

Baur's Preface to the First Edition

THE LIFE AND INFLUENCE of the Apostle Paul, his position and importance in the history of early Christianity, have for quite a number of years been topics of special interest for me. I have mainly focused my critical research on the Pauline epistles and the Book of Acts. The first fruits of these studies appeared in 1831, in the *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* (1831), no. 4 [pp. 61–206], as the treatise “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christenthums in der ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom.” In this treatise I first established the contention I have since adhered to and further supported, namely that the harmonious relation usually assumed to have existed between the Apostle Paul, and the Jewish Christians led by the older apostles, is incompatible with the historical evidence; that the antithesis between the two factions to be distinguished here took a deeper hold on the circumstances in the earliest church than has been recognized heretofore. Soon thereafter August Neander published *Die Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung der christlichen Kirche durch die Apostel* (Berlin, 1832), in which he considered a number of points in my treatise, which had made its own contribution to a better understanding of several aspects of the earliest period of church history. I then produced further results on the path thus opened up, which I published in my 1835 book on the Pastoral Epistles, and in my treatise on Romans¹ in the *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* (1836), no. 3 [pp. 59–178].

For a long time I have intended to republish these two treatises from the *Tübinger Zeitschrift*, by linking them with further investigations into these same topics, so as to form a whole. This is what I have done in the present volume, and it has become expanded to the point where it can present itself as a monograph on the Apostle Paul. This makes it a special treatment of a moment in the early history of the development of Christianity, in which one of the most important and most difficult tasks it has to cope with is the great issue of our own day: what Christianity originally was and what it essentially is.

I can assume that my own method of historical criticism is well-known. People have even done me the ambiguous honor of calling me the founder and master of

1. [Ed.] “Ueber Zweck und Veranlassung des Römerbriefs und die damit zusammenhängenden Verhältnisse der römischen Gemeinde.”

a new critical school. Even if I wanted to take this as seriously intended, I can only protest against it. I would not know what I should understand previous criticism to be if I had to consider the principles I follow as new ones. What people object to cannot be that the principles are new, but instead only the results to which their application leads, those very results because of which people usually describe the criticism employed by the new critical school as negative and destructive criticism. But what do these dangerous-sounding epithets amount to? What would criticism have been if it ought not to have also been negative and destructive? The issue can only be about what one is negating and destroying, and what right one has to do that. The issue is whether this criticism, which people suppose can be described as just negative and destructive, is not also in turn a very conservative criticism; whether it is of course conservative because it surely just rests on the simple principle that each element is allowed and given its due consideration, but to be sure only its due consideration.

I am aware of this necessary limitation the conservative principle imposes, and in any event I have no interest in acknowledging indefensible claims, or in defending and supporting traditional opinions that prove to be unfounded and untrue, by overlooking their contradictions when they are clearly evident. There are distinctions and differences that must be grasped with precision if one wants to see the issue in a fundamental way. As much as possible gets blurred and smoothed over so that everything on the deceptive surface level appears smooth and even. One sticks to the half-hearted thinking that first finds the shallow, spiritless theology of the day so comfortable, in order to rest easy in peaceful enjoyment of possessing the truth. This is where the serious work of research and thinking must begin, a labor that of course can so often destroy long-cherished illusions that have become just charming customs.

If this negative and destructive path has brought me results that conflict with the usual conceptions, then show me that these conclusions are false. They should be examined and refuted if one can do so. One should negate and destroy them by the power of reasons and demonstrations if one feels up to the task! However, by attaching an ambiguous label to a scientific procedure, so as to have recourse to malicious insinuations, vacuous pronouncements, and superficial, tendentious publications,²

2. An example is: W. O. Dietlein, *Das Urchristenthum, eine Beleuchtung der von der Schule des Dr. v. Baur in Tübingen über das apostolische Zeitalter aufgestellten Vermuthungen* (Halle, 1845). It is such a baldly partisan work that I can simply mention it here. Nowhere in the course of my investigation itself has he presented anything substantial to which I would have been able to respond. It appeared at a time that was not in its favor, since my views about early Christianity are to be judged simply by the present, more comprehensive work than they were by my earlier treatises on the Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Romans, and the Pastoral Epistles. (Herr Dietlein limits himself to these treatises, since he seems to want, first of all, to reserve judgment about my treatise on the Gospel of John with his prudent silence.) One assumes that things will go no better for Herr Dietlein's book than they did for Herr Heinrich Bötcher's book, *Baur's historische Kritik in ihrer Consequenz* (Braunschweig, 1840–41) (dedicated to the theological faculty of the Georgia Augusta [University of Göttingen] as negative criticism of merely negative criticism), which appeared a few years ago but is already long forgotten. What value have publications that are not only pure products of a partisan spirit and announce themselves as such, but also are so tedious and long-winded and written without

or, what is far simpler and easier, recourse to sheer ignorance, is, in scientific matters, a procedure that accomplishes nothing. It has been some time since the appearance of my treatise on the Gospel of John and its becoming accessible to the public in the *Theologische Jahrbücher*.³ It has indeed met with various indications of consternation, disapproval, and disagreement, as well as individual petty, superficial replies. But how long do we have to wait for a serious and fundamental evaluation of it, one fitting the importance of the topic, not merely sticking to side issues but instead addressing the subject matter itself, one the opponents can hardly deny is needed?

If everything instructive were not vulnerable to the senselessness that so often apparently makes it its business to misunderstand the views of others, then I perhaps would have hoped, after the publication of this book, that much of it, although not judged to be a fair treatment of the topic, would nevertheless be correctly understood. But in any event I myself am satisfied with the historical view of earliest Christianity that my own independent research and studies have provided. I have developed and set this view forth publicly here in its broader scope and contexts. There may be disagreements here and there about individual points, but partisan interests must sooner or later be silenced when one looks at the plausibility and necessity of the larger picture to which the individual points belong. Trusting in it, I let this book stand for itself.

This book engages in a remarkable way with another critical text in which the Apostle Paul plays a major role. Although its author stands on the same ground as I do, in recognizing the antitheses within early Christianity, he poses the issue in a way directly opposite to my interpretation. I mean here a book I first read with great interest after already concluding my own book. It is: *Die Evangelien, ihr Geist, ihre Verfasser und ihr Verhältniss zu einander. Ein Beitrag zur Lösung der kritischen Fragen über die Entstehung derselben* (Leipzig, 1845).⁴ It is as though the author would have fully intended to confront the direction taken by my book when, on p. 437, he says this about the Apostle Paul.

even any polemical vigor, so they can interest no one, not even those they primarily affect?

3. [Ed.] "Ueber die Composition und den Charakter des johanneischen Evangeliums," *Theologische Jahrbücher* 3 (1844), 1–191, 397–475, 615–700. In this article Baur demonstrates that the Gospel of John cannot be harmonized with the other gospels, and that its theological agenda prevents it from serving as a reliable source of information about the life and ministry of Jesus. This article was incorporated into his book, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien, ihr Verhältniss zu einander, ihren Charakter und Ursprung* (Tübingen, 1847).

4. [Ed.] The book was published anonymously, but according to the Harvard and Tübingen online catalogues, the author is Christian Adolf Hasert (1795–1864), a professor of theology on the Protestant faculty at Greifswald. (The *Deutsche Biographie* confirms that his first name is Christian, not Christof as reported in the Harvard catalogue.) Although the book is about the gospels, there are references to Paul in it, including the remarks quoted by Baur below. Baur's response seems to allow more credence to the book than it deserves, since it soon disappeared from discussion. It provides an occasion for Baur to defend the right to free critical scholarship in the Protestant Church.

He is the Saul who persecuted the second David [i.e., Jesus] just like King Saul, who bore the same name and sprang from the same lineage, had persecuted the first David. He is the wolf (λύκος) in the Gospel of Luke.⁵ He has broken into the Lord's sheep-pen with an impure lust for power and violent fervor, and has wrenched so much out of its original shape and pure beauty, and adapted it according to his own sensibilities, not the Lord's. My challenge is to it, that is to every distortion he has presented as the Lord's true and original teaching. Paulinism is not true Christianity, without exception. Those who found the only true salvation in his Christianity, and have firmly wedded themselves to it, may rise up in his defense. I fearlessly speak against them. Yet not I, but Christ himself and his ill-treated twelve apostles, and the truth, accuse him of violent fervor and a high-handed way of construing the gospel.

My book is the answer to these new accusations made against the Apostle Paul. Thus two very divergent and mutually opposed views about the great Apostle to the Gentiles are appearing at the same time. I cannot concede the many assumptions from which this book I refer to proceeds. I cannot discern the many individual personal connections that are glimpsed everywhere here as though with the eyes of a visionary. I cannot regard it as the business of criticism to look into such suppositions, when criticism does not want to adopt too subjective a character. But I do fully agree with this ingenious author that, when criticism just wishes to take a sharper look, it can discover endlessly much in the gospel story that people have not previously thought about at all, something that lets us see more deeply than before, into the mysterious obscurity of these circumstances. One may just venture to continue to investigate and allow the Protestant Church its inalienable right to be restricted by no false concerns, at least not by fear of the truth; that is, its right to freely investigate the scriptures and beyond the scriptures. Whoever does not acknowledge this right—and indeed acknowledge it truly and honestly in practice, not merely in an abstract, theoretical, general way that of course no one dares to deny—and in acknowledging it also abandons the foolish prejudice that striving for truth and searching for truth could be to the detriment of the church, is no friend of the Protestant Church. (This search should simply be one's honest intention, but belief in this honesty should not have been so difficult as soon as one does not want to see the challenge of presumptive truth as an essential denial of what is truth in itself.) Whoever in the interest of the church thinks he must at least hold back the advance of the spirit (as if it were possible to do that!) is no friend and supporter of the Protestant Church. He is instead its enemy and destroyer and, at best, knows not what he does.

5. [Ed.] Luke 10:3: "See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves."