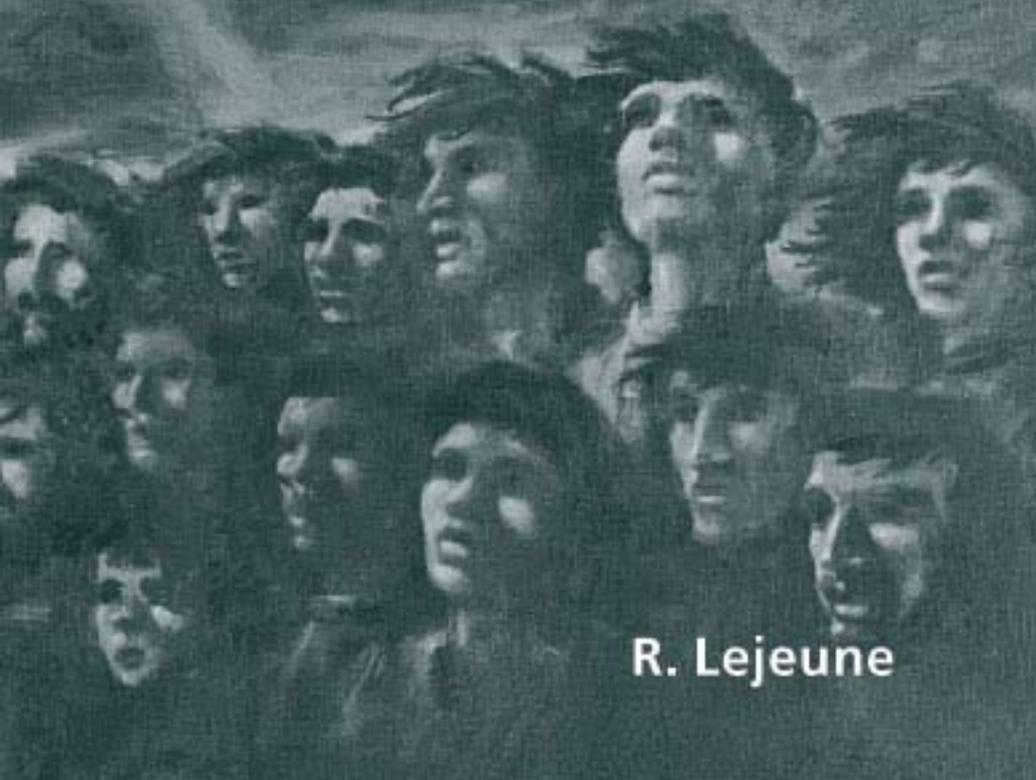




Christoph Blumhardt  
*and his Message*



R. Lejeune

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R. Lejeune



The Plough Publishing House

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Volume 2: Sterbet, so wird Jesus leben! (Die and Jesus Will Live!)

Volume 3: Ihr Menschen seid Gottes (You Belong to God!)

Volume 4: Gottes Reich kommt! (God's Kingdom Is Coming)

# Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	7
1. Christ the Lord	67
2. The Power of God	69
3. God's Allies	74
4. Behold, I Make All Things New	80
5. When God Hid His Face	92
6. The Lampstand of God's People	97
7. A New Foundation	102
8. "Our Jehovah"	110
9. The Light of the World	118
10. God's Kingdom	125
11. People of Zion	134
12. The Church of Jesus Christ	140
13. Christ in the Flesh	151
14. I Am the Lord	160
15. Jesus among the Wretched	170
16. "I Am with You"	181
17. Our Human Right	191
18. The Savior Is Coming	203
19. The New Reality	212

# Introduction

by R. Lejeune

**T**o the average person Christoph Blumhardt is not well known. In reality, only a small circle of people—mostly serious readers and scholars—are aware of Blumhardt’s significance and unique witness. This is unfortunate, to say the least. As the reader will see, the words contained in this volume express a vision of God’s kingdom so marvelous, so vast, that it is hardly possible not to be swept up in Blumhardt’s hope for the world.

The greatness of Blumhardt’s vision lies in contrast with his relatively quiet life. The setting for his work was the remote Bad Boll [“Spa” Boll] in Württemberg, Germany, where he had taken over its leadership from his father, Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880). Here he held devotions and gave sermons for his household and dedicated

himself to his guests in discussions and pastoral talks. At times, however, he did speak in public. In the 1880s he preached in many German and Swiss towns, gathering thousands around his pulpit. Near the turn of the century he also spoke in many political gatherings in his home state, Württemberg. Through the confidence of the people he was elected to the legislative assembly of the state.

Unlike many of his famous contemporaries, however, who were proclaimed as leaders by enthusiastic followers, Blumhardt did not want to be famous; he merely wanted to be a tool in the hand of Another. When friends urged him to write the story of his life, he rejected the idea with a smile but with the serious words, “No one needs to know what kind of a person someone like me was; there is nothing to it.” He simply considered his own life as being unimportant:

When the whole of humanity is finally allowed to come to God, then I would like to be a little mouse and hide in the darkest corner. I shall not want to have anything even as big as a fingernail.

Blumhardt, nonetheless, was aware of that his life was significant – not because of his person but because he witnessed to Jesus. In the sermons he held in Berlin in the spring of 1888, we find the words:

I am often surprised at how people follow me. Wherever I go, in Germany as well as in Switzerland, people follow me. At home it is the same; from early morning until late at night I do not have a moment to myself. Why

do people come to me? Because I am so devout? Oh, certainly not! Or because I have such a fine house at Boll, with beautiful surroundings and good air? Oh, no! There are much finer things of this kind elsewhere. But *one* fact does bring people here: the Savior is working here. Blumhardt is nothing and all the people are nothing. Jesus, Jesus is here! This is what attracts people and has lasting worth.

The many who came to hear Blumhardt's sermons and seek his help felt that they were not simply faced with a man of human gifts and abilities. They sensed in him *spirit* and *power*.

Those familiar with Blumhardt's message today prick up their ears. They see him not as a man clever with words, but as one entrusted with a word of God to our generation; as one through whom God speaks to us in a new way.

Blumhardt's message grows out of what he experienced. And when he preached, he spoke with vision. He concerned himself not simply with human history but with how God works and guides on earth in order to lead people toward his kingdom: "We were born from the kingdom of heaven, from that kingdom of heaven which manifests itself on earth."

This explains the almost biblical character of Blumhardt's life. Nineteenth and twentieth century liberal theology stripped the image of Christ of all that is miraculous, and cut it down to the "historical Jesus." In contrast, Blumhardt, on the basis of miraculous life experiences, witnessed to the power of victory in Christ, the same power that confronts

us so forcefully in the story of the Gospels and in the testimonies of the apostles.

This is why a mere biographical outline, not to mention a theological analysis, of Blumhardt's life would be out of place. In fact, he made it very plain how little his message was based on intellectual work: "It is quite a different matter whether one *learns* or whether one *experiences* what Jesus is." In a similar connection Blumhardt said, "If only people had prayed with my father, we would have had a different theology a long time ago."

Although from early childhood on he was familiar with the Bible, and though he seemed to live more in Biblical, sacred history than in the everyday world history, he rose above Biblicism. "Our Bible is in heaven. Not one letter of it is of any use to me unless it is given from above." Blumhardt listened closely to God's word. Over and over again, beyond the "words" of the Bible, he heard the living word of God; he was thus able to stand up against the scribes, those scholars who often in the name of "what is written" try to smother God's truth and deeds.

Blumhardt was able to say of the fountain where the people of the Bible drank:

This fountain is wonderful! We find it through all ages in the history of God's people. It is a strange fountain, a kind of school where one is placed. It is the heavenly school where God himself is able to speak.

At the same time he testified:

We have drawn our daily nourishment from this fountain. Our strength is the search for a living fountain and—

thank God! —also the finding of this source. Marvelous fountains have run, and we have tasted them and have also matured through this drinking. Whoever cannot say, “Our whole life is worth nothing without this fountain at which Joseph drank and Abraham before him, at which Moses drank, at which the apostles drank. Without this living water there is nothing”—whoever cannot say this, does not understand *us*; but neither does he understand the Bible. What is the Bible if one denies this fountain?

Blumhardt knew that his whole life was part of the history of God on earth. Like the men and women of God in the Bible, he too became a servant and witness of God through revelation, through words of God directed to him and through deeds of God done to him.

The extraordinary history of Möttlingen and Bad Boll began with the experiences of his father in Möttlingen. For Blumhardt this was of decisive importance.

Möttlingen is our birthplace. In reality we still live there today. Without Möttlingen I would not know where we would be. Möttlingen is the soil on which we stand and grow. There the Savior opened the door which is still open today.

So far I have spoken mostly of “Blumhardt,” failing to distinguish the father from the son. This is because the father and the son Blumhardt are so united in what is essential that any arbitrary comparison or distinction of the two would be wrong. One cannot even understand the son

Blumhardt without the father and his experiences—especially in Möttlingen. At the same time, the father’s significance would not have reached its full expression had not the son continued his father’s work.

Their history is *one*. And although there are differences between them, the unity that binds them must be emphasized. To a visitor from Möttlingen, the son said as a greeting to take back to that town:

Tell them that we carry Möttlingen in our hearts, and that whenever we say “Bad Boll” we really mean “Möttlingen.”

It is true that outwardly seen; in later years the son expressed the work differently. Yet he always pointed to those days of Möttlingen as the source of this history. It was not only Blumhardt’s birthplace, but also in a deeper sense, the starting point of his life.

**T**hose “days of Möttlingen” were ushered in by father Blumhardt’s struggle against the dreadful illness of Gottliebin Dittus, a parishioner at Möttlingen. Behind Gottliebin Dittus’ illness, the father Blumhardt recognized the dominion of darkness of which the Bible speaks, and how it still exerts its power over individuals. He also knew from the Bible that God “has saved us from the dominion of darkness, and placed us into the kingdom of his beloved Son.”

This kingdom had once shown its power in Jesus Christ. Blumhardt asked himself whether this same kingdom now

had to capitulate to the powers of darkness. He struggled for help and saw himself confronted with the question of faith itself: May we take God to be *certain and real*, even in the face of the hard and dreadful realities of this world?

Who is the Lord? I often had to ask myself this question. As I trusted in him who is the Lord, I felt again and again challenged to press forward. It must lead to a good end, even if it goes down into the deepest depths, or else it is not true that Jesus has crushed the viper's head underfoot.

In the report the father Blumhardt submitted to the church authorities we read this important passage:

It became clear to me that something demonic was at work here, and it was painful for me that in such a ghastly experience no counsel or remedy should be found. In these thoughts I was gripped by a kind of anger. I jumped forward, took hold of her [Gottlieb Dittus'] stiff hands and in her unconscious state called her name loudly into her ear and said, "Fold your hands and pray: Lord Jesus, help me! We have watched long enough what the devil does; now we want to see what the Lord Jesus can do." After a few moments she awoke, and repeated the words of my prayer. To the great astonishment of those present the convulsions stopped.

Blumhardt called this "the decisive moment" which threw him with irresistible power into a fight for Jesus' cause. His biographer Friedrich Zündel emphasizes the significance of this first experience:

He dared to turn deliberately and directly to God, to the Highest, with a firm conviction, to Jesus who is raised to the right hand of God; and the Lord immediately guided his actions. Here he experienced the merciful, powerful intervention of the Savior, just like the stories he had read in the Bible as a child. He began to see that this is a matter of power, a fight, a task of faith. He sensed that, ultimately, divine redemption reaches into human life only to the degree that there is a faith and a longing for it in mankind.

On the one hand the father Blumhardt had come to recognize that the world was still in a bad way, still subjected to its “Prince.” On the other hand he was very serious about his faith in the living God who helps, who can loosen our bonds, the God who opposes the kingdoms of this world with the revelation of *his* kingdom for the redemption of this world.

“Is there then no other power in the world than that of the devil?” Blumhardt asked. His was a Biblical realism, one that believed in the truth and reality of God’s kingdom and which refused to yield to the realities of this world.

Blumhardt had to recognize that in the present state of God’s kingdom the most burning question is that of power. Who is to have the power? The Savior or the darkness? In this fight the Lord wants to triumph through the faith of his Church. (*Zündel*)

Blumhardt believed in the reality of God’s kingdom. The struggle against the powers of darkness, which he carried on for almost two years, ended with a complete victory.

The true victor in this fight was proclaimed in the final outcry of the sick woman, “Jesus is victor! Jesus is victor!” With these words the sickness was overcome for good.

Thirty-five years later, on the anniversary of this final victory, Blumhardt said in a sermon:

That was a fight against personalities of the darkness. We struggled for twenty-one months to see who would win; I in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, or she in her old rebelliousness against the living God. I remained courageous, trusting in the Lord Jesus. We went through hard times and I was driven to the extreme, yet the thought of Jesus, the beginner and achiever of faith, kept me strong. In the end even the darkness had to exclaim, *Jesus is victor!*

*Jesus is victor!* This is the father Blumhardt’s experience; it determined his whole future life. The son Blumhardt quite rightly called “Jesus is victor!” the greatest experience of his father’s life.

This “fight” must be seen from within a larger context. It represents the *initial* but not the preeminent point for Blumhardt. As the son Blumhardt said,

One may judge these experiences as one will; this much remains certain: the gratitude and love of tens of thousands for the deep experience of a new life and new hope for life which grew out of that experience. The mighty power of the healing and life-giving words that came out of my father’s mouth had its roots in that experience and became a reality in the hearts of thousands.

These words indicate that in the “*fight*” the new life had merely begun. The fight had merely ushered in God’s history, and only in its development did its true meaning and importance become fully revealed. In fact, it was only after the fight had receded that the new experiences of God came. Thus the father Blumhardt felt pained when so many people directed their curiosity toward this fight.

“But this isn’t ‘Möttlingen,’” he said to a friend when he reluctantly handed over his report to the high church authorities. The fight was not what the name Möttlingen called to his mind. The experience upon which he built his great hopes, and which, as long as he lived, he felt was of great significance for the Christian church, was not the fight but *the awakening*. (*Zündel*)

It was the movement of repentance that began immediately after the decisive victory that captured Blumhardt’s attention. Repentance took hold of his whole parish and extended even to the neighboring towns and villages. Streams of people came to Blumhardt to confess their sins and to seek forgiveness from God.

In this way, the history of Möttlingen proved to be a true piece of God’s history. Forgiveness of sins was experienced as a living reality – not as a doctrine or as a church institution. Jesus stepped forward as the victor over sin. Zündel, who himself experienced this time of awakening, wrote: “It was as if we were in the New Testament, the days of John the Baptist, the days of the apostles. We felt in those days that a beam of that radiance which is in the heavenly kingdom of Jesus Christ fell on us.”

In the story of the paralytic, Jesus confirmed his power to forgive sins by adding to his words, “Your sins are forgiven you,” the command, “Arise, take your bed and go home.” In Möttlingen, too, people experienced physical healing through repentance. Blumhardt did not look for it in any way; he often did not even know about it. Yet innumerable people who heard his sermons or who were given his pastoral help were healed.

People experienced that the Lord was truly the one who “forgives all your sins and heals all your infirmities.” Jesus pointed the doubting John (Luke 7:18–23) to God’s deeds that happened before everyone’s eyes: “The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed.” In such deeds he joyfully recognized the breaking in of God’s kingdom. Blumhardt, too, saw manifestations of the living God, signs of his kingdom, in all that happened through him to many people who sought his help.

Today, miracles are rarely expected. Yet for both of the Blumhardts they were a reality. Looking back over those days at Möttlingen with their fight and their victory, with their awakening and their miracles, Blumhardt said,

It was a great time. Those who saw it and lived through it must admit that these experiences did not happen by chance. They were a prelude to a much greater time of redemption, which is still to come over the whole world, not restricted to one church.

Blumhardt’s experiences opened up to him the kingdom of God in the most Biblical sense. For him it became the

purpose of all God's deeds on earth. For Blumhardt the history and message of the Bible is not a matter of human religions and churches, of cults and dogma, not even of inner peace and personal redemption. It is a matter of the coming of God's reign, of God's victory over the whole world: the fulfillment of his will on earth, as in heaven.

This victory confirmed the Biblical promise of a new world, a world redeemed from the curse of the fall and restored to its original purpose. Through this "door that the Savior has opened" new light streamed into the world, the light of hope.

The early Christian hope of the coming of the Lord and of his kingdom had been placed "under a bushel" for far too long a time. The world remained in its old darkness and the light of this hope was almost completely extinguished. The father Blumhardt again placed the light of hope on the lamp stand. Significantly, he had the words of the prophet Habakkuk put up in the church at Möttlingen,

For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

(Habakkuk 2:3)

The father Blumhardt was a true man of hope. This hope set a stamp on his whole personality.

It was not his acceptance of traditional faith, nor his knowledge of the Bible; not the clarity of his manner in dealing with people, nor his gift of preaching that distinguished him from other believers. What gave his

ministry its unique character and made his personality an outstanding one was his hope in God, hope for God's kingdom. Expectantly he reached out with his whole being toward the goals the prophets and apostles had envisioned in all their striving.

In himself, the church, and the whole of Christianity, he saw God's kingdom developing. Christianity to him was not a finished religion through which men could be "saved." It was a real kingdom and government of God that historically begins, continues, and is perfected on earth, until God is all in all. Preparing for God's kingdom on earth and extending his rulership determined all his thoughts and actions. It culminated in the cry, "Jesus comes! Yes! Jesus comes soon!" (*Christoph Blumhardt*)

Throughout the centuries, Christianity has had preachers telling of the Christ *who has come*. Unlike these, Blumhardt gave witness to the Christ *who is to come*.

In the lives of both Blumhardts the rebirth of early Christian expectation was given anew. What they visualized far surpassed what was given during the Reformation. For Blumhardt, the men of the Reformation

are almost completely silent about the coming of the Lord, and do not lead toward an expectation of it. Yet we should be "like men who are waiting for their Lord."

Blumhardt's attitude toward the world was quite different from the Christianity of his day—a religion that sought to justify conditions as if they were willed by God. Blumhardt however recognized that this world is not yet God's—that

it still *has to become* his in the future.

In the light of Biblical expectation the world appeared to him as the old creation that has to yield to the new one as night yields to the dawn. The redemption Christ brought to the world is not yet fulfilled. For us, as for the Christians of the beginning time, it is a matter of “waiting for a new heaven and a new earth where justice will dwell according to God’s promise.”

He who began the great work of redemption among us told us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in heaven. Deliver us from evil.” Blumhardt exhorted us to “be as people who wait for their Lord.” We can only wait and pray for the time Christ will prepare our world anew. We should do it in the certain hope that he who has begun this work will also complete it.

The attitude taken by Christians nowadays is fatalistic toward the world situation and world events. True, this fatalism is glossed over by a pious manner. But few believe or act as if a new creation on this earth is possible.

Blumhardt’s hope for the coming of God’s kingdom had nothing to do with the kind of optimism that so often flares up in our time; that belief which trusts in human technical progress. He was not so naïve. He saw too deeply into the unredeemed condition of the world; he wrestled with the powers of evil. Again and again Blumhardt experienced the power of the *living Christ*. On this alone he based his hope.

Only *God’s* history could lead people out of their own history. Blumhardt knew that a new intervention of God,

a new revelation, was needed again and again. His expectation found its strongest and truest expression in his hope for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which would lead humankind to fulfillment in God.

Blumhardt's attitude of faith and hope for the victory of Christ's cause comes to vivid expression in a song, which the congregation at Möttlingen and Bad Boll sang with new and living faith for decades.

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

**T**he son Blumhardt grew up during the first period of the "fight" in Möttlingen. Born on June 1, 1842, Blumhardt was surrounded by an atmosphere of the tangible proximity of God. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was deeply impressed by Jesus, the Victor. Already at the age of thirteen, he was carefully copying out his father's sermons. He was eager to understand his father's faith. Until he was sixteen his father taught him all the subjects needed for further studies in the university. It was father Blumhardt's special concern to introduce his son to his deep understanding of the Bible.

In 1852, at the age of ten, the son Blumhardt moved

with his parents to Bad Boll. From there he went on to study theology, more to please his father than from personal inclination. He confessed that he “could not get anything out of theology, positive or negative, in all its subjective diversity.” Later, in one of his devotions, we find the significant words,

A God like *that* I could not believe in either. Already when I went to college I thought, if *that* is God, what you preach about, then I am through. I don't want to become a parson! You have the proper words, but you no longer understand the essence of God's cause. You create a God without hands, without a mouth, without any feet, so that we can simply do as we like. Your God has to keep quiet and is not allowed to act. No thanks! I cannot believe in such a God.

Whether one grows up as a child in the atmosphere of God's presence, or enters it consciously as an adult, are two different things. A child takes it as a matter of course, whereas an adult can witness God's power through his own experience. Blumhardt suffered from being a spectator of the history that took place before his own eyes. In those years he often felt miserable, especially seeing the abundance of life that surrounded him.

I grew up, it is true, under the protection of my parents and of the spiritual fire which filled them at all times. Yet I felt excluded. Their life stood at a holy distance from me, inaccessible to my soul. Filled with a longing and a yearning, but unable to find anything that would

enable me to take a real part in this life, I mostly went my way in sadness. Compared to the many who gathered around my parents in joyful, hopeful fervor, I saw my own life as empty—indeed almost hopeless.

The son Blumhardt's first assignment was as assistant pastor in the Church of Baden and Württemberg. At this time, he was on the point of giving up his vocation. When his father called him to Bad Boll as his helper, he only wanted to make himself useful around the house in modest ways, performing the most menial tasks. "I thought only of helping my father in an outward way, even only as a cook." At times he washed bottles at the well and carried luggage for the guests, or he would wait quietly and humbly outside his father's door for any kind of job.

Eventually, however, something real from God shone into his life. It kindled in him the spiritual fire he had felt in his father during his childhood. It was then that a "little spark" entered his heart, affirming his awareness that "God is! God comes! God is *my* God!"

He once said:

One little spark makes you clever enough—I can testify to it. I never learned a text nor could I ever remember even one verse, but now I knew more within a week than all the theologians. Since then I also understand how the apostles preached.

Now he was "God's pupil." He was part of the "heavenly school where God himself is able to speak."

The death of Gottliebin Dittus on January 26, 1872,

had an especially powerful influence on Blumhardt's life. Her life story was interwoven with that of his father's in a particularly holy and serious manner. Soon after her miraculous healing she moved completely into Blumhardt's house, where she became his indispensable helper. From this remarkable woman people felt a deep sense of nobility, greatness, and victorious faithfulness. Her death was a turning point for the whole household at Bad Boll. It drove everybody to seek repentance with a greater and more decisive earnestness and signaled a new spiritual impulse.

It changed the life of the son Blumhardt profoundly. Until then God's history and the new life of the Spirit had remained at a holy distance from him; now it forcefully became the spiritual center of his existence. It was at the deathbed of Gottliebin Dittus where he experienced the spiritual birth of which he later spoke. He would explain the significance this day had for him, saying:

That is *my* day, given into my heart. It was a night of death. We can still feel its darkness, and its brightness still shines for us. The open door that we have today is something that was fought for. It began with the death of Gottliebin. Her death opened up a new time for us.

Blumhardt even drew a parallel between the decisive hour in that night of dying, and what his father had experienced in Möttingen at the sickbed of Gottliebin.

One thing alone caused the change in Möttingen: the

breaking in of Jesus Christ's victorious power—the watchword was “Jesus is victor.” Another great battle was fought during the night of Gottlieb's death and again it ended with the cry, “Jesus is victor!” This is alive in us to this very day: the living contact with the Lord Jesus has remained! The Lord goes on caring about the earth, about all people. He goes forward step by step and allows his children on earth to feel the power of his victory. In this way God's history becomes visible and remains true: *Jesus is victor!*

Father Blumhardt sensed what had happened in his son. From then on he was a true helper to his father. Now when he proclaimed the great truths that became revealed in the history of Möttlingen and Bad Boll, he witnessed to what he himself had seen and experienced.

The new insights he had been given enabled him to wholeheartedly support his father when death unexpectedly drew near, bringing into question his father's great expectations. When his father thought of his death his words betrayed a certain anxiety:

Since my time in Möttlingen I have thought a great deal about the nearness of the Lord. I witnessed a vision of his nearness and if this were to disappear with me, think how hard this would be for me!

When he felt the victory of Jesus in his son he had new confidence, expecting further signs of Christ's power, also in the future history of Boll.

We should interpret the words of the dying man in this

sense, as with a last effort he raised his hand and placed it on his son's head in blessing, "I bless you for the victory."

Joshua was a consolation to the dying Moses. He was to continue leading the people into the Promised Land, while Moses had to stay behind, weary unto death after the long wandering. In a similar way the dying father Blumhardt had a consolation in his son. In the trust and hope that the cause he had served all his life would be carried on, he blessed his son for the continuation of this task.

**T**he father Blumhardt died on February 25, 1880. From the first moment it was clear to the son Christoph that the marvelous history that had begun in Möttlingen and Boll must not be allowed to end with the death of its first bearer. For it was not the history of his father that they had experienced, but the history of Jesus himself with his victorious power. Christoph Blumhardt expressed this feeling at his father's burial:

In the course of years we witnessed marvelous manifestations of God in our midst. They all point us again and again to the fact that Jesus is victor. Our father is no longer with us, but we shall always have need of this victorious Savior. We must have him and we shall have him. From the grave of our dear father take with you the hope and the certainty that Jesus is victor!

And again on Ascension Day that year:

We must not think we are defeated now. Believe me, such an attitude hurts the majesty of Christ in heaven. We must not act as though the Savior were dead for us,

weak and poor and lowly though we feel we are. *Christ lives*. He lives for us as he lived for the fathers. We shall experience that the more powerfully and courageously we uphold Jesus Christ's majesty, the more we go forward. We must remain *people of victory*, for we have experienced something of the majesty of Jesus Christ!

At the end of this decisive year, Blumhardt compared his father to Simeon who waited for the comfort of Israel.

Now we no longer have a Simeon. Now our house, as a congregation, must be this Simeon. We must stand as *one* man and represent this Simeon. When such a man dies one cannot simply say, this is the end. No, *this* man does not die—that is, if *we* carry on not even the thread is broken. Life goes on: it must go on in this same attitude of waiting. What has been given us through this waiting *must remain*. Woe to us if we give up these fruits of our waiting in unbelief and drowsiness!

On New Year's Eve, 1880, he said:

We must not let the servants of God die, even if they have to leave us. They must continue to live in us. We must not think that now the cause has to decline because the founder of our life who achieved so much with his faith is no longer among us. Indeed, if we do not believe this, then it will decline. But if we believe, then it will grow.

Father Blumhardt's death was not the end of the history of Möttlingen and Bad Boll. Blumhardt again and again experienced new signs of the Victor, and this determined

his attitude in the following years. On the anniversary of his father's death in 1882 he said:

His death roused us to new life. The Savior did not withdraw from us. With our father's passing nothing of value disappeared. Something divine protects us and leads us and fills us with hope for greater deeds of love from God for the world.

The true origin and nature of the history of Möttlingen and Bad Boll is clearly shown in that Blumhardt was actually able to carry on his father's work. Years later Blumhardt expressed his joy about this in one of his sermons in Berlin.

For me to be able to carry on my father's work is the greatest miracle I can think of. All the circumstances seemed to be against it. This is not my merit, for I was personally quite incapable of succeeding. But one thing I *did* have—I knew it did not depend on me when the Savior wanted to step in.

Some time later he wrote, "Is not the kingdom of God greater than the person who serves it? At that time God gave me the strength to carry on in joy and vigor as though nothing had changed, while everyone thought, this is the end of Möttlingen and Bad Boll."

Just like his father, Christoph was a powerful witness of Christ's victorious power. His witness penetrated into ever growing circles, and out of ever-renewed experiences the congregation at Boll was able to sing the old song of victory, "Jesus is Victorious King!"

Nevertheless, the history of Möttlingen and Boll did not simply go on as before. This is where the son Blumhardt showed himself to be a true servant of God. He remained open to a voice of God speaking, which led him on new paths, just as his father was led on new paths after Möttlingen.

For instance, Blumhardt resisted the fact that people hung onto the melancholy recollections of his father, thus expecting too much from him.

In this way one easily forgets what the Lord expects of us *today* and what he is concerned with *now*. *Jesus'* strength *and his* Spirit alone can lead us on the way we are *now* expected to follow. The times change quickly. New tasks, new demands are made on us. Yet we also have abundant and ever renewed proof of the Spirit and his strength. May the Lord Jesus strengthen us anew in his name. May he make us his servants with a pure spirit and give us alert hearts for the new tasks that will come.

Blumhardt was able to interpret the signs of his time in a truly prophetic manner: “what the Lord demands of us *today* and what he is *now* concerned about.” He possessed a continuity that permitted him to recognize and represent new truths.

For this reason, one can speak of different periods of the son's life but never of mere episodes, surpassed and annulled by the following ones. The truths that filled his life turned into a living history bridging the times. Blumhardt was right in saying of himself, in wonderment at the paths on which God led him forward,

I always went along the very same way. If anyone thinks I wavered or doubted, he is wrong. I merely went out of one shell, remaining the same inwardly, into another shell, only to break this last shell again and to enter another shell, so that I might proclaim the Gospel among all men.

For the first years Blumhardt worked in the manner of his father. His activity eventually led him into circles where caused a sensation on his mission journeys in Germany and Switzerland. At this point he began to question his public preaching. His appearance in Berlin, where he preached more than twenty times in March 1888 and thousands heard his message, became the highlight—yet the conclusion of this activity. This great success would have filled others with satisfaction and gratification. Blumhardt, however, began to doubt the rightness of this way of representing the cause of Christ. Somehow he felt misunderstood by the masses who flocked to hear him.

I am terribly sorry that people say I am a famous preacher. May God grant that I can escape all the fame people have given me. I don't want to be a speaker. I am no speaker at all, nor do I want to be one. I want to be a man of deeds. I do not merely want to talk. I want to stand before you as a witness!

After his return from Berlin, Blumhardt retired from his public preaching activity. To visitors at Bad Boll it must have been even more striking that the healing of sickness noticeably receded in Blumhardt's activities. He strongly

opposed all those who saw the results of Möttlingen and Bad Boll merely in these healings, and who sought only their physical healing. He fought against Bad Boll becoming an “institution for faith healing.”

There is much sorrow in heaven because people want to draw the healing of their sickness into their piousness: they want to grab God’s miracles for themselves. My father certainly did not mean it this way. It is from him that they all have it, but my father did not want the healing of sickness on a human level. *It is a gift from God.*

In a special printed circular letter, Blumhardt wrote these characteristic words:

In our attitude toward God, in our prayers and religious services there is a lie that exploits the mercy and grace of God in such a way that the Savior then becomes our servant. He is merely expected to restore again and again what we have spoiled. A selfish streak has crept into everything. This pains our hearts, and I decidedly wish to find a new attitude toward those who come to me in need and affliction.

Many people write us letters now just as they used to, asking for our intercession. We should actually answer in each case: “Stop your begging before God and first search with us how we can do justice to God, recognizing our guilt and striving for God’s real justice and his kingdom on earth. Turn your whole self in the opposite direction and stop looking at yourselves and all your suffering. Look at the suffering of God, whose kingdom has been

held back for so long because of the lying spirit in us all. Be confident; God will not let you be separated from him. You will be his true child, zealous for his honor.”

For Blumhardt, even the overcoming of sickness was justified only in connection with God’s kingdom. God’s rulership and his justice cannot come to us until all our problems point us toward our deepest need.

There *have to be* signs of our deafness, our blindness, our dumbness so that we recognize that things are not right with mankind!

Such was Blumhardt’s new attitude to the healings, which for many people had indeed been the essential thing in Bad Boll. He experienced a deep-going transformation, which he later explained:

The acts of healing in Möttlingen were quite natural and easy to understand. But today we have come further, and those who stop at that point do not even know where they are. At the beginning signs were needed. A trumpet of God had to sound; but it was not meant to sound forever; it had to become silent. Other trumpets have become more important in the world. It would be a small thing for God to heal the sick—it happens more and more often, though very much in quiet. Yet it should not be proclaimed. God’s kingdom does not consist in the healing of sick people. To be cleansed is more important than to be healed. To have a heart for God’s cause, and not to be chained to the world, but to be able to move for the kingdom of God! This is the second

trumpet call—to tear ourselves away from the traditional ways of Christianity.

This “tearing oneself away from the traditional ways of Christianity” marks the decisive transition and transformation in Blumhardt’s life and work. He became suspicious of “ourselves, of our prayers, of our devotions, of our worship services,” in which he felt just that “selfish” streak. Blumhardt’s father took up the fight with the “dominion of darkness” and won decisive victories. Now the obstacle, which above all stood in the way of God’s kingdom, was “*each* human being, all of us in our flesh which struggles against the truth.”

Now Blumhardt’s fight was directed against this “flesh,” and he sometimes changed the old song of fight and victory to “Jesus is victorious King, who also conquers *our flesh*.” By this “flesh” Blumhardt did not just mean sensuality, but selfishness. He saw this flesh especially where people behave in a very “spiritual” manner. In fact, he often spoke of the “Christian flesh” as the greatest menace to the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

If only we would stop worshipping our Christian qualities. We would then stop striving with frantic zeal to obtain the various pleasures they afford us and instead sacrifice this to God—feel our poverty and our weakness, recognize that nothing is of any value unless Jesus is alive among us. Then all our striving would very quickly be fruitful. But *we* have to want to make room for his life. We must truly seek God’s kingdom and his justice.

Here the meaning of the new watchword given to Blumhardt at this turning point of his life becomes clear to us; it determined his whole message during this period of his work—*Die and Jesus will live!*

With this watchword Blumhardt opposed every form of self-driven piety—that spirituality which only wants to have God’s mercy for itself, and never thinks of making room for God’s justice.

Justice, not mercy? Yes, justice, the Savior says. Mercy can never be first in our flesh. We must seek God’s justice in our lives; only then can he give us mercy. It is justice when God allows our works to die so that *his* work may prosper. We should not be concerned with *our* pain and pleasure, but driven solely by the thought that once *God* may have pleasure on earth! The long outrage we Christians have inflicted on him must come to an end. Then all creation will have joy in its God.

He severely chastised all “salvation-only” Christianity. That is, a Christianity so concerned with its own salvation that it loses sight of the victory God promised for the *whole world*.

Today’s Christians leap around in raptures, crying, “Oh, what bliss!” One is left completely speechless at the sight of these leaping, blissful people. Are they happy? Well, I’m not! While the world is teeming with sin and it is next to impossible for us to uphold God’s kingdom, while God’s name is being blasphemed and even good people no longer have any zeal for God, they are all in

raptures? I very seriously ask these Christian lazy-bones: What are you seeking? Yourself or God? Your own cause or the cause of the Lord?

The pietistic background out of which the father Blumhardt came was now completely outgrown. With ardor and dedication the son Blumhardt turned toward the one great concern contained in the Lord's Prayer, "*Thy* name be honored! *Thy* kingdom come! *Thy* will be done on earth as in heaven!" He often closed his prayer with these three supplications.

Blumhardt also counted among those Christian works of the flesh the churches and denominations that demand for themselves a zeal and a dedication that is due only and exclusively to God's kingdom. Father Blumhardt's move from Möttlingen to Bad Boll signified that he was leaving the state church; the son was led still further. "The year of the churches is past!" he would say. He had in mind the state church as well as all the "traditional ways" of Christianity when he exclaimed at one point,

All that has existed until now is nothing! The old traditions are of no use! However you choose to understand it, soon we shall be saying, "I count everything as loss, in order that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). Our works must come to an end; only then can God create something pure from above. In our impurity nothing can endure!

He could not understand the sureness of the traditional churchgoer, since he himself had deeply recognized how questionable all human religious structures are.

It is so easy to see that God wants us to go a *different* way. One should not simply say, “God is merciful again and again. He will maintain his church again and again.” Why should God? I would like to see the place in the Bible where permanency is promised to any human church. God does not care about the church if it no longer serves his cause. We have no guarantee that God’s cause will be left forever in our hands.

As an expression of his attitude to the official church, Blumhardt took off his cassock and gave the pulpit from Bad Boll to a church in the Black Forest. At times he stopped giving regular sermons and didn’t use his right to celebrate baptism or the Lord’s Supper in his house. He passionately broke with all sanctimonious behavior. “Zeal for thy house is consuming me!” (John 2:17)

He no longer wanted to stand before his household as a pastor, but simply as a housefather among his family. Daily life was to be a witness to God; mealtimes became the Lord’s Supper; life as a whole was service to God. All that was of a religious nature receded into the background. This new freedom separated Bad Boll from all religious and church limitations. He believed very seriously in the words of Jesus that describe this whole period, “Seek first his kingdom and his justice, and all these things shall be yours as well.”

**U**nder the banner, “Die, and Jesus will live!” Blumhardt tore himself away from traditional Christianity. A new freedom was given, and in the fall of 1896 he proclaimed at Bad Boll a new motto:

Become free people! Listen in freedom to the trumpet call of this day! Now it is important to hear the third trumpet. The trumpet which today resounds in the air says: "Carry the love of God in your heart!" This will lead us further than all our Christianity. Today it is no use to sit in a pious meeting and make a pious face. Today we are told to go out into the world! Listen to the trumpet resounding in the world! This is true piety.

Blumhardt was thus led into the world where he searched for the kingdom of God— not in any religious church form, but in the world. It was here that God would break in.

Today we must be men and women of God in the world. Those who do not understand this do not hear the voice of the Lord. It is no longer a matter of denominations, confessions of faith, creeds; *those* times are over. I am by no means an anarchist, but what is here is nothing but ruins.

The worldwide breadth and greatness of God's kingdom had opened up before him.

The kingdom of God is taking on colossal dimensions these days. We have come out of our little rooms, out of our isolation, to all that it encompasses. This kingdom has come into the streets where the poorest live—the outcasts, the miserable. God's reign extends into the heavens and into hell, and to all people.

"The love of God is the key to this world." These words express Blumhardt's new insight, which would henceforth

determine his whole outlook. He saw the world through the radiant light of God's love. God loved the *world*. If anyone asked, "Which one?" his answer was, "The satanic and godless world."

The people who lived in darkness saw a great light. The desperate, the condemned, the damned, the murdered, those for whom there is no longer any consolation, no longer any hope, are allowed to see the Father who loves them. With every word of the Gospel, God places his hand on the darkness. His loving hand reclaims sin, death and hell.

God's love for the world was revealed when he gave his only Son, allowing the Word to become flesh. *Christ in the flesh* remains the pledge of God's love. Blumhardt thus began to proclaim to everyone, "Jesus is born, therefore *everyone* is loved."

*You belong to God!* No matter whether you are still godless, or already devout, under judgment or in mercy, saved or condemned, you belong to God! Whether you are dead or alive, whether you are just or unjust, whether you are in heaven or in hell, you belong to God!

Listen, you people! You belong to God. Hell has no claim on you. The greatest sin is to degrade your personality, for I tell you, you belong to God.

Joyfully, Blumhardt gave witness to a "universal Christianity," a vision for which his father had already been reproached.

Blumhardt's attitude toward the world was not a naïve optimism that ignored humanity's fallen nature and did

not take seriously the power of sin. Yet Blumhardt believed in people—not because of their virtues and merits, but because God believes in people and does not give us up even in our lost condition. “It is not because we love God, but because *he loves us* that he brings salvation.”

Blumhardt was able to see past the corruption of the world and see it as God’s creation; he saw past humankind’s degeneration and saw each person as God’s child. If God loves the world, we must also carry this love in our hearts. Since he sent Christ to be human, we should not despair because of our sin. Wherever there are sinners, there is the love of God.

Don’t despair about your sins; the Gospel tells us that God sent Jesus into the flesh, so that God’s life in humankind may be rescued from the lies of sin and of death. Indeed, what we call sin and death is nothing but deception. True, eternally true, are man and God’s creation.

With this insight, Blumhardt saw that there was a movement in the world toward the kingdom of God— “he who loves God sees life in the world.” There is a living spark in everything—God’s will to build up his kingdom in the world—where the pious see only godlessness and sin.

In spite of the shortcomings behind the human efforts to improve the lives of people he was convinced that God was at work. The great hopes of the masses “want to come to fulfillment in the world through Christ.”

Blumhardt’s entry “into the world,” had various practical

expressions. He was moved, for example, by the spirit of peace that was felt as a consequence of the first Peace Conference at The Hague. He felt that the “Manifesto of Peace” from the Russian Czar [Nicolas II], connected with the ideal of the “King of Peace.” “This does not come out of a Russian heart—something like that comes from God!” He felt it was a revelation from God that in our world destroyed by violence and war, the words “Peace on Earth!” would be spoken.

He was extremely pained by the blindness and lack of understanding that “believing” circles in particular showed toward this working of God.

I beg you, do not mock! How many people will pray when the Peace Congress meets in January? Why are we Christians? For the sake of peace, people say, but peace comes from God alone. Everyone must pray for it, and if you do not pray for it, you are a satan. Mock if you will, you are mocking the Savior! May God give us a truly sensitive feeling for our time, so that we may notice the signs of the time!

The striving for social justice, expressed in such ideologies as Social Democracy in the late nineteenth century, was the most significant sign of the times to Blumhardt. Underneath all the unrest and ferment he felt people longed for God. Many were taking pains to improve their lives; they cried out passionately for liberation and demanded a new, more just order. In all this Blumhardt heard the call for God’s kingdom.

Now there is great confusion; now all the spirits are howling. It is a strange time. Yet even this is God's work. In quiet, God's cause is being prepared through judgment or through grace. People come into the kingdom of God they know not how—the net falls over them.

Today a storm is raging all over the world, for the world seeks a master. Even though it does not know it, it seeks Christ. If the children of God do not cry out, then the stones must cry out. There *must* be a quivering and quaking, so that Jesus Christ can enter into the world at some point.

Just because Blumhardt's great concern was the kingdom of God, he felt the cry for a new world in which the rights of all would be respected. However harsh, even godless, this cry might sound, there was in it more truth than in all the religious and spiritual noise of the zealous.

How can you see yourself as noble and religious if you eat well but do not think of those who are starving? Today you *have* to think of them. It is a service to God when we stand up and say, "They also want to live." It is often these very ones, the so-called godless people, who toil and work in God's vineyard. They are not "churchy." They pretend they have no religion. Yet isn't it religion and praying when one strives for the vindication of each person's rights?

Blumhardt felt that it was faith in God's kingdom that inspired a striving for a new social order. The struggle for social justice was a sign of Jesus Christ.

The social struggle of millions in our time is not a coincidence. It is related to the struggle of the apostles, and to the struggle that later also was fought by others in secret, the struggle which we too want to fight. The ferment in the nations, the agitation of the poor, the crying out for the right to exist—a plea from the mouths of even the most miserable, which can no longer be silenced—these are signs of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blumhardt saw a Messianic meaning of this social hope, sensing in it the hope for a new heaven and a new earth where justice lives. He thus came to agree with the Social Democrats and their efforts to create a new society:

The more ideal they imagine it, the more “utopian,” as people say, and the more impossible it seems, all the more God will acknowledge: “They believe what Jesus wants!” They don’t know that it’s *Jesus* who wants this. They don’t know that they represent the thoughts of God, however imperfectly—yet they do believe. They believe in humanity; they believe in a better government, in better conditions, and that one can become a person who is able to live with others.

More than once Blumhardt applied the parable of the two sons to the Social Democrats.

They are a tool of God like the son who says, “I will not obey my father,” yet afterwards does the father’s will...

They do not prattle about God, yet they act religiously.

To the great annoyance of the nationalists they aspired to better forms of government among the nations, with their

International Workers' Associations. In Blumhardt's eyes this had significance before God also.

The Social Democrats are working toward peace—they study theology because peace is a part of God.

With all the “worldliness” of Democratic Socialism, Blumhardt believed it had great importance for the coming of God's kingdom. Blumhardt's prophetic nature saw God even in the godless and recognized God's work where God appeared “incognito.” This was incomprehensible and offensive to the pious who did not recognize such a possibility. They were satisfied with a God who worked only in the narrow sphere of their religious world.

Blumhardt's appreciation of social justice shows the true Biblical spirit, the same spirit that led Isaiah to see in the Assyrians the rod of God's anger, and in the second Isaiah to see a servant of God and an anointed of the Lord in Cyrus, King of Persia.

In the movement for social justice Blumhardt saw a sign of judgment first of all, a serious call to repentance for all Christianity. This movement wanted, in its own way, to reawaken the conscience of Christendom to forgotten truths of the Bible.

The social movement is like a fiery sign in the sky announcing judgment. When Christian society sees itself confronted with this judgment, it should not be obstinate but consider the truth that is being revealed.

For Blumhardt, the rising of the underprivileged and their demand for a new order rightly calls into question the

whole social structure. It is a cry for a new, more just and humane order, a cry raised in conscious, often passionate opposition to church and religion. The fact that the lowly and poor no longer expect anything of the church and of Christianity is a terrible accusation against those who represent Christianity! Any movement for social justice should drive self-righteous Christianity to repentance!

The workers despised and repudiated a Christianity that abandoned the cause of Christ. The powers of this world cultivated a religion that all too often proved to be an “opium of the people.” If church and religion justify and protect this world of money and force, of injustice and misery, while the unchurchly and godless strive for a new world of justice and peace, of humaneness and brotherliness, then Christ may indeed, as Blumhardt once sharply said, “Put all the pious with the devils and bring the godless into the kingdom of heaven.”

In striking terms, Blumhardt sometimes spoke of a moral and working atheism in the world. He preferred this to a devoutness that circled around itself. Even in the French Revolution Blumhardt saw the hand of God. “If the angels will not do God’s will, then he will use devils.” Because he saw God’s hand in the social movement he was able to look upon all the commotions and upheavals, indeed the whole collapse, with confidence.

From their lofty spiritual standpoint, most Christians accused Democratic Socialism of “materialism.” This did not shock Blumhardt. As one deeply concerned for the kingdom of God on earth, he recognized the justice that

lay in that materialism. The redemption promised to the world embraces the whole of life. The prayer for the daily bread for all people is also a prayer for the coming of God's kingdom, and has therefore found its place, and rightly so, in the Lord's Prayer.

Democratic Socialism wants the reordering of property in such a way that not money and possessions, but the life of everyone be given the highest meaning. Why should this be a reprehensible, revolutionary desire? I am certain that it is in keeping with the spirit of Christ to pursue such a goal. There will be revolutions until it has been achieved. It is no use to resist, for God wants people to be equals in the most essential respects.

Blumhardt could speak quite sharply against those Christians who, for all their spirituality, have no understanding for this right to bread which is God's will. "Our cause has become so spiritual that people have been drowned in spirit."

How can we speak about spiritual matters in these days to people who look at us with eyes full of hunger and burdens? What use is it to prattle about the kingdom of heaven if you leave your fellow human beings in their fetters and bonds, the slaves in their chains, and the oppressed in their misery? You cannot even overcome the material differences around you because you are frightened of the poor and lowly. You just want to continue living in your hell! We live in the time of the proletariat. The poor are simply there, God bless them!

Blumhardt heard the voice of God in the social movement. He wanted to give expression to this voice and become a mouthpiece for the poor.

The Savior is with the poor, with the poor who have no voice. It is the Spirit of God that comes into our world, into the world of human misery, of human suffering, of distress. There the Spirit of God sighs; it is as though God had forsaken this world. Jesus is in the hell that we make for ourselves. The Savior goes first to the poor and miserable, passing over the pious. We too should feel drawn more to the lowly. We should bring them the Gospel, the joyful message that things can become better in the world. The sighing of the poor must have a voice. We have to recognize that the poor are justified in crying out for their human rights.

In the summer of 1899, Blumhardt, for the first time, participated in a large protest meeting. This meeting had been called in Göppingen after the publication of a bill for the limitation of the workers' right to form an alliance. To the great surprise of those present he spoke in solidarity with those threatened by the bill: "I feel it is my duty to come forward and say publicly what I feel against this bill. It is a crime against justice!"

In the fall of that year he spoke at a meeting that dealt with the employment of married women in factories:

I feel allied with these people who are reproached with pursuing utopian ideas. I am on their side! I cannot help it, I have to say this: may the time come when it will be possible to bring a new order to society, when not money,

but the life of all people will be the main concern.

On October 24, 1899, Blumhardt was invited to a meeting of the Social Democratic Party in order to explain his point of view. In his talk he openly took a stand for Democratic Socialism. He tried to show the surprised and moved workers how it was just his Christian faith that led him to them; how he felt bound to them because of his faith.

Christ also proclaimed a new era. It was he, and not the Social Democrats, who first said, "This world must be smashed." Christianity has forgotten this. If what Christ taught 1900 years ago now suddenly wants to bear fruit in us, why should this alarm us? Surely the Christian world order is not Christ's world order! Believe me, I will stand with you with my whole heart, and I will work together with you for the new social order. We should, all of us, grasp the goal fully and completely and work towards it.

Blumhardt's appearance and express avowal of Socialism naturally caused a sensation. However, he never understood this "avowal of socialism" in the sense of party politics. Therefore, he was quite alarmed by the controversy that ensued. Nevertheless, he willingly took upon himself all accusations of worldliness of which he was made a victim.

His own view of this decision is expressed in the words he wrote to his anxious friends who were unable to understand the meaning of his step:

My appearance in workers' circles, and in particular the support I lend to Democratic Socialism, has disquieted

many. All my life I have believed in and striven for God's kingdom and his justice on earth. Now all this is expressed in my alliance with the great workers' movement, with the poor who are fighting for their lives. Their fight is represented by social justice. It sets thousands of hearts on fire everywhere. I see a sign of Christ in it, for Christ too wants a humanity that is wholly penetrated by justice and truth, by love and life. In the spirit I am united with this struggle. Let us not judge. Movements, even revolutions, have to be. Do not be afraid. Rather, believe that our time, more than any other, is called to bring us closer to God's kingdom.

Elsewhere we find these words: "I pledge myself to the longing for a new era, not to a party. It is according to Christ's will alone that the world will be overthrown."

Large circles banished Blumhardt for joining Democratic Socialism. He had gone to those "godless people," just as Jesus once had kept company with the tax collectors and sinners. Now in indignation or in scorn, Blumhardt too was called "a friend of tax collectors and sinners." (Mt. 11:19) Immediately after the meeting at Göppingen, the Royal Consistory asked him to renounce the rank and title of pastor of the Church of Württemberg. Blumhardt readily complied with this request. "State and church are no soil for the fire of God," he said in the prayer meeting the morning after he received the letter from the Consistory.

Years previous, Blumhardt had already renounced the church privileges which had been given him for Bad Boll. It was now a relief for him to be freed of all obligations. As

he saw it, he could not be truly free in a church that “no longer depended on Christ’s commands alone, but on its own dogma and on state institutions.”

Consequently Blumhardt was not only excluded from the German state church but also from the entire bourgeois Christian world. The simple working folk, who were already alienated from the church, received him with even greater openness and enthusiasm. He spoke to the people in many meetings all over the country. They gathered everywhere in large groups to hear him speak. There he was able to experience what Christ said to John the Baptist, “The poor have good news preached to them.”

It is remarkable how he showed his new friends where their faith and hope ultimately came from.

The real depth and truth of the principles on which Democratic Socialism rests can only exist where Jesus has an influence. The thought that God is love comes from Jesus. Jesus inspires us to love our neighbor. From Jesus originates the thought that the poor must be happy. With the poor it must begin.

These people who long ago had turned their backs on the church, who had perhaps exchanged their Christian dogma for an atheistic dogma, enthusiastically listened to him speak of Jesus. Now they were told of the Christ who wants to become Lord on earth in the new kingdom of God. Again and again Blumhardt experienced the reality of the parable of the great feast. He knew himself sent out as a servant into the streets and alleys, the highways and hedges, to gather

the poor. He experienced how they came gladly to the feast.

It needs to be emphasized here that Blumhardt was not, by nature, political; he believed in a kingdom not of this world. In spite of this he experienced the great trust of the people and accepted a seat in the legislative assembly of Württemberg, to which he belonged for six years (1900-1906). Some of his speeches in the meetings of the assembly were quite significant. He explained why he was absent when the King held the swearing-in of five of the Democratic Socialist members. He spoke against a grain tax that did not help agricultural workers, but only increased the price of bread for the poor. He took active part in the discussions about new school legislation, speaking sharply against the teaching of religion in schools.

Yet with all this activity, Parliament was not the "soil" on which Blumhardt's specific task could be developed. Therefore, this time of political activity increasingly became a heavy burden, and over the years he became more and more quiet. Even for his comrades he was obviously too broad, "too much his own man," to be a true politician. They once reproached him about this and he answered: "If politics cannot tolerate a human being, then let politics be damned!" At the end of the term he resigned from his mandate and made a journey to Palestine, avoiding all efforts the party made to persuade him to accept a new candidacy.

When Blumhardt returned from Palestine he became seriously ill. This kept him away from the household at Bad Boll for a longer time. He gradually withdrew from the agitated life of the last few years to seclusion and quiet. In this last period of his life he found a new direction.

He gave up his activities in the Socialist movement. Though he still followed the movement with real interest, maintaining the connection with the Social Democratic Party until his death, he did not expect anything decisive from its development and success. He would still speak about socialism in his personal conversations but in his devotions and sermons he hardly mentioned it, in striking contrast to the preceding years. He would sometimes say of the social movement that potentially it could “further the thoughts of Jesus in the life of the nations more than any other movement.” Yet, his ultimate verdict was:

The social movement as we see it today still belongs to the world and it will pass. It does not contain the fellowship of equality, as it will one day, through God’s Spirit. Too strong a defense of each person’s opinions has a flavor that is disturbing to the pure service of God.

Blumhardt also severely criticized the further development of the social movement:

The attempt to force my idea of God into earthly situations cannot take root at a time when men are filled with the hope that they, and they alone, can create a blissful

humanity. They first have to be shipwrecked on the rock of earthly opinions, in order to grasp the truer values.

One could almost say that in the end Blumhardt was disappointed in the social movement. But this doesn't mean that he was deceived about God's direction for that time or about the answer God expected from the world.

By his stand for social justice Blumhardt always believed that truth wanted to become real in the here and now. This witness was still valid even after Blumhardt became quiet about his task in the world. He hadn't joined the social movement out of false illusions or out of self-will: he had done it in faith, in obedience to God's word which he had heard as his true servant. Such a witness remains independent from all personal satisfaction or disappointment and from all visible success or failure.

Blumhardt's new attitude toward Socialism was similar to his attitude toward the church. Though he did not expect a new form of community to develop from the social movement, neither did he expect victory for Christ's cause from the churches. He called it childish tricks to try to achieve church reforms. He did not want to stake his faith "merely on a permanent church." He drew a parallel between Christianity and Socialism when he said, referring to the latter,

This human organization with its whole development and all who belong to it cannot possibly represent the ideal. Whenever people with their nature seize on an ideal, something imperfect results, something harmful to the ideal itself. In the same way, organized Christianity has not remained on the level of what Christ demands of us.

He believed that the established church, as well as the social movement of his day, belonged to the world that will pass away. Blumhardt's vision was directed toward the world that is to come. All organizations and institutions, secular or religious, receded before the one to whom his entire faith and hope belonged—Christ with his coming kingdom, his power and his glory.

Faith in the kingdom of God and the expectation of Christ's coming was always Blumhardt's deepest concern. Like his father opposing the powers of darkness, he came with a helping hand to alleviate the misery of sin and sickness, with the cry "Jesus is victor!" He opposed selfish and self-sufficient Christianity with the watchword, "Die, and Jesus will live!" He was allied with those who believed in a new kingdom, fighting for a new humanity within the world and sharing the message of God's love. Throughout his work, it was the faith in God's kingdom that determined his attitude.

It was this faith that led him beyond all the material forms of socialism. It also propelled him past his struggles with and criticism of traditional Christianity. His last years were marked preeminently by expectation. In the midst of the events of this world, he lived in the future promised by Jesus Christ.

I wish we could live completely in the promise, for the promise is something substantial from God himself. Again and again it renews our strength, our hope and our experience.

Using the parable of the begging widow, Jesus laid it on the hearts of his disciples to pray without ceasing. It was to such praying that Blumhardt gave himself. His many human concerns took second place. His primary concern was: Thy kingdom come! “We want to be people who, thinking of the misery in the world, always say, ‘Thy kingdom come!’”

Blumhardt knew that waiting for the kingdom of God creates strength. “Waiting is a great strength. Waiting is a great deed.” Waiting is not inactivity, not a passive attitude; it strongly expresses that we expect decisive strength and help from Christ and his coming kingdom. A true waiting attitude prepares a way for God’s kingdom; through waiting we become co-workers with Christ.

True Christians who wait for the day of God’s mercy for everyone will “gently spin thread and twine it around the nations,” tying them to our faith and preserving them for the day of Jesus Christ. What a coming of Christ that would be if many Christians were to say, “I want to do something also, I want to be a quiet strength, through my waiting, for the sake of the others.”

This very waiting for God’s kingdom frees us from the powers of this world. It frees us from the reliance on its power and from the fear of its violence. In this freedom we recognize God’s will, take up his task, do his work, fight his battle—ultimately taking his sacrifice upon ourselves.

To the true “waiting” for the Lord belongs the “hastening” toward his future. Those who wait know that the Lord is coming and hasten to meet him. They are concerned only

with the deeds of the living God. They also perceive what God wants to accomplish in his time, and support God's will with all their strength. All this, through God's power and help, serves the future.

"Watch for my future," the Savior calls to us! If we fulfill this task—if we watch for *his* future, it will be as though this future were coming right now! Again and again new life is given, new developments, opening up the way that we can follow. Each time it is an added part that belongs to Jesus Christ's future. Christ's future is not one single point in an absolute remoteness for which we are to wait. This is hardly imaginable—we would all go to sleep over it. The future is already present.

Therefore Blumhardt not only speaks of a future appearing of Christ, but that the Savior is on the way.

The Savior is coming. He is not quietly sitting in eternity, waiting for a moment when he will suddenly burst in. *He is on the way.* We should have the future before our eyes at all times, expecting it every day. The coming of the Savior is in the center of Christian history, through God's work in the world, like a thread. If this thread is to continue, then the Lord Jesus is coming. There will be new ways; new revelations will enable us to continue working and waiting. Our watching and waiting, preparing the coming of the Lord Jesus, will be fulfilled at his time.

So firmly did Blumhardt expect Christ's coming that his constant prayer, "Lord, Jesus, come!" often gave way to the

certain promise, “The Savior is on the way.” His great and main concern, “Thy kingdom come!” again and again became the joyful message, “God’s kingdom is at hand!” Blumhardt knew himself called to be the doorkeeper: “I am only a doorkeeper, nothing else.” He saw his task simply to stand by the door and watch for the coming of the Lord, keeping the church of Jesus Christ constantly alive in this expectation through his call, “He is on the way!”

Blumhardt’s retirement from the world, therefore, didn’t mean he gave up hope for the world. No. The Christ he expected comes as the Lord of the world. With this in mind, Blumhardt had a special concern to gather a living church that would stand with him in the future for Jesus Christ, preparing the way for the Lord in great expectation. The existence of such a living church was decisive. But such a church did not consist of organized Christianity. He visualized a people placed in the midst of this world that gathered in anticipation of the coming of God’s kingdom.

To Blumhardt the significance of Bad Boll was that here were people seeking for the coming of the Lord. It was a place where they were trying to live for God’s kingdom.

The character of our house is the expectation of God’s kingdom. Whoever enters the house should feel that here people want to stand quite directly in the growth of God’s kingdom and participate in its coming. If he does not feel this, he understands nothing of Bad Boll.

Blumhardt knew how important such a place was for God’s history. God always wants to have a place, a community,

which belongs to him really and truly, so that God can dwell there. God needs such a place where he can work for the rest of the world, a place on earth where the sun of God's kingdom shines forth.

That said, Blumhardt abhorred the thought of a "Bad Boll Christianity." He longed for a waiting church-community that would grow apart from Bad Boll and independently from his person. A Zion of God, "a people of the promise" where God could begin his work, should arise from all the nations, out of all the churches.

There must be people who carry this faith and this hope in their heart, people who are coworkers participating in their own creation. Everything stands still unless there are people who are ready to become God's coworkers.

Blumhardt wanted to invite everybody to join these people of God. Even the simplest folk become significant when they understand this call:

You child of man, the Savior needs you. Do not be indifferent! You also belong. See to it that you are filled with joy, love, and delight for God's kingdom. He needs us all. In *his* future, the only future we have, he needs us.

God's promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church only applies to this living church of Jesus Christ. It does not apply to any human church. This living church might be only a small group in the world, even in our "Christian world"; yet it is to this "little flock" that God

wants to give his kingdom.

The living church has the special vocation to hold his light of promise up in the middle of the darkness of the world. When all the spirits and powers of this world are unleashed and seem to cast a doubt upon this “growth of God’s kingdom,” just then the church-community has a special task.

It is very significant that during World War I a church community was given at Bad Boll. In those years world history showed its true face in unheard-of horrors destroying all human hopes for a positive course of history. Yet Bad Boll was a place where people lived in the expectation of God’s kingdom. Even when many countries were filled with war and battle cries, here was a “Zion of God” where God’s peace was preserved in the hearts of a few on behalf of the whole world.

Blumhardt had always expected that with the coming of the Lord the sins of humankind would be revealed. So when the satanic powers in the world revealed themselves, he did not waver in his faith and his hope. It was clear to him that God also reveals his will at just such world events. These times of judgment would ultimately serve God’s cause. “Human history always seems to be without God, yet his will and power run through everything. Finally his will is done.”

Shortly before the beginning of the war Blumhardt expressed his beliefs in these words,

Even out of evil good will come. The evil in the world must work towards the good—this is the silent rule of God in the world. We are living in stormy times; a new

catastrophe is threatening us and everywhere people speak about the upcoming war. Even this evil has to lead to good. It can shake up many hearts and open a new pathway when God speaks to us and Jesus Christ becomes Lord and King of this earth. We must remain firm however great and manifold the evil in the world may become. Today we stand in a crisis, under judgment. We expect an ending: the present must cease and make room for the future.

With this assurance Blumhardt experienced the outbreak of World War I. And with this reasoning he stood firm against the frightening din of war and remained convinced that God would ultimately make the nations and their doings work for his cause. In one of his first wartime sermons he emphasized that in human history a higher power than the will of people rules.

The first thing we see, born of the willful “I” of us all, is fighting and quarrels, anger, war and bloodshed. Our world is a world of sin, and all sin comes from the self-will of men and nations. But above this there stands another “I”: “I will pierce your fear and sadness, your sins and your crimes with my peace!” The “I” of God, the will of God, remains greater than the human self will. It is the will of man and our human thinking that brings about war; I want to be greater than my neighbor. And yet, be comforted; through all this pain, through all sadness, world history leads toward a great peace. This is the end for which we wait. A hopeful future must stand before us. All sadness shall find a hopeful end.

To Blumhardt the very fact that so much evil in humanity was revealed became a sign that truth would ultimately prevail.

All the evil that lies in humanity must be revealed. If we hate each other in times of peace, very well, then one day we will have war because of our hatred. If one wants to become greater than the other, then this must also be shown up. In this revelation of sin, of evil, of foolishness, of crime, there is a step forward. So let us accept the situation and remain watchful, always in the hope that what is happening must belong to God's kingdom. It has to lead to the goal, to the end of sin, to the ultimate great peace which shall come to the earth according to the promise of Jesus Christ—peace on earth.

He prayed:

We must believe that in the midst of a terrible world your kingdom, O God, will be planted, that your kingdom will grow. Lord God, Father, have mercy on us all! Have mercy on the times we live in, our generations and nations! Have mercy over all countries everywhere on the earth! Let the light and the power of your kingdom arise from the dead and death-bringing humanity!

Blumhardt saw the war as a judgment that had to come to all nations. Because God is at work in this judgment, finally good must come out of it, "for God's judgments are never to harm; the end is always good." People have to understand this meaning of war; they must repent under such a judgment.

The most important thing in this war is not the sum of events, the battles and murdering of countless human beings, but what lies behind it all. It is a sign of God, a language of God, and we have to learn from it. Our time cries out to us all, Repent! We all have a guilt in this war. All the nations have helped to bring about the final outbreak. We must all together repent for what is happening today. Do not sleep! Wake up! Watch and pray! The kingdom of heaven wants to come near.

Blumhardt remained free of all hatred against the warring armies. To him hatred was the real enemy against which we must fight:

The *real* enemy, Satan, the enemy of God and of all people, is the deathly hatred against others that wants to invade our hearts.

Therefore he warned those around him:

We are not only Germans; we are citizens of the world. We must pray for our enemies. We must love everyone. Humankind belongs to God through Jesus Christ... Our hearts must be opened to feel the misery of those whom we call our enemies. They are not God's enemies. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Russians, Germans—they are all one: they all belong to God.

For this reason, Blumhardt did not rejoice over the German victories. While people were in a veritable frenzy of triumph he said:

You rejoice over the victories, over battles we have won. I feel a shudder going right me when I hear people

shouting, “We are victorious, thousands of the enemy are killed!” We cannot rejoice over this, my friends, we cannot!

During the war Blumhardt longed for a different fight and a different victory from those fought on the battlefields. At the beginning of the war he prayed:

Let this fight be turned into a fight for thy heavenly kingdom, for the salvation of the world. Thy victory *must* come after long afflictions!

He remained certain that Jesus would arise from this conflict as the victor.

However many afflictions may come, one thing is forever certain: Jesus remains the Lord. *His* victory alone is important and in *his* victory all evil must be swallowed up. He is triumphant! This war is merely an occasion for Jesus Christ to reveal himself as victor. You, oh God, cannot let the history of the world fall from your hands. We believe that *Jesus is the victor*. We remain confident that he remains our salvation and comfort.

The living church of Jesus Christ is of decisive importance for this victory. Jesus needs people who fight his battle in the midst of the chaos of world history.

We must be a people who stand by the greatest commander-in-chief, Jesus Christ. Take your place in the ranks of those who fight for God’s kingdom!

On the first Christmas of World War I, Blumhardt called his household to be part of this struggle:

We must hold high the banner, we of God's kingdom—the banner of our Savior Jesus Christ. He wants to win in this battle. Even if it should take a long time, we have Christ's day in our hearts and we should not let it disappear. It is our calling to preserve Christ's day in our time, in the midst of all the horrors of our time. We will remain firm and never give up. The coming of peace will depend upon those who have Christ's day in their hearts.

Blumhardt recognized the power of Satan in the war; but he faced this evil with the weapon of light: "Jesus, the light of the world, will come!" With renewed conviction he would again and again sing out the old song of Möttlingen, "Jesus is victorious King!" Faith in the victorious King, "who leads us, with his might, from the darkness to radiant light," became for him the only strength needed to prevail in this fight.

We live in a dark time. It is a time of death, a time of earthly powers and not of the heavenly kingdom. The kingdom seems as though lost. But now arise, you people of God; and you, people of God, arise! In the midst of the world's night we are to have a light in our hearts. This light is the hope in our almighty God who gives us help in all our ills. Our present task is a quiet, trusting expectation. Be people who wait for God! Be firm and look only toward the goal that the kingdom of God will bring to us!

Blumhardt remained in this quiet, trusting expectation to the very end.

Come what may, in joy or in pain, in war or in peace, at all times we can walk as if in heaven. In great and small things we must remain steadfast to God's will on earth. We can overcome and endure even the hardest times. Our task is to have faith and hope in the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a simple, powerful way he expressed this at his last evening devotion on September 29, 1917. To the Bible text (Is. 49:7-13) he only added these few words:

This is the promise. At all times there will remain a light on the earth. We may walk in this light of the promise. Often it appears to us as though God had forgotten us, yet he remains with us. His word is living and true—be comforted. All things will yet come into his hands!

A radiant light lay over the last years of this man of God. Like the dying Moses on Mount Nebo, after all the battles he looked calmly and confidently towards the Promised Land. At the same time a childlikeness radiated from him that shows us clearly the truth of Jesus' words, "Unless you turn around and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 18:3)

Blumhardt gave us an image of himself when he said in one of his last sermons:

He who looks into the eyes of children looks into the heavens. We too are still children. The childlike qualities that God gave us at our birth must triumph over the darkness and keep us joyful in good and in bad days.

Unless we believe in a childlike way, unless we trust as children do, in all circumstances, and remain joyfully in our childlikeness before God, we are not worthy of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven does not want great individuals; it wants a child. The greatest are those who remain childlike, even when they become great and famous.

This childlikeness showed itself especially after Blumhardt suffered his first stroke. “Now the evening of rest has come,” he said almost joyfully after his stroke. From now on he waited for the hour of his homeward voyage like a happy child waiting for Christmas Day. Of his anticipation, one member of his household said:

He was extremely touching in his helplessness—always filled with joy and gratitude like a happy child. His powerful prayer life was a confirmation of his life. He would lie quite still with folded hands or whisper softly, “Yes, come, Lord Jesus! Amen.” Joyfulness radiated from his face. In the last days of July 1919, we felt that the end was near. In the night of August 2, he passed away very quietly. He lay there like a happily slumbering child with an expression of victory.

Blumhardt opens up for us this faith and this hope. The powers of corruption that at present inundate so many things shall not remain victorious. Faith gives us the certainty that Jesus Christ stands at the end of the history of this world. World wars, world crisis, world need, and all the developments that press on toward new, still more terrible

catastrophes, all these reveal to us the end toward which our world history is hurtling. Yet Christ stands behind this end. In the light of his promise we know it will come. “Behold, I make all things new!”

Blumhardt’s fight, his message of the truth of God, become all the more significant for the future. The words written over his grave witness to the truth:

CHRIST’S VICTORY REMAINS FOREVER SURE.  
THE WHOLE WORLD WILL BE HIS!

# I Christ the Lord

THE LORD HAS RISEN INDEED!

*Luke 24:34*

**T**he Crucified One, who is now the Risen One, is *the Lord!* We must believe this. We have not gained much by just accepting that Christ died and rose again. Many people believe this, but nevertheless go into hell. This belief is of no help to me unless I make Jesus my Lord. It is not the worst if some people are unable to believe that Christ rose from the dead—at least they still regard it as something tremendous, too tremendous to believe. The sad thing is that some claim to believe it and yet it means little to them and they do not make him their Lord.

When we hear about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it should stir and shake us. “What? Somebody has risen from the dead? Who is it? That can’t be—if it is true the

whole world must change!” Anyone who is not struck in this way has no idea what it means to be crucified and then to rise again. This must sink so deeply into our hearts that we gain a new attitude to life. It must strike us so powerfully that we make this Risen One our Lord and accept him as Lord of the world. We must acknowledge that all things belong to the Lord Jesus. Why? Because he has risen from the dead! This is why all knees must bend before him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord. There shall be no creature, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth who shall be anything beside him. It is for this that we live and strive.

Only those people may be called Christians who, under the impact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the name of the One who rose again, lay claim to the whole world. They alone know that it will be only a short time until Jesus Christ becomes the ruler. He who merely accepts that Christ died and rose again is no Christian. He is simply a man with certain views.

A Christian is a warrior and fighter, one who concludes from the resurrection of Jesus Christ that the world will come under the rulership of God. He knows that as a Christian he must help toward this goal. As the Church of Christ, we should live in constant striving toward the great reign of the king, Jesus Christ. That will make us Christians.

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## 2 The Power of God

“BUT NOW I WILL COME,” says the Lord, “because the needy are oppressed and the persecuted groan in pain. I will give them the security they long for.”

*Psalm 12:5*

**H**ow? How will God do it? That is always a puzzle. Everywhere in the Bible you can read, “Go away, let me do it!” Sometimes, of course, it sounds as though God were lamenting, as though he would not be able to do it. But there comes a time when he says, “I will do it. I see the poor and the needy and I must help them.” But now, how will he do it?

A lot can be said in answer to this question. The faint-hearted say, “Oh, yes, even in our misery he can bless us, and after all, there is eternity.” But in this way not a single need is overcome, not a single tear is dried. This concern of eternity—honestly speaking, I don’t quite trust

it when people console me with hopes of eternity. If I cannot see any help in *this world*, who can guarantee help to me in eternity? Or has the Savior come only into eternity? I say he has come to *us!* Therefore this comfort is not sufficient. Even when, in many situations, we do not reach the goal during our earthly life but only beyond it, it is nevertheless a question whether the goal is reached as soon as we leave this life behind us. I don't believe it's so. God does not work in such a mechanical way in the world. Things take a more natural course, and the fight is more difficult than we think. We cannot just skip around in the world and lightly assume that when we die everything will be all right in eternity. Oh, no! There is a continuation of advances and reverses, according to how much affliction can be taken from us and how far God is able to help us.

Our happiness depends upon God's power. He must exert his power, and we have to believe that he will do this. This is why God created us. People who are ready to receive God's power in their hearts, pull a little of that power down to this world. They become the best representatives of God by drawing down his power to help. It is not so much a question of us wanting to change and be converted. The first and most important thing is that God rises up and, in the end, gathers us in. We experience God's help in moments when we do not expect it. This is our redemption. In the last hours of our life, and then in heaven, we will be amazed how much help we have received from God exerting all his power to save us *against* our will. God comes to us again and again. He meets us and comes closer and closer to us

until he breaks into this world with all his power.

This is the goal of all God's efforts for us. Need and misery will not be overcome until once more the barriers between eternity and this world are broken through. This is why help is continually delayed. An opening must be made from above downward, not from below upward. Christendom sees it just the other way round. Christians want nothing but openings up and out of this world. They only want to fly out like doves and be saved. According to the Bible, however, the openings must be broken through from above in order that help will fly down to our earth. But nowadays it costs a terrible struggle to bring this about. Do you know why? Because nobody believes it! They all want to easily get away and be saved, and yet they do not know what lies beyond. People even hurry to die, although when they get to "the other side," they will rub their eyes. One should think very carefully about these matters, and it is a great pain to me that Christians generally do not understand them. That is why our life is so sloppy.

I know that people will say, "Here comes Blumhardt again with his quaint stories." But please prove to me which of these two is biblical: our death, or God's future for us. From the first to the last chapter, the Bible deals with the coming of God into this world, and there is nothing about this business of dying. Every word in the Bible guarantees to us all deeds done by God right here where I stand. God only needs to lift one finger against our afflictions, and more is achieved than if we founded a hundred thousand institutions. In the near future we must expect help from

God's intervention. We can't bring it about by ourselves, we must ask God to come to us; we have to become biblical again. I'm emphasizing: "become biblical." Understanding and wisdom will be given if our primary concern is that God comes down and that Jesus comes down. Let's lay claim to our right on this earth, the right to victory over sin and death here on earth, not because of our faith, but because of God's power.

Our pitiful faith accomplishes nothing. Most people believe their own ideas. It sounds harsh, but I can't stand it when people continually babble about faith. They are so self-centered, and think only of themselves. I do not want the kind of faith we fabricate when we want to enforce our own ideas. I know what faith is. It is the power of God which redeems us and will redeem many people even though they do not fully believe in this power. Who, then, can say of his faith, "Look, I have the true faith." That is a delusion. If we turn our ideas around and live according to the Bible our faith will shine out. We will receive a completely new heart and mind, completely new hands and feet. We will bear in mind God's efforts to penetrate into our world and accomplish something here on earth. It's not enough to have a "religion." Heathens have a religion too, only a little different from ours. God does not care about what we call religion. In times when he was unable to come down and help he preferred to let people become irreligious. In ancient Egypt the Israelites could do as they liked, and they went to rack and ruin; but still God took care of them. His help does not depend upon men's ideas of religion, but upon

God's faithfulness, mercy, and power, and upon hearts that wait for him to come down.

Let's unite in the hope and certainty that God sees us, the wretched ones on this earth, and says, "Now I will rise up. Now I will help them." Then we know that great help will be given on the day of Jesus Christ.

■ February 12, 1886 (Volume 1, No. 49)

## 3 God's Allies

O LORD, HEAR; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, give heed and act; delay not, for thy own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

*Daniel 9:19*

This was Daniel's prayer and it had an effect, as one can feel from the whole prayer. He is praying about important matters: he is praying for the liberation of his people from Babylonian captivity. It could have been said, "That is God's affair. He has stricken us and when he wills it, he will raise us up again. After all, it has been promised that it will happen one day. We cannot bring it about by ourselves." Daniel didn't think this way, however. He thought, "Since it has been promised, I will make it my business, and I will not rest until it happens!"

He has every right to do this. God can expect of him, and indeed of all who believe in the promise, that they will

put their energy into doing God's will on earth. God takes us as his allies; he is glad to have us because the earth is, after all, in our hands. We are important to the destiny of the earth. We can withhold the benefits of the earth from God, or give them to him. We can live to God's glory on earth or we can live as his enemies. This globe is like a small kingdom, and its prince is man. If events on earth are to run according to God's will and not according to Satan's, then we must be God's allies. God cannot set up his kingdom among us unless we cooperate. In fact, one might say that even for the smallest action that God wants to perform on earth, he looks for a man and asks, "May I? Shall I? Do you also want it?" Only when man agrees, will he do it.

Certainly, God could go about it differently. It would be a small matter for him to take our position from us and say, "You stupid people, why should I bother about you? Go away from me. I shall rule!" But he won't remove us as subjects who owe allegiance to him. Instead, he respects us in spite of our sins. God upholds the promise he gave to mankind in the beginning: people shall govern the earth. Everything that God does on earth is done through man. One day we will see how much grief has come about because we have not, as God's allies, exercised the rulership to which we were appointed and have not included God in our earthly life. Then God will ask us, "Why didn't you let me in? I would gladly have helped you, but you did not ask me to: you did not avail yourselves of my power. With great enthusiasm you let yourselves be taken in by every other power. When I offer myself, you start yawning and are bored.

But when spiritualism or some other kind of ‘cure-all’ appears on the scene, you are all for it, body and soul.”

Eventually we find out we have created our own misery. Our greatest sufferings are caused by the will of us all who, in our arrogance, have fallen in with false allies. But when we become God’s ally and throw our whole being into this alliance, he will rule the world—from the heights above the clouds to the depths under the earth, and upon the earth.

This is just what is lacking; but so few grasp this truth. Daniel was one who did. And God is kind, for when there is only *one* who prays rightly among the many, God accepts it as the prayer of all. He thinks, “The others are too stupid; they do not realize what it is all about. If they knew, they would pray like that, too.” Thus it is possible for a great-hearted person to intercede for us all. Now the Lord Jesus is here, who with an all-embracing heart intercedes for us all. Following him, the living Church of Jesus Christ should also intercede for all people. The Church of Christ is the chosen people who should intercede for the rest of mankind.

What is the purpose of our existence? It’s not to make sure of our own speedy salvation; anyone who thinks that is making a big mistake. We must be fighters who will bring the world under God’s feet. We should be the voice of justice on earth no longer tolerating the rule of sin and Satan. Become allied with God! Fighting together we are victorious. We Christians can become Daniels.

Christ’s cause stands still unless his Church is alive and active. God has patience even up to this day, but it is just

as Peter says, "It is not God who hinders his cause." God does not delay the future of Christ, of his coming great redemption; he is not responsible for the tedious history of the church. God is patient and says, "I am waiting until you come. That is why it goes slowly. I will not interfere too quickly, but if you remain my allies, the cause will be won."

We are called to be allies of God now. This is what the Church of Christ must say. I am not a Christian for the purpose of seeking my own salvation in an egotistical, self-centered way. I am a Christian for God's sake: a servant of God who fights for the cause of Jesus Christ.

The Church of Jesus Christ must take God's interest to heart and study the Commandments of God, his "legal documents," to find out what is to be achieved by this fight. The earth lies before us like a great estate that has become weather-beaten and lies wasted—whose ancient title deeds have been forgotten. Now when we accept our alliance with God, we must as representatives of Christ "read" these title deeds of the earth, and there find that the evidence is in our favor. We shall see that we have been terribly wronged. Now it is a matter of starting a lawsuit against the Devil! Through sheer deceit we have been tricked out of our rightful place, and we have to fight for our rights to be restored.

Our first step is to go to the highest judge, that is, to God, and say, "God, have mercy on us. It cannot go on like this. We have fallen into the adversary's hands. Help us!" Then God will answer, "I do see your misery, but it is

your own fault, not mine, because you have lived this way. Yet I am just, and I am also concerned to see that you regain your rights. So I will help you.” Thus the proceedings begin that will help us win our case—and we shall win. When we study the “files” and see how much has already been fought for by the intercession of Jesus, it should encourage us to become very active in establishing our rulership, the rulership of the living Church. This has been newly documented and guaranteed by the person of Jesus. The verdict in our favor has been given, but it’s not been put into effect yet.

Now the living Church of Jesus Christ should fight, heart and soul, to see that the judgment is carried out which has already been pronounced on the enemies of mankind, on sin, death, and the Devil. Then God’s victory can truly come and man will be set free according to God’s will.

Is this what we long for? If so we would become a Daniel; we would know what God has promised, and what our rights are. We could stand and say, “This is what we want! It has been promised to us by the Almighty God and guaranteed to us anew through his love.” Finally, it *will* come. In the end there will be people who cry, “Lord, hear us; Lord, be merciful; O Lord, give heed and act! Do not keep us waiting any longer! For thy own sake, our God, don’t delay! Thy city and thy people are called by thy name, and according to thy name it is thou who shall, at last, rule on earth.”

Finally, Christ will come again! This will be more

glorious than the deliverance from Babylon was in its time, for the coming of Christ will bring the deliverance of mankind from their earthly and sinful condition. Ah, we have waited long enough. If only people understood this! It troubles me that so few people understand this right of mankind. But even if only a few understand, they can finally reach the goal if they stand before God in spirit and power. May God grant that Christ comes soon!

■ April 16, 1886 (Volume 1, No. 50)

## 4 Behold, I Make All Things New!

AND HE WHO SAT UPON THE THRONE said, “Behold, I make all things new!” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

*Revelation 21:5*

**B**ehold, I make all things new.” This word of God should accompany us on our way out of this year, 1886.

It cannot be in vain that his voice is heard. When God steps forward and speaks so that he is heard on earth, saying, “I,” he comes close to this world. Even if at first only one person hears it, through this all of us will hear it, and finally the whole world.

The Almighty stands on the heights while below life goes drifting by like a river whose current threatens to engulf all men. So, when the Almighty speaks, weak man can grasp hold of him by his word. We say: “Flee, all you years! Perish, all the earth! We no longer belong to you! We hold in our hands the rope by which we can swing ourselves up into heaven, from where we heard his voice.”

Even in our day we are allowed to hear this voice. We know that it is by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we are able to hear the Almighty speaking to all of us, he who made heaven and earth. Therefore it is to Jesus that we give our whole hearts tonight, in gratitude, love, and trust. He brings the almighty God to us that we may share in the throne of God for our life, which truly needs a throne, a government. One glance at our wretchedness makes us long for a firm support, which will never disappear. This firm support is Jesus Christ who has come near, who has entered into our flesh. We feel him, grasp him, and take him into our hearts as our brother, in order that we may have the support of the Almighty God in this world. If you want to go from this year into the next in this way, it will benefit you. Then the earth can turn any way it likes, whatever happens—our trust is in the throne of God.

I would like to ask you very seriously: Are you aware that, transcending time and circumstances, the almighty God offers himself through the Lord Jesus so that we may enter into his everlasting kingdom and escape from all that is mortal and perishable? We still don't grasp this, dear friends. When we realize that this is lacking just among

those called Christians, it seems as though the Bible had been given to us in vain. So few of us take hold of God in Christ, or live in God through Christ, no longer in the world in our own strength.

This evening the best thing we can do is take refuge in this word of God and ask him to protect us and keep us in it. There are many sayings which we all know; we do not need to search for them. Since our youth we have been taught how to come close to the Living God through them. But the greatest word which crowns all the others, is still this one: "I make all things new!" This is especially true as a support and comfort when we become aware of how short our life is and how quickly all life passes away and becomes dust and ashes. *All things new*, dear friends! — *This is God*. He cannot endure anything corrupt or harmful, but he seeks to restore everything. Today, we must believe this consolation from the Living God.

Of course, this comfort is only given us when we repent. Many people do not consider all that must become new. We think about all kinds of things around us, often giving no thought to what needs to become new in us. If we do think about ourselves, we only want to have certain things changed so as to be able to carry on even more comfortably. We never consider that *everything* must become new, everything in us and around us, everything in the whole world, in the whole of creation. We should be deeply humbled when we see that there is actually nothing which does not need to be made new. If we were to take a close look at each one of us, it would be clear that all of us must become

totally new! Everything is wrong! Ours is a lost cause without this!

Of course we wish we could say this or that is already new and doesn't need to change. After all, we do have Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, through whose grace we can be born anew. Of course we do have him, although to speak frankly, it almost looks as though we don't have him. All we see of mankind gives us the feeling there is still a lot that has to be made new. Even where something has begun to change, it is often so mixed up with man's old nature, that, in spite of something new appearing, we feel like saying, "Away, away with it all; *everything* must become new."

This is how things are. Darkness has come over this concept of renewal in Christianity. We are so easily contented and so quickly satisfied with a Christianity which turns us into slightly more respectable people. This is all we want. Yet, if we think about it, we have to say, "This surely cannot be all!" No, dear friends, what we have is not all. Everything, everything must become new, not only a little taste of something new, but everything new! *First of all, in us all!* Oh, that we all might at least feel the longing for something new to be given again. How long have we been meeting together; how long have we been preached to; how long have we been hammered at; how long have we let ourselves be admonished! Still there is no breakthrough! Just consider—what are our villages like, or our towns, our families, our own hearts? We don't want things to become new!

This could depress us, but instead, today it should unite

us in repentance. Turn your whole heart to the text in which the Living God says, “I make all things new.” Call on this God and say, “Yes, dear Father in Heaven, all things should become new through our Lord Jesus. But just look—nothing happens! Why don’t people change? Why don’t they receive the strength to resist sin? Why don’t they break away from evil, from the Devil’s cunning, power and temptation? Why is it that nothing happens? And, when something does happen here or there, when you even give us a sign and heal or free someone from the Devil, why is it that nothing becomes new then? O, Lord our God, this is a terrible calamity; nothing becomes new in us. Have mercy on us, our Savior Jesus Christ!”

This should be our cry! I also say this to you in my house—or do you feel *we* already have something? Are we people proud enough to think this? And what have we? Nothing! Certainly there is a show of Christian virtue, but each one thinks that *he* has it! I have yet to experience that someone has been born anew. You are still the same as you were ten, twenty, thirty years ago. You haven’t changed! If we don’t become new our house will continue to stand on shifting sand and that will be the end of our cause—this is a matter of life and death. This must become clear: either all things become new, or everything comes to an end.

This is true for each individual; unless you are renewed you will perish, and then you can join in the stream of death which the whole world follows. But as Christians, as disciples of Jesus, we should shudder when we swim along in this numbing stream of death. We must resist! Overnight

Satan comes and seizes one after the other; in our misery we will lie in the dust, and what will we do then? If we have not become new, we will perish like everyone else! Oh, that we would open our eyes, and cry out for help. Oh, that we could see that we are bound, and are in chains; that all our customs and conventions only serve to carry us along the same old monotonous paths until finally we are laid in the grave. When a man dies, people throw earth over him and return home to continue living in the same dull and superficial way. They are not one bit different than they were fifty years before; they remain just the same and do not really want to turn around.

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

“Behold, I make all things new!” God speaks, and we want to *believe* it. In order to believe, we have to repent; without repentance we had better leave it alone. If your eyes are opened to what is lacking, then believe! It is God who says these words, and we want to put our trust in them completely and carry them in our hearts, however bad things may look now. God speaks, he does not say, “Perhaps, if possible, under certain circumstances, I will

make things new, but I must think it over.” No, he says quite plainly, “I make all things new. It will be done, even if much patience is needed. I will certainly make all things new!” So again and again we have reason to think that he will do it. And if we surrender ourselves, a beginning might be made with *us*.

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

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

We are faced with a desperate situation. Must we let it

go on? I don't think so. Let us all help to carry it on our hearts and think of these words in faith, "I make all things new." Must there always be war? If that were so, God would not be making all things new! I could not believe these words. If we cannot pray with confidence for the time to come when God's almighty arm will stop warring armies, then it is not true that he makes all things new. Yet it is true that he makes all things new. Therefore, I believe there is something we can do to breach the gap, to stop such things from happening.

But of course if everything is to be made new, something must break in which does not come from us, but from heaven. A new deed of God must take place; something living and real from the Lord Jesus must break into the physical world. We must be able to actually see that Jesus really lives, that the Almighty God really exists and will not be pushed to one side forever. It will mean a hard struggle, dear friends, until finally everything becomes new. People simply do not believe that God will intervene from heaven. They say, "He guides the destinies of the nations," but they also say everything is sent by God, even when it is the Devil at work. Nobody believes that God will really intervene. Much would already be new with us if only we could believe that he will truly, personally intervene in our physical world, and that the time must come when we can pray to avert such threatening dangers, and our prayers are answered.

There are other events which threaten us. If war does not break out, disasters still rain down upon the whole world, even if we don't usually see them all at one time. Masses of

people have perished during the past year through many kinds of judgments such as tempests, landslides, explosions below and above the earth, earthquakes, epidemics, and all kinds of accidents which should be expected from the hectic life we live. Along with all this there is an enormous amount of sickness of body and soul. How much sighing there is in hospitals, how much misery in the mental homes and how many people are wasting away with the most horrible diseases. How many are being killed, some slowly through envy and hatred, others through the maliciousness of people toward each other. It would make a terrifying mountain if all the people murdered during one year were gathered in one place. There isn't even need for cannons; people perish anyway.

Every family must be prepared for something to happen suddenly to disturb its way of life. Then we must believe and pray that these judgments can be turned away; that something new may be given to us, our families, and to the whole world—indeed to all creation—something from the heavens above. When God fulfills his word we can stand up against anything, especially if we ourselves already experience something new! Take a portion of the new now and then! Try it! God often attempts to start something new with this one or that one, but they do not grasp it, they remain apathetic. So rise up and direct your steps towards what is new! Pray for it! Something new will begin. It will come from heaven and strengthen our trust that the whole world will be renewed through the almighty power of God.

This is what Jesus Christ wants. This is why he is the firstborn from the dead. He does not want us to be lazy forever. He wants the world renewed! Christ was born for this; for this he died and arose; for this he is sitting at God's right hand. Draw near to his call to renewal so that it will come!

We must believe and look toward what is new. But what does it mean, "new?" "New" means Jesus! Heaven! God! It means what is as old as eternity. Strictly speaking, we in our sins are "new." Sin is not the oldest thing; it came in as something new. God is the Old One, the Eternal One, who was from the beginning and remains so into all eternity. We are insignificant newcomers. Therefore, the "new" is really the old; it is eternal heaven, and has no beginning and no ending—it is God himself! The earth must become like heaven; all that is of earth must become eternal; temporal things must be transformed into the divine state which was at the beginning. Just think what it would be like if life would only *begin* to become really divine, if physical and material objects were no longer corrupt but became divine! What happy people we would be then!

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

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

Perhaps, dear friends, if you know that to become new means to become holy, as Jesus is holy, you will be able to grasp that it can easily happen as soon as we find life in Jesus. The gates of heaven are quickly opened, especially if we gather in greater numbers to call upon God. Then the Devil will be alarmed, for he knows that the heavenly state is the old, original state, and that our sin and death are new, wrong thinking which has come into the world but does not belong here at all. If we are faithful, the heavenly life will be ours; God and Christ will be ours. Everything else is of the Devil and is none of our business.

Now you know it! Grasp it in faith and in repentance—reach out to heaven for it. Love the Savior! Believe in God! Seek his word and keep it! Be zealous, be faithful! Jesus

Christ is our brother. Being at the right hand of our almighty God, he hears us and will quickly answer. Oh, that this may come to pass in this New Year!

■ December 31, 1886 (Volume 1, No. 63)

## 5 When God Hid His Face

CAREFREE AS I WAS, I had said, “I can never be shaken.”  
But, Lord, it was thy will to shake my mountain refuge;  
thou didst hide thy face, and I was struck with dismay.

*Psalm 30:6-7*

**W**e must always see passages like these as part of historical events. They are not just expressions of religious sentiments such as we often repeat, but involve impressive occurrences such as Moses’ leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Suddenly the waters drew back and all the people crossed to the other side and

were saved and they thought, “Our faith will never again be shaken.” They were especially elated when they saw the Shekinah,<sup>1</sup> when manna fell from heaven, and everything was put in order under God’s direct guidance. But when the people sinned and God hid his face, and they received no answer, then, “I was struck with dismay!”

We can hardly imagine what this means. In the first place, we have no idea what it is to talk with a Shekinah. Nobody in the world knows! We have no idea how it is when God is angry—we do not even notice his anger. We see great misery, suffering, need, and misfortune, even in our Christian efforts, but these are so confused, that, as a rule, we no longer know what is of God and what is of the Devil.

When we are clear-sighted we have discernment. We develop a certain uniformity of perception that helps us stumble along, but that is not the real insight. Reality is when we are clearly aware of and can say, “The Lord is present.” Then equally, clearly see when *we* have gone wrong, feel how terrible that is, and wonder how it happened. For instance, when Achan had stolen<sup>2</sup> and God was disobeyed, the consequences were powerful. How happy the people had been up until then, but now everything came to a halt. The people cried out, “What is it? What is wrong?” The slightest reverse was like a deathblow. The thought that this was the end, that the thread that bound men to

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<sup>1</sup> Shekinah means “habitation” of God, the brightness of God’s majesty that reveals His presence among men. This Shekinah appeared to the Israelites in the pillars of cloud and of fire during their journey through the wilderness, and it was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai as a gleam of the radiance of God’s countenance. According to rabbinical interpretation, the Shekinah visits the devout but draws back in the face of the sins of men.

<sup>2</sup> See Joshua 7

God had broken off, made their world crumble. That is how it was then. Today we can't imagine this. It is no wonder that today so many people do not believe there was a direct relationship with God, not just now and then, but lasting for centuries. The prophets said again and again, the Word of God was rare in the land. This does not mean there was no Bible; but people didn't place so much importance on the Bible for they were used to being guided directly by men of God. They believed that without prophets, the Bible was of no use to them. And if there were no prophets for a long time, they were anxious—then God was far away.

If we had something that came to a sudden halt, we would also be disheartened. It's a pity that nowadays there is so little dismay when divine things come to a halt. We respond with some anxiety but we are so used to it, that when this happens, we simply carry on in our human strength. Occasionally we are shocked when misfortune happens to one or even many people, but, usually we don't care deeply when God is obviously no longer among us; when, symbolically speaking, the Ark of the Covenant is lost.

This sense of anxiety needs to come back to us. I would like to push our modern Christians back into the experiences of the early Christian time and then back again into our present-day situation. I want to push them to the side of the Risen One who might speak to them; into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit who might speak to them. Then, throw them back into our own time that is full of the chatter concerned only with ourselves, "me, me, me," demanding attention. But God is silent. The way many

Christians say, “The Lord has spoken with me,” or “The Lord has said this to me,” is not enough for me. If only it were true! The thoughts we make up in our heads, even if sincerely meant, are a long way from coming from the Lord. The very ones whom we are sure the Lord has not spoken to, are those who are most sure about it. Those thoughts that we know for certain are not from God, they claim with greatest assurance to have received from the Lord. They are demonic inspirations—there are even pious demons that chatter with the piety of angels. They are so pious I can’t keep up with them. When human opinions claim to represent God the situation becomes difficult. The divine powers have to retreat into the background because the human noise is too great. Everything becomes paralyzed and feeble; countless hungry and thirsty souls are neither fed nor given water. If light is to come again, man must be silent and then God will speak.

Will the light come? I hope so; for a little of it is here, but it is hidden. A fine thread, which was not created by men still runs on. In Israel there was a little “stream” which ran on quietly for a long, long time until at last John appeared. Then Jesus came, and with him hope was reborn.

It is now like this with us: we too experienced a Shekinah to begin with—the Holy Spirit of the new covenant is none other than the voice of Jehovah of the old covenant—but then this disappeared. Now everything is quiet, just as it was in the post-Babylonian time. And now we too must be dismayed, for we are at a standstill in the world and we cannot rise up into the light. This is why we pray, “O Lord

our God, do not let us go on creeping along in this way! We've had enough of studying; in any case we cannot bring about anything new. Therefore rise up and *speak* once more! Speak from heaven, and this time to the whole world. *Thy glory must break into the entire world!* Then your goal will be reached!"

- April 6, 1887 (Volume 1, No. 69)

## 6 The Lampstand of God's People

THE LORD WILL GIVE HIS PEOPLE justice and have  
compassion on his servants.

*Psalm 135:14*

**W**e want to be God's people, everywhere, in all places. The Savior shall work within us with the power of the Almighty and not fail to chastise us. Then all will be well with us. The only danger for us would be if God said, "You can go your own way! I am not interested in you; you can do as you like!" This is the worst thing that could happen. The consequence of this is that someone in heaven comes and blows out the

lamp. Then the light is out! Or, in the case of an individual, someone comes with a pen and crosses out his name. It would be as it is written in Revelation: “I will spew you out of my mouth.” That is, you will never again be mentioned in heaven.

Well, we do not want to be counted among such people. We want to be counted among those who are spoken of in heaven, who may perhaps be allowed to gather as a people whose light on its lampstand is lit heaven! This is my deepest wish. There isn’t yet a full and consistent representation of us all in heaven on the basis of wholehearted, united striving for the kingdom of God. The lamp has been blown out, and only by a great effort will it be lit again. True, there are little lights burning where there is true fellowship with the Lord Jesus—of that we are certain—but we have no lampstand as a living *Church*. If the lampstand would be there, the world would be shaking; life would not be so monotonous. However, don’t underestimate the fact that at least some individuals have a little light in heaven. Because of this there is a forward movement on earth, in spite of difficulties. Of course, my longing is that a living Church will be seen once more. However different people’s natures may be on earth, they will become of one heart and soul because they share the same light in heaven. We long for this here at Boll. Think about this for a while!

I expect a great deal of my friends, I know. I don’t find it easy to say things others refuse to say. It is one of the heaviest burdens I bear; yet I won’t be silent about this. It must be said again and again. I repeat it today, “What is

missing is a living church, a people whose lamps burn in heaven." There is so much godlessness on earth because God is not present the way he should be. Godlessness would be restrained if there were a living church. It often seems as though God were saying, "Let them go! It doesn't make any difference what they do now—everything is already in confusion!" And so there is no restraint. But there is nothing more dangerous than a people without a helmsman. Therefore let's pray, "Beloved Savior, please rule us again."

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

Such a people of Christ should be gathering in a Biblical way: from all people, all languages, and all tongues. Therefore let me also say, please don't be so terribly German, so terribly French, or Russian! Be prepared to see God's people come together from all nations! When the Savior starts to

work, he will not confine himself to man-made boundaries or church-imposed limits. All kinds of blossoms will spring up out of the ground which cannot be made to fit any pattern. Therefore no one should bind himself to anything, apart from the name of Jesus. Those who wish to belong to God's people and have the fulfillment of his kingdom in mind, must at all times be ready to take the plunge and be prepared for Jesus' word of command so that servitude to men can never find its way in. I also say this to my own household. If anyone wants to take sides in the name of Boll, I must say, "No!" Only a person who enters into fellowship with Jesus in a clear, simple way and makes the Savior's loving influence felt on all sides belongs to the true people of God. Then powers and signs will also be revealed.

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

sight and the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up?" Why? Why?

That is why we should pray to God, "Light our lamp!" Then we shall never be afraid. All the things that cause us so much grief will suddenly be gone. The terrible confusions of the soul, the temptations and perplexities will all cease for our lamp will be lit! Our angel, the messenger between God and ourselves, is once more on the way. The connection is restored. Everything is working again on earth after the centuries-long lethargy of the followers of Christ.

■ April 13, 1887 (Volume 1, No. 70)

## 7 A New Foundation

THIS POOR MAN CRIED, and the Lord heard him,  
and saved him out of all his troubles.

*Psalm 34:6*

For God to save people from their troubles is not always as easy as many people think. They believe that God need only lift a finger and they would be helped. This is quite true. Yet God cannot always lift his finger. He could, if earth were to become heaven and God were able to say, “Now the earth is my place, my house, in which I can live and freely rule, as in heaven!” But as long as the earth, and particularly our human life on earth, is in so many ways not under his rulership at all, a great number of people do just as they please and use their freedom to destroy God’s will. God cannot simply help us out of earthly troubles, for this would often be directed against himself and destroy his own intrinsic being. If we want

help in earthly troubles we should not start to cry here, where our need is, but turn to the great need of the world seeking first the kingdom of God, in small and individual things as well as in large and universal things. Even in the very smallest matters, the foundation has to be laid and the basis prepared so that help can come. We should observe this down to the smallest details, and not simply pray, "Help me with my headache or my fever!" We should first of all ask, "How near to me is the kingdom of God? Is there a basis for me to simply say, 'Free me from my headache?'" There has to be a valid reason for this.

There are people who have no valid reason for their request. It is quite wrong to think that merely because we are Christian we have the right to expect God to intervene on our behalf. People grumble against God and say, "Why, why does God not help me, why does he so cruelly abandon me?" There are people, even good people, who are completely under the power of their carnal desires. They themselves and their surroundings serve only their flesh, consciously or unconsciously. They completely go their own way. Then the Savior is supposed to come quickly with help. But whom would he be helping? Their ungodly flesh! There are people who cannot expect the least help from God because they are so full of themselves. They go so very wrong that God must think, "I will let them go their own way. Whether they see it or not, if I were to help them it would only be to their disadvantage and would help them in their evil ways. I cannot help them, even if it means that I am dishonored among them

and they say, ‘There is no God.’”

Then again there are others who, with some part of their nature, are closer to God’s kingdom. God finds some good in them; there is some light there. However, we should be aware of how cautious God must be with those who acknowledge him with only a certain part of their lives. How easily such people can destroy God’s gifts with their sensual nature.

Finally, there are people who live completely to serve God, wanting only God’s justice for its own sake, even when they are judged. With these he can accomplish his truth. Thus, Jesus Christ laid a foundation around himself on which *everything* is possible; he sought God’s justice and God’s truth and sacrificed himself through death, death on the Cross.

Now we must follow him. As an advance guard, we should have on our hearts, in all our prayers, the plea: *Thy kingdom come!* Before we can come with requests to God we must make room for God’s kingdom among us. We can’t so easily make a petition to God asking him to change this world for our sake. We must first sound out how much room we have made for God’s kingdom among us. Do we listen to what the Savior has to say to the honor of God? According to his answer to us, we can only pray and be patient. Yet I should not constantly pray for my troubles to be taken from me. Often I see that it is much more important to simply pray: “Lord, take me into your hands, let me be under your rulership!” Whoever has this attitude will be given a task in God’s kingdom. This was the attitude of the

men of God, the prophets and the apostles, who fought for God's kingdom in ancient times, and for whose sake God worked great miracles. We too can be used to work as they did, but the kingdom of God must be in the foreground much more than it has been in the past. There is also a piety which is not under God's rule. We might even think that it is possible to please God by acquiring a certain holiness, although God does not find his righteousness in us at all. Instead let's give God the honor and be concerned that his kingdom comes to us. Then a great deal can be given. It will be possible to pray for others. In the midst of the world's misery it will be possible to dare to pray and cry out, "May God have mercy and send help so that light may break in on our earth." Indeed, a man who has only God's kingdom in mind and *not* himself will be of significance for the whole world. We see this in Abraham, the apostles and other men who have become significant for the whole world because of the way in which God manifested himself through them.

In this way it happens that the prayer of one man may be answered while the prayer of another is not answered. Not that God has more love for the one man than for the other. For the moment, however, one has drawn God's kingdom to himself and has made room for God in his life by denying his flesh and his earthly life. The other man has not done this. The one prays out of a concern for God's honor; the other, out of pain and grief, because he wants help. God can often give more to a man who may not be clever, but who hungers and thirsts for the kingdom of

God, than to one who wants to help God with great gifts. The latter has not made room for God's kingdom. Even in good times so very much depends upon our longing and trembling for God's kingdom—for God's justice within us, not seeking what is ours, but Jesus Christ alone. If we do not, the ground will collapse beneath us as soon as trouble pours over us, like ocean waves that threaten to engulf us.

Recently, we endured a test like this. I thank God for his help in our troubles, and above all that in the moment of deepest need the ground did not collapse beneath us and Jesus, the Risen One, quietly revealed himself to us. This was wonderful proof of the power of God's life that I would never have dared to ask for because I never imagined there was so much ground under my feet. As poor sinners, we were shattered, lying on the ground. But this we knew—"We surrender our lives. We seek neither wife nor child, home nor earthly life. Our sole longing and desire is that God finds his righteousness in us, even if he must dash us to the ground. If he finds his righteousness and his truth in us, he can do anything with us. We will not run away from him." We give praise and thanks to God for an experience that has enabled us to see how strongly the living hand of Jesus lies upon those who really seek the kingdom of God.

Now we must hold even more firmly in spirit to what is of heaven. Whatever happens in the future this experience cannot be taken from us. Perhaps God will demand more of us—and we want to be faithful so that in the end we may say, "If we only have Thee, we do not ask for heaven

and earth!" Then God can freely work with us without worrying, for we will not raise a lament when his wind like a storm passes through us. Now, with all earnestness, we must place all our human nature within the death of Jesus Christ and truly die with him.

As yet, we do not see much of God's kingdom in the world. Around us there is not enough of the foundation of God's kingdom to plant anew the banner of Jesus Christ, the Risen One. In the quiet of our hearts we can do it, but as yet we are too weak to witness to the world. The world no longer believes; it doesn't even listen. It turns its back on us Christians. Therefore God's kingdom must come with deeds; a *new* foundation must be laid. This foundation must be so strong that in the end, resurrection from the grave is possible; for the Savior said, "I am the resurrection and the life," but first he said, "I am the resurrection." So we must not rest or think that we have already reached the goal. We are on the way, but we have not found the treasure yet. If God gives us the strength, we will keep seeking for it, even though it costs us our lives. We are ready to give our last drop of blood and reject all earthly happiness for this treasure. God, in Christ, the Creator and Life-giver, must appear to establish his kingdom with power and glory and majesty in all the domains of worldly death. But what are we trying to say? Are we not talking too big? We know that we are weak people; we know that we are laden with guilt, and without our knowledge we have piled guilt upon ourselves. Now we want to throw ourselves into the death of Jesus Christ, and die so that he may live. If God the

Almighty confronts us with his sharp sword we will not flee, but with endurance and strength we will seek God's honor until his kingdom breaks in, and Jesus is revealed in the glory of his Father through the Holy Spirit.

All of our fellowship who have sought God's name and honor and not their own glory can be assured of a gift from the Savior which we must guard and cherish in our hearts. We must not only guard the light and the recognition of how God began to lead us in a wonderful and genuine way, while we still had to endure trials to understand his truth, but also the goodness of his will that we could proclaim his salvation *on earth* and remain *on earth* serving him. This has been deeply imprinted in our hearts as a direction and promise. I would say we hope more boldly than ever that God's plans are directed toward bringing about the time when resurrection and life in the Lord Jesus are made known on earth. To express the over-all impression of these last days as it has been stamped upon my spirit for all time, I would say: "The Risen One came close to me." This fulfilled for me a desire which I have long and painfully nurtured.

Do not be offended, dear friends, if I now open my heart and say to you that in spite of all the many experiences I have had, a secret pain has never left me concerning the thought: "We do not yet have the Risen One. Yes, he is in heaven—but on earth?" We speak of him but do not have him. That is why everything is directed toward death, not toward life. But resurrection belongs to the earth, not to heaven—certainly to a new earth. But how is the earth to

become new unless the Risen One reveals himself? Nothing, nothing at all, can advance God's truth and the Gospel except new signs of Jesus Christ, the Risen One. We must come to the point where we do not hold fast to an old confession of faith, but cry out, from new experiences together, "*He is truly risen!*"

He lives among us! He takes up the reins, leading his people, leading all the nations upon the way of his death so that in the death of the flesh his resurrection and his life are glorified, to the everlasting praise and glory of God.

■ January 14, 1889 (Volume 2, No. 10)

## 8 “Our Jehovah”

“I, JEHOVAH, AM THE LORD YOUR GOD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

*Exodus 20:2*

These words stand at the beginning of what we call the Ten Commandments. “I am the Lord, your God!” They stand at the head, like a rock; and out of them flows all the rest of God’s will, like a fresh, living spring. When we have this rock, we also have the spring, the source; we have a true relationship to God. If we lose the rock, we do not have the source: even though we may approve of some of God’s commandments, they have no influence on our lives. We do not truly glorify God by the way we live. But together we can deepen our search for the truth so that our lives become more genuine.

Many people think of the Old Testament as unimportant

compared to the New Testament. But this strikes me deeply again and again when I read the Old Testament. From time to time men of God arose in Israel to whom God’s Spirit showed the way. The Spirit of God that worked through these men pointed to the fact that only in the people of God was life true and genuine. There was to be no pretence in life, as in other nations—no false honor in politics and culture—no false religion—no forced affected behavior. There was to be no hypocrisy or lies, which would make it appear as if the earth and nature are perfect. If everyone became genuine and honest with all their faults and shortcomings, then God would surely help those who were upright and sincere.

This is the way God is speaking to us in the Scriptures. All the prophets struggle for truthfulness among the people so that nothing remains hidden and covered up before God. Truth flows in reverence before the will of God from the one rock, Jehovah. Nothing else shall influence the people of God; nothing else shall instill reverence in the people of God.

Who is this *Jehovah*, in whom Israel shall see God? This Jehovah has now appeared on earth. His power and works are visible and tangible and are the proof that God is present among men. Therefore the words follow, “...who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” We see Jehovah in this miracle—also in the miracle of the pillar of cloud and fire, in the manna, the bread of the desert, and in the water gushing forth from the rock—in all things in which the invisible God is seen and felt by men. “This is your God,”

the powerful voice cries out, “the God who has delivered you and will also lead you in the future until you are saved from all evil, if you hold to him!” In Israel the divine power guided the people to redemption. It was the will of this holy God, Jehovah, to dwell among an earthly people. Through this the people were given the possibility to seek redemption and free their souls from the bonds and fetters of inward lying and corruption. It justified their expectation that the earth around them, freed from the curse, would become a fount of blessing. Then Jehovah would appear in the milk and honey of the earth to all who live on earth, just as he had appeared in the pillar of cloud and fire. Through Israel the earth was to become God’s land, a heritage for his children, who would be able to take from it all the gifts of life.

Jehovah, the creator of heaven and earth, was expected from above and from below, from heaven and earth. As part of God’s truth, man’s life on earth must prove to everyone that it is godly. Our everyday life, our activities and work, should be just as God-filled as our heart’s longings, which rise to heaven in praise of God. Today we hope and long that the fulfillment of God’s kingdom will show itself when God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

The invisible, great God, the holy and exalted One whose essence no man can grasp, unites with the earth in the name, Jehovah. In other words, “I am present and shall be wherever you are, and I am present in such a way that you can understand me.” This brings about the blessed community with God, which distinguishes a true people of

God from all other people. On this earth, where man is created and sustained, a communion is given with all the powers and gifts of God that are possible, both in man's spiritual life and in the life of nature and creation around him.

Many other nations also had God and many names by which they tried to express God in their midst. However sincere their striving, they found only a partial truth. On the whole, these conceptions of God, which were born of their desires, led them, in this very desire, away from God into superstition and merely human passions. Neither their intellectual nor their physical conceptions of God led them to a true life with God. In Israel, for the first time, God was to become truth. From there he could become truth in other people too. Other nations had turned God into a lie, and their ruin revealed the lie of their gods. But in Israel the truth of God was to be revealed in life, in an increasingly glorified life.

This is very important for us if we want to become a people of God. Above everything else we must find the rock—the rock from which the will of God flows forth in a natural way, determining our life and bringing true life with it. God appeared to us as the Jehovah in Christ. Christ came to be with us, as a man like us, not only a name. As in Israel, the most important thing was that Jehovah was honored as God, although that was merely his name; so with us the most important thing is that Jesus is honored as God, although he comes to us in human form, as one man to another. Whatever else we may think, Jesus is the

only one who radiates God on earth in a two-fold way. He towers upward into the heavens to show truth of the Spirit. He leads into the earthly, human life so we will understand and know our growth on the earth—God’s creation. Then the earth will shine through all he has created, just as the heavens shine.

What is God? However much we talk about God’s nature, however many books we write about it, we shall never be able to understand it. Whenever we try to grasp God’s nature, to make it our own, it flees before the doubts that rise up in us, before the unclarities that we cannot resolve. We must simply say, “Look to Jesus Christ. There is God. God is within your reach.” In Jesus Christ we become silent. His whole life and being comforts us because, in him, we can dismiss all theories about God. In a simple, childlike way, we may sit at his feet like Mary, renewed and inspired by the genuine, divine life which flows out from him to us. Eagerly, we want to immerse ourselves into this divine life, body and soul, so that we may become like him in truth and justice—in our relationship toward God, and our relationship toward men.

Thus, Israel was also to be comforted by the appearance of her Jehovah. All further questions and speculations about God and the world, about the mysteries of men’s fate, which appear to be tossed to and fro between good and evil, were to stop before the loud cry, “Be still! For I, Jehovah, am your Redeemer! And with redemption, with the experience of the new life I bring to you, will come all the enlightenment that you need.”

In this way, we too find rest in Jesus. This faith is a quiet contemplation of his life, filled with a heavenly expectation of redemption. Through him who died and yet lives, this redemption should now go much deeper and lead to much more wonderful and sublime experiences than were possible for the people of Israel, for in Jesus we see that even death can be overcome. We are shown a life when we had given up hope. Yet we long for it in the depth of our hearts. The watchword now is: we live although we die.

A new heaven, a new earth, is the goal toward which God leads us through Christ, on the way of redemption. We must become genuine and no longer go on our own ways, believing that God's goal can be reached with our religious institutions, traditions, and customs. Our redemption will come only through the living God, who manifests himself in Christ here on earth. In him we find redemption by surrendering ourselves to him. For his sake we must count everything else as loss. We must allow ourselves to be a tool of his revelation, in truth and justice. This is faith, a faith that justifies us, placing us before God whose justice and truth can then be revealed in us. Christ gave himself in the flesh and in the corruption of the flesh. His death became a sacrifice to God—so that we might find in him the way to sacrifice ourselves as he did; that dying with him we might become a people of life in uprightness, justice, and holiness here on earth.

This is not just a teaching, intended for our momentary edification. On the contrary, all that I have tried to say in my weakness should make practical people of us, people

full of zeal, longing to be captured by this Jesus. We want to become people free of ourselves and of our traditions. Then we are able to serve God truly, toward redemption. It is a shame to see the many forms of Christianity to which men give themselves heart and soul in our day. Yes, just as the heathen sacrificed to their false gods, so Christians today sacrifice to the false gods created by the “Christian” religion—but not by Christ. Even honest people find it hard to break away and to follow the words, “I, God, am your God in Jesus, in nothing else, whatever it is called.” If we find this rock in these words of God, then the fountains of truth will flow for us. Then our lives will also become genuine. The lives of most Christians have become just as false in God’s eyes as the lives of most Israelites who in ancient times practiced idolatry and later their own brand of piety. One’s own piety becomes just as false a god as the gods of the heathen.

If we want to fight for the kingdom of God, then it will be more important and more necessary to do away with the nine-tenths of the Christian religion which has become false. Then we would come to the simple, bare-looking rock which is Christ. Then the Savior himself could live and rule, instead of the many rulerships that come from men while pretending they come from God. We should not worry too much about traditions, which are in any case no longer true. God will show himself to those who are honest and sincere, even if they are unable to follow the grandiose spiritual leaders and theologians. We must become genuine, toward God and toward men just as Jesus was,

and allow no other god to rule over us. Then we shall be on the rock on which there is fellowship, which is called blessed, because it is a fellowship with God and with one another. Such a fellowship no longer places any obstacles in the way of redemption.

When we let these things grow and ripen in us, then we shall all experience in our lives that *our* Jehovah, Jesus, lives and rules and is praised and glorified in all eternity.

■ August 1891 (Volume 2, No. 8)

## 9 The Light of the World

Dear Friends, today the word of our Savior came to me, “*I am the light of the world.*” These words we want to consider today. It is comforting that he does not say, “I am *your* light,” or “I am the light of a nation,” or “I am the light of a church,” or “I am the light of a congregation,” or even “I am the light of my disciples.” No, he says, “*I am the light of the world.*” The Savior obviously wants to tell us something which comes to us from the Bible. “Don’t draw me into all your petty affairs. It is as though you were sticking to a glue pot, or like a fly sticking to honey, from which you can’t pull away. Don’t draw me into your affairs. Nobody should think that I have come only to him, and that I now have to wash only his feet and shine his shoes. No! Accept me as the one who has come to the *whole world*, through whom the world has been created. I am the one who sustains the world and who will create a new world. The Father and Creator of all worlds speaks to you through me. Unless you take me in this way, I will remain far from you.”

This is what we proclaim today, “Christ became flesh.” It is a pity that Christianity has exploited these sublime words—“became flesh”—“came into the world”—in a selfish way. This is probably the reason for the shadow which is cast over all Christendom. We remain without Jesus, without the one who says, “I am the light of the world,” if we love this petty, selfish attitude where everyone has his own “dear Savior,” and cooks himself a nice sweet pudding to eat comfortably to his heart’s content. In this way we don’t become children of God, people who overcome their own nature and know how to live in a way worthy of God. We remain the same mean and miserable people, rummaging around in our own nature. Then we go to pieces and finally complain to heaven that God does not care about us. Certainly God does not care about your selfish interests. He came into *the world*. If you want to meet the Savior, then you must go out into the world, leaving behind your small concerns. Watch out, don’t stay in one corner! Fight against your pettiness. Seek Jesus in the world—there you will find him.

Of course I don’t mean that world which is penetrated by sin and death: that is a fallen world. Jesus says, “I come into God’s creation. I am here to serve this creation of God, so God’s will may be done, and one day it will be as in the beginning: ‘And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was *very good*.’” (Gen. 1:31) We have to penetrate deeply into his creation.

One would think that this is very easy, but, in fact, it is very difficult. We are surrounded by the creation. We draw

our breath from it. We draw our whole life, down into the smallest things, from creation. We are bound and fettered to it. We cannot imagine anything else but ourselves and creation, creation and ourselves. We have to draw every breath from creation, or else our life ceases. It is God's goodness that nourishes us continually from creation. And yet we cannot enter into creation, into the true, pure nature of God.

This is a desperate situation. Just try to bring his simple life into society; it won't work. The human race wants to have something artificial, something affected that twists man and distorts his features. If you want to be an educated person, you cannot just be yourself. This goes for heathens and Christians alike. It is the same everywhere. You need something false otherwise you are not educated. It is like a curse, a human curse. It grips us with iron claws and we cannot get free from it and return to creation. And, if we do try to escape this curse, a storm is raised, just as with our Savior. He who is the light of the world, in the end only heard people crying out, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

It's still like that today. Whenever one attacks the worldly spirit that wants to separate us from creation, one hears, "Crucify him!" Yet those who do not take up this fight are no supporters of God and the Lord Jesus. Today, my friends, I do not want to proclaim to you that Jesus is your helper. In fact, he has been your helper for a long time. Now he waits for you to become his helpers. Don't be afraid of this cry, "Crucify!" when it becomes necessary stand up for truth and justice, which are part of creation.

We have come together in our household to take on *this* obligation. The other part of God's promise, his promise for our redemption, must take second place. Many have been offended by this attitude. Nevertheless, if people don't understand us, this won't stop us. We have to strengthen our will and take upon ourselves the responsibilities that are ours if we want to follow Jesus Christ. In order to enter the world of God, we have to declare war on the human world, in everyone. It should not concern us to get into heaven, because here on earth is the creation which we are allowed to enter if only we are prepared. Jesus Christ, the victorious king, will lead us into his great creation which lies before our eyes.

So that Jesus will lead us, we must will as God wills. We must not be obstinate and spoil the whole work of Jesus Christ. We must not construct a Christianity according to our own ideas: this leads us nowhere. We can see that today, two thousand years later, we are stuck in the same pettiness, in the same sins, in the same misery as all the other people. This is factual proof that we have not understood God's will. Or do you think God would have left mankind in its misery for such a long time if there had been a people who grasped the sublime appearance of Jesus Christ in creation? John was quite right in saying, "He came into his own, and the people received him not." Like a light he shone into the darkness, and the darkness does not accept him to this day. This must change! The darkness will have to accept him. And if all the darknesses do not will it, then we must say to them in the name of the almighty

God that they have to accept him. You too, man, you must accept Jesus Christ and give him the honor due him.

This, my friends, should be the concern of our hearts today. It is your obligation to be God's helpers, and you will perish miserably if you do not help. Long enough you have called on the Savior that he should help. He has done his duty from the beginning; you need not remind him. Now it is your turn to stand by him and to do something to help him! I say this also for myself: We want to stand by the Lord Jesus, even if the whole world cries, "Crucify him!" We know that they crucified him, yet he lives. Let those also be crucified who help the Lord Jesus, those who break away from human laws by entering into creation. Even if they are crucified they will live and nothing will harm them.

The first step for us is to recognize where we stand in his way. We must get out of the way if God is to be the light to this world. We should not step in and become a hindrance. We must be the first who are ready to sacrifice our lives and to give everything that we have. We come together on this day willing to sacrifice ourselves. We want to give ourselves for whatever God demands of us. You know very well that a task has been given to my house. We should all work together, but not to protect each other in a wrong way. For God's sake, we must give up what was wrong in our lives and break away from our past; may God help us to accomplish this. Then each one will be able to contribute, to prepare a way for God in Jesus Christ, so he can care for his creation.

A second step must follow. When we dedicate ourselves, my friends, then we recognize our sins. When God's fire burns and the flames leap up against us and consumes our human nature—this means repentance. Quite a different, more thorough repentance will be demanded of those who want to sacrifice themselves. Only in this way will our innermost flesh be given over to judgment and we die in order that Jesus may live.

We must take to heart, first, the willingness to sacrifice ourselves, then in our surrender, the readiness to persevere in repentance until the judgments are fulfilled: until God has completed in us that which he demands of us. Then, my friends, we *shall* see that Jesus is the light of the world. Then he will come in radiance, shining on all the people of the earth. There will be, as never before, such rejoicing among the people and among nations.

We have no inkling of what the world will be, what the nations will be, what creation will be, once Jesus Christ comes to fulfill the task for which he was sent by the Father in heaven to do. As yet everything seems to be withheld. All the greatness, the sublime and creative power given in Jesus appears now like a pent-up stream held back by God's patience so that the secret forces of darkness can be overcome. But now, something is at work to allow the stream of God's glory to break forth. Now is the last hour, the hour of decision: Is Jesus the light of the world, or is he not? It is true! He is the light of the world. Men shall fall at his feet weeping, and ask forgiveness for their unbelief.

In this way, my friends, let us unite today in the presence

of God and do what is asked of us. Let each one of us carry in his heart the awareness of his duty to be a helper, so that the creation may once more become God's. Let each one of us feel worthy to surrender himself to the will and the plan of God in Jesus Christ, so that this Jesus, the light of the world, may come and wipe out the stain of death and sin in God's creation.

■ December 24, 1894 (Volume 2, No. 68)

## 10 God's Kingdom

SOME OF THEM WANTED TO ARREST him, but no one laid hands on him. Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why did you not arrest him?" The police answered, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" Then the Pharisees replied, "Surely you have not been deceived too, have you? Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed." Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?" They replied, "Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee." Then each of them went home.

*John 7:44-53*

The words we have just heard are a brief comment on an episode in Jesus' life, yet it is very important for us. The history of Jesus' life is the history of God's kingdom then and now, and the same questions arise. It is the same argument about God's cause today as it was then. Some people are shaken; they feel something. Something grips their hearts—they themselves don't know how. It is the divine, the spiritual nature of Jesus. Then they submit, saying, "No man ever spoke like Jesus." Even if they don't understand it, there is nothing they can do against this man. The others hear only what they themselves think. They compare it to what Jesus says. Their hearts are hardened. They do not even notice that there is something special about it. And finally they say, "Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee."

Also, today, we are concerned with the kingdom of God, though I know that for many it has drifted into the background. Today people are aroused by many issues. Their outward life makes great demands on them. More than at any other time, it would seem, man raises himself powerfully in his human search and progress. It is as though the whole world wanted to offer its forces to men, saying, "Use me; become great, become strong, become rich, creative, active—take everything into your hands!" Forces hardly dreamed of are now open to us. We use the new inventions and new forces for our purposes. Our whole earthly life depends on these. If we were to shut our eyes to these things, we would lag behind and finally perish in this earthly life. There is a spirit of intellectual

accomplishment that pushes the concern for God's kingdom to one side, so that we no longer know quite what it is all about.

It must be said, however, that as time passed a tremendous misunderstanding came about, precisely with regard to speaking about God's kingdom. Much has been said about the church. Much has been said about the teachings which are preserved in the church, about confessions that have become sacred within the body of Christianity. Too much emphasis has been placed on formalities by which we prove ourselves as "Christians" before other people. Now all forms have become obsolete, superannuated, as it were. We cannot deny that today many people no longer find the living qualities that our Father in heaven wanted to give us in Jesus Christ. People are so tired of hearing the same things over and over again that they often do not know what course to take. They do not see or experience the life that comes from God, so they are in a quandary. On the one hand they cannot deny, "We too need God, God's word, God's revelation, in our hearts." On the other hand they do not know how to react to the preaching about God's kingdom today. Their hearts hunger and thirst. They are aware that something of God's eternity and truth should be revealed to us, but they don't quite know what to do about their heart's longing.

Just because of all this we must begin to speak of God's kingdom in a new way. In spite of present-day conditions, where much of the church and Christian fellowship is almost dead, we must speak of God's kingdom to men, now. The

kingdom of God is and was and will be the rulership of justice, order, power, and law, of all that is of God in creation. This, my friends, is what moves us, and this must become real. Unless our lives are molded according to this power of God, we shall remain dissatisfied. In spite of all the outward achievements of our time we shall not be able to boast of one single advantage for our lives. We may find practical conveniences, but the revival of the eternal things in you, O man, will be smothered unless God, in his eternal rule and laws, in his truth and in his justice, is recreated in you as the *light of life*.

Yet this very thing, my friends, causes much discord as soon as it is voiced. We should not deceive ourselves. Even in our time millions of people can be Christians in peace and comfort from childhood until they are laid in the grave. They are satisfied with what is said about God, and it does not make them feel uncomfortable at all. Religion is taken as part of one's life; one accepts it placidly, causing no conflict; or at the most an argument about the interpretation of this or that teaching. These arguments are futile. But a new conflict arises as soon as we feel urged once more to proclaim the kingdom of God—alive! This is what I want to do among you today. I don't want to edify you, I want to call out to you what God has laid in my heart: God's kingdom is a living kingdom *and* government. Today it is here. I will go still further; today it is closer than we want to acknowledge. The intervention of the living God in our lives will be more powerful today than many want to believe. It is my firm conviction that we live in a time

when God wants to manifest himself as the one who is present and active. He is the God we should joyfully concern ourselves with so that our lives remain his and are glorified to his honor.

When we speak of God's kingdom, we proclaim that Jesus Christ has not died. He is not someone who appeared two thousand years ago, a personality of the past about whom we retain certain recollections and teachings. No! Just as Jesus lived two thousand years ago, he lives today. *Today* he wants to triumph in our midst for the honor of God. He wants to be the living one among us so that the reverence for the Father in heaven may grow and deepen. Man must face God in the weakness and poverty of his nature and raise his eyes to the Father in heaven, with a sigh in his heart, "My Father, my Father, I too want to be your child!" Then he will believe with life-giving strength: Jesus lives, he will help me, he is victor, and he breaks down my resistance. Whoever I may be, even if I were the most wretched human being, covered with shame—even I am found worthy of being called a child of the Father. Even I am allowed to go forward to meet God's kingdom, so that his name may be sanctified in me and his government may break in, so that his will may be done in me just as it is done in heaven!

I wish, my friends, that I could place in your hearts the living power of our God and Savior. I wish that I could help you to understand that this living power makes new people of us. It overcomes our misery, even in our physical life. Our earthly conditions must become more truthful,

more sublime, more just. God's living power seeks us out and wants to show us, in the midst of the entanglements of life, a clear and true direction which makes nobler men of us. Then we shall no longer be dependant on every fate that befalls us. We will hold our heads high, for we will be men able to conquer, in the spirit of our heavenly Father, all that still needs to be conquered here on earth.

I wish that I could make all this quite clear to you. For it is true that there are many things still to be overcome, visible and invisible. In the invisible realm of man's own nature there is more resistance to God's truth than people believe. In human society, with all the influences to which we are exposed, there lies a hindrance to the living power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this hindrance is greater than people suspect. I often find that I can talk and discuss the teachings of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and agree with people. Nobody is annoyed by this. The conflict begins, however, as soon as I take a firm stand and say, "My friends, I have experienced who Jesus is. I have looked into the living power, into the kingdom of our God which even today wants to take hold of us. I tell you that, even now, the truth and the life-power of our God are at work. I declare to you that even now the truth of God's kingdom comes visibly on this earth. We do not have to wait until we lay ourselves down to die and be buried. Here and now we can hear with our ears, see with our eyes, who Jesus is, who the life giving Spirit is. It is the same today as at the time of the apostles. Today also there are prophets and apostles who say, 'Watch out; the kingdom of heaven is

really at hand.' It is not a question of this or that church, of this or that teaching, but alone of Jesus Christ himself. With him we have to come to terms."

For me, this is the one and only direction. Yet, if I say all this, then there is an argument. "Who is this arrogant person? How can anyone say such things? Are the Bible and the confessions not enough for us? Is it necessary to come along with things long past? This is superstition and exaggeration!" So there is a conflict, but it is a holy conflict. It kindles a light in many hearts, a light of hope, a light of strength, a light from the heights beyond this earth. Nothing can give us more strength than the certainty Jesus lives, that he is active, that he is not an empty word. In saying his name we are stirred by these words out of his life, "He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38) Nothing gives more strength than the knowledge that Jesus is in our midst. This we believe: that his essence is true in us, that his Spirit purifies us, and that the spirit of truth and of justice radiates from us, spreading light wherever we are. But now believe! *Jesus lives!*

There is so much dispute about belief; but woe to us, I tell you frankly, woe to us and our arguments about faith! Isn't it something quite simple, that every child can understand? My friends, Jesus truly lives! If he is to be your King, then you must no longer take anything into your own hands. Then you must deny yourself in all things that are God's. You must be a dying man who says, "Here I can do nothing. Hands off what is God's, what is Jesus Christ's. For none

but Jesus has a right to make a decision in divine matters!” In *this* way we believe; in *this* way we honor our King.

You can do much in earthly things, for you have understanding with which you can and should arrange your life and live in a sensible manner. God’s things, however, those things which have to do with God’s kingdom, are Jesus Christ’s concern. If God’s kingdom is important to you, then you need to think you are not important. Rather, you should place yourself at Jesus’ feet, thinking, “I am a weak human being, but Jesus lives, Jesus is victor. To him I will give myself, and in my heart I will turn everything over to him so that nothing can rule over me but he alone.” This is faith.

Therefore I call to the world, “Die, that Jesus may live!” In faith we must recognize that Jesus Christ is the Lord. In other words, this is *our* task. Do not attach any importance to what is false, to what is opposed to truth, to what must be given into death by us. We must raise our fists, so to speak, against all that comes from the flesh, from the deceitfulness of our own thinking. Indeed, I wish for you an iron fist against all that is untrue and wrong. Do it for the sake of your God, your Savior! Get up and beat it down! What is false shall be called false. What is wrong shall die and die again, and die so that it no longer counts for anything, not even the least little bit. So let us be fighters for God’s sake, for Jesus Christ’s sake! The eternal shall live; Jesus shall live and rule for the glory of God the Father. This is how you should understand the words, “Die, and Jesus will live!” He is our Master, our Lord and King, who

will reveal himself in God's majesty, when his time comes. Then we shall be amazed at how much is possible through his government.

If we are believers in Jesus Christ, then we must hold on to these things in defiance of the whole world. May the Spirit of the living God strike our hearts and make these things come true in us. It will be of no use to you to have heard a man speak, to believe in a doctrine, or to sacrifice yourselves to anything else. None of this will help you, but it will help you to become prophets gripped by the spirit of God, if you are moved for your God, for your Father, for Jesus, the Lord and Savior, who is and was and is to be.

■ January 26, 1896 (Volume 2, No. 77)

## II People of Zion

LISTEN TO ME, MY PEOPLE, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go forth from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples.

*Isaiah 51:4*

**T**his whole chapter of the book of Isaiah is addressed to the people of Zion. Actually one should simply read it and add nothing to it, except perhaps to make a psalm out of it, which one could then sing straight away. But we are so little used to taking seriously what is written about Zion that something has to be said in order to help us understand it.

In Zion everyone is concerned with *justice*. Zion is something different from Christianity. Christians only look for grace; the people of Zion look for justice. That is the difference. All Zion's people want judgment and justice—this is their joy. They do not seek any good for themselves, but

only God's justice. In the midst of struggle and strife, with much pain to right and left, it is a comfort to see that God's law and justice shall be victorious. These are the people of Zion. They don't think of themselves at all. Their own life is quite unimportant to them—at least in the sense in which it is important to other people.

“Our life has no importance in itself; it has meaning only in relation to God. I do not want to live unless I am a servant of God. If God suffers, I too want to suffer. If God is reviled, I too want to be reviled. If he has no joy, then I don't want to have joy. If God's life cannot flourish, I do not want my life to prosper either. My concerns are not for me but in God's creation, that all things shall go according to *his* purpose.”

For the people of Zion the earth is God's creation. They do not think that the earth is a vale of tears. All they know is that men are miserable, and, unfortunately, have brought things to such a point that they are unhappy in the midst of this splendid creation. The people of Zion shake with fury if someone says that the earth is so evil that it is impossible to carry on. They will tell you that the evil is only in *your* heart.

They assert that all the evil in the world is men's fault, down into the smallest details, even the weather. It is quite clear that God has nothing whatever to do with bad weather, except that, in all fairness, he lets us have what we deserve. If we are gloomy, impure people, things must become gloomy around us also. We can even rejoice in the judgments God sends us to make us realize what we are. For only by

the judgments can we appraise ourselves.

The people of Zion acknowledge only God. Their concern is what is fruitful for God. This is how we should think in difficult times: What harm can they do to us? If we are faithful in our hearts, God will make use of us even when things are not going well. We are called to work with him, not against him. We do this not only when we are joyful and cheerful but, also, when we weep with God over the sins of the world. To make it easier for us, he sent his Son to us to help bear the sins of the world. Him we should follow; to him we should offer our shoulders to help carry the guilt. This is our duty.

Many people do not want to do this—either in the visible or the invisible world. This is why they do not receive the comfort that we already have in our hearts. For when God calls to us he says, “I comfort Zion! Be patient, I am the Lord, Jehovah. When you are faithful, a great day of justice and truth will dawn!” This call is our only comfort. We cannot be comforted with a land of milk and honey or with the promise to take us into heaven: that is no comfort to us. God can only comfort us when he brings about his justice. If I were to come into heaven today and God were to say to me, “Now you have a nice place,” I would answer, “No I am not satisfied! How can I be satisfied if you do not have what is rightfully and justly yours?” Only justice and right can comfort the people of Zion and sustain them. So even a time of judgment becomes a time of joy.

This means, of course, that we must have an honest relationship with God. This is very necessary; yet many

people will miss this. Whose fault is it if the contact with God is lost, and if very few believers know what Jesus' thoughts are for this time? We do not want to know what he is thinking. When we chatter about God and Jesus it makes me feel embarrassed. Just imagine if he were listening! He might well say, "Be quiet! You don't even try to know what I am thinking and saying today; you have no relationship with me!" That we have no real relationship with God is extremely serious. Yet this relationship is all I want.

I wish all the sermons in the world would stop. Instead someone should say, "I know what is happening in heaven and this I will proclaim to the world." But no one knows and because of that there are no witnesses. The fact that our relationship to God's kingdom has ceased is the greatest pain we have to bear today.

The apostles *did* have a relationship with God. That was the great thing! I cannot understand how people today say they are entitled to preach the gospel to the whole world just as much as the apostles did. I cannot agree with them. You people do not have the same rights, not at all! You may do some good, but to be able to do it with the real power in which the apostles did it, one must, at least, have a relationship with God.

I cannot just embrace the Catholic or the Lutheran faith; I cannot just be a Pietist or Baptist. These things don't make a relationship with God; he is quite indifferent to them. It is as though someone were to bring me water saying, "This water comes from the Lake of Constance, and this other from the Zurich Lake." What do I care?

Water is water, whatever lake it comes from. Neither does God care what denominations we belong to. The clearest proof that we have no relationship with God is the very fact that we call ourselves Catholics or Lutherans, as though we were doing this in God's name. I would like to shake people out of this delusion whereby they think that they belong to God because they belong to a certain church. God's iron broom has to sweep out all these lies. Unless we seek a true relationship with God, unless we seek God's justice, we have no right to God's kingdom.

Should we mourn over this? No, it should be our greatest joy! For this reason I preach the great, all embracing, reconciliation which goes through the whole of creation. Every church condemns what does not belong to it. Our faith, however, is not tied to a dogma, but binds us to the one God who is God to *all men*. Whether you call yourself Christian or Muslim, I tell you, you are just as much God's own as I am. You Gentile and you Jew are just as much God's own as I am—for you are all human beings and should be proud of it, because this comes from God. You should not be proud of your religion, for this comes from men. Who wants to contradict me? My body and my life come from God. Do my books and my teachings come from God? No, indeed! Only what I have of Jesus comes from God. And Jesus is not contained in a book. Jesus is life, Jesus is resurrection, and Jesus leads to the living God. We have no need to force ourselves into any human structure.

This situation is very serious. It is shameful that people no longer really want and value their relationship with God;

instead they seek relationships with men. But it will be a joy when all our human religions fail and we will see how everything that we set up in God's place, is falling into the dust. The time must come at last when we accept God himself; he alone is ruler, the almighty God through Jesus Christ who sits upon the throne. Whoever sets up anything else will perish. For in this world, none other than Jesus Christ shall one day rule, to the honor of God, the Father.

This is our comfort. This means reconciliation. All men must rejoice in it. No one shall say that he is lost. The churches have brought things to the point where millions of people despair, saying, "I am lost." Yet, he who has found a relationship to God's kingdom can never say, "I am lost." Even if he were in hell, he can still say, "Reconciliation will come, and in his blood, I too, shall be reconciled, for I am God's own." It is true that reconciliation will come through justification by the blood of Jesus Christ; I have to surrender to judgment. However, I must never again say that I am lost and that I am not of God. It is the greatest sin to doubt that you belong to God. Every creature belongs to God and it is the greatest sin to doubt this. All your other sins are nothing compared to this one sin: to doubt that you belong to God. Even in the lowest regions of hell you can still hold on to the knowledge, "*I am God's child!*" Finally, hell will be forced open with this certainty. If you cling to Jesus, you will be saved and belong to those who, even in their deepest sorrow, know that mankind may perish. God's justice is everlasting.

## 12 The Church of Jesus Christ

NOW WHEN JESUS CAME into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is loosed in heaven.”

*Matthew 16: 13-19*

This is a description of how God's kingdom comes into this world like a mustard seed. Here is Jesus, the Son of Man, more human than any other man, more childlike than all other children. He is the kingdom of God and lives among men. He does not make it; he *is* the kingdom! Why? Because he is God *and* man.

When God created the world he founded his kingdom on earth. The earth was his kingdom. And who was to reign, to rule and to watch over it as his representative? Man. Through man God's kingdom was in paradise. Through one upright man God's kingdom comes on earth, no matter what other people are like. The opposing powers, good and evil, darkness and light, make no difference; a *true man*—and the kingdom of God is here!

What was this contrast in paradise? What were light and darkness, life and death, the serpent and God's justice? They amounted to nothing, nothing at all. With Adam, God himself was in paradise. Even if here and there wrong was still lurking in corners, that didn't matter. A man had come, and God was with this man: nothing else was of any importance. Indeed, it dissolved, as sugar dissolves in water, before this one man, Adam.

Man's sin was the world's catastrophe. The true man was lost. This is still the world's undoing today. It is a blessing to know that there is one man in whom the world is God's again; in whom all that is created is placed again into the light of the first creation: Jesus. Where then is evil, where is death, where is corruption? Jesus is here! In his presence what is there to fear? Suffering and corruption, night and

death, disappear. Wherever he is, men are set free—as long as Jesus is among them. Through him the desert is turned into paradise, the sick are healed, the dead come alive, the poor prosper, the foolish become clever. The downtrodden and broken are raised up and praise God. The world comes back to life. A Man is placed again in God's creation; God's creation breathes and shines forth again in one man, Jesus.

Then the question is asked, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" People everywhere guess one way or another and can't see who he is—maybe John, maybe Elijah, or maybe Jeremiah. We just don't see it. Then, in Jesus, paradise and the first creation are united again. Yet, for people to see this, to recognize who he is, a man of God, we need divine inspiration. People seek high and low and don't find any answer. It is as though the spirits of confusion besiege them, perplexing their minds. They all have lofty thoughts, biblical thoughts, and in their imagination think of all sorts of ways that God's kingdom must come. The simplest thing, however, which God does and must do so that all mankind may be saved, they do not see: God again sends a man.

We are still blind, my friends. If the Savior were to come today, he would surely come as man. The world needs a true man. God was always there; he was in the world before Jesus. God ruled everything from Adam until Jesus. The Creator never separated himself from his creation, never. But true man who can influence creation so it can really become God's, be ruled, protected and cultivated by him—true man was missing. He is still missing today and will be missing until Jesus comes again and eliminates the false

man who is the world's destroyer. We know God guides and rules everything, but because humanity has become corrupt, one no longer sees the Father in heaven. It is true that the spirit of God who made the world is present; but the spirits of lying and deceit almost destroy everything. It is this counterfeit nature which, at present, rules in humankind. There are so many false men that one can't see the true man: creation is concealed, at least superficially. False men with false spirits, with false desires and false intent, think that they are real men. Yet they are unhappy because, in reality, they betray themselves and everyone else. But wherever the *true man* is, there is heaven on earth.

Let us become true men in our congregation at Boll or in any other little parish. Then paradise will be here! We don't need a special heaven; our earth is beautiful enough! But there must be true men on it. Then paradise is on earth.

Jesus was such a man so he was crucified, rejected, despised; he was a true man and had nothing to do with the false spirits of his time. He did not care about the emperor and the authorities, although he was very courteous towards them. He did not care about the temple, although he preached in it. He did not care for the arts and the various institutions, although he allowed these things to exist freely. He did not care for science and philosophy, but neither did he attack them. He was a man who cared only for God. People took offense at this and nailed him to the cross. Now he is gone. Once more paradise was lost because he is gone.

It is true that they were apparently able to get rid of Jesus by crucifying him. Now the fight is carried on in the invisible realm. Yet the crucified one will not be pushed aside forever. Now Jesus seeks a *living church*, and he seeks it on earth. Couldn't he, who rose from the dead, have come quickly—in heavenly glory—and conquered all things? He would have done it long ago, without hesitating, if this had made God's kingdom possible. Jesus could have come with hosts of angels. But no! He doesn't want angels, he wants man. Man, not super worldly powers, must serve God on earth. True man must do it, and God must do it in him. This is Jesus' loyalty towards us false men. He could have come in judgment. For a time people even thought he would come in this way and smash up everything in the last judgment. If he had wanted to come in judgment, he could have destroyed the false men already two thousand years ago. Why wait another two thousand years if we are to be damned in any case? No, it isn't like this. No, no! Jesus does not want to kill us; he has never wanted to do this. He would rather wait another thousand years, if need be, than give up on us. This is Jesus Christ's faithfulness, he is patient. He is man and through him we are to become real men once more, and when we are true men the Father in heaven will come to us.

Peter was the first to confess openly, "You, Jesus, Son of Man, you are God's Son, the Son of the living God. We don't want to go anywhere else—where should we go? *You* are the one, you alone! We need you. Through you we have the Father in heaven. What else do we need but you,

the Son of Man? You are the kingdom of God!”

We too must come to this point, so that Jesus Christ’s thirst for men may be quenched. At present Jesus does not come into his rulership—because the false men do not come to Jesus. Don’t deceive yourself. Every acre of this world is still covered with false men, to put it crudely. We have been deceived and taken false Christianity as the right way. But lies shall not prevail; the false men’s power must come to an end. The true, genuine man will live and triumph. To him belong the earth, the sky, and all people. It is indeed a miracle, my friends, if in the midst of this dreadful confusion of false nature, false spirits and false men, even *one* person stands up and says, “You are the one. I no longer want any part of the world. You, Jesus, are the one.” Then Jesus is comforted; then we too are comforted. For if one man is able to say it, if the light can dawn in one man, then there is hope that in others the light will dawn, also. When that happens, then the church of God will arise.

This is the rock on which Jesus founded his church: “You, Peter, are this rock. Yet it is not you who are the rock, but my Father. He revealed it to you. In you the light of the living God dawned, and this binds you to me. In this way you too are a child of the living God, for in you the Father speaks.” Now we know how the church of Jesus Christ came into being.

Some people think they can found a church of Jesus Christ by cutting themselves off from the world and sitting in a corner. That doesn’t work at all. Just try it! You would be taking the false man along with you. For one thousand

years men have tried to do it. It was all in vain; that way was wrong. Other people think, “If only we can pick a quarrel with the church”—but this doesn’t achieve anything. You can found as many sects and communities as you like; it will lead you nowhere. I am not making light of the striving of many people who are willing to deny themselves for God’s sake and live in solitude to do God’s will. They never permit themselves a single laugh, a single pleasure, not even the joy of contemplating nature. I respect their serious outlook, yet believe me, this is not the right way—on this way there will never be a church of Jesus Christ.

The church of Jesus Christ is to be the light of creation, of the existing world, of our skies; it is to be a light in the clouds, in the atmosphere, a light even under the earth. Jesus is truly Lord over the whole creation, and God’s kingdom penetrates all that is created. His church is to have the greatness of Jesus, the greatness of God, the greatness of all creation. The light which Jesus kindles in his Church must shine out as the greatness of the Father, for the Father alone gives his church to the Savior.

How then does this church come into being? Those who have seen Jesus must stop rejecting the revelation of the Father; stop seeking Christ through science and theology. They must stop trying to remake God’s kingdom using worldly powers—or even spiritual powers. You may laugh at me! I will gladly be a fool in the eyes of the whole world; I ask nothing for myself. I want only revelation of God’s kingdom. Unless God opens my heart, unless the Father opens my eyes to Jesus, nothing will help me. I may become

a good man; but God's kingdom, God's church, can only be founded on the rock which is the Father in heaven. On this rock I will stand and defend the Savior to the last drop of my blood: I cannot live in any other way.

This is my joy and jubilation! Therefore I call out to the false nature of mankind, "You have to go! You must stop!" The time will come when all that hinders God must become quite unimportant and small. All false men will have to be silent. None of us can found the Church—only the Father can. We want to belong to this Church with our whole mind, our whole heart and our whole strength, and say, "If only I have the Father and you have him; if only two of us are united in Christ, then he who is Lord over the earth will be with us." Who can prevail against us? It is the Father and the man Jesus Christ, the light of creation in heaven, on the earth and beneath the earth; *they* will found the living church. We do not want to make anything. We do not want to spend our strength in organizing superficial meetings, in theories, science, art, politics. We want none of this. Once people gather together, even only a handful, and stand on the rock which is the Father in heaven, then the realities of God's kingdom will appear.

Don't expect that God's cause will just fall from heaven. There has to be a living church. The Savior says expressly, "To you I will give the keys of the kingdom, to you, man alone, in whom my Father lives." When it is placed into the hands of people in whom the Father lives to bind and to loose on earth, then it is also valid in heaven. Yet the Father must live fully in them, or else it counts for nothing.

It is a great mistake to think that every theologian, every pastor, can loose and bind. The light of our heavenly Father must fill a person—a false light has no authority. It is not the worldly ministry appointed by us men that has the keys in hand. It is not when we select people, when we examine them; that is not how they receive the keys of the kingdom. Only one who receives God’s revelation can loose and release. Any worker, any housewife can be a person who releases. If a person stands on “the rock,” he can release. Even though the living church of Christ is made up of poor, simple, little people, it will be able to loose and set free. In this way the powers of God’s kingdom and its realities are at work on the earth, in heaven, and beneath the earth; they are at work because Jesus lives through the will of the almighty God. My friends, you should rejoice that our earth is valued in this way! Jesus said that *on earth* things shall be bound and loosed, not in heaven.

“Whatever you bind and loose on earth—on the earth! —is valid with our Father in heaven!”

Here is this poor planet Earth; this little heap of dust. Yet what clarity, what majesty, is given when there is a *true man*, when the Son of Man gathers men around himself men who also are sons, sons of the Father, sons of the living God. Then God and man will become *one* on earth; then the Father is on the earth. I wish, my friends that you could feel the greatness of what is still in store for this earth. This earth of ours will yet shine forth. Or do you think that God will let his work be thrown on the dump, just because

foolish men aimlessly go astray? This attitude is like fog and amounts to nothing. God's creation remains sublime and will rule all spirits: the highest spirits in heaven and the lowest spirits in hell. They will have to submit to this power on earth when Jesus finally establishes his living church.

Will God reveal himself in you, my friend? I will tell you when this will happen, when you are turned completely, really completely, to God as Love. Here the roads part. Believe me, I have hardly ever met a person who wanted this love of God. Does that surprise you? They all want to love, but they want to choose the people they love. But those who do not suit them they persecute with their hatred. Naturally, everyone wants to love according to his sympathies. Everyone loves his family, his friends, and his hobbies. However, it is quite different to want God's love, fully and completely. There is a love that rules in the name of man; it is the most dangerous thing in the world! The love of the members of one party judges people belonging to other parties. The love of the members of one church loves only these and condemns all others. The love that is of the world tears God's love to pieces because it judges.

Remember this: whoever does not want the love which is God's love will not recognize the living God, nor will he receive the revelation. This is the love that denies itself; that values each person and no longer judges; the love that respects God's creation, saving and overcoming all evil so that the evil one may be saved. This love wants no one to be lost, because Jesus is here and God is the father of all

men.

We recognize God's love when we see that you, false man, no longer count. We recognize the love of our God, the true God, in the love which raises us above the evil desires which cause all the world's conflict and strife. This love of God redeems the world from its wretchedness. So let us become free in our hearts. God's light has already been shown us. We have received sufficient light to break away from evil, so make a beginning and no longer judge or condemn anyone, just as Jesus has not condemned anyone. Fear every word that comes out of your false love. Be joyful and confident, then you will recognize the Man who sits at God's right hand in heaven. Make a beginning! Then there will be light on earth, and we shall see where the living church of Jesus is to be found on the earth.

May the Father in heaven have mercy on us! It is our hope that the light may soon come. May God's kingdom unfold, not in the bustle of the world, not according to the desires of men who want to see all things judged, but according to the infinite love of God which separates good and evil, which redeems, illumines and sanctifies everything. Praised be the Father in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit of God's love!

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## 13 Christ in the Flesh

*1 Timothy 3:16*

Today we want to open our hearts to those mysterious, blessed words, “*God is revealed in the flesh.*” It is important for those who want to follow the Savior, Jesus Christ, to understand this mystery. Understanding this, do they have the strength of their conviction to say, “God is revealed in the flesh,” but also to really experience that God truly became flesh.

We should not think that with the birth of the Savior, God’s plan was completed. Nor should we imagine that because he died, rose again and ascended into heaven, it is now our duty to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. I believe that our risen Lord, Jesus Christ, does not care whether we celebrate his birth—or whether we immortalize the child in the manger. What matters to him is that we believe that he was born: he wants us to know that he is here. He wants us to understand that “God is in the flesh” has become true, a worldwide truth, and through the gospel it will become a truth to all mankind.

“God is in the flesh” —this alone will raise humanity,

the earth, the whole of creation, to a height which we haven't attained yet. Because many people do not acknowledge this, it causes great misery and death. The apostle John once said, "Every man who does not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh is not of God and does not belong to the living church of Jesus Christ." (1 John 4:2, 2 John 1:7) By this he does not mean that we are to set up a creed and say, "Christ is the Son of God," No! He means that whoever in our day and in our church does not know that through the Lord Jesus Christ the almighty God is in our flesh, is not of God.

Already in the early times there were powers of opposition at work. They were the cause of sin, of misery, of death, of unclarity in man's life. Looking at the people of that time, the Romans, the Greeks, the barbarians, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, one could think, "The Son of God may well have become human at one time; yet now he is in heaven. God cannot be man as he is now." Even many Christians were so greatly impressed by sin and death that they could no longer believe that God was in our human nature. They could no longer believe that Christ was full of life as the word of God; that he is and remains part of our physical existence despite all sin and folly, despite all the confusion that has come over mankind. Christ *is* in the flesh. One almost denies this when one sees people just as they are, untouched by Christ; for it is true that in the flesh there also dwells something else—our flesh is filled with darkness.

I do not want to go into the intricate nature of this darkness. We know enough about all the evil it contains

and about its effects. We know well that it leads to murder, theft and all manner of blasphemy. All I want to say is that the words “Christ in the flesh” are a signal for the battle against those other powers which dwelled in the flesh before and still dwell in it. “Christ in the flesh” is the weapon against all that is in our physical being whether you call it death, devil, Satan or darkness. Whatever you may call it, it is that part of us which each one desires to get rid of. There is some good in everyone, and we all feel, “I would like to be good, but I can’t. I want to serve truth but am driven into deceit. I want to be just and am unjust. I do have the will, but I am unable to carry it through.” Such feelings are in everyone’s heart, and we all know of very sad experiences in our lives. Many condemn themselves because of this. Many have been told to fight such feelings. Well, just try to fight it! For centuries people have studied, have invented ascetic practices and self-torture, to put an end to this. It has all been in vain. No person can wage this fight.

Yet the fight has been begun by the Spirit who is in Christ. The Spirit fights; on him we may rely. “Christ in the flesh” is the most powerful adversary of the devil in our flesh. “Christ in the flesh” opposes our injustice with God’s justice. “Christ in the flesh” is the fight against sin, the fight of life against death. This battle is truly being fought. It must continue; it must lead to victory.

In a sense, therefore, I would call it an illusion for Christians to seek peace. Or if they understand having peace as though the gospel offers them a comfortable life. The contrary is true; here the words apply, “I have not come to

bring peace on earth, but a sword” —as long as the fight is going on, we only have peace in the fight. Our peace is not a comfortable life; it is not tranquility. Our peace is a participation in Christ, in God, in the flesh against all other conditions. We should not console ourselves, either, with the fact that the Apostle said of himself, “I do have the will, but I am unable to carry it through.” Then many people say, “See, we can’t do anything! We can be saved only through grace.” It is true, but we can become fighters through grace. Then we are redeemed!

Don’t think that we miserable creatures are unable to do any good at all. Through grace we can even face death bravely. Through grace we need not give in, nor need we be discouraged by any situation of our daily life. By grace we want to change our attitudes—our deceitful nature. If we live in sin, we deceive, but this is not man as God created him; it is corrupted man. Therefore the words “Christ in the flesh” mean that we should become true to God again. These words also mean: believe in Jesus Christ, and know yourself to be at the side of God, at the side of the Lord Jesus. Then we can say to ourselves and to others, “It is not true that we belong wholly to sin. My flesh is not the truth. Only when God dwells in my flesh, then I am a true man!”

In this struggle our fists, our intelligence and our understanding are of little use. All our efforts are almost in vain. Our faith will help us, the faith that *Jesus is victorious because he is in the flesh*. These words are often misunderstood. People believe that Jesus triumphs and rules and finally

comes on the last day of the world, like an apparition down from heaven. This is not so. Christ does not come down from *above*, as we imagine. God gave Jesus Christ a dwelling place within our flesh. From our heart God's light should shine, because Christ is in us, not "above" us. It does not help us if a light shines down from above—it has to shine within us. Jesus Christ must be within my heart, within your heart. This is a fight for life against death, where people would give their last drop of blood rather than yield to sin. Because Jesus lives, I tell sin, "Your end is prepared for you. It will come as surely as I live." If this weren't true, I would give up my faith because it would be only an illusion. If I, as a man, cannot have God fight in my flesh, then our cause is lost.

*All flesh* is of God: flowers and plants, animals, all that is created is flesh. Something false can come into the whole created world, into everything we call physical life or flesh. We know this very well. Yet we say, "If Jesus is truly in the flesh, then finally all life must recognize God, even the plants and the animals, to say nothing of men." God shall rise, as the sun rises, out of the flesh of all people on the earth—Christ shall rise for the glory of God the Father. In each nation this will come about according to their custom. We cannot turn anyone toward God. Christ in their flesh must make men of God out of them, not by our standards but according to their own need. This applies to the Chinese, the Japanese, the Hindus, everyone in the world. "Christ in the flesh" are words which will fill us with love to all men, even to our enemies. This will make the whole world

one united creation. We must find the way to reach the hearts of sinners, so that Christ can come into their flesh, into their entire being. When this occurs, Jesus will take the place of the sin in their lives.

My friends, this is the meaning of Christ's day, of Christmas. If we want to celebrate such a day I wish the usual kind of celebrations would stop. Every day should be Christ's day—each day must radiate the light of Christ so that it is visible to all the world. Then everyone would see that Christ is *here*—in the flesh. Each person must radiate a divine light to honor God the Father. We must fight for this light and recognize that Christ came into this world as a real man, and through him, God is also with us.

Christ begins this fight, but he does not wrestle with people; he does not wrestle with a single person. He does not snatch up anyone and throw them into hell, and then another and throw him into heaven. Never! Jesus Christ does not do this. Only those who seek their piety anywhere else than with God, do this. They condemn people right and left, and then, in the middle, they select a few that please them and pronounce them "saved." Jesus has never had a part in such false devotion. These have been used by pious people in all centuries. Jesus does not start wrestling with the flesh; he starts a fight *in* the flesh, a fight with darkness, with sin *in you*. He does not pick a quarrel with you; he does not deal with you in anger so that you will overcome sin in yourself. Christ did not come to be our teacher in this world—or our tyrant. He came to be our redeemer. He came to overcome all that is not of God in

us. This must be cast out because Christ is in the flesh.

But in individuals the victory will not be perfect until the whole of mankind is able to experience it. Thus all our striving and struggling, even that of the best of Jesus' disciples, of the apostles, is not yet perfect. Nobody, not even an apostle, can say, "Now I have won, now I can help others." Even in the apostles and in the best of the disciples the fight goes on. Each one of us represents the fight which is being waged in the whole world. Don't despair if we have not achieved clarity yet. We must have the certainty that full clarity *will come*, that it must come, because Jesus is in the flesh.

Let the whole world come and kill us; I shall not defend myself. Let all the devils come, let all the angels of darkness come, let all darkness come—here I stand, I will not defend myself, I don't have to defend myself. Why? Because Christ is in my flesh. Should I have fear and say, "I am a sinner?" No! If I have to fear my own sin, then Christ has not come into my flesh. I need not fear sin or death. If Christ came into the flesh where sin and death dwell, then I am free! Even though I am still a sinner, I am free. Victory is on my side, on your side. Believe it in your hearts and change your lives—*then* you are converted. Nothing else is needed. You need not appear to be holy. If we live in the knowledge and experience that Jesus is among us, then victory will come by itself. Even if many people do not realize it, sooner or later the light will dawn on them, too. *Jesus is in the flesh*. Believe this, then you are converted.

These are the conversions I would like to see in our house.

I don't care for any other kind of piety. Our own efforts to organize life and to set up rules and regulations have no value. In the midst of the suffering and misery, of labor and temptation, in life and in death there is only *one* thing I want you to say, "Christ is in the flesh! What can separate us from the love of God?" I wish that you who live in this house with me could all say this together, wholeheartedly.

We will go through many experiences including bitter ones. It is not a very pleasant matter to *fully* accept the words "Christ in the flesh," to say *wholeheartedly*, "I count everything as loss, that I may gain Christ." (Phil. 3: 8) Most Christians don't like this. They want to see their own interests taken care of first. But whether it will bring peace or conflict, understanding or misunderstanding, this remains the truth: "Christ is God in the flesh."

We are certain that we are created by God. According to his will, we are born anew and created anew. We are all different and none of us is yet perfect; but we stand in a new time looking toward a new heaven and a new earth. My friends, in joy and confidence we believe in God's victory, today and every day and in the future. We *know* that God is revealed in the flesh. Let us exalt our Lord in the flesh, Jesus Christ. Let us hold high his banner and never let it fall. Though it may be a fight unto death, let us never lose heart, never lose courage, never give way to sin, never take the side of darkness! Nothing has any power, nothing has any authority, other than this Christ in the flesh. To his glory we sang 56 years ago:

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

■ December 24, 1898 (Volume 3, No. 29)

## 14 I Am the Lord

I AM THE LORD and there is no other god. I created both light and darkness. I bring both blessing and disaster. I, the Lord, do all these things.

*Isaiah 45:6-7*

**W**e all know that we men stand between light and darkness. It is no secret to anyone; even unbelievers know this. Everyone knows too, that in light there is life and in darkness there is death. It is equally known to us that in life there is good and in death there is evil. This constant conflict brings us into terrible need. This is actually the mystery of life on earth. The greatest minds have been puzzling since ancient times over how to solve this mystery.

Why is this? Few people know God, who is above light and darkness. Through him we can distinguish between

light and darkness, good and evil. God is the only one, the only good one; beside him there is darkness. As soon as something else wants to rule beside him it becomes evil. Because God *is* God, evil just is evil and darkness dark because it has separated itself from him. It would be sad if darkness could also be good, if something outside of God could also be light. This isn't right. It is good that we can say about creation, "All good gifts, all perfect gifts come from above, from the Father of light in whom there is no darkness." Darkness is outside of him, not in him. God is only goodness. All good things in creation come from him; therefore all things that are not connected with him must be darkness. God sees everything that separates itself from him as evil.

Now we know that even the darkness is utterly dependent on him, that evil cannot escape his hand. It cannot exist independently. God, and no one else, caused darkness to come upon evil and death to come upon sin. Through God death and sin were overcome. No one else can do away with evil and sin. This is a great comfort for us.

There is no such thing as two worlds, one in God's hands and the other one not in God's hands. There are not two kinds of people one under God's rule and the other completely outside of God's will. No! Even where there is utter darkness, God alone is the Lord. No devil can do the evil he wants; no wicked angel can achieve anything—he was placed in darkness by God. There he lives a life which unfortunately is contagious and deadly to those who are attracted to it. Yet all sinfulness remains within God's

realm, firmly held in his hands. Carry this knowledge in your hearts as a witness. I would like to tell every devil: “You are under God. You cannot make a single move. You cannot move one finger. You are under God!”

Unless we know this we cannot understand how Christ came into the world. *Into the world*—the good world? No! Into the evil world! *Into the flesh*—the good flesh? No! Into evil flesh! It is wonderful to think that God loved this world. Which world? The world that has become diabolical, the godless world! The people who live in darkness saw a great light—the desperate, the condemned, the damned, the murdered, the miserable—all those for whom there is no longer any consolation, no longer any hope—they saw the Father. They can see the Father, who loves them. Before that there was only darkness, but God held the darkness in his hands! There was evil, but it was in God’s hands. It cannot move without God. Now, there is light—at least light is possible.

Light is promised to us. Light shines into the darkness of death, and this light becomes love. The gospel becomes God’s love in the darkness. With every word of the gospel proclaimed by Jesus or by his disciples in his name, God lays claim to the ownership of darkness, a loving claim, that is. Before this it appeared as if people were in God’s hands; but it is terrifying to fall into the hands of the living God! Now we need no longer fear rejection, for God has total power over sin, death and hell with his love. He loves you, his child. “What? *His child?*” Perhaps you are a devil and God says to you, “I lay claim to you, not just to judge and

condemn you, but to help you.” This you must know, then you are able to believe! This is the Gospel—to tell people, to tell sinners, to tell the whole world— “God lays his hand upon you, not to destroy you, but to help you.” Accept this help! Then you will know that God is your Father.

This is our message. But before we can share it with other people, this must take root in our own hearts. We must first know God who created light and darkness, before we are able to proclaim his gospel. I know very few people who have the gospel in their hearts. So many are Christians, but they do not have the gospel in their hearts: they are all a little bit evil. Try as one may, one cannot make people’s hearts open to the gospel. But we must not give up, though it makes one tired trying. I admit that it makes me tired—or should I be content with people who exhibit nothing but hatred? Should I be content with people who do not understand God’s love—people who have more respect for the devil than for God—who fear darkness more than they fear God? Should I be content with people who are more afraid of sin than of God, and who tremble at the idea of death more than the existence of God? I cannot be resigned to such people, for they do not have the gospel in their hearts. This is why they are not a light in the world.

There are many people professing to be Christians all over the place, and yet no one feels that the light is with them, that it’s Christ’s light! Christians are not the light. God’s word is the light. You must have the gospel in your heart; it comes from God “who makes the light and creates the darkness.” God, who in Christ, lays claim to all men

and urges you to give a witness and to tell everybody, the whole world, that they belong to God. Even if one were a devil, he is God's. No other power, no ruler, no one in heaven or on the earth or beneath the earth, can move one finger without God's direction. Our God alone is Lord over all that is alive. All of creation will have to acknowledge that there is none his equal! They will have to bend their knees, all of them, whether they want to or not.

This must live in our hearts. No man, no spirit is allowed to pretend that he also can achieve miracles. Some people are so proud that they think they can do wonders, too. Spiritual authorities become proud of their apparent powers, also human movements; these are the forces that try hardest to become like God. Even Christianity often yields to such human thinking, saying, "What can we do? One has to give in to these people! These are the strongest authorities on earth." There are German, English, European, Asiatic currents, party currents, social currents: people are caught up in them. They sweep everything else along with them. If you refuse to go along with the stream they hate you. Then there is hostility, dissension, bloodshed, a horrible outcome that has enormous power.

If, for instance, a current of unbelief suddenly seizes people's minds and hearts and ignores God, it seems to have terrible power. Really it isn't so very powerful. I do not fear it, nor do I fear the whole world. But it is distressing when the very people who represent God's cause, saying, "I believe in God," don't really quite trust him. They are afraid of those authorities and principalities. They do not stand

up for God but give in and succumb to the human custom of saying, “What else can one do?” Then it’s as though God were not really the Lord, as though the devil is the master. That is a lie! We have never put faith in the devil! We said 55 years ago, “Jesus alone is victor!” There is no master, not even in the darkness who does not have to yield to our Lord! There is but *one* Lord, there is but *one* God. There is no other master, nor has anything else power—nothing else has any right or any claim to be master. No hell, no death or devil can claim this. *All things are God’s.*

If we men take this stand, then darkness just goes. This is how you must take a stand to yourself too; then the darkness in you will vanish. You feel tormented, distressed, insulted, because the darkness hurts you. Give up your fear of the darkness—fear God! Perhaps darkness may still plague you outwardly, but you can fight, and as a fighter the hand of God will protect you. Fear nothing but God! Don’t admit that anyone else is the master, or has power or authority over you. This is false—wrong—nothing but lies and deception. *One alone is the Lord!* In your sorrow, in your sickness, in your temptation, in all that wants to torment you, in your sin, one alone is the Lord! All things are placed under him who loves you and wants to help you. If you believe this the difficult things you face in this world will be resolved.

We must drive the darkness out. How can we do that? Perhaps by saying, “These strange people belong to the devil, to death?” No! In this way we do not overcome darkness. We have to stand firm and say, “Away with you, darkness, sin, death! You have no business here. And if you were to

get hold of all men, still you would have to give them back to God, each one of them!” This is the way we will drive the darkness out. The Savior demands of us that we love even our enemies. He will not tolerate that we hate or condemn our enemies. It is extremely important to him that we do not judge anyone in the world; that we think of everyone as belonging to God. Even when it goes against our feelings, when we see the worst of men, we must still think, “It is merely a question of time, even though he is in darkness. In any case he is God’s already today, the darkness is under God, too.” We must drive this darkness away from ourselves first, we who already believe in Jesus Christ. Because we believe in God’s victory we should oppose this darkness and say, “You belong to God! You must be subject to him!”

If we take this stand, then we shall experience eternal life in our own lives. We shall experience all manner of good things coming from God to us personally and to many other people. Many times I have thought and said, “I am firmly convinced that in our time God is coming closer.” There must have been people who did not admit the darkness, who have said, “Jesus alone is the Lord.” They witnessed to this wherever they were, “Jesus alone is the Lord. The whole earth belongs to the Lord!” Only in this way can I explain the many blessings that have come to us from above, even in our time. Right now the whole European world is talking of peace, although they don’t have it yet. Why are they talking about peace right now? Who can explain this? Since the dawn of mankind no one has ever

spoken about peace. Yet today they talk about the hope that the nations might consider whether they could get along without war. Such a thing was impossible in all the past centuries, but here we do have something good; a part of the darkness has been driven out.

There are many other situations in our days that we would call good: longer life, stronger love, deeper hope and greater health in contrast to former times. There is more good in the world nowadays. Of course we men don't know where it comes from, so we complain about our times. We say the times are bad because we don't believe in much of anything. Never mind whether we believe or not; ultimately we will have to acknowledge that God is God. As long as there are even a few people who carry God's love in their hearts and believe in the gospel, darkness will be driven out of the whole world. Then good will come, peace will come, and the light of life will shine into death itself.

This is the calling of Jesus' disciples. The Savior says that he wants to give his disciples the kingdom. What does that mean? The Savior will give the kingdom to a disciple—maybe to you, maybe to me—to anyone who believes in him. He will give it to those who believe in the Lord—in him who is Lord over all things. He will give it to any who do not acknowledge any prince of darkness, but who say at all times, "*Jesus is the Lord!*" To his disciples he will give the right to declare on earth, "Away with you, darkness; away with you, evil. Away with all that does not want to submit to God's power and to the rulership of the Lord Jesus."

It is our calling to testify to Jesus' words. If we place

ourselves at the side of the Savior, then we will suffer. Christ suffered deeply and when we follow him we also feel his pain. If we bear the Cross with Christ, we shall also rule with him. We rejoice when we can suffer with Christ. That is the fight. We, who believe in the Savior, shall rule, not by judging people, or being angry and annoyed at those we dislike. No! It means to rule in the way Jesus rules. It means to rule in the love of the Father. It means to say, “In the name of Jesus Christ I say to you, darkness, you must be destroyed. You sin, you serpent, you Prince of death, you must perish. You are nothing to us!” This is what it means to rule.

Because our God keeps all worlds in his power, we are allowed to help carry this in our hearts. There are not two kingdoms, a kingdom of darkness and a kingdom of God. There is but *one* kingdom, God’s kingdom. True, in this one kingdom there is yet darkness over all those who are still in sin; but it is *one* kingdom. There may be two rooms in a house, but it is *one* house, not two. All things are *one* with our God. If we are in this house of our God, we might rule in the darkness, in sin, in death. We must not weaken, nor must we think that we cannot carry on. We can always go on. The victory is ours again and again. Finally the complete victory must penetrate the whole of creation. God must be God on the earth as in heaven, and beneath the earth, and wherever his creatures are.

Let this live in our hearts. This is so necessary in our days, when we need more than ever God’s rulership. Especially today it is necessary for people to understand

this. Please, I ask you, please don't grumble so much about the world! Those of us who grumble about the world do not live in the love of the Father. We shouldn't condemn the godless, the unbelievers, the strangers, the dark! That is not our business. It is not for us to condemn, not for us to judge. Only witness to the truth that God is God and none other! Open your hearts to the gospel of the loving Father. In Jesus he gives to all flesh the hope of eternal life. When you do this you will find peace in your personal struggles, and you will be allowed to experience the victory of the Savior in your own lives. Then you will be allowed to rule with God in his kingdom which will come over all nations on the earth.

■ February 4, 1899 (Volume 3, No. 34)

## 15 Jesus among the Wretched

FOR IT IS BY OUR FAITH that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved.

*Romans 10:10*

With these words the apostle Paul prepares a way for the Lord Jesus; for in Him a new light rises over all life, a light that stands in contrast to the old world which is under the law. From now on there is to be a man, the Lord, God on the earth. The way must be prepared for him. We repeat Paul's words because we also want to prepare the way for the Savior. In speaking them, we think of the fact that Jesus Christ will come into the midst of our own lives. For we know of no spirit in

heaven or on the earth that is greater than he. We know of nothing that ever happened in the history of man that is greater than the coming of Jesus. We know of no revelation and of no grace which could be greater than that which Jesus Christ wants to be on earth. The important thing, however, is to give Jesus the honor due him. This is not an easy matter.

After Jesus died and ascended into heaven, people were no longer really conscious daily of him. Already in the times of the apostles many seemed to forget him. Of course, he couldn't be forgotten in the sense that no one ever thought of him at all. He had penetrated so deeply into the history of men that he could not really be forgotten. But what he wants, what is to come to the earth through him—this seemed to be forgotten.

The disciples and followers of Jesus must fight for this and give their whole hearts to prepare the way for him: in this they will see their righteousness. They are to prepare his way so that what is to happen on earth through this Son of God really will happen. Let us give our *whole hearts* to this; this is our righteousness. Let us give our *whole voice* for this; this is our salvation. Of course I don't mean just our voice; I should say, let us give our actions. For unless I do that to which I confess with my voice, it is worthless. So then let us give our whole hearts and our whole being, our whole energy, that Jesus may come into his own. This is the calling of those who follow Jesus, then and now.

Who then is Jesus? This question almost brings us into difficulties, for in a way we have to place ourselves on opposite

sides to the historical development of Christianity. A large Christianity has developed around the name of Jesus Christ, but the minds of Christians have become too sophisticated. Their longing for Jesus, their adoration of Jesus Christ, has become too secular. In their hearts and in their deeds, many people hold on to him and hope for him in a spiritual way only. In the realm of the spiritual they formulate a certain confession to him and in this way the Christian religions came about. These were never the goal that Jesus had wanted, for these “Christian” religions provide us with no faith and no insight. Everywhere there are different beliefs; at times these beliefs are modified. This is not why Jesus came to earth.

God’s will in Jesus becomes visible in Jesus’ life on earth. Who is he? He is the friend of people, of human society. Characteristically Jesus reaches out to the lowly, the miserable, the despised, the unimportant people—the masses. Then everything rushes in on him; people call him a blasphemer and a servant of sin. They say that he is a man to be rejected and despised. Nevertheless, he steps in firmly where no one ever ventured before him; thus the miserable come to the light for the first time: the sick, those whose spirits are confused, the whole mass of people for whom human society has no use. Jesus steps in among the despised, the enslaved, those who are looked down upon. He comes to the people who are ignored by those intellectuals who have created an abyss between educated and uneducated, between rich and poor, between high and low. Jesus intervenes for those who are ignored by history, nations and society. These miserable

people that have never come to the light are the very ones whose side Jesus takes. The sick must come out, the mentally deranged must come to the light, the poor must become visible. The despised, the enslaved, the imprisoned, the rejected, those who are slighted by educated people, all these *must* come to the light.

Jesus is much more substantially “man” than any human being ever was. He is the Son of God. Even today no one else will take up the cause of these people. No one who cares only about education will go to such people. A man who lives only for philosophy and science, a man who has only human love and human mercy—in other words, a man of the kind we find nowadays will stay away from these people. He will always think, “Oh well, they aren’t so important.” But if he meets a “gentleman,” a person who is honored and respected, he will think, “I must stick to this one.” Anyone who wants to found a new party, anyone who wants to amount to anything in the world, seeks his friends in important places of society. These lofty people are incapable of doing what Jesus can do. Even the angels cannot do it. They will not take up the cause of these miserable people.

Many different spiritual and intellectual directions are coming into fashion these days. People are studying right and left; they soar to intellectual heights; they compose theosophical images; they study philosophy. Yet not a single one of all these “great minds” enters where Jesus entered. Where Jesus entered, there the renewal of human society began. This sounds strange, for we are used to setting our hopes on lofty minds. We set our hopes on the highest

regions of heaven, while Jesus sets his hopes on the poor, on the outcasts, on those who are rejected by kings and emperors. His hopes are with those who are mere playthings in the hands of rulers. Here it is that Jesus sees the beginning of renewal. This is the greatness of the Savior.

Do we want to follow Jesus on this way? Then we must accept him in this company. The call to us is, “set to work wholeheartedly.” *Here* is Jesus. He himself, speaking about the time of his absence, does not say, “I was rich and you respected me.” He says, “I was poor, I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was imprisoned, and you came to me, to the poor Savior. You came to me, who sat as a guest at the table of the lowest of men. There you came to me.” Here is where your whole heart must be, here you must do the deeds of faith; here is where the power comes which will overthrow the world, the wretched, unhappy world.

People are afraid of the collapse of the world. I am looking forward to it. I wish it would begin right now to crash and break apart. This world of the “great men” is and remains the cause of all misery. These well-intentioned people, these good kings and ministers, these excellent prelates and popes, they can’t do anything about it. However much they try, they cannot. I would like to tell all of them, “You cannot do it!” Many times one hopes and thinks that there is one who has achieved some knowledge; one praises some action, one hopes for success and thinks, “Now it comes.” And yet, a little later one realizes that one was deceived again; afterwards it is worse than before.

True, men do achieve quite a lot on the surface. They

help a little to prevent the miserable from collapsing altogether. They educate some, but only at the cost of oppressing others. This is a terrible curse that comes limping along behind our civilization and always keeps up with us in spite of its limp. We are incapable of building up a civilization without killing people. People constantly lose their lives; human beings are killed because of our civilization. I have often spoken of the pain I feel when riding in a train or using any of the conveniences which we enjoy nowadays. So many have to sweat and toil, and live a life of care and misery, so that we may enjoy the comforts and advantages of modern civilization! Everything we do is done at the cost of other lives. Our whole life drives others into death. In the end, blood is the fruit of the earth.

However, it shall not remain like this. Jesus is the only true man, among all people. Yet how difficult it is for this Jesus to live among us! Who believes in him? Who wants *his* justice? Who wants to turn to the sinners? Jesus told us to believe in him. We are told to have faith for the sinners, for the depraved, for the miserable, for the murdered ones, for those who are not alive. This is Jesus.

If it were only a matter of worshipping the Lord Jesus in the heights of heaven, it would be an easy thing for people to do. They would love it—they like to fall down before him. They find it easy to worship any statue made of gold and silver. But Jesus does not want to be worshipped in this way. He does not want to be adored as something separate from men. He wants to be worshipped in connection with the sinners.

This was already too hard for the Pharisees. At the time of the apostles it was too hard for the new Christians among the Jews. They could not understand that Jesus was to be worshipped among the Gentiles, that he was to be seen with the despised, that he was to be sought among these. This was terribly hard for them.

The apostles spent themselves struggling and were hardly able to hold out. The whole New Testament echoes the struggle of the spirits against this Jesus. At first there were the proud Jews who looked down upon the Gentiles from the heights of their religious tradition. Later, after the apostles died and could no longer speak, heathen philosophy found its way into the Christian church. Then the Christian intellectuals, the “great” Christian minds, the Christian rulers, took things into their own hands and fought against this concept of “Jesus among the persecuted.”

Not even the Christian church that was supposedly following Jesus was able to resist this. Like the heathens, the Christians persecuted millions of people. Anyone who, in their eyes, did not appear immediately as a just man was damned. It is unfortunate that to this very day we find not one single Christian confession that would not say, “We condemn, we condemn.” They can’t help it; the human element in them is too strong. Something in them resists this Jesus to the utmost.

Later too, during the time of the Reformation, there was extreme persecution and killing. Anyone that could not immediately reach the “high regions” of one of the Reformers and the great theological minds was beaten down. All the

people that remained on the ground, so to speak, all that lay prostrate and crippled, were trodden underfoot. Anyone who had any other ideas than those pleasing to the leading church rulers, was crushed. Everything had to conform to the will of the kings, the princes, the mighty.

I wish, my friends, that you could feel my grief over this “Jesus amongst the sinners.” Unless we grieve, we cannot come fully to this Jesus. No one who lives under the swindle of polite society, of refined Christianity, “looking down on others” will ever follow in the spirit of Jesus. First a light must dawn in us that makes us see how intense, how fierce the fight is. The fight for this Jesus is a fight unto death. We must fight and oppose our entire nature, all our experiences! I could tell you of my efforts when I tried to help people in their misery. Hundreds of times I was fooled and deceived. Many times my ears rang with the words, “You are a fool! Stick to the educated people, the good people, the righteous people. Stick to those who are in the know. At least one can rely on them.”

No! These are devilish voices. No, I say to them, a thousand times, no! I will fight for the sinners, for the miserable, for the despised, until my last breath. This will be my greatest joy when I show to all those who think they live in such heights, how much rottenness there is among them. Even in my own house I would like to call out every day, “Keep to the lowly!” All too often we look like a very distinguished company. “You should be ashamed of being so refined!” I wish to God that we refined, distinguished people had to withdraw into the corners, and the place was

full of the cast-offs of society. We would be a hundred times happier proclaiming Jesus to these people.

But wait, the ragged and poor *will come!* They have been misled, scared away, deceived: they no longer have any confidence in us. They are sure that we want to have nothing to do with them. They think we despise them and can't stand them. They see we are ashamed of them, so we must get along without them. Sometimes we can meet them in church. They sit in the churches, but we don't really welcome them. We haven't got the faith of Jesus which wants to bring the sinners to the Church. We do not appreciate how Jesus sets up the very place where the proud cannot enter; yet this is precisely where something will begin to happen. If we think about it, we understand that only the large, uneducated masses can truly help the world; only through them can renewal come which will truly set mankind on a different path. This cannot possibly come from single, highly cultivated minds. It can come only from among those with whom Jesus walks. To these Jesus asks the Father to send his Spirit.

No doubt someone might say, "Jesus never came into the world for anything like this. He does not want to change the world. He just wants those who know of him to be saved after their death. He never wanted anything else. This is what has been believed for nineteen hundred years. What you are trying to say about Jesus is something he never wanted."

It's no use to argue about this. All I can say is, "Behold the Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, the one who proclaimed

the gospel to the poor. Behold the Jesus who comes to all the wretched and sick and helps them, the one who feeds the crowds in the desert. Behold the Jesus who sees the common people, those who have no shepherd, those whom he wants to draw unto himself when he is raised up. Behold this Jesus!" Then the light will dawn in you. He really wants to achieve something *on earth*. What good is it if only a few people are saved? His light must shine on all the earth.

Here, in our daily life, relationships must change. Here dwells the real Satan who has to be overcome. The earth in itself is beautiful, the sky is beautiful. Everything God has created is beautiful and good, but we have lost the connection between ourselves and his creation which surrounds us. We have lost our bearings as to the real task we have on earth. We do not even know how to get along with our own folks. Parents don't know how to live with their children; siblings don't know how to live with each other; neighbors don't know how to get along with one another. There is tremendous confusion in all of us.

We protest against this confusion; let the truth of life come to light. We must fight against this lie which is in us, against this sin, this world sin which causes our separation from the truth. When we fight against this world sin, then a light will dawn in us and we will understand this Jesus of the common people, this Savior of men. Then we shall be able to understand that the whole world must look to him for he is the only one who possesses this goal. Other spirits pursue other goals. Leave them to it. Jesus wants to build up a human society in God's praise and honor, *here on*

*earth*. His great goal is that the nations may yet come to Zion and worship. He wants the whole world to behold the glory of God.

So let us believe with our whole hearts, let us confess with all our strength, that Jesus is the Lord. Let us believe and confess it. Let us seek the Savior among the lowly and the rejected, and not in the heavens above. Jesus Christ will be with the despised, among the outcasts. With all our hearts look for him there. Reach out to these with all our energy, then we shall see how great a power Jesus is.

Let me tell you, if we were able to gather a group of people who follow Jesus, the world would marvel at the light which would shine from them. A light would shine in the very midst of our deadly nature, of our misery, our poverty, our helplessness. Then there would soon be an end to social and political problems; our confusion would come to an end. Gathered around Jesus such a living church radiates freedom, abundant life, and love. From it the spirit of truth and power shines everywhere, and its light surpasses anything that mankind has ever seen. May God grant that men recognize Jesus, that they believe in him and that they confess to this Jesus!

■ August 19, 1899 (Volume 3, No. 49)

## 16 "I Am with You!"

REMEMBER, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, even to the end of the world.

*Matthew 28:20*

**I** am with you!" These words should fill our hearts, for they are the greatest truth which can be given to us. As time goes by we may be inclined to become weak and discouraged by the fleeting nature of all that surrounds us. We truly do not know from one day to the next whether what is dearest to us will remain with us. It is then that the great God himself will step in among us. In earlier times he has appeared among men. "I am your shield, your great reward."—"I will bless you."—"I will strengthen you."—"I will comfort you."—"I am your God who will never forsake you."—"Even if I am angry with you, I will also be

compassionate, as a mother has compassion for her child.”

The voice of God was heard in ancient times, in the middle of the dark and transitory world. In this presence of God some people were given new life and new strength. To this day their strength and witness, their lives are a joy and a comfort to us. Now, it comes to us quite simply, in the words, “I am with you.” The Savior, born as one of us, but from the heavenly heights says to us, “I am the light of the world.”—“I am meek and lowly of heart.”—“I will refresh you.”—“I will not let you become orphans.”—“I am with you all through the days, until the end of the world.”

This presence of God, my friends, is our faith. In it we must live. God is among us, he is close to us, we are not alone and we rejoice in him: God himself steps into our midst. No greater truth can be written into our hearts.

At the beginning of a new year we consider how weak, how poor, how foolish, how sinful and how utterly lost we feel. Our fate often appears dark and troubled to us. We are hardly able to see ahead. We doubt everything we do, for we don't know what will come of it.

But all things can change; all things will become new. “I will make all things new. I will make you new in your poverty, in your pain, in your doubts, in your sins. In all things I will make you new, poor man that you are. I will make you so new that you will no longer be poor or grieve; you need no longer despair of yourself. You are no longer alone. The presence of the Savior has bound you to himself; something new fills you.” With us is a power which gives us strength to triumph over all struggles in our lives.

In the life of every human being there is a struggle unto death, a painful fight. The eternal question is, "How will it go with me? How shall I bear it all?" All of us are like a troubled world full of storms and attacks, deep pain and death pangs. Many times one is hardly able to breathe. Yet rejoice! The victory will be ours! When the Lord Jesus says, "Behold I make all things new, I am with you," then we need no longer be concerned for our own soul, our own lives and our eternity. This daily fight is a daily victory.

It is significant for us that the Savior allows us to look into the world through his own eyes. Mankind as a whole is like an individual struggling in darkness, surrounded by night. We all fight and labor for a better fate, for a new world of justice, for a world in which the true image of man as God intended him to be becomes clearly visible everywhere. We must not separate ourselves from the many who haven't experienced the great, healing nature of God. God's power drives us into faraway lands, to the strangest peoples. Here at home this same power drives us down into the darkest company, into the most degenerate areas of human life. My friends, we have to pray for the Savior to enter into those places. If possible, we will carry his power where it is darkest, where hope has almost been given up, where ruin and corruption stare back at us and take away our breath.

Shall we lose courage? No! For we know, we really know, the greatness of God's presence, we know who Jesus Christ is: the one who says, "I give my life for the world." We know the great realm out of which the voice of God, the voice of Jesus Christ, speaks to us. This is a mighty domain, full of

strength and victory, where the Lord Jesus is surrounded by manifold powers. In the same way, we may find ourselves surrounded by great, powerful hosts, and the victory of our Savior will be fully revealed to us.

Whenever we hear the words, “I am with you,” we should sense the endless power and might that lie in the hands of the Savior, for he came from God. He is the true Son of God. He makes us God’s children. He brings victory to this world, whose flesh he has taken on. He is comfort for the corrupted, life for the dying and for the dead. He is in heaven and on the earth and beneath the earth, in every abyss, in all depths, in all darkneses, in all alien territories. He is the great power of God which transforms all things. Of him it shall be said in the end, “Truly, he has made all things new.”

This word of God is significant! Let it be your strength and watchword for the New Year, not your own gifts, your own powers, or human abilities. Rather, let the voice of God be your strength, the voice that says to you, “I am with you all the days.” Let this presence of God be alive in us as well as in our fellowmen. Then our lives will represent the good news on earth, not in words, thoughts, or outward forms and obligations, but with our whole life. We are allowed to live out the good news, which is the power of God, able to redeem all people who are open to it.

Never doubt, for Jesus says, “Through all the days.” What are days? We often feel so lonely. Our days are so dark that at times we cannot even think of the presence of God. At other times we are so very foolish, and later we realize

how many foolish things we have done. This fills us with disquiet, pain and repentance, to the point where we would like to do away with ourselves. Yet even the darkest days are days given to you. Remember this! They belong to you. At the end of your earthly life every day that you have lived, belongs to your days. All those years, those hours, those times that you spent, are yours. All your experiences, all your joys, all that gives you courage for life, all that tries to depress you, to sadden you—all this belongs to you. Into these days, which are yours, the Savior enters. The Lord Jesus stands behind you every single day. Perhaps you are so deep in darkness and night that you do not notice him at all, yet he says, "I am with you through all your days! All your days are in my hand! If they are soiled, I shall clean them. If they become dark, I shall allow light to appear in this darkness so that you may feel joy again. When they are happy days, then look, I am also present. Never forget it. Believe in these words and live by them, I am with you through all your days."

When you look back over your life, you may recall many days of which you are ashamed. Now that you are moved by God's Spirit you must believe that surely Jesus was also present in the days when you did not know him.

From the hour when you learn to know him, his meekness and humility, his life and death, he penetrates into all your days, back to the first day of your life. The redeeming Spirit of Jesus pierces into your past, where so much in you was wrong, so that you may be comforted about your past. You may say about your past life, "Even then, God was with me."

He reaches down into all our days so deeply that our whole life is lit up by his presence. Now we may indeed become God's representatives among men.

My friends, let us grasp this fully and deeply. The Savior says to us, "You are the light of the world; you are the salt of the earth." Can you understand this, poor human being that you are? Can you understand that you, too, may become a person born not of men, but of God? Can you grasp that even in your poor human body you may represent the Savior? For this is how it should be. Wherever we are, whatever we do, we must represent the Savior. Be silent often so that your true self may speak. You have a great task. Do not be too quick to act according to your own nature. Always remember that your voice is now the Savior's voice; all your fighting and living, your pain and your victories, now must witness to the Savior. When we are comforted, then the whole world is comforted. When our sins are forgiven, then the whole world must be forgiven. If we triumph over death and suffering, then the Savior speaks to many people out of our death and suffering. "Be comforted. I shall not leave you!" Then all that we experience will become a powerful gospel.

Many people think that goodness alone can show us God. No! No, indeed! Unless we ourselves are saved again and again from fear and suffering, we have nothing to offer to the world. Our Christianity has no value if we cannot be victorious in times of affliction, fear and need. With Jesus at our side we can overcome all afflictions, suffering and sorrow, however painful they may be, and in this way

be a witness to the world. Christ's suffering continues to this day. We still have to suffer; we still have to bear heavy burdens, yet I have great hope for the times which are coming. I hope for a great liberation, for great redemption.

Somewhere, the darkness, the suffering, the chains and fetters that bind men must be broken down. Maybe you are chosen to be bound, so that the fetters may be broken. Maybe you are sad, so that comfort is received through you; or you are to die, so that the resurrection of Jesus Christ will be revealed through you. All these things will happen to someone we know. God himself steps in among us; Jesus Christ is with us, quite personally. We rejoice to know that he, who is so great, creates a bond between us with his resurrected body. Therefore we should see everything we individually do as a service to God in the world.

Do not be afraid! Remember that whatever we overcome is important also for others. If we know the Savior, if the Lord Jesus is with us, then his powers must work through us and become part of all men that dwell on earth. We Christians should not think we are great on earth; rather, the Lord Jesus shall find his dwelling place among us. God, our Father, shall be at home among us. The presence of the Savior in us and among us should be our greatest joy. Let us stand together, believe together, be joyful together, so firmly that we become one house. Into this house the Lord Jesus will gladly enter and say, "I come to you gladly, for you know that everything depends on me. You know that it is my death and my resurrection alone which can help the world."

We must step back and become his servants. Then whatever we do will bear the stamp of his work. The past years have created too many Christians, even violent Christians—and too little of Christ. Yet Christ is the salvation of the world. The Savior must come! A new time will begin, my friends, once the Lord Jesus has truly made his dwelling on earth.

The present time with all its pain and sin and corruption will have an end. The Lord Jesus will be with us until the end of this world of death, this world of sin, this world of folly. He will be with us until the end of this world, which causes so much heartbreak. The Lord Jesus binds us to the end of the world through his presence. And we are allowed to look toward it. All that is evil, corrupt and sinful will have an end. Are you afraid? Are you afraid of the power of sin? Are you afraid of the power of death? No! A thousand times no! No! No! There will be an end.

Everything that is not of God will come to an end. The world, the human world, will have an end. It will not remain forever as we see it now. Thanks be to God that even now, in small ways, an end is given. My friends, I wish I could show you my exulting heart! I am filled with joy when I think of how I have always heard the words, “I am with you to the end of the world,” even through long years of waiting in darkness. Even the part of the world that weighs you down like a great rock on your shoulders, and makes you groan and moan, will fall; it will end. Everything that torments you, that weighs upon you, that is dark and heavy, comes to an end. All the dark powers that we don’t

understand, though we often sense them; all the restlessness that enters our hearts and makes us sigh—all this will be finished.

In Jesus all things come to an end that are not of God our Father. In his presence we are shown eternity. In reality our earthly years mean nothing; they are a human concept based on the fact that the earth turns around the sun in a certain way. But now, outside of time, in eternity, we feel at home with the Lord Jesus. He dwells among us; we dwell with him; we have been lifted out of the chance happenings of time and into the blessedness of eternity. In the power and in the light of eternity, in its liberating, redeeming nature, all things that are not of God will end.

Wherever there is an end, there is also a new beginning. Many times we want something to happen for God's kingdom. We would like to ask God, "Give this anew; make that new!" Very well, but first you must wait until the old has come to an end. Unless the old comes to an end, there can be nothing new in your heart, in your house, in your whole being. This very fact has comforted me about our life and about our house, which has stood for so many years and where God's kingdom has been prayed for so much.

If something new is to come, something old must first come to an end. And until this end comes we must be patient. We must hold out and say again and again, "He is with us, and therefore the end *will* come!" This is part of our work—in faith, in love and in hope. All the hatred in the world, all the vanity of the world, all the wrong human thinking and speaking, will come to an end. The end will

come soon when the darkness will *have* to flee. The time will come, indeed it is already here, when new feelings come to life in men's hearts and they feel drawn more strongly to what is good. Then we will see the dark powers around us that we do not want. A new willingness has to come and will come saying, "We no longer *want* to live with our corruptions. We no longer *want* to live for sin. We *will* not!" This time will come, and then all that was corrupt and spoiled will come to an end.

In this way, step by step, we shall reach the great end. It will not come all at once. It will come very quietly. One thing after another will come to an end in the world. One thing after another will no longer be tolerated. You can hardly imagine how great are the powers of God that give men a new mind and a new heart, so that they will get rid of all that stands in God's way. Let us continue on our way confidently, through all our days, at the side of the Savior. The way leads onward—onward into a new time. It leads over and above all that we now see spoiled and ruined. The old world comes to an end. Already a new world lies before our eyes. Out of this new world, Jesus Christ speaks to us these words which carry a greater significance today than at any other time, "Behold, I am with you all through the days that are coming, until the end of the world!"

■ January 1, 1910 (Volume 4, No. 12)

## 17 Our Human Right

THEN JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES a parable to teach them that they should always pray and never become discouraged.

“In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that same town who kept coming to him and pleading for her rights, saying, ‘Help me against my opponent!’ For a long time the judge refused to act, but at last he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or respect man, yet because of all the trouble this widow is giving me, I will see to it that she gets her rights. If I don’t, she will keep on coming and finally wear me out!’”

And the Lord continued, “Listen to what the corrupt judge said. Now, will God not judge in favor of his own people who cry to him day and night for help? Will he be slow to help them? I tell you, he will judge in their favor and do it quickly. But will the Son of Man find faith on earth when he comes?”

*Luke 18:1-8*

The nearer we come to making our will one with God's will, the more troubled we become. We feel that our opponent is trying to rob us of something to which we have a legitimate right. This unity with God's will is not something we can only acquire in the future, but it can be our personal possession already now. We have a human right to it and this right the enemy wants to steal from us. We are personally interested in keeping it. Moreover, what we feel in our hearts as God's will should not only be preserved in us; we should also be able to declare it to the whole world. This is the true right of man.

It is this human right that should not perish in corruption and sin. Indeed, a power shall arise out of it which will save us from the trials and tribulations which are yet in store for us, for we are surrounded by enemies that want to rob us of the very best we have. They want to push us down into vanity where nothing but selfishness determines how we live each day. These powers insult and mock us because we are striving for the higher good. We tell them: "No! The goodness of God is firmly established in our hearts. It is our right through the will of God, who sent the Savior, and who imprinted on our hearts the image of God's true life and justice. We do not first have to seek it." If we have this firmly in our heart, can the rest of the world harm us? No! No power has the right to take this possession from us. Therefore we are not shy or timid.

People may say to us, "Whatever do you mean with your new kingdom, new conditions, a new justice, new eternal life? What are you after? You have no right to expect

anything! The world has always been as it is and you can never change it, try as you will. We won't let you!" Without any hesitation or shyness we come before the throne of justice, before him who has the power over heaven and earth and say, "Save us from such nonsense. For many thousands of years men have done their fleeting and unjust works on earth. This way of thinking has taken such a hold on people that they are unable to think in any other way—but this is nonsense. Save us from this enemy! The truth is not found in the history of our unhappy human race burdened with misery, injustice and sin. That is not the truth! Truth is the eternal life and justice of God; therefore, throw everything else out! Father in heaven save us, and give victory to the truth of life."

We guard this as a personal treasure in our hearts. We are like the widow who is concerned for her possessions as any woman would be—who no longer finds protection because of human injustice. We must take our cause to the righteous judge. Thanks be to God that the righteous judge is near at hand, so that we can call on him. Justice and righteousness will not be hidden from us even in the midst of unjust mankind. We can see very clearly what justice is, and we will demand it. God's love and mercy, God's life in our human nature—these are our legitimate rights. Eternal life is our right. This we ought to see clearly and allow no one to take it from us. We trust and rely at all times upon the Judge who has betrothed himself to us. Indeed, he has made a covenant with us, a promise for a time when we shall be saved from all the evil that still surrounds us.

In our text it is significant that the Lord Jesus looks far ahead into the future when God's will for men shall be fulfilled. This is expressed by the words, "Now, will God not judge in favor of his people who cry to him day and night for help? Will he be slow to help them? I tell you, he will judge in their favor and do it quickly. But will the Son of Man find faith on earth?" Yes, for as long as there is one true person we can trust and have faith in him. We rejoice in his life, in his company, in the fact that he speaks to us and that we can draw near to him in a personal way.

However, the Lord Jesus does not expect to be on the earth at the time when the widow cries out, "Help me against my opponent!" Can we still place our trust in someone who does not live among us? Even the disciples of Jesus were tempted. They had placed their full trust in the one who lived among them. Yet when he said he would soon come into the last battle and lose his life at the hands of his enemies, they protested, "No, that is impossible. Everything will stop once you are no longer among us!" In spite of this, we must cling to him even though he is no longer on the earth. Our striving in God's name, the submission of our hearts to God's will, need not suffer from the fact that we can no longer see him. *We must cling to him.*

Yet after centuries of human progress, indeed after two thousand years, will we still place our hopes in this same Jesus? Will anyone still expect judgment in his name? Will we still believe that through his person those things we long for will come? Will we still have faith? Does anyone today believe in Jesus Christ as we should? Nowadays people

complain that they no longer know what to do with the good news of God's kingdom. Everywhere other voices are heard. Will we be able to stand firm and let no one take our faith from us—will we still believe?

Indeed, my friends, we don't find this easy. It is not difficult to think of Jesus as he was in his own time: the Jesus about whom we read in the Bible. Though even in this many people are shaky. Even for believers it is difficult to believe in him as a personality on whom depends everything. My friends, our faith is weak. This living reality is not what was brought to us in the teachings. When I think of Jesus I am filled with awe from head to toe, convinced his power and glory honors God the Father. When we feel this awe for his personality we cannot enter idle chatter about the Lord Jesus or start scientific studies about him as though he were dead. No! We recognize Jesus as the one who is, and was and who is coming and will be here—do we have this faith?

Everything depends on this faith. Only in the person of Jesus can the light of our hearts be kindled and give us hope for the future of mankind. When the truly living and abiding presence of the Lord Jesus is lost, when we erase the image of Jesus Christ from our hearts, then the light of hope is extinguished. It is not true that we can have hope for the world without the person of Jesus. It is not true or possible to have some vague thoughts or a nebulous image of God. It is not true when we think that mankind will automatically develop to a state of perfection, that our earthly conditions can produce something good. It is not

true that our hearts can find a way out of our confusion, out of our sin, out of our darkness and wrongdoing. It is not true that we can achieve something real and true without faith in Jesus Christ. Every reasonable thought in the whole world about the future of mankind has come through Jesus Christ. People who say, “We must honor his memory as a historical personality,” are under a false illusion. In the end they will perish miserably.

Nothing is achieved without the Lord, the Savior. You may have set your mind on improving the human race in our time and you want to do it the worldly way. Where did you get such ideas? Your desire springs from the person of Jesus—from nowhere else. I tell you boldly, we cannot achieve anything for the world without believing in the Son of man, in the Lord Jesus.

But this faith is only given to a few. I do not want to request this from anyone, because the noise of the world is still so powerful that only a few people have this faith. Only a few feel the presence of Jesus in the name of the almighty God. Do we have this perseverance, this praying without ceasing, without fainting? Only when we have a living contact and relationship with the Lord Jesus can we pray without ceasing for the divine things, for the divine growth intended for us all. Those who remain in a vague religion, those who want to get along with human thinking alone, soon become tired and lifeless. They have no real image before their eyes.

Let me give an example of this praying without ceasing, and how important it is even in those secular areas where

we are meant to advance. Not so long ago, a few decades perhaps, we saw only lightning in the sky. Then talk about electricity began. Some people began to ponder about this strange power: it did not leave them in peace. They kept thinking, "Who knows, it might be given to men to use. Could this play of the clouds, this faraway, deadly, terrible yet powerful thing, be used by men?" I remember how millions laughed. Only very few people believed it and did not stop studying it. Suddenly there it was.

Something like this happens when we see Jesus. Anyone who has an image of Jesus from the Bible, perhaps even through experiences in his own heart, recognizes in him the powers we need. At first these powers are very far away. They are heavenly powers, great and divine powers. They are so great that today we can hardly understand the life of Jesus in a human, natural way. At least, humanly we can't understand it. Yet we do see in him the mighty powers of God. We look up and think, "Is it possible that these powers will one day become man's possession?"

Let me repeat that without Jesus there can be no improvement for men. In other words, without these powers which we recognize in him, we can achieve nothing. It is just as it was with the lightning which we saw but could not use. Yet nowadays its power runs through the whole world, with and without wires. With this power of lightning our words run everywhere through the air. In a similar way we see God's powers, the divine powers. We can cling to them only with our thoughts. Yet in the living person of Jesus we see these divine powers unfold in a very real way; they have

become part of our earth. To this very day we see them and recognize them.

We could, of course, shake our heads and say that we don't believe it. Yet we, who are like the widow, have a claim to this divine power. This is our possession. This power of God in Jesus Christ shall triumph among men; it is our legitimate right. Therefore we believe and come daily before God saying, "They want to rob us, but please do not let them! We appeal to you. Even if there are only a very few of us, we appeal to you in the name of all mankind. We appeal to you in the name of the foolish and the clever, the godless and the just, in the name of everyone whom you have created for a high purpose. We maintain firmly that this power, revealed in Jesus Christ as a power of God, a power of life, is our possession! There is little we can do with it today, for we are attacked and opposed from all sides. But we will hold on to it in quiet. It is our right, our human right. Father in heaven, save us from our opponent!"

There are many who hang on to a hope for the future. Although their thinking may be Christian, they have trouble keeping the opponent out of their hearts. With all kinds of tricks and sciences, with all our human thinking, this little flame wants to be taken from us. I beg you, my friends, do not believe in such things! What has been revealed in Jesus Christ, in his words and deeds—this is what we need. Of this you can be certain.

Where else are we to turn to overcome sin, if not to this judging forgiveness which came to us in Jesus Christ? How can we fight against evil, unless we have this clarity of the

living power which shall one day illumine even our bodies? How are we to come unscathed through all the chaos among men, unless the peace revealed through Jesus Christ enters into our hearts, this peace which Jesus proclaimed even in the presence of his enemies? How can we stand above the human turmoil and conflict unless our hearts are opened to the divine purpose? How can we hope to triumph over our own hearts, let alone over all that surrounds us? For this reason we constantly pray, "Save us from our opponent!"

The vision is clearly before our eyes and we say, as people did in earlier times looking at the lightning, "This power must come into the hands of men." Looking at Jesus Christ we say, "This power will be given in rich abundance to those who proclaim the kingdom of God on earth." Give up your dull and insipid Christianity. God cannot use it. But do not let Christ be taken from you!

Everything depends on him. In him we can really unite. I still have a tiny spark of hope that Christians will be able to unite again. If our hearts are filled with his being, what does it matter whether one is Catholic or Protestant? If the vision of Jesus Christ enters into the hearts of those who think at all about God's kingdom, then everything else will fade into the background. The outward differences of our religious practices will not separate us. The one little flame lit in our hearts, the living, powerful kingdom of the future, revealed in the person of Jesus Christ—this is what unites me with people everywhere who may be living in other ways and under different circumstances. In this way there

will develop a united flock of Jesus Christ of which can be said, “*One shepherd, one flock!*”

To anyone who tries to grasp this, it is a bewildering thought. In fact, it is impossible to grasp it with human thoughts. Thousands will tell us, “This will never happen!” Then we must pray and not falter. Who can endure? Who can pray and not falter? Who can seek this highest goal without fear, without worry? Who can remain steadfast and say, “Because it was, it will be,” and then add, “And so it is now!” I have not yet met the man who, having constantly prayed for God’s will to happen, has not experienced salvation in small things. “He will defend them speedily.” Do you think I stand before you as one who only expects salvation in the distant future? No. I, too, am one of you, one of those who have experienced the truth of the words, “I will support you speedily.” This has been so especially at times when I thought I could not go on, when hostility and opposition became so strong that I felt very weak. Then I heard the words, “I will support you speedily.”

Everything that will happen in the future is felt and noticed beforehand by certain people. There is nothing that belongs only to the future. Everything that one day will come in a big way for the whole world, for the whole of mankind, must come first in a small way. All the great things which are to come, we shall experience today quite certainly in all their glory if we pray and do not falter. But without prayer they *will not come*. We must have the great cause constantly and firmly before the inner eyes of our hearts. Otherwise we shall be looking to the right and to

the left, above and below; our curious eyes will wander all over the world, but we shall miss the main goal. We seek this and that, try to change this or that, and thus do not perceive the true power that is already at work.

This power is discovered only by those who truly look for it. Therefore, let me repeat, look toward the divine power which appeared in Jesus Christ and don't be like the blind who grope with a long stick in the dark. Be thankful for any experience, even the smallest, which you may have of this glory of God in the flesh. Don't be indifferent about small experiences; such indifference creates nothing but complaint and discontent. We should hold on to the small experiences which teach us the truth contained in the words, "He will help them speedily." Start with the small things. Start in the depth of your own heart! The darkness is still widespread, but something has begun. We, in the Spirit, may consider ourselves saved, even though there is still much darkness around us.

Do you think the Son of Man will find us faithful? My friends, I know how difficult it is. With all our studying and investigating we have clogged our hearts and heads so we no longer feel the immediate presence of Jesus Christ. Be that as it may, I do not want the Lord Jesus to be defeated. I wish that there were some who look to him—who pray and do not waver. Even if it is only a few, it won't matter. Maybe a few people, maybe only one, will come into God's kingdom, and soon the whole world will be won. Think of how a fort is taken. One soldier gets there first, others follow, and soon the fort is conquered. Many times the

most important events do not happen through the masses, but through an individual, through a few.

Blessed are we if we prove ourselves to be the few. Blessed are we if we can come together as the few in this praying without ceasing. We need to do this because we feel the greatness of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom belongs the victory today and tomorrow and also in the past. He has always been the victor over the dust. Jesus Christ, the image of that which mankind is to be, stands before us in radiance and glory. All who open their hearts to God's Spirit will see him.

■ September 4, 1910 (Volume 4, No. 22)

## 18 The Savior Is Coming

BUT OF THAT DAY AND HOUR no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man. Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left. Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

*Matthew 24: 36-42*

Many times the Savior calls to us, “Watch!”— Watch for my coming! The Lord Jesus gives us a task with this call. It is a blessed, important assignment. If we fulfill this task, to watch for Christ’s coming, this can become reality now. When we keep watch our whole being is directed towards this future. We see it before our eyes, we feel it in our whole life. We cannot be swallowed up by the present, for we are linked to the future, we experience this future already. Our life is renewed again and again and something new develops, something that points the way for us to go: each time it is a glimpse into Jesus Christ’s future.

Christ’s future is not just one single point in an indefinite period that we are to wait for. If this were true, we would probably all go to sleep while we waited; but his future is already here. This future with Jesus Christ must become the personal experience of everyone, today, tomorrow and every day. We must be awake to experience how God works through Jesus Christ.

The Savior is coming! He is not quietly sitting somewhere in eternity, waiting for a certain moment when he will suddenly come. He is on the way. We must always look for him to appear; we should expect him every day. Like a thread, the coming of the Savior runs through Christian history, through God’s presence in the world. If this thread is to continue we must not give in to sleepiness. The Lord Jesus is coming! There will be times of storm and thunder, of sorrow and suffering; yet in all such storms, all sorrows,

and even when we think we cannot go on, there will be new revelations that will enable us to continue working and watching. Then the time will come when our waiting and watching will bear fruit: the Lord Jesus' time will be fulfilled.

All you Christians watch! Watch, and be joyful. Even though fear overcomes you, watch, the Savior *will* enter into your life. I have often experienced this. I have been led and I have had to say, "There *is* a way out of this fear." Even when I felt I could not go on, God showed us a direction and now we have an inkling of Jesus Christ's future among us. We depend on this coming of the Savior. That we are allowed to expect such great happenings animates our daily life and thinking and will finally lead to victory.

Live constantly in Jesus Christ's future. The Savior himself says, "Of this day and hour no one knows." This future of Jesus Christ alleviates the confusion, suffering, temptation and hostility in the world. Now we have hope. Right now there are large circles of people who hope for a new, free and good life. They do not think that things will just go on and on, and that humanity will not reach any goal. Now new doors are being opened for the good to flourish and many people want to take part in serving and helping the need of their neighbors. In great hope, dedication and faithfulness, even the worldly people take part in this task, and in this way are part of Christ's future. Any hope for improvement, any belief that better days will come for mankind, any striving towards better times, are a

proof and a result of this hope which we Christians firmly express by the words, “The Savior is coming!”

We must be alert and watchful. Jesus Christ’s future has to become your personal experience. Whenever you experience protection and remarkable help, whenever you are led on new ways and see others being led on new ways, you should think, “This is a piece of Jesus Christ’s future.” A new wind is blowing in Jesus Christ’s future. All kinds of signs and proofs of God’s help are visible. However poor we may be, however weak we may feel, we will continue to hope and watch. A time will come when we will be allowed to participate in Jesus Christ’s future.

Still, God remains a mystery. God is the mighty power, the tremendous energy which directs human development, so it cannot be determined or foretold, “On such and such a day, at such and such an hour Jesus will come.” Then it would seem as though there had been nothing at all before that time. It would appear as though we had nothing to tell about the coming of the Lord Jesus into our lives. Yet we do have a lot to tell and should take everything seriously that we experience. This is what watching means. Watch out! Suddenly something happens to you. Then take hold of it, be active, believe and seize the good things which the Father in heaven places at your feet.

The Savior is coming! He is on the way to you, to me, to us all, in all circumstances of our lives. Even when things are as they were in Noah’s time, even if the whole world is apparently concerned with nothing but earthly things, with

eating and drinking, with marrying and giving in marriage, we should not give up. We must be a living testimony at all times. Our Christianity must be alive. Our Christian faith must be a light, a light of hope, a light in the midst of the indifference of men, of the whole world. It must be a light even in the midst of all the activity of the world. We look forward to greater things than new machines and inventions. We hope for a change to the good in our hearts and in our lives. We hope for the over-coming of the powers of evil, of all sin that still prevails. We expect victory over all the misery that binds so many people, over all the evil and hostile powers that torment men. This is our expectation.

Because of this expectation we will not become weary. We will not become forlorn, nor will we become irritable or quarrelsome. We will not be dissatisfied with our conditions and with the events that surround us. In all things we will see the Savior coming. This will surpass by far any apparent triumphs which men experience through their own works.

Our household, with all its activities, must live in Jesus Christ's future. The fact that so many things happened in recent times which made it possible for us to carry on, is a piece of Jesus Christ's coming. There are some who complain, who want things to be different, who always think of the "good old times" and want to have them back. They are quite wrong. They torment themselves and others as well. Even now, certain events or experiences are felt by some to be a help, to be a sign of Jesus Christ's future. They thank

God and rejoice, joyfully and gladly continuing on their way in certainty that “the Lord Jesus is coming.” Yet others hang their heads and think, “Oh dear, I never thought this was possible; it is quite different from what it used to be.” They get nothing out of the experience and sadly go on their way.

The future of Jesus Christ must become a real experience in world history, in the history of the church and Christianity. It must become a reality to every Christian. Your life must be a piece of Jesus Christ’s future—your life and also your death. Our dying should not lead into death but into life. Even in our last moments Jesus Christ’s future must touch us. The dying must say, “The Savior is coming!” The sinners, upon their awakening and repenting, must say, “The Savior is coming!” In all our afflictions we should say, “The Savior is coming!” We must be convinced that all our troubles and afflictions have something to teach us.

In this way we should be watching. I know of no other way to do it. We have to experience his coming. There is justification in thinking that the Savior is quite near. It is right to say with the apostles, “He is at hand, he will come soon!” He will not only come at some moment which lies in a distant future. Our whole life is filled with the coming of the Lord Jesus. Daily we rejoice at his coming. Daily he opens up new ways for us, so we can carry on joyfully. Daily he “opens new doors” for us; he helps us and protects us, often without our knowledge. Yet again and again we are allowed to recognize his help when suddenly, like a

miracle, we see that we have been protected. This is the Lord Jesus.

Watch and pray, the Lord Jesus is coming! This watching is a part of our life, of our service to God. The Savior seriously urges us to “Watch, watch, watch!” He wants to lay a foundation for it in our hearts, in our whole lives. It is as though he were always waiting and asking, “How can I come closer to this person, to that person? How can I meet this one who is waiting for me? How can I go to meet many at a time, so that again and again new victories are given? What can I do to make the call heard throughout Christendom, throughout the whole world, ‘Jesus lives, Jesus is victor!’” When we watch we are not thinking of our own lives only. We are watching for the whole world. We are thinking of the world which is still in darkness. We lift our hearts and heads, saying, “Father in heaven, the world is yours. You have given us minds and hearts with which to wait and strive forward. You have made men of us, you who are the God of all gods, the Savior of all men.”

In the small circle of a family, of a household, we keep watch. Each one, keep watch! You need it. Do not fall into darkness and indifference, but watch! Your own hour will come—be prepared for it. The hour will come for your inner growth, for the development of your life, for the renewal of your life and of your death. Watch! Never lose heart. The Savior often comes in the most difficult hour, in the unhappiest times. Watch, for the Savior is on the way!

Watch for the world, too. Do not give the world up as

though it were lost for all eternity. It is true that Jesus Christ's future brings separation. The fact is that one person can come to faith and to the joy in God, while another remains outside for the time being; this should not trouble us. The future of Jesus Christ is and will be a great and powerful help in all situations for all men. All eyes will be opened. We will not be able to say anymore: "This one will be accepted and that one not." People will weep and wail when they see how wrong they were. Their tears are part of Jesus Christ's future, of the Savior's coming and many will receive help. Thanks and praise be to God!

We cannot say that the Savior has not come, that we have experienced nothing of Jesus Christ's future. We live in Jesus Christ's future. Just think how much we have been given—how many times we have received help and protection, often very suddenly and unexpectedly. All of a sudden it was here, this future of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let it live among us now! Don't just look to the distant future, as though something impossible would come eventually. Let it come to life now, in our daily life. Let it come to life in your personal experiences. Let it come to life on your sickbed. For the Savior also comes to the sick, to the poor, to those who have to struggle for their daily bread. The Savior is coming! This certainty is our joy; it is the source of our Christian life. Let it fill our days, today and tomorrow and every day of our life. This joyful certainty will carry us through all our needs. The fact that we are allowed to say, "The Savior is coming!" is like a surging tide of God's Spirit.

This tide will never end; it will continue to carry us forward, and bless us in all our thoughts and endeavors, in our whole life.

Therefore watch! Watch, all of you! Let each one be a fighter for Jesus Christ, a servant of the Savior. Surrender your lives and hearts. Be prepared! Jesus Christ *will* come to you, into your house, into your hearts, into your lives. Never forget this: Watch! The Savior is coming!

■ November 16, 1913 (Volume 4, No. 42)

## 19 The New Reality

“WHICH ONE OF YOU CAN PROVE that I am guilty of sin? If I tell you the truth, then why do you not believe me? He who comes from God listens to God’s word. You, however, are not from God, and that is why you will not listen.”

They asked Jesus, “Were we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon in you?”

“I have no demon,” Jesus answered. “I honor my Father, but you dishonor me. I am not seeking honor for myself. But there is one who is seeking it and who judges in my favor. I am telling you the truth: whoever obeys my teaching will never die.”

They said to him, “Now we know for sure that you have a demon! Abraham died, the prophets died, yet you say that whoever obeys your teaching will never die. Our father Abraham died; you do not claim to be greater than Abraham, do you? And the prophets also died. Who do you think you are?”

Jesus answered, “If I were to honor myself, that honor would be worth nothing. The one who honors me is my Father—the very one you say is your God. You have never known him, but I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him, and I obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see the time of my coming; he saw it and was glad.”

They said to him, “You are not even fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?”

“I am telling you the truth,” Jesus replied. “Before Abraham was born, ‘I Am’.”

Then they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and left the Temple.

*John 8:46-59*

**T**he truth is at stake. The truth is proclaimed by Jesus’ whole being, by all he does, by all he says. This truth, which he proclaims to the world up to the present day, is that he came from God. He came from the almighty, and great God, who is beyond comprehension. He came from God, who creates all things, who has made all things. He came from God, who guides the development of all things from the beginning of Israel’s history, from Abraham’s time until his own time. He came from God, who gives growth to mankind, and who permeates all life in the world. God awakens everything again and again to

new life, toward the one glorious goal. From this God, Jesus came and with him new life came to the earth.

This truth is reality. It is not a new teaching, new laws, or a new institution. Christianity made many teachings and laws and institutions after Jesus, yet these are not the message which we want to hear. We must open our ears to the new message the Son of man brings to the world, the truth. Now, this is the new message—God has created a new reality on earth, first among men, then spreading to all of creation. Heaven and earth are renewed by this new reality, Jesus.

We are still living in the old reality which completely occupies all our senses. It is the old story of perishing, of wasting away, and behind it lies a mighty darkness—death. We live and die. Nature lives and then dies. We fail God, we go wrong and sin enters into our lives—this is a reality which God allows, but a reality of misery and suffering. We men were and are expected to defend ourselves against it, yet we are not able to do it. Because of this, the history of mankind is one of dying and death.

In Jesus a new reality appears, which is opposed to that of world history. Something new is beginning alongside the old reality which does not suddenly disappear, but continues alongside the new. Yet in Jesus we have the new reality. A new history begins, a new working of God. True, God was present in the old world, and his Spirit worked upon its growth and development. He did send men who were able to witness to him. However, it always remained

the old reality; the world could not come to anything new.

Now something new will begin with Jesus Christ. It was meant to be like that from the very beginning, but death still had power over men. Even in the lives of believing men, death made itself felt. This death was so powerful when Jesus appeared, this death caused by the law, this deadliness of human teachings—it was so strong that the Lord Jesus had to struggle with all his might to make people see that in him something new had come, a new history.

This new history will be revealed in you, in me, in all of us. It must become evident that something new *is* possible. Of course, we will have to fight for it daily. We have to grasp this truth that Jesus came from God. From this truth, from this new reality that God came to us, to all mankind, flows everything that we need. We achieve nothing unless we surround ourselves with this truth. With all our Christian talking and praying, with all our institutions, nothing seems to change. Yet if only one man would fully accept this truth: “Christ is the new reality of God on earth”, history will change, and all life be renewed. Christ brings change. This is no teaching; it is not just new words—it has miraculous powers. It is the living person of Jesus Christ, in whom dawns a new history of mankind.

We must believe this today more than ever. If we *do* believe, we belong to God. This truth, that Jesus Christ comes from God, must bear fruit. To begin with, you and others, maybe only a few, perhaps many, must become

children of God. We have to become children of God! The Savior tells us, “Unless you are born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) The kingdom of heaven is founded on the reality of Jesus Christ’s life—this reality which came from God.

Therefore, we are faced with the question: Are we really following Jesus Christ? Have we placed ourselves under the authority which has been given to Jesus for us all? Do you really grasp this? Will you accept it and live accordingly? Will you let your whole life be guided by Jesus, even in times of struggle and suffering which will come to you?

If we are ready for this, we have an obligation which has to endure; we want to strive for the kingdom of God. What is God’s kingdom? Certainly not Christian institutions, although in these there might be traces of God’s kingdom. God’s kingdom is the power of God—it is the rulership of God. God’s kingdom brings the revelation of divine life; it brings the birth of new hearts, new minds, and new feelings which shall guide us along the right way. This is God’s kingdom. Yet who can grasp what it means when God rules? It is too great for today’s Christians. Who can grasp what God is? What is God who is in eternity, where he rules and guides the development of all things? What is God in the heart of each person? Who is God in your destiny, in what you experience, in what may be hard for you and yet is under God’s rule? What is God?

Whoever wants to grasp this must acknowledge that Jesus is from God. He is the light that shines throughout

the centuries since the day of his birth. He is the light that is preserved for us in the gospel. He is the light that opposes the sins that burden us. He is the light that opposes death. Jesus has come from God to triumph over sin and death. Therefore he said, "Can any of you convict me of sin?" Jesus triumphed over death after the most painful suffering. Jesus Christ has come into our midst as one of us! He has laid the foundation for a completely new life, for a new growth. We must believe it! In him we can become completely new men in the very depth of our hearts and not just with words. Even today, whoever recognizes the greatness of this truth will find the new life, of which Jesus says, "Believe me when I tell you this; if a man is true to my word into all eternity, he will never see death."

This must be the power in which the true nature of God's kingdom exists. Of what use is our Christianity if we keep falling back into death, if darkness continues to surround our lives? What good is our faith in God, our faith in Christ, if we continue with our old life as though nothing had happened? We are in a bad way if the power of sin continues to work in us and the power of death keeps threatening mankind. Then our Christianity, our belief in God, is of little value. Jesus' reality must become visible, through new life, new strength and new joy. We no longer live under the rulership of death or the power of sin. We need no longer be subject to misery, even when we continue to be miserable creatures, because we live in the true life that comes from God, the true life which the Spirit of

Jesus Christ pours out over everyone, throughout the ages.

Although we hardly notice it, the life of truth is developing. It exists parallel to the growth of sin and death—but it is present. Two currents are now running parallel, but in opposition. Sin wants to rule, wants to reach its goal, corrupting men more and more, preventing them from achieving anything good. Against this current runs the current of Jesus Christ, the Prince of life. He leads us into something completely new, a new reality, in which we must believe. When Jesus Christ is present then your evil, even your death, will be overcome. He will put an end to death. Even if we still have to die, he has said, “Whoever believes in me shall not see death, even though he die.” The outward dying, the passing of our physical life, is not so important. But the death brought about by sin is a heavy matter. The prophet Isaiah already spoke of the shadow of death, which lies heavy upon us. The shadow of centuries of men’s dying, only to perish in this death, weighs upon us. The shadow of the ages, with everything that wants to corrupt men to this very day, is a heavy burden to us. Yet now the great words are spoken, “Whoever keeps my word will no longer see death.” I say “no longer,” for we have seen death in all its dreadful forms; we have experienced it. Sometimes it comes so close to us that we can feel it almost physically, despite our faith. We have seen death, ah, how long! Looking back over the history of mankind, even that of Christianity, we see death, nothing but death. Not just dying, but death. Dying cannot destroy us. Though we die,

we shall still live. But once death overcomes us we are paralyzed. All we have ever done is over; death has swallowed it up. Therefore let us hear the new words, "If you are true to my word, you will not taste death in all eternity."

What greater words could be said to us? If we can hear these words, then the history of mankind will be renewed. All those who believe, all those who truly allow the reality of Jesus' life to penetrate their own lives, will no longer see death but they will pass into eternity like shining lights. Then a light will also shine on the earth. This light must come from beyond the earth, from heaven. It must come from the place where Jesus Christ now rules and triumphs and judges. A new day must break in upon the earth. Yet this day cannot come from the earth; it cannot be brought about by new human thoughts, new inventions or great deeds of men. This new day must come from eternity.

This new day has now dawned for us. It has come into the past and into the future. It is the eternity of Christ, expressed in his words, "Before ever Abraham came to be, I am." Abraham and Moses too, and the prophets, live in eternity. Yet the eternity in which Jesus Christ lives is a higher eternity, a brighter one, one which penetrates more deeply into our lives. For Jesus Christ is the one who rose from the dead. To him we want to be bound. We do not want to cling to men, also not to the overly pious. Everything must come from the ruler, from Jesus Christ. He alone is the victor. He pierces all the powers of sin and death. No human being can do it. Not even the best teachers will achieve

a change. When Christ appears we shall no longer have to look upon the horrors of death and sin. Then we will be allowed to see the light which dawned with Jesus since the day of his birth. We will see Jesus coming in his glory, and all men will rejoice in God's kingdom.

Already today we can rejoice in God's kingdom through Christ, in the small things. In little, individual things there are already traces of God's kingdom. Look at your own life. God's kingdom is present also in your life, and you must see it. If you don't see it, then it is as though the Lord were saying to you, "You are not God's child, for you do not see the truth." What is truth in the world? What is truth in our own lives? Truth is only what God allows to work in us. This truth we experience often, and we experience it together.

I have fellowship with many—but I do not want human fellowship, human friendship or human praise. I rejoice in a fellowship with men who acknowledge what God has done in them. To me this is the most important thing of all that concerns my own life. We do have a great fellowship with men who in all things, in all their experiences, say, "How much has the Lord of the kingdom of God already done for me! How often has he turned evil into good! How often have I been saved from distress, raised up out of fear, made joyful again after I had been sad. How often has God forgiven my sins and wiped out my wrongdoing. How much love has he shown me! How often have I experienced the reality of a higher authority in my life. How often God has stepped into my life. This has been possible and is now

possible through the coming of the Lord Jesus, who has come from God.”

Believe me, everything has changed. Everything is different in the world because Jesus came from God and went to God. To all those who know who Christ is, new possibilities have opened. Not everything is overcome yet. Indeed, there is much still to be overcome. But this is a new possibility for God to show his mercy to us. God can again rule the world and the lives of individual men. This assurance must live in our hearts. Then the true Christ will be with us, he who came to bring life against death.

Let us therefore be courageous and strong in our own lives. When things are hard to bear, when it becomes difficult and we can hardly escape the snares of death, then let us be watchful. Be strong in the Lord, your Savior! Be strong! He is near! Be strong in the fight and stand firm at the side of the Lord Jesus. A great fight is raging in the world today. In this fight we must be faithful and steadfast, every single day. We must not rely on our own strength, on our own possibilities, but only on the eternal Lord and victor, Jesus Christ, who is, and who was, and who shall be.

Soon God's day will dawn on the earth. Already we can see its first messengers. It will be here before we know it. Then the fight will end in a great victory. Not only your life, not only individual lives, will be renewed when that day comes. All nations will enter into the new history. This is a history which *we* cannot bring about. It must

come from God alone, from the Almighty who rules and triumphs and judges through Jesus Christ in all eternity, until the great goal is attained.

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