

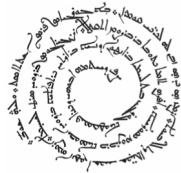
## God and Man in History

The influence of Jakob Böhme and G. W. F. Hegel on Ferdinand Christian Baur's Philosophical Understanding of Religion as Gnosis

Corneliu C. Simuț

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# God and Man in History



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Hegel on Ferdinand Christian Baur's  
Philosophical Understanding of Religion as  
Gnosis

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To Professor Botond Gaál, PhD, DSc, Dr. Habil.  
from the Reformed Theological University of Debrecen,  
*amicus certus in re academica*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table of Contents.....  | vii |
| Introduction .....  | 1   |
| Preliminary Considerations.....   | 1   |
| A General View of Baur's Methodology.....   | 4   |
| God as Spirit in Hegel.....   | 10  |
| The Fundamentals of Jakob Böhme's Theosophy.....  | 13  |
| Chapter 1. Gnosis and History: Baur's View<br>of Religion as Gnosis Based on the Idea of History..... | 21  |
| Understanding Gnosis as System.....   | 21  |
| Understanding Gnosis as History.....  | 25  |
| Understanding Gnosis as Church History.....   | 31  |
| Chapter 2. God and Man: Baur's View of Religion as Gnosis<br>Under Hegel's Influence.....             | 49  |
| From God's Immanence to Man's Mortality<br>through the Death of Christ.....                           | 49  |
| Christ as the Human God and the Divine Man.....   | 71  |
| Chapter 3. God: Baur's View of Religion as Gnosis<br>Based on Böhme's View of the Divine Being.....   | 91  |
| The Essence of the Divine Being.....  | 91  |
| The Trinitarian God.....  | 97  |
| The Features of the Divine Being.....   | 108 |
| The Trinitarian God between Spirit and Nature.....  | 123 |
| God as a Human Idea between the Antiquity of Moses<br>and the Novelty of Christ.....                  | 131 |
| Chapter 4. Man: View of Religion as Gnosis<br>Based on Böhme's Anthropology.....                      | 141 |
| The Image of Adam: Dualistic, Material,<br>and Androgynous.....                                       | 141 |
| The Image of Man: Dualistic, Material, and Feminine.....  | 149 |
| God's Virgin as Adam: The Finitude of Humanity.....   | 159 |
| Adam between Spirituality and Materiality.....  | 166 |
| God's Virgin as Christ: The Ideal of Humanity.....  | 175 |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| The Idea of Incarnation:                               |     |
| From God's Virgin to the Virgin Mary.....              | 184 |
| God's Virgin as the Dualistic Image of Man:            |     |
| between Maleness and Femaleness.....                   | 192 |
| God's Virgin as the Dualistic Image of Man:            |     |
| between Spirituality and Materiality.....              | 204 |
| Conclusion.....  | 215 |
| No Religion without Philosophy .....                   | 215 |
| Baur's Hegelian "Christian Religious Philosophy" ..... | 219 |
| The Devil as the Principle of Evil:                    |     |
| The Key to Understanding Spirituality .....            | 226 |
| Between Gnosticism and Docetism .....                  | 236 |
| Personal Remarks .....                                 | 244 |
| Bibliography .....                                     | 251 |
| Articles .....   | 251 |
| Book Chapters .....                                    | 260 |
| Books.....   | 282 |

# INTRODUCTION

## PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Ferdinand Christian Baur's thought about religion focuses on the idea of Gnosis in close connection with the notion of history, but he does not favor an approach which can be labeled "traditional;" on the contrary, he prefers a different path, which is more inclined towards what was then perceived as a "new" understanding of religion and draws quite heavily on Hegel's philosophy, promoting the idea that history is the realm where God and man exist and work together. This means that pre-Hegelian theology is "old" and, in order for it to be properly understood, one needs to appeal to Hegel's philosophy, which is exactly what Baur does when delving into pre-Hegelian theology and, in this respect, the thought of Jakob Böhme—which Baur must have noticed in his readings of Hegel—seems to serve this purpose rather well. In writing about Gnosis with reference to Böhme, Baur seems anything but creative. What he does is not to produce his own perspective on Gnosis by reading Böhme, even if this appears to have been his initial intention. The result of his going through Böhme is a rather extensive list of quotations from Böhme with some brief comments made in a key which Baur seems to have already decided upon. In other words, Baur's understanding of Böhme and his connections with Gnosticism look as if they were predetermined by his reading of Hegel, although Baur found in Böhme distinct Gnostic elements (dualism emerging as the most important) which provided him with material for his own perspective on the issue. This is why Baur's theological image of Böhme emerges as distinctively Hegelian, with a picture of traditional doctrines painted in modern colors. Thus, the relatively traditional Böhme, who—despite his esotericism—envisages theology in particular and reality in general within the confines of an ontological realism (God is ontologically real, and so is Lucifer, angels, and the whole of creation), ends up being

promoted in Baur as a thinker for whom the beings of God, Lucifer, and angels are ontologically non-realistic (God, Lucifer, and the angels are principles or concepts, not beings *per se*). This is, according to Baur, the true meaning of religion which he draws from his Hegelian perspective on Böhme, namely that dualism in general (and especially the dualism of God and man) presents one single reality, that of the human being living in the materiality of history, which should be explained spiritually based on the classical concepts of Christian theology understood philosophically—in a non-realistic or non-ontological manner—as concepts or principles revealing man's most essential features: good, evil, spirituality, and reason.

Methodologically, the book is based on the detailed analysis of a handful of primary sources, among which the most important is Baur's *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religionsphilosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* [*The Christian Gnosis or the Christian Religious Philosophy in Its Historical Development*] (Tübingen: Verlag Oslander, 1835). This makes constant references to Böhme's *Aurora oder Morgenröte im Aufgang* [*Aurora or Dawn Breaking*] (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1832, originally published in 1612) and *De Tribus Principiis oder Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens* [*Description of the Three Principles of the Divine Being*] (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1841, originally published in 1619). Concerning Hegel's influence on Baur's religious and philosophical thought, the work selected for further consideration was Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion. Nebst einer Schrift über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes, erster und zweiter Teil* [*Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. With a Work about the Proof of God's Being, first and second volumes*] (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1840). Other works pertaining to each of the three most prolific authors could have been taken in consideration but, for the sake of concision and because of evident practical limitations, only those listed above were eventually chosen for the purposes of this book.

Therefore, there is, according to Baur, a direct connection between Böhme and Hegel, as the vast number of secondary sources testifies only to strengthen Baur's point that the link between the two is based on the idea of dualism, the most important component of which is the relationship between God and man as it unfolds throughout history. In pointing to so many texts from Böhme and Hegel, Baur not only confirms the intellectual liaison between

them, but also places himself in the same line by investigating the same ideas in his own, specific manner. The numerous books which can be read on the subject, and especially on how Böhme, Hegel, and Baur are connected in so many ways beyond the dualism of God and man in history, are simply impressive, but because they are so many their listing here would not serve any practical purpose. Some of them, however, were particularly important for this study and they deserve special mentioning for having inspired as well as contributed to the development of its main argument. The most important sources for the investigation which lies at the foundation of this research are Cyril O'Regan's "trilogy:" *The Heterodox Hegel* (1994), *Gnostic Return in Modernity* (2001), and *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme's Haunted Narrative* (2002), followed by Stefan Rossbach's *Gnostic Wars: The Cold War in the Context of a History of Western Spirituality* (1999), Kristen J. Grimstad's *The Modern Revival of Gnosticism and Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus* (2002), Glenn A. Magee's *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (2008), and Gary Dorrien's *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology* (2012), mainly because they all reveal, one way or another, the connection between Böhme, Hegel, and Baur. The distinctive feature which differentiates this study from the impressive list above is the attempt to prove the continuity between Böhme, Hegel, and Baur by showing that Böhme and Hegel influenced Baur in such a way that his understanding of religion through the lens of philosophy was based on the notion of Gnosis and especially on the dualism between God and man as embedded in history.

Based on these observations, I organized the book in four chapters, which deal with Baur's understanding of Gnosis in close connection with the reality of religion. Gnosis may well fall under the influence of philosophy in the sense that it must be understood philosophically, but it is a phenomenon that overlaps with religion. This is why, in Baur, the reading of Gnosis is an enterprise which pertains to the philosophy of religion as it emerges through the unfolding of history itself. Thus, the first chapter deals with Baur's view of Gnosis and how it should be understood through the lenses of history (both as idea and complexity of events). The second chapter investigates the influence of Hegel's philosophy on Baur's understanding of Gnosis; to be sure, Hegel forces Baur to put together traditionally opposing concepts, such as God and man, which are placed at the same level through the downgrading

of God's traditional immanence to the point that it coincides with man's mortality. The instrument which helps Baur balance the two in a Hegelian way is his view of Christ's death, the archetype which blends not only spiritual concepts like divinity and humanity, but also God's traditional (immaterial/immortal) transcendence and man's modern awareness of his own materiality and mortality.

Merging traditionally opposing ideas is the "modern" method, which Baur inherits from Hegel and then applies to his reading of Böhme, as seen in the third and fourth chapters. At the end of Baur's Hegelian investigation of Böhme's theology, it will become clear that the key to a correct—as well as modern—understanding of religion is to accept the whole of religion in general and Christian theology in particular as a manifestation of Gnosis. In other words, religion must be read philosophically to the point that traditional concepts such as God and the devil are eventually embraced in modern terms as principles or ideas, not as ontologically real beings. The true essence of reality is no longer the realm of God and the angels as ontologically real beings (which is the traditional view of religion); the only true reality, according to Baur, is the reality of man in the natural realm of nature.

The modern way of understanding religion as proposed by Baur following Hegel (and based on the former's reading of Böhme through the spectacles of the latter) starts with man's existence in the world and deconstructs the traditional concepts of God and angels by canceling their ontological status in order to turn them into features of man's earthly, contingent, and transient spirituality. This is to say that God is no longer God; in modernity, God is man and—at the same time—man is God. Divinity is not a realm which exists as objective reality; it is only a feature of man's subjectivity, of his innermost psychology. In Baur, this is the very marrow of Gnosis: accepting religious realities as concepts devised by man's intellectual capacities. Religion is not a matter of faith as in traditional theology; it is an issue which speaks of humanity based on man's ability to use his reason in order to enlighten the mysteries of his existence in the material world, as well as the shadows of his own spiritual interiority.

### **A GENERAL VIEW OF BAUR'S METHODOLOGY**

Baur begins his approach of Gnosis by explaining the reasons which constitute the foundations of his intellectual enterprise. He

realizes that his work is a new study in the field, so he feels compelled to present some motivations which triggered his interest in writing a new book in a domain—Gnosis as part of religion in general<sup>1</sup>—that had been delved into long before his time. Therefore, he discloses that his new study investigates an old system, which also sheds some light on how Baur understands the Gnosis itself. The Gnosis is a system which was searched in detail by others before Baur, so his work lines up with other “famous works” which had been produced in the field of religion (but pointing to Gnosis) with “great success” and contributed to the advance of the knowledge concerning this particular subject. This is why he realistically admits that his own book may seem “a bit superfluous” given the impressive number of works which had tackled the subject of Gnosis before him. Without naming these works or any of his predecessors who wrote them, Baur emphasizes that he could not separate himself from the subject of Gnosis despite his acute awareness of the numerous productions which were already available in the very same field.<sup>2</sup> Although the works written before him secured a continuous line of successful writings, he nevertheless decided that he had to produce a new contribution, which eventually proved to be the result of many years of intense study. At the same time, Baur points out that his work not only stays in the line of his predecessors, but also contains insights which should be judged by competent experts.<sup>3</sup>

Baur also explains that in his previous historical studies as well as in his present efforts, he has attempted to comprehend the subject of Gnosis not only according to its external appearance, but also and above all according to its inner connections. Thus he was

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<sup>1</sup> In Baur, Gnosis is not only part of religion, but also of philosophy. In fact, Gnosis is a philosophy which investigates religion. See, for details, Stephan Haar, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 23.

<sup>2</sup> For influences in Baur’s thought, see Robert Morgan, “Ferdinand Christian Baur,” 261–291, in Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Patrick Sherry, and Steven T. Katz (eds), *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, Volume 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 261–262.

<sup>3</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, iii.

concerned with a thorough investigation of the inner movements of the concept of Gnosis, which also led him to consider the totality of its historical developments.<sup>4</sup> Baur is interested in having the concept of Gnosis researched both dogmatically (or synchronically) from the perspective of its inner meanings and historically (or diachronically) based on its evolution in time. His main preoccupation is to offer a clear and broad analysis of the concept of Gnosis and of its various forms (many of which developed “genetically” from the concept itself). This is why Baur set a task for himself, which he sees as absolutely necessary, namely that the results of his studies in the field of Gnosis should at least be able to satisfy those who share a similar interest in the subject. It is clear that, for Baur, the idea of Gnosis is a complex reality which not only developed throughout history,<sup>5</sup> but also presents within itself an intellectual component that allows it to develop into a wide range of various main forms.<sup>6</sup> Baur is convinced that all these must be adequately researched so that the final outcome is profitable for researchers. Gnosis is, in Baur, an intellectual concept whose complexity is therefore given not only by its intricate historical development, but also by its inner capacity to breed other intellectual forms.<sup>7</sup>

Baur’s approach of Gnosis is briefly sketched by means of a very short presentation of his work. The first phase of his approach is to offer some details about the two aspects which he had already presented, namely the dogmatic (or synchronic) and the historical (or diachronic) analyses of Gnosis. At the same time and in addi-

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<sup>4</sup> For Baur’s view of history, especially that of early Christianity, see Walther Schmithals, “The *Corpus Paulinum* and Gnosis,” 107–124, in H. B. Logan and J. M. Wedderburn (eds), *The New Testament and Gnosis. Essays in Honour of Robert McL. Wilson* (London: T&T Clark, 1983, reprinted 2004), 108–109.

<sup>5</sup> The historical development of religious ideas is crucial for Baur and reflects his dependence on Hegel. See Robert Morgan, “New Testament Theology since Bultmann,” 472–480, in *Expository Times* 119.10 (2008): 473.

<sup>6</sup> See, for details, Johannes van Oort (ed.), *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica. Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 3–4.

<sup>7</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, iv.

tion to doing a rather long research of the concept and origin of Gnosis as an intellectual movement,<sup>8</sup> Baur also presents a classification of the various forms of Gnosis coupled with an evaluation of all of them in general. He then confesses that he soon realized that the analysis of Gnosis cannot be done properly based exclusively on the representation of the system of Gnosis; this representation must be seen in connection with the idea of “main form” as applied to the idea of Gnosis. In other words, if the reality of Gnosis is to be understood, then we must have a representation or an understanding of Gnosis based on the fact that it exists as a totality of main forms, which is another indication of Baur’s preoccupation for historiography.<sup>9</sup> Baur discloses that he took into account previous representations of Gnosis, namely previous works on the concept, and even if their influence is undoubtedly significant, he nevertheless chose to distance himself from them in more than just a few respects. The notion of “main form,” which he applies to the concept of Gnosis, is important to Baur’s analysis because the study of Gnosis cannot be understood effectively without it. This is primarily because the idea of “main form” accounts for the various manifestations of Gnosis throughout history. He considers that the idea of “main form” had not been brought into academic discussions before him, so Baur is keen to explain that his enterprise does contain this extension later in his work, which deals with the various main forms of Gnosis.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For details about Gnosticism as an intellectual movement, see also Peter Lampe, *Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (London: Continuum, 2003), 294–295.

<sup>9</sup> Consequently, Baur was very concerned with the origins of Gnosis in early Christianity which was, for him, an extremely complex conglomerate of historical and dogmatic phenomena. For further information, see Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, reprinted 2005), 114.

<sup>10</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, iv–v. He identifies three main forms of Gnosis: the first combines Christianity with Judaism and Heathenism, the second presents Christianity as opposed to Judaism and Heathenism, and the third features Christianity and Judaism in opposition to Heathenism.



In the presentation of his work, Baur makes it clear that he followed a particular approach which must be carefully explained in order for the book to be properly understood. Thus, he shows as poignantly as he can that his work contains a certain presentation of the system of Gnosis which is indeed extensive but also has a particularity that should not be ignored, namely that his book focuses on crucial issues related to Gnosis. He explains that he did originally intend his book to be complete in the sense that he wanted to include less significant modifications of the system of Gnosis in his presentation.<sup>11</sup> Baur, however, confesses that he was unable to take such a task upon himself. This is to say that, in his presentation, he could not follow the great “trunk” of the system of Gnosis with all its various ramifications. What he eventually did was to concentrate exclusively on those main forms of Gnosis which were particularly important. He points out that he chose to investigate only the main forms of Gnosis which represented significant moments of its very conception. In other words, he presented only those main forms of Gnosis which proved to have been historically crucial for the development of the idea of Gnosis. Baur therefore investigated Gnosticism by using a methodology that can be described as a history of ideas.<sup>12</sup> He insists that his work should be taken as a whole from this particular point of view, which was directed towards the identification of significant historical developments of the Gnostic system. Baur’s work is therefore both selective and systematic since he identifies that the system of Gnosis has not only a great common trunk, but also numerous ramifications which he explored by choosing only the most important of them.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For the importance of Gnosis seen as a system, see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis. The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 31.

<sup>12</sup> See also Stefan Rossbach, “The Cold War, the Decline of the West, and the Purpose of ‘Containment’: The Political Philosophy of George F. Kennan,” 144–184, in Glenn Hughes, Stephan A. McKnight, and Geoffrey L. Price (eds), *Politics, Order, and History. Essays on the Work of Eric Voegelin* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 144.

<sup>13</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, v.

As a result, Baur decided to exclude from his presentation all aspects which did not align with the main purpose of his book and which are not directly connected with what he had envisioned with his analysis of the Gnostic system. He explains that all elements which depart from the scope of his work were intentionally left aside. For instance, he deliberately omits questions with the potential to become mired in details and lost to lengthy discussions. The question he had in mind was whether the beginnings of Gnosis can be traced back to the New Testament, an indication that Gnosis cannot be detached from the field of religion.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the issue of attempting to see elements of Gnosis in the New Testament is a subject which, according to Baur, is very important but does not follow the line of his present work. In order to address the question of seeing elements of Gnosis in the New Testament, one needs to take a different path from that which he intended for his work. This is why Baur considered the question of studying the possible Gnostic elements in the New Testament as unfitting for his book. As far as he is concerned, the matter of whether or not Gnosticism is an issue for the documents of the New Testament must be dealt with in a separate treatise which should take a critical approach to the pastoral epistles of the apostle Paul.<sup>15</sup> Consequent-

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<sup>14</sup> For details about how Baur viewed the New Testament, see E. Earle Ellis, *History and Interpretation in New Testament Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 43.

<sup>15</sup> For further information about Baur's understanding of the works of the Apostle Paul, see, for instance, E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and His Opponents: Trends in Research," 264–298, in Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, Part One: New Testament (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 271ff; Jerry L. Sumney, "Christ Died for Us': Interpretation of Jesus' Death as a Central Element of the Identity of the Earliest Church," 148–172, in Kathy, Ehrensperger (ed.), *Reading Paul in Context. Explorations in Identity Formation. Essays in Honour of William S. Campbell* (London: Continuum, 2010), 150–152; Robert S. Dutch, *Education and Community in Graeco-Roman Context* (London: Continuum, 2005), 18; and Mogens Müller, "Kierkegaard and Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Biblical Scholarship," 285–328, in Lee C. Barrett and Jon Stewart (ed.), *Kierkegaard and the Bible. Tome 2: The New Testament*, Volume 1: Kierkegaard

ly, it is crucial to note here that although somewhat detached from the issue of Gnosis, Baur accepts a critical methodology with regard to the study of the New Testament and especially the Pauline epistles,<sup>16</sup> which discloses his high regard for history—a view of history that he applies to religion<sup>17</sup> and, in doing so, it produces a perspective on God seen as spirit.

### GOD AS SPIRIT IN HEGEL

When it comes to reading the significance and meaning of religion as Gnosis, Baur takes a Hegelian approach in discussing the content of religion and how it should be understood from the perspective of the notion of God. As God is the essence of religion, it is instrumental to set some ground rules for the understanding of the concept, as well as the way it is applied to the notion of religion in general.<sup>18</sup> The most important aspect which Baur takes from Hegel in his attempt to read religion but also to decipher the meaning of the idea of God is the dualism of subjectivity and objectivity.<sup>19</sup> The subject of religion is God and, while God is merely an idea, not a concrete being which has an objective existence beyond the reality of the material world, one should first attempt to set the framework for a proper understanding of God.<sup>20</sup> In his capacity of subject of religion, therefore, God must be understood in terms of the

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Research: Sources, Reception, and Resources (Farham: Ashgate, 2010), 307–308.

<sup>16</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, v–vi.

<sup>17</sup> One example of Baur's critical approach to Paul's epistles is his denial of Paul's paternity of the *Epistle to Philippians*; see Angela Standhartinger, "Join in Imitating Me' (Philippians 3:17). Towards an Interpretation of Philippians 3," 417–435, in *New Testament Studies* 54.3 (2008): 418.

<sup>18</sup> See also William Desmond, *Hegel's God. A Counterfeit Double?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 67.

<sup>19</sup> See Georg W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion. Nebst einer Schrift über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*, erster Teil (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1840), 52, 292.

<sup>20</sup> Compare Raymond K. Williamson, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), 264.

unity between subjectivity and objectivity, because this is precisely what the spirit is in reality.<sup>21</sup> God cannot be detached from the notion of the spirit and religion is the spiritual understanding of God as spirit;<sup>22</sup> in this respect, the unity between objectivity and subjectivity is the very essence of divinity and spirituality. God is an idea which conveys another critically important idea, namely that of truth.<sup>23</sup> When God is understood in terms of truth, one must accept that God is the eternal and divine idea which describes the spirit as a living reality that has the capacity to present itself in opposition with itself. In other words, God is the spirit whose most fundamental characteristic is the idea of otherness or alterity. God can be described not only as spirit but also as a spirit which is totally opposed to itself, but his alterity or otherness does not cancel his identity. Consequently, on the one hand, God is the universality and the eternity of the idea of the spirit, while on the other hand, he is also the opposition, the evil, the naturalness and the unsuitability of humanity. It is clear then that God must be understood in human terms; God represents the height of human spirituality which is characterized both by goodness and evil, as well as eternity and finitude.<sup>24</sup> The spirit must be able to differentiate within itself, so it must be able to understand itself in terms of goodness and evil, finitude and infinitude because this is its most essential fea-

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<sup>21</sup> See Quentin Lauer, SJ, *Hegel's Concept of God* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982), 102–103.

<sup>22</sup> In Baur, the connection between God and the spirit takes the form of Christ, as one can see in the earliest manifestations of Christianity, which was heavily influenced by Greek thought. See, for details, Bogdan Bucur, “‘Early Christian Binitarianism’: From Religious Phenomenon to Polemical Insult to Scholarly Concept,” 102–120, in *Modern Theology* 27.1 (2011): 105.

<sup>23</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion. Nebst einer Schrift über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*, zweiter Teil (Berlin: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1840), 207.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Henry S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder. A Commentary on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 689.

ture.<sup>25</sup> When the spirit loses its capacity to see itself in terms of this fundamental differentiation, it also loses its vitality and its spiritual judgment—in a word, he ceases to be the spirit. The spirit must find a way to reconcile the substantial difference between his identity and his otherness, and in this respect it has to embrace not only his goodness and truthfulness, but also its evil and decay. This is why the spirit includes not only the idea of divine infinitude, but also the reality of man's finitude, weakness, and evil. The positive and the negative, life and death, spirituality and materiality are all compulsory facets of the idea of God seen as spirit.<sup>26</sup>

Following the period of the Reformation, which for Baur was a time of predominant and evident manifestations of the old Gnosis as well as the very end of the old philosophy of religion (which includes Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation), there was no obvious interest in the issue of gnosis to the point the gnosis itself became ignored in what he calls "the new philosophy of religion." Nevertheless, as time elapsed, he insists that a new religious manifestation could be seen as sharing an important deal of interests related to the issue of gnosis, mainly in early modern Protestantism.<sup>27</sup> He admits that this new manifestation was commonly regarded as lying outside the realm of scientific investigation, but Baur finds it odd not to include it in his assessment of Christian Gnosis. He then points out that this particular and new religious manifestation is Jakob Böhme's theosophy,<sup>28</sup> which was

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<sup>25</sup> See also Shaun Gallagher, *Hegel, History, and Interpretation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 13–14.

<sup>26</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 687–688.

<sup>27</sup> See O'Regan, *Gnostic Return in Modernity*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> An excellent study of Böhme is Paola Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme. Theosophy, Hagiography, Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999). Baur is convinced that Böhme's theosophy cannot be treated properly without mentioning its influence on Schelling's *philosopheme* or philosophical doctrine. See, for more information, Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life. Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2002), 119–120.

followed a couple of centuries later by Hegel's philosophy of religion.<sup>29</sup>

### THE FUNDAMENTALS OF JAKOB BÖHME'S THEOSOPHY

While Baur makes no reference to Jakob Böhme's biography<sup>30</sup> as he seems to be interested in his writings and ideas, he nevertheless makes it plainly clear from the start that he has a problem with the way Böhme chose to write down his ideas.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Baur points out that it is very difficult to take Böhme's ideas and organize them in a comprehensive and encompassing system of thought,<sup>32</sup> since Böhme's books are nothing but an unending repetition and variation of

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<sup>29</sup> See, for details about the connection between Baur, Hegel, and Böhme, Gary Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit. The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 245.

<sup>30</sup> Jakob Böhme (1575–1624) is known primarily as one of the most original theologians of Lutheranism, with evident proneness to mysticism. Although he had no formal education, Böhme was indeed a person of great intellect, which is apparent in his numerous writings, produced over a rather short time. His ideas revolve around concepts such as quality, *sophia*, and freedom, all of which share a common interest in nature and natural theology. His theology seems to be pantheistic and naturalistic, in the sense that he attempts to connect the physical reality of nature with the metaphysical reality of the spirit. This is why, in his thought, *sophia* is presented as the feminine side or aspect of the spirit, an idea which—alongside many others—had him involved in a long series of controversies with Lutheran pastors. His most famous books include *Aurora oder Morgenröte im Aufgang* (1612), *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens* (1619), *Von der Menschwerdung Jesus Christi* (1620), *Der Weg zu Christo* (1621), *Von Christi Testamenten* (1623), and *Betrachtung göttlicher Offenbarung* (1624).

<sup>31</sup> For details about Böhme, his ideas, and the context of his life, see Evan Fales, "Can Science Explain Mysticism?," 213–227, in *Religious Studies* 35.2 (1999): 216–218.

<sup>32</sup> For a quick glance at Böhme's thoughts and life, see Jerome Gellman, "On a Sociological Challenge to the Veridicality of Religious Experience," 235–251, in *Religious Studies* 34.3 (1998): 238–240.

the same main ideas.<sup>33</sup> This is why it seems to be very difficult for Baur to consider Böhme's fragmentary presentation of his ideas in a way which resembles the methodical development of a system. As far as Baur is concerned, Böhme's book suffers from an "imperfection of form,"<sup>34</sup> but his main ideas have the same meaning throughout his works regardless of the form in which they are presented. Böhme's ideas, however, seem to carry with them a certain analogy to the old gnosis, which Baur finds quite surprising at times.<sup>35</sup>

Before he proceeds with an analysis of the theological corpus produced by Böhme, Baur makes a very brief presentation of his main ideas.<sup>36</sup> Böhme appears to have been convinced that Protes-

<sup>33</sup> Baur was a little obsessed with the idea of "system" mainly because it explained what he meant by the "new philosophy" (in his case, the "new philosophy of religion"), which was presented before him by Hegel and—to take history back to the beginning of modern rationalism—Descartes as a system that radically reconsidered the idea of God. See, for details, Peggy Cosmann, *Protestantische Neuzeitkonstruktion. Zur Geschichte des Subjektivitätsbegriffs im 19. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen und Neumann, 1999), 155.

<sup>34</sup> Having been influenced by Hegel, Baur found it difficult to deal with Böhme's rather mystical approach to religion. See Siegfried Wollgast, *Philosophie in Deutschland zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung, 1550–1650*, zweite Auflage (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 671.

<sup>35</sup> For details about the connection between Böhme and ancient Gnosticism, see O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 157.

<sup>36</sup> Baur is convinced that the main and purest tenets of the mystical-theological system proposed by Böhme can be found in his *Aurora oder Morgenröte im Aufgang* as well as in his *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens* (or *De tribus principijs*), which were taken from the 1730 edition of Böhme's works entitled *Theosophia revelata. Das ist alle göttliche Schriften des Gottseligen und Hoherleuchteten Deutschen Theosophi Jacob Böhmens*. Edited by Johann Georg Gichtel (Amsterdam or Leipzig, 1730). The very title of *Aurora oder Morgenröte im Aufgang* explains—quite clearly as a matter of fact—that Böhme believed in a time when people would have a pure, illuminated, and profound knowledge of God, and this time precedes the final reconciliation (or *apokatastasis*) of all things. For the purposes of this work, the following editions of Böhme's works were used: *Jakob Böhme's*

tantism lacked a certain theological aspect when it began as a religious movement in the early sixteenth century. Thus, Böhme's conviction resides in his wish that—in addition to its specifically profound and internal understanding of the opposition between sin and salvation, as the two fundamental principles around which its entire religious life revolved—Protestantism should have also included within its dogmatic system a certain mystical element.<sup>37</sup> Böhme admits that, at the very beginning of Protestantism, there were some religious manifestations which confirmed the presence of such a mysticism, but later on they were suppressed<sup>38</sup> because of the “principle of the letter” and the “principle of external authority.”<sup>39</sup> Baur notes that Böhme believed that, because of these two principles, the mystical element within early Protestantism was pushed back until the opposition between sin and salvation encouraged it again and helped it come forward in a more powerful

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*Sämtliche Werke*, herausgegeben von K. W. Schiebler, zweiter Band (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1832), which contains Böhme's *Aurora*, and *Jakob Böhme's Sämtliche Werke*, herausgegeben von K. W. Schiebler, dritter Band (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1841), which contains Böhme's *Die drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*. (a slight alteration of the original 1730 title *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*).

<sup>37</sup> For more information about Böhme's mysticism, which influenced even the Catholic Franz von Baader, a staunch critic of Hegel's thought, see Yudit K. Greenberg (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions*, Volume 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 484.

<sup>38</sup> Later Protestantism continued to be influenced by Böhme's thought; one example is German Pietism. See Geoffrey Rowell, “The Marquis de Marsay: A Quietist in ‘Philadelphia’,” 61–77, in *Church History. Studies in Christianity and Culture* 41.1 (1972): 62. Böhme's theology was, in a sense, pietistic since it focused on inner individual experiences, rather than on external radical manifestations. See Donald G. Dawe, “The Divinity of the Holy Spirit,” 19–31, in *Interpretation* 33.1 (1979): 30.

<sup>39</sup> Böhme was actively involved in launching stern criticism against the Protestantism of his day by engaging in various polemical debates. See Andrew Weeks, *Boehme. An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 162.



way.<sup>40</sup> Protestantism has a natural-mystical side,<sup>41</sup> and when this is taken into account—Baur believes—one can easily notice that, based on its original fundamental feeling, Protestantism allows for the construction of a theosophical system,<sup>42</sup> such as that proposed by Böhme.<sup>43</sup> This is because beneath the various connections between the complex doctrines of Protestantism that can be considered, one can discern a religious system which Luther “so warmly recommended as German theology”<sup>44</sup> and wherein the seeds of

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<sup>40</sup> More information about Böhme dogmatics, and especially about his anthropology and soteriology, in G. L. Mosse, “Changes in Religious Thought,” 169–201, in J. P. Cooper (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History*, Volume 4: The Decline of Spain and the Thirty Years War, 1609–48/59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, reprinted 1989), 174.

<sup>41</sup> Mysticism is generally associated with heterodox beliefs, and Böhme’s “unorthodox” teachings seem to have influenced people with equally non-traditional perspectives on life. For instance, Böhme’s works are very likely to have influenced William Cowherd (1762–1816), an English clergyman who is among the first theoreticians of vegetarianism. See Samantha J. Calvert, “A Taste of Eden: Modern Christianity and Vegetarianism,” 461–481, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58.3 (2007): 463. For other people influenced by Böhme in England, especially in the field of natural theology, see Scott Mandelbrote, “The Use of Natural Theology in Seventeenth-Century England,” 451–480, in *Science in Context* 20.3 (2007): 453.

<sup>42</sup> For details about Protestantism as theosophy, see René Guénon, *Theosophy. History of a Pseudo-Religion*, trans. Alvin Moore, Jr., Cecil Bethell, Hubert and Rohini Schiff (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004), 267–272.

<sup>43</sup> See also Arthur Versluis, *Theosophia. Hidden Dimensions of Christianity* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1994), 59.

<sup>44</sup> For details about the manifold connections between medieval mysticism, early Protestantism, and Böhme’s theosophical mysticism, see Abraham Friesen, “Medieval Heretics or Forerunners of the Reformation: The Protestant Rewriting of the History of Medieval Heresy,” 165–190, in Alberto Ferreiro (ed.), *The Devil, Heresy, and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages. Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 182–183.

Böhme's ideas, as well as their specific echo, can also be clearly discerned.<sup>45</sup>

The foundation on which Böhme builds his entire theological and philosophical system lies on the idea that there is a difference, or a duality of principles, within the very being of God.<sup>46</sup> This duality, which is presupposed to exist within the being or the essence of God himself, blends traditional theology with philosophical ideas which go beyond the orthodox boundaries of theology into philosophical thinking,<sup>47</sup> and this is why Böhme's thought is defined as theosophy.<sup>48</sup> Baur is convinced that this duality of principles existing in the essence of God's being is in fact a manifestation of dualism—or, in more precise terms, of philosophical or even religious-philosophical dualism—which powerfully resembles Gnosticism<sup>49</sup> and Manichaeism.<sup>50</sup> To be sure, as far as Baur is concerned, the

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<sup>45</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 557–558.

<sup>46</sup> See Brian J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought. Behmenism and Its Development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, reprinted 2002), 96, and William Turner, *History of Philosophy*, Volume 1 (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 1903, reprinted 2007), 392.

<sup>47</sup> Böhme's dualism left a powerful imprint on Ludwig Feuerbach's view of religion, which—like Baur's approach—made full use of Hegel's philosophy for the purposes of explaining the essentials of religion. See Marx W. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, reprinted 1982), 75.

<sup>48</sup> For details about the roots of theosophy and why it emerged in the midst of dogmatic orthodoxy, see Arthur Versluis, "Hierophanic Nature," 193–204, Barry McDonald (ed.), *Seeing God Everywhere. Essays on Nature and the Sacred* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2003), 197.

<sup>49</sup> More information about how theosophy—even Böhme's—should be connected with Gnosticism (by parallelism, not through historical continuity) can be found in Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom's Children. A Christian Esoteric Tradition* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 231–232.

<sup>50</sup> Compare W. C. van Unnik, "The Relevance of the Study of Gnosticism" (Address, February 27, 1964, Union Theological Seminary), 224–237 in J. Reiling, G. Mussies, P. W. van der Horst, and L. W. Nijendijk

entire worldview proposed by both Gnosticism and Manichaeism was defined by this particular dualism. There is, however, an important distinction between Böhme's dualism, on the one hand, and the dualism of the Gnostics and Manichaeists, on the other. Therefore, in Böhme, there is no postulation of a principle which acts differently and independently from the being of God. In other words, beside the essence and the being of God himself, Böhme does not accept another distinct and independent being, with or without godlike attributes. This is why, as Baur clearly notices, Böhme places this duality of principles, as well as of powers and energies, in the very being of God himself.<sup>51</sup> This is to say that God himself—his very being and essence—is to be conceived in dualistic terms; God himself is a dualistic being. According to Böhme—and Baur stresses this quite poignantly—the very being of God contains an opposition between darkness and light, grimness and gentleness. This particular duality which, according to Böhme, resides in the very being of God himself, is the basis on which the whole antagonism of life seems to be built. Consequently, the opposition between nature and spirit, and then the contradiction between good and evil,<sup>52</sup> they all emerge from the dualism Böhme presupposed that exists in the very being of God and then reflects itself in the reality of natural life.<sup>53</sup> The duality of principles identified by Böhme as pertaining to the very being of God includes ideas such as origin, gloom, bitterness, and fierceness—as well as anything else that can be named in connection with them—which is an indication of their innermost relationship with God. The idea of God, which Böhme depicts by means of this duality, may not be the notion of God in the highest sense of the word as presented in

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(eds), *Sparsa Collecta. The Collected Works of W. C. van Unnik*, Part 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 235.

<sup>51</sup> See John Hunt, *An Essay on Pantheism* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866), 181.

<sup>52</sup> Compare George L. Mosse, "Puritan Radicalism and the Enlightenment," 424–439, in *Church History* 29.4 (1960): 434.

<sup>53</sup> See also Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 492, n. 42.

traditional theology.<sup>54</sup> What is clear, however, seems to be the fact that all these features belong to God in such a way that they constitute the very prerequisite or condition of God's being and essence.<sup>55</sup> In other words, good and evil, light and darkness, gentleness and grimness, they all form what Böhme seems to believe is the very being of God or—to use Baur's own rendering following Böhme's words—the constitution of divine being.<sup>56</sup> Thus, when Böhme speaks of God, it is correct to say that one can rightly make reference to the divine being, rather than to the God of the old philosophy of religion. This is an indication that, while in the old philosophy of religion the idea of God was prominent, in the new philosophy of religion one should use the phrase “divine being” instead, as seems to be the case in Böhme<sup>57</sup> and Baur.<sup>58</sup> This is not to say that one cannot speak of God when making theology within the boundaries of the new philosophy of religion; nevertheless, it is better—for the sake of clarity—to be aware of the distinction between the old philosophy of religion and the new philosophy of religion as based on the difference between the idea of God and

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<sup>54</sup> For a view which denies the orthodoxy of Böhme's thought, see Otto A. Piper, “Mysticism and the Christian Experience,” 156–169, in *Theology Today* 10.2 (1953): 162.

<sup>55</sup> For more details about the essence of God's being in Böhme, see Thomas Schipflinger, *Sophia-Maria. A Holistic Vision of Creation* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser Books, 1998), 193–194.

<sup>56</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 558.

<sup>57</sup> In Böhme, the idea of divine being is closely related to the reality of creation. See Alan P. R. Gregory, “Jacob Boehme,” 214–215, in George T. Kurian and James D. Smith III (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Christian Literature*, Volume 1: Genres and Types/Biographies A-G (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press/Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 215, and Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, 24–25.

<sup>58</sup> In Baur, the divine being tends to be seen through the lens of Christ's humanity as humanity. See John Fiske, *The Unseen World and Other Essays* (Teddington: Echo Library, 2009), 67.

the notion of divine being, especially when Baur speaks about religion seen through the idea of Gnosis.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Vorlesungen über die christliche Dogmengeschichte. Das Dogma der Alten Kirche*, erster Abschnitt: von der apostolischen Zeit bis zur Synode in Nicäa (Leipzig: Fues Verlag, 1865), 168–169.

# CHAPTER 1. GNOSIS AND HISTORY: BAUR'S VIEW OF RELIGION AS GNOSIS BASED ON THE IDEA OF HISTORY

## UNDERSTANDING GNOSIS AS SYSTEM

At this point, Baur explains the perspective from which he approaches the Gnosis itself. What he does in fact is not go into the documents of the New Testament or critically engage with the pastoral letters of the apostle Paul, but rather takes a more historical view of the Gnostic phenomenon, again in close connection with religion.<sup>1</sup> He explains that in doing so, he resorts to his previous work on the Manichaeans,<sup>2</sup> in which he investigated the polemics with Gnostics.<sup>3</sup> At this point, in mentioning the Gnostics, Baur points out that they were both from within the church and from outside it.<sup>4</sup> But this is not enough; in order for the Gnosis to be studied properly, a closer look must be taken. Gnosis cannot be understood in all its significance and accuracy if seen only as an

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<sup>1</sup> An excellent study of Gnosticism is Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism." An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Das manichäische Religionsystem* (Tübingen: Verlag Osiander, 1831).

<sup>3</sup> For details about how Baur connected Manichaeans and Gnostics, namely through the idea of the suffering Jesus (*Jesus patibilis*), see Roy A. Harrisville, *Fracture. The Cross as Irreconcilable in the Language and Thought of the Biblical Writers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 34.

<sup>4</sup> Baur is therefore a pro-Gnostic church historian. See also Kirsten, J. Grimstad, *The Modern Revival of Gnosticism and Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus* (Rochester, NY: Camden House/Boydell & Brewer, 2002), 47.

individual, self-standing, religious system. Having established that, Baur shows that the proper understanding of Gnosis should have two distinct stages. First, a presentation of the Gnostic system and second, a historical investigation of all the movements which it caused. It is only then that an accurate picture of Gnosis will be possible to draft. Gnosis cannot be understood as a historical event in the proper sense of the word if studied exclusively within its own individual sphere. What Baur wants to establish here is the necessity to step outside the Gnostic system itself; thus, the dogmatic approach of Gnosis must be completed by a historical understanding thereof.<sup>5</sup>

According to Baur, Gnosis should not be understood as an individual or particular system. On the contrary, Gnosis is a conglomerate of historical moments, which are not only necessary, but also mutually conditional. The totality of these moments define the concept of Gnosis.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the very concept of Gnosis contains within itself some sort of internal movement which is active and tends to take the concept away from itself into other spheres. Thus, the inner movement of the concept of Gnosis stretches out over other spheres, especially in the sphere of polemics, which—Baur explains—rises against the notion of Gnosis and is eventually only a continuation of its original movement. This particular movement, so characteristic of the concept of Gnosis, must be done in order to understand the Gnosis from a historical perspective. One can easily see that, in Baur, the concept of Gnosis is considered a system, which can be correctly understood if not taken exclusively on its own dogmatic tenets, but also within a historical line of events which were caused by it or were connected to it. Within and due to the reality of the historical context in which the Gnostic system existed, the Gnosis itself encountered an equally

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<sup>5</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, vi.

<sup>6</sup> See also Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted. Heresy and the European Imagination between the World Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 28.

important reality, namely that of polemics.<sup>7</sup> For Baur, the value of polemics deserves to be appreciated, and not scorned as something deficient. At the same time, polemics is not only valuable for Gnosis, but also a necessary agency for the very concept itself. In other words, the Gnostic system and Gnosis in general cannot adequately be comprehended without the acceptance of polemics as well as the consideration of the historical context wherein the Gnosis developed as a series of movements.<sup>8</sup>

Baur is convinced that all the issues related to the research of Gnosis as well as all the answers which were directed to find solutions for the questions raised by the Gnostic system must lead to a certain interest. This interest, for Baur, cannot be denied and should have at least a number of features, such as: first, it should be intrinsic to the issue of Gnosis itself; second, it should last through time, and third, it should extend into the past. This is to say that the Gnosis is not only an issue of the past, which developed in the past and therefore has no connection whatsoever with the present. In Baur, this is just impossible. The Gnostic system may well have developed in the past, but its relevance and interest for the present should never fade away; in a word, Gnosticism has the capacity to return over and over again as history unfolds through the passing of time.<sup>9</sup> Research should take this into account and find a way to be interested in the things of the past, or in the Gnosis itself, in order to discover their relevance for the present. In a parenthesis, Baur complains that he wished he had had more help to produce his investigation on Gnosis—and especially his chapter on Ploti-

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<sup>7</sup> For details about the polemical nature of Gnosis and Gnosticism, see Cyril O'Regan, *Gnostic Return in Modernity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 25.

<sup>8</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, vi.

<sup>9</sup> This is what Cyril O'Regan calls "the Gnostic Return," a theme which applies to Modernity in Baur's case. See O'Regan's entire book *Gnostic Return in Modernity* and also his *Gnostic Apocalypse. Jacob Boehme's Haunted Narrative* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 10–11.



nus<sup>10</sup>—but sadly that was not the case. He wanted to be able to use aids but he experienced difficulties because the writings of famous German philologists were little edited and reproduced, so they were exhausted long before him. This, however, was not the only problem; Baur also shows that intellectual productions from abroad in the field of Gnosis were lacking despite their newness and necessity.<sup>11</sup>

So far, Baur presented his understanding of Gnosis primarily as a dogmatic system which should be understood historically as a totality of manifestations that influenced each other to a certain extent.<sup>12</sup> So, there was both a dogmatic (synchronic) aspect involved and a historical (diachronic) dimension attached to it. The next step for Baur is to establish that his positions about Gnosis, or rather his analysis of the concept of Gnosis, which he had displayed so far, must take a step further. This is why he shows that the limits of his understanding of the concept of the old Gnosis must be expanded. Baur does this by equating the concept of Gnosis with the notion of the philosophy of religion, and in doing so, he points out that this is the right concept of Gnosis, namely that which is understood as philosophy of religion.<sup>13</sup> There is no other way for Baur as he himself underlines that this is the very concept of Gnosis which he accepts, because there is no other notion of Gnosis for him. All studies of Gnosis must become integrated within this new philosophy of religion as well as in what Baur calls

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<sup>10</sup> An aspect which supports the connection between Plotinus and Gnosticism is the notion of will as applied to the divine being (seen as a hypostasis or a person). See, for details, Albrecht Dihle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982), 212, n. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, vii.

<sup>12</sup> See also Hans Schwarz, *Theology in Global Context. The Last Two Hundred Years* (Grand Rapids, IL: Eerdmans, 2005), 37.

<sup>13</sup> Baur is followed in this conviction by Adolf von Harnack, who also viewed Gnosticism as a philosophy of religion. See, for details, in Wendy E. Helleman, "Epilogue," in Wendy E. Helleman (ed.), *Hellenization Revisited. Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 497.

“its new and so meaningful phenomenon.” He also points out that, on the other hand, the new philosophy of religion is important for a correct perspective on the inner organism of the Gnostic system and for a deep appreciation of it. This is only possible due to the new philosophy of religion, as Baur is very pleased to confess,<sup>14</sup> which emerges from the study of Gnosis as a manifestation of complex religious and philosophical ideas throughout history.

### UNDERSTANDING GNOSIS AS HISTORY

The history of Gnosis must be tackled, according to Baur, in a distinctive way. To be more precise, he explains that the history of Gnosis must be grounded on the various historical moments of its development but, at the same time, it must take a step forward.<sup>15</sup> This particular step forward is crucial for Baur as he points out that the subject of his studies in the field of Gnosis must see it. When it comes to identifying the step forward, Baur shows that it consists of turning the history of Gnosis into a history of the philosophy of religion. In other words, there should be progress from the history of Gnosis to the history of the philosophy of religion, and consequently he hopes that his studies in the subject of Gnosis will bear evidence to this progression from a history of Gnosis to a history of religious philosophy. As a matter of fact, Baur is not expressing here only the need to see Gnosis throughout its historical development; so he is not primarily interested in perceiving Gnosis as history. What he has in mind goes beyond Gnosis as history to investigating Gnosis as religious philosophy.<sup>16</sup> He then stresses that he wants his book on Gnosis to be approached from this particular

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<sup>14</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, vii-viii.

<sup>15</sup> For the historical side of Gnosis in Baur, see Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation*, Volume 4: From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 277.

<sup>16</sup> For a helpful discussion of the relationship between Gnosticism, philosophy, and history, see Carsten Colpe, “The Challenge of Gnostic Thought for Philosophy, Alchemy, and Literature,” in 32–56, in Bentley Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism. Proceedings of the Conference at Yale, 1978*, Volume 1: The School of Valentinus (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 34–35.

angle of the philosophy of religion. Thus, he ideally wishes to see his work on Gnosis treated as an investigation in the philosophy of religion, as the title itself indicates. On the other hand, however, Baur expressly underlines that, in his view, a history of the philosophy of religion or, more precisely, a history of Gnosis seen as a religious philosophy is not possible (even if that was totally lacking before him), without going back in history to see the various manifestations of Gnosis, which “the old Gnosis” produced based on its prolific foundations.<sup>17</sup>

Baur’s intention is to present the concept of Gnosis in all its dimensions, and it is from this holistic perspective that Gnosis should be appropriated. The concept of Gnosis, therefore, must be taken together with the notion of religious philosophy. Such an identification between Gnosis and religious philosophy, in the sense that Gnosis should be understood as a religious philosophy, creates the perspective of a series of similar manifestations, so that the system of Gnosis can be apprehended based on these historical appearances. Baur underlines that the notion of Gnosis can be properly assessed through the intrinsic connections of its development/historical moments, and it is through them that the concept itself moves forward.<sup>18</sup> In such a connection of various historical manifestations of Gnosis, each manifestation itself depends on another, and in doing so, they all create a broad historical perspective on the concept of Gnosis. Baur, however, makes it clear that such an extensive historical overview of Gnosis is leastwise attempted in his work and in order for it to be relevant to the Gnosis itself, it must become a history of religious philosophy.<sup>19</sup> Once the history of Gnosis as a series of interdependent manifestations is seen as a

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<sup>17</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, viii.

<sup>18</sup> See also Christoph Marksches, *Gnosis. An Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 11.

<sup>19</sup> If religion is to be seen as philosophy which develops historically, then one aspect that illustrates the development of Gnosticism is the early church’s progression “from Jesus through Paul to the Hellenistic church of the second century,” when the emergence of Gnosticism appears to be evident. See James Carleton Paget, “Schweitzer and Paul,” 223–256, in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33.3 (2011): 230.

history of philosophy, then the Gnosis can be adequately understood.<sup>20</sup> Within this particular concept of Gnosis, old aspects are understood through new insights, while new considerations appear to be mediated through old ideas. To be sure, in Baur, Gnosis should be seen both historically and philosophically, a perspective in which history seems to be connected with old ideas, while philosophy appears as tied to new concepts. What is important to see though in Baur's construct has to do with the fact that ancientness and novelty are blended in the Gnostic system which must be studied from the perspective of history as well as from that of religious philosophy.<sup>21</sup>

Mutuality between ancientness and novelty is crucial for Baur because this seems to be the only way through which Gnosis can be truly and properly comprehended. He explains that the light of either must fall over the other and, in doing so, both ancientness and novelty will explain each other, so our understanding of Gnosis will be enriched from both perspectives. At the same time, he seems convinced that this mutuality will eventually build a foundational relationship between religious philosophy and theology based on a correct perspective and appreciation of what this new religious philosophy had become. Baur explains that this new philosophy of religion, which he himself accepted for his own work, includes the doctrine of faith promoted by Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768–1834).<sup>22</sup> Schleiermacher's teaching is very important for Baur because he admits that his work had to find its place within Schleiermacher's system, so Baur did adjust his own perspective based on what Schleiermacher had to say about religion and doctrine.<sup>23</sup> Baur sees his work as a renewal or a fresh and criti-

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<sup>20</sup> See also Jerry Day, *Voegelin, Schelling, and the Philosophy of Historical Existence* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 31–32.

<sup>21</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, viii.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche* (Berlin: Reimer, 1822).

<sup>23</sup> For more details about Schleiermacher's influence on Baur, see Johannes Zachhuber, "Theologie auf historisch-religionsphilosophischer Grundlage. Ernst Troeltschs Schleiermacherinterpretation," 193–208, in Andreas Arnds, Ulrich Barth, und Wilhelm Gräb (Hrsg.), *Christentum—*

cal attempt to investigate Schleiermacher's thought, to which he had long wanted to return, although his perspective on Schleiermacher had already been consolidated. He did return to Schleiermacher, however, in order to study his correspondence. It is important to notice that, for Baur, the investigation of Schleiermacher's corpus of letters was paramount because it discloses the sphere of influence that the reputed theologian had exerted for religious studies.<sup>24</sup> Schleiermacher's influence though, Baur explains, must be questioned starting from a new critical analysis which starts with the new philosophy of religion.<sup>25</sup>

Schleiermacher's influence on Baur appears to be crucial, since Baur mentions that his new analysis of the most important elements of Schleiermacher's doctrine of faith coincides with another investigation, which was performed by Heinrich J. T. Schmid (1799–1836), a Heidelberg professor and philosopher, who seems to have produced a quite distinct analysis of Schleiermacher since Baur felt it appropriate to mention it so poignantly.<sup>26</sup> Schmid's book on Schleiermacher was also published in 1835, like Baur's work, and it looks like Baur was impressed by it despite its author's young age.<sup>27</sup> Baur also mentions another work which was im-

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*Staat—Kultur. Akten des Kongresses der Internationalen Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft in Berlin, März 2006* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 203.

<sup>24</sup> For a view which opposes Baur's conviction that Schleiermacher was a modern Gnostic, see Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 233–234.

<sup>25</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, ix.

<sup>26</sup> Heinrich J. T. Schmid was only 36 when his work was published in 1835 and sadly he died the very next year, in 1836. See Schmid, *Über Schleiermacher's Glaubenslehre: mit Beziehung auf die Reden über die Religion* (Leipzig: Brodhaus, 1835).

<sup>27</sup> The notion of religious philosophy is present in Schmid, especially when he discusses the need that the concept of religion should become materialized or realized in man's intellectual reality. He also talks about the fact that religion, which must be studied historically as a philosophy, acquires various forms of manifestation as it develops through history, an

portant enough since he points to it and was published in 1834 as a historical presentation of Jewish Alexandrian religious philosophy. Written by August Ferdinand Dähne (1812–1879), a Halle professor preoccupied both with theology and history,<sup>28</sup> this book was not used by Baur although its first two chapters could have produced a relevant comparison with the issue at stake.<sup>29</sup> It is evident therefore that Baur was knowledgeable of the relevant works that had been published just prior to his analysis of the Gnostic system, and so far it seems that the greatest influence on his understanding of Gnosis was exerted by Schleiermacher.<sup>30</sup>

Based on these works, especially that of Dähne, but also on many others which are not mentioned here, it is clear for Baur that there is an active interest in the philosophy of religion. Furthermore, all these works confirm that this active interest, as Baur himself calls it, is directed especially towards the philosophy of religion promoted by the works of Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831).<sup>31</sup> At this point, Baur places his own work within those who forward this interest in religious philosophy with direct connections with Hegel's thought,<sup>32</sup> so Hegel's influence on Baur<sup>33</sup> is the key to under-

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idea that Baur was very fond of. See Schmid, *Über Schleiermacher's Glaubenslehre*, 106–107.

<sup>28</sup> Dähne's conviction that the letters of the apostle Paul should be understood in a Gnostic key must have produced quite an impression on Baur. See August F. Dähne, *Entwicklung des paulinischen Lehrbegriffs* (Halle: Schwetschke und Sohn, 1835), 12–13.

<sup>29</sup> See August F. Dähne, *Geschichtliche Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Religions-Philosophie* (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1834).

<sup>30</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, ix.

<sup>31</sup> Although Baur does not indicate any of Hegel's works, it is very likely that he refers to Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* (Berlin, 1832).

<sup>32</sup> More details about Baur's connection with Hegel, in Peter C. Hodgson, "The Rediscovery of Ferdinand Christian Baur: A Review of the First Two Volumes of His *Ausgewählte Werke*," 206–214, in *Church History. Studies in Christianity and Culture* 33.2 (1964): 1–2.

standing the latter's idea of Gnosis.<sup>34</sup> Baur admits that he is fully aware of the fact that his present work on the Gnostic system had struggled to find a favorable reception. This, however, has proved not to be so easy. The difficulties of finding a solution to the task which he himself established for his analysis of Gnosis seemed to have been a constant issue during Baur's production of his book. He also realized that, despite his open claim that he intended for his work to seek favorable assessments, it may have been that his book on Gnosis met the requirements of "science" only partially. Whether this is true or not constitutes a lesser issue for the time being; what is really important, however, at this point is to see that Baur's work falls under the influence of one distinct approach in a direct way, namely Hegel's thought.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, since Baur's name is inextricably connected with that of Hegel,<sup>36</sup> the awareness that Baur's understanding of Gnosis is seen through the lens of Hegel's philosophy of religion should provide useful insights for his approach on the Gnostic system<sup>37</sup> and its unfolding through church history.

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<sup>33</sup> Hegel's influence on Baur was transmitted even to theologians and historians within Evangelical quarters, such as Philip Schaff. For details, see Thomas A. Howard, "Philip Schaff: Religion, Politics, and the Transatlantic World," 191–210, in *Journal of Church and State* 49.2 (2007): 194.

<sup>34</sup> See Robert M. Wallace, *Hegel's Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 46, n. 33.

<sup>35</sup> Also see S. J. Hafemann, "F. C. Baur," 285–289, in Donald McKim (ed.), *Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 286.

<sup>36</sup> For details about Hegel's influence on Baur, see Abraham Friesen, "Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560), Wilhelm Zimmer (1807–1878), and the Dilemma of Muntzer Historiography," in *Church History. Studies in Christianity and Culture* 43.2 (1974): 177.

<sup>37</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, x.

## UNDERSTANDING GNOSIS AS CHURCH HISTORY

It is Baur's understanding of Gnosis that its system must be studied within the general context of church history.<sup>38</sup> Church history, however, has a specific purpose and this is to be searched frequently as an extraordinary phenomenon. It must be taken into account that this extraordinary phenomenon (church history) emerged based on the parameters of the old church and it acquired various forms. At the same time, the various forms of the church resulted in manifold directions which eventually intersected with each other, oftentimes in sharp and hostile opposition. The same course though of total antithesis was also taken between these various forms of the church, on the one hand, and the dominant dogma, which is also indicated by the general names ascribed to Gnosis or to Gnosticism.<sup>39</sup> This paragraph is very important for Baur as it discloses a few, but fundamental, insights into his understanding of Gnosis. First, the existence of Gnosis must be thoroughly connected with church history in general and with the old or primitive church in particular. The origin of Gnosis lies with the very early part of church history and with the existence of the church in its most ancient form.<sup>40</sup> Second, Gnosis or Gnosticism as a system should not be taken as a uniform monolith. When Gnosticism is to be envisioned, one must be aware that it existed under many various forms, and these forms were frequently opposed to each other,<sup>41</sup> a situation which, in Baur, was also present in the early

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<sup>38</sup> His view of church history is based on his careful assessment of early Christianity. A good analysis of Baur's understanding of early church history can be found in James T. Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church. Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, reprinted 2004), 63–66.

<sup>39</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 1.

<sup>40</sup> In Baur, Gnosis can be traced back to the writings of the apostle Paul and his Judaizing opponents, as well as even to pre-Christian Hellenistic communities. See E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1978), 88.

<sup>41</sup> See also George C. Finley, *The Ebionites and "Jewish Christianity."* *Examining Heresy and the Attitudes of Church Fathers* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, PhD Dissertation, 2009), 16.



church<sup>42</sup> and can be presented in terms of a “Petrine/Pauline dualism.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, Baur was convinced that early church history, which contains the development of Gnosis itself with its fundamental dualism, should be defined through the conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christianity.<sup>44</sup> Third, Gnosticism in general, seen as a totality of adversarial dogmatic and church manifestations, seems to have been essentially driven to oppose the main teaching of the church or what can be historically and dogmatically portrayed as the orthodox interpretation of church doctrine.<sup>45</sup>

Academic research about Gnosticism was not an easy task before Baur and he fully admits to it. He acknowledges that well before him, profoundly deep and independent research was carried out in the field of church history.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the studies about Gnosticism never rested or stopped, regardless of whether they were focused on the whole “family” of Gnostics or were meant to deal with individual branches of the Gnostic system. These studies, Baur points out, were applied anew, so they were pursued constantly with diligence and scholarship, in such a way that they could produce an astute and intellectually sharp combination.<sup>47</sup> The goal

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<sup>42</sup> Baur frequently underlined that, in the early church, two distinct parties existed: a Petrine (Judaizing) party and a Pauline (Hellenizing) party. See also Jan van den Berg, “English Deism and Germany: The Thomas Morgan Controversy,” 48–61, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 59.1 (2008): 50.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Michael Kaler, “Towards an Expanded Understanding of Nag Hammadi Paulinism,” 301–317, in *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 33.3–4 (2004): 303.

<sup>44</sup> See Matti Myllykoski, “James the Just in History and Tradition: Perspectives of Past and Present Scholarship (Part 1),” 73–122, in *Currents in Biblical Research* 5.1 (2006): 76.

<sup>45</sup> See also John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 234.

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism.” An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), n. 2, 292.

<sup>47</sup> See Stephen Emmel, “The Gnostic Tradition in Relation to Greek Philosophy,” 125–136, in Søren Giversen, Tage Petersen, and Jørgen Po-

of this intellectual combination was to enlighten the mysterious darkness at least in some respects, so that the spirit of research should be provoked through its dawning light. Baur insists that this endeavor was altogether difficult given the various points of view which produced many outcomes. A result, however, could be perceived because the object of research could not be exhausted and, despite the fact that a firm contribution could not be foreseen, the value of the solution of the task at hand could never be lost.<sup>48</sup> What Baur wants to underline at this point is that academic research in the field of church history with special reference to Gnosis was diligently carried out through years of hard work to the point that a definitive path was eventually established and some clear results were finally obtained following a long line of dedicated researchers, who dedicated themselves to investigate the issue of Gnosis as part of church history.

Baur points to some famous names in the field of church history, such as Massuet,<sup>49</sup> Mosheim,<sup>50</sup> and Neander,<sup>51</sup> who represent

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demann Sørensen (eds), *The Nag Hammadi Texts in the History of Religions. Proceedings of the International Conference at the Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters in Copenhagen, September 19–24, 1995*, Historisk-filosofiske Skrifter 26 (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2002), 126.

<sup>48</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 1–2.

<sup>49</sup> René Massuet (1666–1716) was a French Catholic monk from the Order of the Benedictines, who was interested in patristic thought. He is predominantly known for his edition of the works of Irenaeus, which was published in Paris in 1710.

<sup>50</sup> Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1693–1755) was a Lutheran theologian and church historian. One of his most famous in the field of church history is *De rebus christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum comentarii*, published in 1753.

<sup>51</sup> August J. W. Neander (1789–1850) was a Lutheran theologian and professor of church history. He produced an impressive number of works, of which the most important include *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche* (Hamburg, 1826), *Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung der christlichen Kirche durch die Apostel, als selbständiger Nachtrag zu der allgemeinen Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche* (Hamburg, 1832), and *Das*

different periods in what Baur calls the long chain of these studies on Gnosis. Their main interest, as well as the interest of all researchers who attempted to discover new insights into the problematics of the Gnostic system, always aimed at bringing to light unfamiliar and abnormal things.<sup>52</sup> Baur realizes that seemed to have been the interest of the entire process of research for all these scholars, namely to discover unknown facts as well as points of contact between the various and numerous manifestations of Gnostic communities.<sup>53</sup> All their efforts made possible a general understanding of Gnosis, but also its clarification within the given historical context of preliterate history of religion and philosophy.<sup>54</sup>

Baur openly admits that the tradition of research in the field of Gnosis has not always been monolithic in understanding and accepting the same conclusions about Gnostics. For instance, Massuet attempted to soften his hate for Gnostics, whom he saw as a class of heretics.<sup>55</sup> This attitude of detestation for Gnosis in general

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*Leben Jesu Christi in seinem geschichtlichen Zusammenhange und seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Hamburg, 1837).

<sup>52</sup> This can imply that the traditional accounts of Gnosis and Gnosticism—for instance those of Irenaeus and Epiphanius—were intentionally inaccurate, so they presented Gnosticism as abnormal when compared to orthodox beliefs. See Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 153.

<sup>53</sup> The issue is extremely complex and controversial since it is almost impossible to establish which community was Gnostic and which was orthodox in early Christianity. For instance, there are doubts as to whether Gnostics were present in Alexandria before the emergence of Christianity. For details, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *Heresy of Orthodoxy. How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 47.

<sup>54</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> This is evident in Massuet's careful editing of Irenaeus of Lyon's *Against Heresies*, which was included in J. P. Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*. See Richard A. Norris, Jr., "Irenaeus of Lyons," 45–54, in Frances Young, Lewis Ayres, and Andrew Louth (eds), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47.

and the Gnostics in particular was, however, a manifestation of an old tradition which originated in the very first disputes the Gnostics had with the mainline orthodox faith. Consequently, this tradition of hate towards Gnostics, to which Massuet adhered, saw the Gnostics as promoting a false orientation of man's will as well as an intentional opposition to the Christian truth through the wrong use of Greek—specifically Platonic—philosophy.<sup>56</sup> According to the same tradition, the Fathers of the old primitive church were seen as the only or even the last authority which could oppose such a staunch opposition towards the Christianity of the catholic church. This particular tradition of interpretation, which sees Gnostics as heretics and fighters against the established truth of the orthodox faith, tends to run against an evident anthropocentricity of Gnosticism, which valued the natural faculties of the human being to a much larger degree than the early church.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, the church appears to have claimed that Gnostics entertain some sort of unfortunate deviation of reason, and this is why they were perceived by the church as fanatics. At other times, the various forms of Gnosis were regarded as manifestations of mad enthusiasm, without which the church was believed to be considerably better off.<sup>58</sup>

Massuet's evaluation of Gnosticism is evidently not in line with Baur's; nevertheless, the latter finds Massuet an outstanding representative of the long line of dedicated researches who attempted to present Gnosis in an earnest way. This is why Baur is

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<sup>56</sup> See C. C. Tittmann, "No Traces of the Gnostics Are to Be Found in the New Testament," trans. Manton Eastburn, 275–399, in *Essays and Dissertations in Biblical Literature*, Volume 1 (New York, NY: Carvill, 1829), 305.

<sup>57</sup> Thus, strictly from the perspective of the history of religions—which Baur would have approved—Gnosticism can be viewed as a distinct religion in its own right, very much like Judaism and Christianity. See, for instance, Birger A. Pearson, "Is Gnosticism a Religion?," 105–144, in Ugo Bianchi, *The Notion of «Religion» in Comparative Research. Selected Proceedings of the XVI LAHR (International Association for the History of Religions) Congress* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1994), 105–106.

<sup>58</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 2.

convinced that Massuet acquired an impressive degree of merit especially in his capacity as editor of Irenaeus' five books, which he wrote against heresies.<sup>59</sup> In this particular work, Massuet managed to produce—according to Baur—a historical clarification and explanation of the Gnostic system. A special characteristic of Massuet's presentation of Gnosticism in a historical fashion lies within his precise and learned demonstrations about the connection between Gnostic teachings and Platonism.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, despite his competent incursions into the historical context of Gnosticism, Baur seems convinced that Massuet must have been influenced in his negativistic assessment of Gnosticism by Irenaeus and his works on the Gnostics. So, according to Baur, Massuet must have acquired his dissatisfaction with Gnosticism based on Irenaeus' writings, which were Massuet's only source of research.<sup>61</sup> Massuet's hostility towards Gnosticism is evident from the very title of Irenaeus' work which speaks of revealing and overthrowing the so-called or false knowledge (of Gnosticism). Again, despite this obvious reluctance to accept Gnosticism as a valid source of knowledge<sup>62</sup> and the scarcity of sources he had access to, Massuet still succeeded in providing a presentation of the Gnostic system in a way which Baur labels satisfactory. The lack of historical sources, however, prompted Massuet to excessively underline the eccentricity and abnormality of some manifestations of Gnosis which, according to Baur, can only be the result of counting some fanatical follies displayed by Gnosticism throughout history.<sup>63</sup>

For Baur, Massuet represented only an incipient stage of the research studies into the field of Gnosis. Therefore, moving a step

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<sup>59</sup> René Massuet, *Episcopi Lugdunensis et martyris, Detectionis et eversiois falso cognominatae agnitionis seu Contra haereses libri quinque* (Paris: Coignard, 1710).

<sup>60</sup> See also Emile Gillouin, *Idées dogmatiques et morales du Siracide* (Toulouse: Imprimerie A. Chauvin et Fils, 1870), 9.

<sup>61</sup> See also Andrew Kippis (ed.), *The Works of Nathaniel Lardner. With a Life by Dr. Kippis*, Volume 8 (London: William Ball, 1838), 320–321.

<sup>62</sup> See also Andrews Norton, *The Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels*, Volume 2, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: George Nichols, 1848), 77, n. †.

<sup>63</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 3.

beyond Massuet's negativistic convictions about Gnosticism, progress in the studies of Gnosis could take only one path and this consists of taking research further as well as expanding it. To use Baur's explanation, the horizon constituted by the perspective on and the evaluation of Gnostic manifestations could be taken a step further and broadened in order to produce valuable results<sup>64</sup> which have at least a couple of characteristics. First, in Baur's vision, the research on the issue of Gnosis must develop into a reality which is a true progress in comparison with the precedent stage. In this respect, Gnostic studies must be produced in such a way that they leave a reasonable amount of maneuvering room. This means at least that this maneuvering room allows for more than just one interpretation—as in Massuet's case—which downgrades Gnosticism as foolish heresy.<sup>65</sup> Second, Gnostic studies should have an inner structure which can embrace as many individual considerations and insights as possible given that the primitive interpretation proposed by Massuet is left aside in favor of a broader perspective on the Gnostic phenomenon as it appears to have developed within history.<sup>66</sup> Thus, and Baur points this out quite clearly, studies in Gnosticism should be structured in a way which does not force us into looking at Gnosis as a random manifestation of some kind of sick phantasy that abandoned its last drop of reason. In other words, Baur proclaims the necessity to see Gnosticism in more objective terms, which do not instantly and intentionally proclaim

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<sup>64</sup> One such result could be the acknowledgement that Gnosis did not develop as a reaction against the main tenets of Christianity, but rather as a movement within Christianity, Judaism, and Paganism. See Helmut Koester, *From Jesus to the Gospels. Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press/Augsburg Fortress, 2007), 120–121.

<sup>65</sup> For an interpretation which considers Gnosticism a movement which—among many others such as Christianity, Greek philosophy, and Oriental religions—attempts to offer answers to man's most fundamental questions about his existence in the world, see James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1901, reprinted 2002), 56–57.

<sup>66</sup> See also Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 20.

Gnosis as something bad, crazy, and perhaps even devoid of reason.<sup>67</sup>

Seeing Gnosticism as a historical religious movement which is more than just crazy and reasonless phantasy was the goal von Mosheim had in mind.<sup>68</sup> Baur explains that he was not satisfied to think of Gnosticism only through the perspective of Platonism. What he wanted to do instead was to find a way by which all sources of Gnosticism should be seen through the lens of what he called Oriental philosophy. So, in order for Gnosticism not to be seen as an odd manifestation within church history, von Mosheim's attempt was to place Gnostic thought within a framework which had nothing to do with Platonism and which reportedly would present it in a much more reasonable way. This new framework for Gnosticism to be properly assessed as a historical religious movement was, in von Mosheim's view, Oriental philosophy, which is evidently pre-Christian.<sup>69</sup> In expressing this particular claim, von Mosheim was convinced that research in the field of Gnosticism must be put into perspective, so they are seen in a totally new and specific sphere. This should help Gnosticism in being perceived based on totally different criteria and standards than what he calls "our common Western rationality and imagination." Baur realizes that von Mosheim had a groundbreaking idea in displacing Gnosticism from the western mindset in order to relocate it specifically within the realm of oriental philosophy. Western thought is evidently essentially different from Eastern philosophy, so he intended to see Gnosticism in a way which should have obliterated the Western bias towards ecstatic manifestations. If placed within the

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<sup>67</sup> Baur, *Das christliche Gnosis*, 3.

<sup>68</sup> See Nils A. Pedersen, *Demonstrative Proof in Defense of God. A Study of Titus of Bonstra's Contra Manichaeos. The Work's Sources, Aims, and Relation to Its Contemporary World* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 73–75.

<sup>69</sup> For an opinion which refutes von Mosheim's objectivity in searching history, along with his idea of "Oriental philosophy," see Michael Gauvreau, *The Evangelical Century. College and Creed in English Canada from the Great Revival to the Great Depression* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 115–116. See also E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and His Opponents: Trends in Research," 265.

influence of Eastern philosophy, Gnosticism would no longer appear as an odd Western phenomenon, but rather as a quite regular Eastern teaching.<sup>70</sup>

Baur underlines the fact, which he presents as something already known, that von Mosheim went through great pains in order to build a system of Oriental philosophy. Having invested a great deal of effort in this attempt, von Mosheim has a powerful connection with Gnosticism which he placed within the sphere of Eastern thought.<sup>71</sup> As far as Baur is concerned, the entire process of research and investigation attempting to decipher the inner connections of the Gnostic system indisputably owes much to von Mosheim.<sup>72</sup> He seems to have been convinced that a successful enterprise to present Gnosticism competently must proceed from the idea of an Oriental philosophy which is based completely on solid historical grounds. This is to say that philosophy can only be properly understood in connection with history, which is a realization that von Mosheim obviously applied to Gnosticism. In other words, Gnosticism should be understood historically within the context of Oriental philosophy—a recurrent idea in his thought, to which he repeatedly made reference. Unfortunately for von Mosheim, his plan to investigate Gnosticism within the sphere of Oriental philosophy seemed a bit odd to Herder,<sup>73</sup> who referred to it as to a “dance around the altar of an unknown God, like a circle (of Oriental philosophy) which forever turns to itself” without hav-

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<sup>70</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 4.

<sup>71</sup> See Robert Haardt, *Gnosis. Character and Testimony* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 13, n. 2.

<sup>72</sup> See also Kurt Rudolph, “Hans Jonas and Research on Gnosticism from a Contemporary Perspective,” 91–106, in Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Christian Wiese (eds), *The Legacy of Hans Jonas. Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 92.

<sup>73</sup> Von Mosheim’s rationalism—so representative for Protestant Enlightenment—seems to have been a little too much so for Herder’s taste, who could easily accommodate Classicism and Romanticism along with rationalism. See, for instance, Alfred Schindler and Klaus Koschorke, “Historiography,” 554–558, in Erwin Fahlbusch (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 557.



ing a firm position.<sup>74</sup> It is rather interesting to see that Baur likes the way Herder characterized von Mosheim's understanding of Gnosticism because he accepts Herder's perspective on von Mosheim as a "witty and not quite undeserving joke."<sup>75</sup>

Baur seems convinced that von Mosheim's perspective on Gnosis remains primarily inactive and lifeless, so he presents it as some sort of a lacking abstraction of a concrete view. Furthermore, von Mosheim's research does not disclose much information about the various manifestations of the Gnostic system, so there is no sufficient ground for the differentiation and classification of the multifaceted forms of Gnosis. This means—and Baur is adamant about it—that von Mosheim did not detach himself from Massuet's presentation of the Gnostics as enthusiasts.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the Gnostics seem to have at least occasionally appeared to von Mosheim—as they did to Massuet—as metaphysicians driven by phantasies and, at the same time, as people afflicted by some degree of fanaticism.<sup>77</sup> Despite all these problems, however, Baur is able to see in von Mosheim's understanding of Gnosis an element of novelty which he himself will preserve in his own perspective of Gnosticism. Thus, Baur notices that von Mosheim's idea of connecting Gnosticism with Oriental philosophy expresses his intuition of a great external and internal context of the Gnostic system, as Baur's study itself will eventually prove. It must be noted here that Baur attempts to stay as objective as he can in relation to both Massuet and von Mosheim, in the sense that, while disclosing their

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<sup>74</sup> Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), famous German philosopher, theologian, and poet, made these remarks in his *Sämtliche Werke zur Religion und Theologie*. Fünfter Teil: "Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts. Eine nach Jahrhunderten enthüllte heilige Schrift." Herausgegeben durch Johann Georg Müller (Tübingen, 1806), 417.

<sup>75</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> See also Philipp K. Marheineke, "Christliche Dogmengeschichte," in S. Matthies und M. Batke (Hrsg.), *D. Philipp Marheinekes Theologische Vorlesungen*, vierter Band (Berlin: Verlag von Dunker und Humblot, 1849), 93–94.

<sup>77</sup> See also Alvin B. Kuhn, *Shadow of the Third Century. A Reevaluation of Christianity* (Elizabeth, NJ: Academy Press, 1949), 135.

faults and lacking features, he is also willing to identify various aspects which eventually proved beneficial for the general research of the Gnostic system. Thus, if for Massuet, Gnosticism was connected with Platonism, for von Mosheim, the Gnostic system was better presented in his relationship with Oriental philosophy.<sup>78</sup>

Baur is aware that research in the field of Gnostic studies had progressed with a certain degree of difficulty, especially given the already-established bias towards seeing the Gnostics as enthusiasts. He points out that many learned and astute researchers produced a considerable range of studies in the field of Gnosticism but this happened only after an interim period which was heavily influenced by von Mosheim and Johann Salomo Semler.<sup>79</sup> To put things into perspective, Baur details the fact that the studies which appeared in this period, when researchers were content only to process von Mosheim's insights, are characterized by von Mosheim's diligence and understanding while still perpetuating his own attitude about Gnosticism. However, if with reference to von Mosheim, Baur uses the words "diligence" and "understanding," when it comes to Semler<sup>80</sup> he points to his "cheekiness."<sup>81</sup> This particular attitude to Gnosticism was doubled, in Baur's view, by the old preconception which saw Gnostics as crazy enthusiasts and the suspicion that they tended to deceive people.<sup>82</sup> Baur also shows that the issue of Gnosticism was furthered by some very serious studies in the field, writ-

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<sup>78</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 5.

<sup>79</sup> Johann Salomo Semler (1725–1791) is known as a rationalistic church historian and Bible interpreter. He taught at the University of Halle and wrote a series of books, of which one of the most famous is his *Über historische, gesellschaftliche, und moralische Religion der Christen* (1786).

<sup>80</sup> For an excellent account of Semler's theology and methodology, see Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism. German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews from Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 39–48.

<sup>81</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> See Armin Sierszyn, *Christologische Hermeneutik. Eine Studie über historisch-kritische, kanonische, und biblische Theologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der philosophische Hermeneutik von Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2010), 60.

ten by Johann August Neander (whom he has already mentioned), Ernst Anton Lewald,<sup>83</sup> Johann Karl Ludwig Gieseler,<sup>84</sup> and Jacques Matter.<sup>85</sup>

Baur knows that each period in the history of the church discloses some specific aspects and it is his conviction that all these aspects must somehow be put together. In this particular respect, he acknowledges the progress of various sciences, such as regional geography and ethnology. The development of these sciences, however, cannot be supported without the opening up of what Baur calls “so many sources,” which provided researchers with information for a better understanding of both distant lands and peoples. These new sources also helped scientists in unveiling the Orient, so the geography and ethnology of the East in general were greatly enhanced as a result of earnest studies in the field.<sup>86</sup> Baur is convinced that various research projects concerning the symbolics and mythology of old peoples began with “great success” and this is why he can talk about the general progress of sciences and especially of historical criticism.<sup>87</sup> In Baur’s view, all the aspects, new

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<sup>83</sup> Ernst Anton Lewald (1877–1848) was professor of theology at the University of Heidelberg and, with reference to Gnosticism, he wrote *Commentatio ad historiam religionum veterum illustrandam pertinens de doctrina Gnostica* (Heidelberg, 1818).

<sup>84</sup> Johann Karl Ludwig Gieseler (1792–1854) was professor of church history at the University of Göttingen, where he taught courses in the history of dogma, church history, and dogmatic theology. He is famous for his five volume *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte* (1824–1855, with only the first three published during his life), followed in 1856 by his *Dogmengeschichte*, oftentimes considered the sixth and last volume of his impressive work in church history.

<sup>85</sup> Jacques Matter (1791–1864) was a philosopher and historian with poignant interests in Gnosticism. He wrote *Histoire critique du Gnosticisme et de son influence sur les sectes religieuses et philosophiques des six premiers siècles de l’ère chrétienne* (Paris, 1828).

<sup>86</sup> For more details, see Carl B. Smith, *No Longer Jews. The Search for Gnostic Origins* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 149–195.

<sup>87</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, “Liberal Theology,” 4–10, in *Expository Times* 122.1 (2010): 5.

sources and sciences must work together from themselves and based on themselves alone.<sup>88</sup> This is because Baur seems to be quite convinced that there is one main purpose to be followed in doing this kind of research, namely to spread a new light over this part of old church history. Moreover, these new academic discoveries of the modern period should produce a critical perspective which must prescribe a new direction in the study of Gnosticism and its sources.<sup>89</sup> As far as Baur is concerned, the historical-critical perspective<sup>90</sup> of the modern era must come up with a new understanding which should counter and even oppose the direction established by von Mosheim.<sup>91</sup>

It is quite clear that, as far as Gnosticism is concerned, Baur is not satisfied with von Mosheim's view that Gnosis should be understood solely in terms of Eastern thought. There may be some kernel of truth in connecting Gnosticism with Oriental religion in general, but a broad perspective on the phenomenon of Gnosis should not be limited to that. Once it is accepted that von Mosheim's view that links Gnosticism with Oriental thought is totally different from that of Neander which places Gnosticism within the realm of Platonism,<sup>92</sup> it is only then that one can immediately move forward towards an investigation which is set to discover the inner genesis and structure of the various Gnostic systems. Should one be totally unable to detach himself from the fundamental questions concerning the Gnostic system, he should try to confine and channel his efforts towards accepting and moving to a broader

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<sup>88</sup> This approach leaves no room for traditional Christian concepts, such as miracles. See Robert M. Burns, "Collingwood, Bradley, and Historical Knowledge," 178–203, in *History and Theory* 45.2 (2006): 196.

<sup>89</sup> See, for instance, PHEME PERKINS, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress press, 1993), 181ff.

<sup>90</sup> Compare G. Wayne Glick, "Nineteenth Century Theological and Cultural Influences on Adolf Harnack," 157–182, in *Church History. Studies in Christianity and Culture* 28.2 (1959): 176.

<sup>91</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 7.

<sup>92</sup> See Stefan Rossbach, *Gnostic Wars. The Cold War in The Context of a History of Western Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 148.

horizon. In Baur's view, such a step should avoid what he terms "von Mosheim's vague uncertainty," because this broader horizon could include the published works of both Neander and Lewald. The dismantling of von Mosheim's perspective by putting together Neander's and Lewald's perspectives is crucial for Baur because Neander and Lewald present two seemingly complementary assessments of the origin of Gnosis.<sup>93</sup> Thus, while Neander is confident—and nearly biased—to affirm that Gnosticism originates in Philo's Platonism,<sup>94</sup> Lewald finds the roots of Gnosis in the dualism of Zoroastrism.<sup>95</sup> This is why, in Baur, the juxtaposition of Neander and Lewald provides us with a broader horizon of meaning which allows and demonstrates that the origins of Gnosticism should be defined not only by platonism and Zoroastrism in general, but also more specifically by Philo's philosophy and dualistic thought.<sup>96</sup>

Baur stresses that Neander's continuous studies in the field of Gnosis had a visible tendency, namely the attempt to balance Alexandrian Platonism<sup>97</sup> with Persian dualism,<sup>98</sup> which he saw as fundamental elements of Gnosis. Nevertheless, Neander's insistence on these two basic aspects is, in Baur's view, a constant reduction of Gnosis, which is a feature of Neander's inclination to see Gnosis

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<sup>93</sup> See also Johann Adam Möhler, *Gesammelte Schriften und Aufsätze*, herausgegeben von I. I. Döllinger, erster Band (Regensburg: Verlag von Joseph Manz, 1839), 406.

<sup>94</sup> See also H. J. Schoeps, "Judenchristentum und Gnosis," 528–537, in U. Bianchi (ed.), *Le origini dello gnosticismo. Colloquio di Messina 13–18 aprile 1966* (Leiden: Brill, 1967, reprinted 1970), 534.

<sup>95</sup> See J. Doresse, "Gnosticism," 533–579, in Geo Windengren, *Historia Religionum I. Religions of the Past* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 575.

<sup>96</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 7–8.

<sup>97</sup> See Jens Halfwassen, *Hegel und der spätantike Neuplatonismus. Untersuchungen zur Metaphysik des Einen und des Nous in Hegels spekulativer und geschichtlicher Deutung*, 2. Auflage (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2005), 163, n. 15.

<sup>98</sup> See August Neander, *Allgemeine Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche*, 4. Auflage, zweiter Band (Gotha: Verlag von Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1864), 186.

in these terms. Baur is aware that Neander's understanding of Gnosis leads to another type of tendency in attempting to define Gnosis, which is the possibility of either shrinking the definition too much or broadening it too generously. As for Baur, he confesses that he refrains from launching a critique of the current state of the studies about Gnosis, but he does intend to highlight one specific aspect connected with Neander's studies. Thus, Baur explains that, in his opinion, the brightest contribution of Neander's explanations about Gnosis which really deserves emphasis has to do with his classification of the Gnostics. To be more precise, Baur noticed that Neander saw the Gnostics as being part of two distinct classes: Judaizing Gnostics<sup>99</sup> and anti-Jewish Gnostics.<sup>100</sup> Given Baur's staunch critique of Neander's approach concerning Gnosticism, it is quite remarkable that he found it necessary to present what he considered to be Neander's exquisite contribution to the field of Gnostic studies. This is also an indication that Baur acknowledged Neander's keen insight into separating the Gnostics into judaizing and anti-Jewish, which discloses the fact that Gnosticism is not only related to Platonism and dualism, but also to Judaism.<sup>101</sup> Thus, whether we deal with Gnosticism in terms of oriental philosophy or not, it is clear that Platonism, dualism, and Judaism are key features of its doctrinal core.<sup>102</sup>

Baur attempts to present a broad and objective view of Gnosis because he struggles to include Platonism, dualism, and Judaism in the whole picture. At the same time though, he wants to make sure that these three fundamental aspects of Gnosis do not only shed some light and order on what he calls "the colorful diversity"

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<sup>99</sup> See also Johann E. Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, volume 1 (London: Routledge, 2002, first published 1890), 231.

<sup>100</sup> For details, see Arnoldo D. Momigliano, *A. D. Momigliano. Studies on Modern Scholarship*, edited by G. W. Bowersock and T. J. Cornell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 154–155.

<sup>101</sup> See Jan Rohls, *Philosophie und Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2002), 120.

<sup>102</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 8.

of the Gnostic systems.<sup>103</sup> By making use of Platonism, dualism, and Judaism to define the most fundamental aspects of Gnosis, Baur's intention is to go deeper into the inner organism and principle of Gnosticism. At this moment, Baur makes some kind of concession to Neander as he recommends that, given his historical perspicacity, the half measures or the shortcomings of his assessments about Gnosticism should be overlooked and even concealed, even if Neander himself would have stood by all of them. Baur feels compelled to stress that Neander's perspective on Gnosis, namely his differentiation and classification of the various types of Gnostic movements, was made in regard to the relationship between what he calls "Gnostic Christianity" and Judaism, on the one hand, and then Heathenism, on the other.<sup>104</sup> Thus, Neander's whole classification of Gnosticism in terms of Platonism, dualism, and Judaism must be kept in close connection with the reality of various heathen religions.<sup>105</sup> Baur does not forget to underline that this classification of Gnosticism is one of Neander's important additions to his perspective on Gnosis, which should essentially alter the whole approach to Gnosticism in general. Baur's willingness to admit to his indebtedness to Neander's classification of Gnosticism clarifies, to a certain extent, his own understanding of Gnosis as a complex mixture of Platonism, dualism, Judaism, and heathenism.<sup>106</sup>

For Baur, the study of Gnosis is not in itself a research which should focus solely on the phenomenon given by the various forms of Gnosticism. Gnosticism, Gnostics, and Gnosis are concepts and realities which should not be limited to themselves. As far as Baur is concerned at this point, he clearly underlines the necessity that

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<sup>103</sup> A helpful tool for the understanding of Gnostic diversity is the work of David Brakke, *The Gnostics. Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), ix–xi.

<sup>104</sup> See Hans Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 101.

<sup>105</sup> See also Klaus Beckmann, *Die fremde Wurzel. Altes Testament und Judentum in der evangelischen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 181.

<sup>106</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 8–9.

Gnosis should be connected with what he calls “the three religions,” namely, Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity.<sup>107</sup> In doing so, Gnosis is a dogmatic reality, whose orthodoxy is not to be pursued, because its relationship with Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity turns it into a system of beliefs that must not be studied primarily as theology, but rather as pertaining to the history of religion.<sup>108</sup> Thus, to study Gnosticism is to do research in the field of religious history, because it is here that Gnosis “must be placed,” as Baur contends. Religious history, however, must be coupled with religious philosophy, Baur later points out, and this is because the properties and the peculiarities of the Gnostic system can only be fully justified in connection with Eastern/Oriental philosophy of religion. At the end of the day—and Baur makes this point as clearly as he can—the proper study of Gnosis will find its last justification in the concept of religious philosophy itself.<sup>109</sup> The reason which lies behind such an affirmation has to do, according to Baur, with the fact that Gnosis itself belongs to the very essence of religious philosophy. This is why he hopes that the religious philosophy will eventually follow the same path which was trodden by the “old Gnosis” itself.<sup>110</sup> In other words, the concept of Gnosis has

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<sup>107</sup> See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels und andere Abhandlungen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Idealismus*, 6. Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990, 1. Auflage 1959), 435.

<sup>108</sup> This is a sign of Baur’s efforts to treat religion somewhat neutrally. For instance, with reference to Christianity, a specific issue—regardless of whether it is theological or historical in nature—should not be considered based on confessional bias, but rather on a neutral, historical approach. Such a case is Peter’s relationship with the church of Rome; specifically, whether or not he was ever in Rome. See, for details, Michael D. Goulder, “Did Peter Ever Go to Rome,” 377–396, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57.4 (2004): 377. Baur believed that Peter never visited Rome; see Markus Bockmuehl, “Peter’s Death in Rome? Back to Front and Upside Down,” 1–23, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60.1 (2007): 4.

<sup>109</sup> See Christian Andrae, *Ferdinand Christian Baur als Prediger. Exemplarische Interpretationen zu seinem handschriftlichen Predigt-nachlass* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 366.

<sup>110</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 9.



established a permanent presence within religious thinking throughout the intellectual history of Christianity, which in Baur is dramatically reconstructed in order to accommodate Gnosis in a natural way<sup>111</sup> as a dualistic philosophical discourse about God and man. In this respect, two of the most influential thinkers that shaped Baur's understanding of Gnosis were Jakob Böhme and G. W. F. Hegel. For the sake of the general argument, Hegel should be approached first because he provided Baur with a philosophical framework which helped him understand the content of Gnosis borrowed, to a large extent, from Böhme.

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<sup>111</sup> For the reconstruction of Christianity in Baur, see Donald W. Riddle, "The Background of Modern Historical Study of Christianity," 203–213, in *Church History* 4.1 (1935): 203.

## CHAPTER 2. GOD AND MAN: BAUR'S VIEW OF RELIGION AS GNOSIS UNDER HEGEL'S INFLUENCE

### FROM GOD'S IMMANENCE TO MAN'S MORTALITY THROUGH THE DEATH OF CHRIST

One of the most important aspects of Hegel's influence on Baur's understanding of Gnosis is God's immanence. Baur finds God's immanence crucial because it helps him trace Hegel's perspective on God<sup>1</sup> back to ancient times, and especially to Origen's theology.<sup>2</sup> God's awareness must be understood as God's immanence in the world, which points to the fact that God's being is consequently a reality that has to be conceived in material terms.<sup>3</sup> When matter comes at issue, it means that the reality of finitude is also present; this is why, for Baur, God's awareness as well as the idea of God's being and his reality must be connected with the material realm of

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<sup>1</sup> See also William Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005), 120.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief comparison between Hegel and Origen, aptly performed by Hans Urs von Balthasar, see Brian E. Daley, "Balthasar's Reading of the Church Fathers," 187–206, in Edward T. Oakes, SJ, and David Moss, *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 204, n. 10.

<sup>3</sup> A concise discussion about Hegel's idea of God and its connection with materiality can be found in Graham Ward, "The Metaphysics of the Body," 159–180, in Elaine L. Graham (ed.), *Grace Jantzen. Redeeming the Present* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 179. Ward senses a Gnostic influence in Hegel's approach.

the natural world, so it is fundamentally finite.<sup>4</sup> God must therefore be considered in finite, material terms because his power is conditioned by his wisdom or even by his knowledge. Since God's power depends on God's knowledge and it has already been shown that immanence is what defines the idea of God on a fundamental level, it means that man's awareness of God arises from man's knowledge about the idea of God.<sup>5</sup> The more man knows about the idea of God, the more powerful his awareness about the same idea becomes. God, as it were, or rather the idea of God grows stronger the more humanity becomes aware of it.<sup>6</sup> The reality of the world and particularly the reality of the human being that lives in the materiality of the world show that God cannot exist without the world and neither can the world without God. To be sure, God can be seen as eternal if the material world is eternal; as a matter of fact, the eternity of God is conditioned by the eternity of the world. If the world is eternal, then God is eternal as well; one knows, however, that the world is finite, so the infinity or eternity of God must be reconsidered and redefined in such a way that they fit the physical reality of the material world,<sup>7</sup> as Hegel seems to suggest in his approach of infinity.<sup>8</sup> Baur admits that Hegel's belief in the identity between matter and spirit was sternly criticized by contemporary Catholic thought,<sup>9</sup> which promoted the substantial or essen-

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<sup>4</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 72.

<sup>5</sup> See also William J. Hill, OP, *The Three-Personed God. The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 151–152.

<sup>6</sup> Compare Stanley J. Grenz, *The Named God and the Question of Being. A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 98–99.

<sup>7</sup> A discussion about infinity and materiality with reference to the idea of God can be found in Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies. After Marx and Freud*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 228.

<sup>8</sup> For details, see Fiona Ellis, "Desire, Infinity, and the Meaning of Life," 483–502, in *Philosophy* 86.4 (2011): 488–490.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, Franz Xaver von Baader (1765–1841), German theologian and philosopher of Roman-Catholic persuasion. For details, see John

tial difference between nature or matter and spirit. Thus, Baur points to the Catholic conviction that there is a fundamental opposition between God and the world, spirit and nature, the absolute reality of God and the finite reality of the material world, as an abstractness which exists in itself.<sup>10</sup> Thus, nature or matter and the spirit are not one and the same substance when judged from the perspective of the reality of being; matter and spirit are therefore neither one single essence, nor one single being.<sup>11</sup> On the contrary—and this is in sheer opposition with Hegel—nature or matter and spirit are two essentially different or distinct substances.<sup>12</sup> For Baur—and Hegel for that matter—this is impossible: matter and spirit must be one reality, because this belief promotes the dualism—not the opposition—between matter and spirit.<sup>13</sup> Matter and spirit must exist in a dualism which is confirmed by human reason and experience; the opposition between the two is not supported by either, at least in Baur's perspective which closely follows Hegel's.<sup>14</sup>

Like Hegel, Baur is quite dissatisfied with the Catholic Church and especially with Catholic teachings;<sup>15</sup> his main criticism is directed against the Catholic doctrine of creation, which Baur considers to be thoroughly Pelagian.<sup>16</sup> The biggest issue though of

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Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel. From German Idealism to Christian Metaphysics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 59.

<sup>10</sup> For details about the distinction between matter and spirit in Catholicism, see M. Francis Mannion, *Pastoral Answers* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2002), 37–38.

<sup>11</sup> For the distinction between being (*Sein*) and essence (*Wesen*) in Hegel, see John Kaag, “Hegel, Peirce, and Royce on the Concept of Essence,” 557–575, in *Dialogue* 50.3 (2011): 561.

<sup>12</sup> Baur points to Anton Günther and Johann Heinrich Pabst, *Janusköpfe. Zur Philosophie und Theologie* (Wien: Wallishausner, 1834), 109.

<sup>13</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 224.

<sup>14</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 706–707.

<sup>15</sup> See Pinkard, *Hegel. A Biography*, 292–294.

<sup>16</sup> Baur's criticism of Catholicism, which is charged with Pelagianism, is a bit odd since Enlightenment philosophy was interested in the rehabilitation of Pelagian thought. See Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel. A*

Catholic doctrine has to do with the fact that it is not concerned with keeping theology and philosophy together.<sup>17</sup> The immediate consequence of severing theology from philosophy leads, according to Baur, to an overestimation of the independence of the human being—and also of creation in general—which is thought to be able to perform various things despite the all-powerful God which is postulated by Catholicism. In Baur, man cannot be totally independent if God is all-powerful because such belief, which is supported by the Catholic Church, promotes the idea of two distinct essences or substances—God and creation or God and humanity—and since God is all-powerful, it is logical to conclude that man's power is limited. Thus, there is an overestimation of what man can do in Catholic thought for the simple reason that philosophy is detached from theology. In Hegel though, where philosophy and theology go hand in hand, Baur contends, there is only one essence—that of the material world and the physical existence of the human being—so man is all-powerful within the limits of his material existence in the physical world through the enactment of the rationality of his will.<sup>18</sup> Resuming the issue of Catholic thought, Baur points out that the overestimation of man's power is not its only problem; at the same time, Catholicism has to explain its doctrine of immortality which does not make much sense if set against Hegel's idea that the spirit is finite and needs to become individualized in history.<sup>19</sup> Catholics believe in the idea of an absolute spirit which can become individualized in history, namely in the person of Jesus Christ, but Baur confesses that he misses the logical consequence of such teaching given that Jesus Christ died despite the

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*Study of G. W. F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, reprinted 1985), 62.

<sup>17</sup> For a Catholic reaction against Hegel's criticism of Catholicism, see Thomas Langan, *The Catholic Tradition* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 183.

<sup>18</sup> Compare Randall Halle, *Queer Social Philosophy. Critical Readings from Kant to Adorno* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 88.

<sup>19</sup> In Hegel, eternal life is the perpetual manifestation of reason in each human being as well as throughout humanity in general. See also Berthold-Bond, *Hegel's Grand Synthesis*, 160.

fact that Catholics believe in his continued existence. The human being cannot exist continuously as in Catholic thought; there is no logical basis for it, Baur believes, at least not from the perspective of human reason and experience. This is why Catholic belief appears to be fundamentally wrong since it cannot prove that the immortality of humanity has anything to do with the idea of personal continuity or with the reality of eternal life as displayed in individual persons.<sup>20</sup> If man is capable of living forever, this would be an ideal perspective on the world and even on God; if so, God is the absolute spirit and man lives in an ideal material reality, which has no support in either human rationality or man's daily existence.<sup>21</sup> This is why Baur is totally unable to grasp what lies beneath Catholic thought and consequently believes in man's mortality and his being considered a finite spirit.<sup>22</sup> Man's powers are far from being ideal and his being does not live in a continuous temporal or material sequentiality; the doctrine of immortality, at least as described by Catholics, cannot be supported by Hegel's philosophical system<sup>23</sup> because it presupposes the existence of two separate essences, God and nature, while Hegel only accepts one, namely the material reality of nature as the cradle of the human being.<sup>24</sup>

As far as Baur is concerned, Hegel's philosophy cannot support the idea of man's immortality—at least not in the classical sense of the word as the continuous, never-ending life of an individual within his or her material or even spiritual constitution—so the concept of immortality must be detached from the reality of

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<sup>20</sup> The belief in the immortality of the spirit goes hand in hand with the idea a metaphysical God, which Hegel cannot accept. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 1 Teil, 306.

<sup>21</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 1 Teil, 306.

<sup>22</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 1 Teil, 393–394.

<sup>23</sup> This is why, in Hegel, immortality should be defined as the spirit's infinite return to itself. See Horst Althaus, *Hegel. An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 254.

<sup>24</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 708–709.

man's personhood, seen as individuality.<sup>25</sup> Man cannot exist as a person and still have the idea of immortality attached to his existence.<sup>26</sup> There is no real evidence, Baur contends, in favor of man's immortality, so one either gives up the concept entirely and, in doing so, it separates it from the material existence of man's life in the world, or reinterprets it based on a different mindset.<sup>27</sup> At this point, Baur dismisses quite clearly Schleiermacher's conviction that the belief in the immutability of the unity between God's being and man's nature in the person of Christ corresponds to accepting the continual existence of man's personhood. In other words, Schleiermacher appears to have been convinced that the idea of eternal life is explained satisfactorily through the unity between the divine being and human nature in Christ's person.<sup>28</sup> Baur, on the other hand, strongly disagrees because, in Hegel, there is no evidence in this respect; namely, there is no proof that man has the capacity to continue his existence in any form whatsoever, so the idea of immortality needs to be separated from man's personal existence in the material world of nature.<sup>29</sup> It is clear for Baur that a direct relationship between the belief in the continuity of man's personhood and divine awareness cannot be supported in itself. What Baur can accept, however, is to redefine the idea of the immutability of the unity between the divine being and human nature in Christ's person as personal continuity based on the reality of Christ's person

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<sup>25</sup> See István Czákó, "Heiberg and the Immortality Debate: A Historical Overview," 95–138, in Jon Bartley Stewart (ed.), *Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Philosopher, Litterateur, Dramaturge, and Political Thinker* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2008), 112.

<sup>26</sup> See also Joe McCarney, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel on History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 203, and Bloom (ed.) *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 67.

<sup>27</sup> Immortality is not crucially important for Hegel. See Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 73.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Chad Meister and J. B. Stump, *Christian Thought. A Historical Introduction* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2010), 437.

<sup>29</sup> See Aidan Nichols, OP, *Scattering the Seed. A Guide through Balhasar's Early Writings on Philosophy and the Arts* (London: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2006), 121.

itself.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the idea of personal continuity can be accepted if and only if one thinks of Christ and Christ alone. Thus, Christ seems to be the embodiment of what one can understand by the notion of personal continuity provided that, on the one side, Christ is seen based exclusively on his merits as savior, and on the other side, his merits as savior are explained by the unicity of his awareness of God.<sup>31</sup> This means that there is no real connection between the belief in the notion of personal continuity and Christ's merits as savior. To be sure, Christ is to be considered savior based on his divine awareness (which can be proved), not on his personal continuity (which cannot be proved). With Hegel, Baur therefore accepts Christ's extraordinary religious awareness, which points to humanity's universal religious awareness,<sup>32</sup> but he rejects the belief in his resurrection, which should be interpreted along spiritual lines.<sup>33</sup> The idea of personal continuity, and even his "resurrection," can still be connected with Christ's person and especially with his capacity as savior because he had a profound religious awareness. He is "alive" for us today, as it were, due to his uncommon sense of divinity, not because he lives in some sort of material or spiritual form.<sup>34</sup> This is why the belief in the immutability of the unity between the divine being and human nature in the person of Christ corresponds to the belief in the fact that man's awareness of divinity remains an awareness of his own humanity. In other words, man's belief in the possibility of having divinity and humanity placed together in one single being can be accepted if man's faith in the possibility of his becoming a divine being within his material human nature through Christ remains essentially a hu-

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<sup>30</sup> In Baur, the person of Christ is the warrant of unity between the divine being and human being, which is illustrated in the unity between Jews and Gentiles presented in the *Epistle to the Romans*. See Charles H. Talbert, "Paul, Judaism, and the Revisionists," 1–22, in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 63.1 (2001): 15.

<sup>31</sup> For the importance of Christ for faith, see also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 1 Teil, 39.

<sup>32</sup> Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*, 144.

<sup>33</sup> See Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 221.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Price, *Without a Woman to Read*, 106.



man awareness.<sup>35</sup> This is to say that any perception of conception of divinity must be interpreted from below, namely based on man's material existence in the physical realm of nature. God is part of man; divine or religious awareness is part of man's essentially human awareness.<sup>36</sup> God does not exist as a separate awareness or a distinct substance from that of man; man is the only existing substance which can convey meaning to the idea of God, immutability, theanthropy, and immortality.<sup>37</sup>

Baur is aware that the idea of belief in immortality pertains to the very fiber of the human being, so he explains that, through Christ—who embodies the very idea of immortality by putting together God's awareness and human nature; in a word, the unity between infinity and finitude, between spirit and matter—it is quite possible to think of “God's being” as connected with the material reality of man's nature;<sup>38</sup> in other words, as Hegel puts it, man is God, and it is only in this way that one can speak of immortality as part of man's being.<sup>39</sup> The religious awareness of such possibility is innate in the human being and this awareness, as Baur, explains, is indeed and always a *human* awareness. This is mainly because in his thought, as well as in Hegel's, the idea of essence or substance is permanently connected with the unique reality of the material world.<sup>40</sup> In other words, there is only one substance when one discusses the ideas of God and humanity. God and humanity are the same substance; consequently, there is no such thing as God which exists as an objective, substantially different being from the human being. Thus, religious awareness about God cannot be divine—in

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<sup>35</sup> Compare Franz Wiedmann, *Hegel. An Illustrated Biography* (New York, NY: Pegasus, 1968), 119.

<sup>36</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 124.

<sup>37</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 709.

<sup>38</sup> See also Quentin Lauer, *Hegel's Concept of God*, 141.

<sup>39</sup> Compare Wallace, *Hegel's Philosophy of Reality, Freedom, and God*, 256.

<sup>40</sup> The human being is the spiritual manifestation of matter, the spirit who is able to access its own interiority despite its material constitution. See also Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel. Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1993), 3.

the traditional sense of the word which presumes one's belief in the objectivity of God's being as a different substance from that of man—but is essentially human. If such awareness is always human and man thinks of God in human terms, based on his human experience, and while using his human rationality, then Baur is willing to concede that such system resembles Hegel's philosophy.<sup>41</sup> To be sure, as Baur points out, Hegel's system promotes the idea that what can be called "God's awareness"—which is man's religious awareness and is essentially human—can be said to be theandric or divine-human.<sup>42</sup> Such an underlining is crucial for both Baur and Hegel because the theandric nature of religious awareness is divine only in the sense that it speaks about God; in any other respect, it is fully human since it originates, grows, and develops within the human being. This explains why this religious awareness leads to the constitution of a community of people who share the same theandric awareness of God. This community is evidently the church, but while Baur does not say this explicitly at this specific point of his argument, he does mention that this community is characterized by a constant progression which is based on the working of "God's spirit."<sup>43</sup> The subjects which belong to this community all share the conviction that God's spirit is at work within them which prompts them to believe that they share the same faith in the theandric nature of Christ, which speaks of man's divine-human religious awareness. Following Hegel, Baur is concerned to establish that man's religious awareness is thoroughly human because, in being so, religious awareness is connected with the collective character of human nature, not with the individuality of each human person.<sup>44</sup> Belief in the immortality of Christ may lead to belief in personal continuity, which is not in line with Hegel's system. Man must constantly seek truth and truth cannot be pursued, Baur argues, based on man's belief in personal continuity and immortality.

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<sup>41</sup> See also Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, Volume 2, 45.

<sup>42</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 285.

<sup>43</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 191–192.

<sup>44</sup> See Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 29, and Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 89.

Truth should be linked with the reality of senses, with what happens in the material world of nature; so the recognition of absolute truth goes beyond personal individuality and continuity. This is why man's quest for truth cannot be connected with either personal interests or personal continuity; truth transcends the personal level of humanity, so it must be found in the collective level of humanity.<sup>45</sup>

In order to better explain Hegel's perspective on religious philosophy and especially his view of Christianity, Baur needs to show that one of the main characteristics of Hegel's thought is the relationship between religious philosophy and historical Christianity or between the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of Christianity seen as a historical religion.<sup>46</sup> Baur is convinced that there is no need to point to such relationship as it seems to be quite salient in Hegel; nevertheless, he does indicate that there is a profound connection between the idea of religious philosophy and Christianity in Hegel as well as the fact that Hegel's religious philosophy is impregnated with concepts and ideas taken from Christianity. This is why, for Baur, Hegel's religious philosophy is the "scientific exposition of historical Christianity."<sup>47</sup> For Hegel's religious philosophy, Christianity appears to be its "world-historical turning point" which is explained by means of the idea of the "spirit." In Christianity, the notion of the "spirit" went through a complex process of development which started from a clear definition of the absolute being and was based on the externalization thereof.<sup>48</sup> In other words, Christianity not only explains what the concept of absolute being entails, but also points to the fact that the absolute being externalizes itself only to return to its core definition; what Hegel has in mind here is the return of the spirit to itself.<sup>49</sup> Practically, this

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<sup>45</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 710.

<sup>46</sup> Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel's Thinking*, 98.

<sup>47</sup> This is why, in Hegel, religion should be discussed conceptually. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 207.

<sup>48</sup> In Hegel, the externalization, as well as the internalization of the spirit, refers to the experience of love. See Beiser, *Hegel*, 115–116.

<sup>49</sup> For details, see Sander van Maas, "Intimate Exteriorities: Inventing Religion through Music," 750–771, in Hent de Vries (ed.), *Religion. Beyond*

presupposes that the idea of the spirit, which is fundamentally human, is externalized in the concept of God as different from the substance of humanity, and then the same spirit is eventually seen as pertaining to man's humanity, not to God's divinity.<sup>50</sup> As far as Baur is concerned, such a definition of Christianity—namely that the human spirit is externalized into the divine being only to return to its basic humanity—places its dogmatic system in a very close relationship with the “old Gnosis.” In order for this to happen, one needs to develop an understanding of the historical significance of Christianity because Christianity, as a historical religion, must be grasped and perceived as a religious philosophy.<sup>51</sup> When seen through the lens of religious philosophy as a particular manifestation of religious philosophy, Baur believes that historical Christianity reveals its affinities with historical Gnosticism.<sup>52</sup> As a particular case which makes direct reference to Christianity's dogmatic system, the doctrine of God, which is so fundamental to Christianity, appears to be nothing but the purely scientific understanding of the idea of absolute spirit. In other words, for Baur—and for Hegel—the idea of absolute spirit finds its best expression in the Christian doctrine of God, most likely because of the externalization of the idea of the (human) spirit into God's divine being,<sup>53</sup> which is also

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*a Concept* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), 756, and Peter Koslowski, “History as the Control of Speculation: Schelling's Discovery of History and Baader's Critique of Absolute Historicity,” 23–40, in Peter Koslowski (ed.), *The Discovery of Historicity in German Idealism and Historism* (Berlin: Springer, 2005), 34–35.

<sup>50</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 1 Teil, 389.

<sup>51</sup> For a critical position against Hegel's religious philosophy as applied to Christianity, see Churchich, *Marxism and Alienation*, 134.

<sup>52</sup> For a parallelism between historical Gnosticism and Hegel's religious philosophy, see Marc Sherringham, “Modern Gnosticism: An Orthodox Reply,” 59–66, in Clark Butler (ed.), *History as the Story of Freedom* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), 62–63.

<sup>53</sup> See also Jean-François Courtine, “The Destruction of Logic. From Logos to Language,” trans. Kristin Switala and Rebekah Sterling, 25–54, in David C. Jacobs (ed.), *The Presocratics after Heidegger* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 22, n. 5.

the feature of historical Gnosticism.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, the doctrine of Christ is again similar in many respects with Gnostic Christology, with the exception of its particular form. So Christian Christology and Gnostic Christology are essentially the same, although the actual shape of the former cannot be perfectly overlapped with the latter. No example is given in this respect, so what Baur means by the form of Christianity is a matter of theological and philosophical speculation, but it may have something to do with the fact that Christ's divinity is connected with Jesus' humanity to a larger degree in Christianity than in classical Gnosticism. Baur, however, is not interested in connecting Hegel's system with historical Christianity—although the subject of Hegel's religious philosophy is historical Christianity and its dogmatic tenets—but rather with Gnosticism. This is why he points to the fact that whatever Gnosticism did in the past in attempting to clarify its elements and directions reached a “pure form” in Hegel's explanation of Christian doctrines.<sup>55</sup>

Hegel comes close to Gnosticism, Baur believes, because the latter is based on the split between the historical Christ and the ideal Christ,<sup>56</sup> namely between Jesus of Nazareth, the person who lived in Palestine, and the Christ that is presented in the Scriptures.<sup>57</sup> The separation between historical Jesus and the Christ of Scripture is, according to Baur, the necessary result of the Gnosticism's speculative understanding of Christianity, which finds its full development in Hegel's religious philosophy. Thus, as far as Baur is concerned, Hegel's system takes Gnosticism to its last consequences, so the connection between Hegelianism and Gnosticism is most

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<sup>54</sup> For details about the idea of externalization (of the spirit or of consciousness) in Gnosticism, see Gedaliahu A. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed. Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 3.

<sup>55</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 707–710.

<sup>56</sup> The distinction between the historical and the ideal Christ is present not only in Hegel, but also in Kant. See Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Volume 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ, John Bolt (ed.), trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, IL: Baker Academic, 2006), 296.

<sup>57</sup> Compare John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1990, second impression 2003), 212.

evident in Christology. This is why Baur points out that Christology is the proof that the doctrine of Christ is what really connects Hegel's thought with Gnosticism.<sup>58</sup> Hegel's intention was not only to absorb the entire content of Christianity, and especially his doctrine of Christ, but also to search for its deepest meaning.<sup>59</sup> In other words, as Hegel did not want to lose sight of the profound significance of Christianity, he made use of Gnosticism in order to achieve his goal. Baur, however, underlines that Hegel was neither in pursuit of depicting an ideal of humanity which was ready to embrace divinity, nor in search of presenting an archetype which progresses from humanity to divinity, so he does not want to insist solely on the idea of divine awareness as based on the notion of divine being. In other words, he is not interested in the concept of the word, which speaks of awareness and being as related to the sphere of divinity; this would be much too abstract for Hegel, who wants to focus on the more concrete image of Christ as God-man.<sup>60</sup> For Hegel, Christ is the God who became man and appeared to humanity in flesh, in a concrete, particular body.<sup>61</sup> Christ is the embodiment of the unity between divine and human nature in a concrete way, which was revealed in a certain individual subject.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the idea of God gets a very concrete form; Baur, in fact, is convinced that Hegel's religious philosophy presents God as

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<sup>58</sup> For details about the connection between Hegel and Gnosticism, see Butler, *History as the Story of Freedom*, 46–47.

<sup>59</sup> In Hegel, the human being is conditioned to look for meaning; an example is the necessity that works of art should have a meaning. See Darren H. Hick, "Toward an Ontology of Authored Works," 185–199, in *British Journal of Aesthetics* 51.2 (2011): 198.

<sup>60</sup> See Lauer, *Hegel's Concept of God*, 299; Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*, 137, and Lauer, *Essays in Hegelian dialectic*, 100.

<sup>61</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 286.

<sup>62</sup> In this case, the subject is Christ, but he is representative for the entire humanity since the reality which confirms the unity between divinity and humanity in his person is love. For an analysis of Hegel's view of Christ and the *locus* of divinity and humanity, with reference to art, see Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History. A Critical Introduction to Its Methods* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 34–35.

a concrete reality which can be seen in the human person of Jesus Christ.<sup>63</sup> The divine-human reality of Christ, his theandric existence in the world is concrete because his person had a real existence in the world. It is important though, Baur believes, to investigate how Christ can be perceived in his capacity as God-man. In other words, Christ's theandric nature must be understood correctly in order to make sense according to Hegel's understanding thereof.<sup>64</sup> As Baur points out, the doctrine of Christ can therefore be approached in three different ways, which reflect the core of his philosophical system in approaching religion and especially Christianity as religion. First, there is a purely external and historical image of Christ, which insists on the fact that Christ was only a common man, a martyr of truth—as Baur puts it—like Socrates.<sup>65</sup> In this respect, Christ is only the subject of unbelief; so unbelievers see Christ as a mere man who was willing to die for what he considered to be the truth. Second, having explained how unbelievers see Christ, Baur proceeds with how believers perceive him. If for unbelievers, Christ is only a man who died for his version of truth, for believers Christ is not only a common man, but a God-man in whom the very nature of God is revealed. Consequently, while unbelievers only see in Christ the reality of humanity, believers are ready to see in him the reality of divinity.<sup>66</sup> Third, the reality of the dead Jesus, who is seen as the risen Christ, must be conceptualized in order to convey the truth of the spirit; in other words, the initial faith in Jesus and then in Christ turns into the reason which investigates the truth of the spirit.

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<sup>63</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 298.

<sup>64</sup> See also Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism that Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 156–157.

<sup>65</sup> The image of Socrates also appears in Hegel. Compare David J. Johnson, *Socrates and Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 25.

<sup>66</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 711–712.

At this point, Baur is very preoccupied with establishing the connection between belief and unbelief,<sup>67</sup> namely how the transition from unbelief to belief or from pure intellect to active faith can be achieved in the actual reality of man's existence.<sup>68</sup> He points out that the origin of faith must be connected with the outpouring of the spirit, which—in addition to being crucial also for Hegel<sup>69</sup>—has a precise function in the transition from unbelief to belief. Thus, the outpouring of the spirit works out in such a way that the immediate reality of history should be transformed into some sort of spiritual counterpart. In other words, the role of the outpouring of the spirit is to allow historical reality to be perceived in a spiritual way or, as Baur puts it, it is through the outpouring of the spirit that we are able to understand the sensual as spiritual. The concrete example thereof is our perception of Jesus. For Baur, the man Jesus or the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth needs to be seen as the human and carnal manifestation of a specific awareness with a spiritual content.<sup>70</sup> To be sure, the historical Jesus should be understood as the concrete, material manifestation of a spiritual reality.<sup>71</sup> This spiritual reality is not different from the material existence of Jesus; it is only that the material existence of Jesus points to a way of understanding it spiritually. For example, the moment of Jesus' death is a historical instance which has evident spiritual con-

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<sup>67</sup> The relationship between belief and unbelief leads to the issue of the "construction" of God or the absolute in Hegel. See Philip J. Kain, *Hegel and the Other. A Study of the Phenomenology of the Spirit* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 15.

<sup>68</sup> For details about the relationship between faith and the spirit, see Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 1 Teil, 206.

<sup>69</sup> For details about Hegel's perspective on the outpouring of the spirit, see Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 220.

<sup>70</sup> See Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 293 and 293, n. 19.

<sup>71</sup> Jesus is the pattern for the entire humanity, so Hegel's goal in talking about Jesus' spirituality is the establishment of a "society of mutually respecting, Jesus-like people." See Robert Wicks, *Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 164.



notations.<sup>72</sup> Thus, Jesus' death is the moment which realizes the transfer of his entire existence in the realm of religion; when Jesus died, his historical person was made available for a new, spiritual understanding, in the sense that he could now be seen as the God-man whose name was Christ. When the historical Jesus of Nazareth died, he turned into the Christ which embodies the concept of God-man and it is the moment of death that speaks of man's capacity to defeat death in a spiritual way. When seen as the Christ of theandric nature, the historical Jesus of Nazareth can be said to have been victorious over death;<sup>73</sup> as the divine-human Christ, Jesus killed death, negated the very essence of negation itself, so whatever is finite, sinful, evil, and alienated in his historical life was destroyed. Through this interpretation of Jesus' death, when one can see him as the divine-human Christ who conquers death, it is possible to perceive Jesus also as the touchstone or the criterion whereby faith proves itself. In other words, faith means belief in Christ as the divine-human image of the historical Jesus, whose death has the spiritual meaning that man is able to defeat death in a spiritual way.<sup>74</sup> As Baur explains, Christ is the God-man only through the mediation of faith, so the man Jesus becomes the God-man Christ only through faith.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, Baur is more interested in the Christ of faith than in the historical Jesus. This is evident when he says that the historical reality behind faith—or the objective reality of Jesus' life in the world—remains veiled in mystery as nobody has direct access to it, so one cannot establish whether or not Christ was the God-man based on his historical existence. What is important is to understand that one can see Christ as God-man beyond Jesus' historical existence and even

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<sup>72</sup> More about the spiritual side of Jesus' death in Dow Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 204–205.

<sup>73</sup> See Vaught, *The Quest for Wholeness*, 166–167.

<sup>74</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 305.

<sup>75</sup> The attempt to see Jesus as the God-man through faith in Christ reflects, in Hegel, a deep concern to connect faith with reason and history, against the Enlightenment's efforts to keep them divided. See Laurence W. Wood, *God and History. The Dialectical Tension of Faith and History in Modern Thought* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2005), 118–119.

without Jesus' historical existence; it is crucial therefore to see Christ as God-man only through faith, an idea which resembles Hegel's witness of the spirit about the absolute spirit.<sup>76</sup> The fact that Jesus lived in history is not vital here; what is vital though is that one can accept the theandric image of Christ through faith, which was also a serious concern for Hegel.<sup>77</sup> Thus, this is in fact the origin of faith, the theandric vision of Christ as God-man, so the object of faith is only Christ as God-man, not Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>78</sup> The very being of faith is accepting the image of Christ as God-man; this is the only way in which history—or the history of Jesus of Nazareth—acquires a spiritual meaning.<sup>79</sup> It is only in this way that history and the sensible manifestations wherein can be given a specific spiritual content. In other words, history has no spiritual connotations whatsoever if deprived of the belief in Christ as God-man; through the image of Christ as God-man, however, history becomes spiritually relevant.<sup>80</sup>

The image of Christ is crucial for Baur because it is vital for Hegel.<sup>81</sup> Baur does his best to explain Hegel's christological position since he cannot place Hegel in line with Gnosticism without a

<sup>76</sup> More about Hegel's idea of faith and its connection with Christ in Philip M. Merklinger, *Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel's Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821–1827* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 189–190.

<sup>77</sup> In Hegel, faith in Christ lies within the fundamental role of philosophy. See Shanks, *Hegel and Religious Faith*, 94

<sup>78</sup> For an interesting discussion about the object of faith in Hegel and in Enlightenment philosophy, see Alice Ormiston, *Love and Politics. Re-Interpreting Hegel* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 57–59.

<sup>79</sup> At this point, it is essential to understand Christ through Jesus' death, which makes the truth of the unity between God and humanity in history a reality that can be actualized through reason (human consciousness, the spirit). See Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology*, 37–38.

<sup>80</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 712–713.

<sup>81</sup> Alain Besançon, *The Forbidden Image. An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 216.

clear presentation of his perception of Jesus Christ. Baur is convinced that, in Hegel, Jesus Christ must be understood as having a powerful connection with the material reality of humanity, which in turn has to be looked at from the perspective of the spirit that is capable of transforming it. Thus, pure humanity can be transfigured and thus understood in a spiritual way simply because Jesus of Nazareth can be accepted as the God-man from a spiritual perspective.<sup>82</sup> As Baur puts it, God's nature opens itself to humanity through the humanity of Jesus and this can happen when material history is accepted as the source of faith. In other words, material history can be seen as the source of faith when the genesis and evolution of faith is the result of the belief of the community of faith.<sup>83</sup> Believers make up the community of faith, and the content of the faith of all the believers that make up the community of faith is the reality which eventually triggers faith.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the historical existence of a group of people who share the same belief can be seen as the origin of the faith which postulates the existence of God's nature as revealed in the humanity of Jesus Christ. To be sure, Jesus of Nazareth can be accepted as the God-man Christ only through faith; Christ as the God-man is the object of faith itself within the community of faith.<sup>85</sup> Baur underlines here that while Christ is the object of faith, he is not the prerequisite of faith. Christ as the God-man cannot be the prerequisite of faith because faith needs something historical for its foundation, namely the mere man Jesus, the human person of Jesus of Nazareth. To be sure, in Baur and Hegel, the prerequisite of faith is the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, while the object of faith is the spiritu-

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<sup>82</sup> Compare Charles Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The Promise of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, reprinted 1996), 83–84.

<sup>83</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 330.

<sup>84</sup> For further details, see Nathan Rotenstreich, *On Faith*, Paul Mendes-Flohr (ed.); (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 152.

<sup>85</sup> See Echol Nix, Jr., *Ernst Troeltsch and Comparative Theology* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2010), 32–33.

al character of Christ the God-man.<sup>86</sup> Baur makes it clear that, without faith, humanity and divinity are separate and distinct; Jesus of Nazareth can never be connected with Christ the God-man without faith. When faith emerges, it serves as liaison between humanity and divinity, so spirituality becomes tied with humanity: Christ the God-man receives a material body, while the historical Jesus acquires a spiritual significance. It is only now that Baur manages to connect Hegel with Gnosticism through Schleiermacher's theology. For instance, Baur claims that Hegel continues the Gnostic belief in the natural man Jesus on whom the higher aeon of Christ descended in some sort of spiritual-natural union by means of Schleiermacher's conviction that the historical Christ should be seen as the humanity's spiritual archetype.<sup>87</sup> Baur notices that, in Hegel, there is a transition from the historical Jesus to the spiritual Christ as well as a leap from a historical religion to its spiritual interpretation. Such transfer from history to spirituality though cannot be done without the reality of Jesus Christ's death, which is for Hegel the essential rationality behind the historical appearance of Christ. Religion, in other words, is a demonstration of human rationality, which works with two distinct levels: first, the historical and external reality of Jesus and second, the spiritual and religious understanding thereof. Practically, the first level corresponds to the dead Jesus,<sup>88</sup> while the second to the Christ who is said to have risen from the dead.<sup>89</sup> Baur though makes a sharp distinction between the Gnostics and Schleiermacher on the one hand, and He-

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<sup>86</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 297–298.

<sup>87</sup> More about the archetypal nature (*Urbildlichkeit*) of Christ in Schleiermacher in Allen G. Jorgenson, *The Appeal to Experience in the Christologies of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Karl Rahner* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 102.

<sup>88</sup> Hegel's image of the dead Jesus was extremely important for Eberhard Jüngel. See John Bainbridge Webster, *Eberhard Jüngel. An Introduction to His Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, reprinted 1991), 71.

<sup>89</sup> See Aidan Nichols, OP, *No Bloodless Myth. A Guide through Balthasar's Dramatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 18.

gel on the other. Hegel can be placed in the tradition of Gnosticism through Schleiermacher's theology, but he nevertheless opposes both. Thus, as Baur clearly explains, both the Gnostics and Schleiermacher appear to have been convinced that the historical existence of Jesus Christ should be seen as divine-human before his death.<sup>90</sup> In other words, for the Gnostics and Schleiermacher, the historical Jesus was considered the God-man Christ before his actual death, which—according to Baur—rendered the transition from historicity to religiosity superfluous. So there is no real separation between divinity and humanity in either Gnosticism or Schleiermacher according to Baur.<sup>91</sup> The real separation between divinity and humanity, Baur believes, happens only in Hegel, but such separation is evident only if assessed from the perspective of Jesus Christ's death.<sup>92</sup> When Jesus of Nazareth died, his humanity died with him, but his divinity became evident precisely at that moment since his history began to be told by those who benefited from the outpouring of the spirit.<sup>93</sup> In this respect, the spirit seems to be the awareness of those who understood Jesus as the God-man Christ, so the community of believers took upon itself the task to proclaim the history of Jesus of Nazareth whose death showed that his humanity was survived by his divinity. Jesus' death proved that divinity can be detached from humanity, and while humanity is thoroughly connected with one's individual history, the idea of divinity goes beyond one's individual history into a reality which points to the entire humanity.<sup>94</sup>

This brings Baur to the third aspect of Hegel's system, which is built on the first and second features. To resume Hegel's religious philosophy in brief, Baur points out that the three aspects are thoroughly connected in the sense that the first, which speaks of

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<sup>90</sup> Compare Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions. Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove, MI: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 93–94.

<sup>91</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 713–714.

<sup>92</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 298.

<sup>93</sup> See Kärkkäinen, *Holy Spirit and Salvation*, 251.

<sup>94</sup> Compare Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 245–255.

the conviction of unbelievers who see Jesus only as a man,<sup>95</sup> leads to the second, which points to the faith of believers who understand Jesus as the God-man.<sup>96</sup> It is important to understand that both these aspects depend on Jesus Christ's historical appearance, so they are tied with his historical existence in the material world. Jesus is believed to be the God-man Christ based on his external historical existence and belief in his theandric nature is the very spiritual content of faith.<sup>97</sup> What is crucially important to understand at this point is the fact that the faith which sees Jesus as the God-man Christ needs to be taken to the next level, which is in fact the third characteristic of Hegel's religious philosophy. Faith needs to be detached from history and when this happens faith is raised to the level of reason.<sup>98</sup> Thus, the spiritual content of faith which sees Jesus as the God-man Christ must turn into a rational awareness which is no longer justified through history or through what happened in the past, but through philosophy or through concepts, which encapsulate the truth in itself. The truth in itself is the absolute spirit, so the absolute spirit is essentially connected to concepts. From a purely conceptual point of view, the absolute spirit is God as Trinity, which is the identity between man and God according to Baur's assessment of Hegel.<sup>99</sup> In other words, from a purely philosophical and conceptual perspective, the truth in itself,

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<sup>95</sup> For details, see Martin J de Nys, "Hegel on Absolute Knowing," 288–308, in Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (eds), *The Emergence of German Idealism* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 290.

<sup>96</sup> For an interesting study on Hegel's Jesus as God-man, see James Lawler, "God and Man Separated No More: Hegel Overcomes the Unhappy Consciousness of Gibson's Christianity," 62–76, in Jorge J. E. Gracia (ed.), *Mel Gibson's Passion and Philosophy. The Cross, the Questions, the Controversy* (Peru, IL: Open Court Publishing/Carus Publishing, 2004), 73–74.

<sup>97</sup> See Merklinger, *Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel's Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821–1827*, 108–111.

<sup>98</sup> Compare Williamson, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, 186–190.

<sup>99</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 228.

which is detached from history, is the idea of God as Trinity which speaks of the identity between man and God or between humanity and divinity.<sup>100</sup> This fundamental truth, which speaks conceptually about the identity between humanity and divinity through the very idea of God as Trinity, should also explain the belief in Christ as God-man. This is, according to Hegel and Baur, the rationality of truth or, to be more precise, the rationality of philosophical truth,<sup>101</sup> namely that belief in the theandric nature of Christ points to the fact that there is a rational philosophical truth which speaks about the unity between divinity and humanity.<sup>102</sup> In a more practical way, the idea of the divine-human nature of Christ reveals the very concept of man in the sense that the theandric nature of Christ does not refer to one single individual, but rather to man in general. The idea of the divine-human nature of Christ does not point to the finite spirit of the human individual, but rather to the absolute spirit of humanity in general which has a real existence in the world. In other words, according to Baur and Hegel, while the finite spirit refers to individual human beings, the absolute spirit refers to humanity in general; likewise, while the finite spirit refers to the individual human being who is said to particularize the reality of humanity, the absolute spirit points to humanity in general which is said to evoke the concept of divinity. This is why in Hegel, and then in Baur, divinity and humanity, God and man, are united.<sup>103</sup> Divine and human nature are one in Hegel because, as Baur points out, divinity is revealed by humanity in general, while hu-

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<sup>100</sup> More details about Hegel's view of the Trinity in Helmut Thielicke, *Modern Faith and Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 382.

<sup>101</sup> Further information about Hegel's view of philosophical truth can be found in John McCumber, *The Company of Words. Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 53–58.

<sup>102</sup> An excellent discussion about the divine-human unity in Hegel, especially with reference to the Self and the Trinity can be found in Schlitt, *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim*, 170–171.

<sup>103</sup> See also Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*, 109–110.

manity is disclosed through the actual reality of individual human beings.<sup>104</sup>

### CHRIST AS THE HUMAN GOD AND THE DIVINE MAN

Baur makes it clear that the three aspects or moments of Hegel's religious philosophy mark an evident transition from the reality of history to the reality of pure thought. The first two moments, unbelief and belief are relevant to history, while the third is connected to what Baur calls a "pure idea," which is also present in Hegel.<sup>105</sup> The idea is the spirit in itself, but the reality of the pure spirit or the idea cannot be detached from the material and historical existence of humanity.<sup>106</sup> The example of Christ is obvious in this respect. Thus, according to Baur, the historical existence of Christ, his human life on earth, in the actual historical reality of the physical world points to a truth which lies beyond the actuality of his physical life, namely to the fact that the being and life of the spirit was shown in his being and life on earth. In other words, the human existence of Jesus Christ proves that the spirit, the pure idea of divinity, can be connected to the reality of one's life on earth; such a conviction cancels the otherness of God and man's being becomes united with God, as it results from Hegel's philosophy.<sup>107</sup> Baur underlines that the being and the actions of the spirit have nothing to do with history for as long as they are considered pure thought and the idea in itself does not refer to actual events. The spirit, however, is able to transcend events, although the idea in itself is given meaning by whatever happens in history. For belief or for faith, Baur insists, history is enough; the material existence of Jesus Christ as God-man in history or what it represents theologically or religiously—namely the incarnation of God—is a historical fact.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 714–715.

<sup>105</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 227–228.

<sup>106</sup> See Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence. Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 100.

<sup>107</sup> Eric C. Rust, *The Christian Understanding of History* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2002, first published 1947), 42–44.

<sup>108</sup> See Glenn A. Magee, *The Hegel Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2010), 52.



Jesus' life and the reality of his bodily existence pertain to the actuality of history; as Baur says, they are historical facts. The spirit, however, is beyond history. This is why he explains that from the standpoint of speculative thinking, the incarnation of God, which faith perceives as a historical fact, is not a historical fact which happened once in the reality of material nature. From the perspective of pure ideas, from the reference point of the spirit, the incarnation of God is the eternal definition of God's being through which the idea of God is brought in the historicity of time.<sup>109</sup> In fact, the incarnation of God as the eternal definition of God's being is seen historically in the material existence of Jesus of Nazareth, so God is man from eternity. The idea of God, which transcends the material existence of humanity, cannot be detached from the physicality of man's life in the world. God, as an idea, as the spirit, may well transcend history, but it depends on man's history.<sup>110</sup> As an idea or as spirit, God cannot exist without the materiality of man's physical life, because the finitude of man's life and the humiliation of man's daily existence are the facts which bring the idea of God into the time of man's actual existence in history. When Jesus Christ is seen as the God-man, the connection between the historicity of man's life and the spirituality of God's being as an idea is made automatically; history and pure thought come together in one single reality, in perfect unity.<sup>111</sup> This is why Baur emphasizes that the reconciliation which Christ is said to have accomplished is not a temporal and historical fact as in traditional theology; on the contrary, it has to do with the reality of pure thought. God reconciles himself eternally with himself; the idea of God reconciles itself with the idea of God from eternity, so reconciliation is a concept, not a factual event. Baur takes his explanation

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<sup>109</sup> Consequently, the absolute spirit is able to move in the world, while—at the same time—it realizes its being within the material, temporal, and spatial boundaries of history. See also Küng, *The Incarnation of God*, 206.

<sup>110</sup> See Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit,"* 541–542.

<sup>111</sup> Compare Jonael Schickler, *Metaphysics as Christology. An Odyssey of the Self from Kant and Hegel to Steiner* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 117.

further in saying that the spirituality, not the factuality, of reconciliation is demonstrated when Christ's resurrection and ascension are considered spiritual, not material-historical, realities; reconciliation, therefore, puts together the finite spirit, as well as his existence in history, and the idea of God.<sup>112</sup> Thus, Christ's resurrection and ascension did not happen in history as facts; they both represent the eternal return of the spirit to itself and its truth—as in Hegel—so they are spiritual, speculative, and rational ideas.<sup>113</sup> This explains Baur's conviction that Christ as man, but also as God-man, namely the historical fact of Christ's existence as man and the belief that he is the God-man, points to man in its universality, to the idea of humanity, not to an actual individual. They also point to human individuality in general, not to the factuality of one individual in particular. To be sure, God refers to humanity or to the idea of humanity, not the historicity and temporality of individual human beings.<sup>114</sup> At the same time though the idea of God, the pure idea of the spirit seen as absolute, the one which points to the universality of humanity has no existence whatsoever without the finite reality of man's finite, individual spirit and existence in history. The death of Jesus Christ illustrates how the two realities come together in Hegel: the finite spirit of man, Jesus, can be seen as the meeting place of divinity and humanity.<sup>115</sup> Unbelief and belief are thoroughly connected to Jesus' historical existence and his actual person, which is seen either as a mere man or as the God-man; Jesus is the man-God who elevates religion to the level of philosophy.<sup>116</sup> Philo-

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<sup>112</sup> See Ralf Wüstenberg, *The Political Dimension of Reconciliation. A Theological Analysis of Ways of Dealing with Guilt during the Transition to Democracy in South Africa and (East) Germany* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 378, n. 21.

<sup>113</sup> For the spirit's return to itself in Hegel, see Lauer, *Hegel's Concept of God*, 321.

<sup>114</sup> See also Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V. G. Kiernan, and Ralph Miliband (eds), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, reprinted 1991), 227.

<sup>115</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 296–297.

<sup>116</sup> See Andrew O'Shea, *Selfhood and Sacrifice. René Girard and Charles Taylor on the Crisis of Modernity* (London: Continuum, 2010), 185.

sophically, however, the idea of absolute spirit is exemplified through the fact that faith was able to connect history or humanity with divinity. Pure divinity is pure spirituality; God is the pure idea of the spirit, so God is the absolute spirit which transcends the materiality of man's life in history, but this is only a theoretical, rational reality, which has no existence without man's life in the physicality of the material world. This is why Jesus Christ, the man Jesus who was considered the God-man Christ, is the meeting point of humanity and divinity. Man and God meet in Jesus Christ; he represents the focal point in which the finite spirit of man meets the absolute spirit of God. Christ is an idea, an image which speaks of man's elevation, and Jesus was the person who understood and then promoted this fundamental truth.<sup>117</sup> Christ is the man who elevates humanity to the level of divinity. Christ is the idea of man's humanity; Christ represents all individual human beings and their common humanity, and the totality of humanity, the idea of humanity itself is elevated through Jesus seen as Christ to the level of divinity, of the pure idea of God as absolute spirit.<sup>118</sup>

Hegel's perspective on Christ, so vividly presented by Baur, shows that the pure idea or the absolute spirit cannot exist without the historical manifestation thereof.<sup>119</sup> In Jesus Christ's case, the idea of God, the concept of divinity itself, cannot have its own existence without the historical manifestation of Jesus' life on earth.<sup>120</sup> There is a fundamental identity between the finite spirit of man and the absolute spirit of pure ideas, so there is no God without Jesus and Jesus is not a God without the pure idea of divinity

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<sup>117</sup> Compare Libby Ahluwalia, *Understanding Philosophy of Religion Edexcel* (Haddenham: Folens Publishers, 2008), 369.

<sup>118</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 715–716.

<sup>119</sup> See, F. David Farnell, "Philosophical and Theological Bent of historical Criticism," 85–131, in Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell (eds), *The Jesus Crisis. The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1998), 107–108.

<sup>120</sup> See Thomas J. J. Altizer, *The Contemporary Jesus* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 27–28.

which is shown in his own, material, and physical life.<sup>121</sup> This implies that the historical manifestation of Jesus' life, his personal existence on earth has a figurative, but also an archetypal significance.<sup>122</sup> The man Jesus is figuratively the God in which humanity wants to trust, while the same Jesus is archetypically the God-man which each human person can become. So there is no idea of God and divinity without man's material existence in history.<sup>123</sup> This is why Baur explains that the idea can be detached from its earthly and physical "shell;" one can theoretically conceive that ideas—in their spiritual purity—can detach themselves from the facts of history, but the facts of history themselves are the "turbid reflex of the eternal process of the spirit" precisely because faith or belief depends on them. This means that the facts of history and especially the facts of Jesus Christ's history on earth, his historical existence in the world have a figurative meaning which is closely related with the very being of the spirit.<sup>124</sup> In other words, what happened with Jesus Christ in history has a specific figurative meaning which can be explained spiritually with reference to the idea of God, divinity, and the pure spirit. The concept of differentiation is paramount at this point.<sup>125</sup> Differentiation is manifested in the physical reality of the world, because in Christ's case his historical existence can theoretically be distinguished from what it means spiritually in the sense

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<sup>121</sup> For a concise description of Hegel's system, as well as the place of the absolute spirit within it with reference to nature and materiality, see C. Marvin Pate, *From Plato to Jesus. What Does Philosophy Have to Do with Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2011), 69–70.

<sup>122</sup> A useful discussion about Jesus as archetype for humanity in Hegel, but also with reference to other philosophers such as Lessing, Kant, and Strauss, from John Macquarrie's perspective, see Georgina Morley, *John Macquarrie's Natural Theology. The Grace of Being* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 145.

<sup>123</sup> This is what differentiates Christianity from other religions, such as Islam. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 348.

<sup>124</sup> Compare Francesco Zaccaria, *Participation and Beliefs in Popular Religiosity. An Empirical-Theological Exploration among Italian Catholics* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 178.

<sup>125</sup> For details, see Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought*, 133.

that the man Jesus of Nazareth was a historical person, while the idea of God existed well before him. For Hegel though, but also for Baur, this differentiation is an integrative part of history because, while this differentiation can be understood theoretically, the unity between divinity and humanity in the person of Christ is what makes this differentiation more evident.<sup>126</sup> The more we understand that the material reality of history exists on its own and the spiritual reality of the spirit is conceptually different from history, the more we realize that in fact they make up one single reality: the unity between divinity and humanity in the historical person of Jesus Christ,<sup>127</sup> whose existence has both a figurative and an archetypal significance for each human being. This realization is crucial for Baur because it shows that the facts of history have a figurative meaning which is powerfully connected with the idea and the spirit, which was also the case of Gnosticism. Like Hegel, Baur explains that history is the reality which explains the differentiation between divinity and humanity, between materiality and spirituality, because truth in itself is the unity between divine and human nature.<sup>128</sup> Man must reach his crucial awareness because only when this awareness is fully realized in man's mind, the spirit is able to turn back to itself from its externalization. In other words, the idea of the absolute spirit, which is fundamentally external to humanity, is able to return to itself and explain itself only through the historical existence of Jesus Christ.<sup>129</sup> This is why Jesus Christ is the great turning point of human history, because he represents man's faith in the unity between divinity and humanity. Truth must reveal itself in an

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<sup>126</sup> Compare Benedict T. Viviano, OP, *Trinity, Kingdom, Church. Essays in Biblical Theology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2001), 116, n. 8, and Stanley J. Grenz, *The Named God and the Question of Being*, 98–99.

<sup>127</sup> See Thomas A. Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism. W. M. L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, reprinted 2006), 84.

<sup>128</sup> Arran E. Gare, *Postmodernism and the Environmental Crisis* (London: Routledge, 1995), 34.

<sup>129</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 210.

objective way and Jesus Christ is the “external *Dasein*,”<sup>130</sup> the external being through which the truth of the unity between divinity and humanity is presented to humanity. The person of Jesus Christ helps humanity be sure about the factuality of the truth that humanity and divinity can be united, that matter and spirit exists as one single reality.<sup>131</sup>

Following closely in Hegel’s footsteps, Baur places Christianity above any other religious or philosophical system based on its Christology.<sup>132</sup> As far as Christianity is concerned, the image of Christ provides humanity with a certain worth and significance; Christ himself is seen through the mediation of his own value and meaning.<sup>133</sup> Neither the idea of dignity nor that of meaningfulness can be detached from how Christianity understands the importance of Jesus of Nazareth who was said to be the Christ. Jesus the Christ has a majestic grandeur as well as a dignified meaning for the entire humanity, and it is exactly this most fundamental characteristic of Christology, namely the human dignity of Christ, which raises the significance of Christianity above other world religions and philosophies.<sup>134</sup> As Baur points out, Christianity is not merely one of the many ways which lead to what he calls the “absolute standpoint;” on the contrary, Christianity is itself the absolute way which shows the way to the best understanding of what the idea of absoluteness means in connection with the notion of the spirit.<sup>135</sup> Should one desire to understand what the absolute spirit is, then Christianity is

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<sup>130</sup> For details about the external *Dasein* in Hegel, see also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 7–8.

<sup>131</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 716–717.

<sup>132</sup> More on Hegel’s Christology, in Vernon L. Purdy, *The Christology of John Macquarrie* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2009), 145ff.

<sup>133</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 494–495.

<sup>134</sup> Compare Christian Starck, “The Religious and Philosophical Background of Human Dignity and Its Place in Modern Constitutions,” 179–194, in David Kretzmer and Eckhart Klein (eds), *The Concept of Human Dignity in Human Rights Discourse* (The Hague: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 181.

<sup>135</sup> See Nishitani Keiji, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 9.

the option he or she should pursue. Christianity is the absolute way to the idea of absolute spirit because of its content, and especially because of its Christological content, because in Christian thought religion and philosophy are kept together. As far as Baur is concerned, religion and philosophy are in fact identical in Christian theology.<sup>136</sup> To be sure, Baur underlines, Christianity is not a mere form of theological thinking which is conditioned by the necessity to separate religion from philosophy. In Christianity, religion and philosophy coexist,<sup>137</sup> which means that faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the God-man Christ is identical with the rational understanding that Jesus Christ is the historical manifestation of the idea of absolute spirit in the reality of a finite, human spirit. This is why, for Baur, Christianity is able to see Christ in theandric terms only in relationship with faith.<sup>138</sup> The divine-human understanding of Christ is the objective connection between faith and philosophy because the real manifestation of Christ's person in history, namely his person seen as a divine-human reality manifested in history is the prerequisite for the liaison between belief and philosophy.<sup>139</sup> Baur also wants to make things clear concerning why faith grasped Jesus as the objective reality for the understanding of the unity between divinity and humanity. According to Baur, there was a necessary precondition for the truth which exists in itself to manifest itself in the unity between divine and human nature, and in order for the truth which exists in itself to be revealed through the connection between divinity and humanity the choice of the person of Jesus of Nazareth seen as the divine-human Christ seems to have been the best option. The unity between divinity and humanity is evident above all in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, so he is what Baur calls the "concrete truth"—a concept also present in He-

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<sup>136</sup> Compare Williamson, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, 3.

<sup>137</sup> Such a conviction is specific to Hegel. See Alister McGrath (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 4.

<sup>138</sup> Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 297–298.

<sup>139</sup> In this respect, Baur continues Hegel's philosophy which places the unity of divinity and humanity in the context of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. See Cooper, *Panentheism, the Other God of the Philosophers*, 113.

gel<sup>140</sup>—not only because he had a personal self-awareness of being the God-man Christ, but also because the truth which exists in itself was expressed and perceived as truth through the person of Jesus the Christ. Baur is convinced that these two aspects—Jesus’ self-awareness as the theandric Christ and his capacity to reveal the truth in itself as concrete truth—constitute the actual merit of Jesus. The next logical step is to ask how Jesus was capable of knowing the truth. In other words, how was he aware of the truth he was able to convey through his person and words.<sup>141</sup>

The issue of how Jesus Christ knew the truth about God as well as about he himself being the God-man Christ is fundamental for the explanation of Hegel’s system,<sup>142</sup> Baur contends. There are basically two possible ways to investigate this particular issue. First, is to point to the fact that Jesus Christ was aware of the truth about God and about himself as the God-man based on the reality of immanent concepts, which for Baur constitute the “adequate form” for the disclosure of truth. Second, there is also the reality of representation, which Baur considers an “untruthful form” for the same unveiling of truth. To be sure, truth—or in this case, Jesus’ own awareness about truth—can be expressed through either immanent concepts or representation, as in Hegel.<sup>143</sup> It is important, however, to realize that the undisputed reality of history must be included in the whole picture, even for the very simple reason that Jesus’ teachings and words are recorded in the documents of the New Testament. Given the variety of forms in which Jesus’ teachings and words are present in the documents of the New Testament, Baur seems to be convinced that from the standpoint of

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<sup>140</sup> See Peter Fuss, “Theory and Practice in Hegel and Marx: An Unfinished Dialogue,” 97–116, in Terence Ball (ed.), *Political Theory and Praxis. New Perspectives* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 101, and Curran, *Doctrine and Speculation in Schleiermacher’s Glaubenslehre*, 69.

<sup>141</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 717–718.

<sup>142</sup> See also Küng, *The Incarnation of God*, 22.

<sup>143</sup> For details about how Hegel understood representation in the context of Christianity as absolute religion, but also its relationship with Christ, see Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 301.



speculative thinking one could accept that Jesus knew the truth about God and about himself as being the God-man Christ through both immanent conceptualization<sup>144</sup> and representation,<sup>145</sup> which are both specific tools used by Hegel to explain his thought.<sup>146</sup> While conceptualization seems to point to speculative thought and philosophy,<sup>147</sup> representation could be connected with faith and religion,<sup>148</sup> consequently, while both conceptualization and representation were used to convey Jesus' awareness about truth, it is nevertheless speculative thought that seems to be superior to religious belief. This is why the image of Jesus as the God-man appears to be more important than the image of Jesus as a historical person who lived in Palestine. Thus, the image of Jesus as the God-man Christ conveys to humanity the very truth about the concept of God, while the image of Jesus as a historical person can

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<sup>144</sup> In Hegel, conceptualization is a method used to put phenomena in an abstract form. For instance, one can speak of the conceptualization of civil society, as in Roland Axtmann, *Liberal Democracy into the Twenty-First Century. Globalization, Integration, and the Nation-State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 59.

<sup>145</sup> Representation (*Vorstellung*) should not be confused with illustration or presentation (*Darstellung*). For an informative discussion about the resemblances and differences between *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung* in general, so not necessary with reference to Hegel, see George Hartley, *The Abyss of Representation. Marxism and the Postmodern Sublime* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 258. For an analysis of *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung* in Hegel, see Christopher Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>146</sup> See Francesca Michellini, "Thinking Life. Hegel's Conceptualization of Living Being as an Autopoietic Theory of Organized Systems," 75–96, in Luca Illetterati and Francesca Michellini (eds), *Purposiveness. Teleology between Nature and Mind* (Heusenstamm: Ontons Verlag, 2008).

<sup>147</sup> Especially the conceptualization of consciousness in Hegel, see Ho-chia Chueh, *Anxious Identity. Education, Difference, and Politics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2004), 24.

<sup>148</sup> For details about representation in Hegel, see Tom Rockmore, *Before and After Hegel. A Historical Introduction to Hegel's Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 121.

only represent a model for humanity. Both, however, are crucial in conveying Jesus' awareness of the truth, so Baur underlines that—in this respect—Hegel talks about the form and the content of rationality.<sup>149</sup> The form is different, but the content is the same, so from the standpoint of the form there is a fundamental difference between the concept of God as embodied in the image of Christ as conveyed by the speculative thinking of philosophy and the representation of the God-man through the historical person of Jesus as transmitted by the faith of religion.<sup>150</sup> This is the differentiation of form, which the philosophy of religion needs to work with. At the same time though, religious philosophy also works with an actual content, and this is the same because the image of Christ as present in philosophical thinking and the representation of the God-man as seen in religious faith both refer to the same content, the historical person of Jesus Christ.<sup>151</sup> This is why, for Baur, religious philosophy must work with both faith and reason when it comes to the person of Jesus Christ. Both form and content are important, but while form may take different shapes, content is always the same.<sup>152</sup>

The connection between form and content is crucial for Hegel,<sup>153</sup> as Baur clearly points out in his analysis. It is important to understand that faith can be absorbed by speculative thought both with reference to form and content; in other words, the form and content of faith can be taken into speculative rationality. Faith can be included into reason, which means that reason has the capacity

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<sup>149</sup> The form and content of rationality is essentially worldly, natural, and human. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 245–246.

<sup>150</sup> See also James Swindal, *Reflection Revisited. Jürgen Habermas's Discursive Theory of Truth* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 1999), 55.

<sup>151</sup> Frederic Ewen, *A Half-Century of Greatness The Creative Imagination of Europe, 1848–1884* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007), 172.

<sup>152</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 718–719.

<sup>153</sup> For a discussion about form and content in Hegel, see Michael J. Inwood, *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 1983), 28.

to work with the form and content of faith.<sup>154</sup> When this equation is applied to Christology, it means that the content of the doctrine of Jesus Christ can be used by philosophy. In other words, the doctrine of Jesus Christ makes up the very content of philosophy, so Christianity can be analyzed philosophically at least with reference to its teaching about Jesus Christ.<sup>155</sup> At the same time, the content of the doctrine of Christ seen as God-man speaks not only about the unity between divine and human nature, but also about the fact that it points to a truth in itself. Thus, the unity between divine and human nature is not only a belief, as professed by Christology, but also the object of philosophy since it points to the very truth which discloses the connection between humanity and divinity. What Baur wants to underline is that, in Hegel, the concept of truth can be expressed both through faith and reason, through belief and philosophy.<sup>156</sup> To be sure, the reality of truth can be investigated not only by the reason of philosophy but also by the faith of religion. In this respect, Baur underlines that Hegel's religious philosophy connects religion and philosophy, faith and reason, through the mediation offered by the concept of truth.<sup>157</sup> Thus, faith is able to see truth from the perspective of the unity between divine and human nature, which is revealed in history through the physical

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<sup>154</sup> For a discussion about how faith is included into reason, so that reason is the origin of faith, see George di Giovanni, "Religion, History, and Spirit in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," 226–245, in Kenneth R. Westphal (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 228.

<sup>155</sup> Hegel reportedly considered himself a Christian philosopher, in the sense that his philosophy reflects the content of the Christian religion. See Terry P. Pinkard, *German Philosophy, 1760–1860. The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 303.

<sup>156</sup> See Eric von der Luft, *God, Evil, and Ethics. A Primer in the Philosophy of Religion* (North Syracuse, NY: Gegensatz Press, 2004), 59–60, and Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 234.

<sup>157</sup> Richard J. Bernstein, *Radical Evil. A Philosophical Interrogation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, reprinted 2003), 69.

existence of the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>158</sup> At the same time, reason perceives truth from the standpoint of the spirit; to me more precise, from the perspective of the being of the spirit, which is made possible through the mediation between history and religious awareness.<sup>159</sup> The only problem is that conceptually, from the perspective of pure ideas or speculative thinking, the content of Christology does not coincide with the historical manifestation thereof, which is the form. In other words, the content of Christology cannot come together with the form of Christology in speculative thinking; the theandric nature of Christ cannot be rationally accepted as objective truth when connected with the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>160</sup> Hegel's religious philosophy can accept the form of Christology, namely the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth because this is confirmed by physical certainty. Nevertheless, when it comes to accepting the content of Christology, namely the theandric nature of Christ based on the historical existence of his person, a further step needs to be taken and this consists of the elevation of faith to the level of reason. This is why Baur explains that faith needs to be accepted as the transformation of historical realities into spiritual realities.<sup>161</sup> When the content of faith is based on this transformation of history into spirituality, the very reality of faith itself is elevated to the level of reason and therefore religion becomes philosophy.<sup>162</sup> Thus, although from the standpoint of rea-

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<sup>158</sup> See, Jonathan Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity. Walking to Heaven Backward* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005), chapter 5.

<sup>159</sup> See also Jon Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss. Hegel's Anticipation of Psychoanalysis* (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 2002), 99–100.

<sup>160</sup> More about form and content in Hegel's Christology, see Robert P. Scharlemann, *The Reason of Following*, Volume 1: Christology and the Ecstatic (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1991), 87–88.

<sup>161</sup> This process has a powerful ethical component. See Jean Greisch, "Otherness: An Ethical Category?," in 171–196, in Guillaume de Stexhe and Johan Verstraeten (eds), *Matter of Breath. Foundations for Professional Ethics* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 183.

<sup>162</sup> Once religion becomes philosophy, the two have the same goal, which is reconciliation, namely putting together the Jesus of religion and

son, the form and content of Christology are two different realities, from the perspective of faith, the form and content of Christology can go together. However, when the faith of religion is absorbed into the reason of philosophy, the conviction of faith that content and form are two different elements that are brought together can be simultaneously upheld with the assurance of reason which understands that the content of Christology—the theandric nature of Christ—can be detached from its form—the historical existence of Jesus—or it can simply be absorbed into the spirituality of philosophy.<sup>163</sup> In other words, if there is a contrast between the content of Christology or the theandric nature of Christ and the form of Christology or the historical existence of Jesus, the content can be explained philosophically, from the perspective of the pure idea of the spirit.<sup>164</sup>

In reading Hegel, Baur is utterly preoccupied with the relationship between form and content at the level of belief, which means that—in his thought—form and content should never be set apart in religious faith.<sup>165</sup> As far as religion is concerned and its reality of faith, form cannot be separated from content because the truth of religious content is unable to exist in a way which is different from its form.<sup>166</sup> In other words, as Baur plainly explains, religious faith is based on a content which originates in the form of an external historical manifestation; in the case of Christianity itself, faith presupposes the indelible connection between the content of the idea of Christ and the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth,

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history and the Christ of philosophy and spirit. See Diogenes Allen and Eric O. Springsted, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, first edition 1985), 179.

<sup>163</sup> For details about the relationship between religion and philosophy in Hegel, see Rüdiger Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 119–122.

<sup>164</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 719–720.

<sup>165</sup> See also Houlgate, “G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to His Life and Thought,” 1–20, in Houlgate and Baur (eds), *A Companion to Hegel*, 13, and Hinchman, *Hegel’s Critique of the Enlightenment*, 132.

<sup>166</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 353.

as in Hegel.<sup>167</sup> If anything else is promoted as being more important than this form, namely the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth, which for religious faith coincides with the idea of Christ, the immediate result is the dichotomy between form and content, which is not proper to religious faith and is a departure from Hegel.<sup>168</sup> If form and content are detached from one another beyond the realm of religious faith, it means that the archetypal Christ is set above the historical Jesus, so this dichotomy runs through the entire thinking process pointing to the fact that Baur no longer has religious faith in mind but rather philosophical or speculative reason, which is specific to Hegel's approach.<sup>169</sup> Eventually, when the archetypal Christ is seen in contrast or at least as separated from the historical Jesus, Baur is convinced that the bare or the pure idea grows to incorporate both the pure content and the pure form.<sup>170</sup> One should not lose sight of the fact that at this point, Baur refers to Hegel's philosophical reason, not to the reality of religious faith. When form and content are detached from each other, it means that there is contrast between religion and philosophy, between faith and reason, and Baur wonders whether this opposition is absolute or relative. Following Hegel, Baur does not seem inclined to believe in the absolute opposition between faith and reason because, if so, then all truth would be closed to faith; in other words, if the opposition between faith and reason is absolute, truth would no longer be available to religion.<sup>171</sup> Philosophy would reign supreme, while religion would be excluded from any possibil-

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<sup>167</sup> This is a later development because, earlier in his career, Hegel connected faith exclusively with the reality of eternal truths, not the phenomena of history. See Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993, reprinted 1995), 88–89.

<sup>168</sup> See Andrew Shanks, *Faith in Honesty. The Essential Nature of Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 70.

<sup>169</sup> Compare Goldstein, *Hegel's Idea of the Good Life*, 96.

<sup>170</sup> See also Morgan, "Ferdinand Christian Baur," 261–291, in Smart, Clayton, Sherry, and Katz (eds), *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, Volume 1, 274.

<sup>171</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 364.

ity to grasp truth whatsoever. This also means that if there is a sheer opposition between faith and reason, there is no reason that can be said to exist as separate from faith.<sup>172</sup> In other words, from the perspective of truth, only reason is right, while faith is wrong, so reason is not longer defined based on the existence of faith but rather without any faith at all. The immediate implication is that if only reason is left with the grasp of truth, while faith has no access to it, it means that there is no true religious philosophy. If the opposition between faith and reason is absolute, then one can defend the existence of philosophy, while religious philosophy is denied altogether. On the other hand, if the opposition between faith and reason is relative, then the differentiation between faith and reason is acknowledged as such, but religious philosophy cannot be denied any longer since it works with both faith and reason as having access to the plenitude of truth.<sup>173</sup> When applied to Christianity, the separation between the historical Jesus and the ideal Christ reaches its perfection because it is the essence of Hegel's religious philosophy.<sup>174</sup>

Baur is very careful to make sure that the distinction between the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of faith is clearly made. This is why he insists that the ideal Christ,<sup>175</sup> who is in fact the Christ of faith seen as God-man, plays a distinct role in Hegel's religious philosophy because he is fundamentally different from the Christ pictured by Schleiermacher.<sup>176</sup> According to Baur, while Schleiermacher depicts Christ the archetype of humanity,

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<sup>172</sup> Compare Etienne Balibar, "Constructions and Deconstructions of the Universal," 47–70, in Jean-Philippe Deranty, Danielle Petherbridge, John Rundell, and Robert Sinnerbrink (eds), *Recognition, Work, Politics. New Directions in French Critical Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 57–58.

<sup>173</sup> See also Bernstein, *Radical Evil*, 69.

<sup>174</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 720–721.

<sup>175</sup> For an analysis of the differences between Hegel's Christology and that of Schleiermacher, see Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism*, 84.

<sup>176</sup> See Clinton Bennett, *In Search of Jesus. Insider and Outsider Images* (London: Continuum, 2001), 103–104.

Hegel sees Christ as the “pure idea,”<sup>177</sup> the very union between the finite and the infinite Spirit.<sup>178</sup> In this capacity which allows him to incorporate the finitude and infinitude of the spirit, Hegel’s ideal Christ is the very truth which exists in itself.<sup>179</sup> This ideal Christ though, who is the object of speculative thought and philosophical reason, cannot exist without what Baur calls “the person of the God-man,” which points to the historical Jesus of Nazareth as the object of religious faith. Philosophical reason and religious faith come together in Hegel because, as Baur points out, the ideal Christ as representative of the pure idea and the unity between the finitude and infinitude of the spirit is inextricably linked with the historical Jesus as proof of the material existence of humanity. The ideal Christ is investigated by philosophical reason as the truth in itself, while the historical Jesus is analyzed by religious faith as historical truth.<sup>180</sup> Jesus of Nazareth, however, as promoted by religious faith in his human capacity points to two distinct realities: first, the individual person of Jesus of Nazareth, who existed in history and displays his real connection with humanity in general, and second, the pure ideality of truth which is based on the historicity of Jesus. This means that even before philosophy is able to speak of the ideal Christ based on the evaluation of reason, religion demonstrates that the historical Jesus of Nazareth has the capacity to disclose not only his sheer humanity, but also his ideality.<sup>181</sup> In other words, even historical truth—through the mediation of religious faith—points to an ideal reality which is confirmed by the truth in itself as revealed by philosophical reason. This is why, for

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<sup>177</sup> Compare Zachhuber, “Theologie auf historisch-religions-philosophischer Grundlage,” 193–208, in Arnds, Barth, und Gräb (Hrsg.), *Christentum—Staat—Kultur*, 205, n. 48.

<sup>178</sup> Hegel details his understanding of the pure idea in Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 223ff.

<sup>179</sup> See Rasoul Najadmehr, *Education, Science, and Truth* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 153.

<sup>180</sup> Also read Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus. The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 77.

<sup>181</sup> See Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*, 14.



Baur, the God-man or the historical Jesus is in fact the unity between divinity and humanity; the historical Jesus represents humanity which wants to become one with God, an idea which resembles Hegel's notion of "submerging" that speaks about man's desire to submerge himself in God's otherness.<sup>182</sup> The historical person of Jesus, which is seen through faith as the God-man Christ, is able to realize the concept of religion through his bodily existence in history. The historical Jesus of Nazareth, his life and deeds are so relevant from the standpoint of religion that they speak about the religion's most fundamental convictions, such as man's aspiration that his life should be transferred from earth into heaven and man's desire to become one with God.<sup>183</sup> In other words, from a religious perspective, the historical person of Jesus is capable of conveying man's belief in heaven and the possibility of life with God. It appears that, as far as Baur is concerned, the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth is crucial for Hegel's religious philosophy simply because he manages to capture the plenitude of divinity. Thus, from the perspective of religion and religious faith, the historical Jesus or the divine-human Christ, the God-man himself, exists in the incarnate truth and reality of history.<sup>184</sup> In other words, the unity between divinity and humanity, between the spirit and man, is inconceivable outside the reality and truthfulness of history. The God-man Christ of religious faith, which is in fact the historical Jesus of Nazareth, is constantly present in the reality of history because he celebrates—for the whole of humanity—the eternal victory of life over death through what religion considers his resurrec-

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<sup>182</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, second edition, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1968, reprinted 1977), 336.

<sup>183</sup> See also Robert M. Burns and Hugh Rayment-Pickard (eds), *Philosophies of History. From Enlightenment to Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 66–67.

<sup>184</sup> Compare Uwe C. Scharf, *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation. Interpreting the Divine-Human Interplay in Paul Tillich's Work* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 49.

tion and ascension to heaven.<sup>185</sup> This is solid proof that Hegel's system, Baur contends, is based on the concrete notion of the historical Christ, which is the historical Jesus of Nazareth whom religious faith sees as the God-man Christ.<sup>186</sup> Christ, however, is the human embodiment of the idea of divine being, which should be the starting point for any religious and philosophical discourse aiming at investigating the relationship between God and man in history, in the material world, as evident in Böhme.

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<sup>185</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 300–301.

<sup>186</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 721.



## CHAPTER 3. GOD: BAUR'S VIEW OF RELIGION AS GNOSIS BASED ON BÖHME'S VIEW OF THE DIVINE BEING

### THE ESSENCE OF THE DIVINE BEING

Böhme's discourse about the being of God is a presentation of the essence of the divine being which seems to have moral and ethical overtones.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that the way he understands the being of God is fashioned in accordance with what he sees in the human being as well as in the material world in general, so there is a fundamental resemblance between the two beings—divine and human—based primarily on his apprehension of the main features of the latter.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Böhme points out that the soul (the mind, or reason) exists in darkness and, in the same time, it holds its will towards light.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the most fundamental state of reason is its dwelling in darkness, but its essential feature—the will—has the capacity to contemplate the light in order to give birth to light. This is to say

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, in Böhme, wrath is part of the divine being. See William Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others. Ways of Being and Mind* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 337, n. 13.

<sup>2</sup> In this respect, Böhme's influence on Schelling is evident. See Joseph A. Bracken, SJ, *The Divine Matrix. Creativity as Link between East and West* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997, first published by Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 46. See also Carl Michalson, "Existentialism Is a Mysticism," 355–368, in *Theology Today* 12.3 (1955): 356.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Andrew Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein. A Literary and Intellectual History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 22.

that another key characteristic of reason is to produce light due to its will.<sup>4</sup> If this were not the case, Böhme argues, there would be no will and no birth. It is important to notice at this point that the dualism between darkness and light not only connects reason with will, but also empowers reason to step outside itself in a movement which takes it from darkness to light. There is another important aspect which Böhme underlines with reference to reason, namely that reason also stays within anxiety and cravings, because the essence of the will itself is the reality of need.<sup>5</sup> This is why Böhme stresses that the need is the will, because the will is characterized by this powerful necessity which is the reality of craving. While the will seems to be strongly moved by need, Böhme also shows that the will holds within itself the power of virtue. It is here that Böhme's understanding of the divine being acquires an evident moral distinctiveness. It is crucial to understand that while the will captures within itself the reality of virtue, it is the same virtue which impregnates reason.<sup>6</sup> This is obviously the logical conclusion of Böhme's idea that reason is characterized by will, so when he says that the will has virtue, then it follows that reason also—which encompasses the will—has virtue amongst its most fundamental features. In Böhme, therefore, both reason and will—or, to be more precise, the reason which contains the will—share the same power of virtue, which seems to define not only the being of God, but also the human being.<sup>7</sup> Another aspect which needs to be highlighted here resides in the fact that Böhme appears to describe the

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<sup>4</sup> See Alan Gregory, *Quenching Hell. The Mystical Theology of William Law* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 2008), 82.

<sup>5</sup> For an interesting study which connects Böhme's theology (and especially his view of anxiety) with contemporary culture in New Mexico, which also hints at liberation theology, see Alvin O. Korte, "El Desmadre. Curse and Disorder," 255–276, in Felipe Gonzales (ed.), *Expressing New Mexico. Nuevomexicano Creativity, Ritual, and Memory* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2007), 275.

<sup>6</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 561.

<sup>7</sup> See also Margaret A. Doody, "The Gnostic *Clarissa*," 210–245, in David Blewett (ed.), *Passion and Virtue. Essays on the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 229–230.

morality of the divine being in terms which present virtue as the capacity to move from darkness to light. This particular capacity is a characteristic of the will in Böhme, but as the will is held within reason—so the will is a feature of reason—then it means the same capacity to move from darkness to light also characterizes reason. Consequently, in Böhme, reason encompasses the will, which in turn holds within itself the power of virtue, namely the capacity to move from darkness to light.<sup>8</sup> This is why, in Böhme's thought, both reason and the will are essentially moral.

The inner constitution of God's being in Böhme can be explained by means of the concept of God's kingdom.<sup>9</sup> The relationship between the being of God and the kingdom of God acquires specific features in Böhme since the two aspects appear to be identical. This becomes evident when Böhme explains that the kingdom of God stays in the power of virtue.<sup>10</sup> Although the normal logical assumption in this case would be to consider the kingdom of God in terms of externality in comparison with the being of God—in the sense that the kingdom of God is external to the being of God—Böhme places the two within one single notion which defines the essence of divine being as he understands it. Thus, since the kingdom of God resides in the power of virtue, now virtue has to be defined and it is obvious right away that, in Böhme, virtue is presented in trinitarian terms.<sup>11</sup> To be even more precise, he points out that virtue is the Holy Trinity, namely God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Böhme, however, adds a

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<sup>8</sup> Compare Kevin Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit. William Blake, Jakob Boehme, and the Creative Spirit* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2004), 73.

<sup>9</sup> See R. G. Clouse, "Boehme, Jakob," 179, in Walter E. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1984, reprinted 2001), 179.

<sup>10</sup> For details about the connection between the divine being and virtue in Böhme, see Robert E. Montgomery, *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence. Beyond Philosophy and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 176.

<sup>11</sup> See also David Ovason, *Shakespeare's Secret Booke. Deciphering Magical and Rosicrucian Codes* (Forest Row: Clairview Books, 2010), 178.

brief explanation beside each member of the Holy Trinity, which explains not only the reality of virtue as the essential component of the kingdom of God, but also the way he sees each of them in relationship to virtue.<sup>12</sup> When he says that virtue is God the Father, Böhme means that light makes virtue visible to the will. At this point, he indicates that the will is God the Son, because—in virtue—light is being born for ever and ever. Then, Böhme explains that the Holy Spirit comes from virtue in the light, so the Holy Spirit gives birth to the will of the eternal being anew in the obscure or gloomy reason (soul, or mind). One can easily notice, therefore, that in Böhme the Holy Trinity, namely God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit can be identified with virtue, will, and light.<sup>13</sup> These three aspects make up the Godhead, and they also hold within themselves what Böhme calls “the intermediary principle,” in accordance to which God is fundamentally good, so he can be presented in terms of love, light, and virtue. At this point, Böhme’s essential dualism becomes salient again in showing that the goodness of God would not be possible if it had not been for the reason’s dwelling in darkness. In other words, the reality of the divine being is possible for Böhme only when one understands that goodness—namely love, light, and virtue—can be explained exclusively by comparison with the reality of darkness.<sup>14</sup> To use Böhme’s rendering, God would not be eternal wisdom and

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<sup>12</sup> Böhme’s cryptic thought may allow for the divine Trinity to be seen through immanentist lens, in the sense that the divine Trinity is an image of the human being’s capacity to transcend its own self through virtue. See Hajime Nakamura, *A Comparative History of Ideas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992), 433, and Robert D. Denham, *Northrop Frye. Religious Visionary and Architect of the Spiritual World* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 174.

<sup>13</sup> See John Hoyles, *The Edges of Augustanism. The Aesthetics of Spirituality in Thomas Ken, John Byrom, and William Law* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 121–122.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Reflections on New Age and the Secularization of Nature,” 22–32, in Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts, and Geoffrey Samuel (eds), *Nature and Religion Today. Paganism in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 28.

knowledge, unless the soul (mind, or reason) did not dwell in darkness. In other words, darkness can only be explained, as well as understood, when compared with the opposing reality of light and vice versa. In Böhme, however, this is not just a logical inference pertaining to the reality of physical reality; it is the very reasoning which defines the inner constitution of the divine being. God, therefore, is good—and, in being God, he is also love, light, and virtue—because we are aware of the reality of darkness which engulfs reason. Böhme’s dualism is evident here because he cannot conceive darkness in monistic terms; this is to say that he cannot accept the singularity of the reality of darkness.<sup>15</sup> In Böhme, darkness cannot exist on its own; darkness does exist but only in connection with its opposing reality, which is light, and—with reference to the being of God—light goes hand in hand with love and virtue, while they all define what Böhme calls the “goodness of God.”<sup>16</sup>

Having gone through this very detailed explanation offered by Böhme with reference to the essence of the divine being, Baur points out that, as far as he is concerned, Böhme’s presentation of God is the eternal birth of the divine essence.<sup>17</sup> The idea of the divine essence, coupled with the notion of eternal birth,<sup>18</sup> gives

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<sup>15</sup> Böhme’s dualism of light and darkness can be translated into similar conceptual pairs: heaven and hell, good and evil, eternity and time, beginning and end, love and hate (anger or wrath in Böhme). See Jan van Meurs, “William Blake and His Gnostic Myths,” 269–310, in Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 289.

<sup>16</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 10:35–39, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 561–562.

<sup>17</sup> More details about the eternal birth of God in Böhme, in Georg Nicolaus, *C. G. Jung and Nikolai Berdyaev. Individuation and the Person: A Critical Comparison* (Hove: Routledge, 2011), 49.

<sup>18</sup> It is clear that, based on this consideration, Böhme’s thought accommodates the idea of theogony. See W. Paul Jones, “Trinitarian Thoughts on Descending into the Grand Canyon,” 333–343, in *Theology Today* 49.3 (1992): 338.



Böhme the opportunity to draft a theoretical image of God.<sup>19</sup> This is because the very concept of divine essence is realized by means of the idea of the eternal birth of the divine essence. The eternal birth seems to be a process with different stages which can be distinguished at least in two ways. Consequently, the eternal birth of God's being can be understood first from the standpoint of its own divine essence, and second in relationship with Satan.<sup>20</sup> Böhme's dualism is evident again, as the idea of divine being is characterized by eternity and in his thought eternity seems to include not only the concept of divine essence, but also the opposing notion of Satan. What is even more important at this stage is the fact that the eternity of God's essence and being are contrasted not only with the idea of Satan, but also with the reality of the world and the human being. In other words, Böhme's dualism consists of two distinct realities: on the one hand, the eternal birth of the divine essence and being, while on the other, one can see the juxtaposition of Satan, the world, and the human being.<sup>21</sup> Böhme's notion of divine essence and being cannot be understood without the opposing idea of Satan, which in turn is connected with the world and the human being. It is, at the end of the day, as if the very essence and being of God were defined in accordance with the realities of the world and the human being, which present the being of God in sharp contrast with the idea of Satan.<sup>22</sup> Böhme also points out—and Baur is keenly aware of this—that both the essence of God and its eternal birth should be seen based on the very process of life, which confirms once more that, in Böhme, the divine being of God is understood through the mundane realities of the world and of the human be-

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<sup>19</sup> Compare Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Volume 2 (London: Routledge, 2002, first published 1969), 156.

<sup>20</sup> See also John Hunt, *Pantheism and Christianity* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2012, first published 1884), 193.

<sup>21</sup> For details about Böhme's dualism seen as a Gnostic feature, see Kenneth Rexroth, "Gnosticism," 132–142, in Bradford Morrow (ed.), *World outside the Window. The Selected Essays of Kenneth Rexroth* (New York, NY: New Directions Publishing, 1987), 140–141.

<sup>22</sup> Compare Jeffrey B. Russell, *Mephistopheles. The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 52.

ing. At the same time, however, even if he attempts to present the essence of the divine being based on the realities one can see in the world, Böhme is careful to establish that the process of life is made possible based on the activity of the principles which define the essence of God.<sup>23</sup> When it comes to the essence of God, Böhme insists that God is a triune God, and the trinity of God is the very eternal and necessary birth of the God that gives birth to his own being.<sup>24</sup> This particular idea of the birth of the God that produces his own being and essence is paramount since it represents the very essence of God's life. In other words, God cannot be conceived as a living God without the reality of the fact that God himself gives birth to his own being, and this idea of the divine being which gives birth to its own essence can only be explained in trinitarian terms.<sup>25</sup>

### THE TRINITARIAN GOD

Any discourse about God should be trinitarian, and Böhme explains this in minute detail. This is why he points out that, should we want to talk about God, then we have to accept that we need to discuss about the Holy Trinity.<sup>26</sup> The idea of trinity does not destroy the fundamental unity of God, so when we talk about God, we must underline that there is only one God.<sup>27</sup> The fact that there is only one God must then be detailed in an explanation which pre-

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<sup>23</sup> See also Lewis Owens, *Creative Destruction. Nikos Kazantzakis and the Literature of Responsibility* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 49.

<sup>24</sup> See John P. Dourley, *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung, and the Recovery of Religion* (Hove: Routledge, 2008), 88.

<sup>25</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 4:57, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 562.

<sup>26</sup> See Jill Raitt, "European Reformations of Christian Spirituality (1450–1700)," 122–138, in Arthur Holder (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011, first published 2005), 131–132.

<sup>27</sup> The unity of God remains valid despite Böhme's fundamental dualism of light and darkness. See also Urszula Szulakowska, *The Alchemy of Light. Geometry and Optics in Late Renaissance Alchemical Illustration* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 180.

sents the characteristics of each member of the Holy Trinity. First, Böhme offers a presentation of God the Father, which is very much in line with traditional theology, so it stands in line with Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Thus, God the Father is seen as the creator of all things, which means that all things are his and everything that exists belongs to him.<sup>28</sup> All the things which exist in the universe share a powerful connection with him and, as Böhme stresses here, everything originates in him and comes from him. At the same time, the fact that God is the origin of all things does not mean that he distanced himself from his creation; on the contrary, there is an eternal connection between him and his creation, so this is why Böhme reveals that everything remains in him forever.<sup>29</sup> Second, Böhme points out that our discourse about God must include references about God the Son, precisely because God is trinitarian, so he exists in three persons. This implies that God the Father has from eternity given birth to his Son. This eternal birth of God the Son from God the Father happens from the latter, so the point of origin here is God the Father, but not in the sense that he delivered another being.<sup>30</sup> Birth here has more the connotation of eternal relationship, so the reality of the Son's origin is the reality of his eternal relationship with God the Father. God the Son—

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<sup>28</sup> See Paul R. Hinlicky, *Paths not Taken. Fates of Theology from Luther through Leibniz* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 69.

<sup>29</sup> Compare David A. Leeming, Kathryn Madden, Stanton Marlan (eds), *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* (New York, NY: Springer, 2010), 4.

<sup>30</sup> The idea of the eternal birth of the Son precedes Böhme since it can also be found in Meister Eckhart. See Linda Brown Hold, *Viewing Meister Eckhart through the Bhagavad Gita* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2004), 22–23, Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 148, Richard Woods, *Meister Eckhart. Master of Mystics* (London: Continuum, 2011), 73, C. F. Kelley, *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge* (Berkeley, CA: DharmaCafé Books and Frog Books, 2009, first published 1997), 244, and James G. Hart, *What One Is, Book 2: Existenz and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Berlin: Springer, 2009), 395.

Böhme shows—is the heart, light, and love of God the Father.<sup>31</sup> At this point, Böhme clearly insists again that the idea of the Son's eternal birth from God the Father is not an issue of origination, but rather an actuality which should be explain in terms of a perpetual relationship.<sup>32</sup> This is why Böhme underlines the fact that God the Father and God the Son do not exist as two distinct beings or essences; they exist as two distinct persons who share the same unique and singular being and essence. Having established the uniqueness and singularity of God's being and essence, Böhme proceeds with the third aspect of the Holy Trinity, which is the person of the Holy Spirit. When he mentions the Holy Spirit, Böhme tells his readers that this particular discourse about the divine being is based on Scripture, and it is Scripture that speaks about the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup> When it comes to the Spirit, Böhme says that he comes from the Father and the Son, so he exists as a distinct person himself, but at the same time he constitutes one single and unique divine being with God the Father and God the Son. He writes that there is one being in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; this is the correct discourse about God—Böhme insists—and this is how we should talk about the divine being.<sup>34</sup>

For Böhme, God the Father is the source of everything; he is the originator of all things that exists. This is why he also describes him as the “most authentic being of all beings.” It is compulsory to

<sup>31</sup> More about the connection between the Son and the Father in Böhme, see Guinn Batten, “‘Where All the Ladders Start’: Identity, Ideology, and the Ghosts of the Romantic Subject in the Poetry of Yeates and Muldoon,” 245–280, in Ghislaine McDayter, Guinn Batten, and Barry Milligan (eds), *Romantic Generations. Essays in Honor of Robert F. Gleckner* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2001), 262.

<sup>32</sup> Compare Miklós Vassányi, *Anima Mundi. The Rise of the World Soul Theory in Modern German Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 145.

<sup>33</sup> Although he was not a Lutheran in the strict sense of the word, Böhme attempted to fall within the category when he insisted that the Holy Spirit was the spirit of faith. See Steven Fanning, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001, reprinted, 2006), 145.

<sup>34</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 4:57, 58, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 562.

see God the Father as the origin of everything, because he is the reason why the other principle emerges in the birth of the Son. Böhme depicts God the Father as the source of all sources, which allows for the origination of the Son from the Father's very being.<sup>35</sup> The Son is presented as God's heart, love, light, beauty, and gentle goodness, so the original essence of the Father seems to be described based on the characteristics of the Son.<sup>36</sup> There is another principle involved here, different from that which works in the Father, so in Böhme, the Father seems to be somehow different from the Son, although the two share the same divine essence. As a matter of fact, Böhme appears to be convinced that the Father and the Son are radically different despite their unique and singular essence that they both share. While the Father is wrathful and fierce,<sup>37</sup> the Son is love, light, beauty, and goodness.<sup>38</sup> The two divine entities though still share the same unique essence, so their individual "persons" seems to complete each other. One can easily notice here Böhme's propensity for a dualistic understanding of God, even if or rather despite his trinitarian understanding of the divine being. In Böhme, the Son reconciles the Father in a loving and merciful way. What Böhme seems to be doing here is an attempt to present the possibility of having one essence with two opposing features.<sup>39</sup> Thus, there is the divine being, on the one hand, and the persons of God the Father and God the Son as opposing manifestations of

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<sup>35</sup> See Elisabeth Hurth, *Between Faith and Unbelief. American Transcendentalists and the Challenge of Atheism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 159.

<sup>36</sup> Compare Eberhard Arnold, *Innerland. A Guide into the Heart of the Gospel* (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1999), 313.

<sup>37</sup> See Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 193.

<sup>38</sup> In other words, the Son is the Father's heart. See Louis Roy, *Mystical Consciousness. Western Perspectives and dialogue with Japanese Thinkers* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 147.

<sup>39</sup> See John P. Dourley, *On Behalf of the Mystical Fool. Jung on the Religious Situation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 62.

the one, single divine essence, on the other hand.<sup>40</sup> It is, therefore, a fundamental distinction between God and the Godhead in Böhme.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the essence of things appears to be fundamentally dualistic, and this is an observation that Böhme borrows from the reality of nature. Good and evil exist in the world, in the very essence of natural reality, and if nature is God's creation, then it follows that the being of God himself must be the same since he created the world. The world has its origins in God and, as the world is essentially dualistic, then it must be that God himself has a dualistic essence or even a "dark side."<sup>42</sup> It is important to notice that, in Böhme, while the Father and the Son share the same unique essence, their individual characteristics seem to exist on their own. Thus, the joy, love, and bliss which exist in the Son appear to be self-sufficient, so they do not depend on the "person" of the Father despite the fact that he shares the same essence with the Son. When it comes to describe the Spirit, Böhme writes that he comes from the Father and the Son, so his origin lies in both the Father and the Son. The Spirit, therefore, shares the characteristics of both the Father and the Son, because he places together bitterness and sweetness, wrathfulness and gentleness, severity and mercy. The Spirit seems to represent the reality which makes the reconciliation between the Father and the Son possible, so the Spirit is the possibility of reconciliation for the opposing features of the same essence.<sup>43</sup> The direct implication of this reasoning is that the spirit lies at the very core of dualism. According to Böhme, dualism presupposes one essence with two different, clearly opposing, characteristics which are reconciled through and by means of the

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<sup>40</sup> See also Edward A. Beach, *The Potencies of God(s). Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 70, and O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 70.

<sup>41</sup> Roy L. Hart, "Godhead and God," 47–65, in Lissa McCullough and Brian Schroeder (eds), *Thinking through the Death of God. A Critical Companion to Thomas J. J. Altizer* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 50.

<sup>42</sup> See Michael S. Horton, *Lord and Servant. A Covenant Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 38.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Cooper, *Panentheism, the Other God of the Philosophers*, 60–61.

Spirit. With reference to the divine being, the Spirit is the spring of gentleness, which “baptizes” everything, including the opposing features of the divine dualistic essence. It seems that the Spirit is capable of understanding both the Father and the Son to such a degree that he works the reconciliation between them following his “being” in both Father and Son. In other words, the Spirit was once in the Father, then he was in the Son, so he knows both individual realities which he reconciles to one another.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, Böhme seems to promote gentleness, meekness, and mercy (the Spirit) as the most fundamental features of the divine being, which are capable of putting together—by means of reconciliation—the opposing features of wrath and grimness (the Father), on the one hand, and love, joy, and goodness (the Son), on the other. This can also mean that the essence of the divine being is the Spirit, the only reality which can reconcile the fundamental duality of its essence and confer universality to it.<sup>45</sup> As the divine being is the origin of the human being, the same principle should be applicable, so the essence of the human being is the Spirit, which is the only capable reality thereof which can reconcile the opposing characteristics of its fundamental dualist structure.

Böhme is very interested in the Holy Spirit and he details his actions in a way which sums up all the characteristics of the Father and the Son.<sup>46</sup> The Holy Spirit seems to gather all the features of both the Father and the Son, so he dwells in each one, while he is still an independent person. The Spirit, however, seems to define himself better in relationship with the Son, and Böhme insists a little on the connection between the Son and the Spirit. Thus, the birth of the Son authenticates itself in fire, so he gets his person and name from the lighting up of the gentle and bright light which

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<sup>44</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 562–563.

<sup>45</sup> See Tim Murphy, *The Politics of Spirit. Phenomenology, Genealogy, and Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 93.

<sup>46</sup> For details about the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in Böhme, see Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis. Historical Outlines of Western Spirituality in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Thought* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004), 120.

he himself is.<sup>47</sup> The concept of light as attached to the Son is crucial for Böhme because it explains the Son's relationship with the Father.<sup>48</sup> The Son embodies the goodness of the Father and is rightly known as the heart of the Father. He is nevertheless a distinct person from the Father but the connection between them is so strong that he is indeed the Father's heart.<sup>49</sup> The entire being of the Son is virtue and light, so Böhme underlines again that the Son is correctly acknowledged as the very power of God. At this point, it is important to realize that Böhme's definition of the Holy Spirit—though not cut off from the presentation of the Father—is drafted in an evident connection with the person of the Son. This is why Böhme is convinced that the Holy Spirit cannot be known before the light in the presence of the Father, but rather when the gentle source springs in light. It is as if God the Father were beyond any possibility of knowledge, so we can know him only when his essence becomes visible in the light of the Spirit.<sup>50</sup> In other words, we see the light of the Spirit, which is the light of God poured into the person of the Son. This presents us the Spirit as the power of the light and of the divine spring, since the Spirit originates in God's great joy.<sup>51</sup> The Spirit becomes individualized as he comes out as an all-powerful Spirit in the great bliss of divine light and spring. Consequently, the Spirit appears to represent the centre

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<sup>47</sup> See also Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit. A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 41.

<sup>48</sup> See Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990, reprinted 1993), 487.

<sup>49</sup> Pavel A. Florenskii, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 57.

<sup>50</sup> God's spirit can be understood here as man's spirit. See Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade. A Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 34.

<sup>51</sup> This also points to the human spirit as the result of God's joy. See Iris L. Russell, *The Human Sacrifice* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005), 186.



of all essences as he authenticates the light of life in the light of the Son and the heart of the Father.<sup>52</sup>

Böhme is careful to underline that the Holy Spirit must be considered a different person, an entity that exists on its own because he exists as the living power which comes from the Father and the Son. At the same time, the Holy Spirit confirms the eternal birth of the trinity.<sup>53</sup> This observation is crucial for the understanding of Böhme's perspective on the Holy Spirit, who is seen as the connection between the Father and the Son; he is the quintessence which places the Father and the Son together from the perspective of the qualities they share as they are all part of the Godhead.<sup>54</sup> The Holy Spirit is a different person from the Father and the Son, but he also encapsulates the features of both. This is why Böhme shows that he confirms the eternal birth of the trinity; the qualities of the Father, Son, and Spirit are the same in terms of their unique divine essence which they all share, and this is confirmation of the fact that they have been forever like that, namely three distinct persons sharing the same divine essence.<sup>55</sup> According to the quality of the principles involved in the existence of the trinity, as well as of the members of the trinity, Böhme points out that what matters in this respect is the notion of relationship.<sup>56</sup> The Spirit does not only confirm the eternal birth of the trinity, which discloses that the Fa-

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<sup>52</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 4:59, 60, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 563–564.

<sup>53</sup> Compare O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, 129.

<sup>54</sup> The idea of quality is related to the notion of eternal birth, which indicates that there is a constant progression within the Godhead; as if God were characterized by becoming. This idea is common to Böhme and Goethe, see Ronald D. Gray, *Goethe the Alchemist. A Study of Alchemical Symbolism in Goethe's Literary and Scientific Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 42.

<sup>55</sup> This can be extended to human beings, in the sense that the divine essence is also to be found in all people. See Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtles. The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 177.

<sup>56</sup> See Aidan Nichols, OP, *Redeeming Beauty. Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 80–81.

ther, Son, and Spirit, share the same unique divine essence despite their individual personhood; the Spirit proves that his relationship to the Son is different from the relationship he has with the Father precisely because of their individual standing as divine persons. The Holy Spirit speaks of the plurality of the divine being, while the Son proves the unity thereof;<sup>57</sup> this is demonstrated by the fact that the Son shows forth the qualities of the Father, while the Spirit underlines the qualities of both the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit must be seen as a different person in the trinity because he displays not only all the powers and virtues of the Father, which have the quality to form and create, but also the unmeasurable and the uncountable birth of God's heart.<sup>58</sup> In Böhme, the Holy Spirit seems to confirm the infinity and eternity of the divine being,<sup>59</sup> on the one hand, as he captures within himself all the qualities of the Father and the Son, as well as the individuality of the members of the trinity, on the other hand, since he stands in different, particular, and specific relationships with the Father and the Son.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the Spirit is the marrow of divine plurality and the essence of the principle of God's openness,<sup>61</sup> because he is open to the Father

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<sup>57</sup> Andrew Weeks, *Valentin Weigel (1533–1588). German Religious Dissenter, Speculative Theorist, and Advocate of Tolerance* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 187–188.

<sup>58</sup> For more details about the Spirit, see Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 4:74, and Böhme, *Aurora*, 3: 28, 12:109, 13:77. See also Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 564.

<sup>59</sup> Anja Hallacker, "On Angelic Bodies. Some Philosophical Discussions in the Seventeenth Century," 201–214, in Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz (eds), *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry. Their Function and Significance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 207, and Weeks, *Boehme*, 205.

<sup>60</sup> Compare Julie A. Reahard, "Aus einem unbekanntem Zentrum, zu einer nicht erkennbaren Grenze." *Chaos Theory, Hermeneutics, and Goethe's Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), 75.

<sup>61</sup> God's openness is manifested predominantly towards creation, nature, and the human beings. See Michael Oriard, *Sporting with the Gods. The Rhetoric of Play and Game in American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 364.

and the Son, while the Father and the Son are open to him in specific, individual, and particular relationships.

In Böhme, the trinity—which encapsulates the essence of the divine being—should be defined in a dualistic way in order to better understand God’s being as described in terms which resemble the natural world.<sup>62</sup> This is why, for Böhme, the trinity is a duality, which means that the three persons of the divine essence share dualistic features that characterize the substance they all share.<sup>63</sup> Böhme explains that the trinity unfolds seven characteristics, which define not only the persons of the divine trinity, but also the foundational relationship that exists among them.<sup>64</sup> As the very source of all divine essence is God the Father, Böhme presents the seven characteristics of the trinity with reference to the person of God the Father. Thus, he points out that all the power exists in God the Father, because he is the fountain of all powers in his profundity. The depth of God the Father, or the very core of the divine being, is a reality which hosts a range of dualistic features such as light and darkness, air and water, heat and coldness, toughness and softness, thickness and thinness, sounds and notes, sweetness and sourness, bitterness and acerbity.<sup>65</sup> One can easily notice that all these characteristics, presented by Böhme in a dualistic fashion, are clustered in the being and person of God the Father according to the reality of the created world. In other words, the spiritual being of God the Father is seen in terms of the physical nature, so Böhme’s theology—although extremely concerned to define the spirituality of the divine being—is grounded in the reality of the physicality of the

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<sup>62</sup> See Cyril O’Regan, “The Trinity in Kant, Hegel, and Schelling,” 254–266, in Gilles Emery, OP, Matthew Levering (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 258.

<sup>63</sup> Compare Paul Carus, *The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Sioux Falls, SD: NuVision, 2008), 114.

<sup>64</sup> See Rowena Pattee Kryder, *Sacred Ground to Sacred Space. Visionary Ecology, Perennial Wisdom, Environmental Ritual, and Art* (Santa Fe, NM: Inner Traditions/Bear & Company, 1994), 296.

<sup>65</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 8:4. Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 564.

world.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, for Böhme, dualism does not mean mutual exclusivism or opposing realities; for instance, despite that the human being is able to sense some of these qualities as mutually exclusive, they are characteristics which make up the being of God.<sup>67</sup> We may well feel or experience heat and coldness as opposing states; in Böhme, they are facets of the same reality. Likewise, light and darkness may appear to humans as mutually exclusive; as far as Böhme is concerned, they both define the very essence of God's being.<sup>68</sup> Even though the idea of contradiction and opposition may be there in some of these characteristics, this does not seem to be a problem for Böhme, because they all reflect the reality of the natural world of creation<sup>69</sup> and—since creation is the result of God's action as well as of his being—they naturally reflect the divine reality of God's essence.<sup>70</sup> It can be said though that Böhme's mystical interest in spirituality, and especially in the spirituality of the divine being, is deeply anchored in the physicality of the world, so his theology proceeds “from below” in order to define the spirituality of the divine being “from above.”<sup>71</sup> The physicality of nature is, in Böhme, the very foundation for the definition of

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<sup>66</sup> B. J. Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult. From the Renaissance to the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 2001), 8.

<sup>67</sup> Compare Tobias Churton, *The Invisible History of the Rosicrucians. The World's Most Mysterious Secret Society* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2009), 466.

<sup>68</sup> See Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, 24.

<sup>69</sup> For details about these characteristics in Böhme and especially about light and heat, see also Stuart Piggin and Dianne Cook, “Keeping Alive the Heart in the Head. The Significance of ‘Eternal Language’ in the Aesthetics of Jonathan Edwards and S. T. Coleridge,” 383–414, in *Literature and Theology* 18.4 (2004): 389.

<sup>70</sup> More details about the idea of opposition which exists within the divine being and the latter's manifestation in the world according to Böhme, see Rudolf Steiner, *Evil* (Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1997, reprinted 2003), 22.

<sup>71</sup> Hugh T. Kerr, “Spiritual Discipline,” 449–453, in *Theology Today* 49.4 (1993): 450.

God as a spiritual being.<sup>72</sup> One can say, therefore, that in Böhme's theology, matter is a quality of the spirit and vice versa, the spirit is a characteristic of matter. Consequently, the physicality of nature explains the spirituality of the divine being, because the origin of the entire creation is God himself.<sup>73</sup> This is why it is important to see how Böhme presents the main features of the divine being through Baur's eyes.

### THE FEATURES OF THE DIVINE BEING

The first characteristic or quality of the divine being according to Böhme is acerbity, or severity.<sup>74</sup> He explains that this particular quality is a feature of the very core of the hidden being of God; it is, in other words, the innermost characteristic of God especially because of its concealment. At this point, it is crucial to understand that Böhme's approach takes a very natural turn, in the sense that he compares the marrow of God's being with some chemicals or material elements which can be found in nature. For instance, he explains that God's severity is like the causticity, concentration, and penetration "of the saltpeter,"<sup>75</sup> in other words, the very essence of God is sharpness and acidity. In trying to find similarities between the chemicals of nature and the essence of God, Böhme seems to imply not only that the characteristics of nature reflect the features of God since God is the originator or the creator of nature, but also that the qualities of the divine being are fundamentally powerful and they all point to an essential strength which characterizes

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<sup>72</sup> See also Michael Losonsky, *Enlightenment and Action from Descartes to Kant. Passionate Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 115.

<sup>73</sup> For further information about the relationship between matter and spirit in Böhme, see Jeffrey A. Bell, "Boehme, Jakob (1575–1624)," 42, in Jo Eldridge Carney (ed.), *Renaissance and Reformation, 1500–1620. A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, CT: 2001), 42.

<sup>74</sup> For details about God's acerbity in Böhme, see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923, reprinted 1958), 107.

<sup>75</sup> See also Trevor H. Levere, *Poetry Realized in Nature. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Early Nineteenth-Century Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 157–158.

the whole being of God.<sup>76</sup> Features like causticity or corrosiveness, concentration, and penetration suggest a powerful action exerted over something else, in the sense that God acted outside his own being in order to affect a reality which, although different from his own being, is still the bearer of its most fundamental qualities. This is why he explains that the severity of God produces strength and firmness, but also coldness, which seems to be the essence of stability.<sup>77</sup> Although it is not clear what exactly Böhme had in mind when he said that coldness is a feature of God, one can think of the effect which freezing has on a decomposing body, when the chemical composition of the body is kept together due to the stability of the freezing condition. Thus, the coldness of God denotes strength and firmness because it keeps everything together.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand though, when ignited, God's acidity produces other manifestations of power "like salt," to use Böhme's rendering. Again, it is very difficult to point exactly to what Böhme thought when he compared God's power to the chemical reaction of acids which produce salt, but one can think, for instance, of baking, a chemical process during which acid salts produce a leavening effect. Regardless of whether Böhme considered freezing and baking when he described God in terms of coldness and acidity, one thing is sure, namely that the very essence of God is power and this power does not only keep all things together, but it also produces or creates other things.<sup>79</sup> Alternatively, one can think of God's real-

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<sup>76</sup> More about God the creator in Böhme, in Eugene T. Long, *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion, 1900–2000* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 232.

<sup>77</sup> An interesting discussion about God's stability in the hermetic tradition of Christian philosophy and theology can be found in Jell Fell, *Alfred Jarry, an Imagination in Revolt* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2005), 57.

<sup>78</sup> See also Weeks, *Boehme*, 64.

<sup>79</sup> Böhme may have influenced Kierkegaard in confining God's power to the capacity to create. See, for details, David Kangas, "The Metaphysics of Interiority: Two Paths of Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard," 655–672, in Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Richard Crouter, Theodor Jørgensen, and

ity which is kept together by God's power, on the one hand, and of nature's reality which is the result of God's power ignited into action by God's own capacity to step outside his own reality. Consequently, God is not only power; he is creative power,<sup>80</sup> which both keeps things together and produces new things within the reality of nature.<sup>81</sup>

The second quality or characteristic of God according to Böhme is sweetness.<sup>82</sup> It is quite interesting though to see how Böhme himself presents it, namely he writes that sweetness is a quality of the Spirit of God in the divine saltpeter.<sup>83</sup> One has the chance now to notice that the idea of the chemical and natural constitution of saltpeter is not only an image whereby Böhme compares the divine essence of God with some realities from the physicality of the world; what he does here is to say that the very reality of the chemical constitution of nature is a quality of God.<sup>84</sup> This is why it appears quite clearly that the saltpeter, which is beyond doubt a quality of nature, is described in Böhme in terms of divinity: the saltpeter is divine or godly.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, it becomes evident that God's saltpeter is God's power or virtue, because sweetness as a quality of the Spirit of God is not only in the divine

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Claus Dieter Osthövener (Hrsg.), *Schleiermacher und Kierkegaard. Subjektivität und Wahrheit/ Subjectivity and Truth* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 669.

<sup>80</sup> See Daniel C. Fouke, *The Enthusiastical Concerns of Dr. Henry More. Religious Meaning and the Psychology of Delusion* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 86, n. 132.

<sup>81</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 8:15, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 564.

<sup>82</sup> For details, see Constance Classen, *The Color of Angels. Cosmology, Gender, and the Aesthetic Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1998), 34.

<sup>83</sup> Compare Urban T. Holmes, III, *A History of Christian Spirituality. An Analytical Introduction* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 128–129.

<sup>84</sup> For details about how Böhme's view of chemistry was perceived in European philosophy, see Fredrick Burwick, *The Damnation of Newton. Goethe's Color Theory and Romantic Perception* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 220.

<sup>85</sup> More information about the theory of the divine saltpeter, see Weeks, *Boehme*, 67.

saltpeter, but also in the divine power.<sup>86</sup> For Böhme, the juxtaposition between the notion of saltpeter and the idea of power is not only a means to explain natural realities, but also a way to corroborate the inextricable and permanent connection between the reality of nature and the reality of God.<sup>87</sup> Sweetness is not just another quality of God; it is a characteristic which is active within God's acerbity, acidity or causticity. Sweetness works within causticity with the intent to soften it as well as subdue it by kindness. This is why it is possible for the causticity of God to be full of love and gentleness, but this cannot be brought to existence without what Böhme calls the sweetness of God. Given that it softens God's causticity, sweetness is also an overcoming thereof; for Böhme it is clear that the first characteristic of God just cannot exist without the second. Causticity and sweetness must coexist if the idea of God's absolute power is to be reconciled with the notion of love. This is of paramount importance for Böhme's definition of God, since he builds it on the realities of nature.<sup>88</sup> Power and love do exist in nature, although oftentimes in sheer contrast; in God, however, they cannot coexist in opposition, and it appears that it is because of his intention to put together these two realities within the being of God that Böhme presents them as working together within God's divine essence.<sup>89</sup> Thus, sweetness is an overcoming of causticity, so the love of God manages to control and subdue the power of God. A solid proof of their coexistence within God's being is given by the fact that, in Böhme, God's sweetness is the very source of God's mercy and compassion.<sup>90</sup> To make things

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<sup>86</sup> See also Boime, *Art in an Age of Bonapartism*, 455.

<sup>87</sup> Compare F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 110.

<sup>88</sup> God's power and love meet in what can be called "all-embracing reality," so the reality of God cannot be detached from the reality of nature. This is most likely why Jung believed Böhme to be a modern Gnostic. See Rosemary E. Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy* (New York, NY: Facts on File/Infobase Publishing, 2006), 46.

<sup>89</sup> See also Phil Huston, *Martin Buber's Journey to Presence* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2007), 39.

<sup>90</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 8:21, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 564–565.



clear, he points out that God's mercy overcomes God's wrath, so the two also coexist in a way which can be called natural even for God's being. Consequently, sweetness and causticity share their existence in the being of God because the former can soften the latter; likewise, mercy and wrath have a common existence within the divine essence because the first overcomes the latter. What is also crucial for Böhme's thought at this point is to notice that since the origin of God's mercy is his sweetness, it appears that the source of God's wrath is his causticity; even more importantly though is the fact that both mercy and wrath, on the one hand, as well as sweetness and causticity, on the other, coexist as an undivided whole in God's being.<sup>91</sup>

Bitterness is God's third quality.<sup>92</sup> It should be noted here that, in Böhme, bitterness is presented in terms which make it somewhat dominant over the previous two qualities. Thus, Böhme writes that bitterness is a penetrating or compelling force which seems to have some sort of leverage over both sweetness and causticity.<sup>93</sup> Without elaborating, he nevertheless states that bitterness is trembling, penetrating, and ascending. Even though bitterness appears to be a little above sweetness and causticity, they are still described by Böhme as "primary qualities," and they all seem to lie at the basis of everything which exists in nature.<sup>94</sup> The entire creation is thoroughly connected with these three fundamental characteristics of God because they constitute God's power and authority. Creation, or natural reality, is not only presently dependent on them; this has always been the same, for Böhme explains that what we know as nature and history was built and crafted based on

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<sup>91</sup> See Richard Cavendish, *The Powers of Evil in Western Religion, Magic, and Folk Belief* (London: Routledge, 1975), 258.

<sup>92</sup> Compare Margaret A. Doody, "The Gnostic Clarissa," 176–206, in Regina Hewitt and Pat Rogers (eds), *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Eighteenth-Century Society. Essays from the DeBartolo Conference* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses/Rosemont Publishing and Printing, 2002), 190.

<sup>93</sup> This hierarchy is not always evident. See Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, 191.

<sup>94</sup> See Gray, *Goethe the Alchemist*, 105.

God's power.<sup>95</sup> Although Böhme does not insist on presenting bitterness in a more elaborate way, it seems that bitterness should not be understood as a fundamental divine characteristic with negative connotations.<sup>96</sup> Bitterness—as ascribed to God—may resemble its natural counterpart to some extent, although in Böhme it seems to be some sort of managing power. It is like a force which is fully aware of what can and should be done, and this is perhaps why he presents it as controlling God's other primary characteristics. With bitterness, Böhme not only presents the reality of nature and history in general; he seems to insist on the natural and historical reality of the human being. Again, this is not explicitly stated in his paragraph about bitterness, but his conviction that bitterness manages both causticity and sweetness can help one picture the image of man who is able to control his severity and love.<sup>97</sup> Both can lead to extreme manifestations; severity and love without control have destructive consequences, so there is almost a "natural" necessity to control them. In Böhme, this necessity takes the shape of bitterness, which is not only powerful, but also compelling. At this point, however, human nature—rather than nature in general—appears as the best counterpart for God's divine being. Man's capacity to exert control over nature gives him authority over the world. At the same time, man's power to subdue nature builds and forms the constitution of nature itself. Man forces nature into becoming something different, in very much the same way that God's divine being actively works upon nature and history in order to transform it according to God's compelling powers.<sup>98</sup> One cannot ignore the

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<sup>95</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 8:26, 8:30, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 565.

<sup>96</sup> See also Ferdinand van Ingen, "Engelsturz. Zu einem Sinnkomplex bei Jakob Böhme," 41–61, in Harmut Laufhütte (Hrsg.), *Literaturgeschichte als Profession. Festschrift für Dietrich Jöns* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1993), 41–42.

<sup>97</sup> Compare Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech. A Psychology of Prayer* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 159, n. 12.

<sup>98</sup> Böhme's decision to compare—through some sort of equalization—man's power over nature with God's creative power over matter seems to have had a powerful impact on Hegel. See Magee, *The Hegel Dictionary*, 49–50.

vivid resemblance between God's being and the human being in Böhme; humanity and divinity seem to be two facets of the same coin or, in Böhme's theology, they appear to be two distinct and yet coexisting states of the same reality.<sup>99</sup> This is why one can infer that there is no real distinction between divinity and humanity in Böhme.<sup>100</sup> If this is true, then the divine being appears to be only an idealized version of the human being, so the very idea of being carries within itself a dualism which blends divinity and humanity into the same historical reality which encompasses the human being.<sup>101</sup>

Böhme lists heat as God's fourth quality and again, this characteristic of divine essence has a clear connection with all other qualities described so far. Heat seems to be a feature which causes life itself and is at the origin of life.<sup>102</sup> This is why Böhme writes that heat is the very beginning of life as well as the proper spirit of life. At this point, it is evident that the natural connection between

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<sup>99</sup> Such a conclusion could infer that divinity is dependent upon humanity, in the sense that divinity is disclosed through humanity. In other words, in order for divinity to become evident, it needs to be self-conscious, but the process through which divinity becomes self-conscious is based on the idea of the reconciliation of the eternal self-contradiction of man's consciousness. See also John P. Dourley, "Memory and Emergence: Jung and the Mystical *Anamnesis* of the Nothing," 994–1011, in Lyn Cowan (ed.), *Barcelona 2004—Edges of Experience: Memory and Emergence. Proceedings of the 16th International LAAP Congress for Analytical Psychology* (Einsiedeln: Daimon Verlag, 2006), 1007–1008.

<sup>100</sup> See James A. Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality. The Eclipse of the Western Religious Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 49.

<sup>101</sup> Böhme's conviction was taken over first by Hegel, then by Marx, and eventually by Jung. See John Dourley, "Religion and Jungian Psychoanalysis," 334–343, in Murray Stein (ed.), *Jungian Psychoanalysis. Working in the Spirit of C. G. Jung* (Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishing/ Carus Publishing, 2010), 340.

<sup>102</sup> Heat animates the spirit and ignites life. See Neil Kamil, *Fortress of the Soul. Violence, Metaphysics, and Material Life in the Huguenots' New World, 1517–1751* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 261.

divinity and humanity becomes even more explicit.<sup>103</sup> For Böhme, the divine being and the human being are connected by means of heat, which both in physical and spiritual terms is the originator of life and the spirit.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, the constitution of being—divine and human or, as seen previously, human but presented in idealized terms—is both physical and spiritual, but for these two fundamental dimensions of being to be present within being itself, heat is a necessary reality. Böhme also points out that heat ignites all other qualities of the divine being—and, by extension, of the human being for that matter—so heat seems to enhance all other qualities; it makes them work within the divine being in order to support its life.<sup>105</sup> According to Böhme, heat works in a very active way within the divine being, and it appears to have a close relationship with sweetness.<sup>106</sup> It is not clear why Böhme presents sweetness here in terms of moisture, but he does underscore that heat works in the moisture or humidity of sweetness, so the connection between the two is evident. Nevertheless, when this happens, and heat works in the moisture of sweetness, something fundamental happens for the existence of being, namely heat ignites light in all other divine qualities.<sup>107</sup> This is to say that all divine qualities are capable of hosting the reality of light, so regardless of the possible negativity which some divine qualities appear to possess at least from a natural point of view—such as causticity or severity—they all have the capacity to develop towards positivity due to the reality of light which is

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<sup>103</sup> See Craig Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire. A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 65–66.

<sup>104</sup> Like the heat of the sun which animates nature and supports life within the reality of matter. See John Beer, “Coleridge the Visionary (1959),” 124–128, in Uttara Natarajan (ed.), *The Romantic Poets. A Guide to Criticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 125–126.

<sup>105</sup> Böhme's idea of heat and its connection with the reality of life appealed to Hegel. See Caroline Rooney, *Decolonising Gender. Literature and a Poetics of the Real* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 88.

<sup>106</sup> See Weeks, *Boehme*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> This is an “interplay” between the qualities, which characterizes the being itself. See Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth. An Inner Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, reprinted 2004), 106.

sparked within them by heat. The possibility of positivity is further enhanced in all divine qualities when Böhme points out that, due to light being ignited in them, heat can produce meanings and cogitations within the being. These are clearly spiritual realities, but they seem to have also been triggered by heat which is not only the beginning of life, but also the initiator of the spirit of life.<sup>108</sup> This is how the lightning of life develops within the being, so heat—having worked upon the moisture of sweetness—ignites light in all other divine qualities, then it produces meanings or significations and thoughts or cogitations, and finally, it causes the very lightning of life.<sup>109</sup> Although it is not certain beyond any doubt what exactly Böhme means by using all these elements pertaining to the natural world in describing the divine being, it is nevertheless obvious that the natural and physical connection between God and man remains undisputed. Life and spirit are the two most essential realities which define being, regardless of whether one speaks of divinity or humanity.<sup>110</sup> This evident dualism is crucial for Böhme, and it appears to be the foundation of his notion of being, divine and human or—as the other possibility presents itself—exclusively human, although presented from a predominantly idealized, divine perspective.<sup>111</sup>

Love is the fifth quality of the divine being, which Böhme characterizes as sweet/fair, friendly, and gladsome.<sup>112</sup> One can easily see that love is presented here in a way which connects all other,

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<sup>108</sup> See Weeks, *Boehme*, 58, and Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 41.

<sup>109</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 8:33, 38; 10:8, 11:5, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 565.

<sup>110</sup> Dourley, *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung, and the Recovery of Religion*, 65–66.

<sup>111</sup> For an illuminating analysis of the dualism which informs Böhme's thought and how it influences Hegel regarding the lapse of the absolute into the finite, see John Milbank, "Materialism and Transcendence," 221–254, in Leonard V. Kaplan and Charles L. Cohen (eds), *Theology and the Soul of the Liberal State* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 248.

<sup>112</sup> For a quick glance at how love fits within Böhme's thought, see Piotr Jaroszyński, *Science in Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 172.

previously mentioned qualities of the divine being, but what really predominates at this point is the human perspective on love, which is given by the final example that describes love, because this love points to God's love.<sup>113</sup> Before that, however, Böhme writes that love first triggers the heat in the sweetness of God and, in doing so, it ignites sweetness. This way, a friendly love (which in Böhme is described in terms of fire and light) develops within God's sweetness. When sweetness is activated, it also ignites God's bitterness and acerbity, which means that a certain positiveness is ascribed to their natural negativity.<sup>114</sup> Böhme underscores that love eats and drinks them with its "sweet juice or nectar." The immediate result is that love revives and illuminates the other qualities of God in order to make them lively and friendly. The sweet and light power of love works in all divine qualities and, when this happens, one can say that love craves for God's life. This particular presentation resembles to quite a high degree the action of human love, especially with its reciprocal craving for life.<sup>115</sup> The results of the action of love on the other qualities of God are friendly welcoming and great victory. God's love, according to Böhme, is like a friendly and fair kiss; it is like a sweet flavor and a great taste. At this point, he introduces the analogy of the bride and her groom;<sup>116</sup> the kiss of God's love is like the kiss between the bride and her groom, so the human analogy serves once again to present and describe the essence of God's being.<sup>117</sup> It is interesting to notice here Böhme's

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<sup>113</sup> See Suzanne R. Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis. Individuation and Integration in Post-Freudian Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 147.

<sup>114</sup> Details about the relationship between love and other qualities in Böhme, see Doody, "The Gnostic *Clarissa*," 210–245, in Blewett (ed.), *Passion and Virtue*, 236.

<sup>115</sup> See also Evelyn Underhill, *Essentials of Mysticism* (New York, NY: Cosimo, 2007, first published 1920), 12.

<sup>116</sup> More about Böhme's use of sexual imagery with reference to love, in Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom. Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 80.

<sup>117</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 8:92–97, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 565.

efforts to draft the intricacies of the mechanism of love, and it is clear that the way for him to proceed is to start at the level of human love. Terms like “craving,” “kiss,” and “juice/nectar of love” are all meant to provide an image of love which is thoroughly human.<sup>118</sup> He does indeed apply it to God’s love, and he evidently presupposes that it works exactly the same with God, which allows once again for a presentation of Böhme’s theology as an attempt to describe God “from below,” namely based on human realities. Whether or not God is just the idealized image of what man can be at his best remains a debatable issue; nevertheless, what can be said at this point is that Böhme’s image of God is heavily informed by his understanding of human nature and especially of the way the foremost characteristics of the human being work both individually and collectively. Another interesting feature of love in Böhme is that it is not presented by means of the word “spirit.” This, of course, does not mean that love is devoid of spirituality, but Böhme does not—at least at this particular point—use any reference to the spirit in connection with love. Here, love is rather playful, natural, and carnal—in a word, sexual.<sup>119</sup>

The sixth quality of the divine being is not only interesting, but it also “sounds” very natural and physical, because in Böhme this particular characteristic of God is sound or the tone as he himself puts it.<sup>120</sup> Thus, the sound or the tone is a feature of God’s power and in Böhme it appears to be a source of spiritual virtue. It is described as a spiritual source, which produces all the things which sound and issue all kinds of auditory impressions or sensa-

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<sup>118</sup> Compare Evelyn Underhill, *Modern Guide to the Ancient Quest for the Holy*, Dana Greene (ed.); (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 76–77.

<sup>119</sup> Norman O. Brown, *Life against Death. The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, second edition (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), 310–311.

<sup>120</sup> Sound has such an importance to Böhme that certain realities are connected with certain sounds; for instance, the sound corresponding to the letter “R” is connected with creation. See Allison Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century. The Life and Thought of Francis Mercurius van Helmont, 1614–1698* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 97.

tions.<sup>121</sup> The sound, therefore, is the source of the language itself,<sup>122</sup> but also the cause which differentiates among all things.<sup>123</sup> This particular quality of sound, as an auditory impression which is capable of sensing various differences among things, seems to allow for the possibility that each thing has its own individual sound, which is virtually the element that distinguishes it from any other object in the world.<sup>124</sup> The spiritual dimension of the sound is further underlined by Böhme when he points out that sound is the very origin of the songs of salvation. Böhme appears convinced that there is a powerful connection between sound as a quality of God's being and the reality of angels,<sup>125</sup> in whom one finds the shaping of all colors and beauty. Why colors and beauty reside in angels is not very clear from Böhme's account, but it is quite evident that angels are able to sing the aforementioned songs of salvation and therefore any beauty—which, in the natural realm, is presented and perceived in terms of colors—can spring from them.<sup>126</sup> Angels are also the source of heavenly gladness and happiness, and they also seem to be closely associated with what Böhme calls “the

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<sup>121</sup> For more details, see Nicholas Hudson, *Writing and European Thought, 1600–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 28–29.

<sup>122</sup> Language, in turn, is deeply attached to the material reality of nature; this is why Böhme spoke of a “language of nature.” See also Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 182ff.

<sup>123</sup> Böhme's “language of nature” (*Natursprache*) and especially his “Adamic language” influenced the entire Romantic movement. See Henry McDonald, “The Performative Basis of Modern Literary Theory,” 55–77, in *Comparative Literature* 55.1 (2003): 58, n. 4.

<sup>124</sup> In this respect, sound is the physical expression of creation. See, for details, David W. Stowe, *How Sweet the Sound. Music in the Spiritual Lives of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 234.

<sup>125</sup> See more details in Brian Vickers, “Analogy versus Identity: the Rejection of Occult Symbolism, 1580–1680,” 95–164, in Brian Vickers (ed.), *Occult Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, reprinted 1986), 107.

<sup>126</sup> See also Richard Webster, *Michael. Communicating with the Archangel for Guidance and Protection* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2004), xv.



spirits,” which are described a little later as the “seven spirits” and then as “the seven spirits of God.”<sup>127</sup> While no clue is given here as to whom these seven spirits of God could be, their connection with angels is quite evident. The spirits seem to be able to move and talk, but when they want to speak—Böhme explains—the tough quality of God must open itself up. In Böhme’s rendering, the harsh sound with its thunderbolts burst into an even more powerful tone—probably an “audio” image of God’s sheer power—which is connected with the seven spirits of God.<sup>128</sup> Thus, God’s power and his seven spirits are able to distinguish the word, which is “*in centro*,” or in the very middle of God’s being because it seems to have been decided within the council of God’s seven spirits. The importance of the idea of sound as one of God’s powers becomes evident when connected with the notion of word and language.<sup>129</sup> The sound is intelligible as words, and words—as bearers of sounds—make sense when used comprehensively as a language.<sup>130</sup> This is why Böhme explains that the seven spirits of God gave mouths to all creatures, so they should be able to speak without difficulty.<sup>131</sup> At the same time, Böhme is convinced that all the powers are concentrated in the tongue, and this is why language

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<sup>127</sup> Compare Classen, *The Color of Angels*, 23; Weeks, *Boehme*, 79; Ver-luis, *Wisdom’s Children*, 147; Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 44, and Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 94.

<sup>128</sup> See Gerald Massey, *The Natural Genesis*, 2 volumes (New York, NY: Cosimo, 2011, first published 1883), 317, and Kryder, *Sacred Ground to Sacred Space*, 296.

<sup>129</sup> See also Stephen Prickett, *Words and the Word. Language, Poetics, and Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, reprinted 1989), 55, and Levere, *Poetry Realized in Nature*, 157.

<sup>130</sup> For more information about language in Böhme, see Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in the Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 140.

<sup>131</sup> In Böhme, this reflects the image of God. See Rosemary E. Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Angels*, second edition (New York, NY: Facts on File, 2004), 73.

should be used in such a way that sounds are uttered softly and beautifully.<sup>132</sup>

If the phrase “seven spirits of God” was not yet entirely clear, now Böhme comes up with a simple explanation, by simply replacing the word “quality” with “spirit.”<sup>133</sup> Thus, the seven spirits of God are the seven qualities of God, and when he begins to talk about the seventh quality of the divine being, he only says what he believes to be the seventh spirit of God. As far as he is concerned, God’s seventh and last quality or spirit is—to use his own wording—the “*corpus*,” or the body, which he claims was born out of the other sixth divine qualities.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, the body as the seventh quality of God is of particular importance since it is connected with the entire creation.<sup>135</sup> The idea of nature, therefore, is inherent in the idea and reality of the body, and this is why Böhme writes that all the heavenly figures or beings subsist within it. The body seems to include everything which has any natural form or shape, and by “natural” one should understand “creatural.” Every creature which was ever created by God within the natural reality of the physical creation or beyond its borders into the spiritual creation is connected with the reality of the body.<sup>136</sup> Everything is shaped and formed in the body, which for Böhme means that all

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<sup>132</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 10:11, 12, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 565–566.

<sup>133</sup> For details about Böhme’s “seven spirits,” see Suzanne M. Sklar, *Blake’s Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre. Entering the Divine Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 30–31.

<sup>134</sup> Compare Ralf E. Remshardt, *Staging the Savage God. The Grotesque in Performance* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 32–33.

<sup>135</sup> This seems to cancel the traditional Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. See Virginie Pektaş, *Mystique et Philosophie*. Grunt, Abgrunt et Ungrund chez Maître Eckhart et Jacob Böhme (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 2006), 55, n. 37.

<sup>136</sup> Compare Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer, “Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Defining the Subject of Ecocriticism. An Introduction,” 9–24, in Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer (eds), *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies. Transatlantic Conversations on Ecocriticism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 19.

beauty and joy develop in close connection with the body.<sup>137</sup> In order to make things clearer, Böhme argues that the body is in fact the spirit of nature or even nature itself. The very idea of comprehensibility or conceivability resides in the notion of “body” because, as Böhme points out, all the creatures in heaven and earth were shaped in accordance with the body. To make the entire explanation even more accessible, Böhme insists that heaven itself was shaped according to the notion of the “body.”<sup>138</sup> While it is not clear whether here Böhme has in mind the spiritual and totally transcendent realm of God’s existence or the universe in general, the very constitution of nature as one can see it on earth—i.e., all the things which are natural and naturalness in general—is based on the reality of the body. Böhme goes as far as saying that the naturalness of God himself is founded on the body, which confirms his belief that the body is one of God’s divine characteristics. This quality of God is so important that, for Böhme, nothing would exist without it. Thus, there would be neither angels, nor humans unless the body as a divine feature existed in reality. God himself would be inscrutable and his being would be beyond any possible reach without the idea and reality of the body.<sup>139</sup> In Böhme, God as a being who created everything which exists is fathomable and can be understood because he shares a fundamental connection with his creation, and this is the notion of the body. On the other hand, humanity can be understood in a better way because its bodily constitution is inextricably linked to God’s very essence,

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<sup>137</sup> The idea of beauty is connected with the reality of the body because, as Böhme points out, there is a “body of God” which contains beauty within its own existence. See Harold Bloom, *William Blake*, Alexis Harley (ed.); (New York, NY: Infobase Publishing, 2008), 91.

<sup>138</sup> The notion of “astral body” (*siderischer Leib*) is crucial here. See James R. Hodkinson, *Women and Writing in the Works of Novalis. Transformation Beyond Measure?* (Rochester, NY: Camden House/Boydell and Brewer, 2007), 225.

<sup>139</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 11:1, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 566.

whose qualities include the idea of the body that includes spirituality and materiality, spirit and nature.<sup>140</sup>

### THE TRINITARIAN GOD BETWEEN SPIRIT AND NATURE

Having described “the seven spirits of God” or the characteristics of the divine being according to Böhme, Baur feels it necessary to draw a conclusion, which is meant to establish a permanent connection between them. This is why it is important for him to underline that all these characteristics of the divine being live together, but they also live in each other.<sup>141</sup> At the same time, they originate in one another in such a way that none of them is superfluous. They all make up the being of God the Father, so the divine being in its entirety is defined by all these seven features.<sup>142</sup> None of these characteristics can exist outside the rest of them and this is because each spirit of God gives birth to another one for the benefit of all.<sup>143</sup> This is why, based on Böhme, Baur seems to infer that the existence of the seven spirits of God is somewhat necessary in the sense that none of them can exist without the remaining six; or, in other words, it is impossible to define the divine being without counting all the seven spirits. It is clear for Baur that, in Böhme, the necessity that all the seven spirits should exist in an objective way points to the individual importance of each spirit: one cannot define the being of God without excluding any of the seven spirits.<sup>144</sup> At this point, however, Baur introduces the notion of alterity

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<sup>140</sup> See Pamela H. Smith, *The Body of the Artisan. Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 161–162.

<sup>141</sup> Since the seven spirits are physical characteristics of natural realities and are attributed to the divine being, it means that nature itself is attached to divinity and all its qualities, the most important of which is eternity. This is how the notion of “eternal nature” emerges in Böhme. See Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 112–113.

<sup>142</sup> Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Volume 2, 22.

<sup>143</sup> See Franz Hartmann, *Magic White and Black* (San Diego, CA: The Book Tree, 2006, first published 1888), 90.

<sup>144</sup> Böhme’s idea of the “seven spirits” which define the divine being influenced Friedrich C. Oetinger (1702–1782), a German philosopher and

within the being of God even if he does not use the term *per se*,<sup>145</sup> what he does in turn is underline the importance of light. Thus, he points out that light is another person, because it is born out of the seven spirits of God and, at the same time, the seven spirits of God appear to depend on light itself.<sup>146</sup> Although it is not clear what, having read Böhme, Baur means by light in this context or whether the light refers to the divine being or not, one can still presuppose that—if the concept of alterity is applied here—then the light must refer to somebody or something other than the divine being. Light is part of the divine being but it is also a different person, as Baur underlines, so it can refer to the human being since light itself is so powerfully dependent on what Böhme calls “the spirit of nature.”<sup>147</sup> This observation is crucial since, for Baur and his understanding of Böhme, the seven spirits of God which define the divine being are ultimately and permanently connected with the spirit of nature, which—in his list of divine characteristics—is the body.<sup>148</sup> Thus, the seven characteristics of the divine being are di-

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theologian who openly professed his belief in the parallelism of nature and spirit. Oetinger explains that the “seven spirits” are “the vehicle of God’s corporealization in creation.” See Priscilla Hayden-Roy, “Sensate Language and the Hermetic Tradition in Friedrich Christoph Oetinger’s *Biblisches und Emblematisches Wörterbuch*,” 58–69, in Eitel F. Timm (ed.), *Subversive Sublimities. Undercurrents of the German Enlightenment* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1992), 59, n. 5.

<sup>145</sup> For details about the idea of alterity in Böhme, but with references to Schelling, see David J. Kangas, *Kierkegaard’s Instant. On Beginnings* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 102.

<sup>146</sup> More information about how Böhme treats the idea of light, in O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 124.

<sup>147</sup> Compare William R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism. A Global Intellectual History, 1670–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 22.

<sup>148</sup> The connection between light and the body in Böhme points to the dualism of spirit and matter, but it seems that, in Böhme, the two are so powerfully welded together that they make up one, indivisible, entity. See van Meurs, “William Blake and His Gnostic Myths,” 269–310, in van den Broek and Hanegraaff (eds), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times*, 289.

rectly linked with the reality of the natural body, but this is possible only in the light of the Holy Spirit,<sup>149</sup> as Baur seems to understand from Böhme's work. This can be an indication that his divine being is some sort of idealized human being, since the idea of the body becomes a reality which defines the very essence of the divine being. The powers of the seven spirits of God appear to originate in the reality of the spirit of nature, so it is the human being which defines the being of God.<sup>150</sup>

At this point it is relevant to note the way Baur attempts to describe the being of God in natural terms and he does so by following Böhme's presentation of the divine being from the standpoint of the seven spirits of God. Nevertheless, in order for the whole discourse to be connected with the traditional understanding of God, Baur insists that Böhme connects the presentation of the being of God in a close relationship with the idea of trinity.<sup>151</sup> In other words, the being of God cannot be conceived outside the notion of trinity because the seven spirits of God present the trinitarian being of God by individualizing each divine person.<sup>152</sup> Consequently, Baur points out that, in Böhme, the first four spirits of

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<sup>149</sup> See also Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 27; Nevill Drury, *The Dictionary of the Esoteric. 3000 Entries on the Mystical and Occult Traditions* (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 2004), 35, and Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme*, 21.

<sup>150</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 11:20, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 566–567.

<sup>151</sup> It appears that Böhme's treatment of the Trinity—which includes the reality of nature and, by extension, the problem of evil with its fundamental negativity—produced a powerful impression on Hegel. See Cyril O'Regan, "Hegel, Theodicy, and the Invisibility of Waste," 75–108, in Francesca A. Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (eds), *The Providence of God* (London: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2009), 93.

<sup>152</sup> The same approach, which connects the seven spirits with the Trinity, can be found in Oetinger, again with reference to the corporality of God as spirit. See Priscilla A. Hayden-Roy, "A Foretaste of Heaven." *Friedrich Hölderlin in the Context of Württemberg Pietism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 39.

God describe the person of God the Father.<sup>153</sup> Nothing else is said here about the connection between the first four spirits and the person of God the Father, but one can be sure that details are provided once the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit are brought forward. Thus, Baur shows that, as far as Böhme is concerned, the person of the Son is presented by the fifth spirit of God and it is here that the idea of light is briefly mentioned again.<sup>154</sup> Light is said to be the very heart of the seven spirits of God and it is also the true Son of God.<sup>155</sup> These are the only details provided at this stage about the connection between the person of the Son and the fifth spirit of God, which makes sense since—for Böhme—the fifth characteristic of the divine being is love and love is commonly associated with the heart.<sup>156</sup> The person of the Holy Spirit is described by means of the last two spirits of God, which are said to give a particular and concrete form or shape to the Holy Spirit. The whole discussion becomes very interesting at this point, since Böhme's last two spirits of God are sound and the body. What is interesting in the whole argument resides in the association between sound and the body, on the one hand, and the person of the Holy Spirit on the other.<sup>157</sup> While in traditional theology the person of the Holy Spirit seems to be silent and entirely spiritual, in Böhme it becomes known to humanity by means of totally opposite characteristics. Thus, Böhme's Holy Spirit is neither silent, nor spiritual; on the contrary, it appears to be vocal and natural since its

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<sup>153</sup> The first four spirits are extremely important because they promote creation *ex Deo*, while dismissing the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Compare Weeks, *Boehme*, 106.

<sup>154</sup> The juxtaposition of the Son and light in Böhme is critical for the definition of God as Godhead. See James Harpur, *Love Burning in the Soul. The Story of the Christian Mystics, from Saint Paul to Thomas Merton* (Boston, MA: New Seeds Books/Shambhala Publications, 2005), 144.

<sup>155</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 11:19, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 567.

<sup>156</sup> See also Elton A. Hall, *Teachers of the Eternal Doctrine. From Tsong-Ka-Pa to Nostradamus* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2006), 33.

<sup>157</sup> This is most likely why Böhme presents the Holy Spirit as the molder or shaper of nature. See, for details, Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme*, 157.

main features are sound and the body. So it is through the person of the Holy Spirit that the whole being of God is drawn closer to the reality of the human being to the point that God as spirit is present in every human being through the Holy Spirit.<sup>158</sup> In addition to being vocal and bodily, the person of the Holy Spirit seems to have a specific shape and a particular form, which is another indication that the divine being of God appears to be one step closer to the human being. The divine being therefore seems to be conceived as some sort of idealized human being, which is confirmed not only by the Holy Spirit's bodily shape and form, but also by what appears to be the connection between humanity and divinity, namely angels.<sup>159</sup> Baur shows that, in Böhme, angels are God's creatures but—very much like the person of the Holy Spirit—they have “a new and concrete form.” It is essential to notice that it does not suffice to say that God created angels; he created them out of the seven spirits of God, so they share their characteristics with the very being of God. What is even more important here lies in Böhme's juxtaposition of the seven spirits of God and nature. Thus, the spirits of God must be conceived in natural terms, an idea which is confirmed by Böhme's connection between nature and “the holy heaven.”<sup>160</sup> In other words, heaven is nature and nature describes the very essence of God's seven spirits, which is again an indication of the fact that the being of God should be conceived as an idealized human being. To be sure, God must be conceived in natural terms, and the concentration or the essence of the divine being resides in the duality of nature and the spirit.<sup>161</sup> In Böhme—and Baur seems to agree in all respects—God should be described in dualistic terms which always connect nature with the

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<sup>158</sup> See Huston, *Martin Buber's Journey to Presence*, 91.

<sup>159</sup> Together with the human being, angels confirm that, through their creation, God initiated a process of detachment from its own being and self, which set the stage for the conflict (or dualism) that exists everywhere in nature. See Thomas P. Burke, *The Concept of Justice. Is Social Justice Just?* (London: Continuum, 2011), 198.

<sup>160</sup> Compare Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Angels*, 73.

<sup>161</sup> Compare Grimstad, *The Modern Revival of Gnosticism and Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus*, 42.



spirit. The presentation of God as nature and spirit comes very close to the reality of the human being, whose corporeality does not hinder him from displaying his spiritual qualities.<sup>162</sup>

The foundational aspect of Böhme's thought here seems to be the idea of trinity, which not only defines the divine being, but also helps with a basic presentation of the human being.<sup>163</sup> In Böhme, the trinity is a critical feature of the divine being, and Baur is keen to stress that this fact is multifaceted. At this point, Böhme uses the concept of angels to explain the multiformity of the idea of trinity as applied to the divine being. Thus, he explains that angels have a constitution which resembles the reality of the Godhead; this is why he shows that an angel is—in a way—like a smaller god.<sup>164</sup> At the same time, God himself created angels out of his own being; nevertheless, as Böhme points out, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all share the status of being the creators of angels.<sup>165</sup> Although angels are like lesser gods and God himself created them out of his own being, it should be noted that there is a fundamental difference between the two entities. The seven spirits of God define the being of God, so angels must be different since their fundamental status as compared to God is that of creatures. According to Böhme, angels have a bodily constitution, so their being is essentially connected with the reality of their own *corpus*, which points

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<sup>162</sup> See, for details, Böhme, *Aurora*, 12:1, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 567.

<sup>163</sup> The connection between God as Trinity and man is very tight in Böhme; the Trinity is the image of God in man, but—at the same time—man contains within himself the Trinity as the image of God. See J. F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming. Popular Millenarianism, 1780–1850* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 20.

<sup>164</sup> This is an indication that the substance or nature of angels resembles that of God. One can even argue that God and angels share the same nature, which is also true of the human being as represented by Adam before the Fall. See also Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Human Potential before Esalen. An Experiment in Anachronism," 17–44, in Jeffrey J. Kripal and Glenn W. Shuck (eds), *Esalen and the Evolution of American Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>165</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 12:41, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 567.

to the fact that their beings have a definite beginning in the reality of created history, while they also mirror God himself.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, the power of angels has its origins in the being of God himself; this explains why, for Böhme, angels are created out of God's very power. Thus, the power from which angels were created is not only God's power; it is God himself.<sup>167</sup> As angels share—at least, to some extent—God's power, it is quite logical for Böhme to infer that they not only benefit from God's power, but also from God's very constitution, which is defined by the reality of God's trinity.<sup>168</sup> This can be seen in the fact that angels seem to have formed three angelic hosts—Böhme uses the term “kingdoms,” each having its own commander.<sup>169</sup> It is important to emphasise here that angels appear to have applied the idea of trinity in their own realm, so while God himself exists as a trinity of persons, angels built a trinity of hosts amongst themselves. It seems that the power of God is somehow transferable from the being of God to all created beings—in this particular case, his angels. This also means that the spirits of God, as features of the Godhead, can be transferred upon God's creatures in a way which makes them resemble the creator. The status of creatures limits all beings—except for God—in aspects such as the possession and the application of God's power, in the sense that they neither have, nor can they make full use of, God's power. Nevertheless, they share some of it because they were created by God, and the very aspect which proves the manifestation of God's power in his creatures is the notion of trinity.<sup>170</sup> One may rightfully ask why Baur is so interested in Böhme's idea of trinity, when Gnosticism is primarily characterized by dualism.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Compare Rossbach, *Gnostic Wars*, 143.

<sup>167</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 12:48, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 567.

<sup>168</sup> See also Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 160.

<sup>169</sup> See Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Angels*, 73.

<sup>170</sup> For an excellent analysis of how God's Trinity externalizes itself in creation, see Cooper, *Panentheism*, 60–61.

<sup>171</sup> Gnostic dualism, which can be seen in Böhme, also presupposes the double nature of God's being, namely God's existence and God's self-awareness, the latter being a special feature which allows God continuously to rediscover himself. In this respect, Böhme's theology exerted a visi-

One possible answer is that, in Böhme, the trinity is not discussed exclusively in trinitarian terms which resemble classical theology, but rather in a dualistic fashion which involves both divinity and creatures. The trinity, therefore, appears to be the very essence of spirituality, both divine and creaturely, while the actual reality of God and his creatures denotes the constitution of the universe.<sup>172</sup> God and his creatures seem to me more important than the fact that both God and creatures have a trinitarian constitution. In other words, the fact that God is a trinity and his creatures may be classified in terms which resemble the idea of the trinity, the dualistic reality of God's and his creatures' existence seems to weigh more than their trinitarian makeup. This also means that the trinity is defined dualistically because both God and creatures, while still trinitarian in their most fundamental composition, form a dualistic pattern of existence.<sup>173</sup> In Böhme—and Baur seems to be fully aware of it—God cannot exist without his creatures and his creatures have no existence without God; thus, the duality of God and his creatures is much more important than the fact of their trinitarian constitution, since neither God, nor his creatures can exist without each other.<sup>174</sup> This is to say that their trinitarian constitution is impossible without their fundamental dualistic and mutually dependent existence. God and creatures seem to be one, hence

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ble influence on Teilhard de Chardin. See Robert L. Faricy, "Teilhard de Chardin on Creation and the Christian Life," 505–520, in *Theology Today* 23.4 (1967): 511, n. 14.

<sup>172</sup> The Trinity speaks of the truth which is revealed in nature, an idea which was incorporated by Hegel in his philosophy of religion. For this connection between Böhme and Hegel, see Althaus, *Hegel. An Intellectual Biography*, 221–222.

<sup>173</sup> What Böhme seems to attempt here is reduce the distance between God and his creatures, which was almost non-existent before the Fall. See Arianna Antonielli, *William Blake e William Butler Yeates. Sistemi simbolici e costruzioni poetiche* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2009), 92.

<sup>174</sup> See Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme*, 211.

Böhme's conviction that "God is all;"<sup>175</sup> if so, God should no longer be seen as a being, but rather as an idea which encapsulates the reality of creaturely beings.

**GOD AS A HUMAN IDEA  
BETWEEN THE ANTIQUITY OF MOSES  
AND THE NOVELTY OF CHRIST**

Baur is convinced that, in Böhme, God is nothing but an idea, while anything pertaining to divinity appears to be related to what he calls "the indwelling divine principle of humanity."<sup>176</sup> To be sure, God is a principle, a concept, or a notion, which lies within the innermost essence of humanity, as a characteristic which defines its existential core.<sup>177</sup> Humanity cannot be define without divinity, but divinity—in Baur's understanding of Böhme—is deeply and most fundamentally human. This specific principle which defines humanity and is based on the idea of God takes a particular shape in Christianity. At the same time, though, Baur underlines the fact that this principle, which in Christianity is called Christ and makes reference to God through the idea of God's incarnate Son, is the very element of human spirituality that assists every human being in forming one's own perspective on the world.<sup>178</sup> In other words, this principle develops itself as times goes by through various moments and periods in human history. What is important to notice here has to do with Baur's conviction that Christianity is

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<sup>175</sup> Compare Grace Jantzen, "Action and Embodiment," 411–419, in Ian A. McFarland (ed.), *Creation and Humanity. The Sources of Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 418.

<sup>176</sup> See also Weeks, *Boehme*, 204–205.

<sup>177</sup> God can also be conceived as a principle which incorporates other principles—a sum of principles—and present God as "no-nature." See, for details, H. Frederick Reisz, Jr., "The Demonic as a Principle in Tillich's Doctrine of God: Tillich and Beyond," 135–156, in John J. Carey (ed.), *Theonomy and Autonomy. Studies in Paul Tillich's Engagement with Modern Culture* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 139.

<sup>178</sup> God as incarnate in Christ or the actual incarnation of Christ is less important than Christ as metaphor. See Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality*, 49.

“the great turning point” which shaped this human principle of knowledge and spirituality into a specific religious awareness that incorporates the most beloved values of humanity. To be sure, in Christianity, this principle reaches its ultimate breakthrough. This aspect is crucial for Baur’s understanding of Böhme because, as far as Baur is concerned, he sees this principle—God, divinity, and Christ in particular—as making itself available to humanity by externalizing itself through the idea of Christ’s incarnation.<sup>179</sup> God becomes incarnate—in other words, the idea of divinity, or the notion of a superior spiritual knowledge—takes a definitive shape in the person of Christ, who turns the principle of God into something which coagulates the values of humanity. Thus, the principle of God becomes self-aware in the person of Christ. Baur realizes that the person of Christ, and especially his death, acquires a vital meaning for the entire humanity, so he approaches a passage in which Böhme discusses the importance of Christ’s death for humanity,<sup>180</sup> especially as placed against Moses.<sup>181</sup> It appears thus that Moses and Christ represent patters of humanity with reference to the idea of God or to the notion of higher spiritual knowledge. What Böhme says according to Baur’s quotation has to do with Christ’s death as the reality which lifted the veil from Moses’ face. This is most likely the first indication that there are in fact two types of humanity: there is therefore an old humanity, represented

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<sup>179</sup> In Böhme, God externalizes himself as Godhead (as an idea or principle) in the realm of matter and nature. Compare Mark Manolopoulos, *With Gifted Thinkers. Conversations with Caputo, Hart, Horner, Kearney, Keller, Rigby, Taylor, Wallace, Westphal* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 183.

<sup>180</sup> Christ’s death, however, leaves behind the idea of a humanity imbued with the most fundamental values treasured by mankind. These values are all gathered in the notion of Christ, which presents Christ as a spirit. See also Patrick Menneteau, “Blake’s Vision of Enlightened Europe in His Poem *Europe*,” 237–249, in Serge Soupel (ed.), *La Grand-Bretagne et l’Europe des Lumières* (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1996), 244.

<sup>181</sup> In Böhme, Christ is placed beside Moses because they both represent the principles of eternity. See Kocku von Stuckrad, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 92–93.

by Moses, and a new humanity, represented by Christ. Old humanity has a certain standing as far as its perspective on the world is concerned, in the sense that its perception of reality was impaired because of a certain “veil”—something which must have clouded man’s reason according to his old humanity. This veil—most likely a reference to a deficient perspective on the world—was lifted up by Christ, so now humanity was given the true understanding of whatever reality entails.<sup>182</sup> According to Böhme, before Christ and since Moses, the stars and elements were infected by the devil’s darkness, so humanity was affected by some kind of smoke or fog.<sup>183</sup> In other words, old humanity could not see clearly how reality looked like and how higher spiritual knowledge should be pursued. It is not that Moses was less intelligent; so it is not a matter pertaining to man’s capacity to understand the world. Man’s reason seems to have been the same throughout history; nevertheless, man’s reason needed the right perspective and guidance to see the world as it is in reality.<sup>184</sup> Moses had his eyes wide open but the veil

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<sup>182</sup> This appears to support the importance of ideas over history, of symbols over nature, and of spirit over matter, in the sense that history, nature, and matter should be understood symbolically, spiritually or ideally. See Antonielli, *William Blake e William Butler Yeates*, 132, n. 215.

<sup>183</sup> Consequently, one can conclude that darkness (a deficient perspective on the world) and light (reason) dwell within the same being, very much like good and evil reside within the same divine being. This idea was taken over by Hegel, for whom God and the Devil constituted a unique—even unified—ontological reality. See Jaques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 285, n. 12.

<sup>184</sup> It seems that there is something beyond natural reason which can help humanity see reality from a new perspective: a feeling, an experience, even a new reason. Arguably, it can be merely the “other side” of reason itself, another aspect of reason which, once triggered, provides man with a new understanding of reality. In more traditional terms, man’s fallen reason (represented by Moses) needs divine wisdom (encapsulated in Christ) in order to see the world in a fresh, new way. See Craig D. Atwood, *Always Reforming. A History of Christianity since 1300* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), 198.

prevented him from seeing clearly through it. Old humanity used its reason to understand the world, but because of its faulty perspective on God as external to humanity, its understanding of the world was severely impaired. Now, in Christ, the veil is lifted off man's face, so man is capable of understanding that God should not be considered in external terms, but rather as an internal, innate human reality.<sup>185</sup> Once we understand that God is within us as a concept, not outside us as a being, we acquire a new perspective on the

world, and—according to Baur—this is Christianity's genuine breakthrough through Böhme's works. Christ is the one who works out this breakthrough and it is through the notion of Christ, which presents us with divine reality within our own selves, that humanity can have access to the gates of the abyss, most likely a reference to the availability of true spiritual knowledge. Böhme also writes about the "lily"<sup>186</sup> which was given "in the hands of God's noble virgin," which spreads its powerful smell in God's Paradise, definitely a metaphor describing higher spiritual knowledge as embodied in the idea of Christ.<sup>187</sup> It is through this metaphorical de-

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<sup>185</sup> For details about what Christ represents for humanity as compared to the state of humanity after the fall, see O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 46. In Böhme, Christ is associated with the image of restoration, particularly the rebuilding of God's image damaged by the fall. In this respect, Christ is seen as the idea which mediates between the (current) corrupted state of humanity and its (initial) pristine condition. Through Christ, humanity is finally capable of returning to Eden. This is why, in O'Regan's words, "Christ is the restoration of the *kairos* of Eden."

<sup>186</sup> For details about the connotations of the "lily" in Böhme, see Verena Olejniczak Lobsien, *Transparency and Dissimulation. Configurations of Neoplatonism in Early Modern English Literature* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 208.

<sup>187</sup> The lily also speaks about the marriage between the spirit and divine wisdom; in this case, the wisdom of the idea of Christ which assists humanity in understanding its own reality in a brand new, spiritual way. See also Arthur Versluis, "Sexual Mysticism in Nineteenth Century America: John Humphrey Noyes, Thomas Lake Harris, and Alice Bunker Stockham," 333–354, in Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds),

vise that Böhme manages to convey the idea that God is merely a human notion that helps each individual understand his materiality and finitude in a meaningful, spiritual way.<sup>188</sup>

So there is a distinction—a rather sharp one—between the old man represented by Moses and the new man embodied by Christ. The two types of humanity find themselves in a relationship which reveals Böhme's understanding—but also, and especially, Baur's perspective on how the world should be read spiritually based on man's physical and material existence within the world—of what man can perceive as reality with reference to himself as well as what lies beyond his own individual self. More importantly, however, is not to lose sight of the fact that Baur believes in the possibility of reading not only the new man in terms of the idea of the spirit—as incarnate in the notion of Christ<sup>189</sup>—but also the old man, which is revealed by Moses.<sup>190</sup> This is why he explains that, despite the relationship between Moses and Christ, or between the old and the new man, it seems that it is not only the new man which is able to perceive his material reality in terms of the spiritual principle captured within the notion of Christ. On the contrary, the same spiritual principle can be read into the actions of the old man;

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*Hidden Intercourse. Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 338–339.

<sup>188</sup> See Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 17:38, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 610. Baur explains that metaphor plays a key role in Böhme's *Mysterium Magnum*, which is an allegorical explanation of the first book of Moses. The book is an analysis of the revelation of God's word through the three principles of God's being, as explained in the extended title of Böhme's work, which is *De Mysterio Magno, das ist von der Offenbarung göttlichen Worts durch die drei Principia göttliches Wesens*.

<sup>189</sup> Compare Richard Popkin, "The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought: Skepticism, Science, and Millenarianism," 21–48, in Edna Ullmann-Margalit (ed.), *The Prism of Science. The Israel Colloquium: Studies in History, Philosophy, and Sociology of Science*, Volume 2 (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing, 1986), 31.

<sup>190</sup> Böhme is able to see the old man represented by Moses in terms of the spirit because the spirit of God spoke to Moses. See also Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 54.



in other words, it appears that even old humanity—whose image if Moses—existed in a way which resembles the spiritual understanding that is incorporated in the idea of Christ, although quite unintentionally.<sup>191</sup> Whether there was a lack of spiritual awareness in Moses, or in old humanity for that matter, in things pertaining to the understanding of spirituality in terms of the idea of Christ is almost impossible to tell. On the other hand though, a certain spirituality did exist in Moses' actions, and this fact is duly admitted by Böhme, while Baur seems to concede to it by implication, mostly because he quotes Böhme on this issue. As far as Böhme is concerned, the idea of spirit is present in Moses' dealings since, as he points out, Moses gave his laws and tough teachings "in zeal and fire."<sup>192</sup> The actual delivery of Moses' laws and teachings was performed "through the spirit of the great world," which was "inqualified"<sup>193</sup> with the severe wrath of God and which originates in the same root.<sup>194</sup> The spirit of the world, therefore, exchanged qualities with the severity of God's wrath, an indication that the reality of darkness or the first principle was at work there. It has been shown

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<sup>191</sup> This particular understanding of Christ, which turns the person of Christ into a spiritual concept that informs man's spirituality through the ages, was subject to the staunch criticism of many traditionalists, amongst whom John Wesley is merely one famous name. See also Benedict Groschel, *I Am with You Always. A Study of the History and Meaning of Personal Devotion to Jesus Christ for Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2010), 304.

<sup>192</sup> More about Moses' teachings in Böhme, in Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Volume 2, 39.

<sup>193</sup> The idea of inqualification (from the German verb *inqualieren*) is connected to the notion of essence, especially God's essence which externalizes itself in the human spirit. The inqualification is an exchange of qualities between essences, for instance, between divine and human essences. See also Hans Joachim Petsch, "Ich als ein einfältiger Mann.' Hinführung zu Leben und Werk Jakob Böhmes," 86–102, in Gerhard Stamer (Hrsg.), *Die Realität des Inneren. Der Einfluß der deutschen Mystik auf die deutsche Philosophie* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 99–100.

<sup>194</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 20:21, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 610.

that, in Böhme, darkness should not always be taken in a negative way; negative connotations of darkness in this context are rather rare, so negativity should be understood here only in terms of the limits which darkness sets in itself for the human spirit. Darkness becomes light when the spirit breaks free, and this happens when the idea of Christ is brought into the larger picture.<sup>195</sup> The spirit, thus, was at work in both old and new humanity; as far as the latter is concerned, however, the spirit has no negativity whatsoever attached to it. On the contrary, in the new humanity, the spirit is not only embodied or incarnate in Christ; it tells humanity that the idea of God himself—which was external to man according to old humanity—is now internal, innate, and meaningful for man's material and finite existence in the physical world according to the new humanity.<sup>196</sup> In other words, the idea and reality of the spirit was present in humanity at all times; there is however, a great difference between old and new humanity in terms of how the spirit should be understood and thus how the world should be seen. To be sure, while in the old humanity, the idea of the spirit was encapsulated within the notion of law (as reference to the clarity of God, which is the God that is external to man) and it conveyed severity, punishment, consummation (because of the image of God seen as a consuming fire), and wrath—this is why, for Böhme, the spirit here is pictured as “great acerbity,”<sup>197</sup> in the new humanity, the idea of the spirit is not captured within the notion of law, but rather in that of Christ, and with Christ comes liberation, freedom, love, light,

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<sup>195</sup> Böhme's interest in the transformation of darkness into light is connected with alchemy. See Ricardo Baeza, *Die Topologie des Ursprungs. Der Begriff der Gelassenheit bei Eckhart und Heidegger und seine Entfaltung in der abendländischen Mystik und im zeitgenössischen Denken* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009), 62.

<sup>196</sup> Böhme's God is, in other words, spirit and nature put together. See also Moriz Carrière, *Die Kunst im Zusammenhang der Kulturentwicklung und die Ideale der Menschheit*, 4. Band: Renaissance und Reformation in Bildung, Kunst und Literatur (Leipzig Brockhaus, 1871), 687.

<sup>197</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 18:31, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 610.

and understanding.<sup>198</sup> Baur astutely notices that, in fact, the difference between old and new humanity, between Moses and Christ, consists of the idea of sin. While in old humanity, Moses and all prophets spoke from God—the external God who is wrathful, severe, and a consuming fire—and God’s message was rooted in his anger against sin (perceived as trespass against this external, vengeful God), so that God is a God who punishes sin, in the new humanity, the perspective changes in the sense that sin should be perceived in such a way that it has to be redeemed, not punished. Old humanity believes in an external God whose wrath against punishing sin is directed against men and women;<sup>199</sup> new humanity believes in an internal God whose love for men and women wants to redeem sin, to the point that sin is no longer perceived as trespass against God, but rather as the darkness and meaninglessness of life before the liberating idea of Christ—representing spiritual higher knowledge—is accepted as liberating.<sup>200</sup> In old humanity, the spirit of the great world, as Böhme terms it, is characterized by the extinction of love, while in the new humanity, love is blossoming towards liberation from the tyranny of meaningless materiality.<sup>201</sup> It is most likely this duality of human understanding that caught Baur’s attention when he studied Böhme. Placing Böhme amongst Christian Gnostics was not difficult for Baur since he identified in Böhme not only a rather sharp dualism between the old and new hu-

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<sup>198</sup> To be more precise, Christ is the notion with which the entire humanity is identified. See Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross. An Analytical Look at the Problem of Pain* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1994), 67.

<sup>199</sup> The need for an external God is the most fundamental feature of the old philosophy of religion, which, according to Baur, precedes Hegel. Evidently, Böhme is an exception for Baur. For details about the humanity’s need to believe in an external God, see G. Stanley Hall, *Jesus, the Christ in the Light of Psychology*, Volume 2 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1917), 303.

<sup>200</sup> The inner God is a God of experience in Böhme. See also William McNamara, “Psychology and the Christian Mystical Tradition,” 389–431, in Charles T. Tart (ed.), *Transpersonal Psychologies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 412.

<sup>201</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 20:22, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 610.

manity, then between the very concept of God (as pertaining to the old and the new humanity) and the idea of spirit (as related to the old and the new humanity), but also a metaphorical or allegorical understanding of the notion of spirit,<sup>202</sup> all pointing to a dualistic anthropology. It is this metaphorical reading of the spirit turning the external God of old humanity into the internal God (Christ) of new humanity, which sharpens even more the Gnostic dualism between God and man,<sup>203</sup> while presenting man (Adam) himself as a dualistic being.

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<sup>202</sup> The process of turning God into a metaphor for the human spirit acquires, in Böhme, even sexual connotations. See Catherine F. Smith, “Jane Lead: Mysticism and the Woman Cloathed with the Sun,” 3–18, in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (eds), *Shakespeare’s Sisters. Feminist Essays on Women Poets* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 8.

<sup>203</sup> Böhme’s dualistic view of creation influenced Klemens Brentano, whose sister—Bettina von Arnim—was a close friend of Goethe. See David Jobling and Catherine Rose, “Reading as a Philistine: the Ancient and Modern History of a Cultural Slur,” 381–418, in Mark G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 384.



## CHAPTER 4. MAN: VIEW OF RELIGION AS GNOSIS BASED ON BÖHME'S ANTHROPOLOGY

### THE IMAGE OF ADAM: DUALISTIC, MATERIAL, AND ANDROGYNOUS

Böhme insists that Adam, the representative image for the entire humanity and the essence of his anthropology, was made from the beginning not only with the three principles within himself, but also with the reality of strife, which tore his being among the three principles.<sup>1</sup> The principles themselves are personified in Böhme, so it was not only Adam who was attracted by each of them; the principles appear to have been able to exert a significant degree of attraction over Adam's being. Given the existence of all three principles in Adam, Böhme writes that a specific need emerged as a certain "departure" from the essences of the three principles, and this need is Adam's trial. What Böhme appears to mean by this is to postulate the necessity that Adam should be tried with respect with each principle; in other words, he needed to prove his standing with respect to each of the three principles if he wanted to remain in Paradise. As the three principles were active in Adam—and Böhme refers to light, darkness, and fragility—so was the reality of strife, and this was also three-faceted.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, Adam had within himself three specific "battles:" the battle within him, the battle outside him, and the battle within the things Adam was able to see. Böhme does not elaborate on the differences between the

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<sup>1</sup> See Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme*, 22.

<sup>2</sup> For the essence of strife in Böhme, see Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century*, 98.

three, although one might feel that a certain differentiation should have been made between the second and the third battle, namely that outside Adam and that within the things which Adam saw as both seem to point to a reality which is external to Adam. The three principles within Adam, however, are fundamentally connected with the three kingdoms which traditionally exist outside and beyond Adam's being.<sup>3</sup> To make things clear, Böhme lists the three kingdoms again: first, the kingdom of hell with its power of grimness and adversity, which is the world of Lucifer and fallen angels; second, the kingdom of this world with its stars and elements, which is the world of humanity; and third, the kingdom of Paradise, which is God's realm with its power of light. All three kingdoms wanted to have Adam, so they all exerted their attraction over him in their attempt to capture his being for their respective realities: darkness, materiality, and light. In order to enhance the power of the attraction which was directed towards Adam's being, Böhme underlines the fact that he was pulled from all directions, from within himself as well as from outside his own being. Thus, he explains that the three kingdoms were both in Adam and beyond him, so Adam—as an individual entity—was being kept in the very middle of what Böhme calls “the powerful strife” which happened “within essences.”<sup>4</sup> They all pulled Adam from within and from outside, so he had to face an internal as well as an external attraction, which in addition to being extremely powerful was also threefold. One might ask why this powerful attraction and why was it directed towards Adam's being. Böhme's answer details the fact that, as a result of his creation, Adam was indeed a “great lord,” crafted according to all the powers of nature.<sup>5</sup> It is not clear what Böhme means by the powers of nature, but the phrase seems to include the core of God's creation, in the sense that Adam was in fact the crown of God's entire creation. This is why God's heart wanted Adam in Paradise, or in God's world, and this is when

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<sup>3</sup> Compare Jaroszyński, *Science and Culture*, 172.

<sup>4</sup> Adam's strife is a reflection of the fallen nature's strife because the darkness of matter is unable to grasp the light of God. See Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 182.

<sup>5</sup> See also Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 228.

Böhme personifies the three kingdoms. Thus, the desire of God's heart to have Adam within God's world is expressed through an utterance, namely through the power of the word, because God's heart seems to have expressed its desire by saying that Adam was its image and likeness.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the kingdom of grimness and darkness, which is Lucifer's world, also seems to have uttered words in order to convey its strong desire to attract Adam within itself by saying that he was from its fountain, namely from the eternal spirit of darkness. The discourse of the kingdom of darkness appears to be a little longer, since its words also include its conviction that Adam's being is deeply inhabited by the power of darkness and this is why Adam lives within this power. The kingdom of this world also expressed its willingness to have Adam in its possession, because Adam wears its likeness, he lives within it and it lives within him.<sup>7</sup> Adam had to face all three influences, and beyond the personification of each kingdom, Böhme wants to express his conviction that the forces which were at work within Adam, but also beyond his individual being, represent the influences which the human being in general faces during its existence in the world.<sup>8</sup> For Baur, Böhme is important because although he speaks of three realms, he places Adam between the dualistic influence of darkness and light, while materiality points to Adam's current state.

It seems that, in Böhme, Adam seems to have lived as some sort of "suspended" being before evil eventually caught him. He also appears to have been somehow neutral with reference to good

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<sup>6</sup> Although not overtly sexual, Böhme's language comes very close to sexual connotations, which discloses that Adam's loss of "God's image" is directly connected with man's sexuality. See Temme, "From Jakob Böhme via Jeane Leade to Eva von Buttlar," 101–106, in Strom, Lehmann, and Van Horn Melton (eds), *Pietism in Germany and North America*, 102.

<sup>7</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 11:31–38, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 593–594.

<sup>8</sup> In Böhme, Adam is only influenced by evil and since Adam is a representative of the entire humanity, all men and women fall within the same influence of evil. Consequently, Böhme seems to reject the traditional doctrine of original sin, so prevalent in the Reformation. See O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 45.



and evil, although they were three realities which exerted an enormously powerful influence over him.<sup>9</sup> Despite the claim of the paradisiac world of God, the dark world of Lucifer, and the material world of what was to be humanity itself, Adam was subject to the tantalizing force of evil as opposed to the goodness of his creation, or at least this is what Böhme seems to imply, but also what Baur may have understood from Böhme's explanation. Personification of the realities of good and evil is used again in Böhme's account of the attraction which the evil world of Lucifer employed in order to subdue Adam. Thus, in pointing to the reality of evil, Böhme explains that the dragon of darkness was able to interpret God's command to the point that he—the dragon—thought to himself that he would not be able to accomplish anything with Adam since he was a spirit without a body, while Adam was a bodily reality.<sup>10</sup> The dragon of darkness—most likely a reference to the biblical image of the devil, which took the shape of a serpent—appears to have been aware of the threefold influence which was active in Adam, but also outside his being, so he thought that he only had a third of the total influence, so the chances for him to turn to evil were considerable. In other words, the dragon of darkness was aware that his spiritual being and of his utter incapacity to influence a bodily reality unless he himself was able to take a bodily form.<sup>11</sup> Thus, as he was fully aware of God's command for Adam—namely to obey God and God alone—the dragon of darkness decided to enter the reality of the material world by combining himself with the essences of the world as well as by becoming mixed with the spirits of the world. The result was that the dragon of darkness

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<sup>9</sup> The influence of evil on Adam in Böhme is not necessarily bad; Adam fell, he gave in to evil because he was supposed to, otherwise he would have never become human. Thus, Adam's fall and his embrace of evil is, at least to some degree, positive. As Rossbach puts it, it was a "fall *upwards*," see Rossbach, *Gnostic Wars*, 150.

<sup>10</sup> For details about the image of the dragon in Böhme, see Sklar, *Blake's Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre*, 31.

<sup>11</sup> The image of the body is evidently important to Böhme. For more details about Böhme's view of the body, see Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 284.

took a creaturely form, so he turned himself into a legate of the kingdom of darkness as he took the form of a serpent.<sup>12</sup> Böhme's theological enterprise at this point is very interesting as he not only uses the biblical narrative of the fall, but he also tries to read between the lines in a way which presents us with a vivid picture of what could have happened behind the "scene," behind the actual words of what the Bible depicts as having happened with Adam before his decision to disobey God. What Böhme does here is to "enrich" the biblical narrative—which only speaks of God and man before the latter's dialogue with the serpent—with what could have happened before the appearance of the serpent, but also before the dialogue between the serpent and Adam. It is crucial to notice here that the bodily constitution of Adam required an equally material temptation,<sup>13</sup> because the spiritual reality of evil and darkness seems to have been unable to capture Adam's being without a material influence of some sort.<sup>14</sup> One can see that Böhme's intention is to construct a dualism between spirit and matter, not only between the spirit as goodness and the spirit as evil. Light and darkness, therefore, became realities which characterize the spiritual and the material realm, although the spirituality of darkness is not excluded.<sup>15</sup> In Adam's case though, Böhme seems to have needed something material in order to explain Adam's fall,<sup>16</sup> and this is why he points out that temptation itself was more material than spiritual in nature despite the fact that the spirituality of evil cannot be discarded. Everything seems to have started with the

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<sup>12</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 11:31–38, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 594.

<sup>13</sup> See also Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 96.

<sup>14</sup> The serpent's temptation could be interpreted as a metaphor for sexuality. See Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought*, 177.

<sup>15</sup> The spirituality of darkness points to the evil's divine origin. In this respect, it is possible to identify Kabbalistic influences in Böhme's thought about the origin of evil. See Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> More about Böhme's perspective on Adam's fall can be found in Kristen Poole, "Naming, *Paradise Lost*, and the Gendered Discourse of Perfect Language Schemes," 535–559, in *English Literary Renaissance* 38.3 (2008): 545.

spiritual aspect, but it ended with the material. Thus, Adam is said to have placed his imagination and desire—the spiritual aspects of his being—within the material world, but then he took the earthly fruit—evidently a reality which appealed to his material constitution.<sup>17</sup> The next step for Böhme is to describe the result of Adam's decision to let himself be attracted by the world of matter. First, Adam's paradisiac and pure soul became dark; second, the spirit of this world caught him; third, he was no longer able to see God, so he became blind with reference to God; and fourth, Adam was no longer able to see God and his virgin in his soul. Now, while the first three consequences of Adam's fall are quite easy to understand, the fourth needs a short explanation. The phrase "God and his virgin" may be a reference to God and his wisdom although Böhme does not offer any clues in this particular paragraph.<sup>18</sup> He does it, however, in his *Vom dreifachen Leben des Menschen* (Of the Threefold Life of Man), where he writes that "God's wisdom is an eternal virgin, not a female, but innocence and purity without taint; it is God's image and the likeness of the Trinity."<sup>19</sup> To put everything in a nutshell, as a result of his fall, Adam was no longer in God "with his soul," but in the spirits of this world, which originally were opposed to God and man.<sup>20</sup> He was left without any power with reference to God's realm, so he fell down and began to sleep.<sup>21</sup> In other words, Adam detached himself from the good influence of God's paradisiac world and allowed himself to be influenced by the dark realm of Lucifer.<sup>22</sup> His being started to exist un-

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<sup>17</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 11:41, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 594.

<sup>18</sup> For details about God's virgin as wisdom in Böhme, see Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 94.

<sup>19</sup> Böhme, *Vom dreifachen Leben des Menschen*, in K. M. Schiebler (ed.), *Jakob Böhme's Sämtliche Werke*, Vierter Band (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1842), 5:44, 70.

<sup>20</sup> See also Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 118.

<sup>21</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 17:90, 56, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 594.

<sup>22</sup> Who wants to escape Lucifer's influence and, in doing so, grasp the essence of salvation must therefore fight his own state of "sleep." Man in

der the fallen influence of the material world, which means that it fell into a spiritual sleep that prevented Adam from seeing God's world as it was in reality. Again, Böhme's dualism is evident here, because the good of God's paradisiac world found itself at odds with the evil of Lucifer's hellish realm, and the result was that Adam fell prey to the latter by allowing his being to exist in the finite and degrading reality of the material world. Adam forfeited his spiritual neutrality, which forced him into decay and decline.

Böhme is convinced that man's creation was first a spiritual endeavor, since Adam appears to have been androgynous—so there was no concept such as gender attached to him—and the reality of his body was anything but physical.<sup>23</sup> Adam's state before his fall is described by Böhme in terms which point to a pre-sleep condition. His fall meant he fell asleep to God, so he was no longer capable of perceiving and understanding God according to his objective reality.<sup>24</sup> Adam's perfect spirituality was replaced by finite carnality, because flesh and blood—Böhme contends—were given to him after his sleep.<sup>25</sup> This indicates that physicality and carnality are states which prevent humanity from having an accurate image of God, because the reality wherein humanity leads its existence is characterized by the third principle, which is fragility, temporality, and contingency—the very opposite of God's reality.<sup>26</sup> The third principle not only characterizes man's world and being; it is now the very essence of humanity as Böhme explains that fragility holds man captive. Man was entrapped by the third principle once he fell asleep to God and it is no wonder that man's perception of God

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general must not be a sleeper if he or she desires to be awake, with a clear mind, for God. See also Orienne SMith, Matthew Scott, Emma Mason, Jason Whittaker, Gavin Budge, Felicity James, and Amy Muse, "The Nineteenth Century: The Romantic Period," 581–647, in *The Year's Work in English Studies* 85.1 (2006): 615.

<sup>23</sup> Arvind Sharma, *Women in World Religions* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), 227.

<sup>24</sup> See also Montgomery, *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence*, 210.

<sup>25</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 17:33, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 594.

<sup>26</sup> Compare Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 157.

was dramatically disabled since his flesh and blood became like a garment for every human being. Böhme underlines the fact that man clothed himself with the physical body once he embraced the reality of the third principle, and it is exactly his physical body which shows fragility at work.<sup>27</sup> To make things even clearer, Böhme writes that because man now sleeps he has hard bones and members.<sup>28</sup> Böhme's presentation of how man's spiritual being was caught by the reality of the physical world which caused man to become a being with a physical body gives Baur the chance to make a few comments. Thus, man's existence as a created being is evidently dualistic. Having been created a spiritual being without a physical body, man was originally androgynous and genderless (sexless).<sup>29</sup> Maleness and femaleness were attached to his physical body following his fall into the spiritual sleep which renders him incapable of seeing God within his objective reality.<sup>30</sup> Thus, according to Baur, Böhme is profoundly Gnostic in this respect because, in Gnostic philosophy, the spirit of stars and elements, or the very essence of physicality, has the power to control man's material body through the third principle of fragility. Man's existence is mastered by the influence of the stars because he changed the reality of his creation into what can be called a re-creation. Thus, man went from *genesis* to *anagenesis*, or from spirituality to materiality, from androgyny to physical gender, and from infinitude to finitude.<sup>31</sup> Man's transition from spirituality to materiality was deeply influenced by celestial bodies, or at least this is what Baur seems to understand from reading Böhme. According to Böhme,

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<sup>27</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 16:22, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 594–595.

<sup>28</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 13:13, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 595.

<sup>29</sup> The soteriological return to man's original state through Christ also points, at least logically, to androgyny. See Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat, "The Mythology of Begetting and Sex in the Church Fathers' Writings," 15–26, in *Diogenes* 52.4 (2005): 20.

<sup>30</sup> See Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Volume 1, 214.

<sup>31</sup> For a good discussion about *genesis* and *anagenesis* as Gnostic features of Christian mysticism, see Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 209.

celestial bodies were not able to create man according to God's image and likeness, because they lacked the power and the reason which were necessary for such an enterprise. They did, however, influence man's transition from his *genesis* to *anagenesis*; this is why Böhme points out that celestial bodies shaped man in such a way that he resembled a beast in his most fundamental non-material faculties, such as reason, morality, and senses.<sup>32</sup> When man desired to be like God—and in this he reiterated Lucifer's attempt to revolt against God—he turned into a beast<sup>33</sup> which, in addition to sharing the features of all animals from the material world, was also "friendly and clever." It is clear that Böhme's description of man as a beast is another opportunity for Baur to include him amongst the Gnostics, since man's good spirituality was doubled by his material cunningness (good and evil intertwined within one single being).<sup>34</sup> The good and evil of man is a reflection of the good and evil which can be seen in the material world, so man was shaped by the spirit of stars and elements into a material being that accommodated itself easily to the materiality of the world. Thus, man's morality, will, and senses appear to be conditioned by the physicality of the material world, and this is why his original perception of God was lost following his sleep into the reality of this world.

### **THE IMAGE OF MAN: DUALISTIC, MATERIAL, AND FEMININE**

Man is fundamentally a dualistic being in Böhme, and Baur is more than willing to connect him with the Gnostic tradition on this respect. Thus, according to Böhme, the human being is characterized by the presence within itself of what Böhme calls "the eternal essences," which is most likely a hint at his creation by God.<sup>35</sup> At the

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<sup>32</sup> See Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 190.

<sup>33</sup> In order not to remain a beast, man must subject himself to Christ and his sacrifice. See James S. Thompson, "The Gospel of Life," 302–312, in *Theology Today* 8.3 (1951): 306.

<sup>34</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 16:22–25, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 595.

<sup>35</sup> Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Volume 1, 208.

same time, these eternal essences are present in the human being in general as well as in particular, and there is a chain of causality involved here since they were first found in Adam, from whom all the humans inherited them. In addition to these eternal essences which are the result of God's direct action in creation, there is also an aspect which stays rather hidden in the human being. As far as Böhme is concerned, a concealed element remains in each human being after Adam together with the eternal essences and they both define humanity. Man's entire image—his whole constitution—is defined by the eternal essences and the concealed element, which are later on completed by the "new birth in water and the Holy Spirit of God."<sup>36</sup> It would have been relevant had Böhme commented a little more on what he means by man's new birth, especially that it is connected with the idea of water and the reality of God's spirit. As he does not elaborate on this issue, one should resort to what he says, especially with reference to the fact that it seems to be the concealed element which pushes the human being towards animality. Böhme has already pointed out that the human being is like a beast and it appears that whatever lies within it and makes it behave like a beast has to do with this hidden element.<sup>37</sup> Since man's positivity is connected with the fact that he is God's creation, the negativity of his beast-like behavior must be somehow connected with the reality of evil, although Böhme does not say anything about evil at this point. He does say, however, that in his heart and mind, the human being is like a beast. Man's beastly constitution and behavior is evident not only in his heart and mind, but also in his five senses and in the "realm of stars," perhaps a reference to his materiality.<sup>38</sup> When it comes to man's resemblance with beasts, Böhme offers some details in the sense that he pictures the

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<sup>36</sup> Compare Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*, 42.

<sup>37</sup> It appears that the image of the beast, which makes man lean towards animality and evil, is only one of the two moral-existential possibilities that can be embraced by man, the other one being the image of God, the symbol of spirituality and goodness. See Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Adam's beastly characteristics in Böhme can reflect Kabbalistic influences. See Smith, *Utopia and Dissent*, 496, n. 15.

human being by pointing to certain animals. For instance, man can be like a wolf, a lion, a dog, but also like a hare, a toad, and a serpent. When man resembles a wolf, Böhme says that his most important characteristics are astuteness, vigor, and fierceness, in the sense that he is always willing to consume other animals, so his courage goes unquestioned.<sup>39</sup> Then, man's comparison with the lion offers Böhme the chance to speak about man's power and ferociousness, but also about his magnificence and his proneness to devour.<sup>40</sup> Man is also like a dog, and in this respect he is a being which displays subtleness, jealousy, and wickedness.<sup>41</sup> As indicated before, Böhme also describes man in connection with animals such as serpents, toads, and hares, but at this point he does not offer any details concerning which features describing these animals may also be said to characterize the human being. While describing man as a serpent leaves a number of clues about his characteristics—cunningness, rapacity, and deviousness—the reference to toads and hares would have needed a certain degree of elaboration concerning which of their characteristics may be applied to the human being. It is important to notice though that, despite the obvious negativity which emerges from man's being compared with animals,<sup>42</sup> there is also a positive side of the whole enterprise since a number of positive features are said to complete Böhme's presentation of the image of human being's existence within the physical reality of

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<sup>39</sup> See Cynthia Bourgeault, *Love Is Stronger than Death. The Mystical Union of Two Souls* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2001, first published 1997), 45.

<sup>40</sup> These features point to Lucifer. See Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 44.

<sup>41</sup> Man stands between the world of angels and the world of God because of his "subtle body," which underlines the fact that he is both like God and like the fallen Lucifer. Thus, good and evil, matter and spirit, as well as animality and humanity/divinity intertwine in the complex human being. See Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 284.

<sup>42</sup> An excellent analysis of the negative as symbol, see Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action. Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 461–462.



the material world.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, although he is fierce, ferocious, wicked, devious, cunning, and jealous, man is also powerful, magnificent, astute, vigorous, subtle, and intelligent.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, it is crucial to understand that all these characteristics and especially the negative ones are the result of the fact that man exists within a universe which is fundamentally physical and material. This is why Böhme points out that the stars and elements are not only the power in which man is held captive, but also the realities which make him look and be like animals. Man's spirit, his soul and mind, resembles the animality of other creatures, but this is only because the human being is "held captive" in the physical reality of the material world.<sup>45</sup> It is now that, having read Böhme's presentation which likens man with beasts, Baur explains that this particular comparison prompted him to think of Basilides' Gnosticism and especially the idea of *prosartemata*—parasitic emotions or appendices which coexist with man's soul.<sup>46</sup> In other words, man's rational soul—which is evidently the work of divinity—is accompanied by a variety of feelings which are the result of his existence in the world.<sup>47</sup>

Adam's connection with this world following his fall was to become extremely powerful according to Böhme. One of its most important consequences was, on the one hand, the fact that Adam forgot "the virgin" as he fell asleep in this world—in other words, he lost sight of God's wisdom—and, on the other, of Eve's creation. It is noteworthy to underline here that, concerning the latter issue, Böhme differs from the traditional understand of creation in Christian theology. Thus, while traditional Christianity professes that the human being was created male and female as part of God's original intention for humanity and, at the same time, their creation

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<sup>43</sup> In Böhme, two distinct urges—human and animal—are at work in man's being. See Weeks, *Boehme*, 97.

<sup>44</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 16:22–25, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 595.

<sup>45</sup> Versluis, *Magic and Mysticism*, 108.

<sup>46</sup> See Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 209.

<sup>47</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 16:31–35, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 595, and 214–215.

happened before the fall, Böhme promotes at least two distinctive beliefs: first, the fact that the human being was created, in Adam, as an androgynous reality which was neither male nor female;<sup>48</sup> and second, the idea that Eve was created following Adam's fall.<sup>49</sup> This can imply that Adam's fall caused him to lose his androgyny and, in doing so, he was given a gender.<sup>50</sup> Having become male as a result of his fall, it is only logical for Böhme to contend that he needed a being which was equally endowed with gender, and this is how the female was created—again, as a result of Adam's fall and after his transformation into a male.<sup>51</sup> As Böhme points out, Eve was created for him as a female in this world dominated by fragility. This is to say that the female was intended to be a being of this world—as it were, to compensate for Adam's fall,<sup>52</sup> very much like Adam was meant to compensate for Lucifer's fall—this is why Böhme highlights the fact that she is the woman or the lady of this world.<sup>53</sup> This seems to have been the only option for Eve's creation as Böhme himself explains that things could not have been otherwise. Everything has to do apparently with the powerful influence of the spirit of this world, which took action upon Adam. Böhme writes that the spirit of this world “overcame and possessed” Adam “with his tincture;” in other words, the very substance and quality of this world penetrated Adam's being in such a powerful way that the

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<sup>48</sup> See also Julie Hirst, “‘Mother of Love’: Spiritual Maternity in the Works of Jane Lea (1624–1704),” 161–187, in Sylvia Brown (ed.), *Women, Gender, and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 175.

<sup>49</sup> For details about Adam's androgyny and the creation of Eve in Böhme, see Adrian Daub, *Uncivil Union. The Metaphysics of Marriage in German Idealism and Romanticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 99.

<sup>50</sup> Androgyny, in this case, can refer to perfection. See Moshe Idel, “Androgyny and Equality in the Theosophico-Theurgical Kabbalah,” 27–38, in *Diogenes* 52.4 (2005): 27.

<sup>51</sup> See Weeks, *Boehme*, 116.

<sup>52</sup> In this respect, it can be argued that Eve was created to replace Sophia, God's wisdom, which was lost by Adam as a result of his fall. Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 189.

<sup>53</sup> See Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 84–85.

finitude, contingency, temporality, transitoriness, and physicality of the material realm became his own reality. After the fall, Adam was no longer a genderless spiritual being; he was not thoroughly material like Eve. At the same time, Adam received a gender, like Eve,<sup>54</sup> but it is important to notice here that she was created with a gender in this material world after Adam's fall, while his creation was genderless before the fall.<sup>55</sup> When it comes to the fall, one should understand that in Böhme, this is not only a change of state, status, and existence; it is also—most profoundly and essentially—a whole existence shaped by a different perspective on reality. This is why, for Böhme, the fall is described in terms of a deep sleep, which literally prevents the human being from perceiving God as he is in reality.<sup>56</sup> As a result of his fall, Adam changed his perspective on reality. He not only fell in the sense that he disappointed God and was tossed within a totally different reality; he fell asleep so he was truly unable to perceive reality in an objective way. “The virginal image” of God's wisdom became highly obscure for Adam.<sup>57</sup> There was a total separation from God's wisdom in the fall; Adam may have seen the noble and virtuous image of God's wisdom which he was meant to wed, but his sleep pushed him away from this original spirituality. Before the fall, when he was wholly spiritual and genderless, Adam was meant to be accompanied only by God's wisdom; after the fall, God's initial plan had to be replaced because, having been given a gender, Adam now needed a being with a gender, and this is why Eve was created as female.<sup>58</sup> One could also notice that, in Böhme, Eve represents—in a material way—the spiritual reality of God's wisdom. Eve's materiality is also her animality; Böhme writes that she was given to Adam following the fact that he was overcome by the spirit of this material world. Eve is the lady of the elements, the woman of matter, which was creat-

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<sup>54</sup> Glausser, *Locke and Blake*, 31.

<sup>55</sup> Gaarden, *The Christian Goddess*, 119.

<sup>56</sup> Montgomery, *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence*, 210.

<sup>57</sup> The virginal image of God's wisdom can be associated with another image, that of Christ. See Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, 139.

<sup>58</sup> This is why Adam's fall was “a fall from androgyny into gender;” see Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 96.

ed out of Adam in the “shape of a beast”—a confirmation of her essential physicality and materiality.<sup>59</sup> One should notice though that this is also a confirmation of Adam’s physicality and materiality because, following the loss of his “wedding” with God’s wisdom in the “celestial *limbo*,”<sup>60</sup> Adam now had to “marry” Even in the worldly place. Although Böhme does not elaborate on what he means by the “celestial *limbo*,” it appears to be a confined spiritual place which was initially meant to be the place of Adam’s indwelling. The heavens are God’s dwelling place as he is uncreated, while the celestial *limbo* seems to have been especially “confined” for Adam—a created spiritual being—as he took delight in God’s wisdom.<sup>61</sup> As far as Baur is concerned, Böhme’s dualism is evident: first in Adam’s creation as he was meant to wed God’s wisdom before the fall, and second in Eve’s creation as she was intended to wed Adam following his fall. At the same time, Adam is essentially a dualistic being—having been created totally spiritual, he nevertheless became material although his spirituality had not been cancelled.<sup>62</sup> Eve, on the other hand, was created material, but she still reflects God’s spiritual wisdom which was initially meant for Adam before the fall.<sup>63</sup> The dualism of reality can also be noticed as this point because—at least for Adam—his existence is defined in terms which present his life before and after the fall. The last, but certainly not the least important aspect, is the way Adam related

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<sup>59</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 17:11, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 595–596.

<sup>60</sup> See also Patrick Harpur, *The Philosophers’ Secret Fire. A History of the Imagination* (Victoria: Blue Angel Gallery, 2002), 253.

<sup>61</sup> Compare Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 44.

<sup>62</sup> In Böhme, Adam’s dualistic constitution is evident both before and after the fall; before the fall, Adam was created androgynous so he had Adam and Eve in his sexless body, while after the fall, he fell “apart into Adam and Eve.” See Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 99.

<sup>63</sup> Böhme’s perspective on the creation of Eve can be interpreted in less positive terms. For instance, Eve can be seen as “an unintended and undesirable outcome of the early history of creation” because “she was the result of an already fallen Adam.” See Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought*, 177.

himself to reality: first, in his capacity of created spiritual being, he was meant to rule over the material world; and second, following his fall and his transformation into a material being with spiritual faculties,<sup>64</sup> he was overcome by the spirit of this world. In other words, his sovereignty over the spirit of this world—over materiality, finitude, contingency, and temporality—turned into vassalage as he was no longer able to discern the spirit of God.

The purpose of creating the woman was important, but not primarily for Adam; the woman was an indispensable being for God, because she was intended to be the instrument through which Adam's kingdom should be enlarged.<sup>65</sup> Thus, according to Böhme, the woman was created by God—and it is important to realize this aspect, so she is not some kind of secondary importance within God's plan although she was created material, carnal, and beast-like in all respects unlike Adam who was initially spiritual—with the specific purpose to be the vehicle of the expansion of what it was to be Adam's kingdom. At the same time, the woman was created for Adam.<sup>66</sup> When it comes to Adam, one should realize that the complexity of his being is closely related to the actuality of the fall itself. Adam did not fall only because he acted towards this end; in other words, he did not fall because he wanted to—at least this is not the only reason for the fall. Böhme explains that the fall was caused by Adam's nature, so—at least in this respect—the fall is linked not only with Adam's volition, but also with his creation; to be more precise, the fall has something to do with the way Adam was created.<sup>67</sup> This line of reasoning implies that God himself is eventually the cause of the fall, since he created Adam with a

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<sup>64</sup> Spiritual transformation is essential to Böhme's thought. See György E. Szönyi, "John Dee and Early Modern Occult Philosophy," 1–12, in *Literature Compass* 1.1 (2004): 7.

<sup>65</sup> For a more pessimistic perspective on Böhme's teaching about the creation of Eve, see Glusser, *Locke and Blake*, 30.

<sup>66</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 17:32, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 596.

<sup>67</sup> Adam did not fall because he wanted to fall and, in doing so, stay away from God. He just did not exercise a "blind obedience to a capricious God." See Weeks, *Boehme*, 114.

nature that was—at least to some degree—prone towards the possibility of what the fall entailed within all its complexity.<sup>68</sup> Adam was evidently created to be a being endowed with a set of principles. Although Böhme does not elaborate at this point, it has already been revealed that light and darkness—as well as good and evil—were the principles which were inculcated in Adam's being from the moment of his creation. Adam's being, however, seems to have had—also from the very beginning—a “side” which was leaning towards the fall, so it was weaker and, as Böhme puts it, “feminine.”<sup>69</sup> This confirms the idea that Adam was androgynous as a result of his creation since the feminine side of his nature was the one which caused him to choose the way of the fall. Why his masculinity did not intervene, since—following the same logic—it was more powerful and, most likely, inclined towards God, is an issue which Böhme unfortunately does not detail. At any rate, it is the feminine side of Adam which places his fall in relationship with God's will the very same way Lucifer's fall was connected to the Godhead.<sup>70</sup> The implication is evident for Böhme: God seems to have wanted the fall because of the first principle which is not only a feature of Adam's being but of God himself. The first principle is darkness, namely what Böhme calls “the hellish abyss,” and it was in this principle or according to this principle that Böhme saw a direct connection between Adam's fall and God's will.<sup>71</sup> God want-

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<sup>68</sup> Adam had a powerful desire (*Lust*) which, although harmonious at first, possessed the possibility of disharmony. See Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 45.

<sup>69</sup> Compare Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 96.

<sup>70</sup> Compare Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 228–229.

<sup>71</sup> It is therefore possible to argue that Adam fell unconsciously. Böhme's “abyss of hell” becomes Hegel's “abyss of the soul,” which is essentially unconscious (*bewußtlos*). See Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, xiv. The idea of the “unconscious will” places Böhme in a long tradition which includes, among others, Luther, Oetinger, Schelling, and Feuerbach. See, for details, A. Katherine Grieb, “Pharaoh's Magicians at the Holy of Holies? Appraising an Early Debate between Tillich and Barth on the Relationship

ed the fall of man, so the chain of causality links God to Adam's fall, whose result is the creation of a different kingdom. This particular kingdom which resulted from Adam's fall neither signified, nor was called God's; it was a reality whose objectivity was fundamentally different from God's kingdom and being, as well as from Lucifer's kingdom and being. As far as Böhme is concerned, this new reality—the direct consequence of Adam's fall, but also of God's will—is the firm delineation of the two kingdoms, God's and Lucifer's. Adam's fall, therefore, seems to have put a clear end to God's act of creation, because it marked the final moment of God's creation. After the creation of man and of the material world, God did not create anything else.<sup>72</sup> God's being, however, seems to display a remarkable dualism in the sense that, while according to the first principle of darkness he wanted Adam's fall, according to the second principle of light—which Böhme calls “the other principle”—God did not want Adam's fall.<sup>73</sup> It is important to see here Böhme's attitude to the first principle, which seems to have determined not only Adam's fall, but also God's disposition towards the same event. The principle of darkness, the very first principle of God's being according to Böhme, appears to have exerted a decisive influence on God's own being with respect to Adam's fall. Thus, the principle of darkness is “the bond of eternity” in Böhme's thought; it is so powerful that it makes itself.<sup>74</sup> It is a pity that Böhme does not elaborate on this aspect, but it seems that

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between Philosophy and Theology,” 360–380, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56.3 (2003): 364, n. 13.

<sup>72</sup> While it may be true that the fall ended God's creation, in the sense that God no longer created anything after the fall, creation itself did not end. Creation itself is characterized by light and darkness, and these two features find themselves in a perpetual struggle, which resembles the very being of God. Thus, although God ceased to create, creation itself cannot be stopped since it is “an ongoing and eternal emanation,” especially after the fall which delineated good and evil in such a clear way. See McCalla, *A Romantic Historiosophy*, 289.

<sup>73</sup> See Cooper, *Panentheism, the Other God of the Philosophers*, 100.

<sup>74</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 18:15, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 596.

the principle of darkness is able to create itself even beyond God's own capacity to somehow contain it. The principle of darkness therefore appears to work on its own in a way which prompted even God himself to will Adam's fall long before Adam himself leaned towards this possibility. It is quite unclear whether God was directly influenced by the principle of darkness as an external power or he was determined from within his own being to will Adam's fall; nevertheless, what seems to be clear enough is the fact that both Lucifer's fall and Adam's fall were foreseen and envisioned within God's eternal wisdom long before the actual creation of the world.<sup>75</sup> All these aspects belonging to Böhme's view of creation were quoted by Baur, which can be an indication of other aspects which he saw in Böhme as related to Gnosticism. For instance, there is first the dualism of the fall, which affected Lucifer's kingdom and then the material world that was given to humanity. Then, there is the dualism of God's knowledge and will, which seem to have seen the fall not only when it happened, but also before the actual moment thereof. God knew about the fall and wanted the fall from eternity, according to the eternity of his wisdom although, in Böhme, the very essence of eternity seems to be defined by the first principle or by darkness.<sup>76</sup> Darkness, though, is linked with the material world, and the material world contains Adam, the key concept which explains why darkness exists and is actively at work in the world.

### **GOD'S VIRGIN AS ADAM: THE FINITUDE OF HUMANITY**

Böhme's personification of the relationship between Adam and the spirit of the material world is crucial for the understanding of how a wholly spiritual being was captured by materiality and physicality within the context of this world. Although, for Böhme, Adam and the spirit of the material world had lived in a very close relationship from the beginning since Adam was "from the world"—an affirmation which seems to contradict his previous statements about

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<sup>75</sup> In other words, Böhme's "double fall"—also appropriated by Hegel—is part of God's plan. See Rossbach, *Gnostic Wars*, 150.

<sup>76</sup> See Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 157.



Adam's preexistence with reference to the material world, that was said to have been created after Adam's fall—they did exist as individual entities with distinct, separate characteristics of their own. Adam seems to have been totally spiritual within the reality of the material world,<sup>77</sup> and so appears to have been the spirit of the material world—a spiritual reality which defined the physicality of the material world. At any rate, Adam and the spirit of the world began to interact in their capacities as spiritual entities, and their interaction seems to have led to an exchange of characteristics, in the sense that Adam acquired features which had been specific to the spirit of the world, while the spirit of the world gained characteristics which initially had been specific only to his being. Böhme's explanation how the interaction between Adam and the spirit of the world happened has its own distinct flavor in the sense that it is rendered by means of a dialogue between Adam (God's noble virgin)<sup>78</sup> and the spirit of the world (the well-shaped lad).<sup>79</sup> Böhme starts from explaining the position in which each of them stood before their actual interaction. Thus, Adam—as God's most virtuous virgin—was “in God's heart,”<sup>80</sup> in fact, he was set in God's heart, which confirms that Adam was a totally spiritual being from the moment of his creation. Adam was not only completely spiritual; his entire being was preoccupied with God and, according to Böhme, he did not want to “have any other imagination”—in a word, he was focused exclusively on God and his relationship with God. His whole mind, the totality of his being, was occupied with God's being, and this is why he did not wish to change the focus of

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<sup>77</sup> Böhme's Adam appears to have had a “non-corporeal body,” so he shared some sort of “spiritual matter” with angels. See Hessayon, “*Gold Tried in the Fire*,” 287–288.

<sup>78</sup> More about the “noble virgin” in Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom. St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987, reprinted 1997), 260.

<sup>79</sup> See, for details, Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 95.

<sup>80</sup> See also Sklar, *Blake's Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre*, 73.

his “imagination.”<sup>81</sup> To be sure, as God’s noble virgin, Adam had only one desire: to keep his imagination focused on God.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, the spirit of this world—whose location and origin was the material world, which also appears to have been Adam’s place—had also one single desire: to focus his imagination on Adam as God’s virgin.<sup>83</sup> According to Böhme, the spirit of the world, or the well-built lad, craved for God’s virgin and wanted to “in-qualify” with her; he desired to exchange qualities with her. The nature of Böhme’s language here is openly sexual—although the word is never used in this context—but it manages to convey the powerful drive which pushed the spirit of the material world towards Adam and, at the same time, explains how Adam eventually fell prey to the materiality of the world. The powerful desire of the spirit of the world prompted him to start a dialogue with Adam, God’s virgin, which also contains sexual connotations, because the lad (the spirit of the world) tells Adam (God’s virgin) that he was the bridegroom while Adam (the virgin) was his “beloved bride,”<sup>84</sup> his “Paradise and crown of roses.”<sup>85</sup> At this point, the sexual language is confirmed beyond any doubt, because the lad tells the virgin that he wants to become an offspring within her—literally “pregnant/gestating in you”—which is an indication of his desire

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<sup>81</sup> An informative discussion about imagination in theosophical and esoteric thought can be found in Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1988), 155ff.

<sup>82</sup> In Böhme, imagination is crucial because it is the glue which keeps reality together. See Harpur, *The Philosophers’ Secret Fire*, 253.

<sup>83</sup> This is because, in Böhme, natural/material imagination is capable of destroying divine virginity. See Sklar, *Blake’s Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre*, 32.

<sup>84</sup> Compare Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme*, 22.

<sup>85</sup> This is most likely a reference to eternity and bliss. See Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, “Salvation through Philology: The Poetical Messianism of Quirinius Kuhlmann (1651–1689),” 259–298, in Peter Schäfer and Mark R. Cohen (eds), *Toward the Millennium. Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 279.

to exchange “essences” with her and to benefit from her love.<sup>86</sup> As God’s virgin, Adam seems to have had a self-awareness which—to a certain point—allowed him to perceive himself as being superior to the spirit of the world, at least in the sense that Adam’s spirituality was above the spirituality of the spirit of the world. This is why his reply consists of not only the admission that the virgin is indeed the lad’s bride while he is her companion, but also of the claim that the lad does not have the virgin’s “jewelry.” It is the word “jewelry” which seems to account for the virgin’s superiority, or Adam’s spiritual superiority over the spirit of the world, because the virgin goes on saying that “her pearls” are more expensive than he, her power is imperishable, and her spirit is everlasting.<sup>87</sup> The virgin also describes the lad, who is said to be the exact opposite of her: he has a perishable spirit and his power is characterized by fragility. Nevertheless, the virgin extends an invitation to the lad, so Adam invites the spirit of the world to live in her (Adam’s) house. The result of their cohabitation is further explained by the virgin who offers not only to host the lad “friendly,” but also to “do a lot of good” to him, adorn him with her jewelry, and dress him with her clothes. At the same time, the virgin (Adam) tells the lad (the spirit of the world) that she will not give him her “pearls” because he is dark, while they (the pearls) are light and beauty.<sup>88</sup> Again, the pearls appear to denote the virgin’s superiority over the lad, but also Adam’s superiority over the spirit of the world. It is, in fact, a matter of spirituality since they both were spiritual despite their existence in the material world. It is important to notice here Böhme’s intention to explain the externality of temptation, on the one hand, and the dual nature of spirituality, on the other. Adam was tempted from outside his own being, because his own imagination was focused

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<sup>86</sup> The idea of pregnancy is thoroughly material (corporeal) and clearly opposed the notion of virginity, which has more spiritual connotations. See O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 150.

<sup>87</sup> See also Macquarrie, *Two Worlds Are Ours*, 183.

<sup>88</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 12:40–42, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 597–598.

entirely on God.<sup>89</sup> When temptation came under the guise of a different existential possibility, he fell in the moment when he decided to talk with the spirit of the world, which is before he expressed his willingness to embrace the spirit of the world. Thus, it is the potentiality of the different existential possibility which caused Adam to fall. The actual fall followed quite smoothly and confirmed the fact that, in the material world, spirituality was both good and evil.

Following Adam's decision to accept the proposal of the spirit of the material world, the two realities—the superior spirituality of divinity and the inferior spirituality of materiality—conjoined in one single spirituality which distanced itself from the pure spirituality of God. In Böhme's terms, the virgin and the lad became one, because the lad was more than eager to live “in the virgin”<sup>90</sup> and to wear her garments.<sup>91</sup> It appears that the connection between the two, Adam and the spirit of this world, was more than a mere juxtaposition; as the two realities became one, it seems that they formed a spiritual mixture, which—although maintaining their individualities—tainted the spirituality of divinity while keeping the spirituality of materiality within the same basic characteristics. This must have been a dramatic change for Adam, because he was no longer fully spiritual as the materiality of the spirit of the world became essential to his being.<sup>92</sup> As a result, he approached God with an important request, which is presented by Böhme in terms which

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<sup>89</sup> For details about the connection between temptation and imagination in Böhme, see Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 23.

<sup>90</sup> See Weeks, *Boehme*, 119.

<sup>91</sup> The image of the virgin dressed in an expensive garment is also present in Jane Leade. See Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 234.

<sup>92</sup> From now on, Adam will no longer be able to see the Godhead outside of his being, but rather within himself. The fall, therefore, is a pedagogical process during which Adam becomes fully human, endowed with wisdom capable of picturing him in material as well as spiritual terms, and ready to progress spiritually/intellectually in the material world. See Kristen Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton. Figures of Non-conformity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 181.

picture the virgin turning to God's heart in order to speak with it. In other words, what was left of Adam's divine spirituality made a last attempt to reconnect with the non-material essence of God's divine being. A dialogue follows, in which Adam (the virgin) speaks first, then the divine answer is given. Thus, Adam (the virgin) turns to God and acknowledges that he is his heart, love, and power, while also pointing to the fact that Adam is full of light only in God.<sup>93</sup> Adam (the virgin) also admits that he was born from eternity out of God's root, which is a very important statement that confirms the powerful dualistic tendencies of Böhme's teaching of creation. Baur must have sensed this aspect since he insists on quoting Böhme's words in this respect; to be more precise, the dualism of creation in Böhme resides in the eternity of the relationship between God and his creation. While it is true that Adam was created, it is equally valid to assert that, in Böhme, Adam was created from eternity and his origin is fully divine.<sup>94</sup> It is important to notice here that Baur did not provide a text from Böhme which would have pointed to the exact moment of Adam's creation. What Baur underlines in turn is Böhme's insistence on the constant relationship between God and creation as if God and Adam would have been together from eternity. Adam was God's wisdom and God found himself in Adam as God's wisdom, so the eternity of the relationship between God and creation appears to be characterized by an evident dualism, which is confirmed by Adam's request addressed to God, following his decision to become one with the spirituality of the material world. Consequently, Adam (the virgin) asks God to save him from the "dragon or serpent of darkness," which the spirit of the world brought with it.<sup>95</sup> In Böhme's words, the virgin asks God's heart to protect her from the serpent of darkness, which her bridegroom had inqualified with.<sup>96</sup> In other words, prior to their

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<sup>93</sup> This could indicate that, despite the fall, Adam never lost his likeness to God. See Jaroszyński, *Science in Culture*, 172.

<sup>94</sup> In Böhme, Adam's divinity is reflected by his androgyny, which includes God's divine wisdom. See Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 99.

<sup>95</sup> See Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 284.

<sup>96</sup> A feeling of shame can be detected here between the bride and the bridegroom. See Kripal, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom*, 80.

interconnection, the lad exchanged essences with the reality of the principle of darkness, so he brought the reality of darkness in his relationship with God's virgin. So Adam (the virgin) asks God to protect him from being "darkened in darkness." Adam also wants God to find joy in him again and asks why should he stay with the spirit of the world within the reality of darkness. In Böhme's rendering, the virgin asks God's heart to save her from being tainted, but she also asks why she should remain in darkness with her bridegroom.<sup>97</sup> This information is crucially important, because while the virgin does turn to God for salvation, she nevertheless seems unwilling to rid herself off the well-shaped lad. In other words, while wishing for his salvation from the spirit of materiality, Adam still intends to stay close to the reality of the material world, which may be the first sign of his actual fall.<sup>98</sup> This seems to be true because this is the first instance which proves that Adam was no longer able to see God as he truly was and neither did Adam see his relationship with God in proper terms since he asked to remain with God while still holding within himself the spirituality of the world. What Adam asked from God was to allow him (the virgin) to return to God while still clinging to the darkness which was brought within his life (the virgin's being) by the spirit of the material world (the lad). At this point, God's answer clarifies the whole situation, when it is shown—in biblical terms resembling the book of Genesis, although neither Böhme nor Baur underlines this aspect—that the woman's seed shall crush the head of the serpent or the dragon, while he (the serpent) will sting "him in the heel."<sup>99</sup> Nothing is said here about who the woman's seed represents; it is clear though that it is a being that is different from Adam, but stays within the genealogy of the woman, so it should be a human, material being. It is now Baur's turn to come up with a very brief, though extremely important, comment which asserts the dramatic

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<sup>97</sup> Putting together darkness of the bridegroom and the light of the bride (Sophia), Böhme speaks about "the spirit or self as the unifier of opposites." See Dourley, *On Behalf of the Mystical Fool*, 62.

<sup>98</sup> In Böhme, Adam desired to turn away from God. See Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 38.

<sup>99</sup> See Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 213.

transformation of man from spirituality to materiality. Thus, according to Baur, man became earthly, fleshly, and terrestrial—in a word, he became material and finite—through the disappearance of God’s virgin. It seems that Adam ceased to be God’s virgin, in the sense that he gave away his pure spirituality in order to embrace the spirituality of the material world. Adam did not only become earthly, fleshly, terrestrial, and material; he also became sensual, feeble, and finite because—as Böhme points out—he was overcome, evidently by the spirit of the material world. As a result, God’s virgin stepped into “her ether,”<sup>100</sup> so she seems to have vanished away, while Adam—now material and driven by senses—turned into a being whose essence (tincture in Böhme)<sup>101</sup> was terrestrial, weary, and weak; in a word, it was permanently affected by finitude.<sup>102</sup>

### ADAM BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND MATERIALITY

The notion of tincture becomes vitally important at this point in Böhme’s argument.<sup>103</sup> The tincture seems to represent the very essence of being, because—as Böhme clearly explains—Adam (God’s virgin) had lived “in the tincture,” and it was the tincture which became earthly, weary, dead, and weak; in other words, it became historical and material.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, Böhme mentions that the “powerful root of the tincture” disappeared in Adam, so it vanished “in the ether,” which points to Adam’s loss of divinity as he decided to turn his back on God and accept the qualities of the spirit of this world. It is important to understand what Böhme meant by the idea of tincture, because this does not only represent the essence of being, but also—as far as Adam is concerned—the

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<sup>100</sup> This could indicate that God’s virgin or wisdom is now available for the entire humanity. See Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 164.

<sup>101</sup> The fall caused Adam to lose his unity with divinity. See Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 229.

<sup>102</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 13:8–9, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 598.

<sup>103</sup> See details in Weeks, *Boehme*, 123.

<sup>104</sup> Compare Glausser, *Locke and Blake*, 41.

way he was created and related himself to God prior to his fall.<sup>105</sup> Böhme shows therefore that the tincture was powerful in Adam before his exchange of qualities with the spirit of the world, and its power was without sleep. Thus, Adam was able to be fully awoken to God, so he was capable of seeing God as he truly was in its being and existence. Adam's tincture or essence was characterized only by rest, so his relationship to God seems to have been entirely stable and deeply rooted in God's divinity. Adam's awareness of God was the one which made him rest in God, and it was only after Adam's fall that this tincture vanished away from Adam's being. Before God's essence left Adam, Böhme also says that the tincture was the heavenly matrix, or the very context of God's existence and being—a reality which seems to have engulfed not only God, but Adam as well.<sup>106</sup> This particular interpretation appears to be supported by Böhme's indication that the divine tincture—as the heavenly matrix—contained both Paradise and the heavenly kingdom, which explains why, following the fall, this divine reality literally vanished from Adam's material life. The essence of divinity is fundamentally different from the essence of materiality—and, therefore, humanity—and the dualism of the two certainly did not escape Baur's inquisitive eye. The fact though that the divine tincture or essence vanished away from Adam's life does not mean that it ceased to exist. It only ceased to exist in Adam and, as it left in the ether, it remained—as Böhme points out—in “the divine principle,”<sup>107</sup> so it continued to exist in God's being.<sup>108</sup> In other words, God never ceased to be God following Adam's fall and, to be sure, despite Adam's fall, which confirms again the sharp dualism between God and Adam that in turn must have signaled to Baur that another Gnostic element is to be identified in Böhme. Having been left without the divine tincture, Adam only had the spirit or the soul which was characteristic to his own being. As Böhme puts it, Adam's spirit or soul remained with “its proper serpent in the third

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<sup>105</sup> Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 96.

<sup>106</sup> See also Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought*, 176.

<sup>107</sup> This is possibly of reference to man's capacity to regenerate his spirit. See Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 19–20.

<sup>108</sup> See Gray, *Goethe the Alchemist*, 46.



principle of this world.” This statement is crucial for a correct understanding of what happened to Adam after the fall, because it shows that as divinity withdrew from Adam in order to remain exclusively in God, Adam’s being was left under the influence of fragility, materiality, finitude, and physicality; in a word, it became a being with a definite end.<sup>109</sup> When it comes to Adam, one must realize that, while he was left without his original divine essence, he acquired what he had been looking for, namely the spirit of the world, which came with its most fundamental fragility and, by extension, death.<sup>110</sup> In Böhme’s imagery of the virgin and the lad, this is explained in terms which picture the virgin as being incapable of letting the lad go away.<sup>111</sup> The first consequence of the fall thus was Adam’s incapacity to perceive God as he truly was, which resulted in his divine essence being withdrawn from him and his unwillingness to let go of the spirit of this world. Once he grabbed materiality, Adam could not put it aside; it became part of his own being, which seems to have left no room for God’s divinity. Despite this dramatic change though, Adam did not completely lose his connection with divinity. He may not have been entirely spiritual any longer, but he continued to exist as God’s creation. Adam was now fallen, left without God’s essence, but he was nevertheless God’s creation. According to Böhme, Adam continued to be God’s virgin who once lived in heaven and Paradise as God’s power and wisdom and it was in this capacity—evidently before the fall—that Adam saw himself in the material quality of the human soul.<sup>112</sup> It was as if God’s divine creation wanted to be human and material even before his actual fall. Adam seems to have longed for humanity when he was a full spiritual being because, in Böhme, he is said

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<sup>109</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 13:8–9, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 598.

<sup>110</sup> Consequently, man is left with a constant struggle to overcome the spirit of the world, as confirmed by Baader. See Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, 219–220.

<sup>111</sup> In Böhme, this is an image which explains the power of temptation. See Weeks, *Boehme*, 116–117.

<sup>112</sup> For the materiality of the human soul in Böhme, see also Kamil, *Fortress of the Soul*, 326.

to have grasped the meaning of the spirit of this world—precisely because his divine essence was the noblest and the brightest—and it was from Adam’s desire to be indwelled by the spirit of this world that the human being came into existence. To be sure, Adam (as God’s virgin, wisdom, and power) was a completely spiritual being who, having understood the spirit of the world, decided to exchange qualities with it. Thus, having embraced it, he lost his full spirituality—but not all spirituality—and became material, historical, earthly, finite, and mortal; in a word, he became human.<sup>113</sup> Adam (the virgin and the bride) became one with the spirit of this world (the lad and the bridegroom), so he acquired “earthly flesh,” an “earthly soul,” and “earthly senses.” It is important to notice here that, despite him becoming material and finite, Adam (as God’s virgin) did not allow him to remain fixed in the centre of materiality. It seems that Adam (as God’s virgin) wanted to be more than merely material; he wanted to become a being which resembled his original status as God’s virgin in Paradise. Thus, he wanted to build a Paradise for himself in the material reality of the physical world.<sup>114</sup>

Adam’s acceptance to become one with the spirit of the material world—or, in Böhme’s imagery, the virgin’s decision to wed the lad—severely affected his relationship with God, since he was no longer able to perceive God as he really was in his objective reality; at the same time though Adam did not completely lose his capacity to related himself to God. He seems to have been left with an awareness which allowed him to understand God’s presence and, although his relationship with God has never been the same, he nonetheless appears still to be able to understand God’s existence. Thus, after he became material having lost his original spirit-

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<sup>113</sup> See Jaroszyński, *Science and Culture*, 172. Becoming human though also implies a more “negative” reality, which points to man’s animality. See Peter Harrison, “Reading the Passions: The Fall, the Passions, and Dominion over Nature,” 49–78, in Stephen Gaukroger (ed.), *The Soft Underbelly of Reason. The Passions in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1998), 55.

<sup>114</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 13:9–11, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 598–599.

uality, Adam (the virgin) began to yearn for God and, as a result, he started to call him fervently on a regular basis.<sup>115</sup> To put it in Böhme's terms, the virgin began to crave for God again, and it was in this state of ardent yearning that she spent all her time. At this point, Böhme makes an interesting remark, namely that "the woman lived in her place" while the virgin craved for God, which could be an indication of the fact that, following the loss of his spirituality, Adam not only became material but also a being characterized by the reality of gender.<sup>116</sup> He must have become masculine when he turned into a material person, which means that his feminine counterpart must have lain dormant within his being. To use Böhme's ideas, God's spiritual virgin underwent a dramatic change of being because her spiritual being began to host—theoretically at first—the reality of the material woman. This confirms Böhme's previous affirmation of Adam's initial androgyny, which indicates that the potentiality for gender was present within Adam's being before he became material.<sup>117</sup> Once the change occurred and he turned into a material being, masculinity and femininity also became real. It appears that the human being acquired for itself a state which was intended to mirror its original state in Paradise. Thus, although the fall was dramatic enough for the human being to lose its initial spirituality, the reception of materiality was not altogether a bad experience. It is in this particular context that Böhme mentions the idea of the "new birth;" in other words, the human being was born again as a result of the fall.<sup>118</sup> It was born again to a new reality, to the reality of gender and matter as well as to the reality of masculinity and femininity. This new birth of the human being revealed what Böhme calls a "higher and more triumphant state," which was rooted in the center of the soul or rea-

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<sup>115</sup> See also Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science*, 127.

<sup>116</sup> The impartation of gender to the fallen Adam and Eve is a "reification." See Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 99.

<sup>117</sup> Adam's androgyny, however, does not point to his sexuality, but rather to his personality, to his being the image and likeness of God. See Giancarlo Maiorino, *Leonardo da Vinci. The Daedalian Mythmaker* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 98.

<sup>118</sup> See Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, 90.

son—evidently human reason—so the human being in its fallen state demonized itself (and this is not necessarily something bad, at least not according to Böhme) in the essence of the blood of the heart, most likely a reference to the bodily constitution of the human being's new material existence.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, the human being was given a material body, adorned with reason, soul, and feelings, which seems to have been intended as a replica of Adam's original spirituality, although in a "conditioned," restricted way.<sup>120</sup> In other words, the material body of the human being, which is the result of the fall, mirrors the spiritual constitution of Adam's existence with God before the fall.<sup>121</sup> Adam's new state, his bodily existence following the fall, was indeed an attempt to reconstruct his original spirituality, but it nevertheless was contrary to what Böhme calls "the paradisiac will," which is an indication of the fact that Adam's fall and his subsequent transformation into a material being was at odds with God's will and his original intent for the human being. Böhme compares God's initial intention for the human being with the image of the mustard seed, which was also used by Christ, as Böhme points out.<sup>122</sup> The mustard seed is very small in the beginning but then it turns into a mighty tree; likewise, the original state of the human being was intended to turn into a powerful reality provided that "the soul remains in the will,"<sup>123</sup> most likely a reference to the fact that Adam must have stayed within God's will, which he evidently did not. This is why Böhme writes that the vir-

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<sup>119</sup> Adam's fall demonized not only his own being, but the entire cosmos, which is a characteristic of Gnosticism. See O'Regan, *Gnostic Return in Modernity*, 77.

<sup>120</sup> See Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult*, 57.

<sup>121</sup> Likewise, Adam's existence before the fall mirrored the very being of God. See Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 182.

<sup>122</sup> The mustard seed could be a metaphor for illumination, which contains "the heart of God." See Irene M. Lilley, *Friedrich Froebel. A Selection from His Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 17–18.

<sup>123</sup> The soul's connection with God's will could be a reference to the "absolute beginning" of the primordial world. Compare Schmidt-Biggemann, *Philosophia Perennis*, 121.

gin (Adam) did not persist in this respect, so she must have seen “her birth” or her state to be much higher since, instead of staying with God alone, she wanted to be with her lad, or with the spirit of the material world.<sup>124</sup> This text must have caught Baur’s eye for the dualism of Adam’s being. The transformation of his initial state of complete spirituality into the fallen state of sheer materiality is evidence enough for a dualistic perspective, which seems to be backed by the fact that God’s will is dualistic too (since there was an initial will for Adam’s spiritual being before the fall, and another will for the human being’s material existence after the fall). The last but certainly not the least important aspect in this respect is the dualism of the human being’s material constitution after the fall, which is given by masculinity and femininity.

Although after the fall Adam was no longer able to perceive God as he really is, so his entire relationship with God changed due to his fundamental transformation from a totally spiritual being into a material being with some degree of spiritual awareness, Adam nonetheless retained a certain capacity to connect himself to God’s reality. This is most likely why Böhme explains that the virgin, which is Adam, calls God’s heart on a constant basis in order to convince God to save her companion from darkness or—to use Böhme’s rendering—from “the dark dragon/serpent.”<sup>125</sup> This indicates that Adam was aware not only of his state but also of the state which characterized the spirit of the material world; his request therefore that God should save the spirit of the material world from darkness points to the necessity that matter be somehow understood in spiritual terms in order for it to make some sense at all.<sup>126</sup> God’s answer, however—Böhme insists—remains the same, but it shows God’s availability to help, since it discloses that the woman’s seed will crush the serpent’s head, which means

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<sup>124</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 13:9–11, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 599.

<sup>125</sup> Compare Sklar, *Blake’s Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre*, 73.

<sup>126</sup> Salvation is thus spiritual, based on wisdom and knowledge, the wisdom which is willing to surrender to God. The wisdom of salvation is the wisdom of the androgynous Adam. See Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 97.

that the darkness which now characterizes the serpent must be taken away from the virgin's bridegroom, namely from the spirit of the material world. This reiterates the necessity that materiality should be understood spiritually, otherwise there is no meaning attached to its objective existence.<sup>127</sup> The human being itself is utterly material as it lives in the physical world and, in order for it to have a meaningful life, it must find a way to look up to its own existence if it really wants to find a certain significance for its life in history.<sup>128</sup> The only way to make man's life meaningful is—according to Böhme—man's attempt to perceive himself in God's light and the spirit which permeates man's entire being should not be read materially, but rather spiritually. In Böhme, God's intention to rescue the spirit of the material from its materiality in order to make it meaningful spiritually pictures in a rather plastic way: on the one hand, the dark clothes which the serpent put on the lad (the spirit of the world) must be taken off, while on the other, the virgin's (Adam's) pearls and beautiful crowns which were darkened must now be broken to pieces and shattered to the ground. These actions show God's availability to save Adam and the spirit of the world from the darkness of matter, but the only way to do so is to leave materiality within its sphere while spirituality should be elevated to God's world.<sup>129</sup> In Böhme's words: the virgin (Adam) and her bridegroom (the spirit of the material world), having been stripped naked of the clothes of materiality, must both rejoice in God because this has always been God's eternal will which must last forever.<sup>130</sup> Now that the overall picture of how materiality should be understood in spiritual terms in order to make any sense whatsoever to the human being, Böhme points to the fact that the virgin herself (Adam) has a message to send to every human being since she (the virgin or Adam) speaks "to us." The virgin (Adam)

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<sup>127</sup> Spiritual understanding includes sexuality, so evident in Böhme's presentation of God's virgin. See Versluis, *Theosophia*, 81.

<sup>128</sup> See Brown, *Life against Death*, 33–34.

<sup>129</sup> More about Böhme's view of salvation in Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 18.

<sup>130</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 12:49, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 599.

stays in the centre of the light of life and it is from this position that she speaks to humanity in general. In other words, Adam seems to represent the redeemed human being, which is now capable of seeing itself in the light of God's spirituality.<sup>131</sup> Thus, Adam represents the human being whose awareness of its own God-given spirituality is able to make sense of its existence in the material world. This is the human being (the virgin or Adam) which claims to possess the light, the power, and the glory, because it also has the gates of knowledge. So it is knowledge—most likely the use of reason for the discovery of one's spirituality—which brings light, power, and glory in the life of each human being following Adam's example who wished to be rescued from sheer materiality.<sup>132</sup> Resuming Böhme's explanation, the virgin (Adam) lives in the light of nature and each human being is utterly incapable of seeing or knowing without her or without her power—another indication that man's reason must guide him to the path of natural knowledge which must be understood in terms of spirituality. It is the virgin (Adam) in her illuminated state that is each human being's "bridegroom," because each person's desire for her power is her attraction.<sup>133</sup> One can easily see here the fact that, in Böhme, the human being seems to exist between materiality and spirituality (expressed through the dualism of darkness and light), an idea which must have been noticed by Baur, who could have perceived it as a feature of the Gnostic dualism between matter and spirit.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, Baur must have captured Böhme's idea of knowledge, which seems to enrich man's materiality by providing him with spiritual clues for a meaningful understanding of his own life. To be sure, notions such as knowledge, matter, and God, point not

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<sup>131</sup> For Adam, salvation is union with God, while for man in general salvation is union with God's wisdom. See Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 317.

<sup>132</sup> In this case, salvation is portrayed as the restoration of androgyny. See Daub, *Uncivil Unions*, 99–100.

<sup>133</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 16:3, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 599–600.

<sup>134</sup> See Grimstad, *The Modern Revival of Gnosticism and Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus*, 43.

only to the essence of Gnosticism, which is given by the power of knowledge (achieved through the diligent use of enlightened reason), but also the sharp dualism between materiality and spirituality as the context for the use of enlightened reason, the fundamental characteristic of humanity in its ideal state.

### **GOD'S VIRGIN AS CHRIST: THE IDEAL OF HUMANITY**

In Böhme, God's virgin—which is Adam especially after the fall, when he became aware of darkness, but also of the need to stay connected with God—seems to represent the ideal of humanity.<sup>135</sup> This is why Böhme depicts God's virgin as addressing herself to each human being while underlining her higher position as compared to humanity in general. To be sure, when God's virgin speaks with human beings, one of the most important features of her discourse is the fact that she sits on her throne, which confirms her position as superior to that of ordinary human beings.<sup>136</sup> Consequently, each human is advised to look up to her in order to acquire the knowledge that she not only holds, but also seems capable of disseminating amongst men. Although God's virgin is aware of her superiority in terms of knowledge, human beings appear to be lacking in this respect. It is the virgin herself who says that, despite her sitting on her throne, human beings do not know this, so they evidently need knowledge which not only recognizes her superiority, but also makes them aware of their need to possess such knowledge. God's virgin also points out that she is in humans, while their bodies are not in her, another confirmation of the fact that attaining superior knowledge and the corresponding spirituality is not only a theoretical possibility, but also a necessity for the human being if men and women want their lives to be meaningful at all.<sup>137</sup> Another aspect which is highlighted by God's virgin lies in the fact that she clearly differentiates herself from anything or anybody else in the sense that she holds a position of superiority as

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<sup>135</sup> Or the “archetypal self,” see Macquarrie, *Two Worlds Are Ours*, 183.

<sup>136</sup> Compare Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 96–97.

<sup>137</sup> See Theresa King, *The Divine Mosaic. Women's Images of the Sacred Order* (St. Paul, MN: Yes International Publishers), 10–11.



related to humanity, and her position is visible although men and women are incapable of such perception. Thus, superior knowledge and spirituality or rather illuminated knowledge and spirituality lie before and within each human being, and man's inability to see it is not an excuse for not pursuing it. To be sure, effort and diligence are required from each human being who intends to take the path which leads to God's virgin, or to the image of illuminated humanity that allows humanity to grow into knowledge of God as well as into meaningful self-awareness or self-knowledge.<sup>138</sup> God's virgin also points out that she is the light of senses, but at the same time she clearly underscores the fact that the root of sense is not within her, rather beside her. Now, this is sufficient proof of the fact that the idea of humanity must acknowledge the reality of senses, although they must not capture one's capacity to understand and use illuminated knowledge and one's reflexive capacity to meaningfully perceive oneself.<sup>139</sup> God's virgin acknowledges the presence of her bridegroom, so she admits to having been influenced by the spirit of the material world; in other words, the ideal of humanity must incorporate the full awareness of the materiality of the world as well as the physicality of one's existence. Nevertheless, it is exactly the materiality of the world and the physicality of human life that are enriched by the knowledge which comes from God's virgin.<sup>140</sup> Once the human being realizes it is a material being with a definite end, then it understands the need to see itself in terms of divine spirituality in order for his or her life to be characterized by meaning and significance. It is important to understand that while God's virgin acknowledges her relationship with the spirit of the world, she is however unwilling to accept him until he "takes off the rough skirt" that he presently wears, most likely a reference to man's poor understanding of himself without the superiority of God's

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<sup>138</sup> Self-knowledge seems to be necessary for salvation. Weeks, *Boehme*, 121.

<sup>139</sup> Compare Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwing Wittgenstein*, 181.

<sup>140</sup> See Martensen, *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard*, 240.

knowledge and wisdom.<sup>141</sup> Once the spirit of the world, which is present in each human being, is willing to give up his poor perception of himself and reality, God's virgin or the ideal of humanity is ready to live within each human being. In Böhme's words, God's virgin is willing to rest for ever in his arms and the root—the very essence—of the spirit of the material world will then be adorned with her power. Consequently, the essence of the spirit of the material world will also receive the very shape of God's virgin and eventually he will marry or will be wed with her pearls.<sup>142</sup> While Böhme's language is quite plastic at this point, one cannot escape his intention to convey the fact that there is a very close connection between the spirit of the material world (which points to man's state before he realizes the need to understand himself and the world in spiritual terms) and God's virgin (which represents man's state of completion, the ideal of humanity that adorns man's fallen, purely material existence, with superior knowledge, self-awareness, and a meaningful perception of one's material existence).<sup>143</sup> Böhme's discourse provides Baur with the opportunity to sketch some brief comments on the whole issue, so he points out that God's virgin should be understood as a higher and spiritual principle, which works within each human being.<sup>144</sup> Actually, God's virgin is—according to Baur—the very reason why the connection between God and humanity has not been totally lost; on the contrary, it was knotted again. In fact, Baur asks—somewhat rhetorically, so he already knows the answer—whether or not God's virgin is the reality which works in Christ, God's incarnate Son, or the power which emanates from him for the salvation and regeneration (the

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<sup>141</sup> Salvation, therefore, is man's union with God's virgin and wisdom. See Fanning, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*, 145.

<sup>142</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 16:3 (but also 15, 46, 16, 29), and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 600.

<sup>143</sup> This reveals the capacity of wisdom or knowledge to restore the plenitude of humanity; in other words, in Böhme, knowledge has soteriological value. See Gaarden, *The Christian Goddess*, 119.

<sup>144</sup> In Böhme, there is an association between God's virgin and the third principle, referred to as the Holy Spirit. See Gibbons, *Gender in Occult and Mystical Thought*, 94.

new birth) of humanity.<sup>145</sup> In other words, as far as Baur is concerned, the salvation and regeneration of humanity resides in man's capacity to understand the spirit of the material world in terms which not only allow him to acquire divine spirituality, but also help him understand his physicality in a meaningful way. Being born again is, for Baur, being made or growing into superior spiritual knowledge, which gives meaning to one's material existence in the physical world.<sup>146</sup>

As far as Baur is concerned, Böhme provides here one of his most obscure aspects of his entire theological and philosophical system, which can be clarified though if one makes a retrospective approach to other related systems. Thus, Baur seems to be convinced that more light could be shed on Böhme if he were compared to other Gnostic approaches to the Christian doctrine of Christ, and especially to the aspect of Christ's incarnation.<sup>147</sup> This particular doctrine, namely the incarnation of Christ, appears to be highly important for Baur since it gives him sufficient cause to place Böhme's thought in line with Gnosticism, at least based on the fact that incarnation presupposes a dualism between spirit and matter—more exactly, between Christ's preexistent state as Logos<sup>148</sup> within the Trinity, which is evidently a wholly spiritual state, and his incarnation in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, which represents a material state of the same concept of Christ.<sup>149</sup> The idea of Christ though—Baur believes—can be easily decrypted if placed near Böhme's notion of God's virgin. The juxtaposition therefore of the notion of Christ and Böhme's concept of God's

<sup>145</sup> To confirm Baur's view of Böhme, see Bach, *Voices of the Turtles*, 100.

<sup>146</sup> See Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 600.

<sup>147</sup> For the connection between Christ and God's virgin in Böhme, see Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 96.

<sup>148</sup> The concept of Logos is important for Baur, who was interested in John's Gospel seen especially as a literary work. See David F. Goslee, "R. H. Hutton's Rift with James Martineau: A Case Study in Victorian Conversion," 33–60, in *Anglican and Episcopal History* 80.1 (2011): 51.

<sup>149</sup> For details concerning the Gnostic elements in Böhme's thought, also with reference to Christ, see Harris, *Gnosticism*, 55.

virgin provides us with a crucial image of historical materiality because, according to Böhme, Christ—or rather the Christian idea of Christ—is in fact Böhme’s notion of God’s virgin. More precisely, Baur argues, Christ is the “feminine form thereof (of Christ).”<sup>150</sup> It is a pity that Baur does not elaborate on this particular idea which pictures God’s virgin as the feminine form of Christ, but one could argue that he might have thought about the human being’s perfection as conceived in feminine terms. Regardless of what Baur meant exactly when he described Böhme’s notion of God’s virgin as the feminine form of Christ, it is important to realize that, as far as he is concerned, Böhme places the word of the promise uttered by the “serpent-treader” (Christ or Messiah) in a very close relationship with God’s virgin.<sup>151</sup> This is why Baur indicates Böhme’s explanation, according to which the word which was delivered by God to Adam from the serpent-treader originated in God’s heart and mouth. Thus, Adam was given the very essence of God’s plan with humanity after the fall, so humanity was not entirely left to itself following Adam’s decision to become material and therefore leaving God’s spirituality. Böhme himself insists that God’s word given to Adam was some sort of glimpse or spark of life from God’s heart, which is indicative of God’s decision not to erase humanity, so the human being was still kept in a relationship with God despite his materiality. God’s spirituality seems to have been made available to the fallen human being by God’s promise released through Christ, the Messiah and the serpent-treader, who is represented by God’s virgin.<sup>152</sup> Christ, therefore, represents the ideal of humanity since, in Böhme, God’s virgin does the same thing, so Christ is the only idea which can in fact counter the darkness of materiality as transferred to Adam’s spiritual being after the

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<sup>150</sup> Compare O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 51, and Dourley, *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung, and the Recovery of Religion*, 88.

<sup>151</sup> See Wendy Elgersma Helleman, “The World-Soul and Sophia in the Early Work of Solov’ëv,” 163–184, in Wil van den Bercken, Manon de Courten, and Evert van der Zweerde (eds), *Vladimir Solov’ëv. Reconciler and Polemicist* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 178, n. 45.

<sup>152</sup> Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 95.

fall.<sup>153</sup> If any human being wants to have a meaningful life, then he or she must first acknowledge their materiality, and second, wish for God's spirituality, which can only be attained in Christ, the very idea which provides humanity with spiritual knowledge and divine meaning for one's historical, material, and physical existence in the world. The spark of life, which Böhme connects with God's being,<sup>154</sup> has always been in God's heart, which is an indication of Christ's perennial existence as religious possibility for man's spiritual awareness. In other words, Christ is an idea which describes man's capacity for superior and spiritual knowledge; Christ is nothing but a notion which presents us with man's ability to understand his own material existence in a spiritual, meaningful way. God's word issued from the serpent-treader is a reaction against, as well as a means to counter the devil's actions through temptation.<sup>155</sup> Again, the idea of Christ is able to fight against the darkness of matter in order to come up with a new and meaningful approach to man's life. In Böhme, Adam and Eve received God's word through the serpent-treader, which is Christ, in order for them to live in "the light of life" or in the very center thereof. God's word in Christ is built in, as well as wed with "the beloved and worthy virgin," so the idea of Christ points to the reality of man's capacity to cultivate within himself a meaningful perspective on his material existence. The virgin is also connected by Böhme with the idea of chastity and breeding,<sup>156</sup> so Christ is able to convey the purest understanding of spirituality which can develop within the human being by means of religious knowledge. God's word was meant to stay in Adam and Eve forever in order to protect them from the "fiery essences and bolds from the devil." This confirms the fact that the idea of Christ is the one means to help humanity escape its

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<sup>153</sup> See Weeks, *Boehme*, 121.

<sup>154</sup> Doody, "The Gnostic *Clarissa*," 210–245, in Blewett (ed.), *Passion and Virtue*, 235, and Gray, *Goethe the Alchemist*, 47.

<sup>155</sup> Böhme, *Von der Gnadenwahl*, 7:17, in R. W. Schiebler (Hrsg.), *Jakob Böhme's Sämmtliche Werke*, 4. Band (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1842).

<sup>156</sup> Compare Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 159.

material condition through a meaningful understanding of its own material constitution in light of spiritual knowledge.<sup>157</sup>

God's word, which was given to Christ, the Messiah—or the serpent-treader—is not only meant to protect humanity from the devil, and especially from the devil's spirit of materiality, but also to enlighten the human soul.<sup>158</sup> The specific knowledge of this word, which comes from God and is embodied in Christ, seems to be able to provide humanity with a meaningful understanding of life in the material world. Materiality presupposes the reality of death, which Böhme describes in terms of the “fragility of the body,” and it is within this state of fragility—which is a constant feature of the human material body until death occurs—that humanity is able to have its soul enlightened.<sup>159</sup> Man can see light despite his fragility and materiality; light, however, comes from the idea of Christ, which—although it appears external to him—is nevertheless an internal reality since it depicts the image of the ideal of humanity in Christ. Having received God's light in Christ, Böhme explains that the soul is able to go through the gates of darkness into God's paradise. When this happens, the soul is said to have been given the capacity to see God's face; in other words, the soul passes from the principle of darkness into the other principle, which is light.<sup>160</sup> The transition from darkness to light though is possible only through knowledge—specifically, the knowledge of God's word given to Christ—so it is the idea of Christ which helps humanity find the divine and spiritual light of true meaning despite its material existence and fragility. Thus, man's life has a meaning despite death, but this meaning must be found in spirituality, embodied by the idea of Christ, as this is the only means which helps man understand the

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<sup>157</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 17:107–112, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 600–601.

<sup>158</sup> For details about Böhme's view of the enlightened soul, see Ver-luis, *Wisdom's Children*, 167–168.

<sup>159</sup> This possibility is made real due to the “inner spark of the divine within the soul.” See Peter N. Borys, Jr., *Transforming Consciousness to an Enlightened Humanity* (Minneapolis, MN: Mill City Press, 2008), 70.

<sup>160</sup> God's light gives the soul the power to conquer death and fight temptation. See Harpur, *Love Burning in the Soul*, 146.

darkness of his material existence in terms of spiritual light.<sup>161</sup> There is no anguish in light, so spirituality comes without fear, so the positivity of light versus the negativity of darkness is another feature which must have led Baur to conclude that, in Böhme, there is a sharp dualism between the two fundamental principles, very much like in traditional Gnosticism. It is important to understand at this point that, according to Böhme, humanity in its entirety is the receiver of God's word and God's light. The human being—male and female—is able to perceive God's word and turn it into the meaningful light of divine spirituality. This is why Böhme writes that God's word was grafted, or transplanted, from one to another, from Adam to Eve, from male to female, because the reality of God's word which makes sense of materiality despite fragility and death is a feature that defines the very essence of humanity. It is the life's birth which allows the soul to be ignited for enlightenment and all this happens within the centre of man's being.<sup>162</sup> When any human being understands the idea of Christ, which embodies God's word of enlightenment, knowledge, and meaning, then he or she receives the kingdom of heaven in his or her soul. This is possible because this is God's will; it is possible because God himself sent Christ to humanity by grace.<sup>163</sup> God's grace makes it possible for humanity not only to contemplate the idea of Christ, but also to benefit from it, in the sense that each man and woman is able to make his or her life meaningful through the appropriation of the idea of Christ for his or her life. The idea of Christ, the reality of God's word, and the meaningfulness of God's grace enlightens the human soul with the knowledge of spirituality, impregnating materiality with divine significance. For Baur, this is an indication that, according to Böhme, man's innate awareness of

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<sup>161</sup> Spiritual life symbolizes God's truth. See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy. Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 195.

<sup>162</sup> Illumination happens within man's inner centre because the centre of man's being is the *locus* for the meeting between God and creation. See Nicolaus, *C. G. Jung and Nikolai Berdyaev*, 49.

<sup>163</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 17:107–112, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 601.

salvation denotes the fact that the higher principle—most likely the principle of light—is present within humanity even after the fall.<sup>164</sup> In this respect, the fall does not seem to be an unfortunate event for humanity. It is not the case for Böhme and neither is it for Baur. In Böhme, Christ cannot be but the virgin's son, as a proof of his divinity or meaningful spirituality. In fact, Christ is not merely the virgin's son; he is also a virgin himself in his soul, exactly like Adam in creation.<sup>165</sup> In other words, Christ is God and is inextricably connected with the Father of eternity.<sup>166</sup> Such a definition of Christ explains that he represents divine spirituality at its best. The eternity thereof is hope for humanity, because Christ seems to be able to represent each human being as an ideal for humanity in general. Men and women appear to be able to grasp the idea of Christ and, in doing so, they prove the eternity of divine spirituality which is capable of providing humanity with meaning despite their materiality and death. To be sure, man's material existence is meaningful only when divine spirituality, embodied by the idea of Christ, is appropriated as a reality which comes from outside humanity, from God himself, but manifests itself genuinely within humanity, in man's consciousness.<sup>167</sup> Böhme's words could have given Baur another reason to place him amongst the Gnostics, since it is quite unlikely that Baur missed Böhme's dualism between Christ and Adam.<sup>168</sup> While Adam, once spiritual before the fall, represents materiality after the fall, Christ is the embodiment of pure spirituality, enlightenment, and meaning, so the human being exists within this existential dualism. Each human being exists in Adam because of its materiality and the only way to make sense of one's physical reality in the material world is to accept the idea of Christ, which elevates one's soul to the enlightened understanding of spirituality and meaning. Man's life ends anyway, but it can be saved from the anguish of death if man is open to the light of Christ, the only spir-

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<sup>164</sup> Compare Szulakowska, *The Alchemy of Light*, 180.

<sup>165</sup> See Hessayon, "Gold Tried in the Fire," 288.

<sup>166</sup> Dourley, *Paul Tillich, Carl Jung, and the Recovery of Religion*, 67.

<sup>167</sup> See also Dourley, *On Behalf of the Mystical Fool*, 62.

<sup>168</sup> For details about the relationship between Christ and Adam in Böhme, see O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 46.



itual reality which can turn man's fragility and death into something meaningful.<sup>169</sup> The anguish of death and the materiality of life are shed with the light of God's word in Christ, and it is only when this happens that true spirituality makes sense for man's physical life in the world.<sup>170</sup>

**THE IDEA OF INCARNATION:  
FROM GOD'S VIRGIN TO THE VIRGIN MARY**

Another interesting issue here is Böhme's idea of incarnation, which does not only refer to Christ,<sup>171</sup> but also to the Virgin Mary, his mother.<sup>172</sup> For instance, Böhme shows that the will of God's heart in the Father comes from the heart in the will of wisdom before the Father as some sort of "eternal wedding." Although this phrase is quite turbid, one can get a glimpse of Böhme's idea when he points out that the virgin of God's wisdom, which is in God's word, literally entered the Virgin Mary's womb. In other words, God's wisdom, which is also God's word, placed itself within the "virginal matrix" provided by Mary.<sup>173</sup> Consequently, God's word not only acquired human features, but it also entered a reality which was not characterized by or related to eternity. Thus, God's word became one with the essences of materiality or, in Böhme's words, with the "tincture of elements," which is indicative of material and physical reality. Before God, this whole process—which includes the actual being of Mary as well as the incarnation of God's word in a human being—is pure and untainted, most likely a

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<sup>169</sup> The meaning of life is given by Böhme's idea of Paradise, which is located within the human being and must be experienced before death if man wants to be able to experience it after death as well. For more information about the meaning of human existence in Böhme, see Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 22–23.

<sup>170</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 601.

<sup>171</sup> The incarnation of Christ does not necessarily refer to the flesh and blood of Jesus, but rather to the preexistent Christ. See O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, 228.

<sup>172</sup> See also Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 98.

<sup>173</sup> In Böhme, the idea of "virginal matrix" is also used for Adam. See Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 58.

reference to the purity and goodness of the knowledge which comes from God's word.<sup>174</sup> God's heart, the very essence of divinity itself, became "angelically human," very much like Adam was as God's creation in the beginning.<sup>175</sup> One should notice here that Böhme's details about incarnation could have supplied Baur with sufficient proof of its dualism. Incarnation is by definition a mixture of two realities, spiritual and material. The very idea of incarnation presupposes not only a bodily, physical entity, but also a previous spiritual reality which turns into flesh in order to be material.<sup>176</sup> This is why it is quite likely that what Böhme meant by Christ's incarnation as a being could have produced in Baur's mind a reflection about what happens to the reality of knowledge. At first, knowledge may be spiritual in the sense that it is theoretical, but eventually it must turn into something palpable in order for it to have any relevance at all for the material world. So, incarnation is not only the movement from spirituality to materiality; it is also the transfer of spirituality into materiality in a way which makes matter meaningful through the reality of the spirit.<sup>177</sup>

Böhme's discussion about the Virgin Mary and especially her connection with God's virgin as God's wisdom is noteworthy primarily because the idea of incarnation is present here, not only with reference to Christ, but also to Mary. Thus, Böhme points out that that, according to Scriptures, Christ is "from a pure virgin without sins," so he was conceived and born out of a human being with special qualities.<sup>178</sup> While Böhme is not particularly clear whether Mary or Christ is without sin, her special qualities are evident since she mirrors God's virgin, which is God's wisdom. Supposing that Christ is without sin, Mary's virginity and virtue are still connected

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<sup>174</sup> Compare Weeks, *Boehme*, 153.

<sup>175</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 18:22–41, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 602–603.

<sup>176</sup> Read also McCalla, *A Romantic Historiosophy*, 290.

<sup>177</sup> The incarnation of God in nature is explained by the analogy of the sun, which "acts and is" in nature. See Montgomery, *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence*, 176.

<sup>178</sup> The most important aspect of the virgin's purity is mercy or "warmheartedness" (*Barmherzigkeit*). See Versluis, *Theosophia*, 149.

with God's virgin because, according to Böhme, our knowledge of Mary allows us to say that the pure and virtuous virgin, in whom God was born, is the pure and noble virgin who stands before God, so she is an "eternal virgin."<sup>179</sup> It is therefore evident that, in Böhme, the image of Mary corresponds to the image of God's virgin, but what is really interesting here has to do with the fact that Mary's material existence in the physical world is compared with the eternal spiritual existence of God's virgin beyond the physical world. Thus, matter is elevated to the status of the spirit, at least as far as Mary is concerned, but it appears that her case is not necessarily different from the general image of femaleness in the physical world. It is as if material femaleness were deeply rooted in the eternity of God's virgin; this is why Böhme writes that "the virgin" existed before the heavens and earth were created.<sup>180</sup> Thus, because there was no matter there in the sense that it had not been created yet, the eternal virgin of God was without blemish. This affirmation is crucial for Böhme because it connects sin with the reality of matter, and in this respect he could have given Baur another reason to read him in a Gnostic way. If God's virgin was pure because heaven and earth did not exist in a material form,<sup>181</sup> then it is clear that her purity is genuine since there was nothing there to taint it. Heavens and earth are God's creation and, one way or another, they are material in nature; matter though seems to have sin included within its innermost essence, and with sin darkness also reigns within the physical reality of creation. At this point, however, Böhme takes things a little further, in the sense that he brings at issue the very incarnation of God's virgin in Mary. Thus, his theology does not promote only the incarnation of God's Son in Christ,

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<sup>179</sup> Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, 139.

<sup>180</sup> This again highlights the virgin's eternity. See Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Mind* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1996, first published 1977), 184.

<sup>181</sup> It can be that, in Böhme, heaven and earth (and hell for that matter) are not external realities, which means that their *locus* is not outside the human being, but rather inside it, in its mind. Heaven and earth (as well as hell), therefore, can be considered "states of mind." See Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 147, n. 54.

but also the incarnation of God's virgin in Mary.<sup>182</sup> Leaving aside his previous conviction that God's virgin, which is God's wisdom, also took shape in Adam, his current belief that God's virgin became incarnate in Mary indicates that humanity in general was impregnated with God's virgin. The incarnation of God's virgin in Mary appears to be only a particular case here, but its particularity speaks of its importance since the incarnation of God's virgin in Mary happened in order for Christ, God's Son, to be born in the material world.<sup>183</sup> God's virgin let herself in Mary—in other words, she allowed herself to live in Mary—in “her incarnation.”<sup>184</sup> Now, it is important to understand that while Böhme uses the word *Menschwerdung* to describe the activity of God's virgin whereby she let herself live in Mary, one should not necessarily read *Menschwerdung* as “incarnation,” but also as “humanization.”<sup>185</sup> While incarnation presupposes the transformation of the spirit into flesh, humanization is not so strong a concept because it only speaks of the spirit's capacity to exist in human flesh. It seems, therefore, that in Mary's case, one should not perceive her *Menschwerdung* as Christ's *Menschwerdung*. In other words, Mary's incarnation is not the same with Christ's incarnation; while Christ became flesh, Mary rather seems to have been filled with the spiritual presence of God's virgin, namely God's wisdom. Mary's “new man” was conceived in “God's holy element” according to Böhme, but this may refer both to Christ and to Mary as a human being, since humanity became impregnated with God's wisdom beginning with Adam.<sup>186</sup> Adam, Eve, Mary, and Christ are all examples of the

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<sup>182</sup> See Robert A. Powell, *The Most Holy Trinosophia and the New Revelation of the Divine Feminine* (Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2000), 46.

<sup>183</sup> In Hegelian terms, it can be argued that the son of God is connected with the world in conceptual terms. Thus, Christ is an idea which spiritually illuminates the world with meaning. See Reid, *Real Words*, 136, n. 1.

<sup>184</sup> Robert Powell, *The Sophia Teachings. The Emergence of the Divine Feminine in Our Time* (New York, NY: Lantern Books, 2001), 61.

<sup>185</sup> The idea of incarnation as humanization appealed to Jung. Compare Dourley, *On Behalf of the Mystical Fool*, 232.

<sup>186</sup> See also Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 16.

*Menschwerdung* of God's virgin, so the wisdom of God becomes humanized (or even incarnate) in all of them as particular cases which speak of the general human awareness of a higher, divine spirituality. In Böhme, the incarnation of God's virgin in Mary has nothing to do with historicity and materiality as it is the case, for instance, with Christ's incarnation. While Christ became human, at least according to Scriptures, Mary became indwelled with God's virgin.<sup>187</sup> Thus, one cannot say—Böhme warns—that the heavenly virgin of God became earthly (or historical, or material) as she let herself in Mary. What one can say is that Mary's soul grasped the heavenly virgin of God, so Mary's spiritual awareness seized or understood God's divine wisdom. In Baur's reading, this would imply that Mary's spiritual awareness was impregnated with the knowledge of a higher, meaningful understanding of spirituality, capable of restoring man's spirituality.<sup>188</sup> This must have given her the chance to nurture a child with a powerful awareness of spirituality, which is sufficient proof that spirituality comes through knowledge, so—in a way—there is a didactic or pedagogical aspect attached to human spirituality. Being aware that one's self is not only a material entity, but also a being with spiritual features is a reality that can be taught on the one hand, while on the other it can be learned. This is why Baur quotes Böhme's conviction that the heavenly virgin of God gave Mary a new and pure garment which was sewn in God's holy elements.<sup>189</sup> It is clear then that God's virgin is God's wisdom and the very source of Mary's spiritual awareness is the knowledge of the higher spirituality which allows humanity to understand its existence in a meaningful way. According to Böhme, Mary was literally clothed with God's mercy as a “newly

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<sup>187</sup> Compare Donald Dawe, “The Blessed Virgin in Depth Psychology. A Theological Appraisal,” 86–101, in William McLaughlin and Jill Pinnock (eds), *Mary Is for Everyone. Essays on Mary and Ecumenism* (Leominster: Gracewing/Fowler Wright Books, 1997), 90.

<sup>188</sup> Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women. Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 59.

<sup>189</sup> If Mary is the image of God's humanization, the idea of garments received from God represents man's divinization. See Schipflinger, *Sophia-Maria*, 202.

born human being” and it was in this spiritually regenerated capacity that she conceived and later gave birth to what Böhme calls “the redeemer of the entire world,” which is Christ.<sup>190</sup> What must have struck Baur here is Böhme’s presentation of both Mary and Christ in strong dualistic terms; for instance, they are both material persons who possess a very high spiritual awareness. The idea of incarnation can be easily attached to both not necessarily as the traditional understanding of the spirit taking human form, but rather as the new perspective on religious thought which accepts the idea that the spirit is able to enlighten man’s material existence.<sup>191</sup> This can be done only through knowledge, a higher, spiritual knowledge which became a powerful awareness within the non-material constitution of the physical human being. For Baur, what seems to count here is man’s reason, or man’s rational soul, his very faculty of discernment which gives him the unique opportunity to understand his material life in a way which impregnates his existence with spiritual meaning.

The redeemer of the world may have been conceived and born out of Mary, who was clothed with God’s wisdom, but what is really interesting in Böhme’s account of Christ resides in the way he describes his nature. Thus, Christ is said to have taken our body or our flesh upon himself—in other words, one can say that he assumed human flesh or even human nature for that matter—but as Böhme’s presentation goes a little further, things become peculiar. This is because, in his view, Christ not only took upon himself our flesh and nature; he remained in a state about which Böhme says that was not characterized by the holy ternary.<sup>192</sup> In other words, although Christ took human flesh, he did not mix or blend with the *ternarius sanctus*, the holy ternary, most likely a reference to the traditional doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>193</sup> To be sure, Böhme could

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<sup>190</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 22:36, 38, 44, and 71, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 603.

<sup>191</sup> The individual who has an enlightened spirit is a “celestial reborn human.” See Weeks, *Boehme*, 39.

<sup>192</sup> For details, see Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult*, 132.

<sup>193</sup> Böhme’s *ternarius sanctus* can be associated with the idea of “immanent Trinity.” See O’Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, 109.

have used the phrase “holy trinity” instead of “holy ternary,” but the word *trinitas* seems to have been avoided here on purpose and thus replaced with *ternarius*.<sup>194</sup> While *trinitas* makes direct and unmediated reference to three divine persons, *ternarius* appears to be a little less personal in Böhme. Consequently, *ternarius* speaks rather of divine essences than of divine persons, because Böhme’s preferred way to describe divinity is through the use of the notion of “principles,” which can be more easily connected with essences, and not with persons.<sup>195</sup> Nevertheless, as Christ was not mixed with the holy ternary, he was not characterized by the pure element, which is the pure, holy, and heavenly earth, in whose earthiness he allowed himself to delve.<sup>196</sup> Böhme’s presentation of Christ as not characterized by the pure element is a bit baffling because one would expect Christ to share the sanctity of God’s wisdom. While Böhme does not say that he lacks God’s wisdom—because, on the contrary, his acute awareness of spirituality seems to be a proof thereof—what Böhme seems to convey at this point is the fact that Christ was a human being in the entirety of his material and spiritual constitution.<sup>197</sup> At the same time, however, Böhme’s description of Christ can be interpreted in a totally different way, and this seems to be the option Baur chose to adopt for his understanding of Böhme. Thus, as Christ did not mix himself with the pure element and its earthiness, the image one can perceive concerning Christ is rather docetic in nature. According to Baur, docetism presupposes the phantom-like apparition of Christ in his pure spirituality,<sup>198</sup> so Böhme’s reference to his lack of earthiness, although he was born out of Mary, may be read as sufficient proof

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<sup>194</sup> Compare Weeks, *Boehme*, 77.

<sup>195</sup> See also Versluis, *Wisdom’s Children*, 286–287.

<sup>196</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 22:36, 38, 44, and 71, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 603.

<sup>197</sup> For a contrary position, which does not see Böhme’s Christ as human, see Herbert McLachlan, *Religious Opinions of Milton, Locke, and Newton* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1941), 31.

<sup>198</sup> Compare Donna Trembinski, “[Pro]passio Doloris: Early Dominican Conceptions of Christ’s Physical Pain,” 630–656, in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 59.4 (2008): 632–633, n. 22.

for docetism. In this respect, however, Baur connects Böhme with the philosophy promoted by Paracelsus,<sup>199</sup> whose thinking seems to have been impregnated with both Mariology and Christological docetism. As far as Baur is concerned, Böhme's perspective on Christ's incarnation, birth, and history is somehow docetic, so it is illusory in nature, which could explain Baur's inclusion of Böhme amongst the Gnostics since docetism was indeed a feature of Gnosticism although not a permanent or even fundamental characteristic thereof.<sup>200</sup> As far as Baur is concerned, Böhme's Christ seems to be a character whose history consists of a series of events that happened "without a doubt" in some kind of "reality of this external history" as if Christ was not part of factual history but rather of some kind of mystical history. In other words, Christ does not seem—at least at this point in Böhme and especially if we are to believe Baur—to have been an actual person, but rather a spiritual reality which can be born in each human being.<sup>201</sup> Christ is therefore some kind of principle which works within humanity at an individual level; a principle which helps human beings perceive themselves spiritually in order to have meaning attached to their material existence in the physical world. Christ seems to be a meta-

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<sup>199</sup> Paracelsus was born Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493–1541) and worked as physician, botanist, astrologer, alchemist, and even occultist. For his theological and philosophical features, and especially for his perspective on Mariology, as well as for his Docetism and Monophysitism. See Dane T. Daniel, "Medieval Alchemy and Paracelsus' Theology: Pseudo-Lull's *Testamentum* and Paracelsus' *Astronomia Magna*, 121–136, in Pia Holenstein Weidmann (Hrsg.), *Nova Acta Paracelsica. Beiträge zur Paracelsus-Forschung*, Herausgegeben von der Schweizerischen Paracelsus-Gesellschaft, Neue Folge 22 & 23 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), 122.

<sup>200</sup> Some of the Gnostics—Marcion, for instance—were docetists, while others were only said to be so (Valentinians and Basilideans), but not all docetists were gnostics and not all gnostics were docetists. See, for details, Andrew K. M. Adam, *Faithful Interpretation. Reading the Bible in a Postmodern World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 46.

<sup>201</sup> See, for details, Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 603–604.



phor for God and spiritual progress,<sup>202</sup> while the idea of God's virgin (with reference to Christ) serves the purpose of explaining man's gender-related existence in the world. Evidently, the argument begins with the reality of the natural world and builds towards an explanation of physical reality in terms which go beyond physics itself into the realm of spirituality. It is not that spirituality had an ontology of its own; on the contrary, spirituality is part of the material world but it consists of notions (metaphors) rather than visible things.

### **GOD'S VIRGIN AS THE DUALISTIC IMAGE OF MAN: BETWEEN MALENESS AND FEMALENESS**

What allows for this metaphorical reading of God in Böhme is—at least as it emerges from Baur—the concept of virgin or rather God's virgin as reference to God's wisdom, which is also the higher spiritual knowledge that enlightens humanity towards a meaningful understanding of material existence.<sup>203</sup> Baur himself believes that some observations need to be made concerning this somewhat peculiar concept, especially that the idea of the virgin in Böhme seems to be quite multifaceted. As far as Baur is concerned, Böhme's image of the bride and the bridegroom<sup>204</sup>—which is essentially dualistic—is conspicuously Gnostic and it confirms the connection between Böhme and the Gnostics. In what can be called traditional Gnosticism, the image of the bride and the bridegroom is applied to Christ and the soul, which in this case is the human soul. To be sure, Christ is the bride, and the human soul is the bridegroom in classical Gnosticism,<sup>205</sup> while in Böhme the God's virgin is the bride and man (taken in general as humanity) is the bride-

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<sup>202</sup> Compare Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality*, 49.

<sup>203</sup> Love seems to be the feeling which is capable of illuminating man's material existence, as also seen in Solovyov. See Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, *Divine Sophia. The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 81–82.

<sup>204</sup> See also Weeks, *Boehme*, 195.

<sup>205</sup> For details, see Roelof van den Broek, *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 233.

groom.<sup>206</sup> God's virgin, the bride, awaits her bridegroom in Paradise and wants to be his dearest lover provided he gives up his earthiness. This is why, according to Baur, there is no essential difference between Böhme and the Gnostics in their use of the image of the bride and bridegroom.<sup>207</sup> At this point, it is important to understand that, in Böhme, the idea of God's virgin is placed somehow above the notion of Christ. Baur appears to be convinced that the understanding as well as the meaning of Christ cannot be deciphered without a clear perception of God's virgin. This is perhaps an indication of the fact that God's virgin transcends even Christ, so the concept of God's virgin conveys and in fact attaches a certain meaning to the notion of Christ. The highest significance of the idea of Christ must be found in the content of the idea of God's virgin; in other words, the concept of virginity is therefore attached to Christ.<sup>208</sup> Reversely, Christ is a virgin—a male virgin according to Baur—because he embodies the nobleness and wisdom of God's wisdom which is denoted by the idea of God's virgin. Baur believes that, in Böhme, Christ had to take a masculine form but, at the same time, his masculinity had to be conceived in terms of virginity, which is not a gender-related issue; it is rather a human category that attempts to cover all the aspects of humanity: in this case, as God's virgin conveyed the idea of femaleness, Christ completes it by means of its maleness. This has always been God's initial plan: to unite humanity and all its apparently divergent or different aspects—live maleness and femaleness—in one single human reality,<sup>209</sup> which speaks of nobleness, virtue, purity, light, and love: in a word, spirituality.<sup>210</sup> From his reading of Böhme, Baur gets the idea that maleness and femaleness must come together in a spiritual way since, from the perspective of materiality, they seem to be rather conflicting realities. This is why maleness is seen as the reality which must control the features of fire, so maleness

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<sup>206</sup> Compare Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 94.

<sup>207</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 15:18, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 605.

<sup>208</sup> Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 98.

<sup>209</sup> Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*, 42.

<sup>210</sup> See Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme*, 23.

equals fire,<sup>211</sup> while femaleness is pictured as the reality that not only incorporates the characteristics of light, so femaleness equals light,<sup>212</sup> but also purifies masculine fire. Thus, femaleness is considered the means whereby maleness is brought into the purity of God's image.<sup>213</sup> This, however, seems to be the case only because Böhme—and Baur does not seem to be unaware of this aspect—believes femaleness to be capable of nobility and purity, unlike maleness which conveys the idea of acerbity. In this case, though, femaleness and maleness should not be considered in gender-related terms; on the contrary, they represent two conflicting realities which somehow must come together.<sup>214</sup> While maleness is associated with fire (and quite oddly in this respect, with darkness, since in Böhme, fire does not communicate the idea of light, but rather of fierceness), femaleness comes very close to light;<sup>215</sup> Gnostic dualism therefore is evident. Maleness and femaleness are not categories of humanity (at least not primarily), but rather conflicting realities that represent an even greater conflict: that between darkness and light.<sup>216</sup>

The notion of God's virgin brings with it the context for the discussion of creation, so Baur is convinced that the idea of femaleness plays a crucial role in Böhme's understanding of reality, which allows Baur to include him amongst the Christian Gnostics. It should be highlighted here that one of the main reasons why Böhme is included amongst the representatives of Gnosticism in modern times is, according to Baur, his decision to relate the creator of elements with the representation of the "harlotry for the great vice." In other words, whoever created the physical ele-

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<sup>211</sup> Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 100.

<sup>212</sup> Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 101.

<sup>213</sup> Böhme, *Von der Menschwerdung Jesu Christi, wie das ewige Wort sei Mensch worden, und Maria der Jungfrauen, wer sie sei von ihrem Urstand gewesen, und was sie sei in der Empfängniß ihres Sohnes Jesu Christi für eine Mutter worden* (Amsterdam: Henric Betkio, 1660), Teil 1, 7:13.

<sup>214</sup> The image of the prelapsarian Adam is perfect in this respect. See Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*, 42.

<sup>215</sup> Harris, *Gnosticism*, 55.

<sup>216</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 605.

ments—most likely a reference to Lucifer, whose rebellion against God turned him into the author of matter and materiality—also provided the context for an uncontrolled desire for all the realities which accompany materiality, namely finitude, contingency, physicality, and death.<sup>217</sup> This is, according to Baur, the “great horror” which appalled heaven with its imagination. The setting of imagination in motion which prompted Lucifer to distance himself from the spirituality of God is the very engine which created the world, so matter—in a way—can be said to have at least some degree of materiality attached to it, in the sense that finitude and physicality were automatically its necessary consequences. It is now that Baur reveals—without any other reference whatsoever—that the idea of femaleness encompasses a wide range of physical realities such as the earth, history, and senses.<sup>218</sup> Although he does not explain how he reached this particular conclusion, Baur may have had in mind the image of Adam’s fall as connected with the actions taken by Eve; in other words, Eve—the representative of femaleness—is somehow blamed for man’s fall;<sup>219</sup> nevertheless, the negativity which comes with the fall itself is not to be taken and interpreted entirely in negative terms.<sup>220</sup> The negativity of the fall as well as the negativity of femaleness is to be comprehended as the affirmation of matter’s non-positivity. In other words, non-positivity is not necessarily a bad thing; it is merely the affirmation of some features which are not positive and, at the same time, the presentation of other features which define the lack of positivity. In practical terms, while positivity refers to God’s spirituality, love, and light, non-positivity can indicate man’s materiality, wrath, and darkness; the

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<sup>217</sup> Death is the result of conflict and war, and in Böhme war is closely associated with the devil. See Sklar, *Blake’s Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre*, 31.

<sup>218</sup> Most likely because the female principle represents the creation of matter (earth), is aware of human history from one end to another (history), and completes—even in connection with sexuality—the masculine principle (sense). See Weeks, *Boehme*, 122.

<sup>219</sup> Compare Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, 90.

<sup>220</sup> In Böhme, the fall is teleological and presupposes a “happy guilt” (*felix culpa*). See O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 153.

latter group, however, should be understood of features which define physicality against spirituality. What is important, however, is to realize that both define the reality of humanity,<sup>221</sup> very much the same way maleness and femaleness define the wholeness of humanity as well.<sup>222</sup> Thus, the negativity of femaleness and its non-positivity should be read in a “creative” way, in the sense that—as Böhme puts it—there is life in the woman as much as there is life in history or in the earth itself, or even in matter since the creator of elements accepted the world in feminine terms. It is clear then that in the world, in whatever matter can be seen as part of physical creation, life comes attached to the idea of femaleness. Life comes from the woman as far as humanity is concerned and everything else in the world of history and matter has its origins in the reality of femaleness.<sup>223</sup> It is therefore an issue of gender differentiation; femaleness has its own positivity as life-giver despite its initial negativity as connected to the desire for materiality. Procreation in the material world is a reality of gender differentiation, and this cannot be understood in negative terms since life itself originates in the combination of the physical realities of gender-endowed organisms. This seems to be the highest reality which rules in the physical and material world, namely the fact that life originates in the combination of maleness and femaleness, but the idea of life-giving entities is primarily connected with femaleness.<sup>224</sup> This is why, in Böhme, such understanding of materiality could have prompted him to include Böhme amongst the Gnostics since life itself in the material world is so fundamentally dualistic. Maleness and femaleness are only one aspect which define humanity and its life in dualistic

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<sup>221</sup> See Dourley, *On Behalf of the Mystical Fool*, 62.

<sup>222</sup> Androgyny, therefore, is essentially soteriological. See Sharma, *Women in World Religions*, 227.

<sup>223</sup> Compare Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 101–102.

<sup>224</sup> Similar ideas are found in Zinzendorf. See Aaron S. Fogleman, *Jesus is Female. Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 77. For details about life-giving and human sexuality in Christian mysticism and esotericism, see Ole M. Hoystad, *A History of the Heart* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 171.

terms; the negativity and non-positivity of femaleness itself is another sign which discloses the dualistic nature of Böhme's presentation of reality, at least according to Baur's reading thereof. This also explains Baur's comment that Böhme's picture of reality can be compared with the Gnostics' understanding of Christ and his connection to the Sophia;<sup>225</sup> in this respect though Sophia is considered the Holy Spirit,<sup>226</sup> which bears with it the idea of femaleness since he wanted to become the feminine being of Christ's mother.<sup>227</sup> This explanation is crucial at this point because it shows not only why Baur considers Böhme a Gnostic, but also because there is no other way to understand Böhme unless in Gnostic terms. Femaleness is a reality without which humanity cannot exist. Maleness is only half of what is needed for humanity to procreate, so dualism is the very essence of humanity and its material existence. Consequently, it is only in dualistic terms and thus within Gnostic lines that materiality can be given a definition according to Baur. This reality, however, is then transferred from the physicality of materiality to the spirituality of divinity. Even the idea of God himself should be then investigated in dualistic—and hence Gnostic—terms, and this is because the notion of femaleness is a must, given God's creativity.<sup>228</sup> This can explain why God's wisdom as pictured in God's virgin in Böhme, because—based on his natural understanding of the material world where femaleness is the origin of life—the origin of creation as far as God is concerned must have something in common with God's "feminine" wisdom.<sup>229</sup> God's wisdom, however, cannot be conceived in masculine terms;

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<sup>225</sup> By using the concept of *Sophia*, Böhme stands in a long and reputable tradition which includes names such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Plotinus (with his anti-Christian attitude), (Pseudo-)Dionysus the Areopagite, and Hildegard von Bingen. See June Boyce-Tillman, "Unconventional Wisdom: Theologizing the Margins," 317–341, in *Feminist Theology* 13.3 (2005): 324–325.

<sup>226</sup> See also Julie Hirst, "Dreaming of a New Jerusalem: Jane Lead's Visions of Wisdom," 349–365, in *Feminist Theology* 14.3 (2006): 353.

<sup>227</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 605–606.

<sup>228</sup> Compare Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 99–100.

<sup>229</sup> See Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 43.

only the feminine can provide even God with a reality that can account for creation and, in Böhme, this is God's virgin, God's life-imparting wisdom that created everything.<sup>230</sup>

The representation of the feminine reality in Böhme is obviously fundamental for the explanation of the origin of life, at least according to what Baur has to say. This is why he continues to comment on Böhme's understanding of femaleness and especially on the image of God's virgin. As femaleness is only half of the whole picture, it is clear that while life is given through femaleness, maleness is there not only to complete the presentation of the whole reality, but also to reinforce the fact that the origin of life cannot be detached from masculinity which completes its feminine counterpart.<sup>231</sup> Consequently, in Böhme's presentation of God's virgin, there is also a position element which sheds light on how the complementarity between maleness and femaleness should be seen, in the sense that God's virgin literally stands before God; in other words, God's wisdom is positionally placed before God as indicative of its role in delivering life, while God himself is somewhat left behind as the originator of life. This may have to do with the fact that Böhme's picture of the complementarity between maleness and femaleness as life-givers is only supposed to mirror natural reality, wherein the female is the actual deliverer of life while the male is the original contributor to it.<sup>232</sup> At the same time, the positioning of God's wisdom before God himself is also another way to say that life opens up to reality through the feminine; in Baur's words, it is God's wisdom—in her capacity as God's virgin—which opens up God's wonders most likely to natural, physical, and material reality. At this point, Baur underlines the fact that Böhme's depiction of God's virgin is similar to the presentation of God's wisdom in Solomon's books and the Apocrypha. To be sure,

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<sup>230</sup> Stevenson, *Romanticism and the Androgynous Sublime*, 16.

<sup>231</sup> Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 96.

<sup>232</sup> The complementarity between maleness and femaleness should be also understood in spiritual terms as a process of "inner transfiguration." See Arthur Versluis, *The Secret of Western Sexual Mysticism. Sacred Practices and Spiritual Marriage* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books/Inner Traditions, 2008), 108.

God's virgin, which is in fact God's wisdom, mirrors itself in all elements, so it endows materiality with its various characteristics. In other words, it is God's wisdom, God's virgin or the very embodiment of femaleness itself which gives life, in all its forms, shapes, and features, to the huge natural variety of entities than can be found in the universe.<sup>233</sup> Baur therefore points out that the result of this mirroring of God's virgin and wisdom in the natural elements consists of colors, art, and virtue—in a word, it is life itself which springs from God's wisdom and its reflection on nature. Baur has a very plastic way to express this reality—which is obviously inspired by Böhme—so one reads of the “growth of God's lily,” most likely the quintessence of life,<sup>234</sup> which is said to have always delighted divinity (and the Godhead) as one of the most beautiful characteristics pertaining to God's virgin seen as God's wisdom.<sup>235</sup> It has to be said here that, due to Böhme's presentation of God's virgin as the deliverer of life, Baur is convinced that he is not only a Gnostic, but also a Manichaean. For instance, Baur finds an interesting parallel, which he thinks that deserves mention, between Böhme's idea of God's virgin and the Manichaean representation of femaleness through the myth of the shining light and the celestial virgin.<sup>236</sup> The fact that in his *Das manichäische Religionsystem* Baur speaks about Christ as being connected with the life-giving light, while in his *Die christliche Gnosis* he mentions God's virgin as the deliverer of life-giving light, seems to be irrelevant; the maleness of

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<sup>233</sup> The same teaching about the female's capacity to give life can be found in Jane Leade. See Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 236

<sup>234</sup> See Sklar, *Blake's Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre*, 30.

<sup>235</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 14:89, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 606.

<sup>236</sup> Baur is very accurate here because in his *Das manichäische Religionsystem*, he does speak about Christ as being the “son of eternal light” as well as the result of the purest emanation of light. This is why Christ can be said to be the “ideal primordial man” given that light (knowledge and spirituality) is what informs his entire existence. See, for details, Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Das manichäische Religionsystem. Nach den Quellen neu untersucht und entwickelt* (Tübingen: Verlag von C. F. Osiander, 1831), 214.



Christ and the femaleness of God's virgin are complementary facets anyway, so what is really important here resides in the whole image of maleness and femaleness which lies at the origin of life (and light for that matter). Life and light, movement and knowledge, can be found in both males and females, and Baur's concern here seems to be greater than merely pinpointing irrelevant distinctions between Gnosticism and Manichaeism; on the contrary, what he seems to do at this point is show that, based on Böhme, both speak of maleness and femaleness as natural bearers, deliverers, and shapers of life.<sup>237</sup> There is something that sets everything in motion so life emerges apparently out of nothing; for this reality though there is spiritual explanation, which Baur finds in the darkness' desire for light which moves the entirety of nature. In other words, it is the heavenly shining light which energizes the natural desires of demons, which manifest themselves as sexual drives. What is really crucial here is to understand that light (knowledge and spirituality) informs and takes action within the natural world of materiality; this is why—Baur contends—Böhme presented God's virgin as acting upon nature itself.<sup>238</sup> In other words, it is not only that God's virgin works within nature; what Baur wants to say here is that there is a reality which, based on Böhme's teachings, can be called divine and informs the materiality of humanity. This reality is described in terms of light, so it can be said to be a spiritual kind of knowledge which is able to confer meaning to man's existence in the physical world of nature. The embodiment of this light of spiritual knowledge is sometimes called Christ<sup>239</sup> and other times is said to be God's virgin;<sup>240</sup> in either case though one should read beyond the actual words themselves into that "divine" spirituality, which is not only innate and characteristic

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<sup>237</sup> Blake closely follows Böhme in this respect. See Dóra Janzer Csikós, *Four Mighty Ones Are in Every Man.* *The Development of the Fourfold in Blake* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó/Academy Press, 2003), 38.

<sup>238</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 606.

<sup>239</sup> See Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 20.

<sup>240</sup> Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 181.

to each human being, but is also capable of bestowing significance upon man's material life in the world.

The image of the virgin as deliverer of life can be better understood in Böhme if, as Baur shows, his perspective on how the world came into being is properly comprehended. It is not difficult to grasp the main reason for Baur's inclusion of Böhme amongst the Gnostics in this respect, since the dualism of darkness and light provides him with the context for the explanation of the origin of the world and consequently of life. This word, Böhme contends, is the result of the great yearning which darkness had for light. In this context, light is associated with God's power, so the craving of darkness was not only for light, but also for God's power. This means, at least for Böhme, that this world, the material world of physical phenomena, was created "from darkness" as a consequence of the powerful longing which darkness had for light and God's power.<sup>241</sup> On the other hand though, it seems that God's power displayed at least some degree of interest in the reality of darkness, so one can easily see the postulation of two principles, darkness and light, as co-existent and interacting in a way which allows for some kind of dualistic reading even if one cannot be totally convinced that this was Böhme's initial intention. When the world was created and brought into being, Böhme explains that this great yearning for divine power remained "in the spirit" within the material constitution of the sun, stars, and physical elements.<sup>242</sup> To be sure, all things appear to have been permeated with this specific desire for "divine power," which in this context may be a reference to something higher than the physicality of material world, most likely a spiritual reality which—as previously noted throughout Böhme's works—is able to revive matter in a spiritual way.<sup>243</sup> Whatever exists in the material world is impregnated with fear and

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<sup>241</sup> In Böhme, creation is an act of God's revelation, so creation as revelation is a "passage from darkness to light." See Rossbach, *Gnostic Wars*, 143.

<sup>242</sup> See also Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 227.

<sup>243</sup> Creation is kept through God's power. Angels, for instance, benefit from divine power as a result of eating God's word. See Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy*, 46.

anxiety; this is why there is this longing for a reality which is not material. Divine power is not necessarily something external to matter in this context, but it appears to be a spiritual reality which is both present in as well as informing matter in a new way, while significance and meaning can be found within it.<sup>244</sup> Spirituality is by definition non-material and, since it is non-material, it is also non-finite. The finitude of matter can be enhanced or at least enriched by the infinitude of spirituality, and it is God's power that delivers this sense of meaningfulness to all material things and beings. All material creatures are most willing to give up the vanity of the devil, Böhme explains, an image which pictures—in a rather vivid way—the nonsense and, at the same time, the lack of meaning which is attached to materiality based on the principle of darkness as the key feature of the devil.<sup>245</sup> One should understand therefore that the devil seems to be the creator of the material world since his finitude and darkness was impressed upon the material world, which is also finite and dark.<sup>246</sup> Finitude and darkness come with an utter lack of meaning and, since material creatures share some degree of longing for light despite their finitude and darkness, they are all willing to take off these demonic characteristics in favor of some kind of spiritual meaningfulness. This, however, seems to be impossible according to the material constitution of every being in the world; this is why Böhme shows that all creatures must wait until their fragility becomes reality and their material constitution dissipates into ether. In other words, material creatures must die in order to gain the reality of spirituality because it is only through the fragility of death that material beings can “get a place in Paradise,” as Böhme explains.<sup>247</sup> There is thus a complementarity—or rather a clear dualism—between matter and spirit in Böhme, which must

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<sup>244</sup> In Böhme, divine power is present in all natural things in order to maintain the order of creation. See Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 176.

<sup>245</sup> Radford Ruether, *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine*, 229.

<sup>246</sup> See Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire*, 70.

<sup>247</sup> Paradise, therefore, is not geographical, but rather eschatological and spiritual. See Weeks, *Boehme*, 52.

have helped Baur read him in Gnostic terms.<sup>248</sup> At the same time, one can see that there is a passing from materiality to spirituality, but this can be attained only when material beings become shadows or images; to be sure they must become spiritual shadows of their former material shape in order to fully acquire the complete meaningfulness of spirituality. Before this happens, creatures—while still material—must display a strong desire for spirituality and they do so in fact, otherwise the entire world would be characterized by vain grimness and infernal damnation.<sup>249</sup> In other words, although full spirituality cannot be attained in this material world but only when the fragility of matter becomes actual and the material being becomes a spiritual image thereof, the desire for spirituality exists and manifests itself within material creatures during their physical existence in the natural world. At this point, the image of the virgin becomes relevant as it represents the desire of material beings for spiritual meaningfulness.<sup>250</sup> Again, this is indicative of Baur's decision to include Böhme amongst the Gnostics since the very constitution of beings in the world is both material and spiritual. To say the least, material beings are endowed with some sort of spiritual awareness which is captured by Böhme within the concept of God's virgin.<sup>251</sup> This is why he points out that despite the darkness of matter and material beings, God's virgin is connected with "the other principle," namely with light.<sup>252</sup> Although God's virgin cannot be detached from the material spirit of this world since she exists within material beings, the two realities cannot be

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<sup>248</sup> Bell, "Boehme, Jakob," in Carney (ed.), *Renaissance and Reformation, 1500–1620*, 42.

<sup>249</sup> More details about Böhme's perspective on the desire that exists in creatures can be found in Ray L. Hart, "Godhead, God(s), Religions, and the Christian Religion," 243–264, in Amos Yong and Peter G. Heltzel (eds), *Theology in Global Context* (London: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2004), 253.

<sup>250</sup> See also Gray, *Goethe the Alchemist*, 44–45.

<sup>251</sup> This explains why the human soul wants to return to God's eternal virgin. See Sklar, *Blake's Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre*, 75.

<sup>252</sup> In Böhme the relationship between God's virgin and light is explained through the idea of Christ. See Harris, *Gnosticism*, 55.

mixed in such a way that they can no longer be distinguished from one another. God's virgin is always interested in the spirit of this material world because she has within herself a strong desire for the "fruit and growth of all things."<sup>253</sup> It seems, therefore, that it is God's virgin, or divine spirituality—the very knowledge which confers spiritual meaning to materiality—that helps and causes material entities to grow, most likely both physically and spiritually. It is clear thus that, according to Baur, Böhme is a Gnostic since his presentation of God's virgin appears to complete the material image of beings in the physical world as a means to show that the meaninglessness of materiality can be turned into meaningful spirituality.<sup>254</sup>

### **GOD'S VIRGIN AS THE DUALISTIC IMAGE OF MAN: BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND MATERIALITY**

As odd as it may appear, it is materiality which drafts a better picture of how the concept of God's virgin should be properly understood. God's virgin cannot be fully comprehended unless connected with the spirit of the material world, which is said to have exchanged qualities with God's virgin herself. In other words, what is believed to be superior spiritual knowledge as embodied by God's virgin cannot in fact exist in the natural world without a firm connection with the reality of matter.<sup>255</sup> In Böhme's words, the spirit of this world, the very essence of materiality, longs for and yearns after God's virgin in a constant way, which is indicative of the fact that the human being—despite its sheer materiality—displays a profound desire for non-materiality. As a matter of fact, this non-materiality can be said to be spirituality, which in Böhme is expressed through the concept of God's virgin, which is not to be

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<sup>253</sup> Böhme's language resorts again to a specifically sexual image. See also Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 95.

<sup>254</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 14:33–34, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 606–607.

<sup>255</sup> The spirit of this world hinders man from true spiritual knowledge, which—despite this barrier—is still to be found in the material world. Compare Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 158.

understood exclusively as God's wisdom, but also as a kind of knowledge which, in a way, transcends matter in the sense that it is able to confer meaning—spiritual meaning, to be more exact—to matter within its natural, physical context.<sup>256</sup> The spirit of the material world is personified again in Böhme and is presented as an entity which is constantly aware of what it does. It is as if the spirit of the world were the personification of human reason, which is always in a state of awareness, coupled with deep yearning for something that can convey meaning to its existence within a strictly material environment.<sup>257</sup> This material context is the physical world and it is within the physicality of the world that the spirit of the world is at work; thus, the spirit of the world raises some creatures to a higher degree of awareness as well as to a greater capacity to reason. The spirit of the world, therefore, seems to be aware of the need that God's virgin should be raised again for him; which can be indicative of the human reason's need to inform itself based on the data supplied to her by the higher spiritual knowledge that can be considered divine.<sup>258</sup> Mere reason with spirituality seems to be totally incapable of providing meaningfulness to the human being; this is why reason, as represented by the spirit of the material world, should be constantly connected with the higher spiritual knowledge that gives meaning to everything in the world and which is said to be God's wisdom. God's virgin, however, is that kind of knowledge which reflects God in Adam before his fall, so it is the spiritual knowledge which is heavily informed by the principle of light, not by the principle of darkness.<sup>259</sup> Reason, as coupled with spirituality, must not be unaware of darkness; on the contrary, darkness is a reality which cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, what should permanently pervade human reason is the spirit of light,

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<sup>256</sup> In Böhme, the knowledge provided by God's virgin is wisdom for one's salvation. See Weeks, *Boehme*, 121.

<sup>257</sup> See Schmidt, *Martin Buber's Formative Years*, 42.

<sup>258</sup> This is because human reason is corrupt because of the darkness which forced its way deep within reason. G. F. Goodey, *A History of Intelligence and "Intellectual Disability."* *The Shaping of Psychology in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 269.

<sup>259</sup> See also Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 95.

love, and meekness, the only features which not only give shape to the concept of God's wisdom (virgin), but also make the material existence of humanity profoundly meaningful. The reality of the fall, which pushed darkness into light, so that there was a constant fight between the two principles, is what appears to turn Böhme into a Gnostic, at least from Baur's perspective.<sup>260</sup> The fall is important not because it happened, but because it represents the current state of the world as well as helps humanity understand how the human being should look like and behave following the spiritual pattern thereof before the fall. In order, however, to understand how man was before the fall, but also how he should be despite the fall, it is important to see the fall as it really is and how it manifests itself throughout the material world.<sup>261</sup> The fall brings forward not only the prominence of darkness, but also the cohabitation between Adam and God's virgin, between materiality and spirituality.<sup>262</sup> The spirit of the world forced itself into Adam's being, because the spirit of the world was dominated by an extremely powerful desire to conquer God's virgin and have her for itself. Human reason, in other words, wanted God's spiritual knowledge for herself, but the result was that the principle of darkness took precedence over everything, including light, so Adam fell—he fell asleep—so the spirit of the world became authoritative in Adam's life and God's virgin was turned into a submissive state.<sup>263</sup> Human reason thus was no longer dominated by the higher spiritual and divine knowledge; on the contrary, it was subdued by the spirit of

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<sup>260</sup> There is, however, an important distinction between classical Gnosticism and Böhme when it comes to the conflict between light and darkness. In classical Gnosticism, the light-darkness conflict is seen in negative terms, while in Böhme it acquires positive connotations. To be more precise, in classical Gnosticism the fall is considered tragic, while in Böhme it is a part of God's self-disclosure. See Grimstad, *The Modern Revival of Gnosticism and Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus*, 43.

<sup>261</sup> For details about Adam before the fall, see Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 99–100.

<sup>262</sup> Compare Gaarden, *The Christian Goddess*, 119, and Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 99–100.

<sup>263</sup> See Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 189–190.

the world, which is material in essence. In other words, human reason ceased to think spiritually and began to consider things in a material way. Having lost the meaningfulness of divine spirituality and knowledge, the human being started to look for what it had lost, and this is how man's material spirit initiated a quest for the eternity of divine spiritual knowledge, an enterprise which was deeply motivated by the lack of meaning which is inculcated by materiality. The fall turned man's essence into a state of exhaustion, while God's virgin or his awareness of divine spiritual knowledge grew weaker and almost faded away.<sup>264</sup> In Böhme, it appears that Adam's desire to exchange qualities with God's virgin or God's wisdom was the very problem which prompted God to cast Adam away. Adam wanted to become one with God's virgin, so he grew in wisdom, gentleness, and lowliness, but—as he wanted to be one single reality with God's virgin who had already been permeated by the spirit of the material world—God's pure spirituality would have been affected by the spirit of materiality, so Adam was cast away from God's presence. Adam though was extracted or created from the *quinta essentia*, or the very core of materiality,<sup>265</sup> which came into open conflict with God's sheer spirituality, which explains God's action to push Adam further way from his presence. Such a description of the relationship between Adam and God in Böhme must have provided Baur with enough evidence to supply his reading of Böhme in Gnostic terms since the dualism of the human being and its existence between materiality and spirituality is more than merely evident.<sup>266</sup>

It is crucial to understand that in Böhme spirituality cannot be detached from materiality and the other way around. In fact—and this perspective seems to be supported by Baur—what Böhme does is carefully observe material reality or the natural world in general and then try to envisage the way the spiritual world looks

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<sup>264</sup> The reality which symbolically represents the weakness of the virgin after the fall is Eve. See Weeks, *Boehme*, 116.

<sup>265</sup> For details, see Cyril Smith, *Karl Marx and the Future of the Human* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 177–178.

<sup>266</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 14:33, 15:17, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 607.



like based on the image he has on the physical world of nature. He therefore presupposes that there is a spirit of the material world and then a spirit which transcends it; this is how he reaches from materiality to spirituality and from humanity to divinity.<sup>267</sup> The immediate result of such a thinking is the personification of both spirits—of the world and God’s—and then he concludes that the spirit must be eternal even in the material constitution of the human being since God’s spirit is eternal itself. This may explain his conviction that the spirit of the soul—most likely a reference to the human spirit—comes from eternity, since it was this spirit, the spirit of the human soul, which had had God’s virgin before the fall.<sup>268</sup> Thus, there was a spiritual symbiosis between the spirit of humanity and the spirit of divinity before the actual fall of the former, when God’s wisdom dwelled within the human being in a plenary way.<sup>269</sup> At the same time, however, one must diligently notice that, in Böhme, there is in fact what can be called a “spiritual trinity” since the spirit of the soul (which seems to be the spirit of the human being) and the spirit of God’s virgin are presented in conjunction with “the spirit of the great world,” which appears to be the very essence of materiality.<sup>270</sup> To be sure, pure spirituality is given by the spirit of God and the spirit of the human soul before the fall and then, after the fall, there is also the spirit of materiality which counterbalances the equilibrium between the spirit (man before the fall and God’s spirit) and matter (the spirit of the world).<sup>271</sup> As far as Baur is concerned, he must have spotted a double dualism here: first, the dualism of non-material spirituality or of pure spirituality which is illustrated by the spirit of man before the fall and God’s spirit, and second, the dualism of post-fall spirituality, when the spirit of man and God’s spirit are faced with the powerful craving of the spirit of the world. There is a powerful attraction between

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<sup>267</sup> Böhme’s, “spirit of this world” explains what happened to Adam and the world around him. Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 190.

<sup>268</sup> In Böhme, eternity and time seem to come together. See O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 137.

<sup>269</sup> See Harpur, *The Philosophers’ Secret Fire*, 253.

<sup>270</sup> Compare Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 50.

<sup>271</sup> See also Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 84.

matter and spirit, evidently following the fall, because—as Böhme points out—the spirit of the material world wanted to be with God’s virgin in the spirit of the human soul.<sup>272</sup> In other words, the essence of materiality and pure spirituality meet in fact within as well as in the human being. The conflict between materiality and spirituality arises when the spirit of the material world wanted to be with the spirit of God in the spirit of the human being as if the human being itself had been before the fall, although this would have been practically impossible since, before the fall, there was only pure spirituality, while materiality was non-existent in factual reality. Nevertheless, Böhme insists that the spirit of the material world wanted to mirror itself in Adam’s virgin (God’s wisdom) with “great joy,” so he wanted to live in God’s virgin or in Adam.<sup>273</sup> This means that materiality was powerfully drawn towards Adam’s pure spirituality, which explains why the human being, which is so evidently material in all respects, displays such a powerful desire for non-materiality and spirituality. The spirit of the world, which is the core of materiality (and therefore of finitude and fragility) wanted to live within God’s spirit in Adam because he wanted to be eternal despite its postlapsarian enmity with God’s virgin.<sup>274</sup> The conflict between the eternity of spirituality (or the eternity of divinity) and the finitude of materiality is not only evident, but also expressed in dualistic terms, which could not escape Baur’s careful reading, especially since he points out that the spirit of materiality felt its fragility, finitude, and—most likely—corruption and death.<sup>275</sup> In other words, the spirit of the material world wanted to find perfection, perfection in all respects, by this association with and indwelling in the pure spirituality of God’s virgin in Adam. Therefore, Böhme points out that the spirit of the material world, which was aware of its roughness, wanted to ex-

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<sup>272</sup> Even “inert matter” is characterized by the force of attraction. See Barrett, “Jacob Böhme: The Ambiguous Legacy of Speculative Passion,” 43–63, in Stewart (ed.), *Kierkegaard and the Renaissance and Modern Traditions*, Tome 2: Theology, 48.

<sup>273</sup> Compare Weeks, *Boehme*, 119.

<sup>274</sup> See de Courten, *History, Sophia, and the Russian Nation*, 256.

<sup>275</sup> Also read Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 190.

change qualities with the spirit of God's virgin in Adam especially by longing for the latter's sweetness and friendliness; this is why he also deeply desired to live within the divine spirit that existed in Adam before the fall. To be sure, the spirit of the world wanted to escape his fragility and finitude in order to live forever.<sup>276</sup> According to Baur's understanding of religious philosophy, this explains man's desire for eternal life, but the achievement thereof is impossible in the material world. What can be done though is for man to wait for the time of his death, when matter becomes dissipated, and he turns into a spiritual image of himself. It is now, after death, that true spirituality begins for the human being when he, and his spirit, can at last exchange qualities with pure spirituality or with an image which can last forever since it is totally detached from any materiality whatsoever. Baur is convinced that in this respect Böhme comes close to Manichaeism, which speaks about the spirit of the world or the *daimon* who is the lord of stars as well as of the world's material elements.<sup>277</sup> It is interesting to notice that, according to Baur, the connection between spirituality and materiality is exemplified through the manifestation of gender-related desire or, in plain terms, sexual drive. In other words, man's sexual drive is the result of the externalization of the longing of the spirit of the material world for God's virgin. Thus, as proof of man's materiality, the cause of sexual or carnal desires lies in the yearning for God's virgin that was displayed by the spirit of the material world. The spirit of creation, which is spiritual in nature, seems to have an obvious manifestation within the world in and through man's sexual desire, which is the material and physical reflection of the initial and divine spirit of creation pertaining to God's being and wisdom.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 14:32, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 607.

<sup>277</sup> The term *daimon* is not used by Böhme, but by Baur. Böhme, however, selected equivalent notions for *daimon*, such as "soul-creature" or "rational life" (*verständliche Leben*). See, for details, *The Illuminate of Görlitz or Jakob Böhme's Life and Philosophy*, Volume 2, 817.

<sup>278</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 607.

Sexual drive is vitally important for Böhme not only because it describes the way life originates and perpetuates in the physical world of matter, but also because it is an image of what happens in the spiritual world which mirrors material existence. This is why he explains that the tincture, which is a concept that points to the essence of matter and refers to masculinity or maleness, is in a constant search for God's virgin.<sup>279</sup> In other words, while in the material world, maleness yearns for femaleness, in the spiritual world, the tincture (which is indicative of the spirit of this world) longs for God's virgin (which is the image of femaleness). God's virgin is the feminine playmate for the masculine spirit of the material world and they both want to exchange qualities in a powerful and energetic movement which can be conceptually described as "love."<sup>280</sup> Maleness searches for femaleness and femaleness searches for maleness, a reality which seems to be valid both in the spiritual world and in its material counterpart. The result of this search between maleness and femaleness is—as shown above—the reality of love, which Böhme presents in terms of a "great desire of the masculine and feminine gender (or even sex)."<sup>281</sup> Love is the movement which pushes maleness towards femaleness and the other way around, so the two want to blend with one another. The tincture of the spirit of the material world wants to become one with God's virgin; in other words, finite matter wants to become one with infinite spirituality through an act of "great fiery love," when both partners want to taste each other "with their loving taste."<sup>282</sup> While Böhme's description has evident sexual overtones, he does manage to present rather graphically what happens with the human

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<sup>279</sup> For details about Böhme's tincture and its relationship with the virgin, see Weeks, *Boehme*, 123.

<sup>280</sup> The same idea which sees the virgin (Sophia) as the playmate of the spirit of matter can be found in Johann Georg Gichtel (1638–1710), the German mystic who described his own illumination by reference to Sophia. See Versluis, *Theosophia*, 144.

<sup>281</sup> For details about love in Western theosophy, see Glausser, *Locke and Blake*, 32–33.

<sup>282</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 13:39, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 608.

being who not only wants to perpetuate material life through sexual intercourse, but—even more important—finds itself in a permanent struggle with its own individuality as it tries to step outside its finitude and materiality in order to embrace divine infinity and spirituality.<sup>283</sup> Such presentation of sexual drive and love, with evident reference to materiality and spirituality, allowed Baur to draft some brief comments about Böhme's dogmatic and philosophical orientation. According to Baur, Böhme displays Manichaeistic tendencies because his description of God's virgin is not a discussion about God *per se*, but rather about a reality which transcends humanity in a divine way. What for Böhme is God's virgin, for Manicheists was the *daimon*, an evident downgrading of transcendence from the initial, traditional level of God's being to a lesser spiritual reality which is presented in terms of God's virgin for Böhme and the *daimon* for Manicheists.<sup>284</sup> What is fundamental here seems to be the dualism of spirituality which is present both in Böhme and Manichaeism in the sense that, while for the former God's virgin is not God himself, but only a complementary reality thereof, the same is true for the latter who make a clear distinction between the *daimon* and God. Baur gives one example in this respect, when he points out that natural phenomena like thunder and lightning were not considered God's works by the Manicheists, but rather actions of the *daimon*.<sup>285</sup> The *daimon* therefore, as believed by Manicheists, was seen as a lesser God, which in Böhme's Christian thought corresponds to the devil, while God's virgin—at least to some extent—can be identified with the notion of Christ. As far as Baur is concerned, following the Manicheistic conviction that the *daimon* is occupied with the actuality of the material world to the point that it

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<sup>283</sup> Compare Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 99.

<sup>284</sup> In this respect, Böhme's virgin and the Manicheists' *daimon* can refer to the transcendental self. See also G. Quispel, "Hermes Trismegistus and the Origins of Gnosticism," 145–166, in R. van den Broek, and Cis van Heertum, *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme. Gnosis, Hermetism, and the Christian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 158.

<sup>285</sup> The *daimon* can also be met in classical Greek mythology and early Christian hagiography. See, for details, Frank R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370–529* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 80.

can be seen as its creator, Böhme sees the devil as the “prince of this world,” very much in line with the biblical passage which presents Christ describing the devil in the same words.<sup>286</sup> For Böhme, there is an evident reason why Christ considered the devil the “prince of this world,” so his labeling was not in vain, because the devil exists according to the first principle, which is darkness, and, since the devil is connected with the kingdom of grimness, he is in this respect eternal.<sup>287</sup> It is crucial to see here that the eternity of the devil is given by the principle of darkness, not by what Böhme calls “the kingdom of the four elements.”<sup>288</sup> When it comes to the kingdom of four elements, which is obviously the realm of the material world, nothing is eternal; the devil, therefore, but also Christ must be concepts in order to be eternal.<sup>289</sup> Another observation of Böhme is equally important here, namely that the devil had full power over the material world when there were no creatures or plants on earth, namely when physical life was non-existent. This explanation is vital for Böhme because it reconfirms the devil’s conceptual existence; the power of darkness reaches its climax when there is no life around. When life begins—and Böhme must have primarily meant the human being when he referred to creatures—the power of darkness diminishes despite the finitude of humanity and the contingency of the world.<sup>290</sup> While the human being is indeed finite and its materiality eventually succumbs to darkness, the same human being has the innate capacity to reach spiritual knowledge which not only allows the human being to perceive itself in terms of light and infinitude, but also represents an

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<sup>286</sup> See also Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 179, and Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 134.

<sup>287</sup> Compare Classen, *The Color of Angels*, 55.

<sup>288</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 13:39, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 608.

<sup>289</sup> This is one aspect of Böhme’s thought which exerted a powerful influence on Hegel, who believed that, in Böhme, concepts are externalized in realities while realities are seen as concepts. See Walsh, “The Historical Dialectic of Spirit. Jacob Boehme’s Influence on Hegel,” 15–35, in Perkins (ed.), *History and System*, 18.

<sup>290</sup> Weeks, *Boehme*, 180.

evident defeat of darkness through the spirituality of life and light which rises above or transcends the darkness of materiality. Baur seems convinced that, in Böhme, the devil is a concept which represents the darkness of materiality;<sup>291</sup> a concept which can, however, be surpassed by the notion of Christ, which bears with it the light of superior divine knowledge; the only idea that allows humanity to see itself as pure spirituality, eternal life, and unending love.<sup>292</sup> The body of the human being may well return to the darkness of matter when physical life is extinguished; what happens then, however, is that a spiritual image of the late human being still remains, so—in terms of temporal sequentiality—the darkness of matter which captured the body is defeated by the light of the spirit which continues to uphold the spiritual shadow of the individual. The devil therefore must be conceived as a notion or principle<sup>293</sup> in order for it to make sense in the physical world of matter, or at least this is how Baur understands Böhme's description thereof. The devil though, Baur seems to imply, is not only the principle which explains the reality of evil; it is also the idea that deprives God of his traditional-ontological transcendence—so that he becomes a mere idea describing humanity—while, through a radical reversal of properties, adorning man with divine characteristics in the material reality of nature and history.

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<sup>291</sup> See Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 92.

<sup>292</sup> In Böhme, Christ is seen as the one who restores what was damaged and destroyed by the devil. See O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 48.

<sup>293</sup> The same approach, which considers the devil as a principle, is present in Blake. See Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Volume 1, 364.

## CONCLUSION

### NO RELIGION WITHOUT PHILOSOPHY

For Baur, Böhme and Hegel—as prominent figures of the Reformation in general and Protestant theology in particular—represent a fortunate combination between theology and philosophy or, in more general terms, between religion and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> This is why he deplors the alienation of theology from philosophy, but also the estrangement of philosophy from theology, which occurred after the time of the Reformation. Baur is convinced that the more philosophy and theology attempted to distance from each other following the Reformation, but also the more each one tried to follow its own individual path, the more they detached themselves from the perspective of the “old Gnosis.” On the one hand, philosophy clung exclusively to the abstract notion of God, as well as to its so-called natural theology, whereby it attempted to preserve its connection with theology.<sup>2</sup> Baur believes that—by means of the concept of God and the idea of natural theology—philosophy tried not only to stay close to theology but also to inform and advise it. This, however, was by far an unfortunate situation and Baur is nothing but unhappy with it. For him, philosophy’s attempt to stay in touch with theology based exclusively on the notion of God—dealt with in an abstract manner—and the idea of natural theology was only a “nasty interrelated addition to its purely formal pur-

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<sup>1</sup> See also George E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967, reprinted 1991), 43–44.

<sup>2</sup> Compare James Richmond, “Baur, Ferdinand Christian 1792–1860,” 37–38, in Justin Wintle (ed.), *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture, 1800–1914* (London: Routledge, 2002, first published 1981), 37.



pose.”<sup>3</sup> Theology, on the other hand, chose to build its argumentation exclusively on a perspective which included a symbolical-ecclesiastical religious system and, in doing so, it only managed to further step away from philosophy. The result was equally disastrous because theology began to be treated with indifference, so when it attempted to replace its old system with a new perspective—namely its initial theological and philosophical understanding of the world with an exclusively theological apprehension—the immediate consequence was a state of dissolution or what Baur calls “a denial of its previous position.”<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that Baur does not favor the detachment of metaphysics from the realm of nature at all. Such an attempt leads—at least in his mind—to the divorce between philosophy and theology, which is also a departure from the essence of real Christian Gnosis. In other words, Christian Gnosis includes philosophy and theology in the sense that it is based on the conviction that there is no distinction between metaphysics and nature. Consequently, the very same Gnosis accepts no difference between God and the world and, for that matter, between absoluteness and transitoriness. This is why Baur is fully convinced that a bad example in this respect was set by Christian Wolff,<sup>5</sup> of whose thought he evidently

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<sup>3</sup> Baur was interested in history, but his preoccupation with history did not focus on concrete historical events; on the contrary, Baur was more interested in abstract connections. See H. George Anderson, “Challenge and Change within German Protestant Theological Education during the Nineteenth Century,” 36–48, in *Church History* 39.1 (1970): 36.

<sup>4</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 555–556.

<sup>5</sup> Christian Wolff (1679–1754) is probably the most famous philosopher between Leibnitz and Kant. A prolific writer and an accomplished thinker, Wolff was preoccupied not only with philosophy, but also with natural and theoretical sciences. His interest for mathematics, physics, economics, and public administration allowed him to stress the professional nature of university education, while his open conflict with the Pietism of his day brought him to appreciate religion in general and, in doing so, he particularly stressed the morality of Confucianist thought. A staunch rationalist and a firm believer in the natural capacities of reason to discover moral truths by its own endeavors, Wolff promoted a philosophy

disapproves, for at least one major reason which has to do with the acceptance of distinctions between metaphysics and nature, God and the world, absoluteness and transitoriness. Baur is so dismissive of Wolff that, as far as he is concerned, there is no greater opposition to Gnosis than Wolff's construct of natural theology.<sup>6</sup> Baur acknowledges that Wolff himself intends to build his natural theology as a religious philosophy, but for Baur Wolff did not succeed in this particular respect. Thus, he is convinced that Wolff's natural theology is definitely not a valid sample of religious philosophy because it promotes the abstract rational concept of "*ens perfectissimum*" (the most perfect being), which he believes represents the valid idea of God.<sup>7</sup> Thus, according to Baur, Wolff accepts the presentation of divine essence and its distinction in stiff, lifeless, and unmediated terms. This is why, in Baur's opinion, Wolff depicts God's essence based on the clear opposition between two totally different halves. Thus, on the one hand, Wolff reportedly believes that God's essence can be known based on the proofs offered by his logic and the metaphysics of reason, while on the other hand, the very same essence of God lies beyond the reach of reason, so it is accessible only through supernatural revelation.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, it is evident that Baur rejects the possibility that the es-

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whose purpose was to account for the abstract possibilities of things. The actuality of things can be seen and learned from daily experience, while whatever goes beyond it into abstractness lies within the abilities of a rationalistic philosophy, which he believed to be the answer to man's quest for truth and morality. For further details, see Jerome B. Schneewind (ed.), *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 331ff.

<sup>6</sup> For details about Wolff's natural theology, see Leo Elders, *The Philosophical Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 13, and Dolf te Velde, *Paths beyond Tracing Out. The Connection of Method and Content in the Doctrine of God, Examined in Reformed Orthodoxy, Karl Barth, and the Utrecht School* (Delft: Eburon, 2010), 63.

<sup>7</sup> For details about the idea of *ens perfectissimum* in Wolff, see Francesco Tomatis, *L'argomento ontologico. L'esistenza di Dio da Anselmo a Schelling* (Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1997), 74ff.

<sup>8</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 555–556.

sence of God should escape the possibility of capture by reason; true Christian Gnosis, in other words, is based on the ability of man's reason to discern the truths of divine essence, and in so doing, Christian Gnosis manifests itself as a genuine philosophy of religion.

Baur, however, seems to be keenly aware that theology and philosophy cannot go hand in hand in a way which does justice to the old concept of Gnosis unless what he calls "the old notion of revelation" is taken into consideration. It may be true that, in Baur, God and the world are one and the same thing, so that there is no difference between absoluteness and transitoriness; nevertheless, Baur stresses that the more the idea of revelation is left aside, the more the whole domain of religion and revelation becomes a reality which is seen exclusively as a human product.<sup>9</sup> Without the notion of revelation, religion itself turns into a human construct, as well as into a long row of religious representations and arguments, which can only be evaluated based on the very restrictive criterion of human reason. For Baur, the real problem is that this reason is restricted to the narrow limits of human subjectivity, so for as long as human reason cannot leap outside its own subjectivity towards the notion of divine revelation—which in Baur can be interpreted as higher human knowledge,<sup>10</sup> although he describes it as divine disclosure—the idea of Gnosis is not properly represented. Baur seems convinced that without divine revelation, religion cannot be raised to that level of development which includes a close relationship with the perspective that is based on the higher necessity of God. In Baur, however, divine revelation appears to make reference to man's capacity to think critically about religious issues.<sup>11</sup> In

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<sup>9</sup> For more information about Baur's idea of revelation, see Todd C. Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins. Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 12–13.

<sup>10</sup> Compare Antony Aumann, "Kierkegaard's Case for the Irrelevance of Philosophy," 221–248, in *Continental Philosophy Review* 42.2 (2009): 243.

<sup>11</sup> In other words, revelation is part of history and never above it. In other words, revelation is man's rational ability to evaluate his own religious experience. Compare J. Zachhuber, "Religion vs. Revelation? A Deceptive Alternative in Twentieth-Century German Protestant Theolo-

other words, divine revelation understood as man's higher apprehension of religion, includes traditional theological aspects—such as divine revelation—which are interpreted in a philosophical, historical, and critical way. This is why, for Baur, the merits of the modern period reside primarily in its capacity to promote a conscientious philosophy with a clear speculative task. This particular philosophy, however, appears to be based on what Baur calls “the pure and livelier notion of religious philosophy,” whose main characteristic lies in its fundamental relationship with religious history. Consequently, according to Baur, true modern philosophy—which is a reiteration of the old concept of Christian Gnosis as a blend of traditional ideas reassessed historically and critically—is a combination between the philosophy of religion and the history of religion.<sup>12</sup> Philosophy and history (or rather historiography) go hand in hand in an attempt to explain (by means of the idea of Gnosis) a wide range of concepts and practices associated with the traditional idea of God and its complex significance for the religious awareness of the human being. As far as Baur is concerned, such an understanding of Gnosis is best seen in Hegel's works.

### **BAUR'S HEGELIAN “CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY”**

Baur seems to be utterly convinced that Christianity in general and its dogmatic system in particular can be described in terms of what he calls “a Christian religious philosophy;”<sup>13</sup> in other words, the

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gy,” 285–316, in L. Boeve, Y. De Maeseneer, and S. van den Bossche (eds), *Religious Experience and Contemporary Theological Epistemology* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 314–315.

<sup>12</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 556.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase can also be pinned on Hegel's thought, especially from outside the immediate context of Christian theology and philosophy. For such a perspective, which sees Hegel's thought as part of “Christian religious philosophy” from a non-Christian viewpoint, see Tarkteerth Laxmanshastri Joshi, *Critique of Hinduism and Other Religions* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1996), 179. Sadly, this source contains many typographical errors, which could have been avoided (especially those which refer to German names).

development of Christian dogmas can be equated—in Baur’s understanding—with the equally important evolution of a Christian philosophy of religion. This is why Baur shows that this has been the case from the very beginning, in the sense that Christian theology grew into an elaborated religious philosophy from the moment Christianity started to manifest itself as a religion, which also seems to be the case with Hegel’s perception about Christian thought.<sup>14</sup> According to Baur, seen as religious philosophy, Christianity maintained the same intellectual direction with great determination despite the various historical periods which shaped its development. To be sure, the Christian religious philosophy in modern times—which for Baur can be attached to post-Reformation thought and especially to Hegel’s philosophy—is not a new development within Christianity; on the contrary, Baur points out, the modern understanding of Christianity as religious philosophy coincides with the actual development of Christian dogma, so it is a natural consequence of a process which is conditioned by the very nature of things themselves. This proves that Christianity is a religion amongst many others, which is also highlighted by Hegel<sup>15</sup> throughout his secularizing philosophy;<sup>16</sup> its doctrines are teachings with philosophical content, so their meaning is relevant for humanity in an existential way.<sup>17</sup> As Christianity has always developed as a religion, as well as a religious philosophy, through the unveiling of time, history, and nature, so the context for the evolution of Christian religious philosophy is the materiality of the natural world,

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<sup>14</sup> For a critique of Hegel’s understanding of Christianity’s development as religious philosophy, see Peter Koslowski, “The Philosophy of the World Religions as the Philosophy of Revelations,” 183–217, in Peter Koslowski (ed.), *Philosophy Bridging the World Religions. A Discourse of the World Religions* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 202.

<sup>15</sup> Bryan S. Turner, *Religion and Modern Society. Citizenship, Secularization, and State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 135.

<sup>16</sup> See H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., “The Culture Wars in Bioethics Revisited,” 1–8, in *Christian Bioethics* 17.1 (2011): 6–7.

<sup>17</sup> John Walker, “Nietzsche, Christianity, and the Legitimacy of Tradition,” 10–29, in Keith Ansell-Pearson (ed.), *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought* (London: Routledge, 1991, reprinted 2002), 23.

above which man must elevate himself through the self-consciousness of the spirit,<sup>18</sup> as it emerges from Hegel's thought.<sup>19</sup> Baur admits that modern religious philosophy—to which he himself adheres—has been wrongly associated with the idea of a “false Gnosis,”<sup>20</sup> which in turn displays his conviction that Christian theology should be associated with the notion of Gnosis especially from the modern perspective that promotes Christianity as a religious philosophy. This is why, for Baur, modern Christian philosophy of religion is different from old Christianity—or traditional Christian theology—only from the perspective of its form, not its being. The very essence of Christianity, Baur contends, has always been the same when it comes to its most fundamental essence; the form thereof was indeed different through its various stages of development as it went through history, but its essence has always remained the same and it can be described as a religious philosophy. This is why Baur is not bothered if Christianity is described in dogmatic terms; for him dogmatics and philosophy are identical, because both reveal the Gnostic nature of Christianity, a label which can be applied to Hegel's thought as well.<sup>21</sup> In other words, Christianity has always promoted a specific knowledge or Gnosis about humanity and the way it should see, embrace, and related to the reality of God, so the idea of doctrine or the notion of philosophy speak about the same intellectual set of Christian convictions. What Baur wants to underline here is the fact that, despite the evi-

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<sup>18</sup> More about self-consciousness in Hegel can be read in Kenneth R. Westphal, “Mutual Recognition and Rational Justification in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*,” 753–799, in *Dialogue* 48.4 (2009): 755ff.

<sup>19</sup> Philip J. Kain, *Schiller, Hegel, and Marx. State, Society, and the Aesthetic Ideal of Ancient Greece* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), 41–43.

<sup>20</sup> See R. Baxmann, “The Heretical Gnosis,” trans. Erskine N. White, 657–679, in *The American Theological Review*, Volume 4 (New York, NY: Bidwell, 1862), 659.

<sup>21</sup> See Carsten Colpe, “The Challenge of Gnostic Thought for Philosophy, Alchemy, and Literature,” 32–56, in Bentley Layton (ed.), *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism. Proceedings of the Conference at Yale, March 1978*, Volume 1: The School of Valentinus (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 34.

dent identity and continuity which characterized Christian religious philosophy through its long historical development, there is also an element of diversity which cannot and should not be ignored. Baur stresses that Christian religious philosophy had to overcome various forms of opposition, then had to abandon a wide range of beliefs which were characterized by rigorism and inadequacy; all these happened as the philosophy of the Christian religion struggled to clarify and promote the importance of the spirit for the lives of human beings. According to Baur, Christian religious philosophy speaks of the spirit in terms of mediation, like Hegel,<sup>22</sup> so the essence of Christianity is the actual mediation of the spirit, which begins with the externality and materiality of the human being and proceeds with the being of the spirit itself.<sup>23</sup> For Baur, the development of Christian religious philosophy from the reality of matter to the notion of the spirit—which can also be noticed in Hegel<sup>24</sup>—is “the most distinctive, inner, and free activity” of the endeavoring human spirit itself. This reveals Baur’s belief in man’s capacity to turn religion in an enterprise of his spiritual capacities; Baur’s adherence to the new philosophy of religion is clear in this respect, because what shapes theology and turns it into a religious philosophy fueled by Gnosis is not God’s intervention in history, but man’s spiritual awareness that confers meaning to his material existence in the natural world.<sup>25</sup> As a finite spirit, man is able to speak of God in terms of an absolute spirit, but this is only a notion which makes spiritual sense for the finitude and materiality of

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<sup>22</sup> R. Beardsworth, “The Political Limit of Logic and the Promise of Democracy: Kant, Hegel, Derrida,” 212–269, in Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor (eds), *Jacques Derrida. Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 2002), 221.

<sup>23</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 315, 329.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Elaine P. Miller, *The Vegetative Soul. From Philosophy of Nature to Subjectivity in the Feminine* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 125–126.

<sup>25</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 330.

man's life in the world, as in Hegel—this is basically the Gnostic essence of Christianity seen as religious philosophy.<sup>26</sup>

For Baur, Gnosis seems to be the special kind of philosophical knowledge which pervades religion in all its aspects, forms, and manifestations in history. This is why he points out that Gnosis was not only the very foundation of Paganism, but it also surfaced in Christianity, as confirmed by Hegel's philosophy.<sup>27</sup> For Baur, the root of the origin of Gnosis penetrated so deep into the foundation of Paganism, that Christianity, when it appeared in history as a distinct religion, could not but face the actual reality of Gnosis through the mediation of Paganism. Thus, Christianity was forced to consider and reconsider its position as compared with Paganism and, in doing so, Christianity repositioned itself with reference to Gnosis. According to Baur, Christianity took a dualistic approach with respect to Gnosis, so on the one hand, it subjected Paganism and thus Gnosis for its own purposes, while on the other hand, it totally separated itself from them. Baur is interested in pinpointing first the Pagan-Gnostic aspects which Christianity had to give up throughout its historical development. Thus, Baur explains, the first issues which were discarded by Christianity from its earliest stages of development were polytheism and dualism, the multifaceted opposition between spirit and matter, the antagonism between a superior and an inferior God, as well as the figurative sensualization of religious and speculative ideas.<sup>28</sup> It is important to notice here that whenever Baur speaks of Christianity he refers in fact to the Christian philosophy of religion, to which he himself adheres, and especially to its new form of manifestation as influenced by

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<sup>26</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 735–739.

<sup>27</sup> Irrespective of whether Hegel can be considered a Gnostic or not, his philosophy does hint at Gnosticism. See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory. Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, reprinted 2006), 161.

<sup>28</sup> For details about Hegel's idea of sensualisation (*Versinnlichung*), with reference to ideas and the spirit in general, see Andrzej Warminski, "Allegories of Symbol: On Hegel's *Aesthetics*," 39–50, in Tilottama Rajan and Arkady Plotnitsky (eds), *Idealism without Absolutes. Philosophy and Romantic Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 39–40.



Hegel. In this respect, he points out that the new Christian philosophy of religion did not position itself only with reference to Paganism, but also with reference to Judaism. Baur is convinced that while throughout history Christianity had embraced many aspects of Judaism, in “recent times”—clearly a reference to the new philosophy of religion—Christianity could eventually detach itself permanently from Judaism. Thus, having left behind both Paganism and Judaism, Christianity—in its manifestation as the new philosophy of religion promoted by Hegel and endorsed by Baur—was able at last to promote its most fundamental idea of the absolute spirit,<sup>29</sup> which manifests itself through the actuality of being.<sup>30</sup> The reality of being—and specifically the reality of the human being—is the mediation which allows the idea of the absolute spirit to be comprehended in its eternal truth.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the freedom and purity of the idea of the absolute spirit can be apprehended as religious awareness through the mediation of the human being.<sup>32</sup> All these insights are available through the new philosophy of religion—which, for Baur, is the new philosophy of the Christian religion—because of its capacity to recognize the work of the spirit through the development of history, which is also in accordance with Hegel,<sup>33</sup> whose idea of work is not only spiritual, but also material.<sup>34</sup> What is important to understand here is that, for Baur, the actual work of the new philosophy of religion presents the activity of the

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<sup>29</sup> See Howard C. Kee, *The Beginnings of Christianity. An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2005), 437.

<sup>30</sup> See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 210.

<sup>31</sup> See Richard D. Chessick, *The Future of Psychoanalysis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 197.

<sup>32</sup> See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 95.

<sup>33</sup> Compare E. C. Cuff, W. W. Sharrock, and D. W. Francis, *Perspectives in Sociology*, third edition (London: Routledge, 1990), 11–14.

<sup>34</sup> Embodied in the human being, the spirit works not only using intellectual or spiritual tools, but also material tools. This is important for Hegel because tools (spiritual and material) represent extensions of the human being. See also Graham Ward, “Theology and Postmodernism: Is It All Over?” 1–19, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80.1 (2012): 7.

spirit as open to the future. This is why, in Baur, the work of the spirit can never be considered as being “closed” or “finalized.” The new philosophy of religion, Baur insists, cannot detach itself from the foundation of objective Christianity—namely from Christianity as a world religion—but it is Christianity itself which allows the new philosophy of religion to present itself as open to the future. Baur is emphatic about the fact that, when it comes to the new philosophy of religion, its task can never be considered solved and its purpose can never be seen as already achieved, at least not until all its interests—which are comprised in its actual concept—have been fully accomplished.<sup>35</sup>

Baur concludes that what really counts in Hegel’s philosophy of religion is logic—in other words, the use of reason—which is more important than history itself although history is an important component of religion.<sup>36</sup> It is from his Hegelian perspective that Baur approaches Böhme, which means that Hegel’s logic or reason investigates Böhme’s mystical and allegorical religious system.<sup>37</sup> To be sure, Böhme’s references to original spirits, angels, Lucifer and the virgin appear to be all symbolical and mystical images in line with what Baur constantly calls “the old Gnosis.” Based on these symbolical and mystical elements of Böhme’s understanding of religion, Baur underlines the fact that the mystical being of the Gnostic system reveals an extremely important methodological issue which must be promoted in the philosophical studies of religion, namely the need to differentiate between forms and ideas. This also means, as in Hegel, that religion should be seen as a magnificent allegory of human life.<sup>38</sup> When it comes to human life and existence, the significance of the concept of community is crucial.

<sup>35</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 739–740.

<sup>36</sup> See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, 2 Teil, 462.

<sup>37</sup> Hegel himself seems to have been influenced by Böhme. For details, see Martin Henry, “G. W. F. Hegel: A Secularized Theologian?,” 194–214, in *Irish Theological Quarterly* 70.3 (2005): 199–200, n. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Markus Gabriel, “The Mythological Being of Reflection. An Essay on Hegel, Schelling, and the Contingency of Necessity,” 15–94, in Markus Gabriel and Slavoj Žižek, *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter. Subjectivity in German Idealism* (London: Continuum, 2009), 61.

In Hegel, Baur contends, the notion of community achieves its fully objective reality in the fact that transcendence and future should be considered through the lens of actual existence and the present.<sup>39</sup> In other words, from the perspective of history and how existence develops in the material world of nature, transcendence is always immanence and the future is always a never-ending present. Hence the paramount importance of what happens in the present and how the present community understands religion. Religion, however, is seen through the eyes of the *Dasein*, so what really counts in Hegel is the individual, subjectivity, and personal religious awareness.<sup>40</sup> It is how the human being in its individuality is able to grasp the meaning of religion through his or her own perspective. The here and now of individual and subjective religious awareness is what makes the interpretation of religion meaningful for the human being in all the aspects of its intricate existence in the word. Therefore, for Baur's Hegelian perspective on religion, Böhme's entire religious system is an allegory of humanity in all its complex aspects which—based on the thorough use of logic or reason—can be deciphered by means of mystical and symbolical images,<sup>41</sup> such as the devil, the idea or the principle representing the reality of evil.

### **THE DEVIL AS THE PRINCIPLE OF EVIL: THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUALITY**

Establishing that the devil is a principle, not a being, proves to be essential for Böhme, at least in Baur's understanding. Baur seems convinced that Böhme presents his readers with a theoretical devil, in the sense that it is merely a conceptual devise which is meant to convey the importance of materiality and especially the origin of

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<sup>39</sup> See also Richard Dien Winfield, *The Just Family* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 31ff, and Sandra Corse, *Operatic Subjects. The Evolution of Self in Modern Opera* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2000), 148.

<sup>40</sup> See S. C. Anderson, *Hegel's Theory of Recognition. From Oppression to Ethical Liberal Modernity* (London: Continuum, 2009), 150.

<sup>41</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 736–739.

matter as reflected in creation and in the physical world of humanity.<sup>42</sup> The devil may be a concept, but he cannot be detached from the four elements which define matter. To be sure, matter seems to exist beyond any concept because it is a fact; nevertheless, matter is there in the world, but for the human being it must have some sort of meaning. In other words, matter means something for the human being who interprets everything one way or another. The meaning of matter for the human being consists of the fact that it has no meaning at all and the meaninglessness of matter can be interpreted only through the significance which, in the Christian tradition but also within Gnosticism, is attached to the notion of the devil. The devil is associated with darkness, with the kingdom of darkness, and where there is darkness the rule of light is excluded.<sup>43</sup> Darkness, in this case, means not only the lack of light (and proper spiritual knowledge), but also the factual presence of finitude, contingency, and death—in a word, a principle which in Böhme is the third principle of fragility. The devil is seen as the origin of darkness since it incorporates darkness as a reality which he appears to be able not only to control, but also to disseminate.<sup>44</sup> The devil is connected with the third principle of fragility because he is self-aware due to this principle. The devil himself then must have an end—one way or another—whether it is the end of a being as in traditional theology or the end of a principle, as Baur seems to understand things. The devil is therefore a principle or a notion which explains the existence of this world in a philosophical, spiritual way because it encapsulates theoretically the meaninglessness of the material constitution of the world. Matter has no meaning left to itself and the spiritual explanation of this fact is rendered through the notion which Christians and Gnostics call “the dev-

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<sup>42</sup> The matter of creation is based on the principle of darkness, and since darkness is seen as a principle, its reality tends not to be ontological, but rather theoretical or conceptual. See Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Russell, *Mephistopheles*, 52.

<sup>44</sup> Böhme's insistence on darkness and the devil produced an “intense nocturnalization” of theology in early modern Europe. See Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire*, 15.

il.”<sup>45</sup> This concept, however, also meets another spiritual tradition and in this respect Baur points to Manichaeism. To be more precise, he indicates that the notion of the devil corresponds to the concept of the spirit of the great world in Manichaeism since Lucifer and the spirit of the world are both incorporated in the Manichaistic idea of the *daimon* or the “prince of darkness.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, whether it is called the devil, the *daimon*, the spirit of the great world, the prince of darkness or just the world spirit, this concept makes reference to the fact that the understanding of the entire world, in its natural, material, and physical constitution, depends on it since it conveys the idea of darkness, finitude, contingency, and death, which are all present within the philosophical understanding of matter.<sup>47</sup> The devil is the concept which makes the world turn around, in the sense that Baur sees him as the master of jugglery (or the swordsman who performs jugglery) or the one who is able to raise the storm of material elements in the grimness of fire.<sup>48</sup> The devil controls the world and he amuses himself as he exerts his dominion over the material world—this is the image which presents the darkness of matter in a personified, philosophical way. Consequently, the devil can be seen as the creator of the world since he so thoroughly controls it, and Baur confirms this philosophical perspective on the devil by point to the Manichaistic belief that the world is the *figmentum diaboli* or the creation of the devil.<sup>49</sup> At any rate, Baur makes it plain that, in Böhme, the image of the devil as the master of this world carries with it the notion of

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<sup>45</sup> See Jeffrey B. Russell, *Satan. The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 52.

<sup>46</sup> For details about the devil in Manichaeism, see Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 14.

<sup>47</sup> More information about Böhme’s philosophical endeavor can be found in Weeks, *Boehme*, 86.

<sup>48</sup> This is because the devil turns away from God and, in doing so, he turns the entire world away from God in a never-ending movement. See Versluis, *Wisdom’s Children*, 23.

<sup>49</sup> Baur points to his *Das manichäische Religionsystem*, 396, 399, where he analyses the importance of matter for Manichaeism and the fact that the world is seen as the creation of the devil.

“ardent movement,” which pushes two ideas one towards the other, namely the virgin and the prince of the world, good and evil.<sup>50</sup> While the virgin represents the spirituality of divinity, the prince of the world points to the materiality of humanity, so it is the idea of the devil which unites them in one single reality. Humanity thus seems to incorporate not only femaleness and maleness, but also the desire for spiritual divine knowledge in a decaying material body.<sup>51</sup>

When it comes to reading Böhme in Gnostic terms and, in doing so, identifying the main Gnostic elements in his thought, Baur lists six distinct issues which could place Böhme amongst the Gnostics. First, there is the conflict between light and darkness.<sup>52</sup> Second, he points to the context wherein the conflict between light and darkness takes place and this is the nature and life of the human being.<sup>53</sup> Third, Baur mentions the aspiration for light;<sup>54</sup> fourth, the strife for freedom;<sup>55</sup> fifth, the progress towards a higher level (harmony perhaps),<sup>56</sup> and sixth, the conflict antagonism between form and matter.<sup>57</sup> All these six features are most fundamentally dualistic because they bring forward two realities which define the human being and between which the human being “moves” in its attempt to take a step further towards its material and spiritual welfare. Such a dualism is evident when light and darkness are placed together, and then the same dualism cannot be overlooked when nature and life are defined as the background against which light and darkness exist in man’s physical and spiritual reality. The same dualism is implied in man’s aspiration for light, since man’s move-

<sup>50</sup> This is another proof of Baur’s Hegelian understanding of Böhme. See Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 144.

<sup>51</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 608.

<sup>52</sup> See also O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 124.

<sup>53</sup> See also Pagel, *Paracelsus*, 206–207, n. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Compare Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme*, 89.

<sup>55</sup> Böhme himself was an advocate for freedom, especially in the realm of theology. See Fanning, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*, 145.

<sup>56</sup> See Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality*, 49.

<sup>57</sup> The unification of form and matter was one of Hegel’s preoccupations. See Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, 32.

ment towards light presupposes a previous, as well as lower, inferior stage, which is defined by darkness.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, the idea of aspiration presupposes the fact that, in non-material terms, the human being has a “low,” which is the basis of his natural living, and then it is from this “low” that man sees a “higher” level of knowledge, which is supposed to open his materiality and physicality towards the non-material reality of spirituality. The strife for freedom is another aspect which implies a dualistic understanding of nature because freedom is only the end-point of man’s spiritual search that starts in the previous, lower state of slavery. Man is essentially a being which can be defined as “slave to matter” or “slave to darkness” and perhaps, above all, “slave to death.”<sup>59</sup> His current state of slavery prompts man to desire freedom, which seems to be seen in absolute terms, in the sense that it is not necessarily material—matter can never be defined by total freedom for as long as it is defined by death and finitude, two features which are the most essential characteristics thereof—but rather spiritual for it is only non-materiality that can provide man with the infinity of the spirit.<sup>60</sup> The progress towards a higher level is also dualistic because the higher level implies a lower level and man’s movement from a “lower” reality to an “upper” position shows his fundamental desire to redefine his existence in terms of something which can be left behind as well as something which can be grasped ahead.<sup>61</sup> Such a presentation of man’s existence in the world, from a lower to a higher level, shows not only man’s determination to move forward, but also the fact that he moves forward because what he leaves behind is unsatisfactory. Thus, it is at this point that one can infer man’s lack of meaning in his natural, physical, and material existence, which in fact triggers a search for meaning within himself, and it is evident that such a quest for meaning is essentially

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<sup>58</sup> See Weeks, *Boehme*, 168.

<sup>59</sup> Compare Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 153.

<sup>60</sup> Freedom, therefore, pertains to the realm of God. See Marek Styczyński, “Berdjaev: Authentic Existence or a Negative Sociology,” 81–91, in *Studies in East European Thought* 62.1 (2010): 86.

<sup>61</sup> In Böhme, the idea of progress presupposes a “spiritual evolution” toward harmony. See Herrick, *The Making of the New Spirituality*, 49.

spiritual in nature. The spirituality of man's quest for meaning is confirmed by Baur's conviction that what really defines Böhme's Gnosticism is the overall antagonism between form and matter.<sup>62</sup> Matter is the starting point of man's spiritual endeavors, while form is the goal, the finish line which is set ahead for his efforts to acquire meaning for his material existence in the world. This is why Baur selects some lines from Böhme, in which the latter discloses his belief in the capacity of the human soul to conceptualize what he calls the "highest meaning" and this is evidently a spiritual faculty.<sup>63</sup> In theological terms, Böhme speaks about the fact that the human soul is able to see what God, its father, does; the soul comprehends that there is a "higher" reality which should inform his spiritual development<sup>64</sup> in the material world and it is based on this sheer conviction that the material human being moves forward or higher towards a non-material reality, towards the spiritual knowledge that enables him to find meaning for his finite existence in the world of darkness and death. The human soul works in some sort of cooperation with God, its father; in other words, matter works with the spirit in an attempt to capture a new sense of meaning for what is meaningless; the spirit searches for significance in a world of matter for an existence which is defined by matter and, without a non-material hook which is powerfully anchored in spir-

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<sup>62</sup> The dualism of form and matter is connected to the notion of corporeality, which in Böhme refers to God's revelation in creation (*Leiblichkeit*). Böhme's corporeality (*Leiblichkeit*) could have originated in the radical Protestant theology promoted by Caspar Schwenkfeld (1490–1561), who used the idea of spiritual corporeality (*Geistlichkeit*). See also Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition*, 7, and Antoine Faivre, "Le courant théosophique (fin XVIe-XXe siècles): Essai de périodisation," 6–40, in *Politica Hermetica* 7 (1993): 9 [Les posterités de la théosophie: du théosophisme au new age].

<sup>63</sup> The notion of "highest meaning" can also be found in Schiller *via* Milton. See Richard F. Hardin, *Love in a Green Shade. Idyllic Romances Ancient to Modern* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 64.

<sup>64</sup> For information about Böhme's spiritual development, see Tracy D. Eells, "Epistemological and Interdisciplinary Trends in the Continuity of Psychoanalysis," 89–94, in *Culture and Psychology* 5.1 (1999): 89.



ity, has in fact no meaning whatsoever. This is why the human soul or spirit works with God, or with a higher spiritual knowledge, to achieve the “heavenly forms”<sup>65</sup> which seem to be searched for within the “spirits of nature.”<sup>66</sup> It is as if a certain thing were built; the thing is material but before it is given a certain form that particular form was spiritually or intellectually visualized at a theoretical level; it was only after such visualization that the form took a material shape. Böhme, in fact, refers to a typification which is the very mechanism of the soul; all things are made according to a type or a prototype and it is through such spiritual typification that all things appear to be made in the material world.<sup>67</sup> The corrupt human soul—in other words, the finite spirituality of the human being which is essentially subject to death—works constantly in the material world in order to build heavenly forms; to be sure, man’s material existence is fully characterized by a permanent effort to acquire spiritual knowledge. What is important to understand here is that matter is incapable of producing spirituality; the work and labor of the human being is characterized by what Böhme calls “a corrupt saltpeter (*Salliter*),” an essence which is defined by matter and consequently by finitude and death; it is some sort of “half-dead nature”<sup>68</sup> incapable of building heavenly figures.<sup>69</sup> In order to acquire meaning for his material existence, man needs a knowledge which goes beyond his materiality into what can be conceived as divine spirituality. The most fundamental dualism therefore in Böhme is, as Baur rightly noticed, the antagonism between matter and the spirit, but such antagonism is the one which reveals man’s

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<sup>65</sup> Compare Classen, *The Color of Angels*, 23; Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 59, and—for the idea of “heavenly forms” in Oetinger—Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, 72–73.

<sup>66</sup> See Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 44–45.

<sup>67</sup> This also applies to spiritual issues; for instance, the fall away from goodness is “typified” by Satan. See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Volume 3: Ockham to Suarez (Turnbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1953, reprinted 1999), 272.

<sup>68</sup> For details about Böhme’s “half-dead nature,” compare Kamil, *Fortress of the Soul*, 195, and Brinton, *The Mystic Will*, 157.

<sup>69</sup> Weeks, *Boehme*, 65–67.

quest for meaning as he proceeds from his essential materiality to a deeply desired spirituality.<sup>70</sup>

One of the most important aspects which Baur sees in Böhme—if not *the* most important—is the latter’s accountability for his readers, which is explained, by Baur himself, in terms of God’s gift to him. Thus, he points out that God gave him wisdom to fathom all the things he described and analyzed in connection with God’s being. He underlines the fact that such wisdom is not his; it was given to him by God so that he, Böhme, should be in it. The wisdom, he then explains, is God’s bride,<sup>71</sup> and all “Christ’s children”—who are in Christ and in God’s wisdom—must be considered God’s bride as they truly are. This observation is crucial as it reveals one of the fundamental aspects of theological methodology, namely the fact that one must be God’s child, or Christ’s child, in order to be associated with God’s wisdom. In other words, God’s wisdom is given only to those who are in God, namely in those who have Christ. Theology is not exclusively about history, or about the facts that happened and about the necessity that we should be born again in Christ. In saying this, Böhme is critical of the theologians of his day, who seem to have been more preoccupied with what happens, not necessarily with what exists.<sup>72</sup> Böhme expresses his dismay that such attempts only deal with aspects of reality which happened in the past, occur in the present, and will come again in the future; theology, however, is not about that. In doing so, such theologians claim that man should not search for what God is starting from below. It is interesting to notice here that, as far as Böhme is concerned, the new birth of Christians is treated as a historical event which seems to have lesser importance when compared with man’s search for God starting with the things of nature. In other words, in Böhme, the new birth appears to be of a more experiential nature—an event which helps man under-

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<sup>70</sup> See, for details, Böhme, *Aurora*, 15:41, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 608–609.

<sup>71</sup> See also Schipflinger, *Sophia-Maria*, 195.

<sup>72</sup> Böhme’s beliefs and attitudes were not appreciated by some of the theologians he had in mind when drafting his critical stanzas. See Koslofsky, *Evening’s Empire*, 71.

stand what God is on experiential, emotional grounds—while the kind of search he proposes, namely the search of nature in order to discover how God is in reality, could be of greater importance. To be sure, what Böhme appears to suggest here is that the new birth in Christ, while important and necessary, is not to be treated as the only significant event in man's life because it points only to God and God is beyond history and materiality. Something else should also point to man's physical and material constitution, to what he can discover by himself, but also to the way he can do so. Man is not supposed to search for God only on experiential grounds or through the new birth in Christ;<sup>73</sup> what man should do is also search for a criterion which is not exclusively divine in his quest for truth. It seems as if Böhme claimed that the experiential or emotional event of the new birth should be coupled with a more rational attempt to see God based on the opposite reality. If God is light, then man should not exclusively search into light; what he should do is somehow stretch out his area of investigation by going beyond the "boundaries" of light into the realm of darkness.<sup>74</sup> If so, then God should not be understood only as we see him based on our investigation of light; we should also see God starting from what we know when we investigate darkness, but this implies a thorough research of the concept of "devil" which seems to have been shunned by the theologians of his day. This is why Böhme points out that obliterating the devil, or refusing to talk about the concept and realities which are encapsulated in this notion, is "dirt and filth."<sup>75</sup> In other words, it is wrong to avoid any discussion about darkness and the devil as concepts which can in fact shed significant light on other concepts such as God and divinity. This explains Böhme's conviction that God cannot properly be understood without a thorough investigation of the material world, but

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<sup>73</sup> Compare Godwin, *The Golden Thread*, 117.

<sup>74</sup> The pedagogical nature of Böhme's conviction becomes evident; darkness needs to be investigated in order for man to acquire knowledge, so that "the Nothing might be known in the Something." See Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 162.

<sup>75</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 3:5–8, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 609.

not necessarily as history. The world must be understood as matter, as a reality that exists—the fact that events happening within this reality are secondary in importance.<sup>76</sup> Events are a constant reality in the material world and they should be investigated; however, what is far more important is that this has to do with the investigation of the core of materiality. Man should understand primarily not what happens within the material world, but rather what the material world is and what its spiritual essence consists of.<sup>77</sup> Once he does that, he is better equipped to delve into what God is and how such conceptual reality should be understood in terms of what he already knows about matter. As for Baur, he must have sensed the dualism involved in Böhme's conviction that the investigation of what matter is and how it exists informs our understanding of what God is and how he exists.<sup>78</sup> This is why he expressed his conviction that, in Böhme, everything can be reduced to the antagonism between matter and form, between humanity and divinity, between man and God. It is in fact the permanent conflict between matter and spirit which should drive man's quest for the understanding of reality, because reality presupposes the understanding of matter in a spiritual way or in a way which is capable of attaching spiritual meaning to the finitude of matter.<sup>79</sup> When this happens—as Böhme notices—the dawn breaks; a new day for humanity is there to be grasped because humanity is able to understand his materiality in light of the meaningfulness of spirituality.<sup>80</sup> Such a knowledge seems to be the ultimate desire of humanity for Baur, because it reveals not only that man is able to see himself through a

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<sup>76</sup> For details about the material world and its importance in Böhme, see Holmes, *A History of Christian Spirituality*, 128.

<sup>77</sup> See Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 147.

<sup>78</sup> It is possible to argue in favor of the belief that God needed creation to accomplish his purposes in revealing or externalizing himself. See Mayer, *Jena Romanticism and Its Appropriation of Jakob Böhme*, 22.

<sup>79</sup> This is because creation itself is the result of the mixture between the “dark world of matter” and “the light world of the spirit.” See Weeks, *Boehme*, 115.

<sup>80</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 3:5–8, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 609.

higher, spiritual knowledge, but also that man's experience is deciphered in terms of the spirit, which for Baur implies the active use of reason. To draw the line, in Baur's understanding of Gnosticism, man's use of reason is the very tool which should inform his religious beliefs because religion itself is man's rational attempt to search for meaning despite his finitude and materiality into the realm of the spirit. In doing so, man investigates spiritual concepts in a rational way, an enterprise which Baur believes to be thoroughly meaningful for the human being's finite and contingent existence in the material world of nature. For instance, if Christ is the idea which places God and man together in the history of Jesus, it means that Gnosticism (God and man) and Docetism (the idea of divinity applied to humanity) are both significant for Baur's religious philosophy.

### BETWEEN GNOSTICISM AND DOCETISM

Baur reads Böhme not only in Gnostic way, but also in a Docetic key—and in this, as has been shown, he compares Böhme with Paracelsus<sup>81</sup>—because of his conviction that, according to Böhme, all the concepts of Christianity can be understood through one single developing principle which goes through the entire history of humanity from the very beginning. This principle is evidently the notion of Christ, which—as Baur poignantly indicates—is born in the very soul of each human being.<sup>82</sup> In other words, to keep in with Gnosticism and Docetism, man's rational soul is characterized by the development of a humanizing principle—which Christians call "Christ"—within each individual, male and female. Consequently, this principle, which in Christianity is described in terms of the notion of Christ, belongs to the very nature of humanity and it is essentially spiritual.<sup>83</sup> Baur is convinced that, in Böhme, the prin-

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<sup>81</sup> O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 130.

<sup>82</sup> Böhme uses the picture of the marriage between Christ and the soul. See Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 94.

<sup>83</sup> Baur must have been aware of Böhme's influence on Hegel as well as of the latter's knowledge of Gnosticism and Docetism. For details, see Rossbach, *Gnostic Wars*, 148.

ciple of Christ must be therefore understood in Gnostic and Docetic terms primarily because, first, it denotes man's capacity to understand his materiality in a spiritual way, and second because the principle itself which allows humanity to attach meaning to its materiality and see it spiritually is spiritual in nature. Thus, it is the very notion of the spirit which prompts Baur to include Böhme amongst the Gnostics and Docetists.<sup>84</sup> According to Baur, Böhme is a Gnostic because he understands the human being as a dualistic entity, which is both material and spiritual, and then Böhme is a Docetist for he believes in the idea of Christ as incorporating the spiritual marrow of humanity. If one is to believe Baur at this point, Böhme's idea of Christ as the spiritual principle of humanity should be connected with man's "awareness," although it cannot be totally and substantially detached from this basic awareness—which is, in fact, a religious awareness. If so—although Baur does not say anything about this aspect—the principle which Christians call Christ can be found, under different names, in most if not all religions in the world. To be sure, the spiritual principle of humanity—Christ in the Christian religion—represents the ideal grounding of man's being. Thus, Christ, the idea of Christ, is the foundation of man's spirituality and, at the same time, the ideal thereof. This is why Baur connects Böhme's phrase "the heavenly virgin" with the idea of Christ as the foundation and ideal of human spirituality.<sup>85</sup> The principle of Christ has some sort of innate capacity to convey spiritual power and spiritual life since, the "old man" can be born again into a "new man."<sup>86</sup> This means that, according to Baur, in Böhme the "old man" points to the state in which humanity is unable to understand the spiritual principle within itself, so the human being lives in a state of fear and disappointment that is induced by

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<sup>84</sup> This seems to be because of Hegel's thought, which can be considered both Gnostic and Docetic, and since Baur was interested in establishing a history of Gnosis in modern times, the connection between Böhme and Hegel emerges as perfectly normal. See also Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology. The Divine Drama* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 110.

<sup>85</sup> Compare Versluis, *Wisdom's Children*, 5.

<sup>86</sup> See also Fischer, *Converse in the Spirit*, 199–200.

the materiality of the world. Once the principle which Christians call Christ is properly understood, the “old man” of humanity dies off—in other words, man is able to rid himself of fear and disappointment—and the human being is born again into the “new man,” which is able to acquire the knowledge of the spiritual principle of ideal humanity that provides each man and woman with a new, spiritual, and meaningful understanding of material life and existence in the world.<sup>87</sup> This happens when, as Baur explains, the word becomes man, but also when the eternal word of God’s promise or the belief in some sort of salvation is incorporated in man’s religious awareness.<sup>88</sup> The immediate result is that the word of God’s promise of salvation takes a specific spiritual “shape” within the human being, namely the shape of Christ according to Christians, and this belongs to the innermost essence of the human being. This is the eternal birth of the divine being, so according to Baur, the divine being is born within the human being.<sup>89</sup> Divinity does not exist outside humanity, but within humanity in a spiritual way. Christ represents the essence of divinity which exists in the human being as the power to turn materiality into something spiritually meaningful despite man’s finitude and death. God himself is born in man through the notion of Christ which gives power for the renewal of man’s life on spiritual grounds. Baur explains that, when this occurs, the first principle (darkness) opens up to the second principle (light), so the Father opens up towards the Son and the result consists of the fact that, in the Son (or in the idea of Christ), the darkness and the wrath of God turn themselves into life and light.<sup>90</sup> In fact, darkness and wrath are transfigured so they become life and light only if the principle of Christ is meaningfully understood as man’s power to be born again to the higher knowledge of spirituality. This is why Böhme is a Docetist as well as a Gnostic according to Baur: man’s most fundamental materiality is endowed with the religious capacity to understand his life in

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<sup>87</sup> Compare O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 28.

<sup>88</sup> Read also Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 99.

<sup>89</sup> Thus, man, who is indwelled by the spirit of this world, appear as a “hypostatized manifestation of God.” See Vassányi, *Anima Mundi*, 145.

<sup>90</sup> See Weeks, *Boehme*, 177.

spiritual terms. While man's life is characterized by darkness and wrath in its material state, it is the same material state which has the innate power to transform its darkness and wrath into a "new life and love," but this can only happen spiritually and it always starts from within the human being.<sup>91</sup> When such spiritual movement occurs within the human being, the one can say that the principle which is called Christ in Christianity becomes activated, so God himself and divine nature are born within humanity, darkness becomes light, hate becomes love, and death becomes meaningful.<sup>92</sup> This means that Christ is not external to humanity and neither is God. They are both spiritual concepts which transform man's "bad spirituality" into "good spirituality." Salvation is therefore man's internal means to turn his understanding of life around, in the sense that he can understand—through his own spiritual powers—that his materiality, which is seemingly devoid of any significance, can be seen in the new light of Christ that pictures it in a totally different spiritual way: as a meaningful, beautiful, and powerful existence in the physical world. This may be why, according to Baur, Böhme sees a connection between the external word of Scripture and what Baur calls his "mystical theosophy."<sup>93</sup> In other words, while Böhme uses notions from Scripture (such as God, Son, Spirit, Christ, and salvation), the meaning thereof is, according to Baur, fundamentally Gnostic and Docetic.<sup>94</sup> If Baur is to be believed, Böhme is therefore Gnostic because each of Scripture's notions is seen dualistically (as a means to convey the idea that man's constitution is both material and spiritual) and, at the same time, the same concepts are used to explain how the reality of Christ is not external, but rather internal to each human being. To be sure, in Böhme—Baur seems to contend—salvation is in Christ (and in

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<sup>91</sup> Compare Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*, 41–42.

<sup>92</sup> This seems to be a Hegelian influence on Baur. For details about the meaningful content of death in Hegel, see Thomas A. Carlson, *Indiscretion. Finitude and the Naming of God* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 111.

<sup>93</sup> See also Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss*, 30.

<sup>94</sup> Baur's assessment of Böhme's is in line with Jung's. See Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy*, 46.



Scripture),<sup>95</sup> but this does not refer to one's belief in the external person of a man called Christ.<sup>96</sup> On the contrary, it is man's religious awareness that the notion of Christ speaks about his innate capacity to turn the darkness and wrath of his materiality into a new spiritual reality characterized by light, love, and meaning.<sup>97</sup> Man opens to divinity through the knowledge which is embodied in the notion of Christ, a spiritual idea that speaks of humanity's innate religious awareness, which transforms the "old man" of transient meaningless materiality into the "new man" of eternal meaningful spirituality.<sup>98</sup>

Baur is evidently not bothered by what he considers Böhme's Gnosticism and Docetism. Or, to be more precise, Böhme's Docetic Gnosticism seems to appeal to Baur, who is convinced that his predecessor succeeded in putting together his specific understanding of the external word of God in Scripture with his mystical perspective on theology that emerges as theosophy. When the two converge and Scripture is understood theosophically and mystically—namely gnostically and docetically as applied to the idea of Christ—then Baur believes that the key to true understanding has been found. In other words, genuine human rationality consists of realizing that what Christians mean by the idea of Christ—which should be interpreted in Gnostic and Docetic terms as the idea of the human being itself that helps individuals acquire meaning for their material existence—cannot make sense without pairing the words from Scripture with theosophical mysticism, or with a perspective which keeps the ideals of humanity within humanity itself.<sup>99</sup> This means that whatever humanity believes to be its ideal—

<sup>95</sup> Also read Weeks, *Boehme*, 151.

<sup>96</sup> For details about how Böhme changed the course of Christian mystical-esotericism from exteriority to interiority, which is evident in his treatment of Christ, see Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 147, n. 54.

<sup>97</sup> Compare O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 47.

<sup>98</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 604.

<sup>99</sup> Modern Western theosophy is generally Gnostic and Docetic. See, for instance, Norman O. Brown, *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 54.

and for Christians this ideal is encapsulated in the notion of Christ—must not be perceived as external to the human being, but rather as internal to it; this means that the ideal of humanity originates within humanity, not in a reality outside or beyond it.<sup>100</sup> This is why Baur points out that, in Böhme, the genuine ideal of humanity can be reached only if and when the human being has access to a metaphorical interpretation of its own spirituality, in the sense that the words of Scripture must be brought in accordance with theosophical speculation. To be sure, the words of Scripture should not be taken literally; on the contrary, they must be understood metaphorically, speculatively, dualistically, and spiritually. This, and only this interpretation is able to lift off the veil from our reasoning,<sup>101</sup> very much like in Scripture—and this is an example that Baur takes from Böhme—the veil which was placed on Moses' face was lifted off.<sup>102</sup> Such interpretation is also proof of Baur's disavowal of traditional Christian theology which takes supernaturalism in a literal way. For instance, what traditional Christians believed to be ontologically real—God's existence as a real spiritual person, Christ's preexistence, his incarnation, resurrection, standing at the right hand of the Father, his return, salvation from sin perceived as revolt against God, eternal death and eternal life, as well as the literal and real indwelling of the Holy Spirit within each believer—is to be disproved as meaningless and incorrect, since our rational soul must see all these aspects in an exclusively metaphorical way.<sup>103</sup> It is interesting to notice that Baur does not reject the use of

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<sup>100</sup> See also Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves*, 100.

<sup>101</sup> For details about how the image of the veil—understood as nature—made it from Greek philosophy and mythology to early modern Western theosophy, see Kathleen Raine, *Gaolgonooza. City of Imagination. Last Studies in William Blake* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1991), 38–39.

<sup>102</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 17:36, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 604.

<sup>103</sup> More information about the importance of metaphors in mystical theosophy can be found in Willis Barnstone, "Epilogue: The Inner Light of Gnosis," 219–252, in Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer (eds), *Essential Gnostic Scriptures. Texts of Luminous Wisdom from the Ancient and Medieval*

traditional concepts—such as divine spirit—but their meaning must switch from the traditional literal understanding to a modern metaphorical perception. This is why Baur expresses his conviction that the “divine spirit,” through which man’s new birth can be truly achieved, is also the spirit of a “higher enlightenment and knowledge.” Baur’s explanation means that the “divine spirit” is not the spirit of a God who lives beyond history in a realm which is both ontologically real and spiritually constituted; on the contrary, it is the spirit which comes from within, not from outside, the human being.<sup>104</sup> The divine spirit is man’s innate capacity to acquire the knowledge or the understanding that materiality can be given meaning and significance provided that humanity believes in this natural faculty as its ideal manifestation. In order to support his interpretation of divinity and spirituality, Baur quotes Böhme again and especially his description of how the devil can be defeated. Thus, in Böhme, the devil can be overcome “in the flesh,”<sup>105</sup> so when that happens, the gates of heaven open widely in the spirit because the spirit is able to see divine and heavenly being. What is important to notice here is the fact that the spirit does not see the divine and heavenly being as external to the body, but rather as internal to it. In other words, the very fountain of the heart realizes “the carnality of the brain” in which the spirit is able to work his spiritual understanding.<sup>106</sup> While Böhme’s words still can be understood within traditional Christian lines in the sense that God’s spiritual understanding of material reality can rise within each individual through the work of the Holy Spirit, which means that the believer understands his materiality in light of God’s external truth, for Baur things stand the other way around. As the spirit must be coupled with a metaphorical understanding, the spirit is no longer

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*Worlds—Including the Gospels of Thomas, Judas, and Mary Magdalene* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 2010), 226ff.

<sup>104</sup> Compare Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 12–13.

<sup>105</sup> The image of the devil’s defeat “in the flesh” points to salvation “in the flesh,” which is made possible due to man’s creation “in the flesh” that points to the incarnation of the redeemer himself. See Sklar, *Blake’s Jerusalem as Visionary Theatre*, 186.

<sup>106</sup> Böhme, *Aurora*, 11:68, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 605.

an objective reality originating in an external, real, and personal God. Such a God does not exist and neither does such a spirit. The spirit does not originate in an external God; on the contrary, it stems from within the human being, from the carnality of man's material constitution, and it is the knowledge of such reality that brings man's reason in accordance with the meaning provided by this metaphorical understanding of spirituality.<sup>107</sup> Based on Böhme's conviction that the human spirit is the virgin who enters man's rational soul and satisfies its needs with her light,<sup>108</sup> although God's virgin can still be understood as an external reality as compared with the human being, in Baur, Böhme virgin is in fact man's native spiritual capacity to see the world and material existence in general in a metaphorical, spiritual way. For Baur, there is no objective reality beyond the materiality of the physical world; there is only an objective spirituality within the materiality of the human being, and it is the light of this spirituality which can provide humanity with sufficient metaphorical understanding of religion for a meaningful perspective on its finite existence in the physical world. In other words, God is the Spirit and the Spirit is man's spirit;<sup>109</sup> it is his innate awareness of the fact that material reality can be read and accepted in a spiritual, metaphorical way.<sup>110</sup> Baur is fully aware of Böhme's traditional understanding of Christianity; in other words, Baur knows that what he interprets metaphorically, Böhme still understands literally (although in a way which is more speculative than traditional theology in general). This is why, according to Baur, it was Böhme's awareness of a higher and unmediated knowledge that prompted him to confront the theologians of his day with utmost confidence, very much like Gnostics and Mani-

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<sup>107</sup> In this respect, Baur follows Hegel's pattern. See Alfredo Ferrarin, "Hegel's Aristotle: Philosophy and Its Time," 433–451, in Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (eds), *A Companion to Hegel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 439.

<sup>108</sup> Böhme, *Beschreibung der drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, 16:54, and Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 605.

<sup>109</sup> Compare Ridderbos, *Paul*, 16.

<sup>110</sup> John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 4.

chaeans had done with orthodox Christians centuries before, for they were all convinced that divine truth had been given to them alone.<sup>111</sup>

### PERSONAL REMARKS

Baur's understanding of Gnosis cannot be detached from the field of religion, which in turn should be deciphered by means of philosophy. This is why, in Baur, the notion of Gnosis is an aspect which pertains to the philosophy of religion, rather than theology. The proof for this particular reading of Baur's idea of Gnosis is provided by his evident connections with Hegel's philosophy as well as what he himself calls Böhme's theosophy, a sort of theological philosophy which is really a philosophy of Christianity seen as religion. A proper understanding of Baur's idea of Gnosis, however, cannot be reached unless the importance of history is given full attention as the context of the development of Gnosis. These three fundamental aspects—the idea of history, Hegel's philosophy, and Böhme's theosophy—are the key issues which lay at the basis of the structure of the present study. Thus, the first chapter deals with Baur's understanding of history, the second with his thought under the influence of Hegel's philosophy, while the third and the fourth with Böhme's contributions to the development of Baur's notion of Gnosis. One of the most obvious facts to emerge from a careful reading of Baur and his view of Gnosis has to do with what could be called his lack of originality with respect to how he sees Gnosis. When it comes to delving into the field of Gnosis and how it relates to the reality of religion, Baur finds support in Hegel and Böhme but not in order to produce something distinctively new. What he does in fact is use Hegel for his understanding of religion and then he focuses on Böhme in order to illustrate his Hegelian view of religion (and of Gnosis as a religious phenomenon). It is not as if Baur used Hegel and Böhme to produce a brand new understanding of religion and Gnosis; as disappointing as it may sound, he only extracts large chunks of texts from Hegel and Böhme, which he places one after another in a long queue of cita-

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<sup>111</sup> See Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis*, 606–609.

tions. This happens especially with Böhme's works, which are quoted at length with only a minimum number of personal comments that Baur offers here and there. This leaves the impression that instead of using Böhme to shape his own understanding of Gnosis, Baur has read into Böhme's texts his already cemented Hegelian view of religion. The most evident concept which confirms this conclusion is the notion of spirit, widely present in Baur accompanying the realities of both God and man, and coupled with the idea of self-awareness. Baur's use of Hegel and especially Böhme is often times annoying since he builds up arguments which would normally require his final touch in offering full explanations about various aspects of his thought; unfortunately though, his final touch is frequently avoided—whether this was intentional or not is hard to say—so the reader is left without Baur's insights in crucial moments of the argument. Beyond this unhappy flaw, Baur is clear in his intentions and his view of Gnosis can be easily understood once one realizes that the actual basis of his argument is Hegel's philosophy, while Böhme serves as the "pot" in which Baur "cooks" his Hegelian perspective on Gnosis.

In Baur, Gnosis cannot be discussed when separated from religion; religion itself should be understood as Gnosis and, as it is evident in the end, Gnosis is the proper way one should see and accept religion. Since religion is a phenomenon which unfolds within history, the first step for Baur is to explain his view of Gnosis by showing how religion is explained through the idea of history. As far as Baur is concerned, the idea of history not only deciphers the intricacies of religion, but also explains why religion should be seen through the lenses of Gnosis. At the beginning of this study, it was shown how Baur's view of religion as Gnosis is built on the concept of history. Thus, in Chapter 1, it is explained how Gnosis relates itself to history; specifically, how Gnosis must be understood as a system, a religious and intellectual system which develops and manifests itself through history. It is important to understand that, in Baur, Gnosis refers to religion in general as seen in history; this is why in his thought Gnosis explains the historical development of Christianity, Judaism, and Paganism, with all the complexity of their specific dogmatic manifestations. If it is to be accepted as Gnosis, religion must be in a permanent state of intellectual movement, and such understanding of religion can only be achieved through philosophy, which is evident in Hegel's works.

In other words, religion must never be accepted exclusively on dogmatic grounds because doctrine, in Baur, seems to exclude a philosophical, historical, and critical reading of religion. If accepted dogmatically, religion is not Gnosis. In order for it to be seen as Gnosis, religion must be investigated philosophically and critically, based on the reality of history, which is the main feature of what Baur calls the “new philosophy of religion”—the very essence of Hegel’s thought.

This is evident further in the study, as Baur’s view of religion as Gnosis is discussed with reference to Hegel’s philosophy. Thus, the main idea which can be found in Hegel is that of the spirit, which is used to decipher both the reality of whatever is meant by God and the existence of man in history. It becomes rapidly evident that, in Hegel, the spirit is a concept which defines God in terms of man’s humanity to the point that the being of God—conceived as ontologically real in the old philosophy of religion or, as it were, in traditional theological thinking—becomes one with the being of man, whose ontological reality goes without being questioned. One can even speak of a “unification of being,” in the sense that what was previously believed to be God’s being in the old philosophy of religion is now accepted as man’s being. In other words, the idea of the spirit discloses the identity between God’s being and man’s being; man, therefore, is described in divine terms, while God becomes a mere reference to the spirituality of the human being. This is why, in Chapter 2, the unity between God and man becomes evident in Baur’s discussion about the necessity to see God as spirit in the human being. God is not only spirit; he is the human spirit, which is an indication that the spirituality of divinity is blended in Hegel with the materiality of the flesh. As a particularization of this case, Baur also points to Hegel’s explanation that God should not be seen exclusively in spiritual terms; on the contrary, God should be also viewed as corporal, especially when one sees God in Christ’s being or, to be more precise, in the spirituality of Jesus of Nazareth. As Christ, Jesus embodies all the features of humanity, so his acute sense of spirituality can surely point to his historical being as the reflection of God’s spirit within the realm of the physical world. The close connection between humanity and divinity in Baur’s understanding of Hegel is seen in the relationship between philosophy and religion. While religion points to the traditional understanding of God as an ontologically

real being, philosophy brings such understanding “down to earth,” in the sense that the object of religion—which is God—should no longer be seen in religious terms, but rather from a philosophical angle that overlaps God’s being with man’s being. This perspective on religion should become a matrix for all world religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Paganism alike, as Baur clearly points out when he writes about Hegel. The theme of the identification between divinity and humanity in Baur presupposes that the idea of God is connected to the reality of man. Thus, God’s traditional immanence as the historical manifestation of a supernatural God—specific to the old philosophy of religion—becomes synonymous with man’s mortality, which is in turn explained by Christ’s death. This is why, in Baur and Hegel, Christ is a man who can be described in divine terms, so that from the perspective of the old philosophy of religion he is a God with human features. Either way, Christ’s humanity is fully accepted by both Baur and Hegel within an ontological key, while his divinity displays his vivid spirituality. Consequently, Baur—very much like Hegel—resents the idea of a Christian theology; what they favor, however, is the notion of a “Christian religion philosophy” which, based on the concept of the unification of being, produces a specific understanding of Christianity as a world religion (one amongst others, such as Judaism and Paganism) with powerful philosophical roots.

The relationship between Christianity as religion and philosophy is revealed in the third and fourth chapters, which are dedicated to Böhme’s theosophy—a concept which illustrates the combination between theology and philosophy—and how Baur understands it through Hegel’s eyes. It should be highlighted here that Baur seems to have made up his mind about Böhme from the very start, in the sense that he places him between Gnosticism and Manichaeism, based especially on the idea of dualism. In Böhme, Baur believes, dualism explains not only the being of God, but also the constitution of the world as God’s creation. This is evident in Chapter 3, which deals with Böhme’s view of God, whose essence is described as a combination of goodness and evil—a dualistic image which persists throughout Baur’s presentation of Böhme. At the same time, Böhme explains God’s being in trinitarian terms which all make reference to a set of seven features that define God based on what Baur perceives to be an evident dualism: severity and sweetness, bitterness and heat, love and sound—three pairs of



spiritual or non-physical qualities which are all characterized by the feature called *corpus*, a clear reference to materiality. This is why, in Böhme—Baur argues—the being of God is seen as a trinitarian construct which falls between the duality of spirit and nature and must be understood philosophically through the dualism of Christ and Moses (where the former points to the reality of the spirit, while the latter to the reality of nature). This dualism between spirit and nature is explained, Baur believes, through Böhme's perspective on man, which is based on his presentation of Adam. In speaking about man—namely about Adam as representative for humanity—Böhme uses the phrase “God's virgin,” a rather peculiar choice of words which reveals man's “divine” spirituality, as seen in Chapter 4. This particular issue, which discloses Böhme's understanding of man based on Baur's reading of religion as Gnosis in Hegelian terms, is impregnated with the idea of dualism. As permanently represented by Adam, man appears, on the one hand, as material and androgynous, while on the other hand, he is portrayed as material and feminine. Evidently, Böhme is preoccupied with finding a proper philosophical and religious explanation of the reality of man's gender and sexuality as male and female, but an even more important issue here is Baur's efforts to put together man's materiality and spirituality. While Böhme does not seem to have any problems in explaining man's spirituality with reference to God, Baur sees in Böhme an enterprise which juxtaposes man's finite and ideal state. According to Baur, Böhme manages this by placing Adam and Christ at the same level: while Adam speaks of man's finitude, Christ points to his ideal state. The traditional idea of incarnation is also tackled but interestingly not with reference to Christ but rather to the Virgin Mary. Christ is indeed said to have taken human form, but he got his humanity from the Virgin Mary who is directly connected to God's wisdom. In the end, God's virgin seems to express the dualistic image of man as a spiritually endowed being (male and female) within the materiality of the world. Man must understand his own spirituality which, according to Baur's view of Böhme, can only be done if the devil is perceived as a principle, not as a being. Hegel's influence is more than merely obvious here: if the devil is a principle, then God is a principle as well. They are both spiritual principles which speak of man's most fundamental spirituality which combines the awareness of evil and good within the same material, natural, and finite individual. In

conclusion, based on his Hegelian understanding of religion, Baur expresses his conviction that Böhme's thought moves between Gnosticism and Docetism, in the sense that Christ's divinity must be understood as humanity and God's ontological dualism speaks about man's spirituality and materiality. The idea of spirit, which is traditionally ascribed to God, can also be attached to man's worldly reality to the point that the spirit, which in the old (pre-Hegelian) philosophy of religion is said to have embodied the very being of God, ends up being identified with the spiritual, specifically non-physical interiority of man's material existence in the natural world—an intellectual conviction specific to the new (Hegelian) philosophy of religion to which Baur subscribes in totality.



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