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I.

THE RELATION OF GOD TO THE WORLD.

ALL theology, and for that matter all philosophy and all science as well, must be Theo-centric ; must have God for its beginning and end. There is a great deal of confusion of thought arising from substituting words for thoughts, in the pious claim in vogue nowadays that all Theology must be grouped Christo-centrally. There is an immense sense in which every loyal Christian will recognize this as true. In the *first* place, the revelation of God in Christ is so infinitely more clear and full than in all the universe beside, that we may well say not only that Christ is God, but also that there is no God other than the one whose consummate self-revelation is in Christ. In the *second* place, Christ is undoubtedly the Author and Finisher of our faith, and the beginning and ending of human salvation. The entire scheme of salvation begins and ends in his person and work. And in the *third* place, all power in all worlds is put into Christ's hands, so that all events are controlled by his will, all history revolves around his person, and all science finds its key in his doctrine. Notwithstanding all this, however, Christ is central because Christ is God. The unincarnate God and his natural relations to the universe must be logically prior to and more fundamental than the incarnate God and his gracious relations to his creatures. The Apostle Paul has a deep meaning when he says, 1 Cor. xi. 3 : "The head of every man is Christ, . . . and the head of Christ is God," which is equivalent to saying : "The centre of every man is Christ, and the centre of Christ is God."

Three questions, therefore, obviously lie at the foundation not only of all man's religious knowledge, but equally at the foundation

III.

RATIONALISTIC CRITICISM OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

THE writer who attempts to trace the history of Rationalism in any department of thought is met at the outset by a difficulty similar to that which embarrasses the attempt to describe the practical outcome and relations of Darwinism. The difficulty lies in the fact that the word Rationalism is not a fixed but a floating term, to which every reader, and particularly every English reader, attaches his own meaning. Some, overlooking its evil, are inclined to understand by Rationalism the habit which wishes to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. Some, understanding by the word the spirit of unbelief, the Antichrist, fail to give it credit for the possession of any good. And others, making rationalistic equivalent to unorthodox, are unable to appreciate either its evil or its good.

Nevertheless, in spite of this diversity of ideas, there is a thing which is called Rationalism ; not so much a fact as a growth ; not a historical appearance, but a spirit which underlies a chain of appearances ; not a system, but a school of thought.

In Germany this school has been especially drawn toward the investigation of the groundwork of the Christian religion as it is found in the life of Jesus Christ. Its adherents have assumed in the course of this investigation various positions, which seemingly opposed, are connected by a regular process of development, and rest upon a similar philosophic basis. That basis is such a scheme of the universe as by necessary logical deduction renders impossible a special revelation of religious truth in any particular historical fact or facts. Now the New Testament is, on its face, a historical account of a special revelation from God. Rationalists have, therefore, been compelled to investigate it. The history of German Rationalistic criticism of the life of Christ, then, is the history of the attempts of those men whose scheme of the universe rendered it impossible that Christ could be the incarnate God to account for the contents and origin of the New Testament literature.

Two things have determined the course of this criticism : First, the development of the school of rationalistic thought in general as

it modified from time to time the view of the universe from which it sprang, and, second, the truth established by the study of the facts in this special field of investigation. The writer has endeavored to display the first influence by showing, so far as he has been able within the limits of a magazine article, how the different elements which make the spirit of an age have affected the philosophic views of a portion of the German people ; and the second by displaying the positions taken in regard to the New Testament literature by the leading rationalistic authors of lives of Christ, together with the discussions and attacks which have caused the changes in those positions.

The causes of the formation of the view of the universe which was the basis of the first rationalistic life of Christ are to be sought in the history of the development of speculation.

Descartes, laying aside the results of all previous metaphysics, started to construct a new system of the universe, and became the founder of modern philosophy. His system ended in Dualism ; in the assertion of two opposite and opposing substances, spirit and matter, the relations of whose origins he did not explain. He was followed by Spinoza, who attempted to reconcile this paradox, to reduce this dualism to monism. He did it by pointing away from the substances to the *substance*. He explained the single and peculiar as but different parts of one great all-embracing whole. But he overlooked the individual. He gave no proper recognition to the fact that within this one all-embracing whole there are parts, complete in themselves, possessing the ability to resist the influence of the whole, and to some extent determine their own form of being. Hence his system was fatalistic, and, whether he was a pantheist or a materialist, whether he called his one substance God or matter, made no difference in the practical outcome, which was a tendency to destroy personality and hence moral responsibility.

Leibnitz saw and attempted to supply the deficiency. He said the system of Spinoza does not take all the factors into account. He has overlooked the fact of individuality. His *Substance* may explain the existence of the substances, but it does not explain their form. For that we must introduce a new idea, that of "power."

By thus reasserting the importance of form as against mere existence, of the individual against the entirety, he won again a place for personality and moral responsibility.

The system of Descartes was dualistic—that is, it explained the universe in terms both of mind and matter ; the system of Spinoza was materialistic—that is, it explained the universe in terms of a substance whose distinguishing characteristics were those of matter ; the system of Leibnitz tended, as against Descartes, to be monistic,

and explain the universe in terms of one substance, and, as against Spinoza, to be spiritualistic in that it found the distinguishing characteristic of this substance in a quality of mind.

Spinoza found in his system no legitimate place for moral responsibility, and therefore no possibility of a revealed religion ; for himself, indeed, no need for religion at all. In the Christian revelation he found, therefore, a contradiction with the results of philosophy. This contradiction Leibnitz undertook to remove by the construction of a natural theology and a natural religion. Leibnitz never worked out his views into a completed system, and they were interpreted to and became the property of the age through the work of inferior men, chiefly by that of Wolf and Mendelssohn. Overlooking the deep-lying principles because they could not understand them, they constructed a cheap and popular Leibnitzianism, which avoided the difficulties of the original by leaving out its greatnesses.

The system of Leibnitz was psycho-physical ; in the hands of these interpreters it became psychical and physical, and instead of the physical ideas being spiritualized, the spiritual ideas became materialized. For deep, soulful reflection they substituted the operations of logic, working upon premises gathered from the surface of observation, with no appreciation of the depths of thought or feeling. The idea of the immanence of God, which lay like a hidden spring down among the roots of Leibnitz's system, was replaced by a mechanical relation which put God and the world opposite to one another, like a machinist and a machine. That relation of the parts to the whole which Leibnitz had found to resemble a harmony springing from within, this spurious Leibnitzianism found to resemble a bond laid on from without.

To this world they applied the standard of their reason. But when they looked into that mirror of the universe, the soul, they saw, not the real world, but only that false and puny image of it which they had themselves created. As the artists of the time reproduced, not nature, but those belittled conventional models which they believed to be a higher and fuller expression of artistic truth, so these philosophers could never look over the bounds of their schools to the glories and beauties beyond. In the sweep and rush of the stars they saw only the mechanical perfection of an orrery. They could not catch the music of the spheres, and heard instead only the clank of the machinery.

And as their views of God and the world, so also their views of man and the ends of human life. Of the restless striving of the soul for something which it does not possess, they did not understand.

Their system put God away off from the universe, and they were quite content to have Him remain there.

And as they did not have the longing for union with the Divine, so they did not have any appreciation of the difficulties that stood in the way of that union. Leibnitz had regarded sin as incompleteness, a lack of perfection ; but this belief, held side by side with the consciousness of that striving after completeness and perfection which it hindered, did not lessen its pain or blind his eyes to its weight. The introduction of this active principle changed the negative into a positive. But when this *striving* was thrown out of the account, then sin became a necessary accompaniment, a mere incidental evil, to overcome whose inconvenience a wise man need only choose the best of many possible means ; much as a cripple might select the most practicable of many varieties of crutch. The immortality to which they looked forward was but a continuation in the next world of the conditions of life with which they got on very well in this. That optimism which Leibnitz deduced from the nature of God, they were rather inclined to rest upon the belief that man was the centre of the universe, for whose benefit all that is was made ; and that benefit they saw not in the promotion of development, but of existence.

It was characteristic of this tone of thought that, while announcing that " the proper study of mankind is man," it failed to see the greatness and the glory of man. Asserting human sufficiency it came to assert human equality, and lost appreciation of individuality. Consequently it was unable to understand, or even to study, history. Genius it could not appreciate. To admire a civilization whose spirit was not their spirit, to perceive the good of a system whose results did not tally with the results of their system, was beyond their ability. With a besotted Pharisaism, they thanked God that their age was not as other ages had been. Mendelssohn expresses his gratitude that he is not like Plato, and finds that Homer would have been a very superior poet if he had not had these shadowy conceptions of many gods.*

Never, perhaps, was there a spirit which, claiming to be so broad, was so narrow ; asserting so loudly its right to be critical, was so little able either to appreciate or condemn ; preaching so steadily the glory of man, tended to strip him so completely of all that is godlike ; boasting itself of such exalted, had such little ideals, as this spirit of the eighteenth century, whose practical rule of life was a combination of peddler morality and the etiquette of the best society, a mixt-

* Kuno Fischer.

ure of "Poor Richard's Philosophy" and "Lord Chesterfield's Letters."

It was necessary for the believers in any scheme of the universe which thus put God so far off from the world that it was impossible for Him to make to it any special revelation, to explain the facts recorded in the New Testament in such a way as to destroy belief in them. This task was undertaken by Hermann Samuel Reimarus, well known as the author of a now-forgotten book on "The Most Distinguished Truths of Natural Religion," which, in its day, ran through six editions and was translated into French, English, and Dutch. His book upon the Christian history is called "The Apology for the Reasonable Worshippers of God," and its tone is sharply and strongly hostile. As regards the Bible, it is destructive from the first line to the last; and yet it is justly called an apology rather than a criticism; for the author's object is not only to overthrow what he considers the false religion, but to establish what he considers the true. While he is an anti-Christian, he is by no means an anti-religionist. He believes firmly in the existence of God, of a moral law, and the immortality of the soul.

His reasons for beginning to doubt that the Bible was a revelation from God he gives himself in the preface of his Apology.

1. It seemed to him impossible that a revelation from God, which was intended to guide the human race, should have been made in the complex form of a collection of historical, philosophical, and poetical books, rather than that of a short, plain, and simple catechism or hand-book containing a straightforward statement of religious or moral truth. The ideal of such a revelation which he had before his mind was probably such a book as Wolf or Mendelssohn might have written. 2. The difficulty of forming a clear or, indeed, any idea of the Trinity. 3. The eternity of hell taught by the New Testament, which offended his sense of justice. 4. The impossibility of God, after having made the world and established its laws, interfering with their operations, and thus altering the relations between it and Himself by approaching closer to it.

He thus (*a*) assumes, *a priori*, in his fourth position that any revelation is impossible, and (*b*) asserts in his first three that, granting the possibility of a divine revelation, the contents of the Bible do not agree with our ideas of what such a revelation should be. He then proceeds to prove *a posteriori*, by a detailed investigation of the Bible history (*c*), that, assuming propositions *a* and *b* to be false, the Bible could not even then be considered as divine, because of the moral character of the men by whom this revelation was communicated. Running through the books of the Old Testament, he

finds that Noah was a frantic raver, who expressed his disgust over his own faults by cursing his innocent children ; Abraham an honorless husband, who was willing to suffer the dishonor of his wife for money ; Moses a demagogue, whose ambition led him to carefully scheme and carry out by means of cheap conjuring tricks the deception of inspiration from God ; and David a cowardly, treacherous, cruel, and licentious usurper. Proceeding to his investigation of the New Testament, he finds in the apostles a band of unscrupulous, ambitious men, who, losing their political hopes by the death of their leader, cleverly turned their effort to obtain political power into an ecclesiastical revolution ; and instead of founding a new kingdom, endeavored to found a new hierarchy. When he comes to the character of Jesus, he slightly changes his tone. He finds that Christ had two plans : first, the proclamation of the necessity of moral reformation, and, second, the intention to establish a worldly kingdom. The first he finds pure and admirable, but the second draws in its train many impurities, and affixes ineradicable stains to the character of Jesus. He finds Him guilty of a deceitful prearrangement with John the Baptist of raising the wonder and belief of the ignorant crowd by false miracles which He was afraid to attempt before the learned Pharisees. He finds the buying and selling in the courts of the temple a very justifiable and necessary proceeding, Jesus cleansing of it but the first step in an unjustifiable and personally ambitious revolution, and concludes that the Sanhedrim, as the defenders of the Jewish commonwealth and constitution, " could not have done otherwise than as they did ; that, therefore, Jesus died, not innocently, but on account of His own crime."

As far as concerns that criticism of the Old Testament which Reimarus regarded as the foundation of his criticism of the New, he had established, granting the presuppositions which underlay it, a reasonably strong position against such as attacked him on his own ground. It was possible, of course, to point out the particulars in which he had misinterpreted the Bible, or where he had interpolated his own suppositions into its histories ; but to those apologetes who, because Abraham was the Father of the Faithful, deemed it necessary to defend his conduct with Abimelech, or who tried to show that the king, warrior, and poet, David, was not the scoundrel of Reimarus's fancy by holding him up as a model to the burgher-house fathers of their time, the admirers of the apology could make many strong and cutting replies.

To attack the suppositions which underlay that position, the time was not ripe. The general spirit of the age was so incapable of true historic investigation that it was impossible for it to recognize the

greatness of Jewish literature or the glories of Jewish history. In regard to the criticism of the New Testament the case was better. Pure water does not come from a foul spring. If the figure and teaching of Christ as presented in the gospels were drawn by the hand of the apostles, then they could not have been a set of deceitful and ambitious adventurers, and if they were in any sense reproductions of reality, then the original could not have been a political conspirator with rather elevated moral ideas. But the time was too blind to the real worth and grandeur of Christianity to give even this obvious argument its decisive weight. It was a small age, and sceptic and believer alike were too apt to look at the world through the minimizing glasses which they themselves had made.

Nothing is easier in historical study than to take the part either of an advocate or a prosecutor, and yet nothing is more unjust or leads to false views than to yield to such an impulse. Therefore, in considering the German *Aufklärung* of the eighteenth century, one must guard against a too-sweeping contempt and condemnation; an overlooking of the good which was mingled with its evil. Even in its extreme wing there was something to find true. If its spiritualism was materialized, still it was spiritual and not materialistic. If its morality was small, still it was moral. If its idea of God was little, still it had a God. If its views of destiny and the final relations of things were mechanical, still it had an immortality and prayed to a Father in heaven. From the same philosophic system which it misinterpreted sprang a succession of nobler souls, who, even in this very age, fought its small morals, its unscientific spirit, and its mechanical religion. If the close of its influence was marked by a dreadful political humiliation, there yet remained in the people who suffered it the strength that prepared itself for a great historical uprising. This was the golden age of German literature—the age that has given it its right to claim a place among the great literatures of the world. Herder, Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe lived in the eighteenth century.

Reimarus's book has now lost its power. Its criticisms are based on and appeal to a spirit and a view of the world which to-day have but little influence. It is only, indeed, in America that such criticism seems to meet with any but exceptional and occasional following, from people whose social position ought to be a guarantee of some slight degree of education.

The process by which this has been accomplished is not simply, or chiefly, one of controversy and pressure, but of inward growth and change. The agencies which have accomplished it are not so much the direct ones of attack upon results, as the indirect ones, by

which the providence of God, overruling even evil for good, has destroyed the spirit in which this form of attack had its origin.

The first impulse to the destruction of this spirit came, to use a not unmeaning pleonasm, in a new Renaissance, in a return to real classicism from the false classicism. The first thing for the age to do to escape its own littleness was to become conscious of it. In order to do this it was necessary for it to have means of comparison ; it must turn its eyes away from itself toward the study and appreciation of other ages.

Winckelmann began this process in the domain of art. In his "History of Antique Art" he turned from the false and indecent half nakedness of contemporary classicism to show the beauty and purity of the nudity of the real classic.

And the process in art was matched by a similar one in literature. As against the classicism borrowed from France, with its materialism and rules for the manufacture of poetry, there arose a school which, resting on the example of English literature, asserted the ideal nature and imaginative qualities of the poet. The deeply rooted religious view of the world, the sturdy sinewed moral sense, the clear exalted view of human destiny, the defiance of man and fear of God, of those men who beat back the armada and saved Europe from the grasp of the Inquisition, was held up before the young genius of the generation in the living characters of Shakespeare. Klopstock, aroused by the study of Milton, abandoned, like Milton, his original design of writing a great national epic to compose the Messiah.

Herder pointed out the greatness and beauty of Hebrew literature, cut the ground from under the feet of Reimar's criticism of the Old Testament by pure literary arguments, and combated his criticism of the life of Christ by pointing from the details to that ideal beauty of the whole which Reimar was incapable of appreciating.

Lessing, though sympathizing with Reimar far enough to posthumously publish, and to some extent defend, his book, yet by his literary work, consciously or unconsciously, helped to destroy the spirit to which it appealed, and was led by the far-seeing instinct of genius to assume in "Nathan the Wise" that higher position in regard to religion which critical rationalism only reached years after by the slow process of logical development.

The youthful Schiller and Goethe expressed in "The Robbers" and "Sorrows of Werther" that excessive individuality, that self-introspective, self-worshipping egotism which, evil in itself, was but the necessary and healthy revolt against the taste for elegant mediocrity, which would measure all things by the same little pocket rule,

and in their later works taught with the success of genius that ideality and beauty also have a place in life.*

But the destruction of the spirit to which the criticism of Reimarus and his followers appealed was accomplished, not only indirectly by the influence of historical investigation and literary criticism and creation, but also directly through the foundation by Kant of the critical school of philosophy.

He formulated and enunciated that change of spirit and tone which literature was helping to cause and express. His criticism of the methods of investigation of the ruling speculative system destroyed the theory of knowledge which was its base. He showed that the knowledge upon which philosophy is founded and to which it appeals, is determined, not so much by that at which a man looks as by the man who looks, and by his demonstration of the relativity of knowledge and the impossibility of stepping beyond the limits of personality to lay hold on pure truth, destroyed root and branch the arrogant Deistic systems which would permit no mysteries, and measured the infinite with the hard and fast rules of their logic.

But another agency was to enter into the process. The thought and spirit of Germany was to be disciplined and developed, not alone by literature and philosophy, but also in the stern school of experience.

From the French Revolution sprang the modern Attila, Napoleon. That Prussian State which, since the death of Frederick the Great, had been growing ever hollower and hollower, went to pieces at the first touch of the mighty Frenchman. Its boasted army was annihilated at a single blow in the disgraceful fight at Jena, and as the victor marched toward the capital, officer after officer, the representatives of the proudest names in Prussia, surrendered the fortresses

* It is a striking fact that almost all the great men of the greatest period of German literature display a more or less hostile attitude toward the Church, and even toward essential Christianity. Of the great men of English literature perhaps exactly the opposite is true. This final lack of sympathy between German writers and the Church does not seem to have been the result of any personal indifference or hostility. It is a noticeable fact that nearly all the greatest men in this period displayed in their youth an interest in theological studies. Klopstock, Lessing, Herder, Burger, Jean Paul Richter, Wieland, Winckelmann, Schiller and Goethe, all devoted themselves in their youth to the study of theology. Now, so far as these men came into variance with the Church and the theological system, does not this unanimity among men of the same poetic and literary temperament as those who in England have not developed this variance, seem to indicate that there was something wrong in that from which they turned? Does it not seem that there must have been some falsehood inherent in the spirit, or some lack of adaptability in the method of presentation, or some lack of spiritual life in the Christianity of the German Church, which rendered those who were within her walls unable to carry on victoriously the contest against the first stage of Rationalism?

without firing a shot. The fall was terrible. Never perhaps in modern history has a nation gone through a more humiliating experience. But the moment of deepest degradation marked the beginning of the rise.

Perceiving at once that this was no mere adversity of fate, but the legitimate outcome of complete national degeneration, the thinking and noble men set themselves carefully and deliberately to work to remedy the evils that lay at the root. Recognizing that the only security for the independence of a nation was in the character of its citizens, and that the only hope for saving their country lay in a change in the social and political atmosphere, they entered into a tacit conspiracy to educate a nation which should fight and drive out the invader. Hatred of the foreigner and duty to country were taught in the schools as part of a far-reaching and organized system.

This system was pursued silently and patiently for years, until at last the nation felt that it was ready, and only waited for opportunity to strike the blow. It came. The army of France perished in the snows of Russia. Hesitating and half afraid, the king was induced to issue his "Call to my People," appealing for volunteers who should arm and equip themselves, and for contributions to feed them. The reply of the nation was to rise as one man to arms. Peasant and baron, gray-haired men and half-grown boys, marched to the field. The mechanic dropped his tools and the scholar his pen. Professors closed their lectures and carried a musket in the ranks of their scholars. The young poet wrote on a saddle in his tent a battle hymn that stirred the hearts of his countrymen like the blast of a trumpet, and then rode out in the early morning to find that hero's death he had sung. The philosopher who had abandoned his metaphysics to write the German Philippics, came on crutches to volunteer, bringing with him his half-grown son; and, unable to bear the fatigues of campaigning, returned home to die of the fever that his wife had brought from the hospitals where she tended the sick and wounded. Men sold the clothes from their backs to buy a gun or a sabre, and those who had nothing, begged, in the name of the fatherland, the money for arms to defend her. Women who had no money to give cut off their hair and sent their wedding rings to the melting-pot.

At Leipzig Napoleon held this terrific force of a nation determined to win or die for three days at bay; but even his genius could not resist it, and Prussia shook off the yoke of France.

After their victory it was impossible that the people should fall back again into the moral degeneracy from which they had risen to

achieve it. They had learned that there are things not only to live for, but things to die for ; that even in this life man does not live by bread alone.

To a nation who had passed through such an experience as this the old rationalism could not appeal. The spirit from which it arose and by which it was supported had vanished, and it must assume a new form. Henceforth the supposition of Reimarus, that the authors and actors of the New Testament literature were liars and knaves, had lost its force, and some entirely different method must be found to explain the origin of the New Testament.

Paulus, indeed, made the attempt along the old lines to reconcile the new spirit of the age which perceived the greatness and purity of Christ and the New Testament literature, with a belief in the impossibility of revelation. He found in the miracles lucky chances, the operation of natural laws unknown at the time, or the self-deception of excited spectators. He found in many of the teachings of Christ the expression of a self-consciousness that was so pure, exalted, enthusiastic as to be unbalanced and self-deceiving. But his attempt had the inherent defects of the old Rationalistic criticism. It appealed to a false moral standard. Reimarus had failed to perceive the *fact* of moral greatness, but Paulus failed to appreciate the *nature* of moral greatness. He failed to perceive that it was incompatible with the moral greatness of Christ, that He should be willing to trust in lucky accidents to support spiritual teachings, and that self-deception in regard to His own relation to the Father lowered the moral dignity and purity of His character.

But the age perceived what Paulus overlooked. Speculative Criticism or Rationalism had worked through its first and reached its second and higher stage. In its further investigation of the life of Christ it altered both its speculation and its criticism, laid aside not only the explanation of the New Testament literature given by Reimarus, but also the theory of the universe which prompted him to that explanation.

The mechanical view of the universe, which regarded God simply as the Creator, was exchanged for a spiritual one which regarded Him also as its Sustainer. The sharp dualism with its small logic, which tolerated no mysteries because it was unable even dimly to appreciate them, was exchanged for a brooding pantheism, with deep mysteries and vague but lofty ideas. For the small self-satisfaction of the previous age was substituted a noble and aspiring discontent.

The immediate cause of this change of philosophic base on the part of Rationalistic Criticism was the Hegelian philosophy. It

has been said that it is possible to translate Hegel adequately into Greek, but never into English. But it seems possible, even for the Anglo-Saxon, to secure an idea of the practical outcome of Hegel's system in the influence it exerted on criticism of the life of Christ as shown in the second stage of rationalistic controversy. Kant's system of the universe laid the conditioning stress on the ego. It resulted in an implied dualism, for, behind the phenomenon or appearance perceived, lay the reality of the thing which was never perceived, and behind the categories which conditioned the knowledge lay the mind which possessed the categories. As Leibnitz had tended to resolve into monism the dualism of Descartes without that neglect of some of the factors of the problem which he found in Spinoza, so the development which ended in Hegel tended to resolve into monism the dualism of Kant, while still taking into account the new factors to which he had pointed. It did away with the difference between the thought, and both the mind which possessed it and the thing that made its content. It tended to destroy self-determination, because it left nothing apart from the determination itself to be determined. That standing ground for individuality which enabled Kant to make the distinctively personal faculty, the determinative one, disappeared; and individuality was left floating in the air, seeking vainly for a resting-place.

And with this tendency to destroy the possibility of giving the attributes of personality to the individual, the possibility of giving the attributes of personality to God tended also to disappear.

The effect of this view of the universe upon the criticism of the life of Christ is clear. The ground principle of the two first forms of rationalism, different as they may appear, is the same. Both are based on the denial on philosophic grounds of the possibility of special divine revelation. Lessing, living in the time of the first stage, but occupying by the instinct of genius the position of the second stage, has summed up that which is common to both when he says: "Religion can never have its basis in the belief on historical facts." When applied to the life of Christ this general proposition reads: "That view of those historical facts which explains this life as the incarnation of God for the salvation of men is *a priori* impossible." This is as much the position of the second stage of Rationalism as it was that of Reimarus and Paulus. The statement of his reasons is, indeed, an exact contradiction, but the result is precisely the same. The old Rationalism had put God so far off from the world that His special interference in its laws became impossible, and this new Rationalism brought Him so close to the world that His special interference became equally impossible. The first view

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of God's character and relation to the universe excluded the possibility of revelation because it was too personal ; the second because it was too impersonal.

But Rationalistic Criticism had changed not only its philosophic position, but also its critical methods. Through the influence of Schleiermacher and Hase a new turn had been given to the controversy.

The Older Rationalism had posited the Scriptures, and then discussed their interpretation. It assumed the historicity of the accounts of the events of the life of Christ, and then attempted to explain them. Reimarus said these miracles are the results of false and deceitful conjuring tricks, while Paulus attempted to show them as lucky chances or necessary delusions. But the maintenance of these positions in the newer age was impossible, for the same principles made the founders of all religions either fools or liars. This was simply unbelievable. But Christianity is a historical fact, and has for its basis a series of historical facts recorded in an extant literature. If the Rationalist said Christianity could not be a true religion because a true religion could not be based on historical fact, he must account for the existence of that literature ; and as the old explanation had lost its force, he was compelled to give a new one.

This new explanation David Frederick Strauss attempted to supply. He changed the whole ground of discussion. He turned attention from the *events* of the New Testament to the *record* of those events.

The dilemma presented to him was this : The events recorded in the New Testament either took place or they did not take place ; if they took place, then Christ was the incarnate God ; if they did not take place, then He and His Apostles were deceivers and knaves. Now, if the second condition involved an inadmissible conclusion, then the only way to escape the first conclusion was to break the dilemma. This Strauss attempted to do by his theory of " myths." He said, although the events here recorded did not actually take place, yet the men who recorded them are not liars and knaves, because when giving their false report they believed that they were giving a true one. These events have taken place, but not exactly in the way recorded. As Strauss expressed it, the old Rationalistic criticism said " that which happened in this manner cannot have been divine," and endeavored to explain away the essential meaning of the historical documents ; he, as representing the newer Rationalism, said " the divine could not have happened in this manner," and denied the historical trustworthiness of those documents. The New Testament literature arose at a time of nervous excitement

and amid a circle that was ready to seize upon and exaggerate into wonders anything which would exalt Him whom they worshipped as a transfigured God. The imagination working on the historical facts gradually and unconsciously worked into the account of how things did happen, all the prevailing ideas of how they ought to have happened. "The Gospels, therefore, contain not history, but the poetic metamorphosis of history myths."

The facts in regard to the composition of Strauss's "Life of Christ" are interesting. William Vatke has told how, walking one evening in the Thiergarten in Berlin with Strauss, then twenty-seven years old, the latter, speaking of the lectures of Schleiermacher, told his companion how much he owed to them, but added that they did not satisfy him, that the author remained in a half-way position. "I am going back to Tübingen," he continued, "and I tell you, Vatke, I am going to write a life of Christ according to my idea." One year later the entire book was ready in manuscript.

And a remarkable book it was. It marks an era in the history of German, indeed, of the world's theology. With the date of its appearance begins the period of modern theology. There probably never has been a book which summed up and expressed more completely that side of the spirit of the age from which it sprang, and therefore there have been few books—perhaps no modern book—which has met with such instant attention and ready recognition. It ran through four editions, and called forth numbers of opposing books, pamphlets, and articles, and since its appearance no discussion of the life of Christ has been possible which has not been influenced by the position it assumed.

That position had two sides—constructive, in that it endeavored to explain the origin of the New Testament history by tracing the way back through the mythical accounts of the different events to the actual fact with which those accounts started; and critical, in that, both directly and by necessary implication, it attacked the Church theory of the origin of the New Testament literature.

When Strauss's book first appeared there was much talk in Prussia of a prohibition, and it was perhaps only the courage and tolerance of Neander that prevented this suicidal denial of the principles of Protestantism, this fatal attempt to fight spiritual battles with carnal weapons.

But although it could not be fought by the State, it could be fought on its own ground of historical investigation. It could be attacked on both of its two sides; to its criticism could be opposed a constructive presentation of the facts, and to its constructive side a critical investigation of its theory. Neander led the way in one

line, and Tholuck and Ullmann in the other. In his "Life of Christ" Neander opposed the criticism of Strauss by showing a logical consistency, an *organism*, of the life of Christ as presented in the Gospels which prevented its being resolved into opposing sections of historical and mythical elements; while Tholuck used the material of Lardner to oppose the mythical theory in detail; and Ullmann pointed out the weak points in its general logic.

Strauss was not chiefly a scholar. There was a sense in which, as Holtzmann says, "he had no right to speak in matters of pure scholarship." He was not an investigator who collects materials, he was an advocate who presents a case. His book transferred the point of discussion from the character of the authors and actors in the events of the New Testament history to the truthfulness of the accounts of those events, but the final result of his book was to turn the discussion to the authenticity of the writings in which those accounts were contained. Strauss had applied the idea of a myth to the explanation of the New Testament literature without any adequate investigation either of what that literature was and how it arose, or of what a myth was and how and under what circumstances it arose. But that investigation which he omitted his opponents conducted. The discussion of the second of these points was carried on through the application to the Gospel history of the new science of biblical theology, and of the first through the criticism of the sources of the life of Christ by the Tübingen school and its opponents.

To point out the logical relation of the Tübingen school to the mythical position of Strauss, to show how the discussion progressed from one to the other, is difficult. They can perhaps best be regarded as not logically, but historically connected methods, whose appearances at the same time and from the same source gave each an influence on the other. Both started from the same basis, a disbelief in the possibility of an absolute revelation in a historical fact or personage, but the spirit of Strauss was destructive, while that of Baur and his school was constructive. Strauss says the object is to find out "how we are *not* to present the Gospel history." Baur said "a negative result is not a scientific theory, but a confession of the incapacity of science." The object of criticism of the life of Christ is to discover its historical kernel, and that can only be accomplished by criticism of its sources. That historical kernel which lies at the basis of these sources he and his followers strove accordingly to find, not in the investigation of their contents, but by examination of the circumstances under which they arose. They found this explanation not in unconscious "*myths*," but in conscious "*tendencies*."

These two theories ("*Myth*" and "*Tendency*") were from their nature opposed, and yet springing, as they did, from the same view of the universe, and with the common purpose of explaining the New Testament literature in accordance with that view, they had points of affiliation, and exercised a strong mutual influence.

Strauss had omitted the investigation of the sources of the life of Christ, but the omission was a grave strategic error. If the Gospels, whoever their authors may be, were composed in the circle of those who had lived with Christ and only thirty years after His death, then it is impossible to account by his supposition of unconscious mythical distortion for the rise of the belief in those events of the life of Christ which do not accord with rationalistic presuppositions. Some time after the life of an individual, and among people who have not known him, a belief in the divinity of a hero might, with unconscious untruthfulness, finally express itself in a mythical account of his life, but not within one generation, and in the circle of the hero's immediate friends. Hence Strauss's theory implied that the prevailing views in regard to the time of the origin of the Gospels should be investigated and set aside. This was undertaken by the Tübingen school, not, however, in the interest of Strauss, but of their own theory. They endeavored to transfer the period of the rise of the Gospels from the first to the second century, from the time of the contemporaries and successors of Jesus to that of several generations later. Their method was that of historical criticism, but their basis and starting-point, like that of all forms of Rationalism, was metaphysical. The chief reason why they disputed the sufficiency of the proofs of the composition of the Gospels within four decenniums of the death of Christ, the chief argument for their later origin, remained, as Baur said, "always this, that each for itself, and much more all together, they relate so much about the life of Christ in a way in which it in reality never could have happened."

The theory of the origin of the New Testament writings, in whose interests they thus sought to transfer the date of the composition of the Gospels, was directly opposed to the theory of Strauss. As Neander had turned the idea of the life of Christ as an organic whole against Strauss's destructive criticism of the details of that life, so the Tübingen school used the idea of each of the Gospels as an organic whole against his theory of their origin as a mere collection of myths. You can, it is true, look at any one gospel as a mere collection of materials, but it is much more. Those materials are arranged according to a plan. The picture which arises from each of the parts fits into the conception which one draws from the

whole. Now, this plan, this purpose of the writer of each of these Gospels, gives the key which will explain his position in regard to the history he is writing, and the means of distinguishing in his work the historical material from that which is intentional and artistic working over and addition.

As Baur found his chief reason for rejecting the historical accuracy, and therefore determining the later date of the Gospels, in the view of the universe taught by Hegel, so he found the explanation of the form of these Gospels in the principles of Hegel's philosophy of history. According to this view, historical development proceeds by the rise, from the mutual interaction of two opposing principles, of a new reconciling principle, which again divides by the emergence of new elements; again reunites in a new form; and so on *ad infinitum*. These two opposing elements Baur found in Judaism and Paulinism, or the old narrow view of Christianity, held by Christ and His apostles, and the broad, universal view of Paul, who was the founder of modern Christianity. The Gospels arose under the influence of the conflict between these views, and the object of their authors was either to show that one had been the original teaching of Christ, or to help and strengthen that union which had been founded on the modification of both and the final triumph of Paulinism.

It is impossible, within the limits of this article, to trace the progress of the Tübingen school. Almost all possible combinations of the Gospels, and all possible shades of difference in regard to their historical accuracy, have arisen within its bounds. Two tendencies early made themselves manifest within it: (1) A tendency to decreasing disbelief in the historicity of the Gospels, which found its highest expression in the "crazy logic" of Bruno Bauer, who finally even doubted the existence of Christ; and (2) a tendency to an increasing belief in their historicity, which has kept on its steady growth until the present time. But with all these shades of difference the common standpoint remains the same—*i.e.*, a denial of the admissibility of the historicity of the Gospels (Rationalistic) and a reference of their origin to the original conflict in the Apostolic Church (Tübingen).

The result of this working together of these different hypotheses of Strauss and the Tübingen school was to concentrate the weight of the discussion on the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John is an account of Christ's life written by an eye-witness of the events recorded, and to it is appended an attest of authenticity claiming to be from those who had known the author. The strong and full testimony to its apostolic origin has never been doubted until this century, and yet its character is such that the maintenance of its

genuineness is fatal alike to the "Tübingen" and "Myth" theory of its origin, or any combination of them. It is so pervaded with a belief in the divine character of Christ as to render it impossible that its author could have failed to believe that which he teaches so strongly unless he were a conscious liar; and at the same time so organic, complete, and compact that it is impossible to reduce it back to a collection of myths.

Even granting that one who had lived with Christ might in the lapse of time have come to see separate events in an exaggerated light, and to throw around them mythical elements, it is perfectly inconsistent with a belief in his honesty to suppose that he could have invented such a scene as the raising of Lazarus, with its minuteness of detail and the underlying belief that Christ had raised one who had been three days dead, unless there were some historical fact behind his belief. The only alternative is to return to the position of Reimarus, and make the author a conscious falsifier.

Then, if this Gospel, with its undeniably spiritual view of Christ's mission and kingdom, was written in the end of the first century, and accepted as genuine and historical by the Church, it is impossible to believe that narrow Judaistic views of that mission and kingdom could have had the influence which the Tübingen theory gives them. Hence it is at once evident why, in the face of these two theories and their combinations, the Gospel of John became the turning-point of the controversy.

The fortunes of the conflict have been varying. At first the victory leaned strongly to the side of the defenders of its genuineness. In his third edition of the "Life of Christ" Strauss withdrew many of his objections to the genuineness of John, confessed that he had overlooked many of the favorable arguments, and seemed about to withdraw his doubts in regard to it; but in his fourth edition he withdrew again his too-hasty admissions, and reasserted more strongly his old position. In 1855 Hase, in his open letter to Baur, defended the genuineness of John, but, according to his own testimony, "almost the entire free investigation of German Protestant theology went in the end against me." Later, Hase himself modified his position, and found that the Gospel was not written by the beloved disciple, but by one of his scholars shortly after his death, using materials gathered from his teaching. In 1875 Keim said: "Over no question in the province of the Gospels has the newer criticism, in spite of all bulwarks of prejudice, become so united as over the impossibility of using the Gospel of John for the more exact history of Jesus." And Hase remarks that it had come to such a pass that one who recognized

the genuineness of John "almost put his scientific honor at stake." "But," he continues, "that has not always been so, even among those who had no lack of mind and willingness for untrammelled investigation, and it can again become different without any injury to intellect and intellectual freedom." *

After the first demand for Strauss's "Life of Christ" was satisfied, twenty years passed without the necessity of a new edition. Then Strauss turned from the theologians, whom he had at first addressed, to the nation, and published in 1864 his "Life of Christ for the German Nation." The difference between the tone and the standpoint of the two "Lives" is apparent from a glance at their prefaces. The first work had been scientific, and proposed to accomplish in the main a scientific purpose. His second is personal, and proposes to accomplish a practical purpose. That purpose is "to drive the little popes out of the Church;" and it is only as a means to this end that he proposes to "put miracle out of religion." It is to this, which he calls the completion of the work of the reformers, that he summons the German nation. Not that he will therefore "call it away from its political undertaking," but as a help to that undertaking. "For we Germans, can become politically free only so far as we have succeeded in making ourselves intellectually, religiously, and morally free."

Whence came this difference? What caused this change of tone, and what is the reason for this confounding together of two entirely distinct things, this looking at the Church of Christ as the turning-point of a political system, as the obstacle in the way of a people's unity and freedom? Simply that the parties in the strife had made the terrible mistake of failing to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

Between the two editions of Strauss's book came a time of great political ferment. During this period most of the absolute monarchies of Germany received limitations; across the tops of the barricades constitutions were put into the hands of the people. But this successful popular agitation, which followed the French Revo-

* It is a curious illustration of the tendency of human discussion and knowledge to return upon itself that the Gospel of John should have become the centre of the modern conflict over the life of Christ. There is an old tradition that this Gospel was written against the Gnosis of Cerinthus, who denied that Christ had come in the flesh, denied the identity between the man Jesus and the heavenly Christ. Now, what is this but the essence of modern rationalism as stated by Lessing, that "religion cannot have its basis in the belief in historical facts," or as applied to Christianity by Strauss, "that the Christ ideal never has been or could be realized in a historical individual"? Are not both essentially the same thing—the denial that religion rests or can rest on a fact and not on a doctrine? (Bernhard Weiss, *Einleitung zum Evang. Joh.*)

lution, brought reaction in its train, when the court parties endeavored to withdraw the concessions that had been wrung from them by the people. Then came those sorrowful times when the fortresses of half the States of Germany held captives who languished for years unable to obtain a trial, often for some such offence as a hot-blooded word spoken as a half-grown boy at the university. Now, a certain strong party in the German Church during this period of struggle made the great mistake of allowing the Church of Christ to be involved in the conflict. They carried the ark into the battle. Hengstenberg with the Evangelical Church newspaper, the most influential organ in the Prussian Church, deliberately set out to oppose rationalism and democracy as two necessarily and logically connected things. He preached the divine right of kings, asserting that God, "who names Himself Father, Lord, Judge, and King, has representatives in the earthly fathers, lords, judges, and kings, in which He reveals Himself; yes, God is not a God who is at a distance, but a God who is near. These images of God it is a service of God to obey."

But to this teaching in regard to the political duty of Christians to the State was added also a teaching in regard to the duty of the State to the Church. "The pretty phrases of liberal statesmen and teachers of political rights about the unconditional neutrality of the constituted powers in regard to all religions, and the unconditional toleration of the same, are nothing but mist and false appearance. It is entirely impossible for a constituted authority to treat in the same way in which they do their own religion those religions which are completely opposed to it."

It was the unformulated pressure of principles like these which made Neander and Ullmann, the first men who, when Strauss's "Life of Christ" appeared, resisted and made head against the panic it produced, withdraw from their connection with the organ which taught them. Their effect uttered during such a period, combined with a State policy which, scarcely more than a generation ago, imprisoned men for worshipping God according to their conscience, can be imagined. It seems as if in the last analysis it would be found one of the chief causes for that estrangement from the Church of the active, thinking, progressive men of Germany which still seems to exist to a greater or less degree.*

* Shortly before the appearance of Strauss's second "Life of Christ," Tholuck said, "Baur and Strauss are dead;" and Schwarz answered him, "Yes; but it is the German police State and the German police Church, through which the sad political reaction has been transferred to this circle also, that has killed them." The statement and the reproach may be utterly untrue and unfair, but is not the mere fact that it could be used in itself significant?

But the "Life of Christ for the German Nation" does not differ from the "Life of Christ" simply in tone and purpose. The earlier work had been criticised for lack of proper preliminary investigation of the sources, and in this life of Christ Strauss devotes a quarter of the whole space to that purpose. It had been criticised for its lack of positive result, and Strauss now devotes another quarter to a "Life of Christ in its Historical Outlines." But the most significant change is the adoption from the Tübingen school of the "tendency" theory as a support of his own "myth" theory. The pressure of criticism and the light of investigation had led him to join forces with the theory he had at first opposed. He says: "I have in this new presentation of the life of Christ, chiefly in consequence of Baur's argument, allowed much more room to the supposition of conscious and intentional composition, but I have found in this no reason to change my original idea. . . ."

Strauss sums up his starting-points somewhat as follows:

I. "That the working principle in Christ is exclusively the divine; that from this His entire speaking and acting is without limit determined; this, and still more, is the presupposition of the New Testament authors, and therefore the evangelists find the miraculous in the life of Christ the surest guarantee for His superior dignity and the truth of His teaching."

II. That as, according to the standpoint of the science of the age, the Divine in Christ could never have expressed itself save in the form of the human, in compliance with the laws of natural working, "therefore the evangelists are not historical."

He then proceeds to show what portion of the evangelists' reports can be reconciled with the present position of science, and to account for the use of that in their reports which cannot thus be reconciled.

It was in regard to the first of these positions (1) that Strauss was the most vulnerable on his own chosen ground. It was a striking method of attack to oppose the man who endeavored to explain the Gospels by the idea of the myth, by attempting to show him that he had misunderstood both the nature of that which he attempted to explain and of that by which he attempted to explain it. The science of biblical theology was turned against Strauss with deadly effect.

Whatever date be assigned to the Gospels, we possess in some of the other books of the New Testament writings of earlier or contemporary date, and if the stories of Christ's life contained in the Gospels are the result of the ideas of the early Christian community seeking expression in consciously or unconsciously falsified history, then those ideas must appear in the other contemporary writings as

tendencies working or beginning to work. Now, in regard to the general proposition that the evangelists find the surest guarantee for the higher dignity of Christ in His miracles, it can be shown as an absolute fact that the New Testament writings do not point to the miracles of Christ as a proof of His divinity at all. How, then, in a community that did not use the miracles of Christ as a proof of His divinity, could a myth which asserted them have arisen from a desire to express by them the *belief* in His divinity? Strauss had committed the error of transferring to the age when the New Testament writings were composed the theological ideas of the age when he composed his criticism of them.

But there is in the "Life of Christ for the German Nation" not only a marked change of tone, but a logical evolution of philosophic standpoint. Pantheism seems very remote from atheism, but it is really very close to it. The next thing to all God is no God. If there be in the universe but one all-embracing substance, if I who think, the thought that I think, and that about which I think, are one and the same thing appearing under different forms, then it requires but a choice of another mode of expression, to put this whole into terms of matter rather than of mind, and from idealism to come to materialism. Strauss had received the pantheism of Spinoza through Hegel, but he accepted it in the materialistic form of its originator rather than in the new and more spiritualistic shape of its combiner. He made God=man; but whereas Spinoza had been indifferent to the resulting loss of moral freedom, Strauss was not. His tone of thought was practical. His strongest sympathies were for the moral autonomy, for the assurance that in the end all depends upon the moral tone of feeling and practical honesty. For long he held the two together without perceiving the contradiction between them.

Hegel had found the unity of all things in the idea, and God became "the eternal movement of the substance continually making itself subject," or, in other words, "the always personifying itself." But if God be "the always personifying itself," then is the moment of absoluteness to be found, not in the beginning, but in the result of the process. Pantheism changes to anthropologism, and the equation reads Man=God.

This was the step taken by Feuerbach, who, denying God and immortality, proposed to make the worshipper the object of his own worship, man his own God. He denounced religion as not only a negatively imperfect, but a positively injurious idea, and defined it anew as "the relation of man to himself or to his essential being, but as if to another essential being." But although Feuerbach

denied all that makes religion possible, he still tried to cling to religion. He tries not to fall into that belief in nothing except individual atoms and their connections, which is raw materialistic atheism. "He speaks of the idea of the race, mankind, as of a real existence unto which the individual has to raise himself and through which he has to purify himself. In short, he makes out of this general idea which has taken possession of the throne of the Godhead, a mythical existence, about which he speaks with an enthusiasm and devotion peculiar to himself."

It was this anthropological materialism that Strauss had adopted and made the philosophic basis of his new life of Christ.*

Luthardt said that the last book of Strauss was an anachronism, that it belonged to a past age; and his prophecy that it would not make the impression of the first "Life of Jesus" has been fulfilled. He gave as a reason for thus regarding it that it was written from a philosophic and not a historical standpoint. "Whoever desires to write a 'Life of Christ' must write in such a way that we understand Christianity from the person of Christ out, and must not point us back to the Hegelian process of the idea. We have passed that stage. For that we have become too scientific and historical."

And he was right. The criticism of the life of Christ had, since the time of the publication of Strauss's first book, entered on a new stage. It had become positive, scientific, and historical. This change, although accompanied in the case of representative men by a change of philosophic starting-point, yet was not caused by that philosophic change. It was not so much conditioned by an alteration of philosophic basis as by the adaptation of a new method, and the transference of the starting-point outside the realm of philosophy.

* (Strauss, "Old and New Faith," 11th edition, 1881.) Following this direction, the greatest "genius of denial" that Germany has seen finally reached the end of all things, and raised in the "Old and New Faith" the standard of crass materialism. He denies God and the immortality of anything that thinks; sharply denies that he and his followers are in any sense Christians, and then naturally remains in doubt as to whether they have any religion. Mixing together eighteenth century deism, Laplace, Haeckel, and the bathybius, Goethe, Kant, and Von Hartmann, he finally draws from this compound a view of the universe, which shows man "standing helpless within an enormous machine, with iron-toothed wheels and heavy hammers, which on the smallest incautious movement will tear and grind him to pieces." And in his final word on Jesus Christ he returns to the judgment of Reimarus. "As much as we pity Christ because of the superior qualities of His heart and the noble objects of His activity, as much as we feel compelled to consider the punishment inflicted on Him as a cruel and unjust one, still we cannot help the judgment that such weakly sentimental expectation only receives its due when it is destroyed by failure." As Hase sadly remarks, "That was the conclusion of Strauss's investigation of the life of Christ."

The advance in natural science and the sudden prominence given to its methods exerted a great influence on the criticism of the "Life of Christ," as it did on all other branches of human inquiry. That influence produced such a change of temper in the learned world as made it henceforth disinclined to base an entire estimate of a series of historical facts like the life of Christ, solely on philosophical pre-suppositions in regard to the nature of the universe. Impossible as it is to reach a final conclusion on any subject having practical relations to life without reference to the investigator's scheme of the universe, the time was past in which a scheme of the universe could be assumed as the sole foundation and absolutely determining factor in an investigation of fact. When we hereafter speak of Rationalistic criticism of the life of Christ, it is not true Rationalism that we mean, not a system of criticism which denies *a priori* the possibility of the incarnation, but a weakened Rationalism which is not the logical Rationalism of the older stages, but rather an inherited disinclination or disability to believe.

This position is insecure because it is indefinite and rests upon a feeling whose formulated and logical statement its possessors would consider unscientific. Hence it has laid them open to attack from both sides, and they have been assailed not only by those who are more willing to believe, but also by those who decline to believe at all. Strauss,* representing the retrograde movement which has carried him back to the position of Reimarus, and speaking of the attack which had been made upon his last utterances by the combined forces of this third stage of Rationalism, their orthodox opponents, compared himself to Paul before the Sanhedrim, and said it was only necessary for him to cry out: "Men and brethren of the belief in the Godhead of Jesus, I am called in question," to divide his accusers into two hostile bodies and turn them against each other.

But the ways in which the different writers of this third stage of Rationalistic Criticism endeavor to explain the existence and contents of the New Testament, differ from the positions of the previous stages not only because they are based less upon *a priori* considerations, but also because of the necessities of discussion and the facts established in regard to the life of Christ.

Strauss had avoided the necessity of affixing moral stain to Christ while disbelieving in the reality of His miracles and the truth of His exalted claims in regard to Himself, by considering the reports of those miracles and claims exaggerated myths. The Tübingen school had either disregarded the moral stain which their theory

* In his "Old and New Faith."

affixed to the New Testament writers, or removed it from the immediate circle of Jesus, by changing the date of the composition of the New Testament literature to the second century. There was, however, one fatal defect in their system. The four letters of Paul were admitted to be genuine and written by one whose claim to have talked with the apostles and examined certain facts in regard to the life of Christ shortly after His death, there is no reason to doubt. Now, from these letters of Paul we gather three facts in regard to the belief of the apostles about Jesus, which involve both the mythical and the tendency theory in tremendous difficulties. We learn from them, first, that Christ impressed His followers and daily companions as a supernatural being possessed of supernatural powers; second, that He had prophesied to them His return in the clouds of heaven to judge the earth; and third, that they believed Him to have risen from the dead and appeared to them three days after His burial. Neither the "myth" nor the "tendency" theory can account for the existence, so short a time after the death of Jesus, of such impressions in the minds of men who had actually known Him.

The effect of Strauss's first "Life of Jesus" and the theory of the Tübingen school had been to transfer the discussion first to the apostolic and then to the post-apostolic age; but the outcome of that discussion brought it back again to the life of Christ. If, as Baur said, the chief reason for rejecting the authenticity of the New Testament writings always remained that they related what could not have happened, then it was necessary to investigate that which they related in order to see if it could have happened. It was seen that the three beliefs of the early Church shown in the letters of Paul, that Christ possessed miraculous powers, that He prophesied His return in the clouds of heaven, that He rose from the dead, required some explanation in the life of Him to whom they were attached.

The doctrines and systems of the Church might have been developed by the contest between Paulinism and Judaism, but this contest could never have created the historical groundwork of belief which it developed, because that groundwork existed before Paul entered the Church. The basis and starting-point of Christianity is not "an idea striving to develop itself in an unending process," but a historical person.

And the position of the newer Rationalism was also modified by the result of the discussion in regard to the date and authenticity of the New Testament literature. The modern lives of Christ, though relying on various forms and combinations of the "myth" and

“tendency” theories to supply many points of explanation, yet differ from both Strauss and Baur. They differ from Strauss in that they are more positive, and start not from the most uncertain, but from the most certain. They differ from Baur in that they find this most certain in historical *facts* of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Perhaps this cannot be better shown than by an extract from Schenkel’s criticism of Strauss’s “Old and New Faith.” “It is far from my intention to depreciate the value of the service performed by Strauss in his ‘Life of Christ.’ Like a fresh breath of wind it blows through the desert steppes of Rationalism, like a weighty sword-stroke it beats down the half logic of Supernaturalism. But from his doctrinaire sceptical standpoint Strauss has never been just to the reality of the facts and the concrete powers of history. And especially in this book he decides more like an opposing advocate than an unprejudiced investigator in regard to Jesus and Christendom. His assertion that the three first Gospels are compilations made to serve a purpose in the beginning of the second century is a categorical claim that those who have made no personal investigation of the gospel literature may trust, but as thus expressed it is, to say the very least, a sturdy anachronism. The Tübingen school, indeed, a generation ago, tried to found a similar conception of the origin of the Gospels, but the new scientific investigation as it has been conducted by Holtzmann, Weizsacker, Hilgenfeld, Keim, Lipsius, Hausrath, and other honored names, has long ago shown that the origin of the three first Gospels falls in the first century, and the compilation of the evangelical basis writing (Mark) before the destruction of Jerusalem—that is to say, before the year 70.”

Along with and closely related to this positive historical element comes another new element which we may call the biographical. This is traceable to the influence of the “Life of Jesus” by Renan, which, although exerting less scientific influence, won a much larger popular success than the books of Strauss. In four years it ran through thirteen French editions, and was quickly translated into every European language. It is the dramatic element which was new in the book, and it is the plastic power of its historical imagination which makes its charm.

And since Renan, this biographical and dramatic element has always been present in German lives of Christ. Even those of the strongest orthodox tendencies give weight to the plain fact that He who lived from childhood to manhood on the earth possessed not only a human body, but a reasonable soul, and that, even as the first grew, so the second must have developed. They have perceived and pointed out the error of Strauss in claiming that the Christ of

the evangelists is a character without the possibility of development, who brings everything from heaven with Him that is necessary for His purpose, and have striven to answer his demand, so far as it can be answered, for a life of Christ that, "biographically considered, can be mentally grasped."

These, then, are the characteristics of the newer criticism of the life of Christ; that it is more *a posteriori* and less *a priori*, giving more weight to historical investigation of the sources and less to philosophical presuppositions; second, that it is more positive and less negative; and third, that it is biographical and dramatic.

As representatives of these men whose rationalism differs from that of the earlier stages of the criticism of the life of Christ in that it is, to a greater or less degree, an inherited rather than a self-assumed position, a tendency rather than a logical principle, let us take four: Schenkel, Hausrath, Volkmar, and Keim.*

It is a remarkable fact, because it is in no sense a necessary result of their position, that these four men, who since the time of Strauss have made the most influential attempts to present the life of Christ from a standpoint that in any proper sense can be called rationalistic, are theists. They all believe in a God, a creative and preserving Spirit, who resembles the human spirit more than anything else within the range of our knowledge.

And this is only one of the necessary outcomes of the philosophic position of the preceding generation. Pantheism is a floating position which cannot be long maintained. As soon as it descends from metaphysical speculation to the firm ground of a practical undertaking, it must abandon its position of changing equilibrium and begin to determine itself toward one of two resting-places. These are materialism and speculative theism. The first was reached by Feuerbach and popularly expressed by Strauss; the second by the men whom we are considering.†

Strauss said that when "Hegel pictured the universal, all-embracing substance as a subject or mind, he gave his interpreters a riddle

* These men have been selected as representatives because the success of their respective works has justified more than one edition. Daniel Schenkel, "Das Charakterbild Jesu," 4 Aufl., 1873. Adolf Hausrath, "Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte," 3 Aufl., 1879. Bd. I., "Die Zeit Jesu." G. Volkmar, "Jesus and the First Christian Period as Shown in its two First Historians." Lectures delivered in the Normal School, Zurich, Theodor Keim. "Geschichte Jesu übersichtlich erzählt," 1875.

† The middle position occupied by Von Hartmann in his "Philosophy of the Unconscious," in which the world is expressed in terms of a substance partaking of the qualities both of mind and matter, has not yet found its practical expression in the historical field of the life of Christ.

and his followers a refuge." That refuge they have found in "Speculative Theism."

The difference between "Speculative Theism," indeed, the Theism of this age in general, and that of the eighteenth century, is difficult to express; but no one who compares Janet's "Final Causes" with Paley's "Natural Theology" can fail to perceive that there is a difference, readily appreciable though not easily formulated. Dualism and monism, transcendence and immanence, mechanical and dynamic, inner and outer design, have all been used to explain this difference. It is not either possible or necessary to follow here the points of this contrast. It is sufficient as an indication of its practical influence on the criticism of the life of Christ to notice not where it differs, but where it agrees, with the old theism. No one who still forms his idea of the universe in accordance with Paley will care to quarrel with the practical religious outcome of the "modern view" of that universe, so long as, with Lang, although denying a "personal" it admits a "living God;" "an absolute spirit that stands opposite the perishable as a something to which the personal pronoun can be addressed; a creative principle for which 'Father in heaven' is not only the most beautiful, but also the deepest and most exhaustive name."*

Secondly. The positive presentations agree in ascribing to Christ a peculiar religious genius, a peculiar moral purity and relation to God, which no other man in the history of the world has ever possessed. Hence it is that He has produced effects and assumes a position which has no parallel among religious teachers. He is not, it is true, a God, but He is the greatest of mankind. And so the criticism of the life of Christ from this side tends to return to a belief in the broadness and universality of His teaching. The change from the criticism of the contents of the Gospels to the criticism of the Gospels themselves had transferred the interest from the age of Christ to the age of the apostles; and the study of the age of the apostles had brought the emphasis of inquiry back again to the age of Christ through the letters of Paul. But the Christ thus reached was naturally more the Christ of the man by whose writings He was reached. While the Tübingen school had appealed to the Judaism of Christ to account for the narrowness of Peter, these later presentations of the life of Christ appeal to the broadness of Christ to account for the universalism of Paul.

Thirdly. They all agree in a deep veneration for Christ and in giving the highest value to His influence and worship. Even while

* Perhaps the best definition of Speculative Theism is belief in a God "in whom all things live and move and have their being."

refusing belief they use the language of faith. Volkmar, after rejecting the immaculate conception, the resurrection, and most of the miracles, closes his book with this confession of faith: "The Church of God, according to the meaning and foundation of Jesus, is as immortal as He Himself. Who, then, can prevent us, on the occasion of the consecration of every child to the intent that it may become a child of God by the hand of Jesus, from speaking out our faith with the Church of all ages?"

"I believe on the one God, the Almighty Father, who has created us.

"I believe on Jesus Christ, the Son of man and Son of God, who has redeemed us.

"I believe on the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies us through the one universal Church to His eternal kingdom of God."

Hausrath says: "Such a personage as Jesus of Nazareth could not live and preach in Judea in the first century," and the death of Jesus followed of necessity from the existing circumstances. "That the springs of this life course belong, in spite of this, to a higher order it is superfluous for us to say. Our faith gives to the question, Why was it necessary for Christ to die on the cross? another answer than that given by the history of Christ's age, and a more complete one; for the history of the ideal is never a single history, and has always a deeper meaning than that which lies within the striving and streaming of days that rush swiftly by; an eternal meaning and an absolute content that does not belong to the history of an age, but of the human race, and in which every individual has to honor a mystery of grace realized in himself." "The origin of Christianity cannot be found in the circumstances of the age. Favoring relations, possible conditions, unavoidable catastrophes, have existed before, and still no new religion has proceeded from them because the formative, creative spirit was wanting to the chaos. Christianity is the work of Christ, not of the circumstances. The personal life, however, this creative spirit, is always an immediate act of God that cannot be further explained and accounted for. Here is the thread to be sought through which things are joined immediately to God."

Schenkel says: "Jesus was not an ordinary man. In the department of religious life He stands alone as no one before Him had done, and as no one after Him can do, because He first and once for all has shown to mankind their true relation to God, not only through teaching, but also through personal self-revelation." "He is the object of our faith because we see in Him the most perfect organ of Divine self-revelation in the consciousness of mankind."

"The revelation which He came to make was that God is love. This revelation He made through His teaching, but still more effectually through His death." "The merciful love, as whose self-conscious sacrifice He died, called the ordinances of the law which had killed Him before the judgment-seat. His death was essentially the death of the legal ordinances of the priests, of the bloody offerings of the State religions, and therefore the beginning of the life of a new religion whose characteristics were love of God and love of our neighbor."

Fourthly. They all show a tendency more or less strong to admit a residuum of mystery in the life of Christ after the sharpest historical criticism, a something which defies analysis and rises above explanation, a something before which science and scientific methods are powerless. In other words, being all theists, they show a tendency to unite the life of Jesus of Nazareth with the existence and purpose of God.

Strauss has said a good test of a man's belief in regard to Christ, as well as a criterion of his views of the universe, is afforded by the position he takes in regard to the resurrection of Jesus.

Reimarus considered it a cheat. Paulus a mistake. Strauss, opening a new era, transferred it from the realm of fact to that of fancy, and found in it a poem. (In his last or retrogressive position he called it "a world historical humbug.") Baur admitted the belief of the apostles, but did not explain it.

To display the views of the four representatives of modern Rationalism on this subject will show at a glance the way in which an inherited disinclination to disbelieve modifies their conclusions, and how in practice they give a determining influence to *a priori* considerations which they deny in theory.

"It is," says Schenkel, "a reliable fact that in the early morning of the first day of the week which followed the crucifixion, the grave of Jesus was found open and empty." It is also "a reliable fact that the apostles were convinced that they had seen appearances of their crucified Master." And third, "it is a reliable fact that the appearances of the resurrected Master which the elder apostles saw were, according to the conviction of the Apostle Paul, of the same nature as the vision of Christ which he himself beheld." And yet "the reference of objective results to purely subjective causes is a supposition from which science shrinks. When the picture of the crucified Master gleamed out in the minds of the disciples as that of a victor over death and the grave, we can see in it not the mere chance of a passing nervous excitement, but the work of a Divine providence; and in this picture, even though its form and coloring

were products of subjectivity, the imperishable existence of the personality of the Master as lifted far above earthly limitations was displayed to the disciples. Here we have arrived at a point where history finds its bounds. We stand here before a mystery of faith, and the origin of Christianity as an origin in faith is proved to us as through a certainty.

"But the last riddle of the resurrection still remains the open and empty grave." To account for this Schenkel supposes that Pilate repented of his grant of an honorable burial, and fearing lest the tomb of Jesus should become the centre of a cultus, and willing to please the hierarchy, gave them permission to remove the body. This they secretly did, and the story of the seal and watch of Matthew is the outgrowth of a real fact.

Volkmar says: "The resurrection of the crucified Master after three days was the chief thing in the preaching of the apostles. Their belief in this fact became the impulse for the formation of the Church." That belief arose as follows: "As Simon Peter went toward Galilee after the crucifixion, revolving in his heart all the life of Jesus, the Master, as the first historian suggestively relates, *went before him* the whole way, remained spiritually continually before his soul, until at length on the third day He appeared before his eyes, and he cried out in ecstasy: 'Thou art the Christ.'" The belief that Peter had formerly perceived and confessed this truth at Cæsarea Philippi is an error. "This confession could only have been made at the end of Christ's whole ministry, which He sealed by the cross; yes, only after He had triumphed over that cross and on the first day of the week appeared at the right hand of God." The author of the Gospel knew this perfectly well, but transferred the confession to the middle of his book. "For if the world-historical life of Christ, with the healing for all which it wrought, was to be presented in the frame of His life *before* the cross, then the presentation of the confession of Peter must close the account of His labors before the historian went on to the presentation of His sufferings." There are, indeed, references in the "primitive documents" to the appearance of Christ to others, but "all these appearances were of *such* a similar nature in the glory of heaven like the one to Paul, that we can join them altogether in one—the one at the beginning in Galilee to Peter, that quickly became a possession of the others." "It is evident," says Volkmar, "that Christ was not buried after crucifixion." First, it is impossible that Pilate would have permitted it; second, it is uncertain that the disciples would have had the courage. Mark must have known perfectly well that Christ was not buried, for he was a native of Jerusalem, present

at the arrest, and had full opportunity of finding out everything in regard to the end of the Lord ; but he could not permit his Master to be thus dishonored, "and so his Gospel began to build for the crucified King His honorable grave—the kingly grave with closing stone." "Whoever takes the account of Matthew as historical," Volkmar continues, "can only think of an earthly appearance of the risen One by the grave"—that is, "an awakening from a merely apparent death which robs Him of all Easter joy," or fall back on the belief in "a cheat on the part of the disciples." Just why Volkmar considers this dilemma necessary does not appear. Strauss had said in his latest book : "To speak to an educated man of the ascension as a historical fact is to-day an insult." And from his position of raw materialism, which denied God and immortality, his assertion, though arrogant, is logical. A similar position on the part of the Pantheist, who believes that "the idea never reaches its highest realization in a historical individual," or of the Deist, who makes the relation of God to the world too mechanical to permit Him to interpose in the working of its laws, is also logical. But that a man who proceeds on a purely historical method without metaphysical presuppositions, who believes in a God, uses the Lord's Prayer, and considers Christ as "an appearance for which there is hardly an analogy and no parallel in the entire history of mankind," should thus pass by *absolutely without consideration* the explanation that Christ *really* rose from the grave, can only be accounted for on the supposition that he is unconsciously swayed by a *priori* considerations whose right to decide in such a case he denies. Why should *he* think it a thing incredible that God should raise the dead ?

Keim, upon whose youthful shoulders Strauss had once hoped that his mantle would fall, said finally of the resurrection : "The vision hypothesis either assigns the origin of Christianity to a chance, or believes that God inflicted on the apostles a self-deceiving ophthalmia." In view of the "unrejectable, reliable, and full testimony," another explanation must be found. "There is only one remaining—that is, the old view of the apostles, 'We have seen the Lord'—a view that to-day is still frankly held by many investigators, in whom, with all possible freedom of thought, the belief on higher regulation ruling over natural regulation is not lost."

German Rationalism in the persons of some of its noblest representatives seems to linger on the threshold half afraid to enter. Clinging to those beliefs which alone can bring the fragrance of the spring into the days of life's autumn, and light the falling darkness with the colors of dawn, they stand at the portal of that great temple where for twenty centuries human fears have been stilled, human

sorrows soothed, human hopes assured, looking with loving hearts at that face which makes visible to mortal eyes the God in whom all things live, wishing that they might fall at His feet and cry : " My Lord and my God."

One thing becomes clear to the student of the criticism of the life of Christ. If any theory can be formed to account for that life other than that of the men from whom we gain our knowledge of it, it must be a composite one. If those who defend the belief of the apostles have been, and are, involved in difficulties in regard to the *details* of the life of Christ, those who refuse to accept that belief have been, and are, involved in difficulties in regard to their *main theory* of that life.

Every theory that has attempted to account for the facts has broken down. Reimarus attempted to find an explanation of the New Testament literature in the weak badness of the founders of Christianity, and Paulus in an artificial explanation of the facts. Strauss strove to find it in the unconscious exaggeration of a myth-building age, but was compelled to admit the necessity of assuming, with the Tübingen school, the intentional deception of the New Testament writers, and thus, through them, to support himself partly by the position of Reimarus. The modern Positive school reject both Strauss and the old Tübingen position, but they call in their aid in many steps in their presentation of the life of Christ. They reject the natural explanations of Paulus, looked on with scorn by the previous mythical school, and yet in their explanations of the healing wonders as a whole, and in regard to the empty grave of Christ and other points, they have fallen back upon their support.

The result of three generations of discussion of the life of Christ cannot be said to have established an unfavorable polemic position for those who claim that the facts recorded in the New Testament, and the belief of the men who made and accepted those records, can only be accounted for on the supposition that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

The positions which they may assume and defend, not as matters of religious faith, but on purely historical grounds, seem to be as follows :

1. If it be admitted that there is a God, and that He is capable of revealing Himself to man, it can be shown from the three Synoptic Gospels and the Greater Epistles that God has revealed Himself to man as incarnate in Jesus Christ.

2. If the question as to whether there be a God and what that God is like is left open, then from the three Synoptic Gospels and

the Greater Epistles it can be shown that there is the strongest reason to believe that God lived on earth as Jesus Christ.

3. If it be decided that there is no God who could live on earth as Jesus Christ, and at the same time admitted that the Gospel of John is from the hand of an apostle, then the admission destroys the decision, for it can be shown, according to the rules of historical criticism, that the life of Jesus of Nazareth can be accounted for on no other supposition than that He was the incarnate God.

Whether the great mass of critics on both sides of the controversy will ever come to grant to the Gospel of John such a degree of authenticity as they now grant to the Synoptic Gospels cannot be foretold. But one thing is certain : such a result can only be obtained, either in Germany or in this country, by a full, free, and untrammelled investigation on the purely historical basis, without prejudice or acrimony, ruled by that truly reverent spirit which knows that the only foundation of faith is knowledge, and the only worthy end and outcome of knowledge is religion.

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