

on high. But that does not supersede the necessity, or exonerate us from the obligation, to cultivate as far as possible those natural gifts which are available for the service of God in the ministry of the Word.

Moreover, we must not undervalue the work of the home missionary, evangelist, or lay preacher, who has sometimes been regarded with jealousy, and distrusted as irregular and liable to much abuse. We have surely learned by this time that such agencies must have a recognized place in every well-organized Church. Its blessed fruits are so manifest that, whenever it is occasionally used, it is clearly in the hand of God, and therefore to be permitted and wisely directed by the Church.

I spoke of the work of the ministry as something more. He continues for many years—perhaps for a whole lifetime—preaching to one congregation—exhorting, admonishing, instructing, or comforting, according to the ever-varying experiences of its individual members. This needs large resources and special training to give him that wider knowledge and more exact acquaintance with these different particulars and relations, and this is the object immediately contemplated in our colleges or divinity halls.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING RELIGIOUS TRUTH AS A SYSTEM.

There is another branch of theological study which, I believe, there is a tendency at present to undervalue and to depreciate—I mean systematic theology, in which the definite statement of the several truths of revelation is aimed at with as much exactness as possible and their arrangement in systematic order. This, as a study, is not only undervalued but derided. We might almost say there is no topic relating to religion on which we hear and read more nonsense. If the truths of revelation are not to be put in a definite form, or stated with any precision, then we shall soon be adrift on a sea of unsettled opinion, of vague sentiment, or presumptuous speculation. A sermon certainly should not be a theological treatise a preacher is something else than a theologian, but no preacher and no interpreter of Scripture is to be relied on who is not familiar with the forms and mutual relations of Christian doctrine as well as the history of their development or definition; in short, not well acquainted with the great landmarks of systematic theology. A field of thought which has occupied the vast intellect and comprehensive mind of a Calvin, which is gone over in various directions by the Amies,

and Turretines, and De Wittes of a later century, and is traversed anew in our own day by a Chalmers and a Hodge, that is a field of study we should be slow to abandon, and in which we trust our students will continue as of old to be constantly trained and exercised.

RELIGIOUS TRUTH AS CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

There is, however, another branch of study which engages more attention now than at any former period, and deservedly too—I mean exegetical theology, embracing everything that bears upon the right interpretation of Scripture, or the explanation or illustration of its meaning—a field of study as extensive as it is important, of vital consequence to those whose business for life will be to interpret, expound, and apply the Word of God for the instruction of a Christian people. If there is any branch of sacred learning in which our students should be more carefully grounded than another it is this. It is in this department, too, of theological science that the greatest progress has been made in recent times. The immense accumulation of materials during the last half century available for the further illustration of Scripture, the progress made in the more exact knowledge of the original languages of Scripture, especially the Hebrew, the discovery and deciphering of so many monuments of antiquity, Jewish, Assyrian, and Babylonian—all this has given a renewed impulse to biblical studies. To introduce our students into this wide field, to awaken their interest, to direct their studies, to guard them against mistakes and misleading influences, to teach them the principles of sound interpretation, to imbue them with a devout and reverent spirit in the handling of the Divine Word, there is no work to be done in our colleges more important to the Church than this, none requiring higher gifts, more varied and special qualifications on the part of those engaged in it.

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

But what, after all, is the end and purpose for which we subject our students to such lengthened and laborious preparation? Not to make them merely learned divines, able controversialists, or even professors; but mainly, and before everything else, that they should be preachers of the Word—able ministers of the New Covenant, rightly dividing the Word of Truth so as to give to everyone his due portion, that which is suited to his circumstances and experience, thus “feed