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THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT:

ITS INFLUENCE ON LIFE.

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MAN is not a being of isolated faculties, which act independently. The religious, like each other element in us, acts jointly with other powers; its action, therefore, is helped or hindered by them. The Idea of Religion is only realized by an harmonious action of all the faculties, the intellectual and the moral. Yet the religious sentiment must act, more or less, though the understanding be not cultivated, and the moral elements sleep in Egyptian night; in connection, therefore, with Wisdom or Folly, with Hope or Fear, with Love or Hate. Now in all periods of human history, Religion demands something of her votaries: the ruder their condition, the more capricious and unreasonable is the demand. Though Religion itself be ever the same, the form of its expression varies with man's intellectual and moral state. Its influence on life may be considered under its three different manifestations.

I. OF SUPERSTITION.

Combining with Ignorance and Fear, the religious sentiment leads to Superstition. This is the vilification and debasement of man. It may be defined as FEAR BEFORE GOD. Plutarch, though himself religious, pronounced it worse than Atheism. But the latter cannot exist to the same extent—is never an active principle. Superstition is a morbid state of human nature, where the conditions of the religious sentiment are not fulfilled—where its functions are impeded and counteracted. But it must act, as the heart beats in the frenzy of a fever. It has been said with truth, "Perfect love casts out fear." The converse is quite as true: perfect fear casts out love. The superstitious man begins by fearing God, not loving him. He goes on, like a timid boy in the darkness, by projecting his own conceptions out of himself; conjuring up a phantom he calls his God—a Deity capricious, cruel, revengeful, lying in wait for the unwary—a God ugly, morose, and only to be feared. He ends by paying a service meet for such a God, the service of Horror and Fear. Each man's *conception* of God is his conception of a man carried out to infinity; the pure idea is eclipsed by a human personality. This conception therefore varies as the men who form it vary. It is the index of their Soul. The superstitious man projects out of himself a creation begotten of his Folly and his Fear; calls the furious phantom God, Moloch, Jehovah; then attempts to please the capricious Being he has conjured up. To do this, the demands his Superstition makes are, not to keep the laws which the one God wrote on the walls of man's being, but to do arbitrary acts which this fancied God demands: he must give up to the deity what is dearest to himself. Hence the savage offers a sacrifice of favourite articles of food; the first fruits of the chase, or agriculture; weapons of war which have done signal service; the nobler animals; the

skins of rare beasts. He conceives the anger of his God may be soothed, like man's excited frame, by libations, incense, the smoke of plants, the steam of a sacrifice.

Again, the superstitious man would appease his God by unnatural personal service. He undertakes an enterprise almost impossible,—and succeeds, for the fire of his purpose subdues and softens the rock that opposes him. He submits to painful privation of food, rest, clothing; leads a life of solitude; wears a comfortless dress, that girds and frets the very flesh; stands in a painful position; shuts himself up in a dungeon; lives in a cave; stands on a pillar's top; goes unshorn and filthy;—he exposes himself to be scorched by the sun, and frozen by the frost;—he lacerates his flesh; punctures his skin to receive sacred figures of the Gods;—he mutilates his body, cutting off the most useful or most sacred members;—he sacrifices his cattle, his enemies, his children; defiles the sacred temple of his body; destroys his mortal life to serve his God. In a state more refined, Superstition demands abstinence from all the sensual goods of life. Its present pleasures are a godless thing. The flesh is damned. To serve God, is to mortify the appetites God gave. Then the superstitious man abstains from comfortable food, clothing, and shelter; comes neither eating nor drinking; watches all night, absorbed in holy vigils. The man of God must be thin and spare. Bernard has but to show his neck, fleshless and scraggy, to be confessed a mighty saint. Above all, he must abstain from marriage: the Devil lurks under the bridal rose; the vow of the celibate can send him howling back to hell. The smothered volcano is grateful to God. Then comes the assumption of arbitrary vows; the performance of pilgrimages to distant places, thinly clad and barefoot; the repetition of prayers, not as a delight, spontaneously poured out, but as a penance, or work of supererogation. In this state, Superstition builds convents, monasteries; sends Anthony to his dwelling in the desert; founds orders of Mendicants, Rechabites, Nazarites, Encratites, Pilgrims, Flagellants, and similar Mosstroopers of Religion, whom Heaven yet turns to good account. This is the Superstition of the flesh: it promises the favour of its God on condition of these most useless and arbitrary acts; it dwells on the absurdness of externals.

However, in a later day, it goes to still more subtle refinements. The man does not mutilate his body, nor give up the most sacred of his material possessions: that was the Superstition of savage life. But he mutilates his soul; gives up the most sacred of his spiritual treasures: this is the Superstition of refined life. Here the man is ready to forego Reason, Conscience, and Love, God's most precious gifts—the noblest attributes of man—the tie that softly joins him to the eternal world. He will think against Reason, decide against Conscience, act against Love, because he dreams the God of Reason demands it. It is a slight thing to hack and mutilate the body, though it be the fairest temple God ever made, and to mar its completeness a sin; but to dismember the soul, the very image of God—to lop off the most sacred affections—to call Reason a Liar, Conscience a Devil's oracle, and to cast Love clean out from the heart,—this is the last triumph of Superstition, but one often witnessed, in all the three forms of Religion—Fetichism, Polytheism, Monotheism; in all ages before Christ—in all ages after Christ. This is the Superstition of the Soul. The one might be the Superstition of the Hero; this is the Superstition of the Pharisee.

A man rude in spirit must have a rude conception of God: he thinks the Deity like himself. If a Buffalo had a religion, his conception of Deity would probably be a Buffalo, fairer limbed, stronger and swifter than himself, grazing in the fairest meadows of Heaven. If he were superstitious, his service would consist in offerings of grass, of water, of salt; perhaps in abstinence from the pleasures, comforts, necessities of a bison's life. His Devil also would be a Buffalo, but of another colour, lean, vicious, and ugly. Now when a Man has these rude conceptions, inseparable from a rude state, offerings and sacrifices are natural: when they come spontaneously, as the expression of a grateful or a penitent heart, the seal of a resolution, the sign of Faith, Hope, and Love, as an outward symbol which strengthens the indwelling sentiment,—the sacrifice is pleasant, and may be beautiful. The child who saw God in the swelling and rounded clouds of a June day, and left on a rock the ribbon grass and garden roses as mute symbols of gratitude to the Great Spirit who poured out the voluptuous season; the ancient Pagan who bowed prone to the dust in homage, as the sun looked out from the windows of morning, or offered the smoke of incense at nightfall in gratitude for the day, or kissed his hand to the Moon, thankful for that spectacle of loveliness passing above him; the man who with reverent thankfulness or penitence offers a sacrifice of joy or grief, to express what words too poorly tell,—he is no idolator, but Nature's simple child. We rejoice in self-denial for a father, a son, a friend. Love, and every strong emotion, has its sacrifice: it is rooted deep in the heart of man. God needs nothing: he cannot receive; yet man needs to give. But if these things are done as substitutes for holiness—as *causes*, and not mere *signs* of reconciliation

with God—as means to coax and wheedle the Deity and bribe the All-Powerful,—it is Superstition, rank and odious. Examples enough of this are found in all ages. To take two of the most celebrated cases—one from the Hebrews, the other from a Heathen people. Abraham would sacrifice his son to Jehovah, who demanded that offering—Agamemnon his daughter, to angry Diana. But a Deity kindly interferes in both cases. The Angel of Jehovah rescues Isaac from the remorseless knife; a ram is found for a sacrifice. Diana delivers the daughter of Agamemnon, and leaves a hind in her place. No one doubts that the latter is a case of superstition most ghastly and terrible. A father murder his own child!—a human sacrifice to the Lord of Life! It is rebellion against Conscience, Reason, Affection—treason against God,—though Calchas, the anointed minister, declared it the will of Heaven. There is an older than Calchas who says, “It is a Lie.” He that defends the former patriarch, counting it a blameless and beautiful act of piety and faith performed at the command of God,—what shall be said of him? He proves that the worm of Superstition is not yet dead, nor its fire quenched, and leads weak men to ask, “Which then has most of Religion—the Christian who justifies Abraham, or the Pagan Greeks, who condemned Agamemnon?” He leads *weak* men to ask: the strong make no question of so plain a matter.

But why go back to Patriarchs at Anlis or Moriah? Do we not live in New England and the nineteenth century?—have the footsteps of Superstition been effaced from our land? Our books of theology are full thereof; our churches and homes not empty of it. When a man fears God more than he loves him; when he will forsake Reason, Conscience, Love—the still small voice of God in the heart—for any of the legion voices of Authority, Tradition, Expediency, which come of Ignorance, Selfishness, and Sin; whenever he hopes, by a poor prayer, or a listless attendance at church, or an austere observance of Sabbaths and Fast-days, a compliance with forms; when he hopes, by professing with his tongue the doctrine he cannot believe in his heart, to atone for wicked actions, wrong thoughts, unholy feelings, a six days’ life of meanness, deception, rottenness, and sin—then is he superstitious. Are there no fires but those of Moloch?—no idols of printed paper, and spoken wind?—no false worship but bowing the knee to Baal, Adonis, Priapus, or Cybele? Superstition changes its *forms*, not its substance. If he were superstitious who in days of ignorance but made his son’s body pass through the fire to his God, what shall be said of those who in an age of light systematically degrade the fairest gifts of man, God’s dearest benefaction?—who make his life darkness, death despair, the world a desert, man a worm, nothing but a worm, and God an ugly fiend who made the mass of men for utter wretchedness, death, and eternal hell? Alas for them!—they are blind and see not; they lie down in their folly. Let Charity cover them up!

II. OF FANATICISM.

There is another morbid state of the religious sentiment: it consists in its union with Hatred and other malignant elements of man. Here it leads to Fanaticism. As the essence of Superstition is Fear coupled with religious feeling, so the essence of Fanaticism is Malice mingling with that sentiment. It may be called HATRED BEFORE GOD. The Superstitious man fears lest God hate him: the Fanatic thinks He hates not him but his enemies. Is the Fanatic a Jew?—the Gentiles are hateful to Jehovah;—a Mahometan?—all are infidel dogs who do not bow to the prophet; their end is destruction. Is he a Christian?—he counts all others as Heathens, whom God will damn;—of this or that sect?—he condemns all the rest for their belief, let their life be divine as the prayer of a saint. Out of his selfish passion he creates him a God—breathes into it the breath of his Hatred; he worships and prays to it, and says, “Deliver me, for thou art my God!” Then he feels—so he fancies—inspiration to visit his foes with divine vengeance. He can curse and smite them in the name of his God. It is the sword of the Lord, and the fire of the Most High, that drinks up the blood and stifles the groan of the wretched.

Like Superstition, it is found in all ages of the world. It is the insanity of mankind. As the richest soils grow the weightiest harvests, or the most noxious weeds and the most baneful poisons; as the strongest bodies take disease the most sorely; so the deepest natures, the highest forms of religion, when once infected with this leprosy, go to the wildest excesses of desperation. Thus the fanaticism of the worshippers of one God has no parallel among idolaters and polytheists. There is a point in human nature where moral distinctions do not appear, as on the earth there are spots where the compass will not traverse, and dens where the sun never shines. This fact is little dwelt on by philosophers; still it is a fact. Seen from this point, Right and Wrong lose their distinctive character, and run into each other; Good seems Evil, and Evil Good, or both are the same. The sophistry of the Understanding sometimes leagues with appetite, and

gradually entices the thoughtless into this pit. The Antinomian of all times turns in thither, to increase his *faith* and diminish his *works*. It is the very cave of Trophonius; he that enters loses his manhood, and walks backward as he returns—his soul so filled with God, that whatever the flesh does, he thinks cannot be wrong, though it break all laws, human and divine. The fanatic dwells continually in this state. God demands of him to persecute his foes: the thought troubles him by day, and stares on him as a spectre at night. God, or his angel, appears to his crazed fancy, and bids him to the work with promise of reward, or spurs him with a curse. Then there is no lie too malignant for him to invent and utter; no curse too awful for him to imprecate; no refinement of torture too cruel or exquisitely rending for his fancy to devise, his malice to inflict; Nature is teased for new tortures—Art is racked to extort fresh engines of cruelty. As the jaded Roman offered a reward for the invention of a new pleasure, so the fanatic would renounce Heaven, could he give an added pang to Hell.

Men of this character have played so great a part in the world's history, that they must not be passed over in silence. The ashes of the innocents they have burned, are sown broadcast and abundant in all lands; the earth is quick with this living dust. The blood of prophets and saviours they have shed still cries for justice. The Canaanites, the Jews, the Saracen, the Christian, Polytheist, and Idolator—New Zealand and New England—are guilty of this. Let the early Christian, or the lingering Heathen, tell his tale; let the voice of the Heretic speak from the dungeon-racks of the Inquisition; that of the "true believer" from the scaffolds of Elizabeth—most Christian Queen; let the voices of the murdered come up from the squares of Paris, the plains of the Low Countries, from the streets of Antioch, Byzantium, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Damascus, Rome, Mexico—from the wheels, racks, and gibbets of the world; let the men who died in religious wars, always the bloodiest and most remorseless—the women, whom nothing could save from a fate yet more awful—the babes, newly born, who perished in the sack and conflagration of idolatrous and heretical cities, when, for the sake of religion, men violated its every precept, and, in the name of God, broke down his law, and trampled his image into bloody dust;—let all these speak, to admonish, and to blame.

But it is not well to rest on general terms alone. Paul had no little fanaticism when he persecuted the Christians—kept the garments of the men who stoned Stephen. Moses had much of it, if, as the story goes, he commanded the extirpation of nations of idolators, millions of men, virtuous as the Jews. Joshua, Samuel, David, had much of it, and executed schemes as bloody as a murderer's most sanguine dream. It has been both the foe and the auxiliary of the Christian church. There is a long line of Fanatics, extending from the time of Justin, reaching from century to century, marching on from age to age, with the banner of the Cross over their heads, and the Gospel on their tongues, and fire and sword in their hands. The last of that Apocalyptic rabble has not yet passed by—Let the clouds of darkness hide them! What need to tell of our own fathers?—what they suffered—what they inflicted? Their crime is fresh and unatoned. Rather let us take the wings of an angel and flee away from scenes so awful, the slaughter-house of souls!

But the milder forms of Fanaticism we cannot escape; they meet us in the theological war of extermination, in which sect now wars with sect, pulpit with pulpit, man with man. If one would seek specimens of Superstition, in its milder form, let him open a popular commentary on the Bible, or read much of that weakish matter which circulates in what men call, as if in mockery, good pious books. If he would find Fanaticism in its modern and more Pharisæic shape, let him open the "religious" newspapers, or read theological polemics. To what mean uses may we not descend! The spirit of a Caligula and a Dominic—of an Alva and Ignatius, stares at men in the street;—it can only bay in the distance; it dares not bite. Poor craven Fanaticism! fallen like Lucifer, never to rise again! Like Pope and Pagan in the story, he sits chained by the wayside, to grin and gibber, and howl and snarl, as the Pilgrim goes by, singing the song of the fearless and free, on the highway to Heaven, with his girdle about him, and his white robe on. Poor Fanaticism! who was drunk with the blood of the saints, and in his debauch lifted his horn, and pushed at the Almighty, and slew the children of God—he shall revel but in the dreamy remembrance of his ancient crime; his teeth shall be fleshed no more in the limbs of the living.

These two morbid states, just passed over, represent the most hideous forms of human degradation;—where the foulest passions are at their foulest work; where Malice, which a Devil might envy, but which might make Hell darker with its frown—where Hate and Rancour build up their organisations and ply their arts. In man there is a mixture of good and evil: "A being darkly wise and rudely great," he has in him somewhat of the

Angel and something of the Devil. In Fanaticism the Angel sleeps and the Devil drives. But let us leave the hateful theme.

III. OF SOLID PIETY.

The legitimate and perfect action of the religious sentiment takes place when it exists in harmonious combination with Reason, Conscience, and Affection. Then it is not Hatred, and not Fear, but LOVE BEFORE GOD. It produces the most beautiful development of human nature—the golden age—the fairest Eden of life—the kingdom of Heaven. Its Deity is the God of Love, within whose encircling arms it is beautiful to be. The demands it makes are,—to keep the Law he has written in the heart, to be good, to do good; to love man, to love God. It may use forms, prayers, dogmas, ceremonies, priests, temples, sabbaths, festivals, and feasts: yes, sacrifices if it will, as means, not ends—symbols of a sentiment, not substitutes for it. Its substance is love of God—its form, love of man—its temple, a pure heart—its sacrifice, a divine life. The end it proposes is,—to reunite the man with God, till he thinks God's thoughts, which is truth—feel God's feeling, which is Love—wills God's will, which is the eternal Right; thus finding God in the sense wherein he is not far from any one of us; becoming one with him, and so partaking the divine nature. The means to this high end are,—an extinction of all in man that opposes God's law, a perfect obedience to him as he speaks in Reason, Conscience, Affection. It leads through active obedience to an absolute trust, a perfect love—to the complete harmony of the finite man with the infinite God; and man's will coalesces in that of Him who is All in All. Then, Faith and Knowledge are the same thing; Reason and Revelation do not conflict; Desire and Duty go hand in hand, and strew man's path with flowers: Desire has become dutiful, and Duty desirable. The divine spirit incarnates itself in the man—the riddle of the world is solved. Perfect love casts out fear. Then, Religion demands no particular actions, forms, or modes of thought: the man's ploughing is holy as his prayer—his daily bread as the smoke of his sacrifice; his home sacred as his temple; his work-day and his Sabbath are alike God's day. His priest is the holy spirit within him; Faith and Works his communion of both kinds. He does not sacrifice Reason to Religion, nor Religion to Reason: Brother and Sister, they dwell together in love. A life harmonious and beautiful, conducted by Righteousness, filled full with Truth, and enchanted by Love to man and God—this is the service he pays to the Father of All. Belief does not take the place of Life. Capricious austerity atones for no duty left undone. He loves Religion as a bride, for her own sake, not for what she brings. He lies low in the hand of God—the breath of the Father is on him.

If joy comes to this man, he rejoices in its rosy light. His wealth, his wisdom, his power, is not for himself alone, but for all God's children; nothing is his which a brother needs more than he. Like God himself, he is kind to the thankless and unmerciful. Purity without, and Piety within;—these are his Heaven, both present and to come. Is not his flesh as holy as his soul—his body a temple of God?

If trouble comes on him, which Prudence could not foresee, nor Strength overcome, nor Wisdom escape from, he bears it with a heart serene and full of peace. Over every gloomy cavern, and den of despair, Hope arches her rainbow; the ambrosial light descends. Religion shows him that out of desert rocks, black and savage, where the vulture has her home, where the Storm and the Avalanche are born, and whence they descend to crush and to kill—out of these hopeless cliffs falls the river of Life, which flows for all, and makes glad the people of God. When the Storm and the Avalanche sweep from him all that is dearest to mortal hope, is he comfortless? Out of the hard marble of life the deposition of a few joys and many sorrows, of birth and death, and smiles and grief, he hews him the beautiful statue of Religious Tranquillity. It stands ever beside him, with the smile of heavenly satisfaction on its lip, and its trusting finger pointing to the sky.

The true religious man, amid all the ills of time, keeps a serene forehead and entertains a peaceful heart. Thus going out and coming in, amid all the trials of the city, the agony of the plague, the horrors of the thirty tyrants, the fierce democracy abroad, the fiercer ill at home—the Saint, the Sage of Athens, was still the same. Such a one can endure hardness—can stand alone and be content; a rock amid the waves, lonely but not moved. Around him the few or the many may scream their screams, or cry their clamours, calumniate or blaspheme: what is it all to him, but the cawing of the sea-bird about that solitary and deep-rooted stone? So swarms of summer flies, and spiteful wasps, may assail the branches of an oak, which lifts its head, storm-tried and old, above the hills; they move a leaf, or bend a twig, by their united weight. Their noise, fitful and malicious, elsewhere might frighten the sheep in the meadows;—here it becomes a placid hum; it joins the wild whisper of the leaves; it swells the breezy music of the tree, but makes it bear no acorn less.

He fears no evil; God is his armour against fate. He rejoices in his trials, and Jeremiah sings psalms in his dungeon, and Daniel prays three times a-day with his window up, that all may hear, and Nebuchadnezzar cast him to the lions if he will: Luther will go to the Diet at Worms, if it rain enemies for nine days running—"though the devils be thick as the tiles on the roof." Martyred Stephen sees God in the clouds. The victim at the stake glories in the fire he lights, which shall shine all England through. Yes! Paul, an old man, forsaken of his friends, tried by many perils, daily expecting an awful death, sits comforted in his dungeon. The Lord stands by and says, "Fear not, Paul; Lo, I am with thee to the world's end." The tranquil saint can say, "I know whom I have served. I have not the spirit of fear, but joy. I am ready to be sacrificed." Such trials prove the Soul as gold is proved. The dross perishes in the fire; but the virgin metal—it comes brighter from the flame. What is it to such a man to be scourged, forsaken, his name a proverb, counted as the offscouring of the world? There is that in him which looks down millions. Cast out, he is not in dismay—forsaken, never less alone. Slowly and soft the Soul of Faith comes into the man. He knows that he is seen by the pure and terrible eyes of Infinity. He feels the sympathy of the Soul of All, and says, with modest triumph, "I am not alone, for Thou art with me." Mortal affection may cease their melody; but the Infinite speaks to his soul comfort too deep for words, and too divine. What if he have not the Sun of human affection to cheer him? The awful faces of the Stars look from the serene depths of divine Love, and seems to say, "Well done!" What if the sweet music of human sympathy vanish before the discordant curse of his brother man? The melody of the spheres—so sweet we heed it not when tried less sorely—rolls in upon the soul its tranquil tide, and that same Word which was in the beginning, says, "Thou art my beloved son, and in thee am I well pleased." Earth is overcome, and Heaven won.

It is well for mankind that God now and then raises up a hero of the soul—exposes him to grim trials in the forefront of the battle—sustains him there, that we may know what nobility is in man, and how near him God; to show that greatness in the religious man is only needed, to be found—that his Charity does not expire with the quivering of his flesh—that this hero can end his breath with a "Father, forgive them!"

Man everywhere is the measure of man. There is nothing which the Flesh and the Devil can inflict in their rage, but the Holy Spirit can bear in its exceeding peace. The Art of the tormentor is less than the Nature of the suffering soul. All the denunciations of all that sat in Moses' seat, or have since climbed to that of the Messiah—the scorn of the contemptuous, the fury of the passionate, the wrath of a monarch and the roar of his armies,—all these are to a religious soul but the buzzing of the flies about the mountain oak. There is nothing that prevails against Truth.

Now in some men religion is a continual growth. They are always in harmony with God. Silently and unconscious, erect as a palm-tree, they grow up to the measure of a man. To them Reason and Religion are of the same birth. They are born saints—Aborigines of Heaven. Betwixt their idea of life and their fact of life, there has at no time been a gulf. But others join themselves to the Armada of Sin, and get scarred all over with wounds as they do thankless battle in that leprous host. Before these men become religious, there must be a change—well defined, deeply marked—a change that will be remembered. The saints who have been sinners tell us of the struggle and desperate battle that goes on between the flesh and the spirit. It is as if the Devil and the Archangel contended. Well says John Bunyan, "The Devil fought with me weeks long and I with the Devil." To take the leap of Niagara, and stop when half-way down, and by their proper motion reascend, is no slight thing, nor the remembrance thereof like to pass away.

This passage from sin to salvation—this second birth of the soul, as both Christians and Heathens call it—is one of the many mysteries of man. Two elements meet in the soul: there is a negation of the past—an affirmation of the future. Terror and Hope, Penitence and Faith, rush together in that moment, and a new life begins. The character gradually grows over the wounds of sin. With bleeding feet the man retreads his way, but gains at last the mountain-top of life, and wonders at the tortuous track he left behind.

Shall it be said that Religion is the great refinement of the world—its tranquil star that never sets? Need it be told that all Nature works in its behalf—that every mute and every living thing seems to repeat God's voice, Be perfect?—that Nature, which is the *out-ness* of God, favours Religion, which is the *in-ness* of man, and so God works with us? Heathens knew it many centuries ago. It has long been known that Religion—in its true estate—created the deepest welfare of man. Socrates, Seneca, Plutarch, Antoninus, Fenelon, can tell us this. It might well be so. Religion comes from what is strongest, deepest, most beautiful and divine; lays no rude hand on soul or sense; con-

demns no faculty as base. It sets no bounds to Reason but Truth—none to Affection but Love—none to Desire but Duty—none to the Soul but Perfection; and these are not limits, but the charter of infinite freedom.

No doubt there is joy in the success of earthly schemes. There is joy to the miser, as he satiates his prurient palm with gold; there is joy for the fool of fortune when his gaming brings a prize. But what is it? His request is granted; but leanness enters his soul. There is delight in feasting on the bounties of Earth, and the garment in which God veils the brightness of his face; in being filled with the fragrant loveliness of flowers, the song of birds, the hum of bees, the sounds of ocean; the rustle of the summer wind, heard at evening in the pine tops; in the cool running brooks, in the majestic sweep of undulating hills, the grandeur of untamed forests, the majesty of the mountain; in the morning's virgin beauty, in the maternal grace of evening, and the sublime and mystic pomp of night: Nature's silent sympathy—how beautiful it is!

There is joy—no doubt there is joy—to the mind of Genius, when thought bursts on him as the tropic sun rending a cloud; when long trains of ideas sweep through his soul, like constellated orbs before an angel's eye; when sublime thoughts and burning words rush to the heart; when Nature unveils her secret truth, and some great Law breaks, all at once, upon a Newton's mind, and Chaos ends in light; when the hour of his inspiration and the joy of his genius is on him, 'tis then that the child of Heaven feels a godlike delight;—'tis sympathy with Truth.

There is a higher and more tranquil bliss, when heart communes with heart; when two souls unite in one, like mingling dew-drops on a rose, that scarcely touch the flower, but mirror the heavens in their little orbs; when perfect love transforms two souls, either man's or woman's, each to the other's image, when one heart beats in two bosoms—one spirit speaks with a divided tongue; when the same soul is mutual in divided eyes,—there is a rapture deep, serene, heartfelt, and abiding, in this mysterious fellow-feeling with a congenial soul, which puts to shame the cold sympathy of Nature, and the ecstatic but short-lived bliss of Genius in his high and burning hour.

But the welfare of Religion is more than each or all of these. The glad reliance that comes upon the man; the sense of trust; a rest with God; the soul's exceeding peace; the universal harmony; the infinite within; sympathy with the soul of All—is bliss that words cannot pourtray. He only knows who feels;—the speech of a prophet cannot tell the tale—no, not if a seraph touched his lips with fire. In the high hour of religious visitation from the living God, there seems to be no separate thought; the tide of universal life sets through the soul. The thought of self is gone; it is a little accident to be a king or a clown, a parent or a child. Man is at one with God, and He is All in All. Neither the loveliness of nature—neither the joy of genius, nor the sweet breathing of congenial hearts, that make delicious music as they beat—neither one nor all of these can equal the joy of the religious soul that is at one with God, so full of peace that prayer is needless. This deeper joy gives an added charm to the former blessings;—nature undergoes a new transformation. A story tells that when the rising sun fell on Memnon's statue, it awakened music in that breast of stone. Religion does the same with nature. From the shining snake to the waterfall, it is all eloquent of God. As to John in the Apocalypse, there stands an angel in the sun; the seraphim hang over every flower; God speaks in each little grass that fringes a mountain rock. Then, even Genius is wedded to a greater bliss; his thoughts shine more brilliant when set in the light of Religion. Friendship and Love it renders infinite. The man loves God when he but loves his friend. This is the joy Religion gives—its perennial rest—its everlasting life. It comes not by chance; it is the possession of such as ask and toil, and toil and ask. It is withheld from none as other gifts. Nature tells little to the deaf, the blind, the rude. Every man is not a genius, and has not his joy. Few men can find a friend that is the world to them. That triune sympathy is not for every one. But this welfare of Religion—the deepest, truest, the everlasting, the sympathy with God, lies within the reach of all his sons.

STRAUSS'S LIFE OF JESUS,

EXAMINED BY

THEODORE PARKER.

PART SECOND.

WE will now mention only the death, and final scenes of the life of Jesus. Mr Strauss thinks he could not have so accurate a foreknowledge of the manner of his suffering and death, as the Evangelists would lead us to suppose. The prediction was written after the event. Jesus could not definitely have foretold his resurrection from the dead, for then the disciples would have expected the event. But after the crucifixion they anoint the body, as if it was to become the "prey of dissolution." When they repair to the grave, they think not of a resurrection; their only concern is, who shall roll away the stone from the mouth of the tomb. Not finding the body, they think it has been stolen. When the women mention the angels they had seen, it is idle talk to the disciples; when Mary Magdalene and two others assured the disciples they had seen the "risen Jesus," their words produced no belief. It is only when Jesus appears in person, and upbraids them for their unbelief, that they assert as a fact, what they would have foreknown if he had predicted it. A foreknowledge or prediction of this event was ascribed to Jesus after the result, not from any intention to deceive, but by a natural mistake. He thinks, however, that Jesus actually predicted his own second coming in the clouds of Heaven, the destruction of the Jewish state, and the end of the world; all of which were to take place before his contemporaries should pass away. Here, following the Wolfenbüttele Fragmentist, he says, there is no prophecy in the whole Bible so distinct and definite as this, and yet it is found obviously and entirely false. We attempt to fill up the great gulf between this prediction and the fact, and our hope of success shows how easy it must have been for the author of these predictions to suppose that soon after the destruction of the Jewish state—supposed to be the central point of the world—the whole earth should come to an end, and the Messiah appear to judge mankind.

John, who is supposed to have written later than the others, does not mention so distinctly these predictions, because they had not come to fulfilment as it was expected. Mr Strauss thinks Jesus at last saw that his death was inevitable, and designated the next passover as the probable end of his life, and while at table with his disciples gave them the bread and wine, either as the symbols of his body, soon to be broken by death, and of his blood soon to be shed; or as a memorial of himself. He considers as mythical the account of him going *three* times to pray, and repeating the same words at Gethsemane, as well as that of the angels' visit, and the bloody sweat.

Many of the circumstances which, it is related, accompanied the trial and crucifixion he sets aside as mythical additions borrowed in part from the Old Testament. He maintains that the supernatural appearances at the death of Jesus; the sudden and miraculous darkness; the resurrection of the bodies of the saints; the earthquake; and the rending of the veil—have all grown up in the mythical fashion. The latter is symbolical of removing the wall of separation between the Gentiles and Jews. He thinks it quite improbable the Jews would set a guard over the tomb, as it is not probable they had heard of the promise of Jesus to rise from the dead—a promise which the disciples themselves did not remember until after it was fulfilled. The Jews, he thinks, in later times,

pretended that Jesus did not rise from the dead, but that his disciples stole the body by night, secreted it, and then pretended he was risen; and the Christians, to counteract this statement, gradually formed the evangelical narrative, that the door of the tomb was sealed, and a guard set over it; but Jesus was raised, and to throw dust in the eyes of the people, the great national council bribed the soldiers to assent to a very improbable falsehood, that the disciples stole the body while they slept. But it is not probable a body of seventy men would condescend to such open wickedness, with the almost certain chance of detection.

He enlarges at great length, and with acuteness, and some "special pleading," which is not altogether rare in the book, on the confusion in the statements of the four Gospels concerning the time, place, and circumstances of the resurrection, and the several appearances of Jesus after that event, passing through closed doors, appearing under various forms, and, like a spirit, remaining with them but a short time, and then vanishing out of sight. But the fact of the resurrection itself, Mr Strauss says, involves difficulties, and cannot be admitted. We must then suppose, with the Rationalist, either that he was not dead, or that the resurrection did not take place. He accepts the latter part of the dilemma, and thinks the disciples were mistaken, led astray by the figurative passages in the psalms and prophets, which they erroneously referred to the Messiah. The testimony of the Gospels and the book of Acts, he says, is so inconsistent, contradictory and imperfect, that we can place no dependence upon it; and that of Paul, which is consistent with itself, and of great weight, only assures us of his own conviction that Christ rose and appeared to men, and even to himself. But Christ's appearance to Paul was entirely subjective, and there is no reason to believe he supposed Jesus had appeared to others in an objective manner, visible to the senses. Mr Strauss fancies the narratives originated in the following manner: The disciples, thinking the Messiah must remain for ever, thought he must have risen; next, they had subjective visions; then, in a high state of enthusiasm, they mistook some unknown person for him. Afterwards, as these disciples related their convictions, the story was enlarged, embellished, and varied, until it assumed the form of the present canonical and apocryphal Gospels. The ascension to heaven, which many have hitherto rejected as not trustworthy, is regarded by Mr Strauss as a myth, which derives its ideas from the histories and predictions of the Old Testament, and Jewish tradition, and with a particular reference to the alleged translations of Enoch and Elijah.

The author adds a "Concluding Treatise" to his critical work, "For the inward germ of Christian faith is entirely independent of critical investigations; the supernatural birth of Christ, his miracles, his resurrection and ascension to Heaven, remain eternal truths, however much their reality, as historical facts, may be doubted." All these he supposes are realised, not in an historical personage, but in the human race. Mankind have unconsciously projected out of themselves the ideal of a perfect man, an incarnation of God, a personification of morality and religion. This ideal has been placed upon Jesus, a man distinguished for great virtue and piety. But neither he nor any man ever did, or can, realise the idea; it must be realised in the race. The history of the miraculous conception, says one of the profoundest of the Germans, represents the divine origin of religion; the stories of his miracles, the independent power of the human soul, and the sublime doctrine of spiritual self-confidence. His resurrection is the symbol of the victory of truth; the omen of the triumph of the good over the evil hereafter to be completed. His ascension is the symbol of the eternal excellence of religion; Christ on the cross is the image of mankind purified by self-sacrifice. We must all be crucified with him, to ascend with him to a new life. The idea of devotion is the ground-tone in the history of Jesus; for every act of his life was consecrated to the thought of his Heavenly Father.

We can only glance at the contents of this concluding treatise. It gives a fundamental criticism of the Christology of the Orthodox, the Rationalists, of the Eclectics, of Schleiermacher, Kant, and De Wette, and the speculative theology of Hegel and his followers. He points out the merits and defects of these various systems, and concludes his work with an attempt to reconcile, in some measure, his own views of Christ with the wants of religious souls, and the opinions of others. He thus concludes: "Setting aside, therefore, the notions of the sinlessness and absolute perfection of Jesus, as notions that could not be realised perfectly by a human being in the flesh, we understand Christ as that person in whose self-consciousness the unity of the Divine and Human first came forth, and with an energy that, in the whole course of his life and character, diminished to the very lowest possible degree all limitations of this unity. In this respect he stands alone and unequalled in the world's history. And yet, we do not affirm that the religious consciousness, which he at first attained and proclaimed, can, in its separate parts, dispense with purification and farther improvement through the progressive development of the human mind."

Having thus given a patient and, we hope, faithful account of the principles, method, and most striking results of this celebrated work, it may not be amiss to point out some of the false principles which have conducted the author to his extreme conclusions, though we think their extravagance answers itself. We see no reason to doubt that he is a religious man *in his own way*; nay, he calls himself a Christian, and so far as his *life* abides the test, we know not why the *name* should be withheld. His *religion* and *life* may have the Christian savour, though his *theology* be what it is. We know there are fascinations which a paradox presents to daring souls, and we are told there is a charm, to a revolutionary spirit, in attempting to pull down the work which has sheltered the piety, defended the weakness, and relieved the wants of mankind for a score of centuries, when it is supposed to rest on a false foundation. Yet we doubt not that Mr Strauss is honest in his convictions, and has throughout aimed to be faithful and true. We cannot, therefore, as some have done, call him "the Iscariot of the nineteenth century;" we cannot declare him "inspired by the devil;" nor accuse him of the "sin against the Holy Ghost;" nor say that he has "the heart of leviathan, hard as a piece of the nether mill-stone." We judge no man's heart but our own. However, the erroneous principles which lead to his mistaken conclusions may be briefly glanced at.

1. He sets out, as he says, without any "presuppositions." Now, this is not possible, if it were desirable, and not desirable, if it were possible. But he has set out with presuppositions—namely, that the idea precedes the man, who is supposed to realise that idea; that many men, having a certain doctrine, gradually, and in a natural manner, refer this doctrine to some historical person, and thus make a mythical web of history. He presupposes that a miracle is utterly impossible. Again he presupposes—and this is an important feature of his system—that the ideal of holiness and love, for example, like the ideal of beauty, eloquence, philosophy, or music, cannot be concentrated in an individual. In a word, there can be no incarnation of God, not even of what, in a human manner, we call his love or holiness. We could enumerate many other presuppositions, but forbear. He explains his meaning in the controversial replies to his opponents, but does not satisfy us.

2. He passes quite lightly to the conclusion, that the four Gospels are neither genuine nor authentic. Perhaps it is not fair to enumerate this among his *presuppositions*, though we know not where else to place it; certainly not in the catalogue of *proofs*, for he adduces no new arguments against them; decides entirely from internal arguments, that they are not true, and were not written by eye-witnesses, and pays no regard to the evidence of Christian, heretical, and even heathen antiquity on some points in their favour. The genuineness of Paul's most important epistles has never been contested, and the fact of the Christian church stands out before the sun; but the convictions of the one and the faith of the other remain perfectly inexplicable, by his theory.

3. The book is not written in a religious spirit. It will be said a critical work needs not be written in a religious spirit, and certainly those works—and we could name many such—which aim at two marks, edification and criticism, usually fail of both. They are neither wind nor water; are too high for this world and too low for the next; too critical to edify, too hortatory to instruct. That anicular criticism, so common on this side of the waters, deserves only contempt. But a philosophical work should be criticised philosophically, a poetical work in the spirit of a poet, and a religious history in a religious spirit. The criticism of Schleiermacher and De Wette is often as bold, unsparing, and remorseless, and sometimes quite as destructive, as that of Strauss; but they always leave an impression of their profound piety. We will not question the religious character of Mr Strauss; a Christian like Dr Ullman, his own countryman, does not doubt it; others of his countrymen, in letters and conversation, inform us that his religious character is above reproach, and puts some of his opponents to shame.

4. His mythical hypothesis has carried him away. Fondness for theory is "the old Adam of theology," and Strauss has inherited a large portion of "original sin" from this great patriarch of theological errors—this father of lies. To turn one of his own war-elephants against himself, he has looked so long at mythical stories that, dazzled thereby, like men who have gazed earnestly upon the sun, he can see nothing but myths wherever he turns his eye—myths of all colours. This tendency to see myths is the *Proton Psuedos*, the first fib of his system. It has been maintained by many, that the Bible, in both divisions, contained myths. Some of his own adversaries admit their existence, to a large extent, even in the New Testament. But with them the myth itself not only embodies an *idea*, as Strauss affirms, but also covers a *fact*, which preceded it. Men do not make myths out of the air, but out of historical materials. Besides, where did they obtain the *idea*? This question he answers poorly. Shaftesbury long ago said, with much truth, that if a Hebrew sage was asked a deep question, he answered it by telling a story; but

the story, for the most part, had some truth in it. Strauss is peculiar in carrying his theory farther than any one before him; yet he is not always perfectly true to his principles; his humanity sometimes leave a little historical earth clinging to the roots of the tree, which he transplants into the cold thin atmosphere of the "Absolute." Taking the Bible as it is, says good Dr Ullman, there are three ways of treating it: We may believe every word is historically true, from Genesis to Revelation; that there is neither myth nor fable—and this is the theory of some supernaturalists, like Hengstenberg and his school; or with Strauss, that there is no historical ground which is firm and undeniably certain, but only a little historical matter, around which tradition has wrapped legends and myths; or finally that the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, always rests on historical ground, though it is not common historical ground, *nor is it so rigidly historical that no legendary or mythical elements have entered it.* The two former theories recommend themselves for their simplicity, but neither can be maintained; while the *third is natural, easy, and offends neither the cultivated understanding nor the pious heart.*

It is wonderful, we think, that some of the absurdities of the theory Mr Strauss supports have not struck the author himself. He reverses the order of things; makes the effect precede the cause; the idea appear in the mass, before it was seen in an individual. "As Plato's God formed the world by looking on the eternal ideas, so has the community, taking occasion from the person and fate of Jesus, projected the image of its Christ, and unconsciously the idea of mankind, in its relations to God, has been waving before its eyes." He makes a belief in the resurrection and divinity of Christ spring up out of the community, take hold on the world, and produce a revolution in all human affairs perfectly unexampled; and all this without any adequate historical cause. No doubt, theologians in his country, as well as our own, have attempted to prove too much, and so failed to prove anything. Divines, like kings, lose their just inheritance when they aspire at universal empire. But this justifies no man in the court of logic, for rejecting all historical faith. If there was not an historical Christ to idealize, there could be no ideal Christ to seek in history. We doubt if there was genius enough in the world in the first two, or the first twenty, centuries since Christ, to devise such a character as his, with so small an historical capital as Strauss leaves us. No doubt, we commit great errors in seeking for too much of historical matter. Christian critics, says De Wette, will not be satisfied with knowing as much respecting Christ as Paul and the apostles knew. No one of *them*, though they were eye-witnesses, had such a complete, consistent, and thoroughly historical picture of the life of Christ as we seek after. Many of the primitive Christians could scarcely know of Christ's history a tenth part of what our catechumens learn, and yet they were more inspired and better believers than we. It is much learning which makes *us* so mad; not the apostle Paul. But if we cannot *prove* all things, we can hold fast to enough that is good.

Mr Strauss takes the idea which forms the subject, as he thinks, of a Christian myth, out of the air, and then tells us how the myth itself grew out of that idea. But he does not always prove from history or the nature of things, that the idea existed before the story or the fact was invented. He finds certain opinions, prophecies, and explanations in the Old Testament, and affirms at once these were both the occasion and cause of the later stories, in which they re-appear. This method of treatment requires very little ingenuity on the part of the critic; we could resolve half of Luther's life into a series of myths, which are formed after the model of Paul's history; indeed this has already been done. Nay, we could dissolve any given historical event in a mythical solution, and then precipitate the "seminal ideas" in their primitive form. We also can change an historical character into a symbol of "universal humanity." The whole history of the United States of America, for example, we might call a tissue of mythical stories, borrowed in part from the Old Testament, in part from the Apocalypse, and in part from fancy. The British Government oppressing the Puritans is the great "red dragon" of the Revelation, as it is shown by the national arms, and by the British legend of Saint George and the Dragon. The splendid career of the new people is borrowed from the persecuted woman's poetical history, her dress—"clothed with the sun." The stars said to be in the national banner, are only the crown of twelve stars on the poetic being's head; the perils of the pilgrims in the Mayflower are only the woman's flight on the wings of a great eagle. The war between the two countries is only "the practical application" of the flood which the dragon cast out against the woman, &c. The story of the Declaration of Independence is liable to many objections, if we examine it *à la mode* Strauss. The congress was held at a mythical town, whose very name is suspicious—Philadelphia—brotherly love. The date is suspicious; it was the *fourth* day of the *fourth* month (reckoning from *April*, as it is probable the Heraclidæ and Scandinavians, possible that the aboriginal Americans, and certain that the Hebrews, did). Now *four* was a sacred number with the Americans;

the president was chosen for *four* years ; there were *four* departments of affairs ; *four* divisions of the political powers, namely—the people, the congress, the executive, and the judiciary, &c. Besides, which is still more incredible, three of the presidents, two of whom, it is alleged, signed the declaration, died on the *fourth* of July, and the two latter exactly *fifty* years after they had signed it, and about the *same hour* of the day. The year also is suspicious ; 1776 is but an ingenious combination of the sacred number, *four*, which is repeated *three* times, and then multiplied by itself to produce the date ; thus, 44×4 is equal to 1776, Q.E.D. Now, dividing the first (444) by the second (4), we have *Unity* thrice repeated (111). This is a manifest symbol of the national *oneness* (likewise represented in the motto, *e pluribus unum*), and of the national *religion*, of which the Triniform Monad, or “Trinity in Unity,” and “Unity in Trinity,” is the well-known sign ! ! Still farther, the declaration is metaphysical, and presupposes an acquaintance with the transcendental philosophy, on the part of the American people. Now the Kritik of Pure Reason was not published till after the declaration was made. Still farther, the Americans were never, to use the nebulous expressions of certain philosophers, an “idealotranscendental-and-subjective,” but an “objective-and-concrevito-practical” people, to the last degree ; therefore, a metaphysical document, and most of all a “legal congressional-metaphysical” document, is highly suspicious if found among them. Besides, Hualteperah, the great historian of Mexico, a neighbouring state, never mentions this document ; and farther still, if this declaration had been made and accepted by the whole nation, as it is pretended, then we cannot account for the fact, that the fundamental maxim of that paper, namely, the soul’s equality to itself—“all men are born free and equal”—was perpetually lost sight of, and a large portion of the people kept in slavery ; still later, petitions—supported by this fundamental article—for the abolition of slavery, were rejected by Congress with unexampled contempt, when, if the history is not mythical, slavery never had a legal existence after 1776, &c., &c. But we could go on this way for ever. “I’ll prate “you so eight years together ; dinners, and suppers, and sleeping hours excepted ; *it is the right butterwoman’s rank to market.*” We are forcibly reminded of the ridiculous prediction of Lichtenberg, mentioned by Jacobi : “Our world will by and by become so fine, that it will be as ridiculous to believe in a God as now it is to believe in ghosts ; and then again the world will become still finer, and it will rush hastily up to the very tip-top of refinement. Having reached the summit, the judgment of our sages will once more turn about ; knowledge will undergo its last metamorphosis. Then—this will be the end—we shall believe in nothing but ghosts ; we shall be as God ; we shall know that being and essence is, and can be only,—ghost. At that time the salt sweat of seriousness will be wiped dry from every brow ; the tears of anxiety will be washed from every eye ; loud laughter will peal out among men, for Reason will then have completed her work, humanity will have reached its goal, and a crown will adorn the head of each transfigured man.”

The work of Strauss has produced a great sensation in Germany, and especially in Berlin. It has called forth replies from all quarters, and of all characters, from the scurrilous invective to the heavy theological treatise. It has been met by learning and sagacity, perhaps greater than his own, and he has yielded on some points. He has retorted upon some of his antagonists, using the same weapons with which they assailed him. He has even turned upon them, and carried the war into their borders, and laid waste their country, with the old Teutonic war-spirit. We have never read a controversy more awful than his reply to Eschenmeyer and Menzel. Porson’s criticism of poor Mr Travis was a lullaby in comparison. But he has replied to Ullman,—a Christian in heart, apparently, as well as in theology,—as a child to a father. His letters to that gentleman are models for theological controversy. He has modified many of his opinions, as his enemies or his friends have pointed out his errors, and seems most indebted to Neander, Tholuck, Weisse, Ullman, and De Wette, not to mention numerous humbler and more hostile names.

His work is not to be ranked with any previous attacks upon Christianity. It not only surpasses all its predecessors in learning, acuteness, and thorough investigation, but it is marked by a serious and earnest spirit. He denounces with vehemence the opinion that the Gospels were written to deceive. There is none of the persiflage of the English deists ; none of the haughty scorn and bitter mockery of the far-famed Wolfenbuttel Fragmentist. He is much more Christian in expressing his unbelief than Hengstenberg and many others in their faith. We could wish the language a little more studied in some places. Two or three times he is frivolous ; but in general, the style is elevated, and manly, and always pretty clear. We do not remember to have met with a sneer in the whole book. In this respect it deserves a great praise, which can rarely be bestowed on the defenders of Christianity, to their shame be it spoken.

The work derives its importance not more from the novelty of its views, than from the fact that it is a concentration of objections to historical Christianity. Viewed in this light, its importance has by no means been exaggerated. It is sometimes said, had the work been published in England it would have been forgotten in two months; but no man who has read the book, and is familiar with the history of theology, ever believes such a statement. We should be glad to see the English scholars, who are to measure swords with a Strauss, as the Cudworths, Warburtons, Sherlocks, Lardners, and Clarkes, encountered their antagonists in other days, when there were giants among the English clergy.

“Tis no war as everybody knows,
Where only one side deals the blows,
And t’other bears ‘em.”

We have no doubt which side would “bear the blows” for the next five-and-twenty years, should any one be provoked to translate Strauss to a London public.

We cannot regard this book as the work of a single man; it is rather the production of the age. An individual raised up by God discovers a great truth, which makes an epoch, and by its seminal character marks the coming ages. But a book like this, which denotes merely a crisis, a revolution, is the aggregate of many works. Like Kant’s *Kritik*, it is the necessary result of the great German movement, as much so as Spinoza’s theological treatises were of the Cartesian principles; and, indeed, the position of Strauss is in many respects not unlike that of Spinoza. Both mark a crisis; both struck at the most deeply-cherished theological doctrines of their times. Before mankind could pass over the great chasm between the frozen realm of stiff supernaturalism, and lifeless rationalism, on the one side, and the fair domain of *free religious thought*, where the only *essential* creed is the Christian motto, “Be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect,” and the only *essential* form of religion is love to your neighbour as to yourself, and to God with the whole heart, mind, and soul, on the other,—some one must plunge in, devoting himself unconsciously, or even against his will, for the welfare of the race. This hard lot Strauss has chosen for himself, and done what many wished to have done, but none dared to do. His book, therefore, must needs be negative, destructive, and unsatisfactory. Mr Strauss must not be taken as the representative of the German theologians. Men of all parties condemn this work; and men of all parties accept it. You see its influence in the writings of Tholuck, De Wette, and Neander; men who have grown old in being taught and teaching. The liberal party has fallen back afraid of its principles; the stationary party has come forward, though reluctantly. The wonderful ability with which it is written, the learning, so various and exact, wherewith it is stored, are surprising in any one, but truly extraordinary in so juvenile an author; born 1808. For our own part, we rejoice that the book has been written, though it contains much that we cannot accept. May the evil it produces soon end! But the good it does must last for ever. To estimate it aright, we must see more than a negative work in its negations. Mr Strauss has plainly asked the question, “What are the historical facts that lie at the basis of the Christian movement?” Had he written with half this ability, and with no manner of fairness, in defence of some popular dogma of his sect, and against freedom of thought and reason, no praise would have been too great to bestow upon him. What if he is sometimes in error; was a theologian never mistaken before? What if he does push his mythical hypothesis too far; did Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, make no mistakes? Did they commit no sins? Yet Strauss, we think, has never cursed, and we are certain that he never burned, an opponent! We honour the manly openness which has said so plainly what was so strongly felt. We cannot say, as a late highly distinguished divine used to say, that we “should not be sorry to see the work re-published here,” because there is no general theological scholarship to appreciate its merits and defects. With many of his doctrines, as we understand them, especially his dogmas relative to God and immortality, we have no sympathy; but as little fear that they will do a permanent injury anywhere. We still believe our real enemies are “the Flesh and the Devil,” and that neither the philosophy of Hegel, nor the biblical criticism of the Germans, will ever weaken the popular faith in God or man, or the pure religion that mediates between the two. Strauss has thrown a huge stone into the muddy pool of theology, and it will be long before its splashing waters find their former repose and level. Let it not be supposed Strauss is an exponent of the German school of theology or religion, as it is sometimes unwisely urged. He is a single element in a vast mass. His work finds opponents in the leaders of the three great Protestant theological parties in Germany. The main body of the theologians there is represented by Schleiermacher, Tholuck, Neander, De Wette, and men of a similar spirit. Strauss is the representative of a small party. He is by no means the representative of the followers of Hegel, many of whom are opposed to him.

The whole book has the savour of Pantheism pervading it, as we think, using Pantheism in its best sense, if our readers can find a good sense for it. He does not admit a personal God, we are told, and, therefore, would not admit of a personal Christ, or incarnation of God. This, we suspect, is the sole cause of his aversion to personalities. But he nowhere avows this openly and plainly; we, therefore, only give it as our conjecture, though Tholuck openly calls him a Pantheist of the school of Hegel, defining that school "Atheistic;" while Ullman brings the same charge, but with much more modesty, asking men to translate it more mildly if they can.

We are not surprised at the sensation Mr Strauss has excited in Germany, nor at the number of replies which have been showered down upon him. Destruction always makes a great noise, and attracts the crowd, but nobody knows when the Gospels were published, and the world doubtless was in no great haste to receive them. It is fortunate the book has been written in the only country where it can be readily answered. We have no fears for the final result. Doubtless, some will be shaken in their weakly-rooted faith; and the immediate effect will probably be bad; worse than former religious revolutions with them. The Rationalists took possession of the pulpit, but unlike Strauss, says Mr Tholuck, they pulled down no churches. But we have no fear that any church will be destroyed by him. If a church can be destroyed by criticism, or a book, however pungent, the sooner it falls the better. A church, we think, was never written down, except by itself. To write down the true Christian Church seems to us as absurd as to write down the solar system, or to put an end to tears, joys, and prayers. Still less have we any fear, that Christianity itself should come to an end, as some appear to fancy; a form of religion, which has been the parent and the guardian of all modern civilisation; which has sent its voice to the ends of the world; and now addresses equally the heart of the beggar and monarch; which is the only bond between societies; an institution, cherished and clung to by the choicest hopes, the deepest desires of the human race, is not in a moment to be displaced by a book. "There has long been a fable among men," says an illustrious German writer, "and even in these days it is often heard; unbelief invented it, and little belief has taken it up. It runs thus: There will come a time, and, perhaps, it has already come, when it will be all over with this Jesus of Nazareth; and this is right. The memory of a single man is fruitful only for a time. The human race must thank him for much; God has brought much to pass through him. But he is only one of us, and his hour to be forgotten will soon strike. It has been his earnest desire to render the world entirely free; it must, therefore, be his wish to make it free also from himself, that God may be all in all. Then men will not only know that they have power enough in themselves to obey perfectly the will of God; but in the perfect knowledge of this, they can go beyond its requisitions, if they only will! Yea, when the Christian name is forgotten, then for the first time shall a universal kingdom of love and truth arise, in which there shall lie no more any seed of enmity, that from the beginning has been continually sown between such as believe in Jesus, and the children of men. But this fable can never be true. Ever, since the day that he was in the flesh, the Redeemer's image has been stamped ineffaceably on the hearts of men. Even if the letter should perish,—which is holy, only because it preserves to us this image,—the image itself must remain for ever. It is stamped so deep in the heart of man, that it never can be effaced, and the word of the Apostle will ever be true, 'Lord, whither shall we go? thou only hast the words of eternal life.'"

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