

Pastoral Epistles have been subjected to specially searching criticism.

What has been the result? The process of criticism has given us an insight into the New Testament impossible to our grandfathers. The Acts of the Apostles has been most completely vindicated: the number of the Pauline Epistles generally held to be authentic, has been constantly increasing: differences of opinion still exist, and possibly always will exist. But with the possible exception of one Epistle—that of 2nd Peter—the Books of the New Testament are accepted as authentic by the majority of critics. The date of the composition of the Gospel of St. John, which it was once the fashion to put as late as 200 A.D., has been put constantly earlier. It is something to have gained this result.

But what I wish you to note is this: the result has been gained only by the balancing, the testing of theories of authorship and composition—some of them painful to people not scholars and of simple minds: it has been gained by treating the books of the New Testament as if they were ordinary books—subject to the same laws of composition and preservation, subject to the same criticism and the same tests. Believers in a full inspiration and believers in no inspiration have here met on a common field where reason and scholarship had the right to speak and decide, where no assumptions were to bar their right. Had scholars as Westcott and Lightfoot, and Hort and Sanday, and Rendel Harris been afraid of criticism, had they feared to use the intellects which God had given them, what would have been our position to-day? We should have had a Church treasuring the New Testament but almost afraid to open it, with a faith in its accuracy very deep maybe but not very intelligent and certainly unable to give reasons for its existence. On the other hand we should have had outside critics, strengthened in their positions of negations and refusals: hardened in their beliefs by the declarations of ignorant be-