Part 1

The Entrance of Christianity into World History; Primitive Christianity

The Universalism of the Roman Empire as a Preparation for Christianity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christianity and the Pre-Christian Religions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Greek Philosophy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Greek philosophy, which was translated into English.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

our task is simply to develop these innate conceptions. The closer an individual stands to nature, the more clearly these conceptions will be reflected in him; we learn from children what is in conformity with nature. Belief in divinity rests on a similar foundation. By virtue of the human mind's affinity with God, God-consciousness is given directly with self-consciousness. Humans need only to recollect the mind's origins in order to be led to their creator. Nature itself, therefore, teaches us of the existence of God, and the strongest proof of this truth is its universal recognition.[19] In these few sentences we see clearly traced the outlines of a natural theology, which subsequently was elaborated on within Christianity itself on genuinely Christian grounds. The view that self-consciousness is at the same time God-consciousness is ultimately on the way to regarding its original knowledge as something merely given to it and, in the immediate consciousness of a higher source of knowledge transcending the finite subject, to receiving the revelation of divinity. In its longing for a higher communication of truth and an immediate revelation, Greek philosophy finally concluded its course of development in Neoplatonism.[20]

In summary, when Christianity is viewed from this angle, all these elements indicate to us how it entered into the general history of humanity at a point when preparations had been made for it in many important ways. This is the very point when the profound significance of moral consciousness had dawned on the pagan world—a time when the most spiritual and the most practically important results that Greek philosophy produced in the entire sweep of its ethical endeavors had become the essential content of the general consciousness of the age. It was a generally acknowledged truth that the human being is a moral subject with a specific moral role to play in life. Christianity is itself the key point at which the various orientations pursuing the same goal coalesced, in order to find their specific conceptuality and richest expression in Christianity. When approached from the side of paganism, this is Christianity's position in the nexus of world history. As the absolute religion, however, it likewise unites

19. See Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, 1st ed. (n. 15), vol. 3:1, 371ff. [He says:] the natural theology that arose on the foundation of Stoicism appears in its purest form, and the one most analogous to the teachings and principles of Christianity, in the writings of Seneca. Compare my essay, "Seneca und Paulus, das Verhältniss des Stoicismus zum Christenthum nach den Schriften Seneca's," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 1 (1858) 161–246, 441–70. A peculiar characteristic of Seneca's Stoicism is his tendency to approach the Christian religious mode of perception to the same extent that he departs from the old system of the Stoa. I have pointed this out under the following aspects: 1. God and the feeling of dependence. 2. Human beings and their need for salvation. 3. The relationship of human beings to each other. 4. Belief in a future life. 5. The difference in principle between the Stoic and Christian worldviews. At the same time I have tried to show how unjustified the rash but popular conclusion is that this tendency must be ascribed to Seneca's acquaintance with Christianity as he heard it proclaimed.

20. [*Ed.*] Neoplatonism was a philosophical tradition arising in the third century AD and lasting about 300 years. Plotinus and Proclus were among its most important thinkers. Despite a great diversity of views, most Neoplatonists saw the whole of reality as subordinate to, and dependent on, a single principle, "the One." Many Christian theologians through the ages have been influenced by Neoplatonism.

the other two religions, paganism and Judaism. Let us therefore consider its relationship to Judaism in order to observe how, in this respect too, Christianity comprises everything that has attained a higher spiritual significance.

Judaism

Christianity arose on Jewish soil, and it is far more closely and directly connected with Judaism. It professes to be nothing other than spiritualized Judaism; its deepest roots originate in the soil of Old Testament religion. In paganism, Greek philosophy developed the content of moral consciousness to the stage at which Christianity could consolidate with it, whereas Judaism shares the same religious concerns with Christianity. The specific superiority of Judaism vis-à-vis all the religious forms of paganism is its pure and refined monotheistic concept of God, which from the earliest times was the essential foundation of Old Testament religion. In its consciousness of God, therefore, Christianity knows itself above all to be at one with Judaism. The God of the Old Testament is also the God of the New, and all the teaching of the Old Testament concerning the essential distinctness of God from the world, and the absolute transcendence and holiness of God's being, is also an essential part of Christian doctrine. But on the other hand the Old Testament concept of God bears such a truly national stamp that the particularism wholly connected with, and springing from, this feature placed Judaism in the most decisive contrast with Christianity. If the Old Testament God-concept was ever to be an adequate form of religious consciousness for Christianity, with its universal and absolute standpoint, this concept first had to be liberated from, and purged of, everything one-sided and deficient, that is, freed from everything just belonging to the limited perspective of Jewish theocracy, and from the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic views inherent in antiquity.

The course taken by the history of the Jewish people involved, of its own accord, various modifications in their religious views generally, and this led to a gradual broadening and spiritualizing of their religious consciousness. Yet on the other hand the fortunes of the people only led them to cling more tightly to their narrow particularism, and to their nationalistic preconceptions and legalistic tradition. A comprehensive change in their outlook first occurred when the Jews found themselves living in kingdoms founded after the death of Alexander the Great, specifically in Egypt and in a city such as Alexandria. In Alexandria, Judaism was reshaped, first of all, by becoming open to the influence of new ideas, ones originally foreign and contrary to it, ideas leading it to abandon its narrow national and political isolation.[21] The Jew-

21. See Georgii, "Die neuesten Gegensätze in Auffassung der alexandrinischen Religionsphilosophie,

ish diaspora among foreign peoples had already produced a new hybrid group that blended Judaism with Greek practices and culture. This naturally had to become very important for their general spiritual and religious development. The Hellenism that arose in this way acquired its great world-historical significance when it generated an entirely new form of consciousness, based on the Greco-Jewish philosophy that took shape in Alexandria. In such a setting the Jews were powerfully influenced by Greek thinking, and they could hardly resist the temptation to become more closely acquainted with the ideas and teachings of Greek philosophy. Such an interest could not have arisen without transcending the standpoint of pure Judaism; and the more deeply they occupied themselves with Greek philosophy, the more they had to feel the conflict with their national religious consciousness. On the one hand they could not rid themselves of their interest in the new ideas; on the other hand, their ancestral faith asserted its ancient inalienable authority. This contradiction had to be resolved one way or another.

As is well-known, they reconciled the two by the allegorical interpretation of scripture. According to the way the Jews viewed their sacred books, nothing could be true that was not already contained in them, so scripture had to be the source of the new ideas people had adopted. All that was necessary was to find the right key for the interpretation of the Old Testament writings, and then the interpreter could draw forth from the scriptures the same ideas he himself had unconsciously put into them. In this way an entirely new form of Judaism arose. People believed they were simply holding on to the old faith, whereas they had in fact substituted something entirely new for it. So the writings of the Old Testament that were said to also contain the new content became the mere form for something that far surpassed them. The distinctive character of this Alexandrian Judaism consisted in its breaking through the limits of the old Jewish particularism, in setting them aside as far as this could be done without completely abandoning the standpoint of Old Testament religion. Its teachings took on a greatly modified and generally freer and more spiritual shape. New ideas were introduced that came from a worldview completely different than that of Judaism; and in particular the Old Testament concept of God was raised far above all those elements that belonged merely to the limited sphere of Jewish theocracy. The profound influence that the Alexandrian philosophy of religion—in its highest and most elaborate form as it appears in the writings of Philo[22]—later exercised on Christian theology is the clearest proof that the mode of thought on which it was based had great affinity with the spirit of Christianity. Here, however, we need merely trace the influence of Philo's writings in the sphere where they came into the closest contact

insbesondere des jüdischen Alexandrinismus," *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie* 9 (1839) nos. 3 and 4. [*Ed.*] Ludwig Georgii (1810–96), a theology student in Tübingen, later a pastor in Württemberg.

22. [*Ed.*] Philo of Alexandria (c. 50 BC—c. AD 25) was a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher whose allegorical exegesis was important for Christian theologians but had little influence on Rabbinic Judaism.

with Christianity on its original soil. When looked at in this way, the sects of the *Therapeutae* and the *Essenes*,[23] especially the latter, are a very noteworthy phenomenon.[24]

The Therapeutae are the link between Greco-Alexandrian Judaism and the Essenes of Palestine. However, although closely related to the Egyptian Therapeutae, the Essenes are associated with the sects into which Palestinian Judaism divided. They represent the form in which the Greco-Alexandrian way of seeing things became for Palestinian Jews as well a profoundly religious view of life. This is what puts the Essenes in such a close relationship with Christianity. Of course we should hardly suppose that Christianity itself sprang from Essenism; yet it cannot be denied that the religious view of life of the Essenes is far more closely allied with the original spirit of Christianity than are all the features that marked the sectarian character of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Essenes certainly attached great value to outward practices, but they were not caught up in the rules and traditions of Pharisaic Judaism or in the external forms of Levitical temple worship. Their religious piety had a more spiritual and inward character, and a thoroughly practical orientation. Their highest goal in life was to rise above material and sensuous things, and to make all their activity the constant practice of all that could lead them to this one end.

The name "Essenes" indicates that they are "physicians of the soul." They sought to use all the means that seem suited to promote the soul's healthy and therapeutic life, and to keep one always open to the influences and revelations of the higher world. Their many features that remind us of the spirit of primitive Christianity include the prohibition of oaths, zealous practice of the duties of benevolence, and collective ownership of goods. One of their distinctive characteristics is their principle of voluntary

23. [*Ed.*] The Therapeutae were a Jewish sect that flourished in Alexandria and other parts of the diaspora of Hellenistic Judaism. The primary source concerning them is the account *De vita contemplativa* purportedly by Philo, where they are an example of contemplative life as opposed to the active (but ascetic) life of the Essenes. The Essenes were a Jewish sect that flourished from the 2nd century BC through the 1st century AD. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in what is believed to be an Essene library.

24. On the Essenes, see Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen* (n. 13), 3.2:583. Ritschl, in the *Theologische Jahrbücher* 14 (1855) 315–56, and *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche*, 2nd ed. (Bonn, 1857), 279ff., traces Essenism to an endeavor to realize the ideal of the priestly kingdom held up before the people of Israel (Exod 19:6), and to form a society of priests answering to it. Zeller opposes this view and argues (*Theologische Jahrbücher* 15 [1856] 401–33) for the commonly accepted view of a connection between Essenism and the Orphic-Pythagorean ascetic discipline and way of life that were so widely diffused in the ancient world and also had an influence on Judaism. The reasons he adduces are enough to refute Hilgenfeld's view that Essenism arose from apocalyptic prophecy (*Die jüdischen Apokalyptik in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* [Jena, 1857], 245ff.); and these reasons are likely to prevail against any similarly eccentric theories in the future. [*Ed.*] Baur is referring here to a dispute within his own school. On Zeller, see n. 13. Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89) studied at Bonn, Halle, Heidelberg, and Tübingen, where he came under the influence of Baur. But he diverged from the Tübingen School with the 2nd ed. of *Entstehung*, and developed his own theological views, influenced by Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hermann Lotze, when he taught at Bonn and later Heidelberg. For Baur's critique of this work, see Part 2, n. 74. Adolf Hilgenfeld (1823–1907) studied at Berlin and Halle and later taught New Testament at Jena. He was a member of the Tübingen School but did not study under Baur.

poverty—a view of poverty that says it is better to be poor and possess as little as possible in this world, so as to be all the richer in the goods of the world to come.[25] This is the same sense of poverty that we find in Christianity when its first followers are called "blessed" because they are poor in spirit (Matt 5:3). We may reasonably assume that Essenism also had friends and followers who did not share every one of its features. It was a widespread way of thinking and view of life practiced with various modifications and different degrees of rigor. All those who embraced the general turn of religious piety from the external world to inwardness were touched to some degree by the Essene spirit. Thus it is certain that Essenism is one of the most truly spiritual points of contact between Judaism and Christianity. In addition to these affinities in the religious life as such, there is the external factor that the Essenes had their settlements in the same Jewish outlying areas inhabited by a population also including Gentiles, places where Christianity preached the blessedness of the poor. Where else could this gospel of the poor have found such receptive hearts than among those meek of the land whose piety was in so many ways the basis from which Christianity itself arose?

Thus all these various movements, starting from such different quarters, repeatedly meet at the same point; and Christianity, when it is placed in its world-historical context, appears as the natural unity of all these elements. Various and manifold as they are, they belong to one and the same process of development. This process, which moves gradually forward and increasingly eliminates everything that simply bears the marks of what is particular and subjective, can only start out from where the origins of Christianity lie. On what ground, therefore, can we regard Christianity itself as a purely supernatural phenomenon, as an absolute miracle introduced into world history without any natural agency, and thus incapable of being grasped in any historical connection, when wherever we turn we find so many points of connection and affinity linking Christianity most intimately with the entire history of the development of humanity? It contains nothing that was not conditioned by a preceding series of causes and effects; nothing that had not been long prepared in different ways and brought forward to that stage of development at which it appears in Christianity; nothing that had not previously demanded recognition, in one form or another, as a result of rational thinking, as a need of the human heart, or as a requisite of moral consciousness. How then can it be surprising that what had so long been in different ways the goal of all rational striving, and had been forcing itself increasingly and with inner necessity on the developing consciousness of humanity as its most essential content, should have at last found its simplest, purest, and most natural expression in the form in which it appeared in Christianity?

25. See my commentary *De Ebionitarum origine et doctrina ab Essenis rependa* (Tübingen, 1831). Note the passages I have quoted there (p. 30) from Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber*, ed. Mangey, 2:457, and *De vita contemplativa*, Mangey, 2:473; and from Josephus, *de Bello Judaico*, 2.8.3. See also A. F. Dähne, *Geschichtliche Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinische Religionsphilosophie* (Halle, 1834), 1:476ff. [*Ed.*] Titus Flavius Josephus (37–c. 100 AD) was a Romano-Jewish historian, best known for his *Jewish Wars* and *Jewish Antiquities*.

Primitive Christianity and the Gospels

However, the essential nature of Christianity itself involves many different aspects, ones that cannot all be placed under the same heading. The question arises, therefore, as to whether what has been said holds good for Christianity in its whole scope and extent, or only for a specific aspect of it, and whether it applies to what we must regard as its authentic kernel and substantial center. When Christianity is considered from the viewpoint set forth above, it is of course self-evident that this means sticking to all those points of connection and affinity that tie Christianity so closely and internally with the whole preceding history of human development.

But does this aspect then constitute the original and substantial essence of Christianity? Perhaps this historical setting is just a secondary factor. Is it possible to speak of the essence and contents of Christianity as such without making the person of its founder the main object to be considered? Must we not recognize its distinctiveness in that everything that Christianity is, it is solely through the person of its founder? If so, is not understanding the essence and contents of Christianity in terms of its world-historical connection of little consequence? Is not its entire meaning and significance so conditioned by the person of its founder that historical examination and reflection can only start out from him?

These questions lead us to the sources of the gospel story (*Geschichte*), and to the distinction that the most recent critical investigations must draw among these scriptures.[26] The sources of the gospel story are the four gospels. The major question concerns the relationship of the Fourth Gospel to the first three. It is obvious that our way of understanding Christianity will be essentially different depending on whether we assume that the four gospels agree with each other throughout, or instead recognize that the differences between the Gospel of John and the three Synoptic Gospels amount to a contradiction that cannot be resolved in historical fashion.[27] If we assume

26. Compare my work, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien, ihr Verhältniss zu einander, ihren Charakter und Ursprung* (Tübingen, 1847); Köstlin, *Der Ursprung und die Composition der synoptischen Evangelien* (Stuttgart, 1853); Hilgenfeld, *Die Evangelien nach ihrer Entstehung und geschichtlichen Bedeutung* (Leipzig, 1854). [*Ed.*] On Hilgenfeld, see n. 24. On Karl Reinhard Köstlin see Part 2, n. 30.

27. The main question of concern here is not the authenticity of the Johannine Gospel. Regardless of who wrote the Gospel, whether the Apostle John or someone else, the obvious fact cannot be denied

that the four gospels can be harmonized, then the absolute significance that the Johannine Gospel assigns to the person of Jesus must be utterly determinative of how we understand the gospel story. From the fact of the incarnation of the eternal Logos, we must regard Christianity as a miracle in the strictest and most absolute sense. The human dimension vanishes into the divine, the natural into the supernatural; and, despite all the differences between the first three gospels and the Fourth Gospel, the authority of the latter must be decisive. This amounts, however, to an abandonment of the historical treatment of the gospel story, and miracle becomes so overwhelming and overriding that we completely lose any firm historical footing. As a consequence, allowing the Fourth Gospel its claim to absolute miracle means downgrading the historical credibility of the other three gospels to the point where they basically no longer serve as historical sources.

The only way to escape these difficulties is to be convinced that the Johannine Gospel is related to the other three gospels in a wholly different way than has been customarily assumed. Whether we look to its differences from the Synoptics, or to its general spirit and character, how can a gospel such as John possibly be regarded also as a purely historical portrayal, simply in the sense in which the Synoptics can be called historical? So even with all their differences as to the gospel story, we take our stand [as historians] only on the side of the Synoptics. In doing so, we gain a firmer historical foundation; whereas placing John on the same level as the Synoptics can only serve to call the whole gospel story into question, owing to the arguments justifiably favoring John over the Synoptics, or vice versa.

However, here we must further circumscribe what can count as critical historical analysis. The most recent investigations into the mutual relations of the gospels show that the Synoptics cannot all be approached in just the same way. The Gospel of Mark is so largely dependent on the other two that we cannot regard it as an independent source at all.[28] The Gospel of Luke is stamped by the Paulinism of its author, the key to

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that the gospel story in the Fourth Gospel is essentially different from that in the first three gospels. Since this historical difference must either be acknowledged or denied, we have here the parting of two roads that lead in essentially different directions, and whose divergence extends to the whole conception of church history. Whoever overlooks this divergence from a dogmatic point of view will also view the entire history of the church quite differently from one who is not invested so heavily in this principle, and who regards what is historically given from a purely historical point of view. As for the question of authorship, the more the well-known critical dilemma of the Johannine authorship of the Gospel and of the Apocalypse [the Book of Revelation] is faced (as Lücke rightly does in the second edition of his *Einleitung in die Offenbarung des Johannes* [Bonn, 1852], 659–744), the less will any sophistry be able to prevent assigning most of this evidence to the Apocalypse, when the external testimonies for the Johannine origin of the two works are impartially weighed. [*Ed.*] Baur's view is that the Book of Revelation could well have been written by the Apostle John, but not the Gospel of John, which arises from a different *Sitz im Leben* in the second century and has a distinctive worldview. Friedrich Lücke (1791–1855) was a professor of exegesis, dogmatics, and ethics in Göttingen, and a friend of Schleiermacher, to whom the latter wrote his "open letters" concerning the *Glaubenslehre*.

28. See my book, *Das Markusevangelium nach seinem Ursprung und Charakter* (Tübingen, 1851). Also my "Rückblick auf die neuesten Untersuchungen über das Markusevangelium," *Theologische*

its own distinctive portrayal. So we are thrown back on the Gospel of Matthew as the relatively most genuine and trustworthy source for the gospel story.

But if we examine more closely the contents of the Gospel of Matthew, we must distinguish two different elements in it, the content of the teaching and the purely historical narrative. The early tradition about the Apostle Matthew states that he wrote down the λόγια, the sayings and discourses of Jesus, for the Hebrews and in the Hebrew language.[29] Now the main content of our Greek Gospel of Matthew, its actual substance, consists of the discourses and sayings of Jesus, as can be seen above all from the Sermon on the Mount, which is such a meaningful beginning for his public ministry. We may justly conclude from this that the author placed his emphasis from the beginning on treating Jesus' life, and what he manifested, from this point of view. This Gospel differs greatly from the Gospel of John, where the teaching serves to reveal Jesus' personal identity itself and its supernatural standing. What the discourses in Matthew present is the human and familiar face of Jesus, his direct appeal to the moral and religious consciousness, his simple answer to the first and most pressing question as to what one's intentions must be, and what one has to do, in order to enter the kingdom of God. This is not to say that the Gospel of Matthew fails to also ascribe full significance to the person of Jesus, or that this significance is not also perceptible in the Sermon on the Mount. But in the whole of the Sermon on the Mount the personal element remains as it were in the background; it is not the person who gives the discourse its meaning, but rather the content-laden discourse that first reveals the person in his true light. The inner power of truth, directly impressed on the human heart, is Jesus' subject matter here—truth proclaimed here in its world-historical significance.

Jahrbücher 12 (1853) 54–94; and Köstlin, *Ursprung und Composition* (n. 26), 310ff. [*Ed.*] Baur endorsed the so-called Griesbach hypothesis, which accorded priority to the Gospel of Matthew, followed by Luke, and regarded Mark as dependent on both. He had many reasons for doing so, which are elaborated in his *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien* (n. 26) as well as in *Das Markusevangelium*. For a summary, see the chapter by Martin Bauspiess on Baur's view of the Synoptic Gospels in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Bauspiess, Christof Landmesser, and David Lincicum; trans. R. F. Brown and P. C. Hodgson (Oxford, 2017). Today the two-source hypothesis (Mark and Q) is favored over the Griesbach hypothesis, but the issue is still debated. On purely literary-critical grounds, Mark can be placed either first or last.

29. [*Ed.*] Papias, Hegesippus, and other church fathers bear witness to this. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.16.

The Consciousness of Primitive Christianity and Its Principle

Now what does this direct and original element, this principle of Christianity, consist in, as it is expressed in the Sermon on the Mount as well as in the parables and the whole of the teaching contained in the Gospel of Matthew? It may be summed up briefly in its main elements.

The beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:3–12) offer the deepest and most comprehensive insight into the central way of looking at things and frame of mind from which Christianity emerged. What is behind all those pronouncements—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake"—but a consciousness feeling most profoundly the pressure of finitude and all the contradictions of the present day, yet a religious consciousness that, in this feeling, is infinitely exalted above, and extends far beyond, all that is finite and limited. The most pregnant expression of this primitive Christian consciousness is the poverty of those poor in spirit, which rightly comes first in this recitation of all the blessings.[30]

As opposed to the customary interpretation, the poor spoken of here are not to be understood as merely those who feel inwardly poor and empty in the awareness of their spiritual needs. Outward, bodily poverty is an essential part of the conception of this poverty. We ought not overlook this aspect of it because the parallel passage in Luke (6:20) speaks not of the πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι (poor in spirit) of Matthew but simply of the πτωχοί (poor); and because historically the gospel found its first adherents almost exclusively among the poor. That being so, we see that, when looked at in spiritual terms, this poverty in spirit is exactly the opposite of what it appears to be outwardly. Since these poor accept their poverty readily and voluntarily, and of their own free will choose to be none other than what they are, their poverty becomes to them a sign and proof that, though outwardly poor, in themselves they are not poor. Here [on earth] they are the poor who have nothing, in order that there [in heaven]

30. See my *Kritische Untersuchungen* (n. 26), 447ff. [*Ed.*] See Matt 5:3. See also Baur's *Lectures on New Testament Theology* (n. 41), 106–8.

they are all the more certain to be the opposite of what they are here. They are the poor who have nothing and yet possess everything. They have nothing because, being poor in physical terms, they have no worldly possessions; and what they may count as their possessions in the world to come are for them simply something in the future. In having nothing, their existence and their lives are simply the longing and desire for what they do not have; but in this longing and desire they already have in themselves everything that is the object of such longing and desire. As having nothing, they have everything; their poverty is their riches; the kingdom of heaven is already now their most intimate possession because, as surely as they have nothing here, so surely they have everything there.

In this contrast of having and not having, of poverty and riches, of earth and heaven, of present and future, Christian consciousness attains its purest ideality; it is the ideal unity of all the antitheses that press upon temporal consciousness. It comprises all that the most elaborated dogmatic consciousness can include; and yet its entire meaning consists in its being the immediate unity of all antitheses. However diverse they sound, all the beatitudes are simply different expressions of the same original and fundamental outlook and sentiment of Christian consciousness. What they express is the pure feeling of the need for redemption, though as yet undeveloped, a feeling that contains in itself implicitly the antithesis of sin and grace, a feeling that already has in itself the whole reality of redemption. Because all antitheses are held together here in their unity, this original consciousness is so vigorous and rich in content. It is not only the most intensive self-consciousness but also the most wide-ranging world-consciousness. We see this from the words Jesus himself uses immediately after the beatitudes (Matt 5:13–16), when he calls his disciples "the salt of the earth," which must not lose its savor if the world is not to be deprived of the sustaining power that holds it together and preserves it from decay. Jesus says: "You are the light of the world," which must not be set "under a bushel," but must "shine before others so that they may see your good works," the works of those who let their light shine, and "give glory to your Father in heaven."

The beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount describe, in an absolute manner, the innermost self-consciousness of the Christian as something that subsists in itself (*das an sich Seiende*). Likewise, the original element of Christianity, its principle, appears in the form of the absolute moral command, both in the parts antithetical to the Pharisees and elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus insists emphatically on one having a pure heart and the right disposition (*Gesinnung*), on a morality that consists not merely of the outer deed but the inner disposition; and on an earnest and moral observance of the law that can admit of no arbitrary exception or limitation, no toleration of false hypocritical pretenses, no half-heartedness and partiality. But to what extent is Christianity setting up a new principle? Jesus declared at the outset that he had come not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them (Matt 5:17). So he seems to have taken up a purely affirmative relationship to the Old Testament. One

could say that the only difference between the teaching of Jesus and the law or the Old Testament is quantitative, not qualitative.[31] On this view no new principle is advanced; rather the moral precepts already contained in the law are extended to include the whole of the moral sphere to which they are applicable. Jesus simply includes under the law what should never have been excluded from it. He makes explicit the extension and generalization of which it is inherently capable. This interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount is supported by the fact that Jesus always just speaks about individual commandments, so as to give them a significance corresponding to their original sense in the law, or to the moral consciousness.

The sermon never enunciates a general principle applicable in all cases. Nevertheless, the individual stipulations for fulfilling the law, for what alone gives moral worth to human acts, always revert to the difference between the outer and inner aspects, between the mere deed and one's inner disposition. So we cannot but recognize in this a new principle, and one that differs essentially from the Mosaic law. What the law indeed contains, but only implicitly, now explicitly becomes the main thing and is enunciated as the principle of morality. The quantitative extension of the law becomes of itself a qualitative difference. The inner is opposed to the outer, the disposition to the deed, the spirit to the letter. This is the essential, basic principle of Christianity, and by insisting that the absolute moral value of human beings depends simply and solely on their disposition, it is an essentially new principle.

In this way the affirmative relationship Jesus adopted toward the law also includes a contrasting aspect, an antithesis to the law; and it is difficult, therefore, to understand how Jesus could say that not a letter of the law, not the least of its commandments, should be taken away (Matt 5:18). How could he say this, when the very opposite came about so soon afterwards, and the whole law was declared to be abolished?[32] How can he have affirmed the continuing validity of all the injunctions of the law, when we think, for example, of the one injunction of circumcision?[33] It is unthinkable that Jesus himself was so little aware of the principle and spirit of his teaching; and the only choice seems either to understand his words as exclusively about the law's moral content, leaving aside the ritual law, or else as being cast in this strict Jewish form only later. Jesus' stance toward the Old Testament was as affirmative as it could be, and he did not oppose the traditions of the Pharisees, and their additions to the law, to the point of demanding an open break with them. Even when he set aside their

31. See Ritschl, *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche* (Bonn, 1850), 27ff. Ritschl changed his views in the 2nd ed. (Bonn, 1857), although the position characterized above retains its value as a precise formulation, as an inherently possible way of understanding this passage. [*Ed.*] On Ritschl and this work, see n. 24.

32. [*Ed.*] See various passages in Galatians and Romans. In Rom 8:2–3 Paul says that the law of the Spirit has "set you free" from the law of sin and death, and that God has done what the law "could not do."

33. [*Ed.*] Compare what Paul says about circumcision in Rom 2:25–9, namely, that "real circumcision is a matter of the heart." Also, Gal 5:2–6.

excessive scrupulosity and countered it with inherently reasonable practices as being one's inalienable and incontrovertible right, he nevertheless recognized the Pharisees as the legitimate successors of Moses. Examples of this include Jesus' action seeming to violate the Sabbath law (Matt 12:1–14), and his defense against the Pharisees' unwarranted expectations (e.g., Matt 9:14; 15:1).[34] He said the Pharisees and the scribes sit in the chair of Moses, the seat of the teacher and legislator, and the people are required to follow their precepts, if not their example. Jesus does not reject out of hand even the most petty regulations Pharisaic scrupulosity devised for obedience to the law (Matt 23:1ff., 23).[35]

It is also true, however, that he declares the Pharisaic requirements to be heavy and intolerable burdens, and it could not have been his intention to allow this oppressive weight on the people to continue (Matt 23:3).[36] He also said, when speaking out against the Pharisees, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted" (Matt 15:13). His actions were in great measure directed to this end, for he made it one of his most important tasks to challenge the Pharisaic attitude at every opportunity he had. When we think of how antithetical the two sides really were in principle, we can understand how Jesus regarded it as unnecessary to speak in generalities or to derive specific consequences from this antithesis. Instead he could leave to the further development of the spirit of his teaching everything that it involved and that must follow from the teaching itself. That he himself was quite aware of the difference in principle, and of its necessary consequences, is evident in the saying in Matt 9:16,[37] where he not only declares that the spirit of the new teaching is incompatible with that of the old, but also intimates that, although he himself had held as far as possible to the old traditional forms, thus putting new wine into old wineskins, he had done this with the specific awareness that the new contents would soon break through the old forms.

But what all-encompassing content in the new principle breaks through the old forms? It could be nothing other than going back to the inward disposition, to everything that expresses itself as inherently existent in a person's entire consciousness, as its absolute content. Since one's disposition ought to be pure and simple, free from

34. [*Ed.*] In Matt 12:1–14 the Pharisees criticize the disciples for picking grain on the sabbath, and Jesus himself for healing on the sabbath, to which Jesus responds that "it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." Matt 9:14ff. is concerned with fasting, and 15:1ff. with purification rituals; in the latter case Jesus accuses the Pharisees of hypocrisy.

35. [*Ed.*] Jesus says, "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach." (Matt 23:2–3).

36. [*Ed.*] Jesus continues (Matt 23:4, 23). "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. . . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! . . . You have neglected the weightiest matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith."

37. [*Ed.*] Matt 9:16–17. "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

all self-seeking, and since it alone is the root from which the good can proceed as its fruit, human consciousness as such ought to be directed to the one thing that it recognizes as its absolute content. This is the fundamental idea that runs throughout the whole of the Sermon on the Mount. The sayings in it that strike us as most significant are those that forever present most directly this absolute character of Christian consciousness. As the sayings in Matt 6:19–24[38] demand, this consciousness excludes all half-heartedness and ambivalence, all detachment and diffidence. This is just the requirement in Matt 7:12,[39] to which so many have looked for a principle of Christian morality, for its foundational significance. If Christians are conscious of their absolute standpoint, they must be able to stand apart from their own ego, and to know themselves as so much one with all others that they regard everyone else as subjects equal to themselves. This is exactly what Jesus means when he says of this requirement that it is the sum and substance of the law and the prophets; that it has the same meaning as the Old Testament commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.[40] Those who love their neighbors as themselves must renounce everything egotistical, subjective, particular. Above the multiplicity of individual subjects, each of whom is the same as we are, there stands on its own the objectivity of the universal, which subsumes everything particular and subjective. This universal [principle] is the form of the action in accord with which we do unto others what we wish others would do to us. The moral good is thus what is equally right and good for all; in other words, what can be the same object of everyone's action.[41]

Here we see the distinctiveness of the Christian principle expressed once again. It looks beyond the outward, contingent, and particular, and rises to the universal, the unconditioned, to what is existent in itself (*an sich Seiende*); it locates human moral value solely in what intrinsically has absolute value and content. This same energy of consciousness, which finds the substantial essence of the moral life solely in the innermost core of the disposition, makes itself felt in the demand to lift the individual ego up to the universal ego, to the ego or self of the whole of humanity that is identical

38. [*Ed.*] "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. . . . No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

39. [*Ed.*] "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."

40. [*Ed.*] Matt 22:37–9: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

41. [*Ed.*] Baur here uses a very Kantian formulation. As he says in his *Lectures on New Testament Theology*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. Robert F. Brown (Oxford, 2016), 106: "This is a formal principle of action that essentially coincides with the Kantian imperative so to act that the maxim of your action can be the universal law of action." The will of God is the universal law of action, but also more than that, as Baur explains below in the discussion of righteousness and the kingdom of God.

with itself in all single individuals. This requirement differs from the commandment [in Matt 7:12] only in that the commandment is its simplest practical expression.

Thus the absolute content of the Christian principle finds its expression in the moral consciousness. What gives human beings their highest moral value is simply the purity of a genuinely moral disposition that rises above everything finite, particular, and purely subjective. This morality of disposition is also the definitive standard for the human being's relationship to God. What gives human beings their highest moral value also places them in an adequate relationship to God that corresponds to the idea of God. When they are viewed in terms of their relationship to God, the supreme task of the moral consciousness appears in the requirement to be perfect as God is perfect (Matt 5:48). The absolute character of the Christian principle comes to its most direct expression in this requirement. Christianity has no other standard for human perfection than the absolute standard of God's perfection. If people are perfect as God is perfect, then in this absolute perfection they stand in an adequate relationship to God, which is described by the concept of righteousness (*Gerechtigkeit*). Righteousness in this sense is the absolute condition for entering into the kingdom of God. In the context in which Jesus speaks of righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount, we can only understand righteousness as the complete fulfillment of the law—but of course only in the sense in which Jesus speaks in general terms of the continuing validity of the law. If we ask how human beings can attain this righteousness, we find it a distinctive feature of Jesus' teaching that it simply assumes the law can be fulfilled; it assumes that the will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and doing so will attain the righteousness that puts human beings in an adequate relationship to God.

It appears, however, that a forgiveness of sins on God's part is an essential element by which the shortcomings in human conduct are offset and made good, as becomes clear from the Lord's Prayer, in which the forgiveness of sins is something one asks for oneself [Matt 6:12]. Therefore, one cannot be related to God as God wills unless one is also forgiven for one's omissions and sins. Since the teaching of Jesus in principle defines the moral value of human beings as based not on external deeds but only on one's disposition, his teaching can only locate the righteousness consisting in conduct adequate to the will of God in the disposition—the disposition by which people completely cease to will on their own and surrender unconditionally to the will of God. This is worked out in the teaching about the kingdom of God,[42] which is found principally in the parables.

42. [*Ed.*] Baur understands this "kingdom" (*basileia*) not in political terms as the territory ruled by a king but in moral terms as a spiritual fellowship of those who are righteous in the eyes of God. He interprets the teaching of Jesus generally in moral and religious rather than political or eschatological categories.

The Teaching about the Kingdom of God

In the kingdom of God, where every individual is absolutely required to fulfill the will of God, what God wills becomes the common task of a specific community in which all together are to actualize within themselves the purpose established by the will of God. The more closely they are bound together, the more fully they do so. The shared or communal element that comprises the essence of religion is also the essential aspect of the kingdom of God. The Old Testament concept of theocracy is spiritualized in the teaching of Jesus, so that everything concerning the relationship of human beings to the kingdom of God is based purely on moral conditions. The moral dimension is so exclusively the condition here that there is not yet any mention of those objective means that later were thought to enable the acceptance of people into the kingdom of God or for fellowship with God. It is simply assumed that partaking of all that God's kingdom has to offer depends solely on human beings themselves, on their own volition.

How clearly and vividly this simple truth is portrayed in the parable of the sower![43] What makes a person fit for the kingdom of God is the Word, the embodiment of all teachings and precepts a person heeds to actualize the will of God. The Word is given to human beings; they can hear and understand it, but everything depends on how they receive it. What does ordinary experience show us? That, as the scattered seed cannot grow and bear fruit unless it falls on fertile soil, so the subjective capacities of human beings to receive the Word are very diverse. A few may receive the Word in a right spirit, but it is always their own fault when the Word does not produce in people what it is intrinsically capable of producing. The reason lies simply in their lack of receptivity, and they need only will to be receptive for their part. Such is the simplicity of the human relationship to God. Their entry into the kingdom of God depends only on themselves, on their own will, their own natural capability and receptivity.

For this reason, the whole relationship of human beings to the kingdom of God can only be thought of as a moral one. Hence what matters, first and foremost, is that people recognize this, and not suppose that their participation in the kingdom of God depends on anything other than what is of a purely moral nature. The first requirement made of them, therefore, is that they renounce everything on which they might

43. [*Ed.*] Matt 13:1–9; Mark 4:1–9; Luke 8:4–8.

rely as giving them merely an outward claim to the kingdom of God—that they should simply go back into themselves and, only in themselves, in their inner nature and moral consciousness, become aware of whether they are fit for the kingdom of God. If they rid themselves of everything that would put them in a merely external relationship to the kingdom of God, and face the kingdom of God with this mindset that makes no claims and looks purely within itself, then their receptivity can all the more surely consist in their being entirely receptive to what the kingdom wants to provide for them. This is the meaning of the words in which Jesus deals with all the claims the Jews, with their prevailing notions, make about the kingdom of God. In Matthew 18:3, Jesus says: "Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." To become like children is to cease wanting to be something on our own, and to remain rather in that purely natural condition that just makes us aware of our dependence and need. The less we have within ourselves what we ought to have, the more clearly we long for what only the kingdom of God can give, and the more surely we come to recognize the kingdom of God as possessing the highest, the absolute, value. This truth is evident in the parable of the pearl of great value, for which the merchant sold all that he had and bought it (Matt 13:45–6). There can be no doubt that the parables dealing with the subjective stance of human beings toward the kingdom of God, and portraying the moral conditions for one's participation in it, are, together with the Sermon on the Mount, the most genuine and original materials that have come down to us from the content of Jesus' teaching.

The Person of Jesus and the Messianic Idea

If we view everything discussed thus far as the most original and direct content of the teaching of Jesus, we see that it contains only what is clearly focused on morality, and its aim is simply to restore our focus on our own moral and religious consciousness. People only need to become aware of what their own consciousness expresses as its highest moral goal, and thus that they can actualize this goal by their own efforts. Regarded in this fashion, Christianity in its earliest elements is a purely moral religion; its highest and most distinctive aspect is that it bears a thoroughly moral character that is rooted in the moral consciousness of human beings.

Faith in the person of Jesus does not yet emerge here as the essential condition of the new relationship to God into which people should enter through Jesus—at least not in the sense that the Gospel of John makes this faith the precondition for everything else. Other elements belong to the character and content of Christianity, and the relation they have to its most original and immediate aspect may be variously described. But there can be no question that the purely moral element from which Christianity springs constantly remains its substantial foundation. Christianity has never been dislodged from this foundation without denying its true and proper character. People have always been compelled to return to this foundation whenever they went astray in excessive dogmatism from which they drew conclusions undermining the innermost basis of moral-religious life. This original moral element, its significance in principle, has remained the same despite all changes, and, as the very foundation of Christianity's truth, can also simply be regarded as Christianity's proper substance.

And yet had Christianity been nothing more than a teaching of religion and morality such as we have described, what would it have amounted to, and what would have come of it? Although it may, as such, be the sum and substance of the purest and most immediate truths given expression in moral-religious consciousness, and may have made them accessible to the general consciousness of humankind in the simplest and most popular way, this moral Christianity still lacked the form appropriate for concretely shaping religious life. A firm center was needed around which the circle of its followers could rally as a community able to gain supremacy in the world. When we consider the way in which Christianity developed, we see that its entire historical significance depends solely on the person of its founder. How soon would

all the true and meaningful teachings of Christianity have taken their place among the now mostly-forgotten sayings of the noble humanitarians and philosophic sages of antiquity, had not its teachings become words of eternal life as spoken by its founder?

But we cannot help asking what we should see as the actual foundation of Christianity's world-historical significance with regard to the person of Jesus himself. However much we emphasize the total impact of Jesus' person, we see that he must have affected the consciousness of the age from an already existing perspective, if a world-historical development could emerge from the appearing of an individual. Here then is the place where Christianity and Judaism are so closely intertwined that Christianity can only be understood in terms of its connection with Judaism. Succinctly put, if the national idea of Judaism, the messianic idea, had not been so identified with the person of Jesus that people could find in him the fulfillment of the ancient promise of the Messiah, a Messiah coming for the salvation of his people, then faith in Jesus would never have attained such a great world-historical significance. The messianic idea first gave the spiritual content of Christianity the concrete form in which it could embark on the path of its historical development. People's consciousness of Jesus was thus able to expand into a general world-consciousness, via the route of Judaism's national consciousness.

The gospel story itself supplies us with an abundance of evidence for the great national importance the messianic expectations had at the time of Jesus, not only for individual pious souls but also for the faith of the Jewish people as a whole. The greater the discrepancy between the present condition of the Jewish people and the theocratic idea basic to their entire history, the more they looked back to a past in which, at one point at least, albeit for just a short time, the theocratic ideal appeared to have been actualized.[44] But after that one time things were in fact quite different from how they ideally should have been. People expected, even more confidently, that the near or distant future would bring what the past had failed to realize. They handed down, from generation to generation, the promise given to their forefathers, and longed for its fulfillment. It is a characteristic of Judaism that, because of the continuing, ever more apparent, contradiction between idea and actuality, Judaism became principally a religion of the future with its belief in a Messiah who was still to come. Thus nothing of greater import could take place on the soil of the history of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion without being connected with the messianic idea or introduced by it. It also prescribed the course that Christianity must take. The Synoptic account of the gospel story introduces Jesus with all the miracles that were said to proclaim him to be the long-expected and now-appearing Messiah, and to be the Son of God in terms of the Jewish outlook.

From the standpoint of critical reflection we can only ask how it came to be an established fact in Jesus' consciousness that he was called to be the Messiah. Three elements in the gospel story merit special attention in this regard: the title υἱὸς τοῦ

44. [*Ed.*] The time of the monarchy from Saul to Solomon.

ανθρώπου, "Son of Man," which Jesus applies to himself; the group of narratives comprising the confession of Peter, the scene of the transfiguration, and the first announcement of his approaching death; and Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. The manner in which Jesus applies the title υἱὸς τοῦ ανθρώπου to himself is so unusual that, however we define its meaning more precisely, we must assume he intended some reference to the messianic idea when he used it.[45] Such a reference is even clearer in the aforementioned group of narratives. If we follow the gospel story up to the point where we find these narratives, which are so interrelated both externally and internally, we clearly see that Jesus' cause has reached a decisive turning point. Both he and his disciples are now expressly aware that he is the Messiah.[46] It certainly remains quite inconceivable how at that point in time this belief could still require confirmation, when the gospel story has already provided a number of such evident proofs of Jesus' messiahship. But it is of all the greater historical significance that, in a presentation such as that of the Synoptic Gospels, such information could have been convincing only in the wake of the prior established facts.

The most unambiguous demonstration of Jesus' messianic consciousness, however, is furnished by his presence in Jerusalem, even apart from the specific scene of his entry. After his extended activity in Galilee,[47] and after all his experiences of people accepting his teaching and of the opposition to it by the adversaries he met up with there, he resolved to leave Galilee and go to Judea, to appear in the capital itself at the seat of those rulers against whose prevailing system his entire activity up to now had been most decisively opposed. He can only have taken such a momentous step based on the conviction that his cause had now necessarily come to a head. People must either accept or reject his teaching and his person; the whole nation must in fact declare whether it will persist in its traditional messianic belief, inherently bearing the sensuous marks of Jewish particularism, or will acknowledge the kind of Messiah he was and had shown himself to be, in his whole life and influence. The only answer

45. It is very doubtful that this expression was applied to the messiah at the time of Jesus. The most apparent explanation is that, in contrast to the Jewish υἱὸς θεοῦ, "Son of God," and its associated images, Jesus intended to allude all the more emphatically to the genuinely human character of his appearance and vocation. [*Ed.*] Cf. Baur, "Die Bedeutung des Ausdrucks: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ανθρώπου," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 3 (1860), 274–92.

46. *Theologische Jahrbücher* 12 (1853), 77ff. [*Ed.*] Article by Baur, "Rückblick auf die neuesten Untersuchungen über das Markusevangelium," 54–94.

47. The duration of this activity is one of the unsettled points in the life of Jesus about which in its external outlines we know so little. The usual assumption of a teaching activity lasting three years is based only on the number of festival journeys mentioned by John, and this depends on the way the Johannine question is settled. The great weight of the tradition of the early church is that Jesus taught only one year. This one year, however, is the ἐνιαυτὸς κυρίου δεκτός of Isaiah 61:2 ["the year of the Lord's favor"], cf. Luke 4:19; and it is doubtless only a dogmatic assumption. It is not in itself probable that the public activity of Jesus extended over so short a period. Cf. Hilgenfeld (n. 24), *Die clementinische Recognitionen und Homilien* (Jena, 1848), 160ff.; and *Kritische Untersuchungen über die Evangelien Justin's* (Halle, 1850), 337; and my *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien* (Tübingen, 1847), 363ff.

to this question could be the one he himself had long accepted, consciously and with complete self-assurance.

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

What seemed to be on its surface just ruin and annihilation was never turned into such a decisive victory, and breakthrough to life, as this happened in the death of Jesus. Before now there had still been the possibility that belief in the Messiah might be the bond linking Jesus with the people, that is, with the people acknowledging him to be the one supposed to come to fulfill the nation's expectation, and the contradiction between his messianic idea and the Jewish messianic faith still being amicably resolved. But his death caused a complete breach between Jesus and Judaism. A death like his made it impossible for Jews, as long as they remained Jews, to believe in him as their Messiah. To believe in him as the Messiah after such a death would have of course required eliminating from the Jews' notion of the Messiah everything inherently of a Jewish and fleshly nature. A Messiah whose death denied everything Jews expected of their messiah—a messiah who died to life in the flesh—was no longer a Χριστὸς κατὰ σάρκα, an "Anointed One according to the flesh" (2 Cor 5:16), as the Messiah of the Jewish national faith had been. Even to the most faithful adherent of Jesus' cause, what could a Messiah be who had himself fallen prey to death? Only two alternatives were possible: either with his death faith in him must be extinguished; or this faith, if it were firm and strong enough, must necessarily break through even the bonds of death and press on from death to life.

Only the miracle of the resurrection could dispel these doubts that seemingly had to cast faith itself out into the eternal night of death. What the resurrection is in itself lies outside the sphere of historical investigation. Historical reflection has to stick just to the fact that, for the faith of the disciples, the resurrection of Jesus had become the most secure and most incontestable certainty. Christianity first attained the firm ground of its historical development in this faith. For history the necessary presupposition of all that follows is not so much the fact of the resurrection of Jesus itself as it is the belief in the resurrection. We may regard the resurrection as a miracle occurring objectively, or as a subjective psychological miracle. But if we assume the possibility of such a subjective miracle, no psychological analysis can penetrate the inner, mental process by which, in the consciousness of the disciples, their disbelief upon the death of Jesus became belief in his resurrection. In any case it is forever only through the consciousness of the disciples that we have any knowledge of what was, for them, the

object of their faith. We can say no more than that, whatever the means that produced this faith, the resurrection became a fact of their consciousness, and had for them all the reality of a historical fact.

However great the significance of this fact, and however much it had to make the disciples who believed in Jesus break decisively with Judaism, we still must ask: What would this belief in the risen one have amounted to if he had just passed from death to life and risen from earth to heaven, so as to return, after a short interval, the same as he had been before, now just as one seated on the clouds of heaven and clothed with all the power and majesty that belonged to the Son of Man, so as to realize at last what his early and violent death had left unaccomplished? The initial followers thought that the Lord's second coming, which was to be the consummation of the whole world, would occur soon after his departure from the earth.[48] So their faith in the risen one was simply a new and stronger form of the old messianic hope. The only difference between the believing disciples and their unbelieving compatriots was that, to Jesus' followers, the Messiah was one who had already come, and to the latter he was one who was still to come. Had this latter view prevailed, the Christian faith would have become the faith of a Jewish sect in which the entire future of Christianity would have been placed in question. What was it then that first invested the belief in the risen one with a significance enabling the principle that had entered the world in Christianity to develop into the great and imposing network of phenomena that shaped its historical existence? What enabled it to overcome all the restrictive limits on its all-inclusive universalism?

48. Cf. Matt 24:29; Acts 3:19–21.