§ 1n.j FOR WHAT READERS, &e. [inrropucriox.   
   
   
 gnostic errors with an overweening estimation of John the Baptist, were   
 principally aimed at. Others, not finding in this a sufficient account of   
 the peculiarities of the Gospel, supposed this or other polemic aims, to   
 have been united with the supplementary one. Others again finding in   
 the Gospel no sufficient evidence either of a polemical or a supplementary   
 intention, fell back on the didactic aim set forth ch. xx. 31. This view,   
 however, was never found satisfactory to explain the peculiar phenomena   
 of the Gospel.   
 9. Meantime, however, the critical study of the other Gospels had so   
 far advanced, that it became more and more clearly seen, that the hypo-   
 thesis of John having been acquainted with, and having wished to com-   
 plete or correct them, was entirely untenable. Again, not finding traces   
 of a polemical design sufficiently prominent in the Gospel, some critics,   
 slightly altering the term, have supposed it to be apologetic in its cha-   
 racter. Some, lastly, pronounced it unworthy of the Apostle to follow   
 any secondary designs, considering his own avowal in ch. xx. 30, 31.   
 But even granting this, it may still be a lawful enquiry, What peculiar   
 circumstances led to his realizing this his great design in the present   
 peculiar form of composition. The three former Evangelists had, beyond   
 question, the same great design, and yet have followed it in a very   
 different manner. Something of this may doubtless be explained by the   
 individual character of the writer’s mind, but clearly not all: and that   
 character itself was modified by surrounding events. We are driven   
 therefore to the special circumstances under which the Gospel, but   
 especially the prologue, which in this matter rules the Gospel, was   
 composed.   
 10. Into these Liicke enquires under two heads: (1) the relation of   
 John’s Gospel to the other three; (2) the character of the age and   
 section of the Church in which the Evangelist lived. In treating the   
 first of these he disproves, much in the same manner as has been dono   
 in this Introduction, the probability that John intended to supply, or   
 had ever seen, our present Gospels; and maintains that an acquaint-   
 ance on his part with the general stream of oral testimony from which   
 they were derived, will sufficiently account for the relations observable   
 between him and them. His inference is, that if his Gospel (as un-   
 doubtedly is the case) sometimes supplies and gives precision to theirs,   
 this has been only the result, but could in no way be the aim of his   
 writing ; the peculiarities and object of which must be altogether   
 accounted for from considerations belonging to the other head of the   
 enquiry.   
 11. In pursuing this, he distinguishes three classes of writings likely   
 to arise in the apostolic age: (a) the simple committal to paper of the   
 eycles of oral narration, with a view to fixing them for the general and   
 continued edification of the readers. To this class he refers the Gospels   
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