

Principles
of
Bible Interpretation

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1835

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Principles of Interpretation

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Principles of Interpretation.

CHAPTER I.

WRITTEN REVELATION.

The whole christian religion;—its facts, its doctrine, its promises, its threatenings,—is presented to the world in a *written* record. The *writings* of prophets and apostles contain all the divine and supernatural knowledge in the world. Now, unless these sacred *writings* can be certainly interpreted, the christian religion never can be certainly understood. Every argument that demonstrates the necessity of such a written document as the Bible, equally demonstrates the necessity of fixed and certain principles or rules of interpretation: for without the latter, the former is of no value whatever to the world.

All the differences in religious opinion and sentiment, amongst those who acknowledge the Bible, are occasioned by false principles of interpretation, or by a misapplication of the true principles. There is no law, nor standard—literary, moral, or religious—that can coerce human thought or action, by only promulging and acknowledging it. If a law can effect any thing, our actions must be conformed to it. Were all students of the Bible taught to apply the same rules of interpretation to its pages, there would be a greater uniformity in opinion and sentiment, than ever resulted from the simple adoption of any written creed.

Great unanimity has obtained in some of the sciences, in consequence of the adoption of certain rules of analysis and synthesis; for all who work by the same rules, come to the same conclusions. And may it not be possible, that in this divine science of religion, there may yet be a very great degree of unanimity of sentiment, and uniformity of practice amongst all its friends? Is the school of Christ the only school, in which there can be no unanimity—no proficiency in knowledge? Is the book of God the

only volume, which can never be understood alike, by those who read and study it? It cannot be supposed, but by dishonoring God: for as all the children of God are taught by God—if they are necessarily unintelligent in his oracles, and discordant in their views, the deficiencies must rather be imputed to the teacher, than to the taught; for the pupils in this school, can be taught other sciences in other schools, with such uniformity and harmony of views, as to make it manifest to all, that they are the disciples of one teacher.

God's book is, however, put into the hands of men, as it was first spoken to men; but they have, by some unpropitious cause, been taught not to receive it from God, but from men. They do not consider, that the *written* book as well as the *spoken word*, is tendered to us under the stipulations of human language—according to the contract between man and man, touching the value or meaning of the currency of thought: that every word and sentence is to be weighed and tested, by the constitutional laws and standards of the currency of ideas.

When one person addresses another, he supposes the person addressed competent to interpret his words; and therefore, all wise and benevolent men select such words and phrases, as in their judgment, can be interpreted by those addressed. Every speaker proceeds in all his communications, upon the principle that his hearer is an interpreter—that he has not first to be taught the science of interpretation; and that he is bound so to express himself, that his hearer may interpret and understand his words, by an art which is supposed to be *native*,—which is indeed universal—common to all nations, barbarous as well as civilized.

Now, as God is infinitely wise and benevolent in all his oral communications to men, he proceeded upon the principle, that they were, by this native art, competent interpreters of his expressions; for otherwise, his addresses could be of no value. He could not even begin to teach them a new art of interpretation, as respected his communications, but by using their own words in the stipulated sense; unless we imagine a miracle in every case, and suppose that all his words were to be understood by a miraculous interposition. And this idea, if carried out, would make a verbal revelation, of no value whatever to the children of men.

If human language had never been confounded,—if a

multitude of different dialects had not been introduced,—no occasion for translating language, as a matter of course, would ever have existed. Again, if words and phrases, and the manners and customs of mankind were unchangeably fixed, or universally the same at all times and in all countries, the art of interpreting would have been still more simple than it is: for so far as it is *artificial*, it is owing to different dialects, idioms, manners, customs, and all the varieties which the ever changing conditions of society have originated, and are still originating.

At present, however, we would only impress upon the mind of the reader, that the very fact that we have a *written* revelation, that this revelation was first *spoken*, then written, supposes that there is somewhere, a native or an acquired art of interpretation; that the persons addressed were already in possession of that art: for without such an understanding, there would have been neither wisdom nor benevolence, in giving to mankind any verbal communication from God.

To unfold the principles of this art, whether we may regard it as native or acquired,—and to deduce from those principles some plain precepts, is the object of the first part of this book: for as before observed, unless the sacred *writings* can be certainly interpreted, the christian religion never can be certainly understood. We only add, that we will not assume a principle, nor suggest a precept of interpretation, that is not sustained by all the masters of this science, whose judgment is regarded, and whose decisions are acquiesced in, by all the authorities in the republic of letters.

CHAPTER II.

AUTHORS OF THE BIBLE.

The *Oracles of God*, commonly called the Bible, or THE BOOK, including the Old and New Testaments,—contemplated in a *literary* point of view, is the work of at least *thirty-five* independent authors. This volume was on hands for the long period of about fifteen hundred and fifty years; from the giving of the law by Moses, to the close of the vision and prophecy by John the Apostle. Some of its

authors were shepherds, kings, priests, fishermen, and of other callings in society. They spoke and wrote in different languages; at least, in Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek; and lived in countries considerably remote from each other.

As authors, some of them appear in the character of historians, orators, poets, biographers, moralists, letter-writers, &c. And although under an infallible superintendence and inspiration in all their communications to mankind, each of them preserves, in his speeches and writings, every thing peculiar to himself as a man. Like the fishermen of Galilee, on the day of Pentecost, though supernaturally gifted with a perfect knowledge of all the languages then spoken in Jerusalem, so that they could speak with the utmost facility, yet every man retained his own provincialisms; so that the splendid gift of tongues which they displayed, could not conceal from the multitude their Galilean extraction.

There cannot be less than *thirty-five* varieties of style in a work composed by thirty-five authors, even had they all written in the same language, upon the same subject, and at the same time. But when we reflect that these thirty-five authors lived in countries far remote, at different periods of time, through all the fluctuations of more than fifteen centuries, wrote in different languages, on different subjects, full of allusion to the views, manners, and customs of those addressed, and of contemporary neighboring nations; may we not say, that no volume in the world can surpass the Bible, in all the varieties and peculiarities of style; and that no book demands so much discrimination on the part of the student, who would accurately understand, and intelligibly interpret, its ancient and venerable compositions? In forming rules for the easy and certain understanding and interpreting the sacred writings, so far as it is a *literary* performance, these considerations must have due weight.

CHAPTER III.

INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

Revelation and inspiration, properly so called, have to do only with such subjects as are supernatural, or beyond

the reach of human intellect, in the most cultivated and elevated state. In this sense, "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." But besides this inspiration of original and supernatural ideas, there was another species of supernatural aid afforded the saints who wrote the historical parts of the sacred Scriptures. There was a revivescence in their minds, of what they themselves had seen and heard; and in reference to traditions handed down, such a superintendency of the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, as excluded the possibility of mistake, in the matters of fact which they recorded. The promise of "leading into all truth," and the promise of "bringing all things before known to remembrance," by the Holy Spirit, include all that we understand by inspiration, in its primary and secondary import.

But while this inspiration precluded the selection of incorrect or unsuitable words and sentences, the inspired men delivered supernatural communications in their own peculiar modes of expressing themselves. To illustrate my meaning, by another reference to the gift of tongues: the subjects of that splendid gift, in a moment, understood those foreign languages, as well as they knew their own. But in expressing themselves, they selected such terms, as in their judgment, most fitly and intelligibly communicated their ideas. In other words,—their own judgment or taste in the selection of terms, was not suspended by the new language. They used the terms of the new dialect, as they used the terms of their native tongue: chose such as in their judgment, would most clearly and forcibly reveal the mind of the Spirit to their hearers.

To give our ideas of the inspiration of the Prophets and Apostles, we would use such a comparison as the following:—There are some human sciences which may be perfectly understood; for example—the science of arithmetic. Suppose that A, by his own personal exertions, had made himself master of the whole science of numbers; and that B, without any exertion of his own, was instantly gifted with a perfect knowledge of the same science. In teaching that science to those ignorant of it, they would both proceed according to their own judgment and taste, and according to the capacity of their pupils. Neither A, who acquired his knowledge from books—nor B, who received his by inspiration, would feel himself obliged to use the words of the author of his knowledge; but would, from the treasures of

which he was possessed, give rules, and precepts, and examples, suited to a full development of his knowledge, to the need of the student. Neither of them would always speak in the same set phrase, but would, nevertheless, always impart correct and certain instruction on every topic in that science, until the student had a full and accurate view of the whole of it.

We regard the apostles of Jesus Christ, as gifted with a full and perfect knowledge of the christian institution; which entitled them, without the possibility of error, to open to mankind the whole will of their Master, whether in the form of doctrine, precept, promise, or threatening; and as furnished with such a knowledge of the signs of those ideas in human language, as to express this knowledge clearly, accurately, and infallibly, to mankind. But from what they have spoken and written, we are authorized to think that they were as free in the selection of words and phrases, as I am in endeavoring to communicate my views of their inspiration.

My reasons for this opinion are, that neither the Prophets nor the Apostles, exhibit any sort of solicitude in always expressing themselves in the same words, upon the same subject. Nor does any one of them seem at all concerned, to be consistent with himself on all occasions, in using the same words; either in delivering precepts, uttering promises, or in giving a narrative of any of the incidents of his own life, or that of his companions. We have no less than three accounts of Paul's conversion and mission to the Gentiles; one from Luke, and two from himself: one delivered to the Jews in Jerusalem, and one before Agrippa;—yet no two of them agree in *word*, though in sense they are uniformly the same.* We have two accounts of the conversion of the Gentiles; one by Luke, and one by Peter;† and these are as diverse in words, though as accordant in sense, as the narratives of Paul's conversion. We have four memoirs of Jesus Christ, brief records of his sayings and doings; and yet no two of them agree in words, in narrating a single speech, or in describing a single incident of his life, though there is, as far as they severally relate, a most perfect harmony in sense.

Peter's allusion to the epistles of Paul, fully expresses all that we desire to teach on this subject. "Paul wrote,"

* Acts, 9th, 22nd, 24th, chapters.

† Acts, 10th, 11th chapters.

says he, "*according to the wisdom given him.*" Paul's epistles are, then, the development and application of that wisdom given to him, expressed in his own style. It may, indeed, be said, that guided by that wisdom, it was impossible for them to select on any occasion, words or phrases inaccurate, or not clearly and fully expressive of the ideas suggested; so that as Paul himself says, he explained *spiritual things* in spiritual words, or in words taught by the Spirit. We must, therefore, regard these words as the words of the Spirit. It was God's spirit speaking in them, through such words as were natural to them from education and habit. According to these views, the English, or German, or French "New Testament," is as much the word of the Spirit as the Greek original, if that original is faithfully translated, but in any other view of inspiration, we have not the word of God, nor the teachings of his spirit, only in the Hebrew and Greek originals of the two covenants.

Before we dismiss this subject it may be observed, that we find many things in these writings, which are quite natural and common, for which inspiration is neither claimed nor pretended; many specimens of which will occur to the reader, when one is fairly examined. "Make haste to come to me soon; for Demas having loved the present world has forsaken me, and is gone into Thessalonica, Crescens into Galatia, and Titus into Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me in the ministry. But Tychycus I have sent to Ephesus. The cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when you come, and the books, but especially the parchments."*

Concerning every thing in these sacred writings, even the most common and trivial matters as we might call them, there is but one observation we shall offer, and with that close this chapter.

The Apostles, acting under the high authority and commission of Jesus Christ, and inspired with all divine and supernatural knowledge, exhibited in doctrine, in precepts, ordinances, promises, threatenings, and developments of things spiritual, celestial, eternal, are, in consequence of these endowments and authority, worthy of all respect and regard, even when writing upon the most common matters; and these apparently uninteresting things, are to the stu-

* 2 Timothy iv. 8--12.

dent of the Living Oracles of great value, and of indispensable importance, in giving a full development of the religion of christianity, in all its condescensions and adaptations to the most minute and common concerns and business of this life.

CHAPTER IV.

LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE.

God has spoken by men, to men, for men. The language of the Bible is, then, *human* language. It is, therefore, to be examined by all the same rules which are applicable to the language of any other book, and to be understood according to the true and proper meaning of the words, in their current acceptation, at the times and in the places in which they were originally written or translated.

If we have a *revelation* from God in human language, the words of that volume must be intelligible by the common usage of language:—they must be precise and determinate in signification, and that signification must be philosophically ascertained; that is,—as the words and sentences of other books are ascertained, by the use of the dictionary and grammar. Were it otherwise, and did men require a new dictionary and grammar to understand the book of God,—then, without that divine dictionary and grammar, we could have no *revelation* from God: for a revelation that needs to be revealed, is no revelation at all.

Again, if any *special rules* are to be sought, for the interpretation of the sacred writings; unless these rules have been given in the volume, as a part of the revelation, and are of divine authority;—without such rules, the book is sealed; and I know of no greater abuse of language, than to call a *sealed book*, a revelation.

But the fact, that God has clothed his communications in human language, and that he has spoken by men, to men, is *prima facie* evidence that he is to be understood, as one man conversing with another. Righteousness, or what we sometimes call *honesty*, requires this; for unless he first made a special stipulation when he began to speak, his words

were, in all candor, to be taken at the current value; for, he that would contract with a man for any thing, stipulating his contract in the currency of the country, without any explanation, and should afterwards intimate, that a *dollar* with him meant only *three franks*, would be regarded as a dishonest and unjust man. And shall we impute to the God of truth and justice, what would blast the reputation of a fellow-citizen, at the tribunal of political justice!

As then, there is no divine dictionary, grammar, or special rules of interpretation for the Bible, then that book, to be understood, must be submitted to the common dictionary, grammar, and rules of the language in which it was written; and as a living language is constantly fluctuating, the true and proper meaning of the words and sentences of the Bible, must be learned from the acceptance of those words and phrases, in the times and countries in which it was written. In all this, there is nothing special; for Diodorus, Herodotus, Josephus, Philo, Tacitus, Sallust, &c., and all the writers of all languages, ages, and nations, are translated and understood in the same manner.

Enthusiasts and fanatics of all ages, determine the meaning of words, from that knowledge of things which they imagine themselves to possess, rather than from the words of the author,—“They decide by what they suppose he ought to mean, rather than by what he says.”

To adopt any other course, or to apply any other rules, would necessarily divest the sacred writings of every attribute that belongs to the idea of revelation. It must never be forgotten in perusing the Bible, that in the structure of sentences, in the figures of speech, in the arrangement and use of words, it differs not at all from other writings, and must, therefore, be understood and interpreted as they are.

CHAPTER V.

MEANING OF WORDS

Every word in the Scriptures has some idea attached to it, which we call its sense, or meaning. But this meaning is not natural, but conventional. It is agreement, usage, or

custom, that has constituted a connexion between words, and the ideas represented by them; and this connexion between words and ideas has become necessary by usage.

How this originated, is not the question before us: the fact is all that now interests us. We are not at liberty to affix what meaning we please to words, nor to use them arbitrarily; inasmuch as custom has affixed, by common consent, a meaning to them.

The meaning of words is, therefore, now to be ascertained by *testimony*;—and that testimony we have collected in those books called dictionaries, which, by the consent of those who spoke that language faithfully, represent the meaning attached to those terms, or the ideas of which those words were the signs. “The fact,” says Professor Stuart, “that usage has attached any particular meaning to a word, like any other historical fact, is to be proved by adequate testimony. That testimony may be drawn from books in which the word is employed, or from daily use in conversation. But the fact of a particular meaning being attached to a word when once established, can no more be changed or denied, than any historical event whatever. Of course, an *arbitrary* sense, can never with propriety be substituted for a *real* one. All men in their daily conversations and writings, attach but *one sense to a word at the same time, and in the same passage*, unless they design to speak in enigmas. Of course, it would be in opposition to the universal custom of language, if more than one meaning should be attached to any word in Scripture, in such a case;” that is,—in the same passage and at the same time.

But, although a word has but one meaning at the same time, and in the same passage,—it may at another time, and in another passage, have a different meaning; for, many words have, by common consent, more meanings than one. This is what has caused so much ambiguity in language, and so much difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of some sentences and passages in all authors, and in the sacred writings.

Every word, indeed, had but one meaning at first; but to prevent the multiplication of words to an indefinite extent, and to obviate the difficulties which would thence arise in the acquisition of the knowledge of a language; words, in process of time, were used to represent different meanings. A question then arises, *How shall we always ascertain the meaning of any particular word?* If it have

but one meaning, testimony or the dictionary decides it at once; but if it have more meanings than one, the proximate words used in construction with it, usually called the context, together with the design of the speaker or writer, must decide its meaning. Usage and the context, will generally decide. If these fail, the design of the speaker, and parallel passages must be summoned. These are the aids, which the canons of interpretation authorize in such cases.

That there is generally perfect certainty, in the proper interpretation of a word—that is, in ascertaining or communicating its meaning, (for this is what is properly called the *act* of interpretation,) is felt and acknowledged on all hands. But the foundation, or reason of this certainty, is a matter which should be evident to all.

Now, unless we are compelled by necessity, arising from the laws of language, to any particular meaning, there can be no certainty. Therefore, this compulsion is the very cause of certainty. Philological necessity, or that necessity which the *common usage* of a word, *the context*, *the design of the writer* create, in giving a particular meaning to a word in a sentence, is the ground of that complete certainty, which, whether he can or cannot explain, every one feels in the meaning of language. And as a very eminent critic has said, “if any one should deny, that the above precepts lead to certainty, when strictly observed,—he would deny the possibility of finding the meaning of language with certainty.” These remarks would be sufficient to guide us in acquiring the meaning of words, if they had only one class of meanings. But there is the *literal*, and the *tropical* or figurative meaning of words, which must be distinguished, before we can feel ourselves competent to decide, with perfect certainty, the true and proper meaning of any composition.

CHAPTER VI.

LITERAL MEANING OF WORDS.

As has been observed, every word at first had but one meaning; and this, of course, which was first, was the na-

tural, or the literal meaning. Some of our most approved philologists and grammarians define the literal sense of words to be, "the sense which is so connected with them, that it is first in order, and is spontaneously presented to the mind, as soon as the sound of the word is heard." "The *literal sense* does not differ," says the celebrated Ernesti, "among the older and valuable writers, from the *sense of the letter*." But better defined by Professor Stuart, of Andover,—“The literal sense is the same as the *primitive*, or original sense; or, at least, it is equivalent to that sense which has usurped the place of the original one: for example,—the original sense of the word *tragedy*, has long ceased to be current; and the literal sense of this word, now, is that which has taken the place of the original one.” Popular writers, in speaking of the sense of words, are wont to substitute grammatical for literal, as equivalent; because *literal*, in its Latin extraction, and *grammatical*, in its Greek extraction, exactly represent the same thing. But in a shade differing from these, they use the word *historical*, in reference to the interpretation of the Scriptures. “Since,” says T. H. Horne, in his Introduction, “it is not sufficient to know *grammatically*, the different expressions employed by writers, to interpret ancient works, so it is necessary that we add *Historical Interpretation*, to our grammatical or literal knowledge. By historical interpretation, we are to understand, that we give to the words of the sacred author, the sense which they bore in the age when he lived, and which is agreeable to the degree of knowledge which he possessed, as well as conformable to the religion professed by him, and to the sacred and civil rights or customs, that obtained in the age when he flourished.”

When, however, we speak of the *literal* or *grammatical* sense of a word, we mean no more than its primitive meaning. And when we speak of the *historical* meaning of a word, we mean its meaning at any given time. The *figurative* meaning of words belongs to another chapter.

In no book in the world, is the literal sense of words the only sense; and still less in the Bible. But no book in the world, either among the ancients or the moderns, has been interpreted, quoted, and applied, so licentiously, as the Bible. Learned and unlearned, have quoted and applied its words, as if its authors were outlaws and rebels in the commonwealth of letters. Some of the ancient Jews said, that every letter in a word in the Old Testament, had a special

meaning; and the very openings of the mouth to pronounce them, was significant of something sacred. The Rabbinic maxim used to be, and perhaps, still is, "On every point of the Scriptures, hang suspended mountains of sense." The Talmud says, "God so gave the law to Moses, that a thing can be shewn to be clean and unclean, forty-nine different ways." Little more than a century ago, Cocceius, of Leyden, maintained, "that all the possible meanings of a word are to be united." He raised a considerable party upon this principle.

But an opposite extreme, and quite as dangerous, into which some have run, is, that "some passages of the Scriptures, have no literal meaning at all." If, by this it were understood, that some passages have only a tropical, or figurative meaning, it might be admitted, without much detriment to our knowledge of the will of Heaven; but as it is understood by many, a license is taken to allegorize, not only the historical part of both Testaments, but also the miracles of Moses, of Christ, and of the Apostles,—the paradisaical state, the flood, and even the precepts and promises of the gospel institution: so that the whole revelation of God, is thrown into the laboratory of every man's imagination; and the key of knowledge forever taken from the people. That the words of the sacred writings are taken both literally and figuratively, as the words of all other books, is now, almost universally conceded; and that the true sense of the words, is the true doctrine of the Bible, is daily gaining ground amongst the most learned and skilful interpreters: in one word,—that the Bible is not to be interpreted arbitrarily, is the most valuable discovery or concession of this generation. This, indeed, was confessed by our most distinguished reformers. Melancthon said, "The Scripture cannot be understood *theologically*, until it is understood *grammatically*." And Luther affirmed, "That a *certain* knowledge of Scripture, depends only upon a knowledge of its words."

CHAPTER VII.

FIGURATIVE MEANING OF SCRIPTURE.

The turning of a word from its original or primitive meaning, styled the literal, is called a *tropes*, or figure of a

word; because standing in a new attitude before the mind. When words are used not in their proper or literal sense, they are called figurative. In this sort of language, the ancient writings abound more than the modern; and the eastern more than the western.

In ancient times, language was comparatively poor; and as the poor mechanist who has but few tools, has to apply them to many uses,—so in the poverty of language, orators and writers had to use the same words in various acceptations. This is the philosophy of the exuberance of tropes and figures, in the rudest and most ancient languages of the world.

In the east, nature is more gay, rich, variegated, beautiful, and gorgeous, than in the west. It is not only in the superior luxuriance of her soil, the number, variety, and beauty of her vegetable and animal productions; the richness and extent of her metallic dominions; the splendor and brilliancy of her gems and precious stones;—but in the sweet serenity and delicious fragrance of her air; the loftiness, grandeur, and magnificence of her heavens, that Asia excels the other quarters of our globe, and becomes the Eden of the whole earth. It is not for us now to trace the connexion between country, climate, and language; but this much we may say, that it is not in the power of man, constituted as he is, to be placed in the midst of such a combination of happy circumstances, and not to partake of them, more or less, in his constitution, mental and physical. The eye and the ear, those two senses, through which mind has all its perceptions of beauty and harmony, of grandeur and sublimity; through which it has its clearest, brightest, most vivid, and lasting images of things, cannot be constantly feasted upon such objects, without being deeply imbued in all its powers and capacities, by them; and excited to adorn itself in all its manifestations, according to the splendid model constantly before it. As, then, the palaces of the eastern princes greatly excel those of the western, in all the gorgeousness of imperial grandeur; so the oriental languages, in the fulness, splendor, and richness of their imagery; the number, variety, and beauty of their tropes and figures, greatly transcend the occidental.

When standing either at the base or on the summit of the hills and mountains, once frequented by Ossian, the seats and scenes of his poetic effusions;—while I surveyed the rugged cliffs of cloud-capt mountains, or viewed the temp-

est-beaten-ship, riding amidst the foam of conflicting waves;—while I listened to the roarings of the mountain stream, as it tumbled from the precipice into the sea; and the rush of the swelling billows, as they dashed themselves to pieces upon the rocks,—I felt the spirit of the son of Fingal rising within me, and my soul labored for words, to give utterance to the feelings of my heart. It was then I began to learn why Homer, the contemporary of Elijah, was so familiar with the sublime, and Virgil with the beautiful. It was then I *experienced* the truth of that philosophy, which assigns to the different scenes of nature, most of the various charms of song.

This is not so trivial a matter as the speculating mystic would affect to represent it; for it scientifically explains the reasons, why the oriental languages are so luxuriant in all the flowers of rhetoric; and why the Bible, reaching so far back into remote antiquity, and coming from the east—from the land of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, so far excels every other book in the richness and variety, the beauty and splendor of its figurative language.

But to resume the fact, that the Bible is written in human language, and in the language of countries abounding in all the figures of speech,—in developing the principles of interpretation of this book, a due regard must be paid to figurative language. The rankest error in the business of interpreting Scripture, will be found to consist in confounding the figurative meaning of words, with the literal; or the literal, with the figurative. Enthusiasm has two extremes:—the one, literalizes every thing; the other extreme, spiritualizes every thing. The Romanist says the Saviour literally meant what he said, when he said of the loaf, "*This is my body,*" and of the cup, "*This is my blood.*" And hence originated the doctrine of transubstantiation. A lady in New England some time since, said, that Jesus literally meant what he said, when he said to his disciples, "*If your right hand offend you, cut it off, and throw it away.*" Her right hand having offended her, she literally cut it off, and threw it away. This is one extreme: the other consists in making words figurative, which are not so; thus,—"*The walls of Jericho fell down,*" means, "*that the arguments which sustain false religion, were demolished before the approach of the new church of God under Jesus.*" "*And they blew the trumpets seven times,*" means, "*that*

the divine truth was brought down upon the bulwarks of error, complete and perfect;" &c. &c.

Here, then, we have the two extreme systems: the former making "the Scriptures always mean what they literally say;" the other making them never literally mean what they literally say, but always speaking in figurative analogy. Both these systems are alike hostile to the Bible, as a revelation from God; for they both represent its language as unlike the language of every other book,—as a language to be interpreted arbitrarily by special rules, in which, neither words nor phrases are to be understood according to the dictionary, grammar, or rhetoric of human language. Our position, it will be remembered, is, that the language of the Bible is human language. *That God spoke by men, to men, for men.* That this volume has in it all the peculiarities of language,—is constructed upon the ordinary principles of language,—has in it all the tropes, figures, and forms of speech, found in the language of the age and country in which it was written,—and is to be interpreted by the laws of interpretation, universally acknowledged in the commonwealth of letters. We shall, therefore, apply to the tropes and figures of speech found in the Bible, the same canons and principles of interpretation, which are applied to the tropes and figures of other books.

CHAPTER VIII.

METAPHOR.

We cannot explain figurative language more intelligibly, than by a close analysis of the principal figures, and by adducing examples.

We have said that a *trope*, is the change of a word from its original signification. Of tropes, then, there are just as many in a language, as there are changes in sense, made upon its words. But these changes or tropes, are called by different names according to their nature.

A *metaphor* is the name of that trope, which puts the *resemblance*, in place of the proper word. It is a *comparison* expressed in one word, without the form of drawing it;—a comparison in epitome.

So common is the metaphor in all languages, that it has given a name to figurative language. Hence, *metaphorical* language is commonly used, as equivalent to *figurative* language. There is such a force and beauty in expressing a comparison in a single word, drawn from a clear, apposite, and striking resemblance, between the subject and that by which it is presented to the mind, that it equally pleases and captivates the rudest and most polished mind. The Scriptures abound with the richest variety of metaphors. The most beautiful and bold, as well as the most rude and simple, which the oriental languages afford, are found in the Bible.

By a copious exhibition of examples drawn from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, we shall not only illustrate this figure of speech to the dullest apprehension, but also explain, and set in a new light, numerous passages, frequently misunderstood, and as frequently misapplied. To begin with a few of the plainest, we shall instance the following:—

‘I am the *light* of the world.’ Here, then, is a comparison between Jesus and light. On drawing the comparison, there was discovered a resemblance between Jesus, the subject of comparison, and the object, *light*, to which he was compared. Now, the metaphor, (or *translation*,) consists in substituting that resemblance,—or the thing to which he was compared, because of the resemblance found in it,—for the proper word which would literally express the quality, attribute, or character, set forth in the thing to which he was compared. Instead of saying, ‘as light dissipates the darkness of this world, so does Jesus scatter the ignorance of men;’ instead of a tedious comparison in many words, we substitute the term *light*, without any of the signs of comparison; and in a single word, forcibly and beautifully convey to the mind, all that could be taught in a long comparison. A metaphor is, therefore, a comparison in epitome. But it ought to be observed, that the word *light*, is not here taken in its literal signification, but is made to represent something similar to its literal signification, which resemblance constitutes the metaphor.

Again,—‘I will take away your heart of *stone*, and give you a heart of *flesh*.’ Here, *stone* and *flesh* do not literally mean stone and flesh, but something that resembles them. For on comparing the coldness, hardness, and insensibility of the heart of an unbelieving, ungrateful, and unfeeling

Jew to a stone, a resemblance was discovered, and the thing which contained that resemblance, is put for the subject of comparison, and is all expressed in a single word;—so of the *heart of flesh*. These remarks are all applicable to, and may easily be illustrated by the following examples:—‘Behold the *Lamb of God*,’—‘You are the *salt of the earth*,’—‘You are the *light of the world*,’—‘The Lord is my *rock*, and my *fortress*, and *deliverer*; my God, my strength, in whom I will put my trust; my *buckler*, and the *horn of my salvation*, and my *high tower*.’* Here we have six beautiful metaphors in one period. ‘Go you and tell that *fox*,’ namely, Herod. In these it must be evident, that there is a “similitude between the thing from which the metaphor is drawn, and that to which it is applied,” which is the essential attribute of a good metaphor.

BEAUTIFUL METAPHORS.

We shall give a few examples of beautiful metaphors. These are generally, though not always, drawn from the works of nature, or from the natural appearance of things, ‘The Lord God is a *sun* and *shield*,’—‘The wilderness and the solitary place shall be *glad* for them—and the desert shall *rejoice* and *blossom* as the rose,’—‘Awake and sing, you that dwell in *dust*, for thy *dew* is the dew of herbs—and the earth shall cast out her *dead*,’—‘The *stars* of heaven and the *constellations* thereof shall not give their *light*: the *sun* shall be *darkened* in his going forth, and the *moon* shall not cause her *light to shine*,’—‘We wait for *light* but behold *obscurity*; for *brightness*, but we walk in *darkness*,’—‘The *sun of righteousness* shall *arise* with *healing* in his *wings*,’—‘Her *sun* has *gone down* while it is yet *day*.’ The prophet’s word is ‘a *light shining* in a *dark place*,’—‘I am the *bread of life*,’—‘Cast not your *pearls* before *swine*,’—‘The *eyes* of the *blind* shall be *opened*, and the *ears* of the *deaf* shall be *unstopped*,’—‘Then shall the *lame* man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the *dumb* shall *sing*,’—‘In the *wilderness* shall *water* break out, and *streams* in the *desert*.’

BOLD METAPHORS.

‘The voice of thy brother’s blood *crieth* to me from the ground,’—‘Their throat is an open *sepulchre*,’—‘He washed

* The words *italicised* shew the metaphor.

his clothes in the *blood* of grapes,'—'His wife looked back from behind him, and she became a *pillar of salt*,'—'I have made thee a *defenced city*, and an *iron pillar*, and *brazen walls* against the whole land,'—'It is a covenant of *salt* forever before the Lord,'—'The Lord gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and his sons by a covenant of *salt*,'—'Let your speech be always *seasoned with salt*,'*—'Thou hast made us to drink the *wine of astonishment*,'—'Man did eat angel's *food*,'—'The plowers *ploughed* upon my back, they made long their *furrows*,'—'The mountains shall be *melted* with their blood,'—'And all the hosts of heaven shall be *dissolved*, and the heavens shall be *rolled together as a scroll*,'—'The sword of the Lord is *filled* with blood, it is made *fat* with fatness,'—'I will *sweep* it with the *besom* of destruction.'

Many have thought, that the conceptions of the Hebrews concerning God, were too human and low, because they described him as having *eyes, ears, hands, and feet*. But a rational and intelligent regard to ancient and oriental metaphors, would have corrected them. Examine the following metaphors:—'They heard the *voice* of the Lord God *walking* in the garden in the cool of the day,'—'I will *look* upon the bow,'—'Thy *right hand*, O Lord, has *dashed* in pieces the enemy,'—'He bowed the heaven and *came down*, and darkness was under his *feet*,'—'He *rode* upon a chariot, and did *fly* upon the *wings* of the wind,'—'The *eyes* of the Lord are over the righteous, and his *ears* are open to their cry; but the *face* of the Lord is against them that do evil.'

METAPHORS BOTH RUDE AND BOLD.

'With the blast of thy *nostrils* the waters were gathered together,'—'There went up a smoke out of his *nostrils*, and fire out of his *mouth* devoured; coals were kindled by it,'—'It *repented* the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, as it *grieved* him at his heart,'—'Thou sentest forth thy *wrath*, and consumed them as stubble,'—'I, the Lord thy God, am a *jealous* God,'—'The Lord *revenge*th and is *fierce*,'—'He will take *vengeance* on his adversaries; and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies,'—'God *rested* on the seventh day,'—'The Lord *smelled* a sweet savor,'—'I will *go down*

* *Salt*. This metaphor demonstrates, that as one subject or substance may have many qualities, any one of these qualities may be translated to another subject by comparison, and thus become a metaphor.

and *see* whether Sodom and Gomorrah have done according to the *cry* of it which has *come up* to me,'—'He that *sits* in heaven shall *laugh*,'—'The Lord shall have them in *derision*,'—'Then the Lord *awoke* as one out of sleep, and like a man that *shouteth* by reason of wine.'

The anthropomorphists, and other excessive literalists, from a disregard to the highly metaphorical language of the Scriptures, which is both their strength and beauty, and the only language in which things supernatural could be communicated to us, have imagined a human figure for the Deity. On their own principles of interpreting the Scriptures they might, from the following metaphors, imagine him to be like a great fowl:—'Hide me under the shadow of thy *wings*,'—'In the *shadow of thy wings* I will make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast,'—'I will trust in the covert of thy *wings*,'—'He shall cover thee with his *feathers*, and under his *wings* shalt thou rest.'

It is to no purpose to multiply examples, farther than to give an accurate and complete idea of this most common and most beautiful trope. So rich are the Scriptures in this figure, that many thousand examples might be adduced. We have said that there are some of these metaphors both rude and simple; and as the Bible reaches into the most remote antiquity, and exhibits and addresses human nature, in its most simple and unadorned state, it must be expected that it would bear the impress of the people among whom it was written, and to whom it was addressed. When we speak of *simple* metaphors, we have in our eye such as the following:—'Bowels of compassion,'—'Tender mercies,'—'Hunger and thirst after righteousness,'—'They shall be filled,'—'My soul *breaketh*,'—'Yea, *panteth* after God,'—'The glory of Joseph is like the firstling of his bullock,'—'Hear this you *kine* of Bashan,'—'Issacher is a *strong ass*,'—'Naphtali is a *hind* let loose,'—'Joseph is a fruitful *bough*,'—'Judah is a *lion's whelp*.'

To relish and to understand a metaphor, we must always ascertain the point of resemblance. In comparing the tribe of Joseph to the *firstling of a bullock*, allusion is to its strength and power, for here is the point of resemblance. When the prophet Amos compares the matrons of Samaria to the *kine of Bashan*, he has their *luxury and wantonness* flowing from their wealth in his eye: and the point of resemblance between Issachar and an ass, is *bodily strength and vigor*; for the Hebrew notion, drawn from the type of an

oriental ass, was strength and durability: our idea is that of slowness and stupidity. We repeat, then, that the beauty, and force, and sense of a metaphor, requires us to observe with all attention, the point or points of resemblance. But this will be still more fully illustrated, after we have examined a few other tropes, which are of frequent occurrence in the sacred writings.

CHAPTER IX.

ALLEGORY.*

In the figurative language of Scripture, the *allegory*, which, "under the literal sense of the words, conceals a foreign or distant meaning," next claims our attention. While some writers on Scripture allegories have divided them into three classes,—“the *allegory* properly so called which is a continuation of metaphors, or indeed, one continued metaphor; the *parable*, or similitude; and the *mystical allegory*, in which a double meaning is couched under the same words:” we shall, under this head, confine the attention of the reader to the allegory proper.

“An allegory tropes continues still,
Which with new graces every sentence fill.

In the rhetoric of the schools, the following example of allegory is given:—“*Venus* grows cold without *Ceres* and *Bacchus*,” i. e. Love grows cold without bread and wine. Here are three tropes in one sentence, constituting an allegory. But they are not proper metaphors. Some of them are rather *metonymies*. Thus *Ceres*, came to denote *bread*; *Bacchus*, *wine*; *Venus*, the *amorous affection*; *Neptune*, the *sea*; *Pallas*, *wisdom*; *Mars*, *war*; and *Pluto*, *hell*.

But, leaving these tropes and allegories to the admirers and students of the classics, we shall give a few examples of scripture allegories.

* “*Allegooria* is derived from *allo agoreitai*; i. e. a different thing is said from what is meant. It differs from a metaphor in this respect,—that it is not confined to a single word, but continued to a whole thought, or it may be to several thoughts.” Horne, vol. 2, p. 604.

‘A little leaven leaveneth the whole mass,’—‘Cleanse out therefore, the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, seeing you are without leaven, for even our passover, Christ, is sacrificed for us: therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened sincerity and truth.’

Here it ought to be observed, that the proper or literal meaning of the primary or leading term in an allegory, when ascertained, explains the whole allegory. *Leaven* is here the metaphor of a corrupting principle. One person in Corinth of corrupt principles, might be injurious to the whole church, if retained in it, on the same principle that a little leaven leavens the whole mass. This metaphor being understood, the allegory is easily apprehended.

‘The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick,’—‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rear it up again,’—‘Most assuredly I say to you, in your youth you girt yourself and went whither you would; but in your old age you shall stretch out your hands, and another will gird you, and carry you whither you would not,’—‘According to the favor of God which is given to me, as a skilful architect, I have laid the foundation, and another builds upon it. But let every one take heed how he builds upon it: for other foundation can no one lay except what is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any one build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every one’s work shall be made manifest: for the day will make it plain, because it is revealed by fire: and so the fire will try every one’s work, of what sort it is. If the work of any one remain which he has built upon the foundation, he shall receive a reward. If the work of any one shall be burned, he will suffer loss: himself, however, shall be saved; yet so as through fire.’

So recondite, is the meaning of some allegories that it is not easy to find the proper meaning of the whole, nor even of the primary metaphor. This seems to be the case here; for amongst the commentators whom we have consulted, and to whom reference is made, there seems to be a general mistake of the meaning of this allegory. I am not a little astonished to find Hammond, Dr. Whitby, Bishop Hall, Dr. Wells, Bishop Mant, Archbishop Secker, Archbishop Tillotson, Locke, Dr. Adam Clarke, the continuators of Matthew Henry, Horne, &c., mistaking, as we judge, the primary metaphor, and consequently, the mean-

ing of the whole passage. With them, 'gold, silver, and precious stones,' are sound doctrines; 'wood, hay, and stubble,' erroneous or false doctrines; 'the trial by fire,' the day of judgment; &c., &c. Now the figure before the Apostle, is a *house* or building; for he begins with the foundation, and represents himself as a skilful architect, and ends in dividing or destroying the temple of God. The metaphors which constitute this allegory are, then, all taken from a building. Jesus Christ is *laid* the foundation; the Apostles are master builders; other teachers and preachers are builders. Gold, silver, precious stones, are the materials built into the wall, genuine christians. Wood, hay, and stubble, metaphors not of doctrines, but of light, vain, wicked, hypocritical persons, and false professors. *Fire*, the symbol and metaphor of persecution,—'the fiery trial' of Peter. The folly of those foolish builders, wise in their own conceits, will then be seen and felt; and if saved themselves, it will be like one that escapes out of the fire; his life alone is saved, while the labors of his life, his property, is lost.

If any one, then, divide or destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him! All this is in good keeping with the primary metaphor; and according to the well established rules of interpreting allegories, every subordinate metaphor must be understood, in conformity to the principal one. So we have been accustomed for many years, to view this allegory. But it is with some hesitancy, that we dissent from so many great names. Macknight, however, is with us here; and he quotes Jerome, Chrysostom, and some other ancient commentators, as concurring with him. I should add, that the Pope and his party take the last part of it *literally*, and build upon it their doctrine of purgatorial fire!!

'You are the salt of the earth: if the salt become insipid, how shall its saltness be restored. It is thenceforth fit only to be cast out, and trodden by men.'

'In a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.'

These examples will serve to define and explain the allegory proper: and as we only now aim at pointing out and distinguishing the more common tropes and figures, we shall reserve any further remarks we may have to offer on

the allegory, till we come to speak of the parable and mystical allegory.

CHAPTER X.

METONYMY.

Metonymy etymologically imports, a *changing of names*. It is defined in the compends of rhetoric for schools;—

“ A metonymy does new names impose,
And things for things, by near relation shews.”

Next to the metaphor, this is the most common trope; and next to it, it imparts the greatest vivacity and beauty to the effusions of the poet and the orator. It is of very frequent occurrence in the sacred writings.

It is usually exhibited under four forms:—as when we give the name of the *cause* to the *effect*, or the name of the *effect* to the *cause*;—as when we give the name of the *subject* to the *adjunct*, or the name of the *adjunct* to the *subject*. Hence it is defined by many, in the following words:—“A metonymy is a trope, by which we substitute one name or appellation, for another:—as the *cause* for the *effect*, the *effect* for the *cause*; the *subject* for the *adjunct*, and the *adjunct* for the *subject*.”

A few examples of each shall be given; and first, of the cause put for the effect.

METONYMY OF THE CAUSE.

‘*Moses* is read every sabbath day in the synagogue.’ Here, the *author*, (Moses) is put for his writings. ‘The *letter* kills, but the *spirit* gives life.’ Here, the *letter* is put for the law written on stone; and the *spirit*, for the gospel declared by the Spirit of God. ‘The words that I speak to you are *spirit*, and they are *life*,’—‘You have not so learned *Christ*,’ that is, his doctrine. ‘Though you have ten thousand instructors in *Christ*,’—‘Salute Urbanas, our helper in *Christ*,’—‘Your heavenly father will give his *Holy Spirit* to them that ask him,’ i. e. his effects; called in the paral-

lel passage, '*good things*;' i. e. spiritual favors. 'Let a double portion of thy *Spirit* rest upon me,'—'Quench not the *Spirit*,'—'Be not *shaken in mind*—neither by *Spirit*.'

Mr. Horne alledges, that under this species of metonymy, the Holy Spirit is put for his *effects*, for his *operations*, for his *influences* or *gifts*, for revelations, visions, and ecstasies, in very numerous passages.*

The cause and instrument, too, are often put for the thing effected by either of them. 'His *tongue* defends him,' i. e. his eloquence. 'By the *mouth* of two or three witnesses,' i. e. the testimony. 'An unknown *tongue*,' i. e. a foreign language. 'The salutation of me, Paul, with my own *hand*,' i. e. writing.

METONYMY OF THE EFFECT.

Examples of the *effect* put for the *cause*. 'I am the resurrection and the life.' Here the effect gives a *name* to the cause. 'The Lord is my strength, my salvation,'—'The Lord is thy *life*, and the *length of thy days*,'—'He is our *peace*,'—'A *dumb* demon,'—'Glad tidings,'—'Dead works,'—'This is the *condemnation*,' i. e. the cause of it. 'I have set before thee *life* and *death*,' (the cause or means of both.) 'Is the law *sin*?' (the cause of it.) 'Cold death,' i. e. death, which makes cold. 'To be carnally minded, is *death*,' i. e. the cause of death. 'To be spiritually minded, is *life* and *peace*. Instances of metonymy of the effect for the cause, are, in the sacred writings, innumerable.

METONYMY OF THE SUBJECT.

By the *adjunct* is here meant, some appendage or circumstance belonging to the subject. The putting of the subject for the adjunct, is giving the name to the subject which properly belongs to the adjunct; for example:—

Thus the *heart*, is used for the understanding mind, thought, and affections. 'Consider in thy *heart*,'—'That your *heart* be not deceived,'—'The Lord has not given you a *heart* to perceive,'—'She spoke in her *heart*.'

For the *memory*, 'Lay up his words in thy *heart*,'—'Commune with your *heart*,'—'But his mother kept all these sayings in her *heart*.'

* Horne's Introduction, vol. 2, pp. 590, 591.

For the *will* and *affections*, 'With all thine *heart* seek the Lord,'—'The king's *heart* is in the hands of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth them about whithersoever he will,'—'My son, give me thy *heart*.'

For the *conscience*, 'David's *heart smote* him,'—'Because thy heart was *tender*.'

The *reins* are also put for thoughts; 'The righteous God trieth the heart and *reins*.'

The thing containing is put for the thing contained; 'The earth also is corrupt,' i. e. the people in it. 'The *house* of Israel,' i. e. the people of Israel. The possessor, for the things possessed; as, 'To possess nations greater and mightier than thou,' i. e. their land and property.

An action is said to be done, when it is only declared, foretold, or permitted; for example: '*Me, he restored*,' said the chief butler, speaking of the interpretation of his dream by Joseph. 'Lord, thou hast greatly *deceived* this people,' i. e. permitted the false prophets to impose on them. 'I have set thee, Jeremiah, over the nations, to *root* out and pull down,' i. e. to prophesy thus of them: I gave them *statutes which were not good*, and *polluted* them in their own gifts. 'Whatsoever thou shalt *bind* on earth, shall be bound in heaven,'—'Lead us not into temptation,' i. e. abandon us not to temptation.

Sometimes an object is put for that about which it is conversant. Thus we have *sin* for sin-offering, more than one hundred times in both Testaments; and sometimes we have the thing signified put for the sign. Thus the *ark* is called the strength of God. See 1 Chron. xvi. 11; Psalm cv. 4; cxxxii. 8.

The occasioning of an action, is called the doing of it. 'Whether thou shalt *save* thy husband,'—'Thou mayest *save* thy wife,'—'Jeroboam *made* Israel to *sin*,' occasioned it, &c.

METONYMY OF THE ADJUNCT.

The adjunct is put for the *subject*; 'Circumcision nor uncircumcision,' i. e. Jews and Gentiles. 'The *election* obtained it,' i. e. the elect. 'The *strength* of Israel,' i. e. the God of Israel. 'Outer darkness,' i. e. hell. 'Golden incense,' i. e. golden censor. 'Eat the passover,' i. e. the paschal lamb.

Under this figure, things are sometimes named or de-

scribed as they appear, and not as they are; or according to popular opinion, and not according to fact. Hananiah, the opponent of Jeremiah, is called a *prophet*. 'The foolishness of preaching,'—'Another gospel,'—'His enemies shall lick the dust,'—'A *prophet* of their own has said,' a certain philosopher, namely, Epimenides. 'Coming from the end of heaven,'—'The sun goeth down,'—'Ends of the earth.'

The action or affection, conversant about an object, is put for the object itself. The *senses* are thus put for the objects perceived by them. 'Whom shall he make to understand doctrine,' *hearing*, in the Hebrew. 'Lord, who has believed our report,' *hearing* in the Hebrew. The manna was as coriander seed, and the color (eye) thereof, as the color (eye) of bdellium. 'The priests became obedient to the *faith*,' (the gospel preached.) 'Thou art the *hope* of the ends of the earth, and of those afar off upon the sea,'—'For the *hope* of the promise,'—'For which *hope's* sake,'—'Why dost thou seek *love*,'—'Come my love,'—'Let him be thy *fear*,'—'The lusts of the *eye*.'

The sign is often put, by the metonymy of the adjunct, for the thing signified. War is denoted by *bows*, *spears*, *chariots*, and *swords*.

The putting of the badge for the office, is one of the most common and beautiful metonymies. Thus the *mitre*, for the priesthood; the *sword*, for the military; the *gown*, for the literary profession; and the *crown*, for royalty.

'To bow the knee,'—'To kiss the hand,'—'To put on sackcloth,'—'To beat swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks,'—'To give the hand,' are all metonymies of this class.

And, finally, the metonymy of the adjunct often puts the name of a thing for the thing itself; 'The number of the *names* was one hundred and twenty,'—'Thou shalt be called the city of righteousness; thou shalt be called the faithful city.' It should be so in fact. 'The *name* of the God of Jacob defend thee,' i. e. God himself. 'The *name* of the Lord is a strong tower,'—'Whosoever shall call upon the *name* of the Lord,' i. e. the Lord himself.

This trope takes in the most comprehensive range: for, indeed, in all cases *where the name of any thing relative to a subject is substituted for the subject*, it is a *metonymy*. And although there are but *four* general ways of doing this, the varieties under each render it difficult, at first

view, to assign each motonymy to its proper chapter. This is, however, more necessary to relish the beauty of a trope, than to understand its meaning.

CHAPTER XI.

SYNECDOCHE.*

The trope called *synecdoche*, is also of frequent occurrence in the inspired writings.

“A synecdoche the whole for part doth take,
Or, of a part for whole, exchange doth make.”

A synecdoche is, by writers on the figurative language of Scripture, defined to be a trope, which “puts the *whole* for a *part*, a *part* for the *whole*; a certain number, for an uncertain; a *general* name, for a *particular* one; and *special* words, for *general* ones.” A few illustrations will suffice; ‘They have taken away my Lord,’ i. e. his body.

The whole put for a part. Thus the *world*, is put for the Roman empire, and for the earth, which is only a part of it. ‘The *world* wondered after the beast,’—‘A mover of sedition among the Jews throughout the whole *world*,’—‘An *everlasting* priesthood,’ i. e. while the Jewish state continued. ‘He shall serve him forever,’ Ex. xxi. 6; i. e. to the year of Jubilee.

The plural number is sometimes put for the singular, as when Jesus speaks of himself in the plural, John iii. 11; ‘We speak what we do know,’—‘Cities of Gilead,’ for one city; Judges xii. 7. ‘The sons of Dan,’ for one son; Gen. xlv. 23. ‘The daughters of Israel,’ for one daughter; Gen. xlv. 7.

A *part* is sometimes put for the whole. ‘The evening and the morning were the first day.’ The soul, for the whole man. The ox and ass, for oxen and asses: Isaiah i. 3. I have lived under this *roof* ten *summers*, i. e. I have lived in this house ten years.

Very often, a definite number is put for an indefinite.

* Comprehension.

Thus Paul puts *ten thousand*, for a great many; and *five*, for a few: 1 Cor xiv. 19. 'I would rather speak five words intelligibly, than ten thousand.' *Double*, for much, or sufficient; 'She has received of the Lord's hands, *double* for all her sins. *Twice*, for several times; 'God has spoken once, *twice* have I heard this,—that power belongs to the Lord.'

A *general* name is put for a *particular* one; 'Preach the gospel to *every creature*,' i. e. all mankind. 'All *flesh* had corrupted its way upon the earth.' *Man*, for the whole species, male and female; 'The man that does this.'

Particular names and special words are often put for general. *Bread* denotes all the necessaries of life; 'Give us each day our daily *bread*,'—'I am a debtor to the Greek,' i. e. the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Brother, for kinsman; 'Abraham said to Lot, we are *brethren*. Gen. xiii. 8; xiv. 14. *Many*, sometimes denotes *all*; 'The *many* died,'—*Many* of them that sleep in the the dust of the earth, shall awake.'

This figure is of very common occurrence in our daily intercourse; for example: 'There are five *hands* at work, managing seven *head* of horses,'—'We descried a *sail* approaching the harbor,'—'Some follow the *plough*, and some drive the *shuttle*,'—'All the world are employed, and yet there are not so many *mouths* to support in America, as in France.'

CHAPTER XII.

IRONY.*

"An irony, dissembling with an air,
Thinks otherwise than what the words declare."

'*Well done!*' i. e. badly done. '*Good boy!*', i. e. bad boy.

'An irony is a figure, in which we say one thing and mean another; in order to give the greater vehemence and force to our meaning.' The accent, air, and gesture of the speaker; or the extravagance of the praise, or the character

* Dissimulation.

of the person, distinguish the irony, and explain what the speaker intends. Of this figure, there are numerous instances in the Scriptures.

Elijah, to the Prophets of Baal, said—‘Cry aloud, for he is a god; either, he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey; or, peradventure, he sleeps, and must be awaked.’ 1 Kings, xviii. 27. ‘No doubt but you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.’ Job xii. 2. ‘Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.’ Eccle. xi. 9. ‘Go, and cry to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.’ Judges x. 14. ‘Full well you reject the commandments of God, that you may keep your traditions.’ Jesus thus addresses the doctors of the Jews; Mark vii. 9. ‘Now you are full, now you are rich; you have reigned as kings without us.’ 1 Cor. iv. 8. ‘You suffer fools gladly, seeing yourselves are wise.’

Under the head of irony, we generally class the *sarcasm*; which is only an irony, of “superlative keenness and asperity.” ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’—‘Let Christ, the king of Israel, descend from the cross, that we may see and believe.’

CHAPTER XIII.

HYPERBOLE.*

“An hyperbole soars too high, or creeps too low;
Exceeds the truth, things marvellous to shew.”

“This trope either magnifies or diminishes the objects or things which it represents, beyond or below their proper limits. It is common in all languages, and is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures.” We need only give a few examples: ‘The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.’ Isaiah lv. 12. In describing leviathan, Job xli. 18, it is said, ‘His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. His eyes are like the eyelids

* Excess.

of the morning.' 'Thy seed shall be as the *sands* of the sea—the *dust* of the earth—as the *stars* of heaven.' 'Saul and Jonathan were *swifter than eagles*—they were *stronger than lions*.' 2 Samuel i. 23. 'I make my bed to *swim*,'—'*Rivers of tears* run down my eyes.' Psalm cxix. 136. 'If these should hold their peace, *the stones would cry out*.'

CHAPTER XIV.

CATACHRESIS.*

"A catachresis words too far doth strain;
Rather from such abuse of speech refrain."

Even this figure, in common with all others, is found in the sacred writings: for, indeed, every figure of words, and every figure of speech, whether belonging to the poet, the orator, the historian;—to the plain, unlettered swain, or to the more polished scholar,—is found in the sacred writings. A few examples will render farther definition unnecessary. 'I turned to *see* the *voice* that spoke with me,'—'And thou didst drink the pure *blood* of the grape,'—'Let my right hand *forget* her cunning,'—'That thy days may be *long* in the land.'

We have a few instances of this figure, by a sort of necessity, interwoven in many words and sentences, because of the changes in *things*, as well as in words. A *candle-holder* was formerly made of *wood*, and then it was properly a *candle-stick*; but a brass or silver *candle-stick*, is a catachresis. The same may be said of an *ink-horn*, made of steel or silver. Brass *looking-glasses*, Exodus xxxviii. 8, is of the same class. But still more remarkable the phrase, 'Workmanship of God.' But even the poet Young says,

"His voice is but the *shadow* of a sound."

These are the *seven principal tropes*; and concerning them we may say, there is a great analogy and relation between them all; and in them all, we use a foreign or

* Excess.

strange word instead of a proper. "When we say one thing, and mean another like it, it is a *metaphor*. A metaphor continued, and often repeated, becomes an *allegory*. When we say one thing, and mean another mutually depending, it is a *metonymy*. When we say one thing, and mean another almost the same, it is a *synecdoche*. When we say one thing, and mean another opposite or contrary, it is an *irony*. When a metaphor is carried to a great degree of boldness, it is an *hyperbole*: and when at first sound it seems a little harsh or shocking, and may be imagined to carry some impropriety in it, it is called a *catachresis*."

Before dismissing these *seven tropes*, or figures of words, we would still more emphatically observe, that as man is always contemplated as endowed with imagination, as well as with reason; and as his reason can be most agreeably and effectually applied to a subject, when his imagination is engaged,—figurative language has this advantage over literal,—that it not only affords clearer and more impressive views of things, but it also captivates the imagination, and thus pleases while it instructs. "The qualities in ideas," as Dr. George Campbell well observes, "which gratify the fancy, are vivacity, beauty, sublimity, novelty. Nothing contributes more to vivacity, than striking resemblances in the imagery, which convey besides, an additional pleasure of their own."*

When we philosophically trace that superior pleasure, of which every one is conscious, when his fancy rather than his reason is addressed, to its proper source; if we are not greatly deceived, it will be found that it is derived from the discovery of the resemblance, which the imagery employed bears to the subject addressed to the understanding. If that resemblance be too obvious or familiar, no pleasure is received; but if it be such as escapes the notice of the great mass of society, and yet exhibits a strong likeness of the subject; then the pleasure of discovery is heightened, in proportion to the boldness of the imagery, and to the justness and delicacy of the point of resemblance.

* Philosophy of Rhetoric, p. 87.

CHAPTER XV.

FIGURES OF SPEECH.*

Rhetoricians distinguish between figures of *words*, called *tropes*; and figures of *thought* and *expression*, called *figures of speech*. "A *figure* of speech, is the fashioning or dressing of speech, being an emphatic way of speaking—different from the way that is ordinary and natural; either expressing a *passion*, or containing a *beauty*." Of these there are about *twenty*, which are regarded as principal.

Perhaps this chapter will be considered as more curious than edifying: nevertheless, we shall give a definition of these twenty figures, from one of the best systems of rhetoric, which fell into our hands during our academic years. And that the reader may be still more fully convinced, that in the Bible we have all tropes, figures, and flowers of rhetoric, we shall give one example, at least, of every figure, drawn from the inspired writings. To assist the memory, every figure is defined in a couplet.

By *ecphonesis*† straight the mind is raised,
When by a sudden flow of passion seized.

As: —'My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?'
Math. xxvii. 46.

Aporia,‡ in words and actions, doubts;
And with itself, what may be best, disputes.

As: 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit; or whither shall I flee from thy presence?' Psalm cxxxix. 7.

Epanorthosis§ doth past words correct,
And, only to enhance, seems to reject.

As:—'I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' 1 Cor. xv. 10.

* *Figure*: derived from the Latin, *figo*, I fashion.

† Exclamation.

‡ Doubting.

§ Correction.

*Aposiopesis** leaves imperfect sense;
Yet such a silent pause speaks eloquence.

As:—‘Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I into the world.’ John xii. 27.

Apophasis† pretending to conceal
The whole it meant to hide, must needs reveal.

As:—‘I, Paul, have written it with my own hand; I will repay it. *Albeit, I do not say to thee, how thou owest to me, even thy own self beside.*’ Philemon 19.

Apostrophe‡ from greater themes to less,
Doth turn aside, to make a short address.

As:—‘The wild beast shall tear them. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.’ Hosea xiii. 8, 9.

Anastrophe§ makes words, that first should go,
The last in place: verse oft will have it so.

As:—‘*Now to him* that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us: *to him be glory.*’ Eph. iii. 20.

By *Erotesis*|| what we know, we ask;
Prescribing to ourselves a needless task.

As:—‘Doth God pervert judgment?—or doth the Almighty pervert justice?’ Job viii. 3.

Prolepsis¶ your objection doth prevent,
With answers suitable and pertinent.

As:—‘But some man will say, How are the dead raised up; and with what body do they come? Thou simpleton! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.’ 1 Cor. xv. 35.

A *Syncorhesis*** grants you all your claims,
And by concession a sure conquest gains.

As:—‘Thou wilt say, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well: because of unbelief, they were broken off.’ Rom. xi. 12.

* Suppression. † Omission, or passing over. ‡ Turning aside to address.
§ Inversion, or suspension. || Interrogation. ¶ Prevention. ** Concession.

*Periphrasis** of words doth use a train,
Intending one thing only to explain.

As:—‘I go the way of all the earth,’ i. e. I die. ‘The disciple whom Jesus loved,’ i. e. John.

A *Climax*† by gradation still ascends,
Until the sense with finish’d period ends.

As:—‘Add to your faith, courage; and to courage, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love to all mankind.’ 2 Peter i. 5—7.

In *Ozymoron*‡ contradictions meet,
And jarring epithets and subjects greet.

As:—‘But she that liveth in pleasure, is *dead* while she *liveth*.’ 1 Tim. v. 6.

Enantiosis§ poiseth different things,
And words and sense as into balance brings.

As:—‘The *wise* shall inherit *glory*, but *shame* shall be the promotion of *fools*.’ Prov. iii. 35.

Prosepopoia|| a new person feigns,
And to inanimates, speech and reason deigns.

As:—‘Doth not *wisdom* cry, and *understanding* send forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places; by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city; at the coming in of the doors.’ Prov. viii. 1.

Hypolyposis¶ to the eye contracts,
Things, places, persons, times, affections, acts.

As:—‘Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength. He goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him; the glittering

* Circumlocution. † Gradation. ‡ Seeming contradiction. § Contrariety.
|| Something inanimate represented as a living person. ¶ Lively description.

spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha! Ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off; the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.' Job xxxiv. 19—25.

*Paronomasia** to the sense alludes,
When words but little varied it includes.

As:—'As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed.' 2 Cor. vi. 9.

Antanaclasis† in one sound contains,
More meanings; which the various sense explains.

As:—'Jesus said to him, Let the *dead* bury their *dead*.' Matt. viii. 22.

Synonymy‡ doth diverse words prepare,
Yet each of them one meaning doth declare.

As.—'The *fishes* also shall *mourn*; they *that cast angles into the brook*, shall *lament*; and they that *spread nets upon the waters*, shall *languish*.' Isaiah xix. 8.

Epanalepsis§ words doth recommend,
The same at the beginning and the end.

As:—'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice.' Phil. iv. 4.

CHAPTER XVI.

USAGE OF WORDS.

That words have a proper and figurative meaning; that this meaning is not always the same; that there are several tropes of words and figures of sentences, which place the same ideas in different attitudes before the mind,—has been already stated, illustrated, and impressed upon the attention of the reader.

The point now before us, is, to show *how* the particular meaning of any word or sentence is to be ascertained, in

* A resemblance in the sound, but opposition in the sense. † The same word in different senses. ‡ Putting together words of like signification. § The first word, also the last.

any given place. We have seen that words, in the lapse of time, like every thing human,—change not only in their orthography and orthoepy, but also in their sense. Time, that great innovator, and country, and all the ever varying circumstances of society, imperceptibly mould and fashion words anew, both in form and sense.

Many learned treatises have, within the past and present century, appeared upon the subject of historical interpretation. But all these which we have examined, (and we have examined many of them,) are designed for, and adapted much more to the translator, than to the practical and devout student of the sacred writings. It is these that we propose to serve in the present treatise; and, therefore, we wish to confine the attention of the student of the Bible, to those matters that will further his knowledge in the Revelation of God, rather than in the art of translating these communications from one language to another.

To translate the sense into his own mind, he will then please reflect, that much more is necessary, than to perceive that words have a proper and figurative sense, and to understand all the tropes of words, and figures of speech; though these are of much value to him who would attain to a critical knowledge of the book. A more difficult lesson is yet to learn, with respect to figurative language; and that is, to know certainly when it is figurative, or to be understood figuratively; and how to interpret a figurative passage, by corresponding and appropriate terms.

A very superficial reader of the New Testament will observe, that many errors were committed by the contemporaries of the Messiah and his Apostles, from supposing them to speak without a figure, when they spoke figuratively. For example:—Jesus said, ‘Unless you eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of Man, you have no life in you.’ This occasioned some of his disciples to stumble and desert him. ‘How,’ said they, ‘can this man give us his flesh to eat!’ Again, ‘Destroy this temple,’ said Jesus, ‘and in three days I will raise it up again.’ The Jews understood the word *temple*, literally. Even some of the Apostles themselves, erred in this way. ‘If I will,’ said he, ‘that he (John) *tarry till I come*, what is that to you? follow me.’ They understood him to speak of his literal coming in person; and reported that John would never die.

The Samaritan woman, also, made the same mistake when she said, ‘The well is deep, and you have no bucket

to draw. Whence, then have you this living water?" Hence, we may learn, that much depends on our being able to decide when words are to be understood figuratively, and when literally.

It is true, indeed, that the figurative meaning of many words has, by custom or constant usage, become their only proper meaning. Indeed, some words are now never used in their original and literal import: such as the terms tragedy, comedy, pagan, villain, knave. And of others, the figurative use is so common and natural, that we do not perceive the figure; such as, when we say, the *head* of a river, the *foot* of a mountain, the *bed* of a creek, *glad* tidings, *sweet* child, *cold* heart, *inflamed* mind, &c.

We may also, add, with Ernesti, "That those words are not to be regarded as tropical, which have lost their original and proper signification, and are used no longer in any but a secondary sense."

But to answer the question, How shall we ascertain when any thing said or written, is to be taken in a tropical or literal sense? we observe first, that:—

The literal meaning is not to be deserted, without evident reason or necessity.

But this necessity occurs in the following cases:—

First. When the literal meaning involves an impropriety or an impossibility; such as, Isaiah i. 25, 'I will purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin.' This applied to the Jews, would be *literally* impossible. 'I have made thee, Jeremiah, a defenced city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land.' This, again, would literally involve an impossibility, and must therefore be taken figuratively.

Second. The literal meaning must be given up, if the predicate (or that which is affirmed,) be incompatible with, or contrary to the subject of which it is affirmed.

'Hear this word, O you kine of Bashan, that are on the mountains of Samaria; that oppress the poor and crush the needy; that say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.' Amos iv. 1. Now, if the *subject*, viz., *the kine of Bashan*, be understood literally of cattle, the predicates to *oppress*, *crush*, and *say*,—cannot possibly apply to it: but taken figuratively, of the luxurious matrons of Samaria, they do apply and make good sense.

Third. When the literal meaning of words is contrary, either to common sense, to the context, to parallel passages,

or to the scope of a passage, it must be given up. 'Awake, why *sleepest* thou?' '*Sleepest*' cannot literally apply to God; for David, who thus speaks, Psalm xlv. 23, says in another Psalm, 'He that keeps Israel does not *sleep*.' In Isaiah lxiv., the words 'filth of the daughters of Zion,' from the scope of the passage, which immediately speaks of the blood of Jerusalem,' must be understood figuratively. 'To change night into day' is a moral impossibility; therefore, Job xvii. 12, must be taken tropically.

As I prefer in cases of this sort, when much depends on the subsequent use of certain premises and principles of reason or interpretation, to express my views in the words of others, who cannot be suspected of any partiality or leaning to, what some may call, a favorite opinion or principle, I will here introduce Ernesti, and Stuart of Andover, in their own proper persons: from the former of whom, and from Morus, Mr. Horne gives, if not verbally, at least substantially, the three preceding rules. These extracts from Ernesti and Stuart, are of much value on this topic.

"We may commonly understand, at once, whether a word is to be taken tropically or not, by simply examining the object spoken of, either by the external or internal senses, or by renewing the perception of the object. To judge of figurative language, in such cases, is very easy; and in uninspired writings, it very rarely happens that there is any doubt about it; because the objects spoken of are such as may be examined by our senses, external or internal, and therefore it may easily be understood.*

"In the Scriptures, however, doubts have frequently arisen from the nature of the subjects there treated; which are such as cannot be subjected to the examination of our senses. Thus, the divine nature, divine operations, &c., are subjects beyond the scrutiny of our senses: and the question whether the language that respects such things is to be understood literally or tropically, has given rise to fierce controversies, which are still continued. In these, the parties have often disputed about tropical diction, in a way which savored more of metaphysical or dialectical subtilty than truth.

"To the language which respects God and his operations,

* Thus, *Inflamed mind* we understand tropically, by repeating the perception of the idea of *mind*, and taking notice that the literal meaning of *inflamed* is incongruous with it. In interpreting the phrase *snowy locks*, we appeal to the external senses, which determine that the meaning of *snowy* here must be tropical.—Stuart. † Morus, p. 275, XI. Ernesti.

may be added all that respects the invisible things of a future state, i. e. heaven, hell, &c. The controversy whether descriptions of this nature are to be literally and tropically understood, is by no means at an end. One of the things which the human mind learns very slowly, is to detach itself from conceptions that arise from material objects, and to perceive that in *all* the descriptions of a future state, words are of absolute necessity employed which originally have a literal sense, because language affords no other. Even the internal operations of our own mind, we are obliged for the same reason, to describe in language that of necessity must be tropically understood: Almost all men, indeed, now allow that most of the language employed to describe God and his operations, is necessarily to be understood as tropical. Most men will allow that the language which respects the heavenly world may be so considered; but what regards the day of judgment, or the world of woe, they would strenuously contend, must be literally understood. There is indeed sufficient inconsistency in this, and it betrays no small degree of unacquaintance with the nature and principles of interpretation; but as it is productive of no consequences specially bad, the error is hardly worth combating. The motive no doubt may be good, which leads to the adoption of this error. The apprehension is, that if you construe the language that respects the day of judgment, or the world of woe figuratively, you take away the *reality* of them. Just as if reality did not, of course, lie at the basis of all figurative language, which would be wholly devoid of meaning without it. But how inconsistent too is this objection! The very person who makes it, admits that the language employed to describe God and his operations, and also to describe the heavenly world, is *tropical*; that it *must of necessity* be construed so. But does this destroy the *reality* of a God and his operations, and of the heavenly world?

“Who is ignorant of the innumerable controversies that have arisen, about the tropical and literal sense of a multitude of passages in the sacred writings? Almost all the enthusiasm and extravagance that have been exhibited in respect to religion, have had no better support than gross material conceptions of figurative language; or, not unfrequently, language that should be *properly* understood, has been *tropically* construed. There is no end to the mistakes on this ground. Nor are they limited to enthusiasts and

fanatics. They develop themselves not unfrequently in the writings of men, grave, pious, excellent, and in other parts of theological science very learned. Indeed, it is but a recent thing, that it has come to be considered as a science, and a special and essential branch of theological science,—to study the nature of language, and above all, the nature of the oriental biblical languages. Long has this been admitted in respect to the classics, and all works of science in ancient languages. But in regard to the Bible, the most ancient book in the world, and written in a language, the idiom of which is exceedingly diverse from our own, it seems to have been very generally taken for granted, that no other study was necessary to discover its meaning, than what is devoted to any common English book. At least, a Bible with marginal references, studied by a diligent and careful use of these references, might surely be understood in a most satisfactory manner. In very many cases, the *first* thing has been to study theology; the *second*, to read the Bible in order to find proofs of what had already been adopted as matter of belief. This order is now beginning to be reversed. The nature of language, of Scripture language, of figurative language, and of interpretation, is now beginning to be studied as a science, the acquisition of which is one of the greatest ends of study; as it is the only proper mode of leading a theologian to the knowledge of what the Bible really contains. Here too, is a common arbiter of the disputes that exist in the christian world. The nature of language and of tropical words thoroughly understood, will remove from among all intelligent and candid men, who really love the truth, a great part of all the diversities of opinion that exist.”—*Stuart*.

But when it is decided that any passage is to be understood figuratively, the next point is to *interpret metaphorical expressions by corresponding and appropriate terms*.

In doing this, Horne says: “We must enquire in what respects the thing compared, and that with which it is compared, respectively agree; and also, in what respects they have any affinity or resemblance: for as a similitude is concealed in every metaphor, it is only by diligent study that it can be elicited; by carefully observing the points of agreement, between the proper and the figurative meaning.” How often do the Jewish prophets charge the Israelites with deserting their husband Jehovah, playing the harlot, and committing adultery? A slight inspection of all these

passages, evinces that idolatry is intended. Now the origin of this metaphor, is to be sought in that particular notion in which there is agreement between adultery, and the worship paid by the Jews to strange gods. But to carry this principle out into detail:—In such cases where the resemblance between the things compared is so clear, as to be immediately perceived,—or when the writer himself explains it, or the context, or parallel passage, in which the same thing is expressed without a figure,—sets it so evidently before the mind as to remove all suspense, and this very frequently happens, then there is no need for any special rules. But when these fail to decide, the sacred history is to be considered. For example: Christ says he came not to send peace but a *sword*.

Now we shall suppose, first, that the resemblance concealed in the metaphor *sword*, is not so plain as to be immediately perceived. In the second place, we shall suppose the speaker does not himself explain it. In the third place, the context does not decide. And in the last place, there is no parallel passage in which the same thing is expressed, without a figure. I say we shall suppose that all these four expedients have failed to decide the resemblance, and to explain the metaphor; we then turn over to the history, and from that we learn, that in consequence of the spread of the gospel, nations and families became divided, some embracing and some rejecting it; and that the former were persecuted by the latter, on account of their having embraced the gospel; then the figure is satisfactorily explained.

Another expedient is often successfully employed to ascertain the point of resemblance, on the liberal import of a trope, which some would dignify with the name of a *rule*. It is this: "*Consider the connexion of doctrine, as well as the context of a figurative passage.*" This will sometimes lead to the origin of the figures: for frequently some word precedes or follows, or some synonyme is annexed, that plainly indicates whether the expression is to be taken properly or figuratively. For example: Paul says, Christians are '*living stones, a spiritual house, a royal priest-hood,*' &c. The sentiment or doctrine expressed in these metaphors, is found either from the passage to which allusion is made, Exodus xix. 5, 6; or from the words preceding and succeeding, which show the sentiment the Apostles designed to communicate.

"But in deciding the sense exhibited by a trope, the com-

parison ought never to be extended too far, or into any thing which cannot be properly applied to the person or thing represented."

Every comparison has ordinarily but *one particular view*, and ought not to be strained in order to make it agree in other respects, where it is evident that there is not a similitude of ideas. For example: *All flesh is grass*—not in *shape or color*; but in this respect, that men soon *wither and decay*. Now to push it farther than this *one particular view* would be to strain it.

Jesus Christ is compared to a lion—so is Satan—so are wicked men: but each of them in one particular view. Jesus Christ, in that he is noble, heroic, and invincible:—Satan, in that he is rapacious, roaring, and devouring;—wicked men, in that they are fierce, outrageous, and cruel to weaker men.

This leads to another rule, which ought also to be regarded in its proper place, viz.—"*That in the interpretation of figurative expressions generally, and those which particularly occur in the moral parts of Scripture, the meaning of such expressions ought to be regulated by those which are unfigurative, clear, and plain.*"

As illustrative of this rule, Mr. Horne adduces Matth. v. 38—42. Matt. vi. 19, 31, 34. The former respects retaliation—the latter thoughtfulness about worldly concerns. The auditors seem to have understood this discourse upon the Mount much better than the moderns: for they were delighted with it: but many of the moderns think, because they do not rightly interpret figurative language, that the duties enjoined are *impracticable, inconsistent with natural instinct, law, and destructive of society.*"

The inhabitants of the East frequently *put the action for the disposition*, and this gives a boldness to their metaphors almost unknown to the people of the West. But the manner in which these instructions are introduced, and the conduct of our Lord when he mildly reprov'd the officer who struck him at his trial, intimate their true meaning. Although he voluntarily gave himself up—bade Peter sheathe his sword, and cured Malchus whose ear Peter struck off, he reprimanded him who struck him; all of which was in accordance with the proper meaning of his precepts.

"*Not to lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven;*" "*to hate father and mother and one's own life,*" are, in the Hebrew idiom, equivalent to preferring heavenly treasures to earthly; and Jesus Christ to father, mother, and one's own self.

In the last place, in explaining metaphorical expressions, "we must not judge of the application of imagery from modern usage, because the ancients and the people of the East attached to those images, or metaphors, very different ideas." With us it is disgraceful to be compared to *oxen* and *asses*: with the ancients it was honorable; because those creatures in the East in many of their attributes differ exceedingly from those of Europe and America. Princes in the East ride upon asses. They are robust, more beautiful, and quicker in their pace than the same creature is with us. Proverbs and figures drawn from the ancients must be *historically* interpreted. A single instance will sustain this as well as a volume:—In the region of the *trade winds*, a man, steady to his purpose, is said to "*as steady as the wind*:" with us an inconstant man is said to be "*as fickle as the wind*." The metaphors are reconciled when the history of the wind in the regions where these proverbs are used is understood.

These rules and observations for ascertaining and explaining figurative language, must suffice for this chapter. They will be still farther illustrated and enforced in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUBJECT-MATTER.

"Although, in interpreting words that have various meanings, some degree of uncertainty may exist as to which of their different senses is to be preferred; yet the ambiguity in such cases is not so great but that it may in general be removed, and the proper signification of the passage in question may be determined: for the *subject-matter*—that is, the topic of which the author is treating—plainly shows the sense that is to be attached to any particular word. For there is a great variety of agents introduced in the Scriptures, whose words and actions are recorded. Some parts of the Bible are written in a responsive or dialogue form; as the twenty-fourth Psalm, Isaiah vi. 3, and Rom. ñi. 1—9. And the sense of a text is frequently mistaken.

by not observing who is the speaker, and what is the specific topic of which he treats. One or two examples will illustrate the necessity of considering the subject-matter.

“The Hebrew word *be-shen*, literally signifies the *skin*; by a metonymy, the *flesh* beneath the skin; and by a senecdoche it denotes *every animal*, especially man considered as infirm or weak, as in Jer. xvii. 5. ‘Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh *flesh* his arm;’ there are also several other meanings derived from these, which it is not material now to notice. But that the word *flesh* is to be understood of *man* only in Gen. vi. 12, Psalm lxxv. 2, and Job x. 4, will be evident on the slightest inspection of the subject matter. ‘All flesh had corrupted his way’—that is, all men had wholly departed from the rule of righteousness, or had made their way of life abominable throughout the world. And, in the Psalm above cited, who can doubt but that by the word *flesh*, men are intended: ‘O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh,’ that is, all mankind, ‘come.’ In like manner also, in Job x. 4, it is evident that *flesh* has the same meaning: if indeed the passage were at all obscure, the parallelism would explain it, ‘Hast thou the eyes of a man (Heb. *of flesh*)? or seest thou as man seest?’

“But it is not merely with reference to the meaning of particular passages that a consideration of the *subject-matter* becomes necessary to the right understanding of Scripture. It is further of the greatest importance in order to comprehend the various dispensations of God to man, which are contained in the sacred writings. For although the Bible comprises a great number of books, written at different times, yet they have a mutual connexion with each other, and refer, in the Old Testament, with various but progressively increasing degrees of light and clearness, to a *future* Saviour, and in the New Testament, to a *present* Saviour. With reference therefore, to the several divine dispensations to man, the subject-matter of the whole Bible ought to be attentively considered: but, as each individual book embraces a particular subject, it will also be requisite, carefully to weigh its subject-matter, in order to comprehend the design of the author.”

CHAPTER XVIII

CONTEXT.

“Another most important assistance, for investigating the meaning of words and phrases, is the consideration of the *context*, or the comparison of the preceding and subsequent parts of a discourse.

“If we analyse the words of an author, and take them out of their proper series, they may be so distorted as to mean any thing but what he intended to express. Since therefore, words have several meanings, and consequently, are to be taken in various acceptations, *a careful consideration of the preceding and subsequent parts will enable us to determine that signification, whether literal or figurative, which is best adapted to the passage in question.*

“A few instances will illustrate this subject, and show not only the advantage, but also the necessity, of attending to the context.

“It has been questioned whether those words of the prophet Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 15,) ‘Go and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it (Ramoth) into the hand of the king,’ are to be understood affirmatively according to their present meaning, or are to be taken in an ironical and contrary sense? That they are to be understood in the latter sense, the consideration of the context will plainly show, both from the prophet’s intention, and from the prophetic denunciation afterwards made by him. Hence it may be inferred, that some sort of ironical gesture accompanied Micaiah’s prediction, which circumstance ought to be borne in mind by the interpreter of Scripture.

Further, there is a difference of opinion whether the address of Job’s wife, (Job ii. 9,) is to be understood in a good sense, as ‘*Bless (or ascribe glory to) God, and die;*’ or in a different signification, ‘*Curse God, and die,*’ as it is rendered in our authorized version. Circumstances show that the last is the proper meaning; because as yet, Job had not sinned with his lips, and consequently, his wife had no ground for charging him with indulging a vain opinion of his integrity.

“Job xli. Whether the leviathan is a whale or a crocodile, has also divided the judgment of commentators. That the latter animal is intended, is evident from the circumstances described in the context, which admirably agree with the crocodile, but can in no respect be applied to the whale: for instance, chap. xli. 17, &c., relative to the hardness of his skin, and verses 13—16, concerning his teeth and impenetrable scales.

“Once more: it has been doubted whether our Lord’s command to his disciples, ‘To provide neither gold nor silver in their purses,’ Matt. x. 9, be a rule of perpetual observation. That it was only a temporary command, is evident from the preceding and subsequent parts of the chapter, which prove *that* particular mission to have been only a temporary one; and that as they were to go for a short time through Judea, and then to return to Jesus, he therefore forbade them to take any thing that would retard their progress.

“The context of a discourse or book, in the Scriptures, may comprise either one verse, a few verses, entire periods, or sections, entire chapters, or whole books.

“Sometimes a book of Scripture comprises only one subject or argument, in which case the whole of it must be referred to precedents and subsequents, and ought to be considered together.

“To investigate the context of a passage, it will be desirable to investigate each word of every passage; and as the connexion is formed by *particles*, these should always receive that signification which the subject-matter and context require.

“If the meaning of a single verse is to be ascertained, the five, six, or seven verses immediately preceding, should first be read with minute attention.

“A verse or passage must not be connected with a remote context, unless the latter agree better with it than a nearer context.

“Examine whether the writer continues his discourse, lest we suppose him to make a transition to another argument, when in fact he is prosecuting the same topic.

“The parentheses which occur in the sacred writings should be particularly regarded; but no parenthesis should be interposed without sufficient reason.

“Parentheses, being contrary to the genius and structure

of the Hebrew language, are, comparatively, of rare occurrence in the Old Testament.

“In the New Testament, however, parentheses are frequent, especially in the writings of Paul; who, after making numerous digressions, (all of them appropriate to, and illustrative of, his main subject,) returns to the topic which he had begun to discuss.

“Additional instances might be offered, to show the importance of attending to parentheses in the examination of the context; but the preceding will abundantly suffice for this purpose. The author has been led to discuss them at greater length than may seem to have been requisite, from the circumstance, that less attention appears to be given to the parenthesis, than in any other species of punctuation, in the different works on the study of the Scriptures in our language, that have fallen under his notice.

“Where no connexion is to be found with the preceding and subsequent parts of a book, none should be sought.

“From the preceding remarks it will be evident, that, although the comparison of the context will require both labor and unremitting diligence, yet these will be abundantly compensated by the increased degree of light which will thus be thrown upon otherwise obscure passages.”

CHAPTER XIX.

SCOPE.

“A consideration of the *Scope*, or *Design* which the inspired author of any of the books of Scripture had in view, essentially facilitates the study of the Bible: because, as every writer had some design which he proposed to unfold, and as it is not to be supposed that he would express himself in terms foreign to that design, it therefore is but reasonable to admit, that he made use of such words and phrases as were every way suited to his purpose. To be acquainted, therefore with the scope of an author, is to understand the chief part of his book. The scope, it has been well observed, is the soul or spirit of a book; and that being once ascertained, every argument and every word appears

in its right place, and is perfectly intelligible: but, if the scope be not duly considered, every thing becomes obscure, however clear and obvious its meaning may really be.

“The scope of an author is either *general* or *special*; by the former we understand the design which he proposed to himself in writing his book; by the latter, we mean that design which he had in view, when writing particular sections, or even smaller portions, of his book or treatise.

“The means, by which to ascertain the scope of a *particular* section or passage, being nearly the same with those which must be applied to the investigation of the *general* scope of a book, we shall briefly consider them together in the following observations.

“The *Scope* of a book of Scripture, as well as of any particular section or passage, is to be collected from the writer’s express mention of it, from some conclusion expressly added at the end of an argument; from history, from attention to its general tenor, to the main subject and tendency of the several topics, and to the force of the leading expressions; and especially from repeated, studious, and connected perusals of the book itself.

First. “When the scope of a whole book, or of any particular portion of it, is expressly mentioned by the sacred writer, it should be carefully observed.

Second. “The scope of the sacred writer may be ascertained from the known occasion on which his book was written.

Third. “The express conclusion, added by the writer at the end of an argument, demonstrates his general scope,

Fourth. “The scope of a passage may further be known from history.

Fifth. “A knowledge of the time when a book was written, and also of the state of that church at that time, will indicate the scope or intention of the author in writing such a book.

Sixth. “If, however, none of these subsidiary aids present themselves, it only remains that we *repeatedly and diligently study the entire book, as well as the whole subject, and carefully ascertain the scope from them, before we attempt an examination of any particular text.*”

CHAPTER XX.

ANALOGY OF SCRIPTURE.

That there are passages of Scripture parallel or analogous to each other, is universally conceded. The same words, the same sentences, the same incidents, the same allusions, are sometimes found in different writers; and sometimes in different places, in the same writers. That various circumstances connected with the same word, the same sentence, the same incident, the same allusion in different places may often, and do often, decide the proper acceptation of a word, or sentence, or incident, is also generally conceded. For this is common to all contemporaneous authors, and to authors who write intelligently upon the same subject

The number of parallel passages is, however, very generally overrated by the authors of marginal references; for it is confessed by those most studious in the Holy Oracles, that the number of passages precisely parallel, is comparatively small. While certain words and phrases are of frequent occurrence, and while the meaning is uniformly the same; still the number of *contexts* precisely parallel to each other, is by no means great.

We have many words nearly equivalent or synonymous in our language, yet the most learned philologists affirm, that the number of perfect synonymes is very small: and even some doubt whether any two words are perfectly alike in meaning. Still, however, there are some passages parallel in many prominent items; and to consult these in order to ascertain the precise meaning of a word, sentence, or action, is always profitable and wise.

Marginal references are usually much esteemed, on account of the facilities which they offer to such comparisons and consultations. The student, ought indeed, to be as cautious how implicitly he allows his mind to follow in the train of these references, as in following the glosses and comments of a paraphrast, or commentator on the Bible.

We have seen some Bibles with marginal references,

which differed little or nothing from a commentary. The author of the references as adroitly and as certainly gave his own opinions of the sense to the reader, as the most prosing and verbose commentator. Of these now in use, while Scott is the most profuse, the Polyglott is the most judicious. I should, however, be very reluctant to make either, or both of them, an implicit guide in determining parallel passages. They are helps to those who know how to use them: but as there is no substitute for the daily and constant reading of the Bible, in order to piety; so there is no substitute for the habitual study of it, in order to the discovering of parallel passages, and the meaning of them. God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, has laid us under an indispensable necessity continually to converse with him, through his word, in order to our intelligence, purity, and happiness.

The following hints on the proper method of consulting parallel passages may, perhaps, be useful to those who are determined to understand the divine communications:—

First. Remember that the authors of the New Testament were Jews, and well versed in the Jewish Scriptures; and that an intimate acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures, is indispensable to your knowledge not only of the ancient communications, but to an acquaintance with the style and phraseology of the New Testament authors.

Second. In order to an accurate acquaintance with the words, and phrases, and style of any one author in either Testament, you must study his style by itself; or, in other words, you must repeatedly read all his writings by themselves.

Third. Those of them who write upon the same subjects will, as a matter of course, have most parallel passages; and on these topics they are especially to be compared with each other.

Fourth. “When the mind is arrested by any resemblance, consider whether it is a good resemblance; and whether the passages are sufficiently similar, that is, whether the *things* as well as the *words*, do at all correspond.”

Fifth. “When two parallel passages appear, the clearer and more copious must be selected, to illustrate one that is more briefly and obscurely expressed.”

Sixth. “Other things being equal, a nearer parallel is preferable to one that is more remote.”

To these three last rules, extracted from Horne, others

are added, but of little or no use to an English reader of an English translation.

It is of more importance to pay special attention to the acceptance of words in each writer's own compositions, by a diligent comparison of them in all places where they occur; than to seek for explanation in other writer's, even should they be contemporary with him. This, however, not to the exclusion of the other rules and observations here offered.

CHAPTER XXI.

ANALOGY OF FAITH.

Great emphasis has formerly been laid upon the analogy of faith, as a rule of interpreting the Scriptures. When any passage appeared to be ambiguous, that meaning was to be preferred which best suited the analogy of faith. But this always supposed the interpreter to be in full possession of a perfect knowledge of the faith; and consequently the work of interpreting Scripture with him was at an end. To suppose any thing else, would indicate that a person might fully understand the faith; that is, the meaning of all the Scriptures,—without a knowledge of all that is written! A person interpreting Scripture by the analogy of faith, resembles a certain Roman gentleman who first commanded Paul to be bound, and afterwards enquired what he had done. So the theologian, interpreting Scripture by the analogy of faith,—first decides what is the faith, and then proceeds to examine what the Scriptures say.

As Dr. G. Campbell well observes,—with every sect, *“the analogy of faith, is their own system alone.”*

“In vain,” adds that excellent critic, “do we search the Scriptures for their testimony concerning Christ, if, independently of these Scriptures, we have received a testimony from another quarter, and are determined to admit nothing, as the testimony of Scripture, which will not perfectly quadrature with that formerly received. This was the very source of the blindness of the Jews in our Saviour's time. They searched the Scriptures as much as we do; but, in the

disposition they were in, they would never have discovered what that sacred volume testifies of Christ. Why? Because their great rule of interpretation was *the analogy of faith*; or, in other words, the system of the Pharisean scribes, the doctrine then in vogue, and in the profound veneration of which they had been educated. This is that veil by which the understandings of that people were darkened, even in reading the law; of which the Apostle observed, that it remained unremoved in his day, and of which we ourselves have occasion to observe, that it remains unremoved in ours."

"When a Lutheran tells you, 'You are to put no interpretation on any portion of Scripture, but what perfectly coincides with *the analogy of the faith*;' sift him ever so little on the import of this phrase, and you shall find that, if he mean any thing, it is, that you are to admit no exposition that will not exactly tally with the system of his great founder Luther. Nor is he singular in this. A Calvinist has the same prepossession in favor of the scheme of Calvin, and an Arminian of that of Arminius. Yet they will all tell you with one voice, that their respective doctrines are to be tried by Scripture, and by Scripture alone. "*To the law and to the testimony*," is the common cry: only every one of them, the better to secure the decision on the side he has espoused, would have you previously resolve, to put no sense whatever on the law and the testimony, but what his favorite doctor will admit. Thus they run on in a shuffling circular sort of argument, which, though they studiously avoid exposing it, is, when dragged into the open light, neither more nor less than this: 'You are to try our doctrine by the Scripture only. But then you are to be very careful that you explain the Scripture solely by our doctrine.' A wonderful plan of trial, which begins with giving judgment, and ends with examining the proof, wherein the whole skill and ingenuity of the judges are to be exerted in wresting the evidence, so as to give it the appearance of supporting the sentence pronounced beforehand."

In this way all the sects proceed. They seem not to know or feel that they act the part of a judge, who judges not the parties by the law, but judges the import of the law by the interpretation of one of the parties, in whose favor he is already biassed.

While then we admit there may be some assistance de

rived from the *analogy of the Scriptures*, in deciding the meaning of some ambiguous words and sentences from marginal references, and from concordances,—we can find little or no use for the *analogy of faith* in its popular use, unless all parties first agree that such is the faith; and then having learned the faith without the Bible, all will agree to interpret the Bible by the analogy of faith.

Still however, there is a perfect harmony; and consequently, a perfect resemblance: I might add,—a complete unity of faith, doctrine, or sentiment, in all the divine communications to men. And therefore we must say, “*that the WHOLE SYSTEM of revelation must be explained, so as to be consistent with itself;*” and therefore, “*when two passages APPEAR to be contradictory, if the sense of the one can be clearly ascertained, in all such cases that must regulate our interpretation of the other.*” For example: John says, ‘If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.’ Again he says, ‘Whosoever is begotten of God, does not sin.’ Here is an apparent contradiction. Now, the first quotation expresses a truth very often and very clearly asserted in Scripture, and in accordance with every christian’s experience, and therefore the latter must be regulated by the first; or so explained, as not to contradict the first. The style indeed, itself, of the latter quotation, when closely considered, imports sinning *habitually*—as the slave of sin; and this is incompatible with the christian’s relation to God.

We may therefore, affirm in one sentence, that no interpretation of Scripture can be rationally received, which contradicts these capital points of piety and morality which are so repeatedly asserted in the Scriptures,—and that by necessity, all obscure, ambiguous, or figurative words and sentences, must never be interpreted in a sense that will contradict those that are plain;—and that all opinions, doctrines, and practices, which are founded upon a single word, or a sentence or two, contrary to the general scope and repeated declarations of the Holy Spirit, are to be wholly repudiated. Of this class, are “auricular confession” to a priest, “extreme unction,” the building of the church on Peter, Purgatorial fire, &c. &c. of the Roman sect. I would in conclusion add, that, in my judgment, not one of those words and sentences of rare occurrence, and on which these notions and practices are

founded, such as James v. 14, 15, James 5. 16, 1 John i. 9, &c., can logically and grammatically be interpreted to give the least countenance to those absurd dogmas; for nothing can be rationally inferred from any verse in the Bible that is not in it; and whatever can be logically deduced from any sentence in the Book, is as much the revelation of God as any thing clearly expressed in it. But we have much reason of gratitude, that every thing necessary to our acceptance with God, to religion and morality, is so often repeated and so clearly expressed, that no honest mind can possibly err, who will apply himself to what is written; and as Doddridge somewhere says, "I am more and more convinced, that the *vulgar sense* of the New Testament, that is, the sense which an honest man of plain sense would take it on his first reading the *original* or any *good translation*, is almost every where the true general sense of any passage; though an acquaintance with *language* and *antiquity*, with an attentive meditation of the text and context, may illustrate the spirit and energy of a multitude of passages, in a manner which could not otherwise be learned."

CHAPTER XXII.

HIEROGLYPHICS.

Men have but two ways of communicating their ideas: the one by *sounds*, the other by *figures*. Sounds are fugitive, momentary, and confined to a very limited space. Figures are more permanent, and capable of being perpetuated and extended to a great distance.

The first objects on which men think and speak, are *sensible* objects: therefore their conceptions concerning these would be the first subjects of communication, whether by sounds or figures. Now, the most natural way of communicating men's conceptions by figures or marks, is by picturing out the images of the things. Hence, as all antiquity attests, the first kind of writing was by delineating the forms of the objects of sense, or making the *pictures* of

things. Thus, to express the idea of a man or a tree, the writer delineated a figure of them.*

But this was a tedious, voluminous, and expensive way of writing; and as necessity has ever been the mother of invention, improvements were soon found. Of these improvements, the Egyptian hieroglyphics were the most famous. This was a sort of abridgment, on which various improvements were afterwards made. The first hieroglyphics made the principal attributes or circumstance in the subject, stand for the whole. Thus says Warburton: "When they would describe a battle, or two armies in array, they painted *two hands; one holding a shield, and the other a bow*:—a tumult, or popular insurrection, by—*an armed man casting arrows*:—a siege—by a *scaling ladder*."

The second method of contraction or abridgment, was by *putting the instrument of the thing, whether real or metaphorical, for the thing itself*. Thus, an *eye* and a *serpent*, represented a monarch:—a *ship and pilot*, the governor of the universe.

The third and still more artificial method of abridging picture writing, was by "making one thing stand for, or represent another, when any plain analogy or resemblance in the representative, could be collected from their observation of nature, or their traditional superstitions." "Sometimes this kind of hieroglyphic was founded on their observations on the *form*, and real or imaginary *natures and qualities* of beings. Thus, a client flying for relief to his patron, and finding none, was represented by a *sparrow and an owl*;—an inexorable king, by an *eagle*;—a man who exposes his children through poverty, by a *hawk*;—children who injure their mother, by a *viper*;—a person initiated into a secret, by a *grasshopper*, which was thought to have no mouth."

But the obscurity which attended the scantiness of hieroglyphic characters, joined to the enormous bulk of picture volumes, impelled ingenuity still forward, and originated the fourth change in the art of writing. The Chinese characters furnish an example of this. "As the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic was an improvement on a more ancient manner, resembling the rude picture writing of the Mexicans, and joined *characteristic marks* to images,—the

* In proof of this, the Mexicans may be adduced. When the inhabitants of the sea coasts first saw the Spanish ships arrive, they sent expresses to Montezuma with the news. "Their advices were delineated in large paintings upon cloth."

Chinese writing advanced a step farther,—threw out the images, and retained only the *contracted marks*, which they increased to a prodigious number. In their writing, every distinct idea has its proper mark; and is still, like the universal character of picture writing, common to diverse neighboring nations of different languages. The shapes and figures of these marks, however much disguised, do yet betray their original from pictures and images.”

“Thus have we brought down the general history of writing, by a gradual and easy descent, from a picture to a letter; for Chinese marks, which participate of the nature of Egyptian hieroglyphics on the one hand, and of letters on the other; just as these hieroglyphics equally partook of that of Mexican pictures, and of the Chinese characters, are on the very borders of letters,—an alphabet being only a compendious abridgment of that troublesome multiplicity, of which this is a proof, that some alphabets, as the Ethiopic, have taken in those very characteristic marks to compose their letters, as appears both from their shapes and names. This is further seen by the names which express letters and literary writing in the ancient languages: thus the Greek words *semeia* and *semata*, signify as well the images of natural things, as artificial marks or characters; and *grapho*, both to paint and to write. The not attending to this natural and easy progress of recording the thoughts, made some of the wisest among the ancients, as Plato and Tully, when struck with the wonderful artifice of Letters, conclude that they were no human invention, but a gift of the immortal gods.”*

All that is known of the inventor of *letters* is, that he was secretary to an Egyptian king, but his name is to all the world unknown. The transition however, was easy, from a *mark* for a distinct idea, to a *letter* for each of the simple *sounds* of the human voice.

The precise era of this invention cannot even be guessed. Some have made it contemporary with Joseph, with Moses, with Joshua, &c., but no authentic data exists from which it can be inferred. Had one invention disappeared after a better was introduced, then it might have been more easy to have ascertained the origin of letters; but it is a fact worthy of note, that the picture writing continued long after the hieroglyphic, and the hieroglyphic long after the inven-

* Warburton's Divine Legation, vol. 1, pp. 77, 78.

tion of letters, though for different purposes employed, than those which gave them birth: for while *necessity* originated them as means of communicating knowledge, after letters were introduced, they were perpetuated for the sake of concealing knowledge from the vulgar. The priests of Egypt, having made a religious use of them for concealing their mysteries from the uninitiated, they were chiefly appropriated to superstition. Hence the name *Hieroglyphics*, signifies *sacred delineations*.

Our object in noticing them here is, to arrest the attention of the student of the Bible, to the origin, meaning, and use of symbols, of which we have so many in the sacred writings. The frequent use of symbols in the Holy Scriptures, occasioned not merely from the high antiquity of the book, but from the fact that symbolic language is the most suitable to prophecy,—renders an accurate acquaintance with them of indispensable importance to a correct interpretation of large portions of these sacred records.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SYMBOLS.

We have the true foundation of symbolic language in the ancient hieroglyphics. All the Asiatic languages partake of them; and, in the judgment of our most reputable antiquarians, are found upon the model of the Egyptian hieroglyphic. Bishop Warburton, in his bold and masculine style, calls “the prophetic style, a speaking hieroglyphic.”

As we have found in ancient history three kinds of hieroglyphics,—so we find three sorts of symbols, answering to these hieroglyphics. We have symbols of the first sort, which are simply contracted representations of things, without regard to analogy. Hence the creeds of ancient times were, and by some of the learned still are, called symbols; because abridged representations of Bible doctrine. We have also *tropical* symbols, founded upon the second class of hieroglyphics,—formed from some imaginary or far-fetched resemblance; as in putting the instru-

ment by which any thing is acquired for the thing acquired. But we have also a more perfect class of symbols founded upon actual analogies, or natural resemblances; and these are the representation of any one object, by the figure or properties of another. These are the *images* of *things*. In this class, the image of a thing is put for the thing itself; and to it belongs, almost exclusively, the symbols found in the Bible.

All symbols may, indeed, be called signs of things, as words are signs of ideas. The symbol is to the thing intended, what the word is to the idea. And as words are used figuratively, so are symbols; for we have symbols of the idea which we form of the thing, as well as symbols of the thing itself. For example:—the word *tyrant*, is the sign of the idea of a despotic and oppressive ruler; but the symbol of this person named a tyrant, is a *wild beast*. There is no analogy between the word *tyrant*, and a cruel, arbitrary prince; but there is an analogy between a *wild beast*, and such a person: yet this analogy is not in the figure of the wild beast, but in some of its qualities or attributes. The word *lamb*, is the name of a very gentle, innocent, and harmless creature; but a *lamb* itself, is the symbol of a very gentle, innocent, and inoffensive person. Hence, Jesus Christ is metaphorically called, “The *Lamb* of God;” but a *lamb* itself, is the symbol of him: and, therefore, a *slain lamb* is the symbol of Christ crucified. It would not, perhaps, be transcending the bounds of propriety to say, that such symbols are to things, what metaphors are to proper words.

“A metaphor in place of proper words
Resemblance puts, and dress to speech affords.”

And may we not say,—

A symbol puts the *image* for the thing,
As priests, for sin, did put the offering.

Symbolic writing introduced into the ancient languages the boldest, and, to speak according to the taste of us Americans, the most extravagant metaphors. A few instances from the Hebrew prophets, which may illustrate a hundred dark sayings, shall be adduced.

First. A man with four wings, in symbolic writing, represented a supreme ruler. His lieutenants, or princes, were pictured out by a man with two wings. The stretch-

ing out the wings, was the symbol of imperial action or design. Now the names of these symbols, were anciently used for the thing signified.

Isaiah, predicting the invasion of Judea by the Assyrian chief, thus speaks:—‘The stretching out of his *wings*, shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel!’ Jeremiah, in the same style, predicts the desolations of Moab:—‘He shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his *wings* over Moab.’ ‘Woe to the land,’ says Isaiah, ‘shadowing with *wings*.’ See Daniel’s vision of the two-*winged* beasts.

From this we may learn, how God’s power in protecting his people, came to be termed—*his feathers, his wings, the covert of his wings*.

Second. A *crocodile*, was one of the ancient symbols of Egypt. In Psalm lxxiv. 13, 14, the Egyptians are styled, *dragons in the waters*; and their king, *leviathan*. ‘The great *dragon* that lieth in the midst of his rivers,’ Ezekiel xxix. 3. And Isaiah xxvii. 1, says, ‘In that day the Lord with his sore, and great, and strong sword, shall punish *leviathan, the piercing serpent—even leviathan, that crooked serpent*; and he shall slay the *dragon*.’

The king of Ethiopia, probably from the same cause, was called a *fly*; and the king of Assyria, a *bee*. ‘The Lord shall hiss for the *fly* that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the *bee* that is in the land of Assyria.’ Isaiah vii. 18. He will call for the Ethiopian and Assyrian king to avenge his quarrel.

Third. A *star*, was anciently the symbol of the Deity. Thus said Balaam, ‘There shall come a *star* out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel.’ A *star* was also the image of a god. ‘The *star* of your god which you made to yourselves,’ Amos v. 26, i. e. the material image of your god. ‘The *star* of your god, Remphan.’ Acts vii. 7. ‘The king of Babylon is called ‘Lucifer, the Morning Star, Son of the morning.’ Hence the sun, moon, and stars, came to be the symbols of patriarchs, princes, and nobles. See Joseph’s dream, Gen. xxxviii. 9.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ENSIGNS AND DEVICES.

Of the antiquity of ensigns, Moses is a witness, Num. ii. 2. 'Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own *standard*, with the *ensign* of their father's house.' The ensign of each tribe is not now known. But because our Lord, who sprang from Judah is called, 'The lion of the tribe of Judah,' it is conjectured, that from Jacob's blessing, in which he termed Judah a '*lion's whelp*,' he chose a lion for his ensign.

However this may be, "it is highly probable, that in the ensigns by which tribes and nations were distinguished, they painted the figures of such animals, trees, &c., as were emblematic of those qualities, circumstances, or events, by which they thought themselves most honored." Hence, in symbolic writing, the ensign, or painted device, stood for the nation. Jeremiah, therefore, likens Egypt to a *very fair heifer*; either, because the Egyptians carried on their ensigns the image of a heifer, the symbol of *Isis*, their tutelar deity;—or, because in sculpture they were represented by that device. In Pharaoh's dream, Egypt was symbolically represented by *kine*. It is thought that the Assyrians had the Euphrates on their ensigns, emblematic of their irresistible force; because Isaiah calls them, 'The waters of the rivers,' alluding to the Tigris and Euphrates. Hence, the New Testament Mistress of Babylon, is represented as 'sitting upon many waters,' i. e. ruling many populous nations.

Because of the institutions, laws, and discipline, peculiar to cities and nations, designed to form the manners of the people, they were anciently set forth on coins and in sculpture, by a "*young woman sitting on a throne, magnificently attired; and surrounded with emblems, expressive of the attributes by which that nation or city was distinguished.*" Hence, the Jewish prophets in allusion to this symbol, when addressing nations and cities, named them *daughters*, and *virgin daughters*. 'I will weep bitterly, because of the

spoiling of the *daughters* of my people.' Isaiah xxii. 4. 'Deliver thyself O Zion, that dwellest with the *daughters* of Babylon.' Zachariah ii. 7. 'Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, for the *virgin daughter* of my people is broken with a great breach.' Jeremiah xlvi. 11. 'Take balm, O Virgin, the *daughter* of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.'

Because princes and great men were likened to trees in the ancient symbols, we read of 'the *tall cedars* of Lebanon;' and of the common people, as 'the choice *fir trees* thereof;' of the '*oaks* of Bashan.' The *forest*, in Jeremiah, represents a whole nation. 'I will kindle a fire in the *forest* thereof.' But of Judah he says, 'The Lord called thy name a *green olive tree*, fair, and of goodly fruit.' Hence, Messiah is foretold as 'THE BRANCH.' I will raise up to David a righteous *branch*,—'Behold the man whose name is *the branch*.' Zechariah vi 12. 'There shall come forth a *rod* out of the *stem* of Jesse, and a *branch* shall grow out of his *roots*; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.'

CHAPTER XXV.

MYSTICAL ALLEGORY.

From the ancient usage of substituting the *symbol* for the *device*, and the *metaphor* for the thing signified thereby; and the thing signified, having by the same usage obtained the name of the thing by which it was signified,—it was natural to describe the condition, the qualities, and the actions of the thing signified, by the condition, the qualities, and the actions of its symbol. Hence arose that species of composition, called allegory; because, in it one thing was expressed, and another, entirely different from it, meant. The following description and history of the allegory, is from Macknight,—from whom, already, we have borrowed much.

"The Egyptians, who are supposed to have invented picture writing, are thought also to have invented the allegorical method of communicating their sentiments. But, by

whomsoever invented, it came early into general use, and was greatly delighted in by the orientals, for the following reasons: *First.* A well formed allegory, by its striking images and vivid coloring, never failed, when understood, to make a strong impression on those to whom it was addressed. *Second.* Being a narration of things which are objects of sense, and between which there is a natural or supposed connexion, it was easily remembered, and could be translated from one language into another with the greatest precision. *Third.* Professing to contain an important hidden meaning, those to whom it was proposed, were led by curiosity to search out that meaning. *Fourth.* The discovery of the meaning of an allegory, as an exercise of one's mental powers, afforded great pleasure to the discoverer, especially if it contained a moral lesson useful for regulating life and manners: for a person, by the discovery, being led to instruct himself, he was spared the pain of having instruction forced upon him. *Fifth.* Allegory being a kind of speech which none but the learned understood, it was an excellent vehicle for conveying to them the knowledge of such matters, as were thought improper for the common people to know. These reasons led the priests, with whom the whole learning of Egypt was lodged, to teach their religion, their laws, and their politics, under the veil of allegory, both to their own countrymen, and to those strangers who came to be instructed in the wisdom of Egypt. And such well informed strangers, on their return to their own country, in imitation of their teachers, communicated the knowledge which they had acquired in Egypt, to their disciples in allegories: by which means allegory came in a little time to be the most approved method of instruction, all over the east.

“Allegories being in great repute, when the Jewish prophets were commissioned to instruct the people, and to foretel future events, it need not surprise us to find them delivering most of their prophecies in allegories; especially when we consider, that at the time these were delivered, it was proper to conceal the events foretold, under the veil of allegory, that they might not be understood till they were explained by their accomplishment. But, notwithstanding the ancient Egyptian allegory was attended with the advantages above mentioned, its extreme darkness occasioned it to be laid aside, after the gift of prophecy ceased. A new species, however, has been substituted in its room,

better fitted to convey instruction, because it is formed on symbols more obvious than those used in the ancient allegory. Of this new species, the writings of the moderns furnish many beautiful examples, none of which need be mentioned here, in regard they are generally known.

“Of the ancient allegory there were four kinds. 1. The proper allegory. 2. The apologue, or fable. 3. The parable. 4. The enigma.

“The *proper allegory*, was a discourse, in which the *condition*, the *qualities*, and the *actions* of a person or thing, were represented by the condition, the qualities, and the actions of the symbol, device, or metaphor, by which it was represented in picture writing. It was, therefore, a representation of real matters of fact, under feigned names and feigned characters.

“The *apologue* or *fable*, was a narration of speeches and actions attributed, sometimes to men, sometimes to brute animals, and sometimes to things inanimate, according to their natural or supposed qualities. But, these speeches and actions had no existence, except in the imagination of the author of the fable, who contrived them in the manner he judged fittest, for conveying the moral he had in view to inculcate. Of this kind was Jotham’s fable of the *trees* going forth to anoint a king, Judges ix. 8. And Joash’s fable of the *thistle*, which desired the *cedar* to give his daughter as a wife to his son. 2 Chron. xxv. 18.

The *parable*, or *similitude*, was a discourse in which one thing was compared with another which had a resemblance to it, so that the thing compared was more clearly understood, by means of the qualities of the thing to which it was compared, and made a strong impression on the mind of the hearers. Of this kind were many of our Lord’s parables. But, although the apologue and parable were thus distinguished, we find them sometimes confounded with each other.

“Lastly. The *enigma*, or *riddle*, was a mysterious assemblage of different symbols, set forth, either in a verbal discourse, or, by presenting the symbols themselves to the eye. Either way exhibited, the meaning of the assemblage was so dark, that it required the greatest ingenuity to discover it. Of the verbal enigma, Sampson’s riddle is an example. Of the symbolical enigma, Herodotus has recorded a remarkable instance, Hist. lib. iv. 128, 130, where he tells us, that when Darius Hystaspes invaded Scythia,

the Scythian king sent him a present, of a *bird*, a *mouse*, a *frog*, and *five arrows*. This, Gobryas, one of Darius' generals, considering as an enigma, interpreted it in the following manner: 'That unless the Persians could fly through the air like birds, or hide themselves in the earth like mice, or swim through the lakes like frogs, they should not return to their own country, but be slain by the arrows of the Scythians.'

"All allegories have two senses. *First*. The *literal* sense exhibited in the verbal description, or in the visible symbol. *Second*. The remote sense concealed under the literal sense, or under the visible symbol. Wherefore, in every allegory, the first or literal sense is itself the sign of the second or hidden meaning, called the figurative sense of the allegory. And this figurative sense should be as distinctly represented by the literal sense of the allegory, as the literal sense is exhibited, whether by the verbal description, or by the visible symbol. Properly speaking, therefore, the first or literal sense constitutes *the body* of the allegory, and the second or figurative sense, its *soul*. In compositions of this kind, if rightly formed, the literal sense ought to be perfectly plain; and the only exercise of one's ingenuity ought to lie, not in understanding the literal sense, but in finding out its concealed meaning.

"Some of the ancient fables and parables, exhibited such striking representations and reproofs of the common follies of mankind, that by their frequent application they became proverbs. In allusion to this use of the parable, Habbakuk says, chap. ii. 6, 'Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him.' And Micah ii. 4. 'In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation.'"*

Two examples of the allegory set forth in a verbal description:—

'Come down and sit in the dust, *O virgin daughter of Babylon*. There is no throne, *O daughter of the Chaldeans*; for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. —Take the millstones and grind meal; uncover the locks; make bare the leg; uncover the thigh; pass over the rivers.—Thy nakedness shall be uncovered; yea, thy shame shall be seen. I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. As for our Redeemer, the Lord of

* Macknight on the Epistles, vol G. p. 238.

hosts is his name.—Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans, for thou shalt no more be called the lady of kingdoms.—Therefore, hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me, I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children,' &c. Isaiah xlvii.*

'Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt.—Speak and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against thee Pharaoh king of Egypt, the *dragon* that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.—But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick into thy scales.—And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields, thou shalt not be brought together nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field, and to the fowls of heaven,' &c., to verse 17. Ezekiel xxix.†

Those desirous of studying the complexion of such allegories, will find other examples. Ezekiel xxxii. 2; Isaiah lii. 1, 2; xxiii. 15, 16, 17; xiii. 10; Joel ii. 31, 32; Ezekiel xx. 46—49.

Examples of the allegory set forth in dreams and visions, will be found in Genesis xli. 17; Daniel iv; Ezekiel i; iv. 28.

To *allegorize*, is to turn a true history into symbol, and make it represent another subject,—as Paul allegorized the history of Hagar and Ishmael, and Sarah and Isaac, because of their aptness to picture out the two Testaments, and the people under them. Galatians iv. 24—31.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MYSTICAL ACTIONS.

“To render speech forcible and affecting, mankind in all ages and countries, have been accustomed to accompany

* † Macknight on the Epistles, vol. 6, pp. 242, 245.

their words with corresponding gestures and actions." This custom prevailed more in ancient times, when words were less copious and expressive; and especially amongst the eastern nations. It still obtains amongst most of the savage tribes. The Scriptures furnish many examples of it.

Abraham said to Eleazer of Damascus, 'Put thy hand under my thigh and swear.' Genesis xxiv. 2. Jacob, before his death, made his son Joseph put his hand under his thigh and swear. Genesis xlvii. 29. This action was intended to make these promisory oaths more solemn and binding.

Jacob, when he saw Joseph's coat, 'rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned many days.' When Ahab heard Elijah's words, 'he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.' 1 Kings xxi. 27. These actions were symbolic of great affliction and distress.

Moses slew an Egyptian, to show (as Stephen explains it,) 'that God would by him, deliver Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians.' Acts vii. 25. Ahijah caught Jeroboam's mantle, and rent it in twelve pieces, and said, 'Take thee *ten* pieces, for thus saith the Lord, I will rend the kingdom out of the hands of Solomon, and will give *ten* tribes to you.' 1 Kings xi. 30. Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, made him *horns of iron*, and said, 'Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, till thou hast consumed them.' 2 Kings xiii. 18.

Elisha said to the king of Israel, 'Smite upon the ground: and he smote three times, and staid. And the man of God was angry with him and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; but now thou shalt only smite it three times.' 2 Kings xiii. 18. The king did not understand this symbolic action. 'I shook my lap, and said, So God shake every man out of his house and from his labor, that performeth not this promise; even thus be he shaken.' Nehemiah xv. 13. 'Sigh, son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; sigh with bitterness before their eyes; and when they ask you, Why sighest thou? say to them,—For the tidings, because it comes, and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble.' Ezekiel xxi. 6.

'Jesus called a little child to him, and placed him in the midst of them, and said, Indeed, I say to you, unless you

be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.' 'Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child.' Matt. xviii. 2. 'And he *cursed* the barren fig tree:' for, according to the Jewish idea, whatever was barren, was cursed. Thus he intimated the destruction coming upon Jerusalem. Mark xi. 13—21. 'Jesus rose from supper, laid aside his garments, took a towel and girded himself. After that, he poured water into a bason, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel. *Do you know what I have done to you?* said he. If I, your Lord and Master, have thus washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet.' 'He *laid his hands* upon little children, and blessed them.' 'Neglect not the gift in thee, by the imposition of my hands,' said Paul to Timothy. Agabus took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, 'Thus saith the Holy Spirit: So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'

These instances of the fact, that many mystical or symbolic actions, prophetic and representative in their nature, were performed from the days of Abraham to Agabus,—go far to explain many of those singular commandments given to the Prophets, which have so long served for a jest to infidels. They were all in conformity to the manners of the age; and like symbols, were a brief and forcible way of communicating information. We shall give a few examples of these.

Isaiah was commanded to walk three years, not only barefoot, but *naked*; i. e. without the upper garment—the hairy mantle generally worn by the prophets: and this was to be a *sign* and a *wonder*, upon Egypt and Ethiopia. Isaiah xx. 23. This intimated that the king of Assyria should lead away captive the Egyptian and Ethiopian, naked and barefoot; 'even with their buttocks uncovered to the shame of Egypt.*'

Jeremiah, chap. xix. 1, was commanded to get a potter's earthen bottle, and with the ancient of the priests and people, to go to the valley of Hinnom, and *break the bottle* in the sight of those men, while he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. 'So will the Lord break

* Bishop Lowth, with great probability supposes, that *days* has been lost from verse 2d, and that the term was *thres days*, to denote three years,—the interval between the defeat of the Egyptians, and the sacking of the town.

this people and this city, as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot be made whole again.' He was also ordered to make bonds and yokes, and put them on his own neck; and to send them to all the neighboring kings by their own messengers, whom they had sent to Jerusalem, to persuade Zedekiah to join their confederacy: and by this symbolic action, the Prophet was to show them that this confederacy would be captivity to them all. Hananiah took the yoke off Jeremiah, and having broken it, said, 'Thus saith the Lord, Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, from the neck of all nations, within the space of two full years.' Jeremiah xxvii. 2.

Serajah was ordered, when he came to Babylon with Zedekiah, to read the prophecy of Jeremiah against Babylon—then to bind a stone to it, and to cast into the midst of the Euphrates, and to say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her.'

In the same style, Ezekiel was ordered to delineate Jerusalem upon a tile, and to besiege it for four hundred and thirty days; his bread was to be prepared with dung, (i. e. upon a fire made of dry ordure, it was to be baked,) to prefigure the greivous famine during the siege. He was also ordered to shave his head and beard, and by a balance to divide the hairs into three parcels, &c.; all of which is explained, Ezekiel v. This symbol is found in Isaiah vii. 20. 'In the same day the Lord will shave with a razor, that is hired, (by the king of Assyria,) the head and the hair of the feet, and it shall also consume the beard.'

Bishop Lowth says, "In eastern symbols, the hairs of the head, represent the highest order in the state; those of the feet, the common people. This, therefore, denotes a general destruction."

To conclude these examples, already numerous enough, —to illustrate what is intended by mystical actions,—we shall only add,—that, when God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac—although he does not state the purpose —yet from Pauls' denominating the revocation of the order, a 'receiving of Isaac from the dead *for a parable,*' Heb. xi. 19, we learn, that by the command to sacrifice Isaac, and by the suspension of it, the death and resurrection of God's only son, were prefigured. Perhaps, also, our Lord alludes to this transaction, when he says, 'Abraham saw my day and was glad.'

"One thing is certain,—that in the appointment of the

passover, there is no hint of any allusion to the sacrifice of Christ; yet the legs of Jesus were not broken, in allusion to the paschal lamb: and the law of the passover is quoted and applied in this case, as symbolic of the fact, that not a bone of him was to be broken.”*

CHAPTER XXVII.

TYPE.

Type is well defined by Paul, without intending it, in his comment on the Jewish institution. ‘The law,’ says he, ‘contained only a *shadow* of good things to come, and *not the exact image* of those things.’ A *type* originally denoted a rude draft—an outline, or general figure of some object. When I turn my eyes to the rising sun, and a person happens to approach me, his shadow first reaches my eye. It gives me a general idea, but not an exact image of his person. As the sun ascends and he approaches, the shadow becomes more and more descriptive; but at best, it never gives an exact resemblance. Jesus came from the east—from the gates of the morning: his shadow reached us four thousand years before we saw his person. Thus, all the figures or types of him, were distant, shadowy representations of his person, offices, character, and wondrous works.

A *type* is frequently called a symbol; and it may be considered as a symbol of a specific character. It differs from a symbol, only in its comprehension. It merely comprehends a figure prospective and adumbrative of some future person or thing; whereas, a symbol comprehends all figurative representations of persons or things, whether past, present, or future. Whatever is prefigured by a type, is called the *antitype*.

A *type* differs from a simile in this respect,—that it was designed by God to represent its antitype: for many things are, or may be compared to others, which were not made to resemble, for the purpose of representing them. When

* Macknight.

man is compared to grass, a resemblance is discovered: but no person imagines that grass was designed to be a type of man. But when Melchizedek and Christ are compared, a resemblance appears, not from accident, but because the former was prepared by God to represent the latter. This is essential to all Scripture types:—therefore, imagination must be bounded in seeking for types, by the clear and unequivocal intimations of the record itself.

Such rites and observances among the Jews, as were commendatory of virtues to be practised by themselves, are properly symbols; and such as were of a mixed nature, if such there were, ought to be regarded both as types and symbols: for types are confined to those things which were wholly future.

We are authorized, by Paul especially, in his letter to the Hebrews, as well as some other of his epistles, to regard the whole legal institution as typical of the Messiah, his kingdom, and gospel blessings. From their bondage in Egypt, to their settlement in Canaan, their travel's history appears to have been typical, as well as the whole Levitical institution. We are, indeed, taught that the things that happened to the people themselves, happened to them for types,—and are full of instruction to us. But this is not the place to insist on this matter.

There are typical persons, typical places, typical times, typical actions, and typical things, in rich abundance, in the law and in the prophets of the Jewish institution.

The following rules for the right application and interpretation of types, have received the approbation of the most learned expositors of Scripture:—

First. The chief position on the subject of types to prevent mistake, is,—*that there must be something more than mere resemblance. The type must be preordained, to resemble its antitype, and preparatory to its exhibition.* When there is not *previous design* and *preordained connexion* manifest, there is no authority for regarding any thing as a type. Bellarmine contended, that the secession of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, was a type of the secession of the Protestant states under Luther; while the Lutherans contended, by way of reprisal, that Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, was a type of the pope. Both parties erred. No such person or thing was intended.

In interpreting types, symbols, parables, and metaphors, the same rules obtain. Every circumstance is not to be

regarded as typical; for often, there is more in the type than in the antitype; and as often, more in the antitype than in the type.

Second. The type must be explained according to its literal sense; if any obscurity, it must be removed.

Third. The analogy between the thing prefiguring and that prefigured, must be clearly and rationally pointed out.

Fourth. When there are many partial types of one and the same thing, we estimate the antitype from all of them combined; and not from one of them alone.

Fifth. One thing is sometimes the type of two different and even contrary things. "Thus," says Horne, "the deluge was to believers, a type of baptism; but to the unbelievers, a type of the general ruin that awaits them."

Sixth. Sometimes the type assumes the name of the antitype, and the antitype the name of the type.* Thus the christian church is called *Mouni Zion*; and Christ is called *David*. Hosea iii. 5. Ezekiel xxxiv. 23.

Of typical actions, or prophetic types, instances have already been given in the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PARABLE.

A *parable* is a similitude, taken from natural things to instruct us in things spiritual. This, at least, is its current acceptation in the New Institution. But in the Jewish writings, it is found to denote a *proverb*, a *dark saying*, an *emblem*, a *grave discourse*. Bishop Lowth defines it to be, "that kind of allegory which consists of a continued narration of a fictitious event, applied by way of simile, to the illustration of some grave and important truth." Similitude, or comparison, is, for the New Testament, as good a definition as any other. It is of great antiquity, and is

* This licence of rhetoricians is called *enallage*; i. e. *change of words*,—and is thus defined:—

Enallage doth alter person, tense,
Mood, gender, number, on the least pretence,

one of the most insinuating, pleasing, and impressive methods of communicating instruction; and for the great mass of society, it greatly excels dry argumentative reasoning, for which few have capacity, and still fewer have taste. Mrs. More, in her "Christian Morals" correctly observes, "Little reaches the understanding of the mass, but through the medium of their senses. The faculty by which a right conclusion is drawn, is, in them, the most defective: they rather *feel* strongly, than *judge* accurately; and their feelings are awakened by the impression made on their senses." Hence, the Great Teacher abounds in this method of teaching, in his popular addresses.

He seems to have regarded the parable, as not only best adapted to the capacity of the common people, but also, as a veil to hide from his proud and contemptuous opponents, the views and prospects which he opened to his disciples, and the more docile part of his hearers. He explained his parables to all, who from proper motives, desired to understand them: but when he saw in the hearts of his audience, a determination to resist and entammel him, he reserved his interpretation to a private interview with his friends.

From his own explanations, as well as from the established usage of all antiquity, the following rules for the interpretation of parables, are to be strictly regarded by those who would not misunderstand and misapply them:—

First. There is one great object or design in every parable, which may be learned from the context, or from some circumstance connected with it; and to this object, the interpreter must have supreme regard.

Second. Some of the ancients taught that there were *three* things in the construction of a parable, necessary to its perfection:—these are the *root*, or design; the *sap* or *fruit*, or the meaning contained in the figures employed; and the *bark*, or literal import of the imagery under which the hidden or mystical meaning is concealed. Hence, they said, "the literal sense must be first explained, in order that the correspondence between it and the mystical sense may be the more readily perceived." But in close connexion with this, a most important rule is deduced, viz:

Third. In the interpretation of a parable, it is not necessary that we should insist upon every word or incident in it, as containing some mystical meaning; for many cir-

cumstances are introduced for ornament, to make the similitude more pleasing and interesting.

Fourth. No one part of an allegory or parable is to be interpreted literally, and another part figuratively: the whole parable must be first understood literally, and then its mystical meaning must be uniform in all its parts.

Fifth. It may be observed, that it is not necessary that all the actions of men introduced into a parable, should be just or morally correct: it is only necessary that they should serve to illustrate the object of the teacher. Therefore the end or object of the parable, as it justifies the imagery introduced, must be regarded with reference to the *moral* which it communicates:—of such, the parable of the *unjust steward* is a good example.

The application of these rules to the interpretation of a single parable, must for the present suffice for an example. We select the parable of the *unjust steward*.

‘He said likewise to his disciples, A certain rich man had a steward, who was accused to him of wasting his estate. Having, therefore, called him, he said, What is this that I hear of you? Render an account of your management, for you shall be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do? My master takes from me the stewardship; I cannot dig, and am ashamed to beg. I am resolved what to do, that when I am discarded, there may be some who will receive me into their houses. Having, therefore, sent severally for all his master’s debtors, he asked one, How much do you owe my master? He answered, A hundred baths of oil. Take back your bill, said the steward, sit down directly, and write one for fifty. Then he asked another, How much do you owe? He answered, A hundred homers of wheat. Take back your bill, said he, and write one for eighty. The master commended the prudence of the unjust steward; for the children of this world are more prudent in conducting their affairs, than the children of light.’ Luke xvi. 1—8.

First. The object of this parable is learned from the application of it by its author, in verses 9—12. It teaches, that as all men are stewards of God’s blessings, they ought to manage the whole estate entrusted them, with a special reference to the will of the proprietor—with a provident regard to their own future interests. The wisdom of consideration and forecast, and preparation for a time of necessity, is the point inculcated in the parable. The master

commended not the *injustice*, but the *wisdom* of the unjust steward.

Second. The unjust steward is represented as a real character, and all the circumstances of his administration, are related with all the appearance of true history. This is its literal meaning. But under this imagery, a comparison is drawn between a *wise* steward and a *wise* disciple, which places in an impressive light the folly of those, who profess to expect a day of reckoning, but make no preparation for it; nay, indeed, are wasting and consuming the bounties of heaven upon their lusts.

Third. He would proceed most irrationally with respect to the *design* of this parable, who would seek for a hidden meaning in the steward's saying, 'To dig I cannot, and am ashamed to beg;' in 'the two debtors,' who are introduced to set off his policy; or in 'the hundred measures of wheat,' and 'hundred baths of oil' These are the mere dress of the parable.

Fourth. The whole parable must be so interpreted, as to coincide with the point—'the master commended the unjust steward,' *because he acted wisely*, not because he acted *unjustly*.

But the application of the parable has, from inattention to the Saviour's manner, and to the proper import of figurative expressions, been more perplexing to some minds, than the parable itself. The metaphors—'mammon of *unrighteousness*,' 'friends,' 'when you *fail*,' 'that *they may receive* you,' 'into everlasting *habitations*,'—are all in congruity with the imagery in the parable. 'Mammon of *unrighteousness*,' is a bold metaphor; and is well interpreted *deceitful* riches. *Deceitful* is, however, itself a metaphor, though less bold, when applied to riches. Riches *promise* happiness, and because they break that promise, they are *deceitful* and *unrighteous*. It is not ill-gotten gain by which men are to make friends for themselves, to which the Saviour calls the attention of his hearers. It is riches lawfully obtained—it is the property which God has committed to the stewardship of men: for as Moses long ago taught, 'It is the Lord your God, that giveth you power to get wealth.' This wealth, however, will *deceive* those who expect happiness from it, in any other way than as they manage it according to the Master's will. The *true* riches, is also metaphorical. True riches, or the *true mammon*, is that which breaks no promises, nor unrighteously violates a

pledge. 'Make to yourselves friends,' is a phrase in conformity to the parable; and the whole stripped of the metaphor, means—"Be provident and forecasting in the use of all the means of doing good which God has bestowed upon you, and so appropriate all God's bounties, that after death you may be joyfully received into the mansions of bliss; for if you are not faithful in the management of the present portion assigned you, you need not expect the blessings of immortality: and if you are unfaithful as *stewards*, you need not expect to have any thing vested in you, as a possession of your own." Paul gives a similar admonition, without a parable, 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PROVERB.

A *proverb* is a concise, sententious, common saying, founded on a close observance of men and things. The method of teaching by proverbs, is of great antiquity; and at one time, generally prevailed over the east. A proverb professes not to dispute, but to command; not to persuade, but to compel. In order to give charms and interest to this method of instruction, the ancients decorated proverbs with metaphors, comparisons, allusions, and sometimes with the graces of harmony, and all the embellishments of style.

Solomon, so renowned for his proverbs, gives us in a proverb, one of the best definitions of the principal excellency of this method of instruction.

'Apples of gold in a net-work of silver,
Is a word seasonably spoken.' Prov. xxv. 1.

Beauty and *elegance* are the essential attributes of acceptable proverbs. The most forcible and elegant proverbs are expressed in ten or twelve words; that is, the discriminating sentiment in a good proverb, rarely excels that number of words. 'Physician, heal thyself,' is a beautiful example of one in three words. 'It is more happy to give than to receive,' is not so concentrated, and therefore does

not strike the mind with such force, though it is equally beautiful.

'The words of the wise are like goads,
And like nails that are firmly fixed.' Eccle. xii. 10.

The more concentrated, the stronger the impulse to the mind, and the deeper the impression made upon it.

But we have proverbial sentences and phrases, which are sometimes called proverbs, because they have passed into current use. Many of these are found in the Old and New Testaments: such as, '*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,*'—'*The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the washed hog to its wallowing in the mire.*' Many sayings like these, which have acquired the form and use of proverbs, are not, however, correctly called proverbs. A proverb should always force itself upon the mind by a single effort, and not by a tedious process.

A proverb in one period tries to teach,
A short, instructing, and a nervous speech.

Proverbs occurring in the New Testament, are to be explained partly by the aid of similar passages from the Old Testament, and from the context and scope of the passages in which they are found.

CHAPTER XXX.

EMPHASIS.

Emphasis comes from *Emphanein*, which signifies to show, or make conspicuous. "It is," says Stuart, "to language, what a nod or a sign is to looks; i. e. it makes more significancy. When the Jews spoke of Moses as *the prophet*; or the Greeks say *the orator, the philosopher, the poet*, meaning Demosthenes, Plato, and Homer, their respective appellations are *emphatic*." Emphasis, then, may be defined—"An accession to the ordinary signification of a word, either as to the extent or force of its meaning." Therefore, no word is of itself emphatic: every word has

its own native force, and designates a certain idea of a thing, whether great or small, in which there can be no emphasis. Emphasis of words is, therefore, *occasional*.

Emphasis in the Greek language, is generally expressed by the definite article. Thus, when the Saviour gave the cup to his disciples, he uses the article three times, as if he had said—For this is *that* blood of mine—*that* blood of the New Institution—*the* blood ready to be poured out for the multitudes (Jews and Gentiles,) for the remission of sins. Again, in Peter's confession, it is not "Thou art Christ, Son of God;" but, 'Thou art *the* Christ, *the* Son of God.' With the Greeks, the article was both definite and emphatic; and not only gave a definite, but an emphatic meaning to words.

The knowledge of emphasis is more necessary to a translator, than to a practical reader of the sacred writings. But still it is of use to every student of the Book, to know that words are sometimes used emphatically, with an accession of significance beyond their proper meaning; and this generally occurs, when the affections or feelings of the writer are more than ordinarily excited, or when there is any debate upon any subject: in such cases, the writer gives a sort of *intensity* to words and sentences, which carries them beyond their ordinary import, and which ought to be regarded by the reader; and may always be ascertained by the context, or by *observing the peculiar feelings or excitement of the writer upon any subject*.

An instance of false emphasis will better explain the necessity of a proper regard to the true emphasis, than a number of examples of the true. 'As you have therefore, received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in him.' Some emphasise on *as* and *so* thus—"As you received Jesus Christ in the spirit of faith and of humility,—so in the spirit of faith and humility, walk in him." However true this may be, it is a perversion of the word, for there is no *so* in the Greek Testament; and as Dr. Macknight renders it very correctly, it suggests another idea:—"Since you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk in him." So common are errors of this sort, that Horne and others lay it down as a rule, that *emphases* are not to be sought in *versions*.

I once heard a preacher make the best part of his sermon upon a false emphasis. His text was, 'I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.' He

emphasised upon *all*; and being a Calvinist of the high school, he thought it would have been presumptuous for Paul to have said, that he had declared *all* the counsel of God—for he could not himself know it *all*. “But,” said he, “apply the word *all* to the congregation, and then it is both true and edifying: for Paul taught *all* the brethren without partiality, the counsel of God.” Unfortunately, however, for the preacher, the word *all* in the original must be applied to *counsel*, and not to the members of the congregation or its elders, by a law, which, in the Greek language, is of infallible certainty.

In any version of the Scriptures, if the reader will attend to the above rule, of *observing the context, the topic of debate, or the peculiar feelings or excitement of the writer, upon every occasion*,—he will be able, satisfactorily to ascertain the emphatic words, and to escape the errors committed in false emphasis.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CHAPTERS, VERSES, PUNCTUATION.

The various divisions and subdivisions of the sacred Scriptures, into chapters, verses, and members of sentences, are of human authority, and to be regarded as such. Anciently, all the books of the sacred Scriptures were written in one continuous manner,—without a break, a chapter, or a verse. The division into chapters that now universally obtains in Europe, derived its origin from Cardinal Cairo, who lived in the twelfth century. The subdivision into verses, is of no older date than the middle of the sixteenth century, and was the invention of Robert Stevens. Whatever advantages these divisions may have been in the way of facilitating references, they have so dislocated and broken to pieces the connexion, as not only to have given to the Scriptures the appearance of a book of proverbs, but have thrown great difficulties in the way of an easy intelligence of them. The punctuation, too, being necessarily dependent on these divisions, is far from accurate; and taken altogether, it affords a demonstration, that there

is no more divinity in the chapters, verses, commas, semicolons, colons, and periods of the inspired writings, than there is in the paper on which they are inscribed, or in the ink by which they are depicted to our view.

From all of which facts, the following rule is of essential importance:—*In reading the historical and epistolary parts of the sacred writings, begin at the beginning and follow the writer in the train of his own thoughts and reasonings, to the end of the subject on which he writes—irrespective of chapters and verses.* This rule must be observed in all cases, when we read for the sake of understanding any of the sacred books or letters.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THREE DISPENSATIONS.

It must always be remembered by him who would be a scribe, well instructed in the kingdom of Heaven, that the whole Bible comprehends *three* distinct dispensations of religion; or three different administrations of mercy to the human race. These are the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian ages of the world.

There are three high priesthoods, viz: that of Melchizedek, that of Aaron, and that of Jesus the Messiah; and under each of these, there will be found a different economy of things. A knowledge of the leading peculiarities of each, is essential to an accurate knowledge of any one of them, and the right interpretation of the Bible.

It is a standing maxim in religion, that the priesthood being changed, *there is of necessity* a change of the law, pertaining to *acceptable* worship.

After the close of one dispensation and the commencement of a new one, no man could be accepted in his approaches to God by the precedent economy. Moses, nor Aaron, nor the people of the Jews, after they departed from Sinai, dare approach God by sacrifice,—as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were wont to do.

The sovereignty and wisdom of God is most conspicuous in these arrangements. But it is our present duty only to

say, that before we can feel any confidence in our interpretations of any law, commandment, or institution of religion, a previous question must always be decided, viz: *To what dispensation did it belong?*

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RULES OF INTERPRETATION.

In the preceding chapters of this work, which are designed rather to develop the *principles*, than to state and illustrate the *rules* of interpretation, we have borrowed much from the most popular and approved writers on the science of biblical interpretation. And although we have not always quoted directly, we have quoted enough to satisfy the reader that these are not *private* rules, introduced for any private purpose, but that they are *the by law established* (that is, the law of the republic of letters) *principles*, universally acknowledged in all the schools of the nineteenth century.

We have preferred to select and borrow from the works of others, rather than to appear in the character of an original writer upon the subject. We have chosen, for reasons which will be obvious to the intelligent reader, to express our own views, gathered from observation and reflection, in the words of standard authors, even when in our judgment, they did not express themselves in the most felicitous manner.

It was with emotions of no ordinary pleasure, that some two years ago, we saw it asserted from the first theological seminary in America, and from the pen of one of the most erudite biblical critics of this century, either in Europe or America,* that the time was at hand, or was now arrived, (for I quote from memory,) when it will be acknowledged by all men of sense, that *true theology is the true meaning of the words and sentences of the Bible*; and that the best standard of orthodoxy, is *the application of the principles and rules of interpretation to the Bible, which are applied*

* Professor Stuart, of Andover.

to all other writings of the age in which they appeared. Having worked by this rule for many years, to see it promulgated from so respectable a source, and acquiesced in by all the literati of the age, induced me to do as it is said of Paul, on a certain occasion, 'He thanked God, and took courage.'

In January, 1832, an article of unusual merit appeared in the *Biblical Repository*, from the pen of the Andover Professor, on the question—"Are the same principles of interpretation to be applied to the Scriptures, as to other books?" This article was immediately copied into the *Millennial Harbinger*, for February and March of the same year. A short time before, we had just commenced a series of essays, to prove that "*the doctrine of Christ*, is the meaning of the words and phrases of the Saviour and his Apostles." These essays were entitled, "Laws of Interpretation." A more perfect coincidence of views on any subject could not be easily imagined, than I find to exist between that school and myself, on all questions of this sort.

In re-examining this matter on this occasion, and on extending my researches, I feel myself happy in assuring the reader, that I do not know a single *principle* asserted, that is not already approved by the following: Doctors Campbell, of Aberdeen; Macknight, of Edinburgh; Doddridge, of England; Michaelis, of Gottingen; Horne, of Cambridge; Stuart of Andover; Ernesti, Lowth, Calmet, Glasius, Harwood, and many others of equal celebrity. There are some things on the interpretation of prophecy, and on the double sense of prophecy, in which there might, perhaps, be some little differences between us and some of the above: but on that subject we have not touched on the present occasion, as it is not immediately connected with our design.

We shall now conclude this summary view of the Principles of Interpretation, by stating in order, seven general rules of interpretation of primary importance, deduced from the preceding chapters.

Rule 1. On opening any book in the sacred Scriptures, consider first the historical circumstances of the book. These are the order, the title, the author, the date, the place, and the occasion of it.

The order in historical compositions, is of much importance; as, for instance,—whether the first, second, or third,

of the five books of Moses, or any other series of narrative, or even epistolary communication.

The *title* is also of importance, as it sometimes expresses the *design* of the book. As *Exodus*—the departure of Israel from Egypt; *Acts of Apostles*, &c.

The peculiarities of the *author*—the age in which he lived—his style—mode of expression,—illustrate his writings. The date, place, and occasion of it, are obviously necessary to a right application of any thing in the book.

Rule 2. In examining the contents of any book, as respects precepts, promises, exhortations, &c., *observe who it is that speaks, and under what dispensation he officiates.* Is he a Patriarch, a Jew, or a Christian? *Consider also the persons addressed: their prejudices, characters, and religious relations.* Are they Jews or Christians—believers or unbelievers—approved or disapproved? This rule is essential to the proper application of every command, promise, threatening, admonition or exhortation, in Old Testament or New.

Rule 3. To understand the meaning of what is commanded, promised, taught, &c., *the same philological principles, deduced from the nature of language; or the same laws of interpretation which are applied to the language of other books, are to be applied to the language of the Bible.*

Rule 4. *Common usage, which can only be ascertained by testimony, must always decide the meaning of any word which has but one signification;—but when words have according to testimony (i. e. the dictionary,) more meanings than one, whether literal or figurative, the scope, the context, or parallel passages, must decide the meaning: for if common usage, the design of the writer, the context, and parallel passages fail, there can be no certainty in the interpretation of language.*

Rule 5. *In all tropical language, ascertain the point of resemblance, and judge of the nature of the trope, and its kind, from the point of resemblance.*

Rule 6. In the interpretation of symbols, types, allegories, and parables, this rule is supreme: *ascertain the point to be illustrated; for comparison is never to be extended beyond that point—to all the attributes, qualities, or circumstances of the symbol, type, allegory, or parable.*

Rule 7. For the salutary and sanctifying intelligence of the Oracles of God, the following rule is indispensable
We must come within the understanding distance.

There is a distance which is properly called *the speaking distance*, or the *hearing distance*; beyond which the voice reaches not, and the ear hears not. To hear another, we must come within that circle which the voice audibly fills,

Now we may with propriety say, that as it respects God, there is an understanding distance. All beyond that distance, cannot understand God; all within it, can easily understand him in all matters of piety and morality. God, himself, is the centre of that circle, and humility is its circumference.

The wisdom of God is as evident in adapting the light of the Sun of Righteousness to our spiritual or moral vision, as in adjusting the light of day to our eyes. The light reaches us without an effort of our own; but we must open our eyes, and if our eyes be sound, we enjoy the natural light of heaven. There is a sound eye in reference to spiritual light, as well as in reference to material light. Now, while the philological principles and rules of interpretation, enable many men to be skilful in biblical criticism, and in the interpretation of words and sentences,—who neither perceive nor admire the *things* represented by those words: the sound eye contemplates the things themselves, and is ravished with the moral scenes which the Bible unfolds.

The moral *soundness* of vision consists in having the eyes of the understanding fixed solely on God himself, his approbation, and complacent affection for us. It is sometimes called a *single eye*, because it looks for one thing supremely. Every one, then, who opens the Book of God with *one aim*, with one ardent desire,—intent only to know the will of God; to such a person, the knowledge of God is easy: for the Bible is framed to illuminate such, and only such, with the salutary knowledge of things celestial and divine.

Humility of mind, or what is in effect the same, contempt for all earth-born pre-eminence, prepares the mind for the reception of this light, or what is virtually the same, opens the ears to hear the voice of God. Amidst the din of all the arguments from the flesh, the world, and Satan; a person is so deaf, that he cannot hear the still small voice of God's philanthropy. But receding from pride, covetousness, and false ambition; from the love of the world; and in coming within that circle, the circumference of which is unfeigned humility, and the centre of which is God him-

self,—the voice of God is distinctly heard and clearly understood. All within this circle are taught by God; all without it are under the influence of the wicked one. 'God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble.'

He, then, that would interpret the Oracles of God to the salvation of his soul, must approach this volume with the humility and docility of a child, and meditate upon it day and night. Like Mary, he must sit at the Master's feet, and listen to the words which fall from his lips. To such a one, there is an assurance of understanding, a certainty of knowledge, to which the man of letters alone never attained, and which the mere critic never felt.

O that I could forever sit
With Mary at the Master's feet;
Be this my happy choice:
My only care, delight, and bliss,
My joy, my heav'n on earth be this,
To hear the Bridegroom's voice!