

The two parties were fused into the Church Catholic. This theory was accepted and ably advocated by a number of highly gifted disciples in Germany—Hilgenfeld, Schwegler, Ritschl, Kostlin, Volkmar and Zeller. It exercised a powerful influence on the theological thought of Europe for nearly half a century. But its equally learned opponents have shown, by a searching criticism of the authorities on which it was based, that its main positions are untenable. Nearly all the disciples of the Tübingen school have abandoned the idea that the fourth Gospel is a tendency writing, a reconciling Gospel. They now hold with Ritschl that the reconciliation between the two parties "arose from a development of Gentile Christianity without assuming a compromise with Jewish principles." They are reluctantly forced to admit that John's Gospel was composed considerably earlier in the second century than 160 A.D., the date assigned to it by Baur, though they differ widely as to the year.

The authenticity of the fourth Gospel is established by an appeal to two sources of evidence: (1) External, furnished by early Christian writers; (2) Internal—supplied by the Gospel itself. It will be impossible within the limits of this article to do more than briefly survey only the first of these two lines of evidence. Taking up the historical testimony, then, its force will be best brought out, perhaps, by following the method of exhaustion. Starting with the writers of the last quarter of the second century, who are admitted by "the present negative school" to have made abundant use of the fourth Gospel, and to have mentioned John as its author, let us go back step by step towards the beginning of the century and ascertain if any traces of it can be found at each successive stage in the retrograde movement. Now, even if, as we recede, the amount and distinctness of the evidence diminish, and though in the first decade exact verbal quotations are not to be met, yet if we have an unbroken line of testimony from the beginning of the century, the authorship of the Gospel must be ascribed to John. It could not have been the work of a forger at that early date, for the fraud would at once have been detected. No one would venture so soon after John's death to write a Gospel in his name. Commencing, then, with Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, who wrote a great work consisting of five books against the Gnostic heresy not later than 189 A.D., we find him stating in the third book that John who