarks testify: "If I wanted to sing a song for my Zündel today it would be about the fact that he ventured to take it off my hands to write down in a book all that we had experienced and to throw it in the teeth of the whole world, with 'There you have it.'" And, "Out of the same urge to make known to our doubting world what God has done, Zündel welcomed my desire to publish the discussions we had carried on together about the life of Jesus and what we thought about the Apostolic Age and the apostles themselves."

and day, although other Christians must also do the same. Our greatest happiness is to know that our voice is heard in Heaven. I am often astonished at how far people go in taking this for granted. It is as if we need only open our mouths here in the world, as if any Christian can just hold forth, and up above God must pay us the compliment of listening. But you will not find that idea anywhere in the Bible; that is pagan. Pagans also believe that all the fuss that goes on here is heard in Heaven, but that is not so. It costs a real struggle to be heard, until the point is reached that I can say "my voice is heard in Heaven" in a way which really means something.

Naturally, God hears the constant drone of lament which comes from the world. The murmuring, the groaning and moaning of mankind is all heard. But it is one thing for my sighing to be heard, along with all the universal sighing, but something else again that my voice is heard directly in Heaven, or that my prayer rises like incense and my hands are lifted up as an evening sacrifice. It is a different thing if Heaven is always ready to receive me, as it were. It is something else if I am "at home" in Heaven in the sense spoken of in the Revelation to John, that there are lamps in Heaven with lights always burning for the Churches and angels. But if my lamp is extinguished, I shall never be heard; I will again be part of the general murmuring of mankind, and everything will be as it always was. The prayer of the saints, however, is as incense before God, and this is what it should be like among Christians.



But they do not understand this. Christians make me indignant, for with their so-called priesthood of all men, they have turned us all into heathens. We now have a religion in which everyone rattles off his prayers according to a certain form, keeping strictly to himself, standing proudly aloof. No Christian in the time of the apostles would have thought of doing this, but nowadays things have gone so far wrong as to be almost beyond words. I would wish for everyone--especially for one who is a pastor--that he would see that it is not as easy as he thinks. Our voice will not be heard in Heaven unless there is an organic relationship with Heaven, from God through the Saviour, to a Church of Jesus Christ in which there are one or two or more with whom Jesus can do what He wishes. They will not be self-willed but will surrender themselves day and night. They will not be like popes but will be the lowest, serving all the others, enduring all things, giving themselves to toil and drudgery in service to others. I tell you, our voice will not be heard unless this happens. One day you will find out in Heaven that I am right, for I am not just babbling out my own opinions--I know what I am talking about!

But people resist this. All they care about is to be saints in Heaven, giving no thought to what it means when a man speaks on earth and is heard in Heaven. In the Bible this is said only of those men who are gripped completely, heart and soul. I will not be heard above if I join those



who live three-quarters in the world, or even only one-quarter, and so live for myself, for my own heart's desire and my own comfort. Our whole conception of prayer as something that anyone can do is simply not true! Sometimes the most diabolical people will go into a prayer meeting and insist that God must now listen to them. Must God listen to devils? They live like heathen and still presume to pray. Will this be heard in Heaven? Such unclean prayers will not be heard!

On the other hand, if we really stand together as little children and seek the Kingdom of God with all our hearts, an organism will be formed, not in an outward way, but inwardly. Everyone, whoever he is, can join in this; the smallest, the poorest; all who want to stand with the Saviour and live for the Kingdom of God. Suddenly, somewhere, a light will shine and we will know that prayer is rising upward. The voice is heard. Endless praying is not necessary; we no longer need the formal, ritual prayer in which we try to squeeze something out as though in a vise, whether anything is there or not. No! The voice speaks out whenever necessary, and it is heard in Heaven as necessary. We get a reply. We know what to expect, every day; but we become the most dependent, the least free of men. We can no longer do what we want. Self-will ceases utterly with people whose voice is heard in Heaven.

It must be our concern, our desire, for this to happen. Today I also pray that my dear Zündel's voice may be heard;

that we together, along with others, gradually come to the point where somewhere there is always someone whose voice is heard in Heaven. It must be possible for men to join together in this. It is not necessary for them to be alike in all respects. But it would be good if many people, in many places, once more had lamps in Heaven and that light shone down, light from the Saviour. Then there would not be so much lukewarmness for out of the Spirit of God and from Christ something else would burst into flame in a distinctive, lovely, powerful way. Of course there would be struggles and temptations--we ourselves will remain poor sinners. We would not shout for joy. We would have to endure many things in body and soul; everything would be judged; we would not be able to avoid anything. But a little power would spring up, and there would be something which would find acceptance in the Kingdom of God.

Praise God, we do experience something of this together; a little power is welling up. We should not brag about it, though, but always remember that it must become much greater. Yes, our voice must count for much more before God so that we may be able to fulfill the many demands continually made upon Christian people, doing this in the strength of the Almighty, of Jesus Christ who is Lord, before whom all must eventually bow down. However wrong the world is, everything must in the end bow down.

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Luke 23:27: And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him.

They showed they had a heart after all, that multitude of people. Clergymen should also make a note of this and go and sit among the multitude. There it is often quite different than in a gathering of parsons or a committee meeting! We should listen to what the voice of the multitude is saying. It often grieves me to see how the so-called "educated people" all turn up at festive occasions and the "multitude" stays away. Sometimes after such occasions I have a real hunger to be able to sit down just among country-folk where much more real life pulses, and one can also chat about the Saviour. With other people it is different. One can come away from a meeting feeling quite excited about what one has heard, but on sitting down to a pious dinner party afterwards, everyone talks about something entirely different. In this respect I prefer the country folk; they say what they think, sometimes crudely, but that does not matter.

As our text relates, there was a multitude of such people at the time of Jesus; they were quite unlike those followers of Jesus who came from the educated classes. The educated people crept into their houses and consoled themselves, but the multitude of the people followed the Saviour with weeping. It does us good to know that some people wept and wailed and lamented in public for the Saviour. It was right that this happened. As we have said, the common people



feel more naturally, more simply, more genuinely and when the time comes in which the Church of Christ again cares about the lowly, we shall have gained a victory. But as long as the church continues to act like a public institution, it will not be as in the Kingdom of Heaven. As long as those with warm and fervent hearts have to hold their tongues while the cold-hearted ones go on dictating, there will be nothing. The whole outlook of our church is turned upside-down, unfortunately. I appreciate all the rules and regulations of the church, but in principle it is not right if warmth of heart cannot be expressed--unless one is a pastor of course; he is allowed to preach, but then it is always and only the pastor who is heard. This is terribly stupid, for if only the pastor speaks and everyone else must be silent, the active working of the body of Christ as an organic church will be lost. In the end the church will die off under the pastor. Just ask yourselves if it isn't true. I say this so that those who enter this "organism" may watch out. Oh, go down low! Sit down in the farm houses now and then! Chat with these people! Life pulses more there than in the parsonage. There one will hear about the Saviour; there one will find a longing for the Kingdom of God.

Of course, we must be prepared to hear some plain speaking. We will hear of the needs of people and how dissatisfied they are with our sermons. We will see how

often we are Pharisees and Sadducees who trample upon a tiny flower of the Saviour; we have no idea how small our love is. Very often, for example, we seek out the most "worthy" among the poor. Many are in need but are not "worthy," therefore, they must go hungry. There is such a hardness, as if we were God and could judge over other people! This attitude pervades everything and has nothing to do with the Saviour. If we associate with certain persons who perhaps do not have a good name, the people are shocked and say, "What! He is sitting with those people?" Yes, indeed, I would rather go around with scoundrels than with the virtuous, for the Saviour seeks the sinners, not the lofty. Whoever is mindful of this way of the Saviour will climb down a little, down to where the groaning people are. When he hears those who sigh, those who wail and lament, he will be on the right ground. He will find no honor there, but he will be able to work and serve, for these are mostly people who grieve for the Saviour. They can join in sighing and praying for Jesus to come and have mercy on our poor world. They really are able to mourn because the Saviour is crucified on earth, and they take it to heart if things are not right with the church. We feel they have a heart for the Lord Jesus; and if we respect such people, we will also receive something from them.

So let us take to heart what has been said today. I have spoken a little more plainly than usual because Zündel is here. We know one another and speak out what we feel.

69.

## WHEN GOD HID HIS FACE

Psalm 30:6-7 (Translated from the German): I said in my prosperity, "I shall never again be subdued." But when Thou didst hide Thy face, I was dismayed.

We must always see passages like these as part of historical events. They are not just expressions of religious sentiments, such as we have, but involve impressive occurrences such as Moses' leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Suddenly the waters drew back and all the people crossed to the other side and were saved and they thought, "We shall never again be subdued!" And very especially were they elated when they saw the Shekinah,\* when Manna fell from Heaven; and everything was put in order under God's direct guidance. But when the people sinned and God hid His face, and they received no answer, then came the cry, "I was dismayed!"

We can hardly imagine what this means. In the first place, we have no idea what it is to talk with a Shekinah. Nobody in the world knows anything about this. We have no idea either how it is when God is angry. We do not even notice anything. We see much misery, suffering, need, and misfortune, even in our Christian undertakings, but everything

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\*Shekinah means "habitation" of God, the brightness of God's majesty which reveals His presence among men. This Shekinah appeared to the Israelites in the pillars of cloud and of fire during their journey through the wilderness, and it was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai as a gleam of the radiance of God's countenance. According to rabbinical interpretation, the Shekinah visited the devout but drew back in the face of the sins of men.



is so confused, that, as a rule, we no longer know what is of God and what is of the Devil. Therefore we no longer question anything.

Unless we are very clear-sighted we have no discernment. We do develop a certain uniformity of perception with the help of which we can stumble along, but that is not the real thing. The only reality is when we are clearly aware of and can say, "The Lord is present"; and, equally clearly, see when we have gone wrong, feel how terrible that is, and wonder how it happened. For instance, when Achan had stolen\* (how happy the people had been up until then), everything came to a halt. The people cried out, "What is it? What is wrong?" The slightest reverse was like a death blow. The thought that this was the end, that the thread which bound men to God had broken off, made their world crumble. That is how it was then and it was something tremendously great. We can no longer imagine it, so it is no wonder that today many do not believe there was a direct relationship with God, not just now and then, but lasting for centuries. If at times one of the prophets said the word of God was rare in the land, this does not mean there was no Bible. People did not place so much importance on the Bible, for they were used to being guided directly by men of God. They believed that without prophets, the Bible was of no use to them. And if there were no prophets

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\*see Joshua 7.

for a long time, they were dismayed. Then God was far away.

Now if we, too, had something which came to a sudden halt, we also would be dismayed. It is a pity that nowadays there is so little dismay when heavenly things cease among us. This happens sometimes but we are so used to it that when this happens, we simply carry on in our human strength. Occasionally we are shocked when a misfortune befalls somebody, but, as a people, we are no longer dismayed when God is no more among us; when, symbolically speaking, the Ark of the Covenant is lost.

I wish this dismay would come back to us. I should like to jerk our Christians back into the early Christian time and then back again into our present-day situation. I should like to jerk them to the side of the Risen One, who was able to make His voice heard in the situation of the time; into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who was also able to speak into the situation, and then back again to our own time which is full of the chatter of men. It is only men, men, men, who are speaking, and God is silent. For the way in which some Christians say, "The Lord has spoken with me," or, "The Lord has said this to me," is not enough for me. If only it were true! The imaginative thoughts of men, even if sincerely meant, are a long way from being of the Lord. Yet the very ones whom we are sure the Lord has not spoken to, are those who are most firm about it. Those things we know for certain are not from God, are the very things they claim with greatest

assurance to have from the Lord. There are demonic inspirations---there are even pious demons who chatter with the piety of angels. They are so pious I can't keep up with them! When human opinions claim to represent God and divine powers must retreat into the background because of the human noise, the situation becomes very difficult. Everything becomes paralysed and feeble; countless hungry and thirsty souls are neither fed nor watered. Then something, such as the Salvation Army, comes along and throws its hard crusts of bread to poor starving people, with, "Here, swallow this!" and snatches them off into their own particular fold. But we should not imagine that people can be driven to the Saviour by such violent methods. This is a low, human level of religion. Divine light is not created by this kind of restricted Christianity. If there is to be light, man must be silent and God must speak.

Will this ever happen? That is my hope, and my reason for hope is that there is something quietly at work; a little thread still continues on which is not of men. In Israel there was a little stream which ran on quietly for a long, long time until at last John appeared. Then Jesus came, and with Him something new began.

With us it is now like this: we too experienced a Shekinah to begin with--the Holy Spirit of the new covenant is none other than the voice of Jehovah of the old covenant--but then this disappeared. Now everything is quiet, just as it was in the post-Babylonian time. And now we too must



be dismayed, for we are at a standstill in the world and we cannot rise up into the light. This is why we pray, "O Lord our God, do not let us go on creeping along in this way! We've had enough of studying; in any case we cannot bring about anything new. Therefore rise up and speak once more! Speak from Heaven, and this time to the whole world, for finally Thy glory must break into all the world! And that will bring the end."

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1 John 2:28: And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

Yes, even if everything is quiet and the world has its way for a while and false Christianity is accepted, whoever becomes like a little child abides in the Saviour, and only in Him. Do not try to press yourself into a mold. Do not try to represent something in order to show that you are a Christian. No! Lie low--but abide in the Saviour! A time will come when Jesus will become known, and you with Him. The man will not be put to shame who remains faithful to Him; who remains confident, whatever happens; who cleaves only to the Saviour, however wrong everything seems to be, and who persists in the belief that he will be saved when Jesus appears.

Do I say too much? Or too little? My attitude is that with the Saviour I can stand above everything, wherever I am placed. Some people are always wanting to change from one church to another, but, as I have told many Catholics

already, "Please! Stay where you are!" There is no purpose in all this jumping around; the course of events will in any case soon turn everything upside down. We shall soon be in a different time. In whatever situation we are placed, we can still love the Lord! It is just here that the strength of the Spirit shows itself; when, bogged down by all kinds of nonsense, we can still say, "Away with all this nonsense! I belong to the Saviour!" There is nothing to be gained by this jumping back and forth by Catholics, Lutherans, or Calvinists. We just spring into a man-made heaven, and then we realize that the fires of Hell also burn there. We simply didn't see this beforehand. Therefore let us put our hope in the Lord alone. Then, when He comes we shall not be put to shame! It will not be very long now, and we shall experience great joy!

## 70.

## THE LAMPSTAND OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Psalm 135:14 (From the German): The Lord will judge His people and will be merciful to His servants.

We want to be His people, everywhere, in all places. We want the Saviour to work upon us in the power of the Almighty and not fail to deal with us, for this is how I would interpret the word "judge." Then all will be well with us. The only danger for us would be if God said, "You can go your own way! I am not interested in you; you can do as you like!" This is the worst thing that could happen. The consequence of this is that someone in Heaven comes and blows out the lamp. Then the light is out! Or, in the case of an individual, someone comes with a pen and crosses out his name. It is as it is written in Revelation: "I will spew you out of my mouth." That is, you will never again be mentioned in Heaven. We deceive ourselves if we think otherwise.

Well, we do not want to be counted among such people. We want to be counted among those who are spoken of in Heaven, who may perhaps be allowed to gather as a people who would have a lampstand in Heaven! This is my deepest wish. There is not yet a full and consistent representation of us all in Heaven on the basis of wholehearted, united striving for the Kingdom of God. The lamp has been blown out, and only by a great effort will it be lit again. True, there are little lights burning where there is true



fellowship in the Lord Jesus--of that we may be certain--but as a living Church, we have no lampstand. If we had a lampstand, there would be repercussions in the world; life would not be so monotonous. However, we should not underestimate the fact that at least some individuals have a little light up there and because of this, there is a forward movement on earth, in spite of difficulties. But of course my longing is that something of a living Church may be seen once more; that many people, however different their natures may be on earth, may become of one heart and soul because they have the same light in Heaven. That is our longing here at Boll. Think about it a little!

I know that with all this I expect a great deal of my friends. You should not think I find it easy to say things others will not say. It is one of the heaviest burdens I bear, yet it cannot be passed over in silence. It must be said again and again, and I repeat it today: there is no living Church, no people whose lamp burns in Heaven. There is so much godlessness on earth because God is not present in the way He should be. Godlessness would be restrained if there were a living Church. It often seems as though God were saying, "Let them go! It doesn't make any difference what they do now--everything is already in confusion!" And so there is no restraint. But there is nothing more dangerous than a people without government. We should, therefore, all the more carry on our hearts the prayer for Jesus to rule over us again.

Of course, then we must stop being obstinate, for when the Saviour rules, wonderful things happen. We may have to let go of what is dearest to us, things we have hitherto held as most precious. We have to be flexible. A man who waits and prays for the Kingdom of God has to be capable of changing. He must be like a servant who is always attentive to his master's wishes. He never knows what the next hour may bring and simply holds himself ready. In this way we can become a people who are allowed to serve, who experience powers and signs. Above all, we shall come to know God's judgment, and because everything is under judgment, we shall experience His infinite mercy. Judgment and mercy are woven together in a living way, therefore God can do great deeds and we shall say, "Jesus lives! Jesus Christ has done these things, not I!"

A people of Christ such as this should gradually be gathered together, gathered in a Biblical way, from all peoples, all languages, all tongues. Therefore let me also say, please don't be so terribly German, so terribly French, or Russian! Be prepared to see God's people come together from all nations! When the Saviour starts to work, He will not confine Himself to man-made boundaries or church-imposed limits. All kinds of blossoms will spring up out of the ground which cannot be made to fit any pattern. Therefore we should not bind ourselves to anything, apart from Jesus. Those who wish to belong to God's people and have the fulfillment of His Kingdom in mind, must at all times be

ready to take the plunge, must be prepared for Jesus' word of command, so that servitude to men can never find its way in. I also say this to my own household. If anyone wants to take sides in the name of Boll, I must say, "No!" Only a person who enters into fellowship with Jesus in a clear, simple way and makes the Saviour's loving influence felt on all sides, belongs to the true people of God. Then powers and signs will also be revealed.

Oh, if only this might come about soon and the lamp of God's people burn once more! Then many things would be set right. We would not need to settle things from behind a desk, for then the laws of Christ will be re-established. The mighty will be humbled and the lowly and genuine be exalted. In short, everything will be according to Christ, instead of according to the world, as it now is, where the clever ones dominate and the simple ones are written off. In that day the desolate will be comforted, the afflicted will be helped, those who are bound will be freed, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk. A sword should pierce our heart every time we see someone who is blind or deaf. Why must this be? Why do the blind not see, the deaf not hear? Why, when the Gospel includes this express proof of Christ's calling: "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk...the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up"?\* Why? Why?

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\* Matthew 11:2-5



That is why we should pray to God that our lamp be lit. Then we shall never be afraid. Tomorrow my dear D. will be able to hear, my dear friend L. will be able to see; all the lame people in my house will leap up. All the things that cause us so much grief will suddenly be gone. The terrible confusions of the soul, the temptations and perplexities, will all cease, for our lampstand will be lit! Our angel, the messenger between God and ourselves, is once more on the way. The connection is restored. Everything is working again on earth after the centuries-long lethargy of the members of Christ.

71.

## FOR THE TIME BEING\*

Isaiah 14:27: For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

1.

Such prophetic words strengthen us again and again on our journey through the world when so much uncertainty causes us to waver. At such times we wonder if God will really bring about the salvation of souls, as it is written. Are things going backward instead of forward? Our vision of the path and the goal often becomes blurred, and then many of us start to shake and tremble. "Will God really do what He intended?" As Christians we could also ask--not in unbelief but in a prayerful way--whether, through having Christ, we are any different from other people. Is it any different now than it was before the Saviour came?

Yes, of course it is different, and although it may look as if we were the same as other people, our situation has been changed. We certainly do have other objectives and hence a different road to travel, and we shall not be put to shame, even if the going is hard. Try to give expression

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\* Taken from the morning devotions of 11th, 12th, 14th and 15th of May 1887, the days of the illness and death of Hans Brodersen, a son of Gottlieb. For many years he was part of the intimate family circle in Bad Boll and, as gardener, also filled an important place in the external life of the house. Numbers 1 through 3 were lithographed for friends of Bad Boll. No. 4 was the second part of the morning devotions of May 15, 1887, and was available to me in a transcript.

to what Christ stands for! When we come to the end of time, we shall see how the same light shining then in the Day of Jesus Christ radiates right back to the time of the apostles. There it was a star, and beams of light radiate from it throughout the ages. On the Day of Jesus Christ this light will break forth like the dawn and the sun. The end and the beginning will be the same: there will be light, the sorrows of the world will be driven back, and we shall see that God fulfills His word, He carries out His purpose for the benefit of His people, and He will remain victorious over all lands. The Lord of Hosts has purposed it, and He remains Lord and Master on the way to its fulfillment. We should not be faint-hearted along the way, even if it costs many struggles and if many people have to die. His hand will lead us through; nobody can turn it back.

We, too, want to let this speak to us, right down to the smallest things. Everyone of us can draw strength from this, also when faced with tribulations. And now that this great and terrible need has come upon our household, I want, above all, to accept it as a judgment which had to come upon me so that I could know how things stand with me. But even though much more were to be heaped upon me, there is one thing I must not doubt: the hands of God will lead us to the ultimate goal; the goal which I feel in my heart cannot be wrong. During these days I have asked myself whether I am on the right track, for you can imagine what agony I suffer. If our Brodersen should die, it will be a greater calamity



for me than most of you realize. Yet it must be that I am right; the Saviour could not have said what He did just to make an impression. If I want this and accept it as the truth, though the most awful temptations come over me, I will not yield for any reason for the sake of the Saviour. Even if I were to perish, it would still remain true that, "The Lord of Hosts has purposed this--who will turn it back?" God so loved the world that He gave His son that the world would come to resurrection and to life. He wants to seek out the lost, strike down the Devil, make an end to death, and subdue all enemies in Heaven and on earth. Why does He say this if it will not become true one day? We cannot exaggerate the powers of the Lord Jesus over life; they cannot be too much for us. Only misery and distress can become too much for us. The Saviour who gives life and hope for life is always present, and we can let ourselves be filled by Him with pure hope, and with patient longing for God to go on until the end, to go on until the victory is gained.

2.

We are still troubled about my dear nephew. He is very sick. Inwardly I feel quite calm, but I am deeply concerned with the question of whether the Saviour will one day break through the barriers of nature. This momentous question has been on my heart for years, but as it turned out I have had to endure many a blow. Must I now suffer another one? It almost seems so! I will accept it; although one day I will indeed experience something else.

But if you dear friends will pray with me and ask that this time the Lord will be gracious and spare me this blow, I would be grateful. Perhaps the hardest thing for me is to see that Heaven is so full of light--and, praise God, I have often been permitted to see this--and yet at the same time to realize that everything on earth takes its natural course. That is the hardest thing there is! I have often thought that it would have been much easier for me if I had not experienced what I have; then I would reconcile myself to many things, as other people do. I often suffer the pains of Hell alongside the joys of Heaven, and my yearning is great, tremendously great, for God's glory to begin just there at the boundary between this world and eternity. I long for the tables to be turned and that we would no longer speak of leaving the world and entering eternity. No! Jesus must leave eternity and come into the world!

I shall persist in this, for only thus shall we be able to see an end to this agonizing situation. This agony will go on unless the tables are turned. We should not deceive ourselves into thinking it will ever be any different. It will never be any different, however much Christianity we summon up and however many churches we establish. You will not change the world one iota in this way; in reality everything will remain the same. We men also remain the same. We can only have hope for some of those who leave this world; then they are gone. They come into Heaven it is true, and this is fine, but we see them no longer. What a wonderful

thing it would be if, at such a separation, a light from eternity sprang up through which people were converted! And so it is with my Hans; when he has gone, then it is over with.

Well, now, I have lashed out at myself and my household, but I do not deceive myself. Even if God strikes the hardest blow and all hearts are shaken, it passes by. We grieve for three months, but then the tides of nature break over us again with such force that we are once more the same old people. I have no illusions about that!

This is what moves me in these days. That is why I say that the tables must be turned! I will not give up. My one prayer is, "Lord Jesus! Grant that there will be a change--from eternity into the world, not always from the world into eternity!" This is what we need. May the Lord hear our prayer and look graciously upon us, that at last light and truth may spread over all the earth.

### 3.

Today the burial of our beloved Hans is uppermost in our hearts. I have the feeling that we stand at the conclusion of a significant time, both inwardly and outwardly. Inwardly, because I can see it as nothing other than a rebuke from God for our whole household. I cannot find words today for all that moves me; I must ask God to say it for me. I can only say that in certain areas there must be a change; otherwise, we will have to undergo other trials.



Outwardly, this is a hard experience because our Hans was one of those upon whom, quietly, much depended, and upon whose work there was a blessing. We shall miss him very much. The Lord, who allowed this to happen and to happen so suddenly, knows what He has done in not permitting this mainstay to become what we had hoped. So we must go back to doing things as we did before. It will, and must be possible, for outward concerns must take second place in our hearts.

Isaiah 60:20: "And your days of mourning shall be ended."

When will our days of mourning be ended? When we have resigned ourselves to misfortune, perhaps, thinking time heals everything? Or when we find something else to occupy our minds and help us to forget our sorrow, as men do? That is not what the Scripture means by promising an end to our mourning! Our sorrows are not what other people call sorrows, those daily sorrows which confront them. The swift snatching away of our beloved Hans is the fruit of a much deeper sorrow which always confronts us. Don't think that I was taken un-awares; I expect still more to happen, and I tremble every day. I would not be surprised if many more things rained down upon us, for the ground on which we stand is extremely dangerous. Yes! I emphasize on which we stand. It is a fact that we are not understood by many people because of our history, even a cause of anger for some, but we have been consciously led to that great sorrow of mankind which is the embodiment of all the world's misery, in order that we may

oppose it with faith and endurance. For forty years outward progress has never been able to console or reassure us, although we are thankful for the good days we have occasionally had. But it is no consolation or reassurance, for we know that it is a matter of chance, as the world says, when a family experiences good times. And it certainly does not lie within our power to ward off the storms which threaten us. Even with the best of wills and the greatest of efforts, we still fall prey to the consequences of the fundamental sorrow and wretchedness upon which our life is based. It is as if we were skating on thin ice. Often when we make a particular effort to pull through, especially in some outward matter, the ice gives way under our feet, and that's the end of it.

I don't want to say that everyone is as conscious of this as we are. Therefore I stress that it is the way we have been shown. Because of this, we are always in extreme danger for our cause and our calling depend entirely upon the Lord; we can die and be swept away at any moment. Unfortunately, not everyone grasps this sufficiently; therefore so many grievous things happen. And the further we go upon this way the more dangerous it is, because we come closer and closer to the basis of man's suffering and have to deal directly with death.

What should our comfort be? The scriptures tell us everywhere, as also in this chapter of Isaiah, "Arise, shine; for your light has come." It is told here that in the end

God will come to His people with renewed splendor, new glory, and will bring into the world something quite different from what we have experienced till now--namely, complete victory over the wrong which is inherent in the perversity of our nature and in its consequence, death. Yes, we declare war on these things; truly, we will not resign ourselves to them! And when people say we come close to fanaticism, I will not be offended, although I know that I am more sober than all those who call me a fanatic. For if a man disregards the promises made in the Bible, which attack the root of the world's evil, and wants only to have superficial Christian forms, he is not on the right path. That man is on the right path who says with the Scriptures, "Up! We will await the glory of God which is promised in the Day of Jesus Christ." And so let us look forward to the time in which the days of our mourning shall be ended; when something comes from above which has never been in the world before, not even during the time of the apostles, something which heralds a new nature for all of creation. Then, step by step, we can simply tear down this world, we can very specifically tear down, tear down---and build up something new! That is the end of our mourning!

But we must also be ready for less pleasant things! Nevertheless, this is what has been promised to us and we must hold to it; it will surely come to pass if God is a God of truth. And He is a God of truth, as I can testify, for in the midst of deepest sorrow we experience the greatest



manifestations of God's faithfulness. Then we feel within us the time approaching when something completely new will begin.

Our text points toward this time:

James 5:7. Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.

This was even said by "straw James," (as Luther called him because he made little direct reference to the Saviour). Even this dry Epistle cannot disguise the fact that the future of Jesus Christ is the main part of Christianity. "This is how you should act for the time being," James is saying. "For the time being try to get through, until the Saviour comes." This is the way Jesus and the apostles also speak. Therefore, this "for the time being" contains no sure promise of houses, goods, husbands, wives, or children. Nothing is promised, nothing at all. All that is said is "for the time being," and if you are wise and seek first the Kingdom of God, you may perhaps receive some of these things. But when eternity approaches, take care! Then all your own concerns and undertakings will come to an end. It is remarkable that in this present time we are surrounded by all kinds of uncertainties and therefore a wise man makes the coming of the Lord the be-all and end-all of his existence and learns to say, "for the time being." We had our Hans "for the time being"-- and now "for the time being," we have him no longer. With the coming of Jesus Christ, "for the time being" will come to an end, and we shall enter into eternal possessions. When

everything Jesus brings from Heaven takes effect, then changes will take place which will bring us joy. For the moment we must deny ourselves, be patient, endure all things--it is only "for the time being."

And so we will take comfort in this sorrow too. It is only "for the time being"; the Saviour will come soon! Then your Papa will come too, Bertha! And many angels, and our dear Grandfather as well. Let us look forward to this!

## 4.

Matthew 18:19: Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.

Do you know two people who agree with one another? That is the biggest stumbling block! It is not so easy on earth to become one in a godly life. It is something for which I often hunger and thirst. Agreeing together should not mean that people hastily unite temporarily in the face of some calamity. It is not meant in such an outward way. What Jesus means is that two should be completely one before God and then, whatever happens, stand unitedly together. It is united understanding and oneness in the deepest, divine sense.

Everyone will lend a hand, for example, if a cousin lies sick, but if we say, "What has he to do with me? My only concern is for the Saviour!", then faith will soon cease. That is why I often say that we have a cousinly-Christianity. If our family is in some trouble, we stand together in faith, but if something in the Kingdom of God needs our attention,

we are slow to act. Do not be offended because I think little of our Christianity. It is so terribly egoistic compared to the Christianity of the apostles. Even our Christian literature is full of "I," "I"!

I say all this in justification of the Saviour, for people often write to tell me it is not true that prayers made in His name are heard. Of course it is true, but we lack the right spirit and proper understanding and often pray hard for things we should not pray for. Prayers for which we need to have an answer should be aimed higher, toward more universal concerns of the Kingdom of God, and we must forego many everyday things for the time being. Thus, I am completely reconciled to the death of my Hans, although I did pray for his life. But I would not think of staking my faith upon someone's not dying. I simply try to find out if some part of the nature of death can be broken down, not in order to save a particular person, but because I am indignant about the whole matter. Nobody can deny me this, for I see so much wrong happening when death is present. Perhaps others do not see it, but I see it, and that is why I am angry about the darkness which has robbed us of the clarity which we should have as the Church of Jesus Christ. Every time I see someone who is suffering, the main thing for me is not that the individual is quickly prayed back to health--although I would be glad to see this happen--but that we stand together in order that these things shall cease completely, that the



breeding place of all this poison is destroyed.

And if we stand together, we can bring it about, believe me! If we are united in crying out and in prayer, not for our own skins, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God, we can bring it about. When the Heavenly Kingdom comes, we shall realize that every step forward in God's Kingdom has been gained by prayer. Nothing has ever happened without someone's having stood up for it. The Scriptures also teach us this, so I don't mind being laughed at by people who tell me that men cannot bring about the Kingdom of God. Yes, men can do it! Look in the Bible! Men are able to bring things about. From the beginning on, it is men who have achieved something through prayer. Of course, God made the first move, but as a consequence of this, men were able to step in. Even the birth of Jesus came about through the prayer of Simeon.

Prayer, then, is of great significance for the Kingdom of God, especially when two unite to pray together. Then, because two people desire something true and genuine, God is justified in giving.

We will let this speak to us so that we may pray wisely and gain something for the Kingdom of God to the glory of God the Father in Heaven.

## 72.

## LISTENING PEOPLE

Isaiah 55:3: Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.

We must incline our ears and do this with our whole being, for the listener inclines his whole person toward the voice he hears. More than anything else, listening makes a man incline to one side or the other. And God wants us to become listening people, listening to what comes from Heaven. Connected with this is the promise that our souls shall live.

They knew what it meant in Israel when God said, "Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live!" The people of Israel knew this by experience. For the devout man it was as though he heard the voice on Mount Sinai, or as if he saw the angel coming to Abraham, or heard the voice that spoke to Samuel, or later, through the prophets. Then he knew: "Incline your ear, that your soul may live---for the Lord speaks!"

In Israel the devout could hear and learn much through the events in the temple, through the priest and the worship. A ministry for the care of souls was established where people could share freely and speak about things, and even answers from God were given through the priest. Later, too, when it was no longer possible in the temple, there were prophets, and the words of God were given to the people.

At times there was a veritable wealth of such words of God. It often happened that just when the people had become godless and God seemed to withdraw Himself, there was an abundance of His words in the land through the prophets. Dedicated men arose, and devout Israelites felt that here God was speaking to them. And those who listened received the command, "Incline your ear, and come to me!" That was something very precious, men stood on the same ground as God, as it were. Place and person faded away, and men knew that God was speaking to them.

Well, because God spoke, men received the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament. And with the Saviour and the apostles, God spoke even more; it seemed as if God had come down to earth. Through the Bible something has remained for us on earth to which we can turn and listen. It is not difficult for us to find the word of God, but we must enter into the attitude of the Israelites and, like them, have a personal relationship with God. The Bible by itself, detached from the revelation of God, is not enough. It remains the most wonderful book, the most moving, the most sublime, and the truest book. But it should be more than that! The Bible should create a bond between the God who speaks in it and ourselves. We, too, should come to the point where we stand on the same ground, as it were, and draw closer--not to the Bible, but to our beloved God. We must come to know and feel it: "God has spoken!"



That is why we have been given sermons, and I think we can also say of our conference that the Lord has spoken to us. He wants to tell us something! Whoever is touched in his heart by this, whoever feels something of the voice of conscience, of the voice of the Spirit, urging him toward new faith, new hope, new patience, new kindness, new certainty in the Lord Jesus, should know that this is a voice from the Lord, a voice from the Saviour. I am convinced that, one way or another, every one of us will have received a challenge from the Lord in these days. It does not lie in our, the preachers' hands to give this; it is a matter for the Lord our Saviour who speaks to each individual soul, and then again to our whole fellowship. He knows how to make us aware when He has spoken and when a true revelation of His name has come into our hearts. The Saviour in Heaven wants us to notice when He speaks. Oh, believe me! Help us a little to receive more strength from these days, more help, more comfort, more faithfulness in going the way of Heaven, more freedom, more gentleness, more humility.

Yes, the Saviour Himself wants to speak to us. He does not want us to be simply "religious" people; He is not concerned so much about forms. Believe me, we cannot please him simply by living a righteous life. Our righteousness is only a vessel through which the voice of the Saviour enters our hearts, guiding us so that Heaven is with us, ruling us, and giving us an ear to hear it. This is something much greater than the most wonderful

trip we could take. Much more is given to us through the voice of the Saviour than we could receive in listening to the most magnificent concert, the loveliest oratorio, or the noblest sermon. A listening ear makes us blessed: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" When we listen we are drawn in the direction from which the voice comes. When someone cries out, we turn quickly. When someone hears his name called, he looks around to see who called him; if it is an old friend, he hastens towards him. That is how it should be when we hear a voice from Heaven. And you ought to hear a voice. Something should penetrate our hearts so that we turn around and all day long listen for the Saviour who is our very best friend, so that we notice where He is, and turn our steps toward Him; so that we hear His voice and carry out our tasks under the direction of His voice.

Then our souls will live. This does not refer to our salvation, the Scriptures say very little about that. It goes without saying that someone who comes to the Saviour and who is upright, will not go into Hell. The important thing is that our souls are alive in this world, for we must be witnesses here; we must represent the Saviour here. Eternal life must unfold everywhere here on earth where there are still so many people who do not believe and who are involved in so much evil. This is what is lacking. There are many who live in Heaven, but I would say that, for the time being, they cannot help us very much. We need living people here,

and therefore I ask you to be listening people so that you can be living people, people who are alive here in this city, and who therefore can radiate eternal life. Then we shall receive true joy and eternal life, and we can say: God be praised and thanked, the Saviour lives! He can make us people of eternal life who no longer need be afraid of any tribulation; people who even overcome death, who die, but yet live. We are able to go into the deepest darkness and yet remain light. In this manner our souls can live.

Oh, dear friends, let us ask the Lord to open our ears, that we can listen to and receive something from Heaven. Then we can live according to the ways of Heaven and express ourselves in a loving manner, freely and spontaneously. Let there be no stiffness, no false pretense or hypocrisy; let us be as free as the Saviour. Let there be no bitterness, no harshness, no putting on a pious face, but only pure love, pure life. May the Lord grant this to us so that our life may become true! Oh, the wonders we will then experience! For when we truly live, we will also come to know and experience something of God.

That is what our text tells us.

Matthew 8:26: Then He rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

At that time the Lord Jesus was a man like any other. He was a simple man, a carpenter, one of the common people. He was no grand person who put himself above others. No! He was a very simple man! But God was with Him. He was a true Son of God--indeed, the only begotten Son of God!



However, it was not in this sense that He was allowed to rebuke the winds, as though by the sheer power of His being. The authority to do this came through His human obedience to the Father. As the Son of man He placed Himself and all the people of this world under the Father in a childlike, simple way, and was able to pray so deeply and sincerely that the Father could say, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," and, "He will always be heard." As our Saviour Himself said, "I know that Thou wilt always hear me." He, too, was dependent upon prayer, just as we are.

He stood there and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. It was a tremendous event. I cannot now give you an explanation of what this storm actually was, it would take too long. I can only indicate that very often evil lies behind such winds. The satanic world wanted to destroy the Saviour upon the sea. Demons in the clouds and in the atmosphere, about which Paul speaks, were in this wind, and it was these Jesus rebuked and ordered away. This was the kind of thing which happened around the Saviour so men would know that now Heaven was at work upon the earth. We, too, should be able to experience similar things, for those who stand with the Saviour also have the Father at their side. Tremendous events will have to take place before the end, so prepare yourselves for great things to happen such as Jesus promised to His disciples.

Today we want to remember that when we live in the truth, we shall also experience something in our lives. It

would be the greatest joy for me to hear that here in Strassburg people experience something in their lives. To be sure, you can experience very much in the world, but I tell you, however pleasant such experiences may be, they are nothing and soon pass away. You must cease finding the gratification in them that people usually do. The more we become people who listen to the voice of Heaven, the more we can become people to whom meaningful experiences are given. Heaven can work deeds among us by which we can see that God is truly with us, in Jesus. Something happens.

Today many people no longer believe that something can happen; they spend their time analyzing the miracles. Strange people! A short time ago I was at a conference where they also talked about miracles, whether such things were possible, and what we should think about them. I did not stay long. Of what interest to me is all that idle chatter! I know that Heaven does act even today, and even the most miserable human being can experience something. We don't have to speak at length about miracles as long as we do experience something wonderful in our lives. It is all the same to us whether the professors and theologians believe it or not. I can only tell you, I would not be standing here if I had not experienced so much. There is nothing remarkable about me. Because I was one of the most ordinary people in the world, I know that it is possible for anyone to experience Heaven and to become a blessing,

a person able to carry out a task in this world. For when such a person is around, whom God has worked upon, everyone feels happy in his presence; something is alive there. Believe me, you are all destined to experience something of Heaven! Do not be so concerned about the things of this world. A single experience of Heaven is worth much more than anything the world has to offer---just one experience in which we feel that this time the Saviour has touched us. This is our joy and gladness.

Oh, what wonderful works could take place if we joined together in this longing; if we were more united as a Church of Jesus! What wonderful things the Saviour could do! I hope that this will soon come to be, for many people stand in need of it. How greatly does a large city like this need it! How many people live here whom we never reach! How urgent it is for the Spirit to come from above again, for experiences to come from Heaven.

Well, dear friends, the Saviour calmed the winds and the sea. Let us believe that He also wants to be with us and that deeds of God will happen among us. Above all, let us believe that darkness, all that is demonic and evil, will be driven out of the world, and that we will see the great victory when the Lord Jesus comes as Master, Lord, and Saviour, to the glory of God the Father.

Let us rejoice that we can be united with Him, and let us hasten joyfully to meet Him with listening ears so that our souls may live.



## 73.

## TIMES OF TESTING

Isaiah 8:17: I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.

Thus spoke the prophet, in the name of the grieving people. Israel always had a feeling for whether the Lord was present or not. I would say that it is fortunate if we are able to say, "The Lord is not present." At least, I cannot see what good there is in people persuading themselves that God is present when He definitely is not! I meet a great number of people who say, "The Lord said to me...", "The Lord led me...", "The Lord did this," or "The Lord did that." Just the other day I met someone who was quite filled with what the Lord had said to her, but, as I found out later, she was dealing with devils--quite literally so!

Even when it does not go so far as satanic delusions, it still is not right for a person to want to have the Lord for himself only. I observe this attitude in letters, in the many pious phrases people use. They often refer to the Saviour in the most unseemly terms. They are always writing, "My Jesus." I should like to give such people a box on the ears every time. What? "My Jesus"!--you? He is your Lord! We should not speak so irreverently of the Saviour, we should be modest and God-fearing and not talk so thoughtlessly.

Although we can always be sure of God's protection, the attitude we take does make a difference; and we should be able to accept it when we are told that the Lord has hidden His face from the house of Jacob. It won't do any good to deny it. That is just how it was in Moses' time when some said, "It is all the same whether we have prophets or not, or whether miracles take place or not; we shall still find salvation." But it is not all the same. When the face of the Lord shines brightly, the affairs of the people of God will run otherwise than in times when He hides His face. It is important to be able to distinguish between these times. I see it as a serious fault that nowadays we are not allowed to say that the Holy Spirit is lacking here or there, or that, on the whole, the Churches know nothing of the face of God. What shall I say? I know I meet with a great deal of anger and hatred, but to me this is proof that I am right. Men go their own ways; the Lord is what they do, what they decide. Men are not expected to think about it at all, and I am supposed to submit my understanding and discernment to human laws. But I, for one, will not do this! When I see falseness among Christians, when I see that things are done in a human way, I say that this is not the Holy Spirit. It is man's spirit. It is not God's face but man's face. This is obvious in those people who are always bickering and shaking their fists at others who think differently. Something other than God sticks out whenever this hardness and divisive desire appear. We must be able

to discern this and say, "Something is wrong; let us humble ourselves!" This eternal myth, "There is nothing wrong, nothing at all; all is peace, all is well," is absolutely no help; it is a fact that something is wrong! But if, knowing all is not right, we continue in faith, it is of much greater worth than trying to pretend that everything is all right.

In the daily lot and life of individuals, it is also of great value to let ourselves be told when something is wrong or has been wrong. We should be able to hear this without becoming depressed, as though God were not supposed to take the rod to us any more because we are so good, and as though He has to be exceedingly careful about what He says to us at all! Let me say again, however, it is a blessing when someone sees that something has been wrong in his life and that because of this, God has turned away and hidden His face. But it is a greater blessing to remain faithful, to live in hope until God turns His face to us again. We could say that the onward march toward salvation takes place through this succession of times of grace and of judgment.

It just is a fact that God cannot leave us in permanent possession of the gifts of grace. Some people believe, for example, that because we are baptized everything in us will be reformed automatically. On the other hand, when they see disorderliness among Christians they say, "We don't think much of baptism!" Either they make



God into a barrel organ so that men just need to turn the handle to produce something, or they do not believe at all.

That is how it is when I say that we lack the Holy Spirit. Immediately people cry out, "He believes there is no Holy Spirit!" But with this formal, rigid, almost heathen kind of religion which men bring into Christianity, completely excluding any possibility of personal intervention by God, we shall finally become like the dumb brutes. We grope our way through the world with our mechanical rules, looking neither to right nor left, having no understanding of the needs of people, and not seeing where we, as servants of Jesus Christ, should spring in to help. Therefore I say that it is impossible for God to keep us wrapped in wool for all the time we are in this perverse world, and for Him to say, "There, now all Heaven is yours! You will of course never lack anything. You can behave any way you want, it will not matter at all." No! Times will come in which God hides His face and allows us to fall to sighing. Often this will be without any guilt on our part, but at times it will also be our fault.

Usually such times, from our point of view, are times of testing. I would also call them times of judgment, but here again I put my foot in it. When I mention judgment to somebody, he thinks right away of eternal damnation. A tremendous error has crept in here: people believe they will no longer be judged when they are under grace. This comes from an unspiritual approach to the Bible. Because of the

text, "He who believes in Him is not condemned," men think that God has bound His own hands and cannot reproach His children when they go wrong. God, however, is free, and our conscience also tells us that we must go through much judgment, even if we are under grace. God does not want anything wrong to remain in us. I do not see how someone who cannot accept this can be a child of God. And so we should not be afraid of judgment. We can even be very happy about it, especially when it becomes clear what is wrong in us. After all, the main object of God's judgment is to show where the wrong lies. And when this comes out, and we humble ourselves and repent, much good can come of it.

Then we can wait in hope. According to Scripture this is how all the children of God have waited; they hoped in the Lord, Jehovah, through whom they felt drawn, and they felt that in Him they could draw closer to salvation. That is why there is in Scripture always a yearning for revelation, for clear guidance, for signs and wonders; in short, a longing for extensive manifestations of the Lord, so that one could tell who feared the Lord and who did not, so that the nature of God could be revealed. This is what all the devout wished for; this was important for them.

We may ask whether we, too, can wait and hope in this way. The way we now hope is not Biblical. We hope, but expect nothing. In Biblical expectation men thought of the significance that a prophet or a priest could have

for them. Men expected signs and powers of God, and in the absence of these they cried out, "Now something is lacking, the Lord has departed!" But when these signs were present, they said, "Now the Lord is in the land!"

In the new Covenant we can have the same expectation and, for myself, I make bold to say that I will have this, although I will not press it upon anyone else. My greatest longing, the aching that fills my whole life, is for true, actual manifestations of God's nature which cannot be confused with what is human and earthly. I think I should die if I could not and did not know this, for I am all too conscious of the deception in the world. The noblest and most devout souls, the most exalted generations, will go astray if they continue for a long time in their own strength. The whole history of the Church tells us that men go astray when they do not wait in hope for the Saviour to oppose them, to oppose them very concretely, intervening in their lives so they can say that now there is nothing of man or man's doing; now there is nothing earthly or human, but only God.

If this does not happen, the individual can go very much astray. Therefore, for the benefit of all poor people on earth I say: "Hope and wait for the Lord! Hope and wait for the Lord!" He lives today just as He did in times of old. You may also hope and wait for powers, for miracles and manifestations of God's Spirit, which are certainly not here at the moment. Hope and wait for these for your time,



for your family, for your children! You have the right to hope for a sign from your God. The world is not the only thing--on the contrary, the world is unimportant. God is also here, and with Him we shall destroy the whole world. Of what good is the world to us, and all the world's developments! They are absolutely nothing if the living God does not finally reveal Himself to man as decisively different from this world. I expressly say "decisively different." In blunt terms: I want to be filled without earthly bread! I want to have lived without such material things; even, perhaps, without the world at all--I do not want it! That is how I stand, even if alone. I have such a horror of everything that is merely of the earth, of time, of nature! These things are the most paltry. Yes, may God have pity on us!

When we do hope and wait, we shall also experience something; we shall not wait in vain. God allows Himself to be found. To me it is of great importance that for the forty years we have been crying out, we have been in the midst of tremendous experiences. It is only a pity we have to remain so quiet about these things! If you only knew all that has happened because of my father's insight. He felt that on the one hand we do not have what we need, and on the other hand, he had the confident expectation that we shall receive something, that there is something we can have! If everybody knew this, we should discover that we do not hope and wait in vain. We can already see

something! What might I have been? People shout at me that I am only aping my father or that I am an unscientific person. But I only sit quietly here and do nothing very special. The Saviour does something, however! There is not just a vacuum here--there is life! The reason for this is not that I am a smart business man, as the saying goes, but because God has shown Himself to us. There will be manifestations if we hope in Him. The Spirit will enlighten us about many things so that we do not remain ignorant but receive clarity to enable us to find our way in joys and in sorrows. We shall not be bowled over when something serious occurs, nor over-exuberant when something joyful happens. That is how it will be with us now.

I can truly say that I am a witness firstly for the fact that we do not have the Holy Spirit or the powers of God which could be ours if we were more alert. Secondly, however, I can testify that we could receive these, that they could be set in motion as soon as we understand and accept God's judgments, the hard times, for what they really are; as soon as we are no longer satisfied with the world, with the human spirit, and with the spirit of the Church. (For the Church spirit is in no way the Holy Spirit, you may think what you like of me, but you cannot expect me to believe that!) We must stand quite clearly at the side of God, setting our sights upon the place where true help comes, until at last Israel stands completely under grace. And we know where this will lead: to the great revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

74.

## THE NEST

Psalm 84:3: Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God.

This is an Israelite saying which perhaps we cannot quite understand. At least, very few people can grasp what the Israelites must have felt. We can tell this by the theological disputes which go on today. Theologians seldom look behind the scenes, and often they see only what lies on the surface, which is not at all Israel. They fail to see the deeper Israel and therefore cannot grasp it. The essential thing about Israel was her visible, tangible, practical relationship with God.

Outwardly, Israel's altars looked about the same as those of any other nation, only the sacrifice and the ceremonies were somewhat different. But for Israel the sacrifice was totally incidental--much more incidental than our own Church rituals are in relation to the Word of God we listen to. Sacrifice, for the true Israelite (the false ones were as little regarded as false Christians are among us), meant that his heart was filled with the conviction: "We can speak with our beloved God. In Him we have a dwelling place and through His Name, Jehovah, we are assured of the all-powerful protection of the Creator." Because of this there was a tremendous longing for the dwelling place of God. This was the source of



the glorious achievements of Israel right up to the present day.

If we are true Christians we see that also from this Israel comes our conception of God. Unfortunately, however, we have corrupted it and turned it into a philosophy. All of our religious understanding comes from Israel because there a real, specific meeting with God took place. A nest was built on earth, and in it were young ones. That is to say, again and again something human became godlike, or something of God became human, until finally the Saviour came in the flesh and built the nest for Himself in a new way.

We now occupy this nest and can even shout for joy and say triumphantly, "The sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself." The nest is ours! We exult not because of our beautiful churches or because of our parsons, whom we call "believing," but because we feel a movement of God. The nest in its earthly, outward shape is of no importance. The house is incidental and can take different forms. Every snail has its own house, but the snail is more important than the house. We feel true joy in our hearts as soon as we notice that it is God who deals with us, that the Saviour turns His attention toward us. I want to express this strongly because here I differ, and want to differ, from other people, though I often may be misunderstood. The main thing is that the Saviour has a relationship to us, not that we have a relationship to Him. That is our joy and our nest. Still today the most wonderful thing is to see something of God in an

earthly form so that we have a nest here on earth. That is why I have so often said that I do not want to go to Heaven; I am in no hurry at all. I want to have my God here, on earth, in this evil, sinful, deadening world. It is here that I want to experience at last God's Revelation, when everything will become Heaven. This has begun already in very tiny nests throughout man's history. Today the nest is quite large if we look at Christendom as a whole. There is at least a wide area where divine powers can work, and they do work here and there in all lands, although we may not always see them. Ultimately the veil can be drawn aside, and an enormous area will be revealed to us as the House of God.

That is the joy of the children of God. And in our greater striving for the Kingdom of God, as also when we think of our own souls, I would wish that we turn our thoughts more to what God does in us than to other things, which often only make us fearful. There are so many people who are fearful, who think only about themselves, who are full of uncertainty. This paralyzes, hinders, and holds them back. We may be quite sure that God will come to us. Whoever has a sincere heart need not be afraid. The vital thing is that the bond God has made with us through the Saviour and through His Spirit shall not be loosened, but shall continue firm and strong.

It is often said that the Spirit of God, the personal relationship of God to us, is given as a matter of course

through proclamation of the Word and the Sacrament, and we need only be concerned about our personal salvation. This makes the Kingdom of God look like a factory; if I fit myself into it like a wheel, as it were, the machine will run and I shall be shaped automatically. But it is not like that. The Spirit of God is not, as someone has said, an immanent power, that is, always present and always to be had. No! The Spirit of God is a person who can come and go, who can be angry or mild, just like God in Israel. And if we act foolishly, He will leave us, perhaps for hundreds of years. We could even lose the Spirit of God completely; then we would not have our house.

It is therefore essential that we seek a relationship to God. Everything else will come of itself. We must, especially if we want to be sure of the hope of eternal life, be quite certain that God hides His face for only a short time and soon shows Himself again. When we see what is wrong and set things right, there will once more be works of God. For me, at least, the sweetest comfort is that God returns to us. Though there is little to be seen at the moment, I am comforted in the knowledge that we shall have a nest once again. We must only stand before God in a sincere and deep-going way and say to Him, "Dear Father, you have given us the Saviour; grant now that something new happens among us!" We can be sure that God will not give up His plan. It is absolutely certain that through the Saviour a tremendous event will take place on earth. This will lead to the culmination,



when the struggle comes to an end and the age of peace begins. Then we shall have a real altar, a true nest.

75.

## GOD'S WEB

Today is the 13th of July, the birthday of our beloved grandmother of blessed memory, so we can truly call it a blessed birthday. Yes, when we are in Heaven, our birthday is a blessed one, for then we see more clearly the purpose of our life. Now Grandmother knows this too. It is true she was one of those fortunate beings who, even while on earth, knew why they were here. Nevertheless, however blessed a person is, this is something known incompletely and imperfectly. A great illumination will surely come over even the most enlightened person upon entering eternity, where light is. Let us then quietly rejoice in this birthday, a birthday that is in the light. And since it is a birthday for us all, we are glad to know that at least a part of our being is in the light. Indeed, a good part: Grandmother and Grandfather. For we know and, praise God, feel in our hearts that their lives have been given into light, to the praise of the Saviour.

We, too, want to remain in the light so that our lives may all be illumined for as long as we are here, to the greater glory of the Saviour. We must vie with those in Heaven. It is up to us on earth to shine forth in earthly weakness and up to those in Heaven to shine forth in eternal clarity. Now, who will get on the best? Go to it, children,

go to it lest we be put to shame! It is a race. Those over there and we here have a common goal; we stand on different levels, but we work together and strive together. They do their duty over there, and we do our duty here. If we do our part eagerly and with all our hearts, there will be great joy when, as we can really hope, we meet again, whether those from over there come to us or we have to go to them. They will come to us when the Saviour comes. Should He delay His coming, then many of us will have to go over there, but let us not take this so hard. Of course, we would like it best if our separation ended completely and we could all be together. When this happens, that will be the consummation of God's Kingdom.

Exodus 6:2-3: And God said to Moses, "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord (Jehovah) I did not make myself known to them.

A wonderful saying! We can see how God slowly comes closer to man, becomes more and more like man, until at last He becomes flesh and it can be said that God was in Christ. First He is the Creator; then, before the flood, the zealous God, zealous for His creation; after that, the God Almighty who spoke to Abraham; and later, the Jehovah-- I can only say the more human Jehovah--who spoke to Moses. He is always the same God.

Looking back from the time of Moses, we can see that He was always the same; the name Jehovah was also used in the story of Abraham. It is not meant here that the name



of Jehovah (or Lord) did not exist in the times of old-- that is not the meaning of "I did not make myself known to them." The name did exist, it is expressly stated that the name of Jehovah was preached and proclaimed to the generation of Abraham, so there was a historical setting in which the name of Jehovah was cradled. Thus, the name was used, but it was not until Moses that Jehovah made Himself known for what He is and revealed His character and will.

This is the beginning of something quite new. God Almighty is now in and with the people, and His miracles and almighty powers are manifested within human society. In a general way, we can say that before this, it was from Heaven above that the omnipotent God performed miracles in creation as well as by way of remarkable leadings. Everything came down mightily from above. Noah was not able to do anything, neither was Abraham, nor Jacob. Everything came down from Heaven. Consequently, not as much was demanded of these men. Even if they took wrong ways, everything was still brought to fulfillment from Heaven above. Think of the sons of Jacob! They were dreadful people and all deserved to lose their heads. In later times this would have happened, too, but as long as Almighty God was not yet on earth, they could get away with it. But now, with Moses, Almighty God is down here; now He is consistently present, and it is Moses who performs the miracles. A new time has begun. God no longer intervenes directly from

above, but always through men.

That is the revelation of the name Jehovah. From now on there must always be instruments for Him; He wants to enter into mankind. The reason for this is that now it is not just individual persons whom God has to guide--no, many people are to be encompassed--a whole nation. God dwells among them and events take place. And it is through these events that the name of Jehovah comes fully into being--"I AM." It is not meant in the heavenly sense, "I Am! I Am He who is in Heaven," but, "I Am He who is on earth." That is the difference between the name Jehovah and the name Elohim, God: "I am in the world; I am the God who makes history; I am your history." As it is written in the Revelation of John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come on earth."

Thus, through the name Jehovah, a heavenly web has been woven into human society--this is what Israel represents. By earthly standards Israel is a real mess; an awkward and idolatrous people. For a long time they were not even up to grasping what God had in mind for them. But no matter! It is quite unimportant whether they are awkward or not. The main thing is that God's web, in the name of Jehovah, never ceases. Even though Baal rises up in between, as the anti-Christ does with us, yet, God's web is there in Israel, and this is what makes them God's people. We are aware, of course, that in the beginning clear manifestations of God took place, but for centuries these were not understood.

It was only after the Babylonian captivity that Israel began to reach some understanding, but by the time the Saviour came, there was again unclarity. Wanting to be regarded as God's people on earth, they brought in an earthly and human piety. This is the same error we suffer under even today.

But now Almighty God, who first of all spoke directly from Heaven, whose will was then made known in words and deeds through Moses and the prophets, comes down even further: God was in Christ. The Word became flesh, yes, became a man who slid down into the pit of human destiny, even into death itself. So we can justifiably say now that God was in death. God was in the flesh; God was in death; God in Christ descended right into Hell. Do you now understand why the Saviour had to die? Quite simply because He wanted to bring all of mankind into community with God, including the dead and the dying. With Him, something of God wings its way into all graves. That is something very wonderful when we see people such as our Grandmother die. Something of God goes down into the graves. The Saviour won this for us, descending into the grave, into the very depths of the world of death. And so, even before we rise again, our bodies, having something of God in them, are prepared for the Resurrection, which will also come swiftly for many.

So deeply has God's cause entered human affairs! You can imagine what strength there is in this. Now you can say: Jesus is Victor! The important thing now is that



we do want this divine power which, with the Saviour, is able to penetrate even into death. The main issue is not that you are a Christian, but that God is in the world, that the Saviour carries on with us stupid people. There are many rough and ready people who do more for the Kingdom of God than the most polished; their hearts are so sincerely turned toward God that there is always a band of angels around them. Their lives are surrounded by a heavenly web, by experiences of Heaven.

We rejoice in this, also thinking of our beloved Grandmother, and we want to follow in her footsteps. When we think of Grandmother, it does not occur to us to praise her as though she had been a perfect woman. Not at all! Believe me, I do not want to hear any fulsome praise of my mother; whoever speaks in this way does not know what he is doing. What we do praise is that she wanted only that we be surrounded by divine powers, that the events of our lives became heavenly events. For as long as I can remember, I recall that we were always conscious of divine powers---always. Suddenly a little light came on here or there. And what a joy it was to us and to Grandmother when something happened, when after many dark and heavy times a light and a contact with the Saviour suddenly came again. These things increased more and more so that the Saviour was really able to work among us, and Grandmother also had a part in these experiences. That is what we want to be grateful for. Do you understand?

This is what we too, must now work toward, dear friends. I invite you to do this, all of you, for it is something that is lacking in Christendom. People want to be good Christians so that they can go to Heaven--as if it depended upon our goodness! That is very, very wrong. God is not concerned about how good and saintly you are; the greatest saintliness on earth is still counted as dirt in Heaven. That is not the way to do it, and if we sit here looking like angels, it wouldn't do anything to help the Kingdom of God forward. It is helped forward, however, if we have a sincere heart, and an angel comes and takes hold of us and places us here or places us there; if a whole web of God's leadings is spun and is laid upon us with such power that we can hardly breathe. The kingdom of God is helped forward when judgment and chastisement come upon us so that nothing we do is overlooked, so that we have to deny ourselves, surrender ourselves, so that instead of rising up in the world we are driven into divine experiences. And if you want to be part of this, you must give up your comfortable existence and only want what is of God. That is how the Kingdom of God will be pushed forward. Then all that is imperfect in us will be set right, and the perversities and the stubbornness of our life and nature will not be so harmful but will be straightened out as soon as we are involved in the affairs of God. But while I remain outside the deeds God does in Christ, however good I am, it will be of no help to the Kingdom of God.

It is difficult to talk of these things because they lie outside of people's experience. There is much I could say about what God has done for us in these forty years, but it is too early to do so. He has done great things, though, and when we celebrate such days as this, believe me, we feel no trace of human nostalgia whatsoever. That is so unimportant for me. The human side of Mama is completely secondary, although of course it was also quite wonderful. The other side, which caught us up and would not let us go, the web of heavenly deeds which came from the Saviour, came so mightily to the fore that it brightened all our joys and sorrows. Yes, our tribulations were also brightened by it, and we did not lack for these, neither before nor after our dear Grandmother was called home.

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Ephesians 2:8: For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.

Now we understand the expression "by grace." You know what grace is. You have been saved from Heaven above; salvation has come down to you from Heaven. Almighty God, through the Saviour, has come upon you, grabbed you by the hair, and set you down with the words, "There, child of man, now be saved!" That is what "saved by grace" means. Again you see it is not because of your goodness. That is quite wrong. Oh, if only I could drive all this goodness out of present-day Christianity! I would like to take a



whip to all these pious people; their attitude contorts the Bible like nothing else--everything is turned upside down! To be saved does not mean becoming good. In that case, the battle would be over; but in fact we are still in a battle with sin. That is why the Apostle Paul tells us to renew ourselves daily in mind and spirit, to take off the old man and put on the new.\* Now work begins: you can stand in the midst of the dissolute world, in your sinful body, and do something through grace. You can work as men who have become free--"saved" means to be delivered, freed from imprisonment--and you are told: now work through faith! This is where faith comes in. It is not said that we shall be saved through faith--that is not true; it is a delusion. No, we shall be saved by grace! Afterwards we shall, through faith, hold firmly to what has been given, to what is already in existence, just as Abraham did. Once, after God had appeared to him in a vision, Abraham said, "I will never let go of this," and it was counted to him as righteousness. Also when Samuel, as a boy, heard his name called by an angel it struck him like lightning: "What is that? I am going to hang on to this--it must be from Heaven!" From then on he was a man of revelation. Thus faith means holding fast to that which has been given, and then even more is given. Therefore it is said: from grace to grace, from faith to faith, on and on. And so we

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\* See Ephesians 4:23.

can go on working, always by holding on to God's gifts and letting them increase, until finally, through God's gifts and words, we become completely saved.

Let us do this. I hope that everyone will see and hear something; surely something, however little, can be felt. Israel, in its time, had the task of holding fast to what God had given to Moses and to those around him, and of praying that this remained with them and never let go of them. In the same way we, the children of our parents, say that our task is to hold fast to the example of our father and mother. Hold firm, saying, "That is how I also want to live." We all want to be like our Grandmother. The most wretched person can say this. You need not be so awfully good for this; you may be a bit off the right track at times, but you must be humble enough to say, "I am only a good-for-nothing, yet I want to be like Grandmother; I want to receive a gift of God as she did, and I want to be like Grandfather too." That does not mean wanting to be as clever a person and as great a preacher as he was. We can be like him in a very quiet way, without any preaching, through a gift of God. We can all hold fast to this together; we will never let go of what God gave through our parents. We would rather lose the whole world than give up what God showed us at that time.

In this way we, too, will have what was given then. Hold fast to God's gifts--this is faith! And when we do feel something of God's powers, we are going to be pilloried for it, that is really true. I have been terribly attacked

in my time for "imitating" my father. Yes, it was given to me to see something all the while he was alive, and I had sense enough to say, "That is what I am going to be too." Of course, I was a completely different person than Grandfather. I never thought of all this when I was young; I was too dense. But then it dawned upon me just what was happening, and I thought to myself, "Now I have got it--this is what I must hang on to--every bit of it! If Papa experienced miracles, I want to experience miracles; as it has been with Papa, so it must be with me also. This you must grant me, dear Saviour!" And I did stick it out, simply because it was a gift of God.

It is a shame when children let go of something that was given to their parents. People think mistakenly: it's only to that person or that human being that special gifts are given. They cannot believe that through a gift of God others, too, can receive it. There is no greater disgrace than when something from God is given to parents and their careless children allow the thread to slip through their fingers. People say that spiritual gifts cannot be handed on. Really? Then we would have been nicely tricked indeed! What was given to our parents we can hold fast to; it is a gift of God. It is available to anyone. Nobody needs anything else beforehand, for it is given by grace, grace, grace! Hold on to it! And should someone come and alarm you by saying you are not yet good enough, cry out, "No! it is given by grace; it is a gift of God." Be courageous.



When you see that you are sinful and full of imperfections and have the feeling that you can't possibly receive a gift, tell yourself, "Be quiet, you accuser; it is given out of grace! It is God's gift."

This is how the individual person can do something, and this is how we must be. Do not give up! Take courage! We need people with a little boldness for God's cause. There are so many who give up too quickly, who can't wait long enough. Let us together hold fast so that the thread shall not be broken. Say, "I want to be like Grandmother. If she had an angel, if there was a power of Jesus by her side, inspiring divine events around her, then I want this too. I want nothing of this world." In this way the most simple person can receive strength to let something of God happen, and because it is by grace that it happens, it will not make us proud. But whatever stems from our terrible goodness will make us proud.

76.

## THE LEGACY OF A MAN OF GOD

Today we have another birthday in Heaven. This was our beloved father's birthday when he was among us. Now it is different, but still it is a festive day. Our memories of him are so powerful, it is almost as if he were still alive. Would to God it could remain like this until a new and different time breaks in upon us. I would be sorry if our father's influence were to disappear, and I do have some anxiety on that account. Time is our greatest enemy. People say that time is our greatest friend because, of course, everything can be forgotten in time, but it is questionable whether this is good. In any case, it often pains me when I think of the time we live in which, to speak bluntly, carries us ever further and further away from Jesus. We really are, to a certain extent, growing further away from the Saviour. That is why I am apprehensive about this time.

The events we experienced with our father were quite small in scale, yet spiritually they were very great. He was the first man in a long time who was instrumental in working miracles and signs. Before him no one thought of such things. The bread of Christian thoughts and joyful, courageous faith which you now eat every day did not exist at the time my father was born. The ideas concerning the Kingdom of God which we have today also did not exist at

that time. Certainly there were still ripples from Bengel's\* time when there was a somewhat narrow-minded expectation of the second coming of Jesus Christ (which was to be around the year 1836), but hardly anyone thought of all the things that now stir Christendom. In particular, nobody thought of actual miracles, of the healing of the sick through prayer and intercession. The deeds of God which shone forth in my father, in the face of which he himself quite receded into the background, were completely new. In him something of God was able to break through, although people generally reacted unfavorably, and there was always a reluctance about giving him due respect.

But for us it remains an experience of divine deeds, and it is even more precious because these were not connected with an especially great man. Papa was a very simple person, always quick to withdraw. God was to do it all Himself. Papa did not move a hand. He never laid down rules or regulations, neither for us children, nor in the house. The Saviour was to be left free to arrange everything according to His will. That is how it still is with us today; it is the character of our Christianity. There are no commands; everyone leads a free life, always keeping in mind that the Lord has to do it, not we. We must live by miracles, not by rules; by plans which come from Heaven, not by our own ideas. All of this resulted from the whole testimony of Papa's life: "Await the Lord! Keep clear of a mechanical,

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\*Johann Albrecht Bengel, a leader of the Swabian Pietist Movement, who died in 1752.



organized life; our Christianity knows no rules." I never met a man who took the word "justification through faith, not by works" as seriously as my father. He would not accept any rules or regulations for himself or for others. Whatever did not originate in freedom was not, for him, true piety. Yet it is remarkable how scrupulous he was, even in the smallest matters, and he expected those around him to be the same. Without saying a word himself, he expected the Spirit of God to reveal to people all that was evil in them. It was never his concern to have here a pleasant house devoted to edification, where, for a time, people could live piously and contentedly. If people's consciences were not touched and made sensitive in regard to matters of the spirit and, in particular, to their own failings, he found his whole work a burden.

That is how it is till this day. It would be sad if we were just a group of people living together in an outward show of piety. Let us rather be, and look, a little less pious, if only the main goal can be achieved: that we all feel the inward compulsion through the Spirit of God to recognize sin for what it is, and to seek righteousness. Morally, it comes to the same thing: we do not become moral through our own exertions or by laws, but only through God's Spirit.

It was therefore quite natural for our dear father to pray always for the Holy Spirit, for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But this angered almost everybody.

He did not work it all out dogmatically, yet on looking back, I feel there was something prophetic in his praying for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I can testify that my father placed every Christian above himself. He always esteemed others highly, especially all that was accepted as Christian in the world, and he never passed judgment. He was always warm, humble, and kind toward everybody, and never complained when they cold-shouldered him. One would imagine that a man like that, who had such a high regard for all Christians, would certainly never say the Holy Spirit was lacking among us. But he had to say this. Yes, he was right in saying this because the Holy Spirit simply was and is lacking. What disturbed him in Mottlingen was that, although the parish had experienced a conversion, there was no progress toward renewal of hearts. People are quickly converted--all of a sudden they wear a pious expression on their faces. But the power that will change the heart is lacking. Therefore a longing to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit should be part of our Christian ethic. This, too, should remain a legacy for us. There is so much that is right and true in this that I can say if he had done nothing else in his life but teach me to pray for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, my father would have done enough, for everything depends upon this. This is also the reason why the ethics and conduct of Christians cannot be produced from a mold. That will not do it. The only right thing is that we become free of

all shackles and that what must be done for our further development is done by the Spirit of God.

This came to us as an experience, not as an idea. My father was not a thinker who spent hours working out a beautiful sermon. He was a man to whom something was given, around whom events took place, without his being aware of it. We can see the whole thing so clearly-- so clearly that we can stand by it even against the whole world. There was indeed a time when I said to myself, "What do you want? Do you want to stand up against the whole of Christendom?" This was when my father died, and they told me that if only I would give in on this one point-- a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit--they could get along with me. I did consider it, too, but to think of exchanging the moral clarity we have had for forty years for this confused tangle of Christianity--no! no! no! Oh, if only I could share this experience with thousands and thousands of others! All doubts, all unclarities, have for years been wiped away. We can serve everybody-- I am not hemmed in on any side; I can go wherever I like; I am a free Christian and every Christian is a brother or a sister to me. I know how I must talk to people. God's work will not be hedged in--the Bible is open to us and so are people. This we cannot possibly surrender on account of some dogmatic statement! No! we cannot give up life because of a letter. That is why, when Papa had gone, it was immediately clear



that we would rather let Bad Boll collapse--the whole works--than give up the least part of what the Lord, not men, had made.

This is where we stand and will remain standing, and if I say a few words about this, it is only because I am afraid of what time may be doing to us. I must continually so represent my father that it must be as if he had died only yesterday, or were still alive--lest we forget the central point which really matters. This is a vital point. We live in it, and it brings about life. It is not you, Christendom. It is the Saviour! It is not you, Christendom, who will bring about what is to be, but the Holy Spirit! All your institutions and churches are of no use to you; but what God in Heaven does, over your head, at which you can only marvel--that is what will save you!

Deuteronomy 23:5: The Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loved you.

This was already a reality in Israel. It was not because Abraham loved God that there was light on the earth, but because God loved Abraham. It was not because Moses loved God that the light of redemption came and the curse was turned into a blessing, but because God loved the people of Israel. This is the thread which runs through the whole Bible. Because God loves me, all that is cursed is turned into a blessing; and the only thing asked of me is that I recognize this love when it appears. Now it has appeared; the beginnings have been made, and those who want to go on

from these beginnings to attain something more have only to pray, "Lord, go on loving me! Go on loving us." No man can turn the curse into a blessing; what we need to help us on is further loving action from God.

Once more, God showed His love for men when His Spirit came and sowed the seeds of Christendom, and the curse was turned into a blessing. This time His love went even deeper, and we are told: "The Lord your God has turned death into the hope of eternal life." Now we are under this blessing and can say we have the hope of eternal life; this curse of having to go down into Sheol, the Kingdom of the dead, is taken away from us. Now when we die, we go to Heaven. The curse is lifted! Why? Because the Lord our God loves us. He established His Church, just as He established Israel. That was His loving deed.

How shall we go on? "Lord, keep on loving us!" we must say. I believe that if I had lived at the time of the apostles, I would have asked for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, just as I do today--a continually new, fresh, clear, full, and mighty outpouring. The old will never suffice for the time to come. Again and again we need a new outpouring. Until our theology and piety come to the point of saying that the past is of no help to us for the future and that we continually need fresh outpourings of the Holy Spirit, we shall remain dead. Yes, listen--we shall remain a dead Christendom! You can build as many churches as you like, but you will not bring what is dead to life. No man has ever turned death into life.

You can see that with Christ and the Holy Spirit, only a beginning was made. If the fight against sin and death is to go on, if the bastions which the apostles did not and could not conquer because they lacked the strength, are to be won, then the strength to do it must be given to us. We must be empowered through God's almighty hand, through a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

This is, and remains, the heart and core of faith. This is what I call justification by faith; everything else is justification by works. That is no faith if I myself want to do what has to be done. Therefore I can boldly say that if ever there was a reformed Christian, a Christian on the foundation of the Reformed Church, it was my father. And perhaps the only one, may I add. All the others are satisfied with what we have already. But what we have already we don't need to believe in. We already have it. It was my father alone who said, "No! We are saved neither by our faith, nor our church, our dogma, or our Christianity, but only and directly by the Lord in Heaven--He who is, who was and who will be." Finally it will be through the grace of God, through His love for us, that the curse of the earth will be turned into a great blessing.

That is why a man such as our father looked toward a blessing at the end of the world, not a curse. He had the courage to live from faith. He was also the first to free men from the dread of the end of the world. He is the man sent at the end of time to proclaim to the world that men



should not expect a curse, but should rather look forward to God's blessing. The world upon which God's blessing has been poured out through Jesus must not end in condemnation, but in blessedness. This is spoken wholly out of faith; all else is spoken out of unbelief, or out of "works." Most Churches lay down a set of dogmas in accordance with which men become saved or lost. This is what I call being justified, or damned, by works. But we want to do deeds in faith, that the world may also find blessedness. For the Lord our God has turned our curse into a blessing--not because we are righteous, but because He is righteous. Because He loves us it will finally come about, after a long, long time of waiting, that all creation may yet feel blessed.

## 77.

## DIVINE WORSHIP AND RELIGION

Psalm 30:11: Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing;...and girded me with gladness.

These are words of David, the psalmist. The acts of God on earth were always a personal matter for those people who made the Psalms. The activity of God, as it evolved in Israel, was linked to persons who were immersed in it, just as a business is linked to a person. I must point out over and over again that Judaism and the service of Jehovah was something totally different from any religious service anywhere else on earth. I believe this has never been sufficiently appreciated by theologians. We cannot really speak of a religion in Israel such as existed in other nations; it was something quite different. And just because Jehovah protested against "religion" and wanted something else, for a long time Israel did not understand and turned again and again to the service of Baal. They simply would not accept this lack of religiosity. This moving of hearts, which seemed to have such an uncertain basis and only presented itself in individual deeds and works of God, was something quite different from the religion of other nations. The deeds of God are not at all "religious" in character. God cares nothing for the pious expression on your face. But He does care if you can walk through a sea and say, "My God is helping me through!" Or if you

hunger and thirst and can say, "There is a help for this too!" Then everything depends upon God, not upon us.

It is the same with the worship of God in Israel. There is nothing about rules, such as praying for hours, or the like. Men are simply told, "Bring your animal into the Temple. The priest will tell you what you are. Be genuine, a sinner before God! Then thank God!" And that is all, that is the whole of religion! Apart from that God leaves us free to live our own lives, providing only practical pointers such as, "Do not steal," "Do not kill one another," and so on. Later, when the ceremony of worship became more elaborate and became so beautifully religious, God said wrathfully, "Have I ever told you that I desire sacrifice? I have never commanded this!" He did not want a religion in which men believed they could find salvation by following certain forms. God wanted to make His dwelling on earth. And it is a personal matter for each individual that a relationship to God is established.

It is true, most people did not understand this--it was not pious enough for them. Others did understand and took hold of it. It became a personal matter for them; in it they had their joy and their sorrow. To give joy to a man like David, Nathan had to be sent to him so that he could experience in his own person the working of God. This was David's joy. In this he lived, and not to experience the working of God was his sorrow. In this way servants of God (an expression that occurs only in the Old Testament) sprang up:



helpers who drew down powers of God and to whom angels appeared. It was in these servants that the true Israel was hidden; in these was the Son of God, called from out of the wilderness.

Such servants of God, however, are not tolerated by the world--they are killed. But a "religion" is highly acceptable to men. Once it is firmly established in a fixed form, men can do anything they want and still go to Church and take communion, while all the time carrying on with their stealing and cheating. They don't like it if someone comes and says, "You there--stop and listen to me! If you carry on with this shady business, then stay out of the church; unless you are prepared to listen to God, we can do without you!"

God could also say, "Did I ever tell you to build churches, or to celebrate divine worship and communion, so as to be saved?" And particularly if people have the superstition of bravely taking communion before death in order to be more certain of salvation, then the Saviour might also take a rod and say, "Did I ever command the Last Supper as something to be taken mechanically?" If we think we have something mechanical which will save us, we are heathen. If our Christianity is a matter of forms and rituals, it will be dark around us. Today we must still be as servants who await the will of their Lord. Then we hear, "Pay attention! What does God say? Listen to what He says! Apart from that you are free!" But the

less people are attentive to God in their consciences, the more religious they want to become. I wish we were less religious and paid more attention to what is right or wrong!

Even worldly people notice that there is something lacking with us. Why is it that we Pietists\* have such a bad name? Why do we find no favor among the people? We do them no harm! They sense that something is not in order. If we want to be counted among the devout, we should be as people who are servants, who are attentive to the will of God. We shall assuredly not come short if we lay the main stress upon doing right. Then we shall be fully awake; otherwise we are going to remain sleepy-heads. Let us learn to obey once more, to respect the words of God and to do right. Then we shall have a church. He who is truly close to God can experience no greater joy than when he sees what is right and is allowed to do it; when God is again experienced among us and the gospel works and takes shape among us--first in our hearts, then in the whole direction of our lives. In short, we can rejoice when something happens of which we can say, "There is the Saviour! There is life and not stagnation."

But people do not want this, nor did they want it when the Saviour was here. What was the worst thing at the time of Jesus? I will tell you plainly: Religion! People

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\* Pietism: A revival movement which sprang up in the 17th and 18th centuries within the Lutheran churches in Germany, and which emphasized active faith and personal devoutness.

stagnated in religiosity instead of expecting something from above. We, however, should understand the promptings of God; we should run to where God rules and gladly accept what He does.

This is also important for today, the Day of Sedan. The French, too, should remember that Sedan was God's doing. Therefore "Bow down before this! Stop following your own head!" Men always want to give rein to their national or religious spirit. But stop and think: What is right? This is the main thing, and it applies to any nation, any confession. Whoever does not have this in him--this concern for what is right--whether he be Catholic or Protestant, French or German, cannot become a true servant of God and Jesus Christ.



78.

## THE TRUE GOD

Deuteronomy 7:9 (Translated from German): Know therefore that the Lord your God is the true God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.

We should know this, whether we believe rightly or not. I can well understand that many people lose their faith; they do not have the true God. With the passage of time we have forsaken the true God and have acquired instead a philosophical God, still in the form of the old faith but without any reality. We have allowed something to slip away. We think of God as a being somewhere in the higher spheres, but not as a God who reveals Himself among us as a God who acts. In the Catholic church, as among the black people, men resorted to setting up lower spirits. Because they wanted a practical God, they made saints for themselves, believing as they did that God Himself was inaccessible. In the Protestant church, on the other hand, men occupied themselves with the idea of God. Through emphasizing the name of Jesus, they preserved to some extent much that is true; but on the whole, they acquired a philosophical God.

This was clearly demonstrated to me when my father came forward. There was not a single one who was not up in arms about the existence of miracles. What a great fuss and outcry! Once, on the train, I met a professor who said to me quite excitedly, "Your father is either a deceiver

or a man deceived." This was quite a general attitude at the time; and right up till now, people keep carping at all we experienced then and regard it as untrue. No wonder so many people lose faith; I, too, would not believe in such a God. Even at the university I thought to myself, "If what you preach to me is God, then I am through--I will not become a parson. The words are the same, but the spirit is missing. You raise up a God without hands, without a mouth, without feet, and we can do whatever we like while God has to keep quiet and do nothing. No, thank you! I will not believe in such a God!"

It is the same way with Christ. When one speaks of someone's being possessed, people turn red with anger. "The Saviour was mistaken," they say, "these were the views of that time. Nowadays we can get along without that sort of thing. We have doctors and nursing homes and that's all we need. That's the end of it. And then to speak of awakening the dead! What nonsense!"

All the while, though, they are having elevated discussions about the divinity of Christ and about His being the Son of God--just so long as He is not a Saviour on earth! But I tell you, the Saviour is not concerned at all about what we think of His divinity or humanity; His only concern is whether we want Him or not. It is not our task to ponder about the Person of Christ--we shall find out in Heaven what He was. We are told simply, "He is your Saviour! Do you want Him or not? Will you let Him do something to you, or

will you not? Do you reject Him like the Pharisees, or will you accept Him like the tax-gatherers?" We need not have such clever thoughts about the sacrifice of Christ and that sort of thing; rather, it is a matter of whether we have the real Christ who intervenes with divine power. If we do not have this Christ, people will just turn their backs on us. But even unbelievers will believe when they hear of that God whom I call the God of Israel, the God who intervenes in human affairs, and acts. Of course they will want evidence; and if I have no evidence that God intervenes, it will come to nothing.

Now I have often experienced that God does nothing. We can beg as much as we like, but in this or that area we simply get nothing but silence. And what does this lead to? Should we say, as many do, "Now I believe nothing at all!" No! Then I would say we do not have Him. We have turned down a wrong track and no longer have the right attitude to Him, for only a God who intervenes is our God. If He does nothing, then He is not our God. But take heed: as soon as you get back on the right track, you will once more know His faithfulness, His mercy. Then something is bound to happen again, and you will be able to say, "That is our God!"

The world of today can no longer be convinced by sermons and books. It will have nothing to do with mere fantasies. This sort of thing is all right for the devout. But in our world of machines, communications



and business which just laughs at our ideas, in our materialistic way of life where people everywhere seek solid ground under their feet, the man of today can no longer settle for such an up-in-the-air religion. Only a few people can do this. Of what use is the most beautiful speech to the working classes if, day and night, they are sweated almost to death? It is of no use at all unless accompanied by some actual, real help.

Of course, there are still quite a few deeply faithful people to whom in all quietness something is given, but there are not so many of these left. The great mass of people lapse into unbelief because even among the believers, Christianity has become much too much a matter of ideas. This is of no help to us when we want to spread Christianity. It is not a religion we need, but a Man, a God. If we do not have a God, what will be the effect of all our Christianity? It will produce hypocrites--as many of them as there are paving-stones! We need a God of deeds, a God who will do something. That is the God of the Bible. Then everything else will come to rights.

That is what Israel had in their Jehovah. They could say, "This is the true God! Did you not see the smoke on Mount Sinai and did you not hear His voice and the sound of the trumpet?"<sup>\*</sup> Haven't you noticed how He supplies bread and water when there is a lack, and how He wondrously leads

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\* Exodus 19:18-19

you by His hand? Think of these things--that is your God! He is the true God. He can do things. Other gods are nothing. They have mouths, but do not speak; hands, but do not reach out; feet, but do not walk. But your God is the true God." That is how it should be with us, regarding the man Jesus. The Lord Jesus can do things, and when He acts we can say, "Behold, this is the true God; He can do something. But for your prattling I have no use."

That is how it should be, my friends. Therefore it is so necessary for us to pray, "Beloved Saviour, do something!" Words will no longer help us through; what we need is deeds! "Deliver us, deliver us; help us, Oh faithful God, and do something!" Then, when deliverance comes, there will be light.

In many puzzling and heavy situations people ask me why such a thing had to happen. What am I to say? I can only tell them that they do not have the right God. Wherever the true God is, something so absolutely dark simply cannot happen. Wherever there are deeds of God, wherever there is redemption, light will be shed on our condition. Until a difficulty is resolved, we do not understand why things had to take such and such a course. It is only when deliverance comes that we open our eyes and say, "Ah, now I understand why things went like this!" It suddenly dawns upon us. That is why the Saviour said, "The truth will make you free."

If we hold firmly to this, we can perhaps soon enter into the sphere of God's power in which deeds will again take place. Oh, how I yearn for deeds! And there is a God who does deeds---but we are not in the sphere of God. People often think that I am in it, but I am not; I can but sense this sphere, and at times I get something thrown down to me from Heaven out of compassion because I cry out so, but I am certainly not in the sphere of God's power. Ah, if I were, I would make your ears ring! But there is nobody in God's sphere, not one person in the whole world. There are a multitude of good Christians, and of course they will not be flung into Hell; but they are certainly not in the sphere of God's deeds. That is a very great difference.

There are many dear people, but they are not in the sphere where deeds are done. That is why it is said, "Know therefore that the Lord your God, who shows Himself to you and does deeds, is the true God. He is the God who made Heaven and earth. He is the faithful God who will carry out His purpose." And this is the God we want to set our hope on today. We want to cry out and pray together, "Lord, do something for all these many, many people."

We know by experience that we shall not pray in vain, for, as we have said, much is thrown down from Heaven to those who cry out. He feeds the hungry ravens and will not allow His children to pray in vain.



79.

## THE GOD OF DEEDS

Psalm 79:9: Help us, O God of our salvation  
for the glory of thy name;  
deliver us, and forgive our sins,  
for thy name's sake!

Yes, there is need and suffering today, though perhaps not quite the same as in earlier times. Last night I suddenly thought of Boniface\* and of how he was beaten to death by the Frisians because he had preached. It led me to make comparisons and it struck me how today someone like me can travel about preaching and not be beaten to death. On the contrary, people fairly carry me on their shoulders--I believe they would carry one around all day long, wherever one wanted to go! There is among all the people a tremendous longing to hear a Word of God. But still there is very great need. I used to think that if only things could be as they now are, if everyone could be so easily stimulated and made happy by a simple word from the Gospel, we would be in a golden age indeed. Ah, how happy the people were about that wonderful festival, and

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\* Boniface: a celebrated English missionary whose labors among the pagan tribes of Germany earned him the title of "The Apostle of Germany." He founded the Abbey of Fulda and in 755 met his death at the hands of a pagan mob. TR

so comforted, so strengthened!\*

And yet there is and remains one great need--the burden of sin. In spite of everything, in spite of all the forgiveness we have through the Saviour, in spite of the redemption we find in Him, in spite of all the glory of God which shines forth in Christ, there still remains sin. People simply do not get rid of it, and one feels so sorry for them. Some, it is true, are able to shake it off and rise above it, but the great majority groan under the weight of their sins. How will this ever end? I almost break my head when I am at such a festival. I run against this wall like a bull to bring it down, but I can't manage it. Something unyielding is there. Through the preaching of the Gospel, something in men does soften--it gets softer and softer--yet when one really tries to break through--pow! We strike rock. Something stops our coming forward, and there is no breakthrough.

There are people who remain quite undisturbed by this,

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\*This was spoken immediately after Blumhardt arrived back from a preaching trip on which, in particular, he had held the sermon on the occasion of the annual festival of the Deaconess House in Karlsruhe. On the way back he had also held an evening meeting in Pforzheim. About the Karlsruhe festival, he said it was the nicest festival he could remember--"and by now I have attended a host of festivals."

This remark about the evening in Pforzheim may also interest us: "...the first time in my life I have talked at a place where an entrance fee was charged. It was so funny--the orchestra seats cost 40 pfennig and the others 10 pfennig. At first I was quite annoyed, but it turned out all right, it was much more orderly--better than the last time, when people were almost crushed to death."

but not I! I feel that here lies something which must be removed if we are to come to something completely clear, completely light, in Jesus Christ. I have often had the feeling we have actually never been armed with God's powers to the extent of being able to break completely through the heathen shell. I have the impression that our younger Christian nations have been converted only on the surface and that underneath there still run the currents of the old heathen condition. This is what distinguishes us from the first Christianity, that of the apostles, which has been lost completely. Then there was neither German, nor Roman, nor Greek, but all were one in Christ. We, on the other hand, are Germans and Frenchmen, Russians and Englishmen--and we even pride ourselves on it. I don't want to find fault with it, but this is nothing but a natural basis. We do not yet appear to be so completely delivered from the power of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of the beloved Son.

That is why there is so little freedom from sin in individual people. I think now not of freedom from everything which can be called sin; I just mean that there ought to be power to overcome the most flagrant sins. For example, that at long last there may be an end to sorcery, and that we be given a clear perception of what is of God and what is of Satan in the world. Now, on this journey, I experienced once again what confusion there is, and I was with Christian people the whole time! Other gross



sins which must be overcome are: murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and blasphemy. All of these are like a heavy weight upon us, even in our Christian gatherings. It makes you shudder!

These are the things that are constantly poured out to me, for I have been given the grace of God that people conceal nothing from me. Wherever I go, they open their hearts. I let them say what they have to say, but they have no idea how often I weep inwardly. I feel like crying out day and night, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for Thy name's sake!" What is the point of our preaching if it does not finally come about that a hammer smashes this rock to pieces--this rock, this fortress of sin which extends everywhere. Something has to go, something concrete. It is not just a question of something moral or immoral done by men, of which one could say "don't do it any more"--no! Something concrete and real lies there. It is from this reality which penetrates into everything that the individual sins of men spring. People can no longer save themselves from these; it is simply not possible to get out of them.

When we look at the way people live, we can understand this, and for this reason I can only preach with compassion. The way their lives are linked together--by the Christian conformity to the world that has evolved over the centuries, by the existing traditions and customs--it is all like a

huge block of sin to which we are stuck fast completely with hands and feet, until we ourselves look just like this block; everybody is involved in sin! Of course there are some who stand a little apart and try with all their might to draw back from it, but often enough the very worst filth penetrates right into the most intimate Christian circles! Then we have to take care to cover it up well lest it be seen and heard; we take a big flat iron and iron everything smooth. When something bad is actually brought to light, the people concerned are jumped on and attacked. I was also told of something wrong which had happened, and I just had to say, "Have pity on the people! They are no different from you; they just did not get the help they needed." If we are not tremendously careful, the Devil gets a hold on us, and we fall and do all kinds of stupid things.

Well, now, I only wanted to give some indication that there is very great need. Think about it if you will. In spite of all the good that this present time has in it, in spite of all the working of the Gospel, we cannot hide the fact that the need is great. Into all this need and from out of this need, we cry, "Lord, our God, our salvation, help us! Deliver us and forgive our sins; free us so that we can be alive once more!"

It is really quite characteristic that there is a booklet just published in which the stand I take is branded as superstition. Why superstition? It is just because my

father brought out the realities of sin, the realities of darkness, of the Devil, of death, and Hell. He it is who has to bear the brunt of these attacks, since he started it all, but if I had not continued in a similar way, they would have allowed him to rest in peace. People just do not want to hear of this sort of thing. They call this "superstition," especially if I insist with all my strength that it be shown in deeds that Jesus is alive, as I am doing now. To believe in a philosophical God "way up there"--that is not superstition! To exalt a Saviour reclining on a sofa in Heaven, as it were--that we can do as much as we like--that is not superstition! But let God just begin to stir Himself!--then right away it is superstition! It is remarkable how nervous people get as soon as God begins to stir Himself. In particular, wherever there is a hope for something to happen, it is called superstition. And all kinds of people join in with this; I read plenty of mocking remarks in our conservative and Christian journals!

But what is the consequence, dear people, of our being Christian if God does not stir Himself? The consequence is: no deliverance! no light! People can talk as piously as they like; it does not impress me in the least. He who does not seek in the Bible for the God of deeds, the God who intervenes in history, simply does not have the Bible. God is not just a preacher! We have a way of formulating the most peculiar statements which are then repeated without thinking. For example, we have contrived the statement



that no further revelation is needed in the Christian Church. That has been stated, and now everyone simply echoes it. But where is this written? It is not to be found anywhere! If God wanted to do something today, He could! If He wanted to send a prophet today, He could!

And a prophet will arise! Witnesses will come forth! We shall yet experience that it is not we with our prattle who will bring about the Kingdom of God, but that God Himself will tread out the grapes and judge the nations. Unless this happens the goal will not be reached. Therefore let us take care that we remain in the freedom the Bible gives to us and do not let any human doctrines be foisted on us. Let us be people who know how to attend to that "something" which we need for a completely fresh basis of life, in defiance of sin and death.

## THE CRY OF A PROPHET

Isaiah 64:1: O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down!

This is the passionate cry of the prophet toward Heaven, or right into Heaven. It is what all who fear the Lord would like to cry out; all who cannot endure to see how few people fear God, and who see also that there will be absolutely no change in the world until the Heavens are rent.

Look at the efforts God has made to set things right with men. He came down to earth first making His influence felt in very small groups, then spreading out into ever larger circles. Finally, very quietly the Heavens were rent, through the coming of the Saviour an opening was made in Heaven, and now the name of Jesus is proclaimed throughout the world. There has already been a tremendous change; God has given men clearer thoughts, better ideas and recognitions. In the name of Jesus, God has been acknowledged as never before, and this knowledge has been made accessible to millions of people. Truly, God's tremendous grace has not been lacking, and yet in effect men have not changed very much. Our human nature is basically still the same. In fact, under the cover of God's more perfect grace, men manage to live in as godless a manner as any heathen. Such a vast amount of contempt for God has gained ground among us that we can

well plead: "O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens!" Yes, dear God, unless you rend the Heavens, men will not believe; we can go on preaching for another two thousand years, and the result will be the same. Even when we have preached the Gospel to the whole world, unless You rend the Heavens, openly and visibly, there will simply be a shifting of positions: somewhere else in the world a speck of light will appear, while the rest will fall back into heathendom. In this place or that there will be a little more light, but nowhere will there be complete light; the masses of people will again and again relapse into godlessness. This makes us sigh.

God answered the prophet in these words, "I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me" (Isaiah 65:1). This is as if God had said to the prophet: "Be patient! Cry out, but have patience!" For the moment everything has to go forward in secret. The place where you cry to God is the very site of His revelation, and it is precisely there that the situation looks most desperate. Just where we might expect to find a true fear of God, we find it least of all. And so, you arrogant, pious people, your crying will not help you, but God will open a vent somewhere else through which poor wretches can get into the Kingdom of Heaven. God quietly sees to it that a vent remains open, and we can help to keep it open by crying out, "O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens." So does God, in all secrecy,



make a little opening in Heaven, and the wretched are being sought out.

This way out has now been made accessible to the whole world through the Saviour. Therefore we should not despair of our preaching and working. We might, of course, find the going very heavy, for people just will not change. Yet there are souls who quietly find their way to the Saviour. In the visible and the invisible world there is a procession of the poor and wretched. The vent is open. The louder we cry out, "O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens," the stronger will be the response. Finally all of Heaven will come down; the moment will come when Heaven will truly be rent. There will be no mistaking it then--oh, how they will all sit up and take notice! Just wait a little; it is not so far away any more. For some time now the Lord has been working much more than we realize.

We would be deceived, however, if we thought that it will be the high and noble among the Christians who will see the Heavens rent. The poorest sinners will experience more than those who believe they are the saints of the world. The first might well be the last. While Heaven could be already full of sinners, whom nobody would ever have thought of, the proud Christians might still be sitting here, seeing and hearing nothing.

So it is even today. If people had eyes to see, they would rejoice day and night about all that happens

in our time. How much quiet redemption there must have been to bring about this present time! But nobody sees this. Nobody believes we live in a time in which, on the whole, protection and help prevail such as were never given before, so that we can really see that God dislodges the Devil. He turns aside fits of anger. He gives peace and tranquillity where we least expected it. He eases the afflictions of the whole world. Wherever we go we can see things moving forward, forward! It is a joy and delight to see how quickly things are going forward, in general. These are all signs of the quiet redemption taking place. The vent is open. Sooner or later people will surely become aware of it--they will see it!

It is a pity, though, that we cannot gather people together beforehand for an expectant waiting. Then people would not have to be so frightened about the coming of Jesus Christ. They would realize that this is a time of grace, and they could find a bit of joy in the Kingdom of Heaven. Then patience would also be given to wait until the Heavens are rent. For I also have to say that I do not want it to happen one moment earlier than it is really time. It will be awesome enough when it does come. Even now many people tremble at the thought of the Saviour's coming, and it will certainly be hard on those who are taken completely by surprise. That is why we will not press for this to happen before the time is ripe.

But still, we will go on crying out, and I ask you to join us in this. It is much more important than anything else, more important than any Church laws or institutions. Cry out: "O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens!" The more people have it on their hearts that God be seen, the more vents will be opened up for poor wretches; for us, too, it will be a joy and a blessing. Though we ourselves may not yet creep into Heaven, but have to stay outside and keep on crying out, yet we have this assurance that our cries help others to enter there. Such a cry of a prophet has effect throughout the land. The cry of Christians can have an effect throughout the whole world.

But we have to cry out. And we must guard very much against sitting here unmoved and self-assured as if everything were in order with our traditional Christianity. I simply do not understand how people can think like this, with the Bible right in front of them. There we find it written again and again how angry God is about the people who think that a little bit of religion is all that is required. It makes the prophets fairly howl with indignation! And we Christians settle into our seats as smugly as any Pharisee and think that God must be mightily pleased to see us sitting in church on Sunday in a fine coat, or distributing Bibles all over the world.

We have missed the point completely! We have turned the whole thing upside down! We want to climb into Heaven with out religion instead of realizing that God must come



down from Heaven and take hold of us. All that matters is that God reveals Himself and acts against sin, the Devil, death, and Hell; that we know our whole cause is a lost one unless God comes down and brings everything to fulfillment in His great power and glory.

Then, praise God, we shall yet experience that the Lord does hear the crying of men--and many do cry out for help! God hears it, and He knows that the only help for the world will be when He fulfills His promise and gives signs in the heavens by which the whole world will know that truly God lives. Yes, God lives!

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Hebrews 2:11: "...He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

With this the ground is prepared for all manner of revelations, for the Saviour stands side by side with us. The most important thing about the Saviour is that through Him God can now fully reveal Himself. People make this awful mistake of asserting that we no longer need a revelation. Actually the only purpose of the Saviour's coming is to prepare the ground for God's glory on earth! Now everything is possible. The promises are capable of fulfillment. Previously they could not be fulfilled, but now they can be. Now everything can happen because "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Because the Saviour has united with us, something can now happen.

That is why Jesus feels it so important to tell His disciples again and again, "Listen! Take heed! Watch and

pray! Something is coming! And if it does not happen, ask, seek, knock! If still nothing happens, then be insistent! Rattle at the doors of Heaven! Cry out like the widow to the unjust judge. I guarantee that something will come, for I am your brother, and you will do the same works I do, and greater works than these because I go to the Father and will provide for you."

That is how it is now. We can have something now from Heaven! I have to say that as far as I am concerned, all the dogmas of the world could just float down the Rhine if I could only unite everyone in this one point of really expecting something from Heaven! This is the true business of Christians. It is not a question of their becoming wise, or becoming philosophers, or building great churches. That is all very well, but quite unimportant. The main thing is to think: "Watch out! The Heavens can open now! It can come any time now! For the Saviour is not ashamed to call us brethren." This point must be the center of our work. The true disciple of Jesus will care only for this. It is the only thing you need. With it you--yes, everybody--can find salvation without catechisms or anything else. You can brag about your belief in Jesus Christ as God's Son and still be a scoundrel. But you cannot wait for the Saviour and the revelation of God and remain a scoundrel! Therefore all the parables of the Lord and the letters of the apostles point to this: Be people who are alert! Remember what

poor wretches we are!

Praise God, the Saviour is here, and soon everything can be fulfilled. For He is our brother; that means we now have access to the Father. We may expect redemption, may expect the Lord to come down, to intervene and touch our hearts. The Father in Heaven can intervene and do something, and we should be able to experience this. Even if we have to go through hard times, we should always remember that things will turn out right, for we have our Father in Heaven and our brother, the Saviour. In this attitude we would be true Christians.



81.

## THE DIVINE "I" IN MEN\*

Psalm 121: I lift up my eyes to the hills,  
 From whence comes my help;  
 My help comes from the Lord  
 Who made heaven and earth.  
 He will not let your foot be moved;  
 He who keeps you will not slumber.  
 Behold, he who keeps Israel  
 Will neither slumber nor sleep.  
 The Lord is your keeper;  
 The Lord is your shade on your right hand.  
 The sun shall not smite you by day  
 Nor the moon by night.  
 The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
 He will keep your life.  
 The Lord will keep your going out and coming in,  
 From this time forth and for evermore.

(Line 2 changed to conform to German text)

Who is this "I," dear friends, the man who can speak  
 in this way? Oh what a happy man! He must be happy if he  
 can say in complete faith and trust, "I lift up my eyes to

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\*Bible class held at the Christian Hospice in Berlin, March 12, 1888. Blumhardt was in Berlin from March 10-18, 1888, and for the first few days was a guest of Stöcker, the court chaplain. He arrived in Berlin just after the death of Emperor Wilhelm I and was taken to the Emperor's death-bed. The meeting we reproduce here also refers to this event.

During the following days Blumhardt preached more than twenty sermons in Berlin. Immediately after the evening sermon in the Church of Zion on March 18, he left for home. There is a detailed program of the Berlin days which reads at the end: "8 p.m. departure for Munich." I do not know if a trip to Munich really was planned; in any case it was not carried out. At the Göppingen railroad station. Blumhardt heard what was, for him, the particularly significant news of the death of Hans Jörg Dittus. This event brought about a critical turning point which led to the second period of Blumhardt's life. And so the days in Berlin can be looked upon as the end of this first period which we have set forth in this volume.

the hills, from whence comes my help; my help comes from the Lord." He also has the direct assurance from God: "He will not let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber." And again, "The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life. He will keep your going out and coming in, from this time forth and for evermore."

This "I," beloved in the Lord, was something God created for Himself, in His own image, upon earth. Our "I" on earth is a divine "I," something of God's own person, and it was meant to rule over creation. But from that day on when the night of sin closed in around us human beings and it seemed to God that His image was lost, our "I," our divine "I," was also lost.

It was a mighty beginning when the maker of Heaven and earth put something of Himself, His own "I," into His image, so that from this image the majesty and power of God streamed out over the whole creation. We read, "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." Why was it good, we ask? Was it because the trees blossomed so beautifully, or rabbits frisked around, or the mountains were so grand, or the sun shone warmly? Surely not because of these things. Everything was good and very good because there was a likeness of God on earth in which there shone a glory that could be expected to settle as a divine rulership upon all things at any time. Then everything could have existed in great and divine activity, in majestic power and untroubled bliss.

That was the Creation. And now into this comes the great night of darkness, sin, and death. Where is now the divine "I" which was to shine in the human beings God had created?

Can we say we have it? Hardly. We can twist and turn as much as we like. We can try hard to follow certain customs and religious rules and regulations. We can try with fasting and prayer. It is all of no avail. All these efforts do not bring forth the divine "I" in us.

You know how it has been throughout the centuries with the nations of the world. What efforts they have made, and what efforts individuals have made because they all felt that something had been lost, was not in order, not finding its rightful place, and for that reason was making them miserable and unhappy. They tried all sorts of ways, as it is written in Isaiah 53: "...we have turned every one to his own way, but have all gone astray." That is, each sought in his own way to regain the position due to him as the image of God in creation, but they sought wrongly, and the ways were false. Strictly speaking, the worst thing in the world is not the sin we commit or the individual wrong deeds we do, but the night which surrounds us in which we cannot see the right way and where even the best of men fail to reach the goal. In this night the great and constant struggle of mankind, the struggle not to go under and perish, is fruitless. There is nobody who wishes to be dead, nobody wants to be a zero.



When, in despair because they have not yet reached the goal, people today assert, "We are absolutely nothing, there is no God, no eternal life," we should not hold it against them, for this comes from an inner despair. People see and hear nothing, and let it be said to our shame that there is not very much to be seen among us Christians either. There is not much to be seen with us because the divine "I" which, after all, was once given to the world, is very much obscured.

Dear friends, I tell you, at times like these when I have to get up and speak somewhere (for I am not doing this of myself), I must ask your forgiveness for my presence here. I am very conscious that I also do not, and cannot represent that which ought to shine forth as the divine "I" and which should be imparted to many so that once again many will have this divine "I" within them. This has not yet been given, and we must almost feel embarrassed to cling to the belief that, in spite of all the misery in the world, in spite of the lost image of God, the divine "I" is still with us. History assures us that the divine "I" is still with us and can unfold in us. I want to emphasize this very much, dear friends, so that you can be certain of it in your hearts.

You can look for this assurance in two places. The one place is your own inner life, your heart and soul, where you seek God and your salvation. But that is not the right place and you will not find this assurance there. Forgive me if I speak plainly and perhaps rob some people of their

religious sentiments. I cannot do otherwise. I meet with too many people who seek in vain in that place. They will never find comfort there. This ground within ourselves, where we do our searching, is certainly a noble ground. It is the ground the Apostle Paul referred to in Athens with the words, "We all live and move and have our being in God, and you people of Athens also seek the living God and have therefore made an altar to 'the unknown God.'" This place of the inner heart we have in common with all unbelievers. But on this ground we just cannot be sure of not going astray.

And therefore, dear friends, I have looked for another place--or rather, I did not look for it, actually I was led to it by my dear father. His experiences pointed me to the deeds of God as the place where our own "I" must be turned into the divine "I." The deeds of God run throughout the ages and in ever-growing measure justify our plunging into the bright fields where God manifests Himself, where His light streams out, and He says, "You are my servant; no water will drown you, no fire will burn you. You may still be a pretty rough type of servant and have a lot of dirt clinging to you, but no matter, you are in my service and belong to me. My deeds show this to you and my words tell you."

So, my dear friends, the place to seek this divine "I" is where you see something coming from God and where something has already come from Him

in the past. It is the words and deeds testified to in Holy Scripture, which have brought about a divine history, running through time. And our seeking has now been made easy for us because in Jesus we have the deeds of God; also--let me speak from my heart which is so rooted in Möttlingen and Boll--because we can say: Jesus is Victor--away with everything else! If someone comes to me representing something else, or wants to threaten me by telling me I am lost, I am not converted, I am a sinner, then I answer: "Jesus is victor! I know well enough that I cannot save myself, but He will save me. For this He came and therefore He is 'the first-born of all creation.'"<sup>\*</sup>

O, dear friends, take this to heart. I do not know if I have expressed myself clearly. I can only say what is on my heart, and I leave it to God's Spirit to make it clear to you. I cannot make you devout or holy--I am not so myself. I cannot make you believe, nor can I invite you to come over to some congregation or sect which may think itself wondrously endowed--all this I cannot do.

But one thing I can perhaps do, if God gives His grace. I can say to you: Dear friends, regard yourselves as those who have this divine "I." You have the right to do this. Stop persecuting yourselves. Do not be so faint-hearted. Accept the Lord Jesus! He did not come to make us faint-hearted, nor to have us, like unbelievers, start worrying

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<sup>\*</sup>Colossians 1:15.



and fretting about whether we are acceptable or not. Some people fairly squirm with fear before communion, wondering whether they are worthy to come. I know people who for years have never attended Holy Communion because they believed they must first wash themselves so completely clean that the Lord Jesus would have nothing more to reproach them with. Only then would they want to come. But look, dear friends, that is no help to us. That is the wrong track. The main thing for us who have been led to the revelation of the Lord Jesus through the deeds of God, is that we know we are entitled to place ourselves under the light of God's revealed words and acts, and to let the deeds of the Father in Heaven work upon us. Then, in spite of all our weaknesses, we may be quite certain that we belong to the people of God who say, as it is written here: "I lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence comes my help." Yes, you who include yourselves in this, you may say, "This means me. The Lord has His eye on me. He leads me, my cause will not be stayed." The people who take their stand with God's revelation, saying, "I belong here and want to belong," have the right to say, "My cause will endure." Why? Because their cause is God's cause, their cause is the Saviour's cause. It will not perish--not even in the Day of the Lord. It will remain.

You will find that we are bound to be made small and humble when we are at this place where we seek the divine

"I" within us and let it unfold in the power of faith. For here we notice our own efforts are quite unimportant, and there is nothing to be proud about. I sometimes get visits from clergymen, especially young ones, who ask me to pray for them lest they become proud if they should happen to preach a good sermon. Ah, dear friends, what am I to say then? I always tell them it just makes me laugh to think of their being proud about a sermon! Our preaching is all bad and boring and we can only feel ashamed of it. How can a man become proud who stands with God and allows God to rule! How is this possible? I don't understand it at all. Or, how can a person be coarse, ambitious, or envious; how can a man steal, or be full of impure desires, if he allows God to rule in him? It is quite impossible.

I could give you many examples from my own experience of people I have rescued just by telling them, "You belong with me!" "Oh, no," they reply. "I am a terrible person." "No matter, you belong with me." "But you do not know the evil things I have done" they say. "Nevertheless," I reply, "you belong with me, and I belong with you." This has changed people; they received so much encouragement just by having fellowship with me that there was no more talk of their wickedness.

A man once came to me who was a kleptomaniac and he continued in this way, also after he came to me, for a long time. In spite of this, I kept saying to him, "You and I belong together. You can go on stealing as long as you like,

but I will not let you go." Lo and behold, after a time he gave up stealing and became a totally different person. How many others, proud, avaricious, jealous, quarrelsome people have been given strength to change simply because I said, "You belong with me!" If treatment on this human plane has been so effective, what do you think would happen if we again became conscious of belonging to the Lord Jesus? I mean truly conscious, not with empty words. Oh, let us beware of empty Christian words! When we are truly conscious that we belong to the Lord Jesus, then all those sinful things will simply melt away before this Sun which has arisen.

It will not happen overnight that there will be an angel where formerly was a little devil. The Sun of God works slowly, just as the sun outside melts the snow slowly. If it goes too quickly, there will be floods. In the same way, if we are bent on becoming like angels overnight, there will be fanaticism and folly.

But you can rest assured when you are in the hands of our beloved God. He will certainly let His Sun shine upon His servants, upon the disciples of Jesus, those who count themselves His, and then first one part and then another of the old nature will crumble away, and this will continue until the work is finished. When I just think of myself, for example, what a time it took until there was a little change in me! But I must also say, foolish as I was in my youth, even when I felt really sinful and actually had committed sin, I always knew I belonged to



the Saviour. I was quite certain of that. Anything else would have been unthinkable. It would have seemed to me an insult to the Lord Jesus to think that, as a Christian child, I did not belong to Him and could not say, "I belong to you." Even so, it took quite a while until the things were gone which had given me a bad conscience. We often have to wait a long time, and must have patience and submit ourselves to God's rule, before the Saviour has finally cleansed us of all that is wrong. The disciples of Jesus did not become apostles overnight, and we, too, must often wait a long time.

I know some who groan under the weight of a sinful nature; yes, they feel bound by the Devil and are unable to free themselves. They just have to bear this, and it is often only toward the end of their lives, in the last weeks, that this burden is taken away. I would regard them as just as happy as I am, for they are often fighters, sufferers, and martyrs. If only the spirit remains faithful to the Lord Jesus, we shall be all right. God will reveal Himself in us and free us more and more, and, in the end, hold us blameless on His day. But that is not something we can bring about.

Do not be afraid that I will leave you in your sins. I want to tell you of the power that will free you from sin. I want people who, in good time, sinful though they are, turn and reckon themselves as belonging to the Lord Jesus and say, "I cannot possibly allow my sins to separate me;

I must belong to my Saviour, even though there is a lot in me which is still wrong. He will help me forward. God's history and deeds in the world and in Christendom show me that I belong to Him. They give me the right to regard God's revelations as being for me."

So let us join together. I know for a certainty that the Lord Jesus looks upon us to see whether we become inwardly sure in Him and allow Him to work. We shall be a compact circle. It may be a small circle; there is no need for large numbers, but it will be a completely light-filled community in which deeds of God, powers of God, can become manifest and it can be said: Jesus is victor in our hearts, in our innermost beings! Oh what a joy it is when we feel that we have become different; when we can say that a gift from Heaven has fallen into our hearts. What inner certainty is given us when we can live in the deeds of God; when we can rejoice in the powers of the Lord Jesus, and when we can grow in His grace. That is why it is written "from grace to grace," because grace is to be understood in the sense of manifestation.

It is a great pity that in our German language some Bible terms do not quite express the meaning of the original text. We understand grace to mean forgiveness of sins, but that is not quite exact. Grace is rather a manifestation or revelation of the power of God, the loving kindness of God to us as expressed in deeds. That is grace. And how happy we are when we can really say we live from grace to

grace, from manifestation to manifestation, and can see in our own lives that Jesus lives now!

There is no greater joy than this, beloved ones, and that is why I rejoice when sometimes a person becomes well when I pray for him. It is not because the person gets well that I rejoice. There are many who must suffer sickness until the end of life, so why not this one? I rejoice because I see that the Saviour does something to me, to you, to this one or the other. I rejoice when I see that He heeds me and heeds others in the same way. Oh, you dear ones, that is the greatest and most wonderful thing you can see or know. And when we actually experience that souls change; that hearts become different; that, in place of indifference, a concern for the Saviour is now awakened, a sighing, a longing (and I rejoice at even the faintest longing)--then I say that the battle is won; the Lord Jesus has intervened. For where does a person get this longing? He didn't make it. The Lord Jesus has acted, and once Jesus makes a beginning, He will go on and on. What is important is that we are aware of this, that we stay with Him. And also that we wait, wait, wait for more and more things to happen, for even greater works, for even greater deeds, until at last through such deeds, our God will light up the whole world!

This is the task of God's people on earth. This will do more for the proclamation of the Gospel than anything else. If we live and act again as Christians, as men through



whom God works for others, then people will come running. I am often astonished how people run after me. I am simply not able to take a vacation, for wherever I go, in Germany or Switzerland, people come running after me. At home it is the same; from early morn to late evening I have not a moment to myself. Why do people come to me? Because I am so devout? Surely not! Or because I have such a beautiful house in Bad Boll with nice surroundings and fresh air? Oh, no, there are much better things elsewhere. One thing, and one thing alone, brings people here: the Saviour is at work. In this I glory, and in this I rejoice.

I often receive letters with all sorts of requests, some often of a very difficult nature, and even before the letter is in my hands help is given. The Saviour has already intervened. Every day I receive some forty to fifty letters. Among them usually about twenty are from complete strangers, and some are from so-called worldly people. There are letters from all kinds of people, in many countries, some of whom have never experienced anything of Christianity. Others, again, are from Christian circles. A great number of these letters begin like this: "Because we have heard about you and that you make sick people well..." How do people come to think this? It is the Saviour who does it all. Then I look at my own household--the sick remain sick and almost nothing happens! I want to say to all who come to me and want to get well in a hurry: Oh, that is not the important thing! You can

just as well remain sick; being sick is no sin. I will pray for you that the Saviour takes things in hand, and you can have hope, of course, but do not regard getting well as so important. The Saviour Himself was sick. He said, "I was sick and you visited me." There must be sick people in whom the Saviour dwells. I often feel weak, miserable, and sick, having to drag myself around while other people become well. And as I have said, my own household sometimes looks terrible, almost, it seems, on the point of collapse. Nevertheless we are kept going.

Time and again we are given bright and shining manifestations of the kindness of God, deeds of God which enable us to carry on. Hard things are not spared us, but deeds of God fall into our lives and become known. We find relief for our bodies as well as our souls, which proves it is not a matter of Pastor Blumhardt's preaching a fine sermon and seeking followers. Truly, Blumhardt is nothing, and every other human being is nothing. But Jesus, Jesus is here! This is what draws people and has lasting value. If we attract people solely to our own person, we may be able to give them something for a little while, and then it ends. But when the Saviour Himself takes a hand and goes on and on working, then there will be no end.

That is why I rejoice like a child that when my father died, and even before, I, poor wretch that I am, was able to continue this cause. I want to say quite frankly that for me the greatest miracle I can think of in this time

is that I could continue my father's cause, because all the circumstances spoke against it. How complete this continuation has turned out to be, is evident to me by the fact that, now and then, I get a letter directed to my father from someone who has not noticed that there has been a change. Some people still think my father is alive and are extremely surprised to hear it is the son. This is no merit of mine, for I was by nature quite unfitted for this task. I had no interest at all in theology and was a miserable person. One thing I did have, though: I thought to myself that if my father has been given the right thing, then I can be heir to it as well; as long as the Saviour takes things in hand, it does not depend upon what I am.

And so, dear friends, do the same! See to it that the Lord Jesus works in you and go forward in this. Say to the Saviour in your hearts: "Lord Jesus, do something to me. Not only to me--I can wait--but do something here and there in other people, in our families, in our society. Whether it be hard or easy for us, only do something to us, and we will rejoice even in times of suffering."

If you take this stand, you are people who experience something of the Kingdom of God. You can confidently say, "I lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence comes my help; my help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth,"--there lies my strength. This confidence can grow so strong in us that we can overcome all obstacles. Walls of Jericho



will fall, mountains will be moved. No earthly power will impress us any more, be it good or evil. There are many good powers in the world, all kinds of forces of nature and the like, but these no longer count. The only thing that really counts for my life is what comes from above where Christ is enthroned, where the right hand of God is, the right hand of Him who does deeds, who does not sleep. "Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." These are the powers we count on.

I don't just want to say this, dear friends, and leave it at that; I want to impress it so deeply upon your hearts that you really grasp it and make it your own and become happy, blessed people. Blessed are you when you are poor in spirit. Blessed are you when you hunger and thirst, and the world cannot satisfy you, but you are given strength from above. This is the divine "I" upon earth which receives everything from above. It is the beginning of the likeness of God in which God manifests Himself, and this is our salvation. For the rest, we await the Saviour. We simply cannot straighten out everything in this world; it would be foolish to try to do it. It is nowhere promised that we shall change the world. We await the coming of the Saviour. He tells us, "I am going to do it! Meanwhile continue in faith until I come. Do not concern yourselves too much with the world, but keep your eyes fixed on me. I am with you until the end of the world."

This is what the Saviour has in mind. You will perhaps understand now that when we take up this attitude, God's rule will penetrate into even the smallest details of our life. Then our feet will be guided, and without thinking, we shall make no false step.

You, of course, do not want to make a false move, but you will not manage it. However, when the Saviour takes you in hand, "He will not let your foot be moved. The Lord is your keeper. The Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not smite you by day nor the moon by night." The terrible things in the world will not weigh so heavily upon you. You have victory within you. God has put something into you and has pledged His honor that you will not come to shame, because something of the divine "I" is in you.

Therefore be comforted! Divine rulership now intertwines with your affairs. The rivulets of life will run through our earthly existence though there be obstacles in the way. There will be times of stagnation, there will be struggles and temptations, and Satan himself may stand up against us and frighten us. But be comforted; a way through will be given. Wait for the Lord; His light will break in again and again and in the end will permeate your whole being. As the Saviour said, "Your whole body will be full of light, as when a lamp with its bright rays shines upon you" (see Luke 11:36).

That is our attitude as disciples of the Saviour, dear ones! Then that will happen which is expressed in the final words of our Psalm: "The Lord will keep your going out and coming in, from this time forth and for evermore." That is, He will intervene in your life at those moments when something of the future begins, where the Alpha and Omega meet like the main pillars of a building. There He will intervene and act. And that is enough. It is enough to have God's guidance in our lives at certain decisive moments so as to get things moving in the right direction; then we can go on until another crucial moment arises. I wanted to make this clear to you. There is no need for the Saviour to be so tenderly concerned about us every single day. He has many more than us to care for. We must be able to hold out even when He leaves us alone, like the ninety-nine in the wilderness, in order to seek for the lost one. We must not cry if we do not have lofty and sublime feelings every-day. Let us remember only one thing so as to become clear and sensible: At those times in our life when we are on the verge of something, when we have to make a decision and feel something new is at hand which can go one way or the other, we must trust the Saviour to give us a direction and speak a word.

For example, whenever we are attacked by sickness, our first prayer should not be that we are made well and healthy. Rather, our prayer should be, "Lord Jesus, something has happened which can turn out this way or that. Please, Lord



our God, establish whatever is according to your will, and what you decide I will accept quietly in faith, just as it comes." Many people only pray for what they want and for what they think is right, but that is not true prayer.

It is like this in the matter which concerns us all these days regarding our dear Emperor. A great deal of significance is attached to such a personage. Here, too, we must not want to rule and dictate to God what we would like. We must say, "Lord, Lord, this is a momentous hour. Please establish your will today so that we may walk in your paths during the days to come. Do not allow evil to prevail against us, even though we have to experience it, for You alone are the One who decides in Heaven what should be on earth."

I want to end with this, dear friends, so that in these sorrowful days we may be united in the attitude I have been talking about. In such tense, historic moments one does not know what to think, and it is better not to speak too much about all that is involved, for we just do not know, no man knows, what will happen. But one thing, one thing I ask of you all--I do it myself but wish that hundreds of thousands more would help me with it--and that is to pray. Pray that in these days God may say how things are to go. Pray, lest evil should have the say, lest darkness intervene even for a short time because we do not want God ordering our going out and coming in,

or because we are not faithful enough in praying: "Lord, keep Thou our going out. Rule Thou in this time. Proclaim to the world with which Thou hast reconciled Thyself through Jesus Christ that Thou, O great God, rulest in this moment of time. In all the evil which may befall us, even in the midst of death and the distress it brings, let there be decrees of Thy will which will allow our path to be blessed anew." This must be our request, and we must not be indifferent about it. It has been uppermost on my mind during these days, for it is much more important than our striving together for personal edification.

Some people are so full of their Christianity that they care nothing for the world. They are foolish people. We must recognize that this is a moment in history which can lead to either good or evil. Praise God that we can say, "The Lord keeps us." As we think of the passing of our Emperor Wilhelm and the illness of our dear, new Emperor Friedrich, we can say with confidence that the Lord will work His will; He will accomplish His purpose for him, for us, and for all peoples, however bad things may look in the world.

So, you dear ones, let us be a circle bearing great matters on our hearts. Let us pray always, "Lord, keep Thou our going out, even in the smallest things, also in our private lives with all their cares and joys." Whoever shows himself steadfast in such prayer and faith and has a

sure hope and certainty of victory, will also experience  
that Jesus is Victor!

Jesus is victorious King  
Who o'er all His foes has conquered.  
Jesus, soon the world will fall  
At His feet, by love o'erpowered.  
Jesus leads us with His might  
From the darkness to radiant light.



## CONCLUSION

The present volume of selections from Blumhardt's sermons, devotional meetings, and writings covers the period 1880 to 1888, that is to say, from the time of the death of his father, Johann Christoph Blumhardt, until the Spring of 1888. It was then, immediately after his trip to Berlin, that the death of cousin Hansjörg, the last witness of the "Möttlingen days," brought about a new turning point in Blumhardt's life. These are Blumhardt's sermons and meetings held during the first of the four periods into which I have divided his life and which correspond to the four volumes.

Actually, the time in which Blumhardt worked as a curate at churches in Baden and Württemberg (1866 to 1869) belongs to this first period, as also the time when he assisted his father at Bad Boll (1869 to 1880). A considerable number of sermons were available to me which came from the time when he was a curate, in particular from the years 1866 and 1867. In those years Blumhardt was active in Spöck and Staffort near Bruchsal, in Gernsbach in the Baden section of the Black Forest, and in Dürnau, not far from Bad Boll. However, I finally gave up the idea of using some of them in this volume. In spite of the truth contained in them and the quite clearly recognizable "Blumhardt" thoughts, it seemed to me that they did not yet exhibit the characteristic spirit and power

which is so clearly evident in the most important of Blumhardt's proclamations.

As I indicated in my foreword to the complete edition, a chronological sequence of sermons and devotions provides the best, indeed the only true and vital, biography of Blumhardt, compared with which any description of the course his personal life took must appear insignificant. However, in selecting these sermons and devotions I have ruled out the purely biographical aspect and allowed only the Blumhardt to speak to us who spoke out of an inner calling and authority. In these volumes we are not concerned with the person of Blumhardt and his human development, but with the man of God and the message entrusted to him. I have been strongly confirmed in this, my personal opinion about the sermons of the very early times, by various statements that Blumhardt himself made. It is clear he thought of his life as properly beginning only in 1872 with the "remarkable birth" he experienced at the time Gottlieb Dittus died. It was through this event that he was led to his calling and characteristic testimony.

In this selection of the testimonies of this new and genuine life, I have not gone right back to the year 1872 when the decisive turning-point took place. On the one hand this was for the more outward reason that only a very small number of sermons was available to me from the years 1872 to 1880, and they seemed to me not the most suitable to begin this volume, although they certainly do testify to this new

life. But on the other hand, for inner reasons, I also felt urged to let this "Biography through Testimonies" begin with the event which cut most deeply into Blumhardt's life and brought him to the decisive task of his life. This was the death of his father on February 25, 1880. Until then Blumhardt had only been an "assistant" to his father. Because of this death, which nobody anticipated, he was suddenly faced with the tremendous task of stepping into his father's shoes and carrying on his father's work. It was through his wrestling with this task that Blumhardt attained his full stature as a mighty witness to the victorious power of Jesus. The fundamental concern of the father's life was "those wonderful manifestations of God which ever again ended in: Jesus is Victor," and these words also express what determined the son's life.

Ever since the Möttlingen days "Jesus is Victor" had been the platform of the father Blumhardt. "Jesus is Victor" remained also the watchword of the son, who was only able truly to carry on the work of the father in Bad Boll because he believed in the truth of this watchword and because again and again he actually experienced this truth.

It was the father's death which was the starting point of Blumhardt's activity in this first period, a period so decisive for his future. At that time Blumhardt was still, to a marked degree, dominated by his father's life. Later, Blumhardt concluded a descriptive sketch of his father with these words: "His son, Christoph Blumhardt, continues



the work of Bad Boll upon the principles which characterized the life of his father and has, to some extent, drawn further consequences from the experiences of his household." Thus in the early period of his activity, this "continuation" of the work of his father was uppermost. Certainly it was a continuation which, from the first, bore his own personal stamp and which found a new language for the proclamation of the old truths. In the later periods, on the other hand, the "further consequences" which gave such a special and peculiar significance to his witness came more to the fore.

Here in the first period Blumhardt still stands, as it were, directly in the bright light of those radiant "Möttlingen days", those days which opened up new ways for the faith and hope, the thoughts and pronouncements of his father, and so provided the starting point for the highly significant chain of events in Möttlingen and Bad Boll. During these early years he repeatedly pointed to his father's life and to the significance which this life, with its experiences and its witness, had for the understanding and upholding of God's cause upon earth. Through these constant references we obtain an excellent picture of the father Blumhardt. Although in making this selection I have especially taken into account these devotions which directly remind us of this Möttlingen and its witnesses, it was not simply the purely historical point of view, or a desire to present a living picture of that history and its first great exponent which guided me. It is due, rather, to the nature

of the subject matter itself that Blumhardt was given a specially clear view of his own life just when he spoke of his father, and that, in the light of the "Möttlingen days," he was able to see with particular clarity what his own times demanded.

With Blumhardt it was never a matter of a proud or wistful glorification of the past, but always a linking up with a living history, a history which also served to support and guide his own life. Möttlingen was for him the "birth-place in which we actually have our being even today," "the ground upon which we stand and grow." His one great desire in recalling the past days in Möttlingen and Bad Boll was that through this life in the former birthplace, through the standing and growing upon the old ground, there would be ever new experiences of God's wonderful manifestations, and that through these experiences a living continuation of that history of God among men would be given.

So the past lives on in the present and points toward the future. Upheld by what was experienced in the past, Blumhardt listened continually for what God has to say today and through this was able to testify to "what God wants to become in the world." For Blumhardt "Möttlingen" was in no sense a history bounded by place and time. Not at all! Just as the old Möttlingen lived on in the Bad Boll of the father, so the Möttlingen and Bad Boll of the father lived on in the Bad Boll of the son. For this reason Blumhardt sometimes counted the years of his life and the

years of his congregation as beginning with the birth of his father, and especially from the time of the father's decisive experience in the Möttlingen "fight" during the years 1842 and 1843. On his birthdays all thoughts of his own birth--he was born June 1, 1842--were put into the background in thinking of what his father had fought for and won through faith just at that time. And, in fact, what would his life have been without this "Jesus is Victor" which the father had then experienced in such an overwhelming way! The spirit of the Bad Boll of the son was actually the same divine truth and reality which first blazed up over the Möttlingen of the father. Thus Blumhardt would on occasion give a visitor from Möttlingen many greetings to take back with him, asking him to tell the people there that "we carry Möttlingen on our hearts, and whenever we speak of Bad Boll we actually mean 'Möttlingen.'"

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This is not the place to give a detailed account of the story of the fight and victory in Möttlingen. However, in order to understand the many references to those days in Möttlingen, a few remarks are essential. For the rest, I would emphatically recommend the unique biography of the father Blumhardt which Friedrich Zündel wrote out of his deep understanding of and affection for the old Möttlingen of the father as well as the new Bad Boll of the son.

In the frightful illness of the Gottliebin Dittus who is so often mentioned in this book, the father Blumhardt



perceived the work of the "dominion of darkness" which the Bible speaks of. He did not, however, simply accept it with false resignation, for the same Bible also, and above all, witnesses to the One who "has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). He asked himself whether this kingdom, which at one time had advanced so mightily with victory after victory over the kingdom of darkness, should now simply capitulate before the prince of this world. He did not piously accommodate himself to the need which confronted him; he did not simply try to console himself about this darkness; he struggled for concrete help, for true deliverance from it. Blumhardt saw himself placed before that deepest and actually central question of faith: Can we accept God as a reality, even in the face of the hard facts and frightful realities of this world? And even while the fight was going on, he was able to experience who was really Lord, also on earth. God on high responded to his cry with deeds and allowed him to experience "a gracious, powerful intervention of the Saviour...just as he had read in the Bible as a child." Above all, the fruit and true ending of this nearly two-year struggle, was that he experienced a complete and lasting victory. The real significance of this was expressed in the final cry of the sick, but now permanently healed, person: "Jesus is Victor!" Even thirty-five years later on the anniversary of this victory, the father Blumhardt said in a sermon, "That was a personal

struggle with the personalities of darkness, which we fought for a year and nine months in order to see who would be master--I in the name of the Lord, Jesus, or they with their old resistance to the living God. I remained courageous in the Lord Jesus. Even when we went through hard times and I was driven to the extreme, the thought of Jesus, the beginning and the end of faith, kept me strong. In the end even the darkness had to cry out: 'Jesus is Victor.' With this my task was at an end."

It may be there was a side to this struggle which bore the stamp of the time in which it took place--a side which unfortunately all too often monopolized the interest of the curious on the one hand and the criticism of the supercilious on the other. "We may judge these events as we like," as the son Blumhardt once said, "one thing remains certain: a deep experience of new life and of new hope for life sprang out of that time and became a reality in the hearts of thousands."

These last words already indicate that this "fight" and its victory were only the beginning of further "gracious interventions of the Lord." They paved the way for a whole series of events in which it was experienced again and again that Jesus is Victor! In particular, a radical awakening came about among the whole congregation. Forgiveness of sins was experienced as a reality, and countless numbers of sick people were healed in a wonderful way. Zündel, who was present during those great days in Möttlingen, spoke about them when Blumhardt died. He said:



Straight after those hidden struggles with the powers of darkness, in which Blumhardt experienced for the first time the direct intervention of the Lord Jesus, a movement arose. This movement, with its sober, genuine repentance and with its power of complete forgiveness, recalled the days of John the Baptist. And by the power of the Spirit and the abundance of miracles which happened to all kinds of sick people, it brought to mind the days of the apostles. Yes, so great was the power of his preaching that we hardly had time to look around before a new miracle occurred, and during the sermon the personal nearness of the Lord made us forget the person of the speaker. We sensed something of the Jesus Christ of "yesterday"---that is to say, of 1800 years ago---who shows us "today" just what it is that is offered to men in Him and how greatly we need this, and only this, just now. We felt that this man belonged to all mankind. We felt that it was the Lord Himself who revealed and proclaimed through this man that He it is who will build up His Zion once again; the One who is the "same in all eternity"; who paves the way for the glorious and blessed end of the world's history, as He foretold through the prophets, and who wants to say to us: "Hope for this"; "Long for this"; "Pray for this."

It becomes clear in these words what finally was the most wonderful fruit to ripen in those "Möttlingen days." The Saviour opened a door, as it were, "through which He could more fully, more truly, more in accord with His own saving will, than perhaps anywhere else, reach those who labor and are heavy-laden." Through this "Open door" an altogether new light streamed into the world: the light of hope. After the laying of this "ground for miracles" in Möttlingen, one could expect to see on this ground an even greater, more powerful manifestation of the Kingdom of God among men. The invasions of our human world by the Kingdom of God which Blumhardt was able to experience were to him, above all else, significant as a pledge of the



Biblical promise of a new world, redeemed from the curse of the Fall and restored to its primeval state.

In that sermon of a later date to which we have already referred, Blumhardt says, "It was a tremendous time. Whoever saw and experienced it had to agree that it was no accident. It was a foretaste of a much greater time of salvation which was yet to come, not confined to one congregation, but over all the world." This hopeful view of the world is quite characteristic of Blumhardt. "The coming of God to the earth and the carrying-out of His will determined all Blumhardt's thinking and actions and culminated in the cry: 'Jesus comes!'" The early Christian hope of Christ's return for the consummation of His Kingdom found a highly significant rebirth in Blumhardt's message. In contrast to the many who preached the Christ who came, he knew himself called to preach the Christ who is to come. It is characteristic that this preacher of the coming Christ also showed the deepest understanding for the Christ who came. Conversely, out of the true understanding of the Christ who came grew the expectation of the coming Christ. Christ is, in fact, both the one who came and the coming one--"He who is and who was and who is to come...the same yesterday and today and for ever."

In connection with this "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord,"<sup>\*2</sup> Blumhardt also expected a

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\*2 Peter 3:12.

new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Without the shattering and renewal which would come with such an outpouring, he could not imagine that men would be truly prepared for the coming of the Lord. Indeed, he expected the fulfillment of this promise, as also the coming of Christ, to occur already in this time in which he and his people and the whole expectant Church were placed, and he laid the greatest emphasis on being prepared for this decisive act of the Lord. Christianity in general may have had a place somewhere in its doctrine for this final coming of Christ, but, in fact, it was hardly taken seriously. Blumhardt, however, lived in the "soon" of the Lord Jesus. Giving us a deep insight into his character, he once said of this "soon": "This little word 'soon' is my child." Zündel commented on this at Blumhardt's burial. He said:

He had a right to say this, for he was the first to express it so clearly and firmly. And, all unnoticed, the waves of his expectancy spread out in ever greater circles throughout the Evangelical Church. We can also turn it around and say that this little word "soon" is a heavenly decree and that you, dear Blumhardt, are its child. In the same way this house, Bad Boll, is also a child of this little word "soon."

It is a fact that through Blumhardt a new expectation of the coming Kingdom of God was awakened. Because this man grasped and represented this "soon" in such a living way on earth, Heaven, too, did something to help it forward. This "standing in the 'soon' of the Lord Jesus" becomes a power which brings the Lord closer, as it were, which hastens His coming and causes Him to already send forerunners of His

coming now." The Blumhardts themselves, father and son, may be regarded as such forerunners, proclaiming and paving the way for the coming of the Lord. And indeed, the whole history of Möttlingen and Bad Boll, in which their lives were embedded, was of great significance for God's breaking forth into the world.

Blumhardt's new attitude of faith with its living expectation of the coming of the Lord, for the victory of God's cause upon earth, found a characteristic expression in the song which was given to him in those Möttlingen days. This song, which from then on and over many years was sung by the Möttlingen and Bad Boll congregations as a fitting expression of ever new experiences, is the song with which we have opened and closed the message of Christoph Blumhardt in this volume: "Jesus is Victorious King."

Blumhardt held on to this hope until the end of his life. Indeed, he himself definitely hoped to experience something of the greatness of the coming of the Lord, and his death came unexpectedly, both for him and those around him. Even the nearness of death was unable to shake his firm hope and expectation. One of the last things he said was, "The Lord will, in His kindness, grant mercy to all people." The following words of his son Christoph in the morning devotions of February 26, 1880, which is to say the morning after the death of his father at 10 o'clock the previous evening--bring to expression how even at this time of greatest weakness Blumhardt was concerned with the victory of Christ, and how, beyond his own death, he expected something



to be given in Bad Boll for this victory. "And now a third word our beloved father spoke. This was yesterday afternoon when he was extremely weak. I sat next to him, and he spoke sorrowfully. I replied, among other things, 'Victory will come!' Then, with his last strength, he lifted up his hand and laid it on my head in blessing, with the words 'I bless you for the victory.'"

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This "Möttlingen, the scene of battle and victory," with its ever-new manifestations of the victorious power of Jesus and its living hope for Christ's return to gain the final victory, was the ground upon which the son Christoph Blumhardt "stood and grew." This was the Möttlingen which, from 1852 on, became Bad Boll, after the "witness to that which God wants to achieve in the world" had burst the narrow confines of the Church and the ministry.

It could not be otherwise than that the wonderful experiences of the father and the hopes that these nourished were imprinted at an early age on the responsive mind of the child, providing him above all with a living impression of Jesus, the Victor. Even at the age of thirteen we see the boy eagerly copying out his father's sermons. He wrote later that with deep interest he looked into his father's innermost being as he met it in these sermons and devotions. Until he was sixteen he was taught by his father in all subjects necessary for his further education. In this,

the father was surely concerned to familiarize his son with his own biblical and theological views. Bad Boll remained Christoph's spiritual home, the soil which nourished him, right through the years at school: 1858 at the Stuttgart secondary school, 1859 at the theological seminary in Urach, and from 1862 to 1866 at the University of Tübingen. Because of this background, the lectures of his theological mentors were apt to leave him cold. He confessed that he "could find no taste for theology with its positive and negative researches in all their subjective complexity." He expressed the deeper reason for this disinterest in theology in one of the devotional addresses included in this volume (number 78):

I, too, would not believe in such a God. Even at the university I thought to myself, "If what you preach to me is God, then I am through--I will not become a parson. The words are the same, but the spirit is missing. You raise up a God without hands, without a mouth, without feet, and we can do whatever we like while God has to keep quiet and do nothing." No, thank you! I will not believe in such a God.

Naturally, there is a difference between the child or adolescent growing up in an atmosphere of God's nearness, taking his surroundings for granted, and the grown-up deliberately participating in such a life and bearing witness on the basis of his own experiences. As a youth Blumhardt suffered under having to be, as it were, simply a spectator of the events that took place before his eyes in Bad Boll, and just because of the wealth of true life he saw around him, he felt a "wretch" in those years. As a student he was well able to grasp the radical difference

between the God whom the theologians expounded and the Church preached, on the one hand, and on the other, the God who manifested Himself in Bad Boll. But he himself did not really feel part of the life which made Bad Boll this extraordinary "Zion of God upon earth."

I indeed grew up under the protection of my parents and of the spiritual fire which at all times filled them, yet I felt shut out, and for me the life of Bad Boll remained at a distance, something holy and inaccessible to my soul. To be sure, I felt a great longing, but as I could not find the way of truly sharing in this life, I mostly went about sorrowfully. In contrast to the heights achieved by the many who gathered around my parents with vibrant, joyful hope, my life seemed dreary, often almost hopeless.

Even as a curate Blumhardt was close to resigning from the ministry which he had taken up more to please his father than from any inclination of his own. And when he became assistant to his father in Bad Boll, he just wanted to help him in any way he could, and he took on the most humble duties.

Things were to turn out differently, however. In later years I was gripped by events taking place around my father. My thirst for genuine life was stilled by a little drop of heavenly water, and this was enough to awaken the same powerful life which had taken hold of those elder friends in Möttlingen.

"The light of God's truth and reality shone down from above," and fell into his life too. That "little point"--the awareness that "God is! God is breaking forth!" and "God is my God! God is my father!" entered also into his heart.



"This little point makes us as clever as we need to be. I can testify to that. I have never learned a text and was never able to memorize a verse; but when this broke in upon me, I knew more in a week than all the theologians." Now Blumhardt was in that "heavenly school in which God Himself is able to speak." Now he knew that "there is a difference between learning what Jesus is and experiencing what Jesus is." And "We must experience something that comes from Heaven; then we know what the Kingdom of God is."

By the "events that took place around my father," which had such a decisive influence upon Blumhardt, is meant, above all, the death of Gottliebin Dittus on January 26, 1872. The life history of this remarkable woman and fellow-fighter of the father Blumhardt was linked to Blumhardt's own life history in a particularly holy, earnest, and deep way, and influenced him enormously. From 1846 on she was completely a part of Blumhardt's household and moved with him to Bad Boll. She was not only the most faithful support for his wife in the running of the large household and in bringing up the children, but she was an indispensable aid to him, especially in caring for the mentally ill people among those who came seeking help. Significantly, the Blumhardt children looked upon her as a second mother, calling her "Mamo" to distinguish her from the real Mama, and it remained an unanswered question in their hearts which one meant most to them. Her marriage to Theodore Broderson, Blumhardt's support in the outward administration

of Bad Boll, emphasized even more the significance of her place in the household. Such an authority, an inward greatness, and a steadfast loyalty came to expression in her bearing that it made an exceedingly deep impression, above all upon Blumhardt himself and his house. So it was not surprising that her painful illness later on, which lasted for years, became a new "fight" for Blumhardt, a fight which did not lack for victories but which ended in defeat, with her death. This death became for Blumhardt and his household a remarkable turning-point which moved them all first to repentance and to a still greater and more decisive earnestness. But it was also the signal for a new spiritual revival.

This event, which so deeply affected the father Blumhardt's life, was also of crucial significance for the breaking in of that genuine life the son thirsted for. It was with good reason that January 26th, the day of Gottlieb's death, became one of the most meaningful anniversaries for the younger Blumhardt. In the meetings on this day he again and again touched upon the deepest and most personal matters. Blumhardt experienced at Gottlieb's death-bed, (the father was away in Stuttgart at the time), that "remarkable birth" to which he repeatedly referred. Even years later he declared on this anniversary, "That is my day, given into my heart!" In the same meeting he said, "It was a night of death, the darkness and light of which are still with us, and the light shines upon us

even today. We have an open door today because something was fought out. It came about largely through the death of Gottliebin which opened up a new time for us."

Indeed, Blumhardt places the decisive hours of this night of death side by side with that which his father experienced in Möttlingen at the memorable Christmas of 1843 by the sick bed of this same Gottliebin:

There is something which in Möttlingen caused the sudden turn of events, when the superior power of Jesus Christ broke forth to gain the victory, and it ended with "Jesus is Victor." And in that night of death a higher battle was fought, and again it ended with "Jesus is Victor!" This is what has sustained us, right up till now. This one thing has remained: the contact, the living contact with the Lord Jesus, who does not cease caring for the earth and for mankind. He goes forward step by step, allowing His children on earth to feel the touch of His victory. In this way a forward movement can be seen and felt. "Jesus is Victor" still is true and certain for us.

It should be mentioned in this connection that the new life which was awakened so powerfully in Blumhardt also gripped Friedrich Zündel. Blumhardt could say later, "When he sensed this new creative strength at work in me, it entered into him, too; he felt it himself and could see it with eyes that were illumined by grace and truth." Zündel had come to Möttlingen when still a very young man, at the time of the great awakening. Here he "absorbed the full joy of those days, the joy about living deeds of God upon hundreds of people." Afterward he seems to have remained away for many years, preoccupied with his scientific research, and almost losing all contact with Möttlingen and Bad Boll.



"It was as if he had fallen asleep, and I heard nothing of him until I was thirty years old, in 1872."

At that time there was a meeting between the two which had far-reaching consequences, both for them and for the spreading of the truth which had broken through in Möttlingen and Bad Boll. "He, the much older, highly educated scholar, as much at home in theology and philosophy as in the natural sciences and mathematics...I, an ignoramus, a man who never in his life learned anything, and upon whom he looked down from the throne of his scientific superiority." Nevertheless, "When he saw that I had become a better theologian than he, from a different source, so that I impressed him in every way, all that he had experienced earlier was awakened again in him and he experienced a new birth." So it was from the same experience that they both came to represent something in the world, even though they came to it from totally different backgrounds: "He from out of his scientific rubbish, and I from out of my common, good-for-nothing nature, received new life out of the same experience and from then on helped one another."

This new life, which thus also took hold of and renewed Zündel, did not, of course, go unnoticed by the father Blumhardt. Already in a report he wrote about the last suffering and death of Gottlieb, he mentioned that "It was a source of great pain and concern to Gottlieb that my children grew so slowly into the special

spirit of the household. She feared the collapse of my house and of a work of God, and could almost see this happening before her eyes." He added, however, that her longing was fulfilled then through her death: "From that point on the new spirit she wished for them for the sake of the Lord broke through in everyone, and she herself became aware of this even as she lay dying. Of course this must still grow, but at least it has taken root in them all." He, father Blumhardt, even raises the significant question, "Did she perhaps have to die, that is, be a sacrifice for us, so that this might come about?"

From now on the son really was able to assist his father, and he stood by him as a help and deputy, particularly in spiritual matters. Now, when he preached, it was a witness to something he had seen and experienced, and with this he also proclaimed the great truths that had emerged from the spiritual struggles connected with the events at Möttlingen and Bad Boll. Now he was able to say of himself what he had always felt to be the essence of his father's proclamation. "I proclaim what I have seen and touched, and my father cried out to all the world what he had experienced." Out of what was laid into his heart he was then able to stand by and give something to his father when the elder Blumhardt's end suddenly and unexpectedly drew near and seemed to shatter his greatest hopes.

We have already mentioned the words of the dying father with which he blessed his son "for the victory." In this

connection let us not only consider what the father said to the son, but also what the son said in reply to the father's "sorrowful word." When he said, "Victory will come," it was not one of those human words of comfort such as are sometimes thrown out to sick people in order to momentarily reassure them. It was a word spoken out of a holy conviction, a word "not in plausible words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and the power" (1 Cor. 2:4). The father felt this and knew it, and in the assurance of victory he drew from it, he laid his hand in blessing upon the son's head and said, "I bless you for the victory."

To Moses on his death bed, Joshua became a comfort, for Joshua was to lead the people on into the promised land, whereas Moses himself had to stay behind, tired unto death by the long years of wandering. And in the same way the son became a comfort for the dying father Blumhardt. In confident expectation that the cause he had served all his life would continue, he gave his blessing to the son for this continuation.

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The death of the father Blumhardt was an extremely serious event for Bad Boll. All who felt close to the place and recognized its significance for the cause of God might well have had grave misgivings as to how it would continue now. From the very beginning, however, it was plain to the son Christoph that the glorious history which had begun in Möttlingen and Bad Boll must not simply cease with the



death of its first champion. He saw very clearly and was quite certain that what they had experienced was not his father's doing; it was Jesus with His victorious power who was behind all these events. This strengthened him in those difficult days and filled him with an unshakeable certainty of victory. It also put into his mouth that word of assurance of victory which he spoke to his dying father.

He expressed this in the morning devotions of February 26, 1880, immediately following the above-mentioned account of the father's blessing. Christoph said, "We will accept that we are blessed for the victory. Armed with this blessing, we will be patient and have faith. We want to go on striving for victory until it becomes manifest to all how much can be won through patience and faith. Praise and thanks be to God that we can even now enter into the victory of Jesus Christ. In the end he will bring salvation to all the world." And at the conclusion of his father's burial, he gave to the sorrowing congregation the short, simple address with which this volume begins and in which we find the following characteristic words:

Through the years, we have witnessed wonderful demonstrations of God's presence among us which have always pointed to the fact that Jesus is Victor! And now that our father is no longer among us, we still need the victorious Saviour; we must have Him, and we will have Him! I have this request to you: Take away from our dear Father's grave the deep impression and sure certainty that Jesus is Victor!

At this earnest moment, "as an expression of the feeling of victory," Blumhardt started that old Möttlingen song

of victory, whose origin he had told about in this unusual funeral sermon.

Zündel, who had hastened over from Winterthur for the burial and spoke at the ceremony, also did not simply give way to thoughts of grief, although he felt deeply how serious this death was. There was no doubt in his mind that even this heavy event must serve a "going forward." Fully aware of the importance of the Servant for the work of the Lord, he addressed a significant word to Bad Boll, "Blumhardt's dear household." He said:

Keep to the blessing, the purpose and the work of your father. Your house stands or falls by the principle on which it was built; for it is not your house, but the Lord's. Hold to what you have, dear house, that no one robs you of your crown. The work of the Lord presses onward with you, dear house, for the Saviour does not like to change, or even without you, if you should not want it.

At the end he addressed himself to Christoph in particular, whose relationship to his father in the last decade had, he said, been like that of Joshua to Moses, and because of this Zündel read the words the Lord had spoken to Joshua:

Moses my servant is dead; now, therefore, arise; go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them....as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them....Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:1-9)..

It was this consciousness of having been given a task and a responsibility like Joshua's which determined Blumhardt's course during the whole time after the death of his father. He felt deeply certain that this movement, begun under such powerful signs of God, must not become lost in the wilderness, but be led on toward the promised land. And he was fully aware of the responsibility which rested especially on him for its continuation. In the fears that would come over him in the face of this responsibility he found comfort in the exalted Jesus alone, the One who lives today just as He did yesterday. Blumhardt was never self-confident, never placed trust in the natural gifts of men. He conceded, "I do not deny that with Papa something of God's person which dwelt in him has been taken away. Something that was given to him at Möttlingen for the victory and the radical conversion there, has gone. As far as we as persons are concerned, we are now in somewhat the position he was in before his victory in Möttlingen." Christoph immediately added, however, "But as far as the cause is concerned, we are further on, for we have the benefit of what he fought through and achieved."

Throughout Blumhardt's proclamation at that time we hear the tone which, for example, he strongly emphasized in the meeting on Ascension Day, 1880:

It should not be that now we are overcome.  
Believe me, that hurts the majesty of Jesus  
Christ in Heaven. We must not act as though  
for us the Saviour were dead, however weak,  
poor, and insignificant we may feel ourselves



to be. The exalted Jesus Christ lives, and lives for us as for the men of old. We shall yet experience that the stronger and more courageous our sense of the Majesty of Jesus Christ, the more we shall go forward! We must in truth remain people of victory, for we have experienced something of the Majesty of Jesus Christ. We know that it is He who lives, and with Him, the faithful, here and beyond. He lives! And the Lord's cause must go forward triumphantly! If even one little worm took this stand the whole world could accomplish nothing against this one little worm.

On the next anniversary of the father's birth, after his death, Christoph said at the midday meal:

We are not dead, we are alive. If there were an appearance of wilting and dying, I would be the saddest person among you. But I know the Lord has made us. This is a source of joy, for what He has made, He will also preserve. What we have experienced is a new world; truly we already live in a newly created world! We live in a newly created time! This is what this day proclaims to us, and this is how it will be until all men see it!

In a meeting at the conclusion of the Church Year in that decisive year of 1880, Blumhardt read from the little book of daily watchwords put out by the Moravians: "Simeon looked for the consolation of Israel." He then first referred to his father as also being such a Simeon, and continued, "Now we no longer have one, so our household, as the Church, must become a Simeon. We must stand together as one man and represent Simeon." When such a man dies, "...we cannot say, 'Now it is all over.' No, the man does not die as long as we continue in the way."

New Year's Eve, 1880, bore very much the imprint of the loss which the past year had inflicted upon Bad Boll. During the evening meeting Blumhardt said, in reference to Psalm 69:29:

What moves us most of all this evening is the death of our beloved father in this year. It caused us very great distress. From a wealth of life and from out of the fullness of a very special family life, we were suddenly plunged into sorrow. We were forced to ponder: How did it come about? How do we stand? How is it going to be now? The past opened up, the present worried us, and the future lay closed. Nevertheless, in spite of our misery, we feel so much more help from God around us. We are actually better off than we ever thought we would be. It is possible to flourish in the midst of misery. We have not been crushed to death, although sin, death and Hell rose up against us. Unobtrusively, quiet miracles done by our Saviour have accompanied us on our way, and these lift us up and carry us day by day. We were miserable, but we see what the Lord can do. We have experienced deeds of God, and so we in Bad Boll want to be just very simple, foolish people who know only that God helps us. We want to be people of miracles. Other people can be clever--but not we! We know that only miracles of God can help the whole world!

By means of the words, "the children of His servants shall inherit it, and those who love His name shall dwell in it" (Psalm 69:36), Blumhardt made plain to his people the seriousness of their responsibility.

Those who want to see good days in the time when Zion comes to the light, must belong to the seed of God's servants and go forward in the faith of these servants. We must not allow the servants of God to die, even though they depart from us. They must live on in us. Then we shall be their seed. That which matters in God's Kingdom is not physical descent, but the imparting of the Spirit. When somebody attains the same faithfulness that a man of God had shown, he becomes his seed. Thus we can all be a seed of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob and so on, and also a seed of our father, whose faith we had before our eyes. We must not think that the cause will wane now that the beginner of our life, who achieved so much through his faith, is no longer with us. Certainly, if we do not believe, it will wane, but if we believe, it will increase.



And so Blumhardt's vision was always directed forward, never backward in nostalgic memories; for what the life of his father had won did not lie in the past, but in the future. It was, after all, a powerful testimony to what God wants to become in the world. The son's life was also a life of hope and expectancy, a life in the promise. Blumhardt truly stood under the light of the Lords' coming. His hope was constantly fed by a wealth of things seen and experienced. The Lord's future, in which he lived, already descended ever again into the present, for the Lord not only comes, but also is. That is why the word "soon" was taken so seriously by the son Blumhardt. "Do you know what we understand by serving God with all our hearts? I will tell you: it means to remember always that the Saviour will come soon, and that we must every day be prepared for Him to come, whenever He may choose!" And there was no lack of experiences of this "soon." "I tell you, He has already come several times; you just did not notice it. Several forerunners have been in the house, but only I noticed it, nobody else."

What Blumhardt clearly recognized, and firmly grasped as his own decisive task in the first year after the death of his father, was the struggle to continue the activity of the father. This was fundamental for all those years. The whole present volume testifies to this, as will also a few words taken from addresses given in the later years of this first period, but which are not included in this



book. On the anniversary of his father's death, in 1882, Blumhardt ended the morning devotions with these words:

We stand here as guilty people, but not as dead and ruined people. His passing had to help us to new life. It had to bring us clarity in our waywardness and had to make us yearn for heavenly things, for a life truly lived for the Saviour, completely for the Saviour, with whom we know our father to be. And if the Saviour can remain with us, yes, begin anew with us, because we humble ourselves, He can also preserve for us that of God which was given us in our father. Truly, He can even increase it for us, so, instead of losing, we shall have gained. Today we can say with joy that the Saviour has not withdrawn from us. And with the passing away of our father, that which was most precious to us in him has not passed away--something of God which upholds us, guides us, and fills us with hope for a continued increase in God's loving deeds for the world.

(January 25, 1882)

In the sermon at the wedding of a son of Gottlieb Broderson, nee Dittus, Blumhardt said:

Our whole community, our house, and the history of our house, proclaim to us the name of Jesus. Many years ago already, in a special way, it was shown to us who Jesus is. We who are here, who have heard so many testimonies to it, can certainly know who He is, why He came, and that He wants to be Lord among us and in all the world. That history of divine deeds with its testimony that Jesus Christ is the Lord has never come to an end. Ever since then each year has brought us a new witness that this Jesus Christ lives, that He is alive for us, and for all, and that He fights and conquers for the whole world. It would have been all over for our community long ago if living powers from Heaven, working by our father's side, had not established something which places us in eternity and gives us permanence for this time here on earth. And it is not only we children and our children who have felt something of this breath of eternity which comes from the name of Jesus. Large circles of friends have gradually come into being, even far away--we could almost say in every land--and they have felt this too. In all we experienced, also in many later events, even in the passing away

of our beloved Gottlieb and our beloved father behind whom we could feel new powers of God at work; in all we have experienced in good and evil days, in the pain of struggle and in the joy of victory, this name of Jesus appears before us as something quite different from anything this world has to offer. Yes, you should know that we await the glorious revelation of our great God and Saviour, here upon earth. We expect, not for ourselves but for all the places where the Lord Jesus is being served, that the Father in Heaven will gain glory for Himself over against all that is earthly and sinful; all that is of death; all that wants to destroy us; all corruption of darkness, all that is of the Devil. That is what we await, that is what we want to achieve by our service, when we are there where Jesus Christ is.

(January 23, 1883)

February 25, 1885:

Today it is the 25th of February, an important anniversary for us. We celebrate it as a birthday in the true sense of the word, for our dear grandfather is not dead. Five full years have passed and through him we have been blessed by the Saviour as His servants right up to this day. These years have not been much different from the years in which the people of Israel were preserved in Egypt by signs and wonders, and then were led through the Red Sea and through the wilderness. It would pain our father if we clung to him and saw his name as too important. Then we might forget what the Lord asks of us today, and what He is concerned about now. Therefore let us all strive to let go of the name Blumhardt, in which the Saviour has blessed us, and take hold of that Name which the name Blumhardt leads us to--the Name of Jesus. May His power and His spirit alone lead us in the way that is now asked of us. Times change very quickly; we are faced by new tasks and new demands. But there is also no lack of new demonstrations of the Spirit and the power, nor is there lack of a new language through the Spirit of God which, to begin with, will convert the hearts of individuals, and, finally, will be poured out over the whole world. And so may the Lord Jesus, as we stand at the grave of our father, strengthen us anew in His name. May He make us His servants, pure in spirit, and with hearts that are awake when something new comes.



June 16, 1885:

It was just in these days, forty-three years ago, that our father stood in the most intense fight in M8ttlingen. Then he sighed and cried out, "Lord Jesus, I am your servant. And where your servant is, your name shall prevail. Your power shall be made manifest over against all the powers of darkness and evil in this world!" And an answer came from Heaven. This answer consisted in nothing but deeds of the Lord Jesus, from that time on. Even today we still live in this continuous stream of deeds the Lord Jesus does for us. We are people whom the Lord Jesus has gathered and bound together in all kinds of struggles and sorrows, and vicissitudes of life. The goal of all this is that Jesus becomes Victor and that we, standing in the glow of the Saviour, testify to all the world that Jesus lives, Jesus is Victor, Jesus comes, Jesus will light up the whole of creation! Even now we can see Jesus in His future. As those who await Him, we stand in the light of His future. It is the greatest thing of all to be able to stand here and say, "The Lord is coming." We tell you: "The Lord will come soon." We live in this "soon" of the Lord Jesus, in the light of His future for all creation.

February 25, 1886:

Whatever the Saviour begins, He goes on with, that life will not die. That is why we do not hang our heads and cannot muster the grief people commonly display....We rejoice because we have heard a voice from Heaven proclaiming the Saviour to us. We want to belong to the people of God. But we can only belong when the promise dwells in our hearts. If this is so, and we are faithful, there will be a thread reaching into Heaven, and we shall know what the Holy Spirit is. When our hearts flame up to the throne of God in longing for the Kingdom of God to come, something will come down from above in order to bring this about, and we can recognize the Holy Spirit once more. Meanwhile we should not forget that God does allow us to experience a great deal of that which belongs to the Saviour's future. We are not only people who wait. A people of the promise are not merely a people who wait, but a people who have something. When I think of all that we have had in those six years since Grandfather died, it would be a shame for someone to weep and be unhappy today. Just think of what we have!...Servants of the Lord Jesus should be such as have seen the Heavens open above them. If there is something we can praise in our father's life, it is that in him we saw the



Saviour again, working invisibly upon him with the result that the Heavens opened once more, letting the powers of God have free access to us.

Summer, 1887:

The more we draw upon and treasure the past deeds of God, the better we are able to experience divine history--the deeds God brings about today. Not the strange and curious things sorcerers accomplish, but the miracles God does. It is not men who shall become great; no--what is of God in Christians shall come to the fore! So the Christians will be quite unimportant and only what is of God will stand out. Then everyone can say to himself: I, too, can be such a person! Do not waste time worrying whether you can do this; just remember that it is not you as a person who does it, but God. And if you can give praise for the deeds of God you have already experienced, oh how much can then be given to you! You can, one might say, experience biblical history within your own selves.

June 1, 1887:

Our beloved God upholds us. This makes me glad even though I have a year behind me which, I dare say, was the bitterest of my life. A year ago on this day I received the first indication that I must be prepared for something to happen --in short, that my mother would die. And it happened---that was my birthday present! Then death fell upon me like an armed man, and in a short time there were five graves in the cemetery. Among them was my dearly beloved Theophil whose passing, humanly speaking, affected, and still affects me much more than people might think. Then my Catherina, Gottlieb's sister, had to leave us, and that was also more than hard. Finally, my Hans also had to go. That just about wiped out everyone I had looked to for support. Well, I thank my God that it is like this. Now I want to see whether we are founded in men or in God. I believe that if we are true children we shall be carried. We feel this most of all when we lose so much, when those whom we should so like to depend on are taken away from us. And this makes us happy again, it comforts us. On the one hand we lose something; on the other we see that we are being upheld, we can go on. With this attitude we can envision the future--not, of course, in the strength of the horse nor with the courage of the warrior, but in the strength of the men of faith. As men of

faith we can see the world crumble around us and yet remain upright ourselves, for we know that our foundation is elsewhere. And so we celebrate this day with joy, and with great peace, in the Lord. Do not ascribe what belongs to God to a human being--not to me, either! It does not depend upon me, or my mother, even though we are tools. If our cause were no higher than a human cause, I would not want to go on for another hour, and I could not be happy either. But because it does not depend upon men, I say: Give up nothing! Give up nothing of the very highest that is promised us according to Scripture! Let us go on! Forward, in the strength of what we have been shown, toward that which is heavenly! This is what we want to look forward to--the very highest! We will not be despondent, but courageous; not timid, but bold. It is waiting for us in Heaven, whoever can seize hold of it and pull it down can have it.

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We can see by these words alone that Blumhardt's struggle for the continuation of the divine history of Möttlingen and Bad Boll was not in vain. He truly "continued the work of Bad Boll" and, with this, experienced ever new manifestations of the Victor with whom that history had once begun.

The father's death did not mean the end of the story of Möttlingen and Bad Boll, as had been expected by friends and opponents, sadly or with gratification. In its independence from the person of its first exponent, this history revealed its true origin and the source of its strength. Blumhardt eloquently expressed his joy about this in the sermon delivered in Berlin on March 12, 1888, at the end of this first period.



That is why I rejoice like a child that when my father died, I, poor wretch that I am, was able to continue this cause. I want to say quite frankly that for me the greatest miracle I can think of in this time is that I could continue my father's cause, because all the circumstances spoke against it....This is no merit of mine, for I was by nature quite unfitted for this task....One thing I did have though: I thought to myself that...as long as the Saviour takes things in hand, it will not depend upon what I am.

One year later he wrote, "Isn't the Kingdom of God more than the man who serves it? At that time God gave me the strength to carry on with a lively joy as if nothing had changed, in spite of all the notions that now Möttlingen and Bad Boll were finished." It was a fact that nothing had changed. Just as his father had done, the son stood there as a mighty witness of the victorious power of Jesus. And out of ever new experiences the Boll congregation could start their old song of victory: "Jesus is Victorious King."

It was just during these years that Blumhardt also carried his witness farther afield. He liked to take part in missionary gatherings, Bible festivals, and similar events, just as his father had before him. We meet him as the main speaker on such occasions, in Calw, Reutlingen, Karlsruhe, Frankfurt on Main, Barmen, Elberfeld, and Strassburg. Above all, he made annual journeys to Switzerland and spoke there repeatedly in Winterthur and in nearby Freienstein, also at times in Zürich, Uster, in Riehen near Basel, and at other places. The reason for his frequent appearances particularly in Winterthur--I have



at my disposal more than a dozen devotional addresses and sermons from the years 1884, 1885, 1886, and 1887--was without doubt his friendship with Friedrich Zündel around whom a large circle of loyal friends of Bad Boll had gathered. At Zündel's death, Blumhardt wrote about this friendship in his recollections of Zündel: "So it came about that just as I became almost Swiss with him, he became almost German with me. In our common longing we forgot Germany and Switzerland and all nationalities. We felt together as men of mankind, whose king is Jesus." The high point, and at the same time the conclusion, of all this outside preaching activity was reached in Berlin, where Blumhardt spent a whole week in March, 1888. Here he preached more than twenty times and reached thousands of people with his message.

But the value of these public appearances as a preacher became more and more questionable to Blumhardt. The great success he had, outwardly, which would have filled others with gratification and satisfaction, made him doubt whether this was the right way to represent the cause of Christ. Already after some fine days in Karlsruhe (September, 1887), misgivings were mingled with his joy about the "great eagerness to hear a word of God" which was to be found among the people. "I used to think that if it could once be as it is now, we would be in a golden age; if once everyone could be so easily stimulated and made happy by a simple word from the Gospel." But, "in spite of everything, everything,

there remains one great need--the burden of sin....How will this ever end? I almost break my head when I am at such a festival. I run against this wall like a bull to bring it down, but I can't manage it....Something stops our coming forward."

Blumhardt felt that he was somehow misunderstood by the masses who came to hear him, who wanted to hear and only hear. He felt confronted by the "conventional Christianity" from which he was soon to break away completely. He was regarded as a "speaker," whereas he wanted only to be a "witness." We soon hear him sighing, "I am terribly sorry that people say I am a famous preacher! May God grant that I get away from all the glory men have given me."

It was not only his activity as a preacher, though, which increasingly left Blumhardt unsatisfied toward the end of this period. The chain of deaths which began with the passing of his mother in July, 1886, and ended with the death, in March, 1888, of cousin Hans Jörg (Gottlieb's brother and the last witness of the Möttlingen days), came to him as a sign that he must no longer go on in the same way. It was more important to understand what God spoke today, what God demanded of him now, even if this should point to completely new paths. The son Blumhardt's carrying on with the task was not meant to be simply a continuation of the divine history of Möttlingen and Bad Boll. On the foundation of the truth

fought for and won in that history, Blumhardt was to carry it onward and forward in a deeper sense; that is to say, draw those "further consequences" of which he himself spoke in the words already quoted.

Where a history of God comes into being through God's speaking and His servants' listening and obeying, it is shown to be living history precisely by not stopping at what has been attained, but by striding forward and opening up new truths through new revelations of God's will. The very fact that Blumhardt was open for God's speaking anew and allowed himself to be led by Him along new ways, made him truly a servant of God. And out of this grew also that special significance which his life was to have, distinct from that of his father.

These new ways led Blumhardt first of all to what he called a "dying." "Die, and Jesus will live!" became the new watchword, following after the previous one, "Jesus is Victor." By this inward dying, Blumhardt was then enabled to represent the cause of God in full power as a "man of God in the world." This is what is testified to in the volumes of sermons following the present volume, which are already published. This first period, as it were, laid the groundwork for the later witness. I deliberately say "groundwork," because this striding forward must not be understood as an abandonment of what had been fought for and won up until that time. The first fundamental experience of "Jesus is Victor" stands behind all that follows, and



this cry of victory sounded forth again and again  
in the times to come.

Zürich, Easter 1937

R. Lejeune

## NOTES

This volume presents only a selection from the many sermons, devotional addresses, and meditations. Nearly eight hundred of these were available to me from which, after repeated sifting, I chose the ones I felt to be most important and suitable. Of course, many of the others would certainly have been worth including, but even during the printing, several had to be withdrawn because of considerations of space. My "Conclusion" explains why none of the sermons available to me from Blumhardt's curate days or from the years 1872-1879 have been included, although this time does belong to the first period of Blumhardt's activity covered by this volume.

There are quite a number of sermons, devotions, and meditations available from this first period which were printed and published by Blumhardt himself. Over a number of years the father Blumhardt had published the "Blätter aus Bad Boll" ("Pages from Bad Boll"), and in continuation of this, the son published usually twice a month from 1882 to 1888, "Briefblätter für die Freunde von Bad Boll" ("Leaflets in Letter Form for the Friends of Bad Boll"). In addition, his many preaching journeys now and then occasioned the printing of the sermons he delivered. In this form a number of individual sermons were available to me, as also the following small collections: "Sermons given at the Vereinshaus in Winterthur" (August, 1884);

"Sermons and Talks delivered at the Vereinshaus in Winterthur and at the festival in the Rettungsanstalt" (House of Refuge) in Freienstein, (August, 1885); "Sermons and Lectures given in Switzerland, 1886"; and "Meditations at the House of Deaconesses in Strassburg" (June, 1887). Finally, there are the Sermons and Meditations which Blumhardt delivered in Berlin in March, 1888. These were published separately by the author himself as the first numbers of the "Vertraulichen Blätter für Freunde von Bad Boll").\* Beginning in Spring, 1888, these were at first published alongside the "Briefblätter." After 1889 they took the place of the "Briefblätter" and were published at somewhat more irregular intervals. During these years Blumhardt also frequently contributed to the "Stuttgarter Evangelischen Sonntagsblatt" ("Stuttgart Evangelical Sunday Paper"), for which he often supplied the opening meditation.

Besides all that was printed, mention should also be made of the sermons and devotional meetings which were duplicated for friends of Bad Boll. There are a great number of these in existence from all the years of this early period. Special care was given to those published during the years 1886-1889. They are lithographed reproductions, all done in the same style. When collected, they form an imposing volume.

Apart from the printed and duplicated sermons and meetings, a very great number of handwritten transcripts were available to me. Although these were not in every

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\*("Personal Papers for Friends of Bad Boll").



respect completely reliable, I was very glad to make use of them for my selection because certain formal shortcomings in them were compensated for by the advantage of being closer to the original. The printed sermons, particularly those which appeared in the "Briefblätter," often reveal a later polishing, expansion, or cutting down, which at times takes away from the original freshness and spontaneity. Where it was possible for me to compare the transcript of the spoken word with the printed version, the difference was sometimes quite striking. Occasionally this led me to give preference to the transcript, or sometimes to supplement the printed version from the manuscript.

Since some people will be interested in the particular character of the source material, I have added to these "Notes" more detailed information about each sermon or testimony. (Translator's Note: In the English version this information has been included in a separate folder along with a topical index.)

In this first period of his activity Blumhardt also published writings such as the "Erbaulichen Blicke in die ersten Blätter der heiligen Schrift" ("Edifying Glimpses into the First Pages of Holy Scripture"), 1885, and the "Erbaulichen Blicke in die ersten Kapitel der Offenbarung Johannes" ("Edifying Glimpses into the First Chapters of the Revelation to John"), 1886. Although these writings are also based upon devotional

addresses they have not been included here because it is hoped to publish them in a separate volume which would be comprised of longer, connected meditations. For the same reason I have also not taken into consideration a lengthy series of meditations on the first chapter of Jeremiah (1887), on the Lord's Supper (1887), and on the Passion of Christ (1888), all of which appeared in the "Briefblätter."

Generally Blumhardt based the morning devotions on the reading of the daily Watchword and Text of the Moravian Brothers. Often starting with a short introduction occasioned by whatever might give a special character to the particular day, he would usually speak first about the Old Testament watchword and then about the New Testament text. This often resulted in dividing the devotion in two completely independent parts, sometimes of quite different lengths. In making this selection I have at times taken only the first or only the second part, but the result is nevertheless something which can stand by itself and forms a complete whole. Because of the use of the printed "Watchwords" of the Moravians ("Losungen"), I was not only able to verify the dates given in the transcripts but was also able, with a high degree of accuracy, to assign dates to addresses for which the source material itself did not give the requisite information. This was quite important for me because the sequence of devotional addresses and meditations throughout all four volumes was to be a chronological one.

During all this time it was the custom in Bad Boll, on New Year's Eve, to draw a "lot" for each member of the household as well as for faraway friends of Bad Boll. Blumhardt was very concerned that this drawing of lots should not be understood in a superstitious way. In the "Briefblätter" there is the following noteworthy passage: "When this year we again draw the so-called 'lot' for our friends and write and tell them the day for which their names are marked down in our Book of Watchwords, I want to ask that it be understood in the sense we mean it. The purpose of this is not that a text is assigned to someone through the 'lot' which, like an oracle, is supposed to be related to his life in some special way. We draw these lots simply in order to have an opportunity once every year to think especially of a particular friend at our morning devotions. The respective passages or texts set down for the various days do not apply to individuals but to us all. I urge you not to see in the 'lot' anything of soothsaying or even of prophecy. We want to remain simple, standing under the Word of God which applies equally to all men."

I have not included the names of the people determined in this way by lot, nor the words Blumhardt spoke at the beginning of the morning devotions thinking of them. The only exception I made to this was in the case of people who had a special significance for the life of Bad Boll and who were referred to in the address itself. For a



better understanding it may be important to point out that a "lot" was drawn not only for individual people but also for Bad Boll, for Möttlingen, even for the Kingdom of God! This simply meant that on a particular day these were thought of in a special way in connection with the watch-word for the day.

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Translator's note: Bible quotations are in general taken from the Revised Standard Version (1952). Occasionally we have had to translate from the German text where this was absolutely necessary for the understanding of what Blumhardt was saying.