

Theology.

The Study of Hebrew.

IT has been a long cherished principle of the Presbyterian Church that her ministry must be educated. We have reason to be proud of our Canadian Church in this respect and the present high standard of culture and learning among our ministry certainly should not be lowered. We feel, nevertheless, that in some respects the educational system of the Church might be altered with profit—to the end of providing men with greater freedom in the prosecution of ministerial studies. We find to-day men who are seriously handicapped in the study of languages and should the rigid theological curriculum be forced upon them? It is not our purpose to belittle the value of the original languages to the student of scripture, but we may well ask whether from the study of Greek or Hebrew we derive benefit in proportion to the time and effort that we are obliged to put upon them. One of the most important advantages to be derived from his language study is ability to appreciate the work of the critical scholars in both the Old and New Testaments. Without some knowledge of Hebrew, for instance, we would not understand the differences between parts of an Old Testament book regarded as the work of one author, or again the problematical readings suggested for difficult passages. By means of the original we are enabled also to render the sense more exactly and such things are a distinct gain but may it not be true that these results might be attained without requiring so much work, say in Hebrew grammar. There are a number of men reading the O. T. for exegesis who have practically only the Junior Hebrew class work and even of those who have been over the senior work, how many remember the details of the irregular verb or of the pointings in the three declensions of nouns? What they have retained and what they rely upon is a number of primal facts—basic in importance but comparatively few in number. Why should not attention be given to these and much of the more detailed work omitted? To become a skilful critical scholar such details would have to be thoroughly mastered, yet, but few of us hope to be able to do more than to use intelligently the commentaries which have done for us the finest critical exegesis, and for this a few basic facts well mastered are all that is necessary. Why then oblige men to put a great portion of their time upon work in which they cannot hope to become expert and yet in which only expert knowledge gives really satisfactory results. There are students in theology who are putting the greater part of their time upon the finer details of Hebrew and are therefore obliged to allow other work to suffer and yet in the majority of cases these finer details will fade from memory very quickly. Surely the feeling that much of this time could be more profitably spent is not misplaced. There is abundant scope for reading in theology; a splendid library is at our command and yet unnecessary and soon to be forgotten detail is taking a great deal of time from it. Why should we not have more reading of Hebrew with special emphasis upon its broad literary qualities as in the Friday afternoon class? Why should not our aim in grammar be the acquiring of