

and to trace the endeavour to fathom philosophically and systematise the Christian doctrine, from the beginning which was made by the Gnostics, through the patristic and scholastic philosophies of the middle ages down to the theosophy of Jacob Böhme, and from him to Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Hegel. It was one of the first and most important elaborations of Hegel's grand conception of historical development. The same idea was followed out in a series of works—down to the year 1860—on the historical development of separate Christian dogmas and ultimately of the Christian Church itself. “The characteristic feature in these works is that the history of ecclesiastical and especially dogmatic development is considered as a necessary mental process which is dialectically carried on; that, however rich the details may be, no single feature has as such any value, but only if it is placed in the whole and considered as a moment in the process of the general idea which governs everything. Thus the philosophical treatment of history is here taken seriously and based on the foundation of so much learned research and acute combination that the ordinary reproach of abstract constructions which is rightly advanced against so many of Hegel's disciples is silenced in the presence of such an author and such labours. Nevertheless, though Baur is favourably distinguished among other members of Hegel's school by his genuine erudition, it cannot

only be found “in the idea of philosophy of religion itself, as it belongs to the essence of such philosophy again and again to enter upon the same path which had been trodden

by the ancient Gnostics” (*loc. cit.*, p. 9), a view which Baur had already explained in his inaugural dissertation of the year 1827.