Lessing and the Reimarus manuscript

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LESSING AND THE REIMARUS MANUSCRIPT.

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by

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PREFACE.

The purpose of this thesis is to deal with one small section of the life and work of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and with the life and work of the man who was the cause of this part of Lessing's work,—Prof. Hermann Samuel Reimarus. Incidentally, the account of these two includes the writings of other less important men, Pastor Goeze of Hamburg and his friends.

Lessing was more a critic than a dramatist and poet. He believed thoroughly in the free discussion of all subjects, religious as well as any other. Moreover, he enjoyed being in the midst of a controversy of this sort, where the wits of each combatant were put to the severest test. For these two main reasons he published the Reimarus Manuscript, and as a result, was engaged for several years in one of the hottest theological controversies of any time.

Since it was closed summarily by order of the Duke in whose Library Lessing worked, and Lessing completed his side of the discussion by writing "Nathan der Weise", this account is really nothing but an introduction to the study of that great drama, although it is hardly mentioned in the thesis.

The plan of the following pages is to give in the introduction all the material necessary to understand the circumstances existent at the time Lessing began his active connection with the Manuscript. Chapter I., then, deals merely with the history of the manuscript and Lessing's connection with it, giving very little outside the chronology of events. Chapter II. deals with the contents of the fragments of the Manuscript, and the editorial
comments that Lessing added. Chapter III. contains the account of the resulting controversy, and includes many names of men who succeeded in making themselves notorious rather than noted. The conclusion takes up the mooted question of Lessing's real attitude toward the Manuscript and its author's views.
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"Ummglichkeit einer Offenbarung, die alle Menschen auf eine gegründete Art glauben könnten."

"Durchgang der Israeliten durchs rote Meer."

"Dasz die Bücher Alten Testaments nicht geschrieben worden, eine Religion zu offenbaren."

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INTRODUCTION.

Hermann Samuel Reimarus was born in Hamburg, December 22, 1694. His father was a man of rare talents, a teacher by profession. Hermann Samuel, the eldest of several children, received his early education from his father and from such other instructors as Johann Christian Wolff and J. A. Fabricius. His university education was gained at Jena and Wittenberg. During 1720-21, he traveled in Belgium and England.

He married the daughter of his instructor Fabricius, and after the death of the latter, Reimarus edited the works and wrote the life of his father-in-law. Especially valuable was the edition of "Dio Cassius," prepared from materials gathered by Fabricius. (1752-54).

In 1723, Reimarus accepted the position of rector of the city school at Wismar. Later he went to the Gymnasium at Hamburg as professor of Hebrew and mathematics, and here he remained, in spite of a call to Göttingen.

Besides the completing of the work of Fabricius, Dr. Reimarus published three works of importance:—

"Die vornehmsten Wahrheiten der natürlichen Religion." 1754.

"Die Vernunftlehre, als eine Anweisung zum richtigen der Vernunft in der Erkenntnis der Wahrheit." 1756.

"Allgemeine Betrachtungen über die Triebe der Tiere." 1760.

But the best known of all his work is the manuscript that Lessing published after the death of Reimarus. Al-
though brought up in a devout Christian family, Dr. Reimarus had very grave doubts as to the truth of Christianity. He wrote out his opinions and studies of the subject, but not for publication. He intended the manuscript only for his own use and for that of a few close friends. Its publication would too surely have made trouble for him and have harmed the good name of the family. He completed the first draft early in the forties, and changed and improved it considerably before his death.

Dr. Reimarus died March 1, 1768. Three of his seven children survived him,—a son, Dr. Joh. Alb. Heinrich, and two daughters, one of whom, Elise, was a close friend of Lessing's. Lessing became acquainted with the family in Hamburg in 1767, but there is no record of his having met the father, the author of the manuscript with which we are concerned.

The further history of the manuscript will be taken up more in detail in the following pages, as Lessing's connection with it begins at this point.

Lessing's interest in the Reimarus Manuscript lasted more than ten years and covered the entire period of his stay in Wolfenbüttel. The town itself was a small one of a few thousand inhabitants, located seven miles south of Braunschweig. It embraced a few melancholy remnants of previous courtly glory, and had absolutely no mental stimulation except the famous old library.

The Wolfenbüttel Library was established by Augustus of Braunschweig in the middle of the 17th Century. The build-
ing, an imitation of the Pantheon at Rome, stood opposite the palace. Leibniz was librarian here for a time. Its collections of Bibles and manuscripts was, and still is, one of the best in Europe.

Ebert recommended Lessing to the hereditary prince, Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, of Braunschweig, and Lessing visited him in November, 1769. He thought that he had not made a good impression on the Duke, but Ebert assured him that this was not the case. If Lessing would accept the position of librarian, they would give the one then holding the position something else to do. The prince wanted to get Lessing there to adorn his state with the name of the foremost writer of Germany.

Duke Ferdinand was a nephew of Frederick II., and was well enough educated to know whom he was getting. This Prince was really both brilliant and bad. He made a great deal of money by hiring out mercenary troops, and the statistics of his financial "successes" are sickening. One can easily imagine how Lessing enjoyed his life under the control of such a man. But he had a sort of revenge, for he made the Duke into the character of Hetore Gonzaga, in "Emilia Galotti." The Duke felt himself hit by this, and no doubt that fact helps to account for his later treatment of Lessing during the controversy with Goeze.

Lessing was now over forty years of age. For more than twenty of these he had lived an independent life and had refused to be bound to any of the petty princes of the land, under whom he would have received advancement, but by whom he would have been hampered in freedom. Probably the reason
he was willing now to accept this position as the librarian at Wolfenbüttel was for the sake of thy woman he loved, and to gain for himself a bit of home happiness. At any rate, he accepted the Duke's offer, shortly after his visit to Braunschweig, and promised to take up his duties in six or eight weeks, but it was early in April, 1770, before he reached the place, and he began his work the first week in May.

Lessing brought with him to Wolfenbüttel a manuscript copy of Professor Reimarus' "Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes." Reimarus' son had given it to Lessing during their friendship in Hamburg, but with the understanding that Lessing was not to publish it, at least not yet.
HISTORY OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE MANUSCRIPT.

As has been said, Lessing became acquainted with the Reimarus family in 1767, and had a manuscript copy of the "Apologie" in his possession when he came to Wolfenbüttel in the spring of 1770. In the fall of the same year, Moses Mendelssohn visited Lessing and the latter gave him the manuscript to read, in order to get his opinion of it. At the close of the year, the manuscript was still in Mendelssohn's possession. During the following year, Lessing discussed with Mendelssohn and Nicolai the advisability of publishing the "Apologie." Both the friends discouraged the printing of it, for two main reasons,—because of the author's extreme views, and because they feared that Lessing would get himself mixed up in a quarrel with the theologians. In fact, Nicolai had accused Lessing for some time of wanting to do just that very thing.

The next that we hear of the Reimarus manuscript is in October, 1774, when Lessing published a small selection from it in the series of Contributions from the Wolfenbüttel Library. These consisted chiefly of reprints of old manuscripts, and this selection, entitled, "Von Duldung der Deisten," occurs in the third set of the Contributions. Lessing did not have the permission of the Reimarus family to publish the manuscript, so he called it a fragment from an unknown author, and stated that he had found it in the Library. He even went so far as to hint that the author might be Dr. Schmid, the translator of the Bible, from Wertheim.

Lessing was disappointed in the reception that this
fragment received, for no one paid any particular attention to it. By the time he revisited Berlin in 1775, he had decided to print larger and more radical fragments of the manuscript. Nicolai and Mendelssohn again tried to persuade Lessing not to attempt such a course, but he persisted. Voss undertook to print it, and presented it to Teller, the censor, for his seal of approval. Teller had nothing in particular against the contents, but refused to give his approval in writing, so then Lessing decided to do with this part as he had done with "Von Duldung der Deisten,"—print it as if it were an old manuscript belonging to the library.

The part he chose at this time was divided into five fragments, and Lessing wrote comments and partial answers to accompany each. He sent the proofs to Dr. Reimarus, asking his approval, and excusing himself for the early publication of the manuscript. He was really anxious to get the theologians to discussing the questions that Professor Reimerus had raised. The Reimerus family were not very well pleased by Lessing's haste. Dr. Reimerus disapproved because he dreaded the effect it would have on his father's good name if it should ever be disclosed, and the sister Elise objected because of the trouble Lessing would incur, and especially because of the way he had answered her father's arguments. But they allowed the printing to go on.

The titles of these five fragments, which, with Less-
sing's comments, constitute the entire fourth volume of the "Beiträge," are:—

I. "Von Verschreiung der Vernunft auf den Kanzeln."

II. "Unmöglichkeit einer Offenbarung, die alle Menschen auf eine gegründete Art glauben könnten."

III. "Durchgang der Israeliten durchs rote Meer."

IV. "Dasz die Bücher Alten Testaments nicht geschrieben worden, eine Religion zu offenbaren."

V. "Ueber die Auferstehungsgeschichte."

These five fragments were the ones that started the discussion. It really began in September, 1777, with an article by Director Joh. Dan. Schumann, of the Hannover Lyceum. (We shall speak more at length, later, of the contents of these various writings). Lessing answered this in a very brief but pointed article, entitled, "Ueber den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft." In it he hinted at the next article, which appeared soon after,—"Das Testament Johannis."

During this same year, there appeared in Braunschweig a defense of the story of the resurrection which Reimarus had attacked. The authorship was anonymous, but the writer turned out to be Superintendent Archdeacon Joh. Heinr. Resz of Wolfenbüttel. Reimarus had raised ten objections to the resurrection story. Resz treats all of these, but his defense was very illogical and almost childish. By November or December, Lessing had started his answer, a long publication called, "Eine Duplik", in which he, too, takes up each of the ten "Widersprüche."

December 17, 1777, there appeared in the "Freiwillige
Beiträge zu den Hamburgischen Nachrichten aus dem Reiche der Gelehrsamkeit", an article against the Fragments and their publisher, by Hauptpastor Joh. Melchior Goeze (1717-1786). The clergy were very strong in Hamburg, and Pastor Goeze was one of the most important of them. He was a man of narrow and radical views, and very strongly Lutheran in his beliefs. He and Lessing had been rather good friends while Lessing was in Hamburg, but since Lessing had gone to Wolfenbüttel, there had been a misunderstanding. Goeze had asked some courtesy of the Library, and Lessing had been unusually dilatory about responding. This had made Goeze rather angry, and he jumped at the chance to get even with Lessing. This was not his only reason however, for he felt that the writings of this "Ungenannter" were a direct attack on the religion whose champion he considered himself to be. The controversy that followed was not the first in which Goeze had engaged. He was a man of some learning, and wrote a good deal. Lessing had always admired his logical way of thinking. He was bitterly opposed to the theater, and had engaged in a violent controversy about it. Strange to say, his liking for Lessing had led him to exclude the works of the author of "Miss Sara Sampson" from the list of undesirable plays.

The year 1778 was a very hard one for Lessing. His wife and little son died early in January. Lessing was crushed, but went on just the same with the theological controversy which raged violently for the greater half of the year. Some writers even go so far as to say that Lessing's keenness was due largely to his efforts to forget his great sorrow in hard
work. Early in the year and in close succession appeared Lessing's "Eine Parabel", and "Axiomata", the latter of which sums up his arguments in the controversy so far.

Then he decided to publish still another fragment of the manuscript. The part chosen was a continuation of the "Auf-erstehungsgeschichte", which was causing more discussion than any other part of the fragments. Lessing put this one out by itself, without using the medium of the "Beiträge", under the title, "Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger." The contents of this were more extreme than ever, and called forth an uproar among the clergy. Goeze and his friends tried to get the Consistorium roused against Lessing, but the latter was able to use some of Goeze's extreme statements against him, and so make the Catholic part of the Consistorium unwilling to act.

In March, Lessing was the object of an attack by Friedrich Wilhelm Mescho, which made him so angry that he revealed the name of the author of the fragments. Dr. Reimarus was not at all pleased by this disclosure.

During this same spring, Lessing wrote the eleven articles entitled "Anti-Goeze", directed of course at Goeze, who was using the "Freiwillige Beiträge" as his organ for continued attacks on Lessing. Goeze wrote a good many of them himself, some were anonymous, and there were various other contributors. In this paper, Lessing was attacked repeatedly by name, in a manner that was oftentimes abusive.

The publication of the last fragment brought the controversy to a climax. The clergy, after they failed to accomplish anything with the Consistorium, went to Lessing's
master, the Duke. The hereditary Prince was away from home and the Duke was so weak from illness that he could scarcely sign his name. So it was easy for Lessing's opponents to get an order made, forbidding the further publication and circulation of the last Fragment, and worst of all for Lessing, the withdrawal of his freedom from censorship. Lessing received this word on the evening of July 6, just as he was sitting down to write the twelfth "Anti-Goeze".

On the 11th of July, he went to the Duke to ask for permission to continue the publication of the articles against Goeze, because the latter was attacking him with greater bitterness than ever before, and for the additional permission to publish his own views without the inspection of the censor, but he did not succeed.

On the 13th, the Duke sent Lessing an order to send the Manuscript to him, to give up his freedom from censorship, and to stop all his theological controversial writing. This was quite a blow for Lessing. The Reimarus manuscript did not belong to the Library, in spite of his saying so at first, and really the Duke had no right to forfeit it, but Lessing had no way of helping himself at this time.

Lessing was very much discouraged and thought seriously of leaving Wolfenbüttel, but Elise Reimarus proved herself a true friend in time of need by advising him very strongly against such a course. She and his own good judgment finally convinced him that his leaving Wolfenbüttel would be nothing less than a complete surrender to his opponents, so he stayed.

Before the command of the Duke was received, Lessing's
"Nütige Antwort auf eine sehr unnütige Frage des Herrn Hauptpastor Goeze", was in the hands of printers in Hamburg, and it appeared during the summer. This practically closed the open controversy between Lessing and the group of opposing clergy. But Lessing had the final word after all. The use of one weapon was left to him, which Goeze had neither the power to use nor to resist. Lessing wrote "Nathan der Weise", and in it he answered all the religious questions that had been causing such a turmoil for so long. But the discussion of this great drama has no place in the direct connection of Lessing with the Reimarus Manuscript.
CONTENTS OF THE FRAGMENTS AND LESSING'S
COMMENTS.

"Von Bündung der Deisten." (1774).

This, the first fragment of the Reimarus manuscript pub-
lished by Lessing, is not very long, and is a plea for great-
er religious tolerance, especially for the Deists. The ar-
gument is that the Christian church of the day was not even
as tolerant as the ancient Jewish church, which allowed
proselytes to live among the orthodox Jews and to enjoy the
same rights. These "proselyti portae" had to subscribe to
seven laws, called the laws of Noah, in order to live among
the Jews. These as given by Reimarus are:—

"1. Keine Abgötterei zu treiben,
2. Gottes Namen zu ehren,
3. Niemand zu töten,
4. Keine Unzucht zu treiben,
5. Nichts zu rauben,
6. Die Obern zu ehren,
7. Nicht rohes Fleisch zu essen."

Lessing, in his comments, answers Reimarus' arguments,
at least partially, by showing that his comparison of the
proselytes and the Deists is not strictly a true one. The
Deists keep referring to the freedom of the proselytes of
ancient times, but they forget that if the proselytes blas-
phemed God, they were stoned immediately; while these same
Deists want freedom to tear the Christian religion to pieces,
and even to scoff at the God of the Christians. 1.

1. Lessing, Ges. Werke, XI., 43.
Five Fragments, "Ein Mehreres aus den Papieren des Ungenannt-
ten, die Offenbarung betreffend." (1777).

Lessing introduces the fragments with a short statement to the effect that they are by the same author as "Von Duldung der Deisten," and that he feels it his duty to concede with the request of readers for further selections from the same author. Then he gives the five fragments, following them at some length with comments and answers to many of the arguments. The actual fragments are omitted in most of the editions of Lessing's works, but the drift of their contents can be followed without difficulty from what Lessing says about them.

He says first that these arguments may seem very severe to the theologians, but that they are really not destructive to Christianity itself, and then he gives his reasons in a few terse statements that were used over and over again in the succeeding controversy: "Der Buchstabe ist nicht der Geist; und die Bibel ist nicht die Religion. Folglich sind Einwürfe gegen den Buchstaben und gegen die Bibel nicht eben auch Einwürfe gegen den Geist und gegen die Religion. Denn die Bibel enthält offenbar mehr als zur Religion Gehöriges: und es ist blosse Hypothes, dass sie in diesem Mehrern gleich un-
unfehlbar sein müsse. Auch war die Religion ehe eine Bibel war. Das Christentum war, ehe Evangelisten und Apostel geschrieben hatten......Es musz auch möglich sein, dass alles, was Evangelisten und Apostel geschrieben haben, wiederum verloren gänge, und die von ihnen gelehre Religion doch bestände. Die Religion ist nicht wahr, weil die Evangelisten sie lehrten: sondern sie lehrten sie, weil sie wahr ist."¹

¹ Ges. Werke, XI., 47, 48.
Lessing longs for a real defence of the citadel of Christianity. Too often the attack is made upon one tower at a time; and the defenders, with as little discretion, turn all their attention to defending that one apot, without providing against possible attacks on other parts of the wall. Lessing would like to see the citadel completely surrounded, and also carefully defended. He says that the "Ungenannter" has come very close to realizing his ideal of the besieger. And now he longs for a defender: "Möchte er bald einen Mann erwecken, der dem Ideale eines echten Vertheidigers der Religion nur ebenso nahe käme!"¹

Then Lessing takes up each one of the five fragments, and discusses it:

First, "Von Verschreiung der Vernunft auf den Kanzeln." He defines it as the attempt to make Christianity more agreeable. This fragment never caused the comment and discussion that some of the others did.

Second, "Unmöglichkeit einer Offenbarung, die alle Menschen auf eine gegründete Art glauben könnten." Lessing's answers to Reimarus' arguments show the trend of the latter's thought: --"Wenn eine solche Offenbarung unmöglich ist, -- nun freilich: so hat sie auch Gott nicht möglich machen können. Allein wenn nun gleichwohl eine Offenbarung nützlich und nötig ist: sollte Gott demungesachtet lieber gar keine erteilen, weil er keine solche erteilen konnte?.....Genug, wenn die höchste Weisheit und Güte bei Erteilung der Offenbarung, die sie in Jener Allgemeinheit und Allklarheit nicht gewähren konnte, nur denjenigen Weg gewählt hat, auf welchem in der

¹ Ges. Werke, XI., 49.
kürzesten Zeit die meisten Menschen des Genusses derselben fähig wurden. Dieses unendlich mehr verachtete als verächtliche Volk (das jüdische) ist doch, in der ganzen Geschichte, schlechterdings das erste und einzige, welches sich ein Geschäft daraus gemacht, seine Religion mitzuteilen und auszubreiten.1. Lessing claims that the author did not distinguish clearly between things in the Bible that belong necessarily to the Christian religion, and without which it could not exist, and things that were only side-issues, or merely secondary in importance.

Third, "Durchgang der Israeliten durchs rothe Meer." This was one of the fragments that caused the most discussion. Reimarus considered the Bible account in detail, and maintained that it contained all sorts of inaccurate statements;—that the people could not possibly have crossed in the time allowed them, that they could not have crossed in the place given, that they could not have crossed any place because of the contour of the bottom of the Red Sea, that the numbers of people and the corresponding impediments are far from correct, that it would be an impossible miracle for Moses to divide the sea with a wave of his staff, and so on. Lessing gives answers to most of these, but we have space for only two short quotations:—"In den Ältesten Zeiten verband man mit groszen Summen noch sehr undeutliche Begriffe, und es geschah wohl oft ganz unschuldigerweise, wenn man eine sehr grosse Zahl bald durch diese, bald durch eine andere Anzahl ausdruckte. Man hatte viel zu bezweifeln, wenn man an allen den alten Schlachten zweifeln wollte, bei welchen die Zahl der gebliebenen Feinde von dem einen Schrift-
steller so, von dem andern andrs, und von allen weit grszer angegeben wird, als sich mit andern zugleich erzhlten Um­
stnden reimen lsszt.....Denn ob Moses mit seinem Stabe das Meer teilet, und Millionen trocknes Fusses hindurchfhrert,
oder ob Elisa mit dem Mantel seines Meisters das nemliche an dem Jordan thut, und bloss f r seine Person hindurch­
gehet: ist dieses nicht ein ebenso gutes Wunder als jenes?

Fourth, "Dasz die Bücher Alten Testaments nicht geschrie­
ben worden, eine Religion zu offenbaren." The title tells Reimarus' attitude. Lessing does not agree with him on these points any more exactly than in the other fragments, and gives his own views in his editorial comments. In ancient times the idea of one God was existent in the minds of only a very few of the Hebrews. The majority of them thought of Jehovah as merely a God who was stronger than the gods of the other nations. When Jehovah did not give them all the bene­
fits and blessings that they wanted, they were prone to turn to other gods, until some great calamity turned them back to the worship of Jehovah. Moreover, the idea of the unity of God, which the Israelitish people had, was not the idea of transcendental metaphysical unity, such as is the basis of the religion of modern times. Only after the Babylonian captivity, did the Israelites come to a complete realization of their Jehovah, and after that time there was no more idolatry. So it was perfectly natural that the books of the Old Testament should not have the same ideas of God in them that we have now.

Another point that Reimarus had taken up was that there is no trace in the Old Testament of the immortality of the soul. Lessing says that it is perfectly conceivable that a book should be inspired by God and yet not have any mention of such a subject. He uses the first 53 paragraphs of his "Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts", as apropos to this part of the argument. He defines revelation in this way:—"Erziehung ist Offenbarung, die dem einzeln Menschen geschieht: und Offenbarung ist Erziehung, die dem Menschengeschlechte geschehen ist, und noch geschieht...... Erziehung giebt dem Menschen nichts, was er nicht auch aus sich selbst haben könnte: sie giebt ihm das, was er aus sich selber haben könnte, nur geschwinder und leichter, Also giebt auch die Offenbarung dem Menschengeschlechte nichts, worauf die menschliche Vernunft, sich selbst überlassen, nicht auch kommen würde: sondern sie gab und giebt ihm die wichtigsten dieser Dinge nur früher."¹

God has a special order of revelation, just as man's powers develop in a certain order. He allowed the early peoples to believe in gods and revealed only to single, isolated persons that the plurality of gods was impossible. When He did not care to reveal Himself longer to single men, He chose a single people, and these were the wildest and most uncouth He could find, in order to begin at the very beginning with them. Since the Israelites were slaves, they probably had no share in the Egyptian religion, and perhaps they thought there were no gods for them. He showed Himself

¹ Ges. Werke, XII., 52.
first as the God of their fathers, and then by the wonders with which He led them out of Egypt, He showed that He was more powerful than any of the other gods. And since only one can be the most powerful, He accustomed them gradually to the idea that there is only one God. They learned so slowly that often they deserted the one all-powerful God, in hope of finding a more powerful among their neighbors. Jehovah had to treat them as children. After they were instructed, they were to be the instructors of the whole world. When they had been taught for a long time, they were pushed out into a new and strange country, where they learned to appreciate the care they had had.

Lessing compared the Old Testament to a primer for beginners:—"Ein Elementarbuch für Kinder darf gar wohl dieses oder jenes wichtige Stück der Wissenschaft oder Kunst, die es vorträgt, mit Stillwohren übergehen, von dem der Pädagoge urteilte, desz es den Fähigkeiten der Kinder, für die er schrieb, noch nicht angemessen sei. Aber es darf schlechterdings nichts enthalten, was den Kindern den Weg zu den zurückbehaltenden wichtigen Stücken versperre oder verlege. Vielmehr müssen ihnen alle Zugänge zu denselben sorgfältig offen gelassen werden......Also auch konnten in den Schriften des Alten Testaments, in diesen Elementarbüchern für das rohe und im Denken ungeübte israelitische Volk, die Lehre von der Unsterblichkeit der Seele und künftigen Vergeltung gar wohl mangeln: aber enthalten durften sie schlechterdings nichts, was das Volk, für das sie geschrieben waren, auf dem Wege zu dieser großen Wahrheit auch nur verspätet hätte.

Und was hätte es, wenig zu sagen, mehr dahin verspätet, als
wenn jene wunderbare Vergeltung in diesem Leben darin wäre versprochen und von dem wäre versprochen worden, der nichts verspricht, was er nicht hält."1.

As the Jews came into contact with a people of higher civilization, they became aware that their Jehovah was not only the most powerful but the wisest God, and their religion became, then, more than simply a national religion. God became a Personal Being, One whom each one could know and worship for himself, without the intervention of priests and ceremonies. Then the rabbis began reading new meanings into the simple allegories of the Old Testament, and perverting the meanings that God had put into them. So He found it necessary to take His religion out of the control of men. "Ein besserer Pädagog musz kommen, und dem Kinde das erschöpfte Elementarbuch aus den Händen reiszen—Christus kam."2.

Fifth, "Über die Auferstehungsgeschichte." This is more extreme in its statements than any of the preceding fragments. Reimarus compared the Gospel accounts of the story of the resurrection, and pointed out a number of contradictions which he considered sufficient to make the story incredible. Lessing did not say very much about these "Widersprüche" in detail at this time, but took them up one at a time in "Eine Duplik", after an anonymous writer had attempted to answer them.

First contradiction: Luke has the women, who want to

2. " " XII., 64.
to anoint the body of Christ, buy the necessary spices on Friday, toward evening, before the beginning of the Sabbath: and Mark has them do it on the Sabbath evening after the Sabbath was over.

Second: John, according to whom Joseph of Arimathia and Nicodemus cared for the body of Jesus in all details according to Jewish custom, does not say that the women wished to anoint the body. But Mark and Luke, who announce merely that Joseph of Arimathia wrapped the body in fine linen, so probably did not anoint it, say that the women who had witnessed this hurried and incomplete preparation for burial, wanted to anoint the body of Jesus. So John contradicts Mark and Luke, and Mark and Luke contradict John.

Third: Matthew says that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary really saw happen that which the other Evangelists say they found had already occurred before they came to the tomb.

Fourth: None of the evangelists agree about the number of angels who appeared in and around the grave, or the place they stood, nor what they said.

Fifth: In Luke, Mary Magdalene and the other women announce to Simon Peter and John and other disciples, the actual resurrection of Jesus which they have learned from the angels. In John, however, Mary Magdalene alone announces to Peter and John only, simply that she has found the grave of Jesus open and the body gone.

Sixth: According to Matthew, the risen Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene on the way back to the city, and according to John this occurred before the opening of the grave.

Seventh: In Matthew, the women embrace the feet of the
Risen One; in Luke He urges the assembled eleven to touch Him; in John He commands Thomas to touch Him with his hand: but on the contrary, John says that He would not allow Mary Magdalene to touch Him.

Eighth: According to Matthew and Mark, Christ Himself and also through the angels at the grave, orders the disciples to go directly to Galilee; in Luke, however, he commands the same people, on the same day of the resurrection, that they shall remain assembled in Jerusalem, until the Holy Ghost should come upon them.

Ninth: According to Matthew, the appearance in Galilee occurred on a mountain, whither Christ had sent His disciples; according to John it occurred on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and under entirely different circumstances.

The tenth contradiction is simply a fuller statement of the ninth.

In the general remarks about this fragment, Lessing says that two kinds of contradictions are possible,—those among the witnesses, and those among the historians of the sayings of these same witnesses. The latter would be merely superficial, and not prove the story incredible, but the former would be important. But it might be said that these historians were inspired by God. "Ganz recht; nämlich dadurch, dass er jeden zu schreiben getrieben wie ihm die Sache nach seinem besten Wissen und Gewissen bekannt gewesen." Differences among accounts is perfectly allowable, for no two witnesses see the same details of an occurrence, and,
moreover, things that are mere difference of detail in the first telling become real contradictions by the time they have passed through several hands. The story of the resurrection was not written down for thirty or forty years, and that fact may account for most of the seeming contradictions.

Lessing closes with a challenge:—"Folglich findet der Mann, der die Untrüglichkeit der Evangelisten in jedem Worte behauptet, auch hier noch unbearbeitetes Feld genug. Er versuche es nun, und beantworte die gerügten zehn Widersprüche unsers Fragments. Aber er beantworte sie alle. Denn diesem und jenem nur etwas Wahrscheinliches entgegensetzen, und die übrigen mit triumphierender Verachtung übergehen, heisst keinen beantworten."¹

In 1778, Lessing published the seventh and last fragment of the Reimarus manuscript, "Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger." It was a continuation of the part about the story of the resurrection, and is even more radical in its statements than that fragment. In his introduction to it, Lessing excuses himself for its publication in this way:—"Gegenwürtiges Fragment sollte, meinen ersten Gedanken nach, durch mich entweder gar nicht, oder doch nur irgend einmal zu seiner Zeit, in eben dem abgelegenen so wenig besuchten Winkel bibliothekarischen Auskührchts erscheinen, in welchem seine Vorgänger erschienen sind. Ich lasse mir es ungern früher aus den Händen winden: aber wer kann für Gewalt?"²

¹ Ges. Werke, XI., 72
² " XI., 359.
This fragment is divided into two parts:

I. The aim of Jesus' teachings. (33 paragraphs).

II. The reasons for the two systems that the apostles taught. (60 paragraphs).

The gist of the arguments, which Reimarus gave at great length, and in his usual rather involved style, is as follows:

Jesus intended to found an earthly kingdom, but when the people failed to crown him at the time of his triumphal entry, he had to give it up. He never baptized anyone, which he would surely have done if his kingdom were to have been a heavenly one. There is no proof that he was any more the Son of God than David or Solomon were. When he called himself the Son of God, he meant simply that he was God's servant and follower.

John the Baptist did not see a dove descending from heaven, nor hear God's voice. No one else saw or heard, and John simply imagined it. Jesus did not wish to establish any new religion, or any new sacraments. Baptism was simply the Jewish custom of washing to show the cleansing away of sin. The Last Supper was only the passover, eaten two days early and very hurriedly. He did not intend it to be repeated until he should come as king. He did not give the disciples the formula, "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." That was added later.

Jesus believed that his kingdom was near at hand and so did the disciples until his death. But then they changed their system and wrote their books as though Jesus had taught all along that his kingdom was to be a heavenly one. But
they taught that it was to come inside of one generation, or about forty years, before that generation should have died. After his death, Jesus was buried in a garden to which the disciples had access. The confusion in the stories of the resurrection show that it was made up. (Paragraphs 10-32 of part II. of this fragment constitute the preceding fragment, "Ueber die Auferstehungsgeschichte"). The attempted proofs of the story as given by Stephen are not proofs at all. The reasoning is in a circle.

There was a belief among the Jews that their Messiah would appear twice, once as a suffering Messiah and shortly afterward as a King. The disciples used this belief to their advantage after Jesus' death. When the believers became impatient, Paul was wise enough to tell them that in God's sight a thousand years are as one day. The disciples stole the body of Jesus, buried it elsewhere, waited 50 days until it would be unrecognizable even if found, then told how he had risen from the dead, had appeared to them numerous times and ascended to heaven. If he had really arisen, he would have appeared in the Temple and before the Sanhedrin and then the whole nation would have believed.

The disciples were ashamed to go back to their former trades, because everyone would mock them, and anyhow, they had discovered how easily they could live on gifts, during the three years they travelled around with Jesus, so they kept on. They made all their adherents sell their property and put it in the common treasury, where it was redivided by the disciples to suit themselves. The method of the death of Ananias and Sapphira is very mysterious, and the
fact that it was not investigated by the civil authorities shows how disorganized the state was.

Luke contradicts himself in telling the story of the descent of the Holy Ghost in tongues of flame. He has 120 people gathered in an upper room, when the wind roars, and these tongues of flame appear. Something, probably the wind, rests on each one. Then immediately he has 3000 or 4000 people gathered around to listen to them speaking in diverse tongues. There would be no place for so many in one room, and moreover, what would bring them there so quickly?

These, then, are the seven fragments which Lessing published, and which kept the theological world of Germany in a turmoil for so many years. Let us turn now to the contents of the various writings called forth by the controversy.
THE CONTROVERSY WITH GOEZE AND OTHERS.

The publication of the first fragment, as has been said, called forth little criticism, and there was quite a pause after the appearance of the next group of five before the controversy really began. It seemed as if the storm took a long time to brew, but was all the more violent when it came. (The order of appearance of the various articles was given by the "Algemeine deutsche Bibliothek", of Berlin and Stettin, and quoted by Braun. I shall follow this outline rather closely).

During the year 1775, there appeared another "Fragment eines Ungenannten", about Lessing's fragment, "Von Duldung der Deisten". It classes the fragment as dangerous to Christendom, and says that it is only too apparent that it was written expressly against theologians. Lessing judged that it was written by Dr. Schmid, the translator of the Bible, from Wertheim. Its value was not at all great, and Lessing wrote nothing against it.

In December, 1777, Goeze began his attacks on Lessing, in his organ, "Freiwillige Beiträge zu den Hamburgischen Nachrichten aus dem Reiche der Gelehrtamkeit." In an article of some length, Goeze argues against some of Lessing's statements. He states his negative purpose in these words:—

"Meine Absicht ist gegenwärtig nicht, über die, in den Fragmenten enthaltenen Angriffe, oder über die, in den Gegensätzen befindlich sein solgende Vertheidigung der christlichen Religion, eine genaue Untersuchung anzustellen."¹

¹. Braun, vol. II., p. 75.
Thus he tells what he is not going to do, but apparently thinks it wiser not to outline his positive intentions. He goes on to claim:—"Der Buchstabe ist der Geist und die Bibel ist die Religion, und solches mit eben dem Grunde, mit welchem Jesus sagt: Die Worte, die ich rede, sind Geist und Leben."\(^1\) And later,—"Buchstabe und Geist, Bibel und Religion, eines sind: so müssen auch die Einwürfe gegen den Geist, und Einwürfe gegen die Bibel, Einwürfe gegen die Religion sein."\(^2\) In saying that the Bible contains more than that pertaining to religion, Goeze claims that Lessing has admitted that the Bible is religion. Goeze says that the Fragments are not sober criticisms of the Christian religion, but the most violent blasphemy of the same.

In the number of "Freiwillige Beiträge" which appeared January 30, 1778, Goeze vindicates the resurrection story. He uses the dialectic method, with A. defending the story, and B. arguing against it. B. finally capitulates and agrees to two things,—"Dasz Jesus so wahrhaftig auferstanden ist, als gewisz wir das Evangelium von Ihm haben; imgleichen dasz Er so gewisz für uns gestorben ist, als gewisz Er auferstanden ist."\(^3\) The arguments used are decidedly sophistical.

Previous to this time, in the fall of 1777, Joh. Dan. Schumann had written an article entitled, "Üeber die Evidenz der Beweise für die Wahrheit der christlichen Religion."

1. Braun, II., 77.
2. " II., 78.
Lessing followed with "Ueber den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft, an den Herrn Direktor Schumann, zu Hannover." The discussion is about the validity of prophecies. Lessing says that fulfilled prophecies which he has seen, and those of which he learns only through history are two different things. Miracles that he has seen with his own eyes, and miracles that he knows only historically are also two different things. The reports of prophecies of Christ and His miracles are no longer the real prophecies and miracles, but merely reports. These reports are historically true enough, but they can prove nothing. "Zufällige Geschichtswahrheiten können der Beweis von notwendigen Vernunftwahrheiten nie werden." The proof generally given is that these historians were inspired writers, but Lessing says the real difficulty is that the fact of their inspiration is also only historical.

Schumann replied with "Antwort auf das aus Braunschweig an ihn gerichtete Schreiben über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft." Then Lessing answered again with "Das Testament Johannis. Ein Gespräch," (1777), which effectually silenced Schumann. The gist of this is the legend that, as St. John grew older and older, his exhortations to his congregation grew shorter and shorter, till each Sabbath he said only this: "Kinderchen, liebt euch!" And this was his Gospel and his Testament. The style of this short dialogue is Lessing's best, and the critical journals of the time, which were not interested in the theological side of the controversy, but

merely in the literary value of the material produced, praised it very highly.

The next attack on Lessing was anonymous, "Die Auferstehungs geschichte Jesu Christi gegen einige im vierten Beiträge zur Geschichte und Litteratur aus den Schätzen der herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel gemachte neue Einwendungen vertheidigt." The "Algemeine deutsche Bibliothek" criticises it as showing more good will than cleverness. The author turned out to be Superintendent Archidiskononus Joh. Heinr. Resz, of Wolfenbüttel.

Lessing answered with a long article that has been characterized as bitter and unmerciful in its truthfulness, with the title, "Eine Duplik." (1778). In the introduction to this, he explains his position. There is a difference between simply making an answer to a question and really answering it. Reimarus, in attacking the citadel of Christianity, was not so foolish as to attack just one tower at a time, but threw up his ladders at all points. Some of the ladders have been used before, but joined with the others they may still be effective. The defense must be just as systematic.

If Livius, Dionysius, Polybius, and Tacitus do not agree in their reports of historical facts, we do not say that the facts are false. We only ask that the report of each agree with itself. Why not use the same leniency with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? We never are so foolish as to dig up the foundation of a house to see if it is good. We judge by the solidity of the structure above it. Just so with religion. We can judge the truth of the evangelists'
reports by the strength of the religion based upon them.

Then Lessing addresses himself more particularly to this anonymous writer, whom he designates as "Der Nachbar", to distinguish him from "Der Ugenannte", who was Reimarus. Lessing is glad that someone has arisen to answer the arguments of his fragmentist, but he, Lessing, must be allowed to explain his own position to avoid misunderstandings. The positions or claims of the three opponents, as he understands them are as follows:—"Mein Ugenannter behauptet: die Auferstehung Christi ist auch darum nicht zu glauben, weil die Nachrichten der Evangelisten davon sich widersprechen. Ich erwidere: die Auferstehung Christi kann ihre gute Richtigkeit haben, ob sich schon die Nachrichten der Evangelisten widersprechen. Nun kommt ein Dritter und sagt: die Auferstehung Christi ist schlechterdings zu glauben, denn die Nachrichten der Evangelisten davon widersprechen sich nicht. Man gebe auf dieses auch darum, auf dieses obschon, auf dieses denn wohl acht. Man wird finden, dass auf diesen Partikeln gerade nur nicht alles beruhet."¹

The Holy Spirit would do nothing that could even have the appearance of wrong-doing, so he would not allow the evangelists to confuse their reports on purpose to cover errors, even if they had wished to do so. Lessing has this idea of inspiration:—"Noch hat sich, soviel ich weiss, kein Orthodox einfallen lassen, dass der Antrieb des heiligen Geistes die Evangelisten allwissend gemacht habe. Das ist: was die Evangelisten vor diesem Antriebe nicht wussten, das wussten sie auch unter und nach diesem Antriebe nicht. Erfuhren sie also durch den Antrieb des heiligen Geistes

¹ Ges. Werke, XI. 148.
nichts mehr, so erfuhrn sie auch nichts besser. Denn man kann nichts besser erfahren, ohne etwas mehr zu erfahren.\textsuperscript{1}.

Then Lessing takes up each of the ten "Widersprüche", as given by Reimarus, and answered by "Der Nachbar", and shows that the latter was ignorant of the original Greek, that he was inaccurate in many of his interpretations, and especially that he tried to make everything agree with a harmony of the Gospels that he had written himself. Lessing uses this figure, to show the inadequacy of the answers that his opponent had given:--"Sie geben die Quelle aller Widersprüche zu, Nachbar: und wollen nur, dass sie nicht flieszen soll. Sie halten, wie ein spielendes Kind, den Ausbruch des Strahls mit der Hand zurück: als ob Sie ihn immer mit Ihrem Händchen zurückhalten könnten; als ob der Strahl das Händchen endlich doch nicht wegpressen, und das Kindchen noch oberdrei bespritzen würde!"\textsuperscript{2}.

Lessing's next opponent was M. Friedrich Daniel Behn, who wrote "Vertheidigung der biblischen Geschichte von der Auferstehung Jesu, ein Fragment", in two parts. This opponent was mediocre, and Lessing did not answer him directly.

Then Goeze appeared in print again, with "Etwas Vorläufiges gegen des Herrn Hofrath Lessings mittelbare und unmittelbare Angriffe auf unsere allerheiligste Religion, und auf den einzigen Lehrgrund derselben, die heilige Schrift." The title indicates the tone of the entire article. The critical journal which gave notice of its appearance says that the author had gone a little too far in the second part, and had

1. Ges. Werke, XI., 156.
2. " " XI., 190.
become boorish and coarse.

Lessing answered with "Eine Parabel. Nebst einer kleiner Bitte und einem eventualen Absagungsschreiben an den Herrn Pastor Goeze, in Hamburg." (1778). The same journal that criticised Goeze's work so unfavorably says that this parable is full of the finest wit and the keenest allusions.

The parable is this: A wise King over a great realm had in his capital a palace of enormous size and very unusual architecture. And it answered its purpose well, for it stood firm and strong, long years after the masterbuilder had added the finishing touches. The peculiarity of the outside was caused by the small number of insignificant windows in the walls. But there were great numbers of doors and gates of all forms and sizes. All outsiders wondered how so much space could be lighted with so few windows. It never occurred to them that the brightest and most beautiful of the rooms received their light from overhead. Another thing that troubled the outsiders was the number of doors. That the wise King wished his servants to get around by the easiest and shortest way when they were called was beyond the understanding of the outsiders. And so strife arose among those who thought they knew about the palace, and the less they had seen of the inside, the more vigorously they quarreled. And the thing that one would naturally think would put an end to the quarreling made it all the worse. Various people had plots that they believed were the ground-plans of the palace, said to have been drawn by the masterbuilder, long years before. Each proud possessor explained the words and marks to suit himself, and proceeded explain the building
in his own way. Only a very few people said that this was unimportant, and that the main thing was that beauty and order and blessing covered the whole land because of the wisdom that filled the palace. And these few suffered for their idea, and were decried by the many as incendiaries who wanted to destroy the palace. But these few cared not, for they were the ones who held positions of high honor and trust in the palace. Then, one time at midnight, the watchman's voice was heard, crying: Fire! Fire in the palace! And then what happened? Everyone ran home to get his ground-plan of the palace, and then they stood in the street and quarreled about the location of the fire, and from what point it could best be put out if anyone were to extinguish it. In the meantime, the palace would have burned to the ground if it had not been that the terrified watchman had mistaken an aurora borealis for the glare of fire.

At the close of the parable, Lessing makes his petition. He says that a pastor and a librarian are as different as a shepherd and a botanist. The botanist wanders over mountain and valley, hunting for some rare herb, to which Linneus has given no name. And when he finds it, he cares not whether it is poisonous or not, he only cares for the fact that he has something to give the world. Such a person is a librarian. A shepherd, on the other hand, knows only the herbs in his own meadow, and he propagates none but those that are best and most nourishing for his flock. And the shepherd is Pastor Goeze. The Pastor has made several statements in a recent "Beitrag" that give the world an erroneous impression of him, Lessing, and since Pastor Goeze is an honorable man,
he will surely not refuse to correct the matter, and tell
the world that Lessing really has a right to his own view-
point, even if it differs from Pastor Goeze's.

Lessing follows this with a short "Absagungsschreiben",
which closes with this challenge:—"Schreiben Sie, Herr Pas­
tor, und lassen Sie schreiben, soviel das Zeug halten will:
ich schreibe euch. Wenn ich Ihnen in dem geringsten Dinge,
was mich oder meinen Ungenannten angeht, recht lasse, wo Sie
nicht recht haben: dann kann ich die Feder nicht mehr rühren."¹.

The next thing that Lessing wrote was "Axiomata, wenn es
deren in dergleichen Dingen giebt." (1778). He says express­
ly in the first lines, that this is directed against Pastor
Goeze, in Hamburg. Here he gathers up his previous state­
ments about the Bible and religion into ten axioms:

1. The Bible evidently contains more than what pertains
strictly to religion.

2. It is mere hypothesis that the Bible is equally
infallible in all these things outside of religion.

3. The letter of anything is not the same as the spir­
it, and the Bible is not religion.

4. Accordingly, attacks against the letter and the
Bible are not necessarily attacks against the spirit and
against religion.

5. Religion existed before there was a Bible.

6. Christianity existed before the evangelists and
apostles had written. Considerable time elapsed before
the first of them wrote; and it was a long time before the

entire canon was finished.

7. So then, no matter how much depends on these writings, the entire truth of the Christian religion cannot possibly depend on them.

8. There was a space of time in which the Christian religion had already spread out, in which it had taken possession of many souls, and in which no doubt not a single letter had been written of that which has now come down to us: so it must also be possible that even if all the writings of the evangelists and apostles should be lost, the religion taught by them would still stand.

9. Our religion is not true, because the evangelists and apostles taught it; but they taught it because it is true.

10. Every tradition must be maintained by its own internal truth, and no tradition can help to spread truth if it does not contain truth.

Early in the spring of 1778, Lessing began writing the "Anti-Goeze" articles, eleven in all. They followed each other in rapid succession until July. They were interspersed by other parts of the controversy. The "Algemeine deutsche Bibliothek" says that the tone is lamentable, but who was the cause of it but Goeze himself?


Lessing throws down the gauntlet with these words: "Ueberschreien können Sie mich alle acht Tage: Sie wissen, wo.
He goes on to say that if our Lutheran pastors are to be little popes, prescribing for us the limits of our search for truth, he will be the first to exchange these little popes for the Roman Catholic Pope, and no doubt there are others who think the same. The object of Pastor Goeze seems to be to make as many Protestants as possible turn Catholic again. Later, he says that Pastor Goeze seems to object to his arguments simply because they are his. But he had better be careful, for Herr Mascho, a close friend of Goeze's maintains that the Bible contains revelation, but is not revealed in its entirety; that the letter of the Bible is different from the spirit; and that religion existed before the Bible. These were the very things that Goeze protested against so furiously in Lessing's writings.

Zweiter "Anti-Goeze". Goeze had condemned Lessing's style, as too full of figurative language, and so on. Lessing retorts that he is no more to blame for his style than for his nose. Both are a part of his make-up. Goeze had objected to the mixing of play-writing and preaching, as he considered that Lessing was doing. He asked two questions, "Darf ein Prediger Komödien machen?" and, "Darf ein Komödienschreiber Predigten machen?" Lessing's answer to the first is, "Warum nicht? wenn er kann," and to the second, "Warum nicht? wenn er will."1

Dritter "Anti-Goeze". Lessing claims that Goeze has decided that the verse, "Verdammet nicht, so werdet ihr auch nicht verdammt", is not inspired, and so he may leave it out.1 Ges. Werke, XI., 281. 2. Ges. Werke, XI., 291.
in practice. Or else he believes, "Wer nicht glaubt, der wird verdammt!--Ihm nicht glaubt; nicht gerade das Nämliche glaubt was er glaubt--wird verdammt!" Lessing is glad he has published the fragments and would do it again even if a whole world of Goezes condemned him to the deepest abyss of hell for it.

Vierter "Anti-Goeze". Goeze had said, "Wer gegen die Religion schreiben will, soll nicht anders als lateinisch schreiben dürfen; damit der gemeine Mann nicht gehrger werde." In this "Anti-Goeze" Lessing replies that such a course would never do away with the doubts men have, but would make them worse; and would be more destructive to the Christian religion, because free discussion would be prohibited.

Fünfter "Anti-Goeze". The common people can be led from a low plane higher and higher. But it is a fundamental law with some preachers to remain forever standing on one point of morals and religion,—the same one on which their farefathers stood hundreds of years ago. They do not tear themselves away from the common people, but the latter finally break away from them.

Sechster "Anti-Goeze". The church which understands its own best good does not try to limit discussion of religious questions. Lessing claimed that he had an almost superstitious regard for anything written, which the writer intended to use in teaching the world. And if the author died, Lessing felt toward the manuscript as he would toward a

foundling,—he must at least take it to an orphans' home where it would be cared for and given a name.

Siebenter "Anti-Goeze". Lessing takes up the accusation that he is the advocate of the views of the author of the fragments, and says distinctly, "Ich habe nirgend gesagt, dass ich die ganze Sache meines Ugenanntes, völlig so wie sie liegt, für gut und wahr halte. Ich habe das nie gesagt: vielmehr habe ich gerade das Gegenteil gesagt. Ich habe gesagt und erwiesen, dass wenn der Ugenannt auch noch in so viel einzelnen Punkten recht habe und recht behalte, im ganzen dennoch daraus nicht folge, was er daraus folgern zu wollen scheine......Ich habe es nicht allein nicht ausdrücklich gesagt, dass ich der Meinung meines Ugenanntes zugehalten sei: ich habe auch bis auf den Zeitpunkt, als ich mich mit der Ausgabe der Fragmente befasst, nie das Geringste geschrieben, oder öffentlich behauptet, was mich dem Verdachte aussetzen könnte, ein heimlicher Feind der christlichen Religion zu sein. Wohl aber habe ich mehr als eine Kleinigkeit geschrieben, in welchen ich nicht allein die christliche Religion überhaupt nach ihren Lehren und Lehrern in dem besten Lichte gezeigt, sondern auch die christlichlutherische orthodoxe Religion insbesondere gegen Katholiken, Sooinianer und Neulinge verteidiget habe."¹. "Der Ugenannte war mein Freund nicht; und ich wüsste auch sonst nichts in der Welt, was mich bewegen könne, mich lieber mit seinen Handschriften, als mit fünfzig andern abzugeben, die mir weder so viel

¹. Ges. Werke, XI., 324.
Verdrusz noch so viel Mühe machen würden: wenn es nicht das Verlangen wäre, sie so bald als möglich, sie noch bei meinen Lebzeiten widerlegt zu sehen."¹ These two rather long quotations will help, later, in the discussion of the question as to Lessing's position on some of these questions.

Achter "Anti-Goeze." In this, Lessing again refers to Goeze's criticism of his style, and his remarks lose too much in translation to be given in any way but direct quotation. "Ich suche allerdings durch die Phantasie mit auf den Verstand meiner Leser zu wirken. Ich halte es nicht allein für nützlich, sondern auch für notwendig, Gründe in Bilder zu kleiden; und alle die Nebenbegriffe, welche die einen oder die andern erwecken, durch Anspielungen zu bezeichnen. Wer hiervon nichts weisz und verstehet, müsste schlechterdings kein Schriftsteller werden wollen; denn alle gute Schriftsteller sind es nur auf diesem Wege geworden. Lächerlich also ist es, wenn der Herr Hauptpastor etwas verschreien will, was er nicht kann, und weil er es nicht kann. Und noch lächerlicher ist es, wenn er gleichwohl selbst überall so viel Bestreben verrät, es gern können zu wollen."²

Neunter "Anti-Goeze". In this, the discussion is largely about the identity of the "Ungenannten". Very probably, most of the writers concerned knew pretty well who the author was, but Lessing still makes the pretense of concealing Reimaros' identity. He says that since he was a

¹. Ges. Werke, XI., 326.
². " " XI., 331.
little hasty in his judgment of the author, the first time he made a guess, he has made a rule for himself that if he ever finds out the real name, he will never reveal it. He quotes a passage from Goeze, demanding the name; "Zuletzt erinnere ich den Herrn Lessing noch, dass es nun für ihn Pflicht sei, den Verfasser der Fragmenten zu nennen, da er mit der Entdeckung seines Namens gedroht, und es versucht hat, seinen Gegenen dadurch Furcht einzujagen, da es ihm nicht unberannt sein kann, was für gelehrte unbescholtene Männer für Verfasser dieser Missgeburt ausgegeben worden. Die Schuld, dass ihre Asche so unverantwortlich besudelt wird, fällt auf ihn zurück, wofern er mit der Wahrheit länger zurückhält; und er kann solche zu offenbaren, um so viel weniger Bedenken tragen, da er seinen Autor und dessen Arbeit schon vorläufig mit solchen Lobprüchen beehret hat." Lessing retorts, "Ich habe gewarnet, dem Ungenannten nicht gar zu bubenmässig und schülerhaft zu begegnen, damit man sich nicht allzusehr schäme, wenn man endlich erfähre, wer er gewesen." And later, "Der Herr Hauptpastor liest nie das, was ich geschrieben habe: sondern immer nur das, was er gerne möchte, dass ich geschrieben hätte."

Zehnter "Anti-Goeze". Lessing had introduced each preceding "Anti-Goeze" with a Latin quotation from various authors. This time it is in German from Luther: "Aergernis hin, Aergernis her! Not bricht Eisen und hat kein Aergernis. Ich soll der schwachen Gewissen schonen, sofern es ohne Gefahr meiner Seelen geschehen mag. Wo nicht, so soll ich meiner Seelen raten, es ärgere sich daran die ganze oder halbe

Elfter "Anti-Goeze". In this last of the group, Lessing shows that he knows that Goeze feels the shafts that have been directed against him, and is protesting. "Fühlen Sie das, Herr Hauptpastor? Desto besser. So habe ich meinen Zweck mit Ihnen erreicht; aber noch lange nicht gethan was Sie verdienen. Denn einmal gehören Sie zu den Gegnern meines Ugenannnten noch gar nicht. Sie haben bis diese Stunde ihm noch in nichts widerlegt; Sie haben bloß auf ihn geschimpft. Sie sind bis diese Stunde nur noch als mein Gegner anzusehen; nur noch als der Gegner eines Gegners des Ugenannnten. Und nächstdem haben Sie wider diesem Gegner des Ugenannnten sich Dinge erlaubt, die Sie zum Teil kaum gegen den Ugenannnten sich hätten erlauben müssen. Sie haben mich feindseliger Angriffe auf die christliche Religion beschuldigt; Sie haben mich f ärmlicher Gotteslästerungen beschuldigt. Sagen Sie selbst: wissen Sie infamierendere Beschuldigungen, als diese? Wissen Sie Beschuldigungen, die unmittelbarer Hasz und Verfolgung nach sich ziehen? Mit diesem Dolche kommen Sie auf mich eingerannt, und ich soll mich nicht anders, als den Hut in der Hand, gegen Sie vertheidigen können? soll ganz ruhig und bedächtig stehn bleiben, damit ja nicht Ihr schwarzer Rock bestaubt werde? soll jeden Atemzug so müssigen, dass ja Ihre Perücke den Puder nicht verliere?"  

The twelfth "Anti-Goeze" was never written, for the Duke

forbade Lessing's further participation in theological controversies.

Most of the other writings which we shall take up now appeared interspersed among the eleven "Anti-Goeze" papers, which covered a period of several months, as has already been said.

First there was another article by Behn, entitled "Anti-Lessing." He took up the cudgels in Goeze's behalf, but without much effect.

Then came "Sendschreiben an den Hrn. Hofrath Lessing", by Albrecht Wittenberg. The tone of this was, that since the time of Luther, no one else ought to be allowed to disagree with church beliefs.

About this time Goeze entered the field again, with "Lessings Schwächen", parts I. and II. He predicts that Lessing will be afraid to die, because of his blasphemy, but that he, Goeze, will be clear of Lessing's blood. In the second part he attempts to set a trap for Lessing by asking him what kind of religion he understands by the Christian religion.

This was followed immediately by "Gotthold Ephraim Lessings nötige Antwort auf eine sehr unnötige Frage des Herrn Hauptpastor Goeze, in Hamburg." (1778). His answer to Goeze's question is: "Denn kurz: ich antworte auf die vorgelegte Frage so bestimmt, als nur ein Mensch von mir verlangen kann; dass ich unter der christlichen Religion alle diejenigen Glaubenslehren verstehe, welche in den Symbolis der ersten vier Jahrhunderte der christlichen Kirche enthalten sind."¹

¹ Ges. Werke, XI., 365.
How Lessing says Goeze must prove three things:

"1. Warum notwendig die in jenen Glaubensbekennnissen enthaltenen Lehren sich verlieren müßten, wenn die Bibel sich verlöre;
2. warum diese Lehren längst verloren gegangen sein müßten, wenn die Bibel verloren gegangen wäre;
3. warum wir diese Lehren gar nicht wissen könnten, wenn die Bibel niemals gewesen wäre." ¹

Then Lessing gives twenty short sentences about the "regula fidei", which he had set as the basis of his religion. These were the articles of faith of the early church fathers. They existed before the church and are the foundation on which the church was built, rather than on the Bible or Peter and his followers. The Christian religion of the first four hundred years came from the regula fidei. Lessing had collected these statements from careful reading of the church fathers. He closes with a shot at Goeze: "Ihm dazu um so viel mehr Lust zu machen, habe ich mich in diesem Bogen aller Gleichnisse, aller Bilder, aller Anspielungen sorgfältig enthalten; und bin es weiter zu thun erbötig, wenn er sich eben der Präcision und Simplicität in seinen Gegensätzen bedienen will." ²

Goeze answered with part III. of "Lessings Schwächen", but said absolutely nothing about the "regula fidei". He claimed that Lessing had not proved his points, and that he, Goeze, needed to prove nothing because he was the respondent

¹ Ges. Werke, XI., 365.
² " " XI., 369.
and Lessing the opponent.

Lessing's next article was "Der nöthigen Antwort auf eine sehr unnöthige Frage des Herrn Hauptpastor G. in H.--Erste Folge". (1778). He says: "Ich will nur sogleich den Nagel auf den Kopf zu treffen suchen und rund heraus erklären:

1). Dass es nicht wahr ist, dass alle Lehrer der christlichen Kirche, ohne Unterschied der verschiedenen Parteien, die Bibel für den einigen Lehrgrund der christlichen Religion halten;

2). Dass die Socinianer eben dadurch ihre Sache so gut wie gewonnen haben, wenn man die Bibel zum einigen Lehrgrunde der christlichen Religion macht."¹.

The remaining articles of the controversy need little comment. The names of the authors and the titles will suffice for most of them.

Anonymous.—"Epistel an den hochehrwürdigen Hrn. Hauptpastor Göze in Hamburg, von 'n Layen 'n Hauptschlüssel zu den von Gotthold Ephraim Lessing herausgegebenen Fragmenten und Streitschriften wider Hrn. Göze, allen denen zugeeignet, die die vielmächtigen Libells gelesen haben. Der Schlüssel schliesst mehrere Schlüsser." This was written by a friend of Goeze's, who has been characterized as wanting to be a theologian, but succeeding only in being comic.

It was about this same time that Lessing published the seventh fragment, and the controversy, including the "Anti-Goeze" papers, was the hottest. Before this, Lessing had had a good many firends as well as enemies, but now, even those who had upheld him before began to doubt his wisdom.


Anonymous,—"Neue Untersuchungen über die Auferstehungs-geschichte unsers Herrn und Heilandes Jesu Christi." 1778. This is only another of the many Harmonies of the Gospels, which were so numerous at this time.


Friedr. Christ. Göze, von St. Barbara,—"Inhalt und Beantwortung des Fragments vom Zweck Jesu." 1779. This second Göze was less than average in value.

Joh. Friedrich Kleuker,—"Einige Belehrungen über Toleranz, Vernunft, Offenbarung, Theologie, Wanderung der Israeliten durchs rothe Meer, und Auferstehung Christi von der Todten; veranlaszt durch einige Fragmente in den Les-
singischen Beyträgen zur Geschichte und Litteratur (viert. Beytr.) nebst noch einer Nachschrift und neuen Zusätzen, die Lessingische Duplik betreffend." 1778. A criticism made of this was that many of the statements were true enough, but made with unbearable arrogance.


Döderlein, in Altorf,—"Fragmente und Antifragmente, zwey Fragmente eines Ungenannten, aus Herrn Lessings Beyträgen zur Litteratur abgedruckt, mit Betrachtungen darüber. Nebst einigen Landkarten." Part I., 1778. Part II., 1779. This has been called one of the best of the whole group of articles against Lessing.

There were also a number of other writers, most of whom we hear nothing of, except in this connection. Enough titles have been given to show the character of all, so the mere list of names of authors will be sufficient to close the account of the contents of the controversy:—

Johann Christian Blasche.

Martin Friedrich Pitiscus, Professor in Hamburg.

D. Gabriel Christoph Benjamin Mosche.


Abraham Philipp Gottfried Schickedanz.

Johann Michael Schreiter.


In December, 1779, Lessing wrote one final article. A story had been circulated that Jews from Amsterdam had paid Lessing the sum of 1000 ducats for publishing this Reimarus Manuscript. So Lessing wrote, "Noch nähere Berichtigung des Märchens von 1000 Dukaten, oder Judas Ischarioth, dem Zweiten." It purports to have been written by Lessing's stepson, König, and recounts the story of the controversy. It shows how libellous this accusation is, and says that the forbidding of their further publication was rather because of the dreadful uproar that Pastor Goeze caused, than because of the contents of the fragments.

The part remaining now for us to consider is the mooted question of Lessing's real attitude toward the fragments.
ESTIMATES OF THE CONTROVERSY AND THOSE CONNECTED WITH IT.

After Lessing's death, other editions of the fragments were published, and the remainder of the manuscript, not issued by him, appeared in 1787. Later the original manuscript was given by Reimarus' son to the Hamburg city library, where it is now.

The comments of other writers on the Manuscript and its author, Goeze and his attacks, Lessing's attitude toward the questions involved, and all the other aspects of the controversy have been numerous. A few selected quotations will show the tendency of opinion since that time.

"The author, (Reimarus), whose specialty had been oriental and classical philology, had, among his contemporaries, enjoyed the reputation of a great scholar, but his views were not considered discordant with the orthodoxy of his day. A number of his works which dealt with religious topics appeared in as many as four or more editions and were universally regarded as good and wholesome even for wider circles. Lessing was perfectly correct, when, in the controversy that followed, he pointed out to his opponents that the man they were now maligning had not very long before been regarded as a model scholar and a stanch defender of the faith. All of Reimarus' hostility to Christianity was subordinated to his greater enmity against Atheism and Materialism......A true disciple of his time, indeed by some considered to be the best exponent of the Enlightenment, Reimarus lacks all appreciation of historical development, ruthlessly condemns and himself lacks all poetic imagination,
and adds to this an inveterate hatred against the Jewish race, whether ancient or contemporary. It is significant that of all the other religions mentioned not one is accused of such gross absurdity and intolerant bigotry as the Christian religion. Through all the bitter invectives, even through the frequent instances of frivolity with which the worst possible construction is put upon characters and events sacred to the heart of many, there shines an austere morality, a cold reverence for the deity and a stoic trust in its providential guidance which command for the author a respect as cold as his for the feelings of his fellows.¹

"The philosophical standpoint of Reimarus was essentially that of Wolff, though more radical; the being of God, the divine plan in the world, the annihilation of doubt of the divine providence, the immortality of the soul, the advantages of religion were proved by reason, and so far his attitude was apologetic. He was awake to the fact that in his time many little works had appeared which assailed not only Christianity but all religion and ethics, and his aim was to oppose these and to set forth by the claims of reason the truths of natural religion as well as of Christianity."²

"The standpoint of the "Apologie" is that of pure naturalistic deism. Miracles and mysteries are denied, and natural

¹. Diekhoff, pp. 27-30.
². Schaff-Herzog Encyc.
religion is put forward as the absolute contradiction of revealed. The essential truths of the former are the existence of a wise and good Creator and the immortality of the soul. These truths are discoverable by reason, and are such as can constitute the basis of a universal religion. A revealed religion could never obtain universality, as it could never be intelligible and credible to all men. Even supposing its possibility, the Bible does not present such a revelation. It abounds in error as to matters of fact, contradicts human experience, reason and morals, and is one tissue of folly, deceit, enthusiasm, selfishness and crime. Moreover, it is not a doctrinal compendium, or catechism, which a revelation would have to be. What the Old Testament says of the worship of God is little, and that little worthless, while its writers are unacquainted with the second fundamental truth of religion, the immortality of the soul. The design of the writers of the New Testament, as well as that of Jesus, was not to teach true rational religion, but to serve their own selfish ambitions, in promoting which they exhibit an amazing combination of conscious fraud and enthusiasm. It is important, however, to remember that Reimarus attacked atheism with equal effect and sincerity, and that he was a man of high moral character, respected and esteemed by his contemporaries.1

H. Höffding summarizes Reimarus' position as follows:—
"Natural religion suffices; a revelation is therefore super-

fluous. Moreover, such a thing is both physically and morally impossible. God cannot interrupt His own work by miracles; nor can He favour some men above others by revelations which are not granted to all, and with which it is not even possible for all to become acquainted. But of all doctrines that of eternal punishment is most contrary, Reimarus thinks, to true ideas of God, and it is this point which first caused him to stumble."

The general opinion of Goeze is given concisely by Hebbel:—"Jedes Kind ist gewohnt, den Namen Tillys unmittelbar mit dem des Teufels zu verknüpfen; jeder Gymnasiast hat eine Periode, wo er nicht mehr von Pedantismus, sondern nur noch von Gotschedianismus schwadronirt, und Jedermann zählt den hamburgur Hauptpastor Johann Melchior Goeze nicht blosz zu den blindesten Zeloten, die der Protestantismus jemals erzeugte, sondern auch zu den ärztesten Sündern wider den heiligen Geist." This view of Goeze is perhaps a trifle extreme. He was not a bad man, but was a zealous pastor, who matched his wits against a man who was so far his superior, that he could put Goeze into an extremely unfavorable light.

The opinions of Lessing's attitude toward the contents of the manuscript have been varied in the extreme. But as time has gone on, the views have become more and more uniform. The consensus of opinion, now, seems to be that Lessing had more than one end in view when he published the Fragments. For one thing, he believed in free discussion of all topics,

as has already been said. Then, Mendelssohn and Nicolai were probably correct when they accused their friend of being too desirous of getting into a discussion with the theologians of the day. Some men of his time said that Lessing agreed with Reimarus in his beliefs, but it seems to me that there is no reason to do otherwise than accept Lessing's statements as to his attitude, such as he gave in the seventh and eleventh of the "Anti-Goeze" articles. Of course, allowance must be made for the extra heat of some statements, because of the violence of the controversy, but it does not seem at all difficult to get an average from the various statements. It seems to be thought quite generally that Lessing's personal opinion underwent a change during the years of his connection with the manuscript, and that he agreed less with Reimarus' views in 1779 than ten years earlier. Some estimates of the matter are as follows:

"Lessing, no doubt, so far identified himself with the views set forth in these papers, that we cannot but regard him as sympathizing with them. He did so, however, in the interest of what he believed to be freedom of thought rather than from unqualified acceptance of the negative conclusions of his unknown author.....We do not claim that Lessing was a Christian, but he had drunk so deeply of the spirit of Christianity, and had appropriated so much that is characteristic of it in its results, that it would be gross calumny to think or speak of him as anti-Christian. Unable to join any of the existing sects or churches, Lessing nevertheless was devoutly religious in a very real sense."

"The conception of Lessing is, that in God's great schoolbook of Time, each of the historic religions is a lesson set for humanity's learning. This involves the non-finality of any one of them....He gave the basal thought of Hegel's philosophy of religion in his theory of the education of the race, while the foundation for Kant's doctrine of ethics was laid in Lessing's insistences on the gospel of pure morality."¹

"The introduction and the notes which he appended to the 'Fragments' were professedly intended to check the harm that might issue from them; at the same time they very skillfully opened up the controversy. They pointed out that the objections of the fragmentist were directed entirely against the theoretical side of the Christian religion, and might possibly alarm the learned theologian who sees his theories endangered, but surely not the Christian who feels in his heart the reality and force of his religion. They show in what way the objections, or some of them, might be met. Much of these notes is diplomacy on Lessing's part, surely not his honest conviction.....He speaks from his heart when he points out that the belief in a verbal inspiration of the Bible is wholly untenable, and when he emphasizes the practical side of Christianity as over against the thoughtless and unfruitful confession of feith in the mysteries of the dogma."²

2. Diekhoff, pp. 32, 33.
"Zwar bekämpfte er die Orthodoxie fast von seinem ersten Federzug an, aber er bekämpfte sie nur als Organ der sozialen Unterdrückung, als Kappzaum der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, als ideologische Begleiterscheinung des fürstlichen Despotismus. Für Lessing war die Aufklärung nichts als die Selbstverständigung der bürgerlichen Klassen über ihre Lebensinteressen......Mag jeder glauben was er will, aber kein Glaube berechtigt einen Menschen, andere Menschen wegen eines anderen Glaubens zu verfolgen und zu unterdrücken.....Der verfolgten Orthodoxie wäre er ebenso beigesprungen, wie er sich der verfolgenden widersetzte und wie er das Päpstliche Verbot des Jesuitenordens für ungerecht erklärte. Die Religion war ihm einfach eine Privatsache, die schlechterdings nicht in die bürgerlichen Rechtsverhältnisse hineinzureden hatte, und hierin bestand der gewaltige Abstand seiner Toleranz von der sogenannten 'Toleranz' Friedrichs, das heisst der bürgerlichen von der despotischen Toleranz."¹

I know of no better words for the close of this account of Lessing and the Reimarus Manuscript than those in which Fichte characterized Lessing: "If no one of thy statements as thou hast expressed them in words shall permanently abide, yet thy spirit of insight into the soul of knowledge, thy perception of truth, which shall endure, thy deep, sincere soul, thy independence, and hatred of sham and easy-going negation shall be indestructible as our race."²

1. Lessing-Legende, 375, 376.
2. Chaut., 34: 528.
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