

**Nicholas Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures on Religion***

The Saviour is tied to absolutely nothing. He will not be dictated to. Each instance takes its course. The Holy Spirit portrays Jesus to souls; He preaches His wounds. To one this happens distinctly, to another indistinctly.

Therefore, my friends, Methodism, which tells people how a man is begotten again, is in danger of becoming absurd. And for this reason a man's own endeavor to explain to people how he was begotten again is also totally futile, because the man himself does not know, nor can he know, how he was begotten again. One man is begotten again in his cradle; another in the mother's womb; the third in the midst of his dead, natural condition, in his ignorance; the fourth on the occasion of great good fortune; the fifth on the occasion of a misfortune; one young, the other old; one in his last hour, the other near the very first beginning of his life. In a word, the new begetting, when the Spirit from God comes into the heart, when Jesus Christ with His five wounds is formed in us, when we are allotted to Him in heaven above—this is a divine moment.

I will call faith *fiducia implicita* and *explicita*. Faith as it is in our own selves shall be called *fiducia implicita*, and faith which is manifested to others, which unfolds itself, shall be called *fiducia explicita*. Now both of them, when they are together, are such that they make the man who has them unspeakably happy and even here manifest eternal life. But in any event, if they cannot be together, it is sufficient if only the first is there, the undisclosed but affective believing within the heart. And this faith within the heart which one has within himself I also view from two perspectives: the first is "faith-in-distress" and the second is "faith-in-love."

No man can create faith in himself. Something must happen to him which Luther calls "the divine work in us," which changes us, gives us new birth, and makes us completely different people in heart, spirit, mind, and all our powers.

The distress which we feel is the distress of the soul when we become poor, when we see we have no Saviour, when we are palpably aware of our misery. We see our corruption on all sides and are really anxious because of it. Then afterwards it happens as with patients who have reached the point of crisis; they watch for help, for someone who can help them out of their distress, and accept the first offer of aid without making an exact examination or investigation of the person who helps them.

This is faith-in-distress. And here I can never wonder enough at the blindness and ignorance of those people who are supposed to handle the divine word and convert men, for example the Jews and heathen, those abortive "so-called Christians" (who are indeed as blind as Jews and heathen) who think that if they have them memorize the catechism or get a book of sermons into their heads or, at most, present all sorts of well-reasoned demonstrations concerning the divine being and attributes, thus funneling the truths and knowledge into their heads, that this is the sovereign means to their conversion. But this is such a preposterous method.

But what results from this faith-in-distress, from this blind faith which one has out of love for one's own salvation? What comes of a bold trust in the physician that he can and shall help,

without knowing his name and who he is, without having known and seen him before, without having clearly sensed what sort and nature of man he is? Thankful love results from it. So it is exactly with faith-in-distress, it has to do completely with an unknown man, yet with a man of whom the heart says, “He likes to help, he likes to comfort, and he can and will help.”

All this is still *fides implicita*, the faith which is God’s work in the heart in the middle of our stillness, when we and He have to do with each other alone, where nothing comes between us and Him—no man, no book, no knowledge, no learning, not even the most necessary truths—but only the distress, the sinner’s shame, and the faithfulness of the Shepherd.

“It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified!” (Galatians 3:1)

Therefore, if something real is to reach our heart, if we are to love the Creator in the beauty of His suffering, then He must certainly appear before the heart; He must show Himself.

One person attains to it more incontestably and powerfully, the other more gently and mildly; but in one moment both attain to this, that in reality and truth one has the Creator of all things, the fatherly Power, the God of the entire world, standing in his suffering form, in His penitential form, in the form of one atoning for the whole human race—this individual object stands before the vision of one’s heart, before the eyes of one’s spirit, before one’s inward man.

That is the *Crinomenon*, the deciding factor. “Do you want me? Do you receive me? Do I suit you? Am I acceptable to you? Do I please your heart? See, here I am! This is the way I look. For your sake I was made to be sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and for your sake I was made a curse (Gal. 3:13); for the sake of your sin I was torn, beaten, and put to death. I have laid down my life for your sake. Does this suit you? Is this important to you? Are you satisfied with me? Do I in this way please you?”

Now this is the entrance to this state, that one receives Him at that moment, looks at Him longingly, and falls in love with Him, that one says, “It is true; now I can do nothing more, now I want nothing more. Yes, God Creator, Holy Spirit! My eyes have seen your *soterion* (Luke 2:30), they have seen your little Jesus; my heart has wept for joy when His nail prints, His wounds, His bloody side stood before my heart. You know this.” Then our perdition is at an end; then flesh and blood have lost.

[What is the pledge that I am a child of God?] It is nothing other than the frank and free testimony from their own hearts: “I believe that my Creator is my Saviour; I believe that He who made me is my Husband; I believe that my Husband, by His own blood, by His real death on the tree of the cross, has placed me in a privileged position; I believe that there is a point in time when my Creator Jesus Christ will wed me, body and soul.”

Then you will have to stand and say at last, “It is good that Jesus is my Creator and my God, that He is the God over everything.” But what an observation this is, that my Creator has laid down His life for me! All your theology, all your theosophy, insight, and knowledge, will be caught up in this as the central point: all this will run together into the wounded heart of Jesus, it will disappear and be lost in love. Nothing greater, nothing higher can be thought of.