

**THE DOCTRINE OF ST.
JOHN: AN ESSAY IN
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**

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The doctrine of St. John: an essay in Biblical theology by Walter Lowrie

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WALTER LOWRIE

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J. P. Menden
THE

DOCTRINE OF SAINT JOHN

An Essay in Biblical Theology

BY

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MISSION PRIST IN THE CITY MISSION, PHILADELPHIA




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TO THE
VERY LEARNED FACULTY
OF
Princeton Theological Seminary,

TO WHOSE TUITION I OWE THE INCEPTION OF THIS STUDY,
AS I OWE ITS COMPLETION TO THE OPPORTUNITY
OF FOREIGN STUDY WHICH I ENJOYED AS
NON-RESIDENT FELLOW OF
THEIR SCHOOL,

I HAVE THE HONOR TO DEDICATE
THIS BOOK.

N. B. — The system of scripture reference which is here adopted has for some years been used in Germany, and has been lately adopted in certain standard English works. It is especially convenient for the present purpose, since the references are in the main to but two books, the Gospel and the First Epistle of S. John. The larger numeral refers to the chapter; the smaller, to the verse. The Gospel is always intended when no other reference is indicated, expressly or in the context. S. John's Epistles are denoted by the Roman numerals I., II., and III. Other writings are quoted by name, abbreviated as usual.

Preface

THIS essay was originally presented as an academic thesis. During the years which have since elapsed, I have followed up the study with interest, although I have never had time to devote myself professedly to it. This presentation of the subject, although it is far more than a mere revision, reproduces substantially the conception of the earlier study; and it is set forth with the more confidence, because it has thus stood the test of time, of broader study, and of more mature reflection.

This essay aims at interpreting the theology of S. John as a whole. There is an abundance of detailed exegetical studies of S. John's writings; there are also many valuable studies of the several component parts of S. John's theology: but it appears as if no one had seriously undertaken to do for S. John what has in a measure been accomplished in the case of S. Paul; — to give such an exposition of his thought as shall comprise, not only all of his theology — in the sense that every topic of his theology is discussed between the covers of a single book, — but his theology as a whole, as a system. It would not be difficult to arrange the several topics of the Johannine doctrine according to the familiar

rubrics of ecclesiastical theology or according to any arbitrary scheme; but it is a matter of very great difficulty, as it is also of very great importance, to arrange S. John's doctrine according to a system which reflects the peculiar complexion of his own thought. It is chiefly in this respect that this essay may claim to be an independent contribution. To this interest, to the aim of giving a total impression of S. John's theology as an organic unity, every thing has been subordinated, and something perhaps sacrificed in the discussion of the several parts. A glance at the table of contents will show with how much care the construction of S. John's doctrinal system has been studied. I cannot claim that this scheme is established beyond the need of revision; the only hope one can cherish in such a case is that it may approve itself to be a more or less close approximation to the normal, natural development of S. John's doctrine. It will attest its own correctness just in so far as it avails to illuminate S. John's specific doctrines, and to render intelligible their correlation.

I had hoped that, by dwelling upon the salient features of S. John's doctrine, by making prominent the unity of his thought, by omitting technical details, literary references, and any thing which might interfere with the smooth continuity of the exposition, this book might be made available for a far larger circle of readers than is accustomed to interest itself in theological science. That purpose I have had in mind throughout; and although, in reviewing the

work, I cannot claim that I have altogether succeeded, I still cannot devise any way to make it easier reading without making it the poorer. The subject is in itself peculiarly fit to enlist a popular interest; in importance it is not inferior to any theme which can occupy the human mind; and with the attention which it undeniably deserves it will be found at least as easy of comprehension as the system of any pagan philosopher.

I have made in the text almost no references to authorities, but I cannot forbear mentioning here a few books which have proved of capital importance for this study. If I mention first the well known work of Bernard Weiss, "*Der johanneische Lehrbegriff*," it is less as an expression of satisfaction with its treatment, than as an acknowledgment of the fact that it has had a leading influence in the study of the subject, and remains to-day the only book — with the exception of the recent work of Professor Stevens of Yale University — which deals exclusively with the Johannine theology, and professes to give a complete representation of it. There are other works to which I must acknowledge more serious obligation, although they are but indirect or partial contributions to the study: E. Haupt, "*Com. on the 1st Epistle of John*," Eng. trans.; Franke, "*Das Alte Testament bei Johannes*;" Schlatter, "*Der Glaube im Neuen Testament*." It will be readily recognised that a work like the present must be far more broadly indebted than this scant acknowledgment would reveal.