



A
BLUMHARDT
READER



Thy Kingdom Come

EDITED BY VERNARD ELLER

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Everyone must concede
that the kingdom of God
comes not through logical concepts
but through surprises.

CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH BLUMHARDT

The subject of my doctoral study was Søren Kierkegaard, the nineteenth-century Danish thinker. In the course of that research I came across Emil Brunner’s testimony to the effect that the best predecessors of Neo-Orthodoxy were “two great figures of Pietism—Chr. Blumhardt, in Boll, and Kierkegaard.” The strange pairing stuck in my mind: the name I had never heard along with the one heard all over the place. Were these two to be considered equals?

It was, then, in 1966 I discovered some of Blumhardt’s work, namely, the 1963 Plough Publishing House translation of Lejeune’s *Christoph Blumhardt and His Message*. Since that time it has been my magnificent obsession (well, *one* of my magnificent obsessions) to get more of the work of the Blumhardts—father and son—known in larger circles of Christian theologians and laity.

The Plough Publishing House is the publishing arm of that longstanding Christian community commonly known as the Bruderhof. My interest in the Blumhardts immediately got me into contact with these dedicated and friendly people, resulting in two different visits to their headquarters and archives at Woodcrest, Rifton, New York.

Out of longstanding interest and through connections with descendants of the Blumhardts, the Bruderhof has been largely responsible for keeping the Blumhardt tradition alive in this country. These people regularly use readings from

the Blumhardts in their worship and meditation. They are responsible for virtually all of the translation and publication of Blumhardt material in English and hold the largest collection of Blumhardt materials outside Germany.

Gottlieben Blumhardt, daughter of Christoph Blumhardt, devoted the last years of her life to collecting the works of her father and grandfather. It was this effort that made possible the German publication of a great deal of Blumhardt material during the past decade.

It is too little to say that the Bruderhof has been *helpful* in connection with this book. Without the Bruderhof archives, Johann Christoph Arnold (the Plough publisher), and the anonymous members who did the first draft translation of much of the material herein, this book simply would not have been possible. I want to take the opportunity to express my profound gratitude to the community and to all the individual members who have lent themselves to *our* magnificent obsession.

The search for a publisher to take on the book and competent translators to get the Blumhardts' German into English has been a long-drawn and many-directioned one. The publishers, of course, have now come down to one and the translators to four or five of us; but along the way, a whole host of well-wishers and moral supporters did their bit to keep the obsession alive. For a while it almost amounted to the establishment of an underground Blunhardt society; my file of correspondence is several inches thick.

One sort of support came from several different book editors—none of whom were able to sell their houses on the

book idea but who did give personal encouragement to the project. There *could* be enough Blumhardt books to have given one to each, I am sorry that did not happen; but I am grateful for their having made the big try.

Some of the people now to be named are since deceased, and others have moved from the institution with which they are here associated. Many of the contacts were made through the Bruderhof rather than directly with me. But one way or another, to one degree or another, there have been expressions of support from the following.

From Germany, Karl Barth (via a letter written by his secretary, Eberhard Busch); Eduard Heimann (a long-time colleague Paul Tillich); Gottlieben Blumhardt (daughter of Christoph Blumhardt); Margrit Hönig (granddaughter of Christoph Blumhardt); and Christine Ragaz (daughter of the Swiss theologian, Leonhard Ragaz).

From this side of the ocean, Markus Barth (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary); James Smart (Union Theological Seminary); James Luther Adams (Harvard Divinity School), who also offered to speak for his deceased friend, Paul Tillich; Franklin Littell (Temple University); Harvey Cox (Harvard Divinity School); Martin Marty (University of Chicago Divinity School); and H. Martin Rumscheidt (Atlantic School of Theology).

Recommendations of this caliber convinced me that the project represented an essential contribution and thus kept

me at it through the years. I am grateful to all these people.

Because of my own obvious inadequacy in the German language, I have had to have the help of those who could perform at least the first step toward an acceptable translation. These people will be named at the point in the book where they made their contributions: but here I want to take public notice of the time, effort, and skill they have given and express heartfelt gratitude for it.

Finally, I want to recognize and thank (without naming) all the relatives, colleagues, friends, and some new acquaintances who have constituted a general support group for the project and for me in the project. Among these certainly are to be included Eerdmans Publishing Company and all the people there.

Vernard Eller
La Verne, CA
January 1980

INTRODUCTION

In this introduction there are two things I want to do and one I do not want to do. The not doing of the one will be the most difficult.

But, in the first place, no matter how sore the temptation, I am going to try not to do anything in the way of *introducing* the Blumhardts' thought—whether describing it, characterizing it, explaining it, or commenting upon it. Once I start that, there would be no end. I prefer to devote the space to letting them introduce their thought for themselves—which is what this whole book is about.

Besides, these two are fully capable of introducing their own thought. Perhaps every word of theirs recorded here originated as oral discourse delivered informally before a lay audience. The Blumhardts may be the theologians who least need a third party to analyze and “explain” them. If their own words fail to inform, enlighten, or move the reader, there are no words of mine that could reverse the situation.

Besides attempting not to introduce the Blumhardts' thought, I intend to present a whole collection of facts purposed to show the sort of influence the Blumhardts have had upon modern Christian thought. The hope is that this will arouse within the reader the question, “Why have I not heard of them before?” thus exciting him to do something about it, namely, read the remainder of the book. Finally, then, I will offer brief biographical sketches of the two men.

The two Blumhardts, Johann Christoph (1805-80) and Christoph Friedrich (1842-1919), were father and son. Their careers—much more pastoral than theological in character—focused upon the son’s succeeding his father as leader of what might be called a Christian retreat center that the father had established at Bad Boll in southwestern Germany. The thought of the two men shows enough continuity and agreement that it can be treated as one “theology.”

We already have noted that Emil Brunner identified Christoph Blumhardt and Kierkegaard as the two greatest predecessors of the Neo-Orthodox movement. Karl Barth also said enough to indicate that he would agree with the opinion. And, independently, both Leonhard Ragaz and Theodor Haecker had made the same pairing and showed interest in it. Brunner’s father had as much as been converted by the younger Blumhardt, which certainly made Emil’s own relationship to Blumhardt much more than a sheerly intellectual one.

Eduard Thurneysen, Barth’s long-time pastor-partner, visited Bad Boll and studied under Blumhardt as early as 1904. And it was he who subsequently introduced Barth to Bad Boll and to Blumhardt. In 1926, Thurneysen published a small book *Introducing Blumhardtian thought*; and he quoted the Blumhardts at some length in his books on pastoral care. Over a period of thirty years, Barth wrote three different essays on the Blumhardts and gave them major notice both in *Church Dogmatics* and in other of his works.

Barth's chosen touchstone for his own theology, "Jesus Is Victor," is a motto from Father Blumhardt. In Gerhard Sauter's doctoral study of the Blumhardts (the normative scholarly analysis of their thought), there is a major section entitled, "Considerations Regarding the Relationship of Christoph Blumhardt to Karl Barth."

James Luther Adams has testified to Paul Tillich's interest in what Adams calls "the religious-socialist element In Blumhardt"—although I think it would be fair to say that this social concern is about the only element of commonality between Blumhardt's theology and Tillich's.

When I was a seminary student, the book that set the direction of my understanding of Scripture for time to come was Oscar Cullmann's *Christ In Time*. More than a decade later, upon discovering the Blumhardts, I was convinced I had found a forerunner of the *Heilgeschichte* (Salvation-history) idea. When I met Cullmann, I put it to him whether he was familiar with the work the Blumhardts and had been influenced by it. His face lit up like a Christmas tree. "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes," he said.

I had not discovered that, in his published works, Dietrich Bonhoeffer ever mentioned the Blumhardts; but I had suspicions nevertheless. When the opportunity presented itself, I asked Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's confidant and biographer. He assured me that Bonhoeffer had been well familiar with Blumhardtian thought and strongly influenced by it. This is confirmed in Gerhard Sauter's study. Although

it does not include a separate section on Bonhoeffer, that book, at a number of points in passing and in one passage of several pages, does rather conclusively demonstrate how several of Bonhoeffer's most important concepts tie back into the Blumhardts.

Even so, the fact that Gerhard Sauter is a recognized theologian in his own right and the fact that he has done this major study of the Blumhardts—these things have the effect of bringing the Blumhardtian influence directly into the present generation of German theologians with their “theology of hope,” “political theology,” and “liberation theology.”

Karl Barth had called Blumhardt's a “theology of hope” long before Jürgen Moltmann was even born (in 1967, Moltmann published a book of that title to launch at least something of a movement). Moltmann is aware of the connection. As editor of the sourcebook, *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, he chose one of Barth's Blumhardt essays for inclusion. And in personal conversation he was quick to confess his debt to the Blumhardts. There is no knowing how many more of the so-called “younger” German theologians would be ready to confess the same.

Finally, my own “best” theologians include not only Kierkegaard and the Blumhardts but also the contemporary French maverick, Jacques Ellul. Ellul has mentioned and quoted the Blumhardts a few times in his works. There are many of his ideas that *could* be attributed to Blumhardtian Influences—although, most often, these probably came via

and His Message. Almost the first half of that book is given to Lejeune's introduction, the remainder of the volume presenting nineteen selected talks and sermons from the younger Blumhardt. Also important is *Action in Waiting*, a slight volume incorporating Barth's first essay on Blumhardt (1916) and one of Christoph Blumhardt's crucial sermons, "Joy in the Lord." Then there is a pocket-sized book, *Evening Prayers for Every Day of the Year*, compiled after his death from spontaneous prayers the younger Blumhardt used at Bad Boll. There is next a slim, 31-page paperback, *Now Is Eternity*, something of a random sampler of very brief "sayings" from both of the Blumhardts. And finally, there has just appeared a beautiful little 58-page paperback, *Thoughts About Children*, compiling material from both Blumhardts on the topic.

"So why haven't we heard about the Blumhardts before?" Partly because so little material is available in English; and because what is available has come from small, private presses. "But why have other publishers failed to pick up on the Blumhardts?" My best guess in that regard is that, because the Blumhardt impact naturally came with the younger Blumhardt's maturity, death, and the generation of thinkers who continued the tradition from that point. and because that point itself coincided with the First World War, the war itself prevented the Blumhardt reputation from jumping either the English Channel or the Atlantic Ocean at the time it normally would have. Then, later was too late: why publish the works of the Blumhardts when no one knows who

years at Möttlingen, the pressures toward churchly conformity became so constrictive that Blumhardt gave up his pastorate and, for all intents and purposes, formal connection with the Reformed Church. He moved a short distance away to Bad Boll, where he purchased a vacant resort hotel and made it into something of a retreat center, a place to which people could have recourse for periods of rest, meditation, study, and pastoral counsel—and a place where Blumhardt was free to operate according to God's leading.

He continued this ministry until his death in 1880, the testimony of his life perhaps best being summed up in a hymn with which he had been inspired at Möttlingen and which remained popular in Blumhardt circles:

Jesus is victorious Lord
Who conquers all his foes;
Jesus 'tis unto whose feet
The whole wide world soon goes;
Jesus 'tis who comes in might,
Leads us from darkness into light.

Son Christoph (Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt 1842-1919) was born at Möttlingen in 1842, at the very time his father was becoming involved in the struggle with Gottlieb's demons. As his father had done before him, he took university training pointing toward a Reformed pastorate. However, he became disillusioned with the church and theology and so decided simply to return home to Bad Boll and act as a helper there. Upon his father's death, then, he took over as housefather and continued the work until his own

death in 1919.

In time, the younger Blumhardt became quite renowned as a mass evangelist and faith healer. But after a very successful “crusade” in Berlin in 1888, he drastically cut back both activities, saying, I do not want to suggest that it is of little importance for God to heal the sick; actually, it now is happening more and more often—although very much in quiet. However, things should not be promoted as though God’s kingdom consists in the healing of sick people. To be cleansed is more important than to be healed. It is more important to have a heart for *God’s* cause, not to be chained to the world but be able to move for the kingdom of God.

Blumhardt’s interest gradually took what could be called “a turn to the world,” namely, a focus upon the great socio-economic issues of the day. Under the impetus of this concern Blumhardt chose, in a public and conspicuous way, to cast his lot with Democratic Socialism, the much maligned workers’ movement that then was fighting tooth and nail for the right of the working class. Although it brought upon his head the wrath of both the civil and ecclesiastical establishments, he addressed protest rallies, ran for office on the party slate, and was elected to a six-year term in the Württemberg legislature. He was asked to resign his ministerial status in the church.

Blumhardt began as a very active and energetic legislator, but as time passed he greatly curtailed this activity and bluntly declined to stand for a second term of office. Clearly, the pattern was of a piece with his earlier retreat from mass

evangelism and faith healing.

Blumhardt's disillusionment with Democratic Socialism—i.e., with the party politics, not with the movement's purposes and ideals—and the even greater disillusionment which came toward the close of his life with the dark years of World War I—these brought him to a final position expressed in the dialectical motto: Wait and Hasten. His understanding was that the call of the Christian is still for him to give himself completely to the cause of the kingdom. To do everything in his power to help the world toward that goal. Yet, at the same time, a Christian must remain calm and patient, unperturbed even if his efforts show no signs of success, willing to wait for the Lord to bring the kingdom at his own pace and in his own way. And, according to Blumhardt, far from being *inactivity*, this sort of *waiting* is itself a very strong and creative action in the very *hastening* of the kingdom.

Blumhardt suffered a stroke in 1917 and died a peaceful death on August 2, 1919.

Leonhard Ragaz (1868-1945) was a highly respected Swiss professor and theologian, one of the early contributors to dialectical theology, and a leader of the religious-socialism movement in Switzerland.

In 1922, he published a book of 321 pages, *Der Kampf um das Reich Gottes in Blumhardt, Vater und Sohn—und Weiter!* The first 43 pages are an introduction to the Blumhardts and their thought (none of which we will use). The remainder is a presentation of their “message,” the outline and headings of which become directly the outline and headings of our Part One, here following. Under each of these headings, Ragaz opened with his own description of and comment upon the Blumhardts’ position (none of which we will use). Then he collected quotations and excerpts of the Blumhardts’ own words on the topic. Although retaining all of Ragaz’s headings, we have selected, to translate and present here, roughly half of the Blumhardt material Ragaz used.

Using Ragaz as compiler and editor, as it were, has given us inestimable advantages. (a) Ragaz presents a comprehensive and ordered (although not “systematic,” which, regarding the Blumhardts, would be a wrong headed impossibility) view of their thought which any amount of random reading in their talks and sermons could never provide. (b) Ragaz had access to the totality of the Blumhardt *cor-*

pus in a way unsurpassed by anyone and unequalled by any contemporary, non-German scholars. (c) Ragaz knew the Blumhardts and their thought well enough and himself had sufficient theological expertise to make this an authoritative and dependable presentation of their “theology.” (d) Ragaz was wise enough not to try to force their thought into the customary categories and outlines of theology but to let the outline grow out of the Blumhardtian materials themselves. And finally, (e) Ragaz was a skilled enough editor that his selections do not read like a collection of “selections” but almost as though the Blumhardts had set out to write a presentation of their thought as a whole. In short, the Blumhardts nowhere expressed themselves as fully and as clearly as they do here with the help of Ragaz.

The *translation* of the Blumhardt material here presented (via Ragaz) is mine. However, I could not have managed it alone. A rough, first draft translation for part of the material was provided by members of the Bruderhof who had been at work before I ever entered the picture. A second part was done recently by Professor William Willoughby, my colleague at the University of la Verne. And a third part was done some years ago by Lonna Whipple, then a La Verne College German major who had done her junior-year-abroad at Marburg University. To these people I tender my gratitude for their help. However, at the same time it must be said that, with their drafts beside me, I nevertheless

worked directly from the Blumhardt's German (as given by Ragaz, of course). Thus, although they were most helpful, the translation is mine, and I must take full responsibility for it.

Ragaz made no effort to identify sources for any of the Blumhardt quotations he used; so we can be of no help regarding the items of Part One. — V.E.

All passages are by Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt unless marked otherwise.

a hereafter? The *earth* shall be filled with the glory of God. According to the Bible, that is the meaning of all the promises. Jesus, come in the flesh, what is his will? Of course, nothing other than the honor of his Father on earth. In his own person, through his advent, he put a seed *into the earth*. He would be the light of men; and those who were his he called “the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth.” His purpose is the raising up of the earth and the generations of man out of the curse of sin and death toward the revelation of eternal life and glory.

Why else did he heal the sick and wake the dead? Why did he exalt the poor and hungry? Surely not in order to tell them that they would be blessed, after death, but because the kingdom of God was near. Of course, God has a way out for those who, unfortunately, must suffer death; he gives them a refuge in the beyond. But shall this necessary comfort now be made the main thing? Shall the kingdom of God be denied for earth and perpetuated only in the kingdom of death, simply because God wants also to dry the tears of the dead? It is to discard the whole meaning of the Bible if one argues, “We have nothing to expect on earth; it must be abandoned as the home of man.”

Truly, within the human structures of sin, we have no lasting home; we must seek what is coming. But what is it, then, that is coming? The revealing of an earth cleansed of sin and death. This is the homeland we seek. There is no other to be sought, because we do not have, and there cannot come to be, anything other than what God intended for

According to our customary false way of thinking, the kingdom of God must give way to our happiness. With many people the words of the Savior already have been altered to read: “Seek first your own blessedness, and all those things shall be added unto you.” This is something very deceptive, although I know that for me to say so will rub many people the wrong way. They love *themselves*; and if only they know that they are safe, they don’t much care about the rest of the world—or at most, only so much as to say to others, “See to it that *you* also get yourself saved, and then I will be happy!” With this little error, my friends, our fellowship with the Father is destroyed. We are like children always coming to our parents demanding candy, pop, and ice cream instead of being concerned about the wishes of our parents, honoring them with fidelity and hard work, in which case our food would come as a matter of course.

The goal of all God’s effort is that finally he will be a God whom we will be able to see on earth, a God who will make the earth his footstool, where Jesus will be Lord over all men and where they, in him, once more will be integrated into God’s creation.

What do I care about a God of the sort whose being must be demonstrated? The dear Lord came from heaven and *spoke*; had he not done so, even the philosophers could not have found him. Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling—why, they would all still be heathen if he had not spoken his word on Mt. Sinai. I almost burst sometimes when our modern culture sets classical learning over the Bible. Why, everybody would still be ignorant were it not for the Bible and its God who there speaks upon earth.

God lets us meet him in Christ; and in the days of the apostles when there was talk of faith, of being true until death, everyone who belonged to the body of Christ knew what course his faithfulness would take. Something came over these people, something to which none of them had given thought and which none of them would have been able to explain. Suddenly they found themselves part of a history that proceeded of itself and in which such wonderful powers were discovered that the inevitable impression was: “These powers are stronger than the whole world.”

In this situation people had a perfectly clear picture of what God is. There was no need to look up to heaven; the occurrences took place on *earth*; they were bound up with naming the name of Jesus.

In that regard, we ought not to be ashamed frankly and openly to call our Christ “God,” because, with only mental pictures of God, nothing gets started. Our Christ has become Yahweh; he stands upon earth and calls to us, “I am.” And we need not make a big ceremony of it but simply fall before him, knowing in him the living God, the Father in heaven. Then, once we’ve met him, we feel ourselves on solid ground which does not quake but from which the mountains of God’s sovereignty burst forth to overwhelm us, as, in the final cataclysm, they shall overwhelm the whole world.

It may be that there is one error that poisons most of our thinking about God’s kingdom. Prevailing very widely, this is the understanding that, in order for God’s kingdom to come, it is sufficient that we finally and firmly establish and systematize the doctrine. This error works as a poison in that, from this perspective, certain doctrines and conventions soon become almost more important than God himself.

It has become clear to me that no single, dogmatic, fixed, and systematized doctrine will decide the issue of the kingdom: this only the living God himself will do.

As long as you believe sheerly as routine, things are not right. One cannot come drowsing into the kingdom of God. The cause must proceed with clarity and zest; the way must ever be made afresh by God. And therein is true grace

demonstrated—that God hurries forth as the God who *acts*.

I tell you I cannot hold out for a single day unless from somewhere, either in myself or from afar, I have a report or am able to see that “Praise be, God is hurrying forward!”... Thus we all should become enlightened in spirit so that we become clear about world events, so that we do not fall into religious confusion and other foolishness, so that we know what time it is, so that we have an inner sense about how to comport ourselves. “Shall I hurry? Shall I wait? Shall I do this? Shall I leave that?” In short, we need light.

FROM CREATION THROUGH DETERIORATION TO
RESTORATION

We are encompassed by a creation; and one piece of it is this ground under our feet. We go forth upon it; we live from it; we have a certain power over it; we are employed with it and yet it nowhere comes completely right.

If one observes the morals, customs, viewpoints, and lives of all the world's peoples, he is amazed that, alongside the glorious appearance of nature's truth, mankind goes as if deranged. As the Chinese who bind a girl's feet are not satisfied until she is so crippled she can't walk, so do all the nations and peoples, be they Christian or heathen, right in the midst of the organism of truth which is creation, manage to make habitual falsifiers of themselves.

You must bear in mind, my friends, that we humans, even the best of us, are poor comrades to the great whole of creation. Something in us is twisted. Now, all of us were created in the image of God, an important part or—to put it pictorially—an important wheel in the great gearworks of creation. But on this wheel the cogs are all crooked and chipped; and the axle is bent. The human part doesn't work right; and the whole creation suffers in consequence. This is sin. Things don't run right with us men. There is much that

is awry with every person in the world.

Is this creation to which our bodily life belongs simply to be cast aside? Or does there lie within it the embryo of eternity? There are many who see God's creation as of little value and its very loveliness as a sorry thing one would like to leave as soon as possible—preferably with a good kick! I am sad about that.

God did not create mere spirits for this corporeal world but bodies—which he has called his “image.” Only through shattering travail can such a body come to be. And every person sees and experiences for himself that death is a judgment that makes him anxious even when he wants to be strong and convince himself that he can die tranquilly and be a spirit.

Men often attribute everything that happens in the world to God; but this is to do him an injustice. There are also works of man and of the devil. These do harm, whereas the works of God always do good—indeed, it is by this they are known. We are the ones responsible for so much that goes awry in the world. So lay off of my God, and don't say, “He's doing it!”

He is the glory of God upon earth and the glory of man in heaven. Just as God was blotted out on earth, so also was man blotted out in heaven. Now Jesus comes as the one he is; and God lives upon the earth. Then Jesus is again with the Father in heaven; and humanity lives there in him. Now before God there gleams something of the humanity that was dead—it is the glory of mankind in heaven before God through Jesus.

This is the man Jesus Christ; he is fixed in the creation where his true nature is grounded. As the creation is a work of God, so Jesus the Son is a work of God in the whole of creation. He is far above all angels and all powers of God that drive the world. The highest messengers of God, the life elements and life powers, serve him. He is in the creation, and it must go as he goes. One must understand this tremendous magnitude of Jesus Christ in order to believe that he still is able to help us men.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." That is true; nevertheless, it remains night as long as men are unaware of the fact and as long as Jesus is not known universally. We are in the night. That people have believed it to be day simply because Jesus was born, died, and rose again is the greatest error of Christendom. With that error we have been in the darkest night for nineteen hundred years, thinking that everything was complete and good.

this the Apostle Paul says, “I no longer know Jesus after the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16). He does not intend to say that Jesus had not lived historically but that the outward history has fallen away and the life of God remains.

When the Spirit of God moves in a person who is seeking proof of God, that spirit makes his appearance in the life of men actually upon earth and does not allow himself to be shunted into secondary matters. For the spirit knows that the very crux of all truth lies in the kingdom of God—there rather than in the history of man according to the flesh, which shall disappear. A true history of man’s life is in process of fulfillment, bound up with God, even though presently developing under the husks of an unfulfilled relationship. The Spirit knows that this life history is not that of tradition or historical research but of God himself entering the scene. Thus, after the history of mankind has been lost, the life of mankind still will be known, because, from beginning to end, it has been represented in the life of God himself.

Humanity indeed has its history. We can learn it—and we also can learn much from it. But this is not the history that truly brings joy to our hearts. The joy of human history is not so great that we would not gladly give it up. But there is also a history made up of experiences which are not confined to man himself but which are informed by something of the divine. That which is human must be touched by the divine.

When we read of the singular experiences of men of God

from Abraham to Jesus and the apostles—let us admit it openly—they make us angry. What wouldn't people give if they could take Jesus without having to take in the bargain other events that are, humanly speaking, unexplainable? And to top it all off, in the resurrection Christ is raised to heaven. How unsettling this report is to all those who would like to make this dear man the founder of their religion—if only he had not said things or had things said about him that must make cultured people unculturedly ashamed.

How can those who still have faith in science imagine that a man dies and is buried and then later comes back and now lives beyond death? It is as if death were something one could just strip off, something one could come through without losing his physical existence but—quite the contrary—with the physical body transfigured. Yet all the experiences of the people of God point in this direction; and it is in these experiences, and not in the doctrines that follow from them, that the seeds of God's kingdom are found. The doctrines do not lead to experiences, but experience leads to doctrine; and for better or for worse, it is back to experience we must go if we would see the kingdom of God.

When Jesus came into our company, it was day...

The whole history of humanity pivots, one might say, upon the works of Jesus. All that has come to pass since—the good and the evil, the bright and the dark—everything turns upon

these works of Jesus which are directed toward the future of humanity.

It is something like the first beginning, about which, respecting our earth, it is so beautifully and significantly said: “Let there be light’; and there was light.” From that moment on, there was nothing that could stop it. The earth had light, and from that light came everything else—all life, all aspects of life, all the perfecting of life. Everything, down to the deepest depths of the earth, even the coal mines, comes into being through the light. But what a development it all went through! There was much stirring of dust and mire, much destruction, much horror, much abomination—a fearful development—until finally there came out of the earth that which we enjoy today.

In like manner, a kind of light is given in Jesus. It is directed particularly toward man and, to begin with, toward only relatively few men. But whether shining upon many or few, the power of the Spirit’s light calls people out to strive for a high purpose and not be satisfied with baseness. This light has appeared and even now shines forth. This light of the Spirit which has been implanted in humanity produces the greatest development, has the greatest power of revolution and advance for mankind, right up to the present day. A great deal of dust has been raised, the hideousness of man has been uncovered, because sin and brutality and vulgarity had to have their day. The history of Christendom following

the coming of the light is a horror to behold and study. But what of that?...

It is so obvious in human history: there comes a time when something is born; and then things stand still and nobody follows up. There have been developments, and beginnings have been made, which we have failed to recognize. No one can comprehend the mere three years of Jesus' ministry as being the occasion of the greatest revolution ever to occur in human society. The rise of empires and nations' wars, battles, and victories—these are no “events,” no “creations.” In comparison to the high calling that is mankind's, all the empires of earth fade to nothing—as do all differences of race and language, all enmity, all hostility and arrogance between man and man. In the light of the creation that has come to us in Jesus Christ, all these things dissolve; nothing of them remains to be found. But that which does remain, which truly is of value for us—that has the permanence of eternity.

It must yet come to pass that we will not simply hold fast to an ancient confession of faith but out of a new experience be able to call to one another: “He is risen indeed! He lives among us! He takes the reins in hand and leads his people, leads them all the way to his death, that, in the death of the flesh, his resurrection and his life might be exalted in mankind to the eternal praise and glory of God.”

For this cause is Jesus Christ risen from the dead: so that

in him it can be seen that God will bring forth even *our* lives out of death and will take everything into his own hands once more. Therefore, we should die with Christ so that we also can be awakened and so that whatever should live will then be able to live fully and beautifully and gloriously.

The Lord Jesus stands humanly very near to us; I do not know my best friend as well as I know the Savior, I can't get inside my best friend; it is possible that there is within him that which is not quite trustworthy. But as far away as the Savior is from us, we still are so well acquainted with him through the scriptures that he is, as it were, transparent to us. With the writings of a Cicero it is not so; though a person read Cicero as he will, he does not thereby see into his heart. Likewise with a Plato, a Socrates, a Virgil, all the noblest spirits—however beautifully they have written, they still do not become our friends. But the Savior comes in such a way that each person can be his friend. One has only to make his acquaintance; then everything comes of itself.

REDEMPTION

THERE IS REDEMPTION

When, as often happens, a person recites some sad case to me, some fate of life before which I shudder, I cannot simply say, “Accept your fate!” No, I say, “Be patient; the matter will be resolved—very surely it will be resolved.”

Don’t comfort yourself with that sort of Christianity which today practices the art of decking out every distress and wrapping everything in phrases to the effect that whatever happens is good. Don’t accept such 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, that you once could use us as your hired servants!”

THE REDEMPTION OF THE BODY

The Spirit must embody itself. It must enter into our earthly life; it must happen that deity be born in flesh so that it can overcome this earthly world. God is active Spirit only when he gets something of our material underfoot; before that, he is mere idea. The Spirit would govern life.

It is a divine-natural law that body and soul hang to-

gether; and whoever would work on one part must take the other into consideration as well. Whoever would divide body and soul may be said to commit murder.

It seems to be the first concern of the human spirit that the body quickly become well; whereas, in silence the soul should thank God that, in its illness, the body had more rest than in its health—indeed, that it again feels more life and power than it did in healthy days. But many people become almost angry over such a consolation; they are so unaccustomed to being still and considering their lives that they forcibly push themselves back into the turbulence of activity. Yet precisely in this way do they stand in the way of their own health at the very moment God would put them under spiritual restraint, because he does not want them given over to destruction.

Harm to the body is the judgment upon man's drivenness of spirit. Wretchedness and darkening of the soul are judgments upon the vagabond life of the spirit. Therefore, it is important that every sick person who knows Christ should not make it his first impatient wish to become well... [Rather,] he should first hold back his spirit and tame its wildness so that, through the person's own will, Christ can truly receive him and immediately bind him to God and his truth. That is to say, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then body and soul will become healthy.

Being healthy is, to God, the same as being righteous. A healthy body, no matter how normal it may be, is not healthy

in God's sight if it is dragging around in unrighteousness. In this way, stings of death press in by the thousands; and before they have outward effect, a body that appears healthy to us can be sick from head to foot, sick unto death. Righteousness is our health; and the first point of righteousness is that we allow our-selves to be bound by God so that our spirit no longer desires its own freedom.

As long as our Spiritual piety does not present itself as true for the body, as right for the body, as freeing the body for God—as long as this piety is not free of human customs, insofar as these are perverted and out of harmony with divine laws—so long we remain only pious cripples. We must learn to be genuine creations of God through which life can stream out in all directions, as is the intention for all creation.

Therefore, we do not pray, “Do miracles,” but rather, “Let things go the way of truth.” God should do miracles—but only when they are an aspect of the spiritual rectification of mankind. There must be a ground for them, a ground in the kingdom of God renewing and enlightening us from the divine side. It is from this base that miracles should take place; and then—yea, then—we shall shout aloud for joy, when, from within, things get set right. But at that point, outward miracles can disappear...I do not wish to see a sin-

things go according to particular rules of animal life, and the life of the Spirit is not to be found.

Of course, thought cannot go too far in this direction before we come upon a word that is very much forbidden today. Yet there is something to be said for it. I will state it right out: “Anarchy!” Regarding the inhabitants of earth, a certain freedom, a veritable rulelessness, would almost be better than this nailed-up-tight business that as much as turns individual peoples into herds of animals closed to every great thought...

Man is here to make progress; and if he wants peace he must also help bring it about—on his own ground, in his own way, seeking to bring it onto the scene. Mere talking and wishing that it would come of itself is of no value. Thus, everyone who wants peace must undertake peace, must be a man of peace.

And this in particular is what God would have us do now, out of respect for his eternal truth and righteousness. This is our calling; and who knows whether we are not the strongest ones in the present situation? I would not belittle those who strive for peace out of other considerations—out of sympathy, humanitarianism, and the like—but I do not believe that such efforts carry much power. However, there is a particular, invincible power in our efforts: as God wills, as the eternal truth wills, so our will is for peace; our will is that the peoples become changed and this terrible European history come to an end...

If anyone remains stuck in the history we have had until now and thinks to find a solution there, he is a terribly small person...Yet it is already something worthwhile if in these matters even a few people open their eyes to what is righteous, eternal, and true and thus make a firm resolution, "There must be a change!" To that degree, they are able to rise above the history of their time. And this will not have been done in vain; on the contrary, It will lead toward what we call the kingdom of God.

SOCIAL REDEMPTION

Is Social Democracy that which rightly should be demanded? Or is it rather—because it so energetically pursues "the state of the future" —that which, as so many assume, should by all means be opposed by every citizen and churchman?

A person must indeed be blind if he cannot see that, during the entire century since the French Revolution, there have arisen movements of ever increasing consequence directed toward a new ordering of society. Where is there a country that has not been agitated by socialistic ideas? It is one impulse, one forward-striving spirit, which seeks this new social order. No one can avoid this movement. Church and state must grant people freedom in this regard. We have lived in a century of revolution and rapid change and are living in the midst of radical movements—and this is in accord with the will of God!

Notice how much our ways of looking at things have changed already! Who wonders today at the fact that every citizen demands political rights and receives them in ever greater degree? Who now is surprised when equal justice is demanded for all, both high and low? Is there anyone who wants to reintroduce slavery and indentured service? Or who would do away with representative government? These are genuinely new ways of looking at things.

In previous centuries, people who demanded the rights of freedom were simply brought to justice and exterminated. And now, when Socialism sets up the goal that every person have an equal right *to bread*, that matters of ownership be so arranged that neither money nor property but the life of man become the highest value, why should that be seen as a reprehensible, revolutionary demand? It is clear to me that it lies within the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that the course of these events leads toward his goal, and that there is bound to be revolution until that goal is reached. Resistance will be of no avail, because it is God's will that all men in every respect should be regarded equal and that they, rather than being plagued by the earth, should be blessed creatures of God.

That this struggle of the oppressed classes has not always gone pleasantly and that many imperfect things have been thought and done does not discountenance me. The basis of the movement, the energetic will, and the spiritual creativity of the goal are enough for me, so that I can feel myself an ally—and that, indeed, in the Spirit of Jesus Christ who had

led me all along...

But, you say, the Social Democrats want bloody revolution, illegal overthrow of the existing order, and general chaos. Now I say simply, 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. Yet the Reformation of the sixteenth century was even bloodier; why then do we not hate the Reformation? Because it, at least to some extent, brought *religious* freedom? Why then do we hate the revolutions of the eighteenth century? Is it because they helped people toward *political* freedom? The latter seem to me indispensable to the former. The bloodshed of the Reformation pains me just as much as the bloodshed of the Revolution; but I must take both in the bargain and in both see progress toward the freedom of humanity. Why don't we have a general horror of the bloodletting of times both past and present instead of a national prejudice that wants to ignore blood? Indeed, the whole world history is one long, revolutionary stream of blood...

But people say, "Christ kept his distance from all such revolutionary ideas, having in view only the spiritual uplift of mankind." Yet, when he looked upon the temple of the Jews, when he came in touch with the false gods of nationalism and culture which stand opposed to the kingdom of God, he gave warning about the greatest sort of overthrow. "Not one stone shall remain standing upon another" is what

he said about the proud national shrine of the Jews; and he saw destruction fast coming upon the capitalistic social system of that time.

He considered that the immediate result of his advent would be the greatest of revolutions; and he warned his disciples that things would be very violent. Of course, he went on to say that this was not the true end. At the very end, things shall proceed without violence. The Son of Man, the Man of Men, will come as a bolt of lightning lighting up the whole world. That suggests that God's thought and will shall drive universally and with power into human hearts, creating the people that God would have. And at that point we will be ready for a new heaven and a new earth.

However, if we were to bring together all the words of Jesus and the apostles dealing with the final purpose of human history, we would soon discover that, in spirit, Jesus concerns himself with the political and social situation, that his kingdom could not come or even be conceived apart from the overthrow of the established order. And he thought of this overthrow in essentially violent terms.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that, as followers of Jesus, we are to do deeds of violence. We are not to be bloody revolutionaries but to be filled with peace and power as we endure through the entire process, having our eyes fixed on the final goal of peace. Yet this end state cannot come without the most shattering of overthrows. Like the whip which Jesus wielded in the temple at Jerusalem, there is still a whip

to be wielded upon the whole unrighteous nature of humanity—"a day that shall burn like an oven," as the prophet Malachi said. And even if the judgment begins in the household of God, I will rejoice.

Even so, the Socialist movement is like a fiery sign from heaven warning of the coming judgment. And if Christian society is faced with a judgment, rather than becoming proud, let it consider well what truth there is in that which mounts the attack.

Yes, greed is the root of all evil! And it puzzles me that this truth is not more sharply felt. The truth is that our generation is perishing in its acquiring of money and its desire for money. Today nothing stands more high and holy in our eyes than speculation about money. Even among the wealthiest, many suffer from this burden; they take part in self-serving works of charity and yet are unable to be of real help to the miserable. True help will be brought only by the Christ of the all-encompassing End.

And now an organization arises, born out of bitterest need, and struggles toward this end, toward redemption from this world of money, this time of gold. And who would prevent me from giving this organization a hand in the name of Christ? Who will blame me for declaring the truth of those people's clear witness that we are on a downhill road, 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 giving birth to those who un-

it. Too strong a defense of prevailing opinions has a flavor which is disturbing to the pure service of God.”

“The attempt to carry my idea of God into earthly things cannot take root at a time when men are filled with the hope that they and they alone can create a blissful humanity. Now they first have to run aground on the rock of earthly things, in order to grasp the higher things.”

Plainly, Blumhardt does not want to be understood as retracting what he said in the Ragaz quotation; we are not called upon to choose one Blumhardt over the other, the earlier over later or vice versa. What the later Blumhardt did was to introduce a corrective (which may even have been implicit in the earlier statement). The truth, then, is to be found by holding the two positions in tension—letting each correct the other. Thus, Christians must be open to perceive the hand of God even in those purely secular sociopolitical movements whose goals are compatible with the gospel picture of the kingdom of God. And once perceiving God’s hand, we are, of course, under some obligation openly to welcome and support it. However, the later Blumhardt tells us, we dare never give ourselves to any sociopolitical movement as though it were the coming of the kingdom or an equivalent of that kingdom. No, Christian support of any and all such movements must ever include an element of “eschatological reserve,” the freedom to criticize and even withdraw when, inevitably, anti-kingdom aspects of the movement show themselves. But it is quite possible to see Blumhardt as being right, as making a true Christian witness, both in joining and, later, in withdrawing from Democratic Socialism. His total position, then, offers an essential corrective both to those Christians who want to forego all participation in the socio-political world and to those—such as certain proponents of liberation Theology—who commit themselves so completely to particular party programs that, in the name of the gospel, they are willing even to give their blessing to revolutionary violence. — V.E.

The will of God came forth in Jesus’ coming forth upon earth. And what is he? He is the friend of men and of human society. And in a very particular way he holds society

Jesus Christ and the glory that is the comfort of the whole world and all its creatures—*this* is what must be sought.

REDEMPTION FROM EVIL

A person can make himself weak by continually looking at his sinful nature and things he sees as wrong in himself. Often the sin has been forgiven long before; but the person hangs on to it and considers himself weak and sinful. What he should do, then, is stand up and be strong, through faith in God being certain of forgiveness...In principle, sin is forgiven; and we must carry that reality into the world.

When I look at the conversions of today, I see so much lacking that I am afraid they will be a detriment unless people stop making the conversion experience the main thing. The Lord will give nothing, will reveal nothing of that for which we hope, unless the change of heart remains the first and last thing. The gospel always produces repentance...The outcome of one's own repentance is to produce further repentance—which thought also belongs to the gospel. But whatever does not come out of one's own repentance is about as effective as soap bubbles against fortress walls.

(Johann Christoph Blumhardt)

When people come to me in their misery, I always have the feeling, "Oh, here it should be easy to help!" Even when

THE LIVING CHRIST

It is an extraordinary thing and characteristic of the Lord Jesus that he gives us to understand that what he is doing on earth is only a beginning. Nothing is finished yet. Nothing is so complete, nothing so perfect, that it is to remain unchanged from what it was in his time. What he has given us is a root and not yet a tree. The seed still must grow, the branches spread out; the blossoms will come later. In the end the fruit will come...

No other man ever thought, or even thinks today, that his work goes on after him in such a way that he himself is the one who continues to do it. Only Jesus has been raised above death and thus made a beginning in overcoming the death of mankind, in that he says, "As I have been, so I remain; and *I am coming.*"

In this lies the nature of the cause he founded and which he represents; he represents the redemption of the race—and how can that be completed in a day? How can that be finished even in one earthly lifetime? If he had wanted only to found a party or bring to people a new variety of religion in which they could be prouder and more fanatical than in earlier ones, then he could have completed it, as Moham-

med and Confucius did in their lifetimes. But, my friends, *redemption*—that requires time. It is not just for a couple of people or for a few hundred or for a party; it is for all mankind.

The Lord Jesus is the beginning and the end regarding the kingdom of God. Therefore, among us, it firmly and with certainty is said, “The Savior is coming again!” He must complete the work; and we have only to be his servants until he comes again. As servants, we must serve him, the Coming One.

At the same time, we should be a prefiguring of the future of Jesus Christ on earth. We should not be so much concerned with ourselves; nor should we struggle so hard, as though we were the ones to bring the good to its perfection on earth. We cannot do that. That can be done only by the Lord Jesus, who has come the first time and is coming again a second time.

He will complete the work; we will not. We must lock this knowledge in our hearts; it must be true and firm whenever we preach the gospel. Our way must always be lighted by this star, “He is coming again!” And if our minds are directed toward the coming of the Savior, this puts the entire gospel into its true perspective. The gospel will become something personal and living when we firmly and faithfully focus upon the words, “He is indeed coming again!” When we fail to do that, then we are separating the gospel from his

person. Then, no matter how much we talk or what great speeches we make about it, we are nevertheless separating him from the gospel. Without his personal presence, not a word of the gospel has real or profound value.

And so we must be directed toward that future coming of Jesus Christ which is not only something of the future but also of the present, in that he right now is awaited in our hearts...

We are living in a time of death; and we don't want to hide that from ourselves. Our powers become weak; our ideas lose their strength, and our feelings do also. Even though they be alive for the moment, with time they are lost. The law of death surrounds everything, all we do and think and feel. But now a law of life comes into this world of death. It is actually the Lord Jesus himself, the one who is eternal life, who is arisen from the dead, who links us to the other world, who brings us the Spirit of God that, in the midst of our dying life, again and again we might receive something fresh and living through his gift, through his presence, through his coming.

We are not to think of his coming only as an appearance at the end of days. Rather, we must at all times have an awareness of the coming Savior. Each of us should continually have that in mind, even in times of darkness, in times of depression, in times of poverty, in times of sickness, in times of trouble, and in times of work with the things of earth.

We want the life of Jesus Christ to be seen completely pure and clean, to be seen alone ruling upon earth. We don't want it to be mixed with earthly arts and the things of earth; we want it to be pure Christ.

Yet this is why Christ is so hidden. He will not be on earth as a human power. Christ will not be mixed in among men as a great man among the great. What we call great is not great to God. Those things which outwardly make such an impression, which seem so heroic, which so impress us in an earthly sense—those don't impress God at all. And that is why we must take care that *we* do not become mixed.

As Christ shows himself completely pure, as he alone stands before us as the Spirit of Life, so should we Christians also remain pure and clean, not mixing ourselves with the things of our time. Every age brings forward earthly interests, and each century has its particular character. One can become part of that and also lead a satisfactory life in it; but such is not the life of God which Christ is building upon earth. That is something entirely new, which will finally conquer all that is earthly and lead to the coming of a new heaven and a new earth.

And so the life we have today must still be one of fighting and struggling for the divine. But it is a life which has great promise in it. What is hidden at present, hidden with Christ in God, finally shall be revealed. Christ, the life-bearer, the truth-bearer, who has been hidden in God for thousands of years, finally shall become clear to all eyes.

THE COMING OF CHRIST

“Behold, I am coming soon!” (Rev. 22:7). This word concerns the coming of our Lord and King, Jesus Christ. The word itself permeates the whole of his earthly and super-earthly life, and it may seem too high for our understanding to reach. There are few who can grasp it in its spiritual meaning so that it can play a natural part in their self-understanding and in their living for God. Yet we must recognize that the significance of the life of Jesus and his disciples depends upon the fulfillment of these words. Those people built upon them as a firm ground by which the results of their activity would be guaranteed. But also, all the later disciples of Jesus who carry in their hearts the kingdom of God on earth as the goal of the Christian community are directed by these words to hope for the future return of their Lord. Without that, it is useless to hope that the community of God, his justice and truth, will come upon earth.

“Behold, I am coming soon!” This saying divides the history of the Christian community into two periods: first, the foretime, and then, the time of the actual kingdom of God. The Savior himself is the beginning, the Alpha, and the end, the Omega. With the coming of the Savior in the flesh, the foretime has begun; all people should know this, for they are living in it. In this time we have the gospel, “the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith” (Rom. 1:16).

With this, the kingdom of God is announced; and through its prophets it is founded upon earth.

However, the reign of God in Christ has not yet fully penetrated our world. It has made only a quiet beginning in those who believe, and is yet unknown to the world. The faithful are but few. All the rest of mankind, the masses, even though they hear the gospel are still under the reign of sin and death, because they are not yet able and willing to break loose from it.

Yet the light of hope does shine among these masses through the gospel, which reveals the love of God to the world. This hope is itself a world-shaking power of God which we experience in Christianity in a general way; even the unbelievers take part in that hope although they are not aware of it. It is by this power of hope coming through the gospel that the triumph of darkness is prevented; it no longer makes any headway. Wherever the gospel comes, death is pierced through by the hope of life. Yet the hearts of men are not free for God nor have they power for the victory over sin; thus, things in the world seem to go just as they always have gone.

The new (a new creation) is found only in secret, among the believers. These we can call the *forerunners* of the kingdom of God, in whom God's righteousness already has a beginning. It is their calling to be faithful unto death, to fight for the earth as being the property of God until the Son of Man comes in the glory of his Father. It is only then that the

note of this. To those servants “who *wait* for the Lord” (Lk. 12:36), “the elect who cry to him day and night” (Lk. 18:7-8), presently there is given, as answer to their longing, the words, “Behold, I am coming soon!” Their faithfulness is a power that can bear witness to people today. Without that, the gospel does not in itself have the piercing light that makes people right and enlists them as comrades in arms in the company of Jesus Christ.

So it is a joyful thing for us to carry in ourselves the power of the gospel: it brings light into the darkness of our world and is a help toward the end-time coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when all flesh will see the glory of God.

Time itself is 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 to be forgotten, as we ourselves suffer the shame of death. Yes, time is our enemy; it brings us nothing. Christ is the one who brings something; only that which, through Christ, shall be born in the people of Christ, that is what brings the true fruit which mankind has owed to God for many, many centuries.

All the “prophecies” and booklets about the return of Christ are misleading when they suggest that the day comes according to some calculation of time. No, the day comes in response to the people of God; and changes for the good will come in response to that good which is fought for by

God sends us all sorts of powers, all sorts of helpers, both corporeal and spiritual; and all these messengers of God are personal in nature. Under God's command, there are an endless number of powers which can surround us and accompany us; and they are most various.

For a long time we have fought against darkness. The devil, death, and hell would have us in terror. We have been in many difficulties, and many times have not seen a way through. 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 there appears another fight for us, namely, the fight against people who do not want to accept the truth. Yet more dangerous than the invisible powers of darkness is the visible power of men, those who falsely administer the power of God, who misuse the Spirit in their flesh and so put God's honor to shame through their cunning. More dangerous than the deceptions of the world are deceptions in the name of Christianity.

We experience many things which are not at all meant to be shared with others. Regarding experiences connected with the kingdom of God, it is not the main thing that others know about them except, perhaps, that others might live on the fruit of an individual's experience of the kingdom. But the private experiences of Jesus and the apostles, as those of the prophets of the Old Testament, are for the

not divine ones. There, pushing up, is the vile, criminal nature which is the outgrowth of the tares, crowding out the wheat kernels and stalks so that even a truly noble person becomes an evildoer.

I venture to assert, indeed, I dare say it before God: we must guard ourselves from making this malicious distinction. Strike out against evil we must—but, for God’s sake, don’t damn *people!* These old tares that have been scattered throughout Christendom—for God’s sake, don’t see them as being people! We poor people, we are all tangled up in them.

Have you ever seen the wind in a grainfield? There is little one can do to stop it; it tears up the delicate plants and destroys them. And so it goes with many people. Somehow a seed has come into their neighborhood and now is growing in an inhuman and unnatural way. It grows all through people, pushing into their feelings, influencing their wills. Often we label them as fools because of their behavior; and, consequently, they are put down and considered by us as “sinners.” Yet, if we were to think about it, the trace of those scattered seeds could be found even in our own lives.

Therefore, in all we are called to do in the way of holding human society together, the greatest blessing is this: although humanly we have to distinguish between righteousness and unrighteousness, these distinctions go no further than our own opinion. Would you go so far as to damn people for eternity? Do you want to take over the work of God? Is it then, O man, that *you* would make eternal decrees?

Therefore, today I say: The ways which consist so much in “outwardness,” with their outward laws and outward activities...the ways upon which there is to be seen only the earthly life fenced in on religious grounds and the people weighed down with burdens...these are broad ways upon which anyone can go. And yet—and always on the grounds of “the religious life”—a person will increasingly be seen frequenting these ways as his “inwardness” becomes stunted, as the true power of his spirit dies away and, with it, the power of the eternal God as well.

It is not good that Christendom has been established solely by law. Indeed, if into this purely legal Christendom there also had not regularly come childlike individuals, often directly out of the masses, out of uneducated circles, out of the circles of the scorned and lowly...if such childlike individuals had not found a way of saying, “I’m getting away from all this; I’m a child of God; and if I am being despised, then all people are being despised...if it had not been for these people, the Christian community would not have done as well as it has.

But this is terrible, my friends; everywhere among men you find wisdom, learning, might, rule, influence, every possible disposition. But only at great cost can you find childlikeness, the childlike heart. Under all the confusion of teaching and learning, under all the cultured manners, very often true man lies dead. What society most often makes of us is slaves! Many are not capable of thinking through what

“the people” are saying; and so they look around and wind up going the way that all “the people” are going.

Have you not noticed that childlike individuals most often are looked upon by others as evil? I can think of many who were looked at cross-eyed their entire lives, simply because of their childlike demeanor, even though there was truth and the power of living in them. Many such people never get recognized, because childlikeness is of no use to our society. It needs clever and ruthless people who can exercise power over others; but the childlike must always seem to be on its way out. As the Lord Jesus, in his childlikeness and humility, had to stand against the religious laws of his day and thus get himself murdered, so it still goes today.

A person must be converted twice; once from the natural man to the spiritual, and then again from the spiritual man to the natural.

(Johann Christoph Blumhardt)

THE NEW REVELATION

I am truly pleased by the question, “Does what once was said long ago to the people of that time apply also to us?” Indeed, this was also the question of my life, the answer coming to me only with difficulty. The question was solved not only theoretically but practically, being set forth through an act of God so that then we could say, “*Now* it applies to us; and even if it did not fully happen with the biblical people, it can now happen with me.” Thus something is happening for us today which did not take place for Abraham or Moses or even one of the apostles.

The advance of the kingdom of God brings to light old and *new* demands, as these may be required, and also old and new promises. There is nothing rigid, nothing mechanical about the rule of our God. Everything is always new, alive, relevant, and timely. And our problem, then, is always to understand what it is that is going on *today*.

Meanwhile, I believe, we have to seek—on the basis of the conscientious belief that Jesus is the truth of God—to seek that which today is true to life and to the living promises of God. I can understand that you—and many people—find this doubtful. Yet the old gives way; and new necessities bring forward new graces. And until this last is firmly understood, we will continue to stagger about. In this you can trust: whoever seeks will find, because God is never lost. However, he will be found only where he is, not letting him-

self be found where he does not wish to be. In this way, then, we must *seek* him.

Apart from life-experiences it does not happen. We dare boldly to say that “revelation” is also needed *today*; it did not terminate with the Bible. I am well aware that many people get angry over the word “revelation” and consequently, out of their very piety, have quarreled over all of God’s direct actions and his many miraculous deeds. But I do not see why, out of small-mindedness, we should allow the Highest to be robbed of what is his.

Christ lives; and if he lives, then there also is revelation; and revelation is essential for the hearts of those who would be enlightened by God.

On this basis [i.e., a new development of the kingdom of God penetrating the world] it is now permitted us to think of all things as being new. And if, for example, the apostles earlier have said, “Whoever believes is blessed, but whoever does not believe is damned; blessedness to those who believe, woe to those who do not”—that, in the course of the centuries, has changed a bit. Today it means: “Be blessed! Be blessed also for your enemies, for your opponents—be blessed even for the unbelievers!” We must be a people of blessing for the whole world; then the kingdom of God will come in blessedness.

If we are awaiting a new Zion [i.e., a new Jerusalem, which is the new church community of the redeemed people of God], then, in our hearts we must prepare for *that* Zion and disregard the position presently defined by anyone's church confession. In our hearts we must make ready to serve God alone. And if we become fellow workers with God toward that end, then we will again be *biblical*. It certainly is no fine or helpful word to call a person "biblical" simply because he follows and is zealous for the confessions.

The "biblical" keeps itself *free*. Thus, as it has always been, so today it also is difficult to seek and to give expression to that which is of God. Rather, so much of the human has found expression that the "biblical" now appears as some sort of defense for our civil and social life. Thus it can happen that finally someone with a *biblical* truth must be willing to be seen as a corrupter of the state and of the church.

Yet even so, Christ the Cornerstone stands eternal; and from this stone ever and again will come "the new"—until heaven and earth are themselves made new and the old has gone down before the new, in-streaming kingdom of God.

People speak much these days about "the inspiration of scripture"; and this is good. However, I prefer to speak of "inspired people." God be thanked that we have scriptures

that came from those through whom God's Spirit spoke the truth. Yet it is the *prophet* who is inspired, not the letter of scripture. And if the letter is to lead to the truth, so must you also be led by the Spirit of God as you read.

Conversely, today's natural man knows nothing of the Spirit of God and so gets himself quite confused regarding the words of the inspired prophets. But thus, also, a man like Luther could, for his time, personally witness to the God-intended truth of that for which other writers of *his* time could find no meaning nor make any sense. He was ruled by God and the Spirit, not by biblical texts. But if we all attend only upon the revealed life of God, and if each person is zealous only for his own gifts regarding God's truth and steadfastness, then we do not need to be in conflict over the inspiration of scripture. We then can find ourselves in reciprocal agreement.

Even in ancient times there was a distinction: God in Yahweh and God in the totality of the world. Thus the heathen stood under God, but Israel under God in Yahweh—and Yahweh is the colleague who lives *with man*. Originally the name Yahweh was a cry, "He is here!" When something happens as one of the gracious acts of God, that signifies, "He is here!" As Jacob lay with a stone for his pillow and saw the ladder to heaven, he said, "He is here!" And thus there was built up a concept of God's entirely loving actions signifying *Yahweh*. Indeed, in this regard there is nothing

when one *believes* that it does. Many people do not take this personally enough, and God withdraws; then the word remains hidden and no longer has *power*. Consequently, many no longer take it as the word of God and want nothing more to do with it. A person must watch himself that he does not take the word of God too humanly, too superficially.

That which God has spoken represents his *Person*. I would almost like to say, “Don’t give me the word as though it were something—not the Bible but God in the Bible.”...One can use the Bible in a fearful, superstitious way if one looks only on the outward aspect of what it says, sticking to the letter rather than simply accepting that *God* is present in it. Now, if I read the Law, I am also speaking with God. This way a person can understand the Bible quite simply, because he hears God speak to him. There comes to him an understanding quite different from what otherwise would be the case. But when the person fails to do this sort of reading, he is being unbiblical. He is not understanding the Bible, because he is not taking it as something God says. If we translate everything coming to us from God into *human* terms, then we have a system; and that means that the “biblical” and, indeed, the essential Bible itself are utterly lost...

So it goes continually with everything one should say and hear: if he does it as seated at the feet of God, it will have a totally different effect from what it would if he simply read a book. Doing *that* has no real value...It is not the book that has value; it is *persons* that have value—in this case, the Per-

stroke upon the death of the apostles...Obviously, the Foundation Stone no longer could be eliminated from the world; but the divine, unmediated progress of heavenly demonstrations upon earth, the immediate revelations of God among men, these were over. People helped themselves by means of *memories*, and in this way there could be truly pious people and many times, also, intimations of Zion [i.e., of the redeemed community of the new Jerusalem]. Here and there a light still flashed. But in general, that of God was overwhelmed by “the human”...Human cleverness came up like mushrooms. Heathenish systems got mixed into the true Christian faith...War and bloodletting marked the course of Christendom.

FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO “RELIGION”

You are God’s...You need only the self-knowledge that God can show you; you don’t need “religion.”

Our worlds break apart; they don’t last, But God’s world is established upon the *word* of God; and that is eternal...

These worlds, or cultures, which man has made—whether they be Chinese or European—all collapse together. But God be praised, while they are falling, we can smile—if, through the fall of these carnal worlds, we hold firm to and assert God’s law and in no way let ourselves be deflected from striving for his world. Such a disposition of the heart

and such a striving of the spirit, these alone will lead us to where we can experience the advance of the kingdom of God.

Recently, in another country, I met a person with whom I had a passing conversation touching upon religion. He expressed this view: “There is no *progress* in religion; we have learned that much. It is always the same. In all other works of the human spirit there is progress. Religion alone keeps its seat.” I cringed but had to say, “Yes, you are right!”

But in *the truth* there is progress. The truth imparts life; but no invention of the world can give us progress in life. It is in righteousness that progress must come; but no invention of the world makes men good and upright. Most of all, it is *the kingdom of God* that represents progress. And in God’s kingdom there is none of the old “sitting on the spot”; for the kingdom of God consists in the coming of the truth and righteousness of our God.

Where would we be if we had only “religion” which was expressed in certain teachings—and these were all we had to live by and to present before our neighbors? No, the one thing that is truly alive is the hope of a new day for man. But take that hope out of its Christian context, and it no longer exists at all; it is not aroused through some religion or other.

“Having Christianity” is nothing difficult. Concerning one “Christianity”—for there are several varieties—a person can hardly *avoid* it; he comes into it simply by being born, and it causes him no great trouble to stay in. It might cause him a bit of trouble actually to live it out; but whoever wants to can do so blithely.

Yet there is another sort of Christianity that is to be *enclosed within the heart*—this one called “the rule of God upon the earth.” It is to be so enclosed in the heart that one knows for a certainty, “It *will* come to be!” And that Christianity many times will make us anxious and sorrowful.

It seems right to me that the Lord Jesus should have said, in effect, “Children, it is on the very turf of Christianity and the following of Jesus that there will be the most lies, the most power plays of darkness trying to destroy us.”

It isn’t pretty but is nevertheless true that, on the spot where the Highest and Holiest is fighting for our eternity, *there* is taking place the most deception and error. And it is all the more dangerous that it is precisely there that error takes on the appearance of truth, because words can play so important a role. It always has been dangerous, in the area of the religious life and the following of Jesus, that words have meant so much. Yet words don’t produce anything all that important; only *actions* are truly creative. And unless God leads his people into *action*—people whose only purpose is to follow—then nothing will go forward.

We have taken pains to emphasize that we are not to identify our Christianity with Christ himself...We have sought to explain how Christendom is, so to speak, a secondary world in which Christ is honored as God—although only in the way the world speaks of God. Thus, as the world *speaks* of God without becoming godly, so the secondary world of Christendom speaks of Christ without following him.

A person speaks of faith *in* Christ yet produces no faith for Christ (to use)...He believes *in* the love of God which was in Christ but does nothing *for* (or in response to) the love of God. He believes in eternal life but does not believe in doing anything *for* (or about) eternal life. He believes in the kingdom of God; he does not believe anything *for* (the sake of) the kingdom of God. So faith, hope, and love are only words if the *actions* die within us; and all the noisy gongs and clanging cymbals of Christendom, this secondary world which still involves Christ, cannot hide that wretched death.

Would it be too much to say that, in Christendom, Christ is dead and Christians have returned to the sin of the ancient people of God?

Not with “strange gods” perhaps—although Christians may not be entirely free of that—but of themselves they have throttled the God-longing within themselves; and it is

now the varieties of Christianity of every form that strive for the highest spot. If formerly the totality of mankind build the Tower of Babel, we now see the *Christian churches* building that tower. *They* want to be infallible, to be the greatest and most clever. *They* figure things out; and *they* will suppress God's word and, with their own words, bring in the kingdom.

[Referring to Mt. 11:25-30, Blumhardt says:] that was the time when the Lord Jesus felt himself forsaken but where, in the little land of Galilee, the simple people began to bring him joy, But those who were rulers among men had quickly turned away.

And that is how it always goes among us: that which the Lord Jesus would give, such people are the first not to want it. Whether they are now people of love and goodwill or, as then in Jerusalem, people of pride and arrogance, these rulers who dominate human culture are always and everywhere present.

And the greatest goodheartedness and kindness in a populace, even the best of wills, is of no advantage regarding that for which Jesus came. He came to raise mankind completely out of earthly things and into the heights of God. And in doing that, he first of all forces earthly things *out* of the heights of God. And no society is about to let that happen.

So it has been, even to the present day, One can, in a manner of speaking, *enculturate* Christianity and even bring it to power; but then it is no longer what Jesus had in mind. Even

such “Christian” powers—which ultimately are in opposition to the Spirit of God—will be displaced by other powers or else become bound up with them; and the whole world will again be running on the same old tracks. There is no track driving through to Christianity.

We dare not surrender that which we so long have carried in the heart, namely, that, to the glory of God, the Savior might reveal himself in new ways. This is, indeed, a great offense to many people, because, in present-day Christendom, everyone thinks he can see what is needed for the fulfillment of God’s will upon earth. I very much wish that I could do that, hopeful of what I might observe in the various forms of Christianity. However, I am not able to do so; for everywhere there is untruth and unrighteousness that in some way must be removed if, in its truth and righteousness, the kingdom of God is to become public fact.

I grant you that there are now also many people who object that the Bible gives us no warrant at all for waiting any longer—as does even a Christian “religion,” in suggesting that, after death, one becomes blessed and continues so until the end of the world. Yet perhaps one may be permitted to think a bit differently regarding the scriptures. And whoever reads the scriptures carefully will find, in the Old Testament as well as the New, that it is the definite will of God to have, *on earth*, a people who, in justice and innocence, love not themselves but God and thus become the light for the

of God...We certainly will not be deceived if, out of present events, we read *the* mind of God, the mind which leads out of the old system of the rule of the worldly church and into a new and fresh life of truth.

A judgment runs through our time. A finger of truth points to this and that lie or deception in custom and religion. A finger of justice demands that we follow the voice of truth and consider whether everything shouldn't be done differently.

After the human race has continued to live on in tranquility through the centuries, never having been jolted or shaken by the surging waters of history, then all sorts of comforts make themselves at home by way of habit and custom. Finally, these come to be seen as being *of God*. Then it can happen that everything is done only with the consideration of defending human arrangements, because it appears that in these consist the survival of society. It looks as though everything would break apart if these time-bound arrangements were to tumble.

Once a person has made a specialty out of a bad business, he often is too cowardly to hold it up to the judgment of God for *itself* and against *himself*. Thus we can see that a whole lot of nonsense and superstition has crept into Christianity; it is easy enough to spot shortcomings and perversities in our religious institutions. However, people have gotten themselves used to these things and so take them all

in stride in order to retain these necessary institutions. So, even though there is much that is perverse and all the people groan under it, still, whenever the righteous voice of God comes, requiring truth and justice, the truth and justice get damned, and the nonsense is defended.

Even if we were to collect all the good of Christendom and the church and clothe ourselves in it, the peoples would still remain in darkness. The blackness of sin and death among men and nations is still the typical sign of human existence. In view of this, some people become pessimists and others optimists. However, without the light represented by the actuality of the kingdom of God, neither view has been able to win ascendancy.

The Jesus who says, “I am the truth,” is not so revealed in any congregation of Christians that, regarding their manner of life, an observer could with confidence say, “There, in that group, is taking form the truth of God which makes possible the unfolding history of the kingdom of God and allows the goal of the fulfillment of that kingdom to come into sight.” ...What we lack is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth...

It is no wonder the Holy Spirit is silent when we respect all other spirits more than we do that Spirit. That is why, for a long time, we have taken pains to put ourselves under judgment, in order to become fully conscious as to which we truly prefer: God or the world; Christ or Christendom; church or Spirit.

includes what is good and true. And, on the other hand, the Protestants have not represented the truth of all things; they have incorporated much that is not true. Consequently, God has willed that Protestantism and Catholicism remain standing alongside each other.

God's primary purpose in the Reformation was not simply that a more appropriate Christian viewpoint, or religion, or denomination arise, under which our religious lives could continue. No, it was rather that new light might come, in deed and in truth a preparation for the coming of the Lord. If I were to add anything further, it is that, for me, the three hundred fifty years of the Reformation have been nothing other than an image of a spiritual renewal which must extend through the entire world, beginning as the light and glory of God over all the peoples of earth until it leads to a revival into a new and godly life.

It is a mistake when, in considering the Reformation, we think only of the establishment of Protestantism, the Evangelical Churches—Lutheran, Reformed, or whatever. The Lord had much greater and extensive intentions for the Reformation. Our long-held understanding, that all the redemptive purposes of God would have to be fulfilled in the Evangelicals, as though no other peoples or churches even existed, as though we were a new Israel which had only to dream egotistically and self-lovingly about herself—that was not right.

Johann Christoph Blumhardt

THE NEW AWAKENING AND THE BLUMHARDTS' CONCEPT
OF HOPE

There is no other way to quench the thirst, to end the drought, than through God pouring out his Spirit. There are many in this day and age that no longer want to believe this. Why? Because this would be something out of the ordinary, not fitting into the usual courses of this world...For that reason, it appears too big to most people. But I can't help that; I can't make it any smaller, or think of it as any smaller, than it is.

A stream of the Spirit will come...Only let us await it with confidence! Indeed, a small part of the expectation already was fulfilled in the time of the apostles...Indeed, must it not now be fulfilled on a large scale as it was then on a smaller one? In that first outpouring of the Spirit we had proof that God keeps his word. However, now we need it again. We are a dehydrated people. The thirst is almost killing us; and it is entirely too awful how people are deteriorating both inwardly and outwardly. But now, because we need it again, God will also give it again.

(Johann Christoph Blumhardt)

We must exercise justice and seek it with a whole heart. Then our hearts will call for the Holy Spirit to draw near

and rule over us. Today justice is like a trembling sword above us. However, it does not yet fall, in order that we not be shattered. There is rather a waiting to see whether people can be found to whom judgment can be revealed, thereby making a new beginning.

“What should be happening from the human side so that things again can be better?” To this I can answer nothing other than that, among Christians, there should be more sighing and longing for that which is missing, in general more faith in the Holy Spirit.

However, people let everything stand as though it was good enough just as it is. They act as if nothing more were required of them from above—even as they betray the fact that what they do have was contrived and acquired by study rather than by inspiration...Because an evil race still will not believe, it will let the Savior be the one who destroys, who, in judgment, even now smashes everything into the abyss—this, rather than the one who blesses and whose heart, out of concern for the deliverance of the many, moves him to be the instrument for mediating what otherwise would be the *still-promised* Spirit.

Whoever truly wants to do something should learn to have a heart for the millions, as did Jesus, who, not just in appearance but through his blood, showed a desire to bring reconciliation to the entire world. Those who, out of sympathy with the lament over endless misery on all sides, do

themselves sigh, weep, and yearn, seeking in the scriptures an understanding of the Holy Spirit—they are the ones who truly help us toward a better time.

(Johann Christoph Blumhardt)

I see that you are entirely correct in waiting upon God for your health. I would say only one other thing: do not weaken yourself with the thought that, because you are not yet well, you must be guilty. One can always reproach himself about many things; but it is not good when a person makes the action of God dependent upon his own doing or not doing—especially when someone like you has his whole heart and longing centered upon the authority and help of God. Only remain firm in your love for God, even when the move out of disease and into life and health goes slowly. You are and will remain God's; and you can continually come to know that in your heart.

All sick people should note this: God cannot save when guilt is present; he is just. This has been clear to me for many years; there has never been a time when I could simply pray, “May the people become healthy.” No, for a long time I have known very well that, under the circumstances, help does not come through the prayer, “Make me well,” but rather through the patient word, “I will suffer.” Often, through suffering, one must do a kindness for our dear God, as it were. The more a person will, gladly and

entirely, go to meet him, the more that which is lacking can be made whole.

Signs and wonders are all right as legitimate proof that one has to do with our dear God; but they cannot truly help us. What helps us is justice and truth; and a hundred thousand miracles are of little use in comparison to one word of truth, or one command of truth through which God makes something straight that was crooked.

A great many prayers and sighs climb clear up to heaven and then fall back to earth again like the rain. Very few penetrate to the throne of God so that it can be said, “They have been prayed.”

If I do not have an ear to the telephone in order to receive from God into myself, then likewise God does not have an ear on the other end to receive *my* words into *himself*. God will not hear us one-sidedly; there must be correspondence between us.

Thus, it is understandable that sometimes it must be said to people, “Suspend all your praying for a time! Seek first to receive God into yourselves, be fair to him; and then prayer will come of itself without forethought. It will be childlike and in accordance with the truth.”

From our side, the first thing is that we listen to God. However, if, in our inward being, we are open only to the next best, the bustle of the world, then in earthly pleasures

and afflictions our hearts are roused for our own sakes. Then, if the uplifting God does not make us uplifted, we may be sure that our praying is not actually prayer. God can well hear the sighs of everyone, even the foolish; yet, in reality, only those can *pray* who *listen* to God.

son should say that a father has no need that his sons help him; it is only goodness when he simply allows them, as his children, to come on their own. As if it could make no difference to a father whether his sons desert him and he has to hire outsiders!

But all that is nothing. We do not even want to stay with the Father simply as servants. No, then it would be preferable that, like the prodigal son, we waste in riotous living the wealth that the Father gave us, until we land with the pigs. Then, naturally, it must be an honor for the Father when we return home in rags—although, certainly, we should not be as stupid as the prodigal, who wanted to work and be a day laborer. No, we come only to be blessed in that very coming!

Once in a while God needs people who will help him. That is the secret of the summons into covenant; without the covenant with God, nothing happens. I know very well what is regularly hurled at me: “We can’t *build* the kingdom of God.” Obviously not; we cannot build it; and it is just for that reason the Almighty founded a covenant. Through it, he would have people who bear fruit for him, who fight for him, who no longer misuse weapons upon human flesh but use them to carve out of the evil, blasphemous world of men that which will be to God’s honor, that it might be great. For this, God needs people. Yet many are called, but few are chosen, Why is this? Because they do not truly give themselves;

only strong people making something of themselves, people who understand how to take power into their own hands; but he was always the weak one. The Lord Jesus was not the sort of man who would say to his disciples, “Pay attention to how I bring things off. The future is mine!” No, he refused all this and came to nothing—in *this* world, perhaps we should say.

In every age, whatever is difficult is understood only by a few. That to which everyone runs—that which everyone, as part of the herd, simply accepts—that is easy. So, not where the many dash and run, but where only a few are to be seen—there lies the deeper truth. And so today Jesus’ “little flock” consists of those who are not content with run-of-the-mill Christianity but who trust in one who is greater, having hope in a high goal for mankind.

Dear friends, God can help through just a few people and through our hope, which is the Spirit. The Spirit is greater than the whole world. The children of God depend upon the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit enters them and makes of them a dwelling of God so that from just one sighing child of God the entire glory of God can radiate. God does not need to count and say, “Yes, by all means I must have a hundred thousand in the world; otherwise nothing will succeed; if there are only a thousand, then all is lost.” Such calculation is not necessary for God. If he has only several—indeed, at present, hardly any—yet through one

person he can let such glory radiate that the hope gleams through the whole world.

Our dear God never lets his little flock become prominent. They are always in the background. They might be ever so successful and strong within themselves; but they will never win human fame through human deeds, not even if they be the finest of prophets or angels. Indeed, precisely because they are such, they must remain hidden. Our dear God is not about to strike a deal with mankind on the basis of any great personages he can claim for himself.

Not the strong and powerful, but the simple, the insignificant, the ones the world doesn't count, those who face great difficulties without apparent help but who yet have a place within them where God can rule—these are the ones through whom God will accomplish his purpose, whether they be men or women, the children or the aged, the foolish or the clever. None of this depends upon our intellect or strength but upon the rule of God.

Until Jesus comes, his will remain a “little flock.” Yet this is not simply because only a little flock are to be called to glory—oh, what an awful mistake! No! No! —It is because the rest of the poor people simply have not the wherewithal to bring off the assignment...But the little flock arrives at the goal; and it is through this flock that the kingdom will be given...

Before this time, the kingdom remains a matter only for individuals, but thereafter, for all. Then shall they be retrieved from the hells and the depths, from sin and from death. Sin and death shall not have won a single person. This is a freedom we have in God; we will be able to stand so firmly that not a single hell will be able to say, "This man belongs to me." "No, he belongs to God," I say; and if no one else will say it, I do. Not a single hell can say, "The man is mine." No, no! Either all belong to my Father in heaven or else none do.

If I must give up hope for any person in any respect, then Jesus is not risen. I tell you this before God and his angels, before Jesus himself, "You are not the light of the world if I have to give up hope." ...For me, this *is* the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Of course, it takes a real battle to keep oneself within this light of redemption, because I must ever create this redeemed world within myself, as it were. We always stand in psychological, spiritual, and physical relationships to the world as a whole. And now one sees all and feels all; when one is thus transformed by the light of resurrection, there is pain, but it has an end. There are hells; but they have an end. There is death and sin enough; but they will reach their ends.

In this knowledge, I can bear the pain; it is integral to justice that there be reward *and punishment*, grace, *and judgment*. As long as good and evil are operating simultaneously,

then it is a necessary part of justice that these things exist—even if only temporarily.

But before you come to faith—the faith that hell, sin, and death have an end; that all people are God’s; that, if we believe in Jesus Christ, we are to fight on behalf of all people—before we can promote the love of God in heaven, under the earth, and in all people; before we can ourselves become realized persons in eternal life—before any of this, we believers have to fight against melancholy, a melancholy that is laid directly upon us. However, we must not, to the world, be an example of mourning. If we cannot rejoice in our faith, then we cannot invite other people into it. So we must put the pain behind us and hold firmly and steadily to the Lord, placing heaven and earth under their master.

Because God has made us great, so that we cannot be satisfied with small things, so we must also learn to think big. If you can believe me, throw off the shackles; think big! The hellish gospel, the devil’s gospel, must be trodden under foot so that, in the end, Jesus can come to all creatures and no false prophet can make difficult the path of my soul to the Father in heaven.

My beloved friends, the one who does this is *Jesus!*

THE PEOPLE OF GOD AND THE SERVICE OF GOD

There should always be a people gathered on the basis of revelation, of whom God can say, “You are *my* people,” To

these, his people, great promises regarding both earthly and eternal life are given. And the promise has been maintained in the revelation of God even into the new age, the age of Jesus Christ. Also, in the name of Jesus Christ, a community shall be founded in which everything God has promised shall come to fulfillment. Today it is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that produces the community for which the promises are intended.

It so happens that there is only a very small band of those who truly want to be fighters. I tell you, there are *peoples*, Christian peoples, where not a single person is a fighter, not one. There are thousands of *Christians*, and *not one* will hazard his blood; they all make excuses...They bow and scrape around the Lord Jesus, but they are not fighters. They will not give their lives even unto death; and whoever will not do so can never be a disciple of Jesus, fighting for his victory.

Until all sin is checked, until the darkness which has accumulated for centuries is dissolved and removed from among people, the community of Christ must suffer. Yet, thanks be to God, in this suffering we also discover a help that makes it possible to hold out...We who believe in the Savior can legitimately think of ourselves as people who, through our own suffering, help in the suffering of Jesus Christ by which the darkness is overcome. Insofar as we are thinking of other people, our suffering becomes a force that helps the Father

in heaven in building his kingdom on earth...The cross of Jesus led to the resurrection; and our cross will also bring resurrection...Those who bear their crosses are Jesus' co-workers, working to make all things new.

It is possible that the fruit of our prayers will first be experienced by later generations, by generations breaking forth in the songs of praise which we ourselves would have liked to address to heaven in thanks for the *granting* of those prayers. Yet, how many attacks does it take before the walls of a well-entrenched city are breached? Our prayers, it might be said, are hammer-strokes against the bulwark of the princes of darkness; they must be oft repeated. Many years can pass by, even a number of generations die away, before a breakthrough occurs. However, not a single hit is wasted; and if they are continued, then even the most secure wall must finally fall. Then the glory of the Lord will have a clear path upon which to stride forth with healing and blessing for the wasted fields of mankind.

(Johann Christoph Blumhardt)

THE ZION OF GOD

What is Zion, and who is “the inhabitant of Zion” who is said to “shout and sing for joy” (Isa. 12:6)? It is the personality who, according to God’s revelation, dies to the world

and lives for God. Sometimes it has been only one person who could shout and sing for joy because he was allowed an experience of the living God. Often it has been several, an entire community; it could be thousands or even millions. The more people it is, the more pleasing it is to our dear God. But Zion must be a sort of people who are so fired by the light and life of God that they give themselves body and soul, making God the single treasure of their hearts, cost what it may...Zion is not an earthly faction, not a community possessing mere religious teachings and forms. The true people of Zion have no particular artistic or technical skill, no strength of character that would make them persons of importance. Their strength is in God alone...These people are “the inhabitant of Zion.”

Whenever, upon earth, God’s cause was to take a step forward, then God always created a Zion, i.e., a smaller or larger community of people differentiated by their manner of life, with hearts kept open to God’s doing and speaking. Apart from such a Zion, there has never been anything of God’s splendor given to the world. Out of a Zion, for the first time, come rights and laws that are themselves right, living, and true; without such a Zion, they die off and become a dead weight on the body of humanity.

Godly truth and eternity can dwell upon earth only so far as there is created what we call a “Zion,” in which people pay attention to these things.

THE INVISIBLE BATTLEFIELD

Because our human world displays increasing activity in its resistance to God, there is a battle. It is a battle taking place primarily in inwardness, in the invisible life-impulses of man. However, the expectation is that, once the invisible has been swept clear of all hindrance, then visible change also can show itself in clear and true manifestations of life... If, through the stirring and moving of their lives toward the truth, the people of God achieve victory over this unjust and untrue interior existence, then the outward—as far as this age will allow—can immediately be formed as new, true, and eternal.

There is a battle taking place outside of human society. There is a battle taking place in the spiritual regions surrounding us. There is, on the one side, the bright, clear light of God which presses toward people, allowing them to lift themselves from the ground to experience new spiritual development time and again, to come, time and again, to moral growth and achievement—all of this being the great and mighty working of the good in the midst of humanity... And on the other side, there is always the enemy of the good and of mankind, the enemy of God and his people.

THE HUMAN VISION

When we look back over the history of mankind, we see a forest where trees once grew but where the storms have passed, laying it waste. In this, in the whole unhappy course of mankind, our dear God is still the manager who allows people—who must belong to *him*—to be his saints. These are people in whom he is a power and to whom he simply says, “You must go my way and demonstrate that, even under evil conditions, a way is to be found which can be traveled without becoming entangled.”...Always, when things are to move forward, God must have saints who also stand in their own times; who understand the times; who know how to live among the people of the times; but who, even though the times be ever so perverted, still carry the high thoughts of the kingdom of God in their spirits.

There are at hand battles against evil that must be carried through. God assigns these battles to us, and for that reason we must not think that things always have to go well with us. Our existence is justified only if we will fight against evil and make a pact with the good against the evil...That, at a future time, this battle will resolve itself into a victory in which we can rejoice—that is our consolation. For the present, however, the battle itself is our joy. And even when

the going gets hot, we will remain loyal in battle—that is our calling. It is because the *entire* human race is not in a position to do so that God entrusts this battle to particular individuals, individuals who can intercede on behalf of everyone.

What I see to be the greatest danger for most people is that they judge themselves and others against a norm set up by society, one by which people can flatter themselves. And this self-justification becomes a powerful force. As a stance before God, it is colossal autonomy. In that situation, one dare not raise any questions about the encompassing social milieu.

Ultimately, however, the only thing of importance is God's opinion. Men can neither justify nor damn; only God can... To be able to live *before him*—this is what we must seek. We don't need the slightest recognition from men; and we don't want it, either. We need only God's recognition on earth. His freedom, nobility, and superiority must captivate us. I do not want to be dependent upon anything else, so that I can be completely dependent upon God, his eternity, truth, and greatness.

We should be in high humor all the day, strong in spirit, vigorous, godly, and powerful against all enemies and the hindrances of life.

No cursing, no ill will, no contempt ever should be heard from our mouths; this is the new—perhaps brand-new—attitude that can work inconspicuously in our time. We have been prohibited from heaping hatred on our enemies, even when we have been totally misunderstood. Today it is *this* enemy-loving Jesus who has become great, in whom we are able to bear all enmity with hearts full of blessing.

When I see people as they are, when they are building things higher and higher, when they are aroused against all that is evil—I always see also that they will soon fall away, exhausted and sick. The weeds choke them; they don't have the breath of God; they think that, by external means, they can do what needs to be done; the breath of God has gone out of them.

Thus, our situation always would be hopeless, If it weren't that we have a great hope: the Lord sends reapers into the harvest first to clear out the weeds (Mt. 13:24-30). For me, this represents the most heartfelt need of our times. These reapers, we should know, are not men, not visible men. We could not possibly do this job. No one should think that he is able to loosen the weeds from any other person. He always will destroy the grain itself; and weeds look to him like good grain.

The weeds are actually people's desire for reputation one over another—envy, jealousy, and all. Yet all the greater is that which the Lord Jesus sees and proclaims and to which he also opens our eyes. There are the reapers whom the Lord very quietly sends into the harvest. These are invisible powers, including his Holy Spirit and his angels. These are all the million-faceted powers of the good that God has given. The time is coming when they will receive a knife in their

hands; and the enemy of God and of men will be deprived of his fruit.

Regarding that which the Lord is waiting to bring together for the first time, in quiet and obscurity God already has done a very great deal. The eternal God can create at the deepest, most hidden levels that which no human being notices. In fact, he creates much that, if our eyes were opened to see, would truly amaze us...Indeed, on the surface it can look as though there were no God in heaven. Yet none of us sees into the depths; and God does not intend that we should be able to. Yet, if we are awaiting something—a new age, a time of redemption—then we dare not assume that this possibly would come overnight, without preparation.

(Johann Christoph Blumhardt)

DANGER OF DEGENERACY

*Areas in which Blumhardt's thought might become distorted
among his followers. — V.E.*

BEING QUIET OR QUIETISM?

The hope derived from the light of the Holy Spirit also has its reverse side, namely, that we come alive and recognize that the hope itself is alive with possibilities for us—possibilities, we should say, that lie in God, certainly, but in the creation as well. There are people who think nothing more is possible than what they can see with their half-dead eyes. Thus, when they hope, it is a feeble matter, because they always think, “We can’t do anything at all; everything must come down from heaven.”

It is different with those who know true hope; they become active on their own. How can I hope for a new heaven and a new earth in which justice dwells, how can I hope out of the strength of the Spirit, unless I am conducting myself in such a way that something more just, something better, can be created on earth? For everything God does must happen through us. It would be wrong for us to do nothing at all. As soon as God lays some promise in our hearts—and he has laid it in our hearts that things shall be better—in his doing this, there also comes a certain strength: “Now begin! The hope is there; so you can begin!”

battle. A soldier has peace when the bullet hits him and he falls dead, *as an honorable fighter in the war.* A soldier does not have peace when he lies in his tent sleeping through the fighting.

FREEDOM OR FORMULA?

The love of God makes free. We always have been free people, for we stand in the love of God. And I say to you, dear friend, “Wherever you may be, if you succeed in saying ‘Jesus’ in such way that everything of your own falls to the ground and you come into the love of the Father, then you are free.”

The regime of God requires free people...God needs flexible people; in the love of God we are uncommonly flexible. And in direct correlation to the needs of the kingdom of God we must be ready to change; we cannot continue century after century in *one* manner.

God meets me in a completely different way than he does you. All of us may have the same concept of Yahweh; but he will never speak to you as he does to me; he will appear individually to you differently from what he does to me. There remains a certain freedom in every individual regarding our feeling for God and our relationship to him—even though we are united as one people through *one* Spirit. Yahweh is nothing mechanistic.

I cannot say more than that I would that everyone might

We are convinced that in this time, when everything is being ruined and broken, inconspicuous seeds of the kingdom of God yet are being planted in the world. These seeds, which come from God himself, will not rot under the debris of the present day world but will much more truly, while the old is being rolled out of the way, grow upwards to serve as a transfiguration of the name “Jesus” to “The Christ of the World.”

Therefore, let as much torment and grief take root here and there among people as will, we will not despair but rather look to the future with courage, not letting ourselves become dependent upon this or that law or human order but letting ourselves be dependent upon Jesus, the light of the world. He will live and conquer until the entire creation glistens with his light to the glory of God, until our race of men who have ever been lost finally find the path which alone will lead them to the goal, to the destiny which, as sons of God, they have in creation.

CONCLUSION

*We in the final battle stand,
Where Life and Death are fighting.
Remain, then, under God's command,
If wrong you would be righting.
The world, the old, is overthrown;
And Jesus' kingdom, it alone,
Arises from the ruins.*

Regehr arranged his selections in the chronological order of their original delivery; I have chosen, instead, to form them into a somewhat logical sequence. In the interest of including as much of Blumhardt's thought as possible, I also have taken the liberty to condense and to excerpt where that seemed helpful.

Regehr made his selections from the four-volume collection of the works of the younger Blumhardt, *Christoph Blumhardt: Eine Auswahl aus seinen Predigten, Andachten und Schriften [CFBL], herausgegeben von R. Lejeune* (Rotapfel Verlag, 1925-37). Each selection in Part 2 includes a reference that identifies each piece as to source and date and indicates what sort of editing has been done. — V.E.

“I am making all things new!” This was the main source of power for Jesus as long as he was on earth. This is the source of power and might which arises in us again and again through the Spirit of Christ, so that we may not keep on working foolishly with externals, but may be inspired to hope that all things will indeed become new. What to us is the world with all its evils if we have become strong in the Spirit of God? Who can name anything that could make us afraid if we are strong in the Spirit of God? When we have become new, then we conquer all things.

CFBL 4:71-76 (#9). Evening worship of September 18, 1909, abridged.

Many try in their wretchedness to create some kind of religion to assure their happiness after death. Be happy in love right now, from this day forward. Begin to love! Love one another! Boll would become a paradise in one year's time if everyone here had this love of God in his heart. This needs to be grasped. Receive the full love of God, and you will be separated from your sins. There is no longer anything that condemns, because you yourselves have left the old, have become new persons, new creatures. All things have become new!

We need not wait for some special event; there is enough of blessedness now, because the love of God is effective in creating blessedness. Much creative work takes place now, because the living word is present, reviving the person both inwardly and outwardly. Suddenly someone says, "I was dead and have become alive again!" A sick person says, "I have become perfectly happy; I don't know where my sickness went to!" One lying at the point of death breathes again and does not die; an insane person is cured.

Oh, you have no inkling how many creative works take place simply because of this love of God! People are planted upon new foundations for living, foundations that have been present all along, though unused. Everything necessary is present already; but it becomes effective only where Jesus is and where one understands the love of God in Jesus.

As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. (Ezek. 34:12)

Expressions similar to this one from Ezekiel appear frequently in the Holy Scripture; and these words contain the great thought of God that must be heard and understood among men. The thought of God always is this: No one is to remain lost. God regards everything that we would call lost as his possession.

With Abraham and even earlier, nothing was ever given up. It is not as though God settled for Abraham when Abraham believed in him. Certainly not! Always, God sees beyond Abraham—and at Abraham's expense! Abraham is not to gain at the expense of the world; but Abraham is to suffer for the benefit of the world. At Abraham's expense, God looks toward all the generations of earth. Israel is called, not that God might have a people in whom he can take pleasure, but that through this people he might reach the nations, the masses of mankind which are his sheep. At Israel's expense, God goes out to the nations, and in this same great thought of God, Jesus Christ enters the world, coming into the flesh. It is not that God will settle for a dear Son and a few disciples serving him. No, at the expense of Jesus and his disciples, God is again looking to the nations. Jesus himself says: "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.

