

for thinking that it was first composed in a Semitic language. St. John, again, was an original Greek document. But when this has been said, we must go on to recognise another element in the question. These books were written—with the exception of St. Luke's Gospel—by men whose mother-tongue was not Greek, who thought in Aramaic. St. Mark's Gospel, moreover, was not improbably based on the personal recollection of St. Peter, whose interpreter he was said to have been. St. Peter, in relating his stories to St. Mark, would naturally use the Aramaic language; and this could not fail to influence St. Mark's expression. Since even St. Luke's narrative embodied large portions of St. Mark, with only minor changes we can see that even the most Greek of the Gospels had a Semitic element in the background of the narrative. But vastly more important is it to remember that all the conversations related in these Gospels were originally spoken in Aramaic. This seems to be a certain result of criticism. Now we are not compelled to suppose that these conversations reproduced in every instance the exact words which were actually spoken. This would presuppose superhuman feats of memory, and would land us in a most perplexing position. For we could not then understand how St. Matthew and St. Luke could have felt at liberty to make changes in the details of these conversations had they held them to be the *ipsissima verba* of the speakers. All that they demanded of the Gospels was that they presented the highest type of faithful narrative—representing the true sense of what was said, though often in an abbreviated form; and giving in the case of important and striking sayings the exact words, though in the form of a translation. Syriac, though closely akin to it, was not the actual dialect of Palestine in the Lord's time. That dialect was called Aramaic, and it was a difficult task to collect from the fragments that remained of it sufficient material for a trustworthy retranslation of the Gospel sayings into their probable original form. To this work a German scholar has devoted the best years of his life. For the words of the Lord Jesus Christ the Church would ever look. As she learned to read them in the newest light that reverent criticism could bring to them, she would learn fresh lessons of what inspiration was, and of what it was not.