

an authoritative expounder of the Bible, that is to say, in the chief functions of his great life work. All of which means, practically, that every minister, to be fully equipped, must thoroughly study the Hebrew and Greek Testaments.

People who pay any attention to such assertions as the above often remark that the thing is self-evident and think no more about it. A few, however, in Canada, as well as elsewhere, are getting to be of a quite opposite opinion, and are beginning to think that the absurdity rather consists in neglecting what is self-evident in a concern of such vital importance. They are beginning to be ashamed of a system which has always maintained in theory the self-evident necessity of the study of Hebrew as well as Greek, and has, in a large degree, failed to insist upon it in practice. And they are trying to see what can be done to remove the disgrace and to reform the abuse.

It is worth while, in passing, to call attention to the way in which so many deceive themselves as to the practical bearings of this question. Bad as the case seems for the reputation and efficiency of the Church, and bad as the case really is, it will not do to settle the question by off-hand and sweeping condemnation. When the great body of ministers admit, as the Church has always admitted, that the serious study of the original languages is a self-evident necessity, they only use the term "necessity" in a relative sense, meaning in effect that it is a very good thing to study the Bible in the originals if you can only get the leisure and the facility. The necessity thus conceded means about as much as when it is said that it is a necessity for every well-educated person to know French, or for every leader of a church choir to have good taste in church music, or that tea or beer should be classed among the necessaries rather than the luxuries of life. In other words, it is not meant that a good working knowledge and use of Hebrew is a prime or absolute necessity for the professional expounder of the Bible, but only a very desirable thing when other things more important are not sacrificed for its attainment. This really defines the issue in all fairness between those ministers who excuse their own Hebrew illiteracy or tolerate it in others, and those who deprecate such illiteracy and labor for its removal. On the one hand it is claimed (practically and sometimes avowedly) that the professional ex-