

of mankind, has not been mistaken in attributing extreme importance to those variations in faith, even on points apparently secondary, by which Christendom has been and is still so grievously divided." The whole case is most concisely put in a comprehensive passage in the "Systematic Theology" of the late Prof. John Miley:*

"A religious movement with power to lift up souls into a true spiritual life must have its inception and progress in a clear and earnest presentation of the vital doctrines of religion. The order of facts in every such movement in the history of Christianity has been, first, a reformation of doctrine, and then, through the truer doctrine, a higher and better moral and spiritual life. . . . Such has ever been and must forever be the chronological order of these facts, because it is the logical order. When souls move up from a sinful life or a dead formalism into a true spiritual life they must have the necessary reasons and motives for such action. . . . If we should be consecrated to God in a life of holy obedience and love, it must be for reasons of duty and motives of spiritual well-being which are complete only in the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. These doctrines are not mere intellectual principles or dry abstractions, but living truths which embody all the practical forces of Christianity. The spiritual life takes a higher form under evangelical Christianity than is possible under any other form, whether ritualistic or rationalistic, because therein the great doctrines of Christianity are apprehended in a living faith and act with their transcendent practical force upon all that enters into this life."

If there be any validity at all in these remarks, the indispensability of Systematic Theology to the preacher is obvious. For they make it clear not only that some knowledge of Christian truth is essential to him who essays to teach that truth, but that the type of life which is produced by his preaching, so far as his preaching is effective, will vary in direct relation to the apprehension he has of Christian truth and the type and proportion of truth he presents in his preaching. As Bishop Westcott puts it:† "Error and imperfection in such a case must result in lives which are faulty and maimed where they might have been nobler and more complete"; and, on the other hand, "right doctrine is an inexhaustible spring of strength, if it be translated into deed." In directly the same line of remark that saint of God, Dr. Horatius Bonar, urges ‡ that: "All wrong thoughts of God, whether of Father, Son, or Spirit, must cast a shadow over the soul that entertains them. In some cases the shadow may not be so deep and cold as in others; but never can it be a trifle. And it is this that furnishes the proper answer to the flippant question so often asked: Does it really matter what a man believes? All defective views of God's character tell upon the life of the soul and the peace of the conscience. We must think right thoughts of God if we would worship Him as He desires to be worshiped, if we would live the life He wishes us to live, and enjoy the peace which He has provided for us." And what is true of the doctrine of God is true of every other

* Vol. I., pp. 48-49. Cf. also p. 40.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

‡ "The Gospel of the Spirit's Love," p. 22.