FERDINAND CHRISTIAN BAUR: 
JUDAISM AS AN HISTORICAL ANTIPODE OF CHRISTIANITY

Although the scope and date of Ferdinand Christian Baur’s more direct involvement with Hegelian ideas is disputed, Baur undoubtedly operated with an idealistic dialectical model of history. He did this in a similar vein to Hegel, regardless of whether it was initially the result of direct inspiration from Schelling or from Hegel himself.¹ In any case, with Baur as the founder of what is known as the (New) Tübingen school,² idealistic dialectical history in Baur’s specific conception became the vogue in the discussion of early Christian history, conditioning much of it for the rest of the century. Hence—and because the structures of his thought remain in New Testament research tradition—Baur stands as one of the founding fathers of New Testament exegesis.³ The study of


² This concept is by no means unambiguous, see Ulrich Köpf, “Die theologischen Tübingen Schulen”, in Historisch-kritische Geschichtsbetrachtung Ferdinand Christian Baur und seine Schülers. 8. Blauberger Symposium, ed. Ulrich Köpf (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1994). The Tübingen school here is to be distinguished from the old Tübingen school, as well as from the Catholic one, all with very different views, Köpf, 15. Baur himself was trained in the old Tübingen school.

Morgan, Semler, Herder, Schleiermacher and de Wette indicates that Baur may not have produced the original sketches of Jews and Judaism in early Christianity.\(^4\) It is well known that Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre* led to a breakthrough in Baur’s thinking—“without Schleiermacher, Baur’s entire research is unthinkable”.\(^5\) However, Baur combined this and other influences into a new synthesis, through his extensive writing but also through his influence on students and followers, constructing a building in which generations of scholars would dwell.

**A Dialectical Movement from Paganism and Judaism to Early Christianity**

Baur’s is a history of great sweeps, and since he is first and foremost an historian, the place of Christianity in world history is of interest to him. Throughout his production runs a coherent narrative about the dialectical movement from two religious worlds on the verge of dissolution, and how this is followed by a new synthesis, Christianity. Baur notes that the rise of Christianity and the apex of the Roman Empire coincide in time:

> It is a genuinely world-historical viewpoint that at the same time as the Roman Empire united all the peoples of that time into a universal monarchy, the religion, too, began its course through the world, dissolving (aufhob) all religious particularism into universalism.\(^6\)

This describes a moment in time when the national, the particular and the individual unite into two great bodies, the Roman Empire

