INTRODUCTION. ] JOHN’S GOSPEL. (cu. v.   
   
   
 the method of speaking which even he, under the guidance of the Spirit,   
 adopted to convey that truth, must have become familiar to and valued   
 by the educated and phildsophic minds in the Christian community.   
 5. It may be well to set down the opinions of the ancients on this,   
 before we enter into the matter itself.   
 Trenzus states that John wrote his Gospel to controvert the errors of   
 Cerinthus, and before him the Nicolaitans. Tertullian in the main agrees   
 with this. Epiphanius and Jerome repeatit as a certain fact, that John   
 wrote against Cerinthus ; but instead of the Nicolaitans, they mention   
 the Ebionites. Those who assert him to have written against Valentinus   
 or Marcion are evidently chronologically in error.   
 6. Several of the ancients give, in substance, the supplementary view   
 of the design of John’s Gospel. Clement of Alexandria related, “ that   
 John, last of all, perceiving that only outward and bodily facts were   
 related in the existing Gospels, being urged on by the skilled in divine   
 things, and inspired by God’s Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.”   
 Eusebius states, that whereas the other Evangelists wrote the history of   
 the official life of our Lord subsequent to the imprisonment of the Bap-   
 tist, John wishing that there should be a complete account, gave in his   
 Gospel the particulars preceding that event. ‘The same is repeated almost   
 word for word by Jerome. Later authors reproduced the conjectures of   
 their predecessors as being traditions of the Church; and for the most   
 part united the polemical with the supplementary theory\*.   
 7. None of the above-cited authors appeal to any histgrical or tra-   
 ditionary fact, as the ground of their own statements. Those statements   
 have therefore for us no external authority, and must be judged by their   
 own intrinsic probability or otherwise, as established by the contents of   
 the Gospel, and the state of the Church at the period of its publication.   
 In modern times, these last considerations have given rise to several   
 opinions, which I shall now briefly state; acknowledging, throughout   
 this part of the section, my obligations to Liicke, whose facts and remarks   
 I have for the most part borrowed.   
 8. Grotius, and some of the Socinian Commentators, supposed,—on   
 account of the contrast strongly drawn in the prologue, ch. i. and else-   
 where, between Jesus Christ as the true Light, and the Baptist as only   
 having come to bear witness of that Light,—that the Evangelist wrote   
 against the so-called disciples of John, who held the Baptist to have   
 been the Messiah. Others thought that the Sabeans, who combined   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 ® For an instance of the kind of use which is made of these notices in Eusebius and   
 others by the advocates of the supplementary theory, see Dr. Wordsworth’s note intro-   
 ductory to St. John: where such parts of them as suit that theory are strongly affirmed.   
 as fact, called “the uniform consent of antiquity concerning the design of St. John’s   
 Gospel in relation to the other three,” while the part not suiting it is up under   
 “for other reasons of a doctrinal nature.”   
 58]