

common translation, with general accuracy of rendering, combines a simplicity of diction, which both accords with the sublimity of scriptural sentiment, and presents the Word of God in its true character, the guide, alike of the unlearned and intelligent.

Still, however, the perusal of the scriptures in their original languages is a useful exercise. The terms and modes of expression which an author uses, are best calculated to convey the spirit of his writings; and you are aware, that these cannot always be literally translated without barbarism. The general ambiguity of language also, occasionally introduces into versions an obscurity of meaning which, a reference to the original tends to elucidate. Besides, our common translation of the scriptures, with all its excellencies, has no claim to perfection. It is susceptible of many improvements, which, an accurate acquaintance with the original languages, and a knowledge of the present state of biblical criticism, will enable you to make.

But when I direct your attention to the scriptures, I would not, by any means, advise you to trust to the resources of your own minds for a knowledge of their contents; the student who reads only the Word of God, resembles the solitary Christian. By his own meditations he may enlarge his knowledge; but those who enjoy fellowship and speak often one to another, acquire a superior degree of information; and the same reason which proves the value of christian communion, enforces the perusal of books that contain elucidations of scripture. This is a species of fellowship by which you may enjoy the conversation of both the dead and the living; and concentrate, in your own minds, the religious knowledge of ages.

Books upon scripture present to the student a fertile source of improvement. Students, however, even when they are eager to improve, do not always derive from books, a degree of knowledge proportioned to the means of information which are within their reach. All that has been written upon biblical topics is neither with respect to subject nor talent of equal importance. On this account it frequently happens that the student who selects his own course of reading, expends much time and labour to very little purpose. His proficiency in knowledge does not correspond with his exertions; and, sometimes, the knowledge which he does acquire is not of the most profitable kind. It is possible that he may be ever learning, and adding to his stock of intelligence, and yet never arrive at the knowledge of those truths which are most necessary to be preached. I would advise you, therefore, in the perusal of books, to regulate your studies by the relative importance of subjects, as bearing upon