

applies—‘More knowledge of languages should be acquired: I say, *more knowledge* of languages—rather than a knowledge of *more languages*.’¹ The accuracy of study is of far greater importance than its extent. ‘A little study, *well digested in a good, serious mind*, will go a great way, and will lay in materials for a whole life.’² This intellectual process incorporates the subjects of thought with our own minds; and thus, instead of weakening their energies by an unnatural pressure, enlarges their capabilities of receiving and retaining their treasures. Massillon well distinguishes the main requisites of this digestive habit, to be—‘love of study; a desire of becoming useful to our parish; a conviction of the necessity of deriving from prayer that knowledge which study does not afford; of being impressed with a desire of salvation, and of applying all the means of advancing in evangelical wisdom, to inspire our flock with a love of their duty, in order that they may the more easily be induced to practise it: in a word, a sincere desire to fulfil our Ministry.’³

It is of great moment, that the habit of study should, as far as possible, be maintained through life. For the most part—the ground work only has been laid. Let our early attainments excite, not satisfy, our thirst for information—divert, not bound, our investigations. If useful habits are gained, they are probably far from being matured. St. Paul’s instructions so often alluded to, were given (as we have hinted) to an elder of some years’ standing in the Church. Mr. Scott to the last combined the student with the Minister.⁴ ‘If we live only on old stores,’ (as a beloved brother has observed) ‘we shall never enlarge our knowledge’. It is allowed, that it is not easy diligently to pursue a course of persevering study. Our families and our daily duties must not be neglected. It requires fixed plans, vigorously followed up. Our natural indolence, and the love of society,

¹ Life of Pliny Fisk, Missionary to Palestine; a most valuable piece of Missionary, and indeed of Ministerial Biography, p. 25. Mr. Fisk was one of the instances of subsequent conviction of the mistake, that industrious study is inconsistent with ardent practical religion.

² Burnet’s Conclusion to the History of his own times.

³ Massillon’s Charges, p. 222.

⁴ Scott’s Life, pp. 600, 601. Mr. Richmond’s advice to his son looking forward to the Ministry was—‘From the day that a youth on Christian principles is devoted to the Ministry, he ought to become a Divinity Student, and all his studies should bend to the one great object.’

must be broken through. Cecil says—“Every man, whatever be his natural disposition, who would urge his powers to the highest end, must be a man of solitary studies.”¹

Yet, after all, the solidly-learned, the studious, and well-furnished man is but the unshapen mass, from which the Christian Minister is formed. The plastic energy—the quickening influence of the Almighty Spirit—is still needed to put light, life, and motion into the inert substance, to mould it into the Divine image, and to make it a “vessel of honour meet for the Master’s use.” Nor must we deny, that studious habits are attended with ensnaring temptations.² The tree of knowledge may thrive, while the tree of life is languishing. Every enlargement of intellectual knowledge has a natural tendency to self-exaltation. The habit of study must be guarded, lest it should become an unsanctified indulgence; craving to be fed at the expense of conscience or propriety; employed in speculative enquiries, rather than in holy and practical knowledge; pre-occupying the time that belongs to immediate duties; or interfering with other avocations of equal or greater moment. A sound judgment and a spiritual mind must be exercised, in directing these studies to the main end of the Ministry. Let none of them intrench upon those hours, that should be devoted to our study of the Bible, or our preparation for the pulpit. And wheresoever we find our inclination too much attached to any particular human science, let us set a guard upon ourselves, lest it rob us of Divine studies, and our best improvement. A Minister should remember, that himself with all his studies is consecrated to the service of the sanctuary. Let every thing be done therefore with a view to one great end; and let us pursue every part of science with a design to gain better qualifications thereby for our sacred work.³

¹ Bickersteth’s *Christian Hearer*, pp. 243. 244. The whole chapter is replete with valuable thought upon Christian study. “How few read enough to stock their minds! and the mind is no widow’s cruse, which fills with knowledge as fast as we empty it. Why should a clergyman labour less than a barrister? since, in spiritual things as well as temporal, it is “the hand of the diligent which maketh rich.” Does the conscience, in fact, never whisper upon any topic in theology—“Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?”” *Christian Observer*, 1828, p. 420.

² See some valuable remarks on this subject in Bickersteth’s *Christian Student*, ch. viii.

³ Watts’ *Humble Endeavour for a Revival*, pp. 17, 18. How closely did Henry Martyn live in the spirit of this caution—“May I be taught to remember, that all