

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE II.

CHRISTIAN ERNEST LUTHARDT ON THE DESIGN OF
ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

TRANSLATED BY CASPAR RENÉ GREGORY, PRINCETON, N. J.

(Continued from p. 29).

THE REAL DESIGN OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

LET us first gather together the results of the preceding discussions as to the final aim of the book.

The fourth Gospel takes for granted the existence of the other Gospels; but it does not intend to complete them, or to give additions to them. It is no more a collection of remarkable things out of the life of Christ than the first three are. It is a doctrinal treatise. As such it has no thought of bringing forth or preaching a new doctrine, as Reuss implies when he calls it a sermon, nor is it the expression of a newly risen view of the history or of the person of Christ; it does not preach a new doctrine which arose, whether outside or inside of the bounds of the Christian church; nor does it express, as Baumgarten-Crusius thinks,¹ a new view which came out in the church, or which, it may be, sprang up in the person of the writer, and was approved and spread abroad by the apostolic authority. Nor can the book be explained by the development of *πίστις* to *γνώσις* within the church, or by accommodation to the false *gnosis* outside of it. The point that it has in view is *πίστις*. This is the only point. The Gospel in hand does not teach or develop an idea taken from somewhere else, or thought out independently, or drawn out of the history. It presents to us the person of Christ. And this it does without regard to the distinction between the Gentile Christian element and

¹ *Theologische Auslegung der Johanneischen Schriften* (Jena, 1843.), Vol. I. p. xvii.

the Jewish Christian element of the church of Christ, and without regard to the different needs growing from this distinction and then present with it. The one whole Christ is made known to the one united church in his fullest essential power and most entire significance.¹

The book itself gives the best confirmation of this. Its whole character shows that it is an historical writing; and the result of our inquiries as to the mode of presentation was that it handles the history as doctrine. The question is, What does it mean to teach? It is a poor thing to stop the search after the final aim of a book at the very beginning of it, if that part does not speak clearly about the aim, and much more, if that is so shaped as to be open to the most manifold interpretations. On the other hand, if the conclusion of the book is clear, it decides and informs us about the whole, and, of course, then, about the beginning. Now, whether we look at the last word of Jesus that is reported in the Gospel, or at the last word of the evangelist, in each case alike we see that belief is its substance. Here, then, is the aim of the book. The instruction of the disciples by Jesus has this in view, and John's preaching has for its design the forming of this belief which brings real salvation. The last word of Jesus fixes belief more exactly, in that it sets belief in contrast with sight. Both also intend to produce belief without sight. And the leading design of the evangelist is to remark the way in which Jesus determined or tried to form this belief. Yet, while he sets forth this proceeding of Jesus, he has no thought of reviving it or adding to its efficacy by his testimony. The way of Jesus, however, is in general the following: The miracles done by him make the first demand for belief. But the importance of these arises from them not in so far as they are miracles, but in so far as they are *σημεία*, signs of something hidden which can and should be perceived in them. Here the two paths of belief and unbelief separate. The evangelist has to

¹ The Church in the Apostolic Age. By H. W. J. Thiersch. Translated by T. Carlyle (London, 1852), pp. 247-249.

show how the first general impression of miracles, much alike as it appeared to be when viewed from the outside, contained, according as each man presented himself to the miracles, both belief and unbelief. Even the last, however, often seemed to take on itself the form of belief. It all depended upon whether the beholder received the miracles as a proof of the superhuman in Christ and as the power of God unto salvation, or whether he rested in the wonderful appearance as such—be it that he sought in it a satisfying of national pride, or of curiosity, or any other advantage. A miracle always failed to reach its object, where astonishment at that which was uncommon was the only result, and where the astonished man was not touched or decided to something moral by it. To such a one it was not a *σημείον*.

The author has to show how, according as the personality held a moral position or not with respect to the miracles, the first general impression developed in different men either into belief or into unbelief, and that by a certain internal necessity. Hence, throughout his whole book, he treats of single miracles as *σημείους*. To him the way in which Jesus saluted a Simon and a Nathanael is no less a *σημείον* than the miracle at Cana or the many miracles which followed the cleansing of the Temple at Jerusalem. In like manner, the word to the Samaritan woman (iv. 17, 18) is in every respect similar to the second Galilean, or the healing at the pool of Bethesda. Then, again, the discourse at Capernaum joins the wonderful feeding, as his following entrance into Jerusalem joins the earlier miracle (chap. v.) which had merely served to make the Jews *θαυμάζειν* (vii. 21), but not to make them teachable. The healing of the blind man goes before the accounts in the ninth and tenth chapters, just as the raising of Lazarus leads to the accounts which come next. And so we may well call this book a *βιβλίον τῶν σημείων*. Not that miracles form the contents of the book, but that they have an important position all the way through it. They always serve as a starting-point for whatever the evangelist wishes especially to preach or to teach.

Thus and in this sense, in my opinion, the evangelist names his book. For *σημεία* must necessarily be understood with *ταῦτα* (xx. 81), so that the evangelist himself, and that not indistinctly, marks his book as a *βιβλίον τῶν σημείων*. And just as necessarily we are not to understand by these *σημείους* (in vs. 80) simply the events which took place after the resurrection, as Lücke and Olshausen think. De Wette has objected to Lücke's explanation, that *ποιεῖν* does not suit for *σημεία* in the sense of *τεκμηρίους τῆς ἀναστάσεως*, and further, that the evangelist here at best glances over his whole book and its aim; but these objections are not enough to disprove Lücke's notion. However, after the discussions we have gone through, every doubt must vanish. When Lücke asks¹ why the evangelist, if he understands by this the earlier miracles, did not call them *ἔργα*, as he had done before, we answer, first, that the word *σημείων* is quite as convenient for him, and secondly, that he had no right to use *ἔργα* here. For the miracles do not come under consideration at this point in so far as they are of a wonderful nature, but in so far as they are signs of what belongs to Jesus. It is on the latter, and not on the former, side that they stand in causal relation to belief. We need only to mention that those who have tried to free our Gospel critically from miracles have not understood it at all. It is plain that our view agrees with the whole symbolical and typical character of this book. Herder² might well say that in this book all that Jesus did became a sign and a miracle. We see, too, that he who added the conclusion (xxi. 25) did not speak so very exceedingly unintelligently as is commonly charged,³ but that when he wrote this he had in mind the idea of *σημείων* in John's sense.

But miracles were a certain sign, of course, only where belief already existed. Before that, morally viewed, they gave merely a general impression of the divinity and of the saving

¹ *Commentar über das Evangelium des Johannes* (3d ed., Bonn, 1840), Vol. II. p. 802.

² *Vom Sohne Gottes*, § 11.

³ Especially Lücke, in loco.

power in the person of Jesus. This general beginning of belief was led on to certain belief by means of the word of Jesus. Therefore the word almost all through follows upon the miracles. Both according to the design of Jesus, and according to the showing of the evangelist, the word appears to be that which founds and begets the actual and the right belief. The self-witness of Jesus, and the apostolic testimony to him as well, explain that which was veiled in the *σημείους*. Where the impression from these has been of the right moral sort, the word will be received throughout in obedience as working certain belief. Where a man cannot endure the word, that is only an indication that he has not let the miracles serve the purpose which they should have served for him. Thus, in the progress from the sign to the word, unbelief developed itself out of the apparent belief which the former often produced. We see this in numerous examples. This was the case with many Jews, and this, too, was the case with those disciples who left Jesus after his discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum. In others, the belief which was not moral that had been called forth by miracles was overcome and made true belief by the self-witness of Jesus. This, too, we find in the case of single Jews. Nicodemus may be named as an example. With others, again, as with the eleven and the rest of those who stood nearest to Jesus, the right moral beginning of belief was present from the first. It needed afterwards only to be made more perfect from time to time, and this, of course, was effected by many purifications and cleansings in the manner of a progressive education. When, however, it reaches belief by the word of Jesus, that belief frees itself from miracles in so far as they are miracles. They are important to it only as signs, and it now recognizes them as such only through the teaching word. It is all one to a believer whether the sign be of an uncommon kind, or not. That which is apparently altogether unimportant can serve to him for such a sign, if he has once reached the right believing perception by the self-witness of Jesus. It was

only signs in the form of miracles that offered an inducement to belief, and therefore such signs alone make the framework of our Gospel. But the word is that upon which belief rests, and that by which it knows that it was produced and begotten. Hence Jesus strives to lead his disciples and all who draw near to him to such a belief upon the word and in the word. The essential purport of the Gospel is to point out this method of instruction — to show how Jesus sought to free his disciples from miracles and to ground their belief upon the word. Of this the end of the fourth chapter may serve as proof. Our evangelist designs to follow in the track of his Master in this method of producing belief. He shows this clearly, not only by the whole drift of his book, but also by the last account of Thomas and by the conclusion of the Gospel. Such a belief, then, is a right belief, — that is to say, it has the essential blessing of salvation, — it is a belief unto life.

This object is the open aim of the instruction of Jesus, and therefore it will be for us really the final aim of the Gospel. We shall be utterly unable to set all sorts of others, as love and life, by its side or in its place.¹ Besides, the carrying out of this purpose is quite peculiar enough to answer the question of Lücke.² However, it may be made even more certain.

The question arises, namely, What is the substance of this belief? We reply that it is the same as the substance of the *σημεία* and of the word of Jesus. In both Jesus declares himself as the one who is: *ἐγὼ εἶμι* (viii. 24, 28; xiii. 19). But what definition of Jesus marks him completely? The Gospel gives answers from very different points of view. He is the one who should come; he is the one signified by the Old Testament; he is the truth itself, the fulness of all revelation; he is the satisfying of all the essential, saving needs of men; he is the possessor, the impartor, and at the same

¹ J. H. A. Ebrard. *Wissenschaftliche Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte* (2d ed., Erlangen, 1850). pp. 831.

² Vol. i. p. 194.

time the place of all communion with God; he is the one from above, etc. When Jesus and the evangelist wish to put it in one word, they say, the Son of God. It is for this reason that the evangelist names him as such at the end of his Gospel. The question as to the definite meaning of this word may be laid aside for the present. It is enough to know that all that Jesus and his witness could and would say of him is contained in this one word. It is the special designation of the one preached. We take it, also, in its most comprehensive and highest sense. Jesus, in all his self-exhibition and self-witness, sets himself forth as the Son of God, whether he testifies to himself in the *σημειοις* as the truth of the Old Testament, or as the life or as the light, or whether he speaks of himself in his word as the one come from heaven, the one who is in real communion with the Father, or whether he shows himself in his departure as the one raised up to God, etc. All that he says, that he does, that he experiences, and that he effects, reveals him as such. This, too, is the substance of the book. The evangelist designs to give testimony to no other than Jesus the Son of God — testimony to him in order to the belief which has him for its substance, and which, in consequence, has real salvation for its possession.

Besides, he does not mean to preach and teach some single thing in and about Jesus, to show this side or that side. He chooses the most comprehensive designation as a sign that Jesus, in the most comprehensive sense and in his essential signification, is the object of the preaching. All that belongs to Jesus is collected in the one *ἐγώ εἰμι*. Jehovah in the Old Testament declares himself clearly with יהוה אלהים; not merely as this or that, but as he who is God so certainly that he emphasizes that he is. In the same manner Jesus declares in the presence of the Jews, by the like sounding *ἐγώ εἰμι*, that he himself is, namely, that he is the one who should be in general, the man of the future, who is such only in that he is the Son of God.¹ At this we may well remark that the

¹ Compare J. C. K. Hofmann, *Der Schriftbeweis* (Nördlingen, 1852), Vol. I.

phrase occurs first of all in the very chapter which contains the sharpest opposition between the Jews and Jesus. It is repeated afterwards (xiii. 19) only as recalling that utterance, repeated on the last evening and at the beginning of the last discourses of Jesus to his disciples.

It thus appears that the discourses of Jesus and all the preachings of the evangelist are exclusively a testimony to Jesus, so that it is perfectly clear that they have him only for their substance as he really is. If this be so, it will be wholly inadmissible and impossible to say that a doctrine which arose or was borrowed somewhere or other is bound up with the person of Jesus, or that some special doctrine is transferred to it. For every special doctrine limits itself in opposition to the one which we have found, namely, the preaching of Jesus in his completeness. However Christian they may suppose the doctrine of the Logos to be, we have seen that there is no room for it as the fundamental thought of the Gospel, as the chief thing, and the like.

But what he is, he is in the *σάρξ*. What he is and his glory are to be revealed in the flesh. To his disciples, everything from the beginning on served for a *σημείον* to make known the glory veiled by the *σάρξ* (i. 14; compare ii. 11). Yet to the Jews the *σάρξ* was a hinderance to belief. The Jews always opposed themselves to Jesus's claims in that they arose from the flesh. They said that he was untaught (vii. 15), or that they knew his origin (vii. 27), or that he was a Galilean (vii. 41). They saw no circumstance in the beginning and course of his life that did not belong to their own (viii. 57). When he presented himself for special claims (vi.), or attributed to himself in distinction from all men a special relation to the Father (v. 18; x. 30, 38), they were offended, because they could not see that his *σάρξ* was in any way distinguished or preferred. It must be acknowledged that even the disciples were surprised at the man when they first knew him (comp. i. 46, 47). They,

p. 122. R. Stier, *The Words of the Lord Jesus*. Translated by Rev. W. B. Pope (T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1846), Vol. v. p. 337.

however, were helped over that difficulty by the fact that they gave themselves up in sincerity to the impression of the real personality of Jesus, and thus they reached certain belief that eternal life was decreed, and was to be found in him and in his *σάρξ* (vi. 68). He was the Son of God while in the flesh, in that his flesh continually demanded belief, and in that the sight of his glory was only imparted through such belief (comp. xi. 40), not the reverse, as the Jews would have it. Therefore Jesus comes to men at every hand with the claim for belief. If he repelled the Jews by this claim, he did the same to the Galileans. It is on this account that John brings forward quite prominently that event in the synagogue at Capernaum (chap. vi.), in order to show that he spoke in the same way in Galilee as in Jerusalem. In each he demanded decided and strong belief, and by this demand gave offence and thrust back respect. That more Galileans than Judeans followed him did not depend upon him. His behavior and his claims were everywhere the same. The evangelist means to make this especially clear.

Besides, it was quite possible to obtain belief on the ground of his own testimony to himself as the Son of God appearing in the flesh. He shows, by more than one example, that only sincerity and obedience towards God were required. At the very beginning, Jesus promised to the candor of Thomas, as to the others, the sight of his glory. And it will not be hard for the disciples to reach belief, since to their sincere mind everything serves to reveal the glory of Jesus. Jesus must also get from the mouth of the Jews testimony that he has done enough *σημεῖα* to establish his claim (vii. 31; x. 38). If they do not believe now, it is because of their unwillingness and insincerity. How often does Jesus upbraid them with the fact that when they could easily believe on him, they would not (comp. v. 36, 40; x. 25, 26)! In the discourses in which he rises to the highest point of opposition, he refers their unbelief to this. He accuses them with the most cutting keenness, because they were controlled

by an ungodly mind, and not by the truth, since otherwise they would have been forced to believe on him (comp. chap. viii.) From the keenness of this reproof we learn how very possible belief was to them. But even because all rests upon belief, Jesus does not intend so to reveal himself as to make it unnecessary, nor does he mean to compel it in any way. Belief should be a moral act, that is, an act of free self-determination. Where, however, a man once takes it up, we perceive that Jesus ever demands a decided belief. Thus we see both things brought out in the Gospel — not only how much need there was of belief, but also how very possible it was. This is of such moment that even the exaltation of Jesus should bear this character of being an object of belief. With this purpose Jesus speaks to Nicodemus of his exaltation, and from that time on this idea shines clearly. It is repeated in the fact that the judgment upon the refusal to believe appears to be that the demand for belief must be pressed only the more decidedly upon those who do not believe. The unbelief of the Jews caused that the exaltation of Jesus should first take place upon the cross, and that only after that, it rose to heavenly glory; the former openly; the latter, however, concealed from men. When they saw the exaltation of Jesus first fulfilled in the death on the cross, they should have believed on the crucified Son of God. But this belief was then only the harder for them, and yet could in nowise be spared. To the disciples, on the other hand, the death on the cross, was a power which first called forth rightly their believing love, — for now it is that we see Nicodemus come out openly, — and therefore also rewarded their belief with the sight of the glory. At the cross that miracle of life was granted to the disciples to be permitted to behold the corpse of Jesus (xix. 34 sq.). As for others, the unbelief of the Jews had caused that the resurrection-life and ascension of Jesus to glory should be concealed from the world (xiv. 22). And thus it was made doubly hard for them to believe in the glorified and ascended one whom they could not see, and whom they had last seen as a dead man.

Therefore they sought him in vain, and had to die in their sins (viii. 21, 24). His own disciples, on the other hand, received now the fullest certainty of belief and completeness of belief. Soon after, the one to whom both of these would come with the most difficulty, gave the ripest and highest confession of belief (xx. 28). Belief is now so perfected that it can dispense altogether with the preceding sight.

We see that the whole Gospel is taken up to such a degree with belief and its necessity and possibility, that at the bottom all rises from this. The essential design of the evangelist is seen to be the setting forth and proving how both belief and unbelief unfolded themselves from their own yet undecided and apparently poor beginnings. He shows that belief where it once was present became ever easier, and where it once was refused became ever less possible, and yet that the demand upon both for belief stood unchangeable in its necessity. How, then, can they say that this Gospel has especially to do with *γνώσις*, and let this idea overmaster that of *πίστις*? And is it much better to turn the thing, as Lücke does,¹ and say that the Gospel points out the right *γνώσις* in the fact that it is one and joined with *πίστις*? Yet, even in this, *πίστις*, much more than *γνώσις*, is the first idea, and the thing is really reversed; for with *πίστις* everywhere in sight, he shows us that *πίστις* is also a knowing, as well as a loving. The former idea, therefore, and not the latter, is the one he aims at.

We can say in a few words what belief consists in, according to his showing. It is, that a man, led by the signs of his revelation, on the ground of the words of his self-witness, receives and submits to the Son of God in the flesh, and through this, because entering into a personal relation with his person, comes into personal communion with him, and thereby possesses the real blessing of salvation, which is he himself, and which is in him. Standing in such personal communion with him, the man beholds more and more the fulness of his glory, and draws more and more from the

¹ Vol. i. p. 214 sq.

fulness of his grace. We need not dwell on this, as we are not now stating doctrine.

There is no need of further proof that what we have found to be the final aim of this book is likewise peculiar to it in single and definite points. It will be enough to recall how well it agreed with the result of the strife about those opinions which sought the final aim of the book outside of itself in a diversity of ways. We can not only do without other aims, but even, in fact, we have no room for them at all. For partly, as we have learned, the final aim is in itself too decided, and partly it is so essential to the book that this circumstance alone must assure us that the whole book is to be understood by it. The full proof is, of course, to be sought first in particulars.

It is another question whether the evangelist had regard to this or that in the composition of his book. He wrote his book not for himself, but for others; not for solitary study, but for the use of the church. But, as before, we must be careful to say that we cannot admit references of any sort that are not included in the recognized character and final aim of the book. Moreover, we know nothing of references to separate false teachers and false doctrines; for the evangelist does not set forth a particular doctrine, which could perhaps be opposed to other particular doctrines. While he is writing his book he has especially in view neither the doctrine of the Logos, nor the Passover controversy, neither the Nazarenes nor Valentinus's school, neither Montanism nor the heresy of Cerinthus. He certainly does look, however, at unbelief in the world. If he wrote for others, he wrote in order that they should get and keep belief on Jesus the Son of God, and also in order that that belief should be shaped for them, and secured against unbelief and its manifold errors and temptations. And further, if he wrote, then he wrote for the church; not for this or that special part of it and the special needs thereof, but for the church of Jesus Christ in the world. Moreover, he sets his testimony, and therefore, too, the full testimony of Christ, to the Son of

God and belief on him against the unbelief of this world in which the believing church and believers stand, and against the peril which this unbelieving world offers to belief and to the divine communion in the belief on Jesus Christ.

Jesus himself, however, when upon earth, came in contact with the unbelief of the world in the Jews. Therefore the evangelist, in the history of Jesus, cannot speak of belief on him, without opposing to it the unbelief of the Jewish people. Such is the internal necessity of this opposition in which they have tried to find every kind of ideal design and direction of the history. The evangelist, according to the complete method in which we saw that he grasped his task, had necessarily to oppose the belief which Jesus demanded to the unbelief which Jesus experienced. And just as necessarily he had to oppose Jesus to the Jews as the representatives of unbelief. Nor was it essentially otherwise with the church of Christ. Where else, in opposition to the church and its belief, did unbelief stand as a decided power and as an act of free self-determination, except in the Jewish people? Their very existence outside of the church, although the latter had begun in the former, rested on the fact that they had refused, and continued to refuse belief. Many single Jews stood within the church; but that does not matter here. The people as a whole had the characteristic of its then present existence in the fact that it was in opposition to the church of Christ, and that it contested with it the title of Church of God;¹ just as in the days of Jesus, in spite of many single believers out of Israel (xi. 45; xii. 42), the people as a whole steadily refused belief (xii. 37). This was their peculiarity, that they set themselves in opposition to Jesus and his claim, and disputed with him that he was the Son of God, while for their own part they took the position that they were God's people (viii. 41; ix. 28) and Abraham's seed (viii. 33 sq.). Besides, if the church for which the evangelist wrote is the believing, in contrast with

¹ Compare J. C. K. Hofmann. *Weissagung und Erfüllung in alten und im neuen Testamente* (Nördlingen, 1841, 1844); *Zweite Hälfte*, pp. 216-218.

the unbelieving world, then, in the first place, it is in contrast with unbelieving Israel. Moreover, if the evangelist bears witness of belief and for it, in opposition to unbelief, then he does it first of all in opposition to the unbelief of Israel. If there were controversial writing in our Gospel, this would be the first. This, however, is not once contained in it as controversial writing, but only as an opposition lying in the thing itself. How much less, then, can our book contain controversy against the chance forms of unbelief at that time in Docetism, Gnosticism, Ebionism, etc. However different these heresies may be otherwise, they agree in one, and that the chief point. They do not see and believe on Jesus as the Son of God in the flesh. This is the very unbelief which is the characteristic of Israel. The evangelist has opposed his Gospel to these errors just in so far as they belong to that unbelief. In so far as these were unbelief they contained abuse of the belief of the church of Christ, or temptation for it to unbelief, and hence to that extent the evangelist has tried to advance and secure the church against them in her belief. Even if he knew of Gnosticism, Docetism, etc., they existed for him simply as unbelief. Otherwise he paid no attention to them. We should never forget that this holds good for all apostles and New Testament writers. What did the apostles have to do with Eons and the rest of the queer notions of the heretics? None takes notice of any of these, but only of their unbelief, the common possession of them all, the power in the world striving against the church of Christ (comp. Eph. ii. 2). Even in his first Epistle, which, in the nature of the thing, has a much more decided reference than the Gospel to the appearances of anti-Christians in the world, John recognizes them only as unbelief, and uses controversial writing against them only in this, — that he sets in opposition to them the belief on Jesus the Son of God in the flesh. He never troubles himself about their special doctrines. Hence, again, it is altogether impossible to say that he has used controversial writing against gnosis and the other heresies of the time, since it cannot be said that he

has even once considered them. Even the controversy between classes of Gnostics, — that which separated Docetism and Ebionism from each other, and perhaps from gnosis in general, — even that lay altogether outside of his discussion. In them all he considered only the one thing, unbelief in the world. What belonged under this at that time might belong under it in the future, and hence the testimony of the evangelist was directed against this, according to the word of Jesus to his disciples (xvi. 8–11). This is the polemical and apologetical side of our Gospel.

Do we need, now, any other reason for this complete testimony to Christ? Did not the church, existing in the world and standing in opposition to it with her belief and confession, need such testimony? She needed it at that time, not because Docetism and Ebionism — that is, these special forms of unbelief — threatened her, but because, in general, decided and conscious unbelief stood in opposition to her. She needed it, too, because existing in the world. She needed it, as she always had needed it and continued to need it. And with this thought John bore his comprehensive testimony to Christ, as he would have borne it at all times. It must have seemed to him especially fit that he should bear it, if he knew the earlier Gospels, and saw how they brought to view only particular sides and satisfied particular needs, if he knew himself to be the last of the apostles, and if he was really the one whom we know from our Gospel as the beloved disciple. If we suppose a divine providence in the leading of the church, how could the church be left without such a comprehensive apostolical testimony to Christ? And even if we do not suppose this providence, what was more fit, and how could it be otherwise? In this, it is true, we touch to a certain degree what Clement of Alexandria says about the spiritual gospel. Though that be awkwardly expressed and mixed with errors, yet it is certainly not said without judgment. What Lessing brings out on this point is also related to what we have just said. At the same time, it is perfectly clear that our view differs a great deal from both of these.

As unbelief presented itself to John in many different forms, it is very likely that the form of unbelief which was most clearly marked in his time served for an external occasion and for the strengthening of his design. And, besides, the prayers of the Ephesian presbyters may have reached him. But the former is as little essential to the question as the latter. In the former he refers only to generalities. He does not touch the particulars any more, for example, than, as we know, the apostle John troubled himself with Cerinthus.

Then, too, they may have applied and used the Gospel at a very early date against all sorts of separate heresies. The Gospel, however, is so very general that it seems to us clear that it might have made known its deeper purport and its abundant applicableness only little by little. Does Baumgarten-Crusius mean to declare something like this, when he says¹ that the Gospel was certainly written earlier than it became known?² To me, at least, Thiersch, in his "Critic," appears to have emphasized too strongly the Johannean element of the sub-apostolic times, and, at any rate, that of the apostolic Fathers. I find the Pauline element preponderating in a Polycarp, and in Ignatius, who is the least like the other. But let that be as it will. They have learned with time to use our Gospel more and more against all kinds of special errors; and thus they think it was written against these different ones, and it runs through the catalogue of the opinions combated, till Epiphanius briefly adds, "and many other heresies."³ Where, however, they could not date back the heresies in hand to the apostolic age, they helped themselves characteristically enough by saying that John had written his Gospel foreseeing the blasphemous tenets of the Gnostics.⁴ In fact, it was no more written against these

¹ Vol. i. p. xxv.

² Compare too Brückner, of De Wette (4th ed.), p. xxix.

³ καὶ ἄλλας πολλὰς αἰρέσεις.

⁴ "Providens has blasphemias regulas, quae dividunt Dominum, quantum ex ipsis attinet, ex altera et altera substantia dicentes eum factum." — Irenaeus cont. Omnes Haereses, III. xvi. 5 (Works, Leipzig, 1853), Vol. i. p. 509.

than against the special forms of unbelief in our day, and no more than against those of the apostolic times. It could and can be applied and used for, and has its value against all of them together.

The exhibition of the method of carrying out of this final aim ought to show that we have been right in holding fast to this decided generality as the intention of our Gospel.

Only one thing could be opposed to what has been said, and that is the doctrine of the Logos. If such a special doctrine be given in the Gospel, then our statement of the design can hardly stand. But we have seen above, that neither the Philonian doctrine of the Logos, nor in general any doctrine of the Logos, is found in our Gospel. It is much more likely, from the foregoing discussion, that the person of Christ is understood in the one designated as the Logos. The prologue does not speak of anything different from what is declared at the end to be the purport of the preaching and the object of belief. It is Christ, whom the evangelist calls the Son of God in the one place, and the Logos in the other. And, moreover, under the last title he has not told anything in particular about him which is not included in the idea of "Son of God."