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With the respects of J. J. J.

STRAUSS'S NEW WORK ON THE LIFE OF JESUS.

Das Leben Jesu, für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet. (The Life of Jesus, adapted to the German People.) von David Friedrich Strauss. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus. 1864.

NEARLY thirty years have now elapsed since a "Life of Jesus" by David Frederic Strauss made its first appearance. We were at that time in Germany, and remember well the startling effect that it produced. There were not indeed wanting men who at once perceived, that the views which it set forth with such uncompromising fearlessness, were a natural consequence of principles of criticism which had been for a long time partially and perhaps unsuspectingly applied. But even those who were familiar with such principles and freely recognized them in relation to insulated points of the gospel history, had never fully realized to themselves the results with which they were pregnant, and were filled with a sort of terror when they saw all their possible applications gathered to a focus and urged home with remorseless consequentiality to their legitimate issue. Of replies to this alarming book there was no lack; but none of them, not even that of Neander, were felt to have effectually repelled the serious blow which it aimed at the old traditional trust in the strictly historical character of the evangelical narratives. Every ensuing contribution to the criticism of the New Testament which bore on it the stamp of solid learning and thorough honesty, though it might approach the subject from another point of view, moved in the same direction, and tended rather to confirm than to weaken the scepticism raised by Strauss. This was especially true of the Tübingen school of theology. The immediate effect was a general unsettling of opinion and a pervading sense of uneasiness. It was impossible for things to remain as they were. The old rationalism which, assuming the impossibility of miracle, had attempted to unite with this negative theory a literal acceptance of the facts recorded in the Gospels, had exhausted its resources, and was shewn by the unanswerable logic of Strauss to be more untenable and absurd than the simple, childlike faith which it had undertaken to replace. Only one of two courses now

remained: either to fall back into broad, self-consistent orthodoxy, which took things as they were written with unquestioning credulity; or else to go boldly forward in the path opened by Strauss and Baur, and develop the results which they had established, with courageous honesty into all their consequences. A perfect trust in truth and fearlessness of the world, such as few men possess, was indispensable to the adoption of the latter alternative. It was a trial of the spirits, and not many were equal to it.

From the storm of reproach and execration which assailed him on all sides, Strauss took shelter in studious privacy; and for many years, finding little encouragement to the prosecution of theological research, busied himself with pursuits of another though still kindred character, which bore valuable fruit in his biographies of Ulrich von Hutten and Reimarus. Meantime the world moved on, however theologians might wish to be stationary. The events of 1848 and 1849 had powerfully roused the popular mind of Germany; and the outbreak of the almost contemporary movements of the German Catholics on one hand, and of the Protestant Friends of Light on the other, shewed what a craving there was in all quarters for release from ecclesiastical bondage and freer religious development. Strauss from his retreat marked these ominous phenomena with thoughtful and not irreverent eye. Cautious and temperate in his political views, he felt with growing conviction, what he has so strongly expressed in the preface to his present work—that the country of the Reformation can only become politically free, to the extent that it has wrought out for itself a spiritual, religious and moral freedom.* He discerned the risk to which many minds were exposed from their inability to draw a clear line of separation between the permanent and the perishable in Christianity—of renouncing the spiritual substance with the historical form—or at least of oscillating continually between a wild unbelief and a spasmodic piety.† The result was a firm persuasion that it was a duty to come to the relief of this morbid condition of the popular mind. He had convinced himself that, owing

* "Wir Deutsche können politisch nur in dem Masse frei werden, als wir uns geistig, religiös und sittlich frei gemacht haben."—Vorrede, xx.

† Ibid. xviii.

to the wide diffusion of education, the people of Germany were prepared for the profitable entertainment of many questions, which might have been justly thought to be prematurely agitated a quarter of a century before. He had gained the experience, which has been constantly that of other teachers of religion,—that on spiritual topics where the premisses lie within every human consciousness, there is often a readier perception of deep, fundamental truth in simple and earnest men of the lowest class, than is to be found among their superiors in social position, whose minds are clouded by conventional prejudices, and not seldom darkened by the interposition of an useless mass of artificial book-learning between their inner vision and the eternal realities of the universe. In this purpose of bringing his views before the general public, he was encouraged by the warm sympathy of his brother, who, though himself a manufacturer, took a strong and intelligent interest in the theological controversies of the time, and was regarded by Strauss as no unfitting type of the middle-class intellect of Germany, fully competent to decide on the main points at issue between the conservative and the progressive schools. Before the publication of the present work, Rénan's *Vie de Jésus* appeared in France. The reception it met with furnished additional proof, that the time had come when the ancient limits of learned insulation might be broken through, and an appeal be safely made to the popular mind and heart. Beyond this general appeal from the verdict of a craft to the judgment of the world, the works of Rénan and Strauss have little in common.*

Strauss's first work was intended immediately for theologians. Some wished at the time that, like Bretschneider's *Probabilia*, it had veiled its heresies in Latin. From the task that it proposed to itself, it was essentially analytic and destructive, and it seemed to leave behind it a very negative result. It took the whole mass of gospel narratives as it found them, and subjecting them to the severest

* In one point they touchingly agree—in the dedications prefixed to each; one to the memory of a beloved sister, the other to that of a brother. In both we painfully miss the distinct recognition of a hope, which to us seems the only availing consolation in such cases. Yet both are affectionate in tone, and, we do not doubt, are genuine utterances of the heart—each strongly marked by the idiosyncrasy of character and race—that of Strauss, grave and earnest; that of Rénan, airy and sentimental.

critical test, it affirmed that it had succeeded in dissolving much that had been received as history, into legend and even into myth, of which the source could often be traced, and of which the aim was obvious. Like the lines of approach drawn round a beleaguered city, the hostile movement was from the circumference towards the centre—constantly advancing further and further, and breaking down one defence after another, till at last it seemed doubtful whether the inmost citadel itself would not be stormed and reduced to a ruin. There was something almost appalling in the imperturbable coolness and apparent recklessness of consequences with which Strauss pursued his work. But it was a work which had to be done. It was desirable to test the utmost force of criticism on the historical frame-work of Christianity. Dissent as we may from the author's conclusion, and even in cases where he leaves no way to any definite conclusion at all, it is impossible not to admire, in many sections of the book, the remarkable acuteness and skill with which a number of widely dispersed and scarcely appreciable indications are combined to throw light on the possible origin of a particular narrative. Though the general theory of Strauss, in the unqualified largeness of its earliest enunciation, must doubtless undergo important limitations, yet his first work will ever retain a high value, as opening the source from which many elements have been supplied to the present texture of the gospel history, and furnishing the student with a model of thorough critical investigation.

His new work has been written with quite another view. It is in no sense a revised edition of the first. If the object of the former was to decompose a multifarious whole into its constituent parts, the main design of the present volume is to reconstruct, by gathering up the residuary facts into a solid nucleus, and then attempting to explain how a mythic atmosphere has formed around it. It reverses the order of the foregoing process. It advances from the centre towards the circumference, making good its ground as it proceeds—striving to convey as distinct an impression of the origin and founder of Christianity as facts now ascertainable permit, and maintaining with calm earnestness throughout, that no results of historical criticism can affect the certainty of those eternal truths, or impair the influence of that beautiful life,

which make the gospel what it is—a possession for ever to mankind. This is evidently the aim of the book. No candid reader can dispute it. There are occasions on which we think he has overstrained his theory. We cannot accept all his assumptions without material qualification; and his own premisses appear to us to yield more positive and consolatory conclusions than he has himself drawn from them. But the volume before us, with all its deficiencies, is the clear expression of an honest, an earnest, and, we will add, a noble mind—a mind which has sought truth for its own sake, though on some vital points we feel strongly that it has missed it, and which has at least proved its own sincerity by cheerfully paying the penalty which truth's loyal service too constantly incurs. Strauss, in his preface, does not conceal his anxiety that his two works, as having different objects, should be kept perfectly distinct; and he has even left directions in his will, that in case a new edition of his former work should be called for, it should be faithfully reprinted, without any reference to the present volume, from the first edition, with only a few corrections from the fourth.*

The limits to which we are restricted, will prevent us from giving more than a summary outline of the plan and contents of this learned and suggestive work. After a rapid survey of successive attempts to write a "Life of Jesus"—beginning with Hess near a century ago, and terminating with Rénan and Keim †—Strauss proceeds to determine the criteria of authenticity, and to inquire how far they are satisfied by any extant testimony to the Gospels. He decides, that in their present form they furnish no evidence at first hand. They are the embodiment of a cumulative tradition, carrying down with it some written memorials of particular discourses and transactions from a very early date. He shews how credulous and uncritical were the earliest witnesses to the books that form our actual canon

* Vorrede, xiii.

† *Die Menschliche Entwicklung Jesu Christi* (The Human Development of Jesus Christ), a very interesting inaugural address on accepting the chair of Theology at Zurich, December 17, 1860; much commended by Strauss, and furnishing, in the warm devotional sentiment with which it envelops the person of Christ, a not unwelcome relief from the somewhat chilling influence of his own more negative views.

—Irenæus and Tertullian, and even the more learned and philosophical Origen and Eusebius. Fidelity to simple fact, even after the desire to harmonize the four evangelists had awakened something like a critical spirit, was constantly overpowered in their minds by dogmatic or practical considerations—by the wish to extract a moral or establish a conclusion. This was the spirit of their age. They were conscious of no wrong in yielding to it. The examination of Papias's account of the origin of Matthew's and Mark's Gospels, proves that the works referred to by him could not have been identical with those which we now possess under the same names. Indeed, the preposition *κατά*—according to—hardly allows direct authorship. In like manner the indication in Luke's preface of many contemporary records of Christ's ministry, and the evident desire which both the Gospel and the Acts betray, of reconciling the opposite tendencies of the Jewish and the Pauline schools, presuppose a later period for the composition of both those books than is reconcilable with their having proceeded in their present form from a companion of the apostle Paul. Contrary to the opinion which he once held, Strauss has yielded to the arguments of Baur, and is now convinced that the apostle John cannot have been the author of the fourth Gospel. He ascribes the tenacity with which Schleiermacher and some other eminent men have clung to the opposite view, rather to sentiment than to critical proof, and thinks it had its source in strong reaction against the old rationalism which was supposed to find its chief support in the Synoptical Gospels. Only in the Epistles of Paul, and in the Apocalypse which he regards as the work of the apostle John, does Strauss recognize any works of direct apostolic origin in our present canon. Having upset the earlier dates which the old apologists had attempted to fix, he does not pretend to find any more definite lower down. We gather from the general tenor of his criticism, that he supposes our four Gospels to have assumed their present form some time in the earlier part of the second century. With the notions now prevalent in the Christian world, this may appear distressingly vague. But can those who complain, satisfactorily establish anything more certain? We want evidence, not declamation. When we consider how these narratives have been composed, of what materials they consist, through

what changes of form they have passed, how gradually they have in all probability been accumulated, and how little anything like formal publication, in our sense of the word, can be predicated of them, till their authoritative recognition by the Catholic Church towards the close of the second century—it is obvious that the assignment of a precise date to the authorship of any one of them, is altogether out of the question. By taking this broad though vague ground, from which there is as yet no final verdict of criticism to warn him off, Strauss gains time and space for that free development of tradition and its consequences, in which he finds a natural solution of many perplexing enigmas in the gospel history. Possibly he may carry his theory too far in this direction, as he certainly on some points overstrains its application; but he is at least more self-consistent than Ewald, who agreeing to the full with Strauss in an absolute renunciation of the miraculous, cuts off by his limitation of the date of the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John, all possibility of accounting without violence for its introduction into the narrative of the New Testament.* Notwithstanding this free treatment of the written documents of Christianity, Strauss distinctly admits that a full and living stream of tradition poured itself into them, which bore along with it the new spirit of Christ,—vivid impressions of the most salient features of his personality, and authentic records of his most remarkable words and acts—and with such a penetrating and diffusive power, wherever it spread, that it “created a soul,” to use a fine expression of Milton’s, “under the ribs of death,” and deposited far and wide over the exhausted soil of heathenism the elements of a higher faith and a nobler life. We have often thought we could trace a wonderful providence in the apparently defective medium through which Christ has been revealed to us;—not set

* Most unnecessarily, on more occasions than one, Strauss seems to us to have explained away a very probable fact into the exposition of a mere idea. Can anything be more fanciful than his interpretation of Luke’s statement, that Jesus, in consequence of the unbelief of his own kindred, transferred his residence from Nazareth to Capernaum, where he met with a more cordial reception—as a symbolical announcement of the rejection of Christianity by the Jews, and its acceptance by the heathen? (p. 121). There is to us also something equally unreal in his comparison of the Sermon on the Mount with the Sinaitic legislation (p. 124), though this may have been suggested to him by his strong persuasion that, according to the Messianic conceptions of that age, the Christ was to be a second Moses.

forth in clear and definite outline, with every feature exactly delineated, and every light and shade filled up—a presentment which would have exhausted by at once satisfying the imagination,—but disclosed to us in transient glimpses of ineffable sweetness and surpassing majesty, which require the co-operation of our own highest thought to interpret and complete them, and make the Christ in whom is our deepest trust, the creation in part of God's own spirit within us. What Christ planted in the world, was not a dogma nor a form, but a living word, which had its root in his own life, and carried with it his own spirit. It propagated itself under God's blessing, but through human agencies, over all the earth, imbibing a flavour from the various soils which nourished it, and taking a new colour from changing skies. We mark its earliest growth in the Galilean records of Matthew. We observe how its vital juices sprout into luxuriant tendrils and put forth leaves and blossoms in Paul and Luke. We see it bending with purple clusters in John. There is a sense in which the fourth Gospel, while deeply tinged with the ideas of the time, may still be said to present us with the most genuine expression of the spirit of Christ, because it exhibits the highest point of organic development within the New Testament; though it may not have been written by the apostle whose name it bears, and though many of its contents may not correspond to historical fact.

“The Johannan Gospel,” writes Strauss (p. 143), “with its image of Christ, attracts more sympathy from the present generation than the Synoptical with theirs. These, written out from the quiet heart of undoubting faith in the primitive society (for, in their conception of the person and being of Christ, there is comparatively little difference between the liberal Judaism of the first, and the tempered Paulinism of the third Gospel), found a natural response in the equally sure and quiet trust of the centuries of faith. The former, with its restless striving to reconcile a new idea with the existing tradition—to represent as an objective faith, what it grasped subjectively as certain truth—must be better suited to the temper of a time, whose faith is no longer a tranquil possession, but an incessant struggle, and that would fain believe more than it yet properly can. In reference to the impression which this side of its influence makes on our present Christianity, we might call the Gospel of John, the romantic Gospel, though in itself it is anything but a romantic

production.* The unrest, the intense sensitiveness, which in the believer of to-day result from his effort, amid the new views which irresistibly force themselves on him, still to keep firm hold of his ancient faith—proceeded, on the contrary, in the evangelist, from his endeavouring to raise the old tradition to the height of his new ideas, and mould it into accordance with them; but the restlessness and the effort, the flickering before the eye, the wavering in the outline of the image so produced, is on both sides the very same; and hence it is precisely towards this Gospel that the modern Christian feels himself especially drawn. The Johannean Christ, who in his self-delineations continually, as it were, overdoes himself, is the counterpart of the modern believer, who to be a believer must be ever in like manner overdoing himself. The Johannean miracles, which are resolved into spiritual signs, and yet at the same time exhibit the extreme form of outward miracle, which are reported and attested in every way, and yet are not to be regarded as the true ground of faith—are miracles and yet no miracles; people ought to believe them, and yet believe without them: just as this half-hearted age seeks to do, which wears itself out in contradictions, and is too worn and spiritless to attain to clear insight and decisive speech in religious things.”

There is much truth in these words, but not the whole truth. They do not do full justice to the very case which they so forcibly put. No doubt we have in the fourth Gospel a vivid expression of the endeavour to reconcile the simple, popular trusts which are transmitted to us in the three first, with a philosophic conception of God's relation to the universe which at that time pervaded with its subtle influence the whole upper region of thought throughout the Greco-Roman world. But it was not all unrest; it was not interminable struggle. In those wonderful chapters, from the 13th to the 17th, which are the highest utterance of the Johannean Gospel, the problem has its solution. In love and trust, in oneness of affection and endeavour with the omnipresent God, in self-surrender to the Parent Mind through the heart's deep sympathy with the holiest human manifestation of filial obedience—the troubled spirit finds at last the rest and peace for which it has yearned. And so it will be in the final issue of this agitated and questioning

* The allusion is to the distinction between the classical and the romantic schools, familiar to all who are acquainted with the history of German literature in the early part of the present century.

age of ours. When the battle between science and faith, between historical traditions and the religion of the inner consciousness, has been fought out, and their mutual relationship has been adjusted; the spirit of Christ will survive these controversies of the intellect, and disengaged at length from artificial obstructions and gratuitous difficulties, will descend with all its power into the human soul, and fill it with a profounder faith and a holier love.*

The somewhat tentative character of Strauss's first book and its large application of the mythic principle, that on the image of Christ, as presented to us in the Gospels, some of the most striking features had been impressed by the Messianic assumptions of the primitive Church,—left on the reader's mind a painful doubt whether the author recognized any historical Christ at all, and whether what we had been accustomed to accept as such, was not to a large extent a product of the imaginative enthusiasm of the first believers; or, to put it in the briefest form, whether, instead of Christ's having created the Church, the Church had not rather created Christ. The supposition, conceived in this broad, unqualified way, is so preposterous that it furnished those who were eager to find in the work not what it might contain of truth, but where it could be most effectively assailed, a ready and obvious point of attack. It is only justice to Strauss to say, that his mature thoughts embodied in the present volume, afford no ground for imputing to him so wild an extravagance. He affirms most distinctly not only the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth, but the wonderful effect of his personality in introducing the greatest spiritual revolution in the history of the human race. What he contends for is simply this: that the image of that personality has not been conveyed to us through perfectly transparent media; and that though the features are sufficiently distinct to enable us to verify the individual, they have been blended in their transmission with the deep subjective influence of the recording mind. Before we condemn this view, we must first shew that with a thoroughly honest criticism we are able to escape it. That Jesus was born

* How searching are these words of the great Augustine! "Væ animæ audaci, quæ speravit si a te recessisset, se aliquid melius habituram. Versa et reversa in tergum et in latera et in ventrem, et dura sunt omnia. Tu Solus requies."—*Confess. Lib. vi. c. 16.*

and bred of humble parentage in Nazareth of Galilee ; that he was a hearer of John, and received baptism at his hands ; that he commenced the career of an independent religious reformer in Galilee, sharing in the general Messianic expectations of his time ; that he penetrated to the spiritual substance of the law, and believed that in the coming age its outward form would be abolished for ever ; that he attached followers to himself from his own rank in life, and preached to multitudes repentance and faith, awakening into consciousness the higher life that was slumbering in them ; that he waged an unsparing war with the formalism and hypocrisy of the professed guides and instructors of the people, and gave his interest and sympathy in preference to publicans and sinners ; that the essence of his teachings is condensed in the Sermon on the Mount, in innumerable parables, and in occasional words that escaped from the fulness of his inmost spiritual being in varied intercourse with the world,—all summed up in the two great commandments of love to God and love to man, of which his whole life was a living impersonation ; that, though he foresaw the fate which awaited him from direct encounter with an irritated and malignant priesthood at Jerusalem, this did not deter him from resolutely pursuing his prophetic career till its close ; that, betrayed by one of his own followers, he fell into the hands of his enemies, and was executed ignominiously by the Roman authorities on the cross ; that notwithstanding the dismay and the dispersion which this event immediately produced among his disciples, they nevertheless after a season recovered their confidence and hope, and firmly believed in his resurrection from the dead and his continued presence and visitation from the heavenly world ;—these are facts which Strauss clearly recognizes as the historic frame-work of the evangelical narrative, and as the basis of his further speculations respecting their accompaniments. He thinks that in consequence of being so far above the ideas of his age and country, Jesus has been often misunderstood by those who heard him ; and that we are therefore justified in interpreting the general tenor of his instructions by the highest and most spiritual utterances recorded of him ; that, for instance, we have probably a truer reflection of his spirit in some of the parables peculiar to the Pauline Gospel of Luke than in

others which occur in Matthew's, and bear evident marks of the Judaic narrowness of its original materials. He believes that we can trace a spiritual growth in the mind of Jesus, and that the consciousness of his Messianic mission did not take possession of him all at once,—that it first becomes distinctly conspicuous about the time of the transfiguration. Having once acquired the conviction that he had been chosen by God to fulfil the Messianic work, it was only a natural consequence that Jesus should apply to himself, and expect to find realized in himself as God's instrument for a great purpose, the several predicates that were attached by universal belief to his office. In this part of his life, however, it is especially difficult to disentangle what he may actually have said about himself, from the stronger and ampler language respecting the Messiah then current among the Jews, which later faith assumed that he must have used, and therefore unhesitatingly applied to him. Enough—he was profoundly sincere in his conviction, courageous and ready for self-sacrifice in carrying it out; and if the admission implies that there was a certain tinge of enthusiasm in his character, he possessed this quality in common with some of the purest and noblest spirits that have adorned the human race; nor is it in any wise incompatible with a providential vocation and a divine life. Such we gather to be Strauss's impression of the historical Jesus.

But in this history there are two elements—one which we have just described, probable in itself and consistent with the known laws of matter and mind; another, intermingled with it, which transcends those laws and stands out as an exceptional case in the history of the world. Strauss's theory of the universe (of which we shall have to say a word or two by and by) precludes him from admitting the possibility under any imaginable circumstances of such occurrences as would constitute the latter element. The problem, therefore, which he has to solve, is to account for the copious infusion of this element into every part of a history which contains so much of the highest truth and has left so profound an impression on the subsequent course of human affairs. His explanation is the following: that assuming the traditional facts of Christ's actual life as their basis, it was the object, first of the preachers of the gospel, and afterwards of those who reduced our earliest records to

writing, to establish on that basis a conclusive argument that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ or expected Messiah, the Son of David, the second Moses, the Son of God ; and that the working of this strong purpose, blended with intense conviction, on the traditional materials subjected to it in a mental atmosphere already deeply charged with foregone conclusions, evolved more and more, as the actual facts receded into further distance, the mythical halo which has invested the whole narrative with a supernatural character. If Jesus were the Messiah, then all the passages of the Old Testament which had a Messianic import, and all the expectations to which the current interpretations of them had given rise, must have had their fulfilment in his person and his life ; and this assumption, ever present to the mind of the evangelists, moulded unconsciously the loose and fluctuating mass of oral tradition into the form in which we now possess it, and mingled with it elements that had their source in the fervid faith of the believing mind. This is what has been called the mythic theory of Strauss. The old rationalistic school, including Eichhorn and Paulus and not wholly excluding Schleiermacher himself, disbelieved equally with Strauss the possibility of the strictly miraculous ; but they attempted by various expedients to explain it away from a narrative which they accepted in the main as historical. Strauss saw the futility of this method, and the violence which it did to the plainest rules of exegesis ; but he attained the same object of accounting for the introduction of the miraculous, by carrying down the Gospels to a later date, and ascribing it to the imperceptible growth of tradition.

It becomes necessary here, for the sake of the English reader, to define a little more exactly the idea conveyed by the word myth, when used in this sense. Heyne was one of the first who shewed that the myth was a necessary form of thought in the earlier stages of human development. While language is yet imperfectly furnished with abstract terms, and the imaginative are ascendant over the reasoning faculties, ideas struggling for utterance clothe themselves in an objective shape and find expression in narrative and personification. Heyne made a distinction between conscious and unconscious fiction ; and regarded the latter alone as properly a myth. In this sense a myth has been called the

spontaneous expression in a historical form of the indwelling idea of a community. Since Heyne's time the subject has been more scientifically developed by George in his essay on "Myth and Legend."* In legend, according to him, there is always at bottom some fact, however much it may have been subsequently overgrown by the wild offshoots of the imagination. A myth, on the contrary, fills up with its own creations from the first—imagining what must have been—the absolute vacancy of the past. But in the proper myth, as in the proper legend, according to this interpretation of them, whatever fiction they may involve is unconscious, is unintentional. With the progress of the intellect, however, and a clearer perception of the distinction between a fact and an idea, this primeval unconsciousness becomes no longer possible. Fiction is still practised, but it now justifies itself by its intention, that of inculcating a moral or enforcing a truth. The literary conscience of antiquity was much laxer in this respect than our own. The line between fiction and history was far less distinctly recognized. If a good end could be served, no hesitation was felt in assuming a false name to recommend a work, and in arbitrarily combining and interpolating the actual facts of history to bring out more effectually the impression intended to be produced. The centuries preceding and following the birth of Christ, abounded in works of this description. It was almost a characteristic of the age. The late F. C. Baur was the first theologian of standing and authority who ventured boldly to assert the occurrence of this practice within the limits of the New Testament, as an element towards the solution of the complicated question of the relative credibility of the evangelists. It was with him an unavoidable consequence of the conclusions at which he had arrived respecting the origin and composition of the fourth Gospel. Indeed his clear and forcible reasonings reduce us to this dilemma; we must either admit the authenticity and trustworthiness of John, in which case the Synoptics fall at once in value, as shewn to be constantly in error; or else, assuming the three first Gospels to exhibit the primitive Pales-

* *Mythus und Saga: Versuch einer wissenschaftlichen Entwicklung dieser Begriffe und ihrer Verhältnisses zum christlichen Glauben.* Berlin, 1837. Legend is an inadequate, and in reference to its etymology, an inaccurate rendering of *Saga*, for which there is no exact equivalent in English.

tinian tradition and John to have used their materials, we must allow that he has handled them, in many instances at least, with a freedom that deprives them of all proper historical character. No third course seems possible. Strauss has embraced apparently in their whole extent the views of Baur on this subject. He describes the Johannean Gospel as another Apocalypse, projecting its images not, like that of the apostle whose name it has assumed, on the thunder-clouds of the future, but on the quiet wall of the past (p. 156). He has been compelled, too, under the same influence, to use the word myth in a much wider sense than that to which it had been restricted by Heyne and George, including conscious as well as unconscious fiction. In its application to the evangelical narratives, he considers the only distinction of importance to lie between the *historical* and the *ideal*, from whatever source the latter may proceed.

"In this new form of the Life of Jesus, I have," he says, "chiefly in pursuance of the indications of Baur, allowed more scope than formerly to the supposition of conscious and intentional fiction; but I have not on that account thought it necessary to employ another term. Rather in reply to the question, whether even the conscious fictions of an individual can properly be called myths, I must, even after all that has been written on the subject, still say: by all means, so far as they have found credence, and passed into the tradition of a people or a religious party; for this is at the same time a proof that they were fashioned by their author not simply at the instance of his particular fancy, but in harmony with the consciousness of numbers. Every unhistorical narrative, however it may have arisen, in which a religious community finds an essential portion of the holy foundation on which it rests, inasmuch as it is an absolute expression of the feelings and conceptions which constitute it what it is, is a myth; and if Greek mythology is concerned in separating from this wider definition of myth, a narrower one which excludes the idea of conscious fiction, critical, on the other hand, as contrasted with orthodox theology, has an interest in embracing under the general conception of myth, all those evangelical narratives to which it assigns a purely ideal significance."—P. 159.

The mythic principle so understood Strauss applies to the explanation of the second of the two elements which we have described as entering into the composition of the Gospels. The earliest evangelists preached and wrote to shew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ; and the course

of their argument, with the kind of proofs on which they chiefly insisted to sustain it, was powerfully influenced by the conception through which they habitually realized to themselves the Messianic character and office—whether as the Son of David, the Son of God or the Incarnate Word. The devout Jew of that age firmly believed that the Messianic era was at hand. His exalted faith threw its own glowing imagery on the sacred pages of the law and the prophets; so that wherever he opened them, whether he lighted on history or poetry or precept, the mystic interpretation in which he had been trained, enabled him to discern some foreshadowing of him that was to come. The Christian had convinced himself that he was already come in Jesus; and consequently all those passages of the ancient Scripture, in which he had been accustomed to find the clearest indications of the future deliverer of Israel and mankind, he assumed without doubting, as God was true, must have their fulfilment in his person and life. What men are persuaded they must see, we know as a rule that they will see, even when present appearances are against them; but when this enthusiastic conviction operates not on contemporary facts, but on a continually receding tradition, it inevitably overpowers the objective by the subjective, and envelopes the history of the past in a hazy atmosphere of imaginative feeling. Without adopting Strauss's theory in all its details, and strongly questioning some of his assumptions, truth nevertheless compels us to admit, that of many statements in the Gospels, after thoroughly analyzing and comparing them, the origin and character are best explained on the supposition that this mythic principle was largely concerned in producing them.

This side of the history of Jesus, Strauss has brought out in a series of mythic groups, in each of which he endeavours to discover the formative idea which gave birth to it; in other words, what Messianic assumption has invested the simple historical nucleus with a character of its own. In the first of these mythic groups relating to the birth of Jesus and the communication of his supernatural powers, three views are clearly traceable which must have originated in different conceptions, and are incapable of perfect reconciliation with each other, though they are blended to some extent in our existing Gospels. We have first the

account of the descent of the Spirit at his baptism, which is probably the oldest view; then two narratives, in Matthew and in Luke, of his conception by a virgin under divine influence, which are inconsistent with each other; and lastly, the doctrine of the word made flesh in John, who omits the genealogies, and has no allusion to Christ's having come into the world in any other than the ordinary way. His birth at Bethlehem, with the miraculous accompaniments of the star and the heavenly host, and the adoration of the magi and the shepherds,—the murderous jealousy of Herod, the flight into Egypt, and the presentation in the Temple,—incidents which it is utterly impossible to weave together into a self-consistent narrative, and which, strange and startling as they were, do not appear to have exercised the slightest effect on thirty ensuing years of tranquil obscurity,—we can hardly doubt were assumed to have occurred, because certain passages referring to the Messianic advent in the Old Testament were believed to require them, and because they were such as antiquity, Jewish and heathen, constantly associated with the entrance of great men into the world. Strauss has instituted a parallelism between the life of Moses and that of Jesus which is to us novel, and which we think he has somewhat overstrained. Both, however, were deliverers; both effected the emancipation of their people through sore trials and temptations; and both, according to the popular belief, ran a risk of perishing in infancy. This last incident often occurs in the legendary memorials of the heroes of the world. It is told of Augustus by his freedman Julius Marathus, in the broad daylight of Roman civilization, and in an age contemporary with Christ.* The relations of Jesus with the Bap-

* Suetonius, Octavianus c. 94. It had been announced a few months before the birth of Augustus, that a citizen of Velitræ (to which his family belonged) should become the ruler of the world; whereupon the Senate being alarmed, issued a decree that no child born in that year should be reared. We had marked this passage some time ago as forming a parallel to the story of the murder of the innocents, and noticed, what Strauss has omitted to mention—that the language used is identical with that in which Suetonius in another part of his book, and Tacitus in his History, describe the Messianic expectation of the Jews. The following is the prophecy about Augustus: “Velitris, antiquitus tactâ de celo parte muri, responsum est, ejus oppidi civem quondamque rerum potiturum.” Of the Jewish belief Suetonius thus writes: “Esse in fatis, ut eo tempore, Judæa profecti rerum potirentur” (Vespas. c. 4); and Tacitus in the very same words: “Profectique Judæa rerum potirentur” (Hist. v. 13).

tist and with his earliest followers have probably, according to Strauss, been tinged in the later conceptions of them with something of a mythic hue. The acknowledgment of his superiority by the former, could not have been so clear and decided from the first as is represented; otherwise the disciples of the Baptist would not have continued to form a separate sect, nor would Christ's own ministry have first taken independent ground when the Baptist had been silenced by being cast into prison. With regard to his disciples, Christ is described as summoning them at once, and the call (to give a greater air of authority to his words) as having been immediately obeyed. In both cases, probably, the effect was gradual. The result only is given. What had preceded it is passed over. The development of these two relationships—the first with his forerunner, the second with his followers—forms the subject of two separate mythic groups in this part of Strauss's exposition of the life of Jesus. Less difficulty will generally be felt in accepting the accounts of the temptation and the transfiguration as mythical; for few thoughtful theologians of any school can now for a long time past have seriously treated them as historical. A conflict with the Evil One is the fundamental idea pervading the whole ministry of Christ; and a symbolical representation of it would form a natural introduction to the history of his public life. So, again, Moses and Elias had prepared the way for the gospel; and besides the current belief that the old prophets would reappear in the days of the Messiah, it was a fitting consecration of the last and most trying period of his ministry, when death was awaiting him and all worldly hopes were about to be extinguished in the blood of the cross, that his great predecessors should be seen to be associated with him in glory, and that the voice from heaven should once more be heard pronouncing him the Beloved Son. In these transactions we have two other mythic groups. It is unnecessary to go through the entire series. We would simply remark, that in those passages of the life of Jesus which record the exertion of miraculous power, the theory of the author assumes its strongest expression and most uncompromising application.

Strauss's philosophical system precludes his recognizing the strictly miraculous in any sense. Its utter impossibility is an assumption which he carries with him *ab initio* to the

criticism of the evangelical narrative ; and it is an assumption so deeply rooted in his first principles of belief, that no accumulation of outward testimony could overcome it, any more than it could make him accept a logical contradiction. His theory, therefore, leaves him no alternative but to eliminate the miraculous from the history as something necessarily untrue. He starts from this premiss ; and all his reasonings are in harmony with it. His book is self-consistent throughout. With him the phenomenal universe is an ultimate fact, carrying its cause and principle within itself. There is nothing, and we can know nothing, beyond it. He would not, of course, deny that there may hereafter be an evolution of new and unexpected results from laws and agencies already in operation ; but those laws and agencies, once clearly ascertained, themselves furnish, in his view, the limit to any further development of phenomena that can be conceived. Any power not already contained in the phenomenal, that could control its course and infuse a new element of life into the growth of the universe, he would disown as a gratuitous assumption. His belief, if we understand him correctly, is limited to the phenomenal alone, and does not extend to any power extraneous and antecedent to the phenomenal.

Every theory of the universe must start from some assumption : the question is, whether the assumption which admits or that which excludes benevolent intelligence and righteous will as the root and sustaining principle of the universe, is most in accordance with the only analogies that can guide us in a matter so entirely beyond our experience, and best satisfies the instinctive belief, the spontaneous trust, the devout yearning which, if the voice of our collective humanity be not the utterance of a falsehood, must indicate some corresponding object in reality. It is not our intention to argue this question with Strauss. It is one too vast and deep to be discussed within the limits of the present paper, and belongs in fact rather to philosophy than to theology. We notice it here only to mark with distinctness the point where our own views diverge widely from those of the author, which, though not essential to his historical criticism, nevertheless underlie it throughout, and give to his conclusions the cold and negative character that need not of necessity belong to them. The religious philosophy implied

in this book, which, we again say, should be considered something apart from its historical criticism, seems to us essentially pantheistic, and at war with the deepest heart of the religion of whose history it is the exposition. Take away the belief in a Living God who can be approached in prayer and has communion through his omnipresent Spirit with the human soul ; take away the sense of our personal relation to a Personal God—the child's sense of kindred with an Everlasting Father, which gives the hope of an undying life in Him ; take away the trust, that the love and the worth and the beauty which shew themselves in things perishing and phenomenal, are an influx from an exhaustless Source which is at once within and beyond them ; and what remains that deserves the name of religion—to carry home the words of Jesus to the inmost recesses of the heart, or to explain the power and sanctity of his own life? We feel, therefore, a much stronger objection to the philosophic theory which prevents our author's admission of the miraculous—that is, of the intrusion of any power from without into the phenomenal—than to the historical criticism which shews that in any particular case the report of the miracle has probably had a mythic origin. We will even add, that were criticism to succeed in demonstrating that not one miracle recorded in the New Testament was historically true, with a better religious philosophy put under that criticism and tempering its results, our faith would receive no shock, and our trust in the great truths of Christianity would be as strong as ever. The difficulty that we experience in wholly giving up the miraculous, is not a religious, but a critical one. Not a few of the miracles of the New Testament, it is true, may, we think, not unreasonably be considered as the product of tradition, interpreting literally the poetic imagery of Isaiah,* and assuming that the wonderful works of Elijah and Elisha must have been repeated by Messiah himself. But allowing the utmost for this source of the miraculous, there still remains so large an amount of extraordinary curative influence, explicable by no laws at present accessible to us, interwrought with the inmost substance of the history of Jesus, that if we attempt to separate it, the very texture of

* "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." (Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.)

the narrative is destroyed ; and if we suppose it altogether the creation of a pious fancy, so sharp a blow would be inflicted on the credibility of even the great fundamental outlines of the history, that we could hardly tell whether we were dealing with any reality at all. Our faith in Christ's word and work does not depend, we are free to confess, on any alleged miraculous attestation in their favour, but on our inward experience of their truth and power ; we should believe in them just as firmly, if it could be proved that not a single miracle had ever been wrought : but we wish to save the character of the narrative through which they are conveyed to us ; and taking our stand on the earliest and most authentic Palestinian traditions, which have probably been preserved to us in Matthew, and partly, perhaps, in Mark,—we have never yet met with any critical process which could entirely extrude what has at least the semblance of miracle, and leave even the ground-work of a credible history behind. What the consistent anti-supernaturalist has to shew is this—how he can divest the person of Jesus of all miraculous influence attaching to it, and yet leave as large a residuum of positive history as Strauss himself accepts as the basis of his theory. John the Baptist was in the first instance as much the object of Messianic expectation as Jesus, and for some time their two ministries appear to have occupied independent spheres ; yet no traditions of supernatural power have gathered round the person of the former. We find it difficult, therefore, to believe that gifts of some extraordinary kind, displayed chiefly in curative effects, and involving also deep spiritual insight, were not possessed by Jesus—a result of the peculiar organization with which he was originally endowed ; and that these formed, as it were, the *punctum saliens* of primitive fact out of which the whole mass of mythic and legendary amplification naturally grew, as they may at first have been the providential means of exciting and securing the attention of some whom more spiritual influences would not so readily have reached. Obscurity is cast over this subject by the vague meaning attached to the word *miraculous*. Scarcely two persons use it in the same sense. No one of any philosophical culture, whatever his religious theory, ever supposes God to act without law. Law springs out of the very nature of mind. The more perfect mind is, the more

surely it is obedient to law, as the condition of harmonious and self-consistent action,—involving in its effects all the difference between a *kosmos* and a *chaos*. But it does not, therefore, follow that the deepest laws of the infinite working can be seized by a finite intelligence, or are even contained as yet within the limits of the phenomenal. The idea of progress and development which the past history of our planet irresistibly forces on us, implies the continual accession of something new, which, as it transcends the actual, the actual is not of itself competent to originate. Out of the vast, unexplored possibilities of the spiritual, which enfold and pervade and underlie the phenomenal, influences at times may, and (if the world is to advance) must issue, which contradict the results of experience, and limit the universality of laws which a premature generalization had accepted as final. It is this occasional intrusion of the spiritual into the phenomenal, which we suppose people mean in general to express when they speak of the miraculous. No doubt the disposition to believe in such intrusion (which is in itself significant, as forming a part of the natural faith of the human soul) has led constantly to its gratuitous supposition, and, in ages when there was no science, assumed its presence in cases which further inquiry shewed were resolvable into laws uniformly in operation around us. The number of such cases, it must be confessed, has been regularly on the decrease with the progress of science. Nevertheless, after every deduction on this account, phenomena are still on record, supported by unexceptionable testimony (testimony, the rejection of which would subvert the foundations of all history), and inexplicable by any laws which science can define, for the solution of which we must go to something beyond the phenomenal as yet known to us. Every one at all acquainted with the history of religion, or, if the reader so pleases, of superstition (for the two histories are closely interwoven with each other), is well aware how constantly every fresh outbreak of the religious life, especially after a long suppression in formality and indifference, has been accompanied by some mysterious and unaccountable phenomena. Our own generation has witnessed them. The miracles ascribed to St. Bernard are reported on more direct testimony than can be alleged for those of the Gospels. All such cases we would have subjected to the seve-

rest scrutiny, and left to rest each on its appropriate evidence, apart from any theory. They will probably be found to contain a large mixture of delusion and self-deception with some unaccountable reality at bottom—linking our human nature, here and there, amid the tangled web of the actual, with dim, mysterious agencies which are slumbering as yet in the bosom of the Infinite, and of which only at the rarest intervals we catch a passing glimpse. This is a subject on which no man will venture to dogmatize. It is the truest philosophy to hold the mind in candid and reverent suspense. The extreme devotion of the present age to the physical sciences confines its interest and belief to the ascertainable and phenomenal, and indisposes it to any recognition of the vaguer realities of the spiritual. We only desire to enter our protest against the narrow and one-sided philosophy which would shut up all possibility within the limits of law reducible to scientific formulas, and exclude the great Parent Mind from all direct action on the condition of his human family.*

The logical rigour with which Strauss carries out the consequences of his system, and his determination to explain every word and every act which appear to him not to come within the range of the strictly historical, in accordance with its pervading principle, have blinded him in some cases to the moral beauty and significance of the narrative, and the deep spiritual intuitions which, amidst errors of scriptural interpretation, have filled Christ's words with enduring light. His theory binds his faculties as with a spell, and keeps him intent on exploring the dim traces of rabbinical refinement and mysticism, when with a mind

* There is a superficial philosophy current in some quarters, that will probably treat with derision the conceded possibilities of the foregoing paragraph; that accepts without difficulty, by the aid of certain traditional formulas, all the miracles of the Old and New Testament, as exceptional cases (peculiar and limited to them) in the order of the world, and yet scouts as weak and irrational credulity every attempt to reduce such cases to deeper but constant laws, and bring them into harmony with the facts of universal history. To the consideration of such persons, who, to be consistent, should believe more or believe less, we commend the following wise and seasonable words, ascribed (we have reason to know, on the best authority) to one of the first mathematicians of the age: "What I reprobate is, not the wariness which widens and lengthens inquiry, but the assumption which prevents or narrows it; the imposture theory, which frequently infers imposture from the assumed impossibility of the phenomena asserted, and then alleges imposture against the examination of the evidence." Preface to a book entitled, "From Matter to Spirit," p. xxix.

more open and erect he could not have failed to bring more prominently into view that remarkable feature of the gospel history—the sympathy, if we may so express it, of its miraculous elements with the moral life of Christ himself, glowing with the same warm hues of human tenderness and love, breathing the same deep tone of devout trust and aspiration, as if the common and the miraculous of the record grew out of the same spiritual root. This may be no sufficient proof of the strictly historical character of these narratives, but it attests at least the intensity of the impression under which they were conceived, and shews how the spirit of Christ had entered into and moulded anew the minds that consorted with him, and handed down the living tradition of his personal presence which has taken shape and consistency in our present Gospels. The predominance of this moral and religious element is the great distinction of the canonical from the apocryphal Gospels, and a proof of the fine spiritual tact of the primitive Church which so clearly separated them.

We shall notice only two instances of what appears to us a certain logical narrowness in Strauss. In commenting on the beautiful words about the resurrection, Matt. xxii. 51, 52; Mark xii. 26, 27; and Luke xx. 37, 38 (pp. 259, 260), he sees no force, as De Wette does, and as we do, in the inference drawn by Christ from the pregnant expression, “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,” clenched by the sublime universalism peculiar to Luke—*πάντες γὰρ αὐτῷ ζῶσιν*—“for all live unto him.” We may admit that the exegesis adopted by Christ in this passage was a rabbinical one, and that the words taken by themselves furnish no direct proof of the doctrine associated with them. But Strauss himself discerns an evidence of Christ’s greatness in the new spirit with which he read the old scripture, shewing him to be a prophet, though no interpreter; and it is surprising to us that one who can see and acknowledge all this, should not also feel the depth and force of the spiritual intuition which perceived at once there could be no death for the soul in God, and, truer than the ancient words in which it found utterance, was the revelation of an eternal reality to the world. The other passage is the story of the raising of Lazarus. We are constrained by internal and external evidence to believe with Strauss that this narrative cannot be

historical. We cannot else understand how an event of such importance, affecting the most intimate friends of Jesus, could have been so entirely passed over without the remotest allusion by the Synoptical Gospels. We think there is great force in Strauss's reasons for regarding it as an embodiment in this concrete form of the doctrine, that the Word is in himself, *ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ*—"the resurrection and the life." But in his rigid development of this idea, and in his anxiety to shew how it has influenced every part of the narrative, he loses all sense of that exquisite tenderness and pathos which would seem to have so entirely possessed the mind of the evangelist, that in the glow of composition he forgets the divinity of his subject, and is completely carried away by his human sympathies, and in individual expressions falls into dissonance with his general theme. Strauss, like some other critics, more logical than his author, is driven to harsh interpretations to bring him into harmony with himself. The betrayal of deep emotion at the grave, conveyed by the words, *ἐνεβριμήσατο, ἔταραξεν, ἐμβριμώμενος* (John xi. 34, 38), he understands of the indignation of Jesus at the insensibility of the bystanders to the greatness and power of the present Logos. The whole context, however, shews that the writer meant something very different, and permitting his human traditions of Christ to overpower for the moment the hypothesis of his divinity, has described with uncommon beauty the struggle in the mind of Jesus with the strength of his natural affections. That this is the true rendering of the passage is evident from the subjoined *τῷ πνεύματι* and *ἐν ἑαυτῷ*, which qualify the original force of the verb *ἐμβριμάομαι*, and from the single word *ἐδάκρυσεν* which furnishes a key to the whole.

As John has added some things not contained in the Synoptics, so he has strangely omitted others which are pre-eminently characteristic of them. There is no curative effect more constantly recorded in the three first Gospels than the expulsion of evil spirits, while no instance of it occurs in the fourth. Strauss's explanation of this peculiarity is at least plausible and entitled to consideration. Reported cases of this kind were common in that age all over the world. Josephus and the sophists make frequent mention of them. And something analogous is said to be

met with to this day in the East. Strauss thinks that the great moral power of Jesus, and the reverence which his presence inspired, might exercise a healing influence on persons liable to the affections that were popularly ascribed to demoniacal possession. This was in perfect harmony with the popular persuasion respecting him. We know there were then regular exorcists by profession both among the Jews and the heathens. But this class of persons had already fallen into disrepute at the commencement of the second century; and Strauss finds an indication of the later origin of John's Gospel in the exclusion from its pages of all cures of this kind, which it would have been no longer regarded as consistent with the dignity of the incarnate Word to ascribe to him.

After the foregoing exposition of his theory, it is hardly necessary to add that Strauss does not believe in the historical fact of the resurrection of the body on the third day, nor, we fear we must add, in individual immortality. Individuals, like all other phenomena, according to his view of things, are transient and perishable. Only the primal idea which evolves and develops itself in and through them, is eternal. He exposes with great acuteness the complexities and inconsistencies of the several evangelical narratives, and shews that they exhibit traces of two perfectly distinct traditions of the appearances of the risen Jesus—one dreamy and phantom-like, the other, and probably the later, hardened into the distincter outlines of corporeal manifestation. He thinks that the apostles and their associates fled on the event of the crucifixion into Galilee; and that hence arose the tradition that Christ first manifested himself to them amid the scenes of his early ministry, in fulfilment of his promise to meet them there. It took more time, in his opinion, than is allowed by our present Gospels, for the full growth of the conviction that he had risen from the dead, had appeared to his first disciples, and was still spiritually present with his church. The minuter specifications of time and place and particular appearance—three, eight and forty days, the Galilean mountain, the walk to Emmaus, the closed chamber at Jerusalem, the shore of the Sea of Tiberias—he considers to be altogether the product of a later tradition. All idea of resuscitation after an apparent death, which was a favourite resource of the old rationalists, and

which appears from his posthumous papers to have been entertained by Schleiermacher himself, is rejected by Strauss unconditionally, as inconsistent with the best attested facts of the case. What became of the mortal remains of Jesus there are no means, he thinks, of our ever knowing. The belief in the resurrection of Christ he regards with Ewald as a result of the intense hopes and longings of the disciples, tradition magnifying dim and uncertain rumours, and the words of Messianic promise working with a foregone conclusion on fervid and enthusiastic minds. But this explanation does not appear to us, any more than that of Ewald, sufficient to explain the extraordinary fact in the origin of the new religion which five words of Tacitus have impressed in indelible characters on the page of universal history—*repressaque in præsens—rursus erumpebat*. What was the cause of that wonderful change in the mind of Paul which made the spiritual world a reality to him? His own words imply (1 Cor. xv. 5—8) that the same appearances which convinced him that Jesus was risen from the dead, had convinced others before him. And what was the effect of that conviction? It transformed their whole mind and life. The disciples *before* and the disciples *after* the death of Jesus (an event which might have been expected wholly to crush the nascent faith, and in the first instance seemed actually to do so) were completely different men; *before*, doubting, timid and carnal; *after*, bold, confident and spiritual. Nor was the effect limited to them. Through them, a new light entered the world, a new hope brightened the horizon of our planet. Immortality, which had been the floating dream of a speculative few, became the steadfast trust of multitudes. The earliest literature and art of the Christians, their simple hymns and the rude frescoes which adorned their tombs, touchingly shew how the future beyond the grave, to which friends and kindred had already passed, was to them a nearer and more vivid reality than the troubled and persecuted present in which they lived on earth. And this has been the animating principle of Christianity throughout its subsequent diffusion over the earth, marking a new era in the spiritual development of our race,—the assurance of a wider and more glorious future for the immortal soul. The origin of this new conviction we can trace back to a definite period in past history associated

with the traditions of Christ. And can we account for it without the supposition of some fresh infusion from the spiritual into the phenomenal? Can that which renovated the world have grown out of the world? Could death develop life? We may never be able to give an objective precision to our conception of the cause. It is involved in deepest mystery. But we think Baur was nearer to the truth than either Ewald or Strauss with all their elaborate explanations, when of the impression—which transformed the mind of Paul and of all who with him were engaged in evangelizing the world,—which linked invisible by a living bond with visible things, and constituted the firm, immovable basis of the whole superstructure of the future church—he declared, as the result of a long life of profound and fearless inquiry, he did not believe that we should ever by any psychological analysis be able to give a satisfactory account. And the deep conviction produced in our mind by the contemplation of these historical phenomena is this—that as in relation to the present world the welcome reception of Christ's spirit and the experience of its happy effects are an evidence of the eternal truth which flowed in it,—so, by whatever means it may have been first infused into the tide of human thought, the firm hold which the doctrine of immortality has had on the mind of civilized men ever since the days of the apostles, the response that it has met with, the unfaceable mark which it has left on literature, philosophy and art, and the way in which it has contributed to harmonize and round off into a consistent whole, our conceptions of God and providence and human life,—are proof conclusive that a doctrine which possesses such enduring vitality and draws its nourishment from the deepest sources of humanity, can be no other than the voice of God, and must have its certain counterpart in some invisible reality.

One satisfaction at least we can derive from this work of Strauss. It shews us the utmost that we have to fear from hostile criticism. We now know the worst. Never were the earliest records of our faith subjected to a more rigorous and searching scrutiny. Never were the possible elements of truth and falsehood sifted with a more suspicious and unsparring hand. The author has done his work with a cold-blooded courage and determination. No lingering affectior

has blinded the clearness of his intellectual vision. No prejudice of the heart has hindered him from seeing the bare, simple fact involved in any dubious narrative. And now—bating his religious philosophy, which is something quite extraneous to his historical criticism—what, after all, is the result? What great principle of conduct, what consolatory trust of humanity, is weakened—that would have stood on a firmer basis and been surrounded with clearer evidence, had we still continued to take the whole mass of the gospel history as historical truth, and had no one ever thought of separating myth and fact? We have still authentic indication of the earliest workings of the greatest moral revolution that has taken place in the world; and we have glimpses, so original that they must be true, of the wonderful personality which introduced it, and the more stimulating, the more spiritually creative, for the very reason that they are glimpses. We can still trace the first swelling and shooting forth of the prolific seed which has impregnated the world with a new life. We feel to this day that we are possessors of the same deep consciousness and the same aspiring trust which originated those great changes, and unites us with them in one unbroken continuity of spiritual life. Now, as then, it is through the heart and conscience of believing man that God speaks to our world. As we trace back the great stream of human thought through the ages to its source, we observe how it is enriched at a particular point by a sudden accession of moral and spiritual strength; and that alone would prove the intervention of some great inspiring mind, were the result of modern criticism on ancient books more destructive than it really is—and would still have proved it, had those books never existed at all, or been entirely swept away in the persecution of Diocletian. We are thankful indeed for their preservation as they are; but their chief value to us is the witness which they bear to the regenerating influence of a spirit which could only have issued from some great and holy mind, and through that mind from God himself. For the grandest of human trusts is the presence of a Living God in history, suggesting the highest thoughts and noblest impulses that animate it, and guiding them to distant issues, which the very souls through which they worked, did not anticipate and could not conceive.

We have remarked in an earlier part of this paper, that Strauss does not do justice to the resources of his own theory. It is more conservative than he allows it to be. His philosophy has marred the applications of his criticism. He remarks (p. 624), with a cold desolateness of tone which sometimes chills the reader in his pages, that the dispersion of the mythic from a narrative does not restore the historical; and that we know less of the actual Jesus of Nazareth than of any great man of antiquity—less, for example, than we know of Socrates. Even if we confine ourselves to the intellectual and objective life, which is all that the criticism of Strauss here contemplates, this statement is certainly overdone. It is not more difficult to trace the characteristic features of the man Jesus through the different media by which it is transmitted to us in the three first Gospels and the fourth, than it is to form an idea of the peculiar idiosyncrasy of Socrates from the widely different representations of Xenophon and Plato. But if we descend into the deeper life of the soul, into the region of affection and sympathy, where the truest evidence of personality is to be found,—then we say the advantage is altogether on the side of Christ, and we have proofs of love and reverence and the transforming influence of a great and genial soul in the diversified conceptions of the apostolic tradition, such as the records of the Socratic school are unable to supply. Even the mythic may here be said to cumulate the evidence; for it could only spring from a depth of impression and an intensity of feeling, going down to the very sources of the moral life, which the cold admiration of Athenian intellect was impotent to produce.

Strauss remarks, that only one side of our humanity is fully exemplified in the person of Christ—that which connects us with God and the religious life; while the industrial, the political, the scientific and the artistic elements, which are so indispensable to the progress of our race, are all wanting. This is true, no doubt; but he should have added, that the spiritual element which is so perfectly revealed in Christ, is essential to the growth of all the rest, and in every human being of every class and in every age is the source of inward peace and the principle of a real sanctification of the life. When the soul is once placed, as it is by the spirit of Christ, in a right relation towards God, the great

conversion of humanity is effected ; it is put in the path of healthful self-development ; and the qualities which may yet be needed to complete the full proportions of our nature, may be left to arrange themselves organically around this central germ, through the free working of our collective faculties guided by the results of experience. In a fine passage (p. 625), which we have not left ourselves space to quote, Strauss does ample justice to Christianity, and places Jesus in the first rank of those who have contributed to develop the ideal of humanity.

We cannot close this volume, strongly as on some points we have expressed our dissent, and notwithstanding our painful sense of the serious deficiencies of its religious philosophy, without a strong feeling of respect for the author, not only for his learning and ability, which none will dispute, but also for his courage and truthfulness, his moral earnestness, and his general candour towards those who are opposed to him. With all its faults and extravagances, for no theory finds its true limits all at once, his book will leave its permanent mark on the theology of the future. It has fixed one or two points in advance, from which it will henceforth be impossible to go back. What we have most to complain of is a certain one-sidedness, which the author no doubt identifies with completeness and consequentiality. On all points he makes it too much an absolute question of Yes or No. He therefore shews on all occasions far more toleration for the old thorough-going orthodox than for those who, cautiously feeling their way towards a wider truth, stop short of the sweeping results at which he has himself arrived. Our own modification of his theory would doubtless bring us under the censure which he pronounces on all who seek their rest in a *juste milieu*. We can only say we have striven to imitate him, where he is most worthy of imitation—in his love of truth—by giving utterance simply and without reserve to the conviction that has been produced in us by the perusal of his book, and by some previous years of thought and study on the same subject. For the rest, we regard with no slight suspicion all violent disruption from the faith and hope which have guided and consoled the best and wisest of our race through long thousands of years ; and we have yet to learn that truth must always be sought in one of two contradictory extremes.

