

Cover 1 -- No Title

The North American Review (1821-1940); Oct 1846; VOL. LXIII., No. CXXXIII.; American Periodicals Series Online
pg. 269

NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. CXXXIII.

OCTOBER, 1846.

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- ART. VI. — 1. *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists, by the Rules of Evidence administered in Courts of Justice. With an Account of the Trial of Jesus.* By SIMON GREENLEAF, LL. D., Royall Professor of Law in Harvard University. Boston : Little & Brown. 1846. 8vo. pp. 543.
2. *The Life of Jesus, critically examined.* By DR. DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS. Translated from the Fourth German Edition. London : Chapman, Brothers. 1846. 3 vols. 8vo.

OF course, we place the titles of these two books together only by way of contrast. They relate, it is true, to the same general subject ; but it is hard to conceive of two works more unlike in their scope, character, and purpose. The object of the one is to prove, and of the other to disprove, the Christian religion. The one is the production of an able and profound lawyer, a man who has grown gray in the halls of justice and the schools of jurisprudence, — a writer of the highest authority on legal subjects, whose life has been spent in weighing testimony and sifting evidence, and whose published opinions on the rules of evidence are received as authoritative in all the English and American tribunals, — for fourteen years the highly respected colleague of the late Mr. Justice Story, and now the honored head of the most distinguished and prosperous school of English law in the world. The other is the work of a German professor and speculatist, also profoundly learned in his way, — an ingenious and daring framer of theories of the most striking character, almost unheard of till his brain either conceived them or gave them currency, though relating to topics with which men have been familiar for eighteen centuries, — a subtile controversialist, whose work, as he himself avows, is deeply tinged with the most strongly marked peculiarities of the philosophy and theology of his countrymen. We presume the most ardent admirer of Dr. Strauss will not object to our characterizing the two works as excellent specimens, the one of clear and shrewd English common sense, and the other of German erudition, laborious diligence, and fertility in original speculation. And if the subject of inquiry were one that involved his own temporal and immediate interests, and it were neces-

sary to determine which of these two writers would give the wiser and safer counsel, or the more trustworthy opinion, we suppose the same person would agree with us in making the choice.

We do not wish to appeal to the authority of mere names in this matter ; it would be but a poor mode of proving the truth of the gospel history, to say that it was believed by Professor Greenleaf, and denied by Dr. Strauss. But our object is to call attention to a point naturally suggested by the contrast between these two writers, to a view of the characters and previous pursuits of the persons by whom this great discussion hitherto has been conducted. The defence of Christianity, the exposition of its evidences, and the refutation of the arguments of infidels, have been committed almost exclusively to the hands of professed theologians and metaphysicians. This was very natural ; the work seemed properly to belong to them, as their tastes and studies had given them an interest in the subject, and made them familiar with the ground. We do not now remember a single work of any note upon the Evidences, which was not written by a person belonging to one or the other of these two classes. But some evil has resulted from this limitation of the number of the professed advocates of Christianity. Their works are all imbued with a professional hue, and sometimes seem as if addressed only to theologians and metaphysicians, as well as written by them. And the expression of their own belief carries with it no intrinsic weight. They appear like employed counsel, whose office and duty it is to defend the cause which is intrusted to them, and hence they do not always receive credit for perfect sincerity in the case. They plead the cause of the whole Christian family, but their argument is often encumbered with matter which has relation only to their particular studies, or it is biased by the special views and peculiarities of their vocation. Their works are colored by the atmosphere of the schools. The student of theology has his private views, or the doctrines of his sect, the philosopher has his theories, to defend ; and sometimes the chief point at issue is quite forgotten or obscured in the heat of these collateral discussions. They are sometimes taken by surprise, or at a disadvantage, when some reckless assailant makes a bold appeal to common prejudices or to popular ignorance, when a wily logician spins his cobweb theories

around them, or a learned historian attacks them with a sneer.

It is matter of good omen, then, when the ranks of the professed champions of Christianity are recruited by volunteers. Hardly any training can prepare one for more effectual service in this cause than the severe logic, the close examination of testimony, and the rigid application of principles, which are required in the practice of law. A well trained jurist cannot fail, at least, to place the subject in a new light, to detect the sophistry and artifices of those who would hide the truth, and to show the value of that testimony which he pronounces sufficient to satisfy a court of justice. All will hear with deference an appeal to this honored tribunal. Mr. Greenleaf appropriately dedicates his work to "the members of the legal profession." He invites them to pursue the inquiry by the light of the established maxims of the law, and urges this duty upon them as one for which they are strengthened by their previous habits, while it is a matter of as awful concern to them as to every other member of the human family. As a recognized teacher of jurisprudence, he offers to them his guidance for a part of the way, as if in the investigation of any legal subject, and challenges their attention to the witnesses whom he puts upon the stand, and to the array of evidence which he brings before them. We believe that his work will be found "profitable for instruction" not only to his professional brethren, but to many others, who will be glad to know the views of a sound lawyer upon this important subject.

The only fault that we have to find with Mr. Greenleaf's volume is that there is not enough of it. Though of quite respectable size, far the larger portion of the book is occupied with a Harmony of the Gospels, the system adopted being that of Archbishop Newcome, with some modifications by Professor Robinson. Brief notes are appended to it to explain most of the apparent discrepancies in the accounts of the four Evangelists, these being selected and abridged from the most approved commentators. The preliminary observations, occupying about fifty pages, and an appendix, the chief article in which is a legal view of the trial of Jesus, contain all that is entirely original in the volume. The writer's remarks, though concise, are clear, logical, and cogent; and on the whole, we do not know that they could have been amplified

without losing some of their force. The scope of the argument is necessarily limited by its legal character, as the witnesses are supposed to be produced, and the only question here treated relates to the credibility of their testimony. In other words, the genuineness of the gospels is taken for granted, or as fully sustained by proofs elsewhere adduced. Mr. Greenleaf's office is that of a lawyer, to comment upon the evidence already in possession of the court. We wish, however, that, instead of contenting himself with mere references to the works of those authors who have so satisfactorily established the genuineness of our Gospel records, he had favored us with a summary of the historical evidence upon this point, and then given a legal opinion of its credibility and sufficiency.

The work of Strauss is confined within similar limits. He also waives the question of the genuineness, or passes over it with a very brief and unsatisfactory view of the testimony adduced, and gives his whole attention to the internal marks of truth or falsity in the narrative. He admits that "*it would most unquestionably be an argument of decisive weight in favor of the credibility of the Biblical history, could it indeed be shown that it was written by eyewitnesses, or even by persons nearly contemporaneous with the events narrated.*" But he coolly passes over this difficulty, though it applies, as we shall see hereafter, with especial force to the particular theory which he seeks to establish, so that even the lowest view that can be taken of the authorship of the Gospels — what the most skeptical inquirers have been obliged to admit upon this point — is absolutely fatal to his whole doctrine. Confining himself strictly, then, to an examination of the testimony as it is found upon the record, and putting aside the question who gave that testimony, the opinions which he maintains come directly in conflict with those of Mr. Greenleaf. The cool and clear-headed jurist and the German mystical doctor are brought face to face.

We shall not enter into any detailed examination of a work now so widely known as the *Life of Jesus* by Strauss. Criticisms upon it in his own country have been multiplied almost without end; replies and rejoinders have flown thick, and he who lists may read them. We have little taste for a controversy in which the opposing parties usually seem more anxious to display their own learning, ingenuity, and dialectic

tical skill, than to establish or refute the great subject at issue. In this gladiatorial play, Strauss is a dexterous opponent. He has an abundant share of learning, great acuteness, can shift his ground skilfully, and weave strange theories out of air as cunningly as his neighbours. But he shows an utter lack of judgment, and of those clear and comprehensive views by which great minds detect almost by intuition the fallacy of a doctrine seemingly supported by an imposing array of arguments. He wastes great industry and erudition, and all the finer powers of his mind, in an attempt to support a hypothesis which the first glance of a sound thinker detects as utterly untenable. There is a crack somewhere ; he who appears to the world as a scholar and a philosopher commits mistakes of judgment in which he may be corrected by a child. Ordinary people describe the case well, when they say that the person has genius, but no common sense. He may be a very agreeable speculatist, but is a most unsafe guide in the search after truth. Strauss has all the defects which are apt to belong to the recluse student of theology and metaphysics, and these are heightened and exaggerated by the theorizing tendency and the wildness of speculation so common among his countrymen. A plain and detailed statement of his doctrine is enough to confute it as the most improbable of infidel hypotheses. It may be opposed, if we mistake not, by fundamental objections in the outset, so as to render any regular examination of the tissue of arguments brought to support it quite unnecessary ; though it is the length and particularity of these, and the perverse ingenuity and misapplied learning displayed in them, which have given the work its whole notoriety. It appears like a complex and curiously devised machine, which has no defect except that it will not work.

We shall gain a better view of the insuperable difficulties lying at the threshold of this theory, by attending first to some points suggested by the preliminary observations of Mr. Greenleaf. The first question is, Why skepticism is so much more busy with the gospel narrative than with all profane history, though the latter be of events contemporaneous with those recorded in that narrative, or even long anterior to them. What principle will enable us to reject the truth of the Gospels, considered merely as records of events,

which will not also require us to consider the annals of the world as one universal blank, down, at least, to the reign of Tiberius? If we will not believe Matthew and Luke, how can we trust Thucydides and Tacitus? No one will dare to say that these historians show more of honesty, candor, and an apparent disposition to tell the truth, than must be ascribed on the best internal evidence to the four Evangelists. Then why is the narrative of the deeds and the crucifixion of our Saviour unworthy of credit, if the story of the exploits and the assassination of Julius Cæsar be not also fabulous? The Christian may fearlessly invite the comparison of external testimony that is here indicated; and we dwell upon it the more readily, because it has been too much left out of sight by the particular class of scholars who have most considered this subject, and who have unwittingly contributed to making a useless and injurious separation of sacred from profane history. We pass over the theologian and the philosopher, therefore, to address this question directly to the professed historian. Let him separate, if he can, the history of the origin of Christianity from that of the destruction of the Roman republic; that is, let him show sufficient difference in the external testimony—for with this alone we are concerned at present—to be a valid reason for rejecting the one and accepting the other.

Let us look for a moment at the relative weight of proof in the two cases, confining our attention to a few centuries immediately preceding or following the commencement of the Christian era. How many events in the profane history of this period are now universally admitted on the testimony of a single historian, though he could not have been an eyewitness of a thousandth part of them; while, in the case of the gospel narrative, we find distinct and harmonious records by four individuals, each marked by striking peculiarities of style and manner, and all agreeing as to all essential points, two of them appearing to have been direct observers of the facts which they narrate, and all brought by irrefragable evidence within a very few years, at the utmost, of the time when these events occurred! Is it said that incidental allusions in the contemporaneous literature of the period confirm most of the facts mentioned by the profane historians? But the narratives of the Evangelists have also a great amount of collateral testimony, in the shape of numerous

epistles, written at the same period, addressed both to individuals and to large societies, making frequent allusion to these facts, even placing particular stress upon them, and betokening throughout a state of things which is totally inexplicable unless these facts did really occur. It will generally be admitted, we suppose, that Paul was a real, historical personage, quite as much so as Cicero. Not the most fanciful author of hypotheses, not even a German theorist upon history, has yet ventured to allegorize *him* into a mythical character. We are acquainted with all the chief incidents of his life, with the story of his conversion, his journeyings, his imprisonments, his shipwreck, — the account of the latter being undoubtedly written, if internal evidence can decide any thing, by an eyewitness and fellow-sufferer with him. We study the development of his peculiar and strongly marked intellect and disposition in his numerous writings, and thereby gain as clear an idea of the individuality of his character, as distinct a portrait of him, as we have of any personage in all Greek and Roman history. He was a highly educated man, a lawyer, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, an impetuous and eloquent orator, an acute and fervid reasoner, a person as little likely to be deceived by any vulgar rumors about marvellous events occurring in his own age and neighbourhood as a shrewd, honest, and able lawyer of our own day. He was a contemporary of the events in question, an intimate associate and friend of the disciples of our Lord, of the honest and impetuous Peter, and the meek, loving, and saint-like John, the very men before whose eyes these wonderful occurrences took place, who were even actors and participators in them, and who were now constantly suffering outrage and persecution, both from the government and the mob, because they steadfastly maintained the truth of their accounts. *What motive had these men to deceive? and how likely was Paul, considering how he was related to them by his education, character, and previous pursuits, to be deceived by them?* They were poor Jewish fishermen, quite unlearned according to the fashions of this world; and he was a man of education and acknowledged ability, of high repute and good station in the community, and employed in business of importance by the government. How often must he have talked over with them, as they journeyed and counselled together, the story

of our Lord's life, his character, his acts of beneficence and power, his discourses and parables, his sufferings, death, and resurrection! And how numerous, in his speeches and writings, are his allusions to these things, — to the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to his teachings and the wonderful deeds which he performed, to his crucifixion and the fact that God raised him from the dead! *Allusion* is the proper word, for in most cases he evidently presupposes a knowledge of all these facts by the individuals and large societies of men whom he addressed, — all contemporaries, be it observed, like himself, of the events whereof he speaks. We know how steadfast was his own faith in them, for they moulded and controlled his whole life, occupations, and destiny. And the crowning act was not wanting; *he died in attestation of his belief.*

Continuing this parallel between sacred and profane history, it may be urged in behalf of the latter, that, as it relates to kings, nations, armies, and governments, the facts recorded in it were of universal notoriety, and of such magnitude and importance that they left a deep imprint, as it were, on the annals of the world, and shaped and colored all subsequent events in the records of nations, so that to question their reality would be an act of silly affectation. Very well; how stands it with the history of our religion in this particular? The establishment of Christianity, viewed merely in the extent and momentous character of its external results, is the great fact in the history of the world, and from the time of Tiberius to the present day this history is an inexplicable enigma without it. And how clearly can we trace its early annals, and show the marvellous and — in all but one view — unaccountable rapidity of its progress, till it became thus established and coextensive with the Roman dominion! Within the lifetime of the contemporaries of its founder, it had become extensively known throughout the fairest and most civilized provinces of Rome. Besides the incidental evidence of this fact, derived from the travels and writings of Paul and the other apostles, we have the distinct testimony of two of the most trustworthy Roman historians, Pliny and Tacitus, both belonging to the first century, that in their times men called "Christians" were imprisoned and put to death on account of the obstinacy with which they adhered to their religious faith; and this sect was so

numerous, that the former writer, in his capacity as governor of a great province, applied to the emperor himself for advice as to the manner in which they should be treated. Of course, many of the persons thus punished had probably received the facts of the gospel history directly from the apostles. In fact, some of the apostles themselves must have been included in their number. In the next century, the new religion spread so widely, that the acts and writings of its adherents and opposers occupy a conspicuous place in the history and literature of the age. But little more than three hundred years after the birth of its founder, the first Christian emperor swayed the sceptre over most of the civilized world. Manuscripts of the Gospels written in his day are even now extant, and may be consulted by the curious. How closely the history of this progress of the Church is connected with the truth of the personal incidents related of our Saviour appears from the institution of the Eucharist, mention of which is found everywhere in the annals of our religion ever since its birth. We have a vague account of it even from Pliny, such as we suppose might come by rumor to the ears of a haughty Roman magistrate. Thus a slight and — to a mere worldly view — very insignificant event in the life of Christ, his supping together with his disciples on the night in which he was betrayed, may claim as great an amount of evidence of its authenticity as can be awarded to any event in Greek or Roman history. The fact, that a few poor Jews met together one night at table in a provincial city, more than eighteen hundred years ago, appears on the page of history in a broader blaze of light than surrounds any one incident in the life of an emperor of the Roman world.

Once more, is it said that the discrepancies in the accounts of the several narrators make sacred history more open to skepticism than profane? To one who has the slightest tincture of historical knowledge we should hardly deem it necessary to answer this question. The discrepancies in question never would have appeared, if the accounts had not been, for the age, of wholly unparalleled minuteness; nor would they ever have seemed of any importance, if the doctrinal zeal of theologians had not obscured the subject by their theory of verbal inspiration. The alleged discrepancies are such as these: — that what occurred, as one Evangelist

says, at the *sixth* hour, according to another took place at the *third*; that Matthew affirms that Mary anointed the *head* of Jesus, while John says it was his *feet*; that the inscription on the cross of Christ, according to all the Gospels, contained the phrase, "the King of the Jews," but the accounts differ as to three other words which were added to this phrase; that Mark declares the women at the sepulchre saw *one* man *sitting* clothed in white, while Luke says "*two* men *stood* by them in shining garments." And what contradictory accounts are found in secular history that can be paralleled with these, we will not say for magnitude, but for insignificance? It is useless to refer to such instances, scattered all over ancient history, as the accounts of the Roman campaigns given by Livy and Polybius, which in many particulars are utterly irreconcilable with each other; for these, unlike the cases cited from the Gospels, are of some substantive importance, so as seriously to affect the character of the historians for information or veracity. We will rather come down to the full light of modern times, in which one great source of contrariety of accounts, the corruption of manuscripts, is entirely done away. And here we borrow from Professor Greenleaf.

"Dr. Paley has noticed the contradiction between Lord Clarendon and Burnet and others in regard to Lord Stafford's execution; the former stating that he was condemned to be hanged, which was done on the same day; and the latter all relating that on a Saturday he was sentenced to the block, and was beheaded on the following Monday. Another striking instance of discrepancy has since occurred, in the narratives of the different members of the royal family of France, of their flight from Paris to Varennes, in 1792. These narratives, ten in number, and by eyewitnesses and personal actors in the transactions they relate, contradict each other, some on trivial and some on more essential points, but in every case in a wonderful and inexplicable manner."* — pp. 37, 38.

* "See the Quarterly Review, vol. xxviii. p. 465. These narrators were, the Duchess d'Angoulême herself, the two Messrs. De Bouillé, the Duc de Choiseul, his servant, James Brissac, Messrs. De Damas and Deslons, two of the officers commanding detachments on the road, Messrs. De Moustier and Valori, the garde du corps who accompanied the king, and finally M. De Fontanges, archbishop of Toulouse, who, though not himself a party to the transaction, is supposed to have written from the information of the queen. An earlier instance of similar discrepancy is

Speaking of the alleged discrepancies in the reports by the several Evangelists of the same discourses of our Lord, Mr. Greenleaf further observes : —

“ Far greater discrepancies can be found in the different reports of the same case, given by the reporters of legal judgments, than are shown among the evangelists ; and yet we do not consider them as detracting from the credit of the reporters, to whom we still resort with confidence, as to good authority. Some of these discrepancies seem utterly irreconcilable. Thus, in a case, 45 Edw. III. 19, where the question was upon a gift of lands to J. de C., with Joan, the sister of the donor, and to their heirs, Fitzherbert (tit. *Tail*, 14) says it was adjudged fee simple, and not frankmarriage ; Statham (tit. *Tail*) says it was adjudged a gift in frankmarriage ; while Brook (tit. *Frankmarriage*) says it was not decided. (Vid. 10 Co. 118.) Others are irreconcilable, until the aid of a third reporter is invoked. Thus, in the case of *Cooper v. Franklin*, Croke says it was not decided, but adjourned ; (Cro. Jac. 100) ; Godbolt says it was decided in a certain way, which he mentions ; (Godb. 269) ; Moor also reports it as decided, but gives a different account of the question raised ; (Moor, 848) ; while Bulstrode gives a still different report of the judgment of the court, which he says was delivered by Croke himself. But by his account it further appears that the case was previously twice argued ; and thus it at length results that the other reporters relate only what fell from the court on each of the previous occasions. Other similar examples may be found in 1 Dougl. 6, n. compared with 5 East, 475, n., in the case of *Galbraith v. Neville* ; and in that of *Stoughton v. Reynolds*, reported by Fortescue, Strange, and in *Cases temp. Hardwicke*. (See 3 Barnw. & Ald. 247, 248.) Indeed, the books abound in such instances.” — p. 39.

Another curious instance may be taken from the history of our own country. It may be presumed that the history of the battle of Bunker's hill has been as carefully studied, and is now as correctly known, as that of any incident in the

mentioned by Sully. After the battle of Aumale, in which Henry the Fourth was wounded, when the officers were around the king's bed, conversing upon the events of the day, there were not two who agreed in the recital of the most particular circumstances of the action. D'Aubigné, a contemporary writer, does not even mention the king's wound, though it was the only one he ever received in his life. See *Memoirs of Sully*, Vol. I. p. 245. If we treated these narratives as skeptics would have us treat those of the sacred writers, what evidence should we have of any battle at Aumale, or of any flight to Varennes ? ”

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war of our Revolution. Numerous accounts of it have been published by those who were present in the fight ; the official reports of the commanding officers are in print ; letters are extant that were written the day after it happened, by persons in the immediate vicinity, to their friends at a distance, giving a particular description of it ; and one or two very aged survivors of this memorable conflict still linger in the midst of us. And yet several important points in its history are still undetermined, and probably never will be fully known, for it is impossible to reconcile the several accounts. It is not yet fully settled who commanded the American troops ; the time of day at which the assault was made upon the redoubt is not clearly made out within several hours ; some deny that General Putnam was even present on the hill, while others affirm that he had the command there ; the accounts of General Warren's agency in the fight are very confused and contradictory ; the exact position of the Americans who were outside of the fort is not known ; nor are the lines ascertained upon which the British thrice advanced to the attack. In 1824, when the corner-stone of the monument on the hill was laid, more than twenty survivors of the battle visited the spot ; it was deemed important to take down in writing the separate testimony of every one of them, in the hope of doing something to remove the contradictions and uncertainties in the previous accounts. And what was the result ? Instead of contributing to clear away confusion and doubt, this mass of new testimony only added to the number of the conflicting stories, so that all the papers were condemned as useless, and committed to the flames.

That we may not be charged with having chosen a very remarkable and unparalleled instance, we will briefly refer our readers to the very similar case of the battle of Lexington. They may not be generally aware that it is not even known *where* this battle was fought, — that is, in which town British blood was first shed. On this account, a grave controversy arose about twenty years ago, whether it should be called the battle of Lexington or of Concord. To settle the matter, about a dozen survivors of the fight — gray-headed, honest old veterans, who could not be even suspected of an intention to deceive — were examined on oath, and their testimony was published. Their affidavits *did* settle it ;

about an equal number of them on each side proved incontestably that British blood was *first* shed *both* in Lexington and Concord.

Those who have not closely studied single points in history may be astonished by these examples ; but the wonder may very easily be explained away. The great curiosity of posterity about events which did not seem so very important when they occurred, while their consequences have been very momentous, wholly changing the condition of a great people, and intimately affecting the political affairs of most civilized nations, has caused the history of them to be studied with great *minuteness*. It is the accumulation of testimony on single and minute points, which gives rise to all these contradictions and doubts. The discrepancies in the accounts of these two revolutionary battles would never have been heard of, if the insurrection had been crushed in the outset, so as to occupy as small a space in the world's history as the account of an Irish or a Canadian rebellion. Look at the matter in another point of view, and the importance of these discrepancies dwindles away almost to nothing. All the important points, all the great features, all that is really and intrinsically valuable to the student of history, of the battles of Lexington and Bunker's hill are perfectly well known ; they are as clear as the sun in the heavens. If we look to more recent history for an account of some battle the political consequences of which may be compared in importance with those of the two here referred to, there is perhaps the single instance of Waterloo ; and here we find the same accumulation of minute accounts, and the consequent almost interminable list of doubts and contradictions. Those who please may examine and try to reconcile the French, English, and Prussian reports of the battle ; but some persons have given up the attempt in despair.

What would be thought of the honesty or the sanity of some grave doctor, who should write a huge book, bringing together with immense industry all these varying accounts, placing all the acknowledged discrepancies in the strongest light, and fairly inventing others by excessively minute criticism, and thus attempt to prove that the whole story of the American Revolution was a *myth* ; that the supposed incidents in it are nothing but old poetical legends, which have sprung out of the well known *inventive* disposition of the

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Americans, and of their intense desire to be independent of Great Britain ; that Captain Parker, Colonel Prescott, General Warren, and General Putnam are all fabulous personages ; that possibly a struggle may at some time or other have taken place between the Colonists and the mother country, but we know nothing about it, and never can know any thing ; and that probably the American provinces still remain subject to the British crown ? Our readers may think that we are here verging upon caricature ; but they may be assured that we have too deep a sense of the awful importance of our main subject, and — we must add — too contemptuous an opinion of Dr. Strauss as a reasoner or a judge, to stoop to any such unworthy artifice as that of ludicrous exaggeration of his theory. Our illustration, it is true, does not do justice to his hypothesis ; yet only because it falls below, instead of exaggerating, its prodigious absurdity. Here are three thick octavos, all occupied with a most minutely critical examination of a history which, if printed at large, would not fill a third part of one of the volumes. And the larger portion of this space is devoted to an exposition of real or supposed inconsistencies in the accounts of the four Evangelists. If this enumeration of discrepancies were expunged, the remainder of the work would not deserve notice, for it contains nothing that is either novel or true. Such an attempt at criticism may be compared to a tediously complete examination of some vast object with a compound microscope, the lenses of which are so striated and colored that not a ray of light finds its way through them without distortion or stain.

For what, we ask again, is the nature and importance of these discrepancies, and how far do they affect the credibility of the narrators ? The gospel history, eighteen hundred years old, contains a biography of one person, but dwells chiefly upon his actions and discourses during a small portion of his life ; nearly all of it relates to a period of only three years and a half, and a good portion gives the history of but one week. There are four distinct accounts, claiming to be by as many biographers, all dwelling chiefly upon the same periods of time, and occupied in the main with the same discourses and events. The authors are evidently simple and unlearned ; but their honesty, frankness, and willingness to state the truth are so conspicuous on the face of their writings, even if they were not attested, as most persons believe, in such an

affecting manner by the latter part of their lives, that even Dr. Strauss ventures but very seldom and very faintly to charge them with an intent to deceive. They seldom speak of themselves, and only in one or two cases do they write in the first person ; they record only the acts and sayings of their beloved master and friend. The story is told with amazing simplicity and minuteness, — the mere fragments of his life and conversation, a short dialogue on the road, a walk through the cornfields, a remark made at the supper-table, being all chronicled with the particularity which strong affection and the unspeakable importance of the subject to the whole human race justify and require. There is not a work or a fragment of ancient biography extant, claiming to be authentic, which makes any approach to such minuteness. And now, judging by the examples just given, what various and conflicting statements may we not reasonably expect to find in four such narratives ? If we decide only by comparison with modern history, with the most authentic and careful accounts of recent events, we should hardly expect to gain more than a general notion of the leading incidents in the life, and a tolerably fair idea of the character, of the subject of biography, — all to be made out from a mass of glaring discrepancies in the more minute and particular statements. But what we *do* find is a harmony among these records which, under the circumstances, is perfectly amazing ; for the discrepancies apparent at first sight, and all reconcilable with each other with but little violence, hardly amount to specks on a broad and bright surface. We have given a fair specimen of them, — putting the third hour for the sixth, anointing the head instead of the feet, the omission of three words in an inscription, and the like. We will take one or two more instances in Strauss's own words.

“ The first two evangelists agree in stating that Jesus, when walking by the sea of Galilee, called, first, the two brothers Andrew and Peter, and, immediately after, James and John, to forsake their fishing-nets, and to follow him (Matt. iv. 18 – 22 ; Mark i. 16 – 20). The fourth evangelist also narrates (i. 35 – 51) how the first disciples came to attach themselves to Jesus, and among them we find Peter and Andrew, and, in all probability, John, for it is generally agreed that the nameless companion of Andrew was that ultimately favorite apostle. James is absent from this account, and, instead of his vocation, we have that

of Philip and Nathanael. But even when the persons are the same, all the particulars of their meeting with Jesus are variously detailed. In the two synoptical Gospels, the scene is the coast of the Galilean sea; in the fourth, Andrew, Peter, and their anonymous friend, unite themselves to Jesus in the vicinity of the Jordan; Philip and Nathanael, on the way from thence into Galilee. In the former, again, Jesus in two instances calls a pair of brothers; in the latter, it is first Andrew and his companion, then Peter, and anon Philip and Nathanael, who meet with Jesus. But the most important difference is this: while, in Matthew and Mark, the brethren are called from their fishing immediately by Jesus; in John, nothing more is said of the respective situations of those who were summoned, than that they *come*, and *are found*, and Jesus himself calls only Philip; Andrew and his nameless companion being directed to him by the Baptist, Peter brought by Andrew, and Nathanael by Philip." — *Strauss*, Vol. II., pp. 51, 52.

Compare this "most important difference" with the instances of Generals Putnam and Warren at Bunker's hill, and consider in which case absolute exactness of statement could most reasonably have been expected.

"We have hitherto examined only two accounts of the vocation of Peter and his companions; there is a third given by Luke (v. 1-11.) I shall not dilate *on the minor points* [!!] of difference between his narrative and that of the first two evangelists; *the essential distinction* is, that in Luke the disciples do not, as in Matthew and Mark, unite themselves to Jesus on a simple invitation, but in consequence of a plentiful draught of fishes, to which Jesus has assisted Simon!" — *Strauss*, Vol. II., pp. 61, 62.

We will do no injustice to Dr. Strauss by our mode of quotation, but honestly confess that the Italics and marks of admiration here are our own.

These are among the more striking instances of contradiction which are detected by our critic. The lighter ones, which are still subjected to very sharp comment, are such as these: — Matthew says that Simon Peter once resided in Capernaum, while John declares that Bethsaida was "the city of Andrew and Peter"; — both accounts may be true. According to Matthew, Jesus "went up into a mountain" before he preached his famous sermon; Luke says that "he *came down* and stood in the plain" ["*upon a level place*" is the correct translation]; — there is no *alarming* discrepancy here. Luke speaks of "Simon called Zelotes,"

who is termed by Matthew "Simon the Canaanite," both wishing to distinguish him from Simon Peter. In another case, by an unlucky omission of a surname, "Matthew the publican," as he is termed in one place, appears as "Levi the son of Alpheus, sitting at the receipt of custom" (the employment of a publican), in another. Of course, omissions by one Evangelist of what is related by another are considered as destroying the credit of both. "Matthew mentions two instances in which a league with Beelzebub was imputed to Jesus, and a sign demanded from him; circumstances which in Mark and Luke happen only once." "It is *suspicious*, that the demoniac who gives occasion to the assertion of the Pharisees is in both instances dumb." Matthew's report of the sermon on the mount is rejected because it contains more than Luke's; and Luke's is evidently false, since it contains less than Matthew's. Another discourse, reported with literal agreement by two of the narrators, shows that they are neither of them independent witnesses, but must have stolen the report from some anonymous old record not now extant. In fine, Dr. Strauss has but two principles of criticism to be applied to a comparison of the four Gospels with each other, but these are tolerably comprehensive. First, if two accounts of the same event agree with verbal accuracy, neither of them is genuine; secondly, if they differ in the slightest particular, both are false. If the careful and exact application of these two rules to every line written by the Evangelists does not disprove the gospel history, it is very evident that it never can be disproved.

But our readers have probably had enough of the infidel argument, so far as it is founded upon disagreements among the several historical records of our religion. And as this is the last point in a comparative view of the testimony and arguments adduced to prove respectively the sacred and the profane history of a few centuries coming nearest to the birth of Christ, we recur to the original question, — Why is it that the truth of the latter is universally taken for granted, while that of the former is so frequently assailed? There can be but one answer, — *the extraordinary character of the events narrated*. This is the only ground of distinction, and we fully admit that it is a proper one so far as it goes. The whole question between the Christian and the infidel — in this case, between Professor Greenleaf and Dr. Strauss — is reduced

to this : — *Is a narrative of miraculous occurrences, properly so called, under all circumstances, intrinsically incredible ?* We must distinctly note progress at this stage in the argument, and prevent the unbeliever from playing his old trick of continually shifting his ground, and changing the issue. He must not diversify his reasoning against miracles in the abstract with continued allusions to insufficient testimony, vague rumors, and unauthentic records. It has been conclusively shown, if we mistake not, that, for the period in question, the mere external evidence vastly preponderates in favor of the sacred record, so that, before it can be rejected on this ground alone, we must apply the sponge to all Greek and Roman history ; and from this conclusion it may be presumed that even a German critic will shrink. Niebuhr himself would shudder at such thorough-going skepticism.

In fact, we have a tacit admission of this point by the latest and most accomplished school of infidels, the German critics themselves, — an admission vouched by the appearance of this work of Dr. Strauss, and by the whole class of publications to which it belongs. The existence of the sacred records with such a body of external evidence in their favor, whatever may be the improbability of their contents, is a phenomenon that must be accounted for in some way. If they be rejected on internal grounds alone, and not even a plausible explanation be offered of the fact that they are found supported by such a mass of outward proofs, the very basis of history is shaken. The writings of Xenophon and Thucydides, of Polybius and Tacitus, considered as throwing light upon the past annals of mankind, might as well have shared the fate of the lost decades of Livy, if the external evidence in their favor is not worth a straw. The critical historians of Germany are perfectly aware of this difficulty ; and those of them who deny the truth of Christianity, and the metaphysicians who assert the absolute incredibility of miracles, have been occupied for more than half a century in framing all sorts of systems and hypotheses in order to account for this stubborn fact, — the present existence of the four Gospels, and of so many collateral proofs of their genuineness and authenticity. The task of the infidel is not merely negative. If he would make converts to unbelief, he must be able not only to demolish the walls and other exterior defences of the fortress, but to show how they were ever con-

structed, whence came the materials, and what is the secret of that imposing strength which has enabled them for nearly two thousand years to defy the assaults of time and the Devil. How successful have they been in this latter attempt? Our answer must be a very brief one, and will be confined to a mere glance at the two most prominent systems, the naturalistic scheme of Paulus and the Rationalists, and the mythical theory of Strauss.

The former system gets rid of the principal difficulty by frankly accepting the Gospels as they are, thus acknowledging the evidence in their favor to be irresistible; but it explains away all their contents. The world has been mistaken in supposing that these books contain the record of a special revelation from heaven, and the persons who wrote them, the eyewitnesses, though honest, were mistaken, too. Here is nothing supernatural, no inspiration, no miracle; all may be explained by the ordinary operation of the laws of nature. Opening the eyes of the blind was like the modern surgical operation for cataract, only somewhat more rapid. As for making the lame walk, every one knows that this is done nowadays, by cutting the tendons. So, also, the dumb are taught how to speak, in Germany, though the process is rather a tedious one, and the utterance of the patients is somewhat indistinct. Raising the dead is rather remarkable, but persons in modern times have been thought to be dead, and have revived again. Calming the winds and the waves is another difficult case, and we do not know precisely how Jesus did it; probably he magnetized them. Again, the system of ethics and religious doctrine which he preached was remarkably pure for the age, and, considering his situation and advantages, was quite astonishing; but there is no knowing how far good intentions will carry a man. In putting forward the high pretensions which he did, Jesus was an amiable enthusiast, a self-deluded impostor.

As the commentary of Dr. Paulus upon the Scriptures, in which he explains away all the miracles and all the religion in them, is very bulky and erudite, many pages being devoted to a consideration of each case, we have not been able, in our brief limits, to present his explanation of the wonderful works of our Lord with much exactness. But we have faithfully indicated the general character of the theory, and the peculiar kind of speculation by which it must be carried

out. As he évidently is not inspired to frame hypothetical explanations of this sort better than any body else, any of our readers who feel inclined may take a copy of the Gospels, and apply to it this mode of interpretation so as to suit themselves. We have no doubt that they will produce explanations of this sort quite as plausible as any that have been published in Germany. For the latest and highest authority in these matters, Dr. Strauss, is not at all satisfied with the work of Paulus and his followers ; he argues against it strenuously, and sometimes appears inclined even to make fun of it, — the irreverent man. We will see, therefore, what success he has had in forming a theory of his own to be its substitute.

The new theory, which is to “take the place of the antiquated systems of supernaturalism and naturalism,” is the *mythical*. Strauss maintains that he possesses at least “one qualification, which eminently fitted him to undertake” the development of this scheme ; “namely, the internal liberation of the feelings and intellect from certain religious and dogmatic presuppositions ; this the author early attained by means of philosophical studies.” Observe that the word which furnishes the whole key to the theory is a new-fangled one for modern use, vague and indeterminate, the signification of which may be stretched or restricted at pleasure, so as to suit the purpose in hand. In its most obvious and literal sense, a *myth* is a *fable* ; to say that the life of Jesus is mythical is to affirm that it is a fiction, a lie. But it is an innocent lie ; for a myth is a peculiar kind of fable, an old traditional legend, in which the prevailing ideas of the age have gradually taken form, as it were, and become concrete. In the simplicity and ignorance of ancient times, these abstract ideas assume life and substance, and become particularized in a definite narrative. All the stories of the old Greek mythology, as the name imports, are myths which have been unwittingly fabricated, enlarged, and ornamented by the active fancy of successive generations ; and modern German scholars have sought to translate them back again into the primitive ideas which they represent, and have thereby invented a new science called *Symbolism*, for specimens of which consult Anthon’s new Classical Dictionary, *passim*. In this way they have discovered a whole world of knowledge, at least half a dozen new systems of German metaphysics,

in these old and rather obscene fables about gods and goddesses. Some persons think, that at least as much imagination is shown in the resolution of these fables into their primitive, abstract elements, as was exercised in the original construction of them out of such materials.

The flexible and slippery meaning of this word is a great convenience to a theorist. Strauss often uses it in its lower sense, to signify merely some anonymous narrative or tradition, which probably embraces a considerable nucleus of truth ; and taking for granted, as we have said, that the Gospels are not genuine, but are compilations from some anonymous old manuscripts and from traditions, he very easily shows that they are all mythical. Then a quick transition is made to the higher meaning of myth, designating an entire fable, a mere concretion of abstract ideas, like that of Apollo slaying Marsyas for presuming to contend with him in music, and the Christian records are at once ranked with the more imaginative portions of Homer and Hesiod. And upon this gross and obvious paralogism the whole theory of Strauss is supported. Like criminals before an unjust and ignorant judge, the Gospels are tried upon one law, and condemned upon another. They are accused only of being compiled from unknown sources, or of being partly legendary in character, and the evidence adduced, such as it is, bears upon this point only ; and they are then sentenced, as if convicted of the higher crime, to be placed in the same class with the foul stories of the Greek mythology. Playing upon this double and doubtful meaning of the word *myth*, and searching in the Old Testament and in Rabbinical books for the kind of expectations which the Jews entertained of the coming Messiah, Strauss assumes that these expectations gradually took form, and thickened into the life of a fabulous Christ. His explanation, therefore, of the presence of the gospel record in history turns entirely upon this latter point,—the *Messianic* anticipations of the Jews. He is inconsistent with himself throughout. He argues, for instance, from very slight indications, that a certain narrative is legendary in form, meaning thereby, that for some time it existed only as a tradition, and while in that state, the attendant circumstances, the garb of the story, were perverted and altered. Here he evidently assumes that a real event formed the basis of the history, though he declares it impossible to tell

what that fact is, or how to separate it from the false accretions. Then a citation from the Hebrew writers, a prophecy or a figure of speech, is adduced as an ideal element which, in the mind of an imaginative people, quickly assumed a narrative form ; and thus we obtain a myth which includes not a vestige of truth. Either or both of these explanations are given of the same passage in the record. The obvious inconsistency between the lofty hopes entertained by the Jews of a Messiah who should be a temporal sovereign and raise their nation to the highest pitch of grandeur and renown, and the story of the meek and lowly Jesus, passing through a life of suffering and persecution to a death on the cross, is either totally disregarded, or frittered away in each case by special pleading.

Let us see what are the marks or criteria by which Dr. Strauss declares that a particular narrative is of a legendary or mythical character. One of his canons we will quote in his own words : — “ Wherever we find a narrative which recounts the accomplishment of a long expected event, a strong suspicion must arise, that the narrative owes its origin solely to the preëxistent belief that that event would be accomplished.” (Vol. I., p. 266.) As no event can be “ long expected,” unless there are some pretty decisive reasons for it, the rule amounts to this ; — that, when there were strong antecedent causes which rendered it very probable that a certain occurrence would take place at a particular time, the attested record of history that it did thus happen as expected is probably false ; and conversely, we suppose, if there was no reason at all to look for it, it probably did occur, though it is not recorded in history. Or the canon may be more briefly stated thus, so as to serve for a check on human prudence and foresight : — Expected events are less likely to happen than those which are unexpected. If your house has taken fire, you may reasonably expect, if you stay in it, that you will be burnt up ; but if you run out, and regard the conflagration from a safe distance, any injury happening to you will certainly be unexpected. Therefore, according to Dr. Strauss, you must stay where you are.

On the apparently simple statement of Luke respecting the childhood of our Lord, that he “ increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man,” Dr. Strauss learnedly observes (*ib.* p. 278), that nearly the same thing is

recorded of Samuel, and, what is quite astonishing, something very like it is said of Samson ; hence he sagaciously concludes, that this is “a favorite form of conclusion and transition *in the heroic legend* of the Hebrews.” It seems that this legendary and mythical element is more common in history than we had supposed, for we find the same fact narrated of the childhood of many good and distinguished men. Nay, we are seriously alarmed for some excellent young friends of ours, of whom a very similar remark has often been made, lest they should turn out to be only mythical personages after all. It is an ominous fact, of which we were recently assured by one of them, that he had actually grown an inch taller during the past year. His fond parents, to whom he is as yet an entire reality, must hope for the future that, in Hibernian fashion, he will only grow downward, and become more and more stupid every day.

As our readers may hardly believe that Dr. Strauss could show so much critical sagacity in detecting the legendary and fabulous element where one would least expect it, but may think that he reasons upon broader and more obvious grounds than appear in our very brief quotations, we will copy his reasoning upon one case at some length. We will take the simple case of the first visit made by Jesus to the temple, when he was but twelve years old. Our critic here frankly confesses, that “the main part of the incident is thoroughly natural” ; and as to the particulars, — “the journey of Jesus when twelve years old, the eagerness for knowledge then manifested by him, and his attachment to the temple, — there is nothing to object negatively, for they contain nothing improbable in itself.” But how, then, can we prove that they are mythical, since there is not a shadow of historical evidence against them, and they are also thoroughly natural ? Why, thus : — “Their historical truth must become doubtful, if we can show, positively, a strong interest of the legend, out of which the entire narrative, and especially these intrinsically not improbable particulars, might have arisen.” That is, our critic applies the canon which we first quoted from him, — that events which are most to be expected are least likely to happen ; and if a record be found that they did happen, then they are certainly fabulous. He makes out this point as follows ; — and we crave the reader’s attention even to the footnotes which accompany the extract, in order that he may do

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justice to the amazing erudition with which these German critics discuss such difficult matters.

“ That in the case of great men who in their riper age have been distinguished by mental superiority, the very first presaging movements of their mind are eagerly gleaned, and if they are not to be ascertained historically, are invented under the guidance of probability, is well known. In the Hebrew history and legend especially, we find manifold proofs of this tendency. Thus, of Samuel it is said in the Old Testament itself, that even as a boy he received a divine revelation and the gift of prophecy (1 Sam. iii.), and with respect to Moses, on whose boyish years the Old Testament narrative is silent, a subsequent tradition, followed by Josephus and Philo, had striking proofs to relate of his early development. As in the narrative before us Jesus shows himself wise beyond his years; so this tradition attributes a like precocity to Moses; * as Jesus, turning away from the idle tumult of the city in all the excitement of festival time, finds his favorite entertainment in the temple among the doctors; so the boy Moses was not attracted by childish sports, but by serious occupation, and very early it was necessary to give him tutors, whom, however, like Jesus in his twelfth year, he quickly surpassed. †

“ According to Jewish custom and opinion, the twelfth year formed an epoch in development to which especial proofs of awakening genius were the rather attached, because in the twelfth year, as with us in the fourteenth, the boy was regarded as having outgrown the period of childhood. ‡ Accordingly it was believed of Moses, that in his twelfth year he left the house of his father to become an independent organ of the divine revelations. § The Old Testament leaves it uncertain how early the gift of prophecy was imparted to Samuel, but he was said by a later tradition to have prophesied from his twelfth year; || and in

* Joseph. Antiq. ii. ix. 6.

† Philo, de Vita Mosis, Opp. ed. Mangey, Vol. 2. p. 83 f. οὐχ οἷα κομιδῆ νήπιος ἤδετο τωβασμοῖς καὶ γέλωσι καὶ παιδιαῖς — ἀλλ’ αἰδῶ καὶ σεμνότητα παραφαίνων, ἀπούσμασι καὶ θεάμασιν, ἃ τὴν ψυχὴν ἔμελλεν ὠφελήσειν προσείχε. διδάσκαλοι δ’ ἐθύς, ἀλλαχόθεν ἄλλος, παρήσαν. — ὦν ἐν οὐ μακρῷ χρόνῳ τὰς δυνάμεις ὑπερέβαλεν, εὐμοιρίᾳ φύσεως φθάνων τὰς ὑφηγήσεις.

‡ Chagiga, ap. Wetstein, in loc. *A XII anno filius censetur maturus.* So Joma f. lxxxii. 1, Berachoth f. xxiv. 1; whereas Bereschith Rabba, lxiii., mentions the 13th year as the critical one.

§ Schemoth R. ap. Wetstein: *Dixit R. Chama: Moses duodenarius avulsus est a domo patris sui, etc.*

|| Joseph. Antiq. v. x. 4: Σαμούηλος δὲ πεπληρωκῶς ἔτος ἦδη δωδέκατον, προεφήτευσεν.

like manner the wise judgments of Solomon and Daniel (1 Kings iii. 23 ff. Susann. 45 ff.) were supposed to have been given when they were only twelve.* If in the case of these Old Testament heroes, the spirit that impelled them manifested itself, according to common opinion, so early as in their twelfth year, it was argued that it could not have remained longer concealed in Jesus ; and if Samuel and David showed themselves at that age in their later capacity of divinely inspired seers, Solomon in that of a wise ruler, so Jesus at the corresponding period in his life must have shown himself in the character to which he subsequently established his claim, that, namely, of the Son of God and Teacher of Mankind. It is, in fact, the obvious aim of Luke to pass over no epoch in the early life of Jesus, without surrounding him with divine radiance, with significant prognostics of the future ; in this style he treats his birth, mentions the circumcision at least emphatically, but above all avails himself of the presentation in the temple. There yet remained according to Jewish manners one epoch, the twelfth year, with the first journey to the pass-over ; how could he do otherwise than, following the legend, adorn this point in the development of Jesus as we find that he has done in his narrative ? and how could we do otherwise than regard his narrative as a legendary embellishment of this period in the life of Jesus,† from which we learn nothing of his real development,‡ but merely something of the exalted notions which were entertained in the primitive church of the early ripened mind of Jesus ? ” — Vol. I., pp. 279 – 282.

We will leave it to any unprejudiced reader, whether Strauss has not made out, from the customs and opinions of

* Ignat. ep. (interpol.) ad Magnes. c. iii. : Σολομῶν δὲ — δωδεκαετῆς βασιλεύσας, τὴν φοβερὰν ἐκείνην καὶ δυσερμηνεύτου ἐπὶ ταῖς γυναῖξι κρίσιν ἕνεκα τῶν παιδίων ἐποιήσατο. — Δανιὴλ ὁ σοφὸς δωδεκαετῆς γίγονε κάτοχος τῷ θείῳ πνεύματι, καὶ τοὺς μάτην τὴν πολιὰν φέροντας πρεσβύτας συκοφάντας καὶ ἐπιθυμητὰς ἀλλοτρίου κάλλους ἀπήλεγξε. *But Solomon, being king at the age of twelve years, gave that terrible and profound judgment between the women with respect to the children. . . . Daniel, the wise man, when twelve years old, was possessed by the divine spirit, and convicted those calumniating old men who, carrying gray hairs in vain, coveted the beauty that belonged to another.* This, it is true, is found in a Christian writing, but on comparing it with the above data, we are led to believe that it was drawn from a more ancient Jewish legend.

† This Kaiser has seen, *Bibl. Theol.* 1, 234.

‡ Neither do we learn what Hase (*Leben Jesu* § 37) supposes to be conveyed in this narrative, namely, that, as it exhibits the same union with God that constituted the idea of the later life of Jesus, it is an intimation that his later excellence was not the result of conversion from youthful errors, but of the uninterrupted development of his freedom.

the Jews, a strong antecedent probability of such an incident in the life of Jesus. And how, then, according to the canon, and as the Doctor rather triumphantly asks, at the close of the extract, "how could we do otherwise than regard his [Luke's] narrative [the express record that the incident did take place] as a legendary embellishment of this period in the life of Jesus, from which we learn nothing?" The extract further shows a peculiarity in the opinions of Dr. Strauss which is worth noticing. He believes that those who have approved themselves in their mature years as wise and good men, who have been eminent and excellent kings, lawgivers, or prophets, cannot have shown any marks either of grace or greatness in their childhood. He does not allow, with Wordsworth, that the child is father of the man; stories about early goodness or a precocious intellect he cannot away with; they are improbable legends and myths, and no such persons as those to whom they relate ever existed. This is a peculiar opinion, and doubtless a very profound one, as we can see no reason for it. Is it possible, that the learned critic himself, while yet a boy, was remarkable either for obtuseness of intellect, or as a graceless little vagabond? We need not apologize for a question which, upon the converse of Dr. Strauss's own principle, is a very complimentary one.

We will now pass to another set of rules, relating not to the matter, but to the form, of the narrative, which will assist us in distinguishing the legendary from the true. "Among the reproaches which modern [German] criticism has heaped on the Gospel of Matthew, a prominent place has been given to its want of individualized and dramatic life." (Vol. II., p. 189.) And certainly, continues Dr. Strauss, "when we read the indefinite designation of times, places, and persons" by this Evangelist, — when we remember his "wholesale statements," and "the barrenness and brevity of many isolated narratives," we must conclude that "Matthew's whole narrative resembles a record of events which, before they were committed to writing, had been long current in oral tradition, and had thus lost the impress of particularity and minuteness." But the other sacred historians, especially Mark and John, are remarkable for the dramatic and lifelike character of their narrations, and for lively and minute descriptions of particular incidents. "This is the actual fact," says our critic, with great candor and decision,

“and it ought not to be any longer evaded.” But does this opposite quality make it any the more probable that their accounts are not legendary and fabulous? Not at all; and here follows the general *dictum* of Strauss, to which we crave attention proportioned to its importance.

“It is important to bear in mind that tradition has two tendencies: the one, to sublimate the concrete into the abstract, the individual into the general; the other, not less essential, to substitute arbitrary fictions for the historical reality which is lost.”—
Vol. II., p. 191.

Verily, this “tradition” is a queer thing; for it has the power of changing white into black, and black into white, with equal facility and quickness. The rule is a very convenient and comprehensive one; for the first branch of it has enabled our critical judge to rule Matthew out of court, and the second part authorizes him to exclude Mark, Luke, and John, also. He accordingly proceeds, on page 193, to affirm with great complacency and decision, that “the three last Evangelists owe the dramatic effect in which they surpass Matthew to the embellishments of a more mature tradition.” We perceive, then, that tradition is like Penelope at her web; she has alternate fits of laboriously canceling her work—the particularity of narrations—and then doing it all over again. Matthew found the whimsical dame in one of her destructive moods, and she gave him only a blurred sheet. The other three historians came soon afterwards, and the fickle lady handed them a painting in which all the colors and outlines appear with startling vividness and effect, and the whole story is told with wonderful distinctness and particularity.

We have room to comment on but one other of these principles of mythical criticism, though sorry to leave a subject on which the acumen and originality of our author appear to so much advantage. We will select the strongest case,—the rule governing the interpretation of “those narratives in which the influence of the legend may be *demonstrated*.” It is introduced in commenting on an instance of *discrepancy* to which we have already alluded; that Matthew mentions *two* occasions on which Jesus was charged with being in league with Beelzebub, and a sign was required of him, while Mark and Luke give an account of only *one*. Our critic is much

troubled by the fact, that the demoniac who gives occasion for this charge "is in both instances *dumb*"; though he immediately adds, in a parenthesis, "in the second only, *blindness* is added." Still, says our author, the fact is "suspicious"; he observes that "demoniacs were of many kinds," and appeared to suffer under "every variety of malady"; and asks, with great anxiety, "Why, then, should the above imputation be not once attached to the cure of another kind of demoniac, but twice to that of a *dumb* one?" We candidly assure Dr. Strauss that we cannot tell; but as dumbness was quite a common manifestation of this prevalent form of insanity, as our Lord cured many demoniacs, and as such a charge was the one most readily prompted by the opinions of the people in that age and place, as a means of doing away with the effect of a wonderful action, perhaps some of our readers, who have known one or two cases of a rather odd coincidence of events in their own experience, may be able to inform him.

But this is not the only difficulty. Our Lord shows the absurdity of such an imputation, and the discourse he utters on this charge is appended by Matthew to the second occasion, — to the cure of a dumb and blind demoniac; Luke reports the same discourse in connection with the cure of a demoniac, of whom it is said only that he was dumb. Hence Dr. Strauss sagaciously infers, that the legend has doubled one and the same incident. Tradition, he thinks, added new circumstances to the story, and as the old form of the legend was handed down together with the new one, "a compiler more conscientious than critical adopted both as distinct histories." Any one but a learned German critic, it is true, would simply say, that Luke describes but one of the two cases, and that one not so fully as Matthew, for he says only that the demoniac was dumb, while Matthew adds that he was blind. As the latter was an eyewitness of the affair, which Luke probably was not, this omission of a slight additional detail does not appear very extraordinary. But Dr. Strauss looks into the matter more profoundly. He finds in this apparently simple affair an important and characteristic trait of legendary or mythical influence, which he enunciates at the close of the section with great precision and earnestness.

"It is in the nature of traditional records, such as the three first Gospels, that one particular should be best preserved in this

narrative, another in that ; so that first one, and then the other, is at disadvantage in comparison with the rest."

This proposition, says our author, has been " but too little regarded." We fear it has been, for its advantages are obvious. Whenever we have two accounts of the same set of occurrences, this rule enables us to detect the mythical element in them with great facility, and to any extent. Livy and Polybius, for instance, both wrote narratives of the second Punic war ; sometimes the Roman historian has the advantage, and sometimes the Greek ; therefore they both compiled their accounts from tradition, and the history of Hannibal's campaign in Italy is a mere myth.

We crave pardon of our readers for a lighter strain of remark in the last few pages than may seem to be proper for the occasion and the subject. While examining only the prominent features, the general characteristics, of this infidel hypothesis, however silly and unreasonable it may appear, a regard for the topic to which it relates enables one to review it with becoming seriousness. But when we descend to particulars, to the absurd application of an absurd theory, the exhibitions of the author's elaborate folly become so ludicrous, that " to be grave exceeds all power of face." We will take refuge once more in a higher region, and in more comprehensive views.

Heroic legends and myths belong only to the infancy of society. A system of mythology properly so called, embodying the religious ideas of a people, can be created only in the faint morning twilight of civilization, and many centuries must elapse before it can acquire form and distinctness. It must be anterior even to the art of writing, for its only source is in the imaginations of bards and minstrels, in songs and ballads preserved only in the memory, liable to perpetual changes and additions, and sung at lofty banquets, or while wandering about the country, by a class of itinerants devoted to this profession alone. Men are exalted into heroes and demigods only when there is not light enough to see their true proportions. Hercules and Theseus, Numa and Egeria, Odin and Thor, are proper mythical personages, gigantic forms seen only in the mist of ignorance, fancy, and superstition, when the songs of wandering bards are the highest intellectual entertainment of a barbarous people. When the art of writing is invented or introduced, this process of formation ceases ; written copies can be compared

with each other, and the additions to the poem or legend by the ever teeming fancy of the minstrels are detected and thrown out as spurious, not having the sacred stamp of antiquity. The formerly fluid elements of mythology curdle into shape, crystallize into rigid forms, and the religion of the people becomes fixed, though their poetry, recognized as such, may continue to advance. Even Homer and Hesiod did not invent their theogony ; the work in great measure was done to their hands. Written copies of their poems contributed to stay the progress of invention in the national religion, and to check and control the imaginations of the bards who came after them. The mythology of the Greeks and Scandinavians, the legendary history of Rome under the kings, may be faintly traced back towards their poetical birth-places by the light of the traditions embodied in them ; but with the appearance of the first written record, authentic history begins.

And where does Dr. Strauss place *his* mythology, *his* account of the legendary and poetical formation of a new religion ? Just at the close of the Augustan age of Roman literature, when civilization and refinement, in fact, had passed their culminating point, and were just beginning to decline. The fine arts had begun to give way to the more useful ; laborious and faithful annalists were taking the place of the more elegant, but perhaps less trustworthy, historians ; diligent observers of nature, like the elder Pliny, critics like Quintilian, ethical philosophers and dramatic poets combined, like Seneca, writers on law, antiquities, husbandry, military tactics and strategy, showed that an age of analytic and minute labor was succeeding to one of inventive genius and original and daring speculation. It was not a credulous, but a skeptical period. Law had become a complex science, and its practice was a distinct and honorable profession. Trials were held and facts investigated by shrewd and wary advocates, in a manner not unlike the sharp practice of our modern courts. The rude sounds of war were heard only on the distant frontiers, for the might of the Roman arms had long been peacefully acknowledged in the provinces and tributary kingdoms nearer the great heart of the empire. The arts, luxuries, and refinement of Rome were rapidly diffused in Judea, especially by the influence of Herod the Great, and were mingled with the indigenious elements of civilization and

learning. The priesthood and the scribes were bodies of learned and intelligent men ; the luxurious and skeptical sect of the Sadducees alone opposed a strong barrier to the propagation of marvellous stories, or the rise of new superstitions. The people were fanatically attached to their ancient faith, were instructed from infancy in the Hebrew Scriptures, and looked for the august coming of their Messiah, under whom the renewed splendors of a theocratic government should far surpass even the majesty of hated Rome. Think of heroes and demigods, of heroic legends and a wholly novel species of myths, arising among such a race, and in such an age ! “ The idea,” exclaims the honest and able historian, Dr. Arnold, “ the *idea* of men writing mythic histories between the time of Livy and Tacitus, and of St. Paul mistaking such for realities ! ” It would hardly be a greater error in the opposite direction, if we were to talk of locomotives, gas-lights, and cotton factories under the reign of Tiberius.

The confusion of ideas which is here exposed, the lack even of a shade of probability in the very elements of Dr. Strauss’s theory, is enough to mark it as one of the most signal of all failures in speculation. There was no time for the formation of myths, always a slow process, even if the people and the age had allowed of their construction. The lowest theory of the origin of our four Gospels carries them back to the end of the second, or the beginning of the third century, and holds that they were then compiled from a primitive gospel which had long been in being. The preaching of those who had listened to the apostles themselves, who had received and studied the autograph epistles of Paul and John, who had heard the story of our Saviour’s life from those who were fellow-sufferers with him, extended into the beginning of the second century. This primitive gospel, then, must have been in their hands, and could not have survived their day, if they had disclaimed it as unauthentic ; for it assumed to be a record of the origin of their faith. The gospels compiled from it must have been tolerably faithful, if not complete, transcripts ; for the written word admits not of such facile changes and enlargements as tradition. Where, then, is there *any* interval for tradition, in which to make its unconscious forgeries, and to indulge in the marvellous ? How could abstract ideas simulate real events, and assume a narrative form, amid such an array of witnesses, all interested to

detect the falsity, and to keep pure the faith once delivered to the saints? In truth, the mythical hypothesis has arisen from a total misapprehension even of the theory which denies the genuineness of our present Gospels; Eichhorn's supposition is as fatal to it as the common view, that the Evangelists actually wrote the books which bear their names.

We have finished our brief view of the two most remarkable attempts, made by the most learned and skilful infidels of the present day, to account for the phenomena of the present existence of the four Gospels, and of the religion which is founded upon them, together with the mass of historical evidence in their favor, which exceeds in amount and value all the testimony that can be adduced for the authenticity of Greek and Roman history. It has been proved that these attempts are ludicrous failures, so extravagant in their first aspect, that a reasonable and judicious thinker will not waste his time in a further examination of them. Whatever may be the issue, then, of the subsequent part of the discussion, the historical inquirer must remember that these phenomena lie directly across the path of his future investigations, so that, if he declares the gospel accounts to be incredible, he must give up all confidence in outward testimony as to the fidelity of the past annals of mankind. He may try his hand, if he will, in framing a more plausible scheme for getting rid of the difficulty than that of Paulus or of Strauss; but judging from their experience, he cannot hope for much success in the undertaking.

Before we approach the abstract subject of miracles, a preliminary remark is necessary as to the effect which accounts of miraculous events, even supposing that these are impossible to be believed, should have on the general credibility of the narrator. If these accounts are interspersed in a record of other occurrences, which are in themselves thoroughly probable, are perfectly consistent with each other, and are supported to a reasonable extent by collateral testimony, and if the reputation of the narrator for veracity in all other respects is free from stain, then we affirm that his reputation is not destroyed by these accounts; and for support in this opinion we appeal to the almost unanimous judgment of historical critics. There is hardly one of the old Greek and Roman historians who does not occasionally introduce stories which are thoroughly incredible, so that no person hesitates for a moment in rejecting them. Yet he

never thinks of rejecting the whole work along with them, though this is precisely the manner in which Strauss and other infidels would have us act.

But we go much farther. If all the conditions just mentioned are fulfilled, and if the account of the miraculous occurrence is by an eyewitness, his narrative of this very event must also be accepted, even if we admit that miracles are inexplicable. The occurrence is complex, embracing several events. He testifies only to the outward facts, to what he heard and saw ; and these facts are not impossible. The miracle consists in the connection of cause and effect between these facts, and this connection is not a matter cognizable by the senses, but is an inference of the understanding. It may be the narrator's inference, — that is, he may declare his belief in the miracle ; but this belief forms no proper part of his testimony as to the outward facts, and therefore must not cause the rejection of that testimony. The inference may even appear to all reasonable persons to be quite irresistible, — that is, they cannot see *how* such events should happen, unless they were related to each other as cause and effect ; but they can easily believe that the mere events themselves *did* happen. If you tell me, that you cannot see *how* a word, uttered even by divine power, should open the eyes of the blind, perhaps I may agree with you ; but if, when many credible persons seriously declare that a man blind at one moment had good use of his eyes at the next, and that they were present at the time and saw the change, you say further that you will not believe them, I shall have no great respect for the soundness of your judgment. To take another case ; it is perfectly credible that a violent storm at sea should be suddenly followed by an entire calm, and that one of the passengers on board a ship should be speaking just at the time when the wind lulled. If one of the other passengers, a sober and truthful person, seriously informs us that this actually happened, we admit the possibility of it, and believe him without hesitation. After we have made this admission, he informs us for the first time, that the words spoken at the critical moment were these :— “Peace ! be still.” Is our knowledge of this additional particular to destroy our belief of the other events, which we have just declared to be perfectly credible ? and is it not just as *possible*, in the nature of things, that the passenger should have uttered these words as any other ?

But as many persons are perplexed in the attempt to distinguish between the action of the understanding and the testimony of the senses in the case of an alleged miracle, another illustration may help to remove the difficulty. It has so happened that we have never seen the automaton chess-player; but several of our friends, whose veracity it would be foolish to question, have assured us that there is such a figure, that they have repeatedly seen it, and examined it closely enough to satisfy themselves that it was a mere piece of machinery, a collection of springs, wheels, and drawers, which had no connection with the floor or with any other portion of the apartment in which it is placed; and that they have often seen this wooden figure play long games of chess, and win them, too, against some of the most accomplished players in the country. We have accepted their testimony, and fully believe that the facts are as they state; but we also believe, — and it is an opinion which fire will not melt out of us, — that mere machinery cannot be made to play successfully the intricate and difficult game of chess, in which the number of possible moves is at least so *near* infinity as wholly to transcend the powers of the numeration-table. It is true that mechanical invention has made vast progress in these modern times, and it is difficult to say where it will stop; but we can more easily believe that in some future age it will succeed in building a railroad from this earth to the sun, than that it will ever be able to construct a wooden figure which will play a good game of chess.

Now, suppose that some acute critic, like Dr. Strauss, who maintains that the narration of an event deemed to be incredible ought to destroy the credit of the narrator, should undertake to rebuke us for the inconsistency of our opinions. He would say it was absurd to admit the narration to be veracious, and the event to be impossible, at the same time; and that we ought at least to show how it was possible, even if the way was not probable, for the thing to be done. We answer, that we did not say the event was “impossible,” but only that it was “deemed to be incredible”; and this is all which can be affirmed of the solar railroad, the wooden chess-player, or a miracle; and in this unauthorized substitution of one phrase for another consists the worthy critic’s whole difficulty. And we answer, secondly, that *we are not bound to show* HOW it was done, but only to produce good

reasons for our belief in it. This we have succeeded in doing in the present instance, for Strauss himself will not deny that the account of the automaton is true. To try to limit the confidence reposed in reputable witnesses, or to deny the credibility, in certain cases, of any amount of testimony, not merely by our narrow views of what is possible, but by our power of devising a satisfactory explanation of the *modus operandi*, or of showing *how* the thing is done, is a foolish and groundless assumption. In the case of the chess-player, the judicious observer frankly confesses his ignorance of the mode in which the effect is produced ; but he acknowledges at the same time that the inventor of this curious machine has more mechanical skill and ingenuity than himself. As we are not now addressing atheists, we may add, that it becomes the objector to the credibility of narratives containing records of miraculous events to imitate this humility, and to acknowledge that the *supposed* author of miracles is one whose wisdom is inscrutable, and whose ways are past finding out.*

Some of our readers might feel more confidence in the propriety of relying upon human testimony to this extent, if they could see a very able statement of the point, and a legal opinion in favor of its sufficiency in court, pronounced by a sound old lawyer. We will therefore hear Professor Greenleaf.

“In almost every miracle related by the evangelists, the facts, separately taken, were plain, intelligible, transpiring in public, and about which no person of ordinary observation would be

* The point of the argument here, it will be seen, is not to prove the credibility of miracles in the abstract, but merely to show that histories perfectly well attested, and credible in every other respect, are not to be rejected solely because they contain accounts of inexplicable events. Certainly, we are very far from placing the instance of miracles on a par with that of the automaton, which every one knows to be a cheat, though an inexplicable one. We are only illustrating a law of belief, which the sophism of Hume, and the *credulity* of writers like Strauss, has too much kept out of sight. We admit that more testimony is required ; the history needs to be better authenticated than if it recorded only simple and natural occurrences. Before the chess-player was exhibited in Europe, if we had seen only an anonymous statement in a newspaper, that such a machine had been invented and exhibited in India, we should not have believed it. But when the testimony of several eyewitnesses, whose veracity is perfectly well known, is added, assent is yielded without any difficulty.

likely to mistake. Persons blind or crippled, who applied to Jesus for relief, were known to have been crippled or blind for many years; they came to be cured; he spake to them; they went away whole. Lazarus had been dead and buried four days; Jesus called him to come forth from the grave; he immediately came forth, and was seen alive for a long time afterwards. In every case of healing, the previous condition of the sufferer was known to all; all saw his instantaneous restoration; and all witnessed the act of Jesus in touching him, and heard his words. All these, separately considered, were facts plain and simple in their nature, easily seen and fully comprehended by persons of common capacity and observation. If they were separately testified to, by witnesses of ordinary intelligence and integrity, in any court of justice, the jury would be bound to believe them; and a verdict, rendered contrary to the uncontradicted testimony of credible witnesses to any one of these plain facts, separately taken, would be liable to be set aside, as a verdict against evidence. If one credible witness testified to the fact, that Bartimeus was blind, according to the uniform course of administering justice, this fact would be taken as satisfactorily proved. So also, if his subsequent restoration to sight were the sole fact in question, this also would be deemed established, by the like evidence. Nor would the rule of evidence be at all different, if the fact to be proved were the declaration of Jesus, immediately preceding his restoration to sight, that his faith had made him whole. In each of these cases, each isolated fact was capable of being accurately observed and certainly known; and the evidence demands our assent, precisely as the like evidence upon any other indifferent subject. The connection of the word or the act of Jesus with the restoration of the blind, lame, and dead, to sight, and health, and life, as cause and effect, is a conclusion which our reason is compelled to admit, from the uniformity of their concurrence, in such a multitude of instances, as well as from the universal conviction of all, whether friends or foes, who beheld the miracles which he wrought." — pp. 61, 62.

We have not yet touched the general question respecting the intrinsic possibility of a miracle. But it has been shown, if we mistake not, that, whatever may be the opinion of the inquirer on this point, he is bound to accept our four Gospels as they are, with their accounts of supposed miracles and all, as truthful records of what actually happened. The *facts* that are narrated respecting the origin of our religion he must believe; he may place what interpretation upon them he pleases. And here we might fairly leave the whole sub-

ject, having carried the inquiry quite as far as the legitimate boundaries of the human understanding will permit. There is a blindness of the heart as well as of the intellect ; logic may cure the latter, but it will have no more effect on the former than on the nether millstone. Any one who can believe that the writings of the four Evangelists constitute a faithful and true history in all their parts, and still deny the divine origin of the Christian religion, on the ground of mystical speculations and metaphysical subtleties, labors under an incurable disease in his moral constitution and sympathies, and is beyond the reach of argument. But as waiving the discussion of this last point might seem like an implied admission that there was an insuperable difficulty in the case, and this might affect the convictions even of those who did not know what the difficulty was, we shall attempt to prove, not only that there is no valid presumption against the occurrence of miracles, but, when the proper conditions are fulfilled, that there is a strong antecedent probability in their favor. But the reasoning will be addressed only to theists ; for those who deny the being of a God will of course reject any evidence of extraordinary manifestations of divine power.

The question now is, *Whether miracles properly so called, under all circumstances, are so improbable, that any belief in their occurrence is unphilosophical and wrong?* We do not ask whether they are “impossible,” because a theist acknowledges the omnipotence of God, and if the question were put in this form, he *must* answer it in the negative. Neither shall we insist on the foolish and intolerable assumption of being able so far to pry into the divine counsels as to declare it to be in the highest degree improbable that the Deity will ever manifest his power by extraordinary means. There is no need here of having recourse to the argument *ad invidiam* ; the case is strong enough without it.

It is not easy to frame a definition of a miracle which shall not be open to cavilling. Every one knows what is meant by it, though he may find it difficult to express his idea of it with philosophical precision. It is a temporary interruption of what are called “the laws of nature,” — a departure from what has been for a longer or shorter period the usual mode of divine action, — made with the intent, and for the sole purpose, of accomplishing some great end, com-

mensurate in importance with the dignity of the means by which it is to be attained. It is commonly objected to the probability of such an occurrence, that it is inconsistent with the attribute of divine wisdom to suppose that the Deity ever changes his plan or alters his purpose. To this it may be replied, first, he who declares that infinite wisdom necessarily dictates invariability of action also assumes that he possesses infinite wisdom himself; and secondly, a change in the mode of action does not necessarily imply a change of purpose. The emergency may have been foreseen, the extraordinary action by which it was to be met may have been predetermined, from the foundation of the world. If it be further urged, that it is a low and unworthy conception of the government of God to suppose that crises and emergencies arise in the world's affairs which he must meet by extraordinary means, we answer that this leads directly to the deep and dark questions of human free agency and the origin of evil, with which at present we have nothing to do. As before said, we are not reasoning with an atheist, and it is for you to show how much you will be aided in the explanation of these enigmas by rejecting the Christian religion. Absolute free will necessarily requires the permitted coexistence of moral evil, and it is certainly consistent with our notions of the divine benevolence to believe that the Deity may interpose to stay the progress of sin and suffering, while it is inconsistent with the limitations of human reason to pronounce authoritatively upon the wisdom of the means by which this purpose is effected.

Such general considerations as these, we are well aware, are of little weight in determining this great question. But the answer to an objection involves a consideration of the same ideas as are contained in the objection itself; and if these are vague, abstract, and metaphysical, the reasoning on both sides must be darkened by their use. Practically, the objection to miracles consists altogether in a short-sighted reference to the assumed invariability of the laws of nature. The improbability of a violation of law, of a break in the continuity of events, is gauged entirely by what would be the measure of one's own surprise, if, on the speck of earth which he calls his home, in his personal experience, which is but a dot in the history of the universe, there should suddenly be a wholly arbitrary and purposeless suspension of

the usual sequence of cause and effect, — if the sun should cease to warm, the fire to burn him, or the water to slake his thirst, — if he should lose his eyesight without a cause, and acquire it again without a remedy. A man's sanity would very properly be suspected who should now actually look for, or fear, such a meaningless subversion of the order of nature and Providence. His expectation would be akin to the folly of a child who hopes that without industry or thrift some lucky accident will suddenly make him very rich, or some blind chance throw down the huge obstacle which now stands between him and the accomplishment of his wishes. But the silly longings of that child are hardly less philosophical than the narrow self-conceit of the man who errs in the opposite extreme, and would fain weigh the great epochs in the history of a universe, the grand scheme of the Almighty's government of moral and physical events, in the paltry scales which serve to estimate his own infinitesimal experience. Events are strange or marvellous, not in themselves considered, but in relation to the means by which they are accomplished, or to the purpose that calls them forth. If men had talked a century ago of transporting themselves a hundred miles within the hour, or of sending a message in the twinkling of an eye to a place a thousand miles off, the bystanders would have supposed that they were quoting the Arabian Nights' Entertainments ; but railroads and steam have accomplished the one, and the magnetic telegraph has effected the other. And men do not stupidly sit still and marvel that these things are so. The means are seen to be proportioned to the end ; the purpose and the want have created or found the sufficient power.

When estimating the possibility or probability of events which are to affect the destiny of all mankind, we are to be governed by the experience and the necessities not of the individual, but of the race ; we must look to the annals of the world for guidance, and not to the history of one life ; we must decipher even the record, inscribed on the rocks, of the mutations which this solid globe has undergone in the vast series of ages that elapsed before it was peopled with beings like ourselves. The history of God's providence is not the story of a day, nor can it be interpreted by the experience of an hour. If we would climb to the heights of this great argument, our view must be expanded in feeble

imitation of his vision with whom a thousand years are but as one day. Perhaps it will be found, that these supposed breaks in the continuity of the inferior laws of nature are but the intercalations of a higher law, working for a nobler end ; that what appear as special exertions of divine agency are but the ordinary mode in which infinite wisdom works and governs ; that the physical is subordinate throughout to the moral universe ; and what man calls "miracles" are precisely what he may most reasonably and naturally expect from omnipotence and infinite benevolence combined.

As man has not only a physical, but a moral nature, a great epoch in the moral history of the world is at least as probable as the outward creation of the race itself ; the morning of the resurrection of our Lord is but the parallel of that great day "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." In both cases, there was an interruption of the antecedent order of physical events for a spiritual end ; for by the creation of man, this earth, till then, and for almost countless ages, the dwelling-place only of the brute, became tenanted for the first time by a living soul. And if we open the pages of the *Stone Book*, which a certain class of reasoners are so much more willing to believe than the Bible, we find there an ineffaceable and undoubted record of a multitude of cases, in which preceding laws of nature, that had been unbroken for many ages, were interrupted by special exertions of divine power. Mighty revolutions have often swept the face of this planet, hurrying nearly all former orders of life into ruin, and each time the desert was peopled anew with animated tribes wholly unlike their predecessors. Geology is but the history chronicled in stone of many miracles, performed before man was, and extending far back into a past eternity. There is not an animal or a plant on this earth, which, as a race, is not older than man ; and those with whom we now reason certainly will not deny that a distinct and special exertion of power was needed for the creation of each one. *They*, who maintain so stoutly the unchangeableness at any rate of the *present* laws of nature, under which every living thing now produces seed after its own kind, and only for that kind, will not allow that worms were created from earth, and reptiles were born from fishes, and men from brutes, all by the continuous operation of natural laws. Trusting only

to their own eyes, judging only from their own experience, and from the repeated declarations of naturalists and philosophers for some hundreds of years, that persistence of type is one of the great laws of nature, extending in an unbroken chain of cause and effect through all history, they will eagerly declare the appearance of each new race on the globe to be an indubitable miracle.

If we extend our views, then, as far as possible, into the history of God's government of the universe, we find everywhere undeniable evidence of repeated miracles. Huge strata of earth-bound rock, the solid framework of the globe itself, in characters which the schoolboy now may read, testify to the unceasing guardianship, the frequent intervention to renew, repair, and improve, of Him who created the heavens and the earth, and laid the corner-stone thereof. The world was never an orphan, never left to the dominion of chance, or — what is little better — to the blind and unbroken operation of what are called natural laws. A Father's care watched over it, a Father's hand peopled it again and again with tribes of living things, not by inflexible ordinances, nor by vicarious government through secondary means, but even as an earthly parent careth for his children. To him who denies the possibility of such divine intervention, or, in other words, who rejects the doctrine of a Providence, may be addressed the awful question that was put to Job out of the whirlwind : — “ Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth ? Declare, if thou hast understanding ? ”

How stands the antecedent probability, then, of the occurrence of miracles in the divine government of the human race ? Is the creation of a reptile, an insect, a worm, a fit occasion for the special exercise of almighty power, and not the redemption of all mankind from sin ? Did omnipotence become weary only after God had created man in his own image, the noblest of his creatures, when unintelligent tribes or a desert earth through countless ages had been visited with frequently recurring tokens of oversight and protection, of a care that never slept ? Let it not be said, that the world is still far behind the glorious stage of progress which the establishment of our religion seemed to promise for it, if that religion had been divine. Christianity has no more been a failure than the primitive creation of the race. Sin, indeed, has continued to stalk the earth, and human

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misery to track its footsteps, since the expulsion from Eden, and even since the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But if we compare pagan Babylon, and Athens, and Rome, in their imperial magnificence, and their moral squalor and wretchedness, with the present condition of the civilized and Christian world, with schools in every hamlet, with institutions of beneficence in every city, and with churches on a thousand hills, and still more with the glorious promise of the future, we may well say that the founding of our religion, viewed not only in the purity of its doctrine and its ethics, but in the extent and grandeur of its external results, was a work as worthy of Omnipotence as the first establishment of man upon the earth. The religion itself, with its doctrine of redemption and peace, its inculcation of love to God and man, and its revelation of a life beyond the grave, is worthy of "that splendid apparatus of prophecy and miracles" by which it was heralded and accompanied. When properly considered, the Sermon on the Mount appears as godlike as the act of raising Lazarus from the dead.

We accept the evidence of the Christian miracles, then, because they harmonize throughout with what we know of the history of divine Providence as manifested in the universe. The book of nature and the book of revelation, the written word and the law stamped on the heart, are not at variance with each other, but contain essentially the same doctrine; one goes beyond, but does not contradict, the other; it is the complement, but not the substitute, of its predecessor. It is a vain and foolish doctrine, then, that the miracles are useful *only* as evidences of Christianity, and may therefore safely be put aside if we have testimony enough without them. It is not so. Christianity is itself a miracle, — the greatest of all miracles, — a special revelation from heaven, — the authentic record of the latest visible appearance of God on the earth, — a direct interposition in the former order of events for the noblest of all ends. If it be not so, then is our faith vain, and these teachings also are vain. If our religion does not come from above, if it is not specially attested by the broad seal of Heaven, then it is of no authority and no worth. It is no religion at all; for there is no conceivable distinction between a philosophical system of man's device, and a religion properly so called, but this, that the latter comes directly from God, while the former is

the mere invention of a frail and erring being like ourselves. Nay, more ; if Christianity is not miraculous and divine in its origin, it is an imposition, and its founder was a cheat ; for no declaration was more decidedly made by him, no assertion is more frequently written out in the Gospels, than that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah spoken of in the Scriptures, and waited for by the people, who came to make known the will of the Father, and to save mankind from their sins. In proof of this special commission and divine authority, he pointed to the wonderful works which he did ; so that they who deny those works, who say that a miraculous event is incredible, and that it is foolish to suppose that any one was ever specially commissioned by the Deity for any purpose, do in fact deny the claims which he put forth, and heap the coarsest reproach upon his memory. The gloomy and comprehensive conclusion at which Strauss and his followers arrive, as the end of their inquiry, is well presented by that writer himself.

“ The results of the inquiry which we have now brought to a close have apparently annihilated the greatest and most valuable part of that which the Christian has been wont to believe concerning his Saviour Jesus, have uprooted all the animating motives which he has gathered from his faith, and withered all his consolations. The boundless store of truth and life which for eighteen centuries has been the aliment of humanity seems irretrievably dissipated ; the most sublime levelled with the dust, God divested of his grace, man of his dignity, and the tie between heaven and earth broken. Piety turns away with horror from so fearful an act of desecration, and, strong in the impregnable self-evidence of its faith, pronounces that, let an audacious criticism attempt what it will, all which the Scriptures declare and the church believes of Christ will still subsist as eternal truth, nor needs one iota of it to be renounced.” — *Strauss*, Vol. III., p. 396.

There can be no doubt respecting the true position and name of persons who have come to this melancholy result. They may be amiable and good men, in the worldly sense of that phrase, of honest intentions and irreproachable lives. All this can be said of David Hume ; but he never thought of calling himself a Christian. If the followers of Strauss arrogate to themselves this title, they are dishonest and guilty of a wilful attempt to deceive. In any thing like the ordinary meaning of the name, in the *only* meaning of it

which is present to the minds, not merely of this or that sect, but of the whole Christian world, they know they are not Christians. It is foolish to attempt to confound their sweeping unbelief with the many points of difference which are mooted among various Christian denominations. They deny the fundamental assumption of Christianity and of every other religion; they deny that a miraculous event, a special revelation from heaven, is possible or even conceivable. They assert that no such revelation was made by Christ, that what was affirmed on this subject by himself and his apostles was untrue, that the four Gospels are untrue, and what is written in them, from the mere fact that it is there, is of no authority. Such a sweeping doctrine of unbelief as this cannot without a foolish and disgraceful abuse of language be called a mere "variation" of Christianity, like the thousand and one shades of belief which are properly so denominated. It is humiliating to be obliged to say a word on a point which is so evident. Those who call such persons Christians in some measure share their doctrine, and in so far repudiate Christianity themselves; for they acknowledge thereby, that the doctrine of a special revelation by Jesus Christ is not necessarily a fundamental part of Christianity. On this point, we intentionally make our language as plain and direct as possible. To argue against sincere and honest infidelity is one thing, to repel a dishonest assumption of the Christian name is another. In the former case, we may respect our opponents; in the latter, we are compelled to despise them.

The concluding dissertation in the work of Strauss is very curious, for it gives a tolerably fair view of the extravagant shifts, the inane allegorical and metaphysical theories, to which the several schools of infidel critics and philosophers in Germany have been driven, in order to reconcile their decided rejection of what they call "historical" Christianity, their disbelief of the actual existence of the Saviour and of the reality of miracles or a special revelation, with the obstinate retention both by themselves and their followers of the name, office, and emoluments of Christian clergymen and theologians. The systems of Paulus, Schleiermacher, Kant, Hegel, and others are presented with tolerable distinctness, and refuted — as if refutation of such extravaganzas were necessary — with absolutely conclusive reasoning. Finally, Strauss proposes a system of his own, quite as absurd as the worst of those

which he had just rejected ; but he proposes it with little confidence, and in fact admits almost directly, that, if the clergyman entertaining his views be unlucky enough to have a tender and scrupulous conscience, there is no course left for him but to quit the ministerial office altogether. We have room but for a very brief summary, given mostly in Strauss's own words, of his own system and that of Schleiermacher. These are fair specimens ; some of the others unite quite a decided expression of atheism with their disavowal of " historical " Christianity. And we should not burden our pages and the patience of our readers with even this brief notice of them, if it were not for the light which the expressions used, the peculiar phraseology of this school, cast upon some language with which our ears have been shocked even on this side of the Atlantic. We shall know, hereafter, what these persons mean, when they say that they reject only " historical " Christianity, and when they continue to *talk* about Christ and a revelation, though they hold that the narratives of the four Evangelists are mythical and fabulous.

Schleiermacher, says our author, " has adopted in its fullest extent the negative criticism directed by Rationalism against the doctrine of the church ; nay, he has rendered it even more searching." His system is founded, not, like that of the Protestant, upon the Scriptures ; nor, with the Catholic, upon the decisions of the church ; but on the consciousness of the individual Christian, and the " internal experience " which he obtains from his connection with the Christian community ; — " a material which, as its basis is feeling, is more flexible, and to which it is easier to give dialectically a form that satisfies *science*."

" As a member of the Christian church, — this is the point of departure in the Christology of Schleiermacher, — I am conscious of the removal of my sinfulness, and the impartation of absolute perfection : in other words, in communion with the church, I feel operating upon me the influence of a sinless and perfect principle. This influence cannot proceed from the Christian community, as an effect of the reciprocal action of its members on each other ; for to every one of these sin and imperfection are inherent, and the coöperation of impure beings can never produce any thing pure as its result. It must be the influence of one who possessed that sinlessness and perfection as personal

qualities, and who moreover stands in such a relation to the Christian community that he can impart these qualities to its members: that is, since the Christian church could not exist prior to this impartation, it must be the influence of its founder. As Christians, we find something operated within us; hence, as from every effect we argue to its cause, we infer the influence of Christ, and from this again, the nature of his person, which must have had the powers necessary to the exertion of this influence.

“To speak more closely, that which we experience as members of the Christian church is a strengthening of our consciousness of God, in its relation to our sensuous existence; that is, it is rendered easier to us to deprive the senses of their ascendancy within us, to make all our impressions the servants of the religious sentiment, and all our actions its offspring. According to what has been stated above, this is the effect wrought in us by Christ, who imparts to us the strength of his consciousness of God, frees us from the bondage of sensuality and sin, and is thus the Redeemer.” — *Strauss*, Vol. III., pp. 417, 418.

It is needless to quote further; the other offices of Christ are explained in the same way. The substance of the theory appears to be, that *a sort of Christ* exists nowadays in the consciousness of every individual who belongs to a Christian community. “In this sense alone is the doctrine of the threefold office of Christ to be interpreted.” “The facts of the resurrection and ascension do not form essential parts of the Christian faith.” He holds, in some inexplicable way, that a historical Christ existed, but affirms that there is no reason for this belief but what may be found in the consciousness of every individual. “Whatever in the dogma of the church goes beyond this — as, for example, the supernatural conception of Jesus, and his miracles, also the facts of the resurrection and ascension, and the prophecies of his second coming to judge the world — ought not to be brought forward as integral parts of the doctrine of *the Christ*.” We have no evidence from “our internal experience” of the truth of these facts; ordinary Christians believe in them “only because they are stated in Scripture; not so much, therefore, in a religious and dogmatical, as in an *historical* manner.” This doctrine of Schleiermacher, says Strauss, is inadequate on both sides, for it does not satisfy the requisitions either of “the faith of the church or of *science*.”

“It is clear, however, from his doctrine of the work of Christ,

that, in order to satisfy the former so far as is here done, such a contradiction of the latter was quite unnecessary, and an easier course might have been pursued. For resting merely on a backward inference from the inward experience of the Christian as the effect, to the person of Christ as the cause, the Christology of Schleiermacher has but a frail support, since it cannot be proved that that inward experience is not to be explained without the actual existence of such a Christ." — *Strauss*, Vol. III., p. 424.

We fully agree with the following remark of our author.

"We may now estimate the truth of the reproach which made Schleiermacher so indignant; namely, that his was not an historical, but an ideal Christ."

"This Christology," says our critic, "is undeniably a beautiful effort of thought!" But it does not satisfy him, any more than three or four other systems which he examines, and he accordingly propounds a "Christology" of his own.* For him whom the Scriptures and the generality of Christians call Jesus Christ, or, as Strauss luminously expresses it, "*as subject of the predicate which the church assigns to Christ, we place, instead of an individual, an idea.*" This idea realizes itself, not indeed in the "historical" Christ, as the Scriptures would have us believe, nor yet in the consciousness of any Christian individual of the present day, as Schleiermacher supposes.

"This is, indeed, not the mode in which Idea realizes itself; it is not wont to lavish all its fulness on one exemplar, and be niggardly towards all others, — to express itself perfectly in that one

* It is important to understand the phraseology of these persons, and their mode of using names. When they speak of *Christ*, they understand thereby the *idea* so called, which, according to some, is realized in the consciousness of every individual; according to others, in universal humanity; and in the opinion of a third class, is never realized at all. Thus, we have a "Christology," or doctrine of Christ, just as we have a "pneumatology," or doctrine of spirit. The word is not a proper, but a common noun (as appears, indeed, from its etymology and primitive use), and ought to be written *christ*. When they speak of *Jesus*, they mean the historical personage of that name; for most of them admit that such a person actually lived, and was a good man and an eminent preacher of virtue, though the recorded history of him is but a tissue of fables. To show very clearly their opinion of him, his name is usually placed in a list of other excellent persons, such as Socrates, Fénelon, Howard, — and some worthies of our own day, whose names *we* prefer not to mention in such a catalogue.

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individual, and imperfectly in all the rest: it rather loves to distribute its riches among a multiplicity of exemplars which reciprocally complete each other,—in the alternate appearance and suppression of a series of individuals.” — *Strauss*, Vol. III., p. 437.

In brief, according to Strauss, the whole human race, the totality of mankind, is Christ; the idea is thus realized on a magnificent scale.

“And is this no true realization of the idea? is not the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures a real one in a far higher sense, when I regard the whole race of mankind as its realization, than when I single out one man as such a realization? is not an incarnation of God from eternity a truer one than an incarnation limited to a particular point of time?” — *Strauss*, Vol. III., p. 437.

We are reluctant to transfer to these pages the development of this wild and truly German theory. The language is at once disgusting and impious; but it is important to place the whole subject before our readers, and we must not shrink from the duty.

“Humanity is the union of the two natures, — God become man, the infinite manifesting itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude; it is the child of the visible Mother and the invisible Father, Nature and Spirit; it is the worker of miracles, in so far as in the course of human history the spirit more and more completely subjugates nature, both within and around man, until it lies before him as the inert matter on which he exercises his active power; it is the sinless existence, for the course of its development is a blameless one, — pollution cleaves to the individual only, and does not touch the race or its history. It is Humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven; for from the negation of its phenomenal life there ever proceeds a higher spiritual life; from the suppression of its mortality as a personal, national, and terrestrial spirit, arises its union with the infinite spirit of the heavens. By faith in *this Christ*, especially in his death and resurrection, man is justified before God: that is, by the kindling within him of the idea of Humanity, the individual man participates in the divinely human life of the species. Now the main element of that idea is, that the negation of the merely natural and sensual life, which is itself the negation of the spirit (the negation of negation, therefore), is the sole way to true spiritual life.

“This alone is the absolute sense of Christology: that it is

annexed to the person and history of one individual, is a necessary result of the historical form which Christology has taken." — *Strauss*, Vol. III., p. 438.

And *this* is the *idea* which is to thrust Jesus of Nazareth out of the hearts and memories of men, — this the religious belief which is to supplant the one founded on the four Gospels !

But how is belief in these doctrines to be reconciled with the character and office of a Christian clergyman ? This is the final question, and Strauss admits that it is a very difficult one.

“The real state of the case is this. The church refers her Christology to an individual who existed historically at a certain period: the speculative theologian to an idea which only attains existence in the totality of individuals ; by the church the evangelical narratives are received as history : by the critical theologian they are regarded for the most part as mere mythi. If he would continue to impart instruction to the church, four ways are open to him.” — *Strauss*, Vol. III., pp. 441, 442.

First, he may attempt “to elevate the church to his own point of view, and for it, also, to resolve the historical into the ideal ; — an attempt which must necessarily fail.” Secondly, he may himself adopt the point of view of the church, and “descend from the sphere of the ideal into the region of the popular conception.” This expedient, Strauss thinks, is commonly understood and judged too narrowly. “*It is evidence of an uncultivated mind* to denounce as a hypocrite a theologian who preaches, for example, on the resurrection of Christ ; since, though he may not believe in the reality of that event as a single sensible fact, he may, nevertheless, hold to be true the representation of the process of spiritual life which the resurrection of Christ affords.” Strictly speaking, however, this identity of the substantial truth exists only in the consciousness of the theologian, and not of the people to whom he speaks. It is admitted, therefore, that “he must appear in the eyes of the church a hypocrite,” and that “he would ultimately appear a hypocrite to himself also.” A third course remains, which we will present in the critic’s own language, as it throws some light on his notions of honesty and disinterestedness.

“It avails nothing to say, he has only to descend from the pul-

pit, and mount the professor's chair, where he will not be under the necessity of withholding his scientific opinions from such as are destined to science; for if he, whom the course of his own intellectual culture has obliged to renounce the ministerial office, should by his instructions lead many to the same point, and thus render them also incapable of that office, the original evil would only be multiplied. On the other hand, it could not be held good for the church, that all those who pursue criticism and speculation to the results above presented should depart from their position as teachers. *For no clergyman would any longer meddle with such inquiries, if he thus ran the risk of being led to results which would oblige him to abandon the ministerial office; criticism and philosophy would fall into the hands of those who are not professed theologians, and to the theologian nothing would remain but the faith, which then could not possibly long resist the attacks of the critical and speculative laity. But where truth is concerned, the possible consequences have no weight; hence the above remark ought not to be made. Thus much, however, may be maintained in relation to the real question: he whom his theological studies have led to an intellectual position, respecting which he must believe, that he has attained the truth, that he has penetrated into the deepest mysteries of theology, cannot feel either inclined or bound just at this point in his career to abandon theology: on the contrary, such a step would be unnatural, nay, impossible.*" — *Strauss*, Vol. III., pp. 443, 444.

The fourth expedient, according to our simple apprehension, does not differ materially from the second. The clergyman is to adhere to the forms of the popular conception, "but on every opportunity he will exhibit their spiritual significance, which to him constitutes their sole truth."

"Thus, to abide by the example already chosen, at the festival of Easter, he will indeed set out from the sensible fact of the resurrection of Christ, but he will dwell chiefly on the being buried and rising again with Christ, which the Apostle himself has strenuously inculcated." — *Strauss*, Vol. III., p. 444.

But the same difficulty returns, that the opinions of the preacher and his hearers do not actually coincide, and their fundamental beliefs are entirely unlike.

"At least, the community will not receive both as identical; and thus, here, again, in every excess or diminution which the more or less spontaneous relation of the teacher to critical theology, together with the variety in the degrees of culture of the community, introduces, — the danger is incurred that the com-

munity may discover this difference, and the preacher appear to it, and consequently to himself, a hypocrite.

“In this difficulty, the theologian may find himself driven, either directly to state his opinions, and attempt to elevate the people to his ideas; or, since this attempt must necessarily fail, carefully to adapt himself to the conception of the community; or, lastly, since, even on this plan, he may easily betray himself, in the end to leave the ministerial profession.” — *Strauss*, Vol. III., p. 445.

We heartily adopt this conclusion; let him *leave the ministerial profession*. If he will not abandon proselytism to this gloomy form of unbelief, let him not do his work treacherously under the name and garb of the very religion which he assails. There are halls and lecture-rooms for his use, and audiences may easily be collected on the secular days of the week. Let not the church be desecrated by his presence, let not the Sabbath be profaned by impious or hypocritical services. The pulpit and the Sabbath — the Lord's day — are emphatically Christian institutions; they were consecrated in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, they are devoted to the use of those who believe that he was the Son of God, and that he was crucified and rose again. It is dishonest, it is criminal, it is base, for his enemies to seize upon them, and use them for the purpose of discrediting the story of his life, and casting the reproach of falsehood and imposture upon his name. If these lines should be seen by any one who holds the opinions here commented upon, and still retains the name and office of a Christian clergyman, we adjure him by his own notions of honesty and fairness, by his respect for goodness and truth, by his regard for millions of his fellow-beings whose dearest hopes and final consolations his course now tends to destroy, by his sense of reverence for the Infinite One whom he still professes to adore, instantly to quit the post he has no right to hold, and to leave the ministerial profession.