

**THE FOURTH GOSPEL: THE
QUESTION OF ITS ORIGIN
STATED AND DISCUSSED**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649341559

The Fourth Gospel: The Question of Its Origin Stated and Discussed by James Freeman Clarke

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

**THE FOURTH GOSPEL: THE
QUESTION OF ITS ORIGIN
STATED AND DISCUSSED**

THE FOURTH GOSPEL

THE QUESTION OF ITS ORIGIN STATED
AND DISCUSSED

BY

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

BOSTON

GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET
1886

COPYRIGHT,
BY GEORGE H. ELLIS,
1886.

610.8
C 598.4 fo
1886
copy 1

THE PROBLEM OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

THE problem of the Fourth Gospel is this; how could a Gospel proceeding from John, one of the companions and apostles of Jesus, give a view of his character and life differing in many ways from that of the other three evangelists? On the other hand, if it was *not* written by John, but by some later author, how could it have been universally received in the early Church as genuine and authentic, and no trace of opposition to it be found in all Christendom, from Egypt to Gaul? If it gives us a Gnostic Jesus or an Alexandrian Jesus, and not the Jesus of Palestine, its universal reception is all the more unaccountable.

This is the problem which has been discussed in Germany and elsewhere since the time of Ferdinand Christian Baur, and is yet an unsettled question. I shall give the arguments on both sides, especially those which proceed from

such opponents of the Johannine origin of the Gospel as Baur himself, John James Tayler and Albert Réville; and, more recently, as they are summed up by Holtzmann in his *Historical and Critical Introduction to the New Testament* (Freiburg, 1885), and by Dr. Abbott in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

) We will first consider the objections to the authorship of John, as given some years since in the very able work of Mr. Tayler, formerly principal of Manchester New College, London. This book is called *An Attempt to ascertain the Character of the Fourth Gospel*. But it is not so much an examination as an argument. (It is a fair and honest attempt to disprove the apostolic authorship of the Gospel; and it sums up the reasons for rejecting it, as given by Baur and others down to 1867. In considering Mr. Tayler's arguments, we shall know the strongest points that could be made against the received opinion at the time when Mr. Tayler wrote; and perhaps, even now, there is no one book which states and summarizes them so well.

I.

Mr. Tayler first describes the evident difference between the three Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth, as regards the scene of Christ's labors, the form of his teachings, the events mentioned, and the resulting view of the character of Christ himself. He thinks that John's Gospel is not so much another as a different Gospel from those of the Synoptics. Considering it impossible that the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse should have been written by the same author, he decides in favor of the authenticity of the latter. The references to the Apostle John in Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition show, in his opinion, that John belonged to the Jewish section of the Christian Church, to which, plainly, the author of the Fourth Gospel does not belong. The external testimonies to the apostolic authorship of the Gospel do not begin to be satisfactory till toward the end of the second century. The doctrine of the Logos, he thinks, could not have been blended so intimately with Christianity at an early period as it appears in this book. In the apologists of the second century, indeed, he finds this Logos doc-

trine fully accepted ; but, in the writings of Paul, instead of the "Logos" we have the "Spirit." But his chief reason for rejecting the Gospel as apostolic is from its position in regard to the time of the Last Supper. The three Synoptics place it on the fourteenth of Nisan, on the day of the Passover; but John puts it on the day before, and fixes the crucifixion on the Passover. That the Fourth Gospel is wrong here, Mr. Taylor thinks evident; and that, therefore, it could not be written by John, who was incapable of such a mistake, and whose authority was appealed to in Ephesus in favor of the other date. For such reasons as these, he considers himself compelled to deny the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Who was really the writer he is unable to say; but he is convinced that it was some one who was living and writing before the middle of the second century,—certainly before the death of Papias in A.D. 163, and probably after A.D. 135. He differs from Dr. Baur, who considers it of Alexandrine origin, since he regards the uniform tradition of the Church in favor of Ephesus conclusive as to the place of its composition.

The Fourth Gospel, therefore, according to

Mr. Tayler, "belongs to the primitive age of Christianity, and cannot be brought lower than the first half of the second century." Nevertheless, he does not consider it as the work of imposture: partly because it does not speak of John as its author till the last chapter, which he holds to be a later addition; and, also, because the book is really filled with the current of spiritual life which came from Jesus. His work ends with an attempt to show that Baron Bunsen was wrong in saying that, if John's Gospel is not authentic, there can be no historical Christ and no Christian Church. On the other hand, Mr. Tayler asserts that Christianity is not damaged by the results of this criticism, and that we lose nothing in discovering that the Fourth Gospel was not the work of an apostle, but of an unknown writer at Ephesus, in the second century.

Let us next consider the subsequent history of this question, and the present state of opinion among the critics of Germany, as given in Holtzmann's recent book (1885). Holtzmann is one of the leading theologians of the school of Baur; and, like Mr. Tayler and Réville, he rejects the Johannine authorship. We may thus depend on his giving full weight to the objections to the received opinion.