Blumhardt Series

Edited by Christian T. Collins Winn and Charles E. Moore

Pastor Johann Christoph Blumhardt

An Account of His Life

Friederich Zündel

Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1802–1880). Courtesy of Plough Publishing House.

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Series Foreword

The Blumhardt Series seeks to make available for the first time in English the extensive oeuvre of Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880) and Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842–1919), two of the least well-known but influential figures of the latter-half of the nineteenth century. Their influence can be detected in a number of important developments in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Protestantism: in the recovery of the eschatological dimension of Christianity and the kingdom of God; in the recovery of an emphasis on holistic notions of spirituality and salvation; in the rise of faith-healing and later Pentecostalism; in the convergence of socialism and the Christian faith; and in the development of personalist models of pastoral counseling.

Their collected works will make available their vast body of work to scholars, pastors, and laypersons alike with the aim of giving the Blumhardts a full hearing in the English-language context for the first time. Given the extent of their influence during the theological and religious ferment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it is believed that these sources will be of great interest to scholars of that period across various disciplines.

It is also true, however, that there is much of continuing spiritual and theological value in the witness of the Blumhardts. It is hoped that by making their witness more widely known in the English-speaking world the church at large will benefit.

The project outline is flexible, allowing for production of volumes that aim either in a scholarly direction or towards the thoughtful lay-reader. The diffuse works of the Blumhardts will be broken down into different categories, under which multiple volumes will appear. The overarching emphasis will be to reproduce the various German editions of

the Blumhardts' works that have appeared since the late nineteenth century, with only minor modification. A modest scholarly apparatus will provide contextual and theologically helpful comments and commentary through volume introductions, footnotes and appendices as necessary.

During their long ministries, the elder and younger Blumhardt found themselves called to serve as pastors, counselors, biblical interpreters, theologians, and even politicians. No matter the vocational context, however, both understood themselves as witnesses to the kingdom of God that was both already present in the world, but also breaking into the current structures of the world. Together they represent one of the most powerful instances of the convergence of spirituality and social witness in the history of the Christian church. It is the series editors' conviction that the Blumhardts' witness continues to be relevant for the church and society today and their hope that the current series will give the Blumhardts a broader hearing in the English-speaking world.

Christian T. Collins Winn and Charles E. Moore

Foreword

Friedrich Zündel (1827–1891) was from Schaffhausen, Switzerland, and wanted to become an engineer or architect. But in 1845 his attention was drawn to a newspaper article critical of events in Möttlingen, a small village on the edge of the Black Forest. After reading about the prayer-healings and the awakening that had touched the village there, he wanted to see for himself, first hand, what was actually happening. So he undertook a hefty hike to Möttlingen and became personally acquainted with the village congregation and with its pastor, Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880). What impressed him? First, he found no fanatic excesses or "public shrieking of repentance," as had been rumored, but, instead, "upright fruits of repentance." Furthermore, he was struck by Blumhardt's hopes regarding the imminent events in the kingdom of God: the biblical promises regarding the return of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

So struck, Zündel gave up his engineering studies and enrolled as a student of theology in Erlangen and Berlin. By 1859 he became the pastor in Sevelen in the Rhine Valley (Canton St. Gallen, Switzerland), followed by a short time in Oberglatt (Canton Zurich). In 1874 he was pastor of the "minority congregation" in Winterthur, Switzerland, which had seceded from the State Church. Bypassing doctrinal differences, Zündel concentrated on developing a working relationship with the pastors of the State Church, in keeping with Blumhardt's own "inter-confessional" approach. It was said of Zündel, "In State Church circles he spoke Free Church; in Free Church circles he spoke State Church."[1]

1. Georg Merz, "Forward," in Friedrich Zündel, *Aus der Apostelzeit*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Kaiser, 1923), vi. This saying was based on information gathered from Zündel's widow, Emilie Zündel-Pestalozzi.

All the while, Zündel maintained close contact with the Blumhardt family, who in 1852 moved to Bad Boll to spearhead a center for pastoral counseling. He became a close friend of Blumhardt's son Christoph, who succeeded his father as leader of Bad Boll, after his father's death in 1880. At Johann Christoph Blumhardt's funeral, Zündel reminded his listeners that God's promises were still valid, even after Blumhardt's death!

It was natural then for Zündel to become Johann Christoph Blumhardt's first biographer. The first edition of his *Account* appeared in the very year of 1880. He thus found little time for extensive research. Blumhardt's youth, school years, vicariate, and the Basle period thus remained largely in the dark. Even by the fifth edition in 1887 (the last from Zündel's own hand) Zündel limited himself to relatively few of Blumhardt's letters and spoken sermons. He simply relied on his own personal knowledge of Blumhardt and the accounts related by the Blumhardt family and guests at Bad Boll.

But what personal knowledge! Zündel's biography gives a moving portrayal of the events surrounding Gottliebin Dittus and the spiritual renewal of the people of Möttlingen that followed. He was the first person not only to recount the stories of the awakening and the healings that followed, but to show their inner connection to each other. He also successfully conveyed how it was that prayer leads to healing; how prayer is not a feverish state of mind, drummed-up artificially, but a calm and grateful receiving of the "blooms in the field of everyday life." That his *Account* is not exaggerated is proved by what became known only after Zündel's death: a far more extensive collection of Blumhardt's correspondence (together with other handwritten sources, such as diary entries, comprising nearly 4,000 documents).

These extraordinary accounts of struggle, awakening, faith-healing and hope, the "testimony of that which God desires to become in this world"—all this was written down by Zündel at that time when such an account was an offense to many and a source of refuge for others. For this reason, Blumhardt's son, Christoph, offered Zündel his deepest thanks: "He dared to relieve me of what we experienced, to write it in a book and sling it in the face of the entire world to spite the people: you have it right here!"[2]

2. Meditation for June 11, 1891, the day of Zündel's burial. In Christoph Blumhardt, *Ansprachen, Predigten, Reden, Briefe 1865–1917*, vol. 2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1978), 14.

One man, in particular, proved fertile soil for the book's message: the influential Religious Socialist Hermann Kutter. In a letter to Lydia Rohner on March 1, 1892, he wrote, "So it is good that you are making Zündel your spiritual possession. This will create kingdom ground under your feet and lays the base for our life of fellowship.—From the concepts in it, as they are expressed in Zündel's book, I have constructed my present life, which stands and falls with them more and more."[3]

Although Zündel wrote two other books, both of which found an appreciative readership, *Jesus* (1884) and *In the Apostles' Times* (1886), his most significant work remains the *Account*. With this book Zündel shaped Blumhardt's portrait for generations. "May it take the blessing God placed on Blumhardt," he writes in his preface, and "cause something of that air to waft to the reader, the air of an approaching lovely time of grace that might be sensed in the presence of the blessed, and may it fill him with assurance of the certainty of all those great and beautiful matters that this life portrait recounts."

Zündel's work stands in the tradition of those "lives" that not only instruct but, above all else, also aim to "edify." His aim is to help the reader be led to a life oriented to the kingdom of God. The critical questions that appear in the text serve chiefly as only a negative foil to the glorious figure of Blumhardt. Zündel's account, in short, is a Protestant hagiography.

The immediacy of Zündel's experience is invaluable. When one lays Zündel's *Account* aside—inspired, perhaps, or with a critical frown—one cannot help, in any case, be impressed. It also becomes clear that there was something which Zündel did not aim to do and was not able to do: to conduct a conversation with Blumhardt, a real conversation that poses questions, listens and is prepared to learn and to contradict, a conversation conducted with awareness of the limitations of one's own thinking, but also of the limits of the other. Zündel's *Account*, this unique work whose portrayal cannot be duplicated, has found its own limits in its very nearness to Blumhardt.

Dieter Ising
Stuttgart, June 2009

3. *Hermann Kutter in seinen Briefen*, ed. by Max Geiger and Andreas Lindt (Munich: Kaiser, 1983), 122.

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PART ONE

Years of Growth and Preparation

First Section

INTRODUCTION—CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

1

The Native Soil

IT IS CUSTOMARY, WHEN starting a person's biography, to describe his parents, grandparents, etc., and the immediate family in which he grew up. In the case of a man like Blumhardt it is all the more important to depict his spiritual and intellectual forebears, background, and surroundings, for he influenced many contemporaries in their religious life and in fact left a rich spiritual legacy to the Protestant church.

Early in the nineteenth century the upper classes in Germany had been inundated by Voltaire's unbelief and the faith of the lower classes was undermined by the French Revolution. But here and there, particularly in Württemberg and above all in Stuttgart, there were quiet circles with a fresh, youthful faith in the Gospel. Christianity in Württemberg owes its well-known health and vigor mainly to a number of outstanding men. While gratefully embracing the movement of awakening in the Protestant church known as Pietism, these men earnestly resisted the excessive emotionalism that soon became the bane of Pietism in many other places. Among these men we especially mention J. A. Bengel and his pupil Oetinger.[1] Pietism before long paid little heed to the call "Back

1. Editors' Note: Johannes Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752), a prolific and influential Lutheran New Testament scholar, was a pioneer in the field of textual criticism of the New Testament. His exegesis in the *Gnomon Novi Testimenti* (1742) influenced figures like John Wesley and continued to be used into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Bengel's greatest student was Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702–1782). Oetinger's theosophical theories gave inspiration to the celebrated German Idealist Hegel. Bengel,

to the Bible!" which its founding father Spener[2] had raised, and instead gave itself to the cultivation of emotions as the sole way to salvation. Bengel, on the other hand, took the call seriously and threw himself into the study of the Bible with enormous diligence and great inner freedom. In many quarters the cult of feeling led to a suspicious and disparaging attitude toward the official church and to a tendency to regard informal sociability as the main expression of Christian fellowship. It was different with Bengel. He combined his own joy in such sociable gatherings with a deep reverence for the Church and found a way of bringing these two forms of Christian life into mutual harmony. It is largely due to his clear, Christ-centered perception that such gatherings are flourishing in Württemberg even today—doubtless also because of their continuing contact with the established church, whereas elsewhere they have for the most part disappeared when that contact was missing.

What Bengel did for a deeper understanding of the New Testament is well known. The same holds true, at least in scholarly circles, for his courage and diligence in using the oldest available manuscripts in his endeavor to correct mistakes in Luther's Bible translation. He needed all his innate conscientiousness to stand up for the apostolic Bible against the ingrained prejudices of his own fellow believers, attached as they were to the familiar Luther translation.

Another endeavor of Bengel's, again showing his free-ranging spirit, exerted an even greater influence upon Christian people. By a diligent study of Revelation he sought to learn more about the course that the history of God's kingdom and the Church of Christ could be expected to take. While his revision of Luther's translation tended to give cold shivers to believers, this second undertaking earned him the ridicule of the world. To be sure, the way he found the history of Christendom reflected in Revelation is untenable, and so is his attempt to calculate the time of the Lord's return. This actually led him to predict the latter for the year 1836, though he left open the possibility of an error. With respectful silence we note his words: "Neither in time nor in eternity will I need to regret my apocalyptic labors."

Oetinger, and Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), founder of the Moravian Brethren, together constitute the three central figures in the formation of Württemberg Pietism.

2. Editors' Note: Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705), author of the *Pia Desideria* (1675), is widely considered the "father of Pietism."

On the other hand, precisely that side of his work was a courageous deed, with rich blessings in its train. The whole Bible, one might say, testifies that human history has an ultimate goal, and to proclaim that this goal deserves and needs serious and scholarly study was a worthy reply to wild enthusiasts whose lips were full of "revelation" and "The Lord is coming." But what was of importance for the church itself was Bengel's authoritative pointing to the great and sure goal of the kingdom of God. For it almost seemed as if God's kingdom had been reduced to an arrangement enabling humanity to live a godly life and die a blessed death. The course of world events was perceived as something totally unrelated to the kingdom. It was seen as a process that Jesus Christ, though still acknowledged as the Son of God, would never meddle with—or if at all, merely to bring it to an abrupt conclusion. Bengel's was a mighty summons, which re-echoed strongly throughout his homeland, Württemberg, and gave a robust character to the piety of the circles mentioned above. It awakened in them a grateful, expectant readiness for God's kingdom. Even among the devout it makes a difference whether one thinks: The world will go on, but we pass away, or: The world passes away, but we stand for evermore (cf. 1 John 2:17). Awareness that the Lord will come has made people gird their loins and have their lamps burning.

This great, free, and bold style of Christian thinking was further developed by Bengel's pupil Oetinger. While Bengel was a churchman through and through, Oetinger's characteristic was the urge to think, study, and know; his thirst for clarity and truth could never be stilled. Philosophy, theology, medicine, chemistry: which of these was his favorite field? The first and second most likely. In order to reach down to absolute rock bottom in these subjects, however, he kept bringing in new and original material from all sides. He found inward refreshment in Ignatius of Loyola and schooled himself in the subtleties of learned rabbis; yet with the same delight he delved into the works of the unbelieving philosopher Shaftesbury, whose spirit-filled writings he translated in order to publicize one of his own great ideas: the importance of common sense. He called it the "plain man's wisdom" and recommended it as a rich store of helpful guidance for the perception of truth in general and for the understanding of Holy Scripture in particular. He also considered it a bulwark of true piety, since it helps to preserve the truthfulness

and originality of genuine piety from being perverted by human bigotry into something artificial or trivial.

The second concept that Oetinger implanted firmly and deeply into present-day Christian thinking is that of reality as a living unity of matter and spirit. That concept on the one hand sees matter—the visible—as permeated by spirit; on the other hand, it rescues from oblivion and brings to light the actual existence of an invisible world of spirit. By that concept of the oneness of body and spirit Oetinger helped to halt the translating of scriptural ideas into modern ways of thinking, at the expense of their original content and to have them understood as they are meant in the Bible.

In that way, the circles from which our Blumhardt stemmed had received a rich spiritual inheritance from their forebears, and this left its stamp on their whole tone of life. For the most part they were humble artisans, ranging from well-to-do to poor (Blumhardt's father being among the latter), but they also included schoolmasters, pastors, merchants, and even higher-up government officials, all seeking inward refreshment and deepening in that brotherly circle. Here, the hopes and goals of the kingdom of God were discussed on a high inner plane. Their thoughts and expectations concerning the kingdom found living expression when they participated in the founding of the Basel Mission Society. More than one might think, it was hopes for the victory of the kingdom, such as Bengel's vision of the future had kindled in them, that awakened in these men—who had never caught so much as a glimpse of the ocean—the longing to take the Gospel to their heathen brothers across the seas. We shall get more closely acquainted with the Basel Mission later on, when we accompany "candidate" Blumhardt into the Mission Institute at Basel.

Two forms of church life that were linked with the above circles ought to be briefly mentioned here: the Moravian Church and the Korntal community. Bengel, severe and sober-minded, sternly opposed the brotherly society that Zinzendorf had founded, while Oetinger at least cold-shouldered it. They took exception to the Bible's being used merely for edification, instead of being earnestly studied as a whole—a tendency they seemed to detect particularly in Count Zinzendorf. As time went on, though, the contrasts evened themselves out, and the network of orderly fellowships, which the Moravian Church had spread over the Protestant areas proved to be a decided help to scattered groups of the faithful. The itinerant Moravian preachers in particular rendered a valuable service

by blazing new trails, as well as by acting as good Samaritans and leading strays and stragglers back to the main body.

But there was and still is one Moravian institution that was generally acclaimed—their book of daily texts, called *Losungsbüchlein*. Annually, the Moravian Church selects two Bible texts for every day of the year—one text picked by lot from the Old Testament, the other a matching passage selected from the New Testament. Each text has added to it a stanza from a hymn. The widespread distribution and extraordinary popularity of this little book, designed for daily family devotion, can be ascribed to the rich variety of the material. As the year rolls by, the reader is guided to this or that book of the Bible. Thousands upon thousands all over the globe read and take to heart the same text on the same day; so it is easy to understand how widely circulated and how beloved the little book is. We are greatly indebted to the Moravian Church for that gift. Some, along with me, also gratefully acknowledge the fact that in the selection of the hymn stanzas the feeling of mainstream church members has lately been taken more into consideration.

The Korntal community is a splendid testimony to the dedication and the creative urge of the above-mentioned circles as well as to the wise liberalism of the king of Württemberg. When the Württemberg church hymnal, introduced in 1791 and watered down by rationalistic influences, was joined in 1809 by a prayerbook (collection of church prayers) breathing the same spirit, the faithful lost their sole remaining chance of giving vocal expression to their faith. In the circles we have spoken about, this led to an irresistible urge to leave the country. This urge was nourished not only by a longing to live out their Christian ideas in an autonomous fellowship, but also by the expectation of a great turning point in the history of God's kingdom. As the prevailing notions of political economy made such plans highly distasteful to the government, the mayor of Leonberg, Gottlieb Wilhelm Hoffmann, submitted to the authorities a brilliant suggestion. He proposed to let the would-be emigrants move from their various places of residence to a sanctuary assigned to them within their own fatherland; there they would be allowed to give concrete form, at their own discretion, to their religious and moral convictions. Some decades earlier, the young poet Schiller, while attending the *Karlsschule* (Charles's School) on the grounds of the ducal palace called Solitude, in his drama *Die Räuber* (The Robbers) had dreamed of a community freed of the barriers of tradition. He had no

idea that on the estate named Korntal basking in the sunshine at his very feet the germ of truth in his ideas would one day become reality in a holy yet sensible way. For it so happened that the Württemberg government readily acceded to Hoffmann's proposal, and it was possible to acquire the Korntal estate, then belonging to Count Gorlitz, for the purpose. Hoffmann, together with Michael Hahn (a remarkable peasant and head of the religious society called *Michelianer* (Michaelites), who even today are numbered in tens of thousands, drafted the ecclesiastic and civic order of the new congregation, taking as their model the Moravian settlement at Königsfeld. Hoffmann became its first overseer.

2

Birth and Childhood

Godliness, it seems, was an outstanding trait of the stock from which Blumhardt came. Ostertag[1] for example tells of a Blumhardt who was coachman to the ducal court of Württemberg. He tells of the time when this man's son Matthäus got married. After the wedding dinner the father of the bridegroom, together with master shoemaker Volker, the bride's father, knelt down in a cornfield and prayed that the young couple and their future children and grandchildren might all find salvation and that "not a hoof might be left behind" (Exodus 10:26). One of the descendants thus interceded for—the son[2] of this shoemaker Matthäus Blumhardt—was Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt, first inspector of the Basel Missionary Society. Our Blumhardt is not strictly one of these descendants; his line goes back to a brother of the above-mentioned Matthäus, Johann Christoph Blumhardt, *famulus* (or attendant) at the Blaubeuren monastery; so he is a grandson of the inspector's uncle. But that coachman ancestor will surely have included also that other line in his prayer. Blumhardt's father, Johann Georg Blumhardt, started out as a baker and flour merchant and later

1. Ostertag, *Entstehungsgeschichte der evangelischen Missiongesellschaft in Basel* (Basel: Verlag des Missionshaus, 1865), 63.

2. Translator's Note: Zündel actually says "grandson," but that appears to be a mistake, for in two other places (pp. 10 and 39) Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt, the mission inspector, is described as the *son* of the shoemaker Matthäus Blumhardt. That agrees with the statements that "our" Blumhardt is the "grandson of the inspector's uncle" (p. 9) and that the inspector is a cousin of "our" Blumhardt's father (p. 39).

was a wood measurer in Stuttgart. His mother, Johanna Luise, was the daughter of Christoph Deckinger, a master tailor. So it is among humble trades-people that we find ourselves—a class that has often been a main focus of spiritual life in Germany.

Ostertag's book tells yet another incident—again taken from that other line of the Blumhardt family—of the fine Christian spirit at work in those circles. At the age of twenty-one, Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt (the later mission inspector) had been asked to preach a Good Friday sermon in the neighborhood of Stuttgart. He was about to decline the request, because his father Matthäus, mentioned above, lay close to death. But the father ordered him to preach, saying he would surely live through his son's sermon. Returning home after this solemn Good Friday sermon, preached at the behest of the dying father and "greatly blessed," according to a sister's account, the young preacher finds family and friends gathered around the dying father, who lay festively dressed in a clean gown. It was the father's express wish that he might take leave of his dear ones at a meal of remembrance, after the Savior's example. An earnest prayer spoken by the dying man was followed by a simple, festive meal. After it he blessed each of his children with laying on of hands. Among other things, he said to Christian Gottlieb, "The Savior will so bless you and so equip you with the power of his spirit that you will be a blessed instrument of his grace among the heathen." Thus even in death this man's heart went out to the heathen, and his heart's desire to see his beloved son Gottlieb consecrated to their salvation turned out to be prophetic foresight. A few hours later he passed away peacefully.

Our Blumhardt was born on July 16, 1805. "That was a difficult time in Germany," as he told later (*Täglich Brod* 1879, July 16).[3] "I experienced that right at my birth, on July 16, 1805. On that day foreign troops marched into Stuttgart, and my mother with me, her baby, was in extreme danger, for there was no limit to the violence and brutality of the soldiers, who also entered her house. My mother had to hide and pray for the baby to keep still, lest he be heard by the soldiers. Our father was away; he had gone to the town hall, to seek help against the violence of the military. But the baby did keep quiet and help came."

3. Editors' note: *Täglich Brod aus Bad Boll, bestehend in einem Bibelwort mit kurzur erbaulicher Betrachtung auf alle Tage des Jahres, nach stenographischen Aufzeichnungen*, edited by Theophil Blumhardt, vols 1–4 (Bad Boll and Heilbronn, 1878–1881). [*Daily Bread from Bad Boll*] Cited throughout as *Täglich Brod*, year, and day.

An hour after his birth, Blumhardt tells, his mother was once more standing at the cooking stove.

Johann Christoph was his parents' second child, but as his older brother died at the age of eleven, he was from then on the oldest of six children. As early as his fourth year he began to attend school. "History is silent about how the three-year-old boy got to school," a reliable source tells us, "but we have documentary evidence that he did." If the "how" is taken literally, "history" has *not* really remained silent about it. Blumhardt himself tells us that his father used to carry him to school in his arms, and at times he returned home in a similar way, that is, in the arms of the good schoolmaster, who looked after him with tender care. According to Ostertag, that teacher (named Gundert) was a lively, spirit-filled, believing member of those Christian circles that Blumhardt's father also belonged to. He was the grandfather of Dr. Gundert, the missionary who succeeded Dr. Barth as director of the *Calwer Verlagsverein* (Calw Publishing Association). This early schooling had a marked influence on Blumhardt's character. It was, so to speak, natural for him to be a man of culture, not so much in the sense of intellectual refinement, but in the sense that school learning and discipline had become part of his very nature.

Having one day carried home the boy, still quite tiny, one of Christoph's[4] later teachers said to the father, "Here is your son; he is not meant to be a tradesman. You must let him study; the boy has special gifts and could be destined for greatness." The father replied, "But how can I do that? Where am I to find the means to let my son study?" "The means will be found," said the teacher. "I am firmly convinced that something great may become of this boy. He must study, and God will surely find the means. Just have faith!"

From that time on Christoph attended the *Gymnasium* (high school preparing for university)—before long, free of charge.

From an early age the boy found joy in the Bible; it also comforted and quickened him amid manifold tribulations caused by poverty and other difficulties. In the evenings, when the children were in bed, Christoph would stand on his bed in his nightshirt and tell his younger brothers and sisters with lively enthusiasm the stories he had

4. Editors' Note: Before the authorial career of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842–1919), the famous son of Johann Christoph Blumhardt, Johann Christoph Blumhardt published under the name Christoph Blumhardt.

found in the Bible. By the time he was eleven, he had read the whole Bible through twice. Thus the spirit pervading the Bible shaped and nourished the boy's spirit into the very depths of his subconscious. His thinking became instinctively biblical; from now on, he took the biblical view of things for granted; any other way of thinking seemed alien. In particular, the loving nearness of a personal God, as one who truly manifests his presence to the soul, was to him a deeply felt need and also a sure fact. In view of this, he found it painful, strange, and saddening that not only he, but also the venerable, devout men around him, seemed to lack the nearness to God that he saw in the Bible. Even at that time it puzzled him that the gifts of grace of the apostolic age had so receded into the background.

The distress and tribulation that clouded Christoph's early years was due in part to the general need of the times—the war and the famine of 1815 and 1816—and in part to the specific needs of his family. At one time every member of the family—father, mother, and six children—came down one after the other with typhoid fever. Every morning a concerned uncle ventured into the contaminated house as far as the foot of the stairs and inquired of the mother in a loud shout how her family was getting on. Those were hard times, and Christoph, while studying diligently, also had to pitch in with the manifold chores around the house.

As we have but little information on Christoph's childhood, I would like to cite here an experience of those years that remained important to him.

> When I was nine, our professor at the Stuttgart *Gymnasium* once asked me to supervise a small group of my classmates for an hour. It was remarkable, by the way, that it occurred to me to say to the other boys, all of the same age as I, "Children, not so loud!" Then the boys really let me have it for calling them "children." I found that strange, for I thought, "What else are they if not children, and how should I address them?" But even children don't want to be children nowadays. To come to the point, however: While I kept walking to and fro among the boys, I overheard one of them, who was leafing through a Bible reader, ask another, "Listen, can you tell me which story moved you to tears the most?" The other answered promptly, "Yes, the story of Jesus' suffering! Whenever I read that, it makes me cry." The first boy became thoughtful, and I too, felt struck in my heart, because

> I had never yet felt it so deeply. What that boy said moved me to tears. That happened sixty years ago now, but I have still not forgotten that sensitive boy, and every time I read out the story of Jesus' suffering, he helps me to see it in all its seriousness.

Even here a trait of Christoph's character—as felicitous as it is beautiful—comes to the fore that explains in large measure the influence he exerted on people and his ready access to their hearts. It is the reverence he felt for the other person, his warm, appreciative way of placing the other above himself, and his thankful acceptance of the good in the other. This may have become less noticeable toward the end of his life. In those last years he stood largely alone and stubbornly held aloft the banner of his hopes. Yet the reader may still perceive this appreciative reverence for others shining forth from this account of his life.

At an early age his love of singing and his musical talent awakened. Unable to wait for the time when the school curriculum would introduce him to the noble art of singing, he would edge his way close to the precentor (directing singer) in church, and by closely watching the music in front of that man as well as the notes that issued forth, he learned to read music. Before long, he had to take his share in the choral singing of the *Stiftskirche* (collegiate church) in Stuttgart. Once, when bread was being distributed in that church, these young bearers of the future had to officiate as singers, and one of them had to be the speaker. Christoph was chosen to be the speaker, and the singers missed him greatly!

Because of his father's great poverty, from a very early age the boy had to help support the family. Many times he carried home heavy chunks of wood from the wood market, and he was especially keen to split the firewood for his mother's household needs. In later life his small but sturdy hands bore witness that he had done more than just push a pen in his younger years.

Blumhardt tells how seriously his father took the education of his children:

> He was deeply concerned to lead his children to Christ. He gathered us children regularly for prayer and Bible reading, had us sing spiritual songs together, and encouraged us in all kinds of ways. I shall never forget the moment one evening when he spoke to us of the possible persecutions that might be in store for those confessing to the name of Jesus. I felt a thrill run through my

> whole body when at the end he exclaimed with lively gestures, "Children, rather let your heads be cut off than deny Jesus!" Such an education, supported by equal care on the part of a tenderly loving mother and a sympathetic uncle, awakened the good within me at an early age, and I consider it my particular good fortune to have still many a lively childhood memory of special workings of God's grace in my heart.

On their mutual visits, Blumhardt often heard the older men speak of impending great developments in God's kingdom, such as his father had spoken of—of the approaching "end time," and the solemn impression that made on him remained with him throughout his life.

Unfortunately we have no detailed information about his confirmation at the age of thirteen, an important period in his life. From the extremely high value he set on that time and especially on the festive occasion concluding it, we may infer that it was a time of rich blessing for him. Still, to tally with Blumhardt's character and the course of his inner development, it must have been an experience of a steady, simple, and organic nature.

In Württemberg, for a boy who wants to devote himself to the ministry of the Protestant state church, confirmation is followed at once by the so-called *Landexamen*, a state-wide examination in which pretty well all boys of that age group who desire to study theology—between sixty and a hundred or more in number—compete for the thirty (forty at that time) scholarships annually available at the four "lower" seminaries or "monasteries": Schönthal, Blaubeuren, Urach, and Maulbronn. These are former monasteries, which during the Reformation were dissolved and transformed into schools preparing prospective ministers for the study of theology at Tübingen University. The entire further theological training of the thirty lucky winners is taken care of by the State of Württemberg. After four years they advance from the lower to the upper seminary, called the *Stift*, at Tübingen, a celebrated breeding-ground for writers. In Blumhardt's time the seminary student had to pass three more successive examinations (one a year), the last one being the decisive one. It was on only his second try, at the age of fourteen, that Blumhardt succeeded in gaining one of the thirty scholarships. In various ways his poverty had stood in the way of an immediate success. The "monastery" whose gates now opened to him was Schönthal. It is situated in a pleasant valley on the Jaxt River. The ground on which it

stands belonged at one time to the lords of Berlichingen; in the nearby castle of that name the students could marvel at the iron hand of the celebrated Götz von Berlichingen.[5] It was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when through the Napoleonic mediatization (i.e. annexation to one of the larger German states of lands formerly *immediately* subject to the Holy Roman Empire) it became part of Württemberg, that the Schönthal monastery was dissolved and transformed into a Protestant seminary.

In the Protestant church of Württemberg a freshly installed minister usually gives his new congregation a short description of his life and development. To this pleasant custom we owe a brief account of Blumhardt's life until then, as he told it to his Möttlingen parishioners. Beginning here, its several parts will serve us as introductions as we consider the successive stages of his life. For instance, Blumhardt tells the following about his time at Schönthal:

> I had faithful teachers at Schönthal.[6] The short time that the late Prelate von Abel was principal of the seminary was a particular blessing to me. That venerable old man took a special interest in me, and some of his long and truly fatherly talks with me impressed me deeply.
>
> Among my fellow students I found several of like mind, whose company was of great value to me. Above all, I cannot leave unmentioned Wilhelm Hoffmann, son of the founder and director of Korntal, now assistant at Winnenden. (Later he was Gottlieb Blumhardt's successor as inspector of the Basel Mission and died in 1873 as court preacher in Berlin.) With him I formed

5. Hero (and title) of a drama by Goethe.

6. The biography of Hoffmann written by his son tells us more about these teachers, as follows. Abel, later "prelate" (i.e., superintendent general in the Württemberg Protestant church), had been Friedrich Schiller's—the playwright—teacher at *Karlsschule* (Charles's School) and was the first to call his attention to Shakespeare. He was subsequently professor at Tübingen University, where he taught psychology to Schelling and Hegel. Abel's fellow teachers at Schönthal were Hauber, an outstanding mathematician, as well as expert in Latin and Oriental Languages; Fischer, known for his skillful translation into Latin of Voss's *Luise* and Goethe's *Hermann and Dorothea*; Hermann, later prelate at Ludwigsburg; Wunderlich, later superintendent, esteemed as a clever mathematician and as a watchful overseer. Together, these teachers represented a rich store of knowledge and experience with which to prepare their pupils during the four-year course at Schönthal for entry into university. Finally, mention should be made of Kern, a beloved teacher, who as rector of Dürrmenz later on had Blumhardt as his curate. His "simply exquisite" sermons were published by Wilhelm Hoffmann jointly with L. Völter.

> a most intimate friendship during my very first days at Schönthal. For nine years I shared with him all my youthful concerns, and God let this association become a source of inestimable benefit for my heart and my studies.

Blumhardt's tribute to his friend just after the latter's death in 1873 in the periodical *Der Christenbote* (Christian Messenger)[7] was hailed by Hoffmann's son and biographer as the best and most faithful extant account of Hoffmann's time in Schönthal. There Blumhardt depicts that unique and fruitful friendship as follows:

> I have always considered it a particularly gracious leading of the Lord that on my entry into the Schönthal "monastery" in October 1820, when we were fourteen years old, my very first new acquaintance was the late Wilhelm Hoffmann. Already on the way to Schönthal, especially at the last coach stop, we two boys, as yet unknown to each other, caught sight of and eyed one another from our respective chaises. The one in which he rode with his father, which was drawn by the two ponies, so well-known later on, mostly followed closely behind the one in which I was traveling with the late minister of state, Herr von Schmidlin, and his son, who had the kindness to thus facilitate my journey. On arrival in Schönthal, we scurried about looking for rooms and places for ourselves and, with an eye to the future, tried to find what seemed best. A remark made then by Wilhelm's father challenged and impressed me. Seeing how avidly we looked around, he said to him and to me, as if I, too, were his son, "Whoever wants to live like a Christian must not take the best for himself, but leave it for the others." That one word gave me a keynote that kept resonating within me throughout my life. On many occasions I also found it reverberating in my dear Wilhelm.
>
> We immediately became close friends, who could also share with one another the finer and higher things of life. Our friendship was not an ordinary one, for it had a mutually elevating influence on us both, especially since Wilhelm's father, with his vast experience and an eye to the practical even in spiritual matters, served as a link between us, also later during the holidays. For nine years we could be seen together daily, arm in arm. As Wilhelm was much taller than I, who was among the shortest

7. Editors' note: "Erinnerungen an Wilhelm Hoffmann, Generalsuperintedenten in Berlin, aus seiner Jugendzeit," *Der Christenbote* 39 (1873), 305–8. ["Reminiscences Concerning Wilhelm Hoffmann, General Superintendent in Berlin, From His Youth"].

in the class, we would stroll along, his arm around my neck and my arm around his waist. Generally bareheaded (as was then the custom among students), we were constantly talking and at times arguing, but always about matters that in some way nourished our spirit. To be sure, with my friend the preferred subject of conversation—attractive and stimulating though it was to both of us and also pursued by both—tended to be an intellectual one, while in my case it was more likely to be a concern of the heart, and he was well aware of that. Yet whatever it was, it was there in both of us and filled us both inwardly.

It is a rare thing for two friends and fellow students to give to each other as much as we did, and yet I have to say that he was almost wholly the giver and I the avid recipient. His brilliant mind, searching for the truth, lighted on everything noble and drew me along with him, yet never so that our individual personalities merged or got lost in each other. Each in his own way, we retained our independence and individuality. Yet we were so firmly bound together inwardly that we never let each other go, and if now and then, especially during the middle period of our time in Tübingen, the divergent courses of our lives led us apart for a while, we always came back together as eagerly as ever and completely understood each other. My friend was gifted in every direction, especially in linguistics. Together we practiced reading the Greek and Roman classics, especially the poets. Because of building work in the seminary we had eleven weeks of vacation in 1821; that was our first autumn vacation. I spent that time mostly in Korntal, and the two of us worked at a written translation of Horace's letters and satires. But of course, all I could do was look up to him and admire his speed and skill at grasping what Horace had to say and rendering it with such insight. By myself I would at that time have been quite incapable of understanding Horace the way he did.

While still at Schönthal, we also began to learn and practice English and French together, and before long my friend and I plunged into the literature of those languages. During our free time we would often go out, sit in a meadow or wood, and read and study these writings, again with him doing everything and me being at the receiving end. Now and then he would also give vent to his youthful imagination in poetry, and what he shared with me showed me sufficiently how high he could soar and how little I was able to follow him. At other times we would pick up this or that thoughtful and uplifting little booklet, and some of what we read there left a deep impression on us. He loved literature altogether, and whatever was outstanding in any of its

> branches would not remain unknown to him. With his excellent memory he could instantly remember the names of all the books in a list and could also quickly and very distinctly recall passages that were original or witty or apt to lead one deeper. He sought to obtain this or that book that would enlighten him on subjects he did *not* have at his disposal, and it often seemed to me as if from the mere title of a book its content would flash into his mind.
>
> As he was most ready to share his thoughts with me, I benefited greatly from all this, for through him my mind, too, was ever drawn to what was real, spirit-filled, and original, but it also pleased him when here and there I showed a liking for simple things as well, as long as they seemed right otherwise. Even though I could not really keep up with him in all that, something of it did remain with me, and for that I feel grateful to him to this day. This is how it was already at Schönthal, where, instruction being somewhat inadequate in those days, the students had to pick up most by studying on their own. And it was even more so in Tübingen, where we occupied ourselves with philosophy and theology.

What a vivid picture that gives of those halcyon days of the two friends' school years! How it shows us their joyous urge to achieve, their delight in growing, their youthful forays into the land of knowledge! It is also worth noting that Blumhardt was more than a year older than his friend and mentor. While the courses of their lives diverged, they continued to have one thing in common: a wide horizon, coupled with an inner urge to have what had come to them from God in quiet become reality and a common possession of all humankind. As regards the divergence of the ways they followed, a humorous brotherly word to Hoffmann is remembered, which has been ascribed either to Dr. Barth or, perhaps more correctly, to Blumhardt. When Hoffmann moved from Tübingen to take up his new post as court preacher in Berlin, one of the two, it is said, saw him off with this farewell warning: "Watch out that you don't lose your second 'f'!" To explain: *Hoff*mann means "man of hope" (*Hoffnung*), while Hofmann signifies a courtier (court = *Hof*).

A fellow student of those days describes Blumhardt as a steady character, who studied diligently, though without distinguishing himself, morally pure and always very modest. He tells that "when encountering coarseness or attacks on his reverence for God, Blumhardt would indeed react, yet without being moralistic. When his patience

was exhausted, he would say, 'Now listen, that's enough of that; it's going the wrong way.'"

It was during his time at Schönthal, in 1822, that he lost his father. He had spent the fall vacation the year before in his parental home. On the day when he left to go to Korntal with his friend Hoffmann, his sick father, driven by his great love for his son, accompanied the two, notwithstanding his chest ailment. But it went beyond his strength. At a certain place, which Blumhardt was always to remember, his father took leave of him in tears, sensing correctly that he would not see him again on this earth. Neither at his father's death nor at his burial was Blumhardt able to be with him. The father's passing made it even more imperative for him to support his mother and his brothers and sisters. He took this obligation very seriously. For example, to carry it out he made use of an existing arrangement at Schönthal that entitled each seminary student to a daily allowance of a pint of wine, with the understanding that he actually received the wine only on special occasions and that in general he was simply credited each month with "wine money," that is, the monetary value of that allowance (fluctuating with the current price of wine). Blumhardt managed to save a considerable part of his wine money for his mother's household expenses.

3

At the University

In the fall of 1824 Blumhardt entered the University of Tübingen; in other words, the top class of the "lower seminary" at Schönthal advanced to the "higher" theological seminary or *Stift* in Tübingen. The *Stift* is governed by a superintendent (*Ephorus*) who is surrounded by a staff of tutors (*Repetenten*)—younger theologians who have passed their exam with distinction. In this way the best and ablest graduates of previous classes extend with gentle authority a helping hand to succeeding students. It is to this wise arrangement that the Tübingen seminary owes its high rank among Protestant schools of theology and its reputation as an inexhaustible source of eminent writers.

About his time in Tübingen Blumhardt tells his Möttlingen parishioners the following:

> My stay at Tübingen, from 1824 to 1829, was no less blessed. I cannot tell here in greater detail about my studies, which became the more important to me, the more deeply I immersed myself in them. With gratitude to God I must give praise and thanks for the countless ways I was helped, partly by the seminary institution itself, partly by the faithful assistance of various teachers, and partly also by a brotherly relationship with many friends. In outer things it was a struggle for me now and then, but God helped me through in ways that are still a marvel to me. My prayers were frequently answered in memorable ways, which could not help strengthening all the more my living trust in God.
>
> Especially dear to me was the contact with several new friends that the Lord let me find in Tübingen. Two of them have long

> since gone to their rest. The one, Rudolf Flad of Stuttgart, who worked with much blessing as a curate (*Vikar*) in Oβweil and died in Stuttgart, stood by me with counsel and warning through his maturity and Christian experience. The other was Mosmann from Schaffhausen. A brief biography of him has appeared in print. He was one of the truest and most childlike souls I ever met and has been of unspeakable benefit to me through his tender conscience, his deep faith, and his warm, brotherly love. In a special way, my participation in the association of Christian students became a blessing to me, and I feel touched in my heart as I remember the intimate conversations we had together.

A decidedly unusual account of one's university days! Blumhardt refers briefly to his studies and speaks with more warmth and at greater length of his economic straits and how relief and divine help had been forthcoming. But when he comes to thinking of his friends, he really bursts into lively eloquence.

That he devotes so few words to his studies is sufficiently explained, as he indicates himself, by the educational level of his Möttlingen parishioners, to whom the account was addressed. Nevertheless, it also reflects a peculiarity of his education, namely that none of his university teachers had a creatively transforming influence on him, nor did any kindle his enthusiasm. Blumhardt always remembered with gratitude his university teachers—Steudel and others—but what he appreciated above all was that instead of being so-called geniuses, trail-blazers, powerful heads of parties, or founders of schools they were plain, conscientious, capable teachers.[1] In those days, he said, it was a matter of *learning*, not of *speculating*. To be sure, a certain amount of "speculating" or theorizing *was* being done (as we shall see later on), but not by him.

Instead, he studied theology in a way that was in tune with his own conviction, already mature by then. Holy Scripture and the revelation set forth in it occupied a higher place for him than it did for others, as he discovered. Both his mind and his heart, acting in harmony, urged him to study it. And to judge by his sermons of that time, he knew even then how to read it with the "enlightened eyes of the heart" (an expression that Luther, departing from the original text, rendered as "eyes of

1. True, Baur [Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860)] was already one of the younger teachers at that time. But his type of biblical criticism, like that of others, was not to Blumhardt's taste, for he sensed in it a half-conscious tendency to cast aspersions on the Bible, and for that reason he did not in his own heart expect that kind of scholarship to bear much fruit.

understanding")—that is, with that harmony of head and heart that Paul wishes for his readers (Ephesians 1:18). Hence the exactitude with which Blumhardt later on could fathom the meaning of individual passages, as well as the breadth of vision with which he saw the grand interrelatedness of it all. This, too, is noticeable already in his first sermons.

Next to the Bible, he delved with delight into Reformation writings, especially those of Luther, whose whole thought he assimilated once and for all, with great decidedness and clarity. To judge from his later talks and writings, he must have diligently studied religious doctrine as well. Two things were very apparent in him later on: on the one hand, a jurist's liking for exactness, springing from a well-trained logical mind. He would use it to test whether a certain idea was really the faithful expression of a divinely revealed truth. On the other hand, his manner was one of childlike simplicity and just for that reason one of extreme clarity. "Simplicity is the hallmark of the divine," he said. He felt the need for a conviction that was well rounded, firmly integrated, and dogmatically coherent. He strove to fit each new spiritual insight like a new building block into the whole, and this gave his entire thinking that imprint of completeness, sobriety, and certainty that distinguished him favorably from many another popular preacher.

Another characteristic of his theological thinking should be mentioned here: He was an enemy of empty phrases and clichés as well as of a supposedly "spiritual" understanding, if meant in the sense that the spirit is in some way credited with a curiously rarefying and dissolving power. He understood everything in its literal, natural sense, "just as it stands." This imparted a solidity to his perception and thinking that was almost unique. His way of reckoning with none but extremely massive factors repelled many persons initially and misled them into forming a low opinion of his intellectual power in general. Strangely enough, however, those under the influence of his pastoral care would unawares shed, however much they might resist, those shadowy, supposedly "spiritual" concepts mentioned above. Like a healing power there would dawn on them the realization how much we let ourselves be mystified by those "spiritual" notions—in other words: led up the garden path and tricked out of perceiving the real truth and the true reality. So much about Blumhardt's theological studies.

As for the rest, he somewhat resembled his friend Hoffmann in the way he chose his subjects. Like him he subscribed to the principle:

my pasture is everywhere. He went wherever he hoped to learn something *factual*. He sat in on medical lectures, for instance, and later on he displayed such broad and detailed knowledge of world history, physics, astronomy, and other subjects that we may assume earlier forays into these fields too. He went in for music as well, practicing the piano without a teacher, also copying pieces by Beethoven. In addition, in order to help out with his mother's household needs, he, together with Hoffmann and others, translated English writings into German for a Stuttgart publisher.

As a student at the theological seminary he could not sidestep philosophy but like everybody else was obliged to acquaint himself with the works of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, since according to regulations the first two years at the university had to be devoted to philosophy. Besides, the brilliant philosophical achievements being published just then attracted the students more than theology, feebly represented as it was. It was a time when the ideas of Schelling and Hegel electrified students, especially in Tübingen, and Blumhardt's friend Hoffmann was also swept along for a while by the current of Schelling's thought. Blumhardt was protected from this not only by his biblical way of thinking but also by his antipathy toward everything merely "assumed." But he did do some work in this field, and independent work at that, as we see from an essay he wrote on the human will—its freedom and unfreedom. That is a problem closely related to Schelling's greatest thoughts. The essay earned him these words of praise from his tutor, "Well, well, our little Blumhardt has original ideas—very original indeed!"

As Hoffmann's biographer tells us, the common interest in philosophy and literature drew together a little circle of students. Among the older members of this circle were Hoffmann and Blumhardt, and some of its younger members later became well known for their contributions in those areas: David Friedrich Strauss, the esthetician Vischer, and Gustav Pfitzer. Somebody writing about Blumhardt has rightly pointed out that the all-round character of his university studies stood Blumhardt in good stead later on; it laid the foundation for the wealth of general knowledge so well befitting the later "pastor in Bad Boll" and contributed to making conversation with him so attractive and fruitful for all, including highly cultured persons.

It could sadden us to note in Blumhardt's account of his life how, after just briefly referring to his studies, he on the one hand speaks warmly

of the many instances of "relief" that came to him from the seminary, from teachers, and friends, on the other hand of the wonderful help of God. This is an obvious reference to his economic straits. He entered the university in utter poverty and felt inwardly obligated and constrained to help support his orphaned family. This filial loyalty brought him rich blessing through the manifold experiences of help it earned him, both from people and from God. The further delving into the English language that it led to also bore him good fruit later on. English being the *lingua franca* of the world's islands and coastlands, his proficiency in it enabled him later on to gain an unequaled encyclopedic knowledge of the state of affairs in God's kingdom all over the earth—knowledge this man, whose priestly heart beat for all nations, hungered for.

As we have seen, it is of his friends that he speaks most warmly of all in his report. The first of his close friends is already known to us from his time at Schönthal. Wilhelm Hoffmann, fair-haired and Germanic in type, great in height and equally great in spirit, at that time full of enthusiasm "for everything and more," and by his side the short, swarthy, quiet Blumhardt—the two of them looked downright comical, we are told, as they strolled along arm in arm. Yet they were a real blessing to each other. In 1830, for example, Hoffmann wrote to Blumhardt, "Dear friend, apart from my love to you and the time we spent together, all my proud aspirations in Tübingen strike me as so many aberrations." The inward, spiritual, and fruitful character of his relationship to the other two friends he mentions, especially Mosmann, becomes sufficiently clear from what he reports.

Blumhardt actually was not one to be monopolized by a few friends; he had a heart for all, and in the same way as there are flower-lovers, he was a lover of humanity in the true sense. One of his younger fellow students reports: "Blumhardt was popular and well-liked by all kinds of students. Because of his genial and companionable ways he never managed, until just before the due date, to write the two term papers that had to be submitted every semester, but then he would buckle down to it, work day and night, and come up with something good."

Already in his student days he had a way of making use of every minute, even such as are commonly considered lost, to get on with some work. He also knew how to stay away from his friends altogether during hours when work had to be done. Looking for a place where he would not be disturbed, he sometimes (probably only during the summer) moved

into a little-used woodshed at a distance from the rooms of his companions. During one summer his fellow student Hauber (later Prelate von Hauber) lived there with him. To keep the many bedbugs at bay, they kept a starling, which Blumhardt, rising with the sun, would greet every morning with "Hänsle, Hans!" Hauber recalls Blumhardt's tireless diligence, sincere humility, and his way of getting on with his work quietly and steadily. These qualities are also remembered in a poem written by a friend, entitled "To Christoph Blumhardt in the Woodshed." The affectionate address, "Dear heart" is followed in lofty and highly mythological language by words of praise for a certain little bird. The bird has settled, with a sunbeam (actually a blade of straw) in its beak, on a tree opposite the woodshed, in order to lighten up the hermit's cave.

Blumhardt disliked exclusive groups because of the barriers they set up between members and nonmembers. Scarcely anybody ever felt rebuffed by him on account of his standpoint. He was, for instance, on familiar terms with David Friedrich Strauss, who, a little younger than he, was fond of conversing with "little Blumhardt"; to be sure, he was at that time still much closer to the latter in his views. Blumhardt later on thought that what caused Strauss to stray from his faith was his enthusiasm for the so-called seeress of Prevorst, a clairvoyant glorified by the writer Justinus Kerner. According to Blumhardt, that fascination had made Strauss's spiritual faith degenerate into a "natural" or carnal faith, which then logically merged into unbelief—this quite apart from the morbid tendencies one is liable to contract through such wanton playing around with the invisible world. Right to Strauss's death, Blumhardt retained a wistful, yearning, and not unhopeful love for him, and toward zealots that misinterpreted 2 John 10 to justify harshness toward Strauss, he would warmly assert that he would gladly welcome Strauss to his house and table whenever he might come for a visit.

Of course, what was closest to Blumhardt's heart was the gathering of Christian students—the *Stund* or meeting "hour" he mentions in his life story—an association that brought blessing to many instruments of the Lord. Here he felt at home, and from here he spun threads of brotherly fellowship, also among middle-class circles in Tübingen and the countryside around, and his labors there bore visible fruit. His numerous talks and sermons are reported to have been most gracious, attractive, and stimulating even in those days, and the same is true of his cordial, loving, and clear manner. "It would be nice if you, too, would

come to our meeting," he once said to a younger fellow student, who has forever remained grateful to him. That student followed the invitation and found himself greatly blessed in the *Stund*, or meeting, especially through Blumhardt.

To conclude this account of his years at the university, reference should be made to his first literary creation. It was occasioned by a grave public scandal, which made feelings run high. An assistant minister, Joseph Brehm, was charged with murdering a child, was found guilty and sentenced to death by beheading. He was executed on July 18, 1829, at Reutlingen. The excitement among the people was great. Upon hearing that one of his fellow students was working the gruesome story up into an organ-grinder's ballad, Blumhardt, still a student, felt urged to express in a different and holy way the emotions that the heinous deed and the retribution following it stirred in a Christian heart. He wrote a flysheet entitled "Sentiments at the scaffold of the former parish assistant Joseph Brehm." The title page depicts in a primitive and most explicit way the place of execution. Then follows this poem:

At the Place of Execution

Watch in awe how yonder malefactor—
Let the sun conceal its cheering rays!—
Trudges dumbly to his execution,
Never more to show his mournful face.
Clemency has been denied this sinner;
Now he goes to meet the Judge of all,
Who with stern and evenhanded justice
Will pass sentence on his grievous fall.
This man whom the Lord had chosen
And on whom such noble gifts he poured,
That he lead his flock as their true shepherd,
Ever point and guide them heavenward;
He whom God had meant to be a model,
That in virtue should have led the way,
Did himself give in to gross temptation;
Serving blatant vice, he went astray.
Far he strayed from what he preached so loudly
In the church that he did desecrate,
Where against the path of greed and license
His dissembling lips would remonstrate.
Those he was supposed to guide to heaven
Watch him now, dishonored and abhorred,

Shuffle to the place of retribution,
That his crime receive its just reward.
Brothers, mark how human beings stumble
Once the evil gains the upper hand,
When before the passions in us rising
Our reason crumbles to the sand.
In that man about to make atonement
Greed and lust had pushed all else aside;
Urged by evil passion, he descended
To the basest crime—infanticide.
Lust, while there is time, draw back in horror
Lest into that dread abyss you slip!
Greed, make haste to break the chain accursed,
Which enfolds thee in its iron grip.
From the malefactor's blood, now drenching
Sod and sand from out the severed neck,
Can you hear the broken voice of warning?
"Change your ways!" implores the human wreck!

This, the first-fruits of Blumhardt's literary activity, a clarion call of the conscience, less concerned with rhetorical elegance than with power and clarity of content, already exhibits his truly popular traits of simple humility and brotherly trust in everybody. This applies also to the "Warning and Meditation of a Wretched Man," which follows the above poem. It mainly bids the reader take note that mere indignation at a heinous deed is not enough, that everybody has good reason to feel on the one hand compassion with the sinner, on the other hand fear as regards his own person. Many times we are just barely kept from committing coarse sins by the very same power that brought about the fall of this unfortunate man, namely fear of losing one's honor, status, and well-being. There was once a man who, when severely punished by an extremely strict father in his youth, felt surge up the temptation to kill him. But when some time later he caught sight of a gallows, he thanked God on his knees and with tears for having mercifully protected him from ending up there. The flysheet concludes with a short notice about the execution.

The pamphlet is suffused with the lofty hope—so typical of Blumhardt—that it might find an echo in people's hearts. Fear for all, hope for all; abhorrence of sin coupled with deep compassion for the sinner—that is what distinguishes here the young Blumhardt and was later to be the mark of the mature man.

In remembrance of his student days I insert here part of a sermon he delivered in those years.

Sermon on Luke 10:23–35
Delivered on the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday

In the preceding verses Jesus had expressed to his heavenly Father his joy and gratitude for the firm faith of the seventy disciples who had returned from their journey through Judea: "I praise thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to babes." These words take on particular importance for us when we read in our Gospel how Jesus calls his disciples blessed—all of them poor and lowly, ignorant and unlearned. He even sets them above prophets and kings, because they had seen and heard what the latter did not see nor hear. On the other hand, we meet a Pharisee of the usual kind, who, relying on his ample and scholarly knowledge, wants to test Jesus' understanding of the Law and the Prophets, yet clearly shows that in spite of all his erudition he has completely failed to grasp aright the actual spirit of the Law. Thus we have before us both the babes and the wise, and we see how what is hidden from the wise is revealed to the babes. That leads us on to important and significant considerations. Among us, too, wisdom is often sought where there is the greatest knowledge and learning, and whoever can boast of that thinks he has done everything needful for his soul. In fact, however, what he glories in often turns out to be a stumbling block for him. It just reinforces the blindness and ignorance that he would seem to have left so far behind.

Some unlearned people, too, wish they knew more and think they would be good Christians if only they had had time and opportunity to acquire a lot of knowledge, to read many learned books and that sort of thing. Regardless of what different people may think about that, however, true wisdom comes only from above, as our Savior points out. "No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." He likes best of all to reveal himself to those that are not puffed up by their own knowledge, do not go by human laws and doctrines, do not set their hopes on meager, vain bits of knowledge, but openly declare their ignorance and poverty and ask for the fullness and richness of grace. So this is what our Gospel teaches us concerning the wisdom of the simple and the foolishness of the wise—a humbling for some and a comfort to others.

Beloved Savior, who loves simplicity and wants everyone to put their trust in you, in your mercy help us all to become

> children! May we not seek our portion in the wisdom of the world; rather, open our eyes and ears to the Spirit that he may let us see your wisdom, hear your voice, and feel your grace. Then we have chosen the one thing needful, the good portion, which is nevermore to be taken away from us. Amen.

The "babes" in our Gospel—if we take that as our starting point—are the disciples, the twelve that were constantly around him as well as the seventy whom he sent before him into all the towns and villages in order to prepare the Jews for his coming. On their departure he had told them, "Go on your way; look, I am sending you like lambs into the midst of wolves." With these words he already outlines the relationship between them and the world. They were not such men as force their way in, or gain entrance by dint of cunning and smooth words; rather, he compares them to defenseless lambs, which have nothing but patience and submission to pit against the rapacity of the wolves. Outwardly they seem to stand alone, bereft of all that might enable them to make their way in the world. That is why he goes on to call them babes. A babe is a yet undeveloped child, lacking in experience and ignorant of the world and of its own circumstances, hence in every way dependent on its mother and others around it. It can do nothing by itself, constantly needs advice and support, and is helpless and unhappy when nobody takes care of it.

That, says Jesus, is the earthly situation of his people. They cannot rely on what is their own. Not because they lack what God has given to others but because they reach out with all their powers in a direction that is different from that of the world; they sense that they still lack what is true and right. Thus they transcend the world. What they can do is of no use for this world, and they seem so helpless and bereft as if nature had quite overlooked them and failed to endow them with what is needed to weather the tempests of the world. But this very helplessness, already manifesting itself as chronic uncertainty in the use of their natural powers, makes them embrace the proffered help. Joyfully they hold on to the promise that Christ, transfigured, will be with his own every day until the end of the world. Through him, they believe, they will find what they miss here. Through him their hearts are satisfied by what they had always been longing for but could not attain. Now there is harmony between the promise and humanity's innermost being. Now humanity is convinced that whatever it does and thinks is vain and empty and altogether transitory unless it comes together in him who is the source of our existence, unless we live

in him whose living touch is visible throughout the world. This experience unites humanity ever more deeply and firmly with him who came visibly into the world just for this: that his people might see his glory and thus find rest and peace and firmness.

Here again, humanity may be compared to a baby that, sensing its weakness, snuggles up close to its mother and by trustingly gazing at her is filled with courage and contentment. It trembles and cries when the mother goes away, and when left alone will not be comforted, aware that its help and support are gone. So it is with a Christian for whom closeness to his Redeemer has little by little become indispensable. When in moments of sadness he loses that sense of closeness, when he no longer feels God's grace in his heart, because he is painfully aware of sin, he, too, is like a small child, totally at a loss for counsel and help. He will get no rest or peace until he once more senses the Redeemer in his heart, can again believe in his mercy and be sure of his grace.

That makes it clear to us what Jesus means with the words, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see." He cannot have in mind here the physical perception of his person, even though the succeeding words seem to point in that direction: "Many prophets and kings wanted to see and hear what you see and hear and have neither seen nor heard it." The whole of Judea saw and heard him and perceived what he did. Jesus always singled out a small band, which he calls his own and "blessed." When he says elsewhere, "Blessed are those that do not see and yet believe," that utterance must be brought into harmony with our passage, "Blessed are they that see what you see." His own words help to guide us here. When he says, "Blessed are those that do not see and yet believe," he means that what matters is not our outward seeing but rather our believing—the inward taking hold of the incarnate Christ. Thus faith is our spiritual eye. As the physical eye is that organ through which everything that we perceive outwardly takes on form and life for us and gives us light for our whole life and all our activities, so does faith serve as the inward eye of a spiritual person. Faith takes a firm hold of that which our senses and perception merely present to us in an obscure, cloudy, and uncertain fashion; it joins us to him who is the source of all light; it brings life and serenity to our inner life by leading it back to the One who is our highest and ultimate goal. Faith makes our path safe and light, for it goes to him who came among us as a mediator and by his coming into the world firmly directed our gaze to himself as the one and only.

Thus faith, our inward eye, seeks him; to see him, to believe in him is the blessedness that distinguishes Christians from all prophets and kings. In the prophets there stirred but a faint inkling

of what was to come. They yearned for such a mediator, whom they felt to be indispensable if our life was to pass from darkness into light, from emptiness to fullness, and from the perishable to the imperishable. This yearning, which by its very nature also becomes a presentiment, is their "desire to see," of which Jesus speaks in our Gospel. The reason they could not see is that humanity *seeks history*—actual reality that lets him get a firm, confident, and sure hold on all that the doubts and vicissitudes of life try to take away from him. The disciples did see him who had come; they beheld him whom the world had been longing for, and in setting eyes on him they had also opened their *inner* eye; they had seen and felt the glory in their hearts—a glory that from him is transmitted to those that are his, hence also to those that become his by opening their inner eye.

Now we may ask what it was that they inwardly saw and perceived. Jesus does not name it; he merely says, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you have seen." Previously, too, he had said only, "I thank you, Father, that you have revealed these things to babes." Hence he does not name it, nor does he *want* to name it; he just intimates that it cannot be couched in human words. He merely says to his disciples, "What goes on within you, what you feel inside, the power that you sense in all your members, which even enables you to perform miracles and cast out devils—that is what guarantees your blessedness." What he means is that it expresses an awareness that their names are written in heaven. But exactly what it is and what their seeing actually consists in—that he neither says nor does he have to say it, for their faith, their inward eye, bore witness to it.

My dear friends, that is why the faith of those belonging to him stands so firm and unshakable. No quibbling or subtle argument can reason it away, because faith—being, as it were, reason itself—is that in us which is most directly certain, and no words can adequately express it or present its full content. Indeed, the more definitely and conclusively it is clothed in words and formulas, the more do its spirit and strength fade away. That is why the person who has his eyes only on the bare words of his faith is liable to be suddenly beset by doubts, to waver and fall away until, turning away from the words and descending into the depth of his own spirit, he from there hears again the holy voice that never deceives. Then he once more takes hold of himself in his purest consciousness and his innermost being and life. Once he has turned to this, he no longer has an ear for even the most alluring doubts; he stands secure, certain of what is his, though no longer in a position to answer others that seek by apparently logical arguments

Shucks.

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