

in a school which produced an almost miraculously tenacious and faithful power of memory; and in any case the words were difficult to forget. The earliest preachers of the religion of Jesus used them in instructing their converts. And that very likely was the purpose for which they were first written down, perhaps not more than twenty years after Jesus' death, and almost certainly before the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70, forty years after that. But we may feel pretty sure that they had passed from mouth to mouth for a good while before they were fixed in writing. The earliest Christians believed that the end of the world might come any time within the next fortnight, and it required a certain cooling down in them to take the trouble to write anything except letters like St. Paul's, which he would never have written if he could have got at his correspondents by word of mouth.

Now in this process of passing for a considerable time from one man's lips to another's, these logia could not fail to have undergone some changes especially as regards the order in which they were presented, but also in other ways. There would be a quite irresistible tendency, which we can plainly see in actual operation, to bring them up to date, to make them fit more precisely the present circumstances of the Church. The occasion to which they referred would often be forgotten; and a more or less suitable context would have to be supplied. Words dealing with the same general subject would be brought together as in the Sermon on the Mount. Sometimes, the thread of connexion would be merely a word, of which case we have a remarkable example in Mark's Gospel (Chap. IX. 38-50). As to the varying order, everyone could arrange them as it happened to suit him. Matthew has an entirely different arrangement from Luke, who seems likely in this respect to be nearer the actual fact. So much for the logia-source. The narrative would probably be later to crystallize in a firm shape, and was obviously much more liable to alterations, and legendary accretions; ivy and convolvulus, as it were, wreath-