

The Gospel of the Nazarenes.

PART I.

*The Language in which it was Written.*

The question of the authenticity and genuineness of those literary works attributed to the Disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, and commonly called the "New Testament," is one of the most important in the whole range of religious literature. The first part of this collection, and that to which we now call attention, is "The Gospel according to St. Matthew." That this is not an original document, nor genuine in the translations from which our English versions were made, are facts well known to the students of ecclesiastical history, especially those who have honestly endeavored to investigate into the fragmentary remains of the literature, in order to understand the principles, of the first congregations that accepted the faith of Jesus the Nazarene. Yet these are facts that few are willing to admit, even after they have been demonstrated beyond the possibility of refutation. That Matthew, one of the twelve chosen apostles of Jesus of Nazareth, wrote an account of the life and teachings of his master, subsequent to his immersion by John the Baptist in the waters of the Jordan, and that Matthew and his fellow apostles believed their Master to be the Messiah foretold by the prophets of Israel, are facts as clearly proven as any historical statement of that period can be. And

that this biographical work was written in the Hebrew characters, and in the language spoken by Jesus and his fellow countrymen in Palestine, and understood by many of the Jews in dispersion, to the believers of which James, the brother of Jesus, afterwards wrote his epistle, and for whose benefit Josephus wrote his "Wars of the Jews," are also evident facts. That Matthew's original gospel was written in the Hebrew language, and at a period of about twelve years after the martyrdom of Jesus, and that it differed in several important passages from the more modern Greek version, are the facts that it is proposed to elucidate in these papers, and for this purpose, in addition to the canonical writings, quotations will be made from the works of prominent historians, commentators and the writings of the "Fathers" of the first four centuries. Gibbon in his history of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," alluding to the subject of the First Gospel, says: "The modern critics are not disposed to believe what the fathers almost unanimously assert, that Matthew composed a Hebrew Gospel, of which only the Greek translation is now extant. It seems, however, dangerous to reject their testimony." On this note M. Guizot makes the following remarks, "Strong reasons appear to confirm this testimony. Papias, contemporary of the apostle St. John, says positively that Matthew had written the discourses of Jesus Christ in Hebrew, and that each interpreted them as he was able. This Hebrew was the Syro-Chaldaic dialect then in use at