

Karl Barth. *The Doctrine of God*. Vol. II, 1
in *Church Dogmatics*, Trans. T. H. L.
Parker, W. B. Johnston, Harold Knight, and
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pp. 632 - 633

Karl Barth. *The Doctrine of Creation*. Vol.
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Karl Barth. *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*.
Vol. IV, 3, 1 in *Church Dogmatics*, Trans.
G. W. Bromiley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark,
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providence. It was the source of the power and strength of this theology that it taught man so emphatically to see himself with a reference back to the God who was before, Him and who from all eternity, without co-operation or merit on man's part, and before there were any means for man's salvation, had already decided on his whole salvation. This being the case, human life can consist only in a confidence and clear performance of the eternal divine decree and the eternal divine will. No one would or should deny this. But in this theology time itself in its duration, and human life in time with its responsibilities, problems and possibilities, came to have the position of a kind of appendix, though one that was expressed with force. We can only say that in view of the truth of God's supra-temporality time must not in any circumstances be reduced to a mere appendix. For God's presence in time, the *δὲ αἰῶτος*, is just as seriously God's eternity as His pre-temporality and all that is to be said about our life from this standpoint. There is the even more serious objection that God's post-temporality, the *εἰς αἰῶνα* and therefore eschatology, hope, the determination of human life by the coming kingdom of God, were treated far too summarily in Reformation theology, or at least they were not honoured as they should have been. It was only the appendix of an appendix that we have been placed on a way and may proceed along it to reach a goal, because there is a divine plan which is not merely determined but is also to be fulfilled, and we can expect its revealed completion, so that our life is necessarily a life of expectation. This whole side of eternity is certainly mentioned by the Reformers, but it is subsidiary, because they have thought about it much more from the point of view of God's pre-temporality. Over wide tracts of their doctrine there is therefore a gloom, and even a hopelessness, which cannot be based on or justified by Scripture. This can be avoided only if we refrain from the definite one-sidedness with which the Reformers handled the problem of time in their doctrine of God, and if we give more honour to God's supra-temporality and above all His post-temporality than they did.

Far more dangerous, of course, was the one-sidedness with which the 18th and 19th centuries tried to achieve a partial reaction against the one-sidedness of the 16th century by determining to give the preference to what we have called God's supra-temporality. Too much attention was now paid to man in time, his needs and problems, but above all his positive possibilities. The actual relationship of God to time in its duration, His presence and government in the world and the soul and in the religious experience of the individual, now became central to an understanding of His eternity. What of God's pre-temporality? With everything belonging to it, this now came under the suspicion of idle speculation without objective basis or at any rate practical significance. Even where this judgment was not passed, it was regarded only as an introduction to the main and really serious statement about the centre, the eternity present to us in time, and as such it must be rushed through as hastily and even unceremoniously as possible. And what about God's post-temporality? The Reformers and orthodoxy after them had never had their heart in this, and even less so the age which followed. Therefore eschatology, the *εἰς αἰῶνα*, remained the appendix which it had been. Everything was now to be *δὲ αἰῶτος* and only *δὲ αἰῶτος*. "To be eternal in a single moment," as Schleiermacher said at the close of his second Address—for a whole age attempts seemed to be made to compress into this all that they had to say about the eternal God, and significantly it was not said about Him at all but about religious man. Even the Gnostic doctrine of the eternity of the creation and constitution of the world, and their co-existence with the eternal God, now became the view of wide theological circles. In a really distressing way—ininitely more distressing than in the 16th century—the conception of eternity had lost in depth and perspective, so that finally the point was reached where the assertion of it was hardly if at all to be distinguished from the denial of its contents. In the last resort—here

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if anywhere we can see the results of one-sidedness in this matter—it became little more than an exclamation mark which had no positive content, so that it could be placed not only behind the word "God" but behind any word at all denoting a supreme value, even in the very last analysis, as we have seen under National Socialism, behind the word "Germany." Preferences and prejudices of this kind in the sphere of Christian truth are usually the beginning of its total secularisation.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th there has finally been a reaction to the third side that had hitherto been neglected, and unfortunately we have to say again that it has been a one-sided reaction. Eschatology, and therefore the post-temporality of God, was re-discovered after it had for centuries claimed the interest only of certain sects and certain isolated individuals among the theologians of the Church, as, for example, J. A. Bengel. One focus in this movement of discovery was the message of the kingdom of God expounded by the older and the younger Blumhardt; the other focus was the application of scientific exegesis, especially of the New Testament, to the attainment of a previously unknown exactness in both secular and religious history, which—whether a strictly optimistic concept of time was retained or not—made it quite impossible to overlook or deny the fact that Jesus and the apostles themselves had had a very different conception of time determined by a direct looking for the coming of the new age.

It is worth noting that the opponent against whom the post-temporality of God was effectively maintained by the two Blumhardts and their most influential theological spokesman, F. Zündel, was not the cultural optimism of Liberal Protestantism. On the contrary, it was the more recent, positively Church-centred Christianity, and especially its pietistic qualities, which they accused of a complete and utter lack of the characteristic of hope which is so distinctive in the message of the New Testament and New Testament faith, of diluting to a purely individual hope of a future life for the soul the confidence and unsettlement of the expectation of the kingdom of God which will rectify the whole world and all life even to its deepest recesses. They therefore called the world of piety with its apparently very definite faith in Christ to a conversion, to faith in the living Christ who is to come again and make all things new. They gave a central position to the prayer: "Thy kingdom come," and: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," and therefore to post-temporal eternity, although this involved them in conflict with the most earnest representatives of the anthropocentric Christianity of the post-Reformation period. The younger Blumhardt, H. Kutter and especially L. Ragaz, gave this "fight for the kingdom of God" a particularly surprising turn when they linked it with the eschatology and hope of the Socialist Labour movement. They expressly approved this movement and contrasted it with the Church, theology and Christendom, as the representative realisation for our time of the faith that Jesus did not find in Israel. Yet this application was not so remarkable as seems at first sight. It had already been prepared by the elder Blumhardt, in whose proclamation of hope the emphasis, strictly speaking, was less on the return of Christ and the coming of the kingdom than on the new outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was to precede this true end and new beginning and the return of the mighty works and the miracles which, in apostolic times, had proclaimed the imminent kingdom of God in time. It was hard to see any basic reason why this should not be seen in a secular movement like Socialism. If this application to a temporal hope clarified the problems involved in the new discovery, further clarification came when H. Lhotzky and, above all, Johannes Müller (also under the inspiration of the two Blumhardts, found it quite possible to transpose back into general teaching the whole dynamic of the hope proclaimed in Bad Boll. The accent now was on the present and not on the future, and, in good Neo-Protestant fashion, on the present as experienced in individual personal existence. Inevitably, then, the final result was only a

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and therefore in face of sickness, can only be final resistance. [Again and supremely, this consideration overlooks the fact that God Himself is not only Judge but faithful, gracious and patient in His righteous judgment, that He Himself has already marched against that realm on the left, and that He has overcome and bound its forces and therefore those of sickness in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, by which the destroyer was himself brought to destruction. Those who know this, and therefore that they are already helped in this matter; can only reply to the faithfulness of God with a new unfaithfulness if they try to fold their hands and sigh and ask what help there is or what more they can will. Within the modest limits in which this is still possible they must will what God has already willed and indeed definitely fulfilled in Jesus Christ concerning sickness and that whole kingdom on the left hand. With God they must say No to it without asking what the result will be or how much or little it will help themselves or others, without enquiring whether it is not rather feeble and even ridiculous to march into action in accordance with this No. A little resolution, will and action in face of that realm and therefore against sickness is better than a whole ocean of pretended Christian humility which is really perhaps the mistaken and perverted humility of the devil and demons.

There is, of course, a right deduction to be drawn from the fact that sickness is real in this sense, i.e., as an element and sign of the power of chaos and nothingness, and therefore as an element and sign of the judgment of God falling on man. The right deduction is that all resistance to sickness, all human willing of the strength to be as man, all human affirmation, cultivation and promotion of the vital forces of body and soul, is necessarily in vain if God is not God; if He does not live, speak, act and make Himself responsible for man; if this whole cause is not first and supremely His own cause; if His is not the judgment on man from which we cannot escape; if His is not the grace which is the meaning of this judgment; and above all if His is not the judgment on the destroyer and destruction itself which by reason of man's sin can have a little space, but which can have only the space allowed and allotted by God, and in relation to which God is absolute Lord and conclusive Victor. Without or even against God there is, of course, nothing that man can will in this matter. And if faith in Him and prayer to Him cannot be a refuge for weak-willed and defeatist Christians who are lazy, cowardly and resigned in face of His and their enemy, we must also say with the same certainty that if the conflict enjoined upon man in this matter is to be meaningful, faith in Him and prayer to Him must never be lost sight of as its *conditio sine qua non*, but continually realised as the true power of the will required of man in this affair. They cannot replace what is to be modestly, soberly and circumspectly, but energetically, willed and done by man. They cannot replace his determination to exercise

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 from A.T. Mackay, H.L. Knight
 N.A. Kennedy & John Marks

his little strength to be as man, and thereby to maintain himself. They cannot replace hygiene, sport and medicine, or the social struggle for better living conditions for all. But in all these things they must be the orientation on the command of God which summons man inexorably, and with no possible conditions, to will and action. They must be the orientation on the righteous judgment of God in recognition of which man constantly discovers, and again without murmuring or surrender, the limitation of his willing and doing and its consequences. Above all, they must be the orientation on the inexhaustible consolation of the promise, on true and effective encouragement by the One who as the Creator of life primarily espouses this as His own cause, and fights and has already conquered for us in the whole glory of His mercy and omnipotence. It is true that without Him, without the orientation on Him, all ethics, all human willing and doing, can only be futile and impotent in relation to the superiority of evil which opposes us also in the form of sickness; and worse still, that it can only be rebellion against the judgment of God and therefore increase its severity. But it is also true, and even more so, that human willing and acting with God, and in orientation on Him, and with faith and prayer to Him, whatever the outcome, has the promise which man cannot lack, and the fulfilment of which he will soon see, if he will simply obey without speculation. Those who take up this struggle obediently are already healthy in the fact that they do so, and theirs is no empty desire when they will to maintain or regain their health.

"If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptian: for I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Ex. 15²⁶). This is the divine Magna Carta in the matter of health and all related questions. Jer. 33⁶ points into the same direction: "Behold, I will bring this city health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth." And Ps. 107¹⁷ sounds like a response: "Fools because of their transgressions, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." In Ps. 30²⁶ we hear the voice of a man who by the gracious and wonderful power of God has been snatched from sickness, i.e., from the grasp of death's power: "O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit." But this could never happen without crying to God and the intervention of His gracious and wonderful power. When a really sick person may really get well again, an all-powerful and inescapable danger is halted and repelled by the One who alone can properly and finally do this, because He alone can forgive sins and force the onrushing billows of chaos to recede. It is for this reason that in the story of the mortal sickness of Hezekiah in 2 K. 20¹¹ we first have the inexorable statement: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live," and only

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 under Rauld Knight
 Edinburgh: S. & T. Clark 1961

then, as confirmed and symbolised by the sign of the backward-going shadow on the sundial: "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord." And in this instance it is notable that the same prophet Isaiah who speaks the word of judgment and grace also acts as a doctor, not treating the ulcer of the sick man as a mere "appearance" in the sense of Mrs. Eddy, but laying upon it a plaster of figs. Similarly, divine and human healing as well as forgiveness and healing seem to be conjoined in the remarkable direction of Jas. 5¹⁴. If the latter is not without the former, neither is the former without the latter. "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." We know as little concerning the substance of the *χαρίσματα* mentioned in I Cor. 12⁹ as concerning most of the "gifts of grace" of the Holy Spirit mentioned in this and other passages. But there can be no doubt at least that we are to think of a power against sickness which is effective and known in the congregation as a transitory or lasting characteristic of some of its members, not as something belonging to these people, but as a free gift of God, and yet exercised by these people. Perhaps we do well not to bring this power into too close relation with the cures of Jesus as the unique "signs and wonders" of the kingdom come on earth in Him and Him alone, but rather to understand it as a possibility of a secondary type. Yet there can be no doubt that the apostolic proclamation of the kingdom and of the name of its Bearer did also include this possibility, and that we see the community, in the possession and exercise of these gifts and in the following of Jesus Christ, engaged in conflict against sickness and not at peace with it. It is not a wilful fight, but one which is laid upon it and for which it is empowered by the grace of God.

It is necessary to recall at this point the man who in the middle of the 19th century was enabled with his distinctive presuppositions and tendencies to put in an entirely new light this side of the New Testament understanding, and especially those elements in New Testament ethics for which the older orthodox, pietistic and rationalistic Protestantism and even the Reformers had no brief, namely, J. C. Blumhardt. In word and deed Blumhardt made it plain that from one standpoint sickness is the exponent of an ungodly and inhuman reality in relation to which the Christian attitude can only be one of indignation and conflict in co-operation with God and faith in Him and prayer to Him. "The stories of Blumhardt are an abomination to me" (R. Bultmann, *Kerygma und Mythos*, 1948, p. 150). But this is to speak in a way which at least requires some interpretation. A penetrating and judicious analysis of these "stories," and especially that of the complete cure of Gottlieb Dittus in the year 1843, has led Water Schulte to the following results from the standpoint of medicine and psychiatry (*Ev. Theol.*, 1949-50, Number 4, p. 151 ff.). The "measure" of mythologico-magical thinking which Blumhardt shared with his time and environment is not to be related to the form in which he understood and handed down this event, but to the very structure of the happening itself. There are elements in it which defy any kind of medical interpretation. It may well be assumed that Gottlieb Dittus suffered neither from an organic nor a genuine mental illness but from an attack of serious hysteria, and that its cure by Blumhardt is to be ascribed to auto-suggestion actually though unconsciously practised by him. In making this identification, Schulte rejoices as a doctor at the fervour with which Blumhardt both repudiates any false passivity and patience in suffering supposedly incurable pains and also warns against giving way too soon to sickness. And above all he affirms the faith which on any interpretation shines from this story for every age—a faith which in all circumstances and every situation counts on the saving reality of God in this world. Indeed, he approves

the implied relationship between forgiveness and healing; the witness that "Jesus is Victor." This is the significant fact on any interpretation. Blumhardt's perception may have been mythological (and this is surely better than no perception at all), but he saw in the condition of this girl, and later of many others, the presence of the opposing world of the absolutely abnormal and objectively unseemly, i.e., the satanic darkness in relation to which there must not be adaptation into something willed by God but revolt, protest and angry negation. And the basis and power of this negation are for him simply the name of Jesus—not really understood or evoked in a magical way—as the essence of God's reaction against the contesting of His creative will and of His creatures displayed in sickness. Blumhardt realised, in contrast to all older Protestantism and basically to the whole of Western Christendom, that in this name not just a psychic but a historical and even cosmic decision is made, and a question not only of disposition but of power is raised, which all those who confess it must face. Blumhardt missed even in the Jesus of contemporary Pietists the repugnance of the real Jesus at the grave of Lazarus and His will to help and fight and reign. Blumhardt took up the struggle because he was bound and liberated by this royal repugnance of Jesus. Hence the famous words with which he opened the contest in the case of Gottlieb: "Fold your hands and pray: Lord Jesus, help me! We have seen long enough what the devil does, now we shall see what the Lord Jesus can do." Hence the statement in his later account of the matter: "I was ashamed before myself and my Saviour . . . to give in to the devil. I often had to ask myself, Who is the Lord?, and, trusting Him who is the Lord, I always heard the inward call to advance. For it must lead to a good end, just as it plunges into the deepest depths if it is not true that Jesus had crushed the serpent's head." The relationship between sin and sickness and repentance and healing was clearly seen by him, but as a two-sided and therefore hopeful relationship. Ernst Gaugler (J. C. Blumhardt, 1945, p. 36) has rightly stressed that Blumhardt, who was not really an "enthusiast," had no interest in producing anything new in what he said and did in this connexion, whether new insights (for it was not he who regarded demonology as particularly notable from the standpoint of this conflict), or new psycho-medical methods (he himself made no mention of the details of the conflict and did not found a school for the achievement of similar cures), or even a kind of new revelation. "He only read afresh what was already known to him from the old book of biblical truth. He did what every preacher must always adequately or inadequately attempt, namely, to make present the Word of God." He only tried to take seriously the saying in Ps. 77¹⁰, which in Luther's translation runs: "The hand of the most High can change everything." This is what we have to learn regarding sickness as a mortal power consequent upon sin. And we must learn it, not from Mrs. Eddy, but from Blumhardt, or, better, from the place where Blumhardt himself learned it.

But the fact is undeniable that sickness has also another aspect. For health, like life in general, is not an eternal but a temporal and therefore a limited possession. It is entrusted to man, but it does not belong to him. It is to be affirmed and willed by man as a gift from God, yet not in itself and absolutely, but in the manner and compass in which He gives it.

We have defined health as the power to be as man exercised in the powers of the vital functions of soul and body. And we have defined sickness as the impairing of this power, as crippling and hampering weakness. We have seen that in the antithesis, contrast and conflict of these two determinations of human life we have to do

with a real event in the existence of the real man. And we have first attempted to evaluate this event from the angle from which it presents itself as the collision of normal being, as willed, created and ordered by God, with its negation, so that it is brought under the threat of abnormality and even destruction. On this view it can be understood only as man's encounter with the realm of death and therefore the experience of God's judgment. We have been able to describe the required human attitude, the will to live and to be healthy, only in terms of the resistance and conflict of faith and prayer appealing to the grace and gracious power of God. And if we have now to draw attention to another aspect of the same matter, there can be no question—we are irresistibly prevented by the biblical witness concerning health and sickness—of looking away again from this first aspect or even trying to relativise or weaken it. Sickness is one of the elements in the situation of man as he has fallen victim to nothingness through his transgression, as he is thus referred wholly to the mercy of God, but as he is summoned by this reference to hope and courage and conflict. Not a single word of what we have said in this connexion can be retracted or even limited. It must not be lost sight of or forgotten in whatever we may have to add.

What is there to be added? Simply that, quite apart from his transgression, quite apart from his abandonment to the power of nothingness, and quite apart from the consequent visitation of God's judgment upon him, the life of man, and therefore his health as the strength to be as man in the exercise of the powers of all his vital functions of life, is a life which even according to God's good will as Creator, and therefore normally and naturally, begins and ends and is therefore limited. Man does not possess the power to be as man in the same way as God has His power to be as God, nor does he have power over his vital functions as God has His power as Creator, Ruler and merciful Deliverer of His creature. It does not belong to him to be and to live as God. Rather, he may see the goodness of God the Creator in the fact that to his life and strength and powers a specific space is allotted, i.e., a limited span. He may and should exercise them in it and not in the field of the unlimited. They are adapted for it, for development and application within it. Within its confines he may and should be as man in their possession and exercise. Within its confines he stands before God, and at the limit of this span God is mightily for him and is his hope. Just because it is limited, it is a kind of natural and normal confirmation of the fact that by God's free grace man may live through Him and for Him, with the commission to be as man in accordance with the measure of his strength and powers, but not under the intolerable destiny of having to give sense, duration and completeness to his existence by his own exertions and achievements, and therefore in obvious exclusion of the view that he must and may and can by his own strength and powers eternally

speaking and tell of creation, and laud and praise it as the work of God. But supposing that that happens for which creation has the being and existence attested by its own lights and words and truths. Supposing that Jesus Christ is born and lives and dies and is raised from the dead within it, so that "the sun of righteousness" arises, the eternal light, the irrevocable Word, the definitive truth of the election and the covenant and therefore of the glory and love of God? To be sure, their provisional nature is then disclosed and they are divested of any claim to absoluteness. But they are also invested with the glorious finality of God and His action towards man as this is now revealed. They still shine and speak and bear witness concerning creation. But they no longer do this abstractly. They do it concretely, in the context of and in harmony with that which God Himself says concerning His action towards man, concerning what He is and does for man, and what man may be and do for Him. And as the being and existence of creation itself are glorified rather than destroyed by the events of which it is ordained to be the theatre, so its words and truths, far from being contradicted or given the lie, acquire in this context and in harmony with God's definitive Word a similar final force and value and significance. For now the self-witness of creation can also speak and tell of what God says, and therefore speak as from God Himself, praising and glorifying Him: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19¹). To be sure, "there is no speech nor language," i.e., they have no power to do it of themselves. But they acquire this power. The final and trustworthy thing which they cannot say of themselves concerning their being and existence, they now say as they reflect the eternal light of God, as they answer His word and as they correspond to His truth. In other words, they speak of the meaning and determination of the creaturely world for what God is and does for man and what he may be and do for God. In the mirror of this final self-declaration of theirs we have a reflection of the final self-declaration of their Creator in His great act of peace. In this sense they are taken, lifted, assumed and integrated into the action of God's self-giving and self-declaring to man and therefore to the world made by Him. And in the power of this integration they are instituted, installed and ordained to the *ministerium Verbi Divini*. Nor are they unworthy of this ministry, for by the *Verbum Divinum* itself they are made worthy. Nor are they incapable of it, for by the same Word they are made capable. Nor are they unwilling to accept, for by this Word a new will is awakened within them, namely, the will to do it. In their discharge and execution of this ministry "their sound is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps. 19⁴); and the words and the sound are final and definitive.

This, then, as we have tried to indicate it under our three headings, is the critical but also, since it is genuinely critical, the positive relation-

ship of the light of life to the lights which the God whose saving action is revealed by the one light does not withhold from His creatures as such but gives them in His eternal goodness.

3. JESUS IS VICTOR

The statement which has so far occupied us is the simple equation of life as such with light. In other words, the covenant of God with man and man with God as fulfilled in Jesus Christ is not a dumb fact but one which speaks for itself. The reconciliation of the world with God accomplished and consisting in Him is revelation in its very reality. To use the terminology of the older dogmatics, as the High-priest and King, as the humiliated and suffering God and exalted and triumphant man, He is also the Prophet, Herald and Proclaimer of the name hallowed in Him, the kingdom come in Him, the will of God done in Him on earth as it is in heaven. This equation, however, must now be developed and explained in a specific way. A presupposition decisive for its meaning must be particularly emphasized. It must be stated expressly and considered with great precision that in this equation we have the description of a history. In the "is" which links the life with the light, the covenant with the Word of God, the reconciliation with the revelation, Jesus Christ the High-priest and King with Jesus Christ the Prophet, there is concealed a drama. The "is" is thus to be understood in dynamic rather than static terms. This is what calls for emphasis.

All the concepts used refer to a history, whether life, covenant and reconciliation on the one side, or light, Word and revelation on the other. Life, covenant and reconciliation all "are" as they take place. Similarly, light, Word and revelation "are" as that which is denoted by them occurs. Only as they happen, therefore, "are" they in this equation. That life is also light means that as true life it shines and radiates and gives light from God and for God. That the covenant is also Word means that in its institution, execution and fulfilment it makes itself known as it is enacted. That reconciliation is also revelation means that in its accomplishment, which establishes, orders and guarantees peace between God and man, it also reveals and proclaims itself as divine-human truth. But life, covenant and reconciliation are only material descriptions of the being, work and activity of Jesus Christ. We must thus continue that as true God and true man, as the One who accomplishes all that is described in these terms, Jesus Christ is not only the High-priest and King but also the Prophet, Herald and Proclaimer of this accomplishment. That is to say, He works and acts as such. He exists in the actual discharge of this specific office, in the corresponding rendering of service and confirmation of lordship. But this means that He exists in this special

form of His history. Hence in this third form too, as a doctrine of Jesus Christ the true light, Word and Revealer, as a doctrine of His prophetic office, Christology is a narration of His history, and specifically of the shining of His light, the real speaking of the covenant, the revelation of reconciliation, the action of the Prophet Jesus Christ.

The specific obligation to develop and explain our equation in this particular sense originates in two different respects from the matter itself. The first is formal, though not on that account any the less important or noteworthy. The second is material, and even more important and decisive in the ensuing discussion.

The relationship between God and man denoted by the terms life, covenant and reconciliation does not rest on any necessity immanent in either the existence and nature of God or those of man. God does not owe it to man. And man has no claim to it. From the standpoint of both God and man it seems rather to be excluded and impossible. It exists as it is created and takes place in Jesus Christ. Seen from above, it is actual in the free act of grace for which God determines Himself and upon which He resolves in Jesus Christ. Seen from below, it is actual in the free act of obedience in which man acknowledges the doing of the will of God active in the divine act of grace. In this its actuality as a free act of grace and obedience, it is a new thing between God and man. It is the sphere and character of this new thing, in that the life is also light, the covenant Word and the reconciliation revelation. It is still a matter of Jesus Christ and His activity, but now in His prophetic office and work. Here, too, nothing is self-evident, given or necessary. As the actuality of the relationship takes place, so its truth, i.e., its self-declaration, and therefore the grounding of its recognition, can only take place. Its occurrence is the prophecy of Jesus Christ. That He Himself, and in Him the life, covenant and reconciliation, shine out and are disclosed and made known, is an event, and can only be understood as such. It is a drama which can only be followed, or rather experienced and recounted.

The necessity of a historical understanding of the equation results supremely from the fact that His light, Word and revelation no less than His life, covenant and reconciliation, are challenged by an opposition which encounters them, and His prophetic no less than His high-priestly and kingly service and rule thus consist practically in the overcoming of this opposition and answering of this challenge. They occur in an environment to which they are superior in right and might, but which is either hostile or alien, or at any rate strange. The "world" is this environment: humanity; man in and with the cosmos; man in his creaturely and historical nature. But we do well to think also of the Church and individual Christians in this respect. By this environment the Son of God and Man, Jesus Christ, is Himself challenged and assaulted as He challenges and assaults it

by His existence and with His Word. His life is constantly confronted by death, the covenant by unfaithfulness and apostasy, reconciliation by strife. But this is also the situation of His prophetic office and work, ministry and action. His Word is met by the contradiction and His truth by the falsehood of His environment, and they consist in the exposing, resisting and overcoming of the falsehood and contradiction. This does not mean that absolute and final limits are set to Him, but it does mean that He has to contend with limits of relative and provisional seriousness. He is noticeably though not invincibly confined. And as His Word contradicts the contradiction, it seems for its part to subject itself even to a certain bondage and conditioning, and to be spoken with a relative and provisional but unmistakable restraint. We recall the expression in John 1⁵: "The light shineth," but it shineth "in darkness" (whatever this may signify in detail). Yet we must not forget the continuation: "And the darkness overcame it not." This light which streams into the world is still the eternal light which cannot be vanquished or extinguished. Nevertheless, this does not alter the previous statement that it shines in a place or environment which is certainly illumined by it, but does not even partially shine itself, not corresponding to its shining with any brightness of its own, but being differentiated from it as darkness, and as such negatively opposing it with its own limited power. In face of this environment it does not yield but makes its way. Yet, in order finally to exclude and destroy it, it must do so step by step and therefore in a history. Or, as we might say, the Word of the covenant is uttered, going out through all lands, to the end of the world, like the voice and sound of Psalm 19⁴. Yet is it not something self-evident, given or necessary, but a new and special and wonderful thing both as a whole and in detail, if this does not take place in vain, if the Word achieves its object, if it finds ears which are open or even partially open. Or again, reconciliation is revealed in all its clarity. Yet, as it is itself an event, it can only be an event if in the place where it happens, in the reconciled world of humanity, its revelation is confirmed by the fact that it is perceived in its truth and clarity, and it is thus recognised as the reconciliation of the world of humanity. Comprehensively, the great Prophet Jesus Christ is certainly present and at work, pronouncing authoritatively the first and last and total truth concerning the name and kingdom and will of God. Yet like the prophets before Him, and even in the circle of those who are with Him, He is a lonely Newcomer and Stranger, a Messenger who has something to say to the world which it does not and cannot know of itself, which is closed to it as it arbitrarily or indolently closes itself against it, which it is neither willing nor ready to receive, so that it is something which has to happen, and only can happen, if He does not remain lonely, if His message is not in vain but wins a hearing and obedience, if the seed

sown by Him is not scattered to the winds but germinates and brings forth fruit.

Hence we cannot in any sense understand in static terms the relationship between Him and the surrounding world of darkness. It is certainly not dualistic. We do not have the equilibrium of opposing forces, as though darkness had the claim and power finally to maintain itself against light, as though its antithesis, opposition and challenge to light, its restricting of it, rested on an eternal and lasting order. On the other hand, it is not monistic. The power of light is not so overwhelming in relation to that of darkness that darkness has lost its power altogether, as though its antithesis were already removed, its opposition brushed aside, its challenging and restricting of light of no account. The only alternative is to think of it in terms of dynamic teleology, namely, in relation to the power of light, Word and revelation as this is active in great superiority yet has not so far attained its goal but is still wrestling toward it, being opposed by the power of darkness, which even though it yields in its clear inferiority, is still present and even active in its own negative and restrictive way. A history is here taking place; a drama is being enacted; a war waged to a successful conclusion. If from the very first there can be no doubt as to the issue of the action, there can also be no doubt that there is an action, and that it is taking place, and can thus be described only in the form of narration.

In connexion with what has just been said concerning the necessity of a historical understanding of the prophetic work of Jesus Christ (particularly from the material standpoint last mentioned), and before we go on to present and therefore to narrate its occurrence in its various dimensions, we must first undertake two basic discussions the results of which will necessarily be with us in all that follows.

I have chosen as the title for this sub-section the statement, or rather the challenge: "Jesus is Victor," for the simple reason that this statement, which is really to be heard and read as a challenge, is the sign under which a presentation and therefore a narration of the prophetic work of Jesus Christ must always stand. It tells of the issue but also of the beginning of the action, and in so doing of the dynamic and teleological character which marks it from its commencement to its goal. "Jesus is Victor," is the first and last and decisive word to be said in this respect.

It has been popularised by the story of the Blumhardts, and first and supremely by that of J. C. Blumhardt the elder. It should not be overlooked that in content, far from having the character of a new revelation, it merely sums up and succinctly formulates many New Testament sayings behind which there may be seen either directly or indirectly the central witness of the whole of the New Testament. We may think of Jn. 16³³: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world"; or of Col. 2¹⁵, which tells us that when God "spoiled principalities and powers, he

made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them," i.e., in the resurrection leading them in His triumphal march as subjects and prisoners; or of 2 Tim. 1¹⁰, where there is ascribed to Jesus Christ a completed abolition (*καταργεῖν*) of death; or of Heb. 2¹⁴, where He is said to have destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." The things seen and heard in the Apocalypse may also be called to mind. Perhaps it is hardly relevant to think of the rider on the white horse who in 6² "went forth conquering and to conquer," since like the other three horsemen he seems to represent one of the unleashed forces of destruction. But we may certainly refer to the other Rider on a white horse who in 19¹¹ is called Faithful and True, the Word of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who "in righteousness doth judge and make war," whose eyes are "as a flame of fire," who has on His head not one but many crowns, whose vesture is "dipped in blood," and out of whose mouth "goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Similarly 5⁵: "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed"; and also the answer from heaven when the seventh trumpet is sounded: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (11¹⁵, cf. 12¹⁰). We may naturally recall as well Paul's saying in 1 Cor. 15⁵⁴ about the swallowing up of death in victory, which is for Paul the goal of all history already actualised here and now in the resurrection of Jesus Christ; or his saying in Rom. 8³⁷ that Christians are "more than conquerors through him that loved us"; or the saying in 1 Cor. 15⁵⁷ that the Lord Jesus Christ "giveth us the victory"; or the saying in 1 Jn. 5⁴: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"; or Paul again in 2 Cor. 2¹⁴: "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph (*θριαμβεύοντι*) in Christ." But where does not the New Testament finally look in this direction? Where does it speak on any other basis? It would not be witness to the risen Jesus Christ if things were otherwise.

Yet in the summary formulation: "Jesus is Victor," we do not have the witness of the New Testament, but that of J. C. Blumhardt. To be sure, he did not assert and declare it as a slogan which he himself had coined. He took it from a very curious source. In a formal report given in one of his church courts he tells us that he and many others first heard it in Möttingen on December 28, 1843, at the climax of the two-year story of suffering, now about to become a story of healing, of someone called Gottlieb Dittus who was entrusted to his pastoral care. It was not from Gottlieb herself that he heard the words, but from her sister Katherina who for a time had become implicated in her situation. With notable sobriety but great definiteness and astonishing concreteness, he tells us—I am summarising—(1) that this story of suffering unmistakably had for him and all around the form of demon possession so often mentioned in the New Testament, (2) that his pastoral intervention was only participation in a conflict properly and decisively waged by Jesus rather than himself, and (3) that the story of healing which followed had no less unmistakably the form of a victorious encounter of the living Jesus with the alien demonic power which tempted, dominated and tormented this person. Hence he heard and quoted the saying: "Jesus is Victor," not as a saying of her sister, but as a cry of despair—Blumhardt refers to a shriek "which is almost inconceivable on human lips"—which the demonic power uttered through her lips at the very moment when a superior opponent forced it to yield its control over Gottlieb—this power being cautiously described by Blumhardt as "presumably," i.e., according to its own final self-characterisation, an "angel of Satan." We are forcibly reminded of the story in Mk. 1³² about the man *ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ* who cried out, saying: "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? are thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

Like similar events in the New Testament, the occurrence during which Blumhardt heard this cry: "Jesus is Victor," has three aspects. On the first, it is realistically explained in the sense of ancient and modern mythology. On the second, it is explained in terms of modern psychopathology, or depth psychology. On the third, it is not explained at all but can only be estimated spiritually on the assumption that the two former explanations are also possible and even justifiable in their own way.

Its spiritual estimation is possible on the basis of the influence exerted by this story of suffering and healing, and especially by the saying heard by Blumhardt and those around him on this decisive day, upon his own future life and activity and that of his son Christoph. However we may explain the battle of those two years and its issue, the fruits of the occurrence and the results of the saying are still unambiguously before us in the story of the Blumhardts as it commenced at that time: in a new and unhesitating action in the light of the superior life of the risen Jesus Christ; in a new power and joy in the proclamation of the remission of sins as it has taken place and is found in Him; in a new and self-evident apprehension of the reality of the kingdom of God as it has come in Him, and the lordship of God as it has been set up in Him; in new intercession with the unquenchable expectation and indestructible hope that there will be fresh declarations of this lordship and a fresh outpouring of the Holy Ghost on all flesh (of which Blumhardt saw the beginning in this event and the utterance of this cry); in a powerful challenge: "Die, that Christ may live"; in a life of powerful confidence in the coming and revelation of a new heaven and new earth; and therefore in new and disturbed yet also comforted thinking in relation to world history and men in their sin and need, and in relation to that to which they are called, whether they realise it or not.

These were the consequences which flowed from the experience of the elder Blumhardt with Gottlieb Dittus and which marked the whole movement centred in Möttingen and later in Bad Boll. They were all a development of the disclosure and recognition which came to Blumhardt at this moment: "Jesus is Victor." It was not that he then believed and realised for the first time that this is the case. His whole narration of this two-year battle shows that he had entered it with a realisation of what this statement says, and with faith in it. This emerges in the sense of dread yet also the daring resolution with which he undertook the struggle. "Lord Jesus, help me. We have seen long enough what the devil can do. We now desire to see the power of Jesus." This was from the very first his prayer with and for the sufferer. Nor did he meet with anything new—except the new thing of the New Testament—at the crisis of the battle. Yet the fact remains that this well-known truth was then much more to him than the confirmation of an existing conviction or the success of his pastoral venture in the strength of this conviction. It came as a new thing and in an unexpected way when he heard that simple statement: "Jesus is Victor," at the beginning of the healing of the afflicted in demonstration of the power of Jesus. It is to be noted that there is no question of a kind of divine inspiration. It was not mediated by a voice from above, but very much from below through the lips of a girl. It came as the wild and despairing surrender of the opposition, as its declaration of impotence, as the final cry of a routed angel of Satan, and therefore from within the darkest darkness of the world. For Blumhardt the new and surprising thing in the issue of the conflict, which necessarily found immediate expression in new insights and impulses and directives, was the fact that the victory of Jesus is "eternally settled," as it is put in a later hymn, that it is objectively decided even in the darkest darkness of the world, and that it is now manifested, known and declared.

It did not necessarily follow, but was actually the case, that in his own time, too, this was a new word and for long enough an isolated word. That Jesus conquers was not stated nor known, and certainly not "settled" in this way

among the contemporaries of Blumhardt, whether *extra* or *intra muros ecclesiae*, whether in the world of Goethe or that of Hegel, whether in official circles, pietistic groups or theology, whether by the Rationalists, Supranaturalists and Pietists of the 18th century or the Romantics, Speculatives, Biblicists or theologians of the Awakening of the 19th century. In the first instance it was merely the content of his own particular perception and confession. To be sure, many important things were then seen and said concerning Jesus the God-man of the early dogma, Jesus the supreme vehicle of eternal reason, Jesus the Friend of humanity and Teacher of ethics, Jesus the Saviour of souls, Jesus the centre of Christian piety, and, after the fabulous discovery of D. F. Strauss, Jesus the mythical personage. If we turn to any secular or Christian book of the period, and among the Christian books it makes little difference whether it is a work of scholarship or edification, the two words said about Jesus in this declaration, namely, that He "is Victor," could be put on the outer margin of any of them, but they could not have the decisive and comprehensive significance, the emphasis, which they have for Blumhardt. They would represent an intrusion in this sense. Even Christian missions, which took a new turn at this period and in which Blumhardt played an important part, did not in the main stand under this sign. No cause was seen from a reading of the New Testament to fashion this or a similar slogan nor to draw the consequences which it held for Blumhardt. Many years must elapse, and many things take place, be learned and forgotten, before what might almost be called the underground stream of the insight achieved by Blumhardt could come to the service and become increasingly influential over wide areas of Christian life and thought. Nor by a long way can we expect that all Christians even to-day are really awake to the movement which then began, let alone seriously implicated in it.

But however that may be, the source of this thing which was new for Blumhardt, for his contemporaries, and for our modern world, is to be found in the strange happening of the Möttingen struggle at whose decisive hour the cry: "Jesus is Victor," was uttered and heard. The really strange element in this struggle does not in fact lie at the point where it is usually seen by the hostile, confused and curious eye, namely, in the aspects of Blumhardt's account which call for explanation and perhaps find it in terms of mythology or medicine. Quite apart from the manner of its coming or the resultant interpretations, the really strange element is to be found in the utterance at the conclusion of this thing which is new, or which declared itself anew, and therefore in the cry which was then uttered and which came as a summons to Blumhardt, to his age, and to ourselves as its successors. The only question which is finally relevant in relation to the incident is the spiritual one whether or not we will hear this saying.

What does this saying mean in the context of the discussion in which we are engaged? For the understanding of the prophetic work of Jesus Christ, of the concepts light, Word and revelation which now concern us, it means that the occurrence or action of which we are to think has a definite bias or orientation which we have to take into account and to which we have to do justice even as we present and therefore narrate it. In our preceding deliberations we have made it quite clear that this occurrence has the character of a conflict to the extent that the light shines in the darkness which resists it, the prophecy of Jesus Christ taking place in relation to an opposition and challenge on the part of the world. And already we have indicated at least that there can be no question of an equality between the two factors which here confront and conflict with one

another, but that their encounter can be understood and described only as that of a greatly superior and a greatly inferior, and therefore a struggle concerning the issue of which there can be no doubt. But this must now be emphasised for a true evaluation of the theme of this sub-section. And we are reminded of this by the story and cause of J. C. Blumhardt as summed up in the saying: "Jesus is Victor." The saying refers us to the Subject of the action, the dominating Character in the drama and the Hero in the conflict which here concerns us. It tells us that the One at work here as Prophet, light, Word and Revealer, is not One for whom his resisting and restraining opponent might prove too much, who might be too seriously jeopardised and held in check by the challenge and opposition presented. In relation to the issue of the conflict, as it is unforgettably brought before us in the Blumhardt story, and even at its very commencement, He is characterised as the One who is greatly superior in relation to His greatly inferior adversary. In some degree the saying analyses the name of Jesus, and it gathers up this analysis in the simple equation: Jesus=Victor. This tells us that from the very outset, and come what may, the dynamic and teleology of the prophetic ministry and rule of Jesus Christ are unshakeably stamped by the fact that He is this One, Jesus. From the very outset it is clear and certain what will be the result of His ministry and rule, namely, that His right and might will triumph in opposition to the resistance and challenge offered to Him, removing the challenge and destroying the resistance. The equation made in this saying thus forbids us to take with equal seriousness both light and darkness, both Jesus and the contradiction, and opposition which He meets. It certainly forbids us to take the contradiction and opposition even more seriously than Jesus. It commands us simply yet resolutely to count on it that, although the contradiction and opposition are to be taken seriously, yet we are to take infinitely more seriously the One whom it encounters, or rather who encounters, contradicts and opposes it, i.e., Jesus, and the dignity and power with which He does this as the One against whom the adversary can bring nothing corresponding, equivalent, or even similar. He and He alone is *Kyrios*. It is with this bias or orientation that there is enacted the history, action, drama, or conflict of the prophetic work of Jesus Christ, the shining of light in the darkness. As and because He, Jesus, is the acting Subject, the dominating Character, the warring Hero, it has this orientation. And because it has it, this declaration concerning Him is the first and final word to be said about it. If it is to be presented correctly, we must also say that the opponent which contradicts and resists the prophecy of Jesus Christ is also revealed as such and will be taken seriously in its own way. Otherwise it could not be a history, and could not be narrated as such. Nevertheless, the first and decisive requirement in the narration is that it should manifest the One who acts in it, and

that He should be revealed throughout as the Lord who does not need to fear the storm on the lake, but possesses and uses the power to still it with His Word of command. The title of this sub-section is designed to emphasise this decisive requirement for an understanding of what is to be said at this point.

A critical delimitation is demanded. Might we not adopt instead the title and slogan: "The Triumph of Grace"? This would actually indicate what falls to be indicated. Grace is undoubtedly an apt and profound and at the right point necessary paraphrase of the name Jesus. As Jesus conquers, there triumphs in Him the manifested grace of God (Tit. 2¹¹). But the statement needed is so central and powerful that it is better not to paraphrase the name of Jesus, but to name it. "Triumph of Grace" might at any rate give rise to the impression that what is meant to be indicated is the victory of one principle, that of grace, over another which is to be described as evil, sin, the devil or death. But we are not concerned here with the precedence, victory or triumph of a principle, even though the principle be that of grace. We are concerned with the living person of Jesus Christ. Strictly, it is not grace, but He Himself as its Bearer, Bringer and Revealer, who is the Victory, the light which is not overwhelmed by darkness, but before which darkness must yield until it is itself overwhelmed. He Himself is present as the Victor from the very outset. He is life; in Him the covenant is fulfilled; in Him reconciliation is effected; in Him is everything which, again in Him, shines out into the world around. He makes Himself known as He makes known the name and kingdom and will of God on earth. It is in this self-declaration that He is superior to the contradiction and opposition brought against Him. In this context, therefore, "Jesus is Victor" is better than "The Triumph of Grace."

It is not by accident that I refer to this alternative and emphasise that I prefer not to choose it. *The Triumph of Grace* is the title of a book by G. C. Berkouwer which appeared in Dutch in 1954, in English in 1956 and in German in 1957, and which under this slogan dealt with my previous theological work, and particularly with the *Church Dogmatics* so far as it was then in print. Already in the Preface to IV, 2, I have referred to this work with the respect which it deserves. I can only join in according it the recognition which it has won in many different circles on account of its wide range of knowledge and reading, its perspicuous and penetrating mode of exposition and the sharpness and balance of its criticisms. And Berkouwer has undoubtedly laid his finger on an important point. I must admit, however, that I was taken aback when I saw the title given to his book. If I am in a sense understood by its clever and faithful author, yet in the last resort cannot think that I am genuinely understood for all his care and honesty, this is connected with the fact that he tries to understand me under this title. If my guess is right, it was an incidental remark of H. U. von Balthasar, to the effect that Christianity is for me an absolutely "triumphant affair," which inclined Berkouwer to adopt this title. This is something which can be said, though I should prefer not to say it of Christianity. Nor can we describe the expression as unbiblical in view of the Pauline *θριαμβεύειν*. Yet understood thematically, and in connexion with the