§ u.J FOR WHAT READERS, &c. — [inrropuction.   
   
 standing. John,—from his relating so much at length the discourse of   
 our Lord in which He promised the Comforter to guide them into all the   
 truth, and bring to their minds all that He had said to them, and from   
 noticing (ch. xii. 16; xx. 9) that they understood not certain things at   
 first, which were made clear to them afterwards,—seems to be guarding   
 the apostolic office and testimony from such imputations.   
 13. But all these designs, possible as they may have been, do not   
 reach so far as to give any account of the very remarkable cast and   
 diction of the prologue. This opening gives a tone to the whole Gospel,   
 being no less than a compendium or programme of its contents, gathered   
 up and expressed according to a nomenclature already familiar to certain   
 persons within the Church. The fact of John having been led to adopt   
 the gnostic term, “the word” or “logos,” as the exponent of his teaching   
 respecting the person of our Lord, would of itself make it probable that   
 he had the combating of gnostic error in his view; or perhaps, speaking   
 more accurately, that he was led to take advantage of the yearnings of   
 the human desire after an universal and philosophic religion,—by grasp-   
 ing and lifting upward into the certainty of revelation the truth which   
 they had shaped to themselves,—and thereby striking off and proscribing   
 their manifold and erroneous conceits. But neither the language of the   
 prologue itself, nor any prominence given to antagonistic truths in the   
 Gospel, justify us in ascribing to the Evangelist a position directly   
 polemical against the peculiar tenets of Cerinthus\*, The stand made   
 in the Gospel, is against gnosticism in the very widest sense; in its   
 Ebionitish form, as denying the Divinity and pre-existence of Christ,—   
 and in its Docetic, as denying the reality of His assumption of the   
 Human Nature.   
 4. While, however, John contends against false gnosis (or philosophy   
 of the Gnostics) he is, in the furtherance and grounding of the true   
 gnosis (or knowledge), the greatest, as he was the last, of the spiritual   
 teachers of the Church. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, amidst   
 fightings without and fears within, built in his argumentative Epistles   
 the outworks of that temple, of which his still greater colleague and   
 successor was chosen noiselessly to complete, in his peaceful old age,   
 the inner and holier places. And this, after all, ranging under it all   
 secondary aims, we must call the great object of the Evangelist :—to   
 advance, purify from error, and strengthen, that maturer Christian life of   
 knowledge, which is the true development of the teaching of the Spirit in   
 men, and which the latter part of the apostolic period witnessed in its full   
 vitality. And this, by setting forth the Person of the Lord Jesus in all   
 its fulness of grace and truth, in all its manifestation in the flesh by signs   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 $ For an account of them, see Neander’s Church History, Rose’s Translation, vol. ii.   
 p. 49.   
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