

THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE JOHANNEAN QUESTION.

I. THE TENDENCY OF RECENT CRITICISM.¹

I HAD for some time had it in mind to attempt a survey of the present position of the Johannean question, taking as a text what I conceive to be the most conspicuous phenomenon of recent times in respect to it—the mutual *rapprochement* of the two great schools of opinion on the subject—when I found that the task had been already done for me. The same attempt had been already made by one who possesses special qualifications for the purpose. Among German theologians, Dr. Schürer, for some time past of Giessen, but recently transferred to Kiel, holds an eminent place for the combination of solid learning with evenly balanced judgment. He distinctly belongs to the party which would be commonly called “critical”; and yet I do not know any writer who would command at the same time an equal degree of confidence on the side opposed to his own. From such a hand a review of the Johannean question is peculiarly welcome; and it is this which Dr. Schürer offers in a lecture delivered in 1889 before a clerical conference at Giessen.² But what especially caught my

¹ The series of papers of which this is the first is planned to fall under the following heads: (1) “The Tendency of Recent Criticism”; (2) “External Evidence”; (3) “Relation of the Fourth Gospel to the Synoptics”; (4) and (5) “The Author”; (6) “Partition and Derivation Theories.”

² *Ueber den gegenwärtigen Stand der Johanneischen Frage*, published in *Vorträge d. theol. Conferenz zu Giessen*, 1889. Since this was written an English version of Dr. Schürer's paper, with some additions and alterations, has appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for September. A reply by the present writer was inserted in the next number.

own attention in this was that it took its start from the same point which I had set before myself—the gradual convergence of the two wings of the critical advance, and the possibility of obtaining an understanding between them.

Schürer begins his address by mapping out the history of the criticism of the Fourth Gospel into three broadly marked periods. The first is headed by Bretschneider's *Probabilia*, published in 1820, which really, if not exactly in name, heads the list of works in which the authorship of the Gospel has been disputed, and which is rightly credited by Weiss¹ with anticipating all the main lines of later destructive criticism. At a subsequent date, and in fact on three distinct occasions, Bretschneider deliberately withdrew his contentions, and expressed himself convinced by the replies which they called forth.² To the same result contributed in a still higher degree the impressive personality of Schleiermacher, who came forward as a vehement champion of the genuineness of the Gospel. The decisive point with Schleiermacher was the "Totaleindruck"—the impression of the Gospel as a whole—"the impossibility of inventing a picture such as that there given of Christ."³ The difference between St. John and the Synoptics was parallel to that between the twofold presentation of Socrates by Plato and Xenophon: St. John had as much the deeper insight as Plato. For two decades, or rather more, these arguments held the field. Even the cautious and critical Credner gave a full adhesion to them.

The next period opens with an influence as great as that of Schleiermacher. Ferdinand Christian Baur first

¹ *Einleitung*, p. 611 f.

² For a full and clear account of Bretschneider's work, and of its place in his life, and bearing upon his general theological position, see Watkins, *Bampton Lectures* (1890), pp. 179-190.

³ Schürer, *Vortrag*, p. 44, *Contemporary Review*, p. 390; cf. Watkins, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 303.

expressed his views on the Fourth Gospel in the *Theologische Jahrbücher* for 1844. His effort here, as elsewhere, was to realize vividly the leading ideas of the Gospel, and place them in what seemed to be their historical surroundings. In the first part of this attempt he doubtless succeeded better than in the second. Baur's conception of the Gospel as an embodiment of the conflict between light and darkness caused by the incarnation of the Logos was at least far nearer the mark than the impossible date (160-170 A.D.) which he assigned to the Gospel. Within his own school the influence of Baur reigned supreme; but without it, the effect of these radical views was only to excite a more energetic opposition. What we see in this period is the Tübingen School, concentrated and unanimous, on the one side, and a heterogeneous body of outside opinion over against it, on the other.

This state of things, again, lasted for rather more than twenty years. Schürer dates the beginning of his third period from the appearance of vol. i. of Keim's *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara* in 1867. From that time to the present he thinks that the most conspicuous tendency had been that of which I have already spoken—the tendency towards a narrowing of the gap which separates the opposing forces from each other by mutual concessions.

Summarily these concessions are as follows. It is admitted that the external evidence carries back the composition of the Gospel some thirty or forty years beyond the date at which Baur had been inclined to place it. In other words, that at the very latest it must have been in existence in 130 A.D.; it is admitted, further, that the Gospel is not in any case a purely ideal composition, but that it embodies a greater or less amount of genuine and authentic tradition; and, lastly, it is admitted that the divergence between the Synoptic Gospels and St. John is not as wide as had been supposed.

On the affirmative side there are many, and it may be said an increasing number, who are prepared to allow that, even assuming the author of the Gospel to be St. John, still there is in the Gospel a certain subjective element; that in particular the discourses in the Gospel are not reproduced exactly as they were spoken, but with such unconscious moulding in form, if not in substance, as they could not well escape after lying for some fifty or sixty years in the Apostle's mind.

I follow Schürer's estimates of the concessions that are made in the critical camp, so as to guard against overstatement, though I think that we shall be able to put rather more emphasis upon some of them. At the same time, there are of course on both sides writers who cannot be exactly embraced under the definition given. A special word should be said on some of these.

The most irregular combatants in the critical army are Thoma and Jacobsen. Thoma has devoted to his subject a large volume of nearly 900 pages, entitled *Die Genesis des Johannes-Evangeliums* (Berlin, 1882). In this he goes through the Gospel chapter by chapter, and reduces the whole—not merely a salient point here or there—to elaborate and systematic allegory. The Gospel is with him from first to last the fictitious clothing of an idea or group of ideas. "All the narratives are allegory, all the persons are types, all the discourses are dogma, all the notes of time and place, all the names and numbers, are taken symbolically." With the result that, as Weiss puts it, "the most spiritual of the Gospels becomes a second-hand and artificial mosaic, which would do no dishonour to the perverse ingenuity of a Talmudist or to the fantastic imagination of an Alexandrian."¹ Two brief specimens will, I think, be enough to give an idea of what this work is like. The question of the disciples in St. John i. 38, *ποῦ μένεις* ;

¹ *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, 1882, col. 221.

“Where abidest Thou?” is suggested by the passionate words of the lover in the Song of Songs (i. 7): “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.” The double hearing before Annas and Caiaphas is introduced because the false prophet in the Apocalypse, the counterpart of the true Lamb, the true High Priest, has two horns¹ (Rev. xiii. 11)! Schürer himself dismisses this book as “a perfect model of fantastic caprice”²; neither has it met with much more favour elsewhere, though we shall see that it contains some good points, forcibly and clearly stated.³ A similar view to Thoma’s seems to be taken by Hö nig.

Still less can we recognise the “spiritual Gospel” in Jacobsen’s *Untersuchungen über das Johannes-Evangelium* (Berlin, 1884), a rude⁴ attempt to explain the Fourth Gospel as constructed out of materials supplied by the Synoptic Gospels, especially St. Luke, with some further help from St. Paul. It is not without its significance for the scientific value of their inquiries that both Thoma and Jacobsen⁵—strange to say, in the company of so really learned a scholar as Hilgenfeld⁶—defend the genuineness of the adulteress section (St. John vii. 53–viii. 11) as a part of the original Gospel.

Besides these, though in a different sense, we must also put in a place by himself an English writer, Rev. John A. Cross, Vicar of St. John’s, Little Holbeck, Leeds. I shall have occasion later to come back to some of Mr. Cross’ arguments, but there is one peculiarity in his position which it seems right to notice here. He has published a succession

¹ *Die Genesis*, etc., pp. 407, 670.

² Page 56; see also Beyschlag, *Leben Jesu*, vol. i., p. 116.

³ Holtzmann in *Theol. Literaturbericht* (1885), p. 79.

⁴ Mangold speaks justly of his “hier und da recht herben Kritik” (*ap.* Bleek, *Einleitung*, fourth edition, Berlin, 1886, p. 291).

⁵ *Untersuchungen*, p. 100.

⁶ *Die Evangelien* (Leipzig, 1854), p. 285.

of articles in different quarters—in the *Westminster Review*, (August, 1890), the *Critical Review* (February, 1891), and the *Classical Review* (December, 1890, April and June, 1891), dealing with various points in the evidence relating to the Fourth Gospel. Yet, although the tendency of his arguments is uniformly negative, he nowhere says in so many words that he does not believe the Gospel to have been written by St. John. He rejects most of the current arguments, but, for all we know, he may have others in reserve which supply their place more effectually. Now with Mr. Cross' private opinion, as such, I am not concerned. He has every right to keep it to himself, if he wishes to do so. But I cannot help pointing out that criticism of this purely negative kind is not appropriate to a historical subject. It is the criticism of the law-courts, not of the historian. History consists in weighing and testing competing hypotheses, and deciding which fits best and with least forcing into the delicate framework of surrounding facts. But Mr. Cross gives us no alternative to consider. The very utmost that his arguments would amount to, supposing that they were more entirely valid than I think they are, would be that other hypotheses besides that of Johannean authorship were not excluded. When that was proved, we should still have to test those hypotheses in the same manner, and see that enough was not left in the old view to make it, after all deductions, preferable to the new. However I would not deny that the arguments in question have their use. They will at least prevent conventional and indolent acquiescence. And in the papers which follow, they may make it necessary for me to go over some ground which I should otherwise have felt free to pass by.

I hope, as I proceed, to do what I can at once to define more closely the extent of the concessions with which the two opposing parties are meeting each other, and to make

a few remarks on the points which are still in controversy. But as a preliminary we may take a glance at the general drift and current of inquiry. This will appear better from looking broadly at the literature of the subject than from allowing ourselves to be entangled at once in the study of details.

It cannot fail to strike us how frequently, along with the freest criticism, even those writers who deny that St. John wrote the Gospel as we have it yet have recourse to the supposition that he had some direct or indirect connexion with it. It is this tendency which has gained so much in strength during the latest period of Johannean criticism. It has taken several forms. Some writers make, as it were, a vertical division in the contents of the Gospel; others, a horizontal. Some attempt to mark off a Gospel within the Gospel—certain portions which they regard as genuine and apostolic, while the rest is of the nature of later supplemental addition. Others would not venture upon drawing a definite line of this kind, but they would say that the recollections of an Apostle or eye-witness have passed through the hands of disciples, and that what we now have is not so much the recollections pure and simple, as the same recollections seen through a medium, coloured and modified by the action of another mind than that on which they were first impressed.

The first of these two kinds of partition-theory¹ had been tried by several writers in quick succession, some fifty years ago: first by Weisse, in 1838;² then by Schenkel, in 1840;³ lastly by Schweizer, in 1841.⁴ All these attempts, it will be seen, fall in the first stage of the controversy,

¹ I believe that I owe the phrase to Archdeacon Watkins, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 246.

² In *Die Evangelische Geschichte Kritisch-philosophisch bearbeitet*. (Leipzig, 1838.)

³ In an article in *Theol. Studien und Kritiken*.

⁴ In *Das Ev. Johannis, etc., kritisch untersucht*. (Leipzig, 1841.)

before Baur had entered into it. They have been revived quite recently, on lines not very dissimilar from those originally traced, in two rather notable instances. One is the elaborate work of Dr. H. H. Wendt, professor at Heidelberg, entitled *Die Lehre Jesu*, of which the first volume appeared in 1886 and the second last year. The other is the still more remarkable, if somewhat eccentric, series of works by Dr. Hugo Delff, *Die Geschichte des Rabbi Jesus von Nazareth* (Leipzig, 1889); *Das vierte Evangelium* (Husum, 1890); *Neue Beiträge zur Kritik u. Erklärung d. vierten Evangeliums* (Husum, 1890). Into the more detailed views of these writers I hope to enter later. Both vindicate by far the greater part of the Gospel for an eye-witness, if not actually for the Apostle St. John.

Wendt adopted the traditional identification of the author with the Apostle. Dr. Delff in this, as in most other matters, takes a way of his own. He believes that the author bore the name of "John," but that he was the person afterwards known as "the presbyter," not the Apostle. It is not however as "presbyter" that Dr. Delff is most fond of describing him; the phrase which he more often uses is "the high priest John." This at once recalls the famous letter of Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, about the year 190 A.D., an extract from which has been preserved by Eusebius,¹ appealing amongst other authorities on the Paschal Controversy to John, "who lay on the bosom of the Lord, who acted as priest, wearing the plate of gold (ὁς ἐγενήθη ἱερεὺς τὸ πέταλον πεφορεκῶς),² both witness and teacher." The "golden plate" is that worn by the high priest with the inscription HOLINESS TO THE LORD (Exod. xxviii. 36). Delff therefore argues that ἱερεὺς is used broadly for "high priest," as even in the Mishnah.³ He infers that although

¹ *H. E.* v. 24, iii. 31.

² So most MSS. of Eusebius, here and in iii. 31, for πεφορεκῶς.

³ *Das vierte Evangelium*, p. 9.

the name "John" does not appear on the list of high priests, he belonged nevertheless to the high-priestly family, the *γένος ἀρχιερατικόν* of Acts iv. 6, Josephus *B. J.* iv. 3, 6, etc. He interprets *πεφορεκώς* as implying "not that the wearing of the plate was a constant attribute of his person or of his priestly dignity, but that he had worn it once in the past, and therefore that he once fulfilled the high-priestly functions in the dress of the high priest." He supports this by reference to the provision in the Talmud that if the high priest was prevented from acting on the Day of Atonement, a substitute might act for him. Delff thinks that John, who wrote the Gospel, had once acted in that capacity. In that case, the idea of his having *once* so acted would be contained not, as Delff seems to think in *πεφορεκώς*, but rather in the aorist *ἐγενήθη*. Still it may be noticed as perhaps a slight argument against the common view that it was at Ephesus that John took to wearing the high priest's plate, that the term is *πεφορεκώς* and not *φορῶν*. Delff is quite right in pointing out that Polycrates, who was himself bishop of Ephesus, and an old man of at least sixty-five when he wrote, as well as counting seven bishops among his relatives, represents an exceptionally good and broadly based tradition. The passage is at once important and enigmatic, but I incline to think that some literal fact lies behind it, and that it is not merely a high-flown metaphor, as Bishop Lightfoot preferred to suppose.¹ It is an element in the question that Epiphanius ascribes the wearing of the *πέταλον* also to James the brother of the Lord—perhaps on the authority of Hegesippus, from whom other statements on the immediate context seem to be taken.² This would not be quite such good evidence as that of Polycrates, but there is the further possibility that

¹ *Galatians*, p. 345, ed. 2; cf. *Philippians*, p. 252, ed. 1.

² Compare Epiph., *Her.* lxxviii. 14, with Eus., *H. E.* ii. 23.

Epiphanius may have transferred the statement from St. John to St. James by a slip of memory.¹

It was certainly an ingenious idea of Delff's to claim for the author of the Gospel this connexion with the high-priestly family, because it would at once explain not only the allusion to high placed personages like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa, but also the accounts of secret sittings of the Sanhedrin, like that at which it was decided to compass our Lord's death, and the statement that many of the chief rulers believed on Him, though they were afraid to confess it.² This however is gained at the cost of sacrificing the passages which relate to the Galilæan ministry as interpolations. And it is a question whether the simple statement of St. John xviii. 15, "that disciple was known (*γνωστός*) to the high priest," does not sufficiently satisfy the facts on the traditional view.³ It satisfies at least the data of the Gospel, which does seem to imply that the author had some private source of information in these higher circles. It would be enough that he should be in contact with them; he need not have mixed among them on terms of actual equality.

The two writers whom I have mentioned, Wendt and Delff, both venture upon a definite excision of certain parts of the Gospel as not directly proceeding either from the Apostle or the presbyter. I hope to discuss their theories on this head at the close of these papers. But in assigning the main body of the Gospel to John, whether Apostle or presbyter, they naturally do not exclude a certain amount of redaction by the final editor. It is a more common

¹ Cf. Lipsius, *Apokr. Apostelgesch.* ii. 2, 246. It would be rather in favour of Epiphanius' statement as at least in keeping with that of Hegesippus, preserved in Eusebius, that Hegesippus makes St. James enter the holy place. There is however in any case a legendary element in this narrative.

² St. John xi. 47-53, xii. 42, 43; cf. vii. 45-52.

³ It has often been pointed out that the fact that Zebedee, the father of John, had "hired servants" (Mark i. 20) shows him to have been a man of some substance.

view in the critical school to ascribe the whole of the Gospel to such an editor, but to believe that he embodied in it an authentic—and many would add Johannean—tradition.

Of course there are many different shades in this admission. Ewald regards the Gospel as dictated by the Apostle to the willing scribes by whom he was surrounded. He finds in the style traces of this mode of composition. The opinion which he expresses on this head is interesting. "The sentences are short, but not seldom improved, repeated, supplemented, only at times more complicated in structure: this is just the manner of one who dictates words, sentences, and thoughts to an amanuensis, very different from the way in which Paul sketched out his thoughts in writing, and then left them for a skilful scribe to write out in a fair copy."¹ According to Ewald, the whole Gospel practically belongs to the Apostle. The scribes only put themselves forward in verses like St. John xix. 35, xxi. 24 f.

Reuss, in his fourth edition (to which alone I have access) speaks with much reserve on the subject of authorship, which he would seem to throw into—but not far into—the second century, but at the same time he allows that "a number of incidental details, notes of time and place, unimportant in themselves, of personal relations and particular circumstances of all kinds, may without forcing be referred to the statement or authority of an eye-witness"; and even the discourses, which are questioned in the form in which they stand, are yet said to be "drawn from the purest sources, and to have their roots in the best soil"² (*gesundestem Boden*).

Renan, in his latest phase, after having at one time

¹ *Die Johanneischen Schriften* (Göttingen, 1861), p. 50. The examples referred to are St. John iii. 22–24, iv. 1–3, 43–45.

² *Gesch. d. heil. Schrift. N. T.*, §§ 218, 220.

thought that the Gospel was written by a disciple of St. John during his lifetime, still refers it directly to his school, and sees in it in great part a reflection of the personal teaching of the Apostle.¹

Weizsäcker, in his *Apostolisches Zeitalter*, works up with great skill a picture of the school of St. John at Ephesus, which has for its twofold product at once the Apocalypse and the Gospel.

Even Holtzmann, in both editions of his *Einleitung*, admits that, with all its supernaturalism, the Gospel has not a little to show of the "hard, intractable facts of history."² In like manner in his brief *Handcommentar* he has recourse "to personal recollections, whether of the Apostle himself, under whose flag the work seeks to pass itself, or of his disciples, or of other witnesses whom the author had met in Palestine."³

Schürer appears to adopt in his own person a view very similar to that of Weizsäcker. He summarises that writer's opinion to the effect that the Gospel "everywhere rests upon a real tradition, but that this tradition has been handled with great freedom and persistently idealized."⁴ He adds that the leading ideas of Weizsäcker seem to him to point out the way on which the sharply divided forces of the assailants and defenders of the genuineness of the Gospel may one day join hands. In full accord with this are some weighty words which occur in the course of a review of a work on the Fourth Gospel by Oscar Holtzmann. Oscar Holtzmann, a younger cousin—not brother⁵—of the well-known Strassburg professor last mentioned, while allowing some traces of sound tradition in the Gospel,

¹ *Les Évangiles* (1877), p. 228 ff.

² Ed. 1, p. 431; ed. 2, p. 457.

³ Page 18.

⁴ *Vortrag*, p. 57.

⁵ As Watkins, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 262. The relationship is explained by the younger writer himself in the preface to his book (*Das Johannes-Evangelium*, Darmstadt, 1887, p. iv). Heinrich Holtzmann has a brother whose name is "Otto" (*Einleitung*, p. viii).

is inclined to reduce them to a minimum. On this Schürer remarks: "I confess that just these careful investigations of the author have strengthened me in the conviction that the contents of the Gospel cannot be understood merely as a free production on the basis of Synoptic materials, but that a separate tradition finds utterance (*durchklingt*) in it, although handled with supreme freedom."¹

The extent of this freedom is a point on which I hope to join issue with Dr. Schürer later. For the present I am not concerned with controversy, but am simply adducing evidence to show how far the two sides have gone along the road to meet each other. It is now my duty to show how the gradual approximation is not confined to the critical camp, but has its place in the conservative ranks as well.

The subject on which the greatest concessions have been made by conservative writers is the *discourses*. It is coming to be allowed, even by those who uphold the genuineness of the Gospel, that these have undergone some greater or less modification in the mind of the Apostle before they came to be set down in writing.

Perhaps I may be permitted to begin by quoting some words of my own, written now some twenty years ago. They are the words of one who was only a beginner in theological or critical studies, but who was at least trying his best to look at the facts before him freshly and truthfully. It was urged at the outset that there were two questions which ought to be kept separate: the question whether the discourses in the Fourth Gospel represent accurately the words spoken by our Lord, and the further question, whether they are such as to have been committed to writing by an Apostle. The objections were stated thus:

"It is well known that the style and subjects of the Johannean discourses have from the first supplied one of the gravest argu-

¹ *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, 1887, col. 330.

ments against the Gospel. It is urged against them doubly, that they are unlike the discourses contained in the Synoptic Gospels, which, on the other hand, correspond exactly to the description given of our Lord's discourses by tradition; and that while they differ from the discourses in the Synoptists, they present a close and suspicious similarity, both in style and matter, to the Epistle which goes under the name of St. John and was certainly written by the author of the Gospel."

To this it was replied by granting that both the difference and the likeness do exist, though both might be exaggerated on the question of degree. It was admitted that the discourses in the Synoptic Gospels agreed better with the description of our Lord's sayings by Justin Martyr than those in St. John; that among the latter were none which could be called in the strict sense "parables"; that the action was stationary, and not moving or dramatized; and that the thing figured was not cut loose from the figure. Further, that the discourses in St. John were as a rule longer, and not progressive or self-evolving, as with the Synoptists, but frequently returning to the same point, appearing to revolve round a fixed centre, and that centre, not exclusively, but very largely, the Speaker Himself, His works, His person, faith in Him, that Divine Paraclete who was to take His place when He was gone.

What, it was asked, was to be said to these differences? If it was assumed, as it might be, that the Synoptic discourses accurately represent the original, was it probable that the Johannean discourses were equally authentic? Could two such different types at one and the same time be true? To a certain extent they could. Dr. Westcott, for instance, argued that the difference of style corresponded to a difference in locality; that it was one thing to address the simple, impressible peasants of Galilee, and another thing to meet the subtle and learned doctors of the law at Jerusalem; that there were traces in the Synoptists of the same exalted claims and self-assertion; and that it

was only natural that the disciple "whom Jesus loved" should consciously or unconsciously mould his own utterances into the likeness of his Master's.

Every one, it was admitted, would feel that there was truth in these observations, and that they would carry us a certain way. But when it was asked if they would carry the whole way and cover the whole of the phenomena, it was thought that an absolute, impartial judge would say No. All the discourses in St. John were not placed in Judæa, neither were all those in the Synoptics placed in Galilee. The Johannean discourses were not all addressed to doctors of the law, and those in the Synoptists were not addressed exclusively to the populace; indeed the audiences did not seem to vary so very greatly. And the resemblance to the style of the Epistles extended to the discourses of the Baptist as well as to those of our Lord.

It seemed to follow from all this, that the discourses had undergone some sensible modification; and the only question was whether that modification was so great that they could not have been set down as we have them by an eye-witness and Apostle. This question was answered in the negative. It was thought that there was no greater modification than "might naturally result from a strong intellect and personality operating unconsciously upon the facts stored up in the memory, and gradually giving to them a different form, though without altering their essential nature and substance." A Gospel, in short, written by St. John need not have been expected to differ in character very much from such a Gospel as we should have had, if one had been written, from the hands of St. Paul.¹

All turned of course upon the range and extent of the alterations introduced into the discourses. We shall have to attempt to gauge this at a later stage. For the present

¹ *Authenticity and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel* (London, 1882), pp. 69-74.

we will only note the admissions of conservative critics. These, as we might suppose, differ considerably in degree. The reference made above to Dr. Westcott was to the *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*;¹ but I doubt if the elaborate and masterly *Prolegomena* in the *Speaker's Commentary* go, in set terms at least, much farther. It is admitted that we are "brought in the later record to a new aspect of the person and work of Christ, to a new phase of Christian thought, to a new era in the history of the Christian Church":² but, as well as I can gather, the facts are supposed to have been already there, although previously unapprehended; there is no express allowance for colouring imparted by the mind of the Apostle.

Next to Dr. Westcott's among English commentaries in fulness and thoroughness is the treatment of the Gospel by Dr. H. R. Reynolds in the *Pulpit Commentary*. Dr. Reynolds writes thus:

"A subjective element cannot be denied so far as the choice of subject matter is concerned, and even the order, the symmetry, the dramatic grandeur, and monotony of Divine substratum and ethical appeal; but it appears to me infinitely impossible that the subjectivity went so far as to create the form and substance of St. John's Gospel."

It is allowed as "conceivable that the author in the longer discourses may have introduced germane thoughts and words which belonged to different occasions," and that he "may moreover have selected those more notable and impressive teachings which justified and created in his own mind the sublime theodicy of the prologue"; but it is not allowed that he can have invented them.³

In like manner, Dr. Gloag, in his recent *Introduction to the Johannine Writings*,⁴ has "no hesitation in allowing a

¹ Pages 263-265, 267 (ed. 3, 1867).

² Page lxxvii.

³ *The Gospel of St. John*, vol. i., p. cxxvii. (third edition, 1888).

⁴ Page 146 f.

certain degree of subjectivity on the part of John. The thoughts and sentiments were those of Jesus, but John clothed them in his own language, and in some cases subjoins to those discourses of Jesus his own reflections. Probably, also, he unites into one discourse utterances of Jesus spoken at different times."

Dr. Plummer, in the *Cambridge Greek Testament*,¹ gives an interesting extract from a letter of Cardinal Newman's, in which attention is called to the fact that the ancients did not use the third person for the indirect and paraphrastic narration so much as we do. Hence though the first person may be used, the style and words may be those of the reporter, and not of the speaker. I will close this *catena* of English writers with a striking passage from the *Bampton Lectures*² of Archdeacon Watkins :

"The key to the Fourth Gospel lies in translation, or, if this term has acquired too narrow a meaning, transmutation, re-formation, growth; nor need we shrink from the true sense of the terms development and evolution. I mean translation in language, from Aramaic into Greek; translation in time extending over more than half a century, the writer passing from manhood to mature old age; translation in place, from Palestine to Ephesus; translation in outward modes of thought, from the simplicity of Jewish fishermen and peasants, or the ritual of Pharisees and priests, to the technicalities of a people who had formed for a century the meeting ground, and in part the union, of the philosophies of East and West."

Time will compel me to restrict the like *catena* which it would be easy to make from Continental writers.

Godet allows for transference from Aramaic to Greek; he allows for compression; and he allows for the action of memory. The discourses of the Fourth Gospel are therefore with him, not so much a photograph as an extracted essence. But he will not admit that "the slightest foreign element" has been introduced.³

¹ Page 100.

² Page 426 f.

³ *Commentary on St. John's Gospel* i. 135 (Eng. trans. 1876).

Luthardt goes a step beyond Godet. He takes up a saying of Keim's, and admits that the Gospel is "to a high degree subjective," but asserts that it is a misuse of language to treat this as equivalent to "historically arbitrary."

"When Hilgenfeld thinks that the historical is sunk in the doctrinal, we can readily own it, rightly understood. What they call doctrinal is just the soul of the history, which shines out everywhere from the body of the history. It is true that this is not possible without a certain freedom in the handling of the historical materials, and, indeed, a greater freedom than we permit to ourselves and to others. But in antiquity in general, and on biblical ground in particular, they stood towards the historical material in a manner different from ours."¹

Stronger even than this is the language used by Weiss and Beyschlag, not without a protest from Nösgen.² Weiss insists upon the free reproduction of the discourses in the Fourth Gospel, showing at once the style and doctrinal character of the Johannean Epistles. Not only the original text, he says, but the concrete historical relations of the words of Jesus are often effaced, while the evangelist concentrates his attention on their permanent significance and value in connexion with his view of the person of Christ.³ And Beyschlag no less emphatically endorses Weizsäcker's phrase about the "double countenance" (*Doppelantlitz*, *Doppelgesicht*) of the Fourth Gospel and the twofold impression which it makes, at once historical and unhistorical.⁴ Similarly Paul Ewald, another strong champion of the genuineness of the Gospel, nevertheless recognises its subjective character and the dominance of the idea.⁵

I do not of course wish to be answerable for all the

¹ *St. John the Author of the Fourth Gospel* (Eng. trans. 1875), p. 247 f.

² *Gesch. d. neutest. Offenbarung*, i. 63.

³ *Einleitung*, p. 607; *Leben Jesu*, i. 133, etc.

⁴ *Leben Jesu*, p. 125.

⁵ *Hauptproblem*, etc., p. 5.

expressions which have been quoted. As we go on, considerations will come into view which put a limit to the degree of subjectivity which can be admitted. I have only given a number of varied opinions, in order to bring out the common tendency which runs through them.

On both sides I have spoken of "concessions." We are apt to call any step which is made by one party towards another by that name. Yet it is really false and misleading. The differences of opinion with which we are concerned are not matters of negotiation, conducted on the principle of "give and take." Both sides, we may assume, are actuated by the same love and search for truth, and the determination to be satisfied with nothing less. But an open mind will listen to the arguments which are brought against as well as for its own conclusions. It is called upon for a decision, and it gives it to the best of its ability at the time. Still the dart *hæret lateri*. The impression sinks deeper and deeper. A certain unconscious shifting and adaptation takes place. And the next time the old decision is given it is in rather less confident tones, or not without substantial modification. So opponents gradually approach nearer to each other; and so they may be expected to approach. For truth is no monopoly, but is arrived at slowly and surely by the long co-operation, and the friction which is also co-operation, of many minds.

W. SANDAY.