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GODS ASCENDING

IN 1797, a little over two hundred years ago as I write, one J. E. C. Schmidt published an argument that behind the NT lay a struggle between the followers of Peter and of Paul.¹ The idea was taken up by Ferdinand Christian Baur, professor of church history and dogmatics in the University of Tübingen from 1826 till his death in 1860; he did so first in 1831, in an article of 146 pages,² and later in full-length works, most notably *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi* in 1845.³ Baur's powerful advocacy of the thesis drew widespread agreement but not without some sharp criticism, and in one form or another it became the dominant scholarly view for the rest of the nineteenth century; it was not effectively criticized until the work of W. Lütgert in 1908.⁴

Anyone writing a book with such a title as mine, *Paul and the Competing Mission in Corinth*, is calling up the ghost of Baur as surely as Saul called up the ghost of Samuel. In the KJV the witch of Endor said, "I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And [Saul] said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up" (1 Sam 28.13–14). ("Gods" is a mistranslation of אֱלֹהִים; I should say instead "a divine spirit.") Granted, Baur made many

¹J. E. C. Schmidt, *Bibliothek für Kritik und Exegese* (2 vols.; 1797–1803), 1:91. Baur himself refers to Schmidt in F. C. Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz der petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der ältesten Kirche, Petrus in Rom," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 4, no. 3 (1831): 61–206, here 76; but in fact the idea was widespread in the late eighteenth century. Both J. Semler and F. von Schelling were influential on Baur (L. M. White, "Baur, Ferdinand Christian, 1782–1860," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* [ed. J. H. Hayes; 2 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999], 1:112–13), with the suggestion that Petrine Christianity had developed into Catholicism, while Paul had introduced a superior faith now represented by Protestantism.

²Baur, "Christuspartei."

³F. C. Baur, *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi—sein Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und Lehre: Ein Beitrag zu einer kritischen Geschichte des Urchristentums* (Stuttgart, 1845; 2d ed.; ed. E. Zeller; Leipzig, 1866–1867); ET of 2d ed., *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, 1876).

⁴W. Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth: Ein Beitrag zur Charakteristik der Christuspartei* (BFCT 12.3; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1908).

mistakes, like other scholars, but he has been unjustly criticized for mistakes he did not make, and this book is an attempt to restate his central hypothesis on a somewhat different basis. Many NT critics have contributed insights to the meaning of the text, but it falls to the occasional genius, or divine spirit, to scent the outline of a true understanding from the mass of distracting detail. For all his errors, Baur was such a spirit. I shall begin, therefore, with a brief restatement of the part of his thesis that I believe to be well grounded.

Our closest insight into the history of the church in the 40s comes from the second chapter of Galatians.⁵ Visitors to Paul's church at Antioch ("false brethren secretly brought in") had been alarmed at the failure to keep Jewish kashruth rules ("to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might enslave us") and had protested, causing a public altercation ("to whom we did not submit even for a moment"). It became clear to Paul that there would be trouble, and he went up to Jerusalem ("I went up by revelation") to get an agreement on the question from the leadership there ("I laid before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles, lest I should in any way run, or have been running, in vain"). He took Barnabas with him, his fellow pastor and trusted friend of the senior apostles, "taking Titus also with us," because he wanted to have a clear piece of evidence that a Gentile Christian did not have to be circumcised and that the "pillars" accepted this. Paul was nobody's fool.

The meeting was held privately (v. 2) and was a success. Paul explained his message and practice ("the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles"), and the pillars did not impose any conditions on him (οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο, v. 6) either about food and purity laws at the Eucharist or about circumcision. Titus's presence was a masterstroke ("Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was not forced to be circumcised"), for Paul was able to appeal to this fact in fighting off the circumcisers of Galatians. The pillars were impressed by the success of Paul's work ("when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcision") and shook hands ("they gave me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship"). Hitherto there had been one mission (ἀποστολή), led by Peter to the Jews ("He that worked

⁵Baur expounds Gal 2.1–14 in *Paul*, 105–45, much of the argument being a rebuttal of claims of harmony with Acts. He does not argue that the false brethren were introduced at Antioch (rather than Jerusalem) but assumes it: "Why should [Paul] have gone to Jerusalem himself [in Gal 2.1–10]? Why did he so especially wish to treat of the matter with the Apostles if he had not good grounds for supposing that [they] were by no means ignorant of the attempts made by the παρεῖσακτοι ψευδάδελφοί?" (p. 121). This conclusion is disputed in modern times, e.g., by J. D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; London: Black, 1993); but see F. Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 50–51; and F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 115–17, with a list of distinguished scholars.

in Peter for the circumcision mission”); now they recognized that there was a second, parallel mission (“had been at work also in me for the Gentiles”). The meeting ended on a high note of agreement (“that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision”). The pillars were in some financial difficulty with their open-purse policy and requested Paul to help them with a collection from his wealthy Gentile converts (“only that we should remember the poor people,” τῶν πτωχῶν, v. 10). Paul took up the request with enthusiasm (“which also I was eager to do”): if they accepted his money, they would be less likely to be critical of his liberalism.

The text makes clear that both parties accepted a division of the world into two missions, one of Peter (and John and James) to the Jews, the other of Paul (ἐμοί) to the Gentiles. This is not to assert that there were no independent missionaries; we know, for example, of Stephen and Philip and Apollos. But a mission, whether to Jews or Gentiles, required a sending community with finances to cover traveling and supporting personnel, and in the long run, independent missionaries would be drawn into one or other of the great missions, as Apollos was into the Pauline, or Barnabas (it seems) into the Petrine. Nor is it implied that all within a certain mission were united on all points of doctrine and practice. Peter took a softer line than James in Gal 2.11–12, and the circumcisers of Galatians took a harder line still; Luke is at pains to distance the apostles from the Pharisaic Judaizers of Acts 15.1–5. But difference of opinion is a natural state of affairs in any organization; all these people were part of the Petrine mission, even if they overstepped the mark.

Unfortunately, this was not the end of the story. Peter came to visit the Antioch church, sent by the others after second thoughts on their concessions. At first he was impressed by the warmth of his welcome and the church’s spirit of devotion, and he fell in with the Pauline ways (“he ate with the Gentiles”); but after a while he was joined by a further deputation from Jerusalem (“before certain men came from James . . . but when they came . . .”). This forced the issue, and Peter succumbed to their pressure (“fearing those of the circumcision”). He told the church that the food laws were in the Bible and must be observed and that the Eucharist was for those who were prepared to do what God said (“he withdrew and separated himself”). This produced a catastrophe for Paul. The Jewish members of the church had long felt uncomfortable about the purity laws, and they sided with Peter, including even Barnabas (“the rest of the Jews joined in their hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy”). Paul made an angry expostulation (“I withstood [Cephas] to the face, because he was condemned”—by his own shilly-shallying), but the day was lost. Paul had either to bow and accept kashruth rules for his church or to strike out and found a Gentile church of his own. He was wise enough to accept the first alternative and to fight another day.

The incidents so described took place around 48, and the issue of whether Gentile converts should keep the law, including circumcision, was a live one seven years later when Paul wrote Galatians, and again in Romans, and in Philippians, perhaps Paul's last letter ("Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh," 3.2). It does not arise, apparently, in the Corinthian letters, but the tension between the Pauline converts and the Petrine seems evident.⁶ In the opening verses of 1 Corinthians, Paul complains of what seem to be four factions in the church. One is of his own followers, and another of Apollos's; but I,3 appears to show that the two missionaries saw each other as colleagues, planting, watering, building together. This is confirmed by I,16.12, "I strongly urged [Apollos] to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all God's will for him to come now."⁷

But there is a third group, claiming to be "of Cephas." We need not think that Peter had himself visited Corinth or that he would have sanctioned their attitude, but their label is likely to be a claim to the authority of the Jerusalem leaders. This is strongly suggested by Paul's repeated defense of his apostleship both in the First Letter (3.21–4.15; 9.1–27) and in much of the Second Letter.⁸ It becomes clear in II,11.22 that his critics are in fact Jewish Christians who think that they are the only true ministers of Christ and that Paul is no true apostle; the obvious contrast is with Peter and the other Jerusalem leaders, who were Jesus' chosen apostles.

In the long run, it was the Pauline version of Christianity that had the upper hand, for neither circumcision nor purity laws were accepted in the Catholic Church, and Paul was canonized as an apostle. Still, Jerusalem Christianity did not fade away. Peter was accepted as the first apostle, in Rome and elsewhere, and he has been a figurehead for faith far more than Paul. Jewish Christianity did not die with Peter and James, but its continuing life may be seen in the Pseudo-Clementines, the *Homilies* and *Recognitions*, in which Peter often disputes with Simon Magus, a code name for Paul. The two missions of Gal 2.8 in fact grew together into the Great Church. The leader of this reconciling movement was Luke. In his Gospel every opportunity is taken to draw the sting from the Markan account of Peter's (and the disciples') follies, stupidities, and disloyalties. His Acts divides into two approximate halves, in the first of which Peter is the hero, in the second Paul.

⁶For Baur's exposition of the Corinthian letters, see his *Paul*, 168–94, 258–307.

⁷οὐκ ἦν θέλημα: the Greek noun is a rendering of the common ׀׀׀ for the will of God in rabbinic writing; cf. the proud Jew apostrophized in Rom 2.18, γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα.

⁸It was this feature of the Corinthian letters that first suggested to Baur his overarching theory of Pauline-Petrine rivalry; see F. C. Baur, "Die Einleitung in das Neue Testament als theologische Wissenschaft," *Theologische Jahrbücher* 10 (1851): 294.

Moreover, in Acts 15 the private conference of Gal 2.1–10 is turned into a massive assembly in which both Peter and James give unqualified support to the Pauline mission on Pauline terms. In more than one sense Acts is an account of the road to the church of Rome.⁹

THE CHARGES AGAINST BAUR

Such an account of the history of the early church may seem innocuous, apart from the comments on the Corinthian letters; but the association with Baur will be enough to stir the reader's suspicions. For almost all modern scholars have been brought up in the belief that Baur was not only wrong on the major issues¹⁰ but also wrongheaded—that is, that his judgments on questions of NT exegesis were determined not by the texts but by philosophical presuppositions. Probably the most important modern influences leading to the dismissal of Baur have been Werner Kümmel's *Das Neue Testament: Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme* (1970)¹¹ and Stephen Neill's *Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1961* (1964).¹² Those who write the history of a subject take the power to direct the perspective of their readers in decades to come.¹³ We may add the various introductions to the NT written to guide the student—for example, Philipp Vielhauer's *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*.¹⁴

Credit is conceded to Baur today for his insistence on posing the historical question, for seeking an answer to it in the history of the developing churches, and for initiating *Tendenzkritik*. He is not allowed credit for his view that the early history of the church was determined by a rivalry between a Pauline and a Jerusalem mission, and it is this question that I wish to reopen.

Kümmel cites nineteenth-century critics of Baur for three points of fact: (i) there was not a single Jewish-Christian movement in the first two centuries but at least a firmer line and a more liberal line, and probably a

⁹Baur, *Paul*, 12, thought Acts was so full of tendentious distortions that it could not be by Luke.

¹⁰Although this is generally true, there has been a persevering respect for Baur's overall position by a minority of scholars; we may think of Ernst Käsemann, C. K. Barrett, Jacob Jervell, and Gerd Lüdemann.

¹¹The English translation is W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (trans. S. M. Gilmour and H. C. Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1972).

¹²The second edition, revised by N. T. Wright, continues the account to 1986: Stephen Neill and N. T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986* (2d ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹³Cf. T. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 1–22.

¹⁴P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975).

great variety of views; (ii) the Jewish-Christian movement had no permanent influence on the Great Church, and the Pauline theology had little influence; and (iii) Paul was friendly to Peter in the Epistles and cites him as an ally. More significant, and damning, is Kümmel's own (and common) criticism (iv) that Baur's exegesis is determined by his Hegelianism. Not mentioned by Kümmel but historically important are the criticisms of Lütgert: (v) the Corinthian letters show no interest in the questions raised by the Judaizers in Galatians and Romans—neither circumcision nor kashruth is an issue—and (vi) on the contrary, the opposition in 1 Corinthians is principally of enthusiasts, who are likely to be Paul's own converts, more radical than he.

THE CHARGES REBUTTED

Jewish-Christian Diversity. Albert Ritschl wrote in 1850,

It is necessary to make many more distinctions [than Baur does] if we are to draw valid conclusions. So we point out that the original apostles, who lived as Jews, must be distinguished from the Jewish Christians; also various sects of Jewish Christians must be distinguished; and further the Gentile Christianity that was in process of becoming Catholic was not identical with the group influenced by Paul. These observations lead to more probable conclusions, as they do not compel us to regard every Christian phenomenon of the spirit during the period as either Jewish Christian, or Pauline, or neutralizing.¹⁵

Ritschl's idea of the complexity of first-century Judaism, and so of Jewish Christianity, will find a ready response today. But it is important to be fair to Baur, since he is often represented as identifying the Jerusalem apostles and the Judaizers. Vielhauer, for example, says, "According to the Judaist hypothesis in its classic [i.e., Baur's] formulation, the agitation in Galatia does not represent an isolated event but part of a big conscious countermission against Paul's mission, planned and organized by Peter, which has also left its traces in Corinth (Cephas party, 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22) and in Philippi."¹⁶

Baur, however, from his "Christuspartei" article of 1831 till the posthumous second edition of his *Paulus* in 1866–1867, does distinguish the apostles from the Judaizers. The main opposition was indeed "between the Paulinists and Petrinists or Judaizers."¹⁷ But in 1831 he wrote, "Peter had no part in the faction at Corinth that bore his name . . . itinerant pseudoapostles who in-

¹⁵A. Ritschl, *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche* (Bonn, 1850), 22; my translation.

¹⁶Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 118–19. For Baur as the classic statement of this position, p. 104.

¹⁷Baur, "Einleitung," 294.

voked the name of Peter had also come to Corinth. . . . [They] appealed above all to the authority of James and of Peter, though we can scarcely believe that the [Jerusalem] Jewish apostles approved them and could give recognition to sham emissaries of this sort.”¹⁸ And in his *Paulus* (1845) he says,

There grew up within Jewish Christianity itself a strict and a liberal party. The stricter one wished to impose on Gentile Christians also the general principle that there was no salvation apart from Judaism. . . . The more liberal party was in principle in harmony with the stricter one—only after the concessions made by the Jewish Apostles to the Apostle Paul, they could not oppose him practically. . . . We cannot but think that the Jewish apostles were at the head of this [more liberal] party.¹⁹

I do not wish to dispute that Judaism was variegated in the first century or that several nuanced opinions may have been available: Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Diaspora liberals, those who spoke of Noachian commandments, allegorists, and others. But even so, a further distinction seems to be required. The Gentile mission raised a crucial question on which every Christian had to take a stand: were the kashruth provisions in the OT, and as interpreted in Jewish tradition, to be required of the Gentile converts? Paul clearly felt that the Gentile mission would be inhibited, even crippled, if they were required, especially circumcision; living like Jews would, for potential converts, be bondage. The problems would extend to calendrical observance (Gal 4.10; Rom 14.5), since the employment of many Gentiles must have required Sabbath working. Whether from such pragmatic considerations or from more theological ones, he insisted that Gentiles were free of kashruth rules. We see the compulsiveness of the issue gradually dawning in the narrative of Gal 2. At first, when the pillars heard of procedures at Antioch, they were scandalized and sent the “false brethren” to remonstrate.²⁰ Then, when Paul appeared, they thought his liberalism was justified by his success. When he had gone, however, they had second thoughts and sent Peter to settle matters. When Peter came, he thought kashruth less important than the Christian spirit of the church. But then, when certain ones from James came, Peter thought the word of God was important after all. It was similar with the Antiochene Jewish Christians and even Barnabas. There was presumably a Gentile host providing a weekly Saturday supper with nonkosher

¹⁸Baur, “Christuspartei,” 61–62.

¹⁹Baur, *Paul*, 127–28.

²⁰Gal 2.4 seems to imply that the “false brethren” were not just casual visitors. As ψευδάδελφοί, they are involved in some deceit; they are παρείσακτοι, a passive verbal adjective suggesting that a third party has introduced them; they come with intention, “to spy out our freedom,” and with an ulterior motive, “that they might bring us into bondage.” All this could be Paul’s misunderstanding or his rhetoric, but the words imply a mission from the pillars, and this construction is historically plausible.

meat, and the Jewish Christians must have felt uncomfortable about joining in. Still, one does not want to make a fuss in a church meeting, and the host would be hurt, and the animal would have had its throat slit, so there was no question of blood . . . Thus is the human conscience lulled by half-truths. But the arrival of the certain men from James brought the issue to a head. Peter spoke up and posed the central question in Gal 2.12: “Brothers [and sisters], we cannot ignore the commandments of God, given us in the Bible and interpreted for us by the sages. Are you coming with me to honor them, or are you not?” The Antiochene Christians had to take a stand for one side or the other, and the remaining Jews joined in Peter’s “hypocrisy,” even Barnabas. But the central question was unavoidable, and we can watch Peter posing it.

We may even think that Baur has weakened by so steadily making a division between the pillars and the Judaizers, in a quest for “harmony.” When the chips were down, the apostles and the “sham emissaries” were on one side of the fence, and Paul on the other. In modern discussion, the “classic position” of Baur is regarded as a long-discarded error, but the force of his argument is liable to bring his conclusion in by the back door. As Vielhauer concedes, “A connection of Paul’s Galatian opponents with Peter and/or James may be neither proved nor convincingly disproved.”²¹

We lack adequate evidence of any rivalry between a Pauline and a Jewish-Christian mission in the late second century, but we do have a first-hand account of such a conflict toward the end of the NT period. Ignatius writes to the Philadelphians in the twelfth decade of our era:

For even though certain persons desired to deceive me after the flesh, yet the spirit is not deceived. . . . I cried out when I was among you; I spake with a loud voice, with the voice of God, Give ye heed to the bishop and the presbytery and deacons. Howbeit there were those who suspected me of saying this because I knew beforehand of the division of certain persons. . . . For I heard certain persons saying, If I find it not in the charters (ἀρχεῖα), I believe it not in the Gospel. And when I said to them, It is written, they answered me, That is the question. (Ign. *Phld.* 7–8, trans. B. F. Westcott)

Ignatius is a faithful Pauline: he constantly writes reminiscences of the Pauline Epistles in his letters and calls the Ephesians “fellow-mystics with the sainted Paul” (Ign. *Eph.* 12.3). The Philadelphian church is under the influence of those who “propound Judaism” to them (Ign. *Phld.* 6.1), and it is they who in the following chapter suspect Ignatius (correctly) of having known about the tensions from his friends the church officers. Then in ch. 8 they refuse the authority of “the Gospel,” to which he appeals as Scripture (“It is written”). They will accept nothing but the ἀρχεῖα, the original Scriptures, the OT. It is the same basic tension that we have in the Antiochene church in Gal 2 and in the Epistle to the Galatians itself. So far at least, Baur was right.

²¹Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 120.

The Influence of Jewish and Pauline Views. Ritschl also pointed to the difficulty of seeing any influence of Jewish Christianity—or, for that matter, any influence of Pauline thought—on second- or third-century Catholicism:

We can now emphasize more strongly the inability of Jewish Christianity to develop. . . . Catholic Christianity did not issue from a reconciliation of Jewish and Gentile Christians but is a phase of Gentile Christianity alone. . . . We are far from presupposing a fundamental conflict between Paul and the original apostles. If such a conflict had existed, they could not have belonged to the same church, as they did, according to the documents that no one questions.

Paul and the pillars in fact, according to Ritschl, shared Jesus' insights: the transcending of the law by the principle of love, and the Lord's imminent return.²²

To Ritschl, Jewish Christianity was, for all its possible variety, basically an insistence on the law; there was no insistence on the law in Catholic Christianity, so Jewish Christianity has left no mark on the future church. Similarly, Paul taught a gospel of justification by faith, and this teaching was submerged for fourteen centuries; hence, other movements in Gentile Christianity have been more influential on the Great Church than has Paul. But such simplicities cannot stand today. This study will note how many aspects of Jewish Christianity there were, an apocalyptic form of Judaism, with visionaries and ascetics and a realized eschatology that was to have a considerable input into the future, while the Pauline response was to be regulative for the early history of dogma. Baur was wrong on many details, but on the central issue he was more right than Ritschl.

Relations between Peter and Paul. Some of the same points were made by Adolf Jülicher a generation later, but Jülicher also noted the general courtesy that Paul shows to Peter:

What the sequel was to this painful dispute [Gal 2.11–14] we do not learn, but we should have no justification for asserting that it resulted in a definite breach between the parties concerned. Even in the Epistle to the Galatians Paul speaks of Barnabas and Peter in far too friendly a way to leave room for the supposition that a dissolution of the agreement described in 2.8, 10 was contemplated on the ground of some serious difference. Paul does not relate the occurrence for the purpose of prejudicing his readers against Peter, or of lowering him in their eyes, but simply to illustrate in the most striking way his own unchanging steadfastness.²³

²²Ritschl, *Entstehung*, 22–23, 46–52, 107; I owe the references to Kümmel, *History*, 163–64.

²³A. Jülicher, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1894), 5.

It is no occasion for surprise that Paul normally treats Peter with courtesy, and this for two reasons. First, Peter held a position of unassailable prestige in the church. He had been Jesus' leading disciple; Jesus had singled him out by giving him the name of destiny, *Kepha*' [Aramaic]; it was he who had led the church through the bleak days after the crucifixion, who had first had an experience of the risen Lord, who had (it was believed) led the first public preaching of the word and nearly suffered martyrdom for it. He was the anchor man who had continued to preside over the mission into the 50s and to whom the Jewish mission had specifically been entrusted (Gal 2.7). So no Christian could afford to be against Peter. The "Cephas party" at Corinth claimed his name because it was the highest on offer. Even the Fourth Evangelist, who wishes to subordinate Peter to his own hero, the beloved disciple, gives him the second-highest profile. Paul would have been insane to go public on any dissensions between him and Peter; it would be like a modern Catholic theologian disagreeing with the pope.

Second, it is likely that Paul and Peter normally got on very well. The problem was James, a man of principle, who was liable to insist on policies inconvenient in the Gentile mission. Peter, on the other hand, appears in the tradition as a weak and friendly man. He is not the stuff of which martyrs are made (Mark 14); he was "flexible" over eating with the Gentiles (Gal 2.12); Paul could not have persuaded the pillars to give him authority for the Gentile mission unless Peter had been willing; Luke can represent Peter as the man who first accepted a Gentile into the church without conditions (Acts 10). Hence Paul is happy to tell of his welcome by Peter in Gal 1.18 and to join his resurrection experience with that of Peter and the others. It is only when the Galatian Judaizers threaten to ruin his mission that he feels obliged to draw the curtain back and reveal the tensions of Gal 2.11–14, with some acid sarcasms in 2.6, 9. Later the Pauline movement will produce two pseudonymous letters disseminating Pauline doctrines under the name of Peter.

Hegelianism. By far the most frequent and damaging charge against Baur, however, has been his Hegelianism. Kümmel writes,

During the same years [after 1833] the philosophy of Hegel won predominant influence over him [Baur]. Hegel's view of history as a dialectic process of the resolution of the "being-in-itself" and the "being-for-itself" in the "being-in-and-for-itself" combined in Baur's thought with the opposition of Petrine and Pauline Christianity which he had observed by historical method which was settled in postapostolic Christendom, and this triple beat of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis now becomes the clue to the understanding of early Christianity. And history for him becomes the self-unfolding of the spirit in which the particular has to retire behind the general.²⁴

²⁴Kümmel, *History*, 132.

The same accusation is made more aggressively by Neill and Wright in their similar history of NT scholarship:

It was just here that Baur believed that Hegel had given him the needed illumination. Judaic Christianity, Pauline Christianity, the reconciliation of both in the Catholic Church—these things run like a King Charles’s head through the whole of Baur’s researches; and this means that from 1833 onwards his work was gravely vitiated by an irrelevant and unproved presupposition . . . “a dialectical force of arm, which would twist a bar of iron to its purposes; and all brought to bear to prove a perverse and preposterous position. . . .”—There is Baur to the life, in so far as incautious assumptions at the start lead him into error on every principal point of New Testament criticism.²⁵

Several things need to be said about Baur’s “Hegelianism.”

(i) Both Kümmel and Neill-Wright concede that Baur first effectively read Hegel in 1833; in this they accept the conclusions of P. C. Hodgson.²⁶ But the outline of Baur’s theory of a basic Pauline-Petrine conflict underlying the NT, and in particular the troubles at Corinth, had already been published in 1831 in his “Christuspartei” article. So it was not an incautious assumption of Hegelian philosophy “at the start” that was the problem at all: Baur’s dialectical theory was grounded in straightforward exegesis from the beginning. Kümmel is more just in saying that Baur had observed the basis of his theory by historical method.

(ii) No one reading Baur, for example, his *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ* (the second German edition was virtually completed by 1860),²⁷ would have the least impression that he was dominated by an *idée fixe* (“a King Charles’s head”) that was “gravely vitiating” his judgment. The discussion reads just like a modern work of criticism, constantly checking the narrative of Acts against the Paulines, for instance, and using impressive logical argument to settle questions; the German style is more ponderous than we are used to, and the scholars with whom he disputes are often rationalists such as Neander, but the feel of the work is exclusively exegetical. Hodgson wrote, “We have Baur’s direct and unequivocal testimony that his critical procedure was in no way a priori. Although he believed that history . . . is the outward patterning of an inward idea, the idea of reconciliation . . . , he also

²⁵Neill and Wright, *Interpretation*, 23–24. Neill, who wrote this passage in 1962, takes Baur by the beard to kiss him (“Baur was a heroic figure” [p. 21], “Baur’s industry and erudition” [p. 25]), but there is a sword in his left hand, and he smites him in the belly to the hilt.

²⁶Ibid., 22–23, 196, and esp. Kümmel, *History*, 427 n. 177. P. C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 23, gives 1834–1835 as the likely date for Baur’s involvement with Hegel, citing a letter to his son.

²⁷Hodgson, *Formation*, 32.

insisted that independent critical or positive historical research alone determines the shape of our understanding.”²⁸

(iii) In these circumstances an author’s attachment to a philosophical or religious position is irrelevant. All scholars are subtly influenced in judgment by their presuppositions from life more generally, but we deal with the issues raised on the basis of the arguments advanced, not by attacking those presuppositions. For example, many Roman Catholic scholars may believe that Jesus’ virginal conception is a historical fact, a conclusion congenial to Vatican theologians. I should not think it proper (or effective) to dismiss this claim on the ground that they are Catholics: the discussion is about the dating and relating of the traditions in Matthew and Luke, and similar matters. Similarly, Baur’s presuppositions suggested to him, no doubt, that the Pastorals, with their incipient anti-Gnosticism, were later than the authentic Paulines, and in this case the presuppositions were helpful.

(iv) Of course, there is a limit to this. If we found a modern scholar proposing an Ophite interpretation of the Bible, we would say so and expose his or her irrationality without further discussion. But Hegel and Baur were extremely intelligent men, not crackpots. I would be unwilling to go all the way with Hegel and allow that everything in history (and beyond) must develop according to the thesis-antithesis-synthesis principle. But the idea is not, if applied selectively, “a perverse and preposterous position” at all. On the contrary, it is in many cases obviously true, as when the development of capitalism in the nineteenth century called communism into being and the two ultimately achieved some reconciliation in social democracy. In such matters the great Hegelian dialectic is but a complex statement, tricked out with impressive-sounding Greek assonance, of the truism that history advances with swings of the pendulum.²⁹

It is not to be disputed that Baur got many things wrong, but his errors did not extend to “every principal point of New Testament criticism.” He was correct in seeing a basic tension between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles in Gal 2 and in seeing this tension extended by followers of the latter in a Judaizing mission to Galatia and in the Pseudo-Clementines. He was also correct in seeing Acts as a later attempt to bring the two missions into

²⁸Ibid., 3–4. Cf. his citation from Emanuel Hirsch on the framework into which Baur ordered his history of the NT period, “a framework not imposed on it a priori out of philosophical dialectic, but which rather gradually emerged and was clarified by many years of careful study” (p. 209).

²⁹Baur did not, in any case, accept the neat thesis-antithesis-synthesis formula as governing the early history of the church. Hegel’s philosophy was not so simple; but Baur saw Pauline Christianity as an antithesis of Petrine, with which it made a gradual reconciliation in the period of the Synoptics, and a final accommodation by the end of the second century. And reconciliations were not invariable; Catholicism simply overcame Gnosticism (ibid., 208).

harmony. He was wrong to see the Catholic Church as a straightforward synthesis of the two missions, though, as we shall see, not so wrong as appeared to Ritschl. But the central question that concerns us, whether the Pauline-Petrine tension lies at the root of the Corinthian troubles, is not to be settled by aspersions on Baur's philosophizing, but by exegesis of the two epistles.

Modern students of Baur have often shared my rejection of the assault on his "Hegelianism." Peter Addinall reproduces many of the points I have made and argues that Neill is unfair to Hegel as well as to Baur.³⁰ There is also an extended defense of Baur by R. C. Morgan.³¹ An impressive apologia in German was written by Ulrich Köpf, who cites a comment of Baur in 1853, "My standpoint is, in a word, purely historical, in which the sole concern is, as far as it is at all possible, to present the historical data in their pure objectivity."³² Baur was in this much influenced by the historian Niebuhr. He fearlessly treated Scripture like other human works and had no fear of doubt; D. F. Strauss was his colleague and caused his work to be suspect on religious grounds in his lifetime.

The Corinthian Problem. As mentioned, the most significant critique of Baur and his followers was made by Lütgert in a short book, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth*, in 1908. Lütgert highlighted the differences between the opposition in Galatia and that in Corinth. In the latter there is no pressure to circumcise nor any reference to the church being forced to keep the law. On the contrary, the law is dramatically bypassed: sexual immorality and participation in idol worship alike are both practiced and defended. The opposition are certainly not "nomistic" Jews; they are pneumatics, gnostics, with an extravagant doctrine of Christian freedom. If we ask where this doctrine comes from, the most likely answer is Paul himself, for he had preached freedom from the law and the authority of the Spirit. They had outgrown his limited freedom, and they despised him as weak, both in person and in the ability to do wonders: he was no true pneumatic.

For Lütgert, Paul's mention of himself, Apollos, and Cephas as faction leaders is misleading. The pneumatics said they were "of Christ"—that is, they accepted no human leadership, only a divine one; Paul dislikes this and says they worship a different Jesus, with a different Spirit. They exalted their gnosis as a wisdom that Paul could not rival and derided his preaching of the cross as stupidity. Their gnosis tended in fact toward libertinism: incest,

³⁰P. Addinall, "Why Read the Bible?" *ExpTim* 105 (1994): 136–40.

³¹R. C. Morgan, "Ferdinand Christian Baur," in *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West* (3 vols.; ed. N. Smart et al.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1:261–89.

³²U. Köpf, "Ferdinand Christian Baur als Begründer einer konsequent historischen Theologie," *ZTK* 89 (1992): 440–61, here 453.

litigiousness, fornication, idolatry, chaotic worship with undisciplined women ranting on, greed and drunkenness at the meal, an unreal belief that the kingdom had arrived and the resurrection already taken place. Paul regarded this with alarm: it was a human wisdom, a far cry from Galatians. But the gnosis might also lead to an exaggerated spirituality, with demands for sexual asceticism, the other side of the same penny.

Lütgert's analysis was widely convincing and underlies all modern discussion of the two epistles, even when parts of it are rejected, and it is due to his clear thinking that the Tübingen theory has lost its position among the wise and understanding. The situation revealed at Corinth is clearly different from that implied in Galatians, and no sensible person will deny that the main Corinthian opposition are pneumatics with gnosticizing tendencies. In a sense, the present book is an attempt to reconcile the conclusions of Baur and Lütgert, and this attempt will have to be undertaken slowly. Nevertheless, it may be useful to indicate the outline of my proposal:

(i) Lütgert was right to see the main Corinthian problem, in both letters, as pneumatics boasting of their gnosis, with consequent moral and social behavior, but he was wrong to equate gnosis with wisdom, from which it is differentiated in I,12.8 and elsewhere. In I,1-2 the context indicates a Jewish wisdom, and σοφία was the normal term used by Diaspora Jews to commend their way of life to Gentiles (i.e., "words of wisdom," a halakah based on the law).

(ii) Neither scholar gives an analysis of gnosis. There are a series of indications that some of the opposition were visionaries and that they gained their gnosis in their visions. The visions that justified aberrant moral behavior may well have been as shocking to other Jewish Christians as to Paul.

(iii) Contemporary Judaism experienced the tension between two authorities, that of torah and that of the visionary, and took defensive measures against the latter, with its deviant doctrine and praxis. Paul faces both these claims to authority in Corinth, of "wisdom" and of "knowledge," buttressed in some cases by the stance of well-to-do and influential church members. Lütgert was right to see both ascetic and deviant movements among the Corinthian pneumatics, but the "knowledge" inspiring the latter is a long way from Paul's thinking.

(iv) Baur explained the slogan "of Christ" as a Petrine claim to have known Christ in the flesh; Lütgert, as a symbol of independence from any human missionary. Neither is convincing. The title of the group arises from its Christology, which was of an Ebionite, possessionist kind; they revered the divine Christ, not a human Jesus.

(v) The references in both letters to "examining" Paul, and depreciating his claim to apostolicity, are most easily understood as the attempt of a Cephas

party to destroy his credibility. So Baur was right to see Paul and Apollos as allies and those “of Christ” as overlapping the Cephas party. In this respect we have the same lineup as in Galatians, Paul versus the followers of (James and) Peter,³³ although the issue of the law has not yet reached its crisis. Many of the texts in the two letters to which Baur appeals justify his exegesis rather than Lütgert’s.

In the following chapters, I have, in an important measure, followed Baur’s method against that of contemporary scholarship. To undertake a commentary today even on one of the Corinthian letters is liable to lead to a thousand pages, or perhaps four volumes; to attempt both epistles may seem rash. But Baur thought that a plausible exegesis could not be established on a narrow front: a persuasive picture must grow out of a consideration of the development of discussion over many decades in the church. He described the growth of Christian doctrine and practice: first over two centuries, and later over nineteen in his projected five-volume *Geschichte der christlichen Kirche*. Baur published the first volume in 1853. The remaining four volumes were put together from his notes in 1865–67 by his son, F. F. Baur. I have tried to follow him in this endeavor, to understand the two letters in their own right and to infer the opposition’s stances against which Paul is writing. Second Corinthians was written only about a year after the First Letter, and I have been open to the possibility that it may have been written in the face of similar problems from a similar group of opponents. In a second work I hope to inquire whether the same questions recur in further documents of the NT and the Fathers. Sometimes it may be that totally new pressures arose, but the most plausible picture will include more development than fits and starts. Tertullian was right to say dismissively, “Apud Marcionem omnia fiunt subito” (“With Marcion everything happens suddenly”).

So I am happy to have the ghost of Ferdinand Baur to preside over my studies. The criticisms of his historical work can be answered, and the attack on his philosophical presuppositions was misguided. He was a master spirit.

³³Jesus entrusted the Jewish mission to Peter (Gal 2.7), but James, Jesus’ brother, has taken over much of the authority in Gal 2.9, 12. Peter is the flag-carrier in 1 Corinthians also, with Jesus’ brothers shadowy in the background at I,9.5.