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Strauss's Life of Jesus

Theodore Parker\*

Paul Royster (depositor)†

\*West Roxbury Unitarian Church

†University of Nebraska-Lincoln, proyster@unl.edu

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## Strauss's Life of Jesus.

*Das Leben Jesu, Kritisch bearbeitet von Dr. DAVID FRIEDERICH STRAUSS.* Tübingen: 1837. 2 voll. 8vo. *The Life of Jesus, critically treated, &c.* Second improved edition. (1st edition, 1835, 3d, 1839, 4th, 1842.)

THE work above named is one of profound theological significance. It marks the age we live in, and to judge from its character and the interest it has already excited, will make an epoch in theological affairs. It is a book whose influence, for good and for evil, will not soon pass away. Taken by itself, it is the most remarkable work that has appeared in theology, for the last hundred and fifty years, or since Richard Simon published his *Critical History of the Old Testament*; viewed in reference to its present effect, it may well be compared to Tindal's celebrated work. "Christianity as old as the Creation," to which, we are told, more than six score replies have been made. We do not propose to give any answer to the work of Mr. Strauss, or to draw a line between what we consider false, and what is true; but only to give a description and brief analysis of the work itself, that the good and evil to be expected therefrom may be made evident. But before we address ourselves to this work, we must say a brief word respecting the comparative position of Germany and England in regard to Theology.

On the fourth day of July, in the year of Grace one thousand seven hundred and fifty-seven, died at Halle, in Germany, Sigismund Jacob Baumgarten; a man who was deemed

a great light in his time. Some thought that Theology died with him. A few, perhaps more than a few, at one time doubted his soundness in the faith, for he studied Philosophy, the Philosophy of Wolf, and there are always men, in Pulpits and Parlors, who think Philosophy is curious in unnecessary matters, meddling with things that are too high for the human arm to reach. Such was the case in Baumgarten's time in Halle of Saxony. Such is it now, not in Halle of Saxony, but in a great many places nearer home. But Dr. Baumgarten outlived this suspicion, we are told, and avenged himself, in the most natural way, by visiting with thunders all such as differed from himself; a secret satisfaction which some young men, we are told, hope one day to enjoy. Baumgarten may be taken, perhaps, as representing the advanced post in German theology in the middle of the last century. A few words, from one of the greatest critical scholars Europe has produced, will serve to show what that post was a hundred years ago. "He attempted, by means of history and philosophy, to throw light upon theological subjects, but wholly neglecting philology and criticism, and unacquainted with the best sources of knowledge, he was unable to free religion from its corruptions. Everything that the church taught passed with him for infallible truth. He did not take pains to inquire whether it agreed with Scripture or common sense. Devoted to the church, he assumed its doctrines, and fortified its traditions with the show of demonstrations, as with insurmountable walls of defence. His scholars were no less prompt and positive in their decisions than their master. Every dogma of their teacher was received by them, as it were, a mathematical certainty, and his polemics exhibited to them the Lutheran church, in exclusive possession of the truth, and resigned all other sects covered with shame and contempt to their respective errors. Everything appeared to be so clearly exhibited and proved by him, that there seemed to be nothing left for future schol-

ars to investigate and explain; but only to repeat and enforce in an intelligible manner the truths already acquired. Baumgarten, indeed, accounted it nothing less than high treason against his discipline, for his scholars to presume to think and examine for themselves; and acknowledged him only for his genuine discipline, who left his school confident, that with the weapons of his instructor in his hands, he could resist the whole theological world, and overcome it without a violent struggle.\* Philosophy was considered as a pest and its precincts forbidden to all pious souls. Ecclesiastical history was in the service of a mystical Pietism; its real province and genuine sources were unknown. Exegetical learning was thought unnecessary, and even a foe to genuine piety; the chimeras of Buxtorf, half Jewish, half Christian, ruled with despotic sway. Langen's method of salvation was esteemed an oracle in dogmatic theology, and pietistic and fanatical notions prevailed in morals. If a man was not satisfied with this, or showed a desire for more fundamental theological learning, it was said, "He has forsaken his first love and wants to study his Saviour out of the world."† Such was Germany a hundred years ago. The fate of Lawrence Schmid, the "Wertheim Translator" of part of the Pentateuch, is a well known sign of the times. A young man was accused of Socinianism, and Arianism, because he doubted the genuineness of the celebrated passage, 1 John v. 7, now abandoned by all respectable critics; he was reckoned unsound because he openly, or in secret, studied Richard Simon, Grotius, Leclerc, and Wetstein. ‡

Let us now turn to England. Before this time the Deists had

\* Eichhorn, Allgemeine Bibliothek, &c.; Leip., 1793. vol. V. pp. 16, 17. We have followed the beautiful translation in "The General Repository and Review." Cambridge, 1812. vol. I. p. 65, seq.

† Eichhorn, *lc.* vol. III, p. 833, seq.

‡ See Semler's *Lebenbeschreibung*; Halle, 1781, vol. I. p. 250, seq. et passim.

opened their voice; Hobbs, Morgan, Collins, Chubb, Tindal, Bolingbroke, had said their say. The civil wars of England, in the century before, had awakened the soul of the nation. Great men had risen up, and given a progress to the Protestant Reformation, such as it found in no other country of the world perhaps, unless it were in Transylvania and Holland. There had been a Taylor, Cudworth, Secker, Tillotson, Hoadly, Hare, Lardner, Foster, Whitby, Sykes, Butler, Benson, Watts, — yes, a Newton and a Locke, helping to liberalize theology. The works of Montaigne, Malebranche, Bayle, even of Spinoza, had readers in England, as well as opponents. The English theologians stood far in advance of the Germans, among whom few great names were to be reckoned after the Reformation. Take the century that ended in the year of Baumgarten's death, and you have the period of England's greatest glory in science, literature, and theology. The works which give character to the nation were written then. Most of the English theology, which pays for the reading, was written before the middle of the last century; while in Germany, few books had been written on that general theme since the sixteenth century, which are now reprinted or even read. Such was England a century ago.

What have the two countries done since? Compare Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying*, the writings of Cudworth, Locke, Butler, and Tillotson, or Foster, with the writings of the men who occupy a similar relative position at this day, — with the general tone of the more liberal writers of England, — and what is the result? Need it be told? Theology, in the main body of English theologians, has not been stationary. It has gone back. The works of Priestley, and others like him, bear little fruit.

Now in Germany, since the death of Baumgarten, there has been a great advance. Compare the works of Neander, Bretschneider, De Wette, and F. C. Bauer, with Baumgarten, and

“the great theologians” of his time, and what a change. New land has been won; old errors driven away. It is not in vain, that Michaelis, Semler, Eichhorn, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher, have lived. Men study theology as the English once studied it, — as if they were in earnest. New questions are raised; old doubts removed; some principles are fixed; and theology studied as a science, in the light of reason. But as another has said, “In the English theology there is somewhat dead, and immovable, catholic, external, mechanical; while the industrial power of England is active, and goes ahead with giant strides, from invention to invention; while the commercial and warlike spirit of the a nation goes storming forth, with manly and almost frantic courage, into the remotest distance, embracing the globe with its gigantic arms, and in the midst of its material concerns, pursues without wearying the interests of science, too haughty to disturb itself about the truth of religions foreign to its concerns; Theology remains, as it were, to represent the female element in the mind of the nation, sitting at home, domestic as a snail, in the old-fashioned narrow building she has inherited from her fathers, which has been patched up a little, here and there, as necessity compelled. There she sits, anxiously fearing, in her old-womanly way, lest she shall be driven out of doors by the spirit of enlightened Europe, which sports with heathen religions. In English theology a peace has been established between the Understanding and Christianity, as between two deadly foes. Theology preserves unhurt the objective contents of the Christian Religion; but in the dull understanding, it lies like a stone in the stomach.” But let us now turn to the work of Mr. Strauss.

It is not our aim to write a polemic against the author of the “Life of Jesus,” but to describe his book or “define his position,” as the politicians are wont to say. The work in question comprises, *first*, an Introduction, relating to the formation of

“the Mythical stand-point,” from which the Evangelical history is to be contemplated; *second*, the main work itself, which is divided into three books, relating respectively to the History of the Birth and Childhood of Jesus; his Public Life; his Sufferings, Death, and Resurrection; *third*, a conclusion of the whole book, or the doctrinal significance of the life of Jesus. The work forms two closely printed volumes, and comprises about sixteen hundred pages, thus making a work nearly as large as Mr. Hallam's History of Literature. It is not properly called a *Life of Jesus*; but a better, a more descriptive title would be, A Fundamental Criticism on the Four Gospels. In regard to learning, acuteness, and sagacious conjectures, the work resembles Niebuhr's History of Rome. Like that, it is not a history, but a criticism and collection of materials, out of which a conjectural history may be constructed. Mr. Strauss, however, is not so original as Niebuhr, (who yet had numerous predecessors, though they are rarely noticed,) but is much more orderly and methodical. The general manner of treating the subject, and arranging the chapters, sections, and parts of the argument, indicates consummate dialectical skill; while the style is clear, the expression direct, and the author's openness in referring to his sources of information, and stating his conclusions in all their simplicity, is candid and exemplary.\*

The Introduction to the work is valuable to every student of the Scriptures, who has sufficient sagacity to discern between the true and the false; to any other it is dangerous, as are all strong books to weak heads, very dangerous, from its “specious appearances.” It is quite indispensable to a comprehension of the main work. We will give a brief abstract of some of its most important matters. If a form of religion rest on

\* He professes very honestly, that he has no presuppositions. We shall touch upon this point.

written documents, sooner or later, there comes a difference between the old document and the modern discoveries and culture shown in works written to explain it. So long as the difference is not total, attempts will be made to reconcile the two. A great part of religious documents relate to sacred history, to events and instances of the Deity stepping into the circle of human affairs. Subsequently, doubts arise as to the fact, and it is said "the divinity could not have done as it is alleged," or, "the deed could not be divine." Then attempts are made to show either that these deeds *were never done*, and, therefore, the documentary record is not entitled to historical credibility, or that they *were not done by God*, and, therefore, to explain away the real contents of the book. In each of these cases, the critic may go fearlessly to work; look facts clearly in the face; acknowledge the statements of the old record, with the inconsistency between them and the truths of science; or, he may go to work under constraint; may blind himself to this inconsistency, and seek merely to unfold the original meaning of the text. This took place in Greece, where religion did not rest on religious documents, but had yet a sort of connexion with the mythological stories of Homer and Hesiod, and with others, which circulated from mouth to mouth. The serious philosophers soon saw that these stories could not be true. Hence arose Plato's quarrel with Homer; hence Anaxagoras gave an *allegorical* explanation of Homer, and the Stoics *naturalized* Hesiod's Theogony, supposing it related to the operations of Nature. Others, like Evhemerus, *humanized* and applied these stories to men, who by great deeds had won divine honors.

Now with the Hebrews, their stability, and their adherence to the supernatural stand-point would, on the one hand, prevent such views being taken of their religious records; and on the other, would render this treatment the more necessary. Accordingly, after the exile, and still more after the time of

the Maccabees, the Hebrew teachers found means to remove what was offensive; to fill up chasms, and introduce modern ideas into their religious books. This was first done at Alexandria. Philo, — following numerous predecessors, — maintained there was a *common*, and a *deeper* sense in the Scriptures, and in some cases, the literal meaning was altogether set aside; especially when it comprised anything excessively anthropomorphic, or unworthy of God. Thus he gave up the historical character, to save the credit of the narrative, but never followed the method of Evhemerus. The Christians applied the same treatment to the Old Testament, and Origen found a *literal*, *moral*, and *mystical* sense in all parts of the Scriptures, and sometimes applied the saying, "the letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive," to the former. Some passages, he said, had no literal sense; in others, a *literal lie* lay at the bottom of a *mystical truth*. Many deeds, he says, are mentioned in Scripture, which were never performed; fiction is woven up with fact to lead us to virtue. He rejected the literal sense of those passages which *humanize* the Deity. But Origen went farther, and applied these same principles to the New Testament, where he found much that was distasteful to his philosophical palate. Here also he finds fiction mingled with fact, and compares the Homeric stories of the Trojan war, in respect to their credibility, with the Christian narratives. In both Homer and the Gospels, he would consider what portions can be believed; what considered as figurative; what rejected as incredible, and the result of human frailty. He, therefore, does not demand a blind faith in the Gospels, but would have all Christians understand, that good sense and diligent examination are necessary in this study, to ascertain the meaning of a particular passage. But this heretical Father was too cautious to extend these remarks, and apply them extensively to particular passages. The Scriptures fell into the hands of men, who acknowledged something divine in them;

but denied that God had made therein particular manifestations of himself. This was done by Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, who assented to much that is related of Moses and Jesus; while they found "lying legends" in other parts of the Bible.

Among the Greeks and Hebrews, whose religious literature was contemporary with the growth of the nation, the prevalence of allegorical interpretation of the sacred books, proved that the old forms of religion had died out, for the modern culture had outgrown the faith of the fathers of the nation. But in Christianity, the allegorical explanation adopted by Origen, and the peculiar opposition of Celsus taking place so near the birth of Christianity, prove that the world had not yet properly lived in the new form of religion. But, from the age after this time, when the rude Germanic nations, — too rude to find any difficulty in admitting the most objectionable parts of the Old and New Testament, — were conquering the Roman Empire, and becoming Christians at the same time, all proofs have disappeared, which would indicate the prevalence of a manner of interpreting the Scriptures, that arose from a radical discrepancy between the culture of mankind and the statements in these records. The Reformation made the first breach upon the solid walls of Ecclesiastical faith in the letter of the Bible. This was the first sign, that in Christianity, as formerly in Judaism and Heathenism, there was a culture sufficiently powerful to react upon the prevalent form of religion.

So far as the Reformation was directed against the Romish Church, it soon accomplished its sublime mission. But in relation to the Scriptures, it took the direction of Deism. Toland and Bolingbroke called the Bible a collection of fabulous books. Others robbed the Scriptural heroes of all divine light. The law of Moses was considered a superstition; the apostles were called selfish; the character of Jesus was assailed; and his resurrection denied by a "moral philosopher." Here belong Chubb,

Woolston, Morgan, and the Wolfenbüttel Fragmentist. These scholars were ably opposed by a host of apologetical writers in England and Germany, who defended the supernatural character of the Bible. But in Germany there arose a different class of men, who designed to strip the Bible of its supernatural character, and direct divinity; but to leave its human character unharmed. They would not call the alleged miracles, miracles, nor consider them as *juggling*. Thus Eichhorn opposed the Deists, — who ascribed bad motives to the writers of Scripture, — but denied that there was anything supernatural in the stories of the Old Testament. He saw that he must deny this of the Bible, or admit it likewise of all ancient religious documents; for they all claimed it. We are not to be astonished, he says, at finding miracles in these writings, for they were produced in the infancy of the world; we must interpret them in the same spirit that composed them. Thus he can explain the history of Noah, Abraham, and Moses, by natural events.

Others treated the New Testament in the same manner. But the first Christian Evhemerus, was Dr. Paulus. He makes a distinction between the fact *related* and the *judgment* or *opinion respecting the fact*; for example, between the fact and the writer's opinion respecting its *cause* or *purpose*. The two, he supposes, are confounded in the New Testament; for its writers, like others in that age, took a supernatural view, and referred human actions to the direct agency of God. The office of an interpreter is to separate the *fact* from the *opinion* about the fact. Paulus, accordingly, believes the Gospels, but denies the supernatural causality of the events related. Jesus is not the Son of God, in the ecclesiastical sense, but a good man; he works no miracles, but does kind deeds, sometimes by surgical skill, and sometimes by good luck. Both Paulus and Eichhorn, in order to maintain the truth of the narrative, must refer it to a date as early as possible; thus the former admits that

Moses wrote the Pentateuch on the march through the wilderness, and the latter believes the genuineness of the Gospels. Both of these sacrifice the literal history for the sake of the great truths contained in the book.

Kant took a different position. He did not concern himself with the history, but only with the *idea* the history unfolded; this idea he considered not as theoretical and practical, but only the latter. He did not refer it to the divine mind, but to that of the writer, or his interpreter. Christian writers, he says, have so long interpreted these books, that they seem to harmonize with universal moral laws. But the Greeks and Romans did the same, and made Polytheism only a symbol of the various attributes of the One God, thus giving a mystical sense to the basest actions of the gods, and the wildest dreams of the poets. In the same way the Christian writings must be explained, so as to make them harmonize with the universal laws of a pure moral Religion. This, even if it does violence to the text, must be preferred to the literal interpretation, which, in many instances, would afford no support to morality, and would sometimes counteract the moral sense. Thus he makes David's denunciation of his foes signify the desire to overcome obstacles; but thinks it is not necessary these ideas should have been present to the mind of the writer of the books.

Here, Mr. Strauss continues, was, on the one hand, an *unhistorical*, and on the other, an *unphilosophical* method of treating the Bible. The progressive study of mythology shed light upon this subject. Eichhorn had made the reasonable demand, that the Bible should be treated like other ancient books; but Paulus, attempting to treat others as he treated the Bible, could not naturalize the Greek legends and myths. Such scholars as Schelling and Gabler began to find myths in the Bible, and apply to them the maxim of Heyne, "a mythis omnis priscorum hominum cum historia, tum philosophia procedit."

Bauer ventured to write a Hebrew mythology of the Old and New Testament. A myth was defined to be a narration proceeding from an age, when there was no written, authentic history, but when facts were preserved and related by oral tradition. It is a myth, if it contains an account of things, — related in an historical way, — which *absolutely* could not be the objects of experience, such as events that took place in the supersensual world, or, which could not *relatively* be objects of experience, such, for example, as, from the nature of the case no man could witness. Or, finally, it is a myth, if the narrative is elaborated into the wonderful, and is related in symbolic language.

Now the *naturalistic* method of interpreting the Bible could only be resorted to on the supposition of its historical accuracy, and that it was written contemporary with the events it relates. Accordingly, men who denied this, carried out the mythical theory. The Pentateuch, says Vater, can be understood only on the supposition it was not written by eye-witnesses. De Wette declared still more strongly against the naturalistic, and in favor of the mythical hypothesis. To test the credibility of an account, he says, we must examine the writer's tendency. He may write history, and yet have a poetic tendency, and such is the case with the writers of the Old Testament. Fact and fiction are blended together therein, and we cannot separate them, because we have no criterion or touch-stone, by which to examine them. The only source of our knowledge of events is the narrative relating the historical facts. We cannot go beyond this. In regard to the Old Testament, we must admit or reject these narratives; in the latter case, we relinquish all claim to any knowledge of the affairs related, for we have no other evidence respecting them. We have no right to impose a *natural* explanation on what is related as a *miracle*. It is entirely arbitrary to say the *fact* is genuine history, and the *drapery* alone is poetical; for example, we have

no right to say Abraham thought he would make a covenant with God, and that this fact lies at the bottom of the poetic narrative. Nor do we know what Abraham thought. If we follow the narrative, we must take the fact as it is; if we reject it, we have no knowledge of the fact itself. It is not reasonable that Abraham should have such thoughts of his descendants possessing Palestine centuries afterwards, but quite natural, that they should write this poetic fiction to glorify their ancestor.

Thus the *naturalistic* explanation destroys itself, and the mythical takes its place. Even Eichhorn confessed the former could not be applied to the New Testament, and Gabler, long ago, maintained, that there are in the New Testament, not only erroneous *judgments upon facts*, which an eye-witness might make; but also *false facts* and improbable results mentioned, which an eyewitness could not relate, but which were gradually formed by tradition, and are, therefore, to be considered myths. The circumstance of writings and books being well known at the time of Christ, does not preclude the mythical view; for the facts must have been preserved orally long before they were written down. Besides, says Bauer, we have not in the New Testament a whole series of myths, but only single mythical stories. Anecdotes are told of a great man, which assume a more extraordinary character, the farther they spread. In a miracle-loving age, the obscure youth of Jesus would, after his name became illustrious, be embellished with miraculous stories of celestial beings visiting his parents, predicting his birth and character. Where the records or authentic tradition failed, men gave loose to fancy, to historical conjectures, and reasonings in the style of the Jewish Christians, and thus created the philosophic myths of primitive Christian history. But men did not sit down with fancy aforethought, saying, "Go to, now, let us make myths;" but they were gradually formed; a little was added here, and a little there. They would relate chiefly to the

obscurest part of Christ's history. In obedience to this principle, Eichhorn, seeing that only a slender thread of apostolical tradition runs through the three first Gospels, rejects several stories from the life of Jesus, which offended his critical taste; for example, the gospel of the infancy, the temptation, some of his miracles, the resurrection of the saints at his death.

Now, Mr. Strauss objects to his predecessors, that for the most part, their idea of a myth is not just and definite; for in the case of a historical myth, they permit the interpreter to separate a natural, historical fact from the miraculous embellishments, which they refer to *tradition*; not, as the naturalist had done, to the *original author*. Thus the naturalist and the supernaturalist could admit historical but not philosophical myths, for then the entire historical basis seemed to fall away. Again, these views were not applied extensively — as far as they would go. Eichhorn admitted there was a myth on the threshold of the Old Testament. When the mythical hypothesis reached the New Testament, it was not permitted to go beyond the very entrance. It was admitted there could be no certain accounts of the early life of Jesus, and therefore that many false stories, suited to the taste of the times and the oracles of the Old Testament, have taken the place which there was no history to fill. But this does not in the slightest degree impair the credibility of the subsequent narrative. The evangelists give an account of the three last years of his life; and here they were themselves eye-witnesses, or took the word of eye-witnesses. Then objections were brought against the end of the history, and the Ascension was considered spurious or mythical. Thus critical doubts began to nibble at both ends of the narrative, while the middle remained untouched, or as some one has said, "Theologians entered the domain of Evangelical history through the gorgeous portals of the myth, and passed

out at a similar gate; but in all that lay between these limits, they were content to take the crooked and toilsome paths of naturalistic explanation.”

Mr. Strauss next inquires, whether it is possible there should be myths in the New Testament, and, judging from outward arguments, he thinks it possible. Most Christians, he says, believe that is false which the Heathen relate of their gods, and the Mahometans of their prophet, while the Scriptures relate only what is true respecting the acts of God, Christ, and the holy men. But this is a prejudice founded on the assumption that Christianity differs from heathen religions in the fact, that it alone is an historical, while they are mythical religions. But this is the result of a partial and confined view; for each of the other religions brings this charge against its rivals, and all derive their own origin from the direct agency of God. It is supposed that the Gospels were written by eye-witnesses, who were not deceived themselves, and were not deceivers, and, therefore, no room is left for the formation, or insertion of myths. But it is only a prejudice, that the Gospels were written by eye-witnesses. The names of Matthew and John, for example, prefixed to these writings, prove nothing; for the Pentateuch bears the name of Moses, though it must have been written long after him; some of the Psalms bear the name of David, though they were written during the exile, and the book of Daniel ascribes itself to that prophet, though it was not written before the times of Antiochus Epiphanes. He finds little reason for believing the genuineness or the authenticity of the Gospels. Indeed, he regards them all as spurious productions of well-meaning men, who collected the traditions that were current in the part of the world, where they respectively lived. This is the weakest part of his book, important as the question is; yet weak as it is, his chief argument rests upon it. The proofs of the spuriousness of these books

are quite too feeble and uncertain for his purpose, and accordingly we are pleased to see, from the preface and many passages of the third edition, that his doubts upon the genuineness of John's Gospel have become doubtful, even to himself, after a farther study of it, with the aid of the recent works of Neander and De Wette.\*

Again, judging from the character of the books themselves, myths, according to Strauss, might be expected in the New Testament. It is sometimes said, the mythical stories of the Bible differ from the Greek myths, in their superior moral character; but the alleged immorality of the Greek myths arises from mistaking their sense, and some of the myths in the Old Testament are immoral; and if they could be formed, much easier could moral myths be made and accepted. It is sometimes said in opposition to the mythical hypothesis, that all these stories in the Bible appear natural, if you admit the direct agency of God. But the same remark applies equally to the Greek and Indian myths. Still farther, it is said, the Heathen myths represent God as a changing being, and thus contain the natural history of God, and the birth, infancy, youth, and manhood of Apollo, or Jupiter, for example; while those of the Bible represent Jehovah as eternally the same. But Jesus, the Son of God, the divine Logos incarnated, is the subject of history. Others say, there can be no myths, because the time of Jesus was an historical and not a mythical age; but all parts of the world were not filled with the historical spirit, and fictions might easily grow up among the people, who had no design to deceive, and thus myths be formed. This is the more probable, for in ancient times, among the Hebrews, and in particular in the religious circles of that people, history and fiction, like poetry and prose, were never carefully separated, and the most respectable

\* Neander's *Leben Jesu*; De Wette's *Exegetische Handbuch der N. T. Commentar in Johan.*

writers, among the Jews and early Christians, wrote works, and ascribed them to distinguished men of an earlier age.

His definition and criteria of a myth are as follows: a myth has two sides; first, it is not a history; and second, it is a fiction, which has been produced by the state of mind of a certain community.

I. It is not an historical statement: ( 1) if it contradict the well known laws of causality, (and here belong the direct actions and supernatural appearances of God and the angels, miracles, prophecies, and voices from Heaven, violations of the order of succession, and well known psychological laws;) and (2) when the writers or witnesses contradict each other, in respect to *time*, (for example, of the purification of the temple,) *place*, (the residence of Joseph and Mary,) *number*, (the Gadarenes and angels at the grave,) or in respect to *names* and other circumstances.

II. A narrative is shown to be legendary or fictitious, (1) if it is poetical in *form*, and the discourses of the characters are longer and more inspired than we need expect, (for example, the discourses of Jesus,) and (2) if the *substance* of the narrative agrees remarkably with the preconceived opinions of the community where it originated, it is more or less probable the narrative grew out of the opinion. He adds several qualifications and modifications of these tests.

Having thus drawn lines of circumvallation and contravallation about the Gospels, Mr. Strauss thus opens the attack upon the outworks. The narrative in Luke relating to John the Baptist, he says, is not authentic; it is not probable the angelic state is constituted as it is here supposed. This idea was borrowed by the later Jews from the Zend religion, and the name of the angel Gabriel, and his office to stand before God, are Babylonian. The angel's discourse and conduct are objectionable; he commands that the child shall be trained up as a Naz-

arite, and smites Zacharias with dumbness, which is not consistent with "theocratic decorum." Admitting the existence of angels, they could not reveal themselves to men, since they belong to different spheres. The naturalists and supernaturalists fail to render this story credible, and we are, therefore, forced to doubt its literal accuracy. Some writers suppose there are historical facts at the bottom of this tale, for example, the sterility of Elizabeth, the sudden dumbness of Zacharias, and his subsequent restoration. But there is no better reason for admitting these facts, than for admitting the whole story. It must be regarded as a myth, and is evidently wrought out in imitation of others in the Old Testament. It resembles the story of Sarah, in the age of the parties; Elizabeth is a daughter of Aaron, whose wife bore this same name. The appearance of the angel, who foretels the birth of John, his character, and destiny, is evidently an imitation of the prophecy respecting Samson, and there is a very strong resemblance between the language of Luke in this part of the story, and that of the Septuagint in the account of Samson's birth. The conclusion of the story (Luke i. 80,) resembles the end of the story of Ishmael, (Gen. xxi. 20.) The name of John, [God's Gift] which was not a family name, renders the narrative still more suspicious. Thus the whole is a myth. We think Mr. Strauss, for the sake of consistency, ought to deny that John the Baptist was an historical person, and doubtless he would have done so, were it not for an unfortunate passage in Josephus, which mentions that prophet. A rigorous application of his tests would deprive John of historical existence. But Josephus saves him.

He next examines the *genealogies of Jesus*.

Matthew enumerates three series, each of fourteen generations, or forty-two persons in the whole, between Abraham and Jesus, and gives the names of the individuals; but the number actually given does not agree with his enumeration, and no hypothesis relieves us of the difficulty. If we compare this

list with the Old Testament, it is still more objectionable, for it omits several well known names, and contains some mistakes. Luke's genealogy differs still more widely from the Old Testament; from Nathan, the son of David, downward, he mentions only two persons, who occur in the Old Testament, namely Salathiel and Zorobabel, and even here it contradicts the narratives in 1 Chronicles, iii. 17, 19, 20. If we compare these two genealogies together, there is a striking difference between them. Luke reckons forty-one generations from David to Joseph, the father of Jesus, where Matthew makes but twenty-six, and, with the two exceptions above mentioned, the names are all different in the two narrations. According to Luke, the father of Joseph is *Heli*, a descendant of *Nathan*, son of David; according to Matthew, Joseph's father is *Jacob*, a descendant of *Solomon*. Various attempts have been made to reconcile these conflicting genealogies, but they all rest on arbitrary suppositions. It is sometimes said one contains the genealogy of Joseph, the other of Mary; but this also is an arbitrary supposition, at variance with the text, and is not supported by any passage in the Bible. We must, then, conclude these genealogies are arbitrary compositions, which do not prove the Davidic descent of Jesus, who was called *son of David*, because he was considered as the Messiah. It is easily conceivable that a Galilean, whose descent was unknown, after he had acquired the title of Messiah, should be represented by tradition as a son of David. On the strength of these traditions genealogies were composed, which, for want of authentic documents, were as various and conflicting as these two of Luke and Matthew.

He then treats of the *miraculous birth of Jesus*.

Here he makes use of two apocryphal Gospels, quoted by several of the early fathers. He shows the striking difference between the accounts of Matthew and Luke, concerning the birth of Jesus. But since the same view has been taken

amongst us by Mr. Norton, and this remarkable discrepancy has been pointed out by him in a work well known and justly valued,\* it is unnecessary to enter farther into the subject. Mr. Norton rejects Matthew's account as spurious and unauthentic; while Mr. Strauss, with more perfect logical consistency, rejects likewise Luke's narrative, on the ground that Gabriel talks like a Jew; that the supernatural birth is impossible; that if an human birth implies the sinfulness of the child, then a celestial mother is needed also, that the child may be free from sin. Again, there are exegetical difficulties, for Mark and John omit this part of the history, and the latter had the best possible means of information, and it is always supposed in the New Testament that Jesus was Joseph's son. Beside, if Jesus were the Son of God, how could he be the son of David, and why are the two genealogies given to prove that descent, one of which is confessed, on all hands, to be the genealogy of Joseph, who, by the supernatural hypothesis, was no wise related to Jesus? In this case the genealogies would prove nothing. It is not possible, they proceeded from the same hand as the story of the supernatural birth, and Mr. Strauss conjectures they are the work of the Ebionites, who denied that article of faith. The attempts of the rationalists and the supernaturalists are alike insufficient, he thinks, to explain away the difficulties of this narrative; but if we regard it as a myth, the difficulty vanishes, and its origin is easily explained. The story itself, in Matthew, refers to Isaiah, (vii. 14,) and that prophecy seems to have been the groundwork of this myth. In the old world, it was erroneously supposed, or pretended, that great men were the descendants of the gods; for example, Hercules, the Dioscuri, Romulus, Pythagoras, and Plato, of whose remarkable birth Jerome speaks. This myth, therefore, grew

\* Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels, by Andrews Norton. Vol. I.; Boston, 1837.

naturally out of the common Jewish notions at the time, and was at last written down.

He next examines *the account of the census, and the early life of Jesus*.

Luke informs us that Augustus Cæsar issued a decree "that all the world should be taxed," or numbered; but no other writer mentions a general census in the time of Augustus, though a census was made in some provinces. If we limit the term "all the world" to Judea, still it is improbable such a census was made at that time, for the Romans did not make a census of conquered countries, until they were reduced to the form of a province, and Judea did not become a Roman province, until after the disgrace and banishment of Archelaus, which event took place after he had reigned ten years as an allied sovereign. Luke says this census was made when Quirinus was governor of Syria. Now it was not Quirinus, but Sentius Saturninus, and after him, Quint. Varus, who were proconsuls of Syria in the latter years of Herod I., and it was some years after his death that Quirinus became proconsul of Syria, and actually made a census, as Josephus relates. Luke also refers to this latter census, (Acts v. 37,) and speaks of Judas the Galilean, who rebelled on this occasion, as Josephus informs us. Now it cannot be true, that Jesus was born at so late a period as the time of this census, under Quirinus, for, — not to mention the chronological difficulties this hypothesis would create in the latter years of Jesus, — this census could not have extended to Galilee, the residence of Joseph and Mary, for that state was governed by Herod Antipas, in the capacity of allied Prince, and accordingly was not a province; therefore, Joseph would not be summoned to Judea when the census of that province was taken. Still farther, it is not probable the Romans would assemble the citizens together by families in the birth-place of the founder of the family, to enrol them.

One evangelist makes Joseph live at Bethlehem, the other at Nazareth. Now the design of the author, in placing the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, is obvious. He wished the prophecy in Micah (v. 2,) to be fulfilled in Jesus, for the Jews applied it to the Messiah. The author, setting out from the opinion that Joseph and Mary dwelt at Nazareth, sought for some natural errand to bring them to Bethlehem. He found a suitable occasion in the well known census of Quirinus; but not understanding accurately the circumstances of the time and place, he has brought hopeless confusion into the narrative, if it is taken for genuine history. We have, therefore, no reason, concludes Mr. Strauss, for believing Jesus was born at Bethlehem, for the story is a myth.

Other circumstances in this narrative present difficulties. What purpose; asks Mr. Strauss, is served by the angels, who appear at the birth of Jesus?\* It could not be to publish the fact; nor to reward the believing shepherds, who, like Simeon, were waiting for the consolation, nor yet to glorify the unconscious infant. They seem sent to the shepherds, because they were supposed to be more simple and religious than the

\* Mr. Norton, (p. lxi. of the additional notes to his "Genuineness of the Gospels,") thus disposes of these difficulties in Luke's narrative; "With its real miracles, the fictions of oral tradition had probably become blended; and the individual, by whom it was committed to writing, probably added what he regarded as poetical embellishments. It is not necessary to believe, for example, that Mary and Zachariah actually expressed themselves in the mythical language of the hymns ascribed to them; or to receive as literal history the whole of the account respecting the birth of John the Baptist, or of the different appearances of an angel, announcing himself as Gabriel. With our present means of judging, however, we cannot draw a precise line between the truth, and what has been added to the truth. But in regard to the main event, the miraculous conception of Jesus, it seems to me not difficult to discern in it purposes worthy of God." But see, on the other hand, the opposite opinion of Mr. Stuart, American Biblical Repository for October, 1838.

artificial Pharisees. Similar objections may be made to the story of the magi, who, it is presupposed, knew beforehand, as astrologers, that a king of the Jews was to be born. A miraculous star guides them; but a *star* does not change its position relatively to earthly places, and a *meteor* does not appear so long as this guide seems to have done. The conduct of Herod is not consistent with his shrewdness, for he sends no officer with the magi to seize the new-born Messiah. The story of the massacre of the innocents at Bethlehem is not mentioned by any ancient author; except Macrobius, a writer of the fourth century, and he confounds it with Herod's murder of his son Antipater. The Rabbins, who never spare this tyrant, do not mention it. True it was but a drop in Herod's sea of guilt, but it is so peculiarly horrible and revolting, that they would not pass over it. In this short passage there are four miraculous dreams and a miraculous star, not to mention the misinterpretation of the Old Testament. (Matt ii. 23)

But the whole story is mythical, and is derived from ideas and opinions commonly held at the time. The ancients believed a heavenly body sometimes appeared on great occasions; for example, a comet, at the birth of Mithridates, and at the death of Julius Cæsar. The Rabbins assert a star appeared at the birth of Abraham. It was their opinion that a star would appear in the East, and remain visible for a long time, at the period of the Messiah's birth. Balaam also had predicted that a star should come out of Jacob. In ancient times, it was supposed stars guided men, for example, Æneas, Thrasybulus, and Timoleon; and the Jews fancied that a star conducted Abraham to Mount Moriah. Isaiah had foretold, that in the days of the Messiah, men should come from distant lands to worship, bringing gold and incense. Again, many great characters of antiquity had escaped from imminent peril for example, Cyrus, Romulus, Augustus, and Moses, in early life. Abraham,

Jacob, and Moses had saved their lives at a later age, by flight. All these ideas and reminiscences, therefore, appear in the two narratives, which are different variations of the same theme, though they have no direct influence, one upon the other. Matthew passes in silence over the entire period, from the return from Egypt to the baptism of Jesus, and Luke mentions but a single circumstance of his early life, namely, his conversation, when twelve years old, with the Doctors. But this event cannot be historical; for it is not probable he would, at that age, be admitted to a seat in the council of the Rabbis. His reply to his parents would not have been misunderstood, if the previous events had taken place as they are related. The whole story, Mr. Strauss contends, is a myth, conceived to suit the opinion, that great men are remarkable in their childhood. Thus, in the Old Testament, Samuel is consecrated in his childhood; the later traditions, which Philo and Josephus follow, ascribe wonderful things to Moses at an early age, though the Bible knows nothing of them. Tradition says, that Samuel prophesied from his *twelfth* year, and that Solomon and Daniel uttered wise oracles at the *same age*; 1 Kings, iii. 23, seq.; Susannah, vs. 45, seq.

The next chapter treats of the *public ministry* of Jesus. We pass over the chronological difficulties relating to the ministry of John the Baptist, which have been carefully collected by Mr. Strauss, and come to his connexion with Jesus. The baptism of John seems based chiefly on some figurative expressions of the Old Testament, according to which God would wash away the sins of his unregenerate people, before the Messiah came. These passages could easily be combined so as to make it appear that baptism, as the symbol of repentance, must precede the Messiah's coming.

Luke informs us that John was a kinsman of Jesus, and that

their respective mothers were acquainted with the sublime destiny of their children, even before the latter were born. Matthew knows nothing of this, but ascribes to John, at the baptism of Jesus, expressions, which imply a previous acquaintance with him; for otherwise he would not refuse to baptize Jesus, on the ground of his own unworthiness to baptize a being so far above him. These two gospels, then, agree in presupposing the acquaintance of John and Jesus. But the fourth Gospel makes John distinctly deny the fact. (i. 31–33.) The appearance of the sign first assures him of the appearance of Jesus.

All the Gospels agree that John calls himself a forerunner of the Messiah, and that he was convinced Jesus was that Messiah. But Matthew and Luke relate, that after his imprisonment, John sent two of his disciples to James, to ascertain the fact. Now if he was convinced by the sign at the baptism, he ought still more to have been convinced by the miracles of Jesus, that he was the Messiah. He could not have sent his disciples to Jesus, in order to strengthen *their* faith, for he did not know Jesus would work wonders in their presence, nor would he compromise his own assertion, that Jesus was the Messiah; and yet if he himself believed it, he would not urge his superior to declare himself immediately, but would leave him to decide for himself.

The fourth Gospel contains the most definite expressions respecting the Messiahship of Jesus, and puts them in John's mouth. But did the Baptist consider him an expiatory sufferer? Did he ascribe to him an antemundane, celestial existence, as the Evangelist has done? We find no proofs of it, except in this fourth Gospel. Now it is not probable the Baptist had this conception of the office and nature of Jesus; nor is it probable, that he made the reply to his disciples, which this evangelist ascribes to him, (iii. 27–36,) where he confesses that he, (John,) is From beneath, but Jesus, From above, the One Sent by God, the Son of God, Speaking God's words, and

Born of God. He must increase, and I decrease. It is probable that the evangelist put these words into John's mouth, but not that the Baptist ever uttered them; for if he had so deep an insight into the nature of the kingdom of God, and the character and office of the Messiah, and believed Jesus to be that Messiah, the latter would never have said that men so rude in their conceptions, as the humblest of his disciples, were superior to John the Baptist; for Peter, the very greatest of these disciples, never attained the lofty conception that Jesus was the Son of God, the "Lamb, who taketh away the sin of the world." Besides, the character of John renders it incredible he would place himself at the feet of Jesus, the very opposite of himself in all respects. This man of the desert, rough and austere, could not become a pattern of the profoundest Christian resignation. A man on a humbler stand-point, (like that of John,) cannot comprehend the man on a superior stand-point, (like that of Jesus). If this, which is related of John were true, "It would be the only instance on record of a man belonging to the history of the whole world, voluntarily, and in such good humor, giving up the reins of the affairs he had so long directed to a man who succeeded him, only to cast him into the shade, and render his mission unnecessary." The fourth Gospel, then, would make the Baptist unlike the Baptist of the Synoptics and Josephus. The statement, in John i. 29–35, is derived in part from fancy, and partly from an embellishment of the narrative in the Synoptics.

Now the origin of the narratives relating to the Baptist, Mr. Strauss contends, is very easily explained. Paul related the historical fact, that John spoke in the name of one to come, and added, Jesus was that one. Afterwards, men spoke as if John had a personal acquaintance with Jesus. This view, though not supported by facts, pleased the early Christians, who were glad to have the Baptist's authority on their side. But there seems no reason for believing there ever was such a recognition of Je-

sus on the part of John; nor is it probable that, while in prison on the charge of sedition, (as Josephus says,) he would be permitted to hold free intercourse with his disciples. The historical facts are, perhaps, the following: Jesus was baptized by John; perhaps continued for some time one of his followers; was entrusted by John with the idea of the approaching Messiah. After John was cast into prison, he continued to preach the doctrines of his master in a modified form, and afterwards, when he rose far above John, never ceased to feel and express a deep reverence for him. Now we can trace the gradual formation of these stories. John spoke indefinitely of the coming Messiah; tradition added, that, he proclaimed *Jesus* as that Messiah. It was thought the rumor of the works of Jesus might have led him to this conclusion, and, therefore, Matthew's story of the mission of two disciples from the prison was formed. But since Jesus had been a disciple of John, it was necessary the relation should be changed, and this purpose is served by Luke's stories of events before his birth, which prove Jesus is the superior. But these accounts were not sufficiently definite, and, therefore, the fourth Gospel leaves no doubt in John's mind that Jesus was the Messiah, but makes him give the strongest assurance of this, the first time he sees him, and ascribes to him the most distinct expressions touching his eternal nature, divinity, and character, as a suffering and atoning Messiah. Now the accounts of John's imprisonment and execution are easily reconciled with one another and with Josephus; and hence we see that his life, as portrayed in the Gospels, is surrounded by mythical shadows only on the side turned towards Jesus, while on the other, the historical features are clearly seen.

The miraculous events at the baptism of Jesus, Mr. Strauss maintains, also present difficulties. The Synoptics mention both the dove and the voice; the fourth Gospel says nothing of the voice, and does not say, — though, perhaps, it implies, —

that the spirit descended on him at the baptism. The lost gospels of Justyn and the Ebionites, connected with this a celestial light, or fire burning in the Jordan. According to the fourth Gospel, John was the only witness of the spirit descending upon Jesus like a dove; but Luke would make it appear there were many spectators. Taking all the accounts, there must have been some objective phenomena visible and audible. But here the cultivated man finds difficulties and objections. Must the heavens open for the divine spirit to pass through? Is it consistent with just notions of the infinite spirit, to suppose it must move like a finite being from place to place, and can incorporate itself in the form of a dove? Does God speak with a human voice? The various theories, naturalistic and supernaturalistic, fail of removing these difficulties. It cannot have been an aggregation of natural events, nor a subjective vision of John, Jesus, or the multitude.

In some of the old gospels now lost, the words, "*Thou art my beloved son,*" &c. were followed by these, "*This day have I begotten thee.*" Clement of Alexandria and Augustine seem to have found them in their copies, and some manuscripts of Luke still contain the words. These words, (from Psalm ii. 7,) were supposed by Jewish and Christian interpreters, to relate to the Messiah, in their original application. Now to make them more effective, and their application to Jesus, as the Messiah, the more certain, this story naturally grew up, that a celestial voice applied them to Jesus. It was perfectly in the spirit of Judaism, and primitive Christianity, to believe such voices were addressed to men. Some of the Rabbis, it is said, received them not rarely. Still farther, Joel and Isaiah had predicted the outpouring of the divine spirit in the days of the Messiah. This spirit he also was to receive. If Jesus were the Messiah, he must receive this spirit; and the occasion of his baptism afforded a very favorable opportunity. But how

should it be known that it came upon him? It must descend in a visible form. The dove is a sacred bird in Syria, and, perhaps, in Judea. The Jews supposed the spirit of God "moved on the face of the deep" in this form. The dove, therefore, was a proper symbol and representative of the divine spirit. These features were all successively united in a mythus, which gradually grew up. There is, then, no reason for doubting that Jesus was baptized by John; but the other circumstances are mythical, and have been added at a later date. Here Mr. Strauss is false to his principles, and separates the fact from the drapery, which surrounds the fact.

But the whole story of the descent of the spirit on Jesus, continues the author, seems at variance with the previous account of his conception by that spirit. If the divine spirit was the proper parent of Jesus, why should that spirit descend and abide upon him? It could not thereby produce a more intimate union between them. We must suppose this story originated in a community which did not believe the supernatural conception of Jesus; and in fact we find that Christians, who did not admit the supernatural conception, believed the divine spirit was first imparted to Jesus at his baptism, and the Orthodox fathers persecuted the old Ebionites for nothing more rigorously, than for maintaining that the holy spirit, or the celestial spirit, *first* united himself with the man Jesus at his baptism. According to Justin, it was the Jewish notion, that a higher power would be first imparted to the Messiah, when he was anointed by Elias. This seems to have been the primitive belief; but afterwards, when reverence for Jesus rose higher, a myth grew up to prove that his Messiahship, and divine son-ship, did not commence with his baptism, but with his conception; and then the words, "*this day have I begotten thee,*" were left out, because they could not be reconciled with the Orthodox view.

The story of the Temptation also, Mr. Strauss contends, has its difficulties. John does not mention it, but makes Jesus appear in Galilee three days after his baptism, while the Synoptics say, he went immediately after this event into the wilderness, and fasted forty days. The Synoptics also differ slightly among themselves. There are other difficulties. Why did the Divine Spirit subject Jesus to this temptation by a visible Satan? Not to ascertain what manner of spirit he was of; nor to try him, for his subsequent trials were sufficient. Again, a man could not abstain from food for forty days. Therefore some say, this is only a round number, and the fasting was not total abstinence from food; but this theory does not agree with the text. Still farther, wherein consisted the utility of this fast? But the personal devil is the chief stone of stumbling. His visible appearance has its difficulties. How could the devil hope to seduce Jesus, knowing his superior nature? and if ignorant of this, he would not have taken the pains to appear visibly before him. The second temptation could offer no attraction to Jesus, and therefore is not consistent with the alleged character of the devil. How could he transfer Jesus from place to place? Their appearance on the pinnacle of the temple would create a sensation. Where is the mountain, whence he could show Jesus all the kingdoms of the world? To say the *world* is Palestine, with its four provinces, is no less absurd than to maintain with Fritzsche, that the devil showed Christ all the countries on the map of the world. Attempts have been made to explain this story as an account of what passed in the mind of Jesus, either in an ecstatic vision, occasioned directly by God, or the devil, or by his own natural thoughts arising in a dreamy state, when he spontaneously transformed the thoughts into persons speaking and acting. But why should the Deity, or how could the Devil effect this? To suppose it was the result of his own natural thoughts, implies that Jewish notions of the Mes-

siah had a strong influence on him even after his baptism. The merely natural view is absurd. Some call it a parable, designed to show, that no miracle is to be wrought for the man's self; hope of extraordinary divine aid should not lead to rash undertakings; and an alliance with the wicked must never be made even to obtain the greatest good. But if this is so, why does it not wear the form of a parable? It is easy to explain it as a myth. The Messiah was regarded as the concentration of all that is good, and the devil of all evil. He opposes Jesus, but can at farthest only produce momentary bad thoughts, not bad resolutions. Many passages in Jewish writings indicate a common belief, that the Messiah would be tempted by the devil, as they say Abraham had been before. If Jesus was the Messiah, he must encounter this temptation, which, like that of Hercules, was very suitably placed just at his entrance upon active life. The scene of the temptation is well chosen, for the wilderness was not only the dwelling-place of Azazel, (Levit. xvi. 9, 10,) Asmodeus, (Tobit, viii. 3,) and the expelled demons; but it was the place where the whole nation, the *collective son of God*, was tempted forty years; and there is a strong analogy between their temptations and that of Jesus. The story was gradually formed out of these Jewish notions, without the slightest intention to deceive.

There is a striking discrepancy, Mr. Strauss affirms, between the Synoptics and John in respect to many parts of Christ's ministry. The former represent him to have spent the greater part of his life in Galilee; while the latter places him in Jerusalem and Judea. From them we should suppose he spent all his life in Galilee and the Peræa, before his last visit to Jerusalem, while John relates four previous journeys to that place, and a visit to Bethany. If John is in the right, the Synoptics were ignorant of an essential part of Christ's ministry; but if the latter are in the right, then he has invented a great part of the history, or at least transferred it to a wrong place.

We pass over the chronological and many other difficulties. The Synoptics and John disagree in respect to the assumption of the office and title of the Messiah. According to John, Jesus confessed early, that he was the Messiah, and the disciples remained faithful to the conviction, that he spoke the truth, (i. 42, 46, 50. ) To follow the Synoptics, he did not take this title until a late period of his life; he supposes a special revelation had announced the fact to Peter, (Matthew xvi. 17,) and charges the apostle to tell no man of it. Two views may be taken of the case. Jesus was a follower of John the Baptist, and after his teacher was cast into prison he preached repentance, and the approach of the Messiah, and concluded he was himself that Messiah. This view would account for the fact, that he was disturbed when called by this name, and therefore forbid his disciples to speak of him in that relation. But since these prohibitions are doubtful, and if real, they may be accounted for, without supposing Jesus was not thoroughly convinced of his Messiahship, for it cannot be supposed that he, who made such a revolution in the world, as no other man has ever done, ever faltered in the midst of his course, in his conviction that he was the Messiah. Since, then, he must have had a clear consciousness of his calling, we conclude that he was convinced of his Messiahship, from the time of his first appearance in that relation, but was somewhat reserved in expressions of this conviction, because he preferred his disciples should gradually learn the truth from the silent testimony of his life and works.

The Synoptics, says Mr. Strauss, never speak of the preëxistence of Jesus, while John often mentions it. Now the preëxistence of the Messiah was an article of faith with the Jews, soon after Christ, and it is probable they believed it before his time. But it must remain doubtful whether Jesus entertained this idea, or whether John has ascribed it to him without any authority.

Mr. Strauss considers the story of the woman of Samaria an unhistorical myth. The whole scene has a legendary and poetic coloring. The position at the well is the "idyllic locality of the old Hebrew stories." The scene is the same as in the stories of Eliezer, Jacob, and Moses, all of whom meet women at a well. In this case, the woman, weak and good-humored, who had had five husbands, but then had none, is a symbol of the Samaritan people, who had forsaken Jehovah, &c. &c. This story, then, is only a poetic account of the ministry of Jesus among the Samaritans, which itself is not a matter of history, but is only a "legendary prelude of the extension of Christianity" among that people after Christ's death.

But we must press on with more rapid wheels. The calling of the apostles presents numerous difficulties, for there are great discrepancies between the accounts of John and the Synoptics. It is not probable Jesus understood the character of men at first glance of their persons, (John i. 46, seq. though the Jews expected the Messiah, *odorando judicare*, as Schottgen has it;) nor is it probable the disciples would immediately forsake all and follow him. These stories are mythical, and evident imitations of the legendary history of Elijah and his followers. As Elisha left his oxen and ran after Elijah, (1 Kings, xix. 19, seq.) so the disciples presently left their nets and followed Jesus. Elisha received permission to go and take leave of his parents, but now the call of the Messiah is so urgent, that he rejects a young man who made the same request, (Luke ix. 60, seq.) and will not suffer a convert even to go and bury his father. The historical fact may be, that some of his disciples were fishermen, but they must have come gradually into their connexion with Jesus.

John does not mention that the twelve disciples were sent on a mission; and the Synoptics relate nothing of their baptizing converts during their teacher's life. It is probable Jesus had a body of *twelve* disciples; but Luke's statement, that he

had also a larger circle of *seventy* disciples, is not confirmed by any other evangelist, by the book of Acts, nor by any Epistle. It is evidently formed in imitation of the story of *seventy* elders in the Pentateuch. The accounts of Peter's fishing expeditions; and Christ's miraculous draught of fishes, like that of Pythagoras, are self-contradictory, and all mythical.

There is a great difference between Christ's discourses in John, and the Synoptics; they have but few expressions in common; even their internal character is entirely different. The latter differ among themselves in this respect; Matthew gives large masses of discourse, Luke short discourses on different occasions, and Mark offers but a meagre report of his sayings. Matthew's report of the sermon on the mount differs very widely from that of Luke; many of the expressions in Matthew's report are obviously misplaced; for example, Jesus could not, at the commencement of his ministry, have declared that he came to fulfil the law and the prophets, for he had not declared himself the Messiah, of whom alone this was expected. By comparing all the accounts together, we see, says Mr. Strauss, that "the granular discourses of Jesus have not been dissolved and lost in the stream of oral tradition; but they have, not rarely, been loosened from their natural connexion, washed away from their original position, and like bowlders rolled to places where they do not properly belong. By this comparison, we find that Matthew has not always restored the fragments to their original connexion; but yet, like a skilful collector, for the most part, has made an intelligible arrangement, joining like with like; while in the two other Gospels, some small pieces are suffered to lie, where chance has thrown them, in the chasms between large masses of discourse, and Luke has sometimes given himself the pains to arrange them artificially, but has not been able to restore the natural connexion." Vol. I. p. 63.

We pass over the alleged instructions of the twelve, and the parables, where the only difficulty lies in the discrepancy of the several narratives. Mr. Strauss thinks the controversial discourses of Jesus are genuine, because they correspond so closely to the spirit and tone of rabbinical explanations of Scripture at that time. The discourses which John ascribes to Jesus present greater difficulties. Let us take the conversation with Nicodemus. He is not mentioned by the other evangelists. It is difficult to believe that, if John's account is true, so distinguished a follower of Jesus as Nicodemus, would be omitted by Matthew, an immediate disciple of Christ, — to follow the tradition. Still more difficult is it to believe, he would be forgotten by the oral tradition, which was the source of the Synoptical Gospels, which remember Joseph of Arimathea, and the two pious Marys. This difficulty is so great, that we are tempted to ask if it is not more natural that John has followed a traditional legend, and that there never was such a man as Nicodemus? The Synoptics relate that the mysteries of the Messiah were understood by babes and sucklings, but were concealed from the wise and prudent. They mention Joseph of Arimathea as the only disciple from "the better sort" of people. John says the Pharisees attempted to "put Jesus down," by saying, none of the rulers or Pharisees, but only the ignorant and infamous populace believed on him. Celsus subsequently made this objection, which was, no doubt, often brought in the early times of Christianity. So long as only the poor and unlearned embraced this religion, they comforted themselves by Christ's blessings pronounced upon the poor and simple; but when men of "character and standing" became Christians, they wished to find others of their own class among the direct disciples of Jesus. Not finding any such, they could say, "they were his secret followers, who came to him by night, for fear of the Jews," (John xii. 42, seq., xix. 39.) Joseph of Ari-

mathea was one of this class; but more than one such was needed. Therefore this story was formed to remove the difficulty. The Greek name of Nicodemus clearly indicates his connexion with "higher classes" of society in Judea. He is mentioned only in John's Gospel, because this is the most modern, and was composed in a community where the above objection was most keenly felt.

But this is only a conjecture; and even if it is well grounded, it should excite no prejudice against the conversation itself. This may, in all its essential features, be a genuine discourse Jesus held with one of the common people. It is incredible that a Jewish teacher should not have understood the new birth; but it was for the interest of the story to show how far Jesus rose above other Jewish teachers. They were but fools compared to the Great Teacher. Nicodemus applies to earthly things what Jesus asserts of heavenly things. It is not probable, that Jesus really spoke in the manner John relates, for this manner differs from that of the Synoptics. There he dwells on particular points, "with genuine pedagogical assiduity," until he has completely explained them, and then passes on, step by step, to other instructions, as a true teacher must do. But in the fourth Gospel, he speaks in a desultory and exaggerated manner, which can be explained only by supposing it was the narrator's design to set the Teacher's wisdom and the pupil's ignorance in the most striking contrast.

John makes Jesus speak very differently from the Synoptics; for example, in Matthew, Jesus defends his violation of the Sabbath by three practical arguments, the example of David eating the holy bread, of the priests sacrificing on the Sabbath, and of a man saving the life of a beast on that day. But in John he uses the metaphysical argument, drawn from the uninterrupted activity of God; "My Father worketh hitherto." Besides, there is the closest analogy between the lan-

guage of Jesus in the fourth Gospel and that of John's first Epistle, and those passages of the Gospel, in which either this evangelist himself, or John the Baptist speaks; and since this language differs from that of the other Gospels, we must conclude, the words belong to John, and not to Jesus. Perhaps he invents suitable occasions, (as Plato has done,) and writes down his own reflections in the form of his master's discourses. His frequent repetition of the same thought, or form of expression, is quite striking. We must conclude that this evangelist treated the authentic tradition in the freest manner, and in the tone and spirit of the Alexandrians, or Hellenists.\*

We pass over a long statement of discrepancies between the several Gospels, and other matters, of greater or less importance, which Mr. Strauss has treated with his usual freedom, learning, and dialectical clearness of vision. His explanation of the several stories of the sinful women, who anointed the feet of Jesus, is quite ingenious, to say nothing more. He supposes they all grew out of one simple story. We have, then, a group of five histories, the centre of which is the narrative of a woman anointing Jesus, (Matt. xxvi. 6, seq.; Mark xiv. 3, seq. ) John's account of the sinful woman, ( viii. 1, seq. ), and Luke's of Mary and Martha, (x. 38, seq. ) occupy the extreme right and left; while Luke's picture of his anointing by a sinful woman, (vii. 36, seq.), and John's, by Mary, (xii. 1, seq.), complete the piece. All may be but different delineations of the same event.

We come next to the miracles of Jesus. Miracles of various kinds were commonly expected of the Messiah, who was to

\* In the third edition, p. 741, he adds; "I cannot maintain that John's discourses contain anything, which cannot, decidedly, be explained from John's character, or the composition of the gospel in the latter part of his life."

surpass all the former prophets and deliverers. Now Moses had furnished food and water in a miraculous manner; Elisha had opened the blind eyes, healed the sick, and raised the dead. The prophets had predicted nearly the same things in general, and some of them in special, of the Messiah, (Isaiah xxxv. 5; xlii. 7,) and according to the Gospels Jesus did more than realize these expectations. The fact, that men demanded "a sign" from him proves nothing against his miracles, for these demands seem to have been made after a display of miraculous power. He censures the love of miracles; but this does not prove he would never perform one on a suitable occasion. But when he says no sign shall be given unto that generation, &c., Mr. Strauss concludes *he refuses to perform any miracles whatever* before any of his contemporaries. This statement is quite inconsistent with the miraculous narratives in the Gospels, but it agrees perfectly well with the preaching and letters of the Apostles; for there, (excepting a general statement in Acts ii. 22, and x. 38,) the miracles are passed over in silence, and all rests on his resurrection; and this would not be so unexpected, nor would it make an epoch in the world, if Jesus had previously raised more than one from the dead, and wrought miracles of all sorts. Here, then, the question is, whether we are to explain away the Gospel accounts of miracles, for the sake of the above refusal of Jesus to perform them; or doubt the genuineness and authenticity of this refusal; or in consideration of that refusal, and the silence of the apostolical writings to mistrust the numerous miracles of the Gospels. The author devotes above two hundred and fifty pages to miracles in general and particular. We shall notice only some of his most striking remarks.

It was a common opinion of the Jews, that certain diseases were caused by demons; Jesus himself seems to have shared this opinion. The belief, of course, is not well founded. Some

of the accounts, in which Jesus is said to expel these demons, are self-contradictory; for example, it cannot be true that there were *two* Gadarene madmen, so fierce as they are represented, who yet lived together. They would destroy one another. Mark and Luke, with greater probability, mention but one demoniac, in this place. These several accounts, which conflict with one another, present numerous difficulties. The demoniac knows Jesus is the Messiah; in Matthew, *he calls out*, "Hast thou come to torment me?" &c.; in Luke, *he falls down and worships* Jesus, and in Mark, *he knows him at a distance*, runs to him, and does homage. Here is a regular climax in the Christian tradition. But the greatest difficulty consists in the demon entering the swine; for, as Olshausen has said, the Gadarene swine in the New Testament, like Balaam's ass in the old, are a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. If we trust the account, the demon, at his own request, was transferred from the body of the man to the swine, and *possessed* the latter as he had done the former. Then the possessed animals rushed into the sea and were drowned. Here the conduct of the demon is inexplicable; he entreated not to be cast out into the deep, but casts himself into it. The character of Jesus is impaired by this story; for he must have known the result of suffering the demons to enter this large herd of two thousand swine, and the consequent loss their owners would sustain. He, therefore, is thus made "accessory before the fact," and the naturalistic and supernaturalistic theories can give no satisfactory explanation of the difficulties. But considered as a mythical story, which grew naturally out of the common opinions of the people, it is easily explained. It was commonly supposed that demons must possess some body, and that they preferred impure places; therefore the unclean bodies of the swine were the most suitable recipients of the demons, when driven from the man. Josephus mentions a conjuror, who, to convince specta-

tors that he really expelled demons, ordered them to overturn a vessel of water, set near the possessed men, as they came out of him, which they did to the satisfaction of all present. Jesus meant to give a similar proof, and to render the proof doubly strong, the test is not an inanimate body, placed near at hand, but a whole herd of swine, "a good way off," which the demons force to rush upon certain destruction, contrary to the instinct of self-preservation natural to all animals. This, then, was a proof of the expulsion of the demons, and of their perfect subjection to Jesus. Besides, to magnify the powers of Christ, he must not only cure simple, but difficult cases. Accordingly, that is represented as a desperate case; the man was fierce and malignant; he dwelt naked in the tombs, and broke asunder all chains that could be forced upon him; and not only this, but he was possessed by a whole legion of devils, thus presenting a case of the greatest possible difficulty. Matthew gives us the most simple form of the legend, thus constructed; Luke renders it more artificial, and Mark adds still farther embellishments to it.

John mentions nothing concerning the demoniacs or their cure. Yet he must have shared the common Jewish notions on this point, and especially if they were the views of Jesus. It cannot be said, he omitted these cases, which form a great part of Christ's miracles in the Synoptics, because it was unnecessary to repeat what they had recorded, for he more than once allows himself such repetitions; nor can it be true, that he accommodated himself to the delicate ears of his Greek converts, to whom demoniacal possessions would be offensive. It seems, therefore, that the fourth Gospel was written not by John, but by some one who drew from the Christian tradition as received by the more refined Hellenists.

Another case of expelling a demon is evidently an imitation and improvement of a similar case in the Old Testament.

The disciples had failed in their attempt; but Jesus cures him at a word. So Elisha restores a dead child after Gehazi, his servant, had tried in vain, (2 Kings, iv. 29, seq.) Moses and Elisha had cured the leprosy; the Messiah must do the same. He also must literally fulfil figurative predictions of the prophets, and give sight to the blind. John enlarges upon the statements of the Synoptics, and makes him cure a man *born* blind. They relate that he cured paralytics, and increased bread, and restored a dead person; but John enlarges these wonders, and according to him, Jesus cures a man who had been diseased for *thirty-eight* years, *changes water into wine*, and recalls to life a man *four days after his death*, when the body was on the verge of dissolution.

Mr. Strauss supposes the accounts of Jesus involuntarily curing such as touched him, — as it were by a species of magnetic influence, — and even persons at a distance, whom he had never seen, are mythical stories, which have grown out of the popular reverence for Jesus. He places them on a level with similar stories in the Acts, of miraculous cures wrought by Peter's shadow, and Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons, (Acts v. 15; xix. 11, 12.) "It is not difficult to see what causes have produced this branch of the gospel legends of miracles, in distinction from the others. The weak faith of the people, unable to grasp the Divine Spirit with the thoughts, strives to bring it down more and more to the level of material existence. Therefore, according to the later opinion, the reliques and bones of a saint must work miracles after his death; Christ's body must be actually present in the transubstantiated bread and wine, and for the same reason, according to the earlier opinion, the sanatory power of the New-Testament-men adhered to their bodies, and even their garments. The less men understand and adhere to the words of Jesus, the more anxious will they be to seize upon his mantle, and the farther one is removed from sharing Paul's unconfined spiritual power, the

more confidently will he carry home Paul's gift of healing in his pocket-handkerchief."

Mr. Strauss examines the several accounts where Jesus is said to raise the dead, and finds a climax in the three instances mentioned; first, he restores a *girl, on the bed* where she had died; next, a *young man in his coffin*, before burial; and finally, Lazarus, who had *been dead four days, and was in the tomb*. He enumerates all the difficulties that beset a literal or mystical, natural or supernatural interpretation of the passages, and concludes that all the stories grew out of popular notions of the Messiah, or are copied from the similar stories of Elisha's wonderful works (1 Kings xvii. 7; 2 Kings iv. 18,) or from the predictions of the prophets.

He collects and dwells upon the difficulties of the alleged transfiguration of Jesus. What was the use of this scene? Not to glorify Jesus, for his physical glorification is unnecessary and childish. Why or how could Moses and Elijah appear to him, and for what purposes? Not to inform Jesus of his death; he had himself foretold it; not to strengthen him for future troubles, for it did not effect this object; and we do not know that he needed aid at that time; not to confirm his disciples, for only three were present, and they were asleep, and were not permitted to relate the events until after the resurrection. Does God speak in an audible voice, and quote from the Old Testament? The theories of interpreters of the various schools are in part absurd, and all inadequate to remove the difficulties. But the whole story has grown out of the Messianic expectations of the Jews, and an imitation of scenes in the Old Testament. The Jews expected the Messiah would appear with a face far more resplendent than that of Moses, — "a mere man;" his splendor would extend "from one hinge of the world to the other," was the poetic expression. Moses had been glorified on a mountain; God had appeared to him in a cloud. The

same scene is repeated, and Jesus is glorified on a mountain, in presence of the two representatives of the Jewish system, who were expected to appear. Moses and Elijah, the founders of the theocratical law, and of theocratical prophecy, appear as the supporters of the Messiah, who fulfils the law and the prophets, and completes the kingdom of God. God appears in the clouds; and acknowledges him as his son, by a quotation from the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. (Ps. ii. 7; Isa. xlii. 1; and Deut. xviii. 15.)

We will now mention only the death, and final scenes of the life of Jesus. Mr. Strauss thinks he could not have had so accurate a foreknowledge of the manner of his suffering and death, as the evangelists would lead us to suppose. The prediction was written after the event. Jesus could not definitely have foretold his resurrection from the dead, for then the disciples would have expected the event. But after the crucifixion they anoint the body, as if it was to become the "prey of dissolution." When they repair to the grave, they think not of a resurrection; their only concern is, who shall roll away the stone from the mouth of the tomb? Not finding the body, they think it has been stolen. When the women mention the angels they had seen, it is idle talk to the disciples; when Mary Magdalene, and two others, assured the disciples they had seen the "risen Jesus," their "words produced no belief. It is only when Jesus appears in person, and upbraids them for their unbelief, that they assert as a fact, what they would have foreknown if he had predicted it. A foreknowledge or prediction of this event was ascribed to Jesus after the result, not from any intention to deceive, but by a natural mistake. He thinks, however, that Jesus actually predicted his own second coming, in the clouds of Heaven, the destruction of the Jewish state, and the end of the world; all of which were to take place

before his contemporaries should pass away. Here, following the Wolfenbüttel Fragmentist, he says there is no prophecy in the whole Bible so distinct and definite as this, and yet it is found obviously and entirely false. We attempt to fill up the great gulf between this prediction and the fact, and our hope of success shows how easy it must have been for the author of these predictions to suppose, that soon after the destruction of the Jewish state, — supposed to be the central point of the world, — the whole earth should come to an end, and the Messiah appear to judge mankind.

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

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

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

He enlarges at great length, and with acuteness, and some "special pleading," which is not altogether rare in the book, on the confusion of the statements in the four Gospels concerning the time, place, and circumstances of the resurrection, and the several appearances of Jesus, after that event, passing through closed doors; appearing under various forms, and, like a spirit, remaining with them but a short time, and then vanishing out of sight. But the fact of the resurrection itself, Mr. Strauss says, involves difficulties, and cannot be admitted. We must, then, suppose, with the rationalists, either that he was not dead; or that the resurrection did not take place. He accepts the latter part of the dilemma, and thinks the disciples were mistaken, led astray by the figurative passages in the Psalms and Prophets, which they erroneously referred to the Messiah. The testimony of the Gospels and the book of Acts, he says, is so inconsistent, contradictory, and imperfect, that we can place no dependence upon it, and that of Paul, which is consistent with itself, and of great weight, only assures us of his own conviction, that Christ rose and appeared to men, and even to himself. But Christ's appearance to Paul was entirely subjective, and there is no reason to believe he supposed Jesus had appeared to others in an objective manner, visible to the senses.

Mr. Strauss fancies the narratives originated in the following manner. The disciples, thinking the Messiah must remain forever, thought he must have arisen; next, they had subjective visions; then, in a high state of enthusiasm, they mistook some unknown person for him. Afterwards, as these disciples related their convictions, the story was enlarged, embellished, and varied, until it assumed the form of the present canonical and apocryphal gospels. The ascension to heaven, which many have hitherto rejected as not trust-worthy, is regarded by Mr. Strauss as a myth, which derives its ideas from the histories and predictions of the Old Testament, and Jewish tradition, and with a particular reference to the alleged translations of Enoch and Elijah.

The author adds a "Concluding Treatise" to his critical work, "For the inward germ of Christian faith is entirely independent of critical investigations; the supernatural birth of Christ, his miracles, his resurrection and ascension to Heaven, remain eternal truths, however much their reality, as historical facts, may be doubted."\* All these he supposes are realized not in an historical personage, but in the human race. Mankind have unconsciously projected out of themselves the ideal of a perfect man, an incarnation of God, a personification of morality and religion. This Ideal has been placed upon Jesus, a man distinguished for great virtue and piety. But neither he nor any man ever did, or can realize the Idea; it must be realized in the race. The history of the miraculous conception, says one of the profoundest of the Germans, represents the divine origin of Religion; the stories of his miracles, the independent power of the human soul, and the sublime doctrine of spiritual self-confidence. His resurrection is the symbol of the victory of Truth; the omen of the triumph of the good over the evil,

\*Vol. I. p. xii.

hereafter to be completed. His ascension is the symbol of the eternal excellence of religion; Christ on the cross is the image of mankind purified by self-sacrifice. We must all be crucified with him, to ascend with him to a new life. The idea of devotion is the ground-tone in the history of Jesus; for every act of his life was consecrated to the thought of his Heavenly Father.

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

Having thus given a patient, and, we hope, faithful account of the principles, method, and most striking results of this

\*Bis zum verschwinden Minimum zurückdrängte.

†Vol. II. p. 771-779, 3d edit.

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

1. He sets out, as he says, without any "presuppositions." Now this is not possible, if it were desirable, and not desirable, if it were possible. But he has set out with presuppositions, namely, that the Idea precedes the man, who is supposed to realize that idea; that many men, having a certain doctrine, gradually and in a natural manner, refer this doctrine to some historical person, and thus make a mythical web of history. He presupposes that a miracle is utterly impossible. Again he presupposes, — and this is an important feature of his system, — that the Ideal of Holiness and Love, for example, like the Ideal of beauty, eloquence, philosophy, or music, cannot be concen-

trated in an individual. In a word, there can be no incarnation of God; not even of what, in a human manner, we call his Love, or Holiness. We could enumerate many other presuppositions, but forbear.\* He explains his meaning in the controversial replies to his opponents, but does not satisfy us.

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

3. The book is not written in a religious spirit. It will be said a critical work needs not be written in a religious spirit, and certainly those works, — and we could name many such, — which aim at two marks, edification and criticism, usually fail of both. They are neither wind nor water; are too high for this world, and too low for the next; too critical to edify; too hortatory to instruct. That anicular criticism, so common on this side of the waters, deserves only contempt. But a philo-

\* See Ullmann, *Historisch oder der Mythisch. Beiträge zur Beantwortung der gegenwärtigen Lebensfrage der Theologie*; Hamburg: 1838, p. 62, seq. De Wette l. c. Tholuck, *Glaubwürdigkeit der evangelischen Geschichte zugleich eine Kritik des Lebens Jesu von Strauss*. 1838, p. 26, seq.

† See the necessary "presuppositions," laid down by De Wette, *Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zum N. T. Vol. I. Th. 3*, concluding treatise on the historical criticism of the Evangelical History; Leip., 1837. p. 214, seq.

sophical work should be criticised philosophically; a poetical work, in the spirit of a poet, and a religious history in a religious spirit. The criticism of Schleiermacher and De Wette is often as bold, unsparing, and remorseless, and sometimes quite as destructive, as that of Strauss; but they always leave an impression of their profound piety. We will not question the religious character of Mr. Strauss; a Christian like Dr. Ullman, his own countryman, does not doubt it; others of his countrymen, in letters and conversation, inform us that his religious character is above reproach, and puts some of his opponents to shame.

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

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

It is wonderful, we think, that some of the absurdities of the theory Mr. Strauss supports have not struck the author himself. He reverses the order of things; makes the effect precede the cause; the Idea appear in the mass, before it was seen in an individual, "As Plato's God formed the world by looking on the eternal ideas, so has the community, taking occasion from the person and fate of Jesus, projected the image of its Christ, and unconsciously the idea of mankind, in its relations to God, has been waving before its eyes." He makes a belief in the resurrection and divinity of Christ spring up out of the community, take hold on the world, and produce a revolution in all human affairs perfectly unexampled; and all this without any adequate historical cause. No doubt, theologians in his country, as well as our own, have attempted to prove too much, and so failed to prove anything. Divines, like kings, lose their just inheritance, when they aspire at universal empire. But this justifies no man in the court of logic, for rejecting all

historical faith. If there was not an historical Christ to idealize, there could be no ideal Christ to seek in history. We doubt if there was genius enough in the world in the first two, or the first twenty centuries since Christ, to devise such a character as his, with so small an historical capital, as Strauss leaves us. No doubt, we commit great errors in seeking for too much of historical matter. Christian critics, says De Wette, will not be satisfied with knowing as much respecting Christ as Paul and the apostles knew. No one of *them*, though they were eye-witnesses, had such a complete, consistent, and thoroughly historical picture of the life of Christ, as we seek after. Many of the primitive Christians could scarcely know of Christ's history a tenth part of what our catechumens learn, and yet they were more inspired and better believers than we. It is much learning, which makes *us* so mad; not the Apostle Paul.\* But if we cannot *prove* all things, we can hold fast to enough that is good.

Mr. Strauss takes the idea, which forms the subject, as he thinks, of a Christian myth, out of the air, and then tells us how the myth itself grew out of that idea. But he does not always prove from history or the nature of things, that the idea existed before the story or the fact was invented. He finds certain opinions, prophecies, and expectations in the Old Testament, and affirms at once these were both the occasion and cause of the later stories, in which they reappear. This method of treatment requires very little ingenuity, on the part of the critic; we could resolve half of Luther's life into a series of myths, which are formed after the model of Paul's history; indeed, this has already been done. Nay, we could dissolve any given historical event in a mythical solution, and then precipitate the "seminal ideas" in their primitive form. We also can change an historical character into a symbol of "universal humanity." The

\* L. c. p. 221.

whole history of the United States of America, for example, we might call a tissue of mythical stories, borrowed in part from the Old Testament, in part from the Apocalypse, and in part from fancy. The British government oppressing the Puritans is the “great red dragon” of the Revelation, as it is shown, by the national arms, and by the British legend of Saint George and the Dragon, The splendid career of the new people is borrowed from the persecuted woman’s poetical history, her dress — “clothed with the sun.” The stars said to be in the national banner, are only the crown of twelve stars on the poetic being’s head; the perils of the pilgrims in the Mayflower are only the woman’s flight on the wings of a great eagle. The war between the two countries is only “the practical application” of the flood which the dragon cast out against the woman, &c.\* The story of the Declaration of Independence is liable to many objections, if we examine it *a la mode* Strauss. The congress was held at a mythical town, whose very name is suspicious, — Philadelphia, — Brotherly Love. The date is suspicious; it was the *fourth* day of the *fourth* month, (reckoning from *April*, as it is probable the Heraclidæ, and Scandinavians; possible that the aboriginal Americans, and certain that the Hebrews did. ) Now *four* was a sacred number with the Americans; the president was chosen for *four* years; there were *four* departments of affairs; *four* divisions of the political powers, namely, — the people, the congress, the executive, and the judiciary, &c. Besides, which is still more incredible, three of the presidents, two of whom, it is alleged signed the declaration, died on the *fourth* of July, and the two latter exactly *fifty* years after they had signed it, and about the *same hour* of the day. The *year* also is suspicious; 1776 is but an ingenious combination of the

\* We borrowed this hint from a sermon heard in childhood, “opening this Scripture,” and explaining this prophecy, as relating to America.

sacred number, *four*, which is repeated *three* times, and then multiplied by itself to produce the date; thus,  $444 \times 4 = 1776$ , Q. E. D. Now dividing the first (444) by the second (4), we have *Unity* thrice repeated (111.) This is a manifest symbol of the national *oneness*, (likewise represented in the motto, *e pluribus unum*,) and of the national *religion*, of which the Trinitarian Monad, or “Trinity in Unity” and “Unity in Trinity,” is the well-known sign!! Still farther, the Declaration is metaphysical, and presupposes an acquaintance with the transcendental philosophy, on the part of the American people. Now the *Kritik of Pure Reason* was not published till after the Declaration was made. Still farther, the Americans were never, to use the nebulous expressions of certain philosophers, an “idealo-transcendental-and-subjective,” but an “objective-and-concretivo-practical” people, to the last degree; therefore a metaphysical document, and most of all a “legal-congressional-metaphysical” document is highly suspicious if found among them. Besides, Hualteperah, the great historian of Mexico, a neighboring state, never mentions this document; and farther still, if this Declaration had been made, and accepted by the whole nation, as it is pretended, then we cannot account for the fact, that the fundamental maxim of that paper, namely, the soul’s equality to itself, — “all men are born free and equal” — was perpetually lost sight of, and a large portion of the people kept in slavery; still later, petitions, — supported by this fundamental article, — for the abolition of slavery, were rejected by Congress with unexampled contempt, when, if the history is not mythical, slavery never had a legal existence after 1776, &c. &c. But we could go on in this way forever. “I’ll” prate “you so eight years together; dinners, and suppers, and sleeping hours excepted; *it is the right butter-woman’s rank to market.*” We are forcibly reminded of the ridiculous prediction of Lichtenberg, mentioned by Jacobi; “Our world will by-and-by become

so fine, that it will be as ridiculous to believe in a God, as now it is to believe in ghosts; and then again the world will become still finer, and it will rush hastily up to the very tip-top of refinement. Having reached the summit, the judgment of our sages will once more turn about; knowledge will undergo its last metamorphosis. Then — this will be the end — we shall believe in nothing but ghosts; we shall be as God; we shall know that Being and Essence is, and can be only, — Ghost. At that time the salt sweat of seriousness will be wiped dry from every brow; the tears of anxiety will be washed from every eye; loud laughter will peal out among men, for Reason will then have completed her work; humanity will have reached its goal, and a crown will adorn the head of each transfigured man.”\*

The work of Strauss has produced a great sensation in Germany, and especially in Berlin. It has called forth replies from all quarters, and of all characters, from the scurrilous invective to the heavy theological treatise. It has been met by learning and sagacity, perhaps greater than his own, and he has yielded on some points. He has retorted upon some of his antagonists, using the same weapons with which they assailed him.† He has even turned upon them, and carried the war into their borders, and laid waste their country, with the old Teutonic war-spirit. We have never read a controversy more awful than his reply to Eschenmeyer and Menzel. Porson’s criticism of poor Mr. Travis was a lullaby in comparison. But he has replied to Ullman, — a Christian in heart, apparently, as well as in theology, — as a child to a father. His letters to this gen-

\* This quotation seems to be a classic common-place against all new schools. Jacobi applied it to Idealism and Nature-Philosophy, and both Tholuck and Hengstenberg cast it upon Strauss. A writer in the Princeton Repertory “sips the thrice-drawn infusion,” and gives the passage a new application.

† *Streitschriften zur Vertheidigung meiner Kritik*, 1837–8; 3 Hefte, 8vo.

tleman are models for theological controversy. He has modified many of his opinions, as his enemies or his friends have pointed out his errors, and seems most indebted to Neander, Tholuck, Weisse, Ullman, and De Wette, not to mention numerous humbler and more hostile names.

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

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

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

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

We cannot regard this book as the work of a single man; it is rather the production of the age. An individual raised up by God discovers a great truth, which makes an epoch, and by its seminal character marks the coming ages. But a book like this, which denotes merely a crisis, a revolution, is the aggregate of many works. Like Kant’s *Kritik*, it is the necessary result of the great German movement, as much so as Spinoza’s theological treatises were of the Cartesian principles; and, indeed, the position of Strauss is in many respects not unlike that of Spinoza: Both mark a crisis; both struck at the most deeply cherished theological doctrines of their times. Before mankind could pass over the great chasm between the frozen realm of stiff supernaturalism, and lifeless rationalism, on the one side, and the fair domain of free religious thought, where the only essential creed is the Christian motto, “Be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect,” and the only essential form of Religion is Love to your neighbor as to yourself, and to God with the whole heart, mind, and soul, on the other, — some one must plunge in, devoting himself unconsciously, or even against his will, for the welfare of the race. This hard lot Strauss has chosen for himself, and done what many wished to have done, but none dared to do. His book, therefore, must needs be negative, destructive, and unsatisfactory. Mr. Strauss must not be taken

\* See *Observations on the Attempted Application of Pantheistic Principles to the Theory and Historic Criticism of the Gospel, &c.*, by W. H. Mill, D. D. F. R. A. S., and Chaplain to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. Part I. London, 1840.

as the representative of the German theologians. Men of all parties condemn his work; and men of all parties accept it. You see its influence in the writings of Tholuck, De Wette, and Neander; men that have grown old in being taught and teaching. The liberal party has fallen back, afraid of its principles; the stationary party has come forward, though reluctantly. The wonderful ability with which it is written, the learning, so various and exact, wherewith it is stored, are surprising in any one, but truly extraordinary in so juvenile an author; born 1808. For our own part, we rejoice that the book has been written, though it contains much that we cannot accept. May the evil it produces soon end! But the good it does must last forever. To estimate it aright, we must see more than a negative work in its negations. Mr. Strauss has plainly asked the question, “What are the historical facts that lie at the basis of the Christian movement?” Had he written with half this ability, and with no manner of fairness, in defence of some popular dogma of his sect, and against freedom of thought and reason, no praise would have been too great to bestow upon him. What if he is sometimes in error; was a theologian never mistaken before? What if he does push his mythical hypothesis too far; did Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, make no mistakes? Did they commit no sins? Yet Strauss, we think, has never cursed, and are certain that he never burned an opponent! We honor the manly openness which has said so plainly what was so strongly felt. We cannot say, as a late highly distinguished divine used to say, that we “should not be sorry to see the work republished here,” because there is no general theological scholarship to appreciate its merits and defects. With many of his doctrines, as we understand them, especially his dogmas relative to God and Immortality, we have no sympathy; but as little fear that they will do a permanent injury any where. We still believe our real enemies are “the Flesh and the Devil,” and that neither the philosophy of Hegel, nor the Biblical Criticism of the Germans

will ever weaken the popular faith in God or man, or the pure religion that mediates between the two. Strauss has thrown a huge stone into the muddy pool of theology, and it will be long before its splashing waters find their former repose and level. Let it not be supposed Strauss is an exponent of the German school of theology or religion, as it is sometimes unwisely urged. He is a single element in a vast mass. His work finds opponents in the leaders of the three great Protestant theological parties in Germany. The main body of theologians there is represented by Schleiermacher, Tholuck, Neander, De Wette, and men of a similar spirit. Strauss is the representative of a small party. He is by no means the representative of the followers of Hegel, many of whom are opposed to him.\*

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

We are not surprised at the sensation Mr. Strauss has excited in Germany, nor at the number of replies, which have been showered down upon him. Destruction always makes a great noise, and attracts the crowd, but nobody knows when the Gospels were published, and the world, doubtless, was in

\*See, for example, an article on the second volume of the "Leben Jesu," in the Berlin "Jahrbücher für Wissenschaftliche Kritik," for 1836. Band I. p. 681, seq., by *Bruno Bauer*.

no great haste to receive them. It is fortunate the book has been written in the only country where it can be readily answered. We have no fears for the final result. Doubtless, some will be shaken in their weakly rooted faith; and the immediate effect will probably be bad; worse than former religious revolutions with them. The Rationalists took possession of the pulpit, but unlike Strauss, says Mr. Tholuck, they pulled down no churches. But we have no fear that any church will be destroyed by him. If a church can be destroyed by a criticism, or a book, however pungent, the sooner it falls the better. A church, we think, was never written down, except by itself. To write down the true Christian Church seems to us as absurd as to write down the solar system, or put an end to tears, joys, and prayers. Still less have we any fear, that Christianity itself should come to an end, as some appear to fancy; a form of Religion, which has been the parent and the guardian of all modern civilization; which has sent its voice to the ends of the world; and now addresses equally the heart of the beggar and the monarch; which is the only bond between societies; an institution, cherished and clung to by the choicest hopes, the deepest desires of the human race, is not in a moment to be displaced by a book. "There has long been a fable among men," says an illustrious German writer, "and even in these days is it often heard; unbelief invented it, and little-belief has taken it up. It runs thus; there will come a time, and, perhaps, it has already come, when it will be all over with this Jesus of Nazareth; and this is right. The memory of a single man is fruitful only for a time. The human race must thank him for much; God has brought much to pass through him. But he is only one of us, and his hour to be forgotten will soon strike. It has been his earnest desire to render the world entirely free; it must, therefore, be his wish to make it free also from himself, that God may be all in all. Then men will not only know that they

*About the Author*

have power enough in themselves to obey perfectly the will of God; but in the perfect knowledge of this, they can go beyond its requisitions, if they only will! Yea, when the Christian name is forgotten, then for the first time shall a universal kingdom of Love and Truth arise, in which there shall lie no more any seed of enmity, that from the beginning has been continually sown between such as believe in Jesus, and the children of men. But this fable can never be true. Ever, since the day that he was in the flesh, the Redeemer's image has been stamped ineffaceably on the hearts of men. Even if the letter should perish, — which is holy, only because it preserves to us this image, — the image itself would remain forever. It is stamped so deep in the heart of man, that it never can be effaced, and the word of the Apostle will ever be true, 'Lord, whither shall we go? thou only hast the words of eternal life.'"\*

THEODORE PARKER was born in 1810 in Lexington, Massachusetts, the tenth and youngest child of a farm family. His mother died when he was 12. At 16, he became a schoolteacher. At 19, he passed the entrance examinations for Harvard College, but was unable to attend. At 22, he started an academy at Watertown, where he met Lydia Dodge Cabot. He gained admission to Harvard Divinity School in 1834 and graduated in 1836. In 1837, he married Lydia Cabot and became minister of the West Roxbury Unitarian church. Parker's studies of the new German historical biblical criticism, especially W. M. L. De Wette's *Critical and Historical Introduction to the Old Testament* (1817) and D. F. Strauss's *Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1835), led him to speak out publically against the literal factuality of biblical miracles and prophecies. This brought him into conflict with some other Unitarian ministers and their association, but it brought him into contact with the emerging Transcendentalists, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and George Ripley. He published numerous articles in *The Dial* during its brief existence, and his controversies with the Unitarians became more public and more pronounced. In 1846 he resigned from his church in West Roxbury to become minister of the newly-formed 28th Congregational Society in Boston, which met at first in the Melodeon Theater and later in the Boston Music Hall, eventually drawing crowds of more than 2,000 worshippers. He denounced the Mexican War, opposed and resisted the Fugitive Slave Act, and secretly helped finance John Brown's insurrection. Parker became ill with tuberculosis in 1858–1859, and sought to recoup his health by travel. He died May 10, 1860 in Florence, Italy. An excellent biographical sketch by Dean Grodzins is online at <http://www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/theodreparker.html>

\* While we have been preparing these pages, we have sometimes glanced at another book, attacking Christianity. Its title is *Jesus-Christ et sa doctrine, Histoire de la Naissance de l'Eglise, de son organization et de ses progrès, pendant le premier siècle*, par *J. Salvador*. Paris: 1838. 2 vols. 8vo.; a work of great pretensions and very little merit.

## Abstract

David Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (1835) was one of the most influential and controversial theological works of the nineteenth century. It was first translated into English by Mary Ann Evans ("George Eliot") in 1860, and is said to have been an important early influence on Friedrich Nietzsche. Strauss (1808-1874) applied the methods of German "higher criticism" or textual criticism to the Gospels, and argued that their accounts of Jesus' miracles and prophecies were to be understood "mythically"—as products of the early church's use of Jewish messianic ideas and expectations to underscore the conviction that Jesus was the Messiah.

Parker's long (20,000 words) review recaps Strauss's arguments regarding the birth, genealogy, career, and miracles of Jesus, and places Strauss's work in the context of German and English theology and philosophy. He writes: "It is not our aim to write a polemic against the author of the 'Life of Jesus,' but to describe his book or 'define his position,' as the politicians are wont to say. The work in question comprises, *first*, an Introduction, relating to the formation of 'the Mythical stand-point,' from which the Evangelical history is to be contemplated; *second*, the main work itself, which is divided into three books, relating respectively to the History of the Birth and Childhood of Jesus; his Public Life; his Sufferings, Death, and Resurrection; *third*, a conclusion of the whole book, or the doctrinal significance of the life of Jesus. ... [A] more descriptive title would be, A Fundamental Criticism on the Four Gospels; ... it is not a history, but a criticism and collection of materials, out of which a conjectural history may be constructed. ... The general manner of treating the subject, and arranging the chapters, sections, and parts of the argument, indicates consummate dialectical skill; while the style is clear, the expression direct, and the author's openness in referring to his sources of information, and stating his conclusions in all their simplicity, is candid and exemplary."

While Parker does take issue with the "presuppositions" with which Strauss approached his materials, he nonetheless concludes: "The wonderful ability with which it is written, the learning, so various and exact, wherewith it is stored, are surprising in any one, but

truly extraordinary in so juvenile an author; born 1808. For our own part, we rejoice that the book has been written, though it contains much that we cannot accept. May the evil it produces soon end! But the good it does must last forever. To estimate it aright, we must see more than a negative work in its negations. Mr. Strauss has plainly asked the question, 'What are the historical facts that lie at the basis of the Christian movement?' Had he written with half this ability, and with no manner of fairness, in defence of some popular dogma of his sect, and against freedom of thought and reason, no praise would have been too great to bestow upon him."

Controversies over the literal-historical status of the miracles and prophecies of the New Testament played an important role in the evolution of Unitarianism and Transcendentalism. Parker's review brought the European debate into American homes and pulpits and was an important factor in the development of liberal theology in New England.

The review was published originally in the *Christian Examiner* for April, 1840. It is reprinted here from *The Critical and Miscellaneous Writings of Theodore Parker* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1843), pp. 248–308. The pagination follows (but does not reproduce exactly) that of the 1843 edition.