

view of the nature, evidence, agreement, and design of the great truths it contains and reveals. Our own version is sufficiently plain and faithful to lead the humble enquirer into the knowledge of saving truth; yet its language, its geography, its history, its chronology, its philosophy (*truly* "so called")—all find honourable employment for learning, and well reward its application. For a student to be able to satisfy his own mind on the accuracy of the translation as a whole, or of any particular passages in it which he may desire to explore, must be attended with a refined pleasure, as well as an obvious advantage. Beside, in these days of cavil and contradiction, it is not a matter of small importance that his learning enables him to vindicate the truth against the objections of gainsayers, and thus to render essential service to the cause of religion. Nothing indeed is more offensive than an affectation of learning, in public or in private. In preaching, especially, where it is desirable that all should understand, such a display is exceedingly out of place. Elaborate and subtle criticisms, metaphysical discussions, rhetorical flourishes, forced interpretations, and a parade of words, but ill accord with the solemnity and seriousness with which the messages of God should be delivered to the children of men. "Sound speech that cannot be condemned," is a direction that ought never to be lost sight of by preachers of the gospel. Every deviation from this apostolic rule, however it may please the fancy, has no tendency to mend the heart, or to further the work of God. It will be seen, then, that while we recommend learning in a minister of the gospel, it is the *use*, and not the *abuse*, of it that we exclusively regard. Some years since, a minister in England, superior to the majority of his brethren in literary attainments, having preached

to a very plain congregation, was thus accosted by one of the deacons: "Sir, when we heard of your kind intention to pay us a visit, some of us, illiterate people, were afraid we should not understand you; but we never heard a plainer preacher in our lives." To which he replied, "My friends, you mistake the true design of learning in a minister: it is to teach him to speak forcibly and intelligibly, so that the meanest hearer may understand him." When Saint Paul advises Timothy to procure additional labourers in the vineyard for the propagation of the gospel, he enjoins him to commit what he had "heard" "to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Now this ability to teach, the *faithfulness* of the messengers having been first ascertained, may be very much increased by a judicious course of training and discipline, adapted as well to the physical powers as to the mental and moral faculties of our nature, and strictly correspondent with the principles of evangelical truth. Independently of direct instruction, the frequent contact, and even the friendly collision, of kindred minds, have a tendency to rouse the attention, sharpen the intellect, assist the discrimination, and excite the zeal of those who are thus pursuing a common object with a desire to glorify their Lord and Master.

We have already intimated that learning, like every other good thing, may, through the depravity of the human heart, be abused. Instead of a salutary, it may have a pernicious influence, and be prostituted to the cause of scepticism and irreligion, instead of serving that of truth and piety. It will be the object, therefore, of the judicious tutor, and of the conscientious student, to counteract this depravity. To this end, divine teaching, and a gracious influence, will be sought, without which the student will never feel himself