

critical on the one side, and of the practical on the other, for insisting on an ideal of the church too high for even regenerated humanity to make its own, still we do not lower that ideal, for it is not our own, but set before us by One wiser than we. It is not ours to make it more "serviceable," by accommodating it to the world, any more than it is ours to lower the Divine law in our promulgation of it; or rather to think that the Divine Lawgiver should let down His law, because men do not live up to it. No, we are steadfastly set upon the upholding of these scriptural features of the church—not for a moment falling in with the current notion of some that "it is well to accommodate where you cannot attain"—as if an inveterate unbelief of the hearer is to be remedied by the apologetic unbelief of the preacher! That those churches, laying stress upon spirituality, catholicity and simplicity in their life, have always desired a thoughtful and cultivated ministry, only shows their recognition of the fitness of things. And it would be a sign of a change upon one of these fundamental positions if they should indicate their preference for any other ministering than that of the best within their reach and means. A door is this night opened in this place that such a ministry may be provided for them. And as indicating the order of the studies here to be pursued, let me revert to the desire of the churches as expressed in my opening paragraph. I said they desire a ministry not oblivious of the past. It is among certain signs of our times to make light of the past, to count it among the by-gones that ought to be by-gones, of no present use in certifying to any present truth. But no church of the living God can take this position. For, under the living God, out of the past has she been born, and to be separated from all that has come to pass is to have neither root for herself to stand by, nor branch to extend to those beyond the reach of her present body. Besides, Christianity is not simply a system of thought, the conception and the production of a single mind, left among other great conceptions, to work its way in the earth! It is part of the world's life; it has always expressed itself through organized bodies of believers who have not only promulgated certain truths, but done certain deeds, in establishing and extending God's kingdom upon earth. Moreover, it has spread divergently, now in one direction, then in another, impressing itself, expressing itself, repressing alien systems, and in various ways affecting both itself and the world it has moved in. It is impossible to secure any trustworthy knowledge of what it is, without some historic study of what it has been, and what it has done. Moreover, its present doctrines need the past for their explanation. To follow the thinking of the ancient churches; to look at the problems interesting the fathers; to learn how the earlier master-minds of Christendom solved their difficulties; to trace to their roots some of the pestilent heresies of an earlier day; to read the lives of the holy and the true; to see how sincere and earnest minds have, in other ages, been trammelled by what does not trammel ourselves; in a word, to watch the evolving providence of God, is to put ourselves in training for enlightened action upon the Christendom around us. But, aside from its wealth of instruction, who—oblivious of the past—can pretend to progressive action in the present? I cannot step forward without one foot behind me to give me, both poise and impetus in my movement. And it is sheer experiment if not recklessness, to cast one's thinking forward, and forward only, without respectful attention to what has been thought. We are making up a past soon to be, and what think we of that contempt, applauded as originality, independence and progress, which reduces to ridicule what has made the past for us, virtually charging the benign Providence with folly, for allowing such men and measures to live a life and die a death, that the world might thereby be moved one step nearer to the end for which it has been made?

But while thus vindicating church history as part of a course of theological training, and while thus suggesting the value to a minister of a knowledge of past doctrines, rituals, liturgies and literature, let me advance a step by the assertion that he will be but a poorly trained minister for churches of our order, who lives in the past only, or even mainly. The ministry at present