

#### IV.

##### THE GOSPEL OF PERFECTION.

THE Gospel of Perfection was another work regarded as sacred by the Ophites. St. Epiphanius says: "Some of them (*i.e.* of the Gnostics) there are who vaunt the possession of a certain fictitious, far-fetched poem which they call the Gospel of Perfection, whereas it is not a Gospel, but the perfection of misery. For the bitterness of death is consummated in that production of the devil. Others without shame boast their Gospel of Eve."

St. Epiphanius calls this Gospel of Perfection a poem, *ποιήμα*. But M. Nicolas justly observes that the word *ποιήμα* is used here, not to describe the work as a poetical composition, but as a fiction. In a passage of Irenæus,<sup>1</sup> of which only the Latin has been preserved, the Gospel of Judas is called "confictio," and it is probable that the Greek word rendered by "confictio" was *ποιήμα*.<sup>2</sup>

Baur thinks that the Gospel of Perfection was the same as the Gospel of Eve.<sup>3</sup> But this can hardly be. The words of St. Epiphanius plainly distinguish them: "Some vaunt the Gospel of Perfection . . . others boast . . . the Gospel of Eve;" and elsewhere he speaks of their books in the plural.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Iren. Hæres. i. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolas: Etudes sur les Évangiles Apocryphes, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Baur: Die Christliche Gnosis, p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> ἐν ἀποκρύφοις ἀναγνώσκοντες.—Hæres. xxvi. 5.