

Anthony, of the Cobb Divinity School, Lewiston, Me. The whole subject is so full of interest, however, that perhaps a practical paper, taking a general view of the circumstances under which that document was probably composed, and noting also its homiletic value, may not be considered superfluous.

While the four canonical gospels were received everywhere in the early Church as authoritative, no one has ever doubted that local and supplemental "Lives of Christ" were common. Indeed, it would have required a miracle to prevent this. Scraps from private letters, etc., which give new information in regard to Washington or Wesley are still turning up every few years. That happens in regard to every great man. Men talk of him, tell anecdotes about him, make notes in their diaries, and mention him in their correspondence. It was the most natural thing in the world that the grandsons of the men whom Jesus healed should tell about *it*, so that the early fathers could give their names and their trades. It is most suggestive that one of the earliest references to Jesus by a heathen was in a letter to his son (made known in 1865), written cir. A.D. 74, in which he mentions the "new laws" which the "wise king" whom the Jews killed had established.

No doubt the great staple of conversation and testimony in the various Palestinian societies for several generations after the death of Jesus would be "What I saw, or what my father heard, or how my uncle was healed, and what Jesus said to him then;" while at Antioch and elsewhere men would be constantly telling what Paul or Peter said about Christ when they visited the church there. Quite naturally, and necessarily, too, there would grow up in various places fragmentary *written* accounts embodying the knowledge possessed by the old people who had been the original pillars of the Church. Luke says he knew of many such narratives (Luke i. 14). None of these local *memoranda* obtained universal acceptance. They were superseded by the four gospels, which grew up, I do not doubt, independently at different places, each being written for a specific purpose and to reach a particular class of people, and therefore each having new matter peculiar to itself, each varying from the others in style and method of narration, even of the matter that is common, and no one containing all that there is in any other gospel. From the first these four gospels stood without rivals, and went all over Christendom as the authoritative Memorabilia of the apostles. Nevertheless, supplemental narratives continued to be used in local churches, and were sometimes quoted by the ministers of those churches—such as Justin Martyr—in their controversies with the heathen and the Jews. But naturally and almost necessarily some of the old men from whose lips these accounts were taken did not remember with perfect accuracy, and confused the sermons that they had heard many years before from some apostle with their own ideas or imaginations or with stories which they had heard from less responsible parties; and so as the decades passed these supplemental accounts grew