

THE FIGHT FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

in Blumhardt,

Father and Son - and Further!

by Leonhard Ragaz

A DRAFT TRANSLATION

to page 166

"Der Kampf
um das Reich Gottes"
Rotapfel-Verlag
Zuerich, Muenich & Leipzig
1925, 338 pages

INTRODUCTION

9 This book is meant to be a forerunner and bring a message. It does not claim to be anything special in itself, as a work of the author (though it comes from the heart); it is meant as a pointer to something higher and something great.

It is a mystery that the movement of God's kingdom which, in meaning and power, more closely resembles what happened around Jesus than any other movement in Christianity, could take place so quietly that until recently it has remained almost entirely unnoticed. And even now in all Christianity there is only a man or a small circle here and there who knows something about the two Blumhardts - the great father and the great son - or who has heard of Möttlingen or Boll, the places of their fight and victory.

Even the one who writes this, oddly enough, belonged for many years to those who knew scarcely anything about it. He was already at the age of manhood, had gone through decisive developments in his life. He was standing at the beginning of a new road and was slowly struggling forward, when from time to time certain people met him who all had something about them that was special and new, and yet familiar. Writings became available to him, writings which were given to him as precious gifts and as tokens of trust. These touched him like a call from that land which he sought with his soul, like the rays of a new sun as yet unseen. All of these people without exception had something greater and freer about them than most people had - yes, even more than they could by their own nature have possessed. If they were noticeably fearful by nature, a

10 certain courage had now come into them. If others had obviously been rather narrow of outlook, they now showed a new breadth. One could say of these people that a breeze from the heights blew gently about them. In a unique, clear and fine way they had combined the two things which ^{the writer} had previously been unable to bring together, and which are in general more or less at odds. They brought together freedom of spirit and a deep religious faith.

The writings spoke in a power and simplicity and great clarity such as the life and words of Jesus had done. All religious writings of other kinds - excepting the gospels - were pale by comparison. Where did this light come from? Who had changed these men in such a way? From whom did this way of living and speaking come? Finally the answer came: it was Blumhardt in Boll. And little by little the sun itself dawned for the writer in all its clarity and power.

It was a wonderful encounter. The writer had grown toward Blumhardt without ever having known much more of him than the name. Sorry as he was not to have known Blumhardt earlier, when he thought of the immeasurably valuable recognitions and experiences that were lost to him in this way, yet he was also thankful for that delay. For as it was, he was not just one of Blumhardt's disciples, and could not so easily seize Blumhardt's teachings for his own like a kind of booty, and perhaps even boast of them; instead he had to seek first for this truth by himself in his own long struggle, until it came to him in Blumhardt as a wonderful fulfilment and therefore as a gift and revelation. Here was that union of freedom of spirit and deep religious faith which he had sought and longed for. Here was

a river flowing in unimagined greatness and clarity as if from the heart of Jesus himself.

The social, political and human hopes coming from a dying world, which, after a long trek through the desert, had started to grow in his heart, found here a fulness and a depth which had been inaccessible to him before and probably would have remained so. The God-given breath of spring which now bloomed
11 in his life received the bright sun and the great sources that he needed for his life and development. It was a richness and a life and a glory that intensified his being and his strength in a wonderful way. It was a redemption.

It was wonderful to grow into the world of Blumhardt partly through contact with the truest and best of his disciples, and partly through the writer's own inward development, which even now lost none of its individuality. To the wonder of this time belongs the fact that, because of a reverent shyness, he did not seek a personal contact with the human source of all this light, with the man toward whom he felt like a spiritual son. But the day finally came when he went to Boll, only half aware of the great things that awaited him there. There he saw and heard Blumhardt, and for a time he visited the places which had seen such great battles and victories, and also temporary, perhaps only seeming, defeats of God's kingdom. Twice this grace was imparted to him. What he saw and heard there is treasured in the holiest depth of his heart. Here he found the greatest and most undreamed of things that he had ever seen or heard. Some of this will be told in this book; the readers whose insight has been awakened will understand it. The fact that this man opened the depths of his heart and soul and later, with his

fatherly love and an understanding that reflected God's ways, accompanied and carried him, is the most precious possession of the author's life and the most gripping experience of the goodness of God.

From that time on, Boll was to him the most beloved place in the world of today, and the center of his thoughts. It was a rock on which his soul, and all that was holiest to him, could rest.

12 In Blumhardt we saw the picture of Jesus and His life become alive once again. That was for us an infinitely valuable help in the confusion of those times. While in those days Jesus was surrounded in a fog of myth and superstition, and even His existence was disputed, we possessed, in what was seen through Blumhardt's way and activity, a victorious guarantee of the reality of Jesus and a marvelous commentary on the gospels. What happened in Mottlingen and Boll unlocked the New Testament to our understanding far better than all study and book-learning, which in most cases closes it the more. We stood in the sunshine above the fog in which Christianity and theology were working. We could wait until the clouds dispersed - as they have done - and until the Bible and Jesus, the living Christ, and the Kingdom of God as Blumhardt saw and experienced it, are disclosed to the world with a new light and a new reality.

After his visit at Boll the writer then went his own way independently. He was unable, out of reverence, simply to be a disciple of Blumhardt. He knew how far he was from the master. Nevertheless he felt obliged to bear witness to him and to recognize him as his teacher. But it was such a sacred thing

to him, a mystery so wonderful, that he was too shy to speak, and he always waited for the day when this most delicate and greatest of tasks could be brought to completion. In addition he was all this time so involved in struggles into which he did not wish to draw the master. He was to stand above all these fogs and storms of our time; his message was to be a gospel untouched by the disputes of men, even of theologians.

To keep quiet during this time was often difficult. Here a man was given to our time by God, a man who had the redeeming word for all the need of the time; and not the word only, but also the power. And people did not know about him. Yes, other things happened that were even more difficult to bear. Not all were silent. Men came along who took their most worthwhile
 13 ideas from the spring of Blumhardt, and proclaimed them with a very loud voice. And they did it in such a way that the spring water of truth was changed in their hands and lost much of its healing power. But the worst was that they were not merely followers but independent, important and spiritual men who by their own brilliance darkened that simple truth. And yet that simple truth was so vastly greater, richer and clearer, so far more suited to be brought to all the people and to give light to the world!

And then in addition there was a group of followers of Blumhardt who made something narrow and sectarian out of him and just in so doing believed themselves to be true to him. How strong was my wish that the real truth, as it appeared in Blumhardt himself, might shine forth like the sun breaking through the clouds!

It was in these times, however, that Blumhardt passed on.

In the deep darkness of the war (1914-18) the thought of him was a light and comfort to us. If again and again we are able to understand these times and bear them as coming from God, if we are able to see God's thoughts reigning in them and over them, we have to thank Blumhardt above all others. And perhaps the whole world has in a special way to be thankful for his intercession for it, that the terrible storm has not dragged them down completely. As the sound of the cannons ceased he was called away into that world which is to us invisible.

Immediately the writer set before his soul this long-felt and sacred task. But he had (as he thought) still to fight in Blumhardt's spirit and with all his strength in the storms and movements that followed upon the breakdown of the old order which the war had caused. Also, he must admit that the terrible confusion of war and the impossibility of a personal contact with Blumhardt had created a sort of mild separation between him and his teacher. But then there came a new encounter in as wonderful a way as before.

14 In the loneliness of winter in the mountains, wrestling with ultimate, very difficult questions of life and God's kingdom, he took up the task of bearing true witness to the message of the Blumhardts. That year the Swiss mountain sunshine blazed with an exceptional, more than earthly, clarity and brilliance. As if rivalling that sun, the truth of God's kingdom as Blumhardt father and son had represented it, radiated with a new power and glory. The work grew steadily under the writer's hand. From old material new meanings unfolded. In addition, much new material came into his hands. It was like a treasure from God. High in the Alps, in a room of a peasant's dwelling, he

experienced hours of incomparable exaltation and enlightenment. The world of Jesus became as tangible and real as the glowing peaks beyond the doorway. As the author read and wrote, the face of the master greeted him and watched over all that he did from an excellent picture, and the master's wonderful eye rested upon him; his thinking and his writing were like a discussion with Blumhardt; in them he felt responsible to him. With this the author's own glorious experiences flowed together into a unity. It was a relationship of the living.

And so that is the way this book came into being. I did not want to write it but had to. It was not made but given. I only wanted to write a very short report, but now by a higher persuasion even a book, a Blumhardt-book, has come to be.

To me it is unquestionably clear that much could be said against the publication of such a book. Above all, that the kingdom of God which appeared in Blumhardt as Life and Power could now become a teaching, a theology or a "Blumhardtism", a thing which would be infinitely painful to Blumhardt himself. But because the book was born in struggle and leads its readers on into further struggle I do believe that it shall not finally lead to a lifeless theory. I mean that through the words of Blumhardt and through the power of God's kingdom that is here, not only should such dead rigidity be hindered from developing
 15 but the book may even help to shatter the theory and theology which have already been frozen into forms. As this book is never just a teaching for me, so it should not become that for others either. Even the gospels are not immune to misrepresentation, but again and again they have been able to overcome it.

What seems to be a much more important question has

troubled me much less. That is, whether I have the right to speak of Blumhardt, and whether I interpret him rightly. For I say to myself that in the first place my witness is just one among many; this is the way I saw it, others will recognize other facets of this truth better than I. But my witness can stand as well. This is true all the more since I have included many of Blumhardt's own words, contrary to my original intention, for this very reason. They were, as has been said, selected from a great treasure of the lesser known writings of the master but especially from his unprinted sermons, talks at table and letters. In making the selection I have taken great pains. I have put much work into the book. I have presented not only that which most appeals to me; I have tried to give a genuine picture of the kingdom of God in Blumhardt. It is, therefore, a subjective picture, of course, but who can give one that is not?

Admittedly there is something I must still emphasize: as I said at the beginning, my book is meant only to be a forerunner. For a much greater demand and task rises before us: that the incomparable gift of God which we have (in the son's few writings but many accurately recorded sermons, talks and letters) should be offered to the world as fully as possible. He belongs to the world. It would be quite contrary to his intention if he should remain the privilege of just a few. And for that, a
 16 subjective choice of writings should no longer be sufficient. Who would presume to judge the value of the various sayings of Blumhardt? To some people one thing is important, to others something else. As the times change different things will be selected from this treasure, and perhaps later, things will be selected whose significance we are not as yet able to recognize.

That is in God's hands. Under his leading this truth will become effective. We have, in trust to God, to offer them to men. This winter I really experienced, often with a shaking force, that since the days of the prophets and apostles no one has spoken God's word with such clear and powerful authority as did Blumhardt. Some of those words will appear in the "new Bible" of which Blumhardt sometimes spoke.

I have made my choice in consideration of this complete publication which must come. To these words I have avoided adding any learned notes regarding their source. They should have their effect as a word of God. I have, I admit, made no attempt to take from them what is human; I have also intentionally given some examples of the drastically blunt way which was his at times, and in which he was so very much like his Master.

Nothing could be more wrong than to take from Blumhardt those things which are offensive to small people by removing what is basically human or powerfully revolutionary and making him closer to the conventional religious pattern. The real Blumhardt comes to expression in just those things which are boldest and most revolutionary. That the words of Blumhardt show a gradual development, that they may be apparently or actually inconsistent, also seems to me to be no hindrance; such things are also to be found in the gospels. They show that this is not a well constructed system but life, struggle, fighting and pressing forward.

I have not limited myself to the son but I also quote from the father, because we are concerned with one cause, one development which (as the son also says) begins with the father

and continues in the son. Also, the personal element should be completely secondary to the cause, in keeping with the spirit of both Blumhardts. If, in fact, the son comes into the foreground much more, that is partly because some of the father's words are already published, and we also have Zündel's excellent biography.*

The son is also emphasized here because this book has the character of a witness. For the writer knew only the son personally, and received his strongest impressions from him.

The truth to which this book bears witness is, in the highest degree, revolutionary. It not only throws over our worldly institutions, moral outlooks, politics and economics, but also our churches, theologies, Christianity, and puts in their place the kingdom of God which came to us in Christ. The book will offend both the pious because it is so radical, and the radicals because it represents something which is foreign to them, yes, a fantastically demanding faith. But if they do not put the book aside after the first impression, and continue with it, then perhaps the pious may recognize that here the last word is spoken to their piety, and the free may realize that the greatest freedom is the freedom which is grounded in God. Something completely new rises up here which does not fit into any of the old patterns, and which fulfills in a surprising way the deepest longing of our times.

So may this message go out and speak of the kingdom of God.

- - - - -

* "Johann Christoph Blumhardt, a Biography" by Friedrich Zündel, a very worthwhile book, written with love, understanding friendship, and spiritual nearness to Blumhardt. It would be difficult to find anything better to replace it.

of that kingdom which appeared to us once in Jesus and afterwards was almost forgotten, but which has never completely died, of this kingdom which experienced such a great new revolution in Moettlingen and Boll. May it speak of the fight for God's cause which was fought by these two unequalled champions of God.

There is still much that could be said. One could mention the fact that it was a German from whom this world-saving and world-reconciling light came. The fact that in his own land he was listened to almost less than elsewhere would indicate that his significance was far above anything national. But the important thing is that Blumhardt stood as a witness of God for the whole world.

19 Perhaps the question will come up, how is it to be explained that the world has not yet seen this light except in a reflection not recognized as such? I will answer that briefly. Who saw Christ when He taught in Galilee and Jerusalem? What a long time it has taken for His light to shine throughout the world. We stand before a new historical era which will re-evaluate men and movements. There the Blumhardts, father and son, will have their proper part.

The last thing Blumhardt wanted was to be a religious light in the world's eyes. He wanted to be swallowed up in God's cause; he wanted to die in order that Jesus might live. He wanted to be the weakest and smallest of all. If we were now to set up a Blumhardt cult and make him great in the worldly sense, it would be a sin against him, for this was the very temptation which he himself rejected more sternly than any other.

No, this book is only to be an echo of his deepest longing, sighing and pleading to God, that many men, no, not many but at least a number who were prepared to do everything, would make God's cause their own and help God to the victory which He will not and cannot bring about without men.

The cause of Blumhardt, as God's cause, in so far as it is God's cause, must be taken up in ever new and higher forms. Everything depends on that. This book wants to be a call to that.

Parpan (Switzerland)

September, 1921

BLUMHARDT, FATHER AND SON
TWO FIGHTERS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

20 I. Who Was Blumhardt?

Have you, dear reader, already heard of Blumhardt? Perhaps you have already heard something, but only something false or even entirely misleading. But most probably you have not heard anything at all. That is astonishing, for so far as we men can know, nobody has lived in the last hundred years and probably much further back, who has had such significance for the higher history of mankind as Johann Christoph Blumhardt and his son Christoph. So far as we men know, there has not been any place on earth where things happened which were more meaningful for the renewal of Christianity than in Moettlingen in Wuerttemberg, and later in Bad Boll, also in Wuerttemberg. While the old world was collapsing (in the First World War) and with it what was called Christianity, these two men, foreseeing this development and perceiving what it meant, were living, these two men who have renewed the life of Jesus and rediscovered the kingdom of God in the midst of our world. While the world noisily pressed around leaders such as philosophers, theologians or statesmen, who were quite unable to lead them or could lead them only straight to the abyss, these two men, called by God, known chiefly only to a small congregation, worked on in a stillness that was seldom interrupted. They could have saved the world if the world has listened to them. Now, however, that the world has collapsed, and Christianity with it, they can show us why this has happened, where the way must now go, what the kingdom

of Christ is, and how it comes. What they show us is the true reformation of Christianity which must come now, and the new world which is to replace the old.

21 The report about these two men which follows is not for learned people, philosophers or theologians. It is not for those who always know everything better already, and for whom everything all too easily becomes an object of theoretical curiosity or a weapon for argument or a means of dominating others. It is meant for simple hearts in every group, who, in need and confusion, seek God's saving truth and who are in utter earnest about it. They shall for once hear of Blumhardt instead of about so many others who can give them no help.

This report is for "Christians" but especially also for non-Christians, that is, for those who do not know what to make of what we call "Christianity". Blumhardt would show them that this is quite right. For this "Christianity" has had its day. It is not what Jesus was or what He wanted. Perhaps in their doubts they sense the greater truth. Here they will find something which is much more and which can fill and inspire their hearts more deeply than anything else that is offered them, something much deeper and bolder, much greater and more timely. May those Christians who have been dissatisfied in their Christianity find here the true fulfilment of that which they have been seeking without really finding it.

II. Our Christianity and God's Kingdom

What comes to us in the two Blumhardts is, as has been said, something quite different from what we generally understand by Christianity. What then do we understand

by Christianity? Many things. It is a report of wonderful things that happened in the past. Or it is a definite teaching about God and divine things. Or just as definite
22 an arrangement of human things in the form of morals, of state and church. For others it is a way to "heaven" or a comfort in the darkness, sin and need of this world. It is a thing covered with the dust of the past, half-frozen and only half understood, a thing without warm life blood and passion. Or else it is a small-minded stupid sort of thing, something for musty pious circles, or something for theologians to argue about. It is not anything world-wide, or a matter for free souls which are concerned about larger things of the world and of men. It is not a concern for men, for heroes, for youth. And yet people say that this Christianity is what is meant by the Bible!

In fact, the Bible means something quite different! Both the Old and the New Testament, each in its own way, really mean and teach much more. They mean the completion and perfection of this creation through the renewing and redeeming of the world by the living God and His Christ, that is, the kingdom of God on earth. That is what the prophets of the Old Testament taught and demonstrated. God will bring this kingdom to reality on earth by redeeming man to his full truth and glory. This kingdom will overthrow and efface all the powers which oppress men today: guilt, poverty, social injustice, war, sickness and death. In place of this world which arose out of the separation or "revolt" from God and which sighs in darkness, obscurity and deathly need, this kingdom will create a new world which springs forth from God

himself, from the "turning around" to Him. All the great things which the heart of man can long for are included in this message, only freed from what is impure and fantastic and changed from colorful dreams to clear, divine and at the same time human reality. This reality appears in Christ, that is in the man who in His purity and goodness shows the
 23 nature of both God and man. It appears in the new world proceeding from Jesus, which is precisely the kingdom of the God who, living, holy and good, comes to men and wants to raise them to their true, godly nature.

The goal of all history is that this kingdom of God and man should come into being. Whether they know it or not, whether they want to or not, all the developments of history serve that end. Before Him fall the religions and the kingdoms of the earth which, risen out of error and revolt, together with some presentiment of truth, have occupied the world not yet ruled by Him. Before Him fall all cultures which nevertheless, in their innermost even if erring will, spring from Him and must serve Him. This is the hidden, yet revealed, sense of history: the ever clearer emergence of the redeemed world of God.

This world which was foreseen by the prophets, and which forms in fact the substance of the whole Old Testament, is fulfilled in Jesus. That is the reason He is called the Christ, and that is the meaning of this title. The kingdom of God which is coming to this earth, which is approaching and is already at hand - that is the meaning of Jesus' entire appearing. And He didn't just teach about this new world; above all

He lived it! Selfishness, hate and religious hypocrisy, as well as guilt, poverty, sickness and death, yielded to Him as a sign that in the new world these things must cease to be. His death on the cross sealed the fight against the powers of the old world. And that His death was followed by the resurrection is not a fairy tale or myth as people must think who do not understand the true meaning of this story. On the contrary it was the victorious and brilliant dawning of that world of God which is triumphant over all death. It was the beginning of a new epoch in history, a new morning of creation.

24 The new world which then came to light made itself known by new facts and new powers. The Early Church, but especially the apostles, the representatives and disciples of Christ, were armed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which means they had a certainty of the truth and a power of victory over the attacks of worldly powers as well as over sickness and death. They had the power to work together with God, which made itself known especially in the right to forgive sins and in the answering of their prayers. Miracles were the natural expression of this new order of things; they were simply the restoration of the disturbed order of God and of the true creation.

This new world had the promise of overcoming the old in sudden and mighty victories. In spirit Jesus and the apostles already saw this victory; they saw the coming catastrophe of the old order and the breaking in of the new one, that is, of the kingdom of God. That things did not take this course

is due to the failure of the church, and this riddle brings us again to the fact of man's free will, before which even the plans of God stand still. Just as the world which is to be overcome by the kingdom of God came into being through that mysterious fall from God (which we read of in Genesis) so through a new, and in the deepest sense, even a worse falling away of the Church of Christ from God, there arose world Christianity. The life of the Holy Spirit and its powers and gifts weakened and were lost. The truth of the kingdom of God split into pieces, whereby it became the opposite of what it had been. Out of the message of the Living God and the freedom which He gives, there came a fixed teaching which was supposed to have a value in itself. This became a dogma, that is, it became laws of church and state, and turned into a tool of spiritual slavery unequalled even to this day. Out of the kingdom of God was made the church, that is, a worldly, national power which nevertheless claimed to be the embodiment of Christ's truth. The fulfilment of the promises of God's kingdom were shifted to a hereafter (heaven) and all faith and longing were steered to that hereafter and away from this earth. The tremendous confidence in God's victory was replaced by a dull pessimism concerning man and this earth. The intense faith of the fighters for God's cause was replaced by a musty theorizing and fighting over the "true faith". This "true faith" replaced love. In place of concern for God's cause came religious egotism, the concern with one's welfare either here or hereafter, and God was expected to guarantee this. In place of the way of life and

thinking of Christ came a great deal of heathen culture covered over with Christian varnish. All this could be summed up by saying that instead of the kingdom of God came nothing more than a new religion, a new religious system, just what we call Christianity.

That is our situation almost to this very day. The history of Christianity is the history of the degeneration of Christ's rulership, ^{the history} & to be sure ~~also~~/of the fight against this degeneration. And that fight goes right through the Christian centuries. The truth of God's kingdom glimmers even through the forms of its degeneration. It makes its protest in the monastic movement, in Francis of Assisi and John Huss, and it finally breaks out powerfully in the Reformation of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries. But only in part; essential elements were lacking. Especially lacking was the hope for the earth and the decision of men to fight for God's rulership. Both these lived powerfully in the Anabaptist movement of the time, but they were destroyed for the time being by violence and also by serious failures of its own. So the unrest continues. The important movement of Pietism, - which we today are used to linking with backwardness and narrowness but which in its early ^{boldness -} days was a movement of the free, full of spirit and put that old hope again on the candlestick. Although the movement became narrow with the passage of time, the old way was

26 firmly held to. But out of this movement the Blumhardts arose, and in them a new day of Christ and of the kingdom of God.

II. The Life of Blumhardt, Father and Son

1. The Father's Fight

a. The Start

Over a long period of time the missionary movement was almost the only thing in our Christian circles which remained of the hope for God's kingdom, and even that remained in only an imperfect state. It is significant that it was there that the developments which came through the Blumhardts began.

Blumhardt the father, coming from the circles of Swabian pietism, where the old hopes still glowed in many ways, worked at first for the mission service in the city of Basel. That was in the first third of the Nineteenth century when the world was slowly coming into the great movements which are now upon us. From there he became a pastor and settled finally in Moettlingen, a peasant village at the foot of the Swabian Alps. That was the place in which he was led further by great and remarkable things that happened to him and through him.

First of all he found that anything which is only preaching is of no use, however lively it may be. One just preaches the people to death, and this is only the surer as the preaching becomes more powerful. Also revivals which are brought about just by preaching don't help much in the long run. The people soon fall asleep again and in fact this sleep in church is especially prized. That's what people seem to think the church is for, even the preaching about repentance, and every other kind of "inner" teaching. If the people are really to wake up, something must happen. God's acting must give reality and power to the words. The Protestant church, the "church of the word", has forgotten much too much that in the "word" itself

"For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in P. 21 power."
one can read, (I.Cor.4:20)
Where there are men, however, who have pure hearts and want to
serve God with all their strength, something happens.

b. The Fight against Demons, and the Awakening

And so it was also in Moettlingen. A fight comes into Blumhardt's life. It is a mysterious fight of the kind that comes, in one form or another, into the lives of those whom God's kingdom uses for one of its great forward steps. It is a thing which is difficult to speak of and still more difficult to see into the depths of. Gottlieb Dittis, a daughter of the village of Moettlingen, suffers from strange attacks of illness which, little by little, arouse the whole village, until finally Blumhardt as pastor is compelled to help. It soon becomes clear to him that it is not only a question of illness but something connected with demonic powers of the underworld such as confront us in the life of Jesus. Blumhardt's fight with these powers begins and it carries on for years. Whatever else one may think of it, one thing is clear. It is one of the most heroic and meaningful fights of history. A man of flesh and blood, quite alone, only with God as ally, takes upon himself a fight against Satan and his kingdom, although his closest friends doubt him, and he leans upon the promises of God and prayer alone. Terrible things he lives through. Ever new and more devilish horrors arise, until one day the powerful superhuman cry "Jesus is victor" breaks from the mouth of the one possessed, and she is healed for ever.

But then a new and more wonderful story begins. It is as if through this fight and its victory doors have been broken

open through which a whole world comes to light. Or rather,
28 two worlds. A world of sins and dark horrors of which even
Blumhardt is scarcely aware, is exposed. It is revealed that
his own villagers, the members of his church, under the cover
of a very churchly piety, are serving idols rather than God,
yes, have served the kingdom of evil itself in the form of the
worst superstition, especially that connected with mammonism
and with sensual vices. A movement of repentance takes hold
of the whole church and then also of the surrounding neighbor-
hood, bringing in people from ever-widening circles and creat-
ing an ever-increasing effect. Men and women, young and old,
worldly people as well as those from pietistic circles, indivi-
duals and whole groups, flock to Blumhardt's study to confess
their secret sins and receive the forgiveness which emanates
from him as a miraculous power. Then, together with the
revelation of the kingdom of darkness, comes also the revelation
of the kingdom of Christ; along with the horrors of evil there
arise great powers of God which blot them out. The first of
these, the one which clears the way for the others, is just
the forgiveness of sins. We see this in the New Testament
where on the one hand it is the power of Christ himself and
on the other is a gift of grace given to the apostles and to
the Early Church as a whole. Later we see it become in the
Catholic church an institution and in the Protestant church
a doctrine. But here in this man it came forth once more as
a power which frees men and purifies them from sin more than
any penance. It comes directly from him to the repentant and
fills them with new life. But even more remarkable things happen;

even the victory of Jesus over sickness returns. What has taken place with the sick woman (and her brothers and sisters) becomes well known. Signs and miracles take place. The words of Jesus to John the Baptist are confirmed by many examples. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 29 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." It all comes quite unsought for: a word, a touch, or a plea, and hindrances which have defied all the doctors just fall away. Many do take offense. "That cannot be, it's impossible, we are not living in the times of the New Testament", they say. But the newly released power of God simply works, and frees people all around. Miracles occur, and yet they are the most natural thing in the world.

And so in Moettlingen in this and every way the world of the New Testament comes to life again.

c. The Meaning of the Fight

Now here we must pause for a moment and consider especially the fight of Blumhardt which was the beginning of the whole movement. What are we to understand from all this? Some will ask, "Should we believe like him in the reality of a world of demons and of fights against them?" They will resist this, and see thronging in all the dangers and dark-nesses of supersitition, exactly what Blumhardt was fighting. Others will find a certain pleasure in stumbling onto these mysterious things; that also would be completely foreign to Blumhardt's thought. Then what shall we say to it? We feel

first of all that Blumhardt is understood quite wrongly by those who want to dwell on trying to explain the dark things that happened in Moettlingen. It is much better if, in fear and trembling, we leave it as the mystery which in fact it is. Woe to him who from pure curiosity and without need wants to involve himself in that world of demons! But also any reason-
 30 able, supposedly scientific attempt to ^{explain away} clear up the mystery would be just as false, and lead finally to the same result, that one became more than ever involved in the world of demonic spirits. For there are depths in the world which are beyond those which we usually experience, and which we are therefore unable to comprehend. It is just with these powers that the chosen fighters for the kingdom of God have to do.

In our case three things especially forbid our looking upon the whole business as imagination and superstition. First, the fact that Blumhardt was not in the least fanatical, but quite sober. He was a rugged lover of truth and deeply conscientious in the sight of God. In addition he was gifted with unusual powers of observation and was thoroughly realistic. In all this he was much like the picture of his Master. Then, the other fact that he had not sought all these things, the fight and the miracles, but that they forced themselves on him, again as with the Master. And finally what seems most important was the tremendous effect which his fight had (the greater part of which is still to be told). Such a result must come from reality. However one may understand these powers, whether one gives them one name or another, this fight was concerned with terrible realities and was one of the decisive fights in the history of God's coming kingdom.

The meaning of this fight is most clearly visible when we set it into history along with the other victorious fights for God's kingdom. A Moses carries on a fight in the desert until there appears to him the one God, living and holy. An Elijah struggles with Baal, the nature god, which wants to conquer the soul of Israel. An Amos contends with the national God who is considered Israel's servant instead of Israel's serving the true God. Jeremiah completes this fight by rising
 31 above the God of his people to his God, and so brings God and the individual together. Basically they are all fighting for the true God and against idolatry. But Christ, in the temptation in the wilderness, struggles with the united power of the world and the whole kingdom of temptation, on behalf of the kingdom of God. Then again Paul breaks away from Pharisaism to Christ, Francis of Assisi from the Caesar-Christ to the penniless Jesus. The Reformers break out of a religion which has lost touch with God's reality because of human institutions and theories, to God's kingdom itself which in Christ is offered directly to the soul. The example of the fight carried on in the Reformation is the one which helps most towards an understanding of Blumhardt's fight.

In Reformation times it was a question of putting man on his own instead of leaving him dependent on others in matters of belief, or in other words, of reestablishing the direct relationship between the individual man and his God. Instead of being lost in human works he was to be bound to God alone. The Reformation reached the two main points: that man is justified by faith before God, that is, by becoming so that

he can stand before God, be right before him, and second, that this faith depends only on the word of God and not on any human authority, that the soul's faith is fed directly by God. This was a great acquisition. But the Reformation did not keep on enough beyond this. In the end it fell into a kind of religious egotism in which, believing oneself to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, one rejoices in his own salvation and leaves the world to God - or the devil. In this way, as we have shown, one dispenses with the hope of God's victory over the world. The kingdom of God is no longer understood as it was by Jesus and the prophets. So the world gets the upper hand and threatens to do away with Christ's kingdom. It bursts with education, progress, technology and science. Beside this there stands a church and a piety which, in spite of all its enthusiasm and inwardness, changes the world very little.

32 Instead of Christ the idols are in power. Here is where Blumhardt's fight began and it is in this connection that his significance will be understandable. It was a question of a new break-through; the powers of the world which had eclipsed God and become idols in his place, were broken through to the living God himself. Subjection to Nature, world culture and the god Mammon gave way to Christ. So-called Christianity gave way to the kingdom of Christ. It was with the powers of this world, those new and terrible idols of our Christian-varnished heathen culture, that Blumhardt had to do. This is the general way in which we understand this mystery, though in its particular form it yet remains a mystery. But that mystery has a powerful meaning in its great relationship to the fight which God carries on through His representatives.

But why should such a thing happen in the little village of Moettinglen and through a simple village parson? We answer, why should the world begin anew with a carpenter from Nazareth? Why the Reformation through a poor monk from Eisenach, the son of a peasant of Wildhaus, a quiet scholar from Noyon? Today that seems quite natural and we take it for granted, but at the time it appeared quite incredible, and the representatives of the traditional could not decide to give credence to truths that came from such an unofficial place and in such an unofficial way.

It appears that a paradox of God's way of governing is at work here. Just as the Spirit blows where it will, so the decisive fights of God's kingdom take place where one would least expect them, and through the simplest men. The new beginnings in history also prove their creative character by the new place and the new way. Nevertheless, it is not chance but a law which is in control: God's great deeds and revelations take place where the purest souls give themselves most fully for it. Through men and places quite unknown to us, a new history begins.

d. Jesus is Victor

And so with Blumhardt in Moettlingen the kingdom of God reawoke in its old and new meaning. What Blumhardt experienced showed him that the cause of Christ was not only a comfort for the pious soul or a way to "heaven" but a victorious power to which the whole world and all its darkness and need must belong, not just in the distant future but in fresh, great, sudden triumph. From that time on, his battle cry was "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 into light.

All the narrowness that hinders Christ from entering our
 life, our churches, and our pious circles shall disappear;
 His spirit shall go into the world and into the "flesh" to
 overcome it and free it. The pessimism weakens which expects
 nothing from God for the world, and it gives place to a
 tremendous confidence in His rule in all that happens, and
 in His coming in glory to mankind. The old hindrances smashed,
 the horizon is opened on the living God and His Christ.

It is deeply meaningful that the whole further development
 of this break-through was an ever greater unfolding of the
 newly experienced truth. First, it led Blumhardt away from
 34 Moettlingen. The movement there came to a standstill because
 the authorities put certain limitations on his work. So
 Blumhardt found a new location in Bad Boll, also at the foot
 of the Swabian hills not far from the town of Goeppingen.
 And so he and his movement withdrew from the church. This was
 a very significant event. Although Blumhardt the father at
 first held conscientiously true to the church, his cause grew
 out beyond the church which had not accepted it and indeed even
 sought to hinder it. Moreover, his cause expanded more and more
 as well as reaching deeper and higher. While the powers which
 were given him in Moettlingen continued to work through him,

though more quietly, and even increased , his hopes grew till they encompassed the whole promise of the New Testament. He expected as a high point and at the same time a starting-point of the complete fulfilment of the promise, a new outpouring of the Spirit over all Christendom. He hoped for the continuation and completion of the events of apostolic times, and with this a renewal of the gifts of the Spirit: repentance, forgiveness of sins, prayer with authority, and healing of sickness; but above all he hoped for powerful and decisive victories over the entire kingdom of darkness, including the redemption of the past as of the present and future, and the blasting of the gates of hell itself; the overcoming of death, and the full resurrection of the life of Christ in all humanity, crowned by the return of Jesus in glory.

In the midst of these high hopes and great though quiet experiences, he himself was called into eternity, as if snatched away in a storm. The next to the last thing he said was, "The Lord will open his kind hand and shed his mercy on all peoples."

35

2. The Son's Fight

Into the father's place stepped his son Christoph - one just as great, perhaps even greater. His father's last words had consecrated him to the task: "To you I give a blessing for victory." The cause of God continued its forward march uninterruptedly through the son, proceeding from fight to fight, and from one break-through to another. The way it happened was about like this.

a. The Breaking Down of all Barriers

The father still remained faithful and inwardly bound to the church, without, certainly, being confined to its limits.

The son, however, who was also originally a pastor, was soon out of it entirely. (Even after leaving the church he was still called "pastor" although he had nothing preacherly about him.) His exit was half due to his own wish, and half to the wish of the church authorities. And in time he also broke with all the outward forms of church life, although not without great inward struggle, the need arising through his stepping forward upon the way of God. The church which he felt had crippled his father had become for him an obstruction to God's kingdom by putting something stiff and dead in place of the truth of God which was continuously growing and in living movement. Theology, religious factions and even the different confessions, all meant this same thing to him; all are based on human symbols, systems, theories and arrangements, but Christ's kingdom is reality and power.

Further: as we know, the father had come from pietistic circles; long after he had outgrown the essence of Pietism he still retained its dress, its outward attitudes, theological way of thinking and way of speaking (at least at times). Bit by bit the son dispensed with all that. He ^{boldly} took his stand in the midst of the modern world and was in his outlook a man of the world: his attitude towards it was more positive than other people's, but he did all this with God in mind and on the basis of the old but newly seen truth of Christ. He also stood boldly and openly against the modern attitude towards Jesus and the Bible, much more so than even the liberals, but without sacrificing anything of the deeper truth of God's kingdom. For his worldliness did not mean at all God's kingdom

getting lost in the world, but rather the advance of the kingdom and its redeeming power into the world. In that also, he went the way of the Master and led the Reformation onward. The Reformation had opened men's eyes to the kingdom of God but had neglected the conquest of the world by Christ. Here, then, Blumhardt stepped forward, and in that also he was true to the fight of his father.

b. The Forward March of Victory

Again his advance was carried out in fights, stages, concentric circles. The next thing that became clear to Blumhardt was that after his father's great victory over the powers of the underworld, it was no longer his first task to carry on that fight. Far more important was the gathering of the fruits of the victory. But that meant that it would be necessary to bring the battlefield into humanity itself, and to make room there for the life based on God. As the mystery of Christ's appearance is that through him the "word became flesh", so the resurrection of Christ "in flesh", that is, in the physical and material life of men, must also become reality.

37 In the life of Blumhardt the father this truth was revealed most strikingly in the healing of the sick by miracles, and power was also given to the son in like manner. But what good is it in the end if here and there a person is torn from the grip of the degenerative powers, if those powers are not overcome? It became clear to Blumhardt that in order to overcome the falsity, sin and degeneration of a world that had fallen from the truth, Christ must break into the present world situation. That is the direction in which his powerful fight now moved. It was necessary for the flesh to be purified through Christ.

c. Die, that Jesus May Live

In the deepest sense, the impure nature of "the flesh" is not its sensual character, a thing that belongs to God's good creation, but rather its selfishness. So the nature of this fight with the flesh is essentially a dying, that is, a complete sacrifice of ourselves and our selfish nature. With this, the cross and the blood shed thereon come to have a new significance. In world Christianity the cross has become a cushion for the lazy and the cowardly. Instead of learning from it that it is worth while to give up one's selfish desires and let them die so that Jesus can live, it has been made into a means of religious selfishness. Sure of our own salvation we forget God's cause.

This is what Blumhardt opposed more than anything else. To the watchword "Jesus is Victor!" was now added the other, "Die, that Jesus may live!" As the first motto came from God himself in the midst of tremendous experiences so the second was no less important. It was the complement of the first. From the gifts that were given arose a task which had to be taken on; through the opened gates of the spiritual world Blumhardt had to push ahead with God. As the previous fight was in order to overcome a hopeless Christianity, so now the struggle was to overcome a selfish Christianity. As pessimism was the enemy then, so now it was egotism, and especially in its religious form which seeks one's own help and healing rather than the honor of God. Men want to make God the servant of their wishes instead of giving up all their own wishes in order to serve God. The desire for healings and miracles can also come

from this misguided kind of piety. Therefore the son put his gifts of healing even more into the background than his father had done. Like Jesus, he withdrew himself from the people's constant running after miracles. It was not man's cause (in the egotistical, lower sense) but God's cause which was now to have importance. And so this tremendous change grew in the heart of the Blumhardts' revolution; God and His kingdom was the important thing and not the eternal blessedness of the individual. Contrary to the pietistic saying, "You must be saved" (which came out of the one-sidedness of the Reformation) a return took place to the words of Jesus, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you". And so that is the way: from religion to God's kingdom, from the church to a redeemed world, from "me" to God. But in the end, when God is honored in that way, men receive their true honor also. Man will be restored to his original character and nature. His true glory, which was destroyed by his fall from God, will be won again. Also the material world, the "flesh", shall die and shall rise again, but from then on in a life that has been redeemed, purified and made whole. All that belongs to the kingdom of death will give way, until finally death itself will lose its power. The whole creation of God will be created anew and perfected. Man's dying for Jesus shall lead to the rising anew of all creatures before him; the acceptance of the cross shall lead to the great Easter of the whole world.

d. Socialism

The whole unity of this truth determined Blumhardt's

attitude towards Socialism. And so we tell of a new step in the unfolding of the cause of God which he represented. After the crumbling of the walls which had hindered his eyes from seeing with God into the world, discovery after discovery in the new land had to be made. The movements of the world were revealed as a work of the living God leading to the coming of His Christ. And is it not so that right now the world is being driven forward by deep-going and powerful movements? For what else did Socialism want than a new world, the same new world that Blumhardt hoped for, the world of men, brothers, in which the material things are also redeemed? If it denies God, what does that matter? Cannot God just as well be present where He is denied, as absent where people confess Him? Was not Social Democracy a messenger of the coming kingdom of the free and glorious children of God?

And so the unheard-of came to pass, and it was a shock to many, that this man of God, coming out of pietistic circles, joined the Social Democratic Party and sat as its representative in the governing assembly of the district. It was one of the decisive things which God did through men. By this act God made it clear that the social movements are part of His will, and that social justice is part of His kingdom.

But Blumhardt's membership did not markedly change the fate of the Social Democratic movement. As God's ideas go beyond such movements, so also did Blumhardt's deeds. The deed itself went beyond his own idea, but one must admit that Blumhardt did not go to a political party and take on political dogmas - rather he carried Christ with him into this new world. And he

40 did it by dying to himself in that he threw into this unpopular cause all that he had inherited from his father, the powers of God which had been given increase through himself. He became a comrade of "tax-gatherers and sinners" - a new break-through had taken place.

(Footnote to previous page) At that time, Social Democracy had the spiritual greatness and freedom to accept this and understand the blessings of such a man. Many of its leaders spoke at the time of Blumhardt's death and expressed their thankfulness for the valuable service which was given by the deceased to the ideas of Socialism, saying: "He was actually not a party man in the usual sense of the word; such a great personality could not be pressured into this or that special direction, but his way of thinking opposed all force, violence and oppression." Another ^{profess} said, "At a time when it required a certain courage to oneself a Social Democrat, he came to us, and he did so out of circles which were generally closed to Socialism. When he declared himself in Goeppingen he said, "Do you want to have me as I am, with my Christ, with my faith in God?" We answered with a joyful "Yes". Still another said, "When we look back twenty years to Blumhardt's declaration in Goeppingen, we find that he prophesied then the events that have since taken place. What a great deal we always received from him! What courage, joy and confidence we found in our personal relationship and in our meetings with him! The days he was with us were days of rejoicing for us." From another source it is said that one day after his comrades were together with him in an ordinary tavern and when there was no religious talk at all or even any mention

of the living God - indeed, perhaps just because of that - they declared afterwards that it had been to them like a meeting for prayer.

e. Do not Judge, but Believe!

But Blumhardt's outlook did not remain hanging on the tree of Socialism alone. He pressed steadily forward in all depths and heights and distances. He took in the whole earth and went beyond it into the spheres of the spiritual worlds. All that moved in man and in Nature came under the wonderful new light
 41 of God's kingdom. Science, art and political events as well as the many-colored movements of our errors, hopes and longings, the riddle of our hearts and even, in their own way, the mysteries of darkness, had to bear witness to the coming kingdom. And in this there was really something new. Customary religious circles regard social and political movements as "too far from God's truth", or look upon them with mistrust, or even damn them as being "godless". Blumhardt saw in them the struggles and growing of God's will, and heard in them the sighs of the creation for the freedom of God's children and the victorious footsteps of the living Christ. "Don't judge, but believe!" became his motto and was placed alongside the other two.

And so the kingdom of God in the world and for the world became once again a living thing. It pressed forward victoriously when the world was finished with Christianity as with itself. And the world war could not lead it astray. Blumhardt had hoped indeed that things might go differently. His purpose was to affirm and not to deny. And things would have gone differently if what appeared in him had been understood and

accepted. But one thing which he prophesied was that unless there was a real acceptance of Christ in this century, Europe would be destroyed. (In a private letter in June, 1894 he said, "The death of Carnot is a sign that man should watch out. We can be surprised and overcome by more powerful things, for peoples and societies are gripped by change. That which has been until now is slowly coming to an end and finally it shall go quickly, so that new paths can be broken." Compare that with the many quotations to come later which predicted what has already come and point to what is still on the way.) But for him, the approaching human catastrophe was to be the sign of the coming of Christ. Now we know this and are able to understand, and so we can carry
 42 it without being beaten; yes, we can even carry it with the joy and confidence of victory, saying "Jesus is Victor!"

3. Father and Son as God's Word to our Times

We have shown the development of this great new revelation of God and indicated thereby how it went hand in hand with the movements of the world. Here we must pause for a moment, for this point is connected with the whole great meaning of what appeared to these men. We must note in particular that the experiences and fights of these two soldiers of God, these witnesses to His truth, go together with the great developments of our times. There is taking place in Christianity a gradual break-through from death to life, from churches to the liberated world, from past to present, from dogma to Jesus, from religion to the kingdom of God. New hopes are awakening. But in the world as a whole one finds a terrible increase in idolatry and the power of darkness, a titanic rise of selfishness, an

unheard-of destruction of the creation, and the enslaving of men. But on the other hand there is an awakening of mankind, a new seeking for man's true freedom and glory, and a turning/ ^{to a purer, nobler life} and away from death, dirt and untruthfulness. There is especially a longing and a fight for the freeing of things which are not only the spiritual but also the physical and material part of life. And in the end it will all become a longing for God and His Christ.

Were then the Blumhardts just an echo of the movements of our times? Not at all! They came from quite an original direction, over distant paths, through deep and mysterious fights to the truths which move our confused world. They came ^{this fermentation} to the very truth itself. For they saw what the movement of 43 the world by God really meant. They saw the deep meanings which the world rarely recognizes and often denies. Into the need of the world they brought God; into its confusion, the clarity of mountain sunshine. In essence they are a word of God to our generation, whereas the movements of the world have only the significance of the old "when the time was fulfilled..."

And with that we must say a word which many, perhaps, will not understand - it was the Blumhardts who helped to create these movements, not directly and visibly, but rather more in hidden, mysterious ways. From the tremendous but little known fights which they went through, there flowed into the world something which released powers and created movements. Boll was a source of new life for the world because it was a place of combat where God's battles were first fought in spirit before their effects became visible to men. It was a place where God

did things, and God's life was lived. Men came from afar to dip out of this spring, and the ideas and strength which they took with them traveled far and wide having their effect upon the world. ^{Indeed} In those times the world was ruled more from Boll than it was from London, Paris or Berlin. It was a city of God here in the midst of us.

From such a life of seeing, fighting, winning and fighting again, Blumhardt the son crossed into that higher world of God which it was the burning idea of his life to make room for on the earth. And he went as victor!

IV. The Message

44 In telling about Blumhardt's fight we have also indicated the ideas of faith and hope that belong with it. They are really a part of it and cannot be separated from it. We should be misrepresenting these ideas if we took them out of that context to make a philosophy out of them which was supposed to have a value in itself. In Moettlingen and in Boll there was no "theory" and certainly no "theology", but instead a witness was given and the living God was experienced, more through deeds than through words. But just as in the gospels the message of Jesus is clearly developed as such in spite of the fact that it is only a commentary on His acts, a part of His whole fight, so in like manner we may give a special emphasis to the truths which have become known through the Blumhardts.

And truly a whole world of life and spirit has flowed from this spring. Light is thrown on heaven and earth, the visible and the invisible things, over the past, the present and the future; thoughts rich in deep meaning and power and a wonderful originality are expressed. In spite of the fact that very much,

including some of the bravest, deepest and most powerful things, are lost to us because these men, like those in the gospels, acted and spoke much more than they wrote, yet there remains a whole mine of wonderful material. And what we are able to give in this book is only a small indication of what there is. In reading these excerpts one must keep in mind that these ideas retain their true meaning only when they are considered in close connection with the lives of the Blumhardts, for only through the lives of God's witnesses can their words be understood and come to us in their power.

45 One thing more: the world of thought which flowed from the experiences of the Blumhardts is developed quite freely by the author just as he grasps them in his own understanding and faith. It seems to him that such an exposition is a necessary key to understanding the Blumhardts, but once the door is opened the key may be thrown away. The writer believes that the melting together of ^{the} Blumhardt's thoughts with his own does not misrepresent them, and he has been very cautious not to mix in anything which is foreign. His aim is simply to show what the Blumhardts' fight for God means.

To avoid making these ideas into parts of a teaching, let us start at the heart from which they flowed and from which they received life, that is, the hope which the Blumhardts, both father and son, cherished.

1. The Kingdom of God for This Earth

The thing that reappeared in Moettlingen and Boll was the hope for the coming of God's kingdom to this earth. In this way the plea, "Thy kingdom come" which we find in the center

of the Lord's Prayer, once again received its great New Testament significance. We have seen how this hope was almost completely lost, but also how it remained the sacred unrest, the hidden life-fire, of Christendom, so that it could not quite go out. To picture it another way, this hope of the coming kingdom in which the whole message of the New Testament is summed up was, in the beginning, a powerful, roaring stream, breaking forth from the depths of God and rushing out victoriously into the world. Slowly it became weaker; at times it seemed completely ^{sunk and} lost. Nevertheless from time to time its murmuring could be heard. In the plants of the earth and their way of growing one could sense its presence. And occasionally it came to light again in whole or in part. Then ^{the movements at} in/Moettlingen and Boll this stream burst forth in all its original power and glory, and if it will not be misunderstood, I could even say in yet greater glory because of the previous times in history when, through the life of Jesus, it had also broken in.

1. The kingdom of God - and for the earth. That is the surprise which was too much for Christianity itself; yes, official Christianity was even angry at the things which appeared here because they did not just appear in theological thesis but in the massive reality and power of Biblical times. Yes, for the earth! The kingdom of God which Christ meant is not a thing in the pale distance of "heaven". Heaven is more the idea of Plato than of the Bible. It is the earth where God's ideas shall become reality. The word of the Antichrist: "Remain true to the earth, my brothers!" is at bottom really

the will of Christ.

Whatever God may do in other spheres He wants to fulfil in all spheres, and we await the coming of His rule to the earth.

That is the clear message of the Bible, which only old prejudices were able to darken. The Bible knows nothing of a distant heaven as the homeland of the soul. Her eternal life is not a life in a world beyond time, but that of the coming age, that is, the world of God which is already breathed by those who accept God's kingdom. This is to come to replace the present world which is so given to vanity. For above all this is the end of all death. The "world" is death, the kingdom of God is life. That which we usually call "death", the cessation of physical existence, is only one appearance of its nature, even if it is, perhaps, its peak. So all this death must give way before God. For God and death do not go together; they are the great opposites.

God and death do not go together! That is the Blumhardts' deep and passionate basic discovery, and the point from which all their thinking and working emanates. That is the great about-face of Christian thought and feeling which came chiefly through the Blumhardts. Its significance is tremendous and will only come out little by little.

Christianity found its origin in the great victory over death which Christ's resurrection meant, and this victory was always proclaimed. Easter was always its most important celebration. But in this main point as in all others we have drifted (without even noticing it) into a way of thinking which is just the opposite of what it was in the first place. Like the heathen, we place this victory over death in quite another world. The

earth and the body are seen once again as a prison from which the soul is released by death. Death, then, becomes the redeemer and appears to be bright and holy. Death appears as a kind of savior and is glorified and praised. It is taken for a holy and blessed order of God. A desire to die is taken as a sign of deep piety. The earthly life appears as only a preparation for the heavenly one. Such a cult of heaven and the grave has arisen and taken hold of people that it finally seems that death, rather than God, is the great lord. Hope is shifted. The kingdom of God is shifted, and God is taken away from the earth. And so the whole cause of Christ is misrepresented to its very foundations.

48

In spite of the fact that it put "eternal life" in the center of its message, Christianity fell under the spell of death. The way Blumhardt showed is quite the reverse. We may be surprised to hear that just the Blumhardts, who see the disappearance of death as the center of their hopes, and who fight and long for God's kingdom on earth, don't want to hear much about the "heaven" of the "Christians", and so apparently see the way of God as ending with this life. But that in reality is just the result of their fight against death. For they hated death. Death to them was an abomination. But this is not because they feared it as most people do, or because they wanted to hang onto this life. From that they are freer than others. Rather there awoke in them, with all the power of New Testament times, the discovery that God and death do not go together. Death is not a "holy part of God's order" but its opposite; it is a result of our fall from God and a sign of our distance from Him - that is so of all death, and especially so in the case of physical death.

It does not belong to the original creation of God, and so when the creation is restored, that is, when it returns to God, death must disappear. It is not something glorious, but a disgrace. It can be inwardly overcome and understood in faith, but only as is any other ^{miser} which is not thereby to be seen as God's will. To the degree that the kingdom of God works among us, it will bring the overcoming of death. What came to us in the individual works of Christ and especially his rising from the dead, shall become a normal thing and shall be perfected in the complete victory over all death.

So what Blumhardt wants is a much fuller and more actual breaking of the power of death than Christianity understands. The old message, "Death is swallowed up in victory" will come to life again with tremendous power.

49 "But if God's kingdom does come to the earth, where will the dead stay, and what will become of life after death? What happens to those who must die before the kingdom appears in its glory?"

Answer: The kingdom of God which Blumhardt and the New Testament await, is not to be confused with the human philosophy of progress. It is not a thing which grows, as it were, out of the earth into the world of men. It comes from God into the world. It is certainly for the world, but not from it. The kingdom is the world of the living God in which are ^{raised up} all those who today still have to pay tribute to death ("To him all are still alive"), who have fallen into this world of death but who want to replace all death by life. So it is not that the "hereafter" will be overcome by this world, but rather that this world will be overcome by the kingdom of God. "There shall

be no more death." (Revelation 21,4)

Is this an impossibly fantastic notion? It appears so to us because we are no longer accustomed to it, but it is by no means more fantastic than the usual idea of life after death. It is just that we have become accustomed to that. In fact I could say that in the light of modern thought in other spheres this insight of Blumhardt is much more reasonable than the other. For where is "heaven" in the light of modern astronomy which tells us that the earth is a small sphere in the middle of an infinite universe? But we can and must, if we believe in God, believe in a world of this God which is, in a spiritual sense, over our own, and which will open to us and overcome death when God comes to us with his growing kingdom. What is the use of progress if there is no victory over death? If it is difficult for us to conceive of this world in its fulfilment, well, is only that possible then which we can conceive of, or is not rather the most likely thing (literally "the impossible") that which we find hard to understand?

And we must not forget: God's kingdom does not come into a world which otherwise remains just as it is today; it creates a new world and brings new possibilities.

This new outlook which is at the same time a return to the old point of view is not just a new strength and confidence in the overcoming of death, but also a release from inward tension and untruthfulness. For the misguided seeking for "heaven" led at once to a despising of the world, the creation, the material and the body. But since that view cannot really be firmly held and so often stumbles against the truth of the God who created this world and poured His blessings on it, it brings man into

the greatest confusion. More than ever he really longs for this world which he is supposed to despise. Desire for power, lusts and mammonism really thrive in a Christianity which pretends that it is only interested in heaven. The despised creation takes its revenge; matter decays and revolts at the same time: even to this day such a Christianity has never led to a godly order of the world and its material things.

How very different all this becomes as soon as one realizes that the kingdom of God wants to come into all these things, certainly not to be consumed in it but to free it and bring it back to its original creative purpose. Now life can replace death, unity replace division, truth can replace hypocrisy, blessings take the place of curses, and thereby instead of the fake redemption the real redemption can come.

2. But there is a second point that hangs together with the first. If instead of the kingdom of God for the world, one seeks heaven, that means that one wants the kingdom of God and God himself for oneself, for oneself alone. In other words he wants to be ^{saved,} blessed, and get to heaven, but doesn't ask about the honor of God. He wants to be ^{"redeemed"} "saved" and is concerned about his own freedom, but doesn't ask about the ^{redemption} saving of the world for God's justice. He uses God and His goodness in the service of egotism, which thereby changes from natural to religious egotism and becomes that much the worse. And so all of Christianity becomes the breeding ground of religious egotism, which was not there at all to begin with.

This was again a terrible fall from what was originally intended. Christianity punished itself in the most varied ways.

For not only was the world thereafter neglected, falling into decay and lies, not only did love shift out of the center of the message, but - in a terrible contradiction - the cross of Christ became the cushion for the pious ^{salvation-}seekers instead of being the banner of those who forget themselves on behalf of man and God. No, even that which men sought in this deceitful direction, the certainty of salvation, of getting to "heaven", was also lost. From the clear and simple truths of God's kingdom men fell into religious subtleties and reflection, lost themselves in religious introspection, which of necessity led to insecurity and to all sorts of religious hocus-pocus. Men came away from the objectivity of God's word and proved the truth of the words: "He who seeks his life shall lose it."

It is worth while to surrender our lives for God's sake - that is the first thing; that was the revolution which, in Biblical reality, Blumhardt **went** through. Not that God should be more concerned for men, but men should be more concerned ^{salvation} for God! Not our blessedness first, but the kingdom of God.

52 Not our profit (here or hereafter) but the honor of God. The kingdom of God - not for us as individuals but for our brothers, for the world! God is more important than men.

But - the wonder of it! - when this revolution takes place, then men are given just what they lost when they looked in the wrong direction. Serving God alone, man truly finds himself. Seeking only the kingdom of God and its righteousness, he finds moral freedom and a joyful, unconquerable certainty of God's reality. By dying he begins to live. "He who loses his life for my sake will find it." God's lordship

salvation
is the goal - not egotistical blessedness and holiness. God wants the world.

3. Yet a third point, but a very important one: This kingdom of God on earth is not religion, and not Christianity. It is something else. The Bible - as well as the apostles, the prophets and Jesus - did not want a religion, and certainly not 'Christianity'. They wanted a new world; they wanted the rulership of God over all reality. That again sounds surprising, and for many almost blasphemous, but it is perfectly clear if you only read the Bible without glasses.

What then is the difference? Religion is something which we have, so to speak, outside of reality. It is a system of ideas, morals, arrangements, and also a system of feelings and ceremonies. It is a human thing, a human business. Perhaps it is deeply meaningful, beautiful and great. Or it may be dangerous and hateful. But God's kingdom is a definite reality, the reality of God which the Bible knows, the reality of the good, pure and living God which became apparent to us in Christ. The kingdom is the rulership of this God over all reality. It is objectivity and power and life; it is not a system, but a situation, namely, that of the liberated creation and the full glory of man and God. It is the world becoming the world of Christ and God.

53 As we proceed we will speak more fully about these things. At this point we want only to show that there is something here so radical that one has to throw out all one's old ideas in order to grasp what Christ and the Bible are really driving at.

4. Thereby it also becomes clear that we are concerned

with an infinitely tremendous revolution. It is the overthrowing of Christianity, of religion, and also of all the rest of the world. For when God's kingdom was replaced by 'heaven' and the selfish salvation, its power for the world was lamed; when this power is won again, the whole world shall be made over by it. Compared to that, all other revolutions will look like nothing at all.

So we are really proclaiming something new. Take notice of that, you brave spirits who are looking towards the future!

For this changes the entire character of what we know as Christianity. A religion which aims only at the hereafter, or at the salvation of the individual, loses its great attraction and its heroic nature. It presents no goal for which men can forget themselves. The kingdom of God as the fulfilment and climax of all man's hopes gives each one a powerful purpose in life by making him a co-worker, a comrade in arms and in the fight, and opens eternity to all mankind.

But of course only those who know a living God can understand something of this outlook and the coming kingdom.

And with that we arrive at another of the main points of Blumhardt's faith.

Words of Blumhardt the Son

What the kingdom of God is. God's kingdom, what is it?

God's kingdom is the power of God, the reign of God, God's revelation of life; it is the creation of new feelings, new understanding and new hearts so that we are led to what is right. God's kingdom - oh, who can comprehend it, when God will rule! It is almost too great even for today's Christians.

A new reality. There must be a new reality, which is truth; it is not a new doctrine or new law, not a new arrangement.... The truth which we must listen to is the new one that came in the person of the Son of Man himself, that God is now creating a new reality on the earth, first among men but finally over all the creation so that the earth and the heavens are renewed. God is creating something new. A new history is starting. A new world is coming on earth.

On the Earth! The Good Spirit shall rule and evil shall be defeated for all generations. That was the goal of the people Israel, and that goal was firmly held to for hundreds of years. The cause was first of all an earthly one, not a heavenly one as we Christians think, but rather it was the coming of the heavenly on the earth, and to that extent earthly. It was earthly because it was a concern for the situation on earth to become good and righteous, that God's name should become sacred on earth, that His kingdom should come and His will should be done right here. The earth shall be a world that proclaims eternal life. We want to shine so brightly that even heaven will become jealous of us.

God on Earth. I have no God in heaven; the angels have Him. I want to pray here below; I must have God here. That is what the word of God says.

55 God in the world of today. These are the times when the Lord Jesus is among the people of the world more than He is among us believers. ... We are joyful about that. Those were not the nicest times when we used to gather ourselves together in little meetings. Today there are movements in the world and the good impulses of men's hearts must be revealed in them. There in those movements the character of Jesus Christ must be revealed in the name of the almighty God who created men to be a reflection of himself. In our times the Spirit moves far beyond the little circles, and the believers should rejoice that things out in the great wide world of men are getting a little brighter.

Our Earth the Scene of God's kingdom. Do you think that this earth could not be the scene of God's glory? Why, already it is a scene which gives a thrill to the angels. ...

Where in all the Scriptures does God comfort man with a hereafter? The earth shall be filled with the glory of God; according to the Scriptures that is the meaning of all the promises. And what does Jesus want, coming in the flesh? Of course nothing else than the honor of His Father on the earth. By His personal appearance He put a seed in the earth. He wants to be the light of men and He calls His followers 'the light of the world' and 'the salt of the earth'. His aim is the raising of the earth (and of mankind) out of the curse of sin and death, towards the glorious revelation of eternal life.

56

Otherwise why did he heal the sick and wake the dead? Why does He praise the poor and the hungry? Surely not in order to tell them that they will be happy after they die, but because the kingdom of God is near. Of course God has a way out for those who must, unfortunately, suffer under death, and He gives them a refuge in heaven. But shall this necessary comfort now be the main thing? Shall the kingdom of God forget the earth and be preserved only in the kingdom of the dead because God also wants to dry the tears of the dead? It is throwing away the whole significance of the Bible if one wants to argue and say, "We have nothing to expect on the earth; as the home of man it must be abandoned." In the present picture of human sin and wrong-doing we have, of course, no permanent home. But we must seek what is coming. Then what is coming? Obviously, the perfected earth, purified from all sinful and deadly things. That earth is the homeland which we are looking for and we cannot look for any other because we don't have any and we won't have any, except that which God has created for us, namely the earth.

Death as the Idol of Christianity. Our dear Christianity runs toward death as its idol and only real liberator, to whom its prayers and songs are offered. For without it nothing is possible even for the Risen One himself. The Prince of Life must have His minister and He finds him in death, who is the real king before whom one bows as if he were God himself. Against that, naturally, nothing can help that is in the Bible, such as "I will destroy death forever. ... Death, where is your sting? Hell, where is your victory?" (1st Cor. 15:55)

The Flight to the Hereafter, a curse. The hereafter is closed to us; God has given us no vision of it. Why not? Apparently because we ought to direct our eyes to what is here, and honor God's righteousness and truth on the earth.

A whole world of religious and moral untruthfulness surrounds just those people who don't want to experience God's kingdom on this earth. ... The most terrible experiences of religious history arose out of the one-sided idea that we are meant for a hereafter, and that belief comes from a selfish
57 fear of honoring God, the Creator, in his creation.

We should be here for a purpose! No proper servant remains with his master for the wages alone. If he notices that he is of no use, he will go away and rather do without the money. And no proper maid will stay just because of the pay; she wants to be of service, and when she can no longer serve then she isn't happy even if she is paid; she can no longer remain as a maid. And man in the midst of creation ... has the feeling that he is here for a purpose - not just for himself, but for something else, something greater - something which is lost... but today people sit in the churches thinking mostly about themselves. Every one sighs about himself and looks for something in himself and for himself, and doesn't even know what he is looking for. One would like to call out to them all: "People, forget yourselves! Think of God's cause. Start to do something for it, or at least don't be sorry for yourself, but rather be sorry that you have nothing to do but worry about your own petty concerns." Our worst need is that the dear Lord cannot use us; no wonder then that we get dull

in spite of all our culture. Every man goes downhill, also in the physical sense, when he isn't being used as a part of a body with a higher purpose; and those who work with love and enthusiasm for something greater than themselves grow and develop even in our present circumstances. We lose what is worthwhile in life and we decay physically and spiritually when we have nothing to work at for God, for the creation, and for the life of the earth.

God's kingdom vs. Christianity-for-profit. In the course of the centuries it has come to pass that people think to themselves, "How can I profit the most from God?" The worst people come along here (it is quite right that they come) but they only think, "How, after wasting my life, can I get some profit for myself? Then I will be satisfied with that grace." But if such people don't also come to the thought, "Now I want to serve. Now I want to become something for the Lord. I no longer want anything for myself" - if that idea doesn't come to one, then one doesn't have the profit in one's pocket very long. That is why experiences of grace and concerns for peace disappear so quickly from so many men; ... the profit of grace is soon used up if one has no purpose in life and does not learn, whatever one is, that one is it for God. That's why it is said that greed is the root of all evil; it is idolatry because it is for itself and not for God. ... Even if you have a faith in Jesus, but it is only for your own profit, then the world is not overcome.

The greatest and most difficult. Believing in God is easy, but to believe that the world will change, you must be faithful to the death.

God's Zion on Earth, and the seeking for happiness. Zion has been a bit desolate at times,... namely in those times when Christians ... didn't seek God's kingdom, but rather sought their own happiness. So Zion becomes desolate, and there have been many such times, and the angels have been very sad. For you know, the angels can't do much with ^{people who are "saved";} for they only look for their own comfort in eternity, and one can't use them for anything. One seats them in a comfortable chair and says, "There you are now, and stay seated." But when God's kingdom ^{is filling up} and many are pressing to enter it, then there is really work and life among the angels. For God's kingdom is in direct relationship with the earth; it lives with the earth.

59

Seek only for God's kingdom on Earth. We can confidently rely on the fact that everything is being prepared in heaven so that God's cause will soon be proclaimed and revealed on the earth. And we can help a bit in this with a living hope for the fulfilment of the kingdom. But that should be something pressing for you! For it is the most important thing that we can work for today. Anything else we can do, including even the most pious things, is now beside the point; it doesn't get us anywhere. One may simply let everything else lie and be concerned for God's kingdom. That is also the best way to go with regard to our sinful nature, for those who do this will no longer live carelessly in the world. Those who are restless for Zion are ashamed to sin before the angels in heaven who are always with us and watch us in the hope that we will want to serve their God with them.

Jesus in our times. It has already happened to me; I have felt the folds of the Lord's cloak, and just that was so thrilling, so exceedingly great an act of God in Jesus, that I cannot imagine the greatness of the promise: "You shall be heir to all." I also don't think about it much, but I only wish that for the sake of God and Jesus that will also be revealed once in some people somewhere. Just don't think that it's all in the 'hereafter'. That's a big lie; you can wait a long time for that. Nothing will be revealed in the hereafter that is not already founded here. This earth is the goal of God. It is here that the inheritance is to be received; it comes with the creation, not with philosophy or theology.

Jesus the {defiant. defiance. Jesus is the defiance of all misery, sin and need.

60 Be objective. We Christians should have an objective outlook upon these times. But instead, people want to experience everything in themselves and enjoy pleasant inward feelings. When this doesn't happen then they are disappointed. But when one has one's eye on a better future for all mankind, then one experiences a feast within one's heart. A great confidence gives us strength in difficult times.

Not happiness but God's kingdom. According to our customary and false way of thinking, the kingdom of God must make room for our happiness, and with many the words of the Lord have already been changed to read: "Seek first your own happiness, and all else will be given unto you". This is very deceptive, and I (fig. "give offense to many people") know that I (hit many people on the head) when I say that, for they love themselves and when they only know themselves to be

safe, then they don't care much about the rest of the world; or at most, only so much that they say to others, "I'm saved, why don't you do something about your salvation?" With this little error, my friends, the relationship with God is destroyed. We are just like little children always coming to our parents and demanding candy, sweet drinks and ice cream, instead of being concerned about the wishes of our parents and representing them with fidelity and hard work, whereby then our food would come as a matter of course.

Righteousness and grace. We shall receive the heavenly things on earth, for that is what the fight is about. The goal of all God's effort is that finally God will be a God whom we may see on earth, a God who will make the earth his footstool, where Jesus will be Lord over all men and in Him they will once more fit into the order of God's creation.

- - - -

61 2. The Living God

Why did Christianity fall from its hope in the fulfilment of God's promises and become a victim of the reign of death? Because faith in the living God, which is the source of hope, dried up. World Christianity sees the world as finished. The world, having once been created with all its order, remains for them as it is until the end. All that is, is from God and is therefore good and unchangeable. Or else it is all the result of the fall from God, and evil, but nonetheless firm and unchangeable. Only the Day of Judgment, that is, the hereafter, will bring a change. Therefore official Christianity is a conservative cause, and as a matter of course bound together with all other conservative causes.

Christianity also has a finished God, that is to say, a God who once created and now only reigns but no longer creates (in the sense of calling new things into existence); the work of creation is finished. His decisive great deeds belong to the past. His revelations are also finished with. He is the judge, guardian, governor, maintainer, but no longer the creator. He is behind us, not ahead of us. Therefore there is no longer a faith that trusts God to lead His kingdom forward with great deeds of world renewal. There is no tense expectation of His creative acts. There is no church or fellowship that is prepared to trust its life to the living words that come from His mouth, and to do deeds with God. This finished God is the shield of a finished world.

62 Once again that is the opposite of a Biblical outlook. Certainly there is in the Bible a description of an act of creation followed by a rest in which God looks over his work. But it is a terrible misunderstanding to assume that from then on He ceased to create. Rather this beginning of the Bible is only an indication of its whole meaning and asserts: God is the Creator; He is and remains a creative God. It is His nature to create. He is not a philosophical idea which can be limited by human understanding and which remains forever fixed, but He is the ever wonderful and renewing life itself.

God does not reveal His nature in theories of theologians but in deeds which He does to and through men, and for which He finds among heroes and men of God those who understand Him and become His co-workers. And that is how a history first came into being. This is in fact a creation which is striding forward toward something new.

The Living God to whom the Bible bears witness sees no finished world before Him. As in the beginning of the Bible He calls out, "Let there be light" so at the end He declares, "See, I am making all things new!" Here there are no fates - that is a heathen way of thinking - but instead there is a free God and a free humanity. Man is free even to set himself against God. That is how the decay and fall have come into the world. History has become a fight between God and His opposer. The creation must be liberated. And the history of the liberation is not yet finished; in fact, the greatest part, the perfection and fulfilment, are still to come. God is stepping forward, God is at work; He is the living one who is coming. That is the way the Bible thinks. But with the Bible in their hand Christians have betrayed that view of God. This glowing history which is living and great has been rejected and replaced by something stiff and dead, so their God and their world have come to a standstill.

63 And yet even in Christianity this is not entirely so. The truth of God still lived within her as a holy restlessness. But the great reality to come, which the New Testament promises and which the whole Bible bears witness to, has been held back. For God will not and cannot build His kingdom unless men come along. So standstill and death have come over Christianity, and the consequences are very heavy. Therefore the collapse of the world as well as of Christianity had to take place. Christianity has had to represent a truth which had become foreign to it, and speak a language which it could no longer understand. The God of Christianity has even become a "godhead", a philosophical idea, or in the end just another expression for Nature,

the world or fate.

The unequalled revolution which came especially through the Blumhardts, father and son, consisted of a return to the Living God of the Bible whom, just because He is a living God, they experienced in a new way. They experienced the God who is personal will rather than a philosophical idea, one who makes himself known by the creative deeds with which He builds His kingdom, and not by a system of theological truths. And therefore they did not believe in a finished world. The world cannot be finished until God's will for it is realized. We are still in the early stages of the liberation. Yes, the way has been cleared, but the promises and powers which God has put into the world have yet to come to birth; and come forth they shall. That is why the world is in the restlessness of birth-pangs. That is why it is filled with the fights of powers which are struggling to control it. That is why it goes from revolution to revolution and from crisis to crisis.

All that is finished and stiff shall fly before the wind. Where stiffness and finality have come in, death is ruling rather than the God who is life. Christianity has become a conservative power, the kingdom of God has remained the most radical thing that there is. For the Living God in His absoluteness is also the Holy One, the original power of good, and at the same time the continual revolution of the world from which all the revolutions of history arise. For they are the unrest which comes from Him. Of course they can come in a shallower or a deeper expression, in a more human or a more godly form. The kingdom of God does not come along behind like Christianity, but it is always going on ahead. For God's

promises and aims are heavens above what the cleverest of revolutionaries have even dreamed about up to now. God is always before us. But destructive as it is to all that opposes God, this radicalism of the Kingdom only advocates the return of the original order of God; it is certainly not that demonic power which plays such a large part in most human revolutions - rather it is the great liberating and fulfilling "Yes" of the creation.

God is a creator. Therefore man is also a creator! The world is not finished, and so man as well as God still has a lot to do. There is still an infinite amount of material waiting to be formed; there is still the opportunity for children of God to prove themselves in fighting and working.

Now let us see more of what Blumhardt himself had to say.

Words of Blumhardt

The Living One. We never think of the Living God as living enough. The God of history. To stand rightly one must have the God of history before one's eyes. Who is Jesus? Who is Jehovah? He is the God who led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and in whom I trust; who has become active on the earth, who plants community, who makes the godly things earthly and the earthly things godly! What do I care about the kind of God one has to give proof of? The dear Lord came from heaven and spoke; had He not done so, the philosophers also would not have found Him. Schelling, Hegel, Fichte, Kant, why, they would all still be heathen if He had not spoken His word on Mount Sinai. I almost want to burst sometimes when modern people want to place classical education above the Bible. Why, all of them would still be

ignorant if it were not for the Bible and its God who speaks on the earth.

The Living God in Christ. Nobody can really understand philosophical ideas of God. God wants to be experienced. ... He wants to be experienced by us in Christ and when in the times of the apostles men spoke of being faithful unto death, every one who belonged to the Church knew in what direction he should be faithful. Something came over them which no man had thought of, or was able to explain, and suddenly many people found themselves part of a history which carried on of its own accord and in which such wonderful powers were experienced that it gave them the feeling: These are powers stronger than all the world. ... There one had a perfectly clear picture of what God is; one didn't have any need to look up to heaven - the experiences took place on earth; they were connected with the naming of the name Jesus. ... To that extent we should not be at all embarrassed to admit bravely and openly that our Christ is God, for we can't do anything with mental pictures of God. Our Jesus has become Jehovah. He stands on the earth and calls to us: "I am He", and we make short work of it and fall to, knowing in Him the Living God, the Father in Heaven, so that when we have experienced Him we feel ourselves on solid ground, which not only doesn't shake but from which the springs of God's glory burst forth and draw us with them, and which, in the final storm, will draw the whole world to it.

66 God must be witnessed to by the senses. The one God, absolute, and by nature unexplainable, must demonstrate himself to us in our feelings. How we understand Him is one thing, but what

Jesus brought to us is the main thing: "You are born of God, so now get going."

The Living God must speak again and again. So over a long period of time the Israelites were led to a God who spoke to them again and again... and the people also became a people of real and true revelations from God. ...

But now it is like that among us also. ... We can do nothing on our own, but what is asked of us by Him; there are changes of time and situation, and difficulties and complications arise to which we are not at all equal, and again and again there must come a source of light from heaven springing up within us so that we are not overcome by the darkness of the times. Then we may expect God to speak to us directly for His name's sake, a speaking of God's Spirit in Christ, our Jehovah, and just through that as well as through particular experiences, we may come to know who God is.

Doctrine and Living God. There may be one error common to wide circles which poisons most of the thinking about God's kingdom, and this error could be worded: "It is sufficient for the coming of God's kingdom that we have a firmly fixed and systematized doctrine." This works as poison; with this point of view certain doctrines and arrangements soon become almost more important than God himself. And it has become clear that no single fixed and systematized dogma is decisive in God's kingdom, but only the living God himself.

God's kingdom and progress. We must always realize that our God

67 in Jesus Christ is a God of truth and a God of justice, not a God of confessions, schools, churches, morals or societies.

These things can be good, but they can also become perverted; we have enough proof of that. Therefore one cannot say that under all circumstances God will side with the group, with the custom, with the church, with the school, with the denomination. There can come a righteous awareness from God which takes its stand against the arrangements which were relatively good for a long time. That can be because they cease to serve their purpose, and it can also happen in the realm of the religious life. It is not at all necessary for me to be an anti-Christ just because I want the kingdom of God to progress and want to see movement among men in the causes of our God. It may be that in all that is coming God will bring about many changes, and these changes often come from a direction which is probably not comfortable to us.

Life with the Living God. I would like to give you an impression of what it means to live a life in which one continuously listens to what God says and continually sees what He does.

These things together form the real movement of the kingdom of God: "Listen, what has He said?" and "What is He doing?"

God in world developments. God is in world developments; He is in the front of it.

Everything new! The greatest of all God's words is this, which places the crown on all the others: "See, I am making all things new!"... Everything new, my friends, that is God, who cannot stand what is bad and decayed, but wants to renew it.

The God who does things. So long as your faith is a routine matter it is not right. One can't come drowsing into the king-

68 dom of God. The cause must carry on and be clear, sharp and fresh.

The way must always be made afresh by God, and there we see the real grace, that God carries on as the God of action.

I tell you I can't hold out a single day without hearing from somewhere, either as a report from afar or as a personal experience, something that shows me, "Praise to the Lord, He is moving ahead!" Then I can lie down and sleep. But if I were to see that He is no longer doing anything then I would say, "Now it is finished with Bad Boll." May God grant that it soon comes to pass that every one experiences what it means to live entirely in deeds of God. ... Through that we should also become: {enlightened } {brighter in spirit} so that we become clear about the occurrences in the world and do not fall into religious confusion and other foolishness; we should know what time it is and be able inwardly to sense what to do: Shall I hurry? Shall I wait? Shall I do this? Shall I leave that? In short, it is light that we need.

- - - -

3. Creation, Decay, Renewal

a. God is the living creator. The world is creation. That is the foundation of Blumhardt's thinking. As creation the world is good, pure and perfect. It is important to recognize this goodness, purity and perfection in the world. It streams through everywhere. This original, pure and good creation would be referred to by Blumhardt as nature, and with this term we must think of the spiritual as well as the material. This creation was originally a paradise, and came directly from God. Here His life, full of purity and innocence, held sway. That is what we want to return to completely.

One thing should be especially emphasized: the material is also God's creation. It is good by nature and full of {divine } godly life.

69 The body is no less a creation of God than the soul. The creation is all a unit and belongs together. That was important to the father's message and especially so to the son's. They brought this truth to light with great power in an infinite wealth of spoken words and writings. That message also indicates the deep root of the rare naturalness which was fundamentally a part of Blumhardt's nature, and in that also he was very much like Jesus. All asceticism, being basically a fear of the natural, is a deviation from God, for it is essentially a despising of his creation. It is far better to dig back to those original sources of God's life in natural things so as really to get away from all decay and death, and press forward toward life. And so the praise of God's glory in nature streamed from Blumhardt's words and deeds just as it does from the Bible. The kingdom of God is ^{divine} godly nature.

The idea - which is only briefly indicated here - of the creation of the world by God - the forward-moving God - is one of the cornerstones of Blumhardt's spiritual world. This old truth which has been revived in the doctrine of evolution, though darkened by its mechanical approach, was proclaimed by Blumhardt with a power and depth that has not been seen since Biblical times. Its significance is greater than most modern people can even imagine.

b. But of course the original creation has lost so very much by the fall. There is an element of freedom which has power in the world of God. God himself is freedom. That is why His creation is also made with this element. But from freedom there can also come opposition and fall - a riddle which is part of

70

the mystery of freedom. In fact, this fall has come to pass. That is why we have to reckon with a world in which much that happens is not directly from God, rather it is even against His will. The almightiness of God does not mean that all that happens streams directly from His will. On the contrary, His great power is expressed in His ability to give the world its freedom. Evil, therefore, is not the original order of God, but a result of the fall. At most it is indirectly God's will because it is the result of overstepping His order; it is the sign that His order has been overstepped. That is how death and all its associated effects such as sickness, poverty and crime have come to be here. Death is the wage that is paid by sin.

This power of opposition to God in the world reaches to great depths. It is, like the basic nature of the world as a whole, to be thought of as personal power rather than as a thing. It is not to be thought of as limited to its appearance in man, for it appears in many forms which can only be understood through a deeper relationship. That a kingdom of the demonic is conceivable is indicative of the depth of thought and experience. However, the recognition of the factual existence of the demonic does not mean going into it with curiosity either in deed or in thought. On the contrary, by that recognition, the horror of the evil should become clear, and that is the best thing to hinder such curiosity. This kingdom of the demonic has, in principle, already been overcome; about that we will speak later on.

In spite of the liberation which has taken place, this power is now still at work - for that liberation is not yet finished -

rather it is just beginning, both in nature, and in the world of men. The demonic in nature produces the brutal, irrational and chaotic, in man, wild desire, cruelty and egoism, and in both man and nature death and war and all that is puzzling and torn. The kingdoms of the world with their systems of violence come from this power; so do many of the forms of civilization, and also even parts of religion and the nature of religion itself.

71 However, much that is demonic is not yet satanic. For as there is an order of rank in God's kingdom, so likewise in its opposite. In that way this demonic world weighs as a curse upon the creation of God. But under this the creation longs for liberation. All of nature now suffering under the law of selfishness sighs for the "revelation of the sons of God" (Paul's letter to Romans). And all of humanity in frenzy, power and sorrow looks toward Christ, the liberator, for its redemption.

This view signifies another great revolution from the common line of thought. The ordinary Christian viewpoint tends to hold God responsible for all forms of evil that are in the world: "It is His will which takes place in all things." That is a source of unending doubt. How can one connect certain facts with a good, wise and all-powerful God? Then one has to defend God against the attacks of men; one places God before the judgment of men, and even the best defense in that case often has no other result than still graver doubts. At the same time by this method of connecting God and the world, one comes to explain the world as it presently is, with all its injustice and cruelty, as godly and right, or at least as God's will. That makes Christianity the defender of all things as they are, including evil itself.

The Bible's view is quite the opposite. Evil in the world is not God's will but has come through man's guilt. It ought not to be, and therefore as God's kingdom steps forward it will be taken away. For evil is not the consecration but the judgment of the world.

72 Man is accused, rather than God. And whereas the other view tried to lull the world to sleep, this one leads to holy unrest. The usual Christianity is a power of reaction; God's kingdom is the eternal revolution in the world. Together with God you should attack evil and overcome it. You should not ask if God is ^(gerecht) just, but rather if you are ^(right) just. (recht).

In that also, Blumhardt reestablished the truth of the Bible c. The creation reclaimed by Christ, and made new again - that is the meaning of the liberation which was prepared and won by him in Israel. The king of evil was hit over the head and robbed of his power to rule. That is the purpose of Jesus' fight. Through him the original world of God will be created again out of its present decay; the fall will be made good, nature will be saved from evil, and with God, man will again be raised to honor and placed in his kingdom. That is the aim of the appearance of Christ to which we shall shortly turn.

Words of Blumhardt, the son

God speaks through the creation. I want to have my relationship with God in what comes to me through the creation, not just in men. God speaks to me through the creation. I don't turn away from nature. In all of it there is the great life of the Father in Heaven; it is just as important as the life in the prophets and apostles.

Jesus in nature. The life with Jesus is naturalness, righteousness and similarity to the creation.

Creation and fall. The world is a mixture of order and disorder, truth and lies, righteousness and unrighteousness, I would almost like to say of existence and non-existence. ... We are surrounded by a creation and a piece of it is the ground under our feet; we walk on it, we live from it, and we have a certain power over it; we work for it, and nevertheless it doesn't really become what it should be anywhere. Man, what are you in the creation? What is your purpose for the earth? You feel: I should be something in relation to the earth and for the creation, but there appears to be a complete disorder, so many broken threads, and no clear relationship to be seen.

Over the years in our circles we have tried to come to a clarity that in the world - which belongs to God, the Creator, and is created out of truth, offering us the glories of life from God - there is still something foreign to the truth, something which confuses mankind throughout all situations and places. If one looks at the morals, customs, viewpoints and lives of all the peoples one is amazed at how, just alongside the glorious appearance of truth in nature, mankind goes madly off the true course. Like the Chinese who bind a girl's feet and aren't satisfied until she is so crippled that she can't walk, so all the other nations and peoples, Christian and heathen alike, make a lie out of themselves in the midst of such a glorious world creation.

Decay. You must bear in mind, my friends, that we humans, even the best of us, are poor comrades to the rest of creation.

Something in us is twisted. Now, all of us were created in the image of God; we are an important little gear-wheel, pictorially speaking, in the great gear system of the creation. But on this wheel the teeth are all crooked and chipped and the axle is bent. The human part doesn't work right, and the whole creation suffers because of it. That is sin. ... Things don't work right with us men. ... There is much that is wrong with every man in the world.

74 Creation and bodily life. Is this earth, to which our bodily life also belongs, just to be thrown away? Or does it not have within it the seeds of eternity? There are many who look upon God's creation and see it as a bad thing that they would like to have the right to leave as soon as they can (and if possible give it a good kick when they do so). I am sad about that because I almost have to give up hope that men will come to a true understanding. For all are fallen, the heathen first and then the Christians, but the Christians more so than the heathen. For the old heathen honored God more in His creation than the Christians, who in their seeking for heaven no longer see what a jewel of a creation, filled with God's love, they have been allowed to know in this life.

Death is against the meaning of the creation. God did not only make spirits for this physical world but also gave us a body, and this he called his "likeness". Such a body can only be destroyed in the most horrible pain, and every one sees and experiences in his own person that death is a judgment and scares men, even when they want to be very strong and convince themselves that they could die and become a spirit without fear.

Against that, what could be more natural than for man to think: Something is not in order; the order must come when God's will and truth for the creation come into their rights?

Not all comes from God. We often blame God for all that we meet in the world, but in that we do an injustice. There are also works of man and works of the devil, but they do harm whereas what comes from God always does good. We are guilty that so much is wrong in the world. So please let my God go and don't say that He is to blame.

Death, misery and sin and all that stuff - that is something else; it is neither from man nor from God, and together we will squeeze it out. It doesn't belong here.

75 We have brought God's purpose to nothing through our foolishness, and now we are in a situation where we must bear the disgrace.

I know for sure: Some fates do not come from God.

Misery and woe always come where God isn't.

Through you, rationality shall come into our destiny.

- - - -

4. Jesus Christ.

The appearance of Christ wins its significance in the light of what has been said. And by that all the features of his life and work are explained, though they present the greatest difficulties to people who go out from the common point of view.

a. What is the Christ in which the man, Jesus, became flesh?

He is, as Blumhardt often expressed it, "the personal God".

He means: Jesus is God as man. God, in his "own nature", is

for man unimaginable. As such He leads the world quite independently of what men do. But in Christ He joins himself to men, becomes their brother, enters into them, and will work only together with men. And still more: in Christ, as already in Jehovah, God became a reality instead of just an idea. The whole meaning of Christ's appearance as different from heathendom is expressed by the sentence: "The Word became flesh". In Christ, God's glory and goodness takes form and makes His dwelling on earth. In Him, the heart of the Father is made known, but His holiness is also perfected. It is just in love that they come forth completely.

So it is the humanity of God which appears in Christ. But at the same time also the godly in man. God steps out of the darkness and from the unknown becomes the known God. And just by this, the full nature of man is revealed for the first time. Man will become what, in God's idea, he was from the beginning. He shall be freed from all restraints and raised to the glory
 76 ^{the} of/Son of God.

That is the old, revealed, and still unfathomable mystery of God's becoming man in Christ Jesus. Blumhardt speaks of it in new tongues. He sees again one thing in particular which has been forgotten by Christianity, that the godly nature which appeared in the man Jesus is not limited to Him but is poured out through Him upon mankind, which is bound together with Him. God's becoming man is a comprehensive act, the Word becomes flesh in all reality, starting with the Church^{*} of Christ: "To as many as accepted him, he gave the power to become children of God." (John 1:12).

* The Gemeinde - those who follow Christ alone. A small "c" is used for the churches generally.

b. And in that way the kingdom of God appeared in Jesus. T. The kingdom of God is the creation of God, recreated by Christ. It is not - it is important to understand this difference - the general governing of the world by God. For that stretches over the entire world which doesn't know God or even opposes Him; it also has power over nature, over the unbelievers, demons (who must also serve Him even when they do "whatever they like"). But that is not the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is only there where man puts himself at God's disposal for the purpose of renewing the creation and carrying it forward. In other words, the kingdom of God is there where Christ holds sway.

The kingdom of God is there where His powers break forth. It is there where a new world appears, when this eon ("this world") is ousted by the eternal life. In other words, the kingdom of God is there where the Holy Spirit overcomes and creates.

This new reality which broke in in the Old Testament, appeared fulfilled in Jesus Christ - who, in word and deed, presented the true reality of God and man. It was here on earth that he came in "flesh", and it is here that his coming shall be completed. God wants to make His dwelling in the earth. That is Jesus' real meaning. He carries it out in speech and act. It shines out from Him as the sun of the world. "The kingdom of God has arrived; you must change your hearts and minds and believe the good news!", and in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come!"

c. From this basic understanding of Christ's appearance and

its meaning, all the other events are explained. Christ is the creation made new, the directness of God appearing once again. That's why He is two things: He is different from the present decayed creation which we know as the "world" for He is God's real and final will. He is supernatural; that is extraordinary, wonderful, beyond what ordinarily happens here. ... But thereby He is only really natural; that is, just the true order and true nature. He shows us the world as it was without the decadence that has come into it. He shows what is possible when the world of God breaks in.

That is the significance of the part of Christ's life which we call the "miracles". To this view Christianity is opposed; there is the fear of miracles of "modern thought" which doesn't want the idea that "laws of nature" can be broken, and sometimes even for pious reasons. For "the creator of nature is a God of order". A very different kind of opposition is a mania for miracles which is quite the opposite of true faith and is actually superstition. In addition, religious orthodoxy has made a showpiece out of the miracles in that they are looked upon as the proof of the divinity of Christ. All this explains a certain shyness toward miracles even on the part of pious people. This shows that the nature of miracles has been misunderstood. The miracle is not the breaking of nature's order, but the appearance of a new and higher order which is the kingdom of God. Or should the order of natural and spiritual existence with which we are so familiar today be the final and only one? To assume that is narrowness, not enlightenment. In the miracles of Christ's life there appears,

individualized as some of its first proclamations, that new world of God which will some day break forth in its full glory and brilliance. Such proclamations may appear as foolishness to us who are so bound to this customary world, but the foolishness of the world is the wisdom of God. The fulfilment of God's ideas, and the removal of the decay in the world (which is the kingdom of God) must for the present be opposed to the world, and also opposed to its "rationality" which is also fallen from the truth. Just because it is the true nature, it must, to a darkened nature, appear unnatural. But in fact it is only the great "yes" of God's creation.

That is the meaning of the miracles that Christ experienced and performed. The healing of the sick shows that God's kingdom is perfected health; the awakening of the dead, that it also overcomes death. The feeding of thousands with a little bread and fish shows that in the midst of poverty the kingdom's power can bring satisfaction to men, whereas presently selfish hunger destroys all that is fine. The walking upon the water shows us that the kingdom will give us powers over nature which are as yet unknown, but which faith is able to give us.

And similarly all the rest, and in all this the question of the historical accuracy of these things doesn't play such a decisive part at all. For even if it is so that here and there "legends" might have been told, they were nevertheless an indication and picture of the new being that really appeared in Jesus.

d. In the same way the principal events of Jesus' life also explain themselves and reveal their meaning.

79 Jesus himself is a new creation, a miracle. Therefore His entrance into the world of man raised, purified and changed its nature. This truth lies in the message of His virgin birth. It is held within that message as in a tender veil which one should not make into a dogma. The stories of Christ's birth and His entry into the history of mankind are told in a form that in no way even resembles an abstract historical idea.

 The calling and temptation of Jesus demonstrates the decisive fight, both temporal and eternal, of God's kingdom against the powers which oppose it. These powers also appear here in their highest perfection, for they rise to their highest form like that of Christ. The death of Jesus on the cross signifies the death of what is human so that what is godly may live. Here Christ, in the highest purity and love of His priesthood, offers himself as a substitute for all the world which is given over to judgment so that God's whole nature can break forth. The cross is not meant to be a soft cushion for human selfishness and pious religious form, but on the contrary God is given the honor over all flesh, and all is to be offered to Him so that He alone can be Lord, and then of course, all the liberated life of the world and man will rule with Him.

 For to death belongs the resurrection. And this also is not to be thought of as a strange wonder to be displayed, or as a breaking of the laws of nature, but rather as an inward necessity for the world of God. It is a victorious breaking forth of God's kingdom as opposed to the apparent victory of this world; even more important it is a triumph over all death. It is then not the breaking of an order, but the revelation of

a new order; it is a new act of creation, the beginning of a new world which will and shall unfold itself as time goes on.

80 Is this vision in agreement with science? Answer: not at all. Of these things science sees nothing. It has no eye for them; they are completely hidden from science. They can only be seen through faith, can only be experienced by men who have themselves experienced and understood something of the Living God and His powerful acts. In these things a whole world of God is revealed which is so different from ordinary happenings that it cannot be measured by ordinary yardsticks. The most accurate theology, even with the best eyeglasses of science, can be completely blind to this world of God. Science can neither affirm nor deny this world of God. She has no right to do one or the other. Her task is with the world, not with God; with the ordinary, not the extraordinary. Of course she will have a tendency to deny this and try to "explain" things, but if she does so she oversteps her bounds. It is definitely a naive and ungrounded arrogance when any branch of science asserts that the world of Christ which we have described, does not exist.

Likewise, however, one must not in any way try to make a science out of the things of Blumhardt, even if it is called "theology". One may not make of them events to be compared to other histories, or place them as miracles in the religious show-window; but rather one must let them stand as they are, as mysteries of faith which can only be understood to the extent to which the reality of God's kingdom is experienced. They only have value in that connection and they become harmful

as soon as something else is made out of them.

e. The new world in which God and man are revealed comes forward in Christ. This has been understood and misunderstood at the same time in a double way, through orthodoxy and through attempts at "explanation" in many varied forms. Orthodoxy understood the new creation in Christ and emphasized God's part in it. But it made this story into a doctrine, and turned Jesus into a dogma; it took away His life and humanity and made His appearance into a superficial mythological drama. So the old orthodoxy darkened the ^{{divine}godly significance of history and stopped people from thinking freely, and now by "modern thought" they even turn away those who genuinely want to follow God. That is why the spokesman of our times has become "scientific explanation". At least it has sought the natural and human in the story and given due honor to that. That is the good thing about their "criticism" and about the "Bible-critics" in general as well as most free study of the Bible. But all of these have at the same time lacked an understanding for the true meaning of the story. They have missed the "supernatural"; they have missed God's role in the story. They held themselves to the ordinary scheme of things and explained away all that did not fit into it. So they surrendered the kingdom of God for the world in favor of their "culture and rationality".

But the truth stands above both views. One should not think that the "scientific explanations" are in any way based on science. It is far more the case that the "science", or freely interpreted "modern" theology is itself based on the idea of "explaining away"; that means on a very narrow way of thinking

which takes into account only the prevailing ideas of our times. In due course they will be replaced by a new and better line of thought and a viewpoint which is open to the heights and depths of reality. About the supernatural and miracles of the New Testament real science has not a word to say, and knows it perfectly well. But with that, orthodoxy puts its foot in it. For it also makes a science out of things which can only be understood by faith, and then makes its "science" into a law.

82

Both orthodoxy and pseudo-scientific explanations must dissolve in the stream of new knowledge of God's kingdom. Dogmas must again turn into a story which is full of life. And it must be a human story. For the kingdom is the connection between the human and the godly. In this history of God, things go forward in a perfectly human manner. And so it is also in the original reports which are found in the Bible. We don't need to take any trouble about the fact that in the Bible there are errors, contradictions and imperfections. That is part of its humanity. A stiff dogma about its "inspired nature" can only destroy the living character of the Bible. But just in what is human the godly can make itself known freely and movingly. So the objections of modern thought as well as the one-sidedness and contradictions in the comprehension of Christ are overcome. Seen in this new way, the story of Jesus becomes self-evident, natural and real once again. And again Blumhardt becomes for us an incomparably clear witness to the reality of Christ, far clearer than all of "positive theology". And he also becomes the reconciler of contradictions on a higher plane. Nowhere else than in Boll

was Jesus spoken of so freely and realistically, though humanly and naturally. And only in Boll did the reality of God come forth so self-evidently and with such great force. Full freedom was allowed with all its power; the modern theology with the bit of truth that it has found was accepted, and then it was far outdone by a more comprehensive vision of truth.

One thing must still be brought forward again which is of fundamental importance for the right understanding of the supernatural (and nevertheless quite natural) world which appeared in Christ and was connected with Him. This is fundamental and may never be forgotten without great harm, and it applies also to the whole message of God and Christ and the
 83 kingdom wherever it appears: We are never concerned here with "objective doctrines" which one can transmit after the fashion of science, but rather with experiences, experiences of faith. Separated from that, all these things lose their meaning, become dogmas, and eventually myths. In other words, all of these truths are such only for those who are seeking and finding the Living God and His kingdom, and they are that only in the degree to which such is the case. As soon as one makes them part of a theology - even if it is called religious socialism - they are from that moment on misinterpreted. These are not truths for philosophers and systematizers, but for children of God and fighters for His kingdom.

Words of Blumhardt

The name Jesus. We know of nothing but the name, Jesus. ...
 By this man the destiny of mankind is still^{to be}/resolved. The years will bring it.

Jesus the will of God. He is the first one who stands within the will of God, the Father of mankind. And not only in His ideas, as of the prophets of the Old Testament, but as a man among men and with every drop of His blood, He was united with the will of the Father. So they were not His words, His ideas, His honor, or any other virtue, but His whole personality was within the perception of the great God who is in a special way our father.

Jesus, the splendor of God on earth. That is what Jesus, who is the splendor of God on earth, wants to help us toward. For the glow of God comes from this man, and so He is here for a purpose. Once more a man is useful to God in His creation and among men. That is His work, and that's why He has eternal life and doesn't die even if He is nailed on the cross; nothing, no kind of situation, even the most dreadful - you can think what you like - can kill this man, because He is there for a purpose. ... Out of Him shines the Father of the creation, and the creation feels, as it were, hopeful once more because this Man knows how to serve that things ^{might} be brought in order again for the dear Lord and the ruined earth might be restored. I tell you: That is Jesus' main concern. ... Jesus is here firstly for God, and only then for you. Bit by bit man has turned it around and figured out how to make it look as if Jesus came only for us. So one flatters oneself with Jesus, but some day that can turn out quite terribly. I tell you therefore: The Lord doesn't concern himself about us at all; ultimately He doesn't care at all about the whole of humanity, if they don't want to help Him. ... Without further ado He can put us all aside; He has already

begun to cut the threads, and who knows how it will go on, so that even the Christians will be left entirely to their own devices and will have nothing more of Jesus. ...

Jesus the splendor of man before God. He is the splendor of God on earth and the splendor of man in heaven. Just as God was overcome on the earth, so man was overcome in heaven.

Then Jesus comes as the One He is, and God lives on the earth once more. Now Jesus is with the Father in heaven again, and humanity lives there in Him. Now before God there is something alive in the humanity which was so dead; it is the splendor of man which stands before God in Jesus.

Jesus the one who gives offense. Jesus didn't always speak in polite terms at all; often things that He said were extremely impolite. "Whores and tax-gatherers shall enter the kingdom of God before the Pharisees. - No, that is really too coarse! How uncultured! How hateful!" is what they must have said at
85 the time; how nicely, in what rounded phrases, how perfectly, the educated Pharisees spoke in comparison. But He, He changes customs and ethics, thinks nothing of the temple, turns everything upside down - what a revolutionary He was in His time, in spite of all His kindness and humility.

God in Christ. That God who is far from us, that infinitely great, all-comprehending life that covers heaven and earth - we just can't take it in. Just saying God has no value for me. And often when I hear people speaking of God I think: "Do you really know what you are talking about?" Our ideas melt away when we try to think of God. That's why we humans need something we can grasp, something human, something intimate, and

that came to us in Jesus - not all of God, but just that which we need. That which is human in God came to us in Jesus, and that is why we may think of the great God in quite a simple human way in the coming of Jesus. That is the God who comes to us in His infinite depth and power and who can at times come to us in an especially powerful way.

Human and Godly. As it says in the first letter of John (New Testament), ^{one} who does not recognize that Jesus Christ came in the flesh from God the Father, is not standing rightly in spirit, and one can also say: any one who does not accept that message of Christ's coming in its ^{divine} significance, who doesn't see Christ as coming directly from God and from God only, which means that he also respects Him as God and becomes as a child toward Him.. is not a real Christian, but a false one.

Jesus as cosmic power. Jesus Christ the man is a cosmic power; He is in the creation, that's where the real foundation of His nature is. As the creation is a work of God so is Jesus, the son of God, a work of God in the whole creation. He is far above all angels and powers of God that run the world. ...

86 The highest messengers of God, the powers and elements of life, serve Him; He is in the creation and it must go according to Him. This tremendous greatness of Jesus must be understood in order to believe that He is still able to help us.

Jesus as light of the world. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." That is true, but it nevertheless remains night as long as ... man doesn't recognize it, and so long as mankind does not recognize Jesus. We are in the night. That people

have believed it was day just because Jesus was born, died and rose again is the greatest error of Christianity. With that error we have been in the darkest night for nineteen hundred years, and thought that everything is good and finished. But to be apostles of Jesus we must work very hard. Our dead world must be given light. Then it will be day. All men, all that is conscious in heaven, on earth and under the earth, must know that Jesus carries all and that as the splendor of God's glory, as the Son of God, He is ruling over the material. When that is realized it will be day, and then the wind of liberation will blow over all the heights and into all the depths.

The miracles of Christ. With the coming of Jesus a tremendous nearness of God must also have come into the very nature of the earth so that new things, even miracles, could be possible (such as walking on water and the like). Many of the things which the disciples and also great masses of people must have experienced are no longer in any way understandable to us. Among well known people there are only a few who can still look upon the experiences that surrounded Jesus as actual facts, and even among them the so-called miracles, - which to Jesus were only works of the Father just like any other of the Father's works - have only a symbolic meaning. Many people are horrified
87 at the idea of experiencing something like that again, and they defend themselves with all they have against the possibility of "miracles". They aren't able to bring it together with God's natural order in the world, and they think that everything is out of order if something happens such as Peter experienced.

And yet - what if one does experience it sometime - God's order nevertheless remains as it is, it is just that it has once again been brought closer to its deeper truth and real life so that the giving of life and its strengthening becomes noticeable. What is the final purpose of the kingdom of God on earth? Certainly it is not the dissolution of creation and the nature which God has made. It also says in the New Testament: "I have not come to destroy but to fulfil." (Matt. 5:17). In the end all things will serve life, and even today all nature's powers and situations are there for that purpose. The real man and the miracle. We know of one man for whom things went as they should; He is called Jesus Christ, and therefore a light was also brought into our creation again. Then why do you wonder at the fact that Jesus had food for four or five thousand? It surprises us. But He is just a real man again, and that's why the powers of the world are under Him. Or why are you surprised that when He touches a sick person healing takes place? He is a real man. Things go as they should with Him under God's oversight. He's the picture of God, God's Son. And so He is blessed, and has power which also makes others well if they only come into His reach. Even if they are crooked, godless men, if they only press to Him so that something of His spirit reaches them, it makes something right in them also.

Prerequisites to an understanding of miracles. One cannot tell of the things one experiences from God... Even the Biblical miracles of Jesus, it seems to me, cannot be told just as they were; the words become stiff before us. The outward words

are not the spirit; he who does not have the spirit and cannot feel the spirit of the thing makes a miraculous story out of it. The Biblical report. That understanding of Christ's life which sees it only logically should give way in favor of an understanding of Christ's life in the will of God. So many "lives of Christ" are written in which people want to prove His historical existence, and the writers despair over the fact that there is so little written about Him in His own time. Nothing of the time satisfies our hunger for knowledge of His human history. The apostles and prophets don't even bother to give His year of birth. They also don't care to prove the factuality of the different occurrences at His birth, or His arising after death. For the truth does not lie in the physically provable human history but in a life which comes out of the most unpretentious story as a life of God, leaving the story of the physical man behind as a useless shell. The man that you are looking for, that has gone; what was of God in Him remains and continues to bring men life and light. It may be that there are contradictions in the reports about Jesus and the godly things of those times; that can be when the story is taken as a report of outward facts. Where all sorts of men worked together in great enthusiasm it is not surprising that imperfect things mixed with what was perfect; that is the way we humans are. And also there were people following after Jesus who told stories about Him and wanted to bring them in. But to this the apostle Paul said,

89 "I no longer know Jesus after the flesh" (II Cor. 5:16). He doesn't mean by that that Jesus didn't actually live, but that the outward story falls and the life of God remains. And when

God's Spirit is at work he seeks the proof of God, which is actually in appearance as life in men, and this doesn't let himself be pushed aside by secondary matters. For he knows that in God's kingdom the center point of all truth is that instead of man's history, which shall vanish, the history of the true humanity bound to God is coming, even though it is still under the shell of conditions which have become imperfect. The Spirit knows that for the history of this life it is not tradition or history but God Himself that has broken in, so that when the history of mankind is lost, we will then know the lives of those men who represented God's life from the beginning to the end.

The history of man and God. If we are gripped by a longing for God, the living God, then we mustn't puzzle about the experiences of the men of God of old times, so that we are not able to believe any more, but we must see what great joy comes into our hearts when we also experience what they experienced, that there is a history full of remarkable incidents which are not entirely human in origin. Humanity has its history and we can learn it. Also we can learn much from it, but that is not really the history which brings joy to our hearts. The joy of human history is of a sort that we would gladly give up. But
90 there is also a history of experiences which man alone doesn't have; something else must come from God. The human must be touched by the godly, and then we have those remarkable experiences that men of God have experienced from Abraham to Jesus and the apostles and - let us admit it openly - we are angered by those things. For what wouldn't men give if they could have

Jesus without having to accept experiences that are, humanly speaking, unexplainable. And to top it all off, He rises right up into the heavens - how uncomfortable this report is to all you who would so much like to make this dear man the founder of your religion, if only He hadn't said or left reports of things which one has to be ashamed of to be considered educated. How can those who still have faith in science imagine that a man has died and been buried and then returns and lives beyond death, as if death was just one of those things one could write off - something that one comes through without physical existence coming to an end - and on the contrary, the physical body is actually transfigured, that is, assumes a higher form. But the experiences of men of God all lead in that direction, and it is in these experiences, not in the doctrines which have been hung on to them, that the seeds of God's kingdom are found. The doctrines don't lead to experiences but come from experiences, and for better or worse it is back to the experience we must go if we want to see the kingdom of God.

The story of Jesus seen from below and from above. The introduction to John's gospel is the story of a birth which sees Jesus from above rather than from below. ... One could also tell His life story in quite another way as seen from below: "There was a man called Joseph, and his wife was called Mary; they came to Bethlehem and there a child was born to them. And like the
 91 father, this son became a carpenter till it became clear to him that he had a higher calling. Then he went to a prophet who was in the land and let himself be baptized. Thereupon he realized that he was called to something still greater, and from then on

he preached throughout the country until he was nailed to a cross and died." One could tell the life of Jesus like that, but if we see it so then we are only seeing it from below and we make it just like our own life. If we do that we can never really understand what He is. If we really want to see Him in his whole world-significance, then we must see Him from above - not starting from Bethlehem or from Nazareth, but from above: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Jesus and the Day of God. When Jesus entered our world then it was day; He entered into a day of God and we could well say: Through that day of God the things which had been laid within Him could be lived out, so that mankind should come thereby to a higher thinking, feeling and working. We cannot grasp the meaning of a day of God with our minds. It lies quite deep in the inner nature of life, where possibilities can be created in certain times and then remarkable things can happen which cannot happen in other times. Jesus and His works stood in such a deep-lying day of God, and that makes it possible to explain why His working in the visible world of men was hardly noticed. The world went its way, apparently the same as before. In His lifetime, at least, there was only a very small circle of men who were aware of Him, just a few disciples, who became His disciples not by their thinking it out but by an unconscious feeling that drew them to Him. And yet what was laid into this day of God as a seed of mankind's development has become the greatest thing in history. There has been no greater event either before or since, and I also believe that there will be

none in these times until the end of the developments in which we are now standing. The whole of humanity turns, one might say, about the works of Jesus. All that has since then been created, bright and dark, good and evil, ^{working of Jesus upon the} all turns about the future of humanity. It is something like the first beginning after which our earth was said to be "very good" and in which it was said, "Let there be light" and there was light. From that moment on no one could stop it; the earth had light, and out of the light all else came; all of life and its parts, all the perfecting of life, everything, down to the deepest depths of the earth, even the coal mines, came from the light. But
 93 what a development it all went through! There was much ^{whirling} raising of dust and mire, much destruction, many horrible things, a fearful ^{unfolding} development! - till finally out of the earth came the beauties of nature which we now enjoy.

In a like manner a kind of light was given in Jesus; that concerns man especially, to begin with, only a relatively few men. But whether it was many or few, the power of spiritual light, which calls men to strive for a high purpose and not be satisfied with a low condition, has appeared and now it carries on. This spiritual light which has been laid in men produces the greatest development, has the greatest power among men to stride forward and overcome anything up to the present day. A great deal of dust has been raised, the hideousness of man has been revealed, for vulgarity, barbarousness and sin had to have their day and the history of Christianity that followed is terrible to behold. But what is that? If something really new was given in Jesus, which worked on in God's power, then could that

horrible slime and beastly waste of humanity have been left? First there followed a history of inhumanity and sin which had to come out into the light and be judged so that all the world could see: that is what man should not be! But today already we can sense it: no matter how much dirt is stirred up and how much hate comes out, in the course of time it will settle and what is new and great, the things that Jesus is able to do in God's day, will come more and more to light, and already ideas of man's nobility are arising which even the apostles could not imagine. Today our minds are wide open and we have great hopes. Today we can hope for many things which the apostles never thought of. ...

Human history is so peculiar: there are times when something is born, and then it stands still and nobody brings it forward again. There have been developments and beginnings which to us are quite inexplicable. Nobody can grasp the few years of Jesus' activity as the cause of the greatest revolution that has ever occurred in human history. Wars, battles and victories, and the creation of nations and states... these are no great events, no real creation. Compared to the high calling that mankind has, they are nothing: all the nations will disappear, and so will the differences of race and language; in the light of new creation that has come to us in Jesus Christ all enmity and pride that pits one against another, and all else that is hateful shall be done away with. Nothing of that will remain, but where something does remain, something which is really of value for us, that will have eternal life.

The mystery of Christ's birth. The word became flesh, God who is the Word - that is the side of God that is turned toward us - this God becomes flesh. He steps into our planet, and reveals himself not only as a work, or the word of a man, but as a living person. One who is God's, a son of God, enters among us and dwells with us so that we might see His glory, the glory of the only begotten son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

That is the real story of Jesus' birth, a much greater story than would be seen from below, where we might begin: "There were a man called Joseph and a woman called Mary, and to them a child was born." Yes, very much greater: God, who is the Word, and who turns himself toward men, this God becomes flesh. Yes, for once we will speak it out boldly: God is born, not just a man, but God himself is born, that God who turns to men as the Word, now comes in and sets up His tent among humans, and that is the story of Jesus' birth as it is seen from above, the birth of Jesus as a birth of God.

Those who don't want to understand this should let it be, for we cannot speak of these things in the hearing of the world; the world cannot understand them. And who wants to speak of them in the hearing of the church-goers? For one of them it is too old-fashioned and for the other it is not exactly in line with dogma; these people haven't the organ with which to understand it. But our ears are now accustomed to hear such things, and so among ourselves we can speak of the mystery of Jesus' birth, which will be understood, but not with our intellect; it can only be understood with an entirely different
 95 organ which sees and feels into eternity, and can feel how

Jesus Christ, the man on earth, is entirely man, our equal in all respects, just as fully as, seen from above, He is really God, God, born out of eternity into our earthly world.

The meaning of the resurrection. It must yet come to pass that we don't just hold on to an old confession of faith, but in the midst of experiencing something new are able to call to one another, "He is really risen! He lives among us!" He takes the reins in His hand and leads His people, and all the peoples, on the way of His death, so that in the death of the flesh His life and His resurrection can be glorified in all mankind to the eternal glory of God."

For this reason Jesus Christ arose from the dead: so that in Him we could see that God even wants to recreate our life out of death and has decided to take everything into His own hands again. Therefore we should die with Him, so that we can also be reawakened, and that which should live must then live fully and beautifully and gloriously. ...

The resurrection as an experience. In the early days the resurrection was not only an article of faith as it is today, when one just believes: "Christ has arisen", with nothing before it and nothing behind it; then it was an experience of daily life. For the resurrection of Christ should carry on ever anew in those who become faithful to Him, so that they also arise, which means that they find a renewal of their lives so that in the new life they can overcome all things. But the resurrection of Christ, of which we are convinced, is also something mysterious. Not even His disciples knew much about it, therefore they also had to go into this mystery so that it could be revealed to their hearts. But then they also arose; that was the basis of their

96 power, and it must become so for us also.

Jesus trusts us. The Lord Jesus is humanly very near to us; I do not know my best friend as well as I know Jesus. I can't see through the motives of my best friend; it is possible that he is not honest with me after all; I cannot trust any man quite completely. But far away as the Savior is from us, we are nevertheless ^{so} well acquainted with Him through the Scriptures that we can be perfectly sure of His motives. The same is not true with a great writer like Cicero; one can read him all one likes, and still one doesn't see through to the very heart of him. And also Virgil, Socrates and Plato, the noblest spirits, however beautifully they have written, still do not become our friends. The Lord comes in such a way that each one can become His friend. One has only to become acquainted with Him, and then everything else comes all by itself.

Enough light upon the life of Jesus. So much of Jesus has been revealed and is at hand that if any one dips into it with a childlike heart he will understand what Jesus is; perhaps he will not understand it in a moment, but with time he will surely understand it. All of a sudden the main points of the life of Jesus become clear to him so that he can really say, "The Holy Spirit has revealed it to me". Only in this also one must not read too many books. Trust yourself a bit! You don't have to listen to every man's opinion. And also if you err a bit, that doesn't matter; only in things of God don't let any one force an opinion upon you. To begin with, throw away the superstition that other people have to teach you; that is not true, nobody has to teach you; just be sure that you have

the source, and drink from that and don't let yourself be misled.
 97 For it really is true: Jesus lives and and He must speak with
 us, and at least in our hearts the false trumpets of the churches
 should sound no more, for if they do we will not understand the
 trumpets of the future of Christ.

- - - -

5. The Redemption

Through Christ, the fall from God and all its consequences have
 been lifted, the decay of the whole creation overcome, and a
 new creation brought into being.

We are unable to think realistically enough of this fact.
 Above all we must be firm about the fact, contrary to conven-
 tional ideas, that the accomplishments of Christ are not just
 ideas, theories, and "spiritual" accomplishments, but physical
 and material realities and powers. Just as God himself is not
 only an idea or thought, but a creative reality and a power,
 so likewise is His kingdom also. Through the birth and life,
 suffering and death of Christ, and through His works and His
 resurrection, powers flowed into the world which were not there
 before; a life arose which did not previously exist. Christ
 overcame the powers that enslave and corrupt the life of God in
 the world, and which have their climax in death, and thereby He
 set free God's life in the world. Now these new powers are not
 just of a spiritual sort as one customarily thinks, but are just
 as much physical as spiritual. Of course the redemption change
 starts with the spiritual, by overcoming spiritual powers,
 especially guilt, and opening the door to a new spiritual life
 from God. But this new life enters immediately into the physical

yes, one could say that from the very beginning it is also physical. For as God is one, so His creation is also united.

- 98 The separation of body and soul is a human artifice, not a divine one, or to put it historically, it is an idea of Plato, not of Christ; it arises from Greek philosophy, and not from the Bible at all. Greek philosophy is idealism, but the Bible is realism; theirs is a spiritual conception, but here is a material one. The body (the material) comes to be honored. It has a right from God just as much as the spirit has; in the creation of God it plays the rôle due to its equal birth with the spiritual. When the life of the body is wrong, then the spirit is also corrupted. To count the body of little importance is godless. So the redemption, in order to be complete, must embrace the physical body and all the rest of material nature, and not just the spirit alone. And so the eternal life should not be thought of too "spiritually", ^{not} just as the immortality of the soul, as Plato expressed it, and not as an ideal shadowy existence in the hereafter, but rather as a full, or in fact higher, life of material reality, which however has been freed and clarified. That is why the Bible, and also the confession of faith, speak of the resurrection of the "body" or even of "the flesh" and not of the resurrection of the "soul". But as Blumhardt saw it, this resurrection, which is part of God's becoming man in Christ, has further significance: it stretches, as we have said, over all "flesh", over the whole kingdom of the physical and the material. Everywhere in place of the works of death it brings forth the works of life, and everywhere it restores the creation of God and replaces the

corruption which has taken hold of the world. And so the resurrection of Christ receives a new and universal meaning. It is the symbol, and at the same time the cornerstone, of a great Easter, a great reawakening of the whole creation. The word spoken in the spiritual nearness of Blumhardt, that the end of God's way is physical life, wins a powerful meaning in this connection. As yet we can hardly imagine its full meaning.

99

We have called Blumhardt's way of thinking, which is also the way of the Bible, materialism. But of course we understand that we do not mean the idolizing of material things which is the usual sense in which that word is used. Exactly the opposite: we mean that also in the material things God will be honored, that in the material we will see God's creation; in other words the material will be spiritualized not through being despised, which is asceticism, but by being recognized as the work of the Creator. Heathendom despises the material, or else it makes an idol of it, which then is materialism in the bad sense. Heathendom raises natural life in a false way, and then lowers it in an equally erroneous manner. The Bible, however, says no to all of nature insofar as it is corrupted, insofar as it wants to be a god, and so gives God alone the honor, but from that point on all of nature shines out in its godly purity and glory. That is why heathendom is the negation of life - of necessity it leads to that sooner or later - but God's kingdom is the great and joyful affirmation of God's creation.

In Christianity this fight between body and spirit, which had in Christ been overcome, soon began again. As is said today,

men divided the inward life from the outward reality and the opinion arose that real piety required that men withdraw to the spiritual realms and not give much thought to what is physical. Men came to despise the body, the outward material things and the life of the world altogether, withdrew into monasteries, or as Puritans and pietists stood in the world with a gulf between its life and their piety. The only things that seemed important were the saving of one's soul and going to heaven.

Following this path almost every one fell into godlessness, the unnatural and hypocritical. Men despised the body - and
 100 fell into the lusts of the flesh. They regarded money as unimportant - and fell into mammonism. Men fled the world - and the world became powerful within them and around them. The world fell into the hands of the devil, and Christ became a myth. The fate of the monastic movement and of the whole Catholic Church, and also in a somewhat different way, of all Protestantism, shows terribly the curse of this way.

For this selfishness is separation from God who does not separate body and soul but has created them together, and who wants to rule over the physical just as over the spiritual, over all of reality; it is the despising of God's creation which has formed the world. God's will is the restoration of the creation, not its destruction, not running away from the world but conquering it for God, not "no" but "yes", not destruction but redemption. God ^{wants to} come into the world, the flesh, the material, so that He shall be all in all! Inner and outer are decaying together, and must together be redeemed.

Now this liberation of the spirit which leads to the

liberation of the body is more than anything else the overcoming of death, and not just the physical death which strikes the life of the individual, but death the encompassing power which burdens all fallen nature and life and which shows itself also in sickness and misery. This world of death must retreat before the kingdom of God; it did retreat before Jesus and His apostles, and it will have to retreat further as God's kingdom advances.

101 That, to Blumhardt and to the Bible, is the comprehensive meaning of the victory over death. It is a great injustice to that view if one limits it just to the death of the individual. It is much more a question of two worlds which stand in opposition to each other: the world of death which is the world of the fall from God, and the world of life which is God's world. God and death - that is, as we previously showed, the real antagonism. From God comes the world of life; where God is not, the world of death begins. Everlasting life is God's life in the coming era. But the life in the "world" in this era is in itself death. The overcoming of death is the return to God, which - paradoxically - takes place through a dying, a dying in fact for the "world".

But this redemption is above all social and in no way just individual, which means that it reaches out over the community and the world in general rather than just over individuals. That social life, in the narrower sense, is also included here, is clear from what has been said already about the material side of life. The social situation of man as well as the economic and political mess is all part of our sin, our fall from God.

From that source all these aspects of our life have been poisoned by lies, injustice, greed and selfishness, and subjected to the gods, especially the most powerful of them, Mammon. That is why they also must be renewed from the source of divine life to take on the nature of God's kingdom, which is truth, brotherhood, justice and God's service to man. This recognition lay more or less clearly at the basis of socialism. Socialism was a hint, a messenger of God's kingdom, which, however, in its whole meaning goes far, far beyond socialism itself.

102

The redemption of body and soul from death to life took place through Christ. But here a new point of view must be brought in which is of fundamental importance: the redemption has taken place but is nevertheless still to occur. Christianity has, in the whole of its general outlook, a finished world and a finished God, having held fast almost solely to the first part: the redemption has taken place. That has become the easier for it because it has no hope of God's kingdom coming into the world. But also here the Bible, both Old and New Testament, thinks differently. Admittedly the kingdom has come: "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17, 21 - not, as is sometimes falsely translated "within you"). It is here in Christ himself, in the life of God which came to us in Him. It is at hand in the effects which proceed from His life, death and resurrection. He did not bring just a teaching but He has changed the world. The world is not the same as it was before. But this process is not yet finished. That is the other side of the truth. In principle the redemption has

taken place, but it must work itself out within all life. The new creation is founded, but it must unfold itself in fighting and growing. The decisive battle has been fought victoriously, but now the land of the enemy must be invaded and occupied piece by piece.

That is Blumhardt's outlook and likewise the outlook of the New Testament. Both phrases are correct: "The kingdom of God has come" and "The kingdom is coming". They do not contradict but supplement each other. The act of liberation has happened, but the liberation must still work itself out in a powerful drama. In that drama Christ must become all in all. And therein, as has already been noted, and again it is in the New Testament sense, the greatest thing has yet to take place.

Of this something more will soon be said. Here we will add only the further idea that the redemption which is the restoration of the creation is also its continuation, and in fact a new creation. We have already indicated this repeatedly.

103 It is also an old truth but one which has become clear to us anew. There is no mere returning in the kingdom of God, the Living One; every return is at the same time a forward movement. Things are not just restored but each restoration is at the same time a new creation. In the kingdom of God all is new. It is eternally a new dawning. Its history as continual redemption is likewise a continual new creation.

To this view of the development of God's kingdom as a continuing new creation there belongs a further series of important thoughts. Blumhardt's teaching concerning the Holy Spirit is of very special importance, and in our next chapter

(following these words of Blumhardt on redemption) we will speak of that.

Words of Blumhardt

1. There is Redemption

{ Unalloyed?

{ Massive, radical faith. A radicalism of faith must come that takes faith {unalloyed? massively.

A solution will be given. When often people tell me difficult things, such as a heavy burden in their lives, I can't just say: "Reconcile yourself to it"; "Carry on!" No, I say: "Be patient, a solution will be found; quite certainly a solution will be found."

False comfort. Don't comfort yourself with a certain kind of Christianity which today has the cleverness to cover all our need up with fine phrases as if everything that happens is good no matter what it is. Don't accept that kind of comfort but seek with me people who stand before God and say: "Dear Father in heaven, we are not worthy to be called ~~your~~ children, but oh, if you could only use us as hired hands!"

104

{ The Bodily Redemption?
} 2. The physical redemption

The Spirit must have a body. The Spirit must be embodied. It must enter into our earthly life; it must be born as godliness in flesh so that it can overcome this earthly world. God is a real Spirit only when He sets His foot on something material; till then He is just like an idea. The Spirit wants to govern life.

Jesus Christ in the flesh. We should not think that by virtue of the fact that the Savior is born, the thing is finished. ... I believe that our risen Lord Jesus Christ is not so concerned about whether we celebrate His birth and remember the infant

in the crib or not. To Him the important thing is not that we remember that He was once born but that we realize that He is here, that this is now a fact, a world-wide reality, which with time will through the gospel become the truth of humanity. God is in the flesh. Only that can lift mankind, and in consequence also the rest of the flesh, earth and creation, to a new meaning, the need for which brings so much death and misery in the world today.

Sin and death have impressed even the Christians of today to such an extent that they cannot any longer believe that God ^{has} is in the flesh. Jesus Christ/come into the flesh as the Word of God and He remains in it in spite of the confusion, folly and sin in which men find themselves.

Body and soul. It is a natural law of God that body and soul belong together and that where something is done to one part, the other part is also affected. To separate body and soul is to kill.

Sickness and health. So it is the first concern of the spirit that the body may quickly recover its health, whereas the soul silently thanks God for the time of illness in which it has more peace than it has in good health, indeed senses again more life and strength than in days of health. But many people become almost angry over such a consolation, for they are so little accustomed to being still and considering their life that they want to force their bodies straight back into the rush of their occupation, but just in this way they stand in the way of their own health, and indeed exactly at the time when God would restrain their spirit because He does not want to expose it to decay.

Harm to the body is the judgment upon the spiritual activity of mankind. Wretchedness and darkening of the soul is a judgment upon the vagrant life of the spirit, and therefore it is important that every sufferer who knows Christ should not wish impatiently to become well.. (but) first hold back his spirit and root out its wildness so that he can receive Christ and let Him lead us back to God and His truth through our own will. That also means: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then body and soul will become healthy. To be healthy is, to God, the same as to be righteous; a healthy body, no matter how normal it may be, is not healthy in God's sight if it is dragged around in unrighteousness. When this is so, thorns of death press in by the thousand, and before they become outwardly ^{active,} a body which appears quite healthy to us can be sick from head to foot, sick to death. Righteousness is our health and the first point of righteousness is that we allow ourselves to be bound by God and that our spirit no longer wants its own freedom.

Liberation of the body. If our spiritual piety does not become also a physical reality of truth, righteousness and love in a body which is freed from human practices so far as these are wrong and do not correspond to God's laws, we remain only pious
 106 cripples. We must learn to be genuine creations of God through which life can stream out in all directions as is intended for all creation.

Miracles. That is why we do not beg: "Do miracles", but rather "Let things go as they really should." God should do miracles, but only when they come out of the renewal of men. A new ground

must be given, a ground for God's kingdom which renews and enlightens us on the God-ward side. It is on this ground that the miracles shall take place, and then, yes then, we shall really rejoice when things become right again from the very heart of men. But then the superficial miracles disappear. ... I don't wish to see a single miracle in any one that is not related to the inward renewal of a man.

3. The Political Liberation

A revelation for politics. True progress comes only through revelation, and it is so very important that some revelation comes finally to the sphere of politics. That would be a real step forward in the world, for until now it has not happened. Till now God has not really stepped into man's history. There are just human histories, as for example the Boer War. God can only give more light to individuals here and there, both Boers and Englishmen, so that they receive greater understanding and foresight, but through revelation a leading must also come into our political life.

No War! From various sides there are threats of war in our times, and it is necessary that we keep faith and not believe that war or the like would improve our situation. That is only a kind of despair that speaks in our times and adds a great deal to the rumors of war. Here may God look in, for there is absolutely no justification for war and we can trust His powerful arm that in spite of the great danger He will bring peace and send wonders and signs from heaven in all our circumstances in order to help us. We don't need swords and cannon, we want to live and let live, so have mercy upon us, Lord our God,

that you finally, finally, create the kingdom of peace which you have promised.

God's goodwill toward all people. God also has goodwill toward our people, the Germans, He has goodwill toward the French and the English, yes, my friends, also toward the Chinese and Japanese.

Pacifism, nationality, anarchy and God's kingdom. Any one who has eyes in his head can see that in Europe nothing is more sensible than ^{efforts} strivings for peace. Any one who speaks a word against peace today is making a mistake. There is ^{still} apparently a certain political atmosphere, but that is just fabricated. From centuries back a certain war-lust has come into the flesh and blood of the Europeans and other peoples. This war-lust still rules in certain sections of our people, but the rest of the people don't know anything about it. Nevertheless they let themselves easily be enthused for war because in the back of their minds still sleeps the idea: "Wars must occur". Till today men have found no solution for certain political questions except by the sword, but it is a scandal that no other solution should be available than to kill one another and see which side will be luckier - for one can hardly say that the stronger side will win - there are thousands of examples in history where the stronger power has been destroyed. ...

Whoever is able to should consider how narrow we have become in our political ideas. What a wonderfully free playground this great earth with its peoples could be for a genuine humanity, and how narrow we have made it in that we have divided ourselves
108 up as tigers and lambs, as foxes and geese, and naturally the

foxes eat up the geese. So it goes according to certain animal-like rules, and the rule of the Spirit is gone. Of course one cannot think too far in this or one comes to a word which is very much discredited today, but which nevertheless has something to it - I will say it out: "anarchy". In regard to the habitation of the earth a certain freedom, even if it is almost without order, is almost more right than this firmly nailed arrangement in which the individual peoples become more like animals in their herds and become unfree toward every great thought. ...

Man is here to carry on a forward march, and if one wants peace he must also help to bring it about and to bring it onto the scene in the way which is the way of peace. For just talking of it and thinking/^{that} it will come of itself has no value. So everyone who wants peace must ^{strive} for peace and be a man of peace.

And that is what we are doing now especially for God's sake, out of concern for the eternal truth and righteousness of God. That is our cause, and who knows if we are not the strongest in this situation? I do not want to belittle those people who strive for peace from other points of view, such as sentimental and humanitarian grounds and the like, but I believe that these efforts don't have much power behind them.

But the struggle for peace for the sake of God and for the sake of
 /the eternal truth, has a certain unconquerable power, and for the sake of this eternal truth we want the peoples to become different and this horrible European history to come to an end.

Whoever remains stuck in the kind of history we have had

until now and wants to find a solution in that ... is a very small-minded person. ... But it is already something worthwhile if even just a few people open their eyes in these matters on behalf of the righteous, eternal and true will, and make a firm resolution: "There must be a change!", and in that degree are able to raise themselves above the history of their times..

109 That will not be done in vain, but on the contrary it will lead toward that which we call God's kingdom.

4. The Social Liberation

The social revolution and Christ's kingdom. Shall we, like the socialists, ask for a social revolution, or is it rather, as so many assume, something for the churchman and for every citizen to fight against with every means because it is the movement that represents the "future state" most energetically? A man must be blind if he cannot see that the whole of this century since the French Revolution has produced movements which go forward ever more powerfully and are directed toward a new order of society. What country is not touched by socialistic ideas? It is one uncontrollable impulse, one forward-striving spirit, which aims at a new social order. Nobody can withdraw himself from this movement. In this the church and the state must allow people to be free. We have lived and are living in a century of revolution which is to bring forth a new social order and that in accordance with the will of God. Look how much the outlook of men has changed already! Who wonders today at the fact that every citizen demands political rights and receives them in ever greater degree? Who is surprised now when the same justice is demanded for all, both high and low? Is there any one

who wants to reintroduce slavery? Or who would do away with representative government? All these things are new insights. In previous centuries people who demanded such rights and privileges were simply put to death. And now when socialism wants to reach the goal of every man having a right to bread, and the ownership of property being so arranged that the life of man rather than money becomes the highest value, why should
 110 that be an objectionable desire to destroy? It is clear to me that it is in the spirit of Jesus Christ, that His purpose is being followed by these movements and that there will be revolution until it is achieved. And no striving against this will help, because it is God's will that in every way all men should be similarly honored and that mankind should be blessed creatures of God on the earth rather than oppressed. ...

That in this striving of the oppressed classes it has not always gone in a pleasant way and that many imperfect things have been thought and done does not ^{repel} discourage me in any way. The basis of the movement, the energetic will and the spiritual work toward the goal are enough for me, so that I can feel myself an ally to it, and that still in the spirit of Jesus Christ, which has led me on all along. ...

But you say that the Social Democrats want bloody revolution, illegal overthrow of the existing order, and general disorder. Now I simply say, that is not true. Many people have a horror of every revolution because the French Revolution and the revolutionary movements which followed it were of a bloody nature. But the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century was even bloodier, so why don't we hate the Reformation then? The Reformation has,

to a certain extent, brought religious freedom. Why then do we hate the revolutions of the Eighteenth Century? Is it because they helped people toward political freedom? I feel that political freedom belongs to religious freedom. The bloodshed of the Reformation pains me just as much as the bloodshed of the Revolution, but I must accept both, and see also the progress which was made toward the freedom of humanity. Why are we not horrified at bloodshed altogether, both of the past and present, and when blood is shed for the advantage of the nation? Yes, 111 the whole of world history is one long revolutionary stream full of blood. ...

People say: But Christ kept at a distance from all that sort of revolutionary ideas, having only the spiritual uplift of mankind in view. But when He looked upon the temple of the Jews, when He came in touch with the false gods of nationalism and society which stood in opposition to the kingdom of God, He announced the greatest catastrophe; "Not one stone shall remain standing upon another" is what He said of the proud national shrine of the Jews, and He saw the rapid coming of destruction over the capitalistic social system of the then-known world. He thought that just as a result of His appearance the greatest revolution would come, and He warned His disciples that it would be a very violent time. But we must not forget that He also added that this was not the true end. At the very end it will come peacefully. The Son of Man, the man of men, will come like a bolt of lightning that will light up the whole world. That means that God's thoughts and will will press with power into the hearts and activities of human beings and make them the kind

of men wanted by God, for we are awaiting a new heaven and a new earth. If we bring together all the words of the apostles and Jesus which are concerned with the final purpose of human history, we find very soon that Jesus concerns himself in spirit with the political and social situation, that He cannot conceive or think of His kingdom coming without the overthrow of the present arrangements, and He envisions this as first of all coming in a violent manner. But that does not mean that as followers of Jesus we must do deeds of violence; we need not be bloody revolutionaries, but filled with power and peace we must go through all that comes having our eye on the final goal of peace. But this end cannot come without the most shattering revolutions. Like the whip which Jesus wields in the temple, there is still a punishment to come over all unrighteous humanity, "a day that shall burn as an oven", as was said by the prophet Malachi. And even if the judgment begins in the house of God I will rejoice. The socialist movement, however, is like a fiery sign from heaven which warns of a coming judgment. And if Christians are faced with a judgment, let them not become proud but let them consider well what there is of truth in what comes to them. Yes, it is true that greed is the root of all evil! And I wonder why this truth is not felt more painfully. It is true that our generation is perishing in money-getting and money-need. People can't even look at the higher things and the holy things without speculating about money. Even among the wealthiest many suffer from this burden and take part hypocritically in works of charity and yet are unable to help the misery. The only true help will be brought by the final end which Jesus announced.

And now a society arises, born out of the bitterest need, and struggles for this cause, for liberation from this world of money and gold, and who will prevent me from reaching them^{out} a hand in the name of Christ? Who will blame me for admitting the truth of their clear witness that we are on a downhill road, and of their hope that in spite of all our present decadence we are coming to a better time, a time in which it will truly be said: "Peace on earth!", a time in which men will be born who understand the meaning of life and salvation? That is the goal of God's kingdom on the earth, the God who is a redeemer of all humanity.

Jesus and the proletariat. God's will came forward in the coming of Jesus on the earth. What is He? He is the friend of men and of man's society, and in quite a {special? peculiar} way He takes hold of society by what one might call its lowest part, the masses of those who are poor, despised and miserable, who go through life receiving no attention from the world; that is where Jesus takes hold with a firm hand. And even if all rush upon Him and call Him a blasphemer, a sinner and a man who is of no use, He takes a firm hold here where no one else has ever entered. And thereby for the first time the masses of mankind, the confused, the sick and the miserable, have come to the light, all those men who in human society are most looked down upon, including even the slaves and all the others who are never mentioned in the histories of mankind and whom every man who has a bit of education wants to get away from. Thus the educated people separated themselves from these, and a gulf was created between the cultured and the uncultured, between the rich and

the poor, the high and the low - and it is just this sphere that Jesus breaks into. ... Jesus joins with these people and they must come out. Those whom the educated classes despise, the unwanted, the prisoners, slaves, outcasts, the poor, the mistaken, the sick must all come out into the light. Jesus becomes, one may say, much more ^{purely, solidly?} massively ~~man~~ than any man has ever been, and that shows Him to be the Son of God. No other man, no man who had not come from God, could take upon himself this mass of mankind, even to the present day. A man purely of education, a man purely of science and philosophy, a man purely of human love and mercy, cannot reach these men of the masses.

114

He will always think: Oh, that, that is not the main thing!" and when he meets a distinguished man, a man who is honored and considered important, he thinks, "Yes, I must join with him!" If some one wants to be important in the world, or wants to found a party or a movement, he seeks his friends in the upper echelons of society. But the highest spirits, even the highest angels, cannot do what Jesus can. We set our hopes on the professors, the learned and highest spirits of all sorts, on the highest heights of heaven, and Jesus places his hope in the proletariat, the outcasts, the unwanted, whom the high ones use only as playthings: that is where Jesus sees the beginning of renewal. Do we want to follow Him in this? Then we must follow Jesus, which means we must also go forward with all our hearts,

for that is where Jesus is.

The downfall of today's world. People fear the destruction of the world; I rejoice in it. I wish it would start to crack and fall apart today. For this world of human greatness is and remains the source of misery.

Jesus among the sinners. Jesus is the real Man of humanity. But how unbelievable it is that this Jesus lives. Who believes in Him? Who wants this kind of righteousness? Who wants to turn to the sinners? For now it doesn't only mean: "Just believe in Jesus" but "Believe in the sinner, believe in the ruined, believe in those who have been killed, in those who aren't living", for that is Jesus. Oh, how easy people would have it if it was just a matter of praying to Jesus in His majestic glory! They would do that with the greatest pleasure; they lightly set up an image of gold or silver, fall to their knees and pray to it. But that is not the way Jesus wants to be worshiped. He does not want

115 to be worshiped outside of humanity, but rather ^{? -together with } _{in relation to } the sinner, and in His own time that was too difficult even for the Pharisees, and likewise it became too difficult for the

among the Jews,
 early Christians/even in the times of the apostles. These Christians could not understand it - that Jesus should be worshiped together with the Gentiles, that Jesus should be seen in unwanted humanity - to look for Him there was for them bitterly difficult. The apostles fought one another and could hardly find their way through to clarity. The whole of the New Testament tells of the struggle of the spirits against this Jesus. First it was the proud spirit of the Jews who, in their culture, looked down upon the Gentiles, and later, when the apostles were dead and could no longer speak, heathen philosophy entered the Christian church and then it was the Christian rulers, Christian lords and Christian wise men who held the power and strove against the "Jesus among the persecuted". Thus the church could not protect itself from the spirit of persecuting, just

like the heathen; those who did not immediately seem to its eyes to be righteous, were damned. ... Also ... in the Reformation there was the most terrible persecution and murder. ... Anything that could not at once rise to the heights of a reformer was beaten down, and all were to be made to conform to the ones in power, the prince or the king. Oh, dear friends, if only I could place in your hearts my grief for this Jesus who is among the sinners!

Stay with the lowly ones! How much I could tell you of my difficulties when I tried to take upon myself the need of the miserable! How hundreds of times I was disappointed and lied to! How often I had the feeling: "You are a fool! Stay with the learned, the good people, the righteous and those who are high in rank; they are the ones you can depend on! But no! Those are the voices of Satan. No, I say, a hundred thousand times no! I want to fight till the last breath for the unwanted, the miserable and the sinners, and my great joy will come when I can prove to all that are high up what a rottenness there is in all that is high.

And to my own house I would like to repeat every day, "Stay with the lowly ones!" And if often we appear a respectable social group, you should be ashamed that you are so respectable. I wish to God that we respectable ones were all pushed into the corner and that those in rags would sit here! We would be a thousand times happier in the preaching of this Jesus. But the lowly ones must also come in.

The important and the lowly. What men respect is of no account in the eyes of God. It is unnatural/^{just} to sit in wool and velvet.

Actually all the "important" people should be working instead of travelling around in a luxurious manner. The domestic servants with all their faults are much nearer to God than all the "important" ones. When we have calluses on our hands and are actually doing some work ourselves then we are in a position to admonish the household help.

The aim of Jesus. Other spirits pursue other goals; we leave that to them; but the great goal that Jesus pursues is that here on the earth a society shall arise to the praise of God, that people shall yet come to Zion and worship, and that all the world may see the healing given by their God. So let us believe in our hearts and proclaim by all our activities that Jesus is the Lord, and we want to believe and proclaim it in such a way that we are always where the humble folk are, with those who are despised; we want to seek the Lord with them, not up in heaven - no, God only in heaven is not for me! Here where the humble ones are, together with those who are despised and uncared for, there is the heaven of Jesus Christ. That is where we want to seek Him, and that's where we want our hearts
 117 to be and to have our energies used, and then we will see what a power there is in this Jesus. Yes, I tell you that if we could bring about a society based on this Jesus then the world would be amazed at the light which would be given and spread into all our woes and death, in our misery, our poverty and our helplessness. Then there would shortly be no more political or social problems; the confusion would be at an end. For a Church that gathers around this Jesus brings freedom, life and love in the fullest meaning of those words, as well as spirit,

power and truth, all of which should shine out far beyond everything that men have seen until now. May God grant that this Jesus shall be recognized, that He shall be believed, and that He shall come.

5. The Liberation from Death

God and death. God and death are irreconcilable opposites.

We have to stamp that into our spirits if we want to be fighters for and followers of God.

God's kingdom and the abolition of death. The hope of resurrection belongs to the longing for God's kingdom, and the abolition of death is an inalienable ^{element} of the kingdom of God. Whoever does not have the courage to accept this in all earnestness and to give himself to the fight against death ... we have a right to describe as one who cannot be called a disciple of Jesus; ... all the words and works of Christ ... breathe of the abolition of death.

The continuing resurrection. Truly it must not remain a completely isolated fact that Jesus rose from the dead, a thing which we look upon with wonder and to which the large majority of people are completely indifferent because it stands there so completely isolated. "Only once is never", people say, and in a certain sense they are justified. Resurrection must continue if it is to have meaning for us. We should have quite a wrong idea of the death and resurrection of Jesus if we tried to limit the life
118 of the resurrection to the bounds of our own existence. We live all through the days in a confinement. We are thrust into the bonds of death, into spiritual darkness, into weakness, into mistaken, torturous, fearful and despairing ideas; we are like

the lame, the deaf and the blind. In all this we stand in need of the resurrection. Something within us must be liberated. Some kind of deadly ban must be taken off us.

Witness to the resurrection. That is the great triumph of the resurrection of Christ: Men are born - men who already live, but who live in sin and in death, are born again, and in them something new is revealed through the tremendous power of Christ. ... Acts of resurrection take place, new men arise and have stood forth here and there so that one has to say: "There is someone in whom something new has been born." And again I ask you: Dear people, wherein does humanity have life? ... In what is the life of Christianity? - We can answer with certainty: In those in whom the resurrection of Christ has repeated itself, those of whom it is truly said, "He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." (John, 11: 25-26) In those in whom Christ has become the resurrection and the life, those who have become victorious in faith so that they trample the power of this world under foot in the strength of eternity, the reign and power of Christ - it is in these men that the world endures even today. In them Jesus lives, Jesus who has risen from the dead; in them He rules and is victor; in them He is grace and the light of the world; in them He will be glorified through all the creation.

119 Not salvation, but the glory of God over all creation! The whole Bible looks forward to a tremendously great day of God in which all the struggles and need and suffering of these times are as nothing. But the idea that people have nowadays - I say it

quite openly - "It is soon over, I will die soon!" is quite new and unbiblical. No prophet or apostle ever thought in that way, rather they dwelt upon the idea, "Till our God comes! Till our great time comes!" ... That is the biblical outlook. This continual eagerness for death was quite unheard of; only the later Christian times that never understood the Bible and knew nothing of sacred history made death the goal of life.

Death alone never brings happiness to any one - never think that it does! Do you think that if one has a few pious thoughts as one breathes one's last, then one is eternally happy? If you think that, then you will surely burn yourself...If one has lived a worldly life the dear Lord cannot make ~~him~~ eternally happy even if he is one of the best - he is too greedy for worldly things and doesn't long for the heavenly; the coming of God's time, which has its center in the people of Christ, is that glory which is the comfort of the whole world and its creatures; that must be longed for.

6. The Liberation from Evil

Forgiveness. One can make oneself weak if one continually looks at his sinful nature and at the things which he feels to be wrong in himself. Often the sin has been forgiven long ago, but a man hangs onto it and feels himself to be one who is weak and sinful. Then it is a matter of standing up and being strong and, in faith in God, being certain of forgiveness. And so it is not good to complain and speak of one's unhappiness. Instead one should always hold to the good which makes us strong. So we are enabled to overcome the evil in and around us. ...

120 Sin is, in principle, forgiven, and we must carry that reality into the world.

Forgiveness blots out sin. Forgiveness destroys sin like a sulphuric acid.

Repentance and conversion. When I look at the conversions of today I see so much that is lacking that it fills me with fear. This lack can prevent the Lord from giving us something. Nothing new will be revealed if the changing of men's hearts does not remain the first and last thing, and the conversion of people is not made the central point.

All the gospel leads to repentance.... What flows from one's own repentance leads to further repentance, but what is not spoken out of one's own repentance is as effective as soap bubbles against the wall of a fortress.

If the way is not cleared and the curse which lies upon our Christianity is not first taken away, nothing new and great can arise among God's people, and all will continue in the old miserable fashion. It is through repentance that our prayers must go. (Father Blumhardt)

The mystery of redemption. You are happiest when you are taken possession of by some kind of a love. But that does not last. ^{become} If you wish to / free and happy you ^{possessed the} (and that will happen must be ^{by /} love to God. It must warm you inwardly, / as soon as we have a feeling of love toward God, and the more we practice it, seeing God as our only Lord, the more our love ^{behavior} to Him will grow. Then our outward / receives a different character. Without that love you cannot get away from any sin or misfortune; you remain lying on the ground and you are ^{trifling thing that comes along.} dependent on every / But as soon as we have this love we can be victorious over every misfortune in life, over death and devil.

121 When people come to me in their misery, I always have the feeling: "Oh, yes, it would be easy to help there!" Even when I see a ruined body before me, or one who is in the clutches of hell, I often get the powerful impression, "If only these people had God's love, then help would be given, but oh, these superstitions and idols!" They think about all kinds of things, but no thought of God comes into their hearts. That gives room to darkness, and the result is their twisted frame of mind. One is either in love or one is touchy, and overcome by the next incident that occurs. And so people hold on passionately to that which destroys them. This is the misery of lovelessness to God. Don't pick so much on your individual sins; nothing comes of staring at your sins. Hang on to God. See the one thing that is important. If you don't do that you may do penance, and you may believe, and you are still not converted, for your life does not depend upon God. A simple, sober reverence for God, a seeking of God in our spirit, and a soul filled with love to God: by these we can overcome. But we must be whole people. The first things. Leave for awhile your begging to God and seek first the way, ...the way in which we can give God His honor by recognizing our guilt and by truly seeking first for God's kingdom - God's kingdom upon this earth. Forget your own suffering and start to do honest works of repentance, and do that with joy, not with sighing and complaining, giving God the honor in your soul and in your body, and accept your guilt and the judgment of God and seek therein to become a true man. And so Christ will bring you together with God, binding you to Him so that your suffering and need will of its own accord fade out

122

of the picture. Turn yourself about inwardly, and instead of looking at yourself and all your need, look to the kingdom of God and its need, for it has been held back all these years because of our dishonest nature. And then be confident that God will truly treat you as His own child, for you are concerned with His honor, and He will not let you come to shame in this life.

The thing that counts. Let God be God once more. Then the nonsense in our life will come to an end of its own accord. Then we will no longer be so selfish and so easily angered. Without that attitude one may make many promises to oneself, but one does the same things again and again. It is no use saying, "I don't want to do those things any more." One must rather say, "Without God I shall not make one more step!" Unless one takes that attitude one does not get away from one's sins. For that reason there is absolutely no point in preaching to people to come away from their sins. That is not the main thing. When you read the prophets you will see that all that is considered a side issue by God, and ever again the main thing is brought forward: "Are you or are you not seeking for God?" I can tell that your life is as it should be if you remain true to that seeking.

Obey! The first and last thing for a disciple of Jesus is the word, "Obey". I mean to say that in our times the word "believe" is not so important as, "You who believe, obey Him whom you believe!" Of what use is your believing if you cannot obey? I can find no comfort either in heaven or on earth for those people who cannot obey, but when you obey God then it is easy

to correct those things which need to be corrected. It is not difficult at all, for the obedient heart has always with it the all-powerful help of God, and who really wants to and is filled with the idea, "I will obey", will find how much he overcomes easily, indeed as if it were a game.

123 Do not fear sin. If I can't help being afraid of my sins, then Jesus has not come into me. I am not afraid of any sin, even death. Jesus Christ has come into this body in which sin and death are ruling. Now I am free. The victory is on my side, and on your side. But you must believe it and be aware of it. Then you are converted and you need nothing further.

There is no damnation. Eternal damnation is not biblical. It is only the way the churches think. ... What the Lord will finally do with those who are disobedient is His business. Here and now the main thing is the fight, and that is what we should stick to. It is not for us to be concerned with what the Lord will do one day in another eon. Our concern is only what God wants of us in the fight that is now in progress on this earth, and, {my friends?
{dear ones, we should take that seriously.

7. The Liberation from Law

The liberation from law. By the word "law" the prophets understood something quite different from what we understand it to be. They did not refer to an outward law, nor to the Ten Commandments. They meant the {standard?,
{normal, that which in God's name lived in the hearts of the Israelites. And so we are not concerned at all with the outward commandments, but rather with the real nature of life. That is the commandment of God. And so we find in the Bible a colossal freedom. There are no rules. Rules were first

formulated about the time of Jesus. But Jesus goes completely beyond them; even the keeping of the Sabbath is not binding for Him. No sacrifice, no temple, no altar: none of these are a rule to Jesus. The commands of God are not outward things but spiritual. Our people must be penetrated by the simple awareness that we belong to God. ... And thereby without further talk and Christian nonsense we become both bound and free: free, because the law which says that one thing is pious and another not, one occupation leads to sanctity and another not, no longer holds. Everything is allowed, everything is yours, both heaven and earth; go where you will; there is no law... but do it in the awareness that we do not belong to things; it is not material things which concern us; we belong to God, to the Father in heaven, and it is He who may use us; it is for Him that we exist!"

Holy fear. Holy fear is the opening into which something new will enter, and through which God's spirit breaks in.

8. Liberation from Suffering

Suffering and grace. All peoples, all human beings, including you yourself - be sure: you stand under grace. Grace clears up after you and will, finally, bring your life to a good end, as it is in general among men.

And beforehand individuals must suffer for the sake of this grace, and no one should say, "It is all useless - what am I doing by my life?" It can often be that an individual can say; I must, for the general good, and for the sake of God's will, also take something upon myself. My suffering is not meaningless, for it may help ^{some} /darkness to be overcome somewhere.

The suffering with which we are concerned is that which has power against evil; ... there is real power, there are real acts of God behind our development. ...

No suffering without purpose. I have for all of you the most heartfelt concern before God, and I want so much to help, but I don't know anything else to say than, Remain firm - firm in doing what God wants. God's kingdom must be the wish of our hearts, then solutions will be found. You can be useful when you are willing to bear the greatest misery for God's sake, and then you will also be protected physically and not go under, even though it may seem that you are going down.

What we carry for the sake of God may not be in vain,

following Him who carried His cross.

{ Jolly? }
Lighthearted Christianity. A { jolly? }
 really the greatest foolishness in this world where millions of our brothers and sisters are sinking, where everything is dark. Under these circumstances our cry to God may well be a loud one even if it comes to, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" For, rightly meant, that need not be faithlessness but sympathy with the need of the world. ... In this cry lies the way to God and God's way to us. ...

The power of hope. The capacity to hope is extremely important both for God's kingdom and for our own development, for something very real and powerful has been laid in our hearts with this hope. One might say it is a power given to us men which corresponds to the power of God. A power goes forth from God to make something of us, and from us there goes forth a hope that we shall become something. And this power of God and our

hope go together hand in hand as in a marriage, and walk together. We in hope and God in his power - we belong together so that we may follow a purpose, the good purpose of God.

Patience. Almost as soon as some trouble arises we think it should surely be taken away simply because we believe in God. But in that we are nevertheless often disappointed. God cannot step into our lowly lives just whenever we say He should do so. The government of the God of heaven is concerned with other things, not only what happens to suit us at the moment and what is pressing to us. Often God goes His way high above the needs and suffering of men. We think that God must come with His help as soon as ever possible, but often God says to us, "Just be patient! The goal can only be reached in a way that does not permit me to give you preference in order to give you something quite special." It cannot always take place that God enters into our affairs in a way to produce a miracle for us.

126

And that is also to be considered in the larger context. Every period has its catastrophes, and God goes peacefully on beyond them. But we should not let our faith be taken away from us just because something is not improved or made more godly so quickly as we should like. The story of God's kingdom is a long, long story. All that God does must have its own time.

9. The Continuing Liberation

Heaven and earth. Heaven is where God is great and man is small. (literally is) Earth is where man appears great and God small.

The redemption is not yet finished. It is perfectly obvious that the absolute teaching, "Christ has accomplished everything; you may now walk around in Paradise" is quite ridiculous.

The savior of all. It is my wish for you that you remain firm in the gospel of Jesus and are not continually tempted by the false gospel of "Christianity". If God has sent One to save those who are lost, we have no need to philosophize about what is lost. Rather we ought simply to remain by the fact that Jesus has come and His purpose is to save all. The main thing is that we must begin and become joyful in His cause and become clear as we look at the government of God which is now coming anew in the world so that finally God will be all in all.

The redemption of the apostles' time was just a beginning. The beginning which the apostles made was only a beginning, and not the end. The completion must be fought for and won in a hard fight. One should not overvalue the greatness of the apostles' time.

All should be redeemers. Every disciple of Jesus can receive in himself something which brings freedom. These are gifts which God wants to give through the Holy Spirit. They can be shared: one has a gift for one sort of situation, another for another situation, but we disciples of Jesus should always have something redeeming for other men.

6. The Holy Spirit and its Gifts

From its very beginning Christianity has talked of the Holy Spirit. In the church dogma of the "trinity" it is shown how central and important this is. According to the dogma, the Holy Spirit is part of God himself. The church celebrates it as the spirit of creation and dedicates the third of the greatest church festivals to that spirit. But in reality the church no longer knows what to make of the Spirit. It has

become a dogma, a term, a hidden mystery, almost an embarrassment.

And in this area also a resurrection of the old truths has come about through Blumhardt. What is the "Holy Spirit" of which the whole of the New Testament speaks? It is nothing else than the creative power which brings forth all the new life of God's kingdom. It is the principle of the new creation, the new being, the new life which has been disclosed to us through Christ. It is this, however, only through the creative life of God which, having passed through corruption, leads His kingdom forward toward its restoration and completion. And now this Spirit goes out from Christ upon the apostles, and through them upon the whole Church. The gifts of grace (charisma) of which the New Testament speaks, such as those of teaching, healing, governing and prophesying and all the others, are His work. And also the Spirit is not just an idea, a purely "spiritual" truth, but power, and in fact a power which works into the material world. It is the new Spirit that lived in the first disciples of Jesus. Armed with that Spirit they were able to do things which were not possible with the highest of purely natural powers. It is actually a power which is above nature, it is the life of a higher world, the world of God. It is the original miracle from which all other miracles come, and yet it is the only true nature. It is that Spirit which gives men the power to become really natural, for the more a
 128 man is filled with the Holy Spirit, the more natural he becomes.

It is through these original facts and original miracles, through these mysterious but nonetheless natural facts, that the wonderful appearances which come to us in the lives of the

apostles and early church are explained. What appears here is simply the life of the new creation. The higher world has become a reality and something quite natural. Armed with these powers of the higher and real nature, these disciples are enabled really to love and to believe and to hope. They are enabled to speak God's word, and to drive out demons and sickness, and in fact they are even enabled to take death's power away from him. Out of this spirit there sprang a new reality.

In the outlook of Blumhardt and of the Bible one can also see the power which is lent us as a gift of the Spirit, in the light of authority. Through this authority man becomes what he should have been from the very beginning according to the will of God. He becomes a son, a co-worker with God. Man steps into the possession of his godly inheritance which Christ has won for him once more.

The principal forms of this authority, already mentioned several times, may be emphasized as the following:

1. The basic power is the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness which Christ himself practised is not bound to His person but, as with all things that appeared in Him, they are also an inheritance of His Church. The Catholic church has preserved something of this truth in the institution of "confession" but that, which as an institution becomes stiff and which can even become a great power of corruption, ought to be a continually new-born power which works through the Church of Christ and under certain circumstances works through individuals in a special way. That power of forgiveness was the greatest power for overcoming sin. For, as has already been shown, sin

129 dies, not by penance, but by forgiveness. The power of sin among us comes in great part because this gift of the Spirit has been almost entirely lost among us. It has become only an idea.

2. Another authority given by the Spirit is that of the granting of prayer. It is clear in the New Testament that the co-worker of God should depend upon this for help and direction, and should have the absolute certainty that his prayer will be heard. That which is asked for in the Holy Spirit is already assured.

3. A further gift is the ability to represent correctly and to spread the truth. Above all, the Spirit protects against error. The Spirit, and not the letter, is infallible. ^{It} is the living continuation of the truth of Christ. Therein it also protects the Church against split and disunity resulting from the error which is human. It also lends the gift of prophecy, which means that it opens the future to us ~~in~~^{so} far as this is necessary for those who work together with God.

4. The fourth gift is the power over death, sickness and danger, or the authority, under certain circumstances, to work miracles. This means to overcome the powers which oppose God, and to bring nature back to the ^{service} of God's kingdom. The Holy Spirit is power and life.

5. The gift of the Spirit also means the complete victory of the new man over the old man. This victory is at the same time the reawakening of that which the ^{divine} creation has laid in men, but which the entrance of evil has corrupted. The Spirit also stands for the overcoming of sin in all its forms.

130 Here we approach one of the most unusual of Blumhardt's discoveries, whose great significance will only gradually be understood, and which is in addition a rewinning of Biblical truth. Sin is something which dwells in the very nature of man as he now is. It lies within him just as if it were something physical. That is why all moralistic attempts to fight it are so helpless. The only thing that helps here is a complete change that reaches to the very roots. What is needed is the imparting of a new life which is also something of a material power. Help can come only from the new creation; the new creation in Christ and His coming in the flesh have taken place in order that this new life and being shall come into the world and stream into men, and that, in a special way, is the meaning of His resurrection, for it is through His resurrection that the new possibility has been opened. Faith is the organ through which we are able to accept this. The new man is he who accepts the life of Christ in himself, and that means, as a matter of fact, opening himself to the Holy Spirit. He who does this is a new man and has risen beyond sin; in this sense he can no longer sin. "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). His whole desire has taken a different direction. His love has become changed; he is in the deepest sense one who has regained his health.

Sin arises from lack of faith. For it seeks the true life, but it does not seek it in the Spirit that is from God, but rather in the flesh, that is, in the world of the senses. Its last root is that of despair, but also the other gods which enslave mankind draw their power from lack of faith.

Among these gods, and first among them, is anxiety, which is the main root of mammonism and the tendency towards violence which works itself out in hate and the lust for power. In this also the only help is a complete change in the nature of man through the higher power. Man can only believe, that is, he can only understand the word of God in the Holy Spirit and recognize that world as the true reality and build on it alone. It is only in that spirit that man can hope and can
 131 love, also love the enemy and the ^{publican} sinner, and in that love can give and serve. But also in this spirit those things become natural to him which previously were unnatural. Now he must do what before he only felt that he ought to do.

And that is how the creation of the higher will and higher feeling for life is brought about.

6. And finally the Holy Spirit brings back to man his lost understanding. He grants wisdom in the deepest and highest meaning of the word, gives understanding of God and through this, understanding of the world and of men. And it gives us light for all human problems, and talents, that is, gifts, of all kinds: creative genius, from the humblest to the highest forms. In short, the Spirit is the medium of theoretical and practical revelation which leads men to God and brings God to men. It is only through it that supernatural truth can become known and be understandable.

Now this Spirit is not something which is tied basically to the times of the apostles, even if it was only in those times that it came forth and was fully unfolded. Actually it ought to be the living principle of the whole of Christian history.

In fact it is the New Testament itself which insists that the future shall bring a still greater unfolding of this power. It was the Comforter, the Spirit, which was to bring to the disciples and open to them those truths which they were not yet able to carry, for they would then do things in that power which would go even beyond the things which the Master himself had done. It was under the leadership and creative impulse of the Holy Spirit that the kingdom of God should come to fulfilment. It ought really to be experienced as the spirit of creation. The feast of Pentecost is therefore the greatest of all the festivals. It is the feast of the Living God, the feast of hope, the celebration of the completion of God's king-
 132 dom, the creation which is not yet fulfilled. Something of this recognition was preserved in the Catholic Church when it held to the infallibility of the Spirit rather than simply to the authority of the Bible. But now what has become an institution in the Catholic Church and thereby a corrupted tool of worldly power, shall become a free and living power in the Church of Christ.

In relation to these truths about the Holy Spirit something very special must be said which refers also to all the rest of what has been written here:

The Holy Spirit can only be recognized and can only be properly spoken of to that degree in which it is newly experienced. That is very important because the Holy Spirit is the key to everything else. That is why the main concern of the Church of Christ must be the request: "Come, Spirit of Creation! Come, Holy Spirit! Come to us!" And only insofar as that

prayer is heard can there come a new spreading and working out of God's kingdom. The thing that is possible, and above all most necessary for us today, is just this calling upon the Holy Spirit to come.

Modern people for whom this whole message about the Holy Spirit is difficult to understand or not understandable at all, we ask to think deeply about what a message of the freedom and creative glory, and of the divinity of man, it is.

In this even the dreams of Nietzsche are wonderfully surpassed.

Words of Blumhardt the Father

The Holy Spirit as the living teacher. It is the Spirit of truth; therefore it preaches to us in our hearts, especially insofar as it reminds us of what Jesus said to us and renews this in our hearts and makes it ever clearer to us. And so the believing disciple of Christ carries, or ought to carry, his master teacher within himself. So it is not especially necessary for him to hear a preacher again and again who tells him everything and splits hairs to explain things. It ought not to be so that one receives no further instruction just because the physical teacher is not present; the instruction continues and only so much the more powerfully because it comes not just to the outward ears but comes from within and awakes the mind and spirit. All becomes much clearer than when a man is first instructed through outer words and has still to consider, "What do these words mean?" For this teacher brings inward visions; one "sees" what one otherwise heard and thought, and one understands to the very depths, even when now and then the words

are lacking. That is how the Holy Spirit should be our teacher. The Holy Spirit as our greatest longing. And so our main prayer is for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Of course that is a tremendous request and it may take much consideration to put into a few words what this request signifies. As a very minimum I would say there lies in this prayer a desire to stand inwardly right before God and to come into a true communion with Him. That is something which is worked by God through the Holy Spirit. To say the least that means that one asks the Father to free him from everything that is unholy and to fill him with the truthful things that eternally satisfy the soul.

And further it must also be our main request that we should learn to understand what is revealed to us. No one can even call Jesus a Lord except through the Holy Spirit, and so it is also, to a certain extent, expressed in this main prayer. We ask God to give us understanding of the spiritual; may God let us understand His ways, His ideas about us and His plans, may He let us see clearly how He wants to stand to us and how we ought to stand towards Him. May He bring this all to pass through the inward working of the Holy Spirit, without which we should be blind and understand nothing. Without that spirit we cannot grasp anything even if one could make spiritual

134 things clear to us through higher learning and exact definitions in the way we learn about other things. For unless the Holy Spirit teaches us, we cannot understand these things. And so it amounts to this: in order that we may understand the words of truth and have a glimpse into so many things which are still hidden, which may even reach into eternity, it is necessary

that in all humility we ask for the Holy Spirit, that Spirit which can also explain to us many things even before they happen, and without which we should have great worries had we not the spiritual understanding of these things.

All that has been said so far is only the lower grade of this request, for in that phrase "Ask for the Holy Spirit" much more is said. At that time the disciples did not yet have the spirit of Pentecost, and its coming was of the greatest importance to the Lord. The one thing which the disciples had to concern themselves with was the asking for the coming of that Spirit for themselves, and for the world and for all flesh. For after the Lord parted from them, that was to be their most important task. We know that they prayed. They were daily united together and prayed for the promised Spirit. They worked together with their praying until the time was fulfilled, and on the feast of Pentecost the glorious gift and grace and power came and they were all wonderfully filled and from that moment on they really became men. At that moment the heavens were opened and the Lord brought the disciples together with that which was heavenly. Here powers from above descended and covered all that was upon the earth. And with these powers everything shall henceforth be overcome, and the dark powers shall be trampled underfoot.

Words of Blumhardt the Son

The working of the Spirit. How gloriously the Holy Spirit appeared with men and in men, and how remarkable and deep were the workings of the fellowship of God upon the men who belonged to it. The greatest sinners, and even those who were farthest

from the fellowship had to say, "The old has passed away: lo, all has become new!" In every little place there broke forth a clarity and glory of God the meaning of which was shown us by the preaching of the apostles. How is it that wherever the apostles preached, things came to life? They were not great men; they had no earthly wisdom and cleverness, not a way of speaking or a gift of oratory, ^{it was} but simply the glory of God which in Greece and Rome, in Macedonia and Asia Minor, in Palestine and everywhere, brought results to the honor of God.

The extraordinary. Of such experiences as are reported in Second Corinthians, 12 by the apostle Paul, we know nothing. For us, everything is in a haze; indeed, we might almost think him a fanatic. If some one wanted to say these things about himself today, even if it were proven by signs, one would surely consider him a fanatic, for that is how strange these things were in relation to the ordinary happenings of human life. But it is just in this that the great thing and the beautiful thing lies for him who really understands it. For it is quite natural that something extraordinary comes forth in a man who is really freed and newly born as a new creation and therefore stands in a completely different relationship to God than other men. If something extraordinary did not come forth one would have to doubt whether the new creation was really there. [Now we must generalize and we have to say: If in a Christian church nothing at all unusual is experienced, that is, nothing unusual in a recognition and experience of God as well as nothing in a recognition and experience of His opposite, of sin and the power of sin, then that church has lost its true nature.

7. The Living Christ

136 The same truth, that it is not sufficient to remain with the past, with what happened once, is expressed by faith in the living Christ. Once again, that is the central point of the New Testament, and also of traditional Christianity. But here again in traditional Christianity the living truth has stiffened into dogma. Furthermore it is an annoyance to the thinking of today which would have everything explained in a scientific manner. People today cannot grasp the idea of a living Christ. They hold it for fantasy, mythology, and yet it is a real, yes, even a modern truth.

What is the meaning of faith in a living Christ? It means in general, as we have already said, that our faith in God and Christ cannot live from history, from the past alone. We must understand the history in which Christ lives, not as something finished and done with, but as something that is going forward and moving ahead. Furthermore, in this history it is not abstract truths and powers, but persons, who play the decisive roles. In this history we must also not make a division between a "hereafter" where the dead rest, and a "now" that is "this world", in which alone there is obvious life and movement. Rather we must think of : these as a common development in which the hereafter, that is, eternity, and the present play into one another, in which what once worked in a living way continues to work and develop. It is not death that is the ever-growing kingdom but rather life which reaches out fully and victoriously.

Applied to Jesus, this means more exactly that the power

and truth which appear in Him are a living principle, It was so before His appearance on earth (which is the meaning of "the preexistence of Christ") and it has continued even after His physical departure from the earth. But this living principle is so bound together with the man Jesus that instead of
 137 an idea it has become a personal reality, It is in this form that
 . it continues to work. The Risen One lives! Faith in the living Christ is the necessary consequence of faith in the resurrection. Christ lives, but He is not sitting idly in heaven. Rather He is the leader of the New World who in the power of the Father and by means of the Holy Spirit takes his work further and brings it to completion. Christ remains the head of His Church, with which He is inwardly bound in the closest sense. He shares His life with her through the Holy Spirit, and through this Spirit He shows us the one God, the Creator and the Redeemer.

And this is again an absolutely necessary truth without which faith in Christ has nothing living in it. If Christ were subject to the flow of time that is history and with it grew further and further away from us, then we should now be farther than ever from the living God, ^{Jesus} would become more and more a figure of the distant past. Therefore we explain that we believe in the Living Christ, that He is the center of all history, that all history has its meaning in Him, and everything which is only time is a shell that passes away. In the words of a great thinker, He is "living eternity". The life of Jesus in this sense is outside history, outside the scheme of what is past, present and future. It is the center of all

that happens, its meaning and goal. We must think much more deeply than we have of the nature of "history".

138 And this truth, as we have already shown, has been divided and almost lost in the Christianity of today. The one side saw quite justly that history alone, in the sense of just the past, cannot help us, and so they placed the physical life of Jesus so far below the principle or idea that in the end it almost disappeared entirely. The other side, equally justified, not wanting to lose Christ in ideas alone, emphasized the historical facts and thereby went to the other extreme. In the times which lie just behind us one often heard the phrase "Back to Jesus" and so many lives of Jesus have been written as both art and science. Now, however, the pendulum is swinging back the other way.

But both sides are false in the one-sidedness of their views. There is no help for us either in the principle as such or in the historic person just as a historic person. The only thing that can help us is the principle as living and personal history, the Living Christ. As God is only God to us as a living God, so only a living Christ can mean something to us. As God He must not only be behind us but ^{also} before us, not only the One who came but also the One who is coming again. Or, to quote Hebrews 13, 8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

The force of the personal has, in this connection, another meaning as well. This is one which is actually quite understandable to the thinking of today. Part of the deepest and best of the spiritual development of the last centuries has brought us

the insight that personal life is one of the highest values. It is not just things but it is also not just abstract generalities which are the highest and final values. Rather it is the concrete form of the truth which we find embodied in ethical individuality wherein the highest truth is found to be closely bound to single individuals. So that the miracle which found its ultimate form in the "Word becoming flesh" takes place in a general way. [Based on this evaluation of life that has become something personal as the highest form of life that there is, we see^{not only} the purpose of the individual life in the perfection of this personal existence but also the goal of all historyⁱⁿ /a world of personally developed and completely mature spirits. Therefore history cannot be just a play of general ideas and powers but must be understood as the development of a world of such personal spirits which is arising ever more clearly out of the fight between the two powers that are in the creation. This means that at the same time it is a world of the living, for what would be the meaning of a personal life if in the end it lapses into death? Personality is not just natural individuality, but on the contrary it is part of a life which is infinite and unlimited. It is the very opposite of death.

Therefore it is in keeping with the deeper thought of our time to understand that the central personality of history, which we believe Jesus represents, is understood as living and continuing to work, indeed as leader of the kingdom of God, His kingdom, and clothed with infinitely increased power, elevated as He is above earthly existence. How living does history become when

it takes on this personal form and color. What a new meaning it receives when standing above it are the words: "Christ overcomes, Christ rules, Christ triumphs!"

Is it necessary to remark that the above, and everything else that we say here is not scientific theory but words of
 140 faith? It is obvious that that history in which Christ stands at the center will never be written as a science but only through faith. It is a special kind of history, I would say a Biblical kind, a sacred kind, not a worldly history. To be the Living Christ to a man or to a whole generation of men He must, as with the Living God, be experienced. But the Living Christ is a necessary truth and the time will soon come when this will again be understood.

Ordinarily, however, He will only be experienced by those who already know Him by having experienced and grasped His meaning as the historic person who wandered upon the earth, and of course it is also true that only those can understand the historic Jesus who know something of His living presence. And so the past, the present and the future become one and the same. In this unity, however, all time and with it all history as merely the past, disappears and there remains only the living eternity. In this sense also the so-called historic life of Jesus is , as we have already seen, above all history.

The Living Christ is then the Living God, appearing to us as Christ. This means God in the connection with men which He has made through Jesus, that personal Spirit, God as the one who became man. At the same time the Holy Spirit is the same living God who after the victory of Christ is the new living

principle that carries the Church and the redemption of mankind forward. The old teaching of the triune God has tried to explain in a dogmatic, philosophical formula the way in which the Living God exists, but in the end it has to admit that it is a mystery, a mystery which is beyond the natural understanding of man. The dogma suffocated what was living by its formulas, but it saw rightly enough that in these three forms God is the
 141 same. The God who meets us as the creator and ruler of nature and the world of man is the same as He who meets us in Christ, and He is also the same who carries on the work of redemption as the Holy Spirit. He is always Father, Son and Holy Spirit at the same time, even in spite of the fact that men cannot bring this to clear expression in their formulas. And the teaching also saw rightly that God's working is everywhere a personal working, not just a mechanical or magical thing, as the heathen or semi-heathen understand it. That formulas is broken, and we let it remain broken, but the realities that they were trying to put into words remain, and they are only now becoming really alive once more.

Words of Blumhardt the Son

Jesus, also in our times. In our times when we have become more seekers than before, we must take care that just by so much seeking we do not fail to see what God has given to our time. One can blind oneself simply by striving too much. We can get the impression that there is nothing about us of the kingdom of God. But one might ask today, "Where is Jesus among us?" We don't need to look so much at what the first disciples had. We can live by what God gives us. He who sees that can be at peace.

For now a higher hand reaches into my life-and into the life of the peoples. Under the rule of this hand we can feel like children. ... Be careful what we call evil in the individual, in his calling: I should like to set you back a couple of hundred years so that you could see how much Jesus is at work in our time, in spite of unclarity and restlessness.

The apostles and we. We need different eyes from what the apostles had. They saw Jesus in the flesh. We did not. They felt God in His humanity, we did not. We must have spiritual eyes to see Jesus as He is at the right hand of the Father, 142 to see what comes from eternity today into our times. This wonderful thing which comes as life from God must enter into our hearts. We must not talk about the things which the living Savior does, only keep them in our hearts with the powerful hope: "The Savior is coming!" This saying has brought deeds of God streaming to us.

Always today.

Jesus is still fighting. Jesus is still fighting today; He is still the one who is put to death. He is still today the one they stick with the spear; He is still the one who is mistreated; He is still battling for His throne on earth among men.

The work of Jesus on earth only a beginning. It is a remarkable thing and characteristic of the Lord Jesus that He makes us understand that what He is doing on earth is only a beginning; nothing is finished yet; there is nothing that remains so eternally fixed that it is the same now as it was in His time. He is a root and not yet a tree; the seed must first grow,

the branches must still spread out, and the flowers will come later. In the end the fruit will come. No other man ever thought and thinks even today that his work goes on after him in such a way that he himself continues to do it. But only Jesus is raised above death and has made the beginning in overcoming the death of man, in that He says: "As I have been so I remain, and I am coming." That lies in the nature of the cause which He founded and which He represents. He represents the redemption of mankind, and how can that be completed in a day? How can that be finished even in one earthly life? If He had only wanted to found a party, or if He had only wanted to bring men a new kind of religion in which they could be prouder and more fanatical than in earlier religions, then He could have finished it like a Mohammed and a Confucius. But,

143 my friend, redemption - that requires time. For it is not just for a couple or for a few hundred or for a party, but it is for all mankind.

Jesus at work in our time. I am firmly convinced that in our times God is coming nearer: there must have been people who have not allowed the darkness to have its way and who have said, "Only Jesus is the Lord", and who, wherever they went (and wherever they stood, have insisted that the whole earth belongs to the Lord. That is the only way I can explain that nevertheless much good has come down from heaven into our times. Today one hears people speak of peace throughout the whole European world. Why are people talking of peace today? Who can explain it? As long as man has existed people have never spoken about peace; today people speak of the possibility that

people yet consider some day whether nations could not live without war. That was out of the question in all past centuries. And so we have something good there; a darkness has been pushed away. One can speak of many good things in our time: such good health compared to previous times, so much hope, so much love and so much life. In short, much good is coming into the world in our times, and men do not know where it comes from.

The Christ of our times is not less powerful than the Christ of earlier days, and in times to come He will be more powerful still.

The Living One as the Coming One. The Lord Jesus is the beginning and the end for the kingdom of God. Therefore it is said firmly and with certainty among us: "The Savior is coming again!" He must complete the work and we have only to be servants, until He comes again, and as servants we must serve Him, the Coming One. At the same time we should be figures of the future of Jesus Christ on earth. We should not be so much concerned with ourselves, nor struggle so hard, as if it were we who can bring goodness to perfection on earth. For we cannot do that. Only the Lord Jesus, He alone, is able to do that, who has come for the first time and is coming again a second time. He, not we, will complete the work. We must look that in our hearts, and in that we must be true and firm even when we preach the gospel. And we must always be lighted by this star: He is coming again! And when our minds are directed toward the coming of the Lord, this puts all of the gospel into its true light. The gospel will become something personal and living when we are firmly and faithfully directed to the words:

"He is coming again!" When we don't do that, then we are separating the gospel from His person, and then no matter how much we talk of it and no matter what great speeches we make about it, we are nevertheless separating it from Him. And without His personal presence not a word of the gospel has a real and deep-going value.

And so we must be directed to the future coming of Jesus Christ, which is not only a thing of the future but also a thing of the present, in that He is right now awaited in our hearts...We are living in a time of dying, and we don't want to hide that from ourselves. Our powers become weak, and our ideas lose their strength, and our feelings also. And even though they are very much alive, with time they are lost; the law of death surrounds all, all that we do and think and feel. But now a law of life comes into this world of death, and that is actually the Lord Jesus himself, the one who lives eternally, who has arisen from the dead, who makes a contact from the world to us, and who brings us the spirit of God so that in the midst of our dying life, again and again we might receive something fresh and living through His being with us, through His coming.

For we must not think of His coming as something which we
 145 expect only at the end of time, but rather ^{there} must at all times be a picture of the coming Savior in our life. And each of us should always think of that, even in times of darkness and depression, in times of poverty, in times of sickness, in hard times, and in our work at earthly things.

The concealment of Christ. We want to see the life of Christ,

completely pure and clean, and it alone, ruling upon earth. We don't want it mixed half and half with earthly arts and earthly beings, but rather we want it completely pure.

That is why Christ is so hidden. He is not to be on the earth like a human power. Christ is not to be mixed in among us men like a great man among the great. What we call heroic and great is not great to God. Those things which make such an impression outwardly and which seem so heroic to us don't impress God at all. And that is why we must watch out that we don't mix with every spirit. For as Christ appears completely pure and as He stand alone before us as the life, so we Christians should also remain pure and clean and not mix ourselves in with everything that goes on in our time. For every time brings earthly things forward and every century has its particular character. One can become part of that, and can also lead a satisfied life in the character of the century, but that is not then a life of God which Christ is building upon the earth. Christ's life is something that will be completely new and which will finally overcome all that is earthly and lead to a new heaven and a new earth.

And so it remains that the life that we have on earth today is one of fighting and struggling for the divine. But it is a life which has a great promise within it. What is
 146 hidden at present, hidden with Christ in God, shall finally become revealed. Christ who is truthful, who lived as a human being, and who was hidden in God for thousands of years, will finally be revealed. Finally it will be completely clear before all eyes.

Jesus in living nearness. Jesus wants to be near us as the Living One. It should not happen that all contact between Him and us and thereby with God should cease.

8. The Coming of Christ

The coming again of Christ belongs to these same spheres of truth, and it is that hope which summarizes all. And here again we are concerned with something that causes a lot of annoyance to modern thinkers. Yet it is a main point of Christian faith, and is especially important to the Biblical world. And as we see, it is the crowning hope of both the Blumhardts. So, by its very nature, Christ's coming cannot be mythology and fanaticism, even though it has often been made into such things through error and falsification. Then what is it really?

Once again it is faith in the Living God working itself out in a new form. And it is a necessary faith. For the struggle and work of our God cannot lead to nothing, not even the nothingness of infinity. It must move toward a purpose; it must have a meaning and a relationship to things. It must have an inward unity. That is why the fight must lead to some decision. The fight between God and the world, between good and evil, must lead to some final conclusion. Otherwise it would be in no way serious, and have no more earnestness than a show in a theater.

That is the significance of the idea of a final judgment which is found in faith and in philosophy. It is in fact, essential for an ethical outlook upon life, for an ethical faith. Judgment means decision, and thereby it means a

separation. (This is shown in a footnote which says that in Greek both these things are symbolized by the one word "crisis".) But of course for a long time all this has been strange to modern thought. We moderns have become accustomed to imagine an endless development of the world, perhaps in the name of "progress", but finally we imagine the world will come to an end either by fire or by freezing. But thereby one loses the ethical sense of history and falls into either a coarser or a finer naturalism. In the end one gives up history itself, for history is not made just wherever something happens, but rather where something meaningful happens. But this has its beginning and its end. In spite of its inward infiniteness, yes, just because of that, it comes to a conclusion. It comes back to itself. It is as a line which comes back to its beginning, rather than one which loses itself in infinity, as modern thinking would have it. It is for this reason that the Bible, which is the book of the Living and Holy God, is also the book of judgment. The creation is already judgment insofar as it separates light from darkness. Judgment begins with history from the fall into sin, and judgment is the last word. On the other hand, however, the end of judgment is a new heaven and a new earth, therefore also a new creation. The development of the world has its meaning. It comes to a decision. It is a real history. It can be shown that our historic thinking comes from the Bible. Heathendom knows no history in the deeper sense, but has only a faint idea of it. Real history takes place only where there is a Living God, a God who acts in freedom, and a man, a man who is in freedom

God's co-worker. Judgment and creation belong to history. Judgment brings the creation to perfection in that it renews it. The Lord, who separated darkness from light in the beginning, does the same thing on again in the end. He himself comes forth at the beginning and at the end. History is the coming again of God.

It is in this connection that the waiting for Christ's coming has such great importance. History which began with Christ must finally come to its conclusion. History presses us to a decision, and finally beyond all individual decisions to that decision which is judgment. But Christ is the whole meaning of history; partly without knowing it, history leads toward Him. His truth is the force that leads it on, and also its judgment. So Christ is the judgment of the world.

But He is also the judge of the world, for that is the meaning of the viewpoint that the powers that move the world are, in the final analysis, of a personal nature. Therefore we may assume that He will have a physical part in the final victory, for it is in this form above all that the truth of Christ broke into history and is bound together with its fate and its decision. For the way of God is in the end embodiment, also in the personal sense, that is, it is concrete forms and not just abstract ideas.

This truth is clearly brought to us in the Biblical idea of the return of Christ. Like everything else in the Bible, this is not just an idea but a mental picture, a picture of something which cannot be expressed with ideas alone. Therefore one has to keep all human calculations and fantasy

out of it, but also all that is theological cleverness and human systematizing. Through God's own foresight in giving us such a variety of pictures (which even in their variety are wonderfully united in their basic meaning) we are required to take them simply. Whether the individual imagines the future and perfection of Christ's kingdom in one way or in another, 149 in all cases a holy humility is required. Most appropriately the whole hope and expectation could be summed up in the words of the prayer: "Thy kingdom come!"

But one thing must be firmly held to, though it is contrary to the idea which is often expressed in pious circles: the judgment is not only something negative, rather, it is to be positive., That is, it is not simply to destroy, but will save. It will not dissolve, but it will fulfil. It is an obliteration of all the powers which are opposed to God, as it is a destruction of the world of evil, but it is the salvation and fulfilment of the creation: "See, I shall make all things new!" (Revelation 21, 5).

Of course the fight will become more difficult, or sharper, the nearer the final judgment approaches, and so the approach of God's kingdom will result in a sharper separation of the two worlds which are at war with one another. These two worlds will become more apparent to men; they will be revealed; and that is how "Revelation" gets its name. But it is just the revealing of evil which precedes its defeat. So once again it is quite within the spirit of the Bible (and of ethical thought as a whole) that the enmity against God appears in a personal form. In this same way it is natural to this way

of thinking that evil, in its most dangerous forms will not
 be that coarse ^{opposition to Christ} which every one can recognize, but
 rather will come in a form wherein it seems as much like
 Christ as possible, and thereby mislead many and bring many
 more into temptation. That is the meaning of the picture
 of the Anti-Christ which comes forth in the New Testament
 and follows us through history from then on.

150 These ideas as well as those of the return of Christ
 have in some way been altered and disfigured by a kind of
 degenerate piety which is in reality far from Christianity.
 Christ's coming has been robbed of its tremendous significance
 and dragged down to smallness and superficiality. The fear-
 ful and terrible aspects of His coming have been especially
 pictured, and men seem even to find a certain joy in so doing.

Such things are as little Blumhardt's view as they are
 the view of the New Testament. The Revelation of John is,
 after all, only a part of the New Testament. It presents
 a moment of ^{of the kingdom} the coming very strongly. But it does not
 abolish the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer. The
 judgment does not cancel the meaning of the gospels. With
 the coming of Jesus mankind entered into the age of grace.
 Even though the coming of God may be accompanied by judgment
 and great suffering, nevertheless its meaning is one of grace
 and of new creation, or in other words, redemption. And we
 must also assume that the terrible crises and catastrophes
 which undoubtedly will come as the kingdom of God approaches
 will be of such a nature that men will be able to carry them.
 It is an idea of Blumhardt the father that part, perhaps even

the most difficult part, of the New Testament's predicted sufferings has already passed behind us, as the so-called history of Christianity, which also belongs to the coming of Christ, has been filled with terrible catastrophes. As he once explained, he could not look upon Christ as the great destroyer, and, furthermore, with the increase in evil, the good will also grow stronger and even much stronger. The victorious growth of the good powers will be a sign that God is coming, just as the growing power of light is a sign that the sun is rising. One ought not to allow oneself to be misled in the times of judgment because it appears that evil is growing stronger than the good. For the good wins its victories quietly, and also upon the way of the cross, and even through it.

151 That is why it also did not fit Blumhardt's thought when people who "await Christ's coming" just lay their hands in their laps as much as to say, "All human striving is completely useless." Such servants would certainly fall asleep whereas the coming Lord wants to find them wide awake.

All these ideas - judgment, revelation of evil, hope for the new coming of Christ's kingdom, yes, and in a way even Christ himself, seem in our days to have come to life again after a long sleep. They have formed part of a great awakening of Christianity. We can also say, "Hope has awakened again in Christianity". But all the other ideas of which we have spoken are of necessity bound to this hope. For in the many-colored variety of this world of pictures (that is, the Bible) all these ideas want to express only one thing: the faith that

the kingdom of God is the final goal of history, that God is coming, coming to redeem by judgment. In time these things will be shown as truth.

So we see again in The Bible a meaning which has been shied away from for a long time, a meaning of which even the men of the Reformation had no proper understanding... Once again the Scriptures receive their great and living meaning.

Even in the circles of philosophy and theology of these times we have been given eyes to see that the New Testament is above all filled with hope and waits for the coming of Christ and the end of this world age. This was called the "eschatological" point of view, that is, the point of view whereby the New Testament message is believed to be concerned entirely with the "last things". But blind as people were to the deeper meaning of this fact, they came to an explanation which could be summed up as follows: since the whole of the New Testament ^{is} oriented toward these last things, and receives its meaning from them, and since this orientation is naturally false, it is necessary to explain away great parts of the New Testament as "things which seemed true in their time" but are no longer of importance. But because that struck at the very heart of the New Testament, struck at the victory of God's kingdom over this world which opposes it, this really meant
 152 {destroying
 {abolishing the truth of Christ.

But the true situation is quite the opposite of this; the hope of the New Testament comes of a tremendous trust in the living God, His power and His victory. Therein God is the great reality. The whole gospel arises from this reality,

as does also the hope for the future. This has nothing to do with the "times" in which people live, for in all times God remains the great reality.

But didn't this hope turn out to be a delusion? Wasn't it true that the early Christians expected the end of the world to come at any moment, but now almost two thousand years have passed without these expectations being fulfilled?

What do we say to this? First: questions of time are not the important thing in such matters. It is not a question of time but of eternity. Second, the expectation of apostolic times did not prove false: Christ really was the turning point of the world. A deeper understanding of history would show that He is this much more than one even dreams at present. It really is so that at that time the old world was thrown down and a new world was enabled to break through. Third, what does it mean if in fact, not everything which was expected at that time came to pass? Every expectation is tied to certain conditions. God does not want to act without men. The fulfilment of His promises requires a certain attitude, a certain understanding and working together of man. That is its pre-supposition. We have shown that freedom is a basic element of the world of God. God does not force any one to anything, even salvation. So then, if it is a fact that men have really failed God, how could He fulfil His promises? How could those promises have been fulfilled when men were not ready for them? But does that mean that the promises of God have been retracted? Does that mean that the hope has become a lie?

"Behold, I am coming soon!" (Rev. 21:20). This word of the coming of our Lord and king, Jesus Christ, which permeates the whole of His earthly and super-earthly life, seems to us to be too high for our understanding to reach. There are few who can grasp this in its spiritual meaning so that it plays a natural part in their living for God. And yet we must admit that the importance of the life of Jesus and of His disciples depends upon the fulfilment of these words. They themselves build upon them as upon a firm ground by which the results of their activity will be guaranteed. But also all the later disciples of Jesus who carry the goal of God's kingdom in their hearts as the purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ are directed by these words to hope for the future return of their Lord. For without that it is useless to hope for the community of God and His justice and truth to come upon the earth.

"Behold, I am coming soon!" This saying divides the history of the Church of Jesus Christ into two periods, firstly the time of preparation, and then the time of God's kingdom. The Lord is the beginning and the end. With the coming of the Lord in the flesh, the time of preparation has begun, and all men should know of this for they are living in it. In this time we have the gospel, which has been called "the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith." (Romans 1: 16) By this the kingdom of God is announced, and in its prophets it is founded upon the earth. But the reign of God in Christ has not yet fully broken through.

It has only made its quiet beginning in those who believe, and is as yet unknown to the world. The faithful are only very few. All the rest of mankind, the masses, even though
154 they hear the gospel, are yet under the power of sin and death because they are not yet able and willing to break loose from it. The gospel which reveals the love of God to the world is, however, the light of hope which shines into the masses of the people. In this hope we already have a world-shaking power of God and we experience this in Christianity generally, and even the unbelievers take part in that hope even if they are not aware of it. The victory of darkness is hindered by this power of hope which comes from the gospels. Darkness no longer reaches any goal. Darkness and death are pierced by the hope of life wherever the gospel is brought, but the hearts of men are not yet free for God, and they have no power over sin, so that things in the world seem to continue just as they always did. A new world, a new creation, is only found in secret among the believers. These we call the forerunners of God's kingdom, in whom God's righteousness has already begun. It is their calling to be faithful unto death, and to fight for the earth as the property of God, until the Son of Man comes in the glory of His Father. It is only then that the power of God in Jesus Christ will come to the peoples and to all the masses of mankind. Then that will become possible which Christianity and the gospel are incapable of in these times: namely, a judgment. Without judgment, which means that except a man recognizes himself through God's punishing spirit and separates good and evil before God and gives the evil in to be judged,

155

without that, even in the times of the apostles, no one was great or blessed. In the same way it is not possible for the masses of mankind to be saved in the end without the judgment which the Son of Man brings with Him when He comes. It is only in this final judgment that many things will collapse which we hold for good and proper today, but which in fact have only been temporarily tolerated by God. So as regards the world and the victory over it, all the apostles waited and hoped for this time. Before this time comes they expect no real renewal of the world ^{as a whole,} and so we also ought not to lose faith when in the present time the world remains untouched and our faith can only fight through in secret. For that does not mean that the world is lost forever, for the world awaits the final revelation in Christ when He shows himself as King of Kings.

Of course a lazy waiting is out of place, for the life of the faithful is the beginning of the end, and everything depends upon the faithfulness of these people. The Savior himself, as well as the apostles, makes that plain, and for those servants "who wait for the Lord:, the "chosen ones who cry out for Him day and night" (Luke 12: 36 and 18: 7-8), there is for the time being only the one answer to their longing in the words, "Behold, I am coming soon!" And furthermore such faithfulness is a power that can bear a witness to men of today. Without that the gospel does not have the triumphant light to save individuals and call them forth as comrades in arms, as the Church of Jesus Christ.

And so it is a joyful thing for us to carry within us the power of the gospel; it brings light into the darkness of

our world, and helps to bring the final return of Christ in which time all flesh will see the glory of God.

Time alone is of no help. Time is in itself our enemy. Time is the enemy of eternity; time crinkles us up like an old towel and throws us out into the darkness of death just to be forgotten again, and through it we ourselves suffer the shame of death; yes, time is our enemy. It brings us nothing good.

It is only what shall be born through Christ in the people of Christ that brings the true fruit which mankind has owed to God for many, many centuries.

156 The Sign. All the world waits for a sign. In spite of the fact that they don't believe in it, the Christian world (in so far as it is a Christian world) hopes for the coming of Christ. People always expect something to come from the dear Lord because everything comes down from above, and then they say, "But it never comes!" Yes, dear friends, to whom does God show His mysteries? You can see that while powers of Heaven are trembling, while men are perishing, for fear of the things that shall come over the world, while they feel that something is coming, at a time when the peoples press together and seek for ways to live, making agreements with one another and political arrangements in order to halt the march of the times and to win security and firm ground under their feet, they still don't see what is happening. While everything is busy and giddy with intoxication, with the great spirit of the world, trying to ensure their lives by seizing temporal goods which run out of their hands before they are able to take care of them, even when signs appear in Heaven which indicate the nearness of God,

nobody notices it. Only those who have already noticed it before, hear the words, "Take care! Prepare yourselves! for your redemption is coming!"

Wrong

Curiosity. "On one occasion when two were arguing as

whether Blumhardt (the father) thought of the coming of the Antichrist as before or after the dawn of the time of grace which is hoped for, he answered them, "The Antichrist is not now our immediate concern". (Zündel's biography of the father) The day of God. Instead of putting the blame on others, Christians should see their own faults and try to correct them.

In that way we can come into the condition in which we ^{help} to bring those changes in the world which have to come. If these changes do not take place, then the existence of all mankind is just foolishness, just a bad joke! These changes are com-

157 ing with the day of Jesus Christ, and in order that this day come the Lord needs men who will help Him. All the so-called "prophecies" in booklets about the day of God are misleading in that these believe that the day will come at a certain time, as it were by the clock. Rather the day of Christ will come in connection with the people of God, and the changes for the good will come in connection with that good which is fought for and won by God's people. If that is not possible, then ^{the ban} (a terrible tragedy) will come upon the earth, as is indicated in the last words of the prophet Malachi: "For behold, the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi 4: 1)

If that happens, there may be another catastrophe such as has already happened once, so that the earth will become desolate and empty as it was before the creation. But in the meantime we must hold fast to the fact that the changes which are necessary are not only possible but that their reality is our greatest concern, for the Lord has joined himself with our earth, and the Lord cannot simply be put aside. Ever again we must want the heavens to open, and we must say, "Without You and Your speaking and acting, we are and remain the old fools; we remain followers of idols who know nothing of God's countenance."... God's countenance must shine into every situation so that every idea such as, "Oh, nothing is of any use any more!", "It is a hopeless situation; there is nothing we can do!" shall be seen by us as a sin. Man can do something and should do something, and should have no rest day or night. Things must become different! That is the thought that should be continuously crying in our hearts.

And what can man do? Man can take the guilt upon himself. (A.R. inserts: Man can see and accept the guilt for our situation Judgment for the pious, not a sofa in heaven. There are parties in Christendom who are rejoicing already that they will be transfigured and float up to heaven and then they will be able to laugh at the poor people who have to stay behind. But that is not the way it is. Now is the time to take upon ourselves a work in which we are the first to give ourselves in to judgment, and not the first to have a sofa in heaven. For only those who are the first, the first to give themselves with the Saviour into judgment, can become tools to further His work among the rest of mankind.

How Christ returns. Perhaps people have understood it in this way: Jesus has won and rules and comes finally to the earth, as a phenomenon coming down from heaven, and all of a sudden He makes everything different. That is not the way it is. Jesus does not come down from above in accordance with our idea of "above". Above, that is not the heavens. "Above" is the place that God has prepared for himself in the flesh. It is in you that Jesus Christ is "above". God is to shine out from you because Jesus Christ is in you. It is of no use to us that lights come down from heaven. There must be light within us, and the "above" of our Lord Jesus Christ is there in my breast and in your breast, there where the life-and-death fight goes on, where a man would rather give every drop of blood than allow sin to have its way with him.

No dark view of things! "And this is the name by which the Lord was called: 'the Lord is our righteousness'" (Jeremiah 23:6). Such places in Scripture are so important to me because they are concerned with the last times, times which one usually thinks of in terms of the king of darkness, the desolate, the Anti-Christ. It is certainly written that there are enemies and opposition, and also an Anti-Christ, but the Scripture does not speak of an Anti-Christ who is all-powerful. On the other hand there are many, many places where it tells of a King who will bring peace over all the earth so that in the end good will win. Oh, yes, people speak of the culmination of evil. Now that is indeed our experience. But the Scriptures speak of the culmination of good as the end draws near, so that not good but evil shall be overthrown.

For the Lord will still become the master upon earth before
 159 He comes, for when He comes we must already be able to say,
 "Lord, who is our righteousness." (Father Blumhardt)

9. The Spirit World

In this connection it would be best to come to a chapter which deals with a little-known but not unimportant part of Blumhardt's ideas.

It would be an omission, even a misrepresentation, if we failed to mention, at least in a few words, that in the world of Blumhardt, both father and son, there were experiences which were mostly kept in the background but which were always reckoned with - that of the spirit-world. This world of living, personal spirits is, for them, not limited to the world of men. Rather, our human world stands in a much greater context which is hidden in invisibility, and leads deep into the kingdom of evil as well as into the kingdom of good. Man cannot be understood if this greater context is left out of consideration. Man does not stand isolated from the world of spirits. In many ways he is tied up with demonic powers which rule over him or at least try to do so, but he is at the same time surrounded by personal powers of redemption and help. Only when the connection with the evil powers is broken and the relationship to the good powers is affirmed, can he reach full freedom, redemption and authority. If the victory of God is to be completed in the whole of mankind it must also penetrate through the whole of the invisible kingdom of darkness. Between these two there is a very close connection. Also the works of Jesus reached into that kingdom. He was

victorious over it upon the cross, and therefore his resurrection means a call to the light addressed to all creatures without exception who are bound by the powers of darkness and death. Also in this connection, the fight goes on until the complete victory is won.

160

And so a look into the depths is given and the drama of history becomes endlessly greater. Is it right to speak again in our time of things which are fantastic? But is it not much more a fantastic narrowness to separate completely the world of men from that of personal spirits? Again we ask, is it not a deeper and even more necessary, and in the best sense, a more modern idea to set personal powers in the place of those which are looked upon as abstract? Isn't it true that in every deeper consideration of the nature of man we run up against powers of evil and of good? And isn't it so that in the last ^(analysis?) instance these show a personal character? If one wants to say that all those who have an insight into these things are fanatics, then along with them we must name all the deeper spirits such as Goethe and Dostoyevski. Rather, one must say that those who do not have this insight are, in a certain sense, blind. The fact is that the modern, so-called "scientific outlook" can blind men just as well as the old superstitions. In such matters science has nothing further to say.

In any case the Bible also knows this world of spirits and reckons with it. But so also does superstition and magic. And here it is extremely important to note how the Bible fights against superstition and magic as the deadly enemy

of faith in God. Blumhardt also fought against these in the same way. We have seen how his work began with the fight against magic. The world of spirits exists, but it is not for nothing that it is kept hidden from sight. Men should not let themselves become involved with these things as a matter of curiosity, for if they do they come to a terrible downfall. Man should walk in that daylight which Jesus Christ has brought to us.

Above all, one error must be avoided. To admit the existence of a world of demons does not mean to believe in them, that is, to believe in the true sense of the word which means to trust in them or to hold them as a power and as a reality. One should believe only in God, not in angels and demons, and especially not in the devil, which is the sin of
 161 sins, and, as already said, the exact opposite of belief in God. This, of course, in one form or another as belief in evil, is only too widespread already. One should not have faith in devils. For devils have no power. They have the appearance of power given them by men insofar as men serve them. It is true that in that way their power can become very great. But it is not a power in itself. It is not a power founded in truth. And evil also is in the power of God for it is judged already from the beginning. That is why it can be overthrown. It can be overthrown by that faith which says "Yes" only to God in the world, in men, and even in the devil, and which uses everything for God's purpose. And it is also overcome by love which brings to all things the "yes" of the Creator and Father, and is ready to offer itself

completely to all things. That is why we should have no fear save that of God alone! He is the Lord and He shall be the ruler. Even the devils must serve Him. Yes, still more, the devils must also be redeemed.

If the relationship of men with the wider world of the spirit is understood in this way, then it can be of the greatest significance for the victory of the kingdom of God. Then one understands man better. One sees how deeply he is enslaved. Thereby one becomes milder in one's judgments, and at the same time also stronger. For man's economic enslavement is also his guilt. With this understanding there grows in a man a holy earnestness regarding good and evil. One no longer plays about with men in a superficial way, trying to further one cause and fight another. Rather, one goes in genuine radicalism to the very roots. One presses forward to the highest powers between which, in the final analysis, the fight of good and evil goes on. So instead of the skirmishing that our attempts to improve things represent, we come to decisive battles such as were fought by the Blumhardts, both father and son. And great victories and great liberations are possible.

162

And in yet another way it is important that we know something about the background of our human reality. Because men do have at least some idea of these spiritual realities they are driven to concern themselves with it in one way or another. And just when the spiritual world is denied by the false humility of rationalism, then all the more ^{strongly} a false curiosity about the spirit world comes in. Rationalism generally leads to superstition,

(Spiritismus)

especially in the form of spiritualism (?) and seeing spooks.

In fact what we know today as theosophy draws a part of its power from this source. This is very harmful to the kingdom of God. For through these things what belongs on the periphery is made into the center, and thereby a "science" is made out of what is really only a vague sensation, out of things that should and can only be a shadow of true faith. What ought to be only background becomes foreground. Men are led into a world of shadows and lies and become the toy of the fantastic, and of demons, and the kingdom of God is lost.

Against this trend there is no "explaining" that can help us. For this sickness has its origin in "explaining". The only help is that this reality of the spirit-world is admitted but kept in its proper place in the coming kingdom. Then we do not deny the night but we are ruled by the daylight. And with that the hope must arise for the stronger breaking in of the higher world which is at hand. In this there must be an understanding of the deeper realities, and this very justified hope must be bound together with the whole waiting for the kingdom of God, with its natural childlikeness and here-and-now realism of everyday life. But whatever is separated from these things turns into myths and dreams and lies. And in this also Blumhardt shows the way to our generation.

Words of Blumhardt

We are not alone. It is not ~~as~~ if we little men were here on the one hand, and on the other hand there were the great, tremendous, powerful God whom it is difficult for us to think of and even impossible for us to understand. Rather, the

rulership of God runs through infinitely many personalities, powers and principalities that stand about His throne and also round about us and near to us. Yes, I know quite well that modern man only wants to see men, and outside them nothing else in all the world. I know quite well, we want to be the only ones who have spirits, so that we can glorify ourselves thereby; ... but, my friends, all that lives in heaven's world, that world into which our material eyes cannot see, fills all earth and heaven, surrounds us from the Father in heaven. There lives a rulership under which we repeatedly feel ourselves served by invisible powers, and our spirit feels again and again the awakening by the Spirit which fills the whole creation and which is God.

The greater circle. Are we men to be the highest and the only personalities in the whole of creation? On our earth we are the highest stage of living being in which the spirit is personality. Beyond our stage of development there arise ever higher spiritual beings. We are like a tiny chick that has not yet hatched from its shell. It can already move a little but there is only a very tiny bit of freedom. Within this shell we are in a greater circle of spirits; each circle lies within a greater one.

The world of God about us. So we are related to a world of God, and that is a great comfort. For to think of ourselves as quite alone on earth, quite abandoned and wholly dependent
 164 on our own powers, is a very sad thing. I don't want to have a single day without the thought that the hosts of God are around us, and that they go out into all the world. I couldn't

live a single day without thinking that never, in any place, are we alone.

The helping powers. God sends us all manner of help and powers, both physical and spiritual, and all these messengers of God are like personalities. There are infinitely many powers in God's kingdom which can surround us and accompany us, and which are very varied.

The worst danger. For a long time we have fought against darkness. Hell, death and the devil want to scare us. We have been in many difficulties, and many times we have not known how to get through them. But God has reached out His right hand to us in Jesus Christ, and for many years he has protected us and given us victory. But today it appears that there is another fight before us, namely the fight against the humanism which does not want to accept the truth. More dangerous still than the invisible powers of darkness is the visible power of men, men who misuse the power of God, who misuse the spirit which is in the flesh and so, in their tricks, put God's honor to shame. Untruths in the name of Christianity are more dangerous than the falsities of the world.

We need no knowledge of occult powers. Many things which are experienced are not meant at all to be shared with others. For with the experiences of God's kingdom it is not the main thing that others know of them; rather, it is only that perhaps

others may live from the fruits of the experience of individuals in the kingdom of God. The inward experiences of the prophets of the Old Testament as well as of Jesus and the

apostles are for the most part untold. We are convinced, and we can prove from many parts of the Scripture, that infinitely great knowledge of the invisible world, both relative to human relations with demons and the devil, and to the divine, formed the background of the theories of the apostles and prophets, if I may put it in that way. But they don't do us the favor of allowing us a glimpse into their experiences in this realm. They think in about this way: "If someone is again called to a fight, then it is not necessary that we tell him how it is. He will see then for himself just how things are in those areas where the earthly eyes of men do not usually penetrate. ...

We don't want to make the devil important, but the dear Lord, and it is men who shall make their appearance, not demons...

Even the fighters themselves do not grasp the inter-relationships within the fight in which they stand... It is also not their task to give to visible men a story of the invisible world... But they are indeed called to keep themselves pure as true fighters for God in whom nothing has power but the kingdom of God in this world.

Believe in God, not in demons! It is not ^{nice? (fein)} right ^{{if our faith} in God and in the truth of his creation gets mixed with a faith in ungodly things.

But fear not! Above all, do not be afraid of the devil and of spirits. All of these have absolutely no power as compared with God, and they disappear as the night flees before the sun, if we accustom ourselves to give all our strength to the interests of the kingdom of God and not allow our self-love and self-interest to mix in all the time.

God remains the Lord. It is a great comfort to know that the realms of darkness are also dependent upon God, and evil, even, is not free of His hand. Nothing can stand of itself. It is God that has laid a darkness over the evil. It is from God that death has risen over sin, not from someone else. And that is why we can see the whole world in God's hand, yes, the whole of the universe. There are not two worlds, one in God's power and the other not in God's power. There are not two kinds of men, one under God's rulership and the other kind outside of God's rule. No, even where it is utterly dark, God alone is the Lord. There is no devil who can do "just as he likes", no evil angel can create something of his own. It is from God that he is in the darkness. There is in the dark realm a certain kind of life which, unfortunately, spreads, and brings death to those who allow it to draw them after it. But the whole world of sinful and death-bringing things belongs to God and remains firmly in God's hand. That is the witness that we may have in our hearts. To every Satan I would like to say, "You belong to God - you, devil, can do nothing, you can't lift a finger, for you are God's." No faith in the devil! We have never yet believed in the devil. That is why we said fifty-five years ago, "Jesus is victor". He only is the victor; there is no lord, even in the darkness, who does not have to bow to our Lord. There is only one Lord, just as there is but one God, and nothing else is lord. Nothing else has any power. Nothing else has any rights, and may claim anything as its own, not the smallest screw or nail belongs to any devil, to death, or to hell. Everything belongs

to our God, yes, everything. If we men take such an attitude then the darkness must disappear.... Fear nothing, fear God alone.

God appears in men. To us God has taken on the appearance of a spirit and still God appears in human form. We have made Him into a spirit form. And so we look for God in the appearance of a spirit. That is why spiritualism, or what is now known as theosophy, is able to find an echo and to be called a prophecy. ... The most beautiful appearance of God is, in fact, in a human being.