

proportions. We must be content that it shall grow toward completeness. And then you know that, when a system of general truth is formed without all the facts, the inferences are not reliable, let them be ever so logically made. I will not take the inference of any theologian under heaven unless I can find a plain didactic statement on the back of which I can inscribe, "Thus saith the Lord." The system is human; the Book is divine. And I say here what I said in the presence of those who were my teachers on the greatest occasion, perhaps, of my life, that we must go from the system to the Word of God, and from the Word of God back to the system. The system is only provisional, and is rather a group of statements under logically-arranged topics out of a philosophical whole.

I hope what I have said during this fleeting hour may be of some service to you. Let me urge you, from an experience in which I have gone through agonies that the torment of the flesh cannot possibly represent, to be thorough all the while. If you are not willing to task your brain and study with all the physical strength and all the time that God shall give you; if you are not disposed and pledged with your service and solemnly bound before God to be a thorough man, as God shall give you breadth and persistency; then go back to the plough and to the shop. I do not think you are wanted in the ministry. There are a great many men that would rather be out of it than in it to-day. If your eyes are too weak to read Hebrew, then make a good lay evangelist of yourself. Laymen can preach pretty well nowadays, and many people think they can do better than the ordinary ministry. If you have got to leave off your Greek the minute this bell ceases to ring you to recitation, and take all your New Testament knowledge at second hand, then I would rather be a good Sunday-school teacher. If you will not throw off your garments, leap into the arena, and put all your life into this business, then go back and make a decent living. Do not go on toward the ministry.

Now, this may seem to be severe and even harsh; but it is my feeling just now. I wish I could antedate my history, and go back to the freshman class and begin over. A great many men wish they were there, and they would not go any further. That I know, for they confess it. They would go out west, according to Mr. Greeley's advice, and clear off a hundred acres of land, and stay there. I do not discount ministerial piety and spirituality. They are all good enough, with something inside. There must be the bone and sinew of intellectual power, structural development, and harmony, to give contour to piety, before it can be exemplary in the pulpit in this age.