

be satisfied by such a theory, and that we must have recourse to the hypothesis that some common documents lie behind, which every Evangelist used in his own way. And, again, it has been argued, with great plausibility, that one of the documents which were before the writers of the First and Third Gospels must have been the Gospel according to St. Mark in its present form. But whatever conclusion is reached, it is pretty generally admitted on all hands that there is no antecedent presumption against the Gospels, any or all of them, being compilations from previous records. In Dr. Liddon's felicitous phrase, their inspiration must be regarded as, in part, an inspiration of selection. And this far-reaching principle, which has been so hotly debated in the region of Old Testament criticism, has been adopted by almost all scholars in the more sacred territory of the New Testament. Some scholars have found traces of compilation in the Apostolic epistles—a thesis which, as many of you know, our own Dr. Kennedy has been recently defending, with characteristic acumen, in relation to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians; but it is only as applied to the Gospels that I can here speak of it. This principle—that the Synoptic Gospels are, in part, compilations rather than original compositions—has been reached, be it observed, solely by the internal evidence of the documents, for there is no scrap of external evidence in its favour. And it may lead to theological issues of far-reaching importance. It is at once apparent that the evidence for the main facts of the life of Christ thus goes back to an earlier date than that of the composition of the several canonical Gospels. These great facts were recorded in earlier documents than any that have reached us. The story of St. Mark's Gospel cannot be treated as a late legend; it takes rank as an almost contemporary record. But, on the other hand, once the idea of the compilation of the First and Third Gospels is admitted, we have to abandon in large measure our old "harmonising" methods. And the more cautious of our English scholars—such as Dr. Sanday, whose *Life of Christ* in the new "Bible Dictionary" is, I venture to think, one of the most important contributions to theology made during the past year—the more cautious of our scholars do not attempt to bring all the narratives of the Gospels into exact and detailed correspond-