

entered. Depend upon it, we are not at the end of the various theories that will be propounded to account for the origin of our Gospels. One theory gives place to another, and has done so, but who shall say that we have seen the last? In all probability, the actual evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels will be in a hundred years hence substantially what it is now. A few discoveries may be made which will elucidate more or less certain points, but the main bulk of the evidence will be what it is; unquestionably not less, very possibly a trifle more. This, then, being so, it matters little what theories may be proposed. Theory cannot set aside fact; and if the facts are sufficient now, they will be sufficient to the end of time, and sufficient also to confront any form of theory. The validity of the evidence for the Gospels does not vary in proportion to the ingenuity of those who propound theories. It is the yoke to which they must eventually bow. If, therefore, there is valid reason, as we know there is, to believe that the several Gospels are genuine—that is, the composition of the two Apostles, Matthew and John, and the two evangelists, Mark and Luke—see how wonderfully that circumstance bears upon the indirect testimony of St. Paul. And even if it is not possible to trace any Gospel, say, beyond the year 70, it by no means follows that it did not exist before that time. It is quite conceivable that many years may have been spent in the composition of a Gospel before it was, so to say, launched upon the world in such a form as to admit of evidence being borne to its existence from independent sources. It is, moreover, quite possible that a Gospel may have been current in the Church for many years before the rise of such independent testimony as would witness to its existence, or which, having arisen, would survive to do so. There is nothing unreasonable in supposing, *e.g.*, St. John to have had the materials of his Gospel by him for years, before in his extreme old age, he bequeathed it in a literary form to the world. The one question we have to decide is; whether or not we are warranted in ascribing it to him. I, for my part, am profoundly convinced that, upon internal evidence alone, we are