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— Now is —

ETERNITY

Comfort and Wisdom for Difficult Hours

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NOW IS ETERNITY

Comfort and Wisdom for Difficult Hours

**Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt &
Johann Christoph Blumhardt**



THE PLOUGH PUBLISHING HOUSE

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In memoriam

WINIFRED M. HILDEL

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SOURCES

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Is there no herd of men like beasts
 where man may go?
Come home at last; come, end of loneliness...
to our thin dying souls against Eternity pressed.

S T E P H E N S P E N D E R

PREFACE

“THE DEEPEST NEED each of us has, even if we are not conscious of it, is that of eternal life.” With these words Christoph F. Blumhardt uncovers the root cause of so much that has gone wrong in modern life: the loss of any awareness of eternity. For most people nowadays, it is the temporal and transitory things of life that are most important. That is not surprising, for those things are immediate, tangible, and visible. But it is still lamentable, because it means that the eternal dimension of life – that part of it that is divine and thus enduring – falls by the wayside, unnoticed and unacknowledged.

When eternity is forgotten, human destiny is robbed of its real significance, and the goal of life limited to the search for fulfillment on an earthly

plane. Remembered, it enlarges our view and, through what is best and noblest in us, reminds us of the promise of another home on a higher plane: the world from which we come, and to which we must one day return. To be mindful of eternity is to know that our earthly existence will one day be overshadowed by the eternal reality of everlasting life.

Anyone who opens our minds to this knowledge does us a great service. That is why the words collected here, unassuming and simple as they are, are so powerful, and so significant. For Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880) and his son, Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842–1919), “eternity” is not just another word for the hereafter – for some vague, future haven where the souls of the departed find rest. No. For them eternity is a present reality whose transformative power is already breaking into time, and whose

glory is already visible here and there, wherever there are eyes to see it. And so for us, it is a guide and a beacon, a source of strength, a fountain of hope that never fails. We need this hope urgently, no less than we need our daily bread.

The Editors
December 1999

IF WE ARE NOT ACTIVE as part of a whole, working toward a higher goal, we will deteriorate inwardly and outwardly. Only if our hearts are in a task greater than ourselves will we thrive in earthly matters too. Society will deteriorate, physically and spiritually, unless each of its members has a task to fulfill for the sake of the common good and for creation – for God.

WHETHER we are aware of it or not, eternity is our only joy. It strengthens us in our earthly life, which is ephemeral without eternity. Anything we might hope for in life, everything we have that brings us joy, is connected with the name of Jesus, the heavenly jewel sent us by the Father. And so, in the measure that we share in his name, the years of our life will be enfolded in heavenly things.

TO FEEL CLOSE to God is a great comfort. It is depressing to feel alone and forsaken, to think that we have been left to our own resources and must rely on our own strength. I would not want to live a single day without being able to feel that God's angels are around me, and around the whole world. I cannot live one day without believing that we are never alone.

IT IS WONDERFUL to know what we live for, to know that what we do for our Lord is never wasted but will bear fruit in eternity. Yet we must not forget that whatever good we accomplish is not the result of our own strength. It happens only through the blood of Christ. If we forget this, all our efforts will fail, because we will lack the incentive to dispense with worthless things and seek the truth. Oh, how hard it is to draw oneself out of the vanity of one's own life!

PERHAPS the greatest danger that threatens us comes from being overly involved in the small, ordinary happenings of daily life – from becoming so enslaved by them that they fill our heart and soul. To go about life in this way is to go about unprotected, unaware, distracted, and removed from reality. Let us never allow ourselves to be dragged down by pettiness, or take the things of this earth so seriously that they burden us day after day. Let us live constantly in the Promise.

