

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL: EXTERNAL EVIDENCES

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BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following essay was read, in part, before the "Ministers' Institute," at its public meeting last October, in Providence, R.I. In considering the external evidences of the genuineness of the Gospel ascribed to John, it was out of the question, under the circumstances, to undertake anything more than the discussion of a few important points; and even these could not be properly treated within the time allowed.

In revising the paper for the *Unitarian Review* (February, March, June, 1880), and, with additions and corrections, for the volume of "Institute Essays," I have greatly enlarged some parts of it, particularly that relating to the evidence that the Fourth Gospel was used by Justin Martyr. The consideration of his quotations and of the hypotheses connected with them has given occasion to the long Notes appended to the essay, in which will be found the results of some original investigation. But the circumstances under which the essay is printed have compelled me to treat other parts of the evidence for the genuineness of this Gospel less thoroughly than I wished, and on certain points to content myself with mere references. It has also been necessary to give in a translation many quotations which scholars would have preferred to see in the original; but the translation has been made as literal as the English idiom would permit, and precise references to the passages cited are always given for the benefit of the critical student.

E. A.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., May 21, 1880.



THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL :

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES.

THE problem of the Fourth Gospel—that is, the question of its authorship and historical value—requires for its complete solution a consideration of many collateral questions which are still in debate. Until these are gradually disposed of by thorough investigation and discussion, we can hardly hope for a general agreement on the main question at issue. Such an agreement among scholars certainly does not at present exist. Since the “epoch-making” essay (to borrow a favorite phrase of the Germans) of Ferdinand Christian Baur, in the *Theologische Jahrbücher* for 1844, there has indeed been much shifting of ground on the part of the opponents of the genuineness of the Gospel; but among scholars of equal learning and ability, as Hilgenfeld, Keim, Scholten, Hausrath, Renan, on the one hand, and Godet, Beyschlag, Luthardt, Weiss, Lightfoot, on the other, opinions are yet divided, with a tendency, at least in Germany, toward the denial of its genuineness. Still, some of these collateral questions of which I have spoken seem to be approaching a settlement. I may notice first one of the most important, the question whether the relation of the Apostle John to Jewish Christianity was not such that it is impossible to suppose the Fourth Gospel to have proceeded from him, even at a late period of his life. This is a fundamental postulate of the theory of the Tübingen School, in regard to

the opposition of Paul to the three great Apostles, Peter, James, and John. The Apostle John, they say, wrote the Apocalypse, the most Jewish of all the books of the New Testament; but he could not have written the anti-Judaic Gospel. Recognizing most fully the great service which Baur and his followers have rendered to the history of primitive Christianity by their bold and searching investigations, I think it may be said that there is a wide-spread and deepening conviction among fair-minded scholars that the theory of the Tübingen School, in the form in which it has been presented by the coryphæi of the party, as Baur, Schwegler, Zeller, is an extreme view, resting largely on a false interpretation of many passages of the New Testament, and a false view of many early Christian writings. Matthew Arnold's protest against the excessive "vigour and rigour" of the Tübingen theories brings a good deal of plain English common-sense to bear on the subject, and exposes well some of the extravagances of Baur and others.* Still more weight is to be attached to the emphatic dissent of such an able and thoroughly independent scholar as Dr. James Donaldson, the author of the *Critical History of Christian Literature and Doctrine*, a work unhappily unfinished. But very significant is the remarkable article of Keim on the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem, in his latest work, *Aus dem Urchristenthum* ("Studies in the History of Early Christianity"), published in 1878, a short time before his lamented death. In this able essay, he demolishes the foundation of the Tübingen theory, vindicating in the main the historical character of the account in the Acts, and exposing the misinterpretation of the passage in the Epistle to the Galatians, on which Baur and his followers found their view of the absolute contradiction between the Acts and the Epistle. Holtzmann, Lipsius, Pfeleiderer, and especially Weizsäcker had already gone far in modifying the extreme view of Baur; but this essay of Keim's is a re-examination of the whole question with reference to all the recent discussions. The still later work of Schenkel,

* See his *God and the Bible*, Preface, and chaps. v., vi.

published during the present year (1879), *Das Christusbild der Apostel und der nachapostolischen Zeit* ("The Picture of Christ presented by the Apostles and by the Post-Apostolic Time"), is another conspicuous example of the same reaction. Schenkel remarks in the Preface to this volume:—

Having never been able to convince myself of the sheer opposition between Petrinism and Paulinism, it has also never been possible for me to get a credible conception of a reconciliation effected by means of a literature sailing between the contending parties under false colors. In respect to the Acts of the Apostles, in particular, I have been led in part to different results from those represented by the modern critical school. I have been forced to the conviction that it is a far more trustworthy source of information than is commonly allowed on the part of the modern criticism; that older documents worthy of credit, besides the well-known *We*-source, are contained in it; and that the Paulinist who composed it has not intentionally distorted (*entstellt*) the facts, but only placed them in the light in which they appeared to him and must have appeared to him from the time and circumstances under which he wrote. He has not, in my opinion, artificially brought upon the stage either a Paulinized Peter, or a Petrinized Paul, in order to mislead his readers, but has portrayed the two apostles just as he actually conceived of them on the basis of his incomplete information. (Preface, pp. x., xi.)

It would be hard to find two writers more thoroughly independent, whatever else may be said of them, than Keim and Schenkel. Considering their well-known position, they will hardly be stigmatized as "apologists" in the contemptuous sense in which that term is used by some recent writers, who seem to imagine that they display their freedom from partisan bias by giving their opponents bad names. On this subject of the one-sidedness of the Tübingen School, I might also refer to the very valuable remarks of Professor Fisher in his recent work on *The Beginnings of Christianity*, and in his earlier volume on *The Supernatural Origin of Christianity*. One of the ablest discussions of the question will also be found in the Essay on "St. Paul and the Three," appended to the commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, by Professor Lightfoot, now Bishop of Durham, a scholar who has no superior among the Germans in breadth of learning and thoroughness of research. The dissertation of Professor