

## **J.C. Blumhardt: Another Kind of Healer**

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Throughout its history, divine healing has been of great interest to the Christian church.<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the early church, Adolph von Harnack could quite rightly say, “Christianity never lost hold of its innate principle; it was, and it remained, a religion for the sick,”<sup>2</sup> but the comment could be applied equally well to any period. During the latter half of the twentieth century in particular, healing has attracted a great deal of both popular and scholarly attention.<sup>3</sup>

Those claimed to be healers differ widely among themselves. Perhaps the image that comes to mind most readily is the stereotypical, Pentecostal evangelist such as Oral Roberts laying hands on long lines of people and praying with passion. Or, by contrast, one might think of Brother André, “The Wonder Man of Mount Royal,” whose heart is embalmed and on view at St. Joseph’s Oratory, Montreal and who is well on his way to canonization.

In this paper, I will focus on Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805-1880), who is largely unknown outside of his native Germany. His obscurity can be accounted for in a number of ways: (1) most of his own writings and other relevant sources are available only in German; and (2) contact between Germany and the English-speaking world was disrupted by World War One at a time when he might have become known. However, (3) even more significant to his marginalization was the fact that he was seriously out of step with the intellectual *Zeitgeist* of late-nineteenth-century Europe.<sup>4</sup>

Those who knew him differ widely in their impressions. With evan-

gelistic zeal, and riding the receding wave of modernism, Rudolf Bultmann could say, “the Blumhardt legends are to my mind preposterous,”<sup>5</sup> while Karl Barth called him “. . . one of the most remarkable men of the nineteenth century . . .”<sup>6</sup> I want to bring Blumhardt out of the shadows because he stands unique among healers. There are three factors which set him apart: the general course of his life; his healing ministry; and his impact on Karl Barth.

### ***The Biography***

Johann Christoph Blumhardt was born in Stuttgart, Germany on 16 July 1805, and he died at Bad Boll on 25 February 1880. His family was typical of south German pietism, but there have been questions raised regarding his adherence to that religious stance.<sup>7</sup> After preparatory studies in Stuttgart and Schöndal, he went to Tübingen in 1824 where he spent five years studying philology, history, mathematics and philosophy before turning to theology.<sup>8</sup>

There are two comments which can be made regarding Blumhardt’s education. First, it covered a relatively broad theological spectrum. He read pietists Georg C. Knapp and F.A.G. Tholuck, among many others, but he was also thoroughly familiar with the work of rationalists K.G. Bretschneider and F.C. Baur, and he had also studied F.D.E. Schleiermacher intensively.<sup>9</sup> Second, Blumhardt’s education gave him facility with ancient languages. The theological exams which he wrote to qualify for ministry are held in the Archiv of the Überkirchenrat of the Württembergischen Landeskirche in Stuttgart. He wrote some of his answers in Latin. In addition to that, at one point in his career he taught Hebrew,<sup>10</sup> and later introduced his sons, Christoph and Theophil, to these languages as well as to Greek.<sup>11</sup>

The impression one gets is that Blumhardt was highly literate theologically,<sup>12</sup> an impression that is strengthened by visiting his library which is held at the European headquarters of the Brüder-Unität in Bad Boll. Along with a large number of secular works by authors like Cicero, Herodotus, Shakespeare, Goethe and Schiller, it contains exegetical works such as H.A.W. Meyer’s *Kritisch exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament* and Keil and Delitzsch’s commentaries on the Old Testament. One also finds historical material like C.J. Hefele’s *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera*, Philip Schaff’s *Geschichte der Alte Kirche* and Zwingli’s *Werke* in

eight volumes. While one cannot be certain that all these books belonged to Blumhardt, certainly most of them did.

Here is a strong theological foundation. Ernst Rüschi makes the point that when Blumhardt later laid aside much of the theology common in his day in the light of experiences in ministry, he did it in full knowledge of the critical scientific tradition and of the most important theological currents of his time, not in a vacuum.<sup>13</sup>

This preparation did lead to a full life of ministry. Blumhardt was on the records of the Württembergischen Landeskirche from 1829 to 1880.<sup>14</sup> He served as an assistant in Dürrmenz during 1829 and 1830 and as a teacher and an administrator under an uncle at a missionary training institution in Basel (1830-1837). Here he had encounters with the “spirit world” which became relevant later. In 1837-38 he was a temporary parish administrator in Iptingen,<sup>15</sup> and on 23 September 1838 he was installed as pastor at Möttlingen.<sup>16</sup> There he had experiences which utterly changed his life.

There was one more move in Blumhardt’s career. In 1852 some friends helped him buy a 129-room mansion at Bad Boll from King Wilhelm I of Württemberg.<sup>17</sup> On 15 April he wrote happily to a friend, “Boll ist mein . . .”<sup>18</sup> While there, he was twice elected to attend the National Synod of the State Church (1869 and 1874).<sup>19</sup> He travelled extensively, accepting invitations to speak in many places including Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Köln and Frankfurt.<sup>20</sup>

One final comment remains to be made with regard to Blumhardt’s biography, and that has to do with his son, Christoph. Christoph eventually became deeply involved in the work at Bad Boll. When his father died in 1880, he succeeded him. However, what is even more striking is the degree to which he identified with his father’s thought. Many scholars have observed that the lives and minds of the two are inseparable, and refer to them as the “Blumhardts” or the “older and younger Blumhardt.”<sup>21</sup> However, in one important area the two differed: the younger Blumhardt gave their thought a decidedly more political twist, joining the Social Democratic Party and serving as an elected member of parliament from 1900 to 1906.

### ***The Healing Ministry***

Any sketch of Johann Christoph Blumhardt's life would be completely beyond understanding without a discussion of his ministry of healing. Beginning during his tenure at Möttlingen, 1838-1852, it was that which catapulted him to fame.<sup>22</sup> There were three phases to his healing ministry with the first involving the exorcism of a 28-year-old woman.

Gottliebin Dittus took ill in December 1841.<sup>23</sup> The symptoms were repeated episodes of physical rigidity, with arching of the body, thrashing of the head from side to side, and foaming at the mouth. In addition to this, Gottlieben reported seeing spirits drifting about the room and feeling sharp blows as though someone were hitting her. Occasionally, she was thrown violently to the floor. After several months of unsuccessful medical treatment, Blumhardt felt constrained to become involved through prayer.<sup>24</sup> Having prayed and watched carefully, he decided that the source of the difficulty must be demonic.<sup>25</sup> On 6 June 1842, having watched Gottlieben trash in a convulsion, in Blumhardt's words, he leaped to the bedside, pressed her stiff fingers together as in prayer, and ordered, "Put your hands together and pray 'Lord Jesus, help me!' We have seen for long enough what the devil does; now we want to see what Jesus can do!" Slowly Gottlieben prayed, and the convulsion stopped. For Blumhardt, "this was the decisive moment at which I threw myself with irresistible strength into a response to the affair."<sup>26</sup> This intervention launched them into difficult waters.

In a letter to Christian Gottlob Barth, his predecessor at Möttlingen, on 2 July 1842, Blumhardt shared his opinion that they were not just confronting a demonic presence, but that Gottlieben was often under the complete control of evil spirits, i.e., demon possessed, and he confessed his inability to describe what he had seen over the previous eight days.<sup>27</sup> Then on 27 July 1842, Blumhardt wrote his wife's parents telling them, with a kind of wonder, that on one day he had cast 157 spirits out of the woman.<sup>28</sup> However, the battle was not over. Symptoms persisted and Blumhardt continued to pray. In response to advice, he added fasting to his arsenal as the conflict continued.<sup>29</sup>

The climax came at 2 a.m., 28 December 1843.<sup>30</sup> With a number of other people present, Blumhardt was praying with Gottlieben when her sister, Katharina, began to act strangely. She became threatening and, in Blumhardt's words, roared superhumanly. He took that as demonic and

began to pray. Suddenly, at tremendous volume she shrieked, “Jesus ist Sieger!” (Jesus is victor!) and fell silent.<sup>31</sup> Both women experienced immediate freedom.

The importance of these events for Blumhardt, not to mention Gottlieben, cannot be overestimated. He came to see that the exorcism had significance not only for one sickroom, but for the whole cosmos. He saw that Jesus had come and had utterly, finally destroyed the devil’s rule. The exorcism which he had witnessed demonstrated the ongoing impotence of the devil before the might of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> Blumhardt ultimately developed a theology of the Rule (Kingdom) of God, but, as Sauter put it, “the expression ‘Rule of God’ is now only the abstract concentration of the sentence ‘Jesus is victor!’”<sup>33</sup> 140 years before Jürgen Moltmann, Blumhardt became “. . . a theologian of hope.”<sup>34</sup>

The immediate result of the exorcism, and the second phase of Blumhardt’s healing ministry, was a deep spiritual awakening. Vernard Eller writes,

Jesus’ victory in the demented girl immediately triggered an in-breaking of kingdom power that transformed the entire village of Möttlingen and attracted people from miles around. The congregation experienced revival to a degree quite beyond even the dreams – let alone the actual accomplishments – of modern programs of church growth and renewal.<sup>35</sup>

Doris Blumhardt, Johann’s wife, wrote to her parents describing the spread of the renewal, noting both the numbers of people attending evening services and the women’s Bible study at which 50 people were in attendance.<sup>36</sup> The Rev. W. Guest’s sources talked about the church building and the churchyard frequently being filled with people, while others listened to sermons from neighbouring houses.<sup>37</sup>

It was an awakening marked by repentance. People came to Blumhardt one by one. As Karl Barth says, “unbidden, but irresistably, people came to him to confess what they had to confess, and he for his part saw himself compelled, unsought, unasked, governed by no preconceived theory, to absolve them in the name of God with a quite unpriestly objectivity.”<sup>38</sup>

Of course, there were claims to healings. There never has been any attempt to compile a complete record of them, and Blumhardt himself

chose to divert attention from them. Apparently, people were cured while Blumhardt preached or while he counselled with them, but often without any special act on his part; no special prayer, or laying on of hands, or anointing with oil.<sup>39</sup> In this awakening the miraculous was an ancillary to the more important work of spiritual healing upon which emphasis was placed.

The last phase of Blumhardt's healing ministry began in 1852. Late in the previous year Doris Blumhardt had written to a friend saying that they could not carry on in Möttlingen. They were looking for a place like an old monastery where Blumhardt could devote himself to his call to children and to the sick.<sup>40</sup> They did not find a monastery, but what became the "Kurhaus" at Bad Boll was a more than acceptable substitute.

As people began to flock there,<sup>41</sup> a daily routine emerged at Bad Boll. It was very important to Blumhardt that his guests should experience a restful, calm atmosphere,<sup>42</sup> so people were free to rest, stroll in the grounds or go for coach rides, but they were counselled to take part in the spiritual life of the house by being present at the four common meals each day and by attending the church services which were held at 10 a.m. on Sunday and Thursday. At meals there could be up to 150 persons present, seated along two long tables with a third cross table at the top of the room. Blumhardt would say grace before meals, and then after eating he would read a Bible text from a devotional book, acknowledge the birthdays of former patients and visitors, and deliver a brief address. The meal-time would end with the singing of a hymn, often with music composed by Blumhardt, and with a prayer of thanksgiving.<sup>43</sup>

In keeping with his concern for tranquility, Blumhardt's approach to healing was understated. He never pushed himself on his guests. He would remain in his place after meals, making it easy for people who wished private counsel or prayer to approach, to make appointments and then meet with him in his study. There were no healing services, no prayer lines, relatively little emotion, and no expansive promises. He would say to those who came, "If you are healed, it is from God. If you are not, God will give you strength to bear it."<sup>44</sup> It should also be noted that Blumhardt had no hesitation about making referrals to physicians.<sup>45</sup> Without doubt, Blumhardt's place in history has been earned by his healing ministry. It was widely known, and it stands as unique among those who have prayed for the sick. However, he is not known only for his work with the physically and emotionally distressed.

***The Impact on Karl Barth***

In attempting to measure Blumhardt's significance, people have noted that the medical community has expressed some interest in him as a possible forerunner to modern psychotherapy,<sup>46</sup> that with his son he was a major source for European religious socialism,<sup>47</sup> and that his work was among those in Europe which stimulated the healing movement which erupted in the United States in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup> He and his son were also of importance to European theologians. Donald Dayton's list of those who felt the Blumhardtian presence includes Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Oscar Cullmann and Jürgen Moltmann.<sup>49</sup> To this list, Vernard Eller has added Eduard Thurneysen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Jacques Ellul.<sup>50</sup>

Johann Christoph Blumhardt was, however, particularly important for Karl Barth.<sup>51</sup> Through the agency of his close friend, Eduard Thurneysen, Barth spent 10-15 April 1915 at Bad Boll where he met and talked with Christoph (Johann's son) Blumhardt.<sup>52</sup> Soon after returning home, Barth read the biography of Blumhardt by Friedrich Zündel. He then wrote Thurneysen saying, ". . . I finished reading the book on Blumhardt today, mainly with a feeling of shame. Along side such a man I see how very small I am."<sup>53</sup> Obviously, Barth had come to a very high opinion regarding Blumhardt. He frequently placed him with important figures in the theological world,<sup>54</sup> and he identified him as one of the three whom he calls ". . . my mentors."<sup>55</sup>

The concept from Blumhardt which assumed crucial importance for Barth was **hope**.<sup>56</sup> The eloquence of Barth's summation comes across even in translation:

What appeared again in Boll that was new and in accord with the New Testament can be comprehended in one word: hope – hope for a visible and tangible appearing of the lordship of God over the world (in contrast to the simple, and so often blasphemous, talking about God's omnipotence); hope for radical help and deliverance from the former state of the world (in opposition to that soothing and appeasing attitude which must everywhere come to a halt before unalterable 'relationships'); hope for all, for mankind (in contrast to the selfish concern for one's own salvation and to all the attempts to raise up religious supermen and aristocrats); hope for the physical side of life as well as for the spiritual, in the sense that not only sin and sorrow, but also poverty, sickness, and death shall one day be abolished (in

contrast to a purely spiritual ideal of the so-called ‘religious-moral’ life). To believe in ‘God’ meant, for the two Blumhardts, to take this comprehensive hope seriously, more seriously than all other considerations; to regard and deal with everything on the basis of this hope; to place one’s self and one’s life in all particulars in the light of this hope. This new hope is all along the line and in all points down to the present day a total contrast to the general religion of churches and pastors of all denominations.<sup>57</sup>

Barth thought that Blumhardt had forced a series of questions back onto the table of academic theology; “the question of theodicy, of the universality of revelation and grace, of the practical significance of the New Testament miracles, of the unity of soul and body, of the real power of reconciliation, of the character and presence of the Holy Spirit and the reality of Christian hope.”<sup>58</sup> But Barth saw academic theology pushing the questions aside, ignoring them because Blumhardt had raised them in a pastoral setting rather than in a suitably academic context. Barth went on: “the moment had to come and did come which brought the insight that there was something decisive to be learnt here – for academic theology.”<sup>59</sup> Barth does not say precisely when that moment came. He may have felt that it had arrived in him, himself. He, Karl Barth, would foreground Blumhardt’s questions, forcing academicians to take them seriously. He had embraced the Blumhardtian hope, resting on the belief in the living God who acts, and he had done so in a personal *kairos*.

By 1915 Barth had become disillusioned with his teachers and their theology as he saw them endorsing the German war effort,<sup>60</sup> while the tragedy of the war itself had undermined the dream that Christoph Blumhardt and many others had had that the Social Democratic Party would have a major role to play in establishing the Rule of God.<sup>61</sup> In James D. Smart’s words, Barth was looking for “. . . a new and less readily adaptable basis for the Church’s message.”<sup>62</sup> Enter Blumhardt. Barth’s indebtedness to Blumhardt expressed itself in two primary areas: soteriology and eschatology.<sup>63</sup>

In the first area, the theme is “Jesus ist Sieger!” Barth believed that in Jesus God had “. . . marched against that realm on the left . . .” overcome it, bound its forces and brought the destroyer himself to destruction.<sup>64</sup> Barth believed in the devil – “the devil certainly exists and is at work. We have to reckon with him . . .” – but he had been defeated by

Jesus.<sup>65</sup>

Smart describes the way in which Barth, and his friend Eduard Thurneyson approached theology as

the attempt to think through all the problems of the church's theology, taking with complete seriousness that the God of whom theology speaks is a God who is living and acting in relation to us at the very moment that we speak. We think of him, speak of him, and write of him not as an object of our thought that is at our disposal, but as a person who confronts us in all the reality of his being as whose mind concerning us determines all things in our existence.<sup>66</sup>

This is “. . . none other than the Blumhardt vision of the living God, God who acts here and now in the power of his Spirit.”<sup>67</sup>

When Barth came to apply this to sickness, a topic I raise because of its importance to Blumhardt, he made a remarkable statement: “with God they [Christians] 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.”<sup>68</sup> We hear Barth submitting himself to Blumhardt's idea of revelation while at the same time struggling with the irrationality that the submission involved. Sickness was a part of the “kingdom of the left” that had been defeated by Jesus.

The second area in which Blumhardt influenced Barth was eschatology. It is widely recognized that this is a dominant motif in Barth's work.<sup>69</sup> Barth believed that the church had lost sight of eschatology for hundreds of years to rediscover it only in the late-nineteenth, early-twentieth centuries. He was convinced that one of the primary factors in bringing the future back into the mind of the church was “. . . the message of the kingdom of God expounded by the older and the younger Blumhardt . . .”<sup>70</sup> He saw Blumhardt as playing a critical role in reorienting, rebalancing the thinking of the church by pressing upon it the hope that it has in Jesus. Blumhardt, the healer, played a major role in shaping Barth, the theologian.

### ***Conclusion***

Christian interest in divine healing has shown itself in many ways

through the years, and it is receiving special attention in the latter half of the twentieth century. In discussions of the subject, Johann Christoph Blumhardt must not be overlooked. His remarkable education and diverse career, his healing ministry with its calm, confident emphasis on the victorious Jesus, and his significant impact on no less a theologian than Karl Barth mark him as a different kind of healer: “Jesus ist Sieger!”

### ***Endnotes***

1. I am defining divine healing as the restoration of health through the direct intervention of God.
2. *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Theological Translation Library, trans. and ed., James Moffats, no. 19 (London: Williams and Norgate), 109.
3. Literature representing the scholarly analyses include works by Victor G. Dawe, “The Attitude of the Early Church toward Sickness and Healing,” (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1955); Raymond J. Cunningham, “From Holiness to Healing: The Faith Cure in America 1872-1892,” *Church History* 43 (1974): 499-513; Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Paul G. Chappell, “The Divine Healing Movement in America,” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1983); Morton T. Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); and Aline Rousselle, *Croire et guérir: la foi en Gaule dans l’Antiquité Tardive* (Paris: Fayard, 1990). See also my paper “Jesus, Saints and Relics: Approaching the Early Church Through Healing,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1993): 91-104.
4. Vernard Eller (*Thy Kingdom Come: A Blumhardt Reader* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], xvii), and Donald W. Dayton (*Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* [Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1987], 216), note that he and his son, Christoph, whose ministry was inseparably intertwined with his, are virtually unknown in North America. This is true in spite of a Princeton dissertation (William G. Bodamer, Jr., “The Life and Work of Johann Christoph Blumhardt” [Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1966]) and at least two dictionary articles (William Korn, “Blumhardt, Johann Christoph,” *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. G.G. Cohen [Marshallton, DE: The National Foundation for Christian Education, 1968], 123; and Wayne Detzler, “Blumhardt, Johann Christoph (1805-1880),” *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, eds. J.D. Douglas, E.E. Cairns, and J.E.

Ruark [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974], 138). Pierre Scherding pointed to a similar obscurity in Europe earlier in this century (*Christoph Blumhardt et son père: essai sur un mouvement de réalisme chrétien*, in *Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse*, no. 34 [Paris: F. Alcan, 1937], 9). It would be appropriate to note here that Blumhardt scholars are concerned to distance him from modern healers and fanatics (Interview with Gerhard Schäfer, Stuttgart, Germany, 31 July 1990; Dieter Ising, ed., *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991], 14; Interview with Seigfried Bayer, Bad Boll, Germany, 1 August 1990; and Walter Nigg, "Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Heiliger der Neuzeit," in *Wie Heilig ist der Mensch*, ed. Wolfgang Böhme, *Herrenabler Texte*, no. 69 [Baden: Evangelische Akademie, 1986], 38).

5. Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Lohmeyer, Julius Schniewind, Helmut Thielicke and Austin Farrer, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. H.W. Bartsch, trans. R.H. Fuller (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 120.
6. Karl Barth, "Friedrich Naumann and Christoph Blumhardt," in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson, trans. K.R. Crom (Richmond, VI: John Knox, 1968), 40.
7. Gerhard Schäfer, "Johann Christoph Blumhardt Bausteine zu einer Biographie," *Johann Christoph Blumhardt – Leuchtende Liebe zu den Menschen: Beiträge zu Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: J.F. Steinkopf, 1981), 27; and Nigg, "Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Heiliger der Neuzeit," 35.
8. E.G. Rüsçh, "Bermerken zum theologischen Studiengang J.C. Blumhardts," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 13 (1957): 103. He also showed interest in medical questions (Gerhard Schäfer, ed., *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Gesammelte Werke* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979], vol. 1, part 1, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Der Kampf in Möttlingen, Texte*, eds. Gerhard Schäfer and Paul Ernst, ix).
9. Rüsçh, "Bermerken zum theologischen Studiengang J.C. Blumhardts," 108.
10. Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 23.
11. On one occasion, he wrote to them while they were at university offering to send them some sentences in these three languages to help them brush up on their grammar" (Johann Christoph Blumhardt to Christoph and Theophil, Bad Boll, 12 February 1861," in Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 50.

12. In the judgment of some, he showed a high level of sophistication in the way in which he handled scripture (see Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 22; and Schäfer, ed., *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, part 2, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Blätter aus Bad Boll*, ed. Paul Ernst, 257).
13. Rüschi, "Bermerken zum theologischen Studiengang J.C. Blumhardts," 108.
14. Archiv, Überkirchenrat, Württembergischen Landeskirche, Stuttgart.
15. Schäfer, "Johann Christoph Blumhardt Bausteine zu einer Biographie," 26ff.
16. Archiv, Überkirchenrat, Württembergischen Landeskirche, Stuttgart.
17. See "Blumhardt to Luise von Scheibler, Möttlingen, 24 November 1851," Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 46; Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 28; and Ernst, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt*, v.
18. "Blumhardt to Christian Gottlob Barth, Möttlingen, 15 April 1852," Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 47.
19. Schäfer, "Johann Christoph Blumhardt Bausteine zu einer Biographie," 23.
20. Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 54ff.
21. See Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 21; Eller, *Thy Kingdom Come: A Blumhardt Reader*, xiv; and Robert Lejeune, *Christoph Blumhardt and His Message*, trans. Hela Ehrlich and Nicoline Maas (Rifton, NY: Plough, 1963), 16.
22. There has been considerable discussion regarding the validity of the claims to healing associated with Blumhardt. M.T. Schulz says that there is no readily defensible proof in support of them (*Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Leben-Theologie-Verkündigung*, *Arbeiten zur Pastoraltheologie*, ed. Martin Fischer and Robert Frick, no. 19 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984], 68), but a nineteenth-century author who stitched together eye witness accounts of Bad Boll refers to a professor of medicine from Tübingen who reviewed letters sent to Blumhardt in which people testified to healings. Apparently the professor found it increasingly difficult to doubt the reality of the cures (W. Guest, *Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, intro. Rev. C.H. Blumhardt [Johann Christoph's brother] [London: Morgan and Scott, 1881], 60). At this point, perhaps the best one can say is that some of the claims would be more difficult to explain without reference to God than others, but it would be impossible to go beyond that. However they are to be judged, the claims to healing are what made Blumhardt's ministry.  
 The issue of the verification of miracles is surrounded with difficulty. It would be unfair, or impossible, to insist that science offer unequivocal

judgments regarding the miraculous, or to refuse to acknowledge the miraculous because science will not grant its imprimatur to an event. Epistemologically, scientists are professionally competent to comment on the physical, but not on the metaphysical. Biology, for example, is within their purview: theology is not. Presuppositions, especially the absence or presence of belief in a God who directly heals illness, will determine the view which one takes of inexplicable recoveries of health. René Latourelle offers three criteria which may assist in identifying a miracle: (1) there must be solid historical evidence that the event, or recovery, in question actually occurred; (2) the recovery must be something unusual or difficult to believe; (3) the recovery must have taken place in a setting of prayer and holiness. Latourelle adds that the miraculous nature of an event is fatally compromised if there is “. . . the slightest appearance of frivolity, extravagance, or suspect morality. Anything smacking of trickery, emotional excitement, charlatanry, fakery, oddity, greediness, or self-interest, or giving any hint of the occult or spiritualism or hypnosis or magic, is alien to the truly miraculous” (*The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles*, trans. M.J. O’Connell [New York: Paulist, 1988], 310-313).

23. It is assumed that she had contacted witchcraft through an aunt. See Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*; Schäfer, ed., *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1, part 2, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Der Kampf in Möttlingen, Anmerkungen*, eds., Gerhard Schäfer and Paul Ernst, 24; Schäfer, “Johann Christoph Blumhardt Bausteine zu einer Biographie,” 30; and Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 33.
24. Friedrich Zündel, *Pfarrer Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Lebensbild*, 5th ed. (Zürich: S. Höhr, 1887), 127.
25. Johann Christoph Blumhardt, “Krankheitsgeschichte der G[ottlieben] D[ittus] in Möttlingen,” in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Schäfer, vol. 1, part 1, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Der Kampf in Möttlingen, Texte*, eds. Gerhard Schäfer and Paul Ernst, 40. Gerhard Schäfer and Paul Ernst suggest that the biblical material regarding Jesus’ interaction with demons provided the theological foundation for Blumhardt’s conclusion (*Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Schäfer, vol. 1, part 1, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Der Kampf in Möttlingen, Texte*, eds. Gerhard Schäfer and Paul Ernst, x).
26. Blumhardt, “Krankheitsgeschichte,” 40.
27. “Blumhardt to Barth, Möttlingen, 2 July 1842,” Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 36ff.
28. “Blumhardt to Karl and Maria Köllner, Möttlingen, 27 July 1842,” Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 38.

29. Blumhardt, "Krankheitsgeschichte," 49; and Interview with Christian Tröbst, recently retired pastor of Bad Boll, Bad Boll, 1 August 1990.
30. Blumhardt, "Krankheitsgeschichte," 76.
31. There is some discussion over which of the women actually spoke the critical words. Ising, Schäfer and Ernst all review the evidence, pointing out that the confusion stems from Blumhardt himself (Schäfer, ed., *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1, part 2, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Der Kampf in Möttlingen, Anmerkungen*, eds., Gerhard Schäfer and Paul Ernst, 113). Karl Barth (*Church Dogmatics*, eds. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961], IV, 3, i, 169), and Vernard Eller (*Thy Kingdom Come: A Blumhardt Reader*, xviii) adhere closely to the text of the "Krankheitsgeschichte" (75) and insist that it was Katharina who was involved.
32. Schäfer, "Johann Christoph Blumhardt Bausteine zu einer Biographie," 37ff; Gerhard Sauter, *Die Theologie des Reich Gottes beim älteren und jüngeren Blumhardt*, *Studien zur Dogmengeschiede und systematischen Theologie*, no. 14 (Zürich-Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1962), 35; and Lejeune, *Christoph Blumhardt and His Message*, 20.
33. Sauter, *Die Theologie des Reich Gottes beim älteren und jüngeren Blumhardt*, 24.
34. Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background & History*, trans. Brian Cozens (London: SCM, 1972), 645; and Guest, *Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, 20ff.
35. Eller, *Thy Kingdom Come: A Blumhardt Reader*, xviii.
36. Doris Blumhardt, to Karl and Maria Köllner, Möttlingen, 23-24 April and 14-15 May 1844, in Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 41.
37. Guest, *Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, 31.
38. Barth, *Protestant Theology*, 645. Many have commented on this absolution, which took on almost sacramental significance (see Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 26; and Lejeune, *Christoph Blumhardt and His Message*, 23).
39. Lejeune says, "Blumhardt did not look for it [healing] in any way; he often did not even know about it" (*Christoph Blumhardt and His Message*, 23). See also Schulz, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Leben-Theologie-Verkündigung*, 69.

40. "Doris Blumhardt to Luise von Scheibler, Möttlingen, 30 October 1851," Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 46.
41. They came from many levels of society and from all over Europe as well as from England and America (Interview with Tröbst; Guest, *Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, 46; and Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 30). They stayed for long or short periods of time (Interview with Schäfer), paying low fees which were further reduced for invalid missionaries and the poor. Some, university students for example, could stay without charge while some of the wealthy voluntarily paid extra in order to cover costs (Guest, *Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, 45, 75).
42. Interview with Schäfer; see also Guest, *Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, 59, 66.
43. Interview with Tröbst. See also Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 29; and Guest, *Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, 48ff, 75. Opinions on Blumhardt's preaching varied. Guest's sources thought it was quite good (51), while someone named Bardili, who reported on Blumhardt and Bad Boll for the State Church, was not as impressed ("A Report to the Stuttgart Ministerial authority by Bardili regarding Johann Christoph Blumhardt and Bad Boll, Stuttgart, 26 August 1853," in Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Ein Brevier*, 48).
44. Interview with Schäfer; Guest, *Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, 52; and Scherding, *Christoph Blumhardt et son père*, 29. Among all the authorities I consulted, only Guest made reference to an ability Blumhardt apparently had to discern in advance whether a person would be healed or not (*Pastor Blumhardt and His Work*, 57).
45. Interview with Schäfer.
46. Joachim Scharfenberg, "Blumhardt, Johann Christoph (1805-1880)," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 6: 726.
47. Donald W. Dayton, "The Radical Message of Evangelical Christianity," in *Church in Struggle*, ed. W. Tabb (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), 216.
48. Other important ministries were those of Dorothea Trudel and Otto Stockmayer, both of Switzerland (see Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 121; Cunningham, "From Holiness to Healing," 501; and R.M. Riss, "Faith Homes," *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, eds. S.M. Burgess, G.B. McGee, and P.H. Alexander [Grand Rapids: Regency

Reference Library, 1988], 298). The inspiration which Blumhardt and the others provided lay in the direction of establishing what came to be known as “healing homes” in the United States to which those who were sick could come for rest and prayer. In 1887 a prominent member of the healing movement, R. Kelso Carter, said, “There are over thirty ‘faith homes’ in America to-day” (*Faith Healing* “Reviewed after Twenty Years” [Boston: The Christian Witness Company, 1897]; cited in Russell Kelso Carter, “Faith Healing,” in *The Higher Christian Life: Sources for the Study of the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Keswick Movements*, ed. Donald W. Dayton [New York and London: Garland, 1985], 35).

49. Dayton, “The Radical Message of Evangelical Christianity,” 216.
50. Eller, *Thy Kingdom Come: A Blumhardt Reader*, xivff.
51. Arnold B. Come, *An Introduction to Barth’s Dogmatics for Preachers* (London: SCM, 1963), 33. And this in spite of Barth’s being rather dismissive of Blumhardt theologically. He emphasized that Blumhardt’s thinking is not a clearly developed system, and suggested that among theologians Blumhardt was a “completely unarmed warrior” (*Protestant Theology*, 643, 647). James D. Smart agrees with such an assessment (“Eduard Thurneysen: Pastor-Theologian,” *Theology Today* 16 [1959]: 83). It will become apparent that Barth did not have as low a view of Blumhardt as these comments imply. However, I still think the judgment he and Smart have made is harsh. There is a great deal of important theological reflection, for example, in *Gesammelte Auffässe, Gesammelte Werke von Joh. Christoph Blumhardt*, ed. Christoph Blumhardt, vol. 3, *Besprechung wichtiger Glaubensfragen* (Karlsruhe: Evangelischen Schriftenverein für Baden, 1888), 76-105. Blumhardt was far from being an “unarmed warrior.”  
 Gerhard Sauter, in what is perhaps the definitive discussion of Blumhardtian theology to date, argues that the Blumhardts’ theology is, in fact, systematic in that it is centred on a particular idea (*Die Theologie des reich Gottes beim älteren und jüngeren Blumhardt*, 12). Later he says, “All of Blumhardt’s statements are fundamentally a development of this sentence: Jesus ist Sieger!” (23). Sauter’s discussion focuses on the Blumhardts’ concept of the Rule of God, but it also deals with other ideas such as their pneumatology and their understanding of sin and sickness.
52. See Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1976), 84.
53. Karl Barth to Eduard Thurneysen, 14 June 1915,” *The Beginnings – Karl Barth’s Theology in the Early Period*, vol. 1 of *Revolutionary Theology in the Making*, trans. James D. Smart (London: Epworth, 1964), 30.

54. He places Blumhardt beside Kierkegaard, Calvin, Overbeck and Dostoevsky (*The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. E.C. Hoskyns [London: Oxford, 1933], 29, 252; and *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923/24*, ed. Dietrich Risch, trans. G.W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], xv).
55. Karl Barth, *Letters, 1961-1968*, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, trans. and ed. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 251. The other two were Leonhardt Ragaz and Hermann Kutter.
56. See Busch, *Karl Barth*, 85.
57. Barth, "Friedrich Naumann and Christoph Blumhardt," 41.
58. *Protestant Theology*, 652.
59. *Protestant Theology*, 652ff.
60. See Smart, "Eduard Thurneysen: Pastor-Theologian," 78; and Come, *Introduction to Barth's Dogmatics*, 33.
61. *Church Dogmatics*, II, 1, 634; and "Friedrich Naumann and Christoph Blumhardt," 44.
62. Smart, "Eduard Thurneysen: Pastor-Theologian," 78.
63. This is suggested by Barth himself: he states that for the Blumhardts God was the living God ". . . in the double sense that they wanted to understand him as the bible does, as the one who lives, from whom new deeds, power, and proofs are to be expected, and that they wanted to seek for and await his Kingdom not only in the souls of individual men or in a distant heaven, but above all and first of all in life, precisely in the 'real' life of men on earth" ("Friedrich Naumann and Christoph Blumhardt," 41). In *Protestant Theology* he describes the two-fold perspective that developed at Bad Boll as the belief in ". . . the present help and grace of God in the individual and the promise of an imminent appearance of his glory to all the world" (646).
64. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 368.
65. *Church Dogmatics*, IV, 3, i, 260; and *Protestant Theology*, 645.
66. Smart, "Eduard Thurneysen: Pastor-Theologian," 84.
67. Smart, "Eduard Thurneysen: Pastor-Theologian," 84.
68. *Church Dogmatics*, III, 4, 368.

69. See Eduard Thurneysen, "Introduction," *The Beginnings – Karl Barth's Theology in the Early Period*, 16; and Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology, 1910-1931* (London: SCM, 1962), 36, 71.
70. *Church Dogmatics*, II, 1, 633.