**Foreword for the new edition**

Zündel’s “Jesus Book” and the “Blumhardt-Zündel Guide to the New Testament” are aimed at earnestseekers and particularly students of theology. This is the first time that these two writings, belonging together in essence and movedby ***one*** spiritwill be publishedtogether although each volume is self-contained and can stand alone.

These are texts that have been out of print for decades and are now available again; the volumes “Seelsorge”, “Predigten” and Zündel’s biography of Blumhardt (Plough Publ., 2015) are appearing in their entirety for the first time in one hundred years, and Blumhardt’s commentary on the Gospel of Matthew is appearing for the first time as an independent publication. It is to be hoped that the unique value that Blumhardt’s and Zündel’s works can have for the education of future pastors and priests will soon be recognized within theological faculties, Protestant as well as Catholic.

The meeting of the young Zündel with Blumhardt[[1]](#footnote-2), his spiritual mentor, was a significant and great moment. One can hardly gauge how much the experiences they underwent have stimulated and guided following generations, particularly believers, up tothe present day.

In order to better understand the three main works of Zündel, published when he was of an advanced age – the Blumhardt biography, the “Jesus Book” and “Aus der Apostelzeit” – it is helpful to know a little more of Johann Christoph Blumhardt. In a selection of his writings[[2]](#footnote-3)Otto Bruder says of him: [[3]](#footnote-4)

“What raises Blumhardt above his time and why his word still carries so much weight today is due to the “realities” attested and revealed to him in the bible: the actuality of the glory of the power of God, the triumph of Christ, the rule of the exalted Lord and the power of the redemption of sins, which are seen by him neither as historical events from the past, nor as experiences of earlier times which today might only have relevance for life in the hereafter; the book not only records the former deeds of God but shows through the word of the scriptures, if it is heard and believed, that God will ***today***manifest as the all-powerful and triumphant in Jesus Christ and be revealed in even greater abundance than we have experienced up till now.

“This approach of Blumhardt’s means something new for the Protestant Churchin the last four hundred years,inasmuch as that now a man has recognized that the events in the Bible and their reflection in the words of the prophets and apostles are not merelysomething intellectual that transcends our everyday experiences and aimed solely at the saving of the individual soul, but are the manifestation of the sovereign deeds of the living God. These deeds were not brought to an end with the conclusion of the biblical documents,theycontinue to emerge and be uninterruptedly wrought by God, and would today intervene even more deeply into the earthly being until they bring about a creation liberated from all sin and darkness if only an expectant community existed on earthwhichwould place itself at God’s disposal as an instrument for His work of salvation.”

Blumhardt experienced a decisive incident in the healing of the possessed Gottliebin Dittus in his Möttlingen parish in the year 1843. If one reads carefully his report to the superior church authorities regarding this,[[4]](#footnote-5) it becomes clear how deeply Blumhardt – quite against his will – was drawn into the realms of the demonical and how this world revealed itself to him as ***living reality*** in such a way that one, appalled at this abyss, would rather close one’s eyes against it and dismiss it as non-existent.[[5]](#footnote-6)However, in connection with the circumstances attendant on the healing of Gottliebin Dittus and her sister Katharina[[6]](#footnote-7), Blumhardt experienced an influx of divine powers to his parish and the gradual, ***profound*** “awakening” of the same. There was ***not a singleperson*** in the parish who did not appear penitently in Blumhardt’s study during the following weeks and months to reveal his or her sins to the Lord. Blumhardt remarks that “everyone had to come at least three times; others, who found no peace while a fragmentstill remained unconfessed, had to come six to eight times.”[[7]](#footnote-8) That we are not dealing with easy word games but with valid ***realities*** that endure in the eyes of our FATHER can be seen in certain concomitant circumstances, recorded in Blumhardt’s letters, insofar as such things are accessible to human judgement.[[8]](#footnote-9)

After Blumhardt’s first great experience – the healing of Dittus– and the ***second***, even ***greater***, the movement of repentance in his parish, followed, as Zündel states, “a third, no less wonderful and auspicious for the whole: ***the miracles***. This appearance also, as is the nature of it, did not come through him but obviously from above. In this succession of important experiences of the powerful and gracious influence from the highest source there lies an inimitable divine logic. For Blumhardt himself it was the language of God bordering on revelation which overwhelmed everything in him and steadied him almost prophetically. This third experience was of course not sharply demarcated from the second, as this was from the first, but grew organically from the second.”[[9]](#footnote-10)

These were the circumstances in which the young Zündel, shortly after beginning his study of engineering in 1845, made the acquaintance of Blumhardt in Möttlingen.

It would certainly be in accordance with the wishes of Blumhardt and Zündel if their persons were to retreat to the background in favour of what is decisive here – to allow faith ***to become lived reality***. With this brief insight into the yearning and longing of Blumhardt much that is essential is also said of Zündel. With regard to his personal development and his close relationship to Blumhardt we would refer you to the foreword by Georg Merz to “Aus der Apostelzeit.”

On the occasion of the new edition of Zündel’s writings we would like to glance at the ***sources***on which Zündel based his observations. They are particularly the four gospels, as well as the continuation of Luke’s gospel, the story of the apostles, and the most important letters of Paul and the other apostles. For the credibility of these sources F.F. Bruce remarks:[[10]](#footnote-11)

“It is a peculiar fact that historians are frequently more willing to acknowledge the texts of the New Testament than are some theologians.[[11]](#footnote-12) There are those who regard any “holy book” *ipso facto*with suspicion and demand much more confirmation for its authenticity than they would for any ordinary secular or heathen text. From the standpoint of the historian, however, the same standards are to be applied to both ( … ).

“The all-encompassing aspiration of the New Testament for humankind is absolute. The character and deeds of its main figure are so completely without parallels that it would not be amiss if we were to assure its historical reliability as above that of other texts. Indeed, it must remain undisputed that there is a greater body of evidence for the New Testament than for other ancient texts from a period that would allow comparisons to be drawn. There are at least three thousand Greek manuscripts of the New Testament that render it fully or in part. The best of these go back to roughly AD 350. The two most important are the *Codex Vaticanus*, the greatest treasure in the Vatican library in Rome, and the well-known *Codex Sinaiticus* that was discovered most adventurously by the German scientist Tischendorf in St. Catherine’s Monastery in Sinai in 1859 [[12]](#footnote-13).

“Perhaps we can gauge most readily how rich the New Testament is in attestations in manuscript form when we compare the text material with other ancient and historical works. From Caesar’s*Gallic Wars* (written between 58 and 50 BC) there are several existing manuscripts of which, however, only nine or ten are good – ***the oldest was written 900 years after Caesar’s lifetime***![[13]](#footnote-14)

How completely different is the case with the New Testament!”

We can see, therefore, that the body of source material for the textual transmission of the gospels is vastly better than is the case, for instance, withCaesar’s*De bello gallico*. Hardly anyone would seriously doubt that there had been Gallic wars, or even that Caesar actually lived – but in the case of Jesus? Those who fundamentally question the transmission history of the gospels presumably have other, rather more private, reasons for this.

Further particulars dealing with the writing of the gospels have been for generations the object of intensive textual criticism and comparative philological research. Today we may assume, as the result of immense scholarly effort since the time of Erasmus of Rotterdam, ***that the foundation of the New Testament had been completed between the years AD 80 and 110***. Mark, who never heard Jesus in person but did hear the lectures of Peter, his companion and interpreter, wrote his gospel around the year 70; Matthew between the years 80 and 90; and Luke, Paul’s companion, wrote his report around the year 90, that is, about thirty years after his arrest in Rome (AD 60-62). As John’s gospel, in contrast to the synoptic gospels, was not known to the Christian scribes of the first half of the second century (according to Ignatius of Antioch) this seems to indicate its origin from AD 110 onward.[[14]](#footnote-15) The lapse of time between the writing of the originals and the earliest codex to have come down to us is, according to Frederic Kenyon, “so short that it can practically be ignored, and any remaining doubts that the scriptures have not indeed been handed down to us as they were writtencan be allayed. The credibility as well as the authenticity of the books of the New Testament can be regarded as proven.”[[15]](#footnote-16)

Apart from the canon of the New Testament, which was obviously already completed in the form we know today during the first third of the second century, a second important source was available to Zündel for the preparation of his material: the close relationship to Johann Christoph Blumhardt and the profound experiences connected with this.

It is not easy to understand what Blumhardt represented for Zündel and his career. As a young student at the polytechnic in Stuttgart, young Zündel used to walk the entire Saturday night through so that he would be in time to listen to Blumhardt in the church in Möttlingen on Sunday morning. He would eat lunch in the parsonage before starting back in the evening on his eight-hour walk back to Stuttgart.[[16]](#footnote-17) At this time Blumhardt had already done “violent” battle with the powers of darkness from which he had emerged triumphant and which resulted in his becoming the natural focal point of an ***awakening movement*** which gradually embraced ***all*** members of his Möttlingen parish. Here, at this time and at this place, the heavens opened for the parish so that the joyous message “the kingdom of God is nigh” could become an ***everyday reality*** in the hearts of all.

Equipped with the rich treasure of such experiences as well as the extraordinary events and attestations in Bad Boll, Blumhardt and Zündel investigated the occurrences inthe life of Jesus and the apostles and attempted to understand them. They will have occasionally said to one another, “Yes, just as in Möttlingen and Bad Boll, this is what it must have been like for our Lord Jesus and his disciples!”

Blumhardt (father) and his son Christoph were very much aware of the importance of the intense conversations with Zündel in Möttlingen and later in Bad Boll. In the obituary Christoph remarks, “From the urge to make divine deeds practicable in our doubting world, Zündel complied with my wish to publish the substance of our conversations regarding the life of Jesus and also our mutual thoughts on the era of the apostles and the apostles themselves.”[[17]](#footnote-18)

The Blumhardt-Zündel guide is to be understood, in the words of Karl Barthreferring to Overbeck, Blumhardt and Zündel:[[18]](#footnote-19) as “a resubmission of the files”, as a “***renewed*** enquiry intotoday’s theology”. Thus he saysas early as 1920 in a lecture on “pending enquiries on today’s theology”:

“How was it possible that the early protagonists of the theology that is today dominant could ignore a colleague like Franz Overbeck and remain so indifferent and so untroubled by the questions which he put to them? How could they possibly have been content to admire his historical scholarship and then deem it sufficient to congratulate themselves on the futility of his ‘purely negative approach’ and shake their heads in astonishment and disapproval at the fact that he was and remained a professor of theology in spite of himself and the world’s opinion?

Some of us have long puzzled over how it happened that at that time (I mean thirty years ago) theologians managed to pay no attention at all to the older and younger Blumhardt and their friends. There would have been something significant to learn - as later developments prove – from the books of Friedrich Zündel, for example. Theology would have been spared all sorts of round-about ways and false paths if we had let ourselves hear it. Were Blumhardt and Zündel too monolithic for us, too pietistic, too unscientific and technically inaccurate? That refusal to listen must be confessed, hard as it is for us to put ourselves back into the lofty academic atmosphere so characteristic of that time, which obviously closed many otherwise attentive ears to sounds from that direction.

But – we must ask today – why then did no one listen to Overbeck? If theologians were unwilling to give further consideration to the rather too murky performances at Möttlingen because the stumbling-block was much too great for the spirit of the time, why did they not turn to consider all the more carefully the equally promising and the closer stumbling-block offered them by the *Christlichkeit der heutigen Theologie* (The Christian-ness of Present Day Theology)?

Actually, Blumhardt and Overbeck stand close together; back to back, if you like, and very different in disposition, in terminology, in their mental worlds, in their experience, but essentially together. Blumhardt stood as a forward-looking and hopeful Overbeck; Overbeck as a backward-looking, critical Blumhardt. Each was the witness to the mission of the other.

Why did no one listen to Overbeck? He was no pietist, no believer in miracles, no obscurantist; he was as acute, as stylishly elegant, as free from all assumptions as could be desired. Was it because we wanted no stumbling-block at all that we did not allow ourselves to hear the call to our real task, even when it was given by a critical Blumhardt, the senior of the Basel Faculty? If we keep before our eyes only this one refusal, can we ever again hold the Lord God responsible for the slow and meandering course of the movement of Christian thought? Can we wonder, when we consider the opportunities missed, that the signs of the time in theology and church today point so definitely to deviation and disintegration? Should not those who today stand secure on the conclusions established by the consummation of the old war against orthodoxy and the like now in all seriousness turn back to the place where so many fruitful possibilities were disregarded? Such were the questions which occupied me as I read C.A. Bernoulli’s edition of Overbeck’s papers.”[[19]](#footnote-20)

The text for this edition is based on the last one that was published in Zündel’s lifetime and in it, diverging somewhat from the Georg Merz 1923 edition, we have included nearly all the author’s footnotes. For the index of biblical references – which was created in order to be used! – we could rely on the thorough groundwork undertaken by Merz. In particular I would like to thank Hans-Henning Mey who was always unfailingly reliable and untiring in dealing with all questions pertaining to this new edition.

This “Jesus book” is intendedmore as an aid to thought, to visualization and experiencing rather than to be merely “read through”. I will take the liberty here of expressing a wish: that this book will become a faithful companion along the reader’s way, offering stimulation, support and guidance and that with constantperusal will come alive and, if the reader so permits, will renew life and have a fruitful and invigorating effect on it.

Johann Christoph Blumhardt and Friedrich Zündel were truly filled with the spirit of God. May their writings, now being republished as a unit, serveas a valuable inspiration to priests and pastors in preaching the living word of God in their parishes.

St. Goar and Lübeck

*Leibniz Verlag, Matthias Bernhard Dräger*

1. In the following text “Blumhardt“ refers invariably to Johann Christoph Blumhardt (the father, 1805-1880). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Gotthelf Verlag, Zurich 1947; New edition Gotthelf Verlag, Brunnen Verlag & Franz Verlag, Gießen 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Otto Bruder in der Einleitung zu J. C. Blumhardt: “Schriftauslegung", Gotthelf Verlag, Zürich 1947, S. XI. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Johann Christoph Blumhardt: “Blumhardts Geisterkampf in Möttlingen”, Verlag Dienst am Volk, 1850. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Ultimately this is a too comfortable attitude – it is tothe disadvantage of many sufferers, the cause of whose sickness cannot be treated and who therefore cannot be helped. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Katharina’s cry “Jesus is victor! Jesus is victor!” on the December 28, 1843, at two o’clock in the morning was “heard by half the village” according to Dieter Ising in his biography of Blumhardt, “People do not speak of it much, but an amazement and a quaking made itself felt throughout the village.” Dieter Ising: Johann Christoph Blumhardt. Life and Work. A New Biography. Cascade Books, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Blumhardt to his friend and colleague Christian Gottlob Barth, letter of January 27, 1844, printed in: Johann Christoph Blumhardt: Briefe vol. 3: Möttlinger Briefe 1838-1852. Ed. Dieter Ising. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Cf. remarks inthe chapter “The movement of repentance” in the biography by Zündel which is based on more than a dozen diary-like letters from the first half of 1844 from Blumhardt to his predecessor in Möttlingen (1834-1938), the pastor Christian Gottlob Barth. It was very painful for Blumhardt that his colleagues in the clergy (regrettably also C.G. Barth) did not recognize the generality of this movement nor its necessity and that because of the isolated position that Blumhardt involuntarily took due to this development in his parish, they even referred to it disparagingly as “Blumhardt’s special theory” and even (according to Zündel) accused him of “approaching Catholicism”. The movement, which was put in motion without any assistance on the part of Blumhardt, became close to his heart which is why the chapter “The movement of repentance” from his biography is to appear as a separate pamphlet with appurtenant documents.

   The chapter “Möttlingen” in the new Blumhardt biography by Dieter Ising also yields many interesting details on the awakening of the Möttlingen parish from 1844 and on the reactions hereto of other parishes. Dieter Ising: Johann Christoph Blumhardt. Life and Work. A New Biography. Cascade Books, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Beginning of the chapter “The Miracles” in the Blumhardt biography. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Frederick Fyvie Bruce: Sind die neutestamentlichen Dokumente zuverlässig? R. Brockhaus Verlag, Wuppertal-Vohwinkel 1953. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Historians such as Eduard Meyer, A.T. Olmstead and Ramsay have protested vehemently against the strong scepticism evinced by several theologians when researching the historical texts of the New Testament. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. The British government purchased this Codex from the Russian government in 1933 for 100,000 pounds sterling.

    Two other exceptionally early manuscripts are the *Codex Alexandrinus* (also in the British Museum) which was written in the 5th century; and the *Codex Bezae* (in the University Library of Cambridge), written in the 5th or 6th century, which includes the gospels and the story of the apostles in Greek and Latin. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. And further: “Of the 142 books of *The History of Rome* by Livius (55BC toAD 17) only 35 still exist and we only know of 20 manuscripts that are of some importance. Of these, only one (containing fragments of books III-VI) is from the 4th century. Of the 14 books of *History* by Tacitus (from c. AD 100) only four and one half are complete. Of the 16 books of his *Annals*, ten complete books and two in partstill exist. The text of the existing parts of his two great works of history are based on two manuscripts of which one is from the 9th and the other from the 11th century. The existing manuscripts of further works (*Germania, Agricola* and *Dialogus de Oratoribus*) are corroborated by a codex from the 10th century.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. The timeframes pertaining to the writing of the gospels in this chapter are based mainly on the considerations of Udo Schnelle in: “Einleitung in das Neue Testament”, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 6th revised edition, Göttingen 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Sir Frederic George Kenyon, former director of the British Museum and acknowledged expert on the evaluation of ancient manuscripts in: “The Bible and Archaeology” Harper & Brothers, New York, London 1940, p. 288ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. “Auf den Spuren Friedrich Zündels”, Sekretariat der Evang. Gesllschaft, Zurich 1927, p. 5.

    Christoph Blumhardt, who at this time had just been born, recounts from his family’s tales regarding this time: “As a youth of about 17 he used to walk frequently from Stuttgart to be in my parents’ house on Sundays where they took him in as a son. There he drew in the whole joy of those days, the joy felt by hundreds of people in the deeds of a living God and one which nobody who had experienced it ever forgot.” C. Blumhardt in: “Einige Gedanken in Erinnerung an meinen Freund Zündel”, Chr. Scheufele, Stuttgart 1891, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. C. Blumhardt: “Einige Gedanken…”, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Printed in Karl Barth: “Theology and Church, Shorter Writings 1920-1928. Trans. Louise Pettibone Smith. New York and Evanston, Harper & Row p.55-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Franz Overbeck: “Christentum und Kultur. Gedanken und Anmerkungen zur modernen Theologie”, published from the estate of Carl Albrecht Bernoulli, Verlag Benno Schwabe & Co, Basel 1919. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)