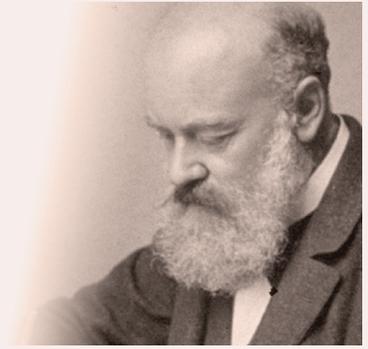


Everyone Belongs to God

Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt



It's harder to lead people out of the swamp of their Christianity than out of the barbarity of sin and unbelief (Matthew 23). After all, so many Christians have become nothing more than whitewashed barbarians living in self deception.

— C. F. Blumhardt, *Everyone Belongs to God*

By all accounts, the focus and emphasis of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842-1919) on the amazing grace and love of God was and is remarkably similar to our mission in the pages of *CWRm*—faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone. While 2019 marks the 100th anniversary of Blumhardt's death, the relevance of his teaching and ministry rings so true for our day that it seems virtually prophetic.

Early in his adult life, Blumhardt served both church and state. He was a religious professional in the institutional church in Germany and served in civil government as a member of parliament in Wurttemberg, a territory and state within Germany. But as Blumhardt grew in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, he found his Christ-centered faith and devotion alienated him from both organized religion and politics.

Blumhardt became increasingly convinced that the “gospel of the Christians” had little or nothing to do with the authentic gospel proclaimed by Jesus. Blumhardt insisted that the gospel had been adulterated and corrupted by the Christ-less religion that holds sway in much of Christendom.

He left the big business of religion, and even though he was stripped of his credentials and the stamp of approval of religious authorities, Blumhardt continued to teach and write.

His daughter married a missionary who served in China, and the advice he shared in letters written to his son-in-law missionary hit the nail on the head for the world of Christendom in our day. Here are some excerpts:

Our Western Christianity is in a terrible mess. The church is tolerated only because it is the prop of the state and the broader culture. Together, they have become the “ruler of this world” with God reduced to an ornament for those in power. —p. 19

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The institutional churches, in their so-called wisdom, too often use their power to crush the free stirring of the Spirit, or at best ignore it. —p. 23

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Why is it so hard for people to imagine anyone coming to God without walking through church doors? —p. 31

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Aggressive attempts at evangelizing do not spring from the love of God, but from the spirit of business. —p. 45

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Today's missionaries often make the grave mistake of acting like professors instructing students, while at the same time churches and Christian societies carry on like industrialists, measuring everything in terms of “success.” —p. 58

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Our task is to spread the gospel of Christ, not the gospel of Christians. —p. 83

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Give yourself completely to this one fact: God loves the world. Don't let anything interfere with this truth. Even when you can't quite grasp it, believe in God's love, which is for all people. —p. 90

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Don't consider yourself as blessed and others who don't believe as condemned. Instead, consider everyone you meet who has yet to come to faith to be under God's blessing. Learn to die daily to yourself, for you too, if you are honest, are in some ways a “pagan,” even though you can testify that you have heard and believed in the gospel. Beware of the grave danger of becoming arrogant simply because you know something that others don't. —pp. 110-111 □

Excerpts from Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt, Everyone Belongs to God (Plough, 2015). UBP.