

rightful heir to the throne of Israel, and that it was his legal and moral righteousness which in the metaphoric language of the Hebrews constituted him the "Son of God." There is also evidence that the Nazarenes held that Mary, the mother of Jesus was of the tribe of Levi, and that in the veins of the Messiah flowed the sacerdotal blood of Aaron, as well as the royal blood of David, hence to the patriotic Jewish believer, the Christ combined in his person all the attributes of a typical king-priest and prophetic law-giver, and they looked onward to his coming again and future universal reign with all the joy and gladness that that faith and hope could inspire, and which no persecution or martyrdom could destroy or quench, and so long as any of the personal relatives of Jesus were living, they were looked upon by their Hebrew fellow believers with reverence and esteem, and they took leading positions in the ecclesias of Jerusalem and Palestine, where Matthew's Hebrew Gospel took rank among them with the older scriptures of Israel for "the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy," or in other words, the account of the life, mission and teachings of Jesus as testified by Matthew in the Hebrew Gospel, were in harmony with what the Prophets had predicted the Messiah would do at his first advent.

Many other testimonies might be quoted to the same purpose, but these seem sufficient to prove that the original record of the life and discourses of Jesus, the Nazarene Messiah, was composed by Matthew, one of his twelve

chosen companions, perhaps with the assistance of his brothers, in the language then commonly called the Hebrew, the language then commonly spoken by the masses of the Jews in Palestine, and used by Jesus himself. It is interesting to note that a copy of this "very Hebrew Gospel," perhaps one of the original copies written by Matthew himself, was seen by Jerome late in the fourth century in the library at Caesarea, and as he resided at Bethlehem and could not use the work for the purpose of study, the Nazarenes residing at Berea (or Aleppo) in Syria, kindly lent him a copy of the same document, which he transcribed into Greek and Latin. In the original Hebrew, however, it still remained extant until towards the close of the fifth century, when the Bishop of Rome, included it amongst the apochryphal gospels and decreed its destruction, and in the reign of Theodosius in the same century, some fifty thousand persons were massacred in the provinces of Asia Minor, by the command of that Emperor, at the instigation of the Catholic priests, for the crime of holding the doctrines and practicing the precepts taught in this Gospel, and in the following century the name of the Nazarenes and their Gospel vanishes from the pages of history.

The first attempt at the formation of a New Testament Canon, was made by Marcion, a native of Pontus, but afterwards the leader of a Gnostic sect at Rome, towards the middle of the second century, but his canon comprised only a mutilated and corrupted Gospel