

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUR GOSPELS ABOUT 200 A.D.

IN presenting the evidence for the Four Gospels from the earliest Church history and the earliest Christian literature, there is a certain advantage in proceeding in reverse chronological order. We take as our starting-point the close of the second century, when the Gospels were fully accepted and acknowledged, and trace them upwards towards the Apostolic age and the time assigned by immemorial Christian tradition for their composition. This course may involve a certain amount of overlapping and repetition, but it is of consequence to be able to start from a fixed point at which all are agreed that the Four Gospels were in existence and were regarded as authoritative Holy Scripture.

By the close of the second century, with the exception of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the two shorter Epistles of St John, the Second Epistle of

St Peter, the Epistles of James and Jude, and the Apocalypse, all the books of the New Testament were acknowledged as apostolic and authoritative throughout the whole Church. The testimony of the great Fathers varied in respect of these disputed books; but the canon of the acknowledged books, including the Four Gospels, was established by their common consent.¹ The word "canon" was not yet in use as a designation of the New Testament writings. It was used from the middle of the second century in such expressions as *ὁ κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας*, *ὁ κανὼν τῆς πίστεως*, designating the formulated confession of the Christian faith; and Clement of Alexandria speaks of the words of Jesus or the Gospel (*κατὰ τὸν κανόνα τοῦ εὐαγγελίου πολιτευσάμενος*) as a canon or rule of life. It was not till about the middle of the fourth century that it was expressly employed to describe the collection of books universally regarded as Holy Scripture. When it came into use, the designation "canonical" was found contrasted with "apocryphal,"—the books used and publicly read in the services of the Church being in this way distinguished from those which were hidden away and not brought forward for such use, but rather employed for their own purposes by schismatical and heretical communities. The great criterion

¹ Westcott, *On the Canon*, p. 344.

of canonical quality was the liturgical reading of the books in public worship. And the use of these books was required to meet the need of the Churches for edification by means of that which Jesus had done and said, as well as that which the Apostles and eminent teachers of the Apostolic age had taught. It was no decree of Church council, nor any direction emanating from Apostolic authority, which determined the canon of Scripture. It was not the head but the heart of the Church, and that heart guided by the Spirit of Truth Himself, which determined the books of the canon.

We see the process far advanced by the close of the second century. By this time the Apostolic writings were called by the name of New Testament (*καινή διαθήκη*), the very term giving them a position of authority and sacredness, and placing them on a level of equality with the writings of the Old; indicating, too, that the full development so long in process at last was reached. Specially treasured were the Gospels. They were the oftenest copied, as we know from the vast preponderance of manuscripts of them extant; they were the first to be translated into other tongues, as they are still the first to be given to converts from heathenism in the mission field. By the end of the second century our Four Gospels were regarded as of exclusive authority

in the Churches of Rome, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Alexandria, North Africa, and Gaul. If there were, even later than this, references to the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel according to the Egyptians, implying that these works found some acceptance in the Churches of Palestine and Alexandria, yet their position was undoubtedly secondary, and their circulation and influence limited.

The Four Gospels were already appealed to, not only within the circles of orthodoxy, for the confirmation of Catholic faith, but also among heretical sects, whose representatives sought from them support for their peculiar tenets or fantastic speculations. Irenæus¹ says, "So well established are our Gospels that even teachers of error themselves bear testimony to them; even they rest their objections on the foundation of the Gospels." The Ebionite heretic, for example, had as his favourite Gospel St Matthew, while the Marcionite, at the opposite pole of doctrinal belief, accepted as his authority a mutilated St Luke. The Valentinian gnostics favoured St John,—the first commentary of all being that on St John by Heracleon, a follower of Valentinus. St Mark was acknowledged and used by more than one of the early gnostic sects. But though heretics accepted the Gospels of

¹ *Adversus Hæreses*, iii. 11. 7.

the Church, and never attributed them to other authors than those we know, they put their own interpretations upon their contents and obtained their own peculiar doctrines by manipulation and perversion of their teaching. It is certainly remarkable that the Valentinians, the Marcionites, and other gnostic sects, never advanced in support of their opinions a single narrative relating to the ministry of Jesus save what is found in the Gospels. It does not appear that they ascribed to Him a single sentence of any imaginable importance which our evangelists have not transmitted. It is true that the large heretical literature of the second century has come down to us only in fragments,—in passages preserved in the pages of Irenæus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, who devoted treatises to the refutation of heresies. But we know enough of their works to be sure of their general attitude. The Docetic author of the 'Gospel of Peter' imparts his own colouring to the Evangelic record, but adheres to the narrative. Marcion and the sect which he founded made use of a recension of St Luke; but we ascertain from the copious references of Tertullian in his treatise 'Against Marcion,' that it differed from our canonical St Luke only by the omissions which Marcion had made. Tertullian, again, expressly declares that

Valentinus used all our Four Gospels. Whilst the heretical sects, with their tendencies to exaggeration and extremes in matters of doctrine, had their favourites, lending some countenance to their peculiar views, within the Church itself the Four Gospels were already venerated and held to be sacred. They were accepted as Apostolic writings, as precious and veracious records of the life of Jesus, and as an authoritative rule of faith and practice.

The epoch which we have chosen as a starting-point for our investigation is no longer in the obscurity which makes certainty so difficult to attain in the early decades of the second century. It stands rather in the broad daylight of a large and unquestioned Christian literature which has survived to us. It was an epoch, in fact, of great activity in the history of Christian literature. To the last two decades of the second century belong Theophilus of Antioch and Irenæus of Lyons. Theophilus is the first who quotes a Gospel by the name of its writer. Writing in 180 A.D. to his friend Autolycus, he refers to what the Holy Scriptures teach, and all the inspired men (*οἱ πνευματοφόροι*), of whom John says: "In the beginning was the Word" (John i. 1). About 185 A.D. there is the great treatise of Irenæus 'Against Heresies.' In the first decades of the third century there are

the commentaries and other works of Hippolytus, notably his work 'Against all Heresies,' long known as the 'Philosophumena,' and attributed to Origen. To the same epoch belongs Tertullian, whose surviving works are numerous and varied, and whose anti-heretical writings in particular are a mine of information. These three writers are specially of value for details they have preserved of the systems of early heretics, and for the quotations they give from their works, enabling us to judge for ourselves what books of the New Testament those heretics knew and accepted. Two greater names remain as representative of this epoch—Clement of Alexandria and Origen,—both associated with the famous Catechetical School of that ancient city, and both writers who devoted themselves to the setting forth of the truths of the Christian system in terms of the science and philosophy of the day. We shall here content ourselves with brief notices of the testimony of Origen (186-253 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (165-220 A.D.), and Tertullian (160-240 A.D.)

ORIGEN was the scholar of Clement of Alexandria, and at a very early age succeeded him as head of the famous Catechetical School. His learning and his industry were colossal. His literary fertility was remarkable, even if we regard the six thousand books credited to him by

Epiphanius as a great exaggeration. None of the early Fathers equalled him in originality, and the Church, which did not fully trust him, has been compelled to acknowledge him as her greatest theologian before Augustine. He founded the Catechetical School of Cæsarea, and travelled over the East more than any other scholar of his time. He is said to have written on every book of Scripture. There are still preserved considerable portions of his homilies on St Luke in Jerome's translation, and of his commentaries on St Matthew and St John,—several books partly in Greek and partly in Latin translations. Remarking upon the sinister meaning of the word "have taken in hand," "attempted" (*ἐπηρείψασαν*), in St Luke's preface to his Gospel, and finding in it a latent charge of haste and lack of spiritual endowment in the writers of the narratives referred to, Origen goes on to say: "Matthew did not 'make an attempt,' but wrote, being moved by the Holy Spirit; likewise also, Mark and John, similarly also, Luke. The Gospel inscribed 'according to the Egyptians' and the Gospel inscribed as 'of the Twelve' the compilers 'attempted.' And there is also in circulation the Gospel according to Thomas. Basilides likewise already dared to write a Gospel according to Basilides.¹ Many therefore made attempts,

¹ See, however, p. 231.

and there is the Gospel according to Matthias and several others. But Four alone the Church of God approves." Eusebius¹ records another statement equally clear and explicit: "In the first book of his commentaries on Matthew, preserving the rule of the Church, he testifies that he knows only Four Gospels, writing to this effect — 'I have learned by tradition concerning the Four Gospels which alone are uncontroverted in the Church of God spread under heaven, that the Gospel according to Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an Apostle of Jesus Christ, was written first; that according to Mark, second; that according to Luke, third; that according to John last of all.'" We are not required to adopt Origen's view of the priority of St Matthew to St Mark, which has been rendered doubtful by internal evidence, but we are well entitled to accept his statement regarding the authorship of the several Gospels. Whilst, therefore, Origen is aware of the existence of other Gospels which he names, and has no objection, any more than Clement and others, that apocryphal and pseudepigraphic, even heretical, writings should be read, he is quite decided in the affirmation that for the public services of the Church only the Four have from any time which he can remember been allowed.²

¹ H. E., VI. 25.

² Zahn, *Grundriss der Geschichte des N. T. Kanons*, p. 17.

Origen, however, furnishes us with the testimony of an earlier writer which is of special importance. We have his 'Apology in Reply to Celsus' in eight books complete. This work has been called "the most perfect apologetic performance, from the standpoint of the Christianity of the early Church," which we possess. The 'True Word' of Celsus, to which it is a reply, shows on the part of the heathen philosopher a considerable acquaintance with Christianity and its records. Origen takes for granted that Celsus had the Gospels before him, and the passages of Celsus which he has occasion to quote show that he was acquainted with all our canonical Gospels. Origen suggests that Celsus derived his view that the Apostles of Christ were notoriously wicked men from a passage in the Epistle of Barnabas, referring to the saying of our Lord that He came not to call the righteous but sinners. However that may be, the silence of Celsus as to other Gospels, and his exclusive, or almost exclusive, references to the contents of our canonical Gospels, go far to show that when he wrote his attack, about 176 A.D., they were held among Christians to be of exclusive and paramount authority.

We are indebted to Origen also for references to the Commentary on St John by Heracleon, the Valentinian heretic about 160 A.D.¹ In his own

¹ See p. 37.

Commentary on St John's Gospel, Origen quotes Heracleon's work more than fifty times, commenting as freely upon Heracleon as upon St John. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the value of the testimony of Origen, living at an epoch of the Church's history, knowing by travel the communities of Church life in many different countries, and furnished with true reverence of spirit and all the aids of history, criticism, and philosophy.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, the immediate predecessor of Origen at the head of the Catechetical School, himself succeeded Pantænus, and continued to preside over it from 189 to 219 A.D. His three chief works are—'An Exhortation to the Heathen' (*Προτρεπτικὸς πρὸς Ἕλληνας*), an apologetic treatise; the 'Instructor' (*Παιδαγωγός*), an unsystematic but tolerably complete repertory of Christian ethics; and the 'Miscellanies' (*Στρωματεῖς*), which have been described as an unmethodical digest of lectures actually delivered in the Catechetical School. These treatises form a kind of introduction to Christianity for the benefit of all, whether Christian believers or heathen inquirers, who desired to receive further instruction or to understand Christian thought. Out of numerous other works which came from his hand only one small tract has been preserved—'Who is the

Rich Man that shall be Saved?' It is in this last that we find the story of St John of Ephesus and the young robber. These works of Clement exhibit immense erudition. They abound in quotations, and references both to Pagan and to Christian authors. The whole domain of Greek literature was perfectly at his command—Homer, Hesiod, Pythagoras, and Plato he quotes copiously. With all his learning, however, he shows no acquaintance with the literature of ancient Rome. With early Christian literature he was well acquainted, and he had read for himself the writings of Tatian, Melito of Sardis, and Irenæus.

It is from Eusebius, however, who has preserved a statement from his lost 'Outlines' (*Ἐποτυπώσεις*), that we obtain the clearest and directest account of his view of the Gospels.¹ "Again, in the same book, Clement has set down the tradition of the elders of former days concerning the order of the Gospels, which is to this effect. They were wont to say that of the Gospels those containing the genealogies (Matthew and Luke) were written first. And as regards Mark, they said this was the plan: Peter having preached the word publicly in Rome, and having spoken forth the Gospel by the Spirit, many of those who were then in Rome

¹ Euseb. H. E., VI. 14.

requested Mark, as one who had attended him for long and remembered what had been said, to commit to writing what had been spoken; and that having composed his Gospel, he communicated it to them at their request. This becoming known to Peter, he neither forbade it nor encouraged it; but John, last, perceiving that the outward life of Christ (τὰ σωματικά) had been detailed in the Gospel, being encouraged by his intimates, under the inspiration of the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel." This account of the relation of St Mark's Gospel to St Peter differs somewhat from that given by Irenæus, but the substantial truth of the tradition is not thereby affected. That Clement regarded the Four Gospels which we now possess as of exclusive authority is not inconsistent with the habit of this great and learned Father in quoting other Gospels and in referring to Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Hermas, the Apocalypse and Preaching of Peter, and the Didache, as Scripture. It cannot be denied that his practice in this respect is the freest of all the Fathers. This may come of the very width of his reading or of the largeness of his sympathies. He finds a parallel to sayings in the Theætetus of Plato and in the traditions of Matthias in the Gospel to the Hebrews, where it is written, "He that hath wondered shall rule and he that hath at-

tained to rule shall rest." He quotes an apocryphal question of Salome to our Lord, with the answer of our Lord thereto, and proceeds: "We do not find the saying in the Four Gospels which have been handed down to us, but in the Gospel according to the Egyptians." The very form of his statement makes it plain that Clement draws a distinction between our Four Canonical Gospels and this apocryphal Gospel according to the Egyptians.¹ When we remember the extraordinary learning of Clement and his wide literary sympathies, we need not wonder at his somewhat loose practice in making quotations from Holy Scripture, and we may confidently assume from the clear and explicit references which we find in his works that his Gospel canon was exactly that which we ourselves acknowledge.

TERTULLIAN (160-220 A.D.) is one of the most original figures in the early history of the Church

¹ In his pamphlet entitled 'Das neue Testament um das Jahr 200,' published in 1889, immediately after Zahn's first volume on the Canon (first half) appeared, Professor Harnack handled Zahn's claim of a closed canon at that date very severely, and laid great stress upon the loose practice of Clement of Alexandria in the matter of quotations. In a vigorous and learned rejoinder, called 'Einige Bemerkungen zu Adolf Harnack's Prüfung,' and in the succeeding portions of his great work on the Canon, Zahn has fully vindicated his position, and shown that in reference to the ecclesiastical authority and completeness of the New Testament collection Clement was essentially in the same position as the other Fathers, whose practice of quotation was more strict.

—the fiery Presbyter of Carthage, lawyer, controversialist, orator, and scholar. His reading in classical literature was extensive, and his works are a storehouse of antiquarian lore, conveying much information regarding the history, the social life, and the religious ceremonies both of Greece and Rome. He quotes, for example, from the 'Histories' of Tacitus, and calls that historian *ille mendaciorum loquacissimus*.¹ He has references to the "Phædo" and the "Timæus" among the Dialogues of Plato, and shows himself well acquainted with the Platonic philosophy. Eusebius describes him as a man versed in the Roman law, and his writings prove his skill as a pleader and his acquaintance with legal terminology. He grew up in heathenism, and was already in his mature manhood when he was converted to Christianity in 192 A.D. In later life he attached himself to the Montanist movement, which had many attractions for an ardent and impulsive nature like his. His writings were voluminous,—apologetic, doctrinal, and practical. What Origen was to Greek Christianity, Tertullian was to Latin, even though his works did not attain to anything like the number of Origen's. He was the first who set himself systematically to explain the doctrines of Christianity in the Latin which was vernacular to the North African

¹ *Apologeticus adv. Gentes*, xvi. 1.

peoples, and it is from him that the expressions *redemption*, *justification*, *sanctification*, and many others in the vocabulary of ecclesiastical theology, have come.

To Tertullian the New Testament already is on a level with the Old. He speaks of the Law and the Gospel, of the Law and the Gospels, of the Law and the Prophets, and the Gospel and Apostolic writings, thus distinguishing the Old Testament from the New, and placing the New on an equality with the Old. He speaks of both Testaments, of the entire canon (*instrumentum*) of both Testaments, of two canons or testaments. He expressly prefers¹ the designation *instrumentum* to *testamentum* ("instrumenti vel quod magis usui est dicere testamenti"), although the latter is in more general use. The remark in the foregoing parenthesis shows that among his Latin contemporaries Tertullian found *testamentum* already in use to describe the Christian Scriptures. Zahn² bids us not think of his use of the word as forensic, as if Tertullian considered the *instrumenta* to be documents in the process between himself and the heretics. The Apostolic writings were to him in their collective form, first and foremost, instruments of instruction without which preaching was impossible. We find, in fact, the expression *instrumentum predicationis*.

¹ Adv. Marcionem, iv. 1.

² GK. i. 110.

The *instrumenta* were the indispensable tools of the preacher and the theologian. He speaks of the Four Gospels as the *instrumentum evangelicum*, contrasting them with the *singularitas instrumenti* of Marcion, who had as his Gospel the one mutilated Gospel of Luke. *Nostrum evangelium* is with him the whole Four as commonly received, and *commune instrumentum* is the Gospel record in so far as his and Marcion's agree.

It is in his great treatise 'Against Marcion' that we find the clearest pronouncements of Tertullian regarding the Gospels, and, as we shall see later, we can determine the character of the Gospel favoured by Marcion from the copious quotations made in his refutation of the heretic. With him the title-deeds of the Church are the Scriptures guaranteed by the signature of Christ and the witness of the Apostles. He insisted on the value of the traditions handed down by Apostles and the churches which they founded. "If it is acknowledged that that is more true which is more ancient, that more ancient which is even from the beginning, that from the beginning which is from the Apostles, it will in like manner assuredly be acknowledged that what has been preserved inviolate in the Churches of the Apostles has been derived by tradition from the Apostles. Let us see what milk the Corinthians drank from

Paul; to what rule the Galatians were recalled by his reproofs; what is read by the Philippians, the Thessalonians, the Ephesians; what is the testimony of the Romans who are nearest to us, to whom Peter and Paul left the Gospel, a gospel sealed with their own blood. We have, moreover, churches founded by John. For even if Marcion rejects his Apocalypse, still, the succession of bishops, if traced to its source, will rest upon the authority of John. And the noble descent of other churches is recognised in the same manner. I say, then, that among them, and not only among the Apostolic Churches, but among all the churches, the Gospel of Luke, which we earnestly defend, has been maintained from its first publication." And "the same authority of the Apostolic Churches will uphold the other Gospels which we have in due succession through them and according to their usage, I mean those of [the Apostles] Matthew and John; although that which was published [by Mark may also be maintained to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was; for the narrative of Luke also is generally ascribed to Paul: since it is allowable that what scholars publish should be regarded as their Master's work." ¹ "We maintain, first and foremost, the evangelical instrument to have

¹ *Adv. Marcionem*, iv. 5.

Apostles for its authors, upon whom this office of proclaiming the Gospel has been imposed by the Lord Himself; if also it has Apostolic men among its authors, it has them not alone, but with Apostles and after Apostles, because the preaching of the disciples might have been suspected of vainglory, if the authority of the masters did not support it, nay, the authority of Christ, who made the Apostles their masters. Therefore, John and Matthew from the Apostolic band instil faith into us; Luke and Mark of the number of Apostolic men establish it.”¹ From these quotations we see that Tertullian not only had the Four Gospels, but had them in an order of his own: John, Matthew, Luke, and Mark, differing very little from that of the Western witnesses to the New Testament text, which is Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark.

At the close of the second century the Church already possessed a New Testament alongside of the Old. Its books were like those of the Old Testament, “Scripture,” or “the Scriptures,” or “the Divine Scriptures.” They were the works of Spirit-moved men (*πνευματοφόροι*).² Not the Gospels alone were “Dominical writings” (*αἱ κυριακαὶ γραφαί*), but the Old and New Testaments. “The constant use of this designation for the whole Bible by

¹ Adv. Marcionem, iv. 2.

² Theophilus ad Autol., ii. 22.

Irenæus, Clement, and the later Africans," says Zahn, "proves that thereby from the beginning it was not a contrast to the writings of the Old Testament that was intended to be expressed, but rather the strong consciousness of the fact that Christ, the Lord, is the Alpha and Omega of all true Revelation, and even of all the records preserving it. Not only does the Old Testament witness of Christ, but Christ Himself speaks through the Prophets; His Spirit, or the Logos not yet manifested in the flesh, has inspired them. Thus is He the Creator and Dispenser of all Holy Scripture. It was, therefore, more than an external fact; it was the universal conviction of the Church regarding the true origin of all Holy Scripture hidden from Jews and heretics, and of the inner connection resting upon that origin, which the Christians of that time expressed, when they called them not only the Lord's writings, but also their writings, or the distinctively Christian literature."¹ This was no other than Luther's doctrine of inspired Scripture—"was Christum treibt"—what deals with Christ.

The existence, at this epoch, of EARLY VERSIONS of the New Testament Scriptures is a notable fact in the history of the Canon.

¹ GK, i. 98.

The claim of Christianity to be the true religion, to possess the one full and satisfying revelation of God to man, to set forth the one and only Saviour of mankind,—carries with it the obligation to make its Holy Scriptures, containing the message of life eternal, known to all mankind. The sense of such an obligation, even if not so highly developed, in the Jewish people, who were possessed of God's earlier revelation, led to the execution of the first translation of all, the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. Of this obligation, although it may not have taken formulated expression, the Church early became conscious. The sense of it fell low in the Middle Ages, but the Reformation, with its assertion of the right of private judgment, gave it new and vastly extended application. Wherever the first Apostles and their successors carried the good news of Christ beyond the bounds of the Greek-speaking world, one of the first necessities they had to meet was the demand for the record of God's revelation of Himself, and of that revelation in Christ, in the vernacular speech of the newly evangelised peoples. And we may be sure that of the New Testament Scriptures, the demand for the Gospels would be the first, as it still is in every mission-field.

There are three versions which go back to a

very high antiquity,—the Syriac, the Latin, and the Coptic or Egyptian versions. The tendency of recent research goes to show that it was in the valley of the Euphrates, in Edessa or Nisibis of Syria, rather than in the more conspicuous cities of the Roman Empire, that the first version of the New Testament Scriptures was made. Professor Caspar René Gregory of Leipzig, an eminent authority in this field, tells us:¹ “These Syrian Christians undoubtedly made a Syriac New Testament very soon, as soon as they learned that there was a Greek New Testament. I think it most likely that they translated the books into Syriac before the end of the second century, and I regard it as possible that many of the books were translated before the end of the first century. It may be seen that the Syriac text had a special charm for them in the thought that it was almost precisely the language that Jesus had used as he went about from Galilee to Jerusalem and back again, to Perea, and to the neighbourhood of Tyre. In the place where our Bibles have an Aramaic expression, like ‘Rabbi,’ ‘Talitha cumi,’ the Syriac translation did not have, as the Greek has and as our Bibles have, a translation of these words, for they were Syriac already and every reader understood them.” The standard version

of the Syriac New Testament, the Peshitta, called for its excellence "the Queen of the Versions," is thought by some scholars to be as early as the latter half of the second century, but it is more generally believed to be the final form of the version, reached in the fifth century. But there are three recensions of the Syriac translation containing the Four Gospels which reach well up into the second century, the oldest of these being represented in the famous Syriac Sinaitic manuscript found on Mount Sinai in 1892 by Mrs Lewis. Although in the old Syriac Canon the Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse were wanting, it is noteworthy that in the earliest Syriac versions the Four Gospels as we have received them, and these alone, are given. When the Syriac Sinaitic version was produced, perhaps not later than the middle of the second century, the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel according to the Egyptians had apparently disappeared from regular use, and the only Gospels considered indispensable and necessary for salvation were our Four Gospels, and these not in any primitive or rudimentary form, but as they are found in our standard evangelical exemplars.

The Latin and the Egyptian versions followed in no great space of time, although in connection with their origin, as with the Syriac, there are

many questions still under discussion. Of them it is true what has been said of the Syriac, that they represent our Gospels in the form in which they have come down to us from their Apostolic authors. The significant point in this inquiry is this, that the earlier those efforts at translation are dated, the earlier the sense within the Church of the sacredness and authority of the Gospels is seen to be. It was because this was the Word of God, and needful for salvation, that translation into vernacular speech, so as to be "understanded" of the people, was resorted to. These versions all contained the Four Gospels and no other, though not always in the order to which we are accustomed. This shows that by the end of the second century, perhaps as early as the middle of it, the Churches outside of Palestine and Asia Minor, outside the boundaries of the Greek-speaking world, where these versions originated, were not then engaged in selecting a gospel or determining a creed: they already acknowledged, and used, and felt the necessity of translating into their vernacular for general use, the Fourfold Gospel which came from Apostles of Christ and their followers, and which was the bond of a common faith and hope to them all.