

**THE SPIRITUAL
ORDER AND
OTHER PAPERS**

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The spiritual order and other papers by Thomas Erskine

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THOMAS ERSKINE

**THE SPIRITUAL
ORDER AND
OTHER PAPERS**

THE SPIRITUAL ORDER
AND OTHER PAPERS.

THE SPIRITUAL ORDER

AND OTHER PAPERS

SELECTED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS

OF THE LATE

THOMAS ERSKINE OF LINLATHEN

THIRD EDITION

EDINBURGH
DAVID DOUGLAS

1884

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE circumstances in which this volume is given to the public call for some explanation.

Under the ever increasing infirmities of very advanced age, its author was unable to satisfy his own demand for unity and sequence in the utterance of his thoughts, and while he lived it would probably never have seen the light. Yet he felt he had a message for his generation, and he left it as his dying charge that his papers should be put into such order as was possible, that what was deemed suitable might be published.

Nothing more than arrangement and selection has been attempted. It has been regarded as a sacred duty to alter nothing and to add nothing. Where a few words seemed absolutely wanting they have been put within

square brackets. The only liberty taken, beyond verbal corrections, has been the occasional suppression of a passage which seemed more in place or better expressed elsewhere. Several of these abstracted paragraphs have been added as Fragments.

To those who feel their need of some help amidst the perplexities of the age, the book is offered with the confident hope that it will be found to contain much very precious guidance both for the spirit and understanding.

EDINBURGH, *May* 1871.

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I.

THE SPIRITUAL ORDER.

IN the Introduction to his *Life of Jesus* M. Renan gives it as his opinion that Strauss has written his book on the same subject too much as a theologian and too little as an historian. He may be right in his criticism; yet I cannot conceive that the subject could be properly treated without a considerable introduction of theological thought, and accordingly it appears to me that the want of such thought is a radical defect in M. Renan's own work.

The avowed purpose of the appearing of Jesus on earth, and of all that he said and did, was to proclaim "the kingdom of heaven"—the supremacy and reign of God and of His holy will—to call men to come into it and to submit themselves to it, as their only escape from sin and misery and confusion. That