

VOICES OF THE CHURCH.

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THE D. F. STANLEY

A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

ISSUED IN THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 1850

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

BY THE REV. J. R. BERRY, D.D.

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VOICES OF THE CHURCH,

IN REPLY TO

DR. D. F. STRAUSS,

AUTHOR OF "DAS LEBEN JESU,"

COMPRISING

ESSAYS IN DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, BY DIVINES OF VARIOUS
COMMUNIONS.

COLLECTED AND COMPOSED

BY THE REV. J. R. BEARD, D.D.

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Contents:

Non est religio à philosophis querenda, qui, de suorum deorum naturâ ac summo bono, diversas contrariasque
sententias in scholis personabant. — AUG. DE VERA RELIG.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages contain several essays — in part original, in part translated — intended to furnish the English reader with some means of becoming acquainted with the aims and tendencies of the work by Dr. STRAUSS, entitled *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet von Dr. David Friederich Strauss*, 2 vols. 8vo, fourth edit. 1840; as well as of forming a calm estimate of the justness of its principles, the accuracy of its argumentation, the soundness of its views, and its general bearing on the historical verity of the gospel. This reply was undertaken in consequence of the wide diffusion in this country—not least among the labouring classes—of opinions and impressions adverse to Christianity, derived more or less immediately from the efforts and publications of Dr. STRAUSS. Even where the *Leben Jesu* was not known, and could not be read, a conviction has prevailed, that some great work had been put forth in Germany, which, as being destructive of the Christian religion, its ministers in England wished to keep from the knowledge of the people, and were afraid even to study themselves. So untrue and unsound a state of feeling may well be regarded with regret, if not alarm, by every enlightened disciple of Christ. The present work will enable the reader to judge how far the attack made by STRAUSS on the historical foundations of our common faith is of so deadly a character as may have been supposed.

As this is the first work in the English language which addresses itself to the Straussian controversy, it seemed improper to give a reply until the general nature of the objections was made known. Accordingly, the first Essay in the ensuing pages is designed to set forth the views which Dr. STRAUSS has advanced. In drawing up the statement which it contains, the writer was solicitous to give a fair and candid account. The same love of equal-handed justice has animated him throughout the volume, alike in the selection of his materials, and in the use which has been made of them. With the deliberate conviction which he has formed from a review of the

entire subject, that Dr. STRAUSS has had more than full justice done him in the public mind, and that his work owes much of its seeming force to a never-failing ingenuity and a dexterous rhetoric, the writer is not without a hope, that the impartial, whatever their peculiar opinions, will, if competent to pronounce a judgment in the case, declare that the laws of honourable controversy have not been broken or disregarded in this volume, and that more deference or larger concessions to the objector might have worn the appearance of compromising the cause of Christ.

Believing, as he does, that Christianity rests on an historical basis, and that that basis is perfectly safe, — believing also that the gospel, as revealed of God in his Son Jesus Christ, is the one hope of the world, and the sole sufficient remedy for our social ills, — the writer would suffer indescribable pain, had he reason to fear, that this attempt to defend its assailed foundations should prove nugatory, or altogether insufficient. Prompted, however, by a desire to learn, with some degree of accuracy, what were the real facts in regard to the injury said to have been done to Christianity by “the new learning” of the German theological schools, — he some years since applied himself to the study of the writers in question; and, having come to the conclusion, that rumour had aggravated the evil and disowned the good, and especially had given a false report touching the alleged damage to the gospel, he felt himself impelled to make his convictions known, the rather because he considers that every fear of the truth and certainty of the Christian religion should, without delay, be looked fully in the face, and have its real nature fully ascertained. The timid believer will of course deplore, and the self-seeking sceptic harshly condemn, the course the writer has pursued: he will, however, be neither dissatisfied nor discouraged; if the honest and candid lovers of truth shall not refuse him a place in their ranks, or shall admit that his efforts have given an impulse in a right direction.

It is deeply to be regretted, that a very exaggerated, if not a positively false, notion prevails in this country, that the new school of German theology is throughout bad; being wild, visionary, sceptical, destructive, running through nearly all varieties, except those of soundness and excellence. May the present work do something to correct this misapprehension! The reader will here see, that, if Germany has produced a STRAUSS, she has produced also a NEANDER and a THOLUCK. In truth, good and ill are found in her teeming theological literature; and scarcely any are qualified to determine the proportions in which the good and the ill exist, but those who have made a careful and impartial study of the chief works which it contains. Whatever may be thought of the conclusions to which some

German theologians have arrived, there can be no question that in sound knowledge, in patient research, in unwearied industry, in the love of religious liberty, in candour and impartiality, — all qualities of the highest kind, — German divines afford examples which may be beneficially imitated by Christian teachers and Christian learners, of all conditions and of every land.

It is not denied that the destructive, as contradistinguished from the reformatory and the conservative party in Germany, is a large and influential one. Yet is it gradually losing some of its worst peculiarities. Of late years, a strong re-action against the extreme negative school has manifested itself, and the most promising men of the new generation are becoming more and more inclined to receive and cherish the fundamental truths of the New Testament. In a word, the best minds are aiming at reformation, rather than destruction. Nor have the extravagances to which STRAUSS and the young Hegelian school have proceeded, been without an effect in making men cautious as well as persevering in their inquiries, and reverential no less than fearless in their ameliorations. A pure and holy love of truth — one of the highest affections of our nature — bids us be gentle and tender even towards the mistakes and errors of the past, and to renounce with regret what we cannot honestly continue to hold. In this, German theology has still something to learn.

The fundamental error, however, of its rationalist party has lain in the exclusive allegiance which in their inquiries they have paid to reason, considered as the mere argumentative and logical faculty. The gospel was given to *man*, and by man must it be appreciated and received. If man's faculties are sundered, and truth is submitted for acceptance to some one of them, to the exclusion of the rest, — no wonder if, man himself having been first marred, he should, when the intellect predominates, disown and reject, or, when the imagination and the feelings have gained the upper hand, amplify and pervert, the truth. But in religion least of all is man's faculty of ratiocination a safe or a sufficient guide; for religion is an appeal to all our higher endowments, and by them only — by the entire man — can it be correctly known, properly estimated, and satisfactorily received. Logic can no more make a man a Christian, than it can make him a poet or a sculptor. And if the name Rationalism (from *ratio*, reason) is intended to denote any thing more than the application of the reasoning faculty to topics, to modes of thought, and sets of ideas, in the formation and retention of which the imaginative and sensitive faculties have had undue scope, then is it as a religious guide condemned by its very name. And though

there doubtless may be conditions of society in which the decomposing influence of reason may be demanded, yet can the necessity be regarded in no higher light than as an evil which should not by any means be enhanced, but be removed and put out of the way as speedily as possible. The negations which it occasions have no life to infuse into society. It is not on denials that men can live, but on every word that cometh out of the mouth of God. The food of the soul must be something definite and pure indeed, but on that very account something positive, — the bread that cometh down from heaven to be the life of the world. To use the words of AMBROSE: — “Non in dialectica complacuit Domino salvare populum suum.” The difference there is between an age of inspiration and an age of negatives has been well described by CARLYLE (“Miscellaneous Writings,” vol. iii. p. 62): — “Religion was everywhere; philosophy lay hid under it, peacefully included in it. Herein, as in the life-centre of all, lay the true health and oneness. Only at a later era must religion split itself into philosophies; and thereby the vital union of thought being lost, disunion and mutual collision, in all provinces of speech and of action, more and more prevail. For if a poet or priest, or by whatever title the inspired thinker may be named, is the sign of vigour and well-being; so likewise is the logician, or uninspired thinker, the sign of disease, probably of decrepitude and decay. Thus, not to mention other instances, one of them much nearer hand, — so soon as prophecy among the Hebrews had ceased, then did the reign of argumentation begin; and the ancient theocracy, in its Sadduceisms and Phariseisms, and vain jangling of sects and doctors, give token that the *soul* of it had fled, and that the *body* itself, by natural dissolution, with the old forces still at work, but working in reverse order, was on the road to final disappearance.”

“The old forces” are in Germany hastening to disappear. A new life is springing up under the quickening and genial influence of new powers. Man is again becoming one; thought is regaining its unity. Reason and imagination have met together; the present and the past have embraced each other. Happy those who can do aught to promote so desirable an accordance. The acceptance as well as the essential unity of religion depends on the harmony of man’s nature. When the heart is allowed to feel, and the imagination to soar, no less than the head to think; and when all these functions proceed in well-adjusted proportion; then will the divine perfection of the man Christ Jesus approve itself to, and be welcomed, loved, and revered by, the human soul, and an era of new religious life display its gratifying results.

The title of Dr. STRAUSS's book points to its origin, *Leben Jesu*, — "Life of Jesus." Towards the close of the last century, the contents of the evangelical narratives began among the Germans to be considered, not only in their separate portions and constituent elements, but in their mutual relations and totality, as forming one combined history of the life of Christ. Special attention was drawn to the subject by publications, the tendency, if not the aim, of which was to impair or even destroy the historic verity of the recorded facts. We may specify *Vom Zwecke Jesu, noch ein Fragment des Wolfenbüttler Ungenmanten (H. Sam. Reimarus) Hrsgg. v. Lessing*. Brnsw. 1778, 1784; Berlin, 1835; — *K. Fr. Bahrdr, Briefe über d. Bibel*, continued under the title, *Ausführung des Plans u. Zwecks Jesu*; Berlin, 1784-93; — *Venturini Natürliche Gesch. des grossen Propheten v. Nazareth*; Kophenh. 1800-2.

These and other assaults gave rise to works of an apologetic character, the authors of which made it their object to solve the alleged difficulties, and to describe the life of Christ, in such a manner as to gain acceptance for their views, while they professed to ground these views on the gospel records. The sentiments, however, thus put forth were in reality as diverse as were the several theological tendencies, which now took in each case a decided tone, as well as a definite and individual shape; giving rise, within a brief period, to an affluence of literature which is perhaps unparalleled in theological history, and which, in its abundance and multiplicity, seems almost to justify the notion of a learned professor, who, in that love of subdivision for which German scholarship is remarkable, proposed to make the subject — the life of Christ — a separate branch of theological study. Those who wish to prosecute inquiries into the subject will find very ample references to the chief works in *Das Leben Jesu von D. K. Hase*, third edit. Leipzig, 1840; *Einleitung*, p. 27, seq.; — a work which, owing to a power of condensation that strikes with amazement one who is young in German studies, comprises, within some two hundred pages, the substance of very many volumes, and an almost complete course of New Testament theology.

In the midst of the thickly-crowded arena appeared Dr. STRAUSS, who, following the fashion of the day, rather than the simple dictates of an honest mind, denominated his attack on Christ and Christianity, not *a* but "*the* Life of Christ," *Das Leben Jesu*. The appearance of this work was the occasion of an outpouring of publications, so numerous, so different in aims, and so diversified in character, that it would be idle to attempt here to enumerate their several titles. We refer, for a pretty full account

of them, to the following works:—*Stimmen der Deutschen Kirche über das Leben Jesu von Doctor Strauss für Theologen und Nichttheologen, von Johannes Zeller*; Zurich, 1837;—*Allgemeines Repertorium für die Theologische Literatur, von Professor Dr. Rheinwald*; Bd. xxi. xxiii. xxiv. xxxi. xliii. For the sake, however, of those who may wish for some guidance, without having recourse to these sources of information, we will put down the title of a few works, in addition to such as will be found cited in the ensuing pages. It may be not undesirable to premise, that the reader may in part judge from the following Essays, which, out of these numerous publications, we consider best suited to an English public. Yet, to prevent misapprehension, we must add, that our choice has been influenced by considerations which involved indeed the intrinsic merit of the pieces, but also took into account that the present work is the first effort which has been made to bring the questions raised by STRAUSS before an English tribunal, in a manner befitting their importance. The following are works that treat with more or less merit the general subject of the life of Christ, the tendency of which is in favour of an historical Christianity, and more or less of a positive form of faith:—*Otto Krabbe, Vorlesungen über das Leben Jesu für Theologen u. Nichttheologen*, Hamb. 1839;—*Kuhn das Leben Jesu wiss. bearbeitet*, Mainz, 1838. HARTMANN (*Das Leben Jesu nach d. Evv. für gebildete Leser*, Stuttg. 1837) has written a life of Christ, especially designed and suited to Christians of cultivated minds, which presents to the reader the historical and divine elements found in the four evangelists. THEILE (*zur Biographie Jesu*, Leipzig, 1837) has successfully maintained a middle course in his views of the life of Christ, between those who believe and those who deny all that is historical and divine therein. WINER also, in several parts of his valuable *Biblische Realwörterbuch* (second edit.), furnishes not only very useful literary notices, but views and explanations, which bear with good effect on our subject. CREDNER has given a general view, not merely of the events comprised in the life of our Lord, but of the contents of the New Testament (having continual reference to all the great questions at issue), in his excellent work, *Das Neue Testament nach Zweck, Ursprung, Inhalt, für denkende Leser der Bibel*; Giessen, 1841 and 1843;—which, though a popular exhibition of the rich contents of his very learned and accurate “Introduction to the New Testament” (*Einleitung in das Neue Test.* Halle, 1836), and presenting ascertained results, apart from the more strictly scientific processes by which they have been gained, offers to the reader (though with some rationalistic tendencies which we dislike) a very

solid and trustworthy, as well as interesting, compendium and guide in the study of New Testament theology. FLECK, professor of theology in the University of Leipsic, has, in his *Vertheidigung des Christenthums*, Leipzig, 1842, one vol. 8vo, given a judicious review of the whole question, both philosophical and theological, involved in the Straussian controversy, with great fairness, moderation, judgment, and skill. The work, in the hands of a judicious translator, would be useful and acceptable to a large and growing class of English students. The latest treatise on the subject (*Das Leben Jesu nach den Evangelien dargestellt, von Dr. J. P. Lange*; Heidelberg, 1844) manifests that disposition to return towards what is positive in history and in doctrine, which is so marked a tendency in the German theology of the present moment.

The battle to which the publication of STRAUSS'S work gave occasion in Germany was fought, on the part of Christianity, not merely by ecclesiastics, and professors of theology: laymen and literary works took part in the strife. Among other journals, the *Litteraturblatt*, conducted by WOLFGANG MENZEL (known in England by GORDON'S bad translation of his work on German literature, in which a useful historical sketch of German theology may be found), came forward with a view to explode the mythical doctrines, by a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* similar to that which will be found in the seventh of the Essays here presented to the public:—*Des Doctor Strauss, "Das Leben Jesu," eine Sage des 19ten hundrets, von Dr. V. Keyserlingk*; August, 1836. Making use of the principles and modes of reasoning adopted by STRAUSS, the writer aims to show, that the learned assailant is nothing more than a legendary personage of the nineteenth century, as was Dr. FAUST of the fifteenth. Not least decided and valuable of the answers issued by laymen is that which may be found in a work by a benevolent educator, a friend of the justly celebrated PESTALOZZI, — *Laienworte über die Hegel-Straussische Christologie, von Dr. Nägeli*; Zürich, 1836. Among the direct replies on the part of persons who had drawn conclusions from the New Testament different from those which established creeds set forth, we may mention in terms of approbation, as containing a calm and moderate view of the matter, and the opinions of a very learned divine (not long since deceased), who has not improperly been termed the modern SEMLER, — *De Mythicæ Evangeliorum Interpretationis indole atque finibus*, by BAUMGARTEN-CRUSIUS, in his *Opuscula Theologica*; Jenæ, 1836. HARLESS, a divine of orthodox opinions, has with excellent effect turned the tables on STRAUSS, and put him on the defensive, in his essay, *Die kritische Bearbeitung des Lebens*

Jesu von Dr. Strauss, nach ihrem wissenschaftlichen Werthe beleuchtet; Erlangen, 1836. The *Tübingen Zeitschrift* for 1838 and 1839 contains valuable papers on the subject, — *Erörterung des Hauptthatsachen der Ec. Gesch. in rucks. auf Strauss's Schrift, das Leben Jesu, von Dr. Kern*. The works which STRAUSS himself judged most worthy of reply may be found enumerated in his *Streitschriften zur Vertheidigung meiner Schrift über das Leben Jesu*; Tübingen, 1841. A general view of the rise and progress of the influences which led to the state of mind that produced STRAUSS's *Leben Jesu*, accompanied by an estimate of its character and tendencies, may, but in a somewhat discoloured form, be found in *Histoire Critique du Rationalisme en Allemagne, depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours, par Amand Saintes*; second edit.; Paris, Brockhaus; London, Williams and Norgate, 1843. A sound and searching critique on the philosophical influences under which STRAUSS was led to undertake his task, and guided in its execution, is presented in a short compass in *Die Speculative Dogmatik von Dr. D. F. Strauss, geprüft von Dr. K. P. Fischer*; Tübingen, 1841.

The English language contains very little of value on the subject. HENNELL, in his "Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity," London, 1838, broke ground in the same direction as that taken by STRAUSS, with an equal desire, but incomparably less ability, to undermine the historical foundations of Christianity. We are not aware that his volume has been deemed worthy of any formal answer. It was not till the year 1841, that a set effort was made to introduce into this country the views which are developed in the *Leben Jesu*, when PHILIP HARWOOD published his "German Anti-supernaturalism: Six Lectures on Strauss's Life of Jesus;" in which, while nothing is done towards confuting STRAUSS, his faults are made worse, and his good qualities marred, by the rhetorical manner in which the subject is treated, — a subject on which, of all others, the arts of rhetoric are misplaced and deceptive. Not more sufficient and correct, as a representative of the views of STRAUSS, is the pamphlet, "The Opinions of Professor D. F. STRAUSS, as embodied in his Letter to the Burgo-master Hirzel," &c. translated from the second edition of the original; London, Chapman, 1844. To say nothing of its brevity, this letter, specially designed by STRAUSS to avert the popular odium occasioned by his being elected Professor of Theology at Zürich, is, from first to last, a piece of special pleading, fitted to throw dust in the eyes of the good people of Zürich. There has been one translation of the *Leben Jesu* into our tongue, published in penny numbers, and designed for circulation among

the working classes, under the auspices of HETHERINGTON. The work appears to have been done into English from the French translation (which is a scholarlike production), *Vie de Jesus traduite de l'Allemand sur la troisième Edition, par E. Littré*, — and has not the slightest literary value whatever; being obviously brought out to supply food to the unhappily depraved appetite for sceptical productions, so prevalent in these times among our manufacturing populations. The translator is ignorant of the most ordinary facts and circumstances connected with his subject. One instance will suffice. In John xi. 6, these words are used of our Lord: "He abode still two days in the place where he was." By referring to the fortieth verse of the tenth chapter, we find this place was beyond Jordan (Peræa), whither Jesus had fled from his enemies. STRAUSS, in his criticism on the resurrection of Lazarus, referring to the fact, says that he abode in Peræa. This Peræa is, with the usual manner of Gallic travesty in regard to proper names, rendered in the French translation by the word *Pérée*, which our English handicraftsman, in his ludicrous ignorance, translates by the senseless term *Pireus*, — "He still remained two days in the Pireus" (verse 6). An English work in which a scholar may find an estimate of the *Leben Jesu*, as well as of the German theology of the last three hundred years, is "German Protestantism and the Right of Private Judgment, a brief History of German Theology, by E. H. DEWAR, M.A." Rivington, London, 1844. The writer is not uninformed on his subject, and affords to the student valuable materials, though he has obviously made free use of the work by SAINTES, previously mentioned. Viewing German theology, however, as he does, with the eyes of Puseyism, he sees nothing but confusion and disaster; and the work, in its general aim, calls to mind BOSSUET's famous attack on Protestantism, — *Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes*. The only just view of the opinions of STRAUSS that we are acquainted with in the English tongue, may be found in a few pages contained in the first volume, p. 115, of Mr. MILMAN'S "History of Christianity," in which there breathes the same spirit of sound scholarship and Christian candour which are conspicuous throughout that excellent work, — a work which well points out the way in which the character of British theology may be redeemed from its actual bondage, inertness, and degradation.

The writer requests of a candid public, that he may not be held accountable for any opinions found in the ensuing volume, to which he has not himself given expression. In a work in which are found labours emanating from many persons, nothing more can be expected than that, in its

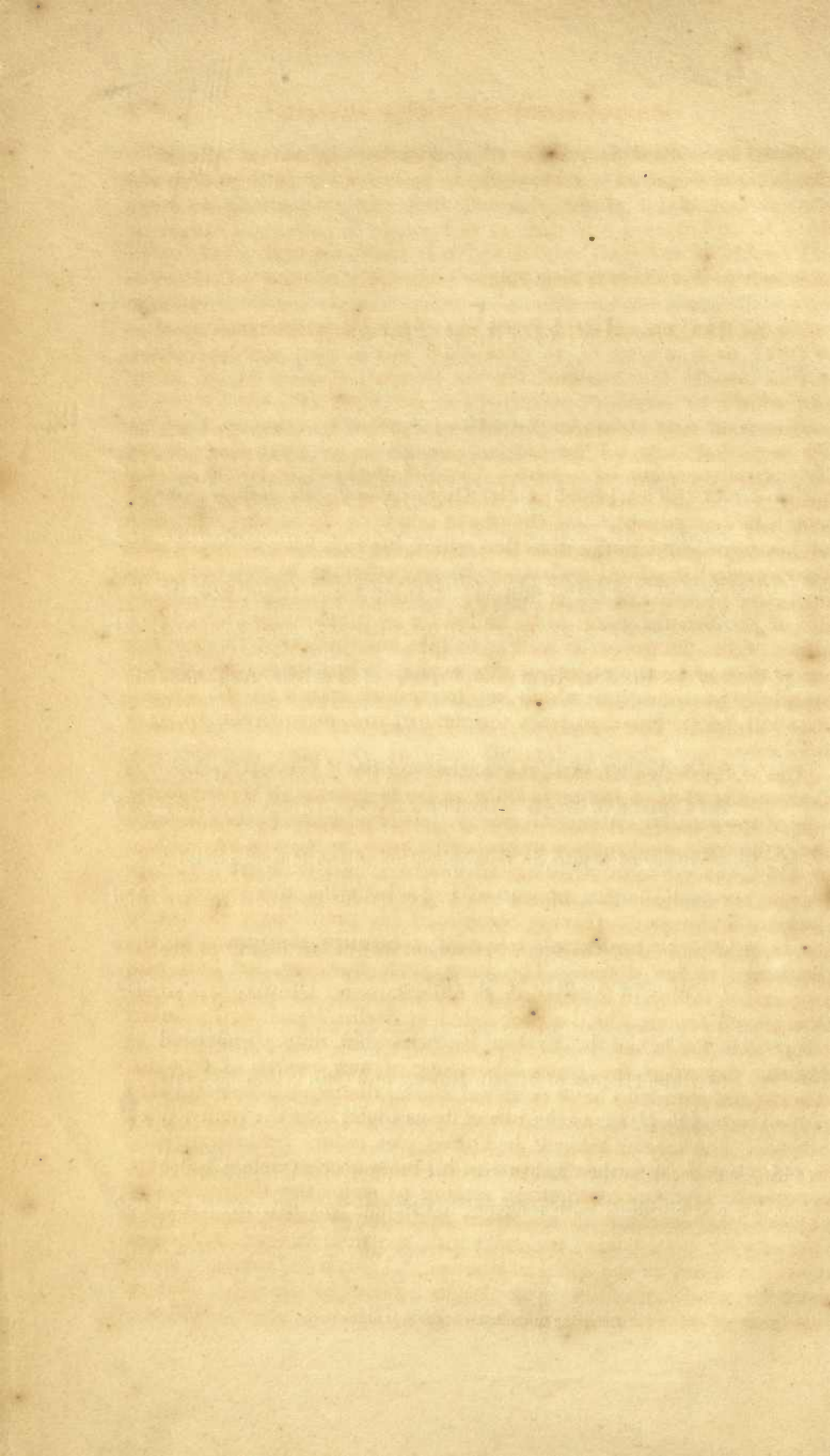
general tendency, each part may carry forward the argument, and promote the aim, in favour of which the publication was undertaken. Wishful that each contributor should enjoy full liberty of speech, the conductor of the work did not think himself justified in requiring an exact agreement with his own views on every point. His sole purpose has been to contribute something in defence of the assailed foundations of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as developed in the New Testament. He will be glad if others shall agree with him in thinking, that the general argument herein conducted, with a view to advance that important end, is rather strengthened than impaired by any diversity of opinion on other points which may prevail among the several contributors.

It only remains for the writer to acknowledge his obligations to those friends who have kindly favoured him with their valuable aid. For the translation of the second and third Essays, and for the translation and abridgment of the eighth piece, he is indebted to three ladies, whose names he is not at liberty to mention. For the first and the sixth Essay, the projector of the work alone is responsible. In regard to the rest, his office has, for the most part, not extended beyond selecting and furnishing the materials employed. The fourth and the seventh Essays were drawn up by the Rev. G. V. SMITH, B.A. of Macclesfield. The fifth Essay was translated by the Rev. R. SHAEEN, M.A. of Lancaster; and the reader is indebted for the Index to the diligent care of the Rev. W. MOUNTFORD, M.A. of Lynn.

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* Referring to the folios at the foot of the pages.



QUINET

ON

STRAUSS'S "LIFE OF JESUS."

THE pages which immediately follow contain portions of a review of the *Leben Jesu* by Strauss, inserted in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, vol. xvi. p. 585, seq. The review bears the name of QUINET, one of the most gifted and eloquent of the modern French writers.

Edgar Quinet, at present Professor of Modern Literature in the University of Paris, was born in 1803, at Strasburg, where — as well as at Geneva, Paris, and Heidelberg — he pursued his elementary studies. Comprehensive in their scope, and solid in their results, — these studies, while they ceased not to have a general direction, were specially designed to prepare him for the successful prosecution of philology. Nor did they fail in their aim. As a philologist and critic, E. Quinet has in France, at the present hour, no superior; and only Fauriel, Magnin, and Ampère, for equals. In philosophy and poetry, he appears to have as yet only made trial of what his powers are.

While a student at Heidelberg, where he gained a thorough knowledge of German literature, philosophy, and morals, he translated Herder's valuable and interesting work — *Ideen*, "Ideas on the Philosophy of History;" adding to his translation a lengthened introduction. Though comparatively a young man, Quinet is an extensive writer. His works are for the most part connected with polite literature. Three poems — "Ahasvérus, Mystère" (1833), "Napoléon, Poème" (1836), "Prométhée, Tragédie" (1838), may be found in a collection of his writings, published in 1839, under the title of *Allemagne et Italie*, "Germany and Italy."

Quinet was appointed in 1840 to the honourable post which he now holds.

WHEN a fundamental question seizes, agitates, absorbs the noblest minds of a neighbouring country, — philosophers, historians, linguists, naturalists, theologians; when it has given rise to a multitude of works, all more or less remarkable; is it permitted to abide, in such grave matters, by the policy of silence? Would it even be desirable that all this agitation were suppressed, through fear of adding doubt to doubt? Or rather is not the hour come, when, an intestine war having burst forth, it is necessary that the cause of the warfare be made more and more evident, in order that the

opinion of all may gradually interpose in the contest? What if this were the trial of Christianity itself? Should it not be definitively judged by the general testimony of the Christian world?

If the work I have to examine confined itself to a denial of the supernatural portion of revelation, it would descend into the English school of the eighteenth century. These doctrines having been sufficiently diffused and controverted in France, it is probable that I should never have occupied myself with a system which to us has no longer any novelty: but the scepticism of the German schools belongs to a train of thoughts so different from these, that we have not an exact and correct expression for them in our language; so that, even in clearly defining the object of the question, I meet with a difficulty, and one which I cannot resolve without first showing how it originated.

It has often been asked why the work of Dr. Strauss is so celebrated. This celebrity certainly does not arise from the style of the writer. His plain, heavy, geometrical language — which, throughout fifteen hundred pages, is never relieved by a lighter tone — has no attractions whatever. As for his doctrines, there is not, I think, one of his boldest propositions which had not previously been advanced, sustained, and debated. How, then, are we to account for the extraordinary celebrity of a work which appears to be the result of a general spoliation? I answer that this arises precisely because the new system rests on all that has preceded it, and that its want of originality in the detail forms the strength of the whole. If this work had appeared to be the thought of one man, so many minds would not at once have been alarmed at it. But, when it was seen as a sort of mathematical result of almost all the labours which during half a century have been accomplished beyond the Rhine, and that each had brought a stone to this sad sepulchre, — learned Germany started, and fled before her work. Such, indeed, has been the case in Germany during the last three years; and, if one thinks for a moment of the intelligence which has prevailed there in philosophy, in criticism, and in history, one is only astonished that this result did not before appear. It is easily seen, that Dr. Strauss has had forerunners in each of the leading schoolmen who have flourished during the last half century, and it was impossible that a system so many times prophesied should not eventually show itself.

When the German philosophy succeeded to that of the eighteenth century, it might have been thought that what Voltaire had destroyed was to be re-established by Kant and Göthe. Could their spiritualism and his sensuality tend to the same results? Assuredly not. He who had dared to assert the contrary would have passed for an idiot. How many lulled themselves with the idea, that Christianity would be completely restored in the new metaphysics! It even appears that philosophy shared this illusion, and firmly believed that peace was made with positive religion. The truth is, how-

ever, that philosophy was satisfied with changing the blunted weapons of the last age, and carrying the quarrel into a new territory. This was plainly seen in Kant's work on religion, which still serves as a sort of basis to almost all our modern innovations. What are the Sacred Writings to the Königsberg philosopher? A succession of moral allegories, — a sort of popular commentary on the law of duty. Christ himself is no more than an ideal being, who solitarily hovers in the conscience of humanity. Moreover, the resurrection being taken from this pretended Christianity, there remained — to confess the truth — only a lifeless religion, a gospel of mere reason, an abstract Jesus, without the manger and the sepulchre. From the appearance of this work, self-deception was no longer permitted in the species of alliance between the new philosophy and the evangelical faith. In this treaty of peace, — criticism, reasoning, scepticism, reserved to themselves all their rights. They crowned themselves. If they allowed religion to exist, it was as a conquered province, whose limits were marked out according to their will. At a later period, pantheism, being wildly mingled with German metaphysics, more and more undermined the old banks of orthodoxy. According to the half-mystical, half-sceptical school of Schelling, the revelation of the gospel was no more than one of the accidents of the eternal revelation of God in nature and in history; and, a little after, the abstraction continually increasing, Hegel saw no more in Christianity than an idea, the religious worth of which is independent of the testimonies of history; which is as much to say, that the moral principle of the gospel is divine, even if the history be uncertain. Now, what is this, if not bordering, in fact, on a profession of the faith of the "Vicaire Savoyard"?* Thus, from deductions to deductions, from formula to formula, the philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, after having long struggled with and denied each other, ended by a reconciliation, and embraced over the ruins of the same belief.

Nevertheless, it is not enough to indicate the relation between metaphysics, and the theology of our days. We must show, in a more explicit manner, how, in the criticism of the Sacred Books, methods diametrically opposite have been followed in France and in Germany; for the infinite differences which distinguish these two countries have never been better demonstrated, than in the ways they have both taken to arrive at scepticism. That of France was straightforward, without disguise or circumlocution. It is of Pagan origin: it borrows its arguments from Celsus, — from Porphyry, — from the emperor Julian. I do not think, that Voltaire has offered a single objection which was not previously started by these last apologists of the Olympian gods. In the spirit of this system, the

* See Rousseau's *Emile*, liv. iv.

miraculous portion of the Scriptures reveals but the fraud of some, and the blindness of others. Nothing is heard but imputations of artifice and deceit. It seems as if paganism itself was complaining, in its own tongue, that the gospel had carried off its votaries by surprise. The resentment of the old society still peeps through these accusations; and throughout this system, which was that of the English school, as well as of the Encyclopedists, we see, as it were, a classic reminiscence of the gods of Rome and Athens.

This kind of encounter appeared but little in Germany, except in Lessing, who indeed transplanted it with supreme authority. By his Letters, and his Defence of the "*Fragmens d'un Inconnu*,"* he seemed, during some time, to be inclining his country towards the foreign doctrines. But it was only an experiment, and was not directed to the genuine judgment of Germany. That was to be shaken by another influence. These fragments remained scattered like the thoughts of an unbelieving Pascal, and the monument of doubt was left as unfinished as the monument of faith had been.

He who in our days has given the greatest impulse to Germany is neither Kant nor Lessing, nor the great Frederick: it is Benedict Spinoza. Mark the spirit which lurks in the depth of his poetry, his criticism, his philosophy, like the unwieldy tempter under the wide-spread tree of knowledge. Göthe, Schelling, Hegel, Schleiermacher, — to speak only of the master-minds, — are the fruit of his works. In his treatise on theology, and his astonishing letters to Oldembourg, would be found the germ of all the propositions lately maintained in the German method of interpreting the Scriptures. From him especially came the practice of expounding the Bible through the aid of natural phenomena. He had somewhere said, "All that is related in the revealed books, happened in conformity with the established laws of the universe." A school rapidly took possession of this principle. To those who desired to remain suspended in scepticism, it offered the immense advantage of preserving the practical teachings of revelation by means of a concealment, or of a preliminary explanation. The gospel ceased not to be a code of divine morals, and no one's sincerity was called in question. Sacred history hovered above all controversy. What more? The point was to recognise once for all, that what is now presented to us by tradition as a supernatural phenomenon, a miracle, was in reality but a very simple fact, magnified at first by the surprise of the senses, sometimes an error in the text, sometimes a copyist's sign, more frequently a prodigy which never existed, save in the arcana of grammar or of eastern rhetoric. The efforts thus made to lower the gospel to the proportions of a moral chronicle, can scarcely be imagined. It was deprived of its glory, to be saved under the appearance of mediocrity. All that was narrow in this

* See Beitrag zur Gesh. und Lit. aus d. Schätzen der Wolfenbüttel Bibliothek Herausg. von G. E. Lessing. Braunschweig, 1778.

system speedily became ridiculous in its application ; for it is easier to deny the gospel, than to reduce it to the standard of a manual of practical philosophy. The pen which wrote the " Provinciales " * would be necessary to lay bare the strange consequences of this theology. According to its conclusions, the tree of good and of evil is nothing but a venomous plant, probably a manchineel tree, under which our first parents fell asleep. The shining face of Moses on the heights of mount Sinai was the natural result of electricity ; the vision of Zachariah was effected by the smoke of the chandeliers in the temple ; the Magian kings, with their offerings of myrrh, of gold, and of incense, three wandering merchants, who brought some glittering tinsel to the child of Bethlehem ; the star which went before them, a servant bearing a flambeau ; the angels in the scene of the temptation, a caravan traversing the desert, laden with provisions ; the two angels in the tomb, clothed in white linen, an illusion caused by a linen garment ; the transfiguration, a storm. This system faithfully preserved, as may be seen, the body of the evangelical history entire, suppressing only its soul. It was the application of Spinoza's theory in its most limited sense, after the manner of those who see, in his system of metaphysics, no more than the apotheosis of brute matter. There remained the shapeless skeleton of Christianity ; and, in its presence, philosophy learnedly expatiated on the facility with which the source of its life may be imagined ; and intimated, that, were it disposed, philosophy itself could do as much as the gospel had done. But could the human race, during two thousand years, have been deceived by an optical illusion, a meteor, an ignis-fatuus, or the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the sign of Pisces ? Be that as it may, this interpretation, plausible as it was made, still was not that which naturally suited Germany. This country might for a time adopt it, on account of the sincerity on which it was based ; but it was by no means the species of incredulity which was adapted to it.

To convert Germany to doubt, a system was wanted, which, concealing scepticism under faith, using much circumlocution to reach its object, dwelling on imagination, on poetry, on spirituality, should transfigure what it threw into the shade, build up what it destroyed, affirm in words what in effect it denied. Now, all these charms are found in the system of the allegorical interpretation of the Sacred Writings, or, to speak with the seventeenth century, in the substitution of a mystical for a literal sense ; for that which was originally the hidden principle of the Reformation is precisely that which bursts into open daylight in the theological debates beyond the Rhine.

This system, which in Germany is the only one that can be truly dangerous to belief, is principally derived from Origen.

* Les Provinciales, &c. par B. Pascal.

This great man was one of the first to admit a double sense to the facts related in the New Testament. He recognised the historical truth of the greater part of the events contained in the Sacred Books. But, according to him, the same events concealed a mystical sense; so that these two truths, the one historical, the other moral, existed at once. The middle ages entered into his opinion: the facts of the gospel history were interpreted by the schoolmen as a species of parables which, however, they did not the less regard as credible. It is not, however, less certain that an imminent danger lurked in this doctrine; since, after having speculated on events as upon figures, one step only had to be taken to bring in an exclusive attachment to the ideal sense, and the allegory was always near to absorb the history. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life — this was the principle of Origen. But who sees not, that, in its turn, the spirit in increasing may kill and displace the letter? Such is the history of the idealist philosophy in its relations with positive faith.

If attention is paid to Pascal's theology, it will be discovered that it inclined to this, and that here was the real abyss open before him. In the volume of his "Pensées," the Old Testament is but figurative. The law, sacrifices, kingdoms, are to be regarded as emblems, not realities: truth itself, with the Jews, is nothing but a shadow or a painting. The Babylonians are offences; Egypt, iniquity. When I read these pages, I always appear to have before my eyes a man who undermines the foundations of his palace, the better to establish himself in it; for is it not evident, that this transformation of the Old Testament is very nearly allied to a change in the New? And if Mosaism be only figuratively the true religion, what hinders me from saying as much of Christianity? Take away from the gospel its real foundation, which is in the ancient law, and what will remain? — a symbol suspended in a vacuum. Assuredly the consequences of this theology, which was also in some measure that of Fenelon, would not have long delayed appearing in France; but they were violently arrested by the eighteenth century, which, changing the principles of philosophy, changed also the forms of scepticism.

These consequences were not fully deduced, save by Germany, which, on this side at least, is allied to Pascal. The system of a mystical explanation once adopted, it was easy to foresee what would come next. Sacred history has more and more lost ground, in the same proportion as the empire of allegory has increased. This incessant progress might be described as that of a wave which at last swallows up every thing. Eichorn (1790) admitted nothing as emblematical but the first chapter of Genesis. He contents himself with establishing the duality of the Elohim and of Jehovah, and with representing, in the God of Moses, a sort of two-fold Hebraic Janus. A few years passed, and in 1803 appears the Mythology of the Bible, by Bauer. Moreover, this method of resolving facts into moral

ideas, at first confined to the Old Testament, soon leaps over its limits, and, as was natural, attacks the New. In 1806, the venerable ecclesiastic Daub said, in his "Theological Theorems,"—"If you except all that relates to angels, demons, and miracles, there is scarcely any mythology in the gospel." At this time, the accounts of Christ's infancy only were attacked by the system of symbols. A little after, the first thirty years of Jesus' life were also converted into parables: the birth and the ascension — that is to say, the beginning and the end — were all that remained in their literal sense. All the rest of the body of the history had more or less been sacrificed; and even these last wrecks of the sacred narrative were not long after travestied as fables. Every one brought into this metamorphosis the character of his own mind. According to the school to which each belonged, there was substituted for the letter of the evangelist, a theology which was metaphysical or moral, legal or simply etymological: the most abstract minds saw little on the crucifix but the infinite suspended in the finite, the ideal crucified in the real. Those who loved in religion the contemplation of the beautiful, after having eloquently affirmed, repeated, established, that Christianity is, in the highest sense, the poem of humanity, ended by no longer recognising in the Sacred Books more than a succession of fragments or rhapsodies of the great eternal Epic. Such, towards the close of his career, was Herder. In his last works (for the first have a totally different character), we can clearly see how either his poetry or his philosophy imperceptibly perverts religious truths. How? — Without altering the names of things, he gives them new acceptations; so much so, that, in the end, the believer, who thinks he possesses a dogma, has in reality no more than a dithyrambic, an idyl, a moral tirade, or an abstraction of school divinity, with whatever fine term it may be adorned. Here Spinoza's influence is again recognised. It was he who had said, "I take literally the passion, death, and burial of Christ; but I regard the resurrection as an allegory."* This idea having been readily taken up, there remained not a single fact of Christ's life which had not by some theologians been metamorphosed into an emblem, a figure, a myth. Neander himself, the most believing of all, extended this kind of interpretation to the vision of St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. So much the less scruple was made to use it thus, that each one thought the point about which he was occupied, the only one which favoured this kind of criticism; and besides, if any uneasiness remained, it was effaced by this singular consideration, that after all they sacrificed but the mortal parts, and, as it were, the body of Christianity; while, by means of a figurative explanation, they preserved the sense of it, that is to say, the soul and the eternal part. It is this which Hegel, in his lessons on

* Epistola xxv.

religion, called "to analyse the Son;" and thus, with the greatest tranquillity of conscience, did the natural defenders of the opinions of the church labour on all sides to change the established belief; for it must be remarked, that this work was not accomplished, as with us, by men of the world, and professed philosophers: on the contrary, the revolution was almost entirely effected through the exertions of theologians. It was from the heart of the church itself that the destructive influence derived all its strength.

In the midst of this ever-increasing demolition, there is one thing at which I cannot cease to wonder: it is the tranquillity of all those men, who seem not at all to understand what they are doing, and who, each day effacing some part of the Bible, are not a whit the less at ease regarding the future fate of their belief. They seem to live peaceably in their scepticism, as if it were their natural condition. There is one, however, who from afar had the presentiment, and, as he himself says, assurance that a crisis was impending. He, too, is the greatest of all, — Schleiermacher, formed to reign in this universal trouble, if the anarchy of spirits had consented to receive a master; a noble genius, an eloquent preacher, a grand writer; characterised in an equal degree as a theologian and a philosopher. No man has made greater efforts to reconcile the old belief with the new knowledge. The concessions into which he was drawn are incredible. Like a man attacked by a violent storm, he sacrificed masts and sails to save the hulk of his vessel. First, he renounces tradition, and gives up the support of the Old Testament: this he terms breaking through the old alliance. To satisfy the cosmopolite spirit, he, in some respects, placed Mosaism below Mahometanism. Having accustomed himself to an Old Testament without prophecies, he, at a later period, accustomed himself to a gospel without miracles. Yet he did not arrive at this wreck of revelation, by the Sacred Writings, but by a species of ecstasy of mind, or rather by a miracle of the inner word. Still, however, in Christianity thus desecrated, he had but little repose; for philosophy was ever urging him onwards; so that, unwilling to renounce either the belief or the doubt, it only remained for him to change incessantly, and at last blindly to bury himself in Spinozism. This condition, which one would think insupportable, is described with much truth in a letter to one of his friends, who also was his disciple. The letter throws so astonishing a light on the condition of thinking minds, that I cannot refrain from quoting some passages of it. I do not believe that an abyss has ever been regarded with a more tranquil despair:

"If, my dear friend, you consider the present state of the sciences, and their unexpected development, what do you foresee for the future? I mean not only as regards theology, but Christianity itself, such as the Reformation has made it. With the ultramontane Christianity we have nothing more to do; for, if the knot of science and of human reason be severed with the sword of authority, if power be used to escape from all examination, it is evident that one is exempted from any trouble regarding what is going on elsewhere; but this we neither can nor will do: on the contrary, we take the times as they are; and

from these I foresee, that we shall soon set aside that which many still think to be the main point, — the soul even of Christianity. I speak not here of the work of the seven days, but rather of the very idea of the creation, such as is in general adopted, and even independently of the chronology of Moses. Notwithstanding the labour and explanations of commentators, how much longer will this idea prevail against the strength of theories, founded on scientific combinations, from which none can escape in a time when general results so soon become common property? And our gospel miracles — (for I will say nothing of those of the Old Testament) — how long will it be before they again fall in their turn, through better-founded and more honourable reasons than those of the French Encyclopedists? For they will be reduced to this dilemma: — either the entire history to which they belong, is a fable in which it is impossible to discern truth from fiction; and in this case Christianity no longer appears to proceed from God, but from nothingness itself; or, on the other hand, if these miracles be real facts, we must agree, that, since they have been naturally produced, they must still have analogies in nature, and then the very idea of a miracle will be destroyed. What then, my dear friend, will be the result? When that time arrives, I shall be no more, — then I shall be resting in the deep sleep of the grave. But you, my friend, and those of your age, and so many others, who cherish the same opinions as ourselves, what will you do? Will you, too, make up your mind to these encroachments, and allow yourself to be blockaded by science? I speak not of the crusading fires of irony which shall be renewed from time to time; for irony will do you but little harm, if you know how to bear it. But what isolation! — what intellectual famine! Science, abandoned by you, — surrendered by you, will hoist out the colours of unbelief. Will history be divided into two parts, — on the one side, Christianity leagued with barbarism; on the other, science hand-in-hand with impiety? This would be, I know, the opinion of the greater number; and from the ground shaking under our feet, already usher forth phantoms of orthodoxy, for whom every examination which goes beyond the worn-out letter is a counsel of Satan! But, God be thanked! we shall not choose these hobgoblins for the guardians of the holy sepulchre; and neither you nor I, nor our mutual friends, nor our disciples, nor their successors, will ever belong to them."

This letter was published by Schleiermacher, in an ecclesiastical journal, in 1829; and, remembering that its author was the chief of the German theology, we cannot but pronounce it to be truly extraordinary. Here there is none of the subtle raillery of the eighteenth century: you recognise in these words the inextinguishable curiosity of a man, bending over the borders of an abyss, the murmuring gulf drawing him onwards with all the strength of an enchanter. The general aim was no longer to destroy but to gain knowledge — a passion of a different nature, and one which never stops until the very depths of the mystery be fathomed; and from that time the announced crisis approached daily.

M. de Wette, one of the most celebrated theologians of the day, soon adopted this system. The first five books of the Bible are in his eyes the great epic poem of the Hebraic theocracy: according to him, they do not contain more truth than the epic poetry of the Greeks. In the same manner as the Iliad and the Odyssey are the hereditary work of the rhapsodists, so the Pentateuch is, with the exception of the Decalogue, the uninterrupted and anonymous work of the priesthood. Abraham and Isaac resemble Ulysses and Agamemnon. As for the journey of Jacob, and the espousals of

Rebekah, "a Canaanitish Homer," says the author, "could have invented nothing better." The exodus from Egypt, the forty years' sojourn in the desert, the seventy elders at the head of the tribes, the expostulations of Aaron, even the legislation from Sinai, are but an incoherent series of poems and myths. The character alone of these fictions changes with each book, — poetical in Genesis, juridical in Exodus, sacerdotal in Leviticus, political in Numbers, etymological, diplomatic, genealogical, but almost always historical, in Deuteronomy. The works in which M. de Wette has developed this system have, like all his productions, the merit of a perspicuity that cannot be too highly appreciated, above all in his country. The results of his researches are never disguised under metaphysical lures: a disciple of the eighteenth century would not have written with a more lively precision. The author foresees that his criticism will be applied to the New Testament; but, far from being excited by this idea, as might have been expected, he concludes with the same repose as Schleiermacher: — "Happy," said he, after having torn page after page from the ancient law, "happy were our ancestors, who, inexperienced in the art of exegesis, believed simply and faithfully all they taught! History lost, religion gained by it! I have not devised the criticism; but, since it has begun its work, it is right that it should be finished. Nothing is good but what is completely carried out. The genius of humanity watches over criticism, and will not wrest from it that which is most precious. Let, then, each act in conformity with his duty and his conscience, and leave the rest to fortune."

Fortune responded to the author, by soon raising him up successors even bolder than himself, against whom he now vainly seeks to re-act. It appeared to him, that he had exhausted doubt, at least with regard to the Old Testament. The theological professors, De Vatke, De Bohlen, and De Lengerke, soon showed him the contrary. According to the spirit of this new theology, Moses is no longer the founder of an empire. This legislator made no law: they contest with him not only the Decalogue, but even the idea of the unity of God. But, if that is admitted, how many diverging opinions are there on the origin of the great body of history on which he has left his name! Bohlen, whose literal expressions I borrow, finds a great poverty of invention in the first chapters of Genesis, which, besides, was only composed after the return from the captivity. According to this theologian, the history of Joseph and his brethren was invented after Solomon's time, by a member of the tenth tribe. Others assign Deuteronomy to the epoch of Jeremiah, or even attribute its authorship to him. Moreover, together with the legislator, even the God of Moses is lowered in the opinion of the critics. After having placed Jacob below Ulysses, how refrain from comparing Jupiter and Jehovah? It was inevitable. On this topic mark what is said by the immediate precursor of Dr. Strauss; I mean, the professor Vatke, in his "Biblical Theology." If you accept

his doctrine, Jehovah, long confounded with Baal in the minds of the people, after having languished obscurely, and perhaps anonymously, during a long infancy, at length displayed himself at Babylon: there he was I know not what mixture of the Hercules of Tyre, the Chronos of the Syrians, and the worship of the sun, so that he became great in his exile. His name did not enter into the religious rites until the time of David: one derives it from Chaldea, another from Egypt. On the same principle they think they recognise other portions of tradition that Mosaism borrowed from foreign nations. About the time of their captivity, the Jews took from the Babylonians the fictions of the tower of Babel, of the patriarchs, of the clearing of chaos by the Elohim; from the religion of the Persians the images of Satan, Paradise, the resurrection from the dead, and the last judgment; and the Hebrews thus stole, a second time, the sacred vessels of their hosts. Moses and Jehovah destroyed, it was natural that Samuel and David should be despoiled in their turn. "This second operation," said a theologian of Berlin, "rests upon the first." Neither the one nor the other is any longer the reformer of the theocracy, which was not instituted until long after both. David was specially wanting in religious feeling. His gross and almost savage worship was not far removed from feticism. In short, the tabernacle is no more than a simple coffer of acacia; and, instead of the holy of holies, it contained a stone. You will naturally ask how the inspiration of the Psalms can accord with so gross an idolatry. This agreement is made by denying any of the Psalms, under their actual form, to be the work of David. The prophet-king thus preserves nothing more than the sad glory of having been the founder of a despotism deprived of the suffrages of the priesthood; for the promises made to his house, in the book of Samuel and elsewhere, could only have been forged after the event, *ex eventu*. In this same school, the book of Joshua is no more than a collection of fragments, composed after the exile, according to the spirit of the Levitical mythology; Kings, a didactic poem; Esther, a romantic fiction, a tale imagined under the Seleucidæ. With regard to the prophets, the second part of Isaiah, from the fortieth chapter, would be apocryphal, according to M. Gesenius himself. After a critic, whom I have already quoted, and who is not less celebrated, Ezekiel, descending from the poetry of the past, to a cowardly and drawing prose, lost the sense of the symbols which he employed: in his prophecies we see nothing but literary amplifications. Daniel, the most controverted of all, is definitively banished by Lengerke to the epoch of the Maccabees. To explain the instances of verbal agreement found in the three first evangelists, each has been successively given as the primitive. Lessing looked on them as free translations of a lost original, which has been by turns imagined as Hebraic, Aramaic, Chaldaic, or Syriac, even Greek, and which, at length, they have supposed never to have been written, but to have been what they have named an oral gospel. To take away the

difficulty, Schleiermacher attached himself to St. Luke, the companion of St. Paul: but he depreciated St. Matthew, on account of his Judaical tendency; and St. Mark, whom they have called, I do not well know why, the patron of the materialists. Through so many criticisms, which contradict and destroy one another, one thing remains firm, which is, that the German theologians incline more and more to consider the three first Gospels no longer as the testimonies of eye-witnesses, but as the utterances, more or less vague, of tradition.

From what precedes, the reader may judge what was the tendency of things when, in 1835, appeared obscurely, with the royal privilege, "The History of the Life of Jesus," by Dr. Strauss, tutor in the Evangelical and Theological school of Tübingen. What, then, was this book which, in the country of theological novelties, disconcerted even the boldest? It was the consequence of premises laid during half a century. The author, for the first time, put together the most contradictory doctrines,—the schools of Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Lessing, Kant, M. de Maistre, under whatever names they were transformed or disguised,—materialism, spiritualism, mysticism; amateurs of symbols, of natural, or figurative, or dogmatical explanations, of visions, of animal magnetism, of allegories, of etymologies; and interpreting them, entangling them, breaking them one against the other, by dint of an indefatigable logic, he drew from them all the same conclusion. In a word, he concentrated all doubts in one, and formed into a bundle the scattered shafts of scepticism. Add to this, that, in tearing aside the metaphysical veil which palliated those doctrines, he brought the question down to its simplest terms; and thus was openly seen, and for the first time, what a work of destruction had been accomplished. He lifted, like Antony, the robe of Cæsar; and every one could recognise in this great body the blows which he had given in secret.

From the pantheism of the modern schools, the author had borrowed the art of refining away historical personages; for there is an idealism which is essentially iconoclastic. All personal existence annoys and displeases it, as being a usurpation. Heroes are for it what statues of wood and of brass are for Mahometanism. They must be overturned. A little further, and this idealism will regard the life of the warbling bird, of the murmuring insect, as something stolen from the absolute. It cannot be content without reducing the universe and history to perfect silence, and then it would enjoy in peace the harmony of its own ideas.

Dr. Strauss, however, does not absolutely deny the existence of Jesus. He preserves the following shadow; namely, that Jesus was baptized by St. John—that he gathered together disciples—that in the end he sank under the hatred of the Pharisees. These are, with a few additional details, the foundation of truth, to which the human imagination has added all the wonders of the life of Christ.

The succession of events related by the evangelists is nothing in reality but a succession of ideas clothed in a poetical form by tradition; that is to say, a mythology.

The manner in which the author conceives that this work of imagination has been accomplished, merits above all to be remarked. He thinks that, struck with the expectation of the Messiah, the people of Palestine by degrees added to the true representation of Jesus, all the features of the Old Testament which could appear to relate to him. Popular tradition accepted as real the imaginary actions that the ancient law attributed to the future Christ; thus modelling, fashioning, aggrandising, correcting, deifying the character of Jesus of Nazareth, after the imaginary type at first conceived by the prophets. On this principle, the New Testament is, in fact, little else than a vulgar and hasty imitation of the Old. In the same manner that the God of Plato formed the universe according to a preconceived idea, the people of Palestine formed Christ after the ideal furnished them by their ancient law. It is evident, that in this doctrine it would not be Christ who established the church, but the church which invented and established Christ. The political, religious, mystical prophecies were the theme which the sentiments of the people soon converted into events. Thus the world was not the dupe of an illusion of the senses, but of something of its own creation; and mankind, during two thousand years, has knelt, not before an imposture, as said the eighteenth century, but before an ideal being, wrongly decorated with the insignia of reality.

The following is, in general, the method which the author employs to arrive at these results. With a large number of critics, he admits an interval of thirty years between the death of Jesus Christ, and the compilation of the first of our Gospels. This space of time seems to him sufficient for the popular fictions to take the place of facts. His criticism applies itself successively to each moment of Christ's life. After the English school, taken up by Voltaire, — after the "*Fragmens d'un Inconnu*," and a great number of other predecessors, he draws forth the contradictions between the evangelists. He affirms that, if orthodoxy has not been able to satisfy reason on this subject, the explanations taken from the natural course of things are not less defective. These two kinds of interpretation being discarded, it only remained to deny the reality of the fact itself; to convert it into an allegory — into a legend — into a myth. This is the uniform consequence with which the author terminates each discussion; and then not one word of grief — not one regret. The impression of the immense void which the absence of Christ will leave in the memory of the human race, does not cost him a sigh. Without anger, without passion, without hatred, he continues tranquilly, geometrically, the solution of his problem. Is it to be said, that he does not feel his work, and that, sapping the base of the edifice, he is ignorant of what he does? Certainly not. But

this kind of impassibility is a fitting thing for Germany. There the learned have such a fear of all appearance of a declamation which might derange the temper of their plans, that they fall into a defect of an opposite nature. That which rhetoric is for us in France, set forms are for the Germans;—an aim which, changed into a habit, finishes by becoming natural. Of their own accord, they take in their books the inexorable form of Fate, on its seat of brass. On the perusal of such a work, you would take the author for a soul of bronze, that nothing human could reach. I confess that such was my illusion regarding M. Strauss himself, until, knowing him better, I found in him, under this mask of destiny, a young man, full of candour, gentleness, and modesty;—one possessed of a soul that was almost mysterious, and, as it were, saddened by the reputation he had gained. He scarcely seems to be the author of the work under consideration. Throughout fifteen hundred pages, and in the same manner as if it referred to an interpolation of Homer or of Pindar, Dr. Strauss disputes with Christ his cradle and his sepulchre, leaving him nothing but his cross. The circumstances connected with the birth of the Son of Mary appear to him fabulously imitated from the birth of Abraham and of Moses. Nimrod and Pharaoh are the models after whom tradition imagined Herod's massacres. As to the manger, it was only fancied to be in Bethlehem, in preference to all other places, in order to conform to the prophet's words. The star which conducted the shepherds is the remembrance of the star promised to Jacob in Balaam's prophecy. The Magian kings themselves had no existence, save in a passage in Isaiah, and one in the seventy-second Psalm. Of the presentation in the temple was made a legend, invented to glorify the man in the child. The scene of Jesus explaining the Bible, at the age of twelve years, was copied from the lives of Moses, Samuel, and Solomon, who at the same age gave proofs of celestial wisdom. The relations of Christ and of John the Baptist bring about interpretations of equal boldness. According to this system, the evangelists have attributed to St. John, ideas which it would have been impossible for him to conceive. His aim was narrower, his tendency less liberal, his genius of a ruder nature; and thus he was rendered incapable of understanding, still less of prophesying, the advent of Jesus. Besides, according to the author, if Jesus submitted to receive baptism, it is a proof that he did not yet believe himself to be the Messiah. At the utmost, he followed in the crowd the teaching of St. John, and drew thence the maxims of the Essenians. On this subject an observation full of justice has been made: it was said, that, if any fabulous personage were concerned in this narration, it surely is not he who passes his life in the midst of a people that touch him, hear him, see him; but rather the solitary, who, dressed in goats' skin, wandering far from towns, withdraws himself from his own disciples, and leaves no trace of his progress, save on the sands of

the desert; that, consequently, the myth here should be St. John, and Jesus Christ the history.

To continue:—Did Jesus propose to himself a temporal or a celestial kingdom? The author answers: Christ hoped to reconquer the temporal sceptre of David, but by means which were wholly divine. The legions of angels, the resuscitated dead, were to place his disciples on the twelve thrones of Israel. Moreover, in all which regards the ancient law, he rejected but the ritual, the external form, the abuses of worship. He accepted its spirit, so that his mission was little more than negative; and he was to Mosaism just what Luther was to Catholicism. Let us speak yet more clearly: he thought not of extending his reform beyond the Jews, whose repugnance for foreign nations he partook. With regard to his doctrine, properly so called, the Scriptures kept only a very unfaithful image of it; since his discourses, according to the three first evangelists, were nothing but incoherent fragments,—a species of mosaic-work, in which St. Matthew merely surpassed the two others. Strauss and his school had disputed the right of Moses to the Decalogue: it was but natural that they should go on to dispute the right of Christ to the Sermon on the Mount, and the Lord's Prayer, which, according to them, are no more than a compilation of Hebraic formulas. St. John still remains to us, and all rests on this last foundation. What will be their decision? The conclusion is not long withheld. Behold it! The discourses related by St. John are still more open to contest than the preceding. These must be regarded as free compositions, mingled with reminiscences of the schools of Alexandria. Thus, to follow up the argument, they would have Hebrew maxims on the one side; and, on the other, sentences from the Grecian philosophy! But, to say the truth, the doctrine of Jesus would have disappeared as much as his person. No historical certainty, no authenticity, unless it be in some relics of the arguments sustained by Christ against the Pharisees; and, in these contests, the author recognises the tone and accent of the dialectics of the rabbins.

All the rays of modern scepticism converge in the last part of the work; and here we find encroachments on questions which in France we are more accustomed to see controverted. The model of this kind of polemics is found in Rousseau's famous letter on miracles; but here the knowledge is much greater, and the system quite different. The gospel miracles are either parables, taken at a later period for real histories, or legends, or copies from those of the Old Testament. The miracle of the loaves and fishes recalls the manna in the desert, and the twenty loaves with which Elisha nourished the people. The water changed into wine is a reminiscence of the unwholesome water healed by the prophet. Sometimes the New Testament would copy itself, as in the sign of the fig-tree struck with barrenness: this prodigy is the counterpart of a parable related just before. What is Christ's transfiguration on Mount

Tabor? A reflection — a copy of that of Moses on Mount Sinai. But does the appearance of Jesus between Moses and Elias imply nothing peculiarly its own? — A pure emblem, to signify that Jesus came to reconcile the law personified in the one, with the prophets represented by the other. Then this had nothing to do, as I had thought, with the transfiguration of Christ? — No, assuredly, but with the transfiguration of a Christian idea.

It remains to be known where a catechism carried forward in this manner would stop. I come to the passion. To speak correctly, the author here admits nothing as historical but the crucifix, which again reminds him of the brazen serpent set upon a pole by Moses. In his language, the scenes which preceded the imprisonment are myths of the second order, in the Gospel according to St. John; and myths of the third order, in the Gospels according to St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. It results from this principle, that the ancient law nowhere announced a suffering Messiah; and the figures taken from Isaiah apply only to the prophets considered as a class, not to the person of the Messiah, whose temporal triumph has, on the contrary, always been announced and exalted in the Old Testament. The apostles, when their minds were filled with the presence of their beloved Master, saw him in shining traits under each of the emblems of the Bible; naturally and invincibly, they applied to him all the words which could be turned from a literal sense: they deceived themselves. In consequence of a similar illusion, after the event had occurred, they first supposed such a thing possible, and then persuaded themselves that Christ must have previously announced his death, his resurrection, and his re-appearance. Hence the prophecies which the evangelists attributed to him. The scene in the Garden of Olives; the bloody sweat; the agony on the cross; — what more? — the cup brought by the angel of the Passion: what do they make of this unutterable grief? A plagiarism from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. That deep presentiment which seizes each creature, even the vilest, at the moment of death, is wanting in Jesus Christ. The two thieves belong to Isaiah. The divided raiment — the nailed feet and hands — the sword thrust into his side — the gall and the vinegar — even the thirst on the cross; — all, as well as the last words of Jesus in expiring, “Eli, lama sabachthani?” are word for word taken from the sixty-ninth and the twenty-second Psalm; which, Dr. Strauss declares, are classical references for all which regards the Passion. To this he adds, that one only of the evangelists makes mention of the presence of the mother of Christ at the foot of the cross; and that her presence, if she were there, would not have been neglected by the others. Here, I confess, I can neither tolerate the manner, nor conceive the feeling, which induces the author, in the midst of such a description, to say, in speaking of the Passion according to St. John, — “The narration of the scene does honour to the ingenious and animated manner of the narra-

tor." At this sentence can you not imagine, that you see the spectre of Voltaire rising erect, and applauding? or rather would not such a cruelty have astonished even him? Be it as it may, the author's coolness does not again contradict itself in the scenes which follow. Certainly none but an erudite German could examine, with an impassibility in which modern irony and the hyssop of Golgotha are indissolubly mingled, into such details as whether Judas, as a theologian has pretended, were not an honest man misrepresented; if Christ were at the same time nailed by the hands and the feet; how many times he thirsted; how many hours he remained on the cross; how deeply in his side the soldier's sword was thrust; if the blood and water could have issued from his wound; supposing that Jesus, after a long fainting fit, went forth from the sepulchre, in what place he took shelter; if, as is seriously pretended by Paulus, the celebrated professor of dogmatic theology, Christ, having escaped from the tomb, died of a slow fever, caused by the wounds of the nail-prints on the cross; or if, after the Passion, he still lived for twenty-seven years in solitude, labouring for the welfare of humanity, as says M. Brennesche, in his Dissertation; and at last in what lonely place, far from the looks of his disciples and his friends, died the God-made-man. This portion of the work has all the odious precision of a judiciary proceeding. Here M. Strauss appears to deviate from his system of myths, and to make a concession to an opposing school; for he admits, that the idea of the resurrection originated in a vision of the disciples, similar to that which St. Paul saw on his way to Damascus: he thinks, besides, that this idea could not well be entertained, but in Galilee far from the sepulchre, and the mortal remains of Christ. The ascension reminds him of Enoch's; of the fiery horses of Elias (which, says he, to conform to the more gentle nature of Jesus, were transformed into clouds); of the apotheosis of Hercules of Tyre, Romulus, &c. Such is this book in its elements; and in its frightful reality, were the analysis to be recommenced, my heart would sink before such an undertaking.

If now it be asked what effect this work should produce in the mind of an impartial man, admitting that in these cases there be any such, I will answer without delay. To pretend that this book can be judged by the analysis that I have just presented, would be to take an undue advantage of its not being translated into our language. The spirit of any work whatever—of philosophy, of art, or of criticism—is not thus reproduced in a few words: indeed much more circumspection is required for this than is generally imagined, and these difficulties are greatly augmented when it is a foreigner who undertakes the work. Entirely occupied in presenting the author's results in their crudity, I have probably neglected some shades and modifications of meaning, and, above all, the display of proofs which never fails him. In spite of myself, I may have been most drawn to those striking passages which best exemplify the

general spirit of a school, at the risk of leaving in the shade some of the particular features of the writer. His penetration into the world of details; his sincere love of truth; the success of his explanations on several occasions; the stoicism of a pure, precise style, which, disengaged from the jargon of the schools, is ever straightforward, and which some of his adversaries have compared to that of Lessing; his firmness, his independence of mind, even his sternness, which makes him enter as a sharpened iron into the very midst of things, when others stop lazily on the surface — these, together with a rare and profound erudition, are qualities which no sensible man will venture to deny. He has rendered the frightful service of feeling, probing, enlarging the living wound of our time, with more vigour, logic, and intrepidity, than any other person; so that indifference itself has started at the sight; and when one reads this book, so sad, so icy, so cutting, one is compelled to echo the words of her who, in stabbing herself, said, “It is not painful.” With the same desire to abide by the truth, I acknowledge that it may be clearly seen from the opening of this work, that this system was conceived beforehand; that it does not necessarily arise from facts; that, on the contrary, the author, with a strong determination of bringing all to agree with it, will not stop before any obstacle; that thus he is drawn onwards by a logical intolerance which resembles a sort of fanaticism, and reveals, with a deeper shade of cold-bloodedness and of maturity, the exterminating spirit of Dupuis and of Volney. I have ground for believing, that, when he shall have recovered from the first heat of the discussion, he himself will not fail to recognise the justice of this criticism.

A second reproach that I shall make against this work — and that the rather because German criticism has not said enough about it — is, that the intelligence and the truly prodigious knowledge of books which it displays, seems to stifle the feeling of all reality. In the midst of this absolute negation of life, you are tempted to interrogate yourself to know, if your most personal impressions, — if your breath and your soul, be not perchance a copy of a wandering text of the book of fate; and if your own existence will not suddenly be disputed, as the plagiarism of some unknown history. As soon as the author meets with a narration which goes at all beyond the most ordinary course of affairs, he declares that it contains no historic truth, and that it can be but a tradition. Now, is it not impoverishing Nature and Thought thus to extend them together on the bed of Procrustes? Is it not strangely restricting the heart of man to demand, that the impressions and circumstances of a past state of society should conform to the general ideas of the present? Are we, then, so certain of being in all things the measure of what is possible? How many miracles pass within our souls which the knowledge of books will never teach us! How much are enthusiasm, and love, and revolutions, our great masters! How much do they teach of things, that all the books in the world would never

tell us! I feel that I should elucidate this by an example. Here is one.

It is taken from the first meeting of Christ and his disciples on the borders of the Lake of Galilee. Strauss, seeing how easily Jesus by a word captivates the apostles, makes this reflection; and it is apparently a very judicious one:—How strange it is that Christ had not desired to try these men, before he chose them! Still more incredible, that they, without having had long communion with him, — without having learned to know him by experience, — should quit their houses, their country, their station, their families, to follow him in his ministry; that, besides, there is an evident contradiction between this docile obedience, and the doubt which afterwards seizes them. From that and similar arguments, he concludes that this pretended meeting of Christ and the apostles is but an allegory, — a figure forged thirty years later, in imitation of the meeting between the prophet Elijah, and his servant Elisha.

But, I ask, why refer to imitation and pharisaic erudition that which is so clearly and so naturally explained in the evangelical accounts? Who sees not, on one hand, the authority of Jesus, — the power attached to his features, his voice, his gesture, his mysterious word; and, on the other, the fishermen attracted by that word, — carried away, overcome, fascinated by the grandeur which appeared in the midst of them? Is it in any other way that enthusiasm seizes on us, and that men give themselves up to one another? Is it, as the German doctor supposes, by a slow and successive experience of the Master's superiority, or not rather by a sudden excitement, — by an inconsiderate impulse, — by an entire abandonment of one's self to the will, the looks, the thoughts of another? Who has not known examples of this nature, I do not say only in public but also in private, nay, even in the most obscure life; which rarely passes without being enlightened for a day, for an hour at least, by one of these prodigious illuminations? And the miracles of friendship, of heroism, — is it experience, is it temporising, which calls them forth? Is it not rather the affair of an instant, of which the influences are overwhelming, and in which every thing is lost or gained? The disciples doubted the moment after, say you; a new proof that this is truth, reality, history. What is more natural than depression after an excess of enthusiasm? These are the features which are never invented by poetic tradition or by mythology. Truly these are men, not myths. For myself I cannot, I confess, yet read this opening of the gospel, without hearing the echo of that arousing voice which said to the fishermen of Galilee, "Rise and walk, and go to the end of the world," so much is there in it of an enthusiasm which is felt and recognised. That is the *fiat lux* ("Let there be light") in the gospel creation: it is the movement which itself produces all others. At this command you hear the disciples rise, and thrust before them ancient civilization; the

Roman empire, in its turn, erects itself in its seat, and follows the impulse; then the Councils, the Papacy, the Reformation; and this movement, propagated from age to age, from generation to generation, arrives at last, and without intermission, to ourselves.

Another example. I choose it because it contains an excellent abridgment of the general style of the author. It is the scene of Christ's temptation in the desert. Strauss begins by showing what he considers the difficulties, the inconsistencies, the fictions, which are met with in the evangelists:—A fast of forty days; the appearance of the demon under a palpable form; Jesus transported firstly to the summit of the temple, then to a mountain whence all the kingdoms of the world could be seen; the angels which came from heaven, and ministered unto him. He successfully combats the naturalist explanations which have hitherto been given of these circumstances, and proves that this scene is neither a vision, nor a dream, nor a parable. Above all, he has no difficulty in showing, that Satan was not a disguised Pharisee, sent to propose that Jesus should enter into a conspiracy against the Romans. This refutation accomplished, he opens the Old Testament. There he finds all the outline of the scene related in the New. Moses and Elias fast forty days in the desert. Satan, during forty years there, tempts the people of Israel. This number forty thus repeated,—this temptation of the people who also called itself the Son of God,—in fine, the angels who prepared Elisha's food,—are there not, in these accounts, the principal traits or models of the recital afterwards imitated by Christian tradition on the books of the ancient law? Then this scene has in itself nothing real, and no historical foundation. It does not answer to any actual circumstance in the life of Jesus.

This analysis appears complete. In my opinion, it is wanting in one important part, which is a deeper examination of Christ himself. Jesus had just been baptized: he publishes for the first time his mission, and then withdraws into the desert. Who may know the anguish, the struggles, the internal foes, which assailed this new Jacob, then wrestling in his solitude with the unknown angel? Before declaring war to all visible nature,—before casting humanity into the future, as a world into a new orbit, who knows if in his heart he did not hesitate;—if the entire past did not raise itself before him;—if the mute universe, clothed in its borrowed splendour, did not with a hundred voices command him to bow down, and to adore, instead of contending with it;—if his thoughts did not take to themselves wings, and fly to the summit of the temple, and the sacred mountain;—if from thence he did not see at his feet, on one side the temporal kingdoms, with their prostrate and submissive people, and on the other the immeasurable empire of thought, with the passion and the cross, instead of the sceptre of Judah? Who knows whether, in this moment, he were not aware of the bloody sweat of Gethsemane; and if, from this pinnacle

of grief, he did not already cry out, at sight of the whole earth raised up against him, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" But, if doubt could reach him, then assuredly was Satan on his throne of darkness; then this history would not be such an illusion as it is pretended to be: on the contrary, it would affect all that is nearest — that is to say, all that is most real — in the life of Jesus. Raised from this mortal dejection, his confidence returns. The heavens are re-opened: he resumes his self-possession, and retains it throughout the scene at Cavalry. The legion of immaculate angels descend into his heart: his spirit, worn out in the struggle, is fortified with their celestial food. In all this, where is the impossibility? — where the fable? and how can one have an idea of the gospel, without seeing in it a continual transfiguration of the inner history and thoughts of Christ? — I stop here; for this point alone would draw me too far.

Another time the author substitutes, for the simplicity of the Scriptures, an abstraction which seems to me strangely to clash with their spirit. Thus Jesus' conversation, at the well, with the woman of Samaria, naturally reminds him of the meeting between Eliezar and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Moses and Zipporah. These resemblances — strengthened, it is true, by many circumstances in the dialogue — conduct him to his ordinary conclusion, that this recital is nothing else than a myth, a legend. But, this admitted, the difficulty augments. This short narration, which bears such a seal of simplicity, — what will it become? A formula of the philosophy of history. The Samaritan at the mouth of the well is the emblem of an impure people, whose alliance with Jehovah is broken. The entire dialogue is but a figure of the relations maintained between the first Christians and the Samaritans. But, as the author denies that these relations have in fact ever existed, there remains to us no more than the symbol of a symbol, the figure of a dream, the shadow of a shade: here the soil sinks under our feet. In all sincerity, are not these abstractions taken as legends, quite contrary to the spirit of the evangelists? The author is in the midst of modern theories, of Hegel's synthesis. He is in the nineteenth century, no longer in the first.

Moreover, I regret that, after having absorbed himself in the literature of the Rabbins and the Talmud, he has not more frequently consulted books of modern voyages, illustrative of Eastern life. I am convinced, that he would have found in descriptions of the people of the Levant, some which would have thrown light on his subject: nay, more, he would then have tempered his evidently too strong tendency to reduce all to an abstraction. If he had a little approached the homes of the apostles, the scenes of the Lake of Galilee, — Christ sleeping in the storm, the waves appeased by his words, would no longer, I imagine, have appeared to him as bodiless fictions, erudite imitations of the passage of the Red Sea, or figures of Virtue embarked on a stormy ocean. On this account,

whatever may be the contempt of theology and philosophy for all observations not gathered from an old book, will it be permitted me to quote here a fact to which I was myself an eye-witness? It is an occurrence I cannot easily forget; for, when it happened, it gave rise in my own mind to much reflection. It was at nightfall on the shores of Malta. I was with four sailors, of the island of Ipsara, in a boat without sail, and far from all refuge; for, a little before, we had been forced back from the island. The tempest was very high, the night very dark; the disconcerted rowers had left their oars, and we were near foundering. In this distressing moment, the captain, who held an oar, suddenly arose. He was a fine, bold fellow. Inspired by the danger, he breathed mysteriously over the waters, and cried out, while pointing with his fingers to the ebbing billows, "Children! look! see the demons are flying away!" The rowers looked around them with an air of stupefaction, and then began again to struggle with the wind. A little after, the vessel which we pursued, was seen through the darkness. We were saved.—Is it not evident, that, from the recesses of a library, nothing would be easier than to convert this narration into a myth, borrowed from the Acts of the Apostles? The place of the scene is the same as that of the shipwreck of St. Paul. The demons which fled belong to the mythology of the Pharisees, who themselves have borrowed it from the religion of the Magi. It is impossible that the principle of evil should have appeared under a personal form. Have demons wings? Do they inhabit the seas? How many questions are there on this simple incident, not to be solved by reason! It is much easier to admit, that all has been instinctively imitated from the recital of St. Luke. On the other hand, it is probable that the rowers, on arriving at their homes, would relate that they had seen marine demons, with wave-coloured wings. Who is to be believed?—the philosopher or the people? And can pure science be so near the borders of ignorance? It may be so.

Without entering more into detail, how many questions remain to be examined? If the epoch of Christ were suited to the invention of a mythology? In what could the science of Alexandria control imaginations at Jerusalem? which would lead to the examination of the spirit of criticism in the Roman world. If thirty years sufficed for the establishment of a wholly fabulous tradition? If the tone of the apocryphal gospels is not wholly different from that of the canonical books? If the Acts of the Apostles, allowed to be true, do not present accounts similar to those of the evangelists? If the parables in the primitive records are not expressly separated from the historical narrative? and if, consequently, the demarcation between history and allegory were not observed by the writers themselves? The preface to the Gospel according to St. Luke,—so reasonable, so methodical, so philosophical,—can that be the introduction to a collection of myths? Do not St. Paul's Epistles bear so much the impress

of reality, that their testimony turns back upon the preceding epoch? And this man, — so like ourselves, so real in all things, that we seem quite to know him, — does he not plead with the voice of truth for the historic integrity of the personages whom we only know through him? These are points that require close examination. I do not object to a comparison of the Gospels, and poems of popular origin. I admit that Charlemagne was transfigured by the imaginations of the middle ages; but under the fable was hidden the history. Under the fiction of the twelve knights-errant, there was the author of the Capitularies, the conqueror of the Saxons, the legislator and the warrior. How comes it, that under the tradition of the apostles there was nothing but a shadow? It will be enough now to leave these questions to the reflections of readers who may thus far have followed me.

One thing cannot fail to strike those who will penetrate yet further into this examination; and it is this, that, in the author's point of view, Christianity would be an effect without a cause. How could this despoiled Christ, this shade of which no appreciable vestige remains, this wandering ghost in tradition, have influenced all the time which has elapsed since? I see the moral universe shaken, but the *primum mobile* escapes me. If in the New Testament there be no spontaneity, whence did life come? Could a new form of society be the result of a plagiarism? If the new law be nothing but the reproduction of the old, if the creative spirit have nowhere manifested itself, if the miracle of the renewing of the world were never accomplished, what do we here, and why are we not within the walls of the ancient city? That which in fact evinces the personal grandeur of Christ is not so much the gospel he gave, as the spirit of the times which succeeded him. Did I know nothing of the Scriptures, and were the name of Jesus effaced from the earth, I should still suppose that there had been somewhere an omnipotent impulse about the time of the Roman emperors. When Strauss says on this subject, "We look on the invention of the mariner's compass and steamboats as superior to the cure of a few sick Galileans," he is evidently the dupe of his own reasoning; for he knows well, that the miracle of Christianity is not this cure, but rather the prodigy of humanity extended on its sick couch, there cured of the leprosy of castes, of the blindness of pagan sensuality, and which, suddenly rising, walks far from the threshold of the old world. He knows well, that the miracle does not consist in the water being changed into wine, at the marriage in Cana, but rather in the change of the world by one single thought — in the sudden transfiguration of the ancient law — in the casting-off of the old man — in the empire of the Cesars struck with stupor, as the soldiers of the sepulchre — in the barbarians mastered by the influence, the ark of which they had conquered — in the reformation which discusses that influence — in the philosophy which denies it — in the French revolution, which thought to destroy it, and which

serves but to give it effect. These are the miracles which should be compared to those of the astrolabe and the magnetic needle.

What! Christ's incomparable originality nothing but a perpetual imitation of the past! and the most original personage in history was ever occupied in forming himself after the model of the ancient prophets! It is in vain to object, that the evangelists contradict each other: it must, in the end, be confessed, that these contradictions never bear on other than accessory circumstances, and that these writers themselves all agree on the character of Christ. — Whence the unity of this character? From the most confused mixture that history has ever allowed to appear? — a chaos of Hebrews, Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Romans, — of the grammarians of Alexandria, scribes of Jerusalem, Essenians, Sadducees, Jewish monks, — of the adorers of Jehovah, of Mithra, of Serapis? Shall we assert, that this vague multitude, forgetting the differences of origin, of creeds, and institutions, is suddenly blended into one spirit — to invent the same ideal, to create from nothing, and to render palpable to all the human race, the character which best contrasts with all the past, and in which the most manifest unity is discovered? At least it will be confessed, that this is the strangest miracle that has ever been heard of, and that the water changed into wine was nothing in comparison to it. This first difficulty draws after it a second; for, far from the plebeians of Palestine having themselves invented the ideal of Christ, what difficulty had not their obdurate minds in understanding the new doctrine? If the Bible is read with an unprejudiced mind, without the refinements of doctrine, without subtlety, will there not be a conviction, that the crowd and the disciples themselves are ever disposed to take the words of Christ in the sense of the ancient law; that is, in a material sense? Is there not a perpetual contradiction between the temporal kingdom expected by the people, and the spiritual one announced by their Master? Do not the greater part of the parables conclude in these words, or in others equivalent to them, — “These things said he; but they understood him not”? A manifest, an irrefragable proof, that the initiative, the teaching, — that is to say, the ideal, — did not come from the crowd, but that they belonged to the person — to the authority of the Master; and that the religious revolution, before being accepted by the greater number, was conceived and imposed by a supreme legislator.

If any one thing distinguishes Christianity from preceding religions, it is that the gospel is not the apotheosis of nature in general, but of personality itself. It has this character in its beginning and in its end, in its monuments and in its dogmas. How, then, should this be wanting in its history? If it had not exclusively prevailed in the new institution, this would have been but a sect of the great mythology of antiquity. On the contrary, mankind has widely distinguished between them, because it was in

fact established on a new foundation. The internal dominion of a soul which feels itself greater than the visible universe — this is the lasting miracle of the gospel. And this prodigy is no illusion, — no allegory: it is a reality. In the same manner as in Paganism, the sea, primitive night, the shoreless chaos, gave a solid base to popular fictions, — here also the infinite soul of Christ served as a foundation for all Christian influence; for what is the gospel, if it be not an unfolding of the inner world?

In this place I meet with strange reasoning. It is said, that the first term of a series cannot be greater than that which terminates it, which would be an effect contrary to all the laws of development; from whence it is inferred, that Jesus, being the first in the progression of Christian ideas, must necessarily have remained inferior to the thought and the type of succeeding generations. From this position it would equally result, that Jesus should give place to St. Paul, St. Paul to St. Augustin, St. Augustin to Gregory the Seventh, Gregory the Seventh to Luther; and on this moving territory each destroying the other, and having no longer any thing stable in the idea of the holy, the just, the beautiful, the true, who knows that we shall not in the end find our ownselves to be the ultimate term in this ladder of holiness? for we also are at the extremity of a series. By this it might also be proved, that, of Homer and Virgil, the second would be the master. But how long has the inspiration of beauty, of justice, of truth, been an arithmetical or a geometrical progression? It will be seen that this is no longer a point in which Christianity only is concerned, but rather the grand principle of all personality, and that it leads to the denial of life itself. However, I am persuaded, that the person of Christ makes so great a part of the history of the last eighteen hundred years, that, if you take it away, all other history should be denied for the same reason, and by the same right; nay, you must, as an inevitable consequence, admit a humanity without nations, or rather nations without individuals, generations of ideas without forms, which die, are resuscitated to die again, at the foot of the invisible cross, where remains suspended the impersonal Christ of Pantheism. The author expresses this conclusion clearly enough, when he recapitulates his doctrine in this sort of metaphysical litany: — “Christ,” says he, “is not an individual, but an idea, that is to say, humanity. In the human race, behold the God-made-man; behold the child of the visible Virgin and the invisible Father, that is, of matter and of mind; behold the Saviour, the Redeemer, the sinless one; behold him who dies, who is raised again, who mounts into the heavens. Believing in this Christ, in his death, his resurrection, man is justified before God.” I quote these words, not only because they sum up all the author’s system, but also because they are the clearest expression of this apotheosis of mankind, in which, during some years past, we have all more or less taken part. The aim of all this is to despoil the individual, in order to enrich the species: the man is

diminished, to enlarge humanity : that which none would dare say of himself is put to the account of all. Self-love is at the same time lowered and deified. This idea has a certain Titan grandeur, which enchants all of us. Is this grandeur real? or do we not strangely abuse each other? That is the question. If the individual cannot himself be the supremely just, the holy, — if he is not identified with God, — if he is incapable of raising himself to the supreme ideal of virtue, beauty, liberty, and love, — what is said? and how will these attributes become those of the species? Tell me, how many men will make up humanity? Will two — will three individuals attain this ideal? If these do not suffice, will three thousand — three hundred thousand — three millions? What matters the number, will they succeed better? Heap up as much as you please of these empty unities, will the result be less empty than they? Is it not evident, that we labour at a senseless work? — that, if the human individual is but a nothing, alienated from God, nations also on their side are but collections of nothing; and that; in adding nations to nations, empires to empires, whatever fine names we may give them, — India, Assyria, Greece, Rome, the empires of Alexandria, of Charlemagne, of Napoleon, — it is in vain to multiply the zeros? The product of them all will still be zero; and, always aiming at the infinite, we really do nothing but embrace in humanity a more perfect nothing, since it is composed of all these nothings together. If that is true, it results that all life, all grandeur, as well as all misery, rises from the individual. Suppose, then, that we wish to exalt ourselves in union with all the human race, we must not deny the dignity of the individual. The noblest work of Christianity is to have consecrated the individual in the highest manner; for, if the life of the God-made-man have a sense comprehensible to all, unexceptionable to all, it is because it evinces that the infinite dwells in each conscience, as well as in the soul of the human race; and that the thought of each man may spread and dilate itself, so as to embrace and penetrate all the moral universe.
