

apprehend their origin and significance, and to understand why they belong to Paul, and could belong to no one else. The assurance and intelligence with which they are to-day accounted his are in the ratio of the deeper insight into their origin to which the Church has been driven by criticism, in the ratio of the prevailing arguments by which reasons alleged for doubting them have been refuted. They have passed through the fire. We hold them now in no fear of what some unknown critic may adduce. We can give a reason for the confidence that is in us. A shade of doubt may still rest on the pastoral epistles, although, even regarding them, some significant admissions have of late been made by the foremost critics, and by some of the best scholars of Germany they are frankly accepted. And undoubtedly the tendency is at present towards the enlargement rather than the contraction of the writings to be ascribed to Paul. In regard to the synoptic gospels, the advance of knowledge has been remarkable. Fine tact and dogged industry, scholarly imagination and mechanical aids, the patience that can count words and the genius that can survey a wide field of literary history, have all helped towards the solution of what is known as the synoptical problem. This problem, if it has not been entirely solved, has yet been reduced within well-defined limits, and the final solution is not likely to be long delayed. The relation of Mark to the other gospels may be said to be determined, and the manner in which the first gospel has been formed is now fairly well understood. But no enumeration of the nett results gained by the criticism of the gospels could convey an adequate notion of the insight into the aims and methods of composition which the prolonged and careful scrutiny of the gospels has won. It might be too much to say that we can now sit with each evangelist at his desk and read along with him the documents he employed and detect the motives which prompted him to omit this incident and give prominence to that, to leave one saying of Jesus where he found it, and shift another to a different connection. But if this might slightly exaggerate the truth, we can certainly say that the attempt to understand the manner in which the gospels were composed has made us acquainted with many most significant facts regarding their