HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOGMA

Ferdinand Christian Baur

edited by
Peter C. Hodgson

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Editorial Introduction

PETER C. HODGSON

F. C. BAUR: HISTORIAN OF THEOLOGY, THEOLOGIAN OF HISTORY

Over fifty years ago, in 1963, I completed my doctoral dissertation. It was a study of the historical–critical theology of Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860).[1] Forty years later, in 2003, I had the opportunity, as part of a panel on historians of theology in the nineteenth century, to revisit my work on Baur.[2] Preparation for the panel aroused my interest in undertaking a translation of one of Baur's most valuable books, the *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmengeschichte* (1858), which is his own summary of lectures on the history of Christian dogma. However, my initial efforts at translation were unsatisfactory, and I put the project aside; only now has it been completed, with the invaluable collaboration of Robert F. Brown. When I first became engaged with Baur, I knew relatively little about the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel. During the intervening years this deficit has been partly erased through my involvement in producing and translating a new edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*[3] and an anthology of his writings on religion called *G. W. F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*.[4] Subsequently I wrote a monograph on the philosophy of religion

[1] The work was published as *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966; repr. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). I also edited *Ferdinand Christian Baur: On the Writing of Church History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), which contains translations of *The Epochs of Church Historiography* and of the Introduction to the *Lectures on the History of Christian Dogma*. Baur was professor of theology at the University of Tübingen from 1826 until his death. For information on his career, see below, pp. 15–16.

[2] The panel, sponsored by the Nineteenth Century Theology Group of the American Academy of Religion, was intended to honor the work of Claude Welch, who is best known for his two-volume *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972, 1985). The paper I presented on that occasion has been revised and forms the basis for this opening section of the Editorial Introduction. As a supplement to what I have written, see the excellent chapter on Baur by Robert Morgan in Ninian Smart et al. (eds), *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), i. 261–89.

[3] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, 3 vols (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984–7; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[4] *G. W. F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

lectures called *Hegel and Christian Theology*.[5] Thus I am in a position to assess from a different perspective Baur's critical appropriation of Hegel. In my earlier work I was concerned to distance Baur from Hegel in certain respects. I now see that Baur's version of historical theology is closer to a middle-Hegelian position than it is to the left-wing and right-wing interpretations that became prevalent after Hegel's death, and that Hegel himself anticipated and attacked.

If Hegel is a theologian of the spirit (assuming that Hegel can in some sense be spoken of as a theologian[6]), then Baur is a theologian of history. This is a shift of emphasis within an underlying continuity, since for Hegel *Geist* (spirit) is essentially *geschichtlich* (historical), and for Baur history is the story of the life of spirit—both of human spirit and of God as absolute spirit. But still there are differences. Baur is a disciplined critical historian who attends to the details of historical evidence even as he attempts to view them theologically and philosophically. He is a historian of theology who is also a theologian of history—that is, he gives a theological interpretation of historical process. This has made him suspect in the eyes of many strictly historical historians—doubly suspect since the interpretation is deeply influenced by Hegel, who sometimes appears to be rather cavalier about the details of history even as he relishes them. Hegel in turn is suspicious of strictly historical historians: he calls them "countinghouse clerks" who keep the accounts of other peoples' wealth but have no assets of their own.[7] So no love is lost between Hegel and historians, despite the fact that history is a central philosophical category for Hegel.

Baur and Hegel

The first point to mention is that Baur was influenced by Friedrich Schelling and especially Friedrich Schleiermacher before he came to know Hegel. Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* had a powerful impact on him when it was published in 1821–2, but almost from the beginning Baur was critical of Schleiermacher's failure to connect the ideal Christ (the ideality of a perfect God-consciousness) with the historical figure of Jesus in such a way that the ideal and the historical are (according to Baur's criterion) neither separated

[5] *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Since then I have produced new editions and translations of Hegel's *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) and (with R. F. Brown) his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). A monograph on the latter, *Shapes of Freedom: Hegel's Philosophy of World History in Theological Perspective*, appeared from Oxford in 2012.

[6] Hegel himself regarded the content of theology and philosophy to be identical; only their forms are different. And he believed that the theologians of his time had abandoned their vocation to know God. Instead this vocation had passed over to speculative philosophy. See *Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*, ed. Hodgson, 4–11.

[7] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 128, 166.

nor totally identified. Nor did Schleiermacher establish this connection on historical-critical as opposed to philosophical or dogmatic grounds. Moreover, Baur found Schleiermacher's doctrine of God to be inadequate: God is not known as God in and for himself but only as an implicate of the feeling of absolute dependence.

> The necessary progression from Schleiermacher to Hegel is that the historical process…is comprehended in its principle and is transposed into the nature of God himself. The historical process, in which Christianity comes to historical manifestation, is simply an element of the general process that is the life-process of God himself, in which the idea of God explicates itself in the distinction of its moments…. The content of Christian faith is no longer merely set indefinitely in consciousness or feeling; it becomes the immanent content of thought itself. For the content of Christian faith is the divine Trinity…. As triune, God is absolute spirit mediating itself with itself in the process of thought.[8]

When did Baur himself make the progression from Schleiermacher to Hegel? The evidence suggests that it came shortly after the publication by Philipp Marheineke of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* in 1832 (the year following the philosopher's death). Possibly some influence of Hegel's logic can be seen on Baur's "Christuspartei" article of 1831,[9] where he first set forth his thesis concerning opposing tendencies in the early church, but the deep assimilation of Hegel's philosophy did not occur until the writing of *Die christliche Gnosis* (1835) and his seminal studies on the history of the doctrines of reconciliation, Trinity, and incarnation (1838–43).[10] In the heat of controversy, Baur insisted that he was "not a disciple of any philosophical system," and he was wary of "Hegelianism" as a label for discrediting his historical investigations.[11] But in fact he was deeply influenced by Hegel, especially in respect to the doctrine of God and the nature of historical process.

It was in the arena of christology and more detailed historical studies that Baur raised questions about Hegel. He intended to take history and the historical mediation of God with the sort of seriousness that he thought was required by the Hegelian system—indeed with greater seriousness than he thought Hegel himself

[8] *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte*, ed. Ferdinand Friedrich Baur, 3 vols in 4 (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1865–7), iii. 352–3. A similar statement is found in Baur's *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmengeschichte*, 2nd edn (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1858), § 120.

[9] "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christenthums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom," *Tübinger Zeitschrift fürTheologie*, 5/4 (1831), 61–206.

[10] *Die christliche Gnosis, oder die christliche Religions-Philosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwiklung* (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835); *Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1838); *Die christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 3 vols (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1841–3).

[11] "Abgenöthigte Erklärung gegen einen Artikel der *Evangelischen Kirchenzeitung*," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie*, 8/3 (1836), 3, 225.

took them. According to Baur, Hegel maintained that Jesus Christ is the God–man only for faith, not in historical fact; or, to put the point more cautiously, that it is not possible to inquire into what lies behind this faith in terms of an objective historical referent. But Baur thinks such an inquiry is essential. He asks in *Die christliche Gnosis*: "How could faith in him [Christ] as the God–man have arisen without his having been in some fashion objectively what faith claimed for him? The necessary presupposition…is that the implicit truth, the unity of divine and human nature, must first come to concrete truth and self-conscious knowledge in Christ, and be expressed and learned from him as truth."[12]

I am now convinced that this is precisely Hegel's own position, and that he and Baur are in substantial agreement on christology. Hegel's views are confusingly presented in Marheineke's edition of the *Religionsphilosophie*, which conflated passages from different lecture series into an editorially constructed text. Hegel's emphases do in fact shift from one lecture series to the next, and this is especially the case with respect to christology in the four series of lectures (1821, 1824, 1827, 1831). By sorting out these lectures, we gain clarity on Hegel's position. Hegel distinguishes between two perspectives on Jesus (as Baur recognizes): a nonreligious perspective, which views him as a human being in accord with his external circumstances and depends on historical accounts of his ministry and teaching; and a religious perspective, which identifies him as the Christ, the God–man, the one in whom God is definitively present and revealed, and depends on the witness of the Holy Spirit.[13] But Hegel's whole point is to show the *congruence* of these two perspectives, such that the historical view confirms or corroborates the spiritual, but without displacing the necessary role of faith and spiritual discernment. He places great emphasis on the teaching of Jesus, and in the 1821 lectures goes so far as to say that the life of this teacher is "in conformity with" his teaching and "strictly adequate to the idea of divine–human unity." "Since it is the divine idea that courses through this history, it occurs not as the history of a single individual alone, but rather it is implicitly the history of actual humanity as it constitutes itself as the existence of spirit."[14] The 1827 lectures go even further. The speech and activity of Jesus are those of a human being, yet they are at the same time essentially the work of God. God speaks through human speech, not in an extrinsic, supernatural way, but as "God's working in a human being, so that the divine presence is essentially identical with this human being."[15]

[12] *Die christliche Gnosis*, 712–13, 717. Cf. *Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes*, iii. 971. In a later work, the *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte* (iii. 534), Baur is less cautious when he says that for Hegel God does not become human really, factually, and objectively, but only in the representation that people of faith have made of this fact. The meaning of God's "becoming human" is of course one of the issues at stake here.

[13] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 316.

[14] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 122–4, 145.

[15] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 320.

All this, according to Hegel, can be said from the human, historical side, and is not yet a religious view. But the latter simply makes explicit what is already implicit in the historical perspective—namely, that it is "the nature of God that is revealed in Christ.... The faith that God is in Christ is the certainty that this course of the divine life is and has been envisaged in the course of this [human] life."[16] Here "Christ" means the historical Christ—that is, Jesus of Nazareth. The "conditions" that are necessary for this envisagement include his teaching, healing ministry, and self-understanding; they confirm that the human life in which the divine life is believed to flow is an appropriate vehicle of divinity. The faith that it does so flow is based on the witness of the Holy Spirit to individuals and to the community of faith. Only faith can see that *God* is present in Christ, but there are reasons for this envisagement; it does not run counter to the historical witness. Faith is rooted in history, but no proof of God can be given from history. This is Hegel's authentic position, and Baur's position, which he regarded as a correction of Hegel, is virtually identical. Indeed, Baur's depiction of the teaching, person, and redemptive work of Christ follows Hegel very closely, although Baur's christology is set forth in greater detail and on the basis of historical-critical study of the Gospels.[17] The essential nature of God appears in Christ, but of course for both Hegel and Baur Christ is not the literal God–man of orthodox doctrine.

Baur quotes Hegel's famous remark that "only by philosophy can this simply present content [of faith in Christ] be justified, not by history. What spirit does is no history (*Historie*). Spirit is concerned only with what is in and for itself, not something past, but simply what is present. This is the origin of the community."[18] Baur takes this statement to indicate that for Hegel the concrete historical Jesus is displaced to secondary, figurative significance in comparison with "the eternal process of spirit, which is only a game of distinctions lacking in seriousness";[19] and he takes this as proof of Hegel's gnosticizing tendency. Again, placing this passage into context helps. It occurs in the 1824 lectures, when Hegel's suspicion of historicism is at its height (as the remark about "countinghouse clerks" indicates). But even in these lectures he insists that faith must begin with sensible, empirical history; and in the 1821 lectures he warns that "to shun the sensible in monkish fashion is to exhibit cowardice of thought. For spirit [is] at home with itself in the sensible."[20] In the 1824 lectures he stresses the necessity of the transition from the sensible to the spiritual presence of Christ, while in 1821 and 1827 he stresses the necessity of historical mediation (or "positivity"). Spirit, for Hegel, in its process of

[16] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*,. iii. 368–9 (from the 1831 lectures).
[17] See my summary in Hodgson, *Formation of Historical Theology*, 100–21, 221–37.
[18] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 232–3.
[19] Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 714–16.
[20] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 134–5.

self-dirempting and self-reintegrating, is not an antihistorical but an essentially historical (*geschichtlich*) category. He speaks commonly of "the divine history" (*die göttliche Geschichte*) or "the eternal history, the eternal movement, which God himself is."[21] But this ever-present historicality of God as spirit is not subject to the external, empirical mode of investigation suitable for data from the past. While God is *geschichtlich*, there is no proof of God from *Historie*. The only witness to spirit is that of spirit itself, which is to say that God is self-attesting. The remark about "a game of distinctions lacking in seriousness" refers to Hegel's discussion of the immanent Trinity. But the non-serious "play of love with itself" becomes deadly serious[22] when the immanent distinctions within God are outwardly posited in the creation and redemption of the world—without which God would not be fully God. World history is incorporated into and becomes a necessary element of the divine history.

Baur's attempt to locate Hegel in the framework of a speculative form of Gnosticism is not successful, in my judgment.[23] In *Die christliche Gnosis* he suggests that a connection exists between ancient Gnostic systems (notably those of Basilides, Valentinus, the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies) and certain modern Protestant philosophies of religion (Boehme, Schelling, Schleiermacher, Hegel). Gnosticism offers a principle for the interpretation of universal historical process, and it is a form not of abstract but of religious knowledge, concerned with redemption. As such Baur believes that it has a legitimate place in Christian theology, especially in the struggle of the first two centuries against the particularizing tendencies of Judaism. But his detailed description of the Gnostic world view[24] shows how antithetical it is to Hegel. Its speculative interpretation of religious history is predicated on a metaphysical dualism deriving from paganism (matter versus spirit, the historical versus the archetypal); and historical development is viewed as occurring through the interaction of dualistically opposed powers. Spirit returns to itself as pure spirit, and an infinite abyss remains between spirit and matter. It posits a determinism that excludes moral freedom and lacks a true doctrine of creation. Its christology is docetic, since the redeemer figure must come into as little contact as possible with matter, and generally the positive content of Christianity evaporates. Hegel's philosophical system, by contrast, is holistic, not dualistic; spirit and matter (or nature) are not antithetical but

[21] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, iii. 77, 186–7, 327–8.

[22] Hegel says this very explicitly in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (see *Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*, ed. Hodgson, 94, 101).

[23] In this respect my interpretation differs from that of Cyril O'Regan, who uses Baur to criticize Gnostic aspects of neo-Protestantism. See *Gnostic Return in Modernity* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001).

[24] For the following see not only *Die christliche Gnosis* but also the account of Gnosticism in *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1853), 159–213.

necessary to each other; spirit overarches the difference between the ideal and the real, returning to itself as embodied, mediated spirit; God becomes incarnate (or more precisely, "appears") as an individual, sensible, human being who suffers the degrading death of crucifixion (the most extreme diremption of spirit in the world); and the positivity and spirituality of Christianity are equally affirmed.

In some respects Hegel's christology seems more orthodox than Baur's, since Hegel has no conceptual difficulty with the union of divine and human spirit in a single individual (Jesus Christ) as well as in humanity as whole. He places much greater emphasis on the death of Christ as the death of God than Baur does; and the necessity of God's appearing in history as a concrete "this" (*Dieser*) becomes a leitmotif in the latter part of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Baur in contrast insists that just a *minimum* of the non-being of the divine idea must remain in the person of Christ. His theory of a "disappearing minimum" is set forth most clearly at the conclusion to *Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes*:

> Idea and reality can never be joined together in such absolute unity that the idea does not transcend every manifestation given in reality, indeed every single individual; therefore the idea can actualize itself only in an infinite series of individuals. In every single individual the non-being of the idea must also be posited, *be it only as a minimum*.... As certainly as the idea of humanity must actualize itself, and as certainly as it is established essentially in the unity of God and the human being, just as certainly can it be actualized only by virtue of the fact that it enters into the consciousness of humanity at a specific point in a specific individual. However, no matter how highly in other respects one may place this individual, in virtue of the idea of this unity that comes to consciousness in him, he must still stand in a subordinate relationship to the idea; and a God–man in the sense of the ecclesiastical doctrine embraces in itself an irresolvable contradiction.[25]

Whether this quantitative difference amounts to a qualitative distinction between Baur's christology and Hegel's seems questionable to me. Jesus is the same whether the idea of God appears in him or whether the minimum of the nonbeing of the idea appears in him. Hegel offers an alternative to the traditional doctrine of the God-man that resolves its contradictions, and his portrayal of the life of Jesus is similar to Baur's. However, the theme of the death of Jesus is important for Hegel in a way that it is not for Baur because it represents the extremity of God's self-diremption, anguish, and suffering in this degrading human death. Tragedy itself is incorporated into the divine life by Hegel.

[25] *Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes*, iii. 998–9. See also *Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung*, 621–4, 735.

Baur's Interpretation of Historical Process and Historical Knowledge

When we turn to Baur's interpretation of historical process, the full extent of Hegel's influence becomes evident. Baur is the "theologian of history" par excellence because for him history is the central theological category and theology is the clue to the nature of history. For this dialectic of theology and history he relies on Hegel. The self-actualization of the idea of God is the ground of the historical process. History exists because God as absolute spirit explicates himself historically. God lives historically, and history is God's triune life *ad extra*—a process moving through phases of original unity, differentiation, estrangement, and reconciliation. The history of Christianity transpires within this life-process. God is essentially spirit, spirit related to itself in the process of thinking. Since history is a process of the unfolding of consciousness, the dialectical movement of the concept can be traced in its materials. Thus we should expect that history develops through the interplay of opposing tendencies and bitter conflicts, that every resolution is temporary and will be surpassed, and that the goal of history is never fully attained within history. Baur insists that concrete patterns must be discovered empirically rather than imposed a priori.[26]

In *The Formation of Historical Theology* I asked whether Baur blurs the distinction between God and history, as I presumed Hegel did.[27] Is the historical process simply identified with God? Does dogmatics dissolve into historical theology? Is faith replaced by historical knowledge? Can there be genuine distinctions within an all-embracing unity? If God is not first God's own other totally apart from humanity and the world, if God in some sense becomes dependent on the world to be God, are not the integrity of the world and the freedom of God sacrificed? These are Barthian questions, and I found myself concurring with Karl Barth that what is lacking in both Hegel and Baur is a doctrine of creation that establishes qualitative differences between infinite and finite, divine and human, God and the world. Without such a doctrine their speculative panentheism is in danger of collapsing into a Spinozistic acosmism. I argued that Baur, with his greater emphasis on historical positivity and particularity, is more successful in avoiding this danger than Hegel is. At the time I was unfamiliar with Hegel's own version of the doctrine of creation (according to which God "releases" the world to be other than God through a primordial "judgment" or "scission"), nor was I familiar with Hegel's own criticism of Spinozistic acosmism (which is connected with his defense of Spinoza against the charges of atheism and pantheism).[28] Hegel clearly is not a

[26] See esp. *Versöhnung*, pp. v–vi; *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte*, iii. 350, 353; and *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmengeschichte*, Preface to 1st edn and Introduction.

[27] Hodgson, *Formation of Historical Theology*, 136–41.

[28] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, i. 376–8; ii. 572–5; iii. 86, 290–4.

pantheist, atheist, or acosmist. I have come to affirm his panentheism or what I call his non-totalizing holism, but that is an argument for another project. I continue to believe that Baur thematized historicality more radically than Hegel did, was more aware of the relativity of historical process and historical knowledge, and brought the skills of a critical historian to bear on the Hegelian vision of God in history and history in God.

For Baur historical knowledge is necessarily connected with historical process. The goal of historical knowledge is "to be nothing other than the true, adequate reflex of the objective event[s]" that comprise the historical process. But the distance between the historian and the historical object in terms of time and point of view is often so great that it is questionable whether the historian ever has direct access to the "real factuality of the matter itself." Thus every historical presentation must be critically tested to determine its relationship to "the pure objectivity of historical truth." Moreover, "history itself…is something so infinitely large that its contents can never be exhausted by historical knowledge, through which what has objectively taken place is also to become subjectively known."[29] All we really have are perspectives on history, not the totality of history, and every historical presentation reflects its own interests, insights, biases, and limitations. Baur's own historical studies were focused on the origins and history of the Christian church and Christian doctrine, and he worked from a Protestant post-Enlightenment Eurocentric (indeed, Germanocentric) perspective, which he never transcended, but at least he was aware of the relativity and limits of his position in the larger scheme of things. Hegel's perspective was considerably broader, including as it did the history of a diversity of religions, cultures, and sciences. Hegel's goal may have been "absolute knowledge," but he did not regard such knowledge as empirically achievable except perhaps as mystical insight into thought knowing itself. It certainly is not a homogenizing totality or a barren identity, but all the endless and inexhaustible details of history, the countless determinate negations through which spirit moves in its quest for recognition and wholeness.[30] Thus Hegel demands of the historian not only an overarching perspective but attention to the concrete details of history. Baur fulfills these demands admirably.

Baur's theory of historical knowledge can be sketched only briefly here.[31] It involves an interplay of authentic objectivity and authentic subjectivity. In respect to the first, the goal of the historian is to penetrate to the objectivity of historical events and to search for inner unities and continuities in the midst of diversity and change. This goal requires moving beyond purely descriptive

[29] *Die Epochen der kirchlichen Geschichtschreibung* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1852), 1–2.

[30] See *Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*, ed. Hodgson, 18, 25, 100–10, 151 (these are references to passages in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*).

[31] For the details see Hodgson, *Formation of Historical Theology*, ch. 4.

and pragmatic methods of writing history to a philosophical, indeed speculative construction of meaning.[32]

> Speculation is . . . reflective thinking (*denkende Betrachtung*) about the object with which one is concerned; it is the posture of the consciousness in relation to the object, in which the object appears as that which it really is; it is the striving to enter into (*hineinstellen*) the objective course of the subject matter itself and to follow it in all the moments in which it moves itself on . . . . Without speculation, every historical investigation . . . is a mere tarrying on the superfluous and external side of the subject matter. The more important and comprehensive the object is with which historical investigation is concerned, and the more directly it belongs to the element of thought, the more such investigation approaches not merely a reproducing (*reproduciren*) within itself of what the individual thought and did but a rethinking (*nachzudenken*) within itself of the eternal thoughts of the eternal spirit, whose work history is.[33]

This passage nicely summarizes the method of speculation, which entails a double mirroring (*speculum*) of the object by the subject, and of the subject by the object; and it introduces several of the categories by which the goal of "reflecting," "entering into," "reproducing," and "rethinking" the objectivity of the subject matter is described. The use of these categories signals that for Baur historical knowledge has a method if its own, distinguishable from though related to the other human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*).

The stress on objectivity must be balanced by a recognition of the role of subjectivity in the work of the historian. Perspective shapes everything, and Baur insists that it must be a contemporaneous perspective, one that really engages the subjectivity of the age in which one finds oneself. Every theological writing, whether biblical or postbiblical, reflects "tendencies"; and instead of a single church historiography there can only be "epochs" of church historiography.[34] The history of the church and of dogma must be continued up to the present moment, since it is only from our own theological perspective that we can trace the history of the movement of spirit through history and transpose ourselves into it.[35] Historians should not attempt to transcend the relativity of their stance but to penetrate critically their own subjectivity, wherein they encounter the true objectivity of the historical process. Authentic objectivity and authentic subjectivity mirror each other: this is the speculative insight. Its conditions of possibility have been contested in the age of postmodernity. But the alternative leads

[32] In an early lecture manuscript from the Blaubeuren period (see Hodgson, *Formation of Historical Theology*, 162), Baur distinguished between purely objective, pragmatic, and philosophical methods of writing history, anticipating in a remarkable way Hegel's distinction in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* between original, reflective (pragmatic), and philosophical history (see pp. 67–77, 133–46, of the Brown–Hodgson translation).

[33] *Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes*, i, pp. xviii–xix.

[34] *Epochen*, 5–6.

[35] *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte*, i/1. 12–13.

to pragmatism and relativism. Without some sort of connection between subjectivity and objectivity, how can anything at all be known apart from our own subjectivity?

Baur's Construction of the History of the Church

The best way to test Baur's theology of history is to look at his construction of church history.[36] The *church* for Baur is the historical institution by which the idea of divine–human reconciliation, released into the world through the person of Christ, achieves various concrete actualizations over time. The idea has a drive to manifest itself, to become ideal-real, and the history of the church is the movement of the idea of the church.[37] Baur's key assumption is that idea and manifestation must be *neither identified nor separated* in the history of the church; they coexist in a continuous dialectical tension that resists the absolutization of a relative institution, on the one hand, and the withdrawal of the idea into a purely spiritual realm, on the other. Catholic and Protestant views of the church emphasize different aspects of this dialectic.

> In the entire period of the church up to the Reformation, the whole trend of the idea of the church was to enter into the reality of the world of manifestations and to merge with it in an inseparable unity, while, on the other hand, after the Reformation the development of the church strives just as much (*ebensosehr*) to retract the idea from the reality of the visible church and to hold idea and manifestation apart from each other in the full extent of their distinction.[38]

In response to the criticism of Karl Hase that such a statement allows authenticity only to the ideal or invisible church, Baur insists that the adverb *ebensosehr* links the two propositions together equally in such a way that Protestantism achieves an appropriate balance, affirming both "the unity of idea and reality and the incongruence of both."[39] The "incongruence" constitutes the Protestant critical principle, its awareness of the necessary though always inadequate relationship of the ideal and the real.[40] In this respect Baur rather precisely anticipates Paul Tillich's version of the Protestant principle.

The interplay of idea and manifestation constitutes the history of the church and defines its several periods. Wilhelm Dilthey remarks that this approach "is perhaps the most penetrating attempt ever made to comprehend a historical

[36] For his construction of the history of dogma, see below, pp. 18–35.

[37] *Epochen*, 248–9; *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte*, iii. 283–4.

[38] *Epochen*, 250.

[39] *An Herrn Dr Karl Hase: Beantwortung des Sendschreibens "Die Tübinger Schule"* (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1855), 83–4.

[40] *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte*, iii. 282–5.

phenomenon through analysis of its essential forms of manifestation."[41] This is a perceptive insight. Baur's five-volume church history (1853–62) offers an interpretation of the historical development of the church that is organic to the church's historicality. The development is understood in terms of the different modes of relation between the idea of the church (the reconciliation of God and humanity in Christ) and the historical forms in which the idea has been realized. The church itself is the fundamental reality in which the idea of Christianity comes to appearance. But the church manifests itself through three primary forms—*dogma, institutionality,* and *faith*—whose relative primacy marks the main periods of the church's historical development. Each is present in all periods, but one predominates in each period. A number of secondary forms of manifestation also play a role: *worship, ethical life, relations to secular power, missions*. The fabric of church history is woven from this complex interplay of factors and from distinctive church-historical motifs specific to each of the major periods.

Here is a summary.[42] (1) *Ancient period* (first six centuries, ending with the papacy of Gregory the Great in 604). The primary form of the church is *dogma* (the formulation of Christian religious consciousness in the central doctrines of the Trinity and Christ). The principal church-historical motifs are the life and work of the founder of Christianity, Jesus of Nazareth; the establishment of the church as an autonomous institution vis-à-vis Judaism and Gnosticism; and the articulation of the basic Christian doctrines in objective form. (2) *Medieval period* (seventh through fifteenth centuries). The primary form becomes that of *ecclesiastical hierarchy*. The first church-historical motif is the transition from dogma to hierarchy, completed with the papacy of Gregory VII in 1073; this is followed by the "ruling absolutism of the church" in the high Middle Ages; the beginning of scholastic theology and the penetration of dogmatic formulations by inwardly reflected consciousness, culminating in the *summas* of Thomas Aquinas; and the breakdown of the medieval synthesis in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. (3) *Reformation and modern period* (sixteenth through nineteenth centuries).[43] Now the primary form is *faith*, by which the truth of Christianity is assimilated into the

[41] Wilhelm Dilthey, "Ferdinand Christian Baur," *Gesammelte Schriften*, 4 (2nd edn, Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1925), 429–30. Dilthey claims that, while in earlier studies Baur had made fruitful use of Hegelian methods, in the first volume of his church history he let go of these in order to "build out of the materials his own authentic historical categories."

[42] See *Epochen*, 251–2; *An Herrn Dr Hase*, 82–3, 85; the tables of contents of the several volumes of church history; and Hodgson, *Formation of Historical Theology*, 124–7, 251–6. The schema serves as a heuristic device but does not control the detailed analyses. The same is true of the schema used for the history of dogma.

[43] Since the last two volumes of the church history, which cover this period, consist of posthumously published lecture manuscripts in which the materials have not been brought into full structural continuity with the preceding volumes, we can only guess how Baur would have organized the church-historical motifs.

consciousness of believers. But the chief church-historical reality is that of the confessional split between Catholicism and Protestantism and the further splintering of Protestantism into denominations and sects. For Catholicism the locus of authority remains the hierarchy and doctrinal tradition, while for Protestantism it shifts to scripture, the interpretation of which presupposes the freedom of faith. The fragile balance between objectivity and subjectivity achieved by the Reformers is in constant danger of breaking down into orthodox dogmatics (Protestant scholasticism), on the one hand, and rationalism (deism, Socinianism), on the other. The task of mediating between these tendencies, of finding the right relationship between the objective content of faith and the criteria of critical thought and subjective experience, continues down to the present day (not merely Baur's present day but ours as well, it might be claimed).

The idea that is realizing itself in the history of the church is a *divine* idea—the idea of reconciliation or of divine–human unity. This is not an abstract *ideal* but an efficacious *idea* with the power to affect what it interacts with. It is God at work in history. Baur does not reflect on certain theological aspects of his interpretation of church history.[44] How does God actually interact with historical forces in such a way as to move them without determining them? Is God guiding the history of the church toward specific ends? Is God at work in other religions and other historical phenomena? How are evil, corruption, and schism to be accounted for? These are questions that Baur seems content to leave to the speculative philosopher of history.[45]

Baur's Interpretation of Theology in the Nineteenth Century

The "modern" or most recent period in the history of the church and theology begins, according to Baur, with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and unfolds through three phases down to the middle of the nineteenth century. This period is covered in the third volume of Baur's lectures on the history of Christian dogma and in the fourth and fifth volumes of his church history (the latter based on lectures presented in the 1850s).[46] Baur's analysis is

[44] He offers his own view on divine providence in his sermons but not in his academic writings. See Hodgson, *Formation of Historical Theology*, 135.

[45] Indeed, these questions are addressed by Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (see pp. 78–107, 140–76). For whatever reasons, Baur rarely mentions these lectures.

[46] *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte*, iii. 298–634. *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmengeschichte*, §§ 113–37. *Kirchengeschichte der neuern Zeit, von der Reformation bis zum Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Ferdinand Friedrich Baur (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1863), 476–679. *Kirchengeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Eduard Zeller (Tübingen: L. F. Fues, 1862; 2nd edn, Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1877), 1–575. The threefold division is unique to the church history. The history of dogma treats the modern period in a single section, but distinguishes between Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment developments.

of particular interest because it offers a unique perspective by a contemporary participant on what is probably the most fertile period in modern Christian theology. While his attention in the history of dogma is limited almost entirely to Germany, the treatment in the church history is trans-confessional (Catholic as well as Protestant) and to some extent trans-national (France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Spain).

The triple division was worked out in the lectures of the 1850s. The first phase dates from about 1750 to 1815 and can be characterized as a period of *revolution* because of the theological crisis and transformation occasioned by the challenge of rationalism and the impact of historical-critical study on the biblical documents and the history of the church. Despite the break occasioned by the Enlightenment, Baur defends a basic continuity between old and new Protestantism, a continuity that allows for the development of the "Protestant principle" of free subjectivity with its critique of dogmatic and ecclesiastical idolatry. The principle runs the risk, however, of weakening the objective content and historical positivity of Christian theology. The christology of rationalism places exclusive emphasis on the humanity of Jesus and loses the reality of the incarnation of God. For Immanuel Kant, Christ is a moral ideal that can never be identified with a historical individual. Here Baur finds antecedents of D. F. Strauss's own basically rationalist christology.

The second phase, from 1815 to 1830, is one of *reaction, synthesis,* and *mediation*—reaction to the extremes of Protestant rationalism, for which the traditional historical norms of Christian thought were largely submerged, and attempted synthesis or mediation between the requirements of critical, speculative reason, on the one hand, and the historicality of the Christian church, its gospel and theology, on the other. The two great figures in this period are Schleiermacher and Hegel. Schleiermacher provides a new foundation for theology in his analysis of religious consciousness and feeling, which are not reduced to autonomous subjectivity. Hegel re-establishes the doctrine of God, which Baur regards as an enormous intellectual achievement. But, as we have seen, he is critical of the weaknesses of Schleiermacher and Hegel as historians and of what he regards as their Gnostic tendencies.

The third phase, from 1830 through the middle of the century, represents a *dissolution* of the attempted synthesis and a rejection of attempts to mediate between faith and critical thought or theology and culture. The dissolution is marked by the disintegration of the Hegelian school into right and left wings, the negative results of Strauss's criticism of the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, the failure of the mediating theologians to further the work of Schleiermacher and Hegel in imaginative ways, and the revival of Protestant conservatism in the forms of confessionalism, pietism, and speculative theism. Christology now replaces the doctrine of God as the central issue, and Strauss is the representative figure. Baur believes that Strauss exploits ambiguities in Hegel's christology, opting for a left-wing solution that displaces the historical

figure of Jesus by a universal human ideal, while right-wing Hegelians restore a supernatural conception of the person of Christ. Baur concurs with Strauss in claiming that the ideality of divine–human unity cannot be completely realized in a single individual, but Baur (unlike Strauss) adds that the ideal must not be severed from the individual either. While faith is not generated by historical study, a historical basis for the faith of the church exists, rather than simply myth and miracle, for Jesus was penetrated by the idea of God–manhood in the most intensive way possible for any human being, and from this penetration flows the distinctive idea of Christianity.

Baur proposes that the authentic route for future theology is down the middle, between left- and right-wing distortions of the theological task, and this he sees as the mission of the Tübingen School, which contends for the historicality of Christianity and the validity of its truth claims on "scientific" grounds. But, with the death of Baur in 1860, the Tübingen School faded into history.

On Baur's grave is inscribed the simple word, "theologian."

BAUR'S *LEHRBUCH DER CHRISTLICHEN DOGMENGESCHICHTE*

Text and Translation

When Baur joined the Protestant theological faculty at Tübingen in 1826, he became one of four professors, each of whom had broad responsibilities. Baur's included all the historical disciplines except Old Testament—that is, church history, history of dogma, and New Testament history, exegesis, and theology. Initially he became well known through his innovative studies of the New Testament, including his interpretation of the teaching of Jesus; his claims for the priority of Matthew among the Synoptic Gospels, the non-historical character of the Gospel of John, and the struggle between Jewish and Pauline tendencies in early Christianity; and his criteria for identifying the genuinely Pauline epistles.[47] He was the first to bring historical-critical analysis to bear on the full range of Christianity, starting with the New Testament and continuing down to the debates of his own time. In addition to the enormous scholarly competence required by his teaching, he served as director of the theological seminary (the "Stift") starting in 1837 and was one of three regular faculty preachers in the university church (the "Stiftskirche"). He attracted talented students and became the de facto leader of the Tübingen School, which

[47] These ideas are summarized in Baur's lectures on New Testament theology, *Vorlesungen über neutestamentliche Theologie*, ed. Ferdinand Friedrich Baur (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1864). We hope to translate these lectures as a companion volume to the *Lehrbuch*.

flourished until his death. But he was not well received by church theologians in Germany, and many of his students pursued careers in philosophy or history rather than theology. His brand of speculative theology fell out of favor, and his accomplishments went largely unrecognized.

Baur lectured on the history of Christian dogma every other year for thirty-four years, from 1826 until 1860. Upon each biennial repetition of the lectures, he revised portions of them, so that the whole took on a new shape several times and remained up to date.[48] In addition to lecturing on the subject, Baur wrote numerous articles and published several large monographs: *Die christliche Gnosis* (1835), *Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung* (1838), and *Die christliche Lehre von der Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes* (3 volumes, 1841–3). The latter in particular is often cited in the *Lehrbuch*.

Baur utilized very extensive lecture manuscripts when he created a one-volume "textbook," the *Lehrbuch der christlichen Dogmengeschichte*, in 1847. In the preface he says that its principle justification is to present to the public the full range and contents of the history of dogma in a brief form—a form that shows the general principles and insights on which the construction of the whole rests, and allows readers to see the "intellectual organism" of the discipline. The textbook is limited for the most part to the summarizing of results, but these are results that Baur himself has achieved through specialized investigations and extensive research in the source literature. The primary purpose of the summary, however, is to allow the "inner process of development taken by Christian dogma in its historical course" to stand out as clearly as possible. Baur responds to the charge that he construes history only in terms of the "prior schematism" of a speculative system, as opposed to simply surrendering himself to the materials at hand.

> Only the crudest empiricism can believe that one simply surrenders oneself to things, that the objects of historical investigation can only be taken directly as they lie before us. Ever since there has been a critique of knowledge, a critical theory of knowledge (such a theory is well known in any event at least since Kant), anyone who approaches history not totally lacking in philosophical education must know that one has to distinguish between things as they are in themselves and as they appear to us, and that they become appearances to us precisely because we are able to have access to them only through the medium of our consciousness.

The critical method holds objective and subjective elements apart but also connects them, because it attends to the objectivity of the thing itself precisely through the medium of consciousness. The conditions of possibility

[48] See Ferdinand Friedrich Baur's Foreword to *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte*, i/1, pp. v–vii. Baur's son edited the lecture manuscripts for publication in four volumes, 1865–7.

for a critical mediation of objectivity and subjectivity are provided by Hegel's speculative philosophy.

Baur issued a second edition of the *Lehrbuch* in 1858, two years before his death, improved by its material expansion, its more detailed presentations, and its additional references. The book grew from 288 pages to 396 pages. These 396 pages summarize the 2,300 pages of the published edition of the *Vorlesungen*, so the *Lehrbuch* is still a remarkable effort at compression. Baur emphasizes in the preface to the second edition that the task of a textbook is to trace the history of dogma through all its periods up to its most recent configurations in the present day. Most historians of dogma terminate their efforts shortly after the Reformation, thereby avoiding the oppositions, controversies, pending questions, and necessary judgments that have to be addressed by extending the history into the middle of the nineteenth century.

This is the form in which the *Lehrbuch* is available to us today. A third edition was published in 1867. Apparently, however, the plates could not be reused but instead had to be reset. Even though the lines and pagination are identical, a few minor errors crept into the resetting that have been spotted by the translators.[49] When discrepancies of this sort appear, the second edition is regarded as authoritative. Current reprints, however, are of the third edition. The translation is of the third edition, checked against the second.

The editor/translators have completed the many abbreviations used in Baur's footnotes and have added explanatory materials and notes as appropriate; the designation "[*Ed.*]" distinguishes editorial material from Baur's own. We have provided translations of Baur's quotation of Greek and Latin texts. We have included all his references to primary sources, but not to secondary texts from the nineteenth century. Baur's presentation is more complete for the introduction and the first major period, which together comprise half the volume, than it is for the second and especially the third major periods. As he approached the end of the work, he must have found himself confronting the limits set for the *Lehrbuch*, because his discussion of issues and figures in the Reformation and modern era often seems compressed and elliptical. Perhaps he could assume that his readers would be more familiar with this material, but that is not true today, so we have provided some clarifying information from the *Vorlesungen*. At the least, the *Lehrbuch* serves as a kind of index to the fuller discussion in the *Vorlesungen*.

The bibliography includes the sources cited or alluded to by Baur, thereby demonstrating the enormous scope of his erudition. References to English translation series and editions are included. The bibliography also lists the works by Baur cited in this book.

[49] See p. 152, n. 182; p. 233, n. 6; p. 290, n. 25; p. 357, n. 68.

A literal translation of Baur's title is "Textbook of the History of Christian Dogmas." Since English does not use the plural "dogmas" in this sense, and since textbooks are rarely if ever called "textbooks" any longer, we have simply called it *History of Christian Dogma*. In any event, it is not a textbook in the normal English sense but a demanding, indeed rigorous, engagement with the discipline. To assist in reading the *Lehrbuch*, the remainder of the Editorial Introduction provides a brief summary of it.

Introduction: The Conception, Method, and History of the History of Dogma

Baur claims that the task of his introduction as a whole is to establish the *concept* of the history of dogma (§ 1). However, it is helpful to construe "concept" in a narrower sense and to distinguish between three main topics addressed by the introduction.

The Conception of the History of Dogma

The conception of the word "dogma" itself is addressed in § 3. It is a difficult conception for English readers to grasp, in part because of negative connotations of the term itself. Baur points out that in antiquity "dogma" simply meant ordinances or teachings that are regarded to be absolutely valid and binding because they involve matters that transcend human authority. For Christian faith, dogma is not Christian teaching "in its original and still indeterminate sense as *logos tou theou*, word of God, but rather already in a specific wording or formulation, in respect to which the undeniably human aspect of the form must be distinguished from the divine content subsisting in itself." This tension between content and form is a decisive factor throughout the history of dogma. On the one hand, dogma contains what is divine and absolute, but, on the other hand, it contains this truth only in human form, and these forms are constantly shifting and multiplying. Indeed, *Dogmengeschichte* in German means a history of *dogmas* (*Dogmen*), not simply of dogma in the singular, and thus the history of dogma(s) "is concerned with the content of Christian doctrine explicated as completely as possible." Dogma as encountered in the history of dogma is always a human product, a limited attempt to express the truth about God and Christ under the conditions of determinacy, conflict, and often confusion. This tensive relationship between content and form is preserved by employing the term "dogma," which in this and other respects is closely related to the term "doctrine" or "teaching" (*Lehre*). Baur uses *Dogma* to describe the discipline as a whole and the characteristics of the major periods, and *Lehre* to name the individual doctrines, but this appears to be an arbitrary convention. English readers might prefer the blander term "thought" for both; the translation sticks with "dogma" and "doctrine."

A discipline is defined by its boundaries, and Baur presents innovative ideas on the relationship of the history of dogma to New Testament studies (§ 3), to church history and dogmatics (§ 2), and to the history of philosophy (§ 5). One type of boundary is temporal, formed by the beginning and the end of the discipline. Baur points out that history itself is a continuous process that has no beginning and no end. The limits of the history of dogma are only the two opposing points between which it moves, the points where the historical movement of dogma has not yet started or has not yet gone any further. These points are fluid: New Testament theology flows into the history of dogma, and the history of dogma into dogmatics.

> Even if [the history of dogma] must accept as the unshakable ground of all historical movement the substantial content of Christian consciousness that is connected to and identical with the person of Jesus, at the same time the original Christian teaching itself is only given to it through the mediation of the New Testament authors—in whose portrayal may already be perceived the kernel of differences that become so pronounced in subsequent developments. Thus, even on the soil of biblical theology, the history of dogma must at least stand freely, going as far back as it can find differences.

This statement is crucial for Baur. On the one hand, the person of Jesus is the indispensable ground of the whole Christian movement. His teaching cannot be conflated with dogma but is rather what dogma presupposes—"the universal and essential form of Christian consciousness, which lies at the basis of and presides over the whole development of dogma." Baur's own christology can be summed up by saying that Jesus' life, teaching, and self-consciousness—his articulation and enactment of a new relationship between God and humanity—are the founding event for all that follows. As such they do not stand outside of history but are a part of history, one of the great turning points by which history takes a new direction. On the other hand, this originating moment is given to us only through the mediation of the New Testament authors, among whom differences already occur and with whom the history of dogma already begins. It is only for practical purposes that New Testament theology is singled out for special treatment, and that the history of dogma starts with the first post-New Testament writings. Of course the emergence of Christianity out of Judaism is also a process that occurs over time, and the New Testament blends into the Old.

The point at which the history of dogma can go no further is that of modern dogmatics:

> Dogmatics is merely the flow of the history of dogma coming to rest from its movement. Dogmatics strives to bring to a standstill what in the history of dogma is always only changing and varying—delivering it, as it were, from the stream in which it is always moving to the shore of firm ground, but struggling in vain against the pressure of the waves. The history of dogma shows itself here in its

> overwhelming power. It is the fate of dogmatics to devolve repeatedly into the history of dogma.

This statement reveals the overarching historicality of Baur's thought. There are really no fixed points in history, no eternally valid definitions, but always only the process of history, which is itself the medium in which God is known and humanity reconciled. It also explains why for Baur the history of dogma cannot be terminated at some earlier point, such as the Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed confessions, following which dogma supposedly is no longer operative.

The "operative" character of dogma is one of the distinctive features of Baur's history. He says that dogma itself "enters into distinctions, increasingly splitting and subdividing itself, taking on determinate form in individual dogmas, and modifying itself in diverse ways." Baur speaks of dogma as though it were an active agent in history, a moving power. Dogma is the rational articulation of the Christian "idea" or principle, the idea of the reconciliation of God and humanity revealed in Christ and actualized in the history of the Christian church; and this idea, like all great historical ideas, has a life of its own. Dogma possesses both an underlying unity, the substantial content of Christian faith or truth, and a great diversity of forms of expression. Rightly capturing the unity in distinction, and the distinction in unity, is the challenge of speculative theology; and the speculative method is that of following the movement of the subject matter itself.

Before addressing the method of the history of dogma, the other type of boundary by which it is defined, its disciplinary boundary, needs to be considered. How is it related to church history (§ 2) and the history of philosophy (§ 5)? In one sense the history of dogma is a subordinate part of church history because the latter encompasses the development of Christianity as a whole in all its forms (doctrinal, institutional, liturgical, practical). In another, narrower sense, however, church history focuses on Christianity as oriented to the external world and political life, while history of dogma is concerned with its inner world of thought. Since the inner is the presupposition of the outer, and the latter can only be conceived from the former, history of dogma has precedence over church history. Baur engages in both disciplines without according priority to either one. His perspective shifts as he moves between them.

The relationship to the history of philosophy is also complex. The two disciplines can be regarded as elements of one and the same spiritual process. They are both "the history of human thought about and investigation into what is existent and true in itself, the absolute—but with the distinction that in the history of dogma thought is active wholly in the form of Christian dogma." This is because a new revelation of divinity occurred with the appearance of Christianity, a revelation that emphasized "the pure objectivity of the absolute idea of God and the unconditional surrender of the humanly finite to God." This revelation purified Greek and Hellenistic ideas of the absolute, but it was not the whole truth. It demanded thought in the form of "faith,"

which expressed itself representationally in concrete and overly literal images. Thought also had to free itself from faith, to "pull itself out of this objectivity that it sees as an alien and transcendent world," and withdraw to its inner ground in the nature of spirit. In spirit the transcendent and the immanent, the infinite and the finite, the divine and the human, the objective and the subjective, are co-present and co-constitutive. Baur believes that this is the lesson that theology has learned from modern philosophy. Philosophy gains the truth of its absolute content from theology, and theology gains its free form from philosophy. The history of dogma is not superseded by modern philosophy but rather moves to a new stage of its development. (This is just as well, because modern philosophy soon enough abandoned theology altogether.)

The Method of the History of Dogma

The method of the history of dogma can only be the objective nature and movement of the subject matter itself (§ 4). By this Baur means that the history of dogma is not merely a contingent aggregate, not simply the constant play of chance and free choice, but rather the movement of dogma itself, releasing its concept into the distinction of its moments and drawing the moments back into unity. It is an intellectual or spiritual process in which the essential nature of spirit itself is revealed. At the same time, the history of dogma is the continuing process of *consciousness* as it thinks about dogma. On both sides—the objectivity of dogma and the subjectivity of consciousness—it is the same spirit that is operative. What is involved is an endless labor of spirit that struggles with itself and strives for the freedom of its self-consciousness in the absolute content of dogma. Every new stage in the relationship of consciousness to its object is inadequate, and the process goes on until content and form, object and subject, coalesce into unity, which is to say that the process never stops. "All this rests on the assumption that dogma in itself is not foreign to the essential nature of spirit, that dogma is only spirit become objective to itself, mediating itself with itself in this antithesis of objective and subjective."

The double activity of spirit, going out from itself and returning to itself, becoming both object and subject, is the principle of movement by which all moments of spiritual activity are determined. The *periods* of the history of dogma are defined by which side in this double-sided activity predominates, although both are always present.

In the *first centuries* a dogmatic productivity occurred in which spirit constructed itself in the form of dogma. The absolute content of dogma was elaborated in great detail, and the claims of thinking consciousness took a back seat. Faith found itself in a condition of obedience and dependence, and a striving to overcome this condition had to be awakened.

This awakening occurred with *scholasticism*, its great task being that of mediating faith and knowledge. The mediation was attempted, however, by

means of the categories of the understanding (*Verstand*), which meant that it could never be satisfactorily accomplished, despite the dialectical acumen of the great medieval theologians. The truth of church dogma remained an absolute presupposition rather than something probed by thought. The time finally had to arrive for a decisive break with dogma.

This rift came about through the *Reformation*. The movement was called "Protestantism" because of its unavoidable schism from church dogma. Protestantism rested on the principle of subjective freedom and the autonomy of self-consciousness. But its principle could not be adequately realized at the beginning because it had a strictly religious interest and could not yet transcend the barrier of Catholicism. It fell back into its own forms of scholastic authoritarianism. Only in the course of the Enlightenment and the early nineteenth century was the Protestant principle liberated from its one-sidedness and elevated to its true freedom, its mediation of objectivity and subjectivity, in which it employed the categories of philosophy as well as theology.

Thus the history of dogma may be divided into three major periods. The *ancient church* (the first through sixth centuries) is the period of the objectification and substantiality of dogma. The *Middle Ages* or scholasticism (the seventh through the fifteenth centuries) is the period of consciousness withdrawing from the objectivity of dogma into its own subjectivity through intellectual reflection (*Verstandesreflexion*). The period since the *Reformation* (the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries) is that of a free self-consciousness dissociating itself from dogma and in principle opposing dogma, yet also producing it anew from itself, more deeply and inwardly. Each of the three main periods may be further divided into two parts, with turning points at the fourth century (the Council of Nicaea), the thirteenth century (high scholasticism), and the eighteenth century (the Enlightenment).

In the six periods thus distinguished, the chronological and systematic methods are combined, each being inadequate on its own. By "chronological" Baur means an introductory survey that identifies the distinctive characteristics and major authors of each period. By "systematic" he means a discussion organized by the history of apologetics and the history of individual doctrines in each period. Apologetics includes topics such as the defense against opponents, theories of canon and inspiration, the relationship between reason and revelation, and the doctrines of scripture and tradition. The history of individual doctrines is organized somewhat differently in the six periods but always includes the doctrines of God, the Trinity, creation and governance of the world, angels and demons, human being, sin and grace, the person and work of Christ, sacraments, the church, and last things (eschatology). This organization may appear antiquated, and was considered as such by later historians, but it has the advantage of allowing both a diachronic and a synchronic reading of the materials. One can trace the history of doctrine "laterally" through time, but one can also read "vertically," following one or more of the doctrines

as they appear and reappear in the history of dogma. The latter, synchronic (or systematic) approach gains an appreciation for the inner dynamics and distinctive problems of each of the doctrines. The doctrines are not arbitrary but in fact constitute the *loci* or topics by which Christian faith and thought have assumed concrete shape in history. Such at least is Baur's view, and his combination of diachronic and synchronic approaches weaves a rich tapestry.

The History of the History of Dogma

Baur begins the lengthy section (§ 6) in which he surveys the history of the discipline itself by remarking that "in its relation to the object, the subject only has to accept into itself what the object contains in itself, only has to follow with its own consciousness the course that dogma in its historical development has taken, to hold itself only to what is given, the thing itself (*die Sache selbst*)." He here adopts a Kantian formulation but applies it in a way that goes beyond Kant to a Hegelian view of knowledge. It *is* possible to know "the thing itself," but such knowledge always entails a mediation of objectivity and subjectivity, a mediation that is implicit in the very concept of a *Sache*. "The concept of the thing (*die Sache*) that is the object of historical knowledge is both the subjective knowing of the thing and also the objective nature of the thing itself." The task of historical knowledge is to bring together subject and object without either being surrendered to the other in an immediate identity, for such an identity is unattainable within history.

The "purely dogmatic" approach to the history of dogma assumes that dogma simply stands before the historian as a fixed, unchangeable object in which the subject plays no role. From the dogmatic point of view, dogma has no history because dogma does not change. Anything that goes forth from its unity is forcefully brought back into itself or is cut off entirely. It becomes heresy, and heresy has no inner connection with dogma itself. The only "history" of dogma is a history of heresies, and this is indeed the form in which history of dogma first arose, in the heresy-histories of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Epiphanius, and Theodoret (although these are not true histories but only dogmatic refutations). When actual differences did arise in the teachings of the fathers, such as those between Arius, Origen, and Athanasius, they had to be explained away as mere appearances. Or they could be interpreted by a theory of accommodation; for example, the Council of Antioch rejected the very word that the Council of Nicaea made a slogan of orthodoxy, *homoousios*, in order "to counter the sophistries of the Samosatene." The "rough spots of history" can be smoothed out in this way, but the smoothing produces a dualistic and docetic view of history. There can be no appreciation of the contributions made to the actual history of dogma by heterodoxy and heresy. This view, Baur suggests, results from the fear of believers that they will lose the anchor of their dogmatic consciousness if change and uncertainty are recognized. People will "do everything possible

and seek at any price to remove from history all that is shifting and changing.... They are fearful in the presence of the living actuality of history; they dare not see what is really there in it." (Fear in the presence of living history underlies many contemporary fundamentalisms and orthodoxies.)

The Reformation forced a break in this dogmatic consciousness and allowed for the emergence of a historical criticism that recognizes change to be present in the substance of dogma itself. But the emergence occurred slowly, and the first type of post-Reformation history employed a "dogmatic–polemical" method. Change and error were now understood to exist within the Catholic church itself; the criterion of truth became the Lutheran doctrine of justification and the few points of light that had cast a faint glow during centuries of darkness. This was the point of view of the *Magdeburg Centuries* (1559–74) and the polemical works by Denis Pétau and John Forbes in the seventeenth century.

In the eighteenth century, after the confessional controversies had subsided, the polemical uses of history were put aside, and church dogma began to be regarded with indifference, as merely an aggregate of random opinions. A purely theoretical or psychological interest in history arose, the "pragmatic–rationalistic" method, epitomized in the writings of C. W. F. Walch, J. S. Semler, and J. L. Mosheim. Here historical criticism first emerged in its full strength, but the method was pragmatic because of its interest in the practical utilization of history for moral instruction and its inability to find truth in dogma as such. The method was rationalistic because it weakened the grip of dogma, and the Christian religion became a matter of subjective feeling, experience, and representation. Rationalism has no historical sensibility, and the history of dogma serves only for the purposes of critique. The most brilliant example of this approach, says Baur, is the dogmatics of his student David Friedrich Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre* (1840–1). In this work history comes off badly; history is not its major concern but critique. "Since the critique is connected not with the positive aspect but the negative, dogma only serves to build up its structure so that its structure is seen to collapse. To show that there is nothing in it that can be sustained, dogma appears in the final analysis to exist only to be criticized and critically negated."

The "scientific–methodical" period arose only after the Enlightenment and was represented by a number of nineteenth-century historians of dogma: J. G. V. Engelhardt, Ludwig Baumgarten-Crusius, K. R. Hagenbach, and August Neander, among others. While appreciating their efforts and accomplishments, Baur was critical of all of them. For him "scientific" (*wissenschaftlich*) means striving "to advance from the externality and contingency of the phenomena to the concept of the subject matter itself, from an empirical to a speculative approach." The speculative approach, which does not reject but refines the empirical, focuses on the essential nature of spirit itself and encompasses both the subject matter and the knowing subject. The speculative approach

would even entail overcoming the division between Catholic and Protestant historiography.

> The Catholic view of the history of dogma has indeed its own validity, grounded in the nature of the subject matter itself. Something universal must be provided whose self-identical unity is the substantial principle of all configurations of dogma.... On the other side, however, there is a requirement no less grounded in the nature of the matter, namely, that a distinction must arise in the unity of dogma that is sufficiently broad not only to guarantee free scope for the individuality of subjects but also to allow each element of the self-moving concept to attain its own legitimacy and to arrive at its existence in reality.

Baur recognizes that neither side is presently able to accept the validity of the other. But he holds out a kind of utopian, even ecumenical, vision of what might be possible if they did. He seems to be reaching for a future that has not yet come about, one that is anticipated by the scientific or speculative approach.

> The objective view of history can therefore only be one that distances itself equally from the one-sidedness of both extremes, and that knows how to grasp the two divergent orientations in their inner freedom as the two sides of the same spiritual process that belong together. To the extent that further investigations of the history of dogma succeed in indicating, in the historical course of dogma, this process that is grounded in the essential nature of spirit, and in bringing it to clear awareness, it will do so by realizing its scientific conception.

In another striking formulation, found in the final section (§ 7) of the Introduction, Baur writes that history as such "is the eternally clear mirror in which spirit looks upon itself, beholds its own image, in order that what it is in itself will also be for itself, for its own consciousness, and knows itself as the moving power of historical becoming." History is the *speculum* of spirit, and spirit the moving power of history. The spirit that beholds itself in history is not the human spirit alone or the eternal spirit alone, but both together.[50] Spirit overarches the difference between finite and infinite.

Baur's vision of history and spirit did not prevail in the larger scheme of things. But much can be learned even today from his ideas and his detailed research,[51] recognizing that all we have are constructions of history, each with its insights and blind spots, the latter including in Baur's case an inadequate recognition of the role of the irrational and tragic in history. His view of development, even though driven by conflict and opposition, is overly sanguine in light of more recent human experience.

[50] See *Dreieinigkeit und Menschwerdung Gottes*, i, pp. xviii–xix (quoted above, p. 10).

[51] The following brief summary focuses only on the main themes of each section (the chronological reading). Space does not allow consideration of the individual doctrines, which, as suggested above, can be read synchronically through all the sections—an exercise that readers are encouraged to undertake.

The Dogma of the Ancient Church: The Substantiality of Dogma

Dogma was first shaped by the heterogeneous elements from which Christianity itself emerged (§ 8). These included Judaism, on the one side, and various forms of paganism, on the other. The idea of the Catholic church sought to find a middle way between the extremes, which could be accomplished only by lengthy struggles. Baur emphasizes these conflicts and the contribution of heresy to doctrinal formulation.

From the Apostolic Age to the Council of Nicaea

The first struggle was with Judaism itself (§ 9), to which Christianity was intimately related. The only difference was that Christians believed that the Jewish messiah had appeared in the person of Jesus, and the question was simply whether messianic salvation could be shared only by those born as Jews, or could also include believing Gentiles. This question divided the Judaizing and the Pauline parties in early Christianity. Judaism within Christianity assumed the character of Ebionitism; it opposed the apostolic authority of Paul, did not ascribe divinity to Jesus, and continued to adhere to Mosaic law. Only in the second century did the Catholic church recognize Paul, alongside Peter, to be a founder of the Roman church.

The second struggle was with Gnosticism (§§ 10–11), which emanated from a form of Judaism already permeated by pagan elements. Baur says that Gnosticism is a type of philosophy of religion, and he describes its central idea in familiar categories: "The process in which the concept of religion develops historically into the concept of the absolute religion is the same process as the life-process of God himself, the self-revelation of the divine being, the self-explicating idea of God." The historical process is grounded in the divine process: this is the Gnostic insight, expressed in allegorical-mythological forms rather than philosophical ones. Gnosticism was believed to be heretical because it seemed to transform positive historical Christianity into something Platonic and dialectical. But it stimulated the development of Christian doctrine: it was as antitheses to the Gnostic doctrines that nearly all the Christian articles of faith first obtained their dogmatic definitions through Irenaeus and Tertullian.

The Alexandrines, Clement and Origen (§ 12), regarded the Gnostics as heretics, but they did not reject the essence of gnosis (knowledge) along with heretical gnosis. Christian perfection requires advancing from faith to knowledge: faith provides the content, knowledge the form. Clement defended the value of philosophy, saying that it derives from the divine Logos and is the testament given to the Greeks, even though it is secondary to the biblical source of Christian truth. Origen took the further step of elevating faith to knowledge, to a science, which he set forth in his *First Principles* as a scientifically

articulated system. The principles are God, world, freedom or soul, and scripture—principles that are similar to those found in Schleiermacher.

The idea of the Logos (§ 13) was the means by which Christian consciousness broke through the limits of Old Testament monotheism. Originally, the divine in Christ was posited in the *pneuma*, the Spirit, and thus for the Ebionites Christ was essentially only a human being. Even Pauline thought did not go beyond this view, which still depended on Judaism. Christian consciousness ascended to its absolute idea in the Johannine doctrine of the Logos, which meant that Christ was no longer merely a human being, but was instead God. Between the Ebionite limitation of God's presence to the Spirit and the Gnostic extravagance of eons, the Logos-idea adhered to the "cool-headed equilibrium of the genuine Catholic middle." The doctrine of the Son of God as Logos became the central point around which the entire development of dogma revolved. The source of the Logos-idea was the Alexandrian philosophy of religion, which emerged independently of the Gospel of John around the middle of the second century as a current idea, an idea that brought a Platonic element into Christian theology.

The Council of Nicaea, which serves as the boundary between the two parts of the first major period, was the first in a series of great ecumenical councils, which were presumed to have the highest dogmatic authority because the assembled bishops represented the totality of the Christian church (§ 14). The councils claimed to be elevated above all subjective opinions and arbitrariness, even though they sparked ever-new controversies.

From the Council of Nicaea to the End of the Sixth Century

Christian dogma moved beyond the earlier external oppositions and now developed through its internal connections and controversies (§ 32). The homousian of the Son—the sameness of being of the Son with the Father—led to the homousian of the Spirit; and the divine side of the person of Christ led to reflection on the human side. The Eastern church took its course on the objective side of dogma, while the Western church proceeded from the subjective or anthropological side, from the human being as the subject of Christian consciousness. Dogmatic movement was driven by oppositions, and, once an issue had been resolved, only one of the two conflicting sides was allowed to be valid or true, while the other was excluded as heretical.

Baur claims that evidence for the fact that dogma developed conceptually, not contingently, is provided by its succession of forms (§ 33). The main doctrine that preceded and influenced all the others was that of the divinity of the Son. Controversy about it occurred only after the council at which it was established. Arianism was overcome only superficially because it appealed to popular convictions of the age with its emphasis on the absoluteness of God (Jewish monotheism) and the subordination of the Son (pagan polytheism).