

# Christianity and the Christian Church of the First Three Centuries



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FERDINAND CHRISTIAN BAUR

*Edited by Peter C. Hodgson*

*Translated by Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson*



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## CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

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# Editor's Foreword

PETER C. HODGSON

Baur published *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* in 1853. It was followed by a second, revised edition in 1860 (the year of his death), which was reprinted as a third edition in 1863 with a revised title, *Kirchengeschichte der drei ersten Jahrhunderte*.<sup>1</sup> The title was revised to accord with the issuing of the remaining volumes of his church history by his son Ferdinand Friedrich Baur and his son-in-law Eduard Zeller. The last two volumes (from the Reformation to the middle of the nineteenth century) were based on Baur's lecture notes; the third volume (on the middle ages) on a manuscript Baur prepared for the press before his death; and the first two volumes on his own published editions.

Allan Menzies (1845–1916), a Scottish pastor and later a professor of divinity and biblical criticism at the University of St. Andrews, translated the third edition of the first volume as *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*.<sup>2</sup> Menzies, who a few years earlier had translated Baur's *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, revised and completed an earlier version of the church history started by the Oxford philosopher T. H. Green.<sup>3</sup> The Menzies translation is written in a rather stilted Victorian English, and it often uses circumlocutions or introduces terms into the translation that are not found

1. *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte*, 1st ed. (Tübingen: Fues, 1853); 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Fues, 1860); 3rd ed., identical with the 2nd, published under the title *Kirchengeschichte der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen: Fues, 1863). Reprint of the 2nd ed. in *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. Klaus Scholder, vol. 3 (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1966). For a bibliography of works by and about Baur, see *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Bauspiess, Christof Landmesser, and David Lincicum; trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 391–401. The German edition, without a bibliography, is *Ferdinand Christian Baur und die Geschichte des frühen Christentums* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2014).

2. 2 vols., London and Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1878–79.

3. On Green's involvement, see the "Note by the Translator" at the beginning of vol. 2, and the remark by James Carleton Paget in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity* (n. 1), 319.

in the German text, most notoriously in a few instances the category of “race.”<sup>4</sup> Its translation of the title of the third edition obscures the fact that Baur himself intended to distinguish between “Christianity” as the original phenomenon and the “church” as the institution that arose from it.<sup>5</sup> For these reasons, we have decided it would be worthwhile to prepare a new translation of the first volume, called *Christianity and the Christian Church of the First Three Centuries*, based on the second edition of 1860, to accompany our translation of the final volume, called *Church and Theology in the Nineteenth Century*.<sup>6</sup> Another consideration is that a group of German, British, and American scholars has recently produced a volume of essays that we have brought out in English as *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity* (see n. 1). It has reawakened interest in the way Baur interprets the period covered by the present book.

In his Preface to the First Edition, Baur says he holds to the convictions set forth the previous year in *Die Epochen der kirchlichen Geschichtsschreibung*,<sup>7</sup> which is intended as an introduction to the present work and explains the general principles that guide his treatment of church history. In his other historical studies, whether of the history of Christian dogma, or of specific doctrines, or of the New Testament, Baur provided an introduction that surveys the history of the discipline in question. In the case of the church history, he published a separate book that identifies six “epochs” in the writing of church history: the supernaturalist or old Catholic view of history (from Hegesippus to the Middle Ages, with a focus on Eusebius), the Reformation and the old Protestant view of history (the *Magdeburg Centuries*, written by Matthias Flacius and others), Catholic and Protestant opposition to the *Centuries* (Caesar Baronius and Gottfried Arnold), the gradual transition from a dualistic worldview to a conception of historical development (J. L. Mosheim, J. S. Semler, C. W. F. Walch), the pragmatic method of historiography (L. T. Spittler, G. J. Planck, H. P. K. Henke), and the quest for an objective view of history (Philipp Marheineke, August Neander, J. K. L. Gieseler, Karl Hase). While the focus is Germanic, the work does provide information not generally accessible to English readers. The final chapter of “conclusions and suggestions” sets forth Baur’s own methodological principles.

4. Compare Menzies’ translation of a passage on pp. 17–18 of vol. 1 with the German text on pp. 16–17 and our version below, p. 17.

5. In the Preface to the First Edition, Baur writes that the church “takes shape” from Christianity (p. xxiv); and in Part Three that the idea of a catholic church “emerges” from Christianity (p. 142).

6. *Kirchengeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Eduard Zeller, 1st ed. (Tübingen: Fues, 1862); 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Fues’s Verlag [R. Reisland], 1877). Reprint of the 1st ed. in *Ausgewählte Werke* (n.1), vol. 4 (1970). ET of the 1st ed.: *Church and Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson; trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018).

7. Tübingen: Fues, 1852. Reprint in *Ausgewählte Werke* (n. 1), vol. 2 (1963). Translated by Peter C. Hodgson as *The Epochs of Church Historiography* in *Ferdinand Christian Baur: On the Writing of Church History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). The translation has deficiencies but is still usable.

In his Preface to the present volume, Baur says that he simply deals “with what is purely historical, what is historically given, insofar as it is possible to understand it in its pure objectivity.” As a summary of his interpretation of history, this statement is very limited and misleading. The question is what constitutes the “pure objectivity” of the historically given. From the *Epochs* it becomes clear that this objectivity does not simply consist of empirical facts as opposed to the subjective biases and interests of “pragmatic” historiography. The objectivity of history is constituted by the interweaving of what is called “the idea” with the various historical materials in which it manifests itself. “The history of the Christian church is the movement of the idea of the church, and therefore consists of something more than a succession of changes following one another at random.” This idea “must possess within itself the living impulse to go out from itself and to become actualized in a series of manifestations.”<sup>8</sup> The difference between pre-Reformation and post-Reformation historiography is that, in the pre-Reformation period the idea of the church simply merges into identity with the historical Catholic Church, while after the Reformation there is an endeavor “just as much to retract the idea from the reality of the visible church” and to hold idea and reality both together and apart in a dialectical tension.<sup>9</sup> This tensive relationship of idea and reality (or manifestation) is the key to Baur’s historiography.

What is the idea of the church? The following passage from the *Epochs* provides a crucial explanation:

The church is the real form (*reale Form*) in which Christianity is made manifest (*zu seiner Erscheinung kommt*). If we inquire about the idea of the church, we inquire, therefore, about Christianity itself. . . . Christianity can be essentially nothing other than that which the Christian consciousness of all times, in whatever form it may have occurred, has perceived (*angeschaut*) in the person of Christ: the unity and union (*Einheit*) of God and the human being. However else we may conceive the essence of Christianity—as everything it is intended to be for human beings in its various aspects, such as the revelation of absolute truth, the establishment of redemption, reconciliation, blessing—it has its absolute conception and expression in the unity and union of God and

8. *Epochs*, 241–42. In a footnote Baur says that this view represents a progression from the “empirical” standpoint to what Schelling called the “universal” or “absolute” standpoint. He quotes a lengthy passage from Friedrich Schelling’s *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studium* (Stuttgart and Tübingen: Gotta’schen, 1803), 216 ff., which ends as follows: “History does not satisfy reason until the empirical causes that satisfy the understanding have served to disclose the works of a higher necessity. Treated in this way, history cannot fail to strike us as the greatest and most marvelous drama, which only an infinite spirit could have composed” (translation from *On University Studies*, trans. E. S. Morgan [Athens: Ohio University Press, 1966], 107). This quotation demonstrates the extent to which Baur was influenced by Schelling’s interpretation of history (see esp. chaps. 8 and 10 of the *Vorlesungen*) before he found confirmation and elaboration of it in Hegel. On Schelling, Hegel, and Baur, see Martin Wendte, “Ferdinand Christian Baur: A Historically Informed Idealist of a Distinctive Kind,” in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity* (n. 1), ch. 3.

9. *Epochs*, 243.

the human being, as that unity is perceived in the person of Christ, and in this perception becomes a fact of Christian consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

The church is the “real form” in which Christianity is made manifest or comes into historical appearance. Actually, the person of Christ is the paradigmatic form, to which all the others are subordinate. Baur goes on to say that the major components in the historical development of the church are also “forms” in which the idea realizes itself. These major forms are *dogma* (doctrine, theology, thought), *institutional governance* (*Verfassung*, meaning the episcopal hierarchy for the Catholic Church and congregational-synodal governance for the Protestant churches), *external relations*, and *moral-religious and cultic practices*. All of these forms are present in every period of the church, but one predominates in each period. As we shall see, this becomes a structuring device for the church history as a whole.<sup>11</sup>

So the idea of the church is the idea of Christianity itself, the idea of God in reconciling communion with human beings as perceived in Christ. This idea does not float above history or intervene in the historical nexus as a supernatural or miraculous causality. Rather it is *constitutive* of Christian history itself, indeed of history as such because the idea is perceived in other forms and figures as well. Baur's conception is remarkably similar to what Hegel says in his philosophy of world history, that the divine idea and human passions “form the weft and the warp in the fabric that world history spreads before us.” The divine idea is like a shuttle that drives back and forth across the warp of human passions, weaving the fabric of world history, which gradually assumes the pattern of ethical freedom. History is a divine-human production in which the idea provides the guiding propulsive power and the passions the material substrate.<sup>12</sup> The “perception” (*Anschauung*) human beings have of this idea is not a sensible perception but rather an intellectual vision or intuition, a spiritual knowing that entails faith.

Baur rarely if ever makes reference to Hegel's philosophy of world history, and in *Christianity and the Christian Church of the First Three Centuries* he downplays his philosophical views because here he wants to stress his historical-critical, scientific method. He is sensitive to the charge of “Hegelianism,” and he defends the Tübingen School against the accusation that it constructs history a priori. The rigor of his historical approach is evident in all his writings. He is able to follow the historical evidence wherever it leads him because he is confident that history is the medium of divine revelation and the manifestation of divine purpose, no matter how tragically

10. *Epochs*, 244, slightly revised.

11. *Epochs*, 244–45. In the *Epochs*, only the first two forms are mentioned, but it became evident as Baur wrote the first volume of the church history, and as he acknowledged in the Preface to the First Edition, that an analysis focusing on dogma and governance alone is insufficient.

12. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, vol. 1, *Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822–3*, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011), 147.

entangled it becomes as a result of human frailty. In this sense his Schellingian and Hegelian “panentheism” is a liberation that allows him to engage freely in New Testament criticism and church-historical research.

Baur famously wrote in an early publication that “without philosophy, history remains for me forever dead and mute.”<sup>13</sup> An eloquent elaboration of this conviction is found much later in his lectures on church and theology in the nineteenth century.

What would the metaphysical truth be without its historical mediation, if it did not actualize itself in the consciousness of humanity by appearing in history, and doing so not merely in scattered individuals but in the organic nexus of historical development, thus emerging out of the abstract region of philosophy into the concrete life of religion, and becoming part of the collective consciousness of a religious and ecclesial community? And what, on the other hand, would the historical aspect be—everything that has objectified itself in such a broad scope in the history of humanity and has been incorporated into human consciousness—how subjective and contingent would it be in all its external objectivity if it could not also be grasped in its true objectivity, and thus in the final analysis as a metaphysical truth grounded in the essence of God himself? Thus it is always a matter here of the vital conjunction of the two opposed aspects, the metaphysical and the historical.<sup>14</sup>

Metaphysical truth is historically mediated, and historical events are metaphysically grounded. Expressed in theological terms, God is in history, and history is in God. God is in history as the ideality that moves history (non-coercively) toward freedom, redemption, and reconciliation. History is in God as an aspect of the divine milieu in which the ideality of God assumes real form. Contingency and chance play a role in history, but they do not define its meaning and purpose. Human passions and interests often disrupt the trajectory of history, but they cannot permanently reverse it. History is animated by conflicts, struggles, and resolutions between competing positions. God is not an abstract supreme being externally related to the world but its inner ideal power, its beating heart. This metaphysical interpretation remains for the most part behind the scenes in Baur's historical-critical writings. It makes an appearance in prefaces, polemical writings, and rare passages such as the one quoted above. It is more evident as a structuring device than in the detailed examination of evidence.

Baur published a revised second edition of *Christianity and the Christian Church* in 1860. It adds about thirty pages of text, mostly through revisions to Part 2 and 3 and additional footnotes. The Preface to the Second Edition evidences a certain weariness of conflict on Baur's part. His health was failing and he died later the same year. He notes that critics do not object in principle to understanding Christianity as a historically given phenomenon, but when it comes to its origins they are reluctant

13. *Symbolik und Mythologie oder die Naturreligion des Althertums*, pt. 1 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1824), xi.

14. *Church and Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (n. 6), 64.



to surrender a supernatural causality. Baur insists on the consistent application of scientific principles; for him *Wissenschaft* (science) includes both empirical research and a philosophical worldview. He does not describe the latter here but says merely that “genuine historical actuality exists only where there is life and movement, coherent and progressive development, and a more profound disclosure of the antitheses that first have to be undergone through struggle and conflict if they are to be overcome and reconciled.” In the latter part of the Preface he becomes entangled in a not-very-edifying dispute with Heinrich Ewald over the origins of Christianity and its relation to the history of Israel. Ewald, a former colleague in Tübingen and now at Göttingen, attacked him quite viciously and personally, and Baur shows that he is a masterful polemicist himself.

*Christianity and the Christian Church of the First Three Centuries* comprises six major parts. Part One treats the historical emergence of Christianity as a new world religion out of its historical context and background: the pre-Christian religions, Greek philosophy, and Judaism. The teaching and person of a Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, appeared as something new in this context and served as the essential foundation of Christianity. This new thing was not supernatural or miraculous but rather a radical appeal to moral-religious consciousness and a proclamation of God’s righteousness and the coming of God’s kingdom—assertions for which Jesus was crucified. These factors led early Christian believers to perceive in Christ the reconciling unity of God and humanity. This perception constitutes the origin of Christianity along with the figure of Jesus himself.

Parts Two and Three describe the transition from Christianity to the Catholic Church in terms of two epic conflicts. As we have noted, history is not based on harmonies and happiness but comes about through conflicts, struggles, and resolutions. These resolutions eventually break down and new issues arise. Baur discovered this truth about history through historical research and did not first learn it from Hegel’s philosophy.<sup>15</sup> The principal conflict in the earliest church was between Jewish-Christian and Gentile-Christian interpretations of salvation. The concrete issue concerned whether Christians must be circumcised. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, argued that Christianity offers universal salvation and is open to believers from all nations without the specific ritual requirements of Judaism. He was opposed by the Apostle Peter, who not only insisted on circumcision but also questioned Paul’s credentials as an apostle since he had not known Jesus in the flesh. Baur describes this conflict and then shows how it was “mediated” in the second century, when baptism replaced circumcision as the initiating ritual, and when the roles of Peter and Paul were eventually reversed,

15. See his discussion of factions in the Corinthian Church, “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christenthums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom,” *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 4 (1831) 61–206 (reprinted in *Ausgewählte Werke* [n. 1], vol. 1 [1963]). Hegel wrote that “in history the periods of happiness are blank pages, for the object of history is, at the least, change” (*Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* [n. 12], 172).



especially in the Book of Acts and later writings. The conflict could be resolved only when it was believed that the principal antagonists themselves resolved it. The Gospel of John is treated as a synthesis, achieved toward the end of the second century, that surpassed both Jewish and Pauline Christianity in a universal, idealized vision of God as love and Christ as the incarnate Logos. But in the process the concrete historical figure of Jesus was obscured.

The other major conflict was over the ideality and historicity of the church and is based partly on the influence of pagan ideas. The Gnostics and Montanists argued, in different ways, that Christianity is a world-principle and that its true existence is not found in an empirical institution. Baur explains the difference between Parts Two and Three as follows:

The issue is no longer whether Christianity is one particular principle of salvation, or is instead a universal principle of salvation. The concern is no longer the condition for a person to gain the blessedness that Christianity imparts. The issue is no longer merely one of breaking through, and setting aside, the barriers preventing Christianity from evolving in a freer and more universal way. The horizon is quite different here. People now see themselves in a setting where the concepts and antitheses are those of God and world, spirit and matter, absolute and finite; of the world's origin, its development, and how it will end. In short, Christianity is to be understood as a world-principle rather than as a principle of salvation.

The Catholic Church, through the development of its hierarchical institution, had to resist this tendency toward historical evaporation:

The church has the important task of holding fast to what are positive elements in Christianity. It is a "catholic" church as such, only inasmuch as it is a central, focal point reconciling all the different perspectives, a center staying just as far from one extreme as it does from the other. On the one hand, if the idea of a catholic church, an idea emerging from Christianity, had not overcome the particularism of Judaism, Christianity itself would have become just a Jewish sect. On the other hand, the threat posed to Christianity by paganism was the equally great danger of generalizing and watering-down its contents by ideas so boundlessly expanding Christian consciousness that it would have had to completely lose its specific, historical character.

These two statements, found at the beginning of Part Three, are as clear a summary as any of Baur's perspective on the formation of the early Catholic Church. Catholicism played an indispensable role in the history of the church until its internal tensions and immoral excesses led to a breakdown in the late Middle Ages. This is quite a different view from that which postulates a "fall" of the church with the emergence of early Catholicism and its recovery only in the Reformation. The view also obviously differs from the Catholic Church's own self-understanding.

Parts 4, 5, and 6 of our text treat the major forms by which the idea of Christianity takes shape: thought, governance, external relations, and practices. (Governance or institutional hierarchy is actually already addressed at the end of Part Three.) In the ancient period thought or dogma was the principal form, and it is elaborated in Part Four under the theme of “Christianity as the highest principle of revelation and as dogma.” At the beginning of Part Four Baur provides another helpful summary of his argument:

In reviewing the presentation thus far, we see that in this sphere there are two outlooks or ways of thinking in which the idea immanent in Christianity realized itself in Christian consciousness. The limitation that the particularism of Judaism wanted to impose on the Christian principle of salvation had above all to be overcome, and Christian universalism established. This could only happen by doing away with the wall of separation between Judaism and paganism or the Gentile world, and by regarding the entirety of humankind as both needing Christian salvation and being receptive to it—as the wide domain in which the idea of Christianity should actualize itself. In this regard, however, just as Christianity had from the outset the tendency to expand into a universal movement, it on the other hand had, from this universal standpoint, an equal concern to hold firmly to its specific content and character. In wanting to be just as specific—that is, personal, individual, and historically concrete—as it was universal, Christianity had to relate these two aspects adequately to each other.

In Part Four the presentation is no longer chronological but thematic. It argues that christology was the major focus of dogmatic development during the first three centuries, and it traces this development from its beginning in the Synoptic Gospels and Paul (a still substantially “Jewish form of christology”) through the formation of the Catholic dogma of Christ (the incarnation of the divine Logos) to the controversies that led to the Council of Nicaea in 325.

Part 5 treats Christianity as a “power dominant in the world.” In order to realize the “absolute idea” that is its “essential content,” and to become a universal religion accessible to all peoples, Christianity had to become a dominant world power. This power put it into conflict with paganism, and into both competition and cooperation with the Roman Empire. Baur discusses these two relationships in terms of their internal and external aspects. Internally he highlights Christianity’s critique by and defense against philosophical opponents, and externally, its engagement with Roman politics and emperors up until the conversion of Constantine.

Regarding the conversion of Constantine, Baur offers a helpful glimpse into his way of understanding the relationship between individual figures and the objective course of events. He cites the historian August Neander, who explains the conversion through a psychological interpretation of the legend that Constantine perceived the sign of the cross in the shape of the clouds. Baur comments: “Those who set more

emphasis on minor personal matters than they do on the larger course of history, and give more weight to what is fantastically miraculous than they do to the simple truth of historical facts, may find this account satisfactory.” But the historian cannot. The simple truth is that Christianity had become an objective force by this time and could no longer be constrained or persecuted. What made Constantine a world-historical figure is simply that he recognized this fact and understood the age in which he lived. He knew how to reconcile his own personal convictions with the spirit of Christianity, even though his principal motive was political—reestablishing the threatened unity of the Roman Empire. For the achievement of unity the episcopal system of the Catholic Church was the ideal instrument.

Part 6 takes up Christianity as a moral and religious principle and its cultic practices. By “moral and religious” Baur means a religious principle with a moral focus or emphasis. Religion proves its truthfulness by the moral transformation it is capable of producing in the world, and Christianity did so to an eminent degree. It brought about an inward renewal of consciousness in relation to God and produced a genuine community of the faithful. It had an aversion to shows and spectacles, withdrew from pagan politics, and emphasized marriage and domestic life. Baur writes: “The aristocratic and despotic spirit of the ancient world, which considered the individual to be simply an instrument serving the general purposes of the whole, . . . had to give way to a more humane and less harsh way of thinking, one recognizing that all had equal rights and respecting the human dignity of even the humblest and lowliest ones.” In this respect the new religion contributed to the abolition of ancient slavery.

But in the early centuries especially, Christian morality also exhibited a one-sided and limited character, as evidenced by superstition, a widespread fear of demons, the moral rigorism exhibited by Tertullian in particular, and a dualistic, ascetic view of life. Marriage was often interpreted in terms of the antithesis of matter and spirit, with the sensuous dimension pitted against the spiritual, and chastity defended as the higher ideal. These “catholic” tendencies are contrasted with “the purer moral principles of evangelical Christianity” on the part of Clement of Alexandria, who set forth a moral vision without Montanist fanaticism. But as time went on, more lenient moral practices settled into place; martyrdom was no longer considered a virtue, and people turned their attention “to what was feasible in practice and suited to their circumstances.”

Finally, the origins of the Christian cultus are explored, including the Eucharist understood not as a sacrament but as an agape or love-feast in remembrance of the Lord’s death, the complex issues related to the Passover (a summary of the earlier discussion), the relative values of Sunday and the Sabbath, more developed cultic forms (incorporating pagan and Jewish practices), and the creation of a cult of saints (also influenced by paganism).

The organizing structure of thought, governance, external relations, and religio-ethical practices is carried over into subsequent volumes of the history of the Christian

Church, with modifications. Volume 2, which covers the period from the fourth through the sixth centuries, is divided into four main parts: Christianity's relationship to paganism; dogma; hierarchy; the Christian cultus and ethical life.<sup>16</sup> Volume 3, on the Middle Ages, has the same four parts, presented in two main periods divided by the papacy of Gregory VII. In the second main period, hierarchy attains ascendancy over dogma as the principal form.<sup>17</sup> In Volumes 4 and 5, from the Reformation to the middle of the nineteenth century, the forms are still present, but are accommodated to the division between Catholicism and Protestantism.<sup>18</sup> With Protestantism the emphasis shifts from dogma and hierarchy to faith and spiritual communion with God. It is true that Baur's church history is written from a Protestant perspective, but he attempts to do justice to the Catholic Church in its historically essential role. In this respect his approach is quite different from subsequent Protestant historians such as Adolf Harnack,<sup>19</sup> who regarded Catholicism to be an expression of an alien Greek spirit in opposition to the faith of "the Gospel." Baur in fact is seeking a mediation between the objectivity of Catholicism and the subjectivity of Protestantism. He seems to be looking toward a time when the truth of Protestantism becomes an integral part of the church universal.<sup>20</sup>



Robert F. Brown is mostly responsible for the translation of this volume. The hundred pages I contributed have been revised and improved by him. My efforts have been directed rather to editorial and publication matters. *Church and Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (n. 6), the final volume in the church history series, was based on Baur's manuscripts and published posthumously by Eduard Zeller. Consequently, most of the footnotes are editorial, and others are designated as coming from [Baur] or [Zeller]. By contrast, the present volume was published by Baur himself with a good many footnotes, and editorial notes are designated as such, either by [Ed.] for our own notes or additions to Baur notes, or simply by square brackets for insertions into Baur notes. (We supplement Baur's bibliographic information silently.) With this exception, the two volumes are edited similarly. We have introduced subheadings into the text from the table of contents, and have broken up Baur's long paragraphs into shorter ones. We have included some Greek and Latin in the text, but with longer

16. *Die christliche Kirche vom Anfang des vierten bis zum Ende des sechsten Jahrhunderts in den Hauptmomenten ihrer Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Fues, 1859).

17. *Die christliche Kirche des Mittelalters in den Hauptmomenten ihrer Entwicklung*, ed. Ferdinand Friedrich Baur (Tübingen: Fues, 1862).

18. *Kirchengeschichte der neueren Zeit, von der Reformation bis zum Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Ferdinand Friedrich Baur (Tübingen: Fues, 1863). For vol. 5, see n. 6.

19. See Daniel Geese in *Baur and the History of Early Christianity* (n. 1), ch. 14.

20. See *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmengeschichte*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Fues, 1858), 56–58. ET: *History of Christian Dogma*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 87–89.

quotations of passages in Greek or Latin only an English translation is provided. For citations of patristic writers, see the bibliography in our translation of Baur's *History of Christian Dogma*.<sup>21</sup> References to *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*<sup>22</sup> are abbreviated ANF, although these translations are often modified by us into more contemporary English, so the references are given partly just for informational purposes. Loeb Classical Library editions, which we occasionally cite, are abbreviated LCL.<sup>23</sup> We hope this new version of one of Baur's most important books will make it more accessible to the public.<sup>24</sup>

I end on a personal note. The book we have translated was published in 1860, just before the beginning of the American Civil War, and the remaining volumes of Baur's church history appeared during the War. Whether Baur would have attended to this tragic and bloody conflict on another continent is unknown since he also died in

21. *History of Christian Dogma* (n. 20), 372–79.

22. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867–73). American edition by the Christian Literature Company, reprinted by Eerdmans and other publishers. A few references to the First and Second Series of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886–1900), are abbreviated NPNF<sup>1</sup> and NPNF<sup>2</sup>.

23. They were published in Cambridge, Mass., and London, and are referenced by volume name rather than series number. The volumes containing Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* appeared in 1926; and those containing Tacitus' *Histories* appeared in 1951–52.

24. Brown contributes the following remark: The term *Religionsphilosophie* (literally, “philosophy of religion”) in Baur's works can pose a problem for someone translating them into English. He uses this same term for two somewhat different things that, in some contexts at least, are best kept distinct. — (1) Philosophy of religion as a topic to which someone who is primarily a philosopher might choose to give attention, by analyzing and/or criticizing religion or particular features of it. The philosopher assuming this role can incidentally be (but may not be and often is not) a religious believer or someone sympathetic to religion. In this sense of the term, and in this role, the philosopher is not operating as a believer any more than a philosopher of art is, or operates as, an artist. Examples of such philosophers of religion from the ancient world discussed by Baur here include Plato, Epicurus, and Plotinus.—(2) The same term, *Religionsphilosophie*, Baur (and others) often apply to the work of a religious believer or sympathizer who uses philosophical concepts and methods to describe and/or construct the beliefs or belief system of that specific religion, as well as defending it against criticism. This practice might just as well be called “religious philosophy” or “philosophical religion” or “philosophical theology.” In fact, we frequently use the term “religious philosophy” for it in translating Baur into English here, and in our previous Baur translation, *Church and Theology in the Nineteenth Century* as well. — Most Anglo-American philosophers of religion practice the first type of philosophy of religion, and regard it as significantly different from this second type. Hence the value of having a separate term for the latter when making an English translation. Of course, the boundary between the two types is not always clear-cut, and individual judgment is called for regarding the use of terminology. For instance, consider Schelling and Hegel. With his right-leaning Hegelianism, and his almost exclusively religious focus on the works of these two philosophers, Baur might regard them in the second sense as philosophers of religion who are “religious philosophers” or “philosophical theologians.” On the other hand, someone of a different mindset, and with a more wide-ranging interest in the other works of these two philosophers, might say they are simply doing philosophy of religion in the first sense.—In the big picture, it is all indeed “philosophy of religion” in the broadest sense. However, in translating Baur into English, we think it important to be clear about this difference between two uses made of the term *Religionsphilosophie*, and to reflect that difference in the translation.

1860, but his focus, in addition to religion, was always on antiquity and Europe.<sup>25</sup> This war and its aftermath certainly tested Baur's Hegelian-inflected views about the role of the idea in history, but Lincoln seems to have come to a similar conclusion when he proclaimed at Gettysburg "a new birth of freedom." The struggles following the Civil War and up to the present day illustrate how difficult a birth this has been. The same is true of the birth of Christianity and the Christian Church many centuries ago.

25. See his remarks on ancient slavery in Part Six, n. 15.

## Preface to the First Edition

For a long time various groups have desired to have a survey of the results brought to light by the most recent critical investigations in the field of early church history. The material itself can also call for such a presentation, since a domain of historical research that constantly requires more intensive reworking has many features that seem unimportant or superficial when looked at in isolation, but are only seen in their true light when placed in their broader context and comprised within the unity of the whole.

Providing such a survey is the main purpose of the present work. But it is not its sole purpose, for this book is not, as one might have anticipated, just a reiteration of what was already known. While I recapitulate my previous investigations by drawing together their main elements, I not only reexamine them in the light of several new perspectives, but also enhance them with additional material providing both new investigations of the sources and new source documents. The new sources include, in particular, the *Philosophumena*,<sup>1</sup> allegedly written by Origen. It is very important for the history of Gnosis and of early dogmas, and I have now made very extensive use of it for the first time. In addition to it I have utilized the quite remarkable *Pistis Sophia*,<sup>2</sup> a Gnostic text heretofore largely ignored. The main thing, however, is that I have not just made needed rearrangements of, and additions to the whole. Parts Five and Six of the present text go beyond the range of my previous authorship on the apostolic and post-apostolic times, since I have now included aspects of the church's initial emergence that must also be considered if the overall picture of the Christian Church in the first three centuries is to be as complete and comprehensive, as clear and concrete, as it possibly can be.

My consistent standpoint over these many years is well-known, and need not be explained again in detail here. I hold firmly and candidly to the convictions set forth last year in *Die Epochen der kirchlichen Geschichtsschreibung* (Tübingen, 1852),<sup>3</sup> which

1. [Ed.] See Part 3, n. 11. The Oxford edition (1851) ascribed it to Origen. The Göttingen edition (1859) attributed it to Hippolytus, as did the English translation published in vol. 5 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1886).

2. [Ed.] See Part 3, n. 40.

3. [Ed.] *The Epochs of Church Historiography*, in Ferdinand Christian Baur: *On the Writing of*



states my overall view as to how to treat church history and the general principles that guide it. That work may be regarded as an introduction to this one, which can therefore omit all these general considerations. Briefly put, from my standpoint I deal solely with what is purely historical, what is historically given, insofar as it is possible to understand it in its pure objectivity.<sup>4</sup> However successful I have been at this, I am in any event not consciously trying to do anything else. This awareness sufficiently shields me from any suspicions, from all those wrongheaded and malicious pronouncements that are the predominant tenor of an age caught up in its limited, partisan concerns. If we disregard all that which still inherently bears the obvious marks of one-sidedness, and which has the effrontery to treat history superficially, then certainly no one can fail to recognize what demands the most important period in the history of the Christian Church always still places on those who research and present it in historical terms. There is no mistaking the task at hand if one is just to approach more satisfactory explanations than those provided so far.

If we take the best and most current portrayals of the early history of Christianity, and look more closely at how they bring the historical materials, with their heterogeneous and far-flung components, into a unified whole, what do we see? We see how insular and fragmentary, how limp and lifeless, how vague and unclear they appear to us in so many respects. This lack of unity quite naturally becomes more apparent the farther we go back toward the points on which one first of all had to make up one's mind, and arrive at a definite view, if any historical vision of Christianity taking shape as the church is said to be possible. Any attempted investigation, in more detail and depth, of the foundation that must first of all be laid—and which no one can lay otherwise than history itself in its unchangeable truth has laid it—can only be justified by carrying it out. Such an investigation will bring coherence, steadiness, and unity to the whole; will separate out, with their differences, the various concurrent factors, and the forces and principles at work, that produced the outcomes of the first three centuries; and will track, in their reciprocal relations, all the individual features belonging to the character of a time embracing such momentous developments, thus unifying them as much as possible in an internally harmonious picture. Accordingly, insofar as it is not too deficient in all the requisites for the possibility of completing its task, such an investigation will, as I said, only be justified by carrying it out. It is from this perspective that I wish to see the present work judged, by those who are sufficiently impartial and knowledgeable to be able to appreciate such an enterprise.

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*Church History*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson (New York, 1968). See the Editor's Foreword.

4. [Ed.] In the *Epochs* Baur writes: "The historian can be equal to his task only in so far as he transposes himself into the objective reality of the subject matter itself, free from the bias of subjective views and interests, . . . so that instead of making history a reflection of his own subjectivity, he may be simply a mirror for the perception of historical phenomena in their true and real form" (241). These phenomena can only be determined by historical science, but they also constitute the dialectical movement of spirit in history, which enables the historian to grasp the overall coherence of events.



*Preface to the First Edition*

Whether I shall in the future go farther along the path I have here begun—even if not to provide a detailed history, yet to indicate the points that my studies and investigation lead me to think most important, in order to follow the general course of development of the Christian Church—remains to be seen. In any event, the present work forms a presentation that stands on its own.

Tübingen, September 1853



## Preface to the Second Edition

I am pleased to bring my book, *Christianity and the Christian Church of the First Three Centuries*, back to the public once again after the first edition has run its course. The first edition set forth the results of many years of study that I value and cherish because of my long engagement with, and personal interest in, the subject matter. This new edition gives me a suitable opportunity to reexamine and improve it, and to fill out the presentation there with all that seems noteworthy, in part from my own further research and in part from other literature. As should be expected, my own view of this history overall remains the same. Even where I found it advantageous to rework larger parts, as was the case most of all for Part Two, I did so only to expand upon one point or another, to emphasize the main features more sharply and define them more precisely. Overall, I endeavored to make the presentation more lucid, more precise, and to lay it out more clearly.

Since the appearance of the first edition, it has become increasingly customary to designate the standpoint I champion, in interpreting early Christianity, as that of the “Tübingen School.” Some who call it by this name regard this standpoint not as wholly unjustified, yet as something one could just resist rather than assenting to it. That has in large measure also been my previous experience. Nothing deemed a product of the Tübingen School has ever lacked opponents and challengers. Although it seems that people often gladly avoid engaging in a more exacting scientific discussion of the disputed issues, they have very few reservations about behaving in a distrustful and suspicious, disparaging and reprehensible fashion. With people frequently delivering verdicts of this sort, they have envisaged the difference between the two standpoints as extraordinarily great and profound. Yet as soon as it comes to understanding this as a difference in principle, they at least want to see it basically in a different light. I can only describe my own standpoint as purely historical. Accordingly, the task is to understand Christianity as, already in its origins, a historically given phenomenon and, as such, to comprehend it in historical terms. People have no general objection to this, and are often happy and willing to agree in principle. So it surprises me when one of my most recent critics, indeed in his review of my book on the Tübingen School,<sup>1</sup> declares in opposition to me:

1. *Die Tübinger Schule und ihre Stellung zur Gegenwart* (Tübingen, 1859 [2nd rev. ed., 1860]).

The issue is whether or not we have the right to view early Christianity from the same standpoint of historical development as that otherwise generally applicable to secular history. At least Protestant research agrees that this standpoint holds good for all other areas of church history. . . . We do not want to believe that someone is seriously inclined to push the antithesis to this extreme. In any event it is so very obvious that, if research should no longer retain the right to comprehend the supernatural too as in turn at the same time something natural, therefore entering [as supernatural] into, and developing within, the historical setting, then the most advisable course would be to dispense with all further scientific investigation of it. This would of course be a very fundamental reversal for science, and many gentlemen would certainly find nothing more desirable than seeing the mouths of the malevolent critics shut forever.

If people are not arguing with me about the principle, then the only question concerns how consistently they adhere to the principle and put it into practice. In fact there is no other issue. Everything just depends solely on whether people also remain faithful to the principle they recognize, when it is a matter of applying it in practice to a specific area of historical research. Yet this very thing is so often their stumbling-block. For what is a scientific view worth if it is not also supported by a scientific frame of mind in the one who holds it? Suppose that one directly seeks to circumvent the principle one has only just established, and to substitute for it something entirely different that is its direct opposite. Or that one is alarmed by the difficulty following from its application, a difficulty one can take as a candid acknowledgment of how things stand. Or if one concocts hypotheses in order to avoid the difficulty, ones too untenable to be seriously intended. Or if one emphasizes minor details in order to camouflage agreement with the principle, under the pretext of differing with it. Or, finally, even not shying away from obvious contradictions. How can such strategies involve anything other than holding two very widely divergent views, despite all the pretense of their unity in principle? In the end, whatever involves such a contradiction with its own principle can only collapse internally.

Genuine historical actuality exists only where there is life and movement, coherent and progressive development, and a more profound disclosure of the antitheses that first have to be undergone through struggle and conflict if they are to be overcome and reconciled. Thus one cannot contest the way I present things here. It relies on a view of history that, by consistently applying its principle, is sufficiently fertile and vigorous that it does not shy away from comparisons with opposing views.

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It contains a detailed discussion of the aforementioned issues. [Ed.] Reprint of the 2nd ed. in *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben*, ed. Klaus Scholder, vol. 5 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1975). The term "Tübingen School" was first coined by Baur's opponents. He wrote this book in response to an 1858 essay by Gerhard Uhlhorn (also reprinted in *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 5), who claimed that the School was in the process of breaking up. Baur does not identify the author of the review.

Without hesitation, I leave it to the future to judge which of the two approaches will be acknowledged as having had the truth overwhelmingly on its side.

Recently, in the final volume of his *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, Ewald dealt with a part of the same period I discuss in this work.<sup>2</sup> So I am tempted to compare his understanding of history with my own. I will remark here on just this one point. We can already see, from the organization of his work, what an unclear conception this historian of the people of Israel has of Christianity's relation to the people of Israel. According to their titles, the first four volumes were said to just go up to Christ, whereas the fifth volume also adopted *Die Geschichte Christus' und seine Zeit* into the overall plan. A new body of material was added in volume 6, with the account of the apostolic age up to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the sequence concluded with volume 7 [1859], *Geschichte der Ausgänge des Volkes Israel*. This account of the ending of an era also appeared again with a twofold title. The full title, as it was put in place only after the final printing of the work, does not just include "the endings of the people of Israel," but instead is *Geschichte der Ausgänge des Volkes Israel und des nachapostolischen Zeitalters*. Ewald states in the preface (p. ix) that he "decided to call attention to the twofold content of this volume, at least on the book cover, simply for the sake of many who want to close their eyes to it, for it is self-evident that this is the end of an era in a twofold way, an ending in perdition and another one leading to a new, eternal salvation."

What is the need for a twofold title when the matter is self-evident? It seems that Ewald has been unable to wholly conceal the internal deficiency of his not-very-organically generated work in the indicated way. What is the point of referring twice here to the ending? Must we not think that, with a work said to have its natural conclusion, an author who must instruct the reader so emphatically about the endings does not rightly know himself how matters in fact stand with them; that in order to extricate himself from the different paths on which he wanders, he must first search for the ending himself. It is as though, based on different endings, we were to hear the call, "Can I just find the ending!" That is in fact the case. Whoever, like Ewald, has hardly made it clear how Christianity relates to the history of the people of Israel, where Christianity is anchored in this history, and how Christianity separates and detaches itself from it—whoever, with the vague, indeterminate concept of the truly consummate religion, as this vague concept is said to have been in the possession of

2. [Ed.] In what follows, Baur responds to Heinrich Ewald (1803–1875), Orientalist and biblical scholar, who taught for ten years in Tübingen (1837–47) before returning to his native Göttingen, where he had studied with J. G. Eichhorn. He engaged in a bitter personal controversy with Baur over the origins of Christianity, leading to an attack in the last volume of his *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 7 vols. (Göttingen, 1843–59). Ewald was also the editor/author of the *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft*, in which he attacked Baur for many years. Ewald believed that divine providence assigned a special task to each of the nations of antiquity. The history of Israel was the history of how humanity acquired the one true religion, beginning with the exodus and culminating with Christ and Christianity. Ewald had a reputation for aggressive and often personal polemics.

the people of Israel from the outset, believes he has captured the guiding thread right up into the first Christian century; and who just knows how to repeat the stock phrase about the truly consummate religion and its eternally same essence, where it is not merely a matter of recounting events and calls for thoughtful consideration at critical points—does not of course know where the one ceases and the other one begins. How externally do the two endings stand vis-à-vis each other here? At what point, and on what basis, have these religions then separated into these two side-by-side paths? In the same manner as the ending of the people of Israel is also said to be the ending of the post-apostolic age, could one not also have made the entire histories of the world and of the church into an appendix to Ewald's history of the people of Israel?

Ewald's entire presentation of Christianity in this period accords with this vague concept of the ending. Here Christianity still appears in some fashion interlaced and entwined with Judaism, as though it would have been incapable of any independent action of its own, and that it could only have enjoyed the fresh air of a free existence, not merely after the destruction of Jerusalem but also when the last Jewish uprising under Bar Cochba had been entirely suppressed. Hence Ewald, in the best fashion of a pragmatic historiography according to a well-known but now superannuated Göttingen specimen,<sup>3</sup> holds forth most especially about the immeasurable consequences for Christianity that the destruction of Jerusalem supposedly had for "the everywhere tenuous groundwork of the apostolic church"—and doing so in a flurry of words whose pathos, with its persistent, and ever more forcefully intensified excitement, is of course not in itself the mindset of a calm and objective historian.

Ewald has, in the customary way, combined with the preface to this seventh volume, a survey of the entire literary and political world, an overview he had to be especially inclined to provide then, right at the pinnacle where he stood in concluding a work that, in the "more than thirty years in which he directed his mental labors to the topic, and the nearly twenty years he set his hand to the task of writing about it," embraces such an extensive and eventful period of time—and fully conscious of "the recognition the now concluded work has gained." Naturally, I am fittingly included among the harmful influences of our time that oppose his views, and he cannot sufficiently bewail their fundamentally destructive impact as compared with his own influence, which alone is salutary. This time he gives me such extensive attention, since I did indeed just recently venture to say something judgmental about him.<sup>4</sup> Yet

3. [Ed.] Baur's reference here is perhaps to Gottlieb Jakob Planck (1751–1833), one of Ewald's predecessors at Göttingen, a "rational supernaturalist" whose method is described in Baur's *Epochs of Church Historiography* (p. xxiii n. 3) as "subjective pragmatism at its peak" (184 ff., esp. 185 n. 29).

4. *Die Tübinger Schule* (n. 1), 119–68. Among other things, he states his views about this in his preface ([to vol. 7], p. xviii), that what I have to say in detail against others, and express in a "feebler" and briefer way against him, is so completely vacuous, but also so completely foolish and undoubtedly off the mark, that in saying this I have just provided a reminder of my own unscientific methods. In a subsequent article in the *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft* Ewald adds that one need not waste one's time evaluating such "Tübingen scribbling." The way he seeks to find solace here, in the impression this little text has made on him, is too ingenuous, as is his wish to rise above this treachery. He

everything he has to say in reply just confirms what I said. Now he can only scold and belittle, and just give new proof of his utter inability to even stand apart from himself and his own subjectivity, as rational reflection calls for in opposing its enemies. It is truly ridiculous how, in painting the darkest picture of my entire life and influence, in attributing to me superficiality, fundamental perversity, rashness, laziness, and appalling consequences of my own making, he reproaches me for extremely pernicious errors and false aspirations. He supposes he can, at a single stroke, cancel out my entire life's activity.

Does he then believe it all comes down to railing haphazardly, in the crudest and most vulgar way, against the opponent so that the whole world would believe it too? I am a public figure just like he is. Anyone who knows me can judge my writings, my scholarly activity; and I do not even in the least fear comparison of what someone says about me with what I am in reality and what influence I have. I can only be amazed at his failure to see how, in saying nothing about others, he leaves himself open by such a lack of critical judgment. Just how has it impressed any one of my opponents when, among so many disparaging and defamatory things he has long said about me, he also, in his *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft*, has for years, in the most absurd way, also denied that I have any ethical consciousness? How does it vouch for the objectivity of his historical judgment when, where everything is laid out and all can judge for themselves, he hardly knows himself how to distinguish his own subjective notions, his set ideas, the products of his own malicious passions, from the true state of affairs? There can be nothing vaguer, more trivial, more pointless, than such an exhibition of Ewald's calumny, the kind he reiterates in his most recent preface. From it one can simply see how little he even knows what he is talking about. It is a forewarning of the contradictions in which he gets himself embroiled.

On p. xvi [of vol. 7] Ewald brags about never having in the least done anything contrary to freedom and science. Yet there can be nothing more high-handed than the peremptory way he treats all his opponents (and of course all who find themselves opposing him in any sort of difference of opinion, and do not unconditionally embrace his own views and perceptions, are opponents), and how he wants to dominate, in the manner of a despot, by claiming absolute authority. In his love for the freedom of science, he also calls upon the Swabians to make even greater efforts than previously to liberate their Tübingen from such a reputation (as I have given it and Tübingen has acquired because of me)! It is surely obvious what kind liberation he has in mind,

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supposes I could just publish "feebler" thoughts, although all those besides himself are feebler than he, the unparalleled one. While he supposes he would be exempted from what I say against him more briefly than I say it about others, one can nevertheless state briefly what hits the nail on the head. However, if he should once try to rebut just one sentence of this "scribbling" of mine—naturally not in everyday expressions that are of course always at hand, but in a scientific way, with reasons and proofs—that will show whether or not he is in a position to do so. [Ed.] In *Die Tübinger Schule*, Baur describes and criticizes Ewald's attempt (in the fifth volume of his history of Israel) to harmonize the Gospel of John's portrayal of Christ with that found in the Synoptic Gospels.

from how he has depicted my influence, mine alone, and from what he can hope for from the Swabians he has called upon to support him.

If anything Ewald says about me, and considers to be the basically destructive feature of my influence, has any sort of rational sense behind it, that could only be related to my disputing the apostolic origin of several of the canonical scriptures. But does he not do the same thing himself? Indeed, he too declares that a number of canonical epistles are pseudo-apostolic writings: Ephesians, the three Pastoral Epistles, and Second Peter. And if one cannot speak of “pseudo-apostolic” scriptures without employing the correct concept of pseudonymity, in the ancient sense, then he certainly has the same view of it (see 7:139, 231, 248, 315, and 321) as the one I have long held. So what is the point of this overly fanatical opposition to me, as though the issue involves the most absolute antithesis!

Let him express himself and blow off steam howsoever he will, about important and unimportant matters in the political and literary world as well as about me, under the cover of a freedom that no rational person can be envious of. All this is not in the slightest way a verdict calling for my attention. In his most recent preface he recalls our previous collegial relations, in order to inform me that, as he is now proud to say, back then he thought our collegial friendship was bogus. That statement gives me greater insight into the cause of the hatred he now bears, not merely against me but also against Tübingen in general. The cause lies in what he calls my philosophical presuppositions<sup>5</sup> ([vol. 7], p. xvi). For him, to be sure, the direct opposite is the case—the absence of what, very understandably, seems to him a very extraneous presupposition, whereas here in Tübingen it is still always counted among the requisites of a scientifically educated theologian. He was supposedly less bitterly enraged in 1848, the year he broke free from his captivity in Tübingen.

The fate of the view of history I have championed is that it has to fight its way past opponents of all kinds. So the reader may excuse me for using this space to present the foregoing account, which had to be stated in the interest of truth, and to publicly express the moral contempt that such conduct deserves from all educated people.

The struggles I have previously endured have hardly disheartened me. Instead I felt the desire and fortitude to continue the history of the early church up to the end of the sixth century, with the continuation appearing in 1859 as a companion to this book.<sup>6</sup> I also plan to venture on to the medieval church and to follow out the history

5. [Ed.] Ewald regarded Baur's philosophical presuppositions, based on Schelling and Hegel, to be atheistic because they did not allow for a supernatural causality. Rather for Baur the divine idea operates *within* the historical nexus and does not interrupt natural causality. He believed that every historian makes at least implicit philosophical assumptions.

6. [Ed.] *Die christliche Kirche vom Anfang des vierten bis zum Ende des sechsten Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1859). Baur prepared the third volume, on the medieval church, for the press, but it was not published until after his death. He suffered a severe stroke in July 1860, followed by a second fatal stroke in late autumn. The last two volumes, from the Reformation to the middle of the nineteenth century, were based on lecture notes, edited by F. F. Baur and E. Zeller.



*Preface to the Second Edition*

of its development in similar fashion, to the extent that my already aging powers still permit it.

Tübingen, February 1860



# PART 1

The Entrance of Christianity  
into World History;  
Primitive Christianity



# The Universalism of the Roman Empire as a Preparation for Christianity

In no area of historical examination does everything that belongs to a specific series of historical phenomena depend so much on the starting point from which it proceeds as it does in the history of the Christian Church. Thus nowhere else does so much depend on the representation we form of that point from which the entire historical course takes its beginning.

The historian who enters upon the object of his presentation with the faith of the church is confronted at the very outset with the miracle of all miracles, the primal fact of Christianity—that the only-begotten Son of God descended to earth from the eternal throne of the Godhead and became human in the womb of the Virgin. Whoever regards this as simply and absolutely a miracle immediately steps completely outside the nexus of history. Miracle is an absolute beginning, and to the extent that such a beginning conditions everything that follows, the whole series of phenomena that belong to the field of Christianity must then bear the same miraculous character. That is because severing the historical connection at the outset makes it possible to do so again. Therefore a truly historical examination or reflection (*die geschichtliche Betrachtung*)<sup>1</sup> very naturally is concerned to draw the miracle of the absolute beginning into the historical nexus and to resolve it, insofar as possible, into its natural elements.

People have often attempted to do this, and various objections have been brought against their attempts, but the task itself remains always the same. By just asking why

1. [Ed.] *Betrachtung* is the term Baur typically uses for critical, scientific (*wissenschaftlich*) historical method. It has both an empirical and a speculative (reflective) component, as our double translation suggests. Empirically, it investigates the wealth of historical materials and follows where they lead regardless of the historian's subjective interests. Speculatively, it knows "how to grasp historical phenomena as appearances of the idea objectifying itself within them, and how to comprehend them as moments of the idea's immanent working within history" (*Kirchengeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Eduard Zeller, 1st ed. [Tübingen, 1862], 416. *Church and Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. P. C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown and P. C. Hodgson [Eugene, OR, 2018], 385.). This immanent working does not sever, but rather constitutes, the historical nexus (*Zusammenhang*). When the systematic meaning is not so evident, *Betrachtung* is translated as "consideration," "view," "perspective," etc.

the miracle with which the history of Christianity begins has entered into the nexus of historical events precisely at this point in world history, we have already raised a series of questions that can only be answered by means of historical examination and reflection. Therefore the first task in a history of Christianity, or of the Christian Church, can only be to orient ourselves to Christianity at the point in time when it enters into world history. So we ask whether we can recognize, on the one hand, something here that belongs to the essence of Christianity itself, and on the other hand, something here that expresses the general character of the age in which Christianity appears. Where such common points of contact emerge, they shed light on the historical origin of Christianity itself.

In doing so, early Christian apologists already found it especially significant that Christianity appeared precisely at the point in time when the Roman Empire reached the zenith of its worldly dominion. They inferred from this that, even in the eyes of the pagans, a religion could not but appear auspicious whose epoch coincided with the fullest flourishing of the Roman Empire. This coincidence of Christianity with the Roman world monarchy<sup>2</sup> appeared to them so remarkable that they could not attribute it to chance.<sup>3</sup>

The true point of contact between Christianity and the Empire, however, is the universal tendency of both. It is a reflection of genuine significance for world history that, at the same point in time when the Roman Empire united all the peoples of the then-known world in a universal monarchy, the religion that subsumed (*aufhob*)<sup>4</sup> all religious particularism into universality began its course in the world. Thus the universalism of Christianity was comparable to the stage already attained by the power and genius of Rome with its world monarchy. This was in fact the time when universal world-consciousness first made this momentous advance. As the barriers and divisions between peoples and nationalities vanished before the encroaching power of the Romans, and people became aware, through their subjection to a common head, of the unity subsuming their differences, spiritual consciousness as such was proportionately enlarged and led more and more to disregard the particular traits that separated one group from another, and to elevate itself to a universal perspective.

The general striving of the age toward an all-encompassing unity, into which everything particular and individual might be resolved, found its most imposing expression in the universalism of the Roman Empire. This universalism was the very goal toward which the course of world history had aimed for many centuries. Alexander the Great had opened to the West the portals of the East; and, by means of so

2. [Ed.] Baur uses the term “monarchy” here and several times below, although the Romans were very clear that the emperor was not a “king.” The Roman Republic had replaced the earlier kings, and the Romans wanted no more of that kind of monarchy.

3. See the fragment of the *Apology* of Melito of Sardis in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.26; and Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.30.

4. [Ed.] The verb *aufheben* means both to annul and to preserve or take up. Thus particularism does not simply disappear but is “taken up into” universality.

many newly-opened routes for the lively and diverse intercourse of peoples, the Greek language and culture had spread throughout the known world. It was but the next step on the same road of world-historical development when the Roman dominion gave all these peoples a new bond of political unity in forms never seen before. This all-encompassing unity found its basis in Roman civilization and law, and operated through the vast and highly organized Roman state. Under the empire, not only was there a reduction in the former hostility among its constituent peoples; but also everything national and individual increasingly resolved itself into a universality that smoothed over their differences.

A group that from its beginnings had kept itself apart from other peoples by the distinctiveness of its national character, and that had clung to this distinctiveness in the most obstinate and persistent way, nevertheless could not remain outside this general unity, which bound peoples together not merely politically but also in a new spiritual bond. After the Jewish state had twice been destroyed,<sup>5</sup> the Jews were forced to associate with other peoples in the wider world. When the successors of Alexander founded their own kingdoms, in those cities that became the chief centers of political and intellectual intercourse among peoples, Jews were an important part of the population. These Jews became Hellenists and assimilated the most diverse elements of Greek culture. Ultimately they were also drawn into the ever-widening net of Roman dominion. So it came about that the birthplace of Christianity on Jewish soil was already in contact with the power that was said to be its forerunner on the road to world conquest.

Thus the universalism of Christianity has its essential presupposition in the universalism of Roman world dominion. But in considering how these two world powers came into contact with each other, we must not think in customary teleological terms. We must not think that, in these external circumstances and connections, Christianity entered into the world by the special favor of divine providence—a providence that, so the supposition goes, could have selected no more appropriate a time than this for the accomplishment of its purposes. On that view the major consideration is merely the fact that so many new routes of communication facilitated the diffusion of Christianity throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire, and that the protection of the Roman legions and civil order removed many obstacles the messengers of the gospel otherwise could have faced.<sup>6</sup>

5. [Ed.] Through the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests.

6. See Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.30. To the objection of Celsus that the sun first displays itself by illuminating all other things, and that the Son of God ought to have presented himself in the same way, Origen answers that he in fact did so. "For righteousness has arisen in his days, and there is abundance of peace, which took its commencement at his birth, God preparing the nations for his teaching, that they might be under one Roman emperor, and that it might not, owing to the want of union among the nations, caused by the existence of many kingdoms, be more difficult for the apostles of Jesus to accomplish the task enjoined upon them by their Master, when he said, 'Go and teach all nations.' Moreover it is certain that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus, who, so to speak, fused together into one monarchy the many populations of the earth. Now the existence of many kingdoms would

The bond that connects the two powers is based, far more deeply and inwardly, on the general spiritual and intellectual movement of the time. The main point is that Christianity could not have been the universal form of religious consciousness that it is had the entire development of world history, up to the time when it appeared, not prepared the way for it. First came the general intellectual culture that the Greeks made the common property of the nations, then Roman rule uniting the nations, with its political institutions serving as the basis for universal civilization. Roman rule removed the limitations of national consciousness and set aside the many differences that had kept peoples separate, not merely in their outward relationships but even more so inwardly. The universalism of Christianity could never have passed over into peoples' general consciousness had not political universalism prepared the way for that to happen. Christianity is itself essentially the same form of general consciousness to which the development of humankind had already advanced at the time of Christianity's appearance.

have been a hindrance to the spread of the doctrine of Jesus throughout the entire world; not only for the reasons mentioned, but also on account of the necessity of men everywhere engaging in war, and fighting on behalf of their native country, which was the case before the times of Augustus, and in periods still more remote, when necessity arose, as when the Peloponnesians and Athenians warred against each other, and other nations in like manner. How, then, was it possible for the gospel doctrine of peace, which does not permit men to take vengeance even upon enemies, to prevail throughout the world, unless at the advent of Jesus a milder spirit had been everywhere introduced into the conduct of things?" [*Ed.*] Rather than translating Baur's German version, we have for the most part used the text translated from Greek in *ANF* 4:443–44.



## Christianity and the Pre-Christian Religions

By viewing Christianity as a universal form of religious consciousness that corresponds to the spirit of the age, and for which the entire previous historical development of peoples has been preparing, we have grasped it at the point where it enters into world history. But what gives Christianity this universal form? It appears as the universal form of religious consciousness because it increasingly overcame the other religions, absorbed them, and transcended them by its universal dominion over the world. As opposed to those particular forms of religion, it is the absolute religion. But what is it in Christianity that gives it its absolute character? The first answer to this question is that Christianity rises above all the defects and limitations, the one-sidedness and finitude, that constitute the particularism of those other religious forms. It is not polytheistic like paganism; it does not, like Judaism, attach itself to outward rites and ordinances, or to the positive<sup>7</sup> aspects of a purely traditional religion. Speaking generally, it stands above them as a more spiritual form of religious consciousness.

This, however, is saying very little and is self-evident as soon as we compare Christianity with the other two religions it encountered [paganism and Judaism]. When Christianity attained its world-historical significance, these two religions had long fallen into decay. They had become empty, inwardly dying, purely external forms that had lost their hold on the religious consciousness of their peoples. Paganism had sunk to the level of a spiritless folk religion. With all educated people, belief in the old gods had become more or less disconnected from religious consciousness. The myths in which the simpler faith of earlier times had expressed its finest religious intuitions seemed now mere fables in which there was no longer a spiritual bond joining form and content into a harmonious unity; they were merely pictorial forms for ideas that had grown up from a totally different soil. The only thing that maintained general interest in the national religion was that, as the religion of the state, it was closely intertwined with all the institutions of political life, and not easily separable from them.

Judaism, to be sure, rested on a wholly different religious foundation. For the Jews “the religion of their fathers” was never a meaningless expression, and religious

7. [Ed.] The tension between “the positive” (historical and authoritative) and “the spiritual” (ideal and inward) is a constant theme of this volume. Both are present in every religion, but the balance between them shifts as we move from Judaism to Christianity, and within Christianity itself.

worship continued undiminished, with all of its elaborate ceremonies. But the fragmentation into so many sects and parties that hardly agreed on the most important issues, clearly shows that here too the national religion was tending toward dissolution.

These two religions had been making way in this fashion for a new religion; and if we look at the situation from the teleological point of view, we can only regard it as a special dispensation of divine providence that Christianity came into existence at precisely the point in time when there was so great a void to be filled in the religious life of the ancient world. But this point of view also fails to provide deeper insight into the inner connection of Christianity, as a new form of religious consciousness, with the preceding development of religion.

In addition to everything that constituted a more or less harsh antithesis between the pre-Christian religions and Christianity, their main point of contact has generally been taken to be how these earlier religions were negatively related to Christianity and the religious feelings and needs awakened thereby. People said that disbelief and superstition (*Unglaube und Aberglaube*) were of course two forces in the paganism and Judaism resistant to Christianity. Yet these forces also involved factors that facilitated the transition to Christianity and made souls receptive to it. There was also a disbelief sustained simply because the need to believe could not be satisfied by anything the ancient world could offer in terms of religion and philosophy. For human nature has an undeniable desire to know the supernatural and be in communion with it. So when disbelief is all-encompassing, that only intensifies the desire to believe. The same was the case to a large extent with superstition, at the root of which lay a need that looked for satisfaction and could find it only in Christianity—the need for deliverance from a deeply felt disconnect, for reconciliation with an unknown God whom people were looking for, whether consciously or not.<sup>8</sup>

Here some interpreters resort to immediate religious feeling as the source of people's receptivity for Christianity. Christianity too undoubtedly has its roots, like every other religion, in this primary ground of all religious life. But to just trace Christianity back to this feeling still leaves us very much in the broad and ill-defined realm of subjective contexts. The question is not what distinctive frame of mind might dispose this or that individual to adopt Christianity, or what individual circumstances might make a person more or less receptive to its content. The question rather is how Christianity, objectively considered, relates to everything constituting the religious development of the world, not merely in its negative but also in its positive aspects. The universal tendency of Christianity presupposed the universalism to which the

8. See August Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche*, 2nd ed., 4 vols (Hamburg, 1842–47), 1:7 ff and 56ff. [Ed.] ET: *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, trans. Joseph Torrey (London and Boston, 1849–51), 1:5ff. and 46ff. August Neander (1789–1850), born David Mendel, converted to Christianity under the influence of Schleiermacher, and was a popular and prolific professor of church history at the University of Berlin. Baur became increasingly critical of Neander's partisanship in later years. See his discussion of Neander in *Kirchengeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (n. 1), 223ff., 369, 380, 382, 384 [ET 209ff., 339, 350, 352, 354].

collective consciousness of the age had already expanded under the influence of the Roman world empire. If this is the case, then the overall religious and spiritual development of the world must be inwardly and objectively related to everything that constitutes not merely the universal, but also the absolute, character of Christianity.

Here, however, it is of first importance to not understand this absolute character of Christianity too narrowly and one-sidedly. Some have thought to find the absoluteness merely in the fact that Christianity welcomes, and most fully satisfies, the human longing for belief; or in its being a supernatural revelation, a universal arrangement for the reconciliation of human beings with God; or because it sets before us, in the person of its founder, one who is the Son of God and the God-man, in the sense the church uses these words. But these answers just lead us to ask what it is about these features of Christianity that makes it superior to the other religions, for the pre-Christian world believed it had more or less analogous features. Every religion claimed to be a supernatural revelation, and there were numerous procedures for reconciling human beings with God. People thought that fellowship with God was provided by beings whose functions were nearly the same as those of the Christian Son of God. What is it then that gives Christianity its peculiar and specific superiority over everything that more or less resembled it in the pre-Christian world? Christianity may be regarded under various points of view, each of which always exhibits only one of the various aspects we can distinguish in it as such. But what forms Christianity's common and all-encompassing unity?

In brief, it is the spiritual character of Christianity as such. We take into account the fact that it is far freer than any other religion from everything merely external, sensible, and material. It has a deeper basis than any other in the innermost substance of human nature and in the principles of moral consciousness. It says that it knows no worship of God other than "worship in spirit and truth."<sup>9</sup> When we fix our attention on its spiritual character as such, the absoluteness of its essence in this broadest and most general sense, how then is Christianity linked to the pre-Christian world and the world contemporaneous with it? What features do we find in the general development of the world that are closest and most related to it, ones that are preconditions for it in regard to its inner essence?

The two religions preceding Christianity, as we have already noted, were in such a condition of decay and dissolution that, at the time they came into contact with Christianity, no one who had become aware of their imperfection and finitude, or who had seen them as they really were, could come away without the feeling of an infinite void, a craving for satisfaction that could not be filled by anything in the entire sphere of these religions, the longing for a positive point of contact to which religious consciousness might attach itself. But what had caused such decay and dissolution in these religions and brought them to ruin? How could this have happened even before the arrival of Christianity? Some other power, a greater power than they, must have

9. [Ed.] John 4:24: "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

come over them. It is a common and very serious mistake to suppose that periods of transition, such as occurred during the time of the appearance of Christianity, are simply times of decay and dissolution, times of a completely moribund spiritual and religious life. The forms of previously active religious life do indeed become increasingly decadent until they are completely emptied of the content that once filled them. But the reason for this is that they have become too narrow and limited for the spirit whose religious consciousness they had served to mediate. When something old collapses, something new is always already there to replace it; the old could not decay if the new had not arrived, even if only as a seed, and had not been long laboring to undermine and render meaningless the previously existing structure. It may take a long time for a new form of religious and spiritual life to take shape in an outwardly evident way, but the spirit doing the shaping is nevertheless silently long at work; there is already fermentation in the depths, and the vital process moving ahead in its unbroken continuity cannot rest until it has brought forth a new creation.<sup>10</sup>

10. [Ed.] This is a very Hegelian perception, as expressed for example in Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of world history. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, vol. 1, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford, 2011), 107–10, 155–66 (passages on historical development, transitions, and progression). At the very end of his discussion of the Greek World, Hegel refers to the circumstances described by Polybius in which “good and practical persons must either despair or withdraw. And such circumstances, together with such personalities, call for a power to which they themselves finally succumb—a power that judges and discloses the impotence of the old way. Over against these parochial concerns, and the fixation in these finite circumstances in which all that is particular in states and personalities rigidifies itself, a destiny appears that can only negate what has gone before; it is blind, harsh, and abstract. And the Roman Empire plays the role of this fate” (425). It is under this fate that Christianity arrives in the world, introducing a new principle antithetical to the Roman principle, the principle of freedom as opposed to that of dominion and servitude (447ff.).

## Greek Philosophy

The decay of paganism is not to be dated from the time when Christianity appeared, and it is certainly not brought about by Christianity. It had been under way from the beginning, from the time when there was not simply a Greek religion but also a Greek philosophy. This philosophy not only offered critical reflection on the popular religious myths but also constituted for itself a world independent of the myths, in the realm of free thought. In this world, the spirit that could no longer find an adequate form for its consciousness in the myths of the popular religion was elevated to a new sphere of its own thinking and intuition.

Thus, in addition to the religious teaching of the Old Testament, Greek philosophy provides the only other spiritual point of contact between Christianity and the pre-Christian historical development of humankind. Its relation to Christianity has always been taken into account, first and foremost, when people have tried to get their bearings on Christianity's place in world history. But the negative rather than the positive aspect of this relationship has customarily been emphasized far more. Despite its apparent defects and biases, people simply give the edge to Platonism. It spiritualized religious thought; it turned away from polytheism to a secure unity of God-consciousness; it stimulated many ideas akin to Christianity, such as the idea of redemption as a deliverance from the blind force of nature that opposes the divine; in Christianity it elevated people to the standpoint of a divine life, beyond the influence of natural powers.

Both Epicureanism and Stoicism<sup>11</sup> are regarded as much less likely candidates. It is said to be self-evident that a system of atheism and eudaemonism such as the Epicurean philosophy can have nothing whatsoever to do with Christianity. And there is the strongest possible contrast between the proud self-sufficiency of the Stoic sage and

11. [Ed.] Epicureanism is a system of philosophy based on the teachings of Epicurus (c. 307 BC), which advocated "pleasure" as the greatest good, but a pleasure that can be achieved only by living modestly, gaining knowledge of how the world works, and limiting one's desires. It originally challenged Platonism but later became the main opponent of Stoicism. Stoicism is a system of Hellenistic philosophy that flourished throughout the Greek and Roman worlds for about 600 years, so-called because its founder, Zeno (c. 308 BC), taught under a colonnade (*stoa*) in Athens. It offered a system of personal ethics based on accepting what is given by life and not indulging one's desire for pleasure or fear of pain.

the humility of the believing Christian. We cannot judge otherwise as long as we focus only on the points where the contrasts are most extreme. Our task, however, is not to focus on individual instances, but to place all the phenomena under the universal perspective of historical development. The question, therefore, is how Greek philosophy, from its principal epoch onward, has been related to Christianity.

The question appears in quite a different light when we recall the well-known parallel so often drawn between Christ and Socrates.<sup>12</sup> There is some truth in it, for Christianity culminates an orientation in the field of pagan religion and philosophy that began with Socrates. All the principal ensuing forms of Greek philosophy serve a mediating function for Christianity. The more closely we follow the course taken by the thinking spirit in this most important period of Greek philosophy, the more clearly we also see why Christianity entered into world history at just this point in time. If the essence of Christianity is located solely in its character as a supernatural revelation, then there is no point in considering its appearance in a broader context, and looking back to the period beginning with Socrates. But in any event Christianity has a genuinely human side; and the more sharply we bring into view its origin, the manner and means by which it introduced itself into the world and sought to gain entrance into human hearts, the more directly it appears to us in its genuinely human character. The first words it proclaims are the demand that human beings must look within themselves (*Insichgehen*) and repent (*μετάνοια*). These words already articulate how Christianity addresses human beings and the entire standpoint from which it understands their relationship to God. Above all it earnestly calls human beings to direct their gaze within, to turn within themselves, to plumb the depths of their own self-consciousness. In this way they are to learn what their relationship to God is, and what it ought to be, and to become aware of everything in their moral nature that awakens, in all its depth and intensity, the need for redemption. In short, it rests on everything that makes Christianity to be religion in the absolute sense—that human beings know themselves as moral subjects. If human moral consciousness had not already been fully developed in all those aspects that concern its deeper significance [as it had with Socrates], Christianity could not have appeared in human history with its own distinctive character as a genuinely moral religion.

Human beings first became moral subjects, however, when they became aware of the concept of the subject, the principle of subjectivity. This is the truly epochal significance of Socrates.<sup>13</sup> [He was the first to demand] that the subject look within, that

12. [Ed.] Socrates (c. 470–399 BC) was the teacher of Plato and Xenophon and the chief protagonist in Plato's dialogues, through which he is known to the world, since he is not known to have written anything himself.

13. See my book, *Das Christliche des Platonismus, oder Socrates und Christus* (Tübingen, 1837), 20ff.; and Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Tübingen, 1859), 78ff. [Ed.] Eduard Zeller (1814–1908) was Baur's student and son-in-law. He taught theology in Bern and Marburg before shifting to philosophy because of church opposition. Subsequently he taught philosophy in Heidelberg and Berlin, and became best known for his history of

human beings go within themselves, that the mind or spirit withdraw from the outer world to the interior world of subjectivity, so as to apprehend what is intrinsically true and actual in the contents of conceptual thought. Likewise, in the practical arena, by referring virtue back to knowledge, we have the demand for moral self-knowledge, the intensifying of moral consciousness within itself, so as to find the norm of action in the inner self-certainty of the subject. From this point forward we find a series of developments—the epistemological theories of Plato and Aristotle concerned with the general nature of things, the ethical systems of the Stoics and Epicureans, and the later orientations of Skepticism and Eclecticism<sup>14</sup>—in which practical interests increasingly predominated over theoretical ones, and the moral nature of human beings became the chief object of reflective thought in the same way that Christianity must understand it. The Stoics and Epicureans applied themselves most directly and earnestly to the moral task of human beings and the conditions under which it is accomplished. All those frequently discussed questions about the idea of the good, or the highest good, the relation of virtue to happiness, the value of moral action, and so on, are simply the ethical expression of the same major issue that Christianity poses to humanity from its religious point of view. Divergent as these two orientations [Stoicism and Epicureanism] were, the very opposition between the two systems served to arouse moral consciousness and to expand and shape it from all sides such that the ground was already prepared on which Christianity could accomplish its higher moral-religious task.

Given the rigor and purity of its moral principles, Stoicism may certainly seem superior to Epicureanism; but it has been rightly acknowledged<sup>15</sup> that the latter, which leads human beings back from the outer world into themselves, and teaches them to seek the highest happiness in the splendid humaneness of an inwardly satisfied and cultivated mind, has contributed just as much, in its more sensitive fashion, as Stoicism has in its more rigorous way, to a free and universal ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). Both systems start from the same guiding idea of post-Aristotelian philosophy—the requirement that the subject withdraw into its pure self-consciousness in order to find its unconditioned satisfaction there. According to the one, humanity's vocation and happiness are found only in the subordination of the individual to the reason and law of the whole, which is virtue; according to the other, they are found in the independence of the individual from all that is external, in the awareness of this independence, in the undisturbed enjoyment of individual life, and in freedom from pain. Thus both strive for the same goal in opposite ways, namely the freedom of

Greek philosophy, which was translated into English.

14. [Ed.] Pyrrho of Elis (365–275 BC) is generally credited with founding the school of Skepticism. Eclecticism comprises a group of Greek and Roman philosophers who selected from existing beliefs those that seemed most reasonable to them. Cicero was one of the best-known Eclectics.

15. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen* (n. 13), 1st ed., vol. 3.1 (1852), 263ff.



self-consciousness; and this led them to a position that contrasts very sharply with the fundamental religious consciousness of Christianity.

The Stoic and Epicurean sages are ideals equally foreign to Christianity. The common endeavor of both systems is to put human beings on their own (*frei auf sich selbst*) and, through the infinitude of their own self-conscious thinking, to make them utterly independent of external factors; and that is opposed to Christianity's feeling of dependence (*Abhängigkeitsgefühl*).<sup>16</sup> But even the Stoics found it necessary to descend from the heights of their moral idealism and to acknowledge its limits by returning to practical needs. Skepticism was the next stage Greek philosophy took in its development. We see from this process that the unbounded character of consciousness ultimately led, through the contradiction of opposed and mutually annulling tendencies, to an awareness of the limitations of knowledge and to consciousness withdrawing into itself by completely abandoning knowing. The subject withdraws into itself, but it cannot remain so utterly inactive in its abstract and self-imposed subjectivity as not to resort to one form or another of what was called "the probable."<sup>17</sup> Thus Skepticism in its turn gave birth to Eclecticism. This mode of thought moderated the harshness and one-sidedness of the earlier schools by choosing the best ideas available and lifting individual ones out of their systematic settings. It was also well-suited for conjoining religious and practical concerns. At the time of the appearance of Christianity, Eclecticism was the most widely-held way of thinking, and it had taken the form of a popular philosophy and natural theology. The writings of its chief representatives—Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius<sup>18</sup>—contain many elements related to Christianity. Their views and doctrines not only present us with the most well-established and practical concerns, mainly drawn from all their predecessors. They also already seem to place us on the soil of Christian religious and moral teaching, and we often come upon sentences whose Christian tone we find surprising.

The firm basis for Eclecticism, which required a standard for testing different opinions, is articulated by Cicero, the best known and most popular writer of the school. This basis is found in immediate consciousness, inner self-certainty, the natural instinct for truth, or innate knowledge. The seeds of morality are innate in us; nature has not merely given the human mind a moral faculty but has bestowed on it the fundamental moral conceptions as an original endowment prior to any instruction;

16. [Ed.] Baur here employs the term famously associated with Friedrich Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre*. See *Christian Faith*, trans. T. N. Tice, C. L. Kelsey, and E. Lawler, 2 vols (Louisville, 2016), 1:18 (§4). Even as he transitioned to Hegel, Baur continued to incorporate important elements from Schleiermacher (and from Kant and Schelling).

17. [Ed.] This is an allusion to the teaching of Carneades (c. 214–293 BC), a dialectician and head of the New Academy.

18. [Ed.] Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–46 BC) was one of Rome's greatest orators and prose stylists. Lucius Annaneus Seneca (4 BC–AD 65) was a Roman philosopher, statesman, and dramatist. Epictetus (c. AD 50–135) was a Greek-speaking Stoic philosopher. Marcus Aurelius (AD 120–181) was a Roman emperor whose *Meditations* is a source for understanding Neo-Stoic philosophy.