

**THE FOURTH GOSPEL,
ITS SIGNIFICANCE
AND ENVIRONMENT**

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The Fourth gospel, its significance and environment by Robert Harvey Strachan

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BY

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TO
MY WIFE



ABBREVIATIONS

- Bevan, *SS*—"Stoics and Sceptics." E. Bevan. 1913.
Davidson, *SC*—"The Stoic Creed." W. L. Davidson. 1907.
Drummond, *CAFG*—"The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel." J. Drummond. 1903.
Harrison, *AAR*—"Ancient Art and Ritual." J. Harrison. 1915.
Hastings, *DCG*—"Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels." Edited by J. Hastings. Vol. i., 1906; vol. ii., 1908.
Johnston, *PPG*—"The Philosophy of the Fourth Gospel." J. S. Johnston. 1909.
Kennedy, *PMR*—"St Paul and the Mystery-Religions." H. A. A. Kennedy. 1914.
Mackintosh, *PJC*—"The Person of Jesus Christ." H. R. Mackintosh. (S.C.M., 1912.)
Moffatt, *LNT*—"Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament." J. Moffatt. 1911.
Moffatt, *TG*—"The Theology of the Gospels." J. Moffatt. 1912.
Murray, *FSGR*—"Four Stages of Greek Religion." Gilbert Murray. 1912.
Scott, *FG*—"The Fourth Gospel." E. F. Scott. 1906.
Scott, *VFG*—"The Historical and Religious Value of the Fourth Gospel." E. F. Scott. 1910.



PREFACE

A COMPLETE statement of the problem of the Fourth Gospel has not been attempted in these pages. Rather the object has been to aid students of the English Bible to reconstruct for themselves the environment in and for which the Gospel presumably was written. Each Biblical writer has a message primarily for his own time, and it is impossible for us to obtain either the full devotional or instructional value of Scripture without first ascertaining what these writers really meant to say to their contemporaries. Scholars are gradually enabling us to rethink the writers' thoughts and to realise their intentions; nowhere is our debt greater to New Testament scholarship in this regard than in the case of the Fourth Gospel. The historical method of interpretation applied to the New Testament is proving itself essentially constructive, and a powerful ally of the devotional life; for men in every age are wonderfully alike when moved by the Spirit that leads into "all the truth," just as the religious difficulties of every age are wonderfully akin when properly interpreted.

I have become convinced that the key to the understanding of the Fourth Gospel is to regard it as an *apologia* for the Christian faith, as it emerged A.D. 90-110. With regard to the question of authorship, the arguments for and against the apostolic authorship will be found in many competent commentaries, textbooks, and dictionary articles, and need not be repeated here. The position adopted in this book is that memoirs of the Apostle John and reports of his preaching form the basis of the whole work, which has been put into its