

## **Synthesis Searching The Continuing Influence of F. C. Baur**

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Roughly one hundred fifty years have passed since the death of Ferdinand Christian Baur.<sup>1</sup> If Baur was right, approximately the same length of time passed from the death of Christ to the writing of the last New Testament document.<sup>2</sup> This period, according to Baur, saw initial opposition between Petrine and Pauline Christianity, followed by a synthesis into catholic Christianity. Analogously, it is possible to regard the last 150 years as opposition between Baurian and Lightfootian (that is, bearing affinities to the work of the well-known exegete and bishop, J. B. Lightfoot) interpretation. For Baur's followers, Peter came to symbolize Jewish, particularistic, law-abiding Christianity, and Paul came to represent Gentile, universalistic, faith-justified Christianity. Similarly, Baur has become iconographic for skeptical criticism and Lightfoot for faith-affirming criticism. Yet, just as scholarship has shown early Christianity to be more complex than Baur's reconstruction suggested, so also this study of Baur will show that reaction to him has been more subtle and more nuanced than is often recognized.<sup>3</sup>

The present study begins with a survey of Baur's view of the early Church with special attention to his method and historical reconstruction.

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur: born June 21, 1792; died December 2, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F. C. Baur* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990), 237. Baur saw the last of the New Testament documents written around 170 CE. Taking the death of Jesus to be about 30 CE, there were 140 intervening years.

<sup>3</sup> Baur's continuing influence on the field of New Testament Studies is readily demonstrable. See, for instance, two recent studies that give much space to Baur: Andrew Dole, "The Case of the Disappearing Discourse: Schleiermacher's Fourth Speech and the Field of Religious Studies," *Journal of Religion* 88 (2008): esp. 13-16, and Dieter T. Roth, "Marcion's Gospel and Luke: The History of Research in Current Debate," *JBL* 127 (2008): 513-527.

This survey is followed by an overview of Baur's followers and critics, from the Tübingen School to Hodgson. Selection for coverage reflects the scholars' prevalence in the secondary literature or their publication of a major work that shows either reliance on, or reaction against, Baur's reconstruction.<sup>4</sup> The final section discusses Baur's continuing influence in New Testament Studies, exploring why his ideas continue to surface and why there is such divergence of opinion regarding his contributions. As demonstrated below, this diversity is due largely to the presuppositions brought to the task of Biblical criticism.

### **Baur**

F. C. Baur (1792-1860) was a man of complex faith. One commentator described his faith as "difficult to summarize.... It is... subtle and... uncommon. It does not lend itself easily to standard theological categories and descriptions."<sup>5</sup> Another observer noted that Baur had an opposite religious experience to Blaise Pascal.<sup>6</sup> Whereas Pascal appealed to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Baur rejected the God of both the Old and New Testaments to the extent that he has been called an atheist.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Baur continued to participate in the life of the church until his death.<sup>8</sup>

Baur published works in the history of doctrine and was a prominent

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<sup>4</sup> Admittedly, the choice is somewhat arbitrary. Other scholars who have interacted with Baur's historical reconstruction and method include the following. *Conservative Critics*: Ernst Barnikol, Michael Baumgarten, I.A. Dorner, Einrich Ewald, William R. Farmer, Adolf von Harnack, Karl Hase, A.C. Headlam, Gotthard Victor Lechler, C. E. Lekebusch, Eduard Meyer, Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Johann August Wilhelm Neander, Philip Schaff, Walther Schmithals, Matthais Schneckenburger, Bengt Sundkler, Friedrich August Gottreu Tholuck, Etienne Trocmé, Gerhard Uhlhorn, and Theodor Zahn. *Radical Critics*: Bruno Bauer, Paul Wilhelm Schmiedel, and David Friedrich Strauss. *Scholars in the Baurian Tradition*: Richard Cassels, J. Daniélou, Samuel Davidson, M. Dibelius, M. Goguel, W.L. Knox, H. Lietzmann, Arthur C. McGiffert, A.D. Nock, Klaus Scholder, and Philipp Vielhauer.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Kaufman, *Foundations of Modern Church History* (New York: P. Lang, 1992), 143-144.

<sup>6</sup> E. Earle Ellis, foreword to *The Tübingen School*, by Horton Harris (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), x.

<sup>7</sup> Ellis, "Foreword," xi.

<sup>8</sup> William Baird, *From Deism to Tübingen* (vol. 1 of *History of New Testament Research*; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 259.

theologian, but he is at least as well known for his contributions to New Testament Studies. Few of Baur's works have been translated into English, notably Paul, *Church History of the First Three Centuries*, and *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History*.<sup>9</sup> Baur's work has been praised because he consistently and rigorously applied methodological reflection. This reflection was based on Hegelian philosophy.<sup>10</sup> It has been argued that his Hegelianism caused many errors but also allowed him to see things that others had missed.<sup>11</sup> It has been called a "lens" which helped him to see Paul, not a "procrustean bed."<sup>12</sup> Baur tried to retain a place for both the historical Jesus and the Christ of the Creeds, thereby interpreting Hegel in a more orthodox way.<sup>13</sup> Thus, he moved beyond the historical reconstruction to place the theological assertions of the New Testament documents into a philosophical framework that he believed was palatable to modern people.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul: His Life and Works* (ed. Eduard Zeller; trans. A. Menzies; 2 vols.; London: Willams and Norgate, 1875-1876), *Church History of the First Three Centuries* (trans. A. Menzies; 2 vols.; London: Willams and Norgate, 1878-1879), and *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History* (ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson; New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> W. Ward Gasque, "Historical Value of the Book of Acts: An Essay in the History of New Testament Criticism," *EvQ* 41 (1969): 76, n. 40. Despite the argument of Hodgson that Baur had not yet encountered Hegelianism when he published his first article on historical method and postulated Pauline/Petrine disunity (Peter C. Hodgson, "The Rediscovery of Ferdinand Christian Baur" (review of F. C. Baur, *Augsgewählte Werke*), *CH* 33 (1964): 206-208), Gasque rightly insists that Baur surely had some familiarity with Hegel early on. Even if he was not influenced directly, it is nevertheless true that he based everything on a Hegelian-like dialectic relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, as we shall see below.

<sup>11</sup> Christophe Senft, "Ferdinand Christian Baur, Methodological Approach and Interpretation of Luke 15:11-32," in *Exegesis: Problems of Method and Exercises in Reading (Genesis 22 and Luke 15)* (ed. François Bovon and Grégoire Rouiller; trans. Donald G. Miller; Pittsburg: Pickwick Press, 1978), 81.

<sup>12</sup> Morgan, "Biblical Classics, 2: F. C. Baur: Paul," *ExpTim* 90 (1978): 8.

<sup>13</sup> Morgan, "Historical Criticism and Christology: England and Germany," in *England and Germany: Studies in Theological Diplomacy* (ed. S. Sykes; Frankfurt: Verlag Peter D. Lang, 1982), 99. Cf. Hodgson: "Thus, in saying that 'history is revelation' for Baur, we must understand that he moves *from* Jesus *to* the Church *to* history as a whole. In other words, the real clue to Baur's thought is his historically explicated Christology." Hodgson, "Rediscovery," 212-213.

<sup>14</sup> Morgan, "F. C. Baur's Lectures on New Testament Theology," *ExpTim* 88 (1977): 204-206.

Baur applied Hegel's thesis-antithesis-synthesis view of historical processes to early church history. Yet the depth of Baur's commitment to Hegelian thought cannot be reduced to such a simple formula; Baur also borrowed the philosophical framework supporting the formula. For Baur, as for Hegel, history represented the unfolding development of divine consciousness: history is going somewhere, namely to the self-fulfillment of divine destiny.<sup>15</sup> Thus, for Baur, the historical task is nothing less than studying the mind of God. As Käsemann said,

Historical-critical work is therefore for Baur obviously something more than a tool of the trade; rather, it has a deeply religious task and is the medium for attaining religious certainty. For it is the factual counterpart to historical revelation as an address to the man called in faith.<sup>16</sup>

For Baur, then, faith and scientific history, rather than incompatible, are mutually edifying because the object of faith is revealed in history.<sup>17</sup> Baur's understanding of revelation, however, is not a static one. That is, truth was not revealed in a completed form in the Bible but rather develops as history moves through time.<sup>18</sup>

Given this view of history, it is not surprising that Baur fashioned a historical-critical perspective on the origins of the New Testament. Nor is it surprising that he forged a thoroughgoing historical-critical method. He viewed this method as the culmination of a four-stage developmental process from the "dogmatic phase," through the "phase of abstract criticism" and the "negative or dialectic viewpoint," to the "historic point of view."<sup>19</sup> For Baur, historical criticism is simply a way of analyzing historic facts in a scientifically objective fashion.<sup>20</sup> The result was a methodology that was

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *From Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy* (rev. 5th ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 330-341.

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Einleitung zu Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben* (ed. Klaus Scholder; vol. 1; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1963), xix. Quoted in Hodgson, "Rediscovery," 209.

<sup>17</sup> Hodgson, "Rediscovery," 207-208.

<sup>18</sup> Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 24 and 26. Cf. Bruce N. Kaye, "Lightfoot and Baur on Early Christianity," *NovT* 26 (1984): 223.

<sup>19</sup> Senft, "Baur," 86-90.

<sup>20</sup> Senft, "Baur," 83-84. It is surprising, however, that Baur sought to be objective

nevertheless neither naturalistic nor supernaturalistic.

Baur's method aimed at finding divergent accounts of one event, setting the differences in the clearest light, and assessing the intentions of the writers in shaping their statements. Thus, on the surface at least, Baur did not appeal to a philosophical theory of history to analyze the data.<sup>21</sup> However, this simple method was expanded into *Tendenzkritik*, or "tendency criticism," as it is usually translated. Tendency criticism was not original with Baur, for Edward Evanson used it in 1792, the year of Baur's birth.<sup>22</sup> Still, it was Baur who developed the method into its place in the annals of New Testament Studies. Baur set out his method in the epoch-making article, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde," in 1831.<sup>23</sup> Describing the impact of Baur's method, Albert Schweitzer said that while criticism prior to Baur had only been able to show that a New Testament document was inauthentic, Baur made possible a 'positive' criticism by which assertions could be made regarding the time and circumstance of writing.<sup>24</sup>

*Tendenzkritik* is the process of evaluating the specific theological viewpoint of a New Testament author from the perspective of early Church history.<sup>25</sup> The procedure looks not only at external factors, but also especially at internal evidence. Baur admitted that the process included a subjective element that left judgments less than completely certain, but he insisted that when data are amalgamated into a comprehensive picture of early Christianity, confidence increases that one's conclusions are cor-

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while at the same time seeing truth as somehow in the process of "becoming" through history. Cf. Senft, "Baur," 86.

<sup>21</sup> Charles K. Barrett, "Quomodo historia conscribenda sit," *NTS* 28 (1982): 307-308.

<sup>22</sup> Ellis, "Foreword," xi.

<sup>23</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christenthums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom," *TZTh* 4 (1831): 61-206.

<sup>24</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (trans. W. Montgomery; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1912), 13.

<sup>25</sup> W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Act of the Apostles* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 27. Cf. W. Ward Gasque, "Nineteenth-Century Roots of Contemporary New Testament Criticism," in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation* (ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 150.

rect.<sup>26</sup> Thus, according to Hans Rollmann, Baur's method was both critical and speculative: critical because he attempted to hold himself separate from the studied data and speculative because the method aimed to understand the meaning of the data. By attempting to find meaning, *Tendenzkritik* was not a "naive apriorism," yet it still left "a severe reduction... to a doctrinal specimen with a fixed position... [which] violate[d] and level[ed] impermissibly the data and processes of history."<sup>27</sup>

The product of Baur's method was, in simple terms, the idea that Petrine-Jewish Christianity (thesis) combined with Pauline-Gentile Christianity (antithesis) to form Johannine Christianity and catholic Christianity (synthesis). The essential element of Christianity, its high moral principle, spread from its particularization or embodiment in Jesus, through Pauline Christianity, to universal Christianity.<sup>28</sup> Baur asserted that the early Church was not doctrinally uniform, despite appearances in the New Testament. Instead, it had Jewish and Gentile parties whose competing doctrines led to the present New Testament form. Thus, the New Testament can best be understood by analyzing the documents in light of their stance toward the Pauline-Petrine division.<sup>29</sup> Baur found support for his theory in the *Clementine Homilies* and in an Ebionite tradition, which called Paul a convert to Judaism. According to the tradition, Paul began preaching against the law after a failed bid for marriage to the Jewish high priest's daughter. Baur saw this as evidence that Paul had indeed been in conflict with Judaism. He found further evidence for disunity in documents referring to the conflict with Gnosticism, which he believed did not arise until the second century.<sup>30</sup>

Baur began his historical investigation of the New Testament by locating an instance where the Pauline Epistles differed from Acts. Specifically, he became interested in the contrasting accounts in Galatians 2, where Paul talks about meeting the Apostles in Jerusalem, and Acts 15, in

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<sup>26</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, "Baur Versus Hilgenfeld: A Forgotten Chapter in the Debate on the Synoptic Problem," *NTS* 24 (1978): 357.

<sup>27</sup> Hans Rollmann, "From Baur to Wrede: The Quest for a Historical Method," *SR* 17 (1988): 444-447.

<sup>28</sup> Philip J. Hefner, "Baur Versus Ritschl on Early Christianity," *CH* 31 (1962): 260-261.

<sup>29</sup> Gasque, "Roots," 149-150 and *History of Interpretation*, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Hodgson, "Rediscovery," 208.

which the Jerusalem council convenes to consider Paul's position. Of these chapters he says,

We now for the first time arrive at a point at which we can attain some positive results, as we can here compare with the story in the Acts of the Apostles, on which we can lay no great dependence, the testimony of the Apostle himself.... The two first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians form a historical document of the greatest importance in our investigations into the true standpoint of the Apostle and his relations to the elder Apostles.<sup>31</sup>

Studying the two reports of what he took to be the same event, Baur concluded that the disagreement between Paul and the Apostles was much deeper and enduring than is indicated by Acts.<sup>32</sup> These were the seeds of the conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christianity.

The conviction that a Pauline-Petrine division characterized the early Church became the basis of Baur's reading of the entire New Testament. As E. Earle Ellis said, "To maintain his highly tendentious reading of Galatians 2, Baur had to dismiss nine of Paul's letters, Acts, and most of the remaining New Testament books as later fictions."<sup>33</sup> For example, Baur thought the Pastorals were late and therefore not by Paul because of their anti-Gnosticism and incipient Catholicism.<sup>34</sup> Baur argued that the Pastorals were written by a later Paulinist who wanted to reclaim Paul for his own generation. They therefore are a source for second century Christianity, not first century.<sup>35</sup>

Baur's test for the authenticity of the remaining Pauline Epistles was the doctrine of justification, which he took to be the quintessential figure for anti-nomistic Paulinism over against legalistic Jewish Christianity.<sup>36</sup> Since the doctrine appears only in Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, and Galatians, Baur maintained that only these four Pauline Epistles could be used as sources for primitive Christianity. Nevertheless, as Schweitzer correctly observed, Baur did not mean to imply the other Epistles were necessarily

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<sup>31</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 1:105.

<sup>32</sup> Baur, *Paul*, 1:119.

<sup>33</sup> Ellis, "Foreword," xiv.

<sup>34</sup> Baur, *Church History*, 2:30.

<sup>35</sup> Senft, "Baur," 79.

<sup>36</sup> Senft, "Baur," 80. See Baur, *Paul*, 2:106-107.

inauthentic, only that they exhibited tendencies that rendered them of dubious authenticity and were thus to be treated with caution.<sup>37</sup>

Although Baur stressed the existence of conflict in the early Church, he noted that the author of Acts minimized it. Therefore, Baur thought it important to explain why Acts presented such a picture.<sup>38</sup> Using *Tendenzkritik*, Baur argued that Acts was written late and minimized the disunity. Baur placed Acts, on a continuum between open conflict and resolution of the conflict, as written from a Pauline perspective with the aim to bring the two sides together. This *Tendenz* explains why Peter is made to look almost Pauline and Paul very Petrine.<sup>39</sup> Baur reasoned as follows. According to Acts 8:14, the Apostles stayed in Jerusalem despite the persecution of the Church. If they stayed, then others must also have stayed. If some were free to stay, the persecution must not have been directed toward all Christians but only toward Hellenistic Christians. Therefore, there must have been a division in the Jerusalem Church between Hellenistic and Jewish Christians, including the Apostles.<sup>40</sup> This reasoning is based on Baur's historical reconstruction, not on the narrative of Acts. Thus, according to W. Ward Gasque, Baur interpreted Acts by means of his theory of primitive Christianity, not on its own terms.<sup>41</sup>

The rest of the New Testament was also evaluated along the lines of *Tendenzkritik* and the conflict between Pauline and Petrine Christianity. Thus, the New Testament was divided into three segments: (1) the genuine Pauline Epistles (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, and Galatians), (2) the fourth Gospel and the Pastorals, and (3) the rest of the New Testament.<sup>42</sup> The first group represents documents written from the Pauline, antithetical perspective, while documents from the second group were written

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<sup>37</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 14. See Baur, *Paul*, 1:246. Baur classified the four undisputed Epistles as "Homologoumena" and the remaining nine as "Antilegomena." Cf. Peter C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of F. C. Baur* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 206-207.

<sup>38</sup> Frederik Wisse, "The Use of Early Christian Literature, as Evidence for Inner Diversity and Conflict," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, & Early Christianity* (ed. Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, Jr.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986), 178.

<sup>39</sup> Wisse, "Early Christian Literature," 178.

<sup>40</sup> Kaye, "Lightfoot and Baur," 202.

<sup>41</sup> Gasque, "Roots," 151.

<sup>42</sup> Morgan, "Baur's Lectures," 203.



after the synthesis had been forged. Products of the third group represent various viewpoints on the spectrum between thesis and synthesis. For example, Baur believed James to have been written from the Jewish perspective; Hebrews and 1 Peter from the Gentile persuasion.<sup>43</sup>

## Baur's Followers and Critics

### *The Tübingen School*

According to Horton Harris, the Tübingen School had eight members: F. C. Baur, Eduard Zeller, Albert Schwegler, Karl Christian Planck, Karl Reinhold Köstlin, Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf Hilgenfeld, and Gustav Volkmar.<sup>44</sup> For Harris, the members of the School were those who (1) accepted a “purely historical” method of interpretation and (2) made an “essential contribution to the historical development of the School.”<sup>45</sup> One distinguishing feature of the School is that it was the first to apply the historical-critical method from a definite historical viewpoint to the whole New Testament.<sup>46</sup>

Harris identified three periods during the life of the School. The years 1835-1841 comprise the period of “preparation and emergence,” marked especially by the controversy surrounding Strauss’s *Life of Jesus* and the resulting disagreement between Baur and Strauss. “Formation and consolidation” distinguished the time from 1842-1846. During this period, leadership was provided by Zeller under the patronage of Baur, and the journal *Theologische Jahrbücher* began to be published. The years 1847-1860 resulted in “decline and dissolution.” After 1847 the Tübingen School’s influence diminished with the gradual dispersal of its members. During the 1850s Baur, Ritschl, Hilgenfeld, and Volkmar continued to propagate the convictions of the Tübingen School, but their individual perspectives brought disagreement to the extent that Ritschl and Hilgenfeld increasingly dissociated themselves from the School. When Baur died in 1860,

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<sup>43</sup> Wisse, “Early Christian Literature,” 178-179.

<sup>44</sup> Harris, *Tübingen School*, xvii and v. Kümmel, however, identifies only four: A. Schwegler, E. Zeller, A. Hilgenfeld, and A. Ritschl. Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. Howard Clark Kee; rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 30.

<sup>45</sup> Harris, *Tübingen School*, 247.

<sup>46</sup> Harris, *Tübingen School*, xxi.

the Tübingen School virtually came to an end.<sup>47</sup> Commenting on the decline, Moisés Silva said,

The rapid disintegration of the Tübingen School is, therefore, the clearest evidence that Baur's handling of the facts can hardly be regarded as objective—quite irrespective of whether or not Baur had an *a priori* theory and whether or not he was aware of his fitting (forcing?) pieces into the large picture.<sup>48</sup>

### Zeller

Eduard Zeller (1814-1908) has been called “the most profound critic of the school of Baur,”<sup>49</sup> and his writings “the ripest fruit of Baur's critical school.”<sup>50</sup> Zeller wrote the article, “Einige weitere Beiträge zur Einleitung in die Apokalypse,”<sup>51</sup> in which he argued that Revelation was written from an Ebionite perspective by the Apostle John and was explicitly anti-Pauline. This result was seen as further evidence for the Baurian hypothesis of Pauline-Petrine conflict.<sup>52</sup> Zeller also wrote *The Acts of the Apostles Critically Investigated*,<sup>53</sup> which has been described as “a clarified and detailed presentation of Baur's *Paul*.”<sup>54</sup> In conjunction with an extensive examination of the external and internal evidence for the historicity of Acts, Zeller declares, “How little reliance must be placed upon the trust-

<sup>47</sup> Harris, *Tübingen School*, 2-8, 248.

<sup>48</sup> Moisés Silva, “The Place of Historical Reconstruction in New Testament Criticism,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 130. Parenthetical comment original.

<sup>49</sup> Gotthard Victor Lechler, *The Apostolic and Post-apostolic Times: Their Diversity and Unity in Life and Doctrine* (trans. A. J. K. Davidson; 3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), 1:24. Quoted in A. J. Mattill, *Luke as a Historian in Criticism since 1840* (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt, 1959; Photocopy, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1981), 51.

<sup>50</sup> Frederic Auguste Lichtenberger, *History of German Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (trans. W. Hastie; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889), 392. Quoted in Mattill, *Luke as Historian*, 51.

<sup>51</sup> Eduard Zeller, “Einige weitere Beiträge zur Einleitung in die Apokalypse,” *TJ* (1842): 654-717.

<sup>52</sup> Harris, *Tübingen School*, 190-192.

<sup>53</sup> Eduard Zeller, *The Acts of the Apostles Critically Investigated* (trans. Joseph Dare; 2 vols.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1875).

<sup>54</sup> Mattill, *Luke as Historian*, 51.

worthiness of our book.”<sup>55</sup> He observes that the reliability of historical documents “must be judged primarily by the trustworthiness of the witness.”<sup>56</sup> This trustworthiness can be assessed either by examination of the external data, which Zeller calls “literary criticism,” or by evaluation of the internal evidence, called “criticism of the contents” or “criticism of the matter.”<sup>57</sup> He notes, “Thus we are involved in a vicious circle: criticism of the matter is assumed by literary criticism, and literary criticism by criticism of the matter, and there is no direct outlet by which we can entirely escape from this circle.”<sup>58</sup> Yet he further suggests that by following literary criticism as far as it will go and then criticizing the contents, with “perhaps... repeated alternations of both methods,” a decision can be reached.<sup>59</sup>

### *Overbeck*

Though not a member of the Tübingen School, Franz Camille Overbeck (1837-1905) was a critic in the Baurian tradition.<sup>60</sup> With Baur, he saw the relationship between Paul and Peter as hostile.<sup>61</sup> He says, “Thus far it has already been established generally that the narrative of the Acts cannot be comprehended without reference to the antagonisms of primitive Christianity.”<sup>62</sup> Similarly, he concurred with Baur regarding the historical unreliability of Acts,

A historical book which, like Acts, subjects its materials to so artificial and arbitrary an arrangement, which so strongly modifies them in the direction of its particular aims, and which has likewise handled its sources with so much freedom, is in general untrustworthy, and has to prove its trustworthiness for each special case.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Zeller, *Acts*, 1:257. Quoted in Mattill, *Luke as Historian*, 79.

<sup>56</sup> Zeller, *Acts*, 90.

<sup>57</sup> Zeller, *Acts*, 91.

<sup>58</sup> Zeller, *Acts*, 91.

<sup>59</sup> Zeller, *Acts*, 92.

<sup>60</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 287.

<sup>61</sup> Mattill, *Luke as Historian*, 180, n. 2.

<sup>62</sup> Franz Overbeck, introduction to *The Acts of the Apostles: Critically Investigated*, by Eduard Zeller (trans. Joseph Dare; vol. 1; London: Williams and Norgate, 1875), 17.

<sup>63</sup> Overbeck, “Introduction,” 64.

Overbeck credits Zeller with the most thorough study of the aim of Acts.<sup>64</sup> Yet he thought its aim was to get in touch with the past and to justify Christianity to Roman officials, not to propose peace between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, as the Tübingen School suggested. Whereas the Tübingen School believed the author of Acts intentionally altered facts to support his position, Overbeck argued that he was simply ignorant and supplied what he thought happened.<sup>65</sup> It is for this reason that Mattill called Overbeck the founder of the “Could-Not-See” School.<sup>66</sup> Paraphrasing Overbeck’s position on Acts, Mattill says, “The author, who was largely innocent of conscious perversion of the truth, was led by no tendentious purpose to attribute Jewish practices to Paul. Rather, from his vantage point, it seemed impossible that Paul could have acted otherwise.”<sup>67</sup>

### *Van Manen*

Willem Christiaan van Manen (1842-1905) represents the Dutch Radical School. This School viewed itself as the true descendants of Baur because they followed Baur’s insights to their logical conclusions. Van Manen agreed with Baur on the Jewishness of early Christianity but thought that all the Pauline Epistles were inauthentic.<sup>68</sup> Thus, while van Manen agreed with Baur’s basic methodology, he reached opposite conclusions on a number of critical issues. According to Mattill, van Manen accepted Acts as a more reliable historical source than the Epistles, believed that the Epistles betray a *Tendenz* in their use of Acts, disagreed with the Tübingen School regarding the duration of the Pauline-Petrine controversy, saw in Acts the representation of Peter in the image of Paul, and believed that the historical Paul was to be found in Acts, not the Epistles. This resulted in a complex understanding of the Pauline-Petrine relationship. Van Manen believed that the historical Paul is accurately represented in Acts’ oldest source, the so-called Diary. Paul was a faithful disciple who acted as a missionary, did not disagree with the Apostles, and kept the

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<sup>64</sup> Overbeck, “Introduction,” 18.

<sup>65</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 80-86.

<sup>66</sup> Mattill, *Luke as Historian*, 171.

<sup>67</sup> Mattill, *Luke as Historian*, 173.

<sup>68</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 86-87.

Jewish Law. The historical Paul differed from other Jews only in his acceptance of Jesus and His emphasis on love. After the death of the historical Paul, a legendary Paul arose who was seen as opposing the practice of the Law and as catalyzing the transformation from Jewish sect to Christianity. The Epistles were written by followers of this legendary Paul to counter the attacks of Jewish Christians. This legendary Paul was replaced by the Lukan Paul as portrayed by the final redactor of Acts. The Lukan Paul was created after the conflict was past and thus was viewed as a conciliatory cofounder of Catholic Christianity. The resulting picture of early Christianity progresses from the peace of the Apostles and the historical Paul, to the conflict between the Judaizers and the school of the legendary Paul, to the eventual peace as portrayed in the canonical Acts.<sup>69</sup> The Dutch Radical School has not found many adherents; Schweitzer describes them as having “come at last... to a condition of mind in which the wildest hypothesis appeals to them more than rational knowledge, if the latter demands the suppression of questioning.”<sup>70</sup>

### *Lightfoot*

One of the most important critics of Baur is Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1818-1889). Lightfoot has been called Baur’s “adversary in early Christian studies.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Lightfoot was stringently opposed to Baur, as indicated by his statement in *Apostolic Fathers*:

No man has shown himself more ready to adopt the wildest speculations, if they fell in with his own preconceived theories... especially in his later days—speculations which in not a few cases have been falsified by direct evidence since discovered. Nothing has exercised a more baneful influence on criticism in the country of critics than the fascination of his name. While he has struck out some lines which have stimulated thought, and thus have not been unfruitful in valuable results, the glamour of his genius has on the whole exercised a fatal effect on the progress of a sober and dis-

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<sup>69</sup> Mattill, *Luke as Historian*, 210-219.

<sup>70</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 137.

<sup>71</sup> Geoffrey Treloar, *Lightfoot the Historian: The Nature and Role of History in the Life and Thought of J. B. Lightfoot (1828-1889) as Churchman and Scholar* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 89.

criminating study of the early records of Christianity.<sup>72</sup>

Lightfoot was one of the few Englishmen of his day who was well regarded among German scholars. Geoffrey Treloar quotes a letter from Caspar Rene Gregory which indicates the positive reception by Harnack and others of Lightfoot's *S. Clement of Rome: An Appendix Containing the Newly Recovered Portions With Introductions, Notes, and Translations*.<sup>73</sup> The reverse—that Baur was well received in England—is not true.<sup>74</sup> Baur and Lightfoot have been contrasted in many ways. For example, Bruce N. Kaye notes that Baur interacted extensively with contemporary scholarship in his writing, while Lightfoot rarely cited except from ancient primary sources and seldom attacked his opponents overtly. More substantially, Baur's approach was "synthetic and analytical"; Lightfoot's was "descriptive and textual."<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Gasque views Baur as a speculative critic, but he describes Lightfoot's work as "historical in the fullest sense of the word," with close attention to detail and careful exegesis.<sup>76</sup> It has been said that Baur asked the right questions, as formulated from philosophy, while Lightfoot answered questions well, based on detailed study of philology and history.<sup>77</sup>

It is often thought that Lightfoot thoroughly refuted Baur's theories. As Gasque said, Lightfoot's "nonpolemical works... demonstrated so clearly that the Tübingen reconstruction of early Christianity was simply a castle built in the sky without any real foundation in historical research."<sup>78</sup> Silva observed that Lightfoot rightly did not attack Baur's reconstruction point-by-point but developed his own picture of early Christianity.<sup>79</sup> Lightfoot proposed his alternate reconstruction in non-polemical com-

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<sup>72</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1889-1890), 1.1.357-8. Quoted in Treloar, *Lightfoot*, 359-60.

<sup>73</sup> Treloar, *Lightfoot*, 392-393.

<sup>74</sup> Barrett, "Quomodo," 308-310.

<sup>75</sup> Kaye, "Lightfoot and Baur," 198-199.

<sup>76</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 134.

<sup>77</sup> Barrett, "Quomodo," 318.

<sup>78</sup> Gasque, "Roots," 153.

<sup>79</sup> Silva also noted that Lightfoot's reconstruction incorporated more insights from Baur than is generally recognized and is marked by the irony that Lightfoot held the Pauline Epistles less historically reliable than Acts. Silva, "Historical Reconstruction," 125-128.

mentaries based on careful attention to grammatical and lexicographical detail. His reconstruction generally agrees with the narrative of Acts, the historicity of which he argued for based on (1) the agreement in incidental details between Acts and the Pauline Epistles, (2) the similarities of thought and diction between the Epistles of Paul, James, and Peter as compared with the speeches attributed to them in Acts, (3) reliability of geographical and historical details, and (4) the corroboration of archaeology.<sup>80</sup> Lightfoot also incorporated post-canonical material into his reconstruction. He established the authenticity of the seven Ignatian Epistles, thereby disclosing faults in Baur's view of second century Christianity.<sup>81</sup> Though it was never the driving force of his life's work, it was important for Lightfoot to refute the Tübingen School because he regarded it as a threat to his incarnational interpretation of revelation.<sup>82</sup> As a result, Lightfoot's place in New Testament Studies has come to be regarded as juxtaposed against Tübingen and Baur. This in turn has led to the designation of Lightfoot as a conservative and Baur as a radical, and the two have become icons for the divergent approaches.<sup>83</sup>

Yet the situation is not as clear-cut as it would seem from much of the secondary literature. Robert Morgan, for example, denies that Lightfoot destroyed Baur's reconstruction.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, Charles K. Barrett says, "The difference between Baur and Lightfoot was in truth small." According to Barrett, Lightfoot succeeded only in destroying the Tübingen chronology (compressing it), but he left the basic dialectic process intact.<sup>85</sup> As Lightfoot himself said,

I feel very confident that the historical views of the Tübingen school are too extravagant to obtain any wide or lasting hold over the minds of men. But even in extreme cases mere denunciation may be unjust and is certainly unavailing. Moreover, for our own sakes *we should try and discover the element of truth which*

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<sup>80</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 116-123.

<sup>81</sup> Morgan, "Baur's Lectures," 202. Cf. Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 116-118.

<sup>82</sup> Treloar, *Lightfoot*, 382-383.

<sup>83</sup> Treloar, *Lightfoot*, 6-8. Treloar also points out that Lightfoot was not so conservative when compared with his British contemporaries.

<sup>84</sup> Morgan, "England and Germany," 95.

<sup>85</sup> Barrett, "Quomodo," 310

*underlies even the greatest exaggerations of able men, and correct our impressions thereby.*<sup>86</sup>

Thus, Kaye rightly observes that Lightfoot did not deny the existence of conflict and problems in Apostolic Christianity.<sup>87</sup> In fact, Lightfoot's position has been called a "modified Baurian position" by Barrett.<sup>88</sup> Yet Treloar disagrees with Barrett that Lightfoot had no theory of history. He says, "Lightfoot not only had a theory of history: It was also a genuine theology of history in its recourse to an ultimately transcendent God for its meaning, means, and purpose."<sup>89</sup> He believed in historical continuity, which prompted him "almost instinctively" to study the early Fathers as a means of verifying and ultimately rejecting the ideas of Baur.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, Barrett rightly pointed out that Lightfoot appeals to "simplicity, straightforwardness and naturalness" for the historicity of Acts but gives no criteria for assessing these qualities.<sup>91</sup> In the final analysis, while Lightfoot learned more from Baur than is usually acknowledged, it is still true that Lightfoot fundamentally opposed the Tübingen approach.

### *Schweitzer*

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) often referred to Baur as "the Tübingen master."<sup>92</sup> Whatever else this designation may imply, it seems clear that Schweitzer respected Baur. Contrasting Baur with Karl August Hase, Schweitzer says, "The name of Hase is inscribed in golden letters in the book of theology, but theology has passed beyond him to the order of the day, as he was no pioneer like Baur, and he does not meet the present age on the footing of a contemporary, offering it problems raised by him and still unsolved."<sup>93</sup> Schweitzer credits Baur with being the first to effectively demonstrate the inconsistency between the Fourth Gospel and the Synop-

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<sup>86</sup> Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*. (5th ed.; London: Macmillan, 1876), xi. Quoted in Kaye, "Lightfoot and Baur," 215-216, n. 40. (Emphasis mine.)

<sup>87</sup> Kaye, "Lightfoot and Baur," 216-217.

<sup>88</sup> Barrett, "Quomodo," 314.

<sup>89</sup> Treloar, *Lightfoot*, 90.

<sup>90</sup> Treloar, *Lightfoot*, 338.

<sup>91</sup> Barrett, "Quomodo," 313.

<sup>92</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 14, 25, 118, 120, and 249.

<sup>93</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (trans. W. Montgomery, J. R. Coates, Susan Cupitt, and John Bowden; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2001), 56.



tics and to thoroughly refute the historicity of the former.<sup>94</sup>

Yet Schweitzer's relationship to Baur is not one of uncritical acceptance. Rather, Schweitzer disagrees with Baur in several crucial respects. Schweitzer blames Baur for failing to grasp Paulinism empirically and missing the importance of eschatology for the Apostle.<sup>95</sup> Following Ritschl, Schweitzer faults Baur and the Tübingen School because they failed to explain "the problem regarding the nature of the unity between Paulinism and primitive Christianity."<sup>96</sup> He accuses Baur of missing the "really fundamental view of the essence of Paulinism" by following the categories of the Reformation instead of empirically discovering the categories of Paul's own thought.<sup>97</sup> Schweitzer points out that Baur failed to appreciate the fact that Paul remained largely unaffected by Greek theology.<sup>98</sup> Finally, Schweitzer blames Baur for not following his own "positive criticism" to its logical end, namely that all the Pauline Epistles derive, not from Paul himself, but from a Paulinist School.<sup>99</sup>

Given these caveats, Schweitzer insists that Paul must be understood according to his eschatological expectation. The force of Paul's reasoning depended upon the fact that he was living between the death and parousia of Christ. The expectation of Jesus' imminent return gave force to the theological constructions built on this between-times consciousness. For Ignatius and others who no longer lived with an expectation Christ's soon return, the arguments held no force. Thus, the composition dates of the Pauline Epistles can be judged internally by whether they convey a sense of imminence. Schweitzer says, "Any one who works out this solution is the true pupil of Baur, however widely he may diverge from him in his views and results."<sup>100</sup> In the closing paragraph of *Paul*, Schweitzer shows himself to be a pupil of Baur by contrasting once again the "followers of Peter" and the "followers of Paul."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest*, 498, n.4.

<sup>95</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 16, 18, 20-21, 240-242. Schweitzer did recognize the improvement in these areas in Baur's posthumously published notes.

<sup>96</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 17.

<sup>97</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 81, 238-240.

<sup>99</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 118-120.

<sup>100</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 249.

<sup>101</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 249.

*Munck*

Johannes Munck (1904-1965) opposed the criticism of Baur and the Tübingen School. He demonstrated that scholarship had rejected Baur's literary theories while retaining his historical judgments—even though the conclusions ought to have been rejected also.<sup>102</sup> One of the wrongly retained results identified by Munck is that Paul was fundamentally at odds with the Jerusalem Apostles.<sup>103</sup> The effect of this error was that contemporary scholarship found arguments against Judaizers everywhere in Paul's letters, even in non-polemical passages.<sup>104</sup> Yet, according to Munck, there is a "natural explanation that the Jerusalem Church's principles may not have been so different from Paul's as is generally supposed." Scholars avoid this interpretation by "separating [early Christians'] principles from their feelings."<sup>105</sup>

Munck identifies a historical problem with Baur's reconstruction: if Paul rediscovered the universalism of Jesus that was absent in the Jewish Church, why did the Apostles submissively give Paul their blessing? Agreeing with Bengt Sundkler, Munck sees the opposition between particularism and universalism as a modern problem. He believes that Baur's reconstruction was exactly backwards: particularism did not start with the Jewish Christians over against Gentile Christians. Instead it developed later as Catholic Christianity lost its universalism. Thus, many scholars are blind to the fundamental weaknesses of Baur's position; they still see primitive Christianity as essentially Jewish, even though they admit differences of emphasis.<sup>106</sup> This blindness results from "bad method in modern Pauline research."<sup>107</sup> It derives from the use of second century sources to establish events in the first century, from the failure to consider the *Sitz im Leben* of the various sources and recensions, and from building a picture of Paul and Acts based on "controversial passages" to the ex-

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<sup>102</sup> Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (trans. Frank Clarke; London: SCM, 1959), 69-70. Cf. Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 271-272.

<sup>103</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 271-272.

<sup>104</sup> Munck, *Paul*, 55-56.

<sup>105</sup> Munck, *Paul*, 75-76.

<sup>106</sup> Munck, *Paul*, 70-73.

<sup>107</sup> Munck, *Paul*, 84.

clusion of “uncontroversial ones.”<sup>108</sup> Munck insists that by rejecting the Tübingen picture of Paul and the early Church, the way is opened for a more accurate view of both. This new perspective will yield “greater riches and variety in early Christianity than [the Tübingen] tradition made possible.”<sup>109</sup>

### *Kümmel*

Werner Georg Kümmel (1905-1995) embodies the statement by Leander Keck, “Everyone ought to start with Baur at some point.”<sup>110</sup> Baur features prominently in Kümmel’s discussions of the task of New Testament Introduction, the Synoptic Problem, the historicity of Acts, John, and the Pauline Epistles.<sup>111</sup> He notes that Baur’s influence is still felt because of the continuing idea that the New Testament must be studied in conjunction with detailed attention to “the external and internal history of early Christianity.”<sup>112</sup> He also highlights the debate over the critical issues surrounding the fourth Gospel and recognizes Baur’s contribution to the discussion by his dating the Gospel to the later second century, denying apostolic authorship, and devaluing its sources relative to the sources of the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>113</sup>

Given this prominence of Baur in his work, Kümmel does indeed seem to have “started with Baur.” Of course, this does not imply that Kümmel accepted Baur’s viewpoints uncritically. Rather, Kümmel disagrees with Baur on a number of critical judgements. Where the Baur School accepted the Griesbach hypothesis for the Synoptic relationship, Kümmel dismisses it because it “must accept too many improbabilities and misjudges the literary independence of Mark.”<sup>114</sup> The Tübingen School questioned the authenticity of Philippians, but Kümmel accepts it.<sup>115</sup> With respect to Phi-

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<sup>108</sup> Munck, *Paul*, 77, 84.

<sup>109</sup> Munck, *Paul*, 85.

<sup>110</sup> Leander Keck, statement made at the New Testament Colloquium, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.; April 10, 2002.

<sup>111</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. Howard Clark Kee; rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 30-31, 48, 160-126, 197-198, 250.

<sup>112</sup> Kümmel, *Introduction*, 31.

<sup>113</sup> Kümmel, *Introduction*, 197-198.

<sup>114</sup> Kümmel, *Introduction*, 47-48.

<sup>115</sup> Kümmel, *Introduction*, 332.

lemon, Kümmel says, “Only *tendenz*-criticism could doubt the authenticity of this letter.”<sup>116</sup> He further notes that Baur’s reconstruction of early Christianity was “discredited,”<sup>117</sup> and disagrees with Baur’s approach to canon.<sup>118</sup> Kümmel also acknowledges that Baur’s approach to Acts was wrong. Still, he agrees with Baur that the task of determining the purpose and theological program of the author is important: “Only in this way could the historical value and the message of the book be grasped reliably.”<sup>119</sup> Thus, while Kümmel rejected the specific results of much of Baur’s research, Kümmel still holds him in high regard, traces the roots of his own research back to him, and especially values the critical questions he raised.

### *Käsemann*

The relationship of Ernst Käsemann (1906-1998) to Baur is unique and complex. Reflecting on his theological formation, Käsemann says, “I think that Bultmann may be called the last significant representative of that radical historical criticism founded 150 years earlier by the Tübingen scholar Ferdinand Christian Baur.”<sup>120</sup> The implication, of course, is that Käsemann does not count himself as a “significant representative.” Despite this apparent modesty, Käsemann does acknowledge an affinity to Baur. He writes, “Though for a long time I was not directly influenced by Baur, I studied him more and more readily. He appears to me now to be my real ancestor.”<sup>121</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, Käsemann adds, “It was primarily careful exegesis that pushed me back through the decades into Baur’s vicinity.”<sup>122</sup> This statement suggests Käsemann’s consonance with Baur’s conclusions, not merely his methods, since the phrase “careful exegesis” suggests independent examination, not methodological dependence.

Käsemann’s respect for Baur is also indicated by the fact that he wrote

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<sup>116</sup> Kümmel, *Introduction*, 349.

<sup>117</sup> Kümmel, *Introduction*, 406.

<sup>118</sup> Kümmel, *Introduction*, 506.

<sup>119</sup> Kümmel, *Introduction*, 161.

<sup>120</sup> Käsemann, “What I have Unlearned in 50 years as a German Theologian [Eng. tr. fr. *Kirchliche Konflikte*, 1982],” *CurTM* 15 (1988): 329.

<sup>121</sup> Käsemann, “Unlearned,” 329.

<sup>122</sup> Käsemann, “Unlearned,” 330.

the introduction to the 1963 publication of Baur's *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben*. In this introduction, Käsemann pointed out faults in Baur. Yet the criticism does not amount to rejecting Baur's reconstruction out right; rather it suggests that the situation in the early Church was more complex than Baur had realized, leaving his basic theory—that conflict formed literature as we have it—intact. Nevertheless, Käsemann goes on to note that Baur's reconstruction is no longer generally accepted without significant modifications.<sup>123</sup> Thus, on the one hand, Käsemann sees himself very close to Baur, yet at the same time he rejects much of his reconstruction.

### Hodgson

Peter C. Hodgson (1934- ) is perhaps the most prolific proponent of Baur in the English-speaking world. He translated significant portions of Baur's work and wrote or translated a number books and articles defending him.<sup>124</sup> Hodgson's interest in Baur is that he believes the questions Baur faced regarding history and hermeneutics are the same ones confronted by Hodgson's generation.<sup>125</sup> Hodgson agrees with Baur that the answers to such questions are to be found in speculative hermeneutics. He says,

What is required to complete the task of Church historiography is a movement beyond the abstract dualism of the older historians and the equally abstract empiricism of pragmatic rationalism to a speculative grasp of the unity and dynamism of history (against dualism) and its comprehensive meaning (against empiricism).<sup>126</sup>

Like Baur, Hodgson affirms a Hegelian view of God and history. According to Hodgson,

The basic presupposition of speculative thinking is a coherence between Absolute Truth (the reality of which is affirmed) and *con-*

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<sup>123</sup> See Hodgson, "Rediscovery," 208.

<sup>124</sup> Baur, *Writing Church History*; Peter C. Hodgson, "Alienation and reconciliation in Hegelian and post-Hegelian perspective." *Modern Theology* 2 (1985): 42-63; Hodgson, *Formation*; Hodgson, "Rediscovery"; and Heinz Leibing, "Historical-critical Theology," trans. P. C. Hodgson; *JTC* 3 (1967): 55-69.

<sup>125</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, introduction to *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History*, 6. Hodgson believes this contemporary relevance was the reason for the on-going controversy surrounding Baur.

<sup>126</sup> Hodgson, "Introduction," 17.

*sciousness* of the Absolute. This coherence is grounded in the nature of the Absolute itself... Spirit accomplishes itself (becomes the Absolute Spirit) in the coming-to-consciousness of finite spirituality, which is a moment in the process of being-in-and-for-itself (*an-und-für-sich-Sein*) of Absolute Spirit.<sup>127</sup>

Hodgson defends Baur at nearly every turn. He explicitly seeks to deflect the charge of apriorism by arguing that Baur derived his reconstruction through careful study of the sources, that he was able to modify his views over time, and that he was not yet acquainted with Hegelianism when he first proposed his theory of conflict in the early Church<sup>128</sup> Hodgson argues that Baur talked in terms of conflict, gradual reconciliation, and accommodation, rather than Hegelian thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Nevertheless, Hodgson himself continues to describe Baur's reconstruction using the term, antithesis. Hodgson goes on argue that Baur's basic theory was strengthened, not weakened, by the discovery of greater variety in the early Church than he had admitted.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, Hodgson acknowledges Baur's difficulty in describing a Jesus who perfectly embodied the Idea of Christianity, but he concludes that the difficulty exists simply because the challenge is so great.<sup>130</sup> Finally, Hodgson admits that Baur inherited weaknesses along with the philosophy he adopted. Yet, according to Hodgson, Baur actually gained insights from them. He says,

God and history, faith and historical knowledge, dogmatic theology and historical theology, must be internally related precisely because historical theology is one important element in the theological response to this revelation, and because the Christian Church and its founding events are fundamentally historical in character. Baur discovered and explicated these internal relationships. He probed them more intensively and creatively than any other major theologian.<sup>131</sup>

Morgan says that Hodgson "has rehabilitated Baur for the English-

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<sup>127</sup> Hodgson, "Introduction," 18-19.

<sup>128</sup> Hodgson, *Formation*, 200 and 256.

<sup>129</sup> Hodgson, *Formation*, 208-212.

<sup>130</sup> Hodgson, *Formation*, 258-259.

<sup>131</sup> Hodgson, *Formation*, 267.

speaking world,” and it is certainly true that this was Hodgson’s aim.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, Gasque is correct when he says that Hodgson’s work is “somewhat marred” by the need “to defend Baur almost *in toto*.”<sup>133</sup>

### Baur’s Influence

Reactions to Baur are extremely varied, some laudatory and others unfavorable. An examination of opinions regarding Baur’s historical reconstruction displays deep ambivalence. Christophe Senft, although usually supportive of Baur, observes that the theory of Markan priority “fundamentally calls in [*sic*] question the picture which Baur has drawn of the history of the primitive Church.”<sup>134</sup> According to Silva, even though Baur rightly proposed to judge as authentic those sources which are free of subjective aim, he ignored the possibility that Paul’s letters may be less trustworthy than Acts because of their polemical nature.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, Hefner states that Baur’s historical judgments are “frequently unreliable by current standards (but less so than we might wish!),” but he goes on to assert that “most of the issues raised are still relevant, mostly still unresolved.”<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, Ellis says, “That [Baur] was able to convince so many of the truth of his ‘history’ is a testimony to his brilliance as a systematic thinker,” yet he is troubled by Baur’s labeling of so many New Testament writings as forgeries and by the fact that this did not seem to bother Baur.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, Frederik Wisse declares that “[Baur’s] own reconstruction of this period remains one of the high points of historical analysis” and “has made the traditional view untenable.”<sup>138</sup> But he further notes that the largest group of Christian writings does not reflect the Baurian conflict. Baur’s reconstruction does not adequately account for the complexities of the literature, and it is not obvious that any of the writings functioned the way Baur thought.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Morgan, “Baur’s Lectures,” 202.

<sup>133</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 26, n. 16.

<sup>134</sup> Senft, “Baur,” 81.

<sup>135</sup> Silva, “Historical Reconstruction,” 22.

<sup>136</sup> Hefner, “Baur Versus Ritschl,” 259.

<sup>137</sup> Ellis, “Foreword,” xiii.

<sup>138</sup> Wisse, “Early Christian Literature,” 179 and 182.

<sup>139</sup> Wisse, “Early Christian Literature,” 180-181.

There is also a divergence of opinion on the value of Baur's exegesis. Senft describes Baur as one of the most important contributors to the field of exegetical methodology.<sup>140</sup> Yet according to Gasque, Baur did little of what could be called exegesis, and he was prevented from "making any serious contribution to the cause of scientific exegesis."<sup>141</sup> Morgan says that Baur based his view of Paul and Judaism on solid exegesis that "stands up surprisingly well," is "still instructive," "still worth visiting," and often "defensible."<sup>142</sup> At the same time Morgan insists that Baur's view is too simplistic, that he failed to account for Jewish apocalyptic, and that basing his interpretation of Paul on Greek philosophy was "plainly wrong."<sup>143</sup> Similarly, Schweitzer sees no contradiction between his statement, "The great merit of the Tübingen critic was that he allowed the texts to speak for themselves, to mean what they said," and his observation that "detail is in fact somewhat neglected in [Baur's] treatment."<sup>144</sup>

It is not easy to explain this diversity of opinion, particularly when the same person expresses both praise and criticism. Nevertheless, a number of contributing factors can be identified. First, Baur has been less accepted in the English-speaking world than in the German-speaking one, primarily because of different philosophical orientations.<sup>145</sup> Morgan observed that Germans were more influenced by the Enlightenment and the English more by ecclesiastical considerations.<sup>146</sup> To put it differently, Germany has been influenced by speculative philosophy and England by

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<sup>140</sup> Senft, "Baur," 77.

<sup>141</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 40; quotation on page 54.

<sup>142</sup> Morgan, "Baur's Lectures," 205; "England and Germany," 87; "Biblical Classics," 7, 8; respectively.

<sup>143</sup> Morgan, "Biblical Classics," 6-8.

<sup>144</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 13 and 15, respectively.

<sup>145</sup> A simpler reason is that very few of Baur's works were translated into English, and those that were suffered from poor translation. Hodgson, "Introduction," 37, n. 84. Another reason is that one of the first attempts to popularize Baur's thesis in Britain, Cassel's *Supernatural Religion: An Inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation*, was attacked by Lightfoot in such a way that capable scholars no longer gave it serious consideration. Gasque, "Roots," 153.

<sup>146</sup> Morgan, "England and Germany," 96. See also Barrett, who notes that Lightfoot and Baur represent "different philosophical and theological traditions." Barrett, "Quomodo," 318.



pragmatism. Schweitzer's description of Baur, as a result, sounds contradictory to English ears:

The Tübingen scholar, in fact, uses the language of Paul in order to set forth an imposing philosophy of religion instinct [*sic*] with Hegelian influence. He gives no authentic account of the Apostle's thought. Nevertheless this book breathes the spirit of Paul the prophet of freedom more fully than almost any other which has been devoted to him. That is what gives it its remarkable attractiveness.<sup>147</sup>

By contrast, Gasque notes that "British biblical scholarship was never the handmaid of philosophy," a deliberate and pejorative evaluation of the difference between British and German scholarship.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, Kaye rightly points out that, while Germany has been overtly conscious of its ties to philosophy, British scholarship relies on its own kind of philosophy. Baur may have been a "Hegelian idealist," but Lightfoot was a "commonsense empiricist," and both were committed to a particular view of revelation in history.<sup>149</sup>

A second factor contributing to the difference of opinion is the faith commitments of both Baur and those who have evaluated him. Frank Kaufman concluded that Baur's complex faith caused the disagreement.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, some scholars perceive Baur as heterodox and as undermining true Christian faith. Those who take this view understandably seek to discredit him and to interpret the New Testament along traditional lines. Other scholars see in Baur a legitimate modernization of Christianity and thus find him compelling. The result, as Gasque pointed out, is that "two parallel streams of criticism begin to emerge, one of them from within Christian orthodoxy and the other in conscious reaction to it."<sup>151</sup>

A final cause of the divergence of opinion is that individuals come with different presuppositions. To put it in broadest terms, Baur is judged

<sup>147</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul*, 16.

<sup>148</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 108. Gasque also says that criticism in Germany was built on the Tübingen viewpoint but British scholarship was founded on philology and Graeco-Roman history. Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 105-106, 108.

<sup>149</sup> Kaye, "Lightfoot and Baur," 217-220. Cf. Hodgson, "Rediscovery," 206.

<sup>150</sup> Kaufman, *Foundations*, 143-144.

<sup>151</sup> Gasque, "Roots," 149.

according to an interpretive framework, which Silva defines as a person's "network of mental associations."<sup>152</sup> If one's mental framework can understand and accept Baur's reconstruction, then he is evaluated favorably. More specifically, Baur's interpretation of the data from early Christian writings is compared to a prior understanding of the meaning of those data. Baur's reconstruction is praised when (1) it can be assimilated into one's own interpretive framework and (2) it better accounts for more of the data than one's own interpretation. Wisse, therefore, correctly observed that Baur's success is due largely to his development of a "comprehensive framework" for interpreting early Christian literature and Church history.<sup>153</sup> Baur understood that a framework was necessary to interpret biblical data, and he provided that framework by positing the importance of conflict in the early Church. Specific details, according to Baur, can be misplaced without damaging the whole; yet Silva correctly warns, "According to Baur's thoroughgoing application of this method, the facts seem to count for very little."<sup>154</sup>

Whether or not one agrees with Baur, it can be agreed that he exerts a continuing influence on New Testament research, though not everyone will agree that the impact has been positive. According to Gasque, Baur's impact is felt in six areas: (1) the on-going goal to create a comprehensive theory to explain all New Testament data, (2) the commitment to explicating a non-supernatural origin of Christianity, (3) the prevalent view of a split between Petrine/Jewish and Pauline/Gentile Christianity, (4) the widespread belief that Acts is not reliable as a history of the primitive Church, (5) the skepticism regarding the theology of Luke-Acts, and (6) the propensity for creating schools of thought, especially in Germany.<sup>155</sup>

Ellis argues that Baur's greatest influence in New Testament Studies stems from his philosophy of history.<sup>156</sup> Senft would agree. He says Baur made a significant step forward by showing that both the biblical truth and theology proper are simply stages in the unfolding of divine truth.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Silva, "Historical Reconstruction," 124-145.

<sup>153</sup> Wisse, "Early Christian Literature," 177-179.

<sup>154</sup> Silva, "Historical Reconstruction," 125.

<sup>155</sup> Gasque, "Roots," 152.

<sup>156</sup> Ellis, "Foreword," xi.

<sup>157</sup> Senft, "Baur," 95, n. 8.

Similar considerations led Morgan to say, “Baur raises the ‘purely historical’ discipline of New Testament theology on to a theological plane, and by daring to speak of God in what seemed to him the best available language, showed New Testament scholars the way to become theologians.”<sup>158</sup> Likewise, Harold O. J. Brown says that “after Baur it became more or less taken for granted in academic circles that theology has always been in process and that there never was a ‘faith once delivered.’”<sup>159</sup>

Baur’s methodology has also been influential. As we noted above, Senft values Baur’s contribution to exegetical methodology. Likewise, G. Wayne Glick says, “Baur’s significance lies in the fact that he was the first historian to apply seriously the methods of critical empirical investigation to the history of the Church.”<sup>160</sup> Morgan asserts that Baur’s tendency criticism “was the most significant antecedent of redaction criticism prior to Wrede’s *Messianic Secret*.”<sup>161</sup> Fuller notes that despite the ultimate rejection of *Tendenzkritik*, it did supply a criterion for the Synoptic problem, namely when a writer carried over a *Tendenz* that differed from his own,

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<sup>158</sup> Morgan, “Baur’s Lectures,” 206. Morgan elsewhere describes Baur as “the greatest single pioneer and practitioner in the field of historical theology.” Morgan, “Biblical Classics,” 4.

<sup>159</sup> Brown, *Heresies*, 26. Cf. Hefner, “Baur has made it impossible to raise the question of meaning in history without at least raising the concomitant question of theological and philosophical frameworks which will permit the historian to utilize their insights and still remain an historian. It is for this reason that Baur’s *Epochen*, for all its shortcomings, has never been superseded as a treatise on the methodology of writing church history.” Hefner, “Baur Versus Ritschl,” 277. Cf. also Hodgson: “Baur’s greatness consists in his recognition of the radically historical quality of the Christian Church and Christian faith, and in his concomitant development of an historical method appropriate to a critical *and* theological study of the Church and its founding events, a study which he understood to be an intrinsically proper and necessary theological discipline” Hodgson, “Rediscovery,” 206.

<sup>160</sup> G. Wayne Glick, “Nineteenth Century Theological and Cultural Influences on Adolf Harnack.” *CH* 28 (1959):167. He went on to say, “What remained as his enduring contribution, however, was his understanding that Christianity must be viewed as a historical phenomenon, and investigated by a historical-critical method.” Glick, “Influences,” 167.

<sup>161</sup> Morgan, “Baur’s Lectures,” 203. Fuller also compared *Tendenzkritik* with redaction criticism, but noted that Baur himself was far removed from the modern redaction-critical approach. Fuller, “Baur Versus Hilgenfeld,” 362, 364.

dependency is present.<sup>162</sup> Finally, as Gasque observed, the importance of Baur is not so much his method, but rather that he raises the right questions, which continue to influence New Testament Studies to this day.<sup>163</sup>

## Conclusion

Baur can be faulted from a number of angles. The critics of Tübingen demonstrated that Baur was wrong because the early Church was both more diverse and more unified than Baur admitted. Moreover, there was less of a rift between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the Epistles than Baur thought.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, the idea can be challenged that ultimate truth undergoes development through history, that the Apostolic Faith is only one expression of unfolding reality.<sup>165</sup> It is better to say with Wolfhart Pannenberg that the meaning of history is known only from its end—but that end is known proleptically in Christ.<sup>166</sup> It is for this reason that the New Testament is the authoritative interpretation of history.

Because of such criticism, Baur's conclusions have been largely modified. Yet a Baurian kernel is still visible in many areas of New Testament Studies. The reason for this enduring presence is that Baur's reconstruction has not been entirely rejected but rather synthesized into fuller descriptions of early Christianity. Thus, it is not entirely accurate to say, as in the introduction, above, that a synthesis is still wanting. For a synthesis brings together aspects of the all theories being supplanted. Thus, as scholarship has progressed through consecutive syntheses, remnants of former theories never entirely disappear. One consequence of this approach, however, is that conclusions brought forward can be dislodged from their foundations and placed uncritically into a new setting where their validity is dubious. Such is the case with a number of the ideas of Baur, as we have seen.

There remains, nevertheless, a significant body of scholarship that has

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<sup>162</sup> Fuller, "Baur Versus Hilgenfeld," 369-370.

<sup>163</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 52.

<sup>164</sup> Gasque, *History of Interpretation*, 70-72.

<sup>165</sup> Brown, *Heresies*, 38.

<sup>166</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg. *Systematic Theology* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; vol. 3; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 595-607, esp. 605.

not made its peace with Tübingen. This cadre is comprised largely of English speaking scholars who remain opposed to Baur. Between the speculative-critical and the confessional-critical ways of thinking, there remains no synthesis. The divide between Baurian criticism and Light-footian criticism still seeks a synthesis after a century and a half. If this can serve as an example, it follows that Baur's vision of conflict and resolution must be deemed unrealistic.

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