

RA1606

THE OPINIONS

OF

PROFESSOR DAVID F. STRAUSS,

AS EMBODIED IN HIS LETTER

TO THE BURGOMASTER HIRZEL, PROFESSOR ORELLI,
AND PROFESSOR HITZIG, AT ZURICH.

WITH

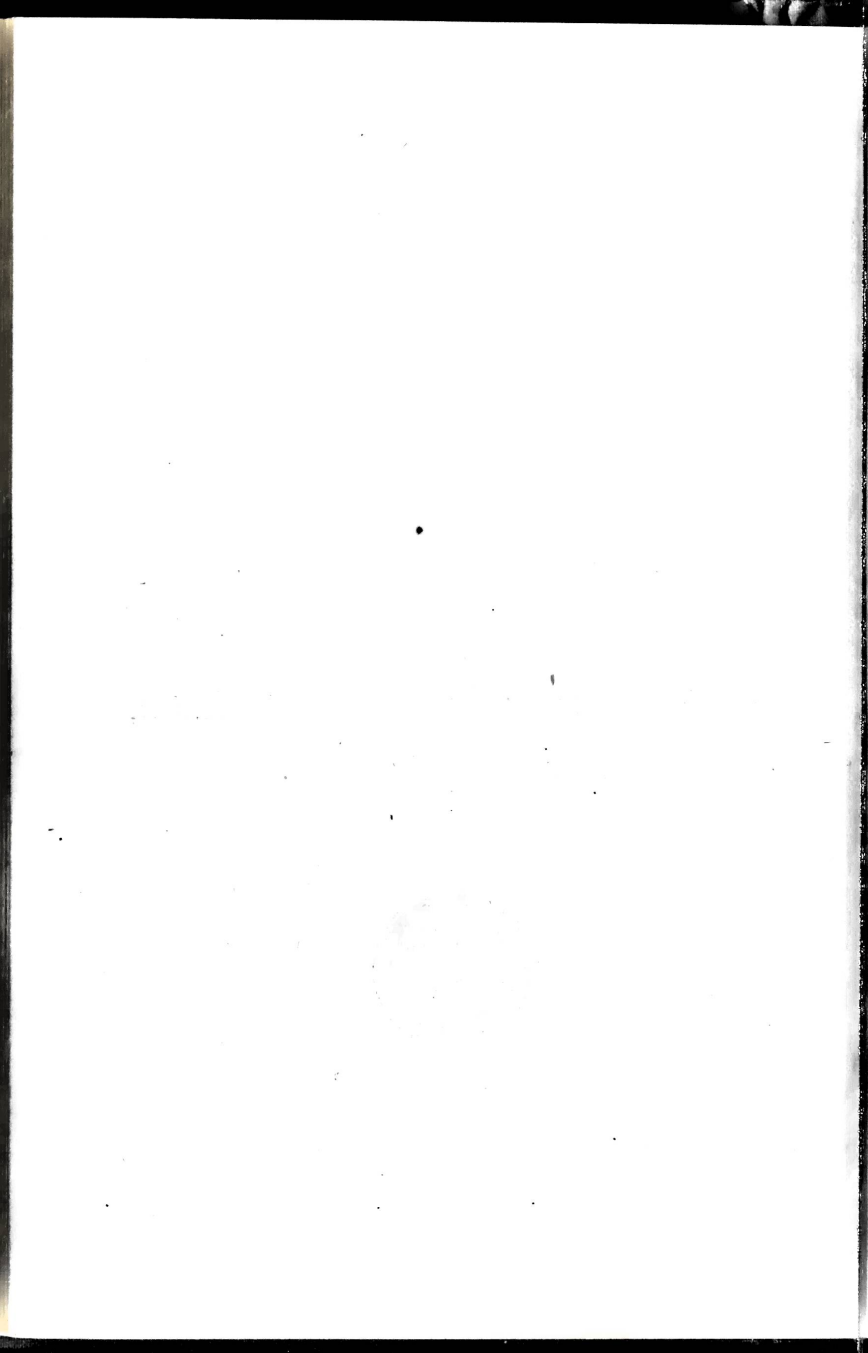
AN ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF ZURICH,

By PROFESSOR ORELLI.



LONDON :

PRINTED FOR THOMAS SCOTT, WEST CLIFF, RAMSGATE.
1865.



P R E F A C E.

DR STRAUSS, the celebrated author of "*The Life of Jesus*," when elected, in 1839, by the proper authorities to the then vacant chair of Professor of Theology at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, and ready to leave his abode in Germany for his new place of destination, was prevented from doing so on account of an insurrection of the people of Zurich and of the surrounding country. Instigated and headed by their clergy, they took up arms, and declared their determination to prevent his coming, calling him "a heretic and an unbeliever." The authorities tried all possible means to tranquillize them, to convince them of their being wrong, and of the groundlessness of their apprehensions; but in vain: the people remained firm in their resolution, obeying their spiritual leaders. It was at this critical time that the following letter of Dr Strauss was written, in order to reconcile the people to his doc-

trines, which he thought were misunderstood by them, because misrepresented by their clergy. Nothing, however, could induce them to retrace their steps; and at last they actually succeeded in forcing the authorities to institute a new election, the result of which was, that another Professor, whom they did not object to, was chosen, and thus the peace of the country restored. The letter of Strauss, though not of very recent date, conveys the clearest idea of his views in regard to the Christian religion, and for that reason it may just now be read by some with no small degree of interest.

PROFESSOR ORELLI'S ADDRESS

TO THE PEOPLE OF ZURICH.

DEAR FELLOW CITIZENS!

READ, I beg and entreat you, read quietly and dispassionately, this little book, in which the enlightened Doctor Strauss propounds and explains the tendency of his theology, and of his Christian belief, in a manner quite intelligible to every one. With the same candour and clearness did Zwingli and Luther, those highly enlightened men of God, formerly communicate their religious persuasions to the people, in opposition to popery, when a new and more beautiful life began to dawn upon them.

After having read the letter, examine first the doctrine of Doctor Strauss yourselves with all conscientiousness: do so in the retirement of your closets, when the peace of God reigns over you and in your hearts. Hold fast what is good, that is to say, whatever appears to you, as rational Christians, to be true, and good, and beautiful; reject the rest, which may seem to you untrue, unchristian, or at least doubtful.

Ask also your ministers by their synodical vow,

and on their conscience, what in the letter accords with the doctrine of our divine Saviour; what, on the contrary, is opposed to it, and therefore heretical and condemnable.

Entreat your ministers to enter quietly, and with a mild spirit, honestly, and without any disguise, as becomes ministers of Christ, upon whatever points you may confidently consult them.

Entreat them not to cast angry imprecations against Doctor Strauss and this little book: such a proceeding would only become the Pope of Rome.

Beseech your pastors to refute those parts of the Letter of Strauss which they think to be false, with sound reasons, and with valid proofs, taken from the treasure of their erudition.

Dear fellow-citizens, I say with the holy Apostle Paul (1 Cor. vii, 23-24): "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."

Take to heart, without any passion, what an old friend of religious liberty, of the constitution and laws, which all of us have confirmed by oath, and especially also of the freedom of popular education, kindly advises you to do.

Your's,

JOHANN KASPAR ORELLI.

LETTER

OF

PROFESSOR DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS.

WHEN I read in the public papers of the disturbance which my election to the University of Zurich has created in your town and in your canton—of the meetings held on that account—of the speeches which are made—of the writings which are exchanged; when I consider the attacks made upon you, most honourable men, and upon all those who assisted in bringing about my election—the invectives thrown out against you, the injuries done to you from so many sides,—a deep and just sorrow comes over me, that men to whom I feel myself so highly indebted should have to pay so dear for their kind interest in my behalf. And I, for whom you expose yourselves to the boisterous waves of a popular commotion, am lying quietly all the while in a calm harbour, scarcely hearing from afar the roaring storm and the resounding breakers, and only able to send you a sympathizing word, but not to appease the wild waters.

When after a long and obstinate resistance my election was at last brought about, I thought your struggle would now be at an end, and I flattered myself with the hope of being now soon to be placed personally in the midst of you, and of being able to begin gradually paying you the debt of gratitude which has run up so high, by meeting you in the kindest manner—by shewing you every respectful attention, and giving you the most friendly assistance for the common purpose of diffusing truth and light. But, behold! it was only the beginning of your troubles; and the time when I shall be able to shew myself personally grateful to you—who knows when it will come? for it would be in vain for me to sow the seed of knowledge on a soil overflown by so many wild waters. Noah was also obliged to wait till the flood had subsided before he could cultivate the field and plant vineyards. But why do I speak to you of gratitude? Men of your disposition, if unfavourable circumstances render active gratitude impossible, are satisfied with that gratitude which lives in the heart, and that, you may rest assured, will only be extinguished with life itself.

But how am I to justify it before the tribunal of the public weal and of science, that on account of my election men like you are disturbed in their activity for both in such a deplorable manner? How many a fruit, carefully cultivated for the general good by your active attention, most honourable Burgo-master, is torn unripe from the tree, or, at least, delayed in ripening by the present storms! How many an hour

which you, most honoured Orelli, would have dedicated to the ancients, for the benefit of all friends of classic literature, is embittered to you by these negotiations, or by indignation at the circumstances in question! And you, dear Hitzig, how often may your faithful acting or feeling for me have hindered you in those labours through which you diffuse such a pleasing light in the hitherto darkest parts of the Old Testament! But here may my desire for the promotion of the public weal and the progress of science hold me excused before their united tribunal, for you intended to do a service to both by bringing me to your University; and though, perhaps, you may have overrated my powers of execution, in my good-will you were certainly not mistaken. But at present I am not even allowed to try how far I might be able to answer your expectations; and so it seems that you have in vain withdrawn your time and labour from your more important occupations.

Do not think so, honoured gentlemen! Your voices have found an echo far and wide, and, still more, silent sympathy, though they may have no resting-place in your own immediate neighbourhood: like the feathered seed of plants, appearing, indeed, to be blown away by the wind, but often alighting on a little piece of earth in a distant country, where it can take root and spring up. Now, or later, through me, or through another one, at Zurich, or wherever else in Germany, or in Switzerland, no matter, but the day will certainly come, when we shall be able to think and speak rationally and freely of religion,

without being called ungodly; and to be really pious and godly, without abusing reason and condemning science. Of this the present occurrences, the discussions of the three councils, the speeches and opinions which were heard there, are forebodings not to be mistaken. Even without any immediate success, it is, nevertheless, infinitely much that once, in an assembled council of the people, thoughts have been uttered like this,—“that you may be a Christian without believing in all the words and relations of the Bible.” They are now wishing, from certain quarters, to have the results of those discussions, and the resolutions of those assemblies, repealed. I hope they will not succeed; but even suppose they do, those who brought it about would have little reason to triumph. If they were more judicious leaders than they appear to be, they would say, in case of success, with that ancient general, “another such victory, and we are lost.” For a single victory and a single defeat decides nothing yet; the germ of future defeats lies often concealed in a victory: on the contrary, the surety of future victories in a defeat—all depends on the manner in which the contest was carried on. On the side of those whom they are now endeavouring to overpower, it was carried on in open deliberation, where speech was opposed to speech, where the defender stood up against the accuser, and where the assembly, as judge, after having heard both parties, decided for him who was accused and defended;—an honest, open contest, an impartial sentence. But on the side

of those who would fain annul this sentence, the contest is carried on, as on that side all contests have been carried on at all times. The council-hall is for certain people unwelcome ground to fight upon, because there each thrust has to expect a counter-thrust: a much more convenient scene of action for them is the church, where the breastwork of the pulpit forms an invincible barrier, and where the orator must be in the right, because nobody is allowed to contradict him. This is a court where only the accuser is heard, but not the accused and his defender; where the judging congregation pronounce their "guilty" on the mere statement of the former. A just judgment, an honourable contest, it cannot be denied!—if the good congregation, who are here to decide on the Christianity and admissibility of an elected Professor at the University had only acquired from elsewhere a knowledge of their own concerning his doctrines, that they might be able to compare what their clergymen accuse him of, with what they know of him themselves, and judge of it accordingly! But if you ask these people, What do you think that Strauss really does teach? I cannot help smiling when I fancy what their answer may be. The modest and simple burghers who form the greater part of those communities, will, I am sure, be ready to confess that they have not read and scarcely seen the book in question*; and also the better educated amongst them, as far as they are not of a learned profession, should at least confess that, although they

* *The Life of Jesus.*

may have read it, they have not possessed the means of thoroughly understanding and justly appreciating it. There remains, therefore, only the judgment of the clergyman, who, the judges having no judgment of their own in this affair, is of course accuser and judge in one person.

But should not the communities be able to rely with security on the judgment of their clergy?—Certainly, in all those points which refer to the individual salvation of the members of the community. On the question, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? the clergymen have to give an answer to those committed to their care, and, without particular reasons for the contrary, it is always to be supposed that they will give the right one. But who would appoint a clergyman, as such, to judge, for instance, of the best manner of cultivating the soil, of establishing manufactures, of governing the State? “Well,” you will say, “that is not his business; but the clergymen must certainly know how to judge of the orthodoxy of a professor of theology, as they have studied theology themselves.” That they have; but will you permit me to make a comparison, in order to show that nevertheless the majority of the clergy are at present the least qualified to be impartial judges in this cause, in which they are themselves so much concerned. When Guttenberg invented the art of printing, who were at the time the bitterest adversaries of the new art, but those who had till then been engaged in copying books? And, to choose some instances of our own days, who opposed

the spinning-engines with the greatest zeal, but those who had hitherto also been employed in spinning, but without engines? Who did most passionately curse the steam navigation? Was it not those who were also navigators, but only prepared to go by means of oars and sails? Would ever a printing-office have been established if the copiers of books had been listened to; or a steam-carriage constructed, if it had depended on the decision of the coachmen?

These instances shew sufficiently that the most implacable adversaries of every new invention, in any line of business, are for the first time the very members of the corporation who have hitherto carried on the same business without the new contrivance. This may be fully applied to the behaviour of most of the clergy with regard to those alterations which, amongst others, I am also endeavouring to introduce in the science of theology. It was at all times, and it will also in future continue to be, the duty of the clergy to excite pious feelings in their auditors, to strengthen their virtuous resolutions, to implant in children the fear of God, to guard the same in grown persons against the impulses of passion and of worldly occupations, to comfort the sick through the word of God, and to inspire the dying with blissful hope, as a companion on their last journey. The Protestant clergy were, till now, accustomed to perform this task in the following manner:—They took the Bible in hand, and said, Behold! there is a God who in ancient times created this world in six days, and rested on the seventh, in commemoration of which the seventh

day was sanctified for the believers as a day of rest. At that time God also made man of the dust of the ground ; but man, first innocent and without fault, was persuaded by a serpent, behind which, perhaps, the devil was concealed, to eat of a forbidden fruit ; whereupon he was driven out of the garden of Paradise, and the earth was cursed for his sake. All men, descended from him, are born sinners since that time, on account of which hereditary sin they would have justly incurred eternal damnation from their very birth ; but God revealed Himself henceforth to several members of the corrupted race ;—He appeared to Abraham in the form of man, wrestled in person with Jacob and dislocated his thigh : through Moses He led His people out of Egypt, and gave them the law from Mount Sinai with His own audible voice. A series of miracles runs from thence through the whole history of this people. Balaam's ass spoke on their account ; Joshua ordered the sun and the moon to stand still in their course ; Elijah obtained fire from heaven through his prayers, and went up thither in a fiery chariot. Then the Prophets rose one after another, foretelling the coming of Christ ; and when the time was fulfilled, Christ appeared himself. He was in all things like the rest of mankind, with the exception of sin, and of the circumstance that he had not, like all of us, with a human mother also a human father ; but, in his case, the Divine Spirit supplied the place of a father. Angels announced his birth at Bethlehem to the shepherds, and a star guided the wise men from the distant east, like a torch carried

before them, to the place and the very house of the Divine Child. When he had grown a man, and was being baptized by John the Baptist, the Spirit of God descended upon him in the visible shape of a dove, and God the father Himself said, in audible words, that He was well pleased in him. From that time his life was a succession not only of beneficent actions, but also of miracles: he raised the dead, fed thousands of people with a few loaves, walked upon the sea, and turned water into wine. But he fell into the hands of his enemies: he died on the cross; he shed his blood for the atonement of the world. However, after three days he rose again from the dead, and after forty more he visibly, and before the eyes of his disciples, ascended into heaven; from whence he poured down upon them the Holy Ghost in a rushing mighty wind, and in tongues of fire; and from whence he will come back one day to resuscitate the dead, and to judge them, together with those who shall then be still living.

This is the old Christian belief; and who would be insensible to the elevating beauty and comfort it contains? We, certainly not; but for that reason they ought to be fair enough on the other side also to acknowledge its insurmountable difficulties, which are more clearly developed as time advances. God is said to have walked with Adam in Paradise, and appeared to Abraham in a visible form, though St John says that no man has seen God at any time: and our reason agrees with the Apostle. God formed man of the dust of the ground: is He not there

represented as a human being with hands? He took food with one of the Patriarchs, and wrestled with the other; does not that suppose Him possessed of bodily limbs? In Paradise the serpent spoke, and afterwards the ass of the heathen seer; but is a speaking animal anything which we are able to imagine, far less to have a clear idea of? The sun stood still in his course; or, rather, the earth was stopped in its daily revolution round its own axis. We know what happens when a carriage is suddenly stopped at its full speed through some obstacle;—a shock ensues, which throws him who has not a very firm hold out of the carriage; and when, at that time, the earth was stopped in its incomparably quicker movement, would Joshua, with his troops, have been able to pursue the enemies unshaken? Would not Israelites and Amorites, together with the towers and houses, not only of Gibeon, but of the whole earth, have fallen to the ground, from a shock stronger than that of the most violent earthquake? Then, the ascension of Elias and of Jesus; is, then, the throne of God really above the clouds? Do not stars surround the terrestrial globe above as well as on all other sides? And are not the stars worlds? and is not God everywhere? If, according to the Apostle Paul (Acts xvii, 28), we live and move and have our being in God, what occasion has He to remove whomever He wants to call to Himself from the surface of the earth, be it in a fiery chariot or on a cloud?

“But these,” they reply, “and all other parts of

sacred history which you are offended at—for instance, the casting out devils, the healing the sick, the raising the dead—are the very miracles through which God has proved that it is He who has made heaven and earth, and all things therein.” What! would it be impossible, then, to know, by the existing regulation and the ordinary course of the world and of nature, that it is God who has created it? Who is ungodly enough to dare such an assertion? or, shall I rather say, childish enough? For, indeed, such a judgment is exactly like the behaviour of children, who do not think anything of it, when they are told that the clock, whose pendulum you see vibrating with such uniformity, and which you hear striking so regularly every hour, was made by this artist here; but as soon as this man condescends to lift up the hammer of the bell with his hand, and to let it strike out of the common way, once, twice, or as often as the child wishes, then the clockmaker is with the children the celebrated and favoured man. It is a pity that mankind should be so slow in putting away childish things. The miracles in the sense of the old popular belief cannot be of any particular value but to him who is unable to discover the power and wisdom of the Creator in the natural regulation of the world; and we, who are accused of not believing those miracles which God performed in Judea at the time of Moses and the prophets—of Jesus and the Apostles—we do not think much of them, only because to us they are lost, like a drop in the ocean, amongst the innumerable wonders which

God is daily and hourly performing in all parts of the world created and supported by Him. "Behold the finger of God," they cry; "he has stopped the sun and the moon at the time of Joshua!" What! only his finger? we reply: we see the whole hand, the powerful arm of Him, who not only stopped the sun and the moon once for some few hours, but who, from the creation of the world until now, has upheld and supported all suns, and moons, and earths, and the whole host of stars, moving them in their right orbits. According to your belief, dumb animals have spoken like men, and thereby proclaimed the glory of God; also, according to ours, do the animals proclaim the glory of God through the artificial construction of their limbs, through their wonderful instinct and their various abilities. Why force us to believe that an animal has spoken with human language, since the truly great and glorious thing in the creation of God is this,—that He is praised by each creature in its own language, by a chorus of beings of so many voices? You find it particularly elevating, that Christ has twice fed thousands of people with a small provision, through the power of his Father. What, only twice! and a long time ago, has your God been doing what ours is doing every year—yea, every day? For it is, indeed, but a small provision which we intrust every year as seed to the soil of our fields and gardens; but the seed brings fruit, as Christ says, "some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty," (Matth. xiii, 23) satisfying every day far more than only four or five thousand, so that

many fragments are remaining. In short, you cannot mention any miracle which we have not also, and even greater and more splendid.

“But is, then, our Saviour no longer anything extraordinary?” they ask. “Is the Son of God nothing but a common man?”—A man, a real man? yes! but a common one? No! the Son of God he is also to us, only not in that coarse sense which must always be an offence to reason. Tell me, is Christ called only Son of *God* in the Scripture? Is he not quite as often called the son of *man*? And is this not a sufficient proof that it must be possible for an individual to be the Son of God, and yet at the same time the son of man? Therefore, to us Christ is the son of Joseph and Mary: God sanctified the fruit of their union; He breathed into it the beautiful and pure soul, the high and powerful spirit which the child showed already at an early age; and for that reason we call the son of man very justly also the Son of God. And so the other miraculous events of his life. God himself is said to have pronounced upon him twice, that he was His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, adding that mankind ought to listen to him. What do we lose by doubting these relations? Having removed the offence we took in fancying God speaking with human voice, we certainly do not feel inclined to call that a loss. But we do not lose anything else; for, considering the godliness and purity of the life of Jesus, and then thinking of God and his holiness on one side, and of our destination on the other, we know,

without a positive declaration, that God must have been pleased with a life like that of Jesus, and that we cannot do anything better than adhere to him. We do not, therefore, lose more with those voices from heaven than is lost for a beautiful picture from which a ticket is taken away that was fastened to it, containing the superfluous assurance of its being a beautiful picture. Whether Christ has healed sick persons through a mere word or touch—what is that to us, who are no longer benefited by it, and who will never be able to do the same? God may have endowed him with particular powers for the purpose of such performances: that was calculated for those who were his contemporaries. He does not help us any longer by means of those powers, like the blind man at Jericho, or the leper and the lame man at Capernaum, or the dead at Nain and Bethany; but he opens our eyes through his doctrines, that we may know the holy will of God; he strengthens our feeble endeavours to follow his example through exhortations and promises; he purifies our hearts through his Spirit, and awakens us through the communion of his life, into which he receives us, to a new life of holiness and righteousness.

“But what,” they ask us, “becomes of the atoning death of Jesus according to your creed? Is he to you as well as to us the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world?” Here we must ask you a question in return: Do you consider the atonement in this way, that God was during the whole time of the Old Testament always an angry and jealous God,

seeking vengeance on mankind, and that only the blood of Christ appeased his wrath and softened his disposition towards the human race? Whoever considers it thus is, not to speak of the unreasonableness and unworthiness of the whole idea, contradicted by Jesus himself, who declared that the love of God towards the world was the principal motive why God gave his only begotten Son (John iii, 16). If, therefore, God was already beforehand merciful and inclined to forgive, it is impossible to conceive that, besides repentance and improvement on the side of man, the death of an innocent person should have been required, and that without it God should not have been able to indulge in his mercy, and really to pardon the sins of those that are penitent. Nevertheless, the death of Jesus is also to us an image and surety of our forgiveness and salvation. If that man whose mind was one with God did not desist from loving sinful mankind even unto death, yea, prayed to God for his murderers, we are able by the mildness of this godly man to measure the mercy of God Himself, and His willingness to pardon even those who have most grossly offended Him, provided only they repent. If an Elias, who caused fire to fall from heaven upon those who were sent out to apprehend him, seemed to teach an angry God (though the Lord had revealed himself even to him in a still small voice, 1 Kings, xix, 12-13) we see, by the forbearing and placable disposition of the dying Christ, that God is love.

According to the old Christian belief, Christ rose

again from the dead, and ascended into heaven. So he did also according to ours ; but not only once, and at the end of his life ; but at all times he arose from those dead, whom he orders to bury their dead (Matth. viii, 22), and to such a life he awakens already at this side of the grave all those who follow him ; for he says himself, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and is passed from death unto life." (John v, 24). In like manner there was no occasion for his being carried up to God into heaven by a cloud at the end of his career, as he soared thither already during his lifetime in each prayer which he said at night on lonely mountains, or in the day, surrounded by his disciples. Moreover, what St Paul demands of the Christians (1 Thess. v, 17) being fully the case with him, that is to say, his life being a praying without ceasing, he was continually with God, which he intimates himself by saying to Nicodemus, "The Son of man *which is in heaven*" (John iii, 13), where also the conversation of the true Christian is already in this life, according to St Paul (Phil. iii, 20).

"But do you also believe," they ask us, "that Christ will come back to judge the world ?" We do believe it, we reply ; only, his coming to judge is to us not, as it is to you, such a one that is always delayed from century to century, and never takes place : but in us the Lord passes judgment every day, for he has given his spirit into our hearts to judge us, punishing us when we are doing or coveting evil, and

rewarding us with peace and happiness, when we are guided and governed by it. And since thus our inward judge, our conscience, purified and sharpened by the spirit of Christ, is adjudging and preparing to us already in this life reward or punishment, happiness or sorrow, according to what we deserve, does not this clearly indicate that also in a future life the Divine Judge will assign to each of us that mansion in his Father's house which he has made himself worthy of here upon earth? Is there any occasion for a particular solemn day of judgment to do this? I do not think so: the rich man was at least condemned, and the poor Lazarus made happy, *immediately* after death, and without any day of judgment. "But are also our bodies to be raised again to eternal happiness or damnation?" The apostle Paul speaks of a trance, in which he was caught up to the third heaven; adding, whether he was in the body or out of the body, he could not tell, God knew it; but he knew that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words (2 Cor. xii, 2). We do also hope with the Apostle to enjoy bliss and happiness in a future life; but whether in the body or out of the body, we leave to God, who will arrange it so as it is best for us.

"All this sounds well enough," perhaps many a one will say to us, who thinks more clearly and more quietly about the matter; "but still you throw away too much of what is related and taught in the Bible, and you despise the Divine revelations, the collection of which you convert into a book of fables." We do

not despise the revelations and their records; we only try to obtain a more correct idea of them. We do certainly not believe that God spoke like a man with Abraham and Moses, nor that he suggested to those who composed the writings of the Old and New Testament, word for word, what they were to write. But God revealed Himself to mankind at all times in their own minds, in the works of the creation (Rom. i, 19), in the history of the nations, and finally in some particularly gifted men, whom he raised amongst them as lawgivers and prophets, as teachers and apostles. Such men rose amongst all nations, but chiefly amongst the Jews, who very early entertained the notion that there is but one God, that He is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, that He is not to be represented by any image or likeness, that He is the holy Lawgiver and the just Ruler of the destinies of mankind. The religious writings of the ancient Jewish nation being the only ones in which this foundation of true religion is to be found so pure and strong (for which reason even the New Testament relies on and appeals to the Old in this respect), they are also holy to us; and the books of Moses and Samuel, the Psalms and the Prophets, are indispensable to our edification. But it is a mistake to think that the holiness of those books obliges us to consider every idea which they contain, and every history they relate, as literally true. For instance, the history of the creation,—a pious Israelite, lost in contemplation of the wonderful works of God, and reflecting upon their origin,

imagined the particulars of this event in his peculiar way. With simplicity of mind he divided the labours of God, as we men do ours, into daily portions ; he related the formation of the inorganic and of the organic worlds in corresponding verses or sentences ; and, as a Jew, being accustomed to the celebration of the seventh day, he made also the Creator rest on this day. Afterwards he, or another one, reflected on the immorality and misery of mankind : he could not believe that they had been originally created by the good God in such corruption and for such misery : their getting into such a bad state he thought must have been their own fault, and so he wrote down the history of the fall of our first parents. Several remarkable events had happened to the Israelitish nation, chiefly in the earlier period of their history ; they had escaped from servitude in Egypt under strange circumstances, and after a long migration they had conquered the land of Canaan in bloody wars. These occurrences, of course, continued to live in the mouths of the people from generation to generation. They were right in seeing the finger of God in these events : but being unable to see that the very doing of God had been this, that He had let the people grow strong during their servitude in Egypt, that hereafter at the right time He caused a man like Moses to rise, and endowed him with all the gifts necessary for the deliverance of His people, moreover that He let the Israelites meet in Canaan with corrupted tribes, divided amongst themselves—being unable to understand this invisible influence of God, and yet

being justly convinced of a co-operation of God, they imagined the Divine activity with regard to the departure from Egypt in this way, as if God had ordered Moses in an oral conversation to deliver His people—as if He had visibly, in the pillar of cloud and of fire, marched before the army, and so forth. This was written down in after-times, which is the real origin of the relations thereof in those writings that are commonly called the books of Moses. It is a similar case with the New Testament. Thus, the first Christians asked themselves, whence in Christ comes this clearness of mind, this sublimity of spirit, this purity of heart, which is nowhere else to be found in any human being? He was not produced by sinful seed, was their answer; he immediately descended from God, the fountain of all light,—which gave rise to the relations of his supernatural production, contained in the Gospels of St Matthew and St Luke. As a higher spirit, he appeared to have come down upon this earth for a short time; but after his departure from it, to have returned to God, whence he came; which caused the relations of his resurrection and ascension, and so forth.

By this view of the matter the Bible is by no means degraded, nor are Christians dissuaded from reading it; on the contrary, it is the only point of view from which the reading of the Bible will be truly edifying for a thinking Christian. As long as he fancies himself bound to believe literally in all the histories of the Bible, he finds with every step a stumbling-block for his reason, the removal of which

causes him so much trouble, and puts his mind into such a state of doubt and disquietude, that the best profit from reading the Bible is lost to him. How many a one has never yet attempted to consider the moral doctrines of Jesus on account of his mind being constantly occupied with the miracles, either faithfully admiring or curiously reflecting on them! How many a one, on the contrary, has thrown aside the whole Bible with scorn and indignation, because its miraculous stories offended him! The view we take of it prevents both these results. He who adopts it will no longer be induced by the splendour of the supernatural to turn away from the less shining but more important parts of the contents of the Bible; nor will he be deterred from reading it by the incongruities in its relations. We rejoice in the piety and simplicity of its authors, and in the deep meaning of their narratives, though often obliged to consider them as mere tradition or poetry. The author of the Gospel of St Matthew tells us, and certainly believed himself, that some heathen wise men of the east had been guided by a star to the newly-born babe Jesus: we do not take this literally, but we explain it as a beautiful symbol of the light which, in Christ, dawned also upon the heathen. In like manner, the relation of the fall of man in the Old Testament, if it does not teach us how the first man fell, certainly shews us, as it were in a mirror, how men are led, by consciousness of present misery and imperfection, to picture to themselves a forfeited prior state of innocence and happiness; and also how

it is that at this day we bring ourselves to fall, or suffer ourselves to be led away to sin. Thus the Bible remains to us a fountain of edification: but we are also edified through the creation, and through the way in which mankind is guided in great as well as in small things; of which the Bible forms only one single part, but the most remarkable and the most instructive one. These three books, that of Nature, that of History, and the Bible, must supply each other. We ought not to neglect one on account of the other, for only together do they constitute the one entire revelation of God.

But where have I got to? All this I certainly do not wish to tell you, most honoured gentlemen, who know it as well as I do, and who know also very well that these are my opinions. My words have insensibly turned to others who cannot know this as well as you do, and who may, perhaps, still take your advice about it. I do not, indeed, expect this of that excited multitude, who, glowing with a hatred of heresy by no means Christian-like, are now preparing, under the cloak of piety, to defend all other worldly interests whatsoever: to these I have nothing to say, remembering the words of Christ, which expressly forbid us to lay the treasure of religious persuasion before such people. But the chief thing which I wanted to say to you, and from which I made this digression, was, that the aversion of the greater part of the clergy to the new view of the Christian religion is as little to be wondered at, as everywhere the irritation of the members of a

corporation against a new invention, by means of which their business is carried on in a simpler way than that in which they learned it. Most of the clergy, I said, are accustomed to excite pious feelings in their auditors by means of clinging to the letter of the Bible relations and ideas: our professing to be edified and to edify others with a more liberal view of the same narratives, puzzles them and excites their indignation, because they are not prepared for such a thing.

Let them be as angry as they like, and let them abuse and calumniate us as much as they please, they or their successors will at last as surely be obliged to accommodate themselves, and to come round to our new method, just as any new inventions in the department of mechanical business, such as we mentioned above for the sake of comparison, must at last be adopted, even by those who at first most objected to the inconvenient innovation. Of course; for who orders now-a-days a book to be copied by hand which he may have cheaper and handsomer in print? In like manner, it must, sooner or later, come to this, that nobody will condescend to listen to a clergyman who thinks of edifying his auditors by a sermon in which the dry passage of the children of Israel through the Red Sea—the walking of Jesus upon the water—the finding of the piece of silver in the fish's mouth by Peter—are defended and explained as real miracles. Then they will ask the clergyman,—Are you not able to tell us something more important of Jesus and Peter than this? Can

you not prove the divine omnipotence through something greater than what he is said to have done once at the time of Moses? When it shall have come to this—though it may yet require a good while, for daily experience shows that God has not in mankind a pupil who makes too rapid steps in learning—whether they will then still think of us I do not know, nor is it of any consequence; but we are even now permitted to give ourselves this testimony, that we have done what was in our power to bring about the time promised by Christ, when God shall be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

May the consciousness of this elevate you, most honoured gentlemen, above the many adversities that now surround you, as it has in similar disappointments kept up the spirits of

Your sincerely devoted servant,
and, I may say, colleague,
though at present still *in partibus*,

DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS.

Stuttgart, 1st March, 1839.