

MANUAL
OF
SACRED INTERPRETATION:
FOR THE
SPECIAL BENEFIT
OF
JUNIOR THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS:

**BUT INTENDED ALSO FOR PRIVATE CHRISTIANS IN
GENERAL.**

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P R E F A C E .

THE following little work was drawn up with exclusive reference to the wants of the Junior Class in the Theological Seminary with which the author is connected, and was intended as a general introduction to the subject of which it treats. His design in publishing it, is to spare the young gentlemen some weary hours in writing imperfect and erroneous transcripts, while he thinks that it may be useful to others in their situation.

He has attempted to give a faithful statement of the general laws and principles of sacred interpretation, in a form so popular and devoid of technicality, that the student fresh from a literary institution can comprehend the whole at two or three sittings, and make an immediate use of them in reading the Scriptures. It will be seen at once, that the treatise, both in its plan and the details of its execution, differs entirely from Professor Stuart's Translation of Ernesti. That, is certainly an excellent work, but I think that it is wanting in simplicity, "lucidus ordo," and appropriate illustrations. Young minds are not successfully addressed by dry apothegms and abstractions. *Cases*

must be adduced, which will give them hue and colouring, and the form of composition should be that of continued argument, both to satisfy the understanding and impress the memory. Whether I have made a happy selection of examples, the reader may judge. They are for the most part such as occurred to me at the time of writing. I have only to add that there are scarcely three pages in the whole volume, so exclusively addressed to theological students, that the unlearned reader can derive no advantage from them. It is hoped therefore, that private Christians will not find their money thrown away in purchasing it. To them as well as to the ministry, our blessed Lord addresses the command, "Search the Scriptures;" and the manner of their performing the duty, will be a solemn item in the account which they must render.

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MANUAL &c.

HERMENEUTICS is the Science of Interpretation. Sacred hermeneutics, has for its object, the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Exegesis is the practical application of the Science. This, gives us the laws—the former, executes them. Thus, we speak of the *Exegesis* of a passage, according to *Hermeneutical principles*.

All that we purpose to say on the subject in this brief treatise, shall be arranged under two Heads :

I. We shall lay down some general Maxims, useful to be fixed in the mind as a preparation for the study ;

II. Give the rules in detail by which we should be guided.

MAXIM I.

The object of Interpretation, is to give the precise thoughts which the sacred writer intended to express. No other meaning is to be sought, but that which lies in the words themselves, as he employed them. In all cases, we should take a sense *from* Scripture rather than bring one *to* it. This rule is fundamental : and yet how often is it violated ! Some, will allow no other sense but what has been baptized in their philosophy, or abstract notions of moral fitness. These, in reading the Bible, *make one* as they go. Thus, they nowhere find the doctrines of the Trinity, or Original Sin, of Atonement, Justification by Faith, or Divine Influence : some even, are unable to discover Miracles. Hence the bloody violence which they practice on every thing that comes in their way. A Socinian can read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, without perceiving any trace of Vicarious Suffering ; can turn the *ἡ ἀρχὴ* in the beginning of John, into the “commencement of the Christian dispensation ;” and refuses to the

Only Begotten of the Father, any higher diploma than that of an accomplished teacher of morals. Nothing is too absurd or arbitrary, for one who brings the word of God to the touchstone of his own speculative opinions. To him it is no revelation at all ; for it teaches only what he knows already.

Others, make it speak invariably according to their theological systems. When they sit down to interpret, they think of nothing but what they call the "Analogy of Faith." Provided they explain the passage consistently with it, all is well. The Analogy of Faith is, within certain limits, exceedingly useful.— But it has been carried too far ; and made to include all that a man thinks or guesses at on the subject of religion. Undoubtedly there are certain truths in the Bible, which we are at liberty to assume, and by which we may reason analogically concerning the meaning of dubious passages. Such are the doctrines of the Unity and Perfections of God, Man's Moral Accountability, the Fall, Redemption by Grace, and Divine Influence. Any exposition of a text contradicting these, we may

put down at once as disagreeing with the Analogy of Faith. This rule is a good one, and applied in the interpretation of all writers. But surely we have no right to set up our whole system of religious belief, including the minutest of our sectarian peculiarities, as a criterion of truth ! This, is to make our creed expound the word of God, instead of letting the word of God frame our creed, and establishes a principle as arbitrary and odious as that of the Socinian. Our ordinary Commentaries are greatly disfigured with the fault just mentioned—being rather dogmatical paraphrases, than expositions of Scripture itself. In few do we discover an unfettered and liberal spirit. The Romanist, Lutheran, and Calvinist, peep out at the end of every line.

MAXIM II.

Scripture is to be interpreted in the same method which we employ, in discovering the meaning of any other book. It was indited

to men ; it speaks to men, in the language of men ; and was understood by those to whom in ancient times it was addressed, as they understood any other communication. The design of God in giving it, was to communicate certain ideas—in order to which, he must speak to us, *just as do others*. Words call up ideas, not by any native significance, but by compact, and every one in speaking is supposed to conform to the bargain. If he does not, but employs language in a sense different from that established by common use, he is, to all intents and purposes, a Covenant Breaker. In reading Scripture, therefore, we are to use the same appliances and aids employed in other cases. Inspiration gives it no special privileges. Rather may we suppose, that a revelation of God's will to the great world of mankind, must be peculiarly susceptible of popular interpretation, and positively require it. This rule sweeps away at once a host of errors : We shall specify two.

1st. That of the Papists, who contend that the Exposition of Scripture is entirely *sui*

generis, and supernatural—being committed to Holy Mother Church, consisting of the Pope, Decrees of Councils, and the ancient Fathers. The pretension is rejected by all sound Protestants with disgust. While we say that the Bible is the book of God, we affirm with equal emphasis, that it is the *Book of Man*, and can be understood by man in the use of the ordinary means. We also affirm that Holy Mother, with her Councils and Fathers, has given too many proofs of something worse than mere fallibility, to be entrusted with the authoritative exposition of it. The Patristic interpretations of Scripture are, with a few exceptions, contemptible. Jerome, Theodoret, and Chrysostom, are all that a modern can quote, and absurdities of every kind are found even in them. They were all ignorant of Hebrew, except Jerome : The later Fathers knew little of Greek. When they used citations in controversy, they took any thing (as Jerome himself acknowledges) which seemed likely to confound their opponents ; and there was scarcely one, who did not prefer an allegorical explanation, or some

frigid and far-fetched conceit, to the plain sense of a passage.

2dly. The errors of Fanatics and Enthusiasts; such as Quakers and Swedenborgians, who boast of certain immediate revelations, which they call the "*Word of God within.*" This interior light is the supreme rule, which entirely dispenses with every thing else—with the knowledge of languages, philosophy, logic, and common sense. With it, every shoe-black is abundantly qualified to expound all mysteries. Without it, "all the learning in the world," says the famous Barclay, "will only make light darkness, and turn the truth into a lie." How the Bible fares in such hands, their writings show.—Yet it would be folly to reason with such people. They are above reason: theirs is the little Goshen where all true light is found: darkness blacker than that of Egypt covers the whole world without.

MAXIM III.

The sense of Scripture is (in general) ONE : in other words, we are not to assign many meanings to a passage. Words indeed have a variety of significations ; but they cannot have this variety at the same time. A single sense must be chosen, in doing which, one expositor may differ from another, and it may be dubious which is right. They cannot, however, be *both right*. If we approve the one, we must, if they really differ, disapprove the other.

The transgressors of this rule, are the Mystics and Allegorists. Their fundamental maxim is not unlike that of the Papists ; for they consider the Bible to be a book so different from others, that its depth of meaning can never be reached by the ordinary laws of interpretation. Being from God, they insist that it must in all respects be worthy of him, and contain a richness of thought suited to his infinite understanding. Hence their favourite maxim ; *Verba Scripturæ tantum ubique significare, quantum significare possunt :*

i. e. whatever a word *may* mean, it *does* mean. A single noun could thus have twenty different senses in the same place, and refer to twenty different things. This odd theory was a great favourite with the Jews in the time of our Lord and his apostles, who occasionally allegorized to please them, though by no means frequently. See an instance in Gal. iv. 22 ; where the Apostle makes Sarah and Hagar types of the two covenants. So far did the Jews carry their love of it, that their rabbies all maintained—"There is not a letter in Scripture, or apex of a letter, which does not contain whole mountains of meaning." They even had a science or art called the Caballa, which by changing, disjoining, or transposing letters, or by calculating their value as arithmetical signs, elicited worlds of profound mystery !

The Jews communicated their mania to the old Christian Fathers, whose writings abound in mystical expositions of all kinds. Every thing in sacred history, was metamorphosed into type and symbol. Origen denied even the literal truth of history, contending that

its whole and only meaning was allegorical. Thus he pronounced it absolutely absurd to suppose, that the world was created in six days. The creation signified the renovation of the soul by the gospel, and the six days, intimate that it is carried on by degrees. Israel in Egypt, he makes to be the soul living in error; and the seven plagues are its purgations from various evil habits—the frogs denoting loquacity, the flies carnal appetites, the boils pride and arrogance, &c. This mode of expounding continued through the different ages of the church, and has been formally adopted by the Papists, who recognize three different senses besides the literal, viz. the allegorical, tropological, and anagogical. Nor was it put down by the reformation. Cocceius, a celebrated Dutch divine, carried it almost as far as Origen did. He held that the whole of the Old Testament was an anticipative history of the Christian church, containing a full recital of every thing which should happen to the end of time.—Even the Lord's Prayer was a prophesy, and its six parts denoted six great epochs in his-

tory. Every good man in the Old Testament, was a type of Christ, or his apostles : Every bad man, of the devil, or the unbelieving Jews.

Such schemes are to be utterly rejected. They destroy all certainty of interpretation. They take the ground from beneath our feet ; and make scripture a nose of wax which every one may twist into the shape that pleases him best. Thomas Woolston, a celebrated English infidel, attacked Christianity itself with these arms, insisting that the narratives of Christ's miracles were not designed to be histories, but are pure allegories. Volney, a French writer, has turned the evangelic history into a system of astronomy—Christ being the sun and moon, and the twelve apostles the twelve signs of the zodiac. Without affirming that there are no secondary senses in scripture, we believe that (the phrase being properly understood) there are very few.—Generally, the meaning is, as in other books, *one* ; and that, lies near the surface. Who ever heard of a man in common conversation, attaching different significations to the words

he used—unless indeed he was playing a game at riddles, or *double entendres*?

MAXIM IV.

The interpretation of Scripture requires suitable preparation. The languages in which it is written, are strange—difficult; and both are dead. In every page, there are references to times, places, transactions, with which we must be well acquainted. The history of the world is given, with a few breaks and interruptions, from the beginning to the four thousandth year. Not only are there accounts of the Hebrew nation, but of many others with whom war or peaceful intercourse brought them in connection; Syrians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans: cities, lakes, rivers, hills, valleys, are continually mentioned. So are natural productions—as plants, trees, precious stones, animals. Hence arises the necessity of being well acquainted with—

1st. Hebrew and Greek: and also the cognate languages, Chaldee and Latin.

2d. History, civil and political ; especially of the Israelites, Egyptians, Phœnicians, Assyrians, and Greeks. If the student has no time for extensive investigation, he should at least make himself master of Josephus and Prideaux, who are accessible to all, and full of entertainment as well as instruction.

3d. Chronology ; which ascertains the dates and order of events. There is great uncertainty and difficulty in this science, but it must not be neglected. A general knowledge of its principles, and a clear view of the great epochs into which sacred and profane history is divided, with an ability to refer every important transaction to its proper time, is indispensable. Chronology is one of the eyes of history. The other is—

4th. Geography. That of Palestine is of special moment, for obvious reasons. But that of Egypt, Idumea, Arabia, and Mesopotamia, must not be passed by.

5th. Customs and manners, or archæology. These exercise a mighty influence on the ideas of a people, and their mode of expressing them. There is in scripture, a

constant allusion to Hebrew usages, and nearly all its tropes are borrowed from them, in connection with the natural features of the country.

6th. Logic and general literature ; which invigorate the mind, and inure to habits of accurate discrimination. Every study that improves the thinking faculties—especially the judgment, and enlarges our mental horizon, will make its value felt in explaining the word of God. What blunders have been committed by commentators, simply because they did not know that they were reading poetry ; and who would not have been benefited by the discovery, as they knew nothing of the laws of that kind of composition—their whole reading having been confined to the mellifluous jingle of Dr. Watts ! The remark of Cicero concerning the orator, is quite as true of the sacred interpreter :—“ *Quod debet omnibus disciplinis instructus esse.*” Let no student of theology allow himself to think, that when he occasionally, or even frequently, opens the page of a Mil-

ton or a Locke, he is wasting time, or stealing it away from his proper work.

We proceed to the Special Rules which should guide us in the interpretation of Scripture.

RULE I.

Carefully investigate the Usus loquendi. By this is meant what the words literally express, the *custom of speech*. The meaning of words is for the most part perfectly arbitrary. They call up certain ideas, because men have agreed that they shall do so, and for no other reason. General usage, therefore, is the great standard, "*quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma dicendi.*" In living languages, we ascertain the usage from conversation and personal intercourse. In those long since dead, as the Hebrew and Greek, we draw on various sources :

1st. Contemporary writers. With respect to the Old Testament, we have none such—all the Hebrew extant being contained in our

volume. In place of them, we have a tolerably clear and ample Jewish tradition. It cannot be doubted, that the rabbies have preserved with good fidelity much of their old national language. As to the New Testament, we have all the Greek writers from Homer to Longinus ; though they must be used with caution, as the New Testament is written in a Hebraistic idiom, and not in the classical language of Demosthenes.

2d. Scholiasts and glossographers. These were men who lived after the death of the writers ; but while the language was still living, and who must have understood the meaning of words better than we. Scholia were short notes inserted in the margin of the work explained, illustrating some phrase or turn of expression. Scholia on the New Testament are very numerous, and some of them have come down from remote antiquity. A noble edition of the New Testament, containing a large collection of them, has been published by Matthai, a distinguished German professor. Glossaries (from *γλωσσα* a form of speech) are dictionaries, containing explan-

ations of certain words arranged in alphabetical order. They differ from common dictionaries, in containing remarks on such words only as are difficult and obscure. The principal works of this kind are those of Hesychius, Suidas, Phavorinus, and Photius.

3d. Ancient translations, made when the languages were still living. Such is the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Bible, made nearly three hundred years before Christ; when the language was well understood, though not spoken with perfect purity. The value of this work to the student of the New Testament, as well as the Old, is incalculable. Without the steady light which is cast by it on the meaning and force of expressions, the interpreter could scarcely advance a step. The Chaldee paraphrase, is another venerable translation of the Old Testament. It presents the views concerning the meaning of that part of scripture, entertained by the learned Jews contemporary with our Lord. It was composed a little before his birth, and in the dialect spoken at that time by the na-

tion. The old Syriac version is also extremely valuable.

4th. Kindred dialects. This source of aid is peculiarly useful with respect to that part of scripture which most needs it—the Old Testament. The Hebrew has three sisters, so like her, that there can be no mistake as to their common parentage. They are the Arabic, Chaldaic or East Aramaean, Syriac or West Aramaean. In two of these—the Syriac and Arabic—there are numerous writings still extant, and the Arabic is a living language. The use of dialects in determining the sense of words, requires skill and judgment; as it by no means follows that the precise signification is the same in both, because they are sisters. Yet its great value as a subsidiary, is generally confessed. Proofs of it you have in every page of Gesenius's dictionary.

5th. Etymology; or the examination of roots. When other expedients fail, we may sometimes derive considerable assistance from tracing an expression to its original element. But after all, etymology is slippery ground.

Words in the process of derivation or composition, often deviate from their original import, so that the child loses nearly all resemblance to its parent. Thus the English word *villain*, in our old writers means a *slave*; *rascal*, in Saxon, a *lean beast*; *hostis*, in Latin, originally signified (according to Cicero) a *stranger*; *pagan*, which with us is equivalent to *heathen*, denoted nothing worse in the language last mentioned from which we obtained it, than a *farmer* or inhabitant of the country. קִדַּשׁ is a Hebrew verb signifying *to be holy*; the noun קִדְּשָׁן , one of its derivatives, is the common term for *prostitute*. Two instances may be given from the New Testament to illustrate the danger of reasoning from etymological significations. The verb προγινωσκω is compounded of the preposition προ , *before*, and γινωσκω , *to know*. It should therefore always denote simple foreknowledge, and many Arminians contend that it does so; yet whoever impartially examines the *usus loquendi* of the New Testament, will see at once, that it is sometimes fully equal in strength of meaning to

our English word *foreordain* : see Rom. ii. 2, Acts ii. 23, 1 Pet. i. 20. The adjective *αιωνιος*, is commonly used by the Greeks for "eternal" or "everlasting," and is the strongest term they can employ. In this sense it is constantly used in the New Testament, with perhaps one or two exceptions. But the Universalist reminds us, that it comes from *αιων* an age, and must therefore be translated "*having age*" or "*enduring for an age.*" So too *αιωνες αιωνων* can mean nothing more than a "number of ages," though in every case, without a solitary exception, it expresses proper eternity.

Nothing can be more unsafe than such modes of procedure. The use of words is continually fluctuating, and we cannot be too careful in guarding against errors from this source. Yet they are common. Whole systems of theology, and even natural science, have been constructed on fanciful etymologies, by men whose imaginations outran their judgment, of which we may cite Parkhurst's Hebrew and Greek lexicons as an example. Great aid, however, may be derived from a

sober and skilful tracing of words back to their source. If it does not always direct to their present meaning, it seldom fails to throw a happy light on the history of language.

These are the principal means of obtaining the "Usus Loquendi." It would be cruel, however, to impose upon all, the task of digging into these deep mines. The labour is in a measure saved by good dictionaries, which, if really good, contain the results of such investigations. Happily we are well supplied with Gesenius in Hebrew, and Wahl and Bretschneider in Greek. Professor Robinson's Lexicon is also excellent.

RULE II.

Examine carefully the parallel passages. By these are meant, texts which relate to the same subject, teach the same doctrine, or relate the same historical fact. They should be accurately collated, that one may supply light to the other, and fill up what is wanting to the perspicuity of the whole. We

perform this operation constantly—in reading the most familiar letter, or the simplest story. Its value in the study and explanation of scripture, can hardly be expressed. It not only enables us to enter into the meaning and force of particular expressions, but places us on a commanding eminence, where we may survey the whole field of divine truth, and admire the harmony of its several parts. All systematic theology should be built on this alone. “I will not scruple to assert,” says the learned Bishop Horsley, “that the most illiterate Christian, if he can but read his English Bible, and will take the pains to read it in this manner, (studying the parallel passages) without any other commentary than what the different parts mutually furnish for each other, will not only attain all that practical knowledge which is necessary to salvation, but will become learned in every thing relating to his religion. He may safely be ignorant of all philosophy, and all history, which he does not find in the sacred books.”

Parallels are of two kinds, *Verbal*, and

Real ; Verbal, are those in which the very same word or phrase is used, though the meaning in one may be much clearer than in the other, and consequently give light to it. Thus in Joel ii. 28, God promises that he “will pour out his Spirit on all flesh.” Doubtful how to understand “flesh” in this passage, I compare it with Gen. vi. 12, which says that “all flesh corrupted their way.” As the whole mass of mankind is here meant, I feel authorised to give the same extent of meaning to the word in Joel. In Matt. i. 20, the angel of the Lord declares that Mary shall “conceive of the Holy Ghost.” Struck with the peculiarity of the expression, I go to the corresponding passage in Luke, and find him using it also, but adding another which is evidently intended to be exegetical, viz. “Power of the Highest,” Luke i. 35, The Holy Ghost therefore is here equivalent to the Divine energy. In 1. Cor. vii. 1, Paul says “It is not good for a man to marry.” A little startled at this squinting of the great apostle towards monkery, I look further down the chapter for an explanation, and

find it in the 26th verse ; “ It is good for the present distress.” Marriage is an excellent thing, but may be very inexpedient in times of severe persecution.

Real parallelism is a correspondence in the thought or subject, although the words are different ; and is still more important than the other. It is two-fold, *historical* and *doctrinal*. *Historical* parallelisms are those which occur in the relation of matters of fact. The four gospels are full of these, and a careful collation of them is of unspeakable use in interpretation. One evangelist fills up the outlines briefly sketched by another, supplying some circumstance of time, place, or occasion, which throw a flood of light on the whole transaction. From a diligent and minute comparison of their accounts, Harmonies are constructed, which deserve to be well studied. There are similar coincidences in the Old Testament, ex.gr. between the books of Chronicles and Kings.

Parallelism of *doctrine* is found, where the same principles are taught in two or more passages. The great business of the

didactic theologian is to investigate this class of correspondencies. All sound knowledge of Christian doctrines, depends on the faithful and judicious comparison of scripture with scripture. Does the student want clear views concerning man's relations to his Creator, original corruption, the person and work of the Redeemer, justification, the connection between it and the renewal of the soul in holiness, the happiness and misery of a future state—his course is plain and easy. He must find the great classical passages on each point, and bring them in juxtaposition : he must compare (asking no other assistance but God's grace and a good dictionary,) Isaiah with Matthew, Paul to the Romans with Paul to the Galatians, and both these with James—the author of the Apocalypse with Daniel and Ezekiel, the Epistle to the Hebrews with Genesis and Leviticus. Let him do this in the fear of the Lord, with a single desire to know the truth ; he will not probably come from his labour a hair splitting metaphysician or cunning rhetorician—but he will prove something more and better,

“a good steward of the manifold grace of God.”

Besides the coincidences above mentioned, there is in scripture what is called the *poetic parallelism*, with which every reader of Hebrew is acquainted. It consists in a mutual correspondence of the two members of a stanza; the one being a sort of echo to the other, as in Isaiah i. 3.

The ox knoweth his owner,
The ass his master's crib,
Israel does not know,
My people do not consider.

Sometimes the answering clause is synonymous with the first, as in the example just cited.

Sometimes antithetical, or opposed to it, as in Prov. xii. 1.

A wise son makes a glad father,
But a foolish son is the grief of his mother.

At others it contains only a farther development of the thought, as in Psal. cxlviii. 7.

Praise the Lord upon the earth,
Ye dragons and all deeps;
Fire and hail : snow and vapour ;

Stormy wind ; fulfilling his will :
Mountains and all hills ;
Fruit trees and all cedars.

These parallelisms are of excellent use to the interpreter. They often enable him to decide important questions concerning the meaning of words and propositions, when deserted by all other hermeneutical aids. Nor is their use confined to the Old Testament. The same rythmical construction everywhere prevails in the New, which in this, as in many other respects, has received a decided tinge from the Hebrew writings. On this whole subject we earnestly recommend to the student, Bishop Lowth's Lectures on Hebrew Poetry, a book almost worthy of its theme.

RULE III.

The consideration of the author's scope or design greatly facilitates interpretation. Every man (not a fool), has some definite purpose in speaking, and it is fairly presum

ed that he will use such terms and arguments as are suited to it. The scope is the soul—the *vis vitæ* of a work, which lives and breathes through the whole, giving order, force and beauty to every part. It may be ascertained in various ways.

1. *By marking the occasion on which the passage or book was written.* Thus the occasion of Paul's epistle to the Galatians, was the dissemination among them of Jewish errors concerning the way of justification. He " marvels that they were so soon removed from him that called them into the grace of the gospel." The epistle to the Romans had a like origin. The inscriptions on many of the Psalms, describing the condition of the poet when they were composed, give them wonderful vivacity and impressiveness : we almost seem to be reading different compositions. Take for example the third Psalm, and in reading it, set before you the pious monarch driven from his throne by the machinations of an unnatural son, and wandering among the hills of Gilead, wanting the very necessities of life, and in constant

danger from enemies who were thirsting for his blood ; yet expressing his perfect confidence that all would be well at last, whatever temporary triumph might be allowed them. How thrilling every expression of his victorious faith in the power and promise of God under such circumstances ! It appears that the serene old man did not lose a night's rest in the darkest period of his trial :

I lay me down and sleep,
I awake for Jehovah sustains me,
I fear not ten thousands of people,
Who set themselves round about me.

The discourses of Christ receive like illustrations from adverting to the occasion of them. Many were answers to the cavils and impertinencies of the Pharisees : some were connected with occurrences which took place in his presence : others were suggested by questions of his disciples. How much we should lose of the meaning and beauty of his conversation with the Samaritan woman, if we separated it from the little introductory circumstances which are recorded ; viz. that the place was " Sychar," the chief city of

the most bitter enemies of his nation ; that "Jacob's well" was there ; that weary with journeying he sat upon its mouth waiting the return of his disciples "who had gone into the city to buy meat;" that he excited her astonishment by asking drink of her, "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Every one of these apparently trifling incidents has its use in illustrating what follows. Not one could be spared, without detracting from a composition which measured by a standard merely literary, has nothing to compare with it in all the ancient and modern classics.

2. *By examining whether the writer has not himself mentioned his design.* Thus the Evangelist John informs us, what his purpose was in writing his gospel, John xx. 31. "These things are written that ye might believe upon Jesus, and that believing ye might have life through his name." Luke avows his design very clearly. He seems to have been dissatisfied with some of the current accounts which had been published of the life of Christ, and determines to give an

accurate and orderly detail, the result of his own personal investigations. As he intimates his purpose to write *καθεξης*, i. e. "in order"—having carefully followed up every event, "*παρηκολουθηκοτι ανωθεν ακριβως*"; many judicious commentators infer that where the evangelists differ as to the order of facts, his account is to be preferred, and have accordingly made it the basis of their schemes of harmony. The author of Ecclesiastes is another instance of a sacred writer who states his object. The whole work is a commentary on the first verse, "Vanity of vanities saith the preacher; all is vanity." It must be confessed that he sticks to his melancholy text most closely, and expounds it with a fearful energy.

Occasionally a sacred writer gives his purpose not at the outset, but the close of his remarks. A striking instance is found in Paul's epistle to the Romans. In the first three chapters, he elaborately reviews the moral condition of mankind both Jews and Gentiles, in all ages, and shows that the whole world was guilty before God. In the

20th verse of the third chapter, we see him distinctly approaching his object: "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." This was one point gained, and one of momentous interest to a mind anxiously inquiring, "How shall man be just with God." But he had a much higher aim than merely to prostrate the sinner. He kills that he may make alive; and after an eloquent discussion through the seven verses that follow, brings out in the 28th the great central truth of the gospel with dialectic formality, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

3dly. If both the expedients mentioned fail, we *should read the whole book, marking the coherence of its various parts.* Mr. Locke recommends the perusal of it at one sitting, quoting his own experience in favour of the plan. "I concluded it necessary," he says, (speaking of Paul's epistles), "for the understanding of any one of them, often to read it all through at one sitting, and to observe as

well as I could the design of his writing it. If the first reading gave me some light, the second gave me more ; and so I persisted on, reading constantly the whole epistle over at once, till I came to have a good general view of the apostle's main purpose in writing." The advice is excellent. It is the very method we employ in ascertaining the scope of other writings. If the title page leave any doubt or darkness on the subject, we instinctively turn to the table of contents, or skim over the different chapters, before we engage in a critical perusal. We thus catch the author's drift—we see what *he would be at*—without some knowledge of which, reading is the most intolerable of all drudgery.

RULE IV.

Examine well what precedes and follows the part to be expounded. This is called the *context* ; and is divided into the *remote* and *immediate*. The *immediate*, is that part which stands in immediate proximity to the

passage ; the *remote*, may extend some distance backward and forward. The mind generally thinks in train, and connects its ideas together by well-known laws of association. This connection of thought, and the logical relation of one part of the series to another, is an invaluable key to the mind of a writer, except when he professedly deals in aphorisms ; as the author of the book of Proverbs, and Christ in part of his sermon on the mount. It is in some respects more important than the scope : the latter only gives me the author's general purpose, which does not forbid the admission of episodes, and topics merely collateral : We shall be certain to err with regard to these, if we neglect the connection.

We must be on our guard, however, against *manufacturing* a connection ; in other words against putting a false construction on what precedes or follows, and then moulding the exposition in conformity with our own gloss, a fault often committed. Falsehood can only beget falsehood. Nor, supposing that our construction is true, may we adjust our pas-

sage to it by any violation of the *Usus Loquendi*, or rules of grammar. In these cases we must take what might seem the worst of two meanings—sacrificing contextual symmetry to the general laws of language. Thus limited, the rule that no explanation is to be admitted which does not suit the context, is of constant use.

Suppose me reading the 42d Psalm, and considering the pathetic exclamation in the second verse :

My soul thirsteth for God, the living God,
When shall I come and appear before God ;
My tears are my meat day and night,
While it is said continually, Where is thy God ?

My first impulse is to view it as the expression of a wish to die and enjoy the felicity of heaven ; especially as the phrase “seeing God,” often refers to future blessedness ! But a glance at the 4th verse, shows that the pious monarch longed for restoration to the services of the earthly sanctuary, of which he had been deprived by the persecutions of his son Absalom :

When I think of this, I pour out my heart in tears,
How I went with the multitude—went to the house
of God,
With jubilee and praise in a sacred happy throng.

The 110th Psalm describes the victorious progress of an illustrious prince, greatly honoured by God, and exalted to his right hand. The first three verses leave me in doubt whether the poet speaks of David or another and far greater personage, as the sitting at God's right hand may be figurative :

Jehovah said unto my Lord,
Sit thou at my right hand,
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool,
Thy powerful sceptre Jehovah sends out of Zion :
Rule in the midst of thy foes.

But the 4th verse settles the question :

Jehovah hath sworn and will not repent,
Thou art an everlasting priest,
Of the order of Melchisedech.

David was no priest, nor could any Hebrew monarch assume the office without heaven-daring profanity. The strange, and (to the Jew) astounding phenomenon of a "priest upon a throne," directs us at once to

David's Son and *Lord*. The application of this simple test will enable the plainest Christian to detect the Psalms called Messianic at a glance. They all embody in their representations such remarkable incidents and traits of personal character, as make it impossible to apply them without the grossest impropriety to any but the great anointed of the Father. Let the 2d, 16th, 22d, 45th, and 72d be brought to this touchstone; nothing but arrant infidelity can resist the force of the argument.

It may admit a doubt, whether the celebrated description in Rom. vii. of the struggle between the "flesh and the spirit," refers to the true Christian or the unregenerate. There are some expressions in it, which certainly agree best with the latter supposition. On the other hand, there are whole sentences which cannot at all be reconciled with this hypothesis, and compel us to understand the apostle as describing the exercises of the Christian. In the 18th verse, it is clearly implied that the person described possesses impulses and principles superior to those of

unrenewed nature. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." In the 22d verse, he is said to "delight in the Law of God after the inner man;" and in the 25th, he thanks God for "his deliverance through Christ Jesus." Farther, to entirely preclude the supposition that this deliverance is a *new state*, following, and not contemporary with the struggle, he adds, "So then with the *mind* I serve the Law of God; but with the *flesh* the law of sin." Surely it is not in accordance with the tenor of scripture, as an excellent commentator observes, to describe in this way the exercises and character of unholy men.

Let us bring to the contextual touchstone another passage—the well-known paragraph in Romans 5th, which seems to assert a direct causal connection, between Adam and his posterity. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned:" "By one man's offence death reigned by one:" "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all to condemnation:" "By one

man's disobedience many were made sinners." Pelagians affirm that all intended by these remarkable statements is, that Adam gave the first example of sinning, and that *somehow* his posterity walked in his steps. They compare the phraseology with expressions like these : " By Sir Robert Walpole, bribery and corruption entered the British parliament : " " By Lysander, luxury entered Sparta ; " which, according to them, only mean that the evils mentioned began with these persons. Without dwelling on the violence done to the words by this gloss, or the fact that their own phrases clearly denote not only a chronological but a *causal* connection, let the student look at the whole series of discourse that follows ; in which the apostle, with an emphasis and accumulation of synonymous expressions, which show how intently his mind was working with the thought, draws a parallel between Adam and the Redeemer. If he does not mean to say that there was a ~~similitude~~ *similitude* between them in official character and relations, almost perfect, there is no meaning in language. The infer-

ence is irresistible. Christ was not the first who received salvation, but is the immediate *author* of it. In the same sense our guilty progenitor is the immediate author of sin and misery to our world.

This attempt to explain away the plain meaning of scripture is sufficiently gross. That of the Socinians to evacuate the Epistle to the Hebrews of our Redeemer's priesthood and atonement, is yet more so. The priesthood of Jesus, they say, is a bold figure, merely denoting that he was a consecrated minister of God. His sacrifice consisted in the virtuous obedience which he yielded, and which might be so called, not properly, but in a *pretty, fanciful* way—because it was crowned with a death of martyrdom! The apostle then, through six mortal chapters, has been hammering at a rough, uncouth figure, and the result of all his learned labour is—absolutely nothing! Nowhere, in all the annals of writing, can be found an instance to compare with it, of the “*montes parturiunt, nascetur ridiculus mus.*” It would be idle to allege the context against such expounders.

They grant every thing we say concerning its entire and perfect harmony with the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction. All they ask us to allow is, that the whole book may be a metaphor run mad. We would rather doubt the sanity of some of its expositors.

These examples may suffice of the advantage derived from studying the context. It is unhappily much discouraged and impeded by the way in which our modern Bibles are printed. The fracture of great coherent masses into verses, is an unhappy arrangement. The reader's attention is almost necessarily carried away from the flow and current of thought, and fixed on an isolated proposition, whose true meaning depends upon something not distinctly before his mind. In consequence, he is very apt to treat revelation as an immense collection of proverbs ; and the majority of common readers actually so consider it. Nor can we approve the practice adopted by many preachers, of running into their pulpits with a single sentence or part of one, which they make their exclusive subject ; not bestowing on the connection a

word of notice—unless they have been hurried in their preparations, and find it convenient to talk a little *round it*, in an extempore introduction. What would we think if we heard any other book prelected on in this way ; a treatise on medicine for instance, or on morals ? Or what would we think of a judge expounding in this way a legal statute ? The civil law has laid down an express canon on the subject, with some tartness, as if indignant at the idea of such a practice : “ *Turpe est de lege judicare, tota lege non inspecta.*” Ministers are often heard to chide their people sharply, for the careless and unprofitable way in which they read the word of God. But they would do well to ask whether they are not themselves to blame in forming them to such wretched habits of perusing it. When our Reverence appears before the people month after month, without in a single instance perhaps, explaining the design, coherence, and argument of a paragraph containing only six verses, it is really too much to expect, that honest John

will spend his Sabbath evenings in supplying the pastor's lack of service.

The same evil prevails in the domain of controversial theology. Many allow themselves to be captivated with the mere sound of a phrase. It seems to suit their purpose in an argument. Incontinently they detach it from the paragraph to which it belongs, dress it up in high-sounding paraphrase, and send it forth, "to root out, pull down and destroy" every thing that opposes. Examples without number could be given, from the writings of all religious parties, even our own. Many passages which Calvinists quote are utterly irrelevant, as the slightest examination shows. An instance of this is the celebrated declaration in Jer. xxxi. 3: "I have loved thee with everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." It may be more properly translated thus,

In days of old have I loved thee,

Therefore will I prolong my goodness to thee.

God is here assuring the ten tribes of deliverance and protection, on account of the love he bore them in former times, when with out-

stretched arm he brought them from the land of Egypt. Nothing is said of the eternity of his purposes, or their accomplishment in the conversion of the elect. If applied to this subject, it must be in the way of pious accommodation. The same is true of another favourite passage : Matt. xxii. 14, "Many are called, but few are chosen." The whole context and scope shows, that the Redeemer is not speaking of sovereign election, but rather stating the fact, that while all are invited to the gospel feast, there are comparatively few *admitted*, in consequence of neglecting to secure the necessary qualifications.

On the other hand, our Arminian brethren quote, with as little shadow of reason, 1 Cor. xii. 7, to prove universal grace. The proposition that "a dispensation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal," sounds indeed bravely. But the sound is all : the whole argument shows that the Apostle is speaking of supernatural gifts of the spirit, and is addressing church members exclusively.

When we apply our Rule to interpretation,

some caution is necessary, in consequence of the context being occasionally broken by a parenthesis. In the New Testament these are very frequent, especially with Paul, whose impetuous genius often starts aside to embody a vivid conception or glowing sentiment that suddenly kindled in his mind, and which he did not allow himself leisure to weave into the general texture of his discourse. We have a beautiful example in 2 Tim. i. 16, 18: where the short prayer in the beginning of the 18th verse is evidently an extempore burst of grateful emotion, and the words must be enclosed in brackets; "But when Onesiphorus was in Rome he sought me out very diligently and found me, (*the Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day,*) and in how many things he ministered to me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well." A more striking instance is in Eph. iii. where the first and fourteenth verses must be immediately united, the parenthesis consisting of not less than thirteen.

Attention to this, wonderfully enlightens some of his dark sayings; among others, that

in 1 Tim. v. 23 : "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." The Apostle is in the midst of a solemn and weighty exhortation to Timothy in relation to ordaining candidates for the ministry. In the 22d verse, he says, "lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins, keep thyself pure." In the 24th he carries out the thought, stating that some men's disqualifications were open and manifest to all, others were more secret and followed after them. There is thus a complete connection between the 22d and 24th verses ; and the question rises how the Apostle comes to press the matter of wine-drinking directly between the two, when the thought was so foreign to his whole subject ? It is manifestly a parenthesis. In the midst of his directions concerning ordination, he remembers that his young friend was of feeble constitution, and liable to severe attacks of dyspepsia. It is in his mind to prescribe a glass—not of syrup, but of good generous wine, which is known to possess great virtue in such complaints.

No sooner thought, than done. Without losing a moment, he tosses it into the middle of his argument, where it stands a fine specimen of the noble artlessness of the great Apostle. Dr. Paley builds on this circumstance a strong argument for the authenticity of the epistle. It scarcely would have entered the mind of an impostor, to exhibit Paul as commending wine, in a grave, apostolical epistle : much less, would he have introduced the advice in so strange and improbable a manner.

RULE V.

We must know the character, age, sect, nation, and other peculiarities of the writer. Every human being has a *character*—a certain something which distinguishes him from others, giving a hue to all his thoughts and modes of expressing them. This must be known, in order to his being understood. The inspired writers are no exception to the rule. They who imagine that the Holy Spirit so

possessed their minds that they became mere automata in his hands, and poured out words and thoughts as they were successively poured in—like so many water-pipes of a cistern, betray profound ignorance of the subject. Some such crude fancies were entertained in former times, and are probably not extinct. They doubtless originated in a vague notion, that the more entirely human agency was excluded from the doctrine of inspiration, the higher honour was bestowed on the Divine Spirit : and the etymology of the word “inspiration” had also its effect. It originally and properly signified, a *breathing in*, and suggested the dark and mysterious conception of an effect produced on the thinking substance of a man, not unlike the inflation of a bladder—

“*magnam cui mentem animumque,
Delius inspirat vates.*”

But inspiration has nothing in common with its etymology. It simply expresses the idea of supernatural assistance and guidance in the communication to mankind of truths previously unknown. Those who were honoured

with it, were enabled to speak, act, and write, as divine messengers, in perfect conformity with the will of Him who sent them ; so that nothing proceeded from them, but what was holy and true. Yet they were not puppets, acted on by a physical and compelling force from without. They were living, personal agents, in full possession of all the faculties with which they had been endowed by their Creator—with perception, memory, consciousness, will ; and the energy of the Holy Ghost wrought no greater violence on their minds in the exercise of these powers, than is wrought by his ordinary operation on the hearts of believers in every age of the church.

It is not our business to give the philosophy of this “pre-established harmony” between agencies so different, nor to speculate on the mode in which they were combined for the production of a single result. As interpreters, we *state* the fact—not *explain* it: and the fact certainly is, that no men are more distinguished from each other by strong mental idiosyncrasies, nor any who give more decided evidence, that their own spirits per-

formed an important office in composition. In the author of the book of Proverbs, we see before us the grave, sententious, dignified monarch, whose profound knowledge of human nature, and sparkling gems of wisdom, made his name celebrated throughout the East. Amos is always the strong, bold, but somewhat unpolished herdsman of Tekoah. The rough and vehement Ezekiel, standing with dishevelled hair and rolling eye, in the midst of his fantastic but expressive symbols, never suffers us to mistake him for Isaiah, the sublime, imaginative, tasteful courtier of Hezekiah. The same with the plaintive, tender Jeremiah—the contemplative John—the argumentative, glowing Paul. It is an old, but, with proper explanation, perfectly true remark, originally made by Jerome, that “revelation consists in thought, not in words or external dress: *nec putemus in verbis scripturam evangelii esse, sed in sensu.*” We insult the Holy Ghost by supposing him unable to accommodate himself to the mode of thinking and phraseology of those whom he honoured with his influence—that when he

made the prophet he was forced to unmake the man.

When we read the Epistle to the Romans therefore, we must remember that we are conversing with a finished gentleman of the old school ; a scholar brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a powerful but rapid reasoner, delighting in ellipses, digressions, repetitions, bold figures, and pregnant expressions, suggesting more than meets the ear—fond of illustrating his subject by Old Testament ideas, even when he intends making no use of them in argument ; and above all, that we are conversing with him, who, more than any other apostle, was deeply penetrated with the glorious catholicity and abounding grace of the gospel ! In reading James, we must think of the stern, high-souled moralist, in whom the ethical element of Christianity seems to have taken the deepest root ; who, while with adoring faith he beheld “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” never lost from his view the awful form of that “eternal law,” which spoke in thunder from Sinai, and yet speaks in milder tones, though with

the same commanding authority, to every child of Adam. John, in his writings, seems to be still clinging to his master's bosom.— Love to the person of his Redeemer is evidently his engrossing sentiment. No one can doubt, apart from every argument contained in other parts of Scripture, that John believed him to be divine. His glory as the uncreated Logos—that glory which he had with the Father before the world was, a few scattered rays of which had been seen through the veil of his humiliation, is the great thought with which his soul holds constant communion, raised above every other object—like the eagle calmly reposing in mid heaven, and *gazing at the sun!* He who gives no attention to these things, and does not take pains to catch the distinctive peculiarities of the sacred writers, commits the same kind of blunder with that of the man who reads Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Addison's *Essays in the Spectator*, yet sees no difference between them except in the length of the lines.

It is important also to note the different kinds of composition they employed. Some

were poets, and must be interpreted according to the laws of poetry. Their bold tropes must not be turned into sober matter-of-fact realities ; as is done by the Millenarians who read Isaiah nearly as they would Blackstone's Commentaries, or the British Constitution. Ezekiel is not Luke, nor is Matthew the publican, David, singing one of the sweet odes of Zion to the music of his harp. Historians are to be treated as historians, not as poets or rhetoricians. The accounts of miracles given in our four gospels must therefore be taken to the letter. No books in the world bear more decided evidence that their authors intended to give simple and perspicuous narratives of events as they actually occurred. The principle must not be tolerated for a moment, of explaining them away, by doing violence to the plain meaning of language, and to all the laws which are applied to other historical compositions. Yet it has been sanctioned by great names, especially in Germany. Grave divines are found, who insist that there is not one miracle in the gospels. The events which *seem* miraculous

were entirely natural, but exaggerated and embellished by the warm fancies of the people among whom they occurred. Only strip, they say, the Evangelists of this semi-poetic drapery, and the business of exposition will go on delightfully. Moses fares, if possible, still worse. They turn him into an allegorist or reciter of mythological fables. The first ten chapters of Genesis contain about as large a body of real truth, as can pass without inconvenience through the eye of a needle—being made up of old stories and scraps of song, which mean nothing, or anything, that a lively fancy may suggest.

Let not the Christian student take great pains to refute this wretched infidelity, which does not openly avow itself infidel, merely because its advocates earn their bread by a profession of Christianity ; the most of them being either professors of Christian theology or pastors of Christian churches. *Indignandum de isto ; non disputandum est.* Such interpretations do not deserve the name. They are feats of jugglery and legerdemain ; and their authors are conceited sciolists, who, pranking

themselves as the high-priests of philosophy, prove by their irreverence for things sacred, that they have not reached the portico of her temple. The true philosopher always trembles when he stands, or even suspects that he stands, in the presence of God ! He cannot trifle with such a book as the Bible ! He cannot sport with a volume, the falsehood of which, if proved, turns him over to the beasts, and deprives him of his last stake as a candidate for the glories of immortality.

RULE VI.

In expounding Scripture, *let there be a constant appeal to the tribunal of common sense.* Language is not the invention of metaphysicians, or convocations of the wise and learned. It is the common blessing of mankind, framed for their mutual advantage in their intercourse with each other. Its laws therefore are popular, not philosophical—being founded on the general laws of thought which govern the whole mass of mind in the community. Now, however men may differ from each other,

there are certain universal notions, plain and obvious principles of knowledge, according to which speech is regulated. When we try a work by these, we bring it to the standard of "common sense."

There is occasion for it every moment.— Scarcely will we hear in a long and serious conversation between the best speakers, a sentence which does not need some modification or limitation, in order that we may not attribute to it more or less than was intended. Nor is the operation at all difficult. We make the correction instantly, with so little cost of thought, that we would be tempted to call it instinct, if we did not know that many of our perceptions which seem intuitive, are the work of habit and education.— It would be an exceedingly strange thing, if the Bible, the most popular of all books, composed by men for the most part taken from the multitude, addressed to all, and on subjects equally interesting to all, were found written in language to be interpreted on different principles. But, in point of fact, it is not. Its style is eminently, and to a remark-

able degree, that which we would expect to find in a volume designed by its gracious Author to be the *people's book*—abounding in all those kinds of inaccuracy which are sprinkled through ordinary discourse, hyperboles, analogies, and loose catechrestical expressions, whose meaning no one mistakes, though their deviation from *plumb*, occasionally makes the small critic sad. In such cases, we reject every thing incompatible with evident truth; assuming that the Bible could never intend to contradict our reason, or teach in any possible case that two and two are five. We shall give a few illustrations.

1st. *It never teaches doctrines refuted by the testimony of the senses.* Thus, when David says that “he is poured out like water, and all his bones are out of joint, that his heart is melted in the midst of his bowels,” we perceive instantly that a literal pouring out and melting cannot be meant, as nothing of the kind has been ever witnessed. When the Redeemer, in the institution of the Supper, declares of the bread, that it is his body; and of the wine, that it is his blood, we ne-

cessarily understand him to be speaking figuratively and symbolically. My senses distinctly see, taste, smell, and feel, that the sacramental elements are nothing but real bread and wine. If the Scriptures really taught the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, they would declare a falsehood, which would be quite sufficient by itself to destroy their authority. The principle of believing a doctrine in direct opposition to the clear evidence of the senses, is destructive of all evidence. If my senses may deceive me, how shall I convince myself that I ever saw a book called the Bible, or read it, or ever heard of such a being as Jesus Christ? The delusion practised on me at the Lord's table, where I am eating and drinking the real body and blood of a dead man, while tasting and smelling bread and wine, may be part of a most extensive scheme of imposture, to which no limits can be assigned.

2d. Its statements *must be compared with the results of experience and observation.*—No one who reads the command, “Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is per-

fect," with reference at the same time to the state of the world in all ages, can deny that it is to be taken with a grain of allowance. Let us *aim* at perfection, but not dream of attaining it—experience amply proving that there is no man who sinneth not. In Matt. x. 34, Christ tells his disciples that "he came not to send peace on earth but a sword."—History is the best commentary on this somewhat harsh expression. The Gospel occasioned discords in families and nations, by inducing some to accept its guidance, while others rejected it. These frequently led to persecutions, which were the sword alluded to in the text.

3. Passages must be *harmonized with established facts in science*. Truth is always in accordance with herself. Her two great books, Nature and Revelation, cannot be at variance, though the latter seldom trims her phraseology into conformity with the starched definitions of science; for which every man of taste and discernment likes her the better. The expressions therefore which represent the earth as at *rest*—as being *built*

on the waters—as having *bounds and limits*—and the sun as *moving round it*, are not to be brought in collision with astronomy. The representations of God as *coming to a place*—*deserting it*—*asking questions*—*grieving*—*repenting*, must be explained consistently with the first elements of natural religion, which teach that he is a pure Spirit, omnipresent, all-knowing, and above all change or perturbation. Lactantius, a Latin Father, must have lost his compass entirely, when he undertook to prove from the Scriptures that God has passions—thus contradicting a plain and evident principle of reason.

Whether the sacred interpreter will ever be required to modify the old expositions of the first twenty verses of the first chapter of Genesis in conformity with the decisions of geology, we do not profess to conjecture. The science is in its infancy, and as yet has made no positive demands, though on some points expressing very strongly its wishes. Whatever be the result, we need not fear it. Scripture will never be found among the enemies of knowledge and sound learning.

4. *It cannot be at issue with any of our intuitive moral judgments* If it recommends the "cutting off a right hand and plucking out a right eye," it must not be taken to mean bodily mutilation. Our life and members are a sacred trust committed to us, which we dare not trifle with. When Christ says, "If any man hate not his father and mother and wife and children, he cannot be my disciple," he is using a strong hyperbole to denote the greater love which we should bear himself. Our moral sense revolts at the idea of hatred to parents, and no exposition can be tolerated that would sanction a feeling so detestable. In Luke x. 4, he commands his disciples "not to salute (during one of their missionary journeys) any by the way,"—a precept which our Quaker Brethren obey to the letter. But Christ could never have intended to inculcate rudeness ; it must therefore mean, "Do not lose time by holding unnecessary intercourse with your friends ; use all expedition in journeying to the scene of your labours." Equally absurd is their well known exposition of the precept

“When smitten on the one cheek, turn the other also ;” as if the Saviour disapproved of self-defence.

On a similar principle, we explain those passages, which exhibit the prophets as doing by command of God things inconsistent with natural propriety. Hosea, for example, is commanded to marry two impure women ; Ezekiel to lie on his left side a year and a month, looking at an iron pan—then turn over to his right side, on which he must lie forty additional days—eating during the whole period a compost of lentiles, beans, barley, millet and fitches, prepared in a manner most decidedly disagreeable. We affirm boldly, that the expositors who consider these and others which might be mentioned, as real transactions, dishonour the word of God, while they betray a want of taste that is astounding. Beyond all doubt, they were symbolical representations, that passed before the Prophet’s mind in his inspired extacy.

The rule under our notice, requiring us to try expressions by the standard of common sense, is of great use in explaining a class of

propositions very frequent in Scripture, which seem to have no limit in their application, but must be restricted by the mind of the reader. They are thrown out by the writer, with the noble carelessness of one who takes a strong view of a subject, and determines to strike with it—not caring for the great swarm of little *buts*, that invariably rise before the mind of a feeble thinker, and darken the principal idea. We shall add a few examples.

Absolute expressions, often denote only what *usually* takes place. Solomon tells us in Prov. xxii. 6, “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” This is not always true: Odd as it may seem, Solomon himself was an exception. Yet it is true generally. A wise and pious education gives good reason to expect the divine blessing. Sometimes they only denote the *tendency* of a thing. Prov. xv. 1, “a soft answer turneth away wrath.” It is calculated to produce this happy effect. Paul declares that the “goodness of God leadeth to repentance.” With

submission to the Apostle—not always. Too often it corrupts and hardens.

At other times, they only indicate *duty—right—official obligation*. Thus Solomon says, Prov. xvi. 10, “a divine sentence is in the lips of the king, his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.” Peter, in like manner says of the civil magistrate, “he is the minister of God for good, a terror to evil workers and a praise to them that do well.” Such declarations show what he is *de jure* : the *de facto*, is quite another question, as Peter himself experienced shortly after ; being put to death by one of these divine ministers in the most cruel manner. The same principle we apply to those statements which exhibit the Redeemer as dying for “all”—for “every man”—for the “sins of the world.” They contain a precious character of privilege—right—and consequent obligation to accept him. He is by office the *world's saviour*. All may enjoy the blessings which he hath purchased, and are excluded simply by unbelief.

Occasionally, we find assertions broadly

made that refer only to *external character* and profession. Paul describes apostates as counting "the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing." They were so in *appearance*. Having avowed their attachment before the church and the world, they were recognized as true disciples and heirs of the promise. Yet of such, another Apostle declares, "they went out from us, because they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they never would have departed." So, all credible professors are called "saints" and "holy." The sacred writers always treat them as being what they ought to be. This practice of naming things from their appearance is quite common. The impostor Hananiah for instance, is called in Jer. xxviii. 1, a "Prophet." False pretenders to piety, are in Matt. ix. 13, called righteous: "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Paul in 1. Cor. i. 21, names the preaching of the gospel "foolishness," because it was thought such by the haughty Greek.

There are other ways in which proposi-

tions stated absolutely, must be limited. Indeed, so various are they, that no definite rule can be laid down which will apply to every case. Each should receive the modification dictated by common sense. The precept for instance, requiring us "not to revenge ourselves," forbids the taking private vengeance, not judicial punishment. Christ, in Matt. v. 33, commands us to "swear not." The connection shows us, that he refers to unnecessary and extrajudicial oaths; but independently of arguments from the context, we might safely assume that he never could have intended to nullify an institution almost coeval with the human race, and which he sanctioned by personal example. We are commanded in like manner, to "take no thought for the morrow"—to "judge not, that we be not judged"—to "pray without ceasing"—expressions which it is scarcely possible to misunderstand—though it would not be safe to stake much on the assertion; many betraying a perversity of thinking where Scripture is concerned, that on any other subject would be ludicrous.

The family of wrongheads in theology, is a very numerous one.

RULE VII.

Study attentively the tropes and figures of the sacred writings. These are deviations from natural simplicity of expression ; one idea being substituted for another, and made to represent it on the ground of some relation between them ; as when I call a warrior, a lion ; compare the march of an undisciplined army to the flight of a noisy flock of cranes, or address a dead or absent person as if possessing life. They abound in all languages, and in many instances are the very language of nature. The least excitement of feeling impels a man of ordinary fancy to express his thought, not by the word directly appropriated to it, but by some accessory idea, which he prefers on account of its greater vivacity and beauty. Thus old age is the *evening* of life ; youth the *morning* ; error is *blindness* ; a great statesman, the

pillar of the commonwealth. The fields *smile*—the stones *cry out*—the heavens *weep*. No one fails to perceive the superior liveliness and brilliancy of such modes of expression.

Nor will their frequent occurrence in the Bible surprise us, when we consider that much of it is poetry, and its birth-place the imaginative east. Its figures are not only numerous but exceedingly bold—sometimes even startling to an occidental ear and a taste formed on classic models. “The blood of Abel cries from the ground.” “God makes drunk his arrows with blood.” “The heavens celebrate the praises of Jehovah.” “The floods clap their hands.” “When Israel came out of Egypt, the sea saw it and fled, Jordan was driven back, the mountains skipped like rams and the little hills like lambs.” Such is the glowing language that meets us in every page, and justifies the remark that it is by far the richest volume of fancy in our literature. The tropes which occur most frequently, are the following.

1. Metonymy. This denotes the *substi-*

tution of one word for another, where the thoughts are closely conjoined and rise up together in the mind, though there be no proper resemblance between them. Such are the ideas of cause and effect—subject and attribute—container and contained—sign and thing signified.

The cause is put for the effect. Thus the Holy Spirit is put for the gifts and influence of the Spirit. 1. Thess. v. 19, “quench not the Spirit.” Luke xi. 13, “how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Rev. i. 10, “I was in spirit on the Lord’s day,” i. e. a state of mind caused by the spirit. In the same sense Jesus was “led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil:” he went there under a divine prompting and impulse. Parents are sometimes put for their posterity, as Judah for the Jews; and in Ezek. xxxiv. 23, David is used for Messiah, his promised son and successor to his throne: “I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even *my servant David*.” Frequently the converse of our rule takes

place—the effect being put for the cause. Chirst is called “our life” because he is its author. “He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption :” i. e. God has constituted him the source of all those blessings. In Hebrews vi. 1. the Apostle calls sinful works “dead.” In what sense are they dead? Some reply, because they have no moral principle or vitality in them. But this is too weak. They are probably so called, metonymically, because they lead to death. In Rom. vii. 7, Paul asks “is the law sin?” he means to inquire, whether it produces sin.

The container is put for the contained. A table, denotes the food placed on it: “Let their table become a snare.” A cup stands for the liquor it contains: 1. Cor. x. 16, “The cup of blessing which we bless.” Heaven, for God himself. Hence the often recurring phrase, “kingdom of heaven,” applied to the new dispensation of Messiah. There is no direct allusion in it to the heavenly state, but simply to its divine origin. In other places it is expressly called the king-

dom of God, Matt. xix. 24, Luke xiii. 29. *House*, signifies the *family* residing in it. Gen. vii. 1, "Enter thou and all thy house into the ark." This is its meaning in Ex. i. 21, which states that because the "midwives feared God, he made them houses." If the idea of giving two midwives a pair of houses be a little odd, there is nothing strange in Divine Providence rewarding their kindness to the families of his people, by giving them large and flourishing families of their own. On this use of the word, Pædobaptists found one of their strongest arguments for infant baptism. It is contended, that the "houses" which the Apostles baptized, must have included all of the family, young as well as old—such being the way in which the term is uniformly employed.

The sign for the thing signified; as a sceptre or shepherd's staff for *power*. To "lift up the hand" is to *swear*: "to bow the knee" is to *do homage*: to "put on sackcloth" is to *mourn*. Baptism is by a like metonymy identified with the moral renovation which it symbolizes. The neglect of

this figure led the ancient Fathers, who are followed by many in the present day, to hold that baptism was itself regeneration—founding their opinion on the words of Christ to Nicodemus, “except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God;” and the language of Paul, Tit. iii. 5, “he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” From these expressions they infer, that a positive renewing grace is actually communicated to the subject of the ordinance, and with it a complete forgiveness of sin previously committed. Were we believers in this doctrine, we should spend a considerable part of our time in marvelling at the singular taste of the Apostle Paul, who declined administering baptism except in a few extraordinary cases; and even thanks God that he had *regenerated* none but Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, 1 Cor. i. 16. The same Apostle, however, in another place, expressly claims the honour of having begotten them, though he had no agency in their baptism; 1 Cor. iv. 15, “In Christ Jesus I have begot-

ten you through the Gospel." Equally strange is it that our blessed Lord should have declined to perform a rite, which, for the stupendous effects produced by it on the corrupt and darkened mind, infinitely surpassed all his miracles on the body. The doctrine seems, on other accounts also, really incredible ; and we deem it far more reasonable to suppose, that moral renovation is coupled with baptism in the passages quoted above, because of the sacramental and symbolical relation between them. As in Acts vii. 8, circumcision is called the " Covenant," because it was the sign of the covenant ; so baptism is the " washing of regeneration," because it is the visible token of it, on the application of which, a man becomes accredited as a citizen of the great spiritual commonwealth, which Christ has washed in his blood.

Frequently *a sentiment or action is used for the object with which it is conversant*. Faith signifies not the *belief*, but the *doctrine believed* : " Contend earnestly for the faith." Hope stands for Christ, the great *object of hope* : Col. i. 27, " Christ, the hope of glory."

Desire, for the *thing desired* : Ezek. xxiv. 16, "Behold I take away the desire of thine eyes [the prophet's wife] with a stroke." Thus Christ may be called "the desire of the nations," on account of the earnest longing for a Saviour, and actual expectation of one about to appear, which preceded his advent. The passage in Haggai, however, where the expression is used, will hardly bear an immediate reference to the Messiah. The context, as well as certain grammatical considerations, prove that the treasures of the Gentiles are meant, which the prophet says shall be brought in great abundance to adorn the second temple. That the whole paragraph contains a prophecy of Christ is almost certain ; but nothing of that kind is involved in this particular phrase.

2d. Synecdoche, is the *substitution of a whole for the part, or a part for the whole*. Of the first kind, the following are examples. The "world," denotes sometimes the Roman Empire, which was a very small portion of it. "Augustus decreed that the whole world should be taxed." "All," is put for a single

individual. Thus it is said of King Joash that his servants slew him for the blood of the sons of Jehoida, the priest, 2 Chron. xxiv. 25. But it appears from the 20th verse, that Joash had killed but *one* son, the Prophet Zechariah. In Judges xii. 7, it is said that Jephtha was "buried in the cities of Gilead." He could be buried of course only in one. The neglect of this synecdoche led some Jewish commentators to invent the strange fable, that to punish him for the sacrifice of his daughter, his body was chopped into pieces, and a part interred in each of the principal cities.

Sometimes, *All*, is equivalent to *Many*. "*All* Jerusalem went out to John the Baptist." "The devil showed to our Redeemer *all* the kingdoms of the earth and their glory." At others, it denotes *all kinds*: Acts x. 12. Peter saw a great sheet, "in which were [literally] *all* four-footed beasts of the field." Our translators have rendered the expression more intelligible, but in so doing forsaken the original, as they have done also in translating Matt. iv. 23; where the Greek says that Christ "healed all sickness and disease among

the people." All *manner* of sickness is undoubtedly the idea intended. On this synecdochical use of the word, those who contend that in no sense can Christ be said to die for the non-elect, found their explications of the numerous passages objected to their view. Nothing more is meant, they say, than that he died for "all kinds of men." Happily, these gentlemen are themselves a synecdoche—and we trust a small one—of the party to which they belong. Calvinism can boast of a different class of expositors, among whom is found Calvin himself—than whom, few use stronger language in describing the magnificent fulness and universality of the gracious provisions of the gospel.

The part is put for the whole ; as in Acts xxvii. 37, "There were in the ship two hundred souls." The soul here comprehends the entire man. Many, is substituted for all ; Dan. xii. 2, "Many that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The prophet certainly does not mean to describe a partial resurrection in these remark-

able words. Rom. v. 19, "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Who the many are, we find in the former verse; "By the offence of one, judgment came upon *all* men to condemnation." A striking example of the figure we have in Ex. xii. 40, which has given much trouble to critics: "Now the sojourning of the Children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years." But it can easily be proved, that four hundred and thirty years include the entire period from the calling of Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees. ~~How~~ then are the Israelites represented as dwelling during that whole period in Egypt? We answer, that the part is put for the whole—Egypt, for the entire region in which Abraham sojourned with his descendants. Being an important part, and that in which they resided last, the writer singles it out to represent all the other scenes of their pilgrimage. The whole thought is given by the Septuagint translators, who insert after Egypt, "*and in the land of Canaan.*"

On Synechdoches of this kind, is founded

a general canon very useful to be remembered in exposition, viz : that Scripture often exhibits a general truth in the form of a *particular case*—not that it is the only one, but that it explains the principle, and suggests the mode of applying it to all others. The language and education of the writers indisposed them for dealing in abstractions. Everything is definite and particular, and may be almost pictured to the eye. But we shall do them the grossest injustice, if we suppose they rested here. There was doubtless a great general idea distinctly before their mind, of which the picture was a symbolical representation. When the wise man in Prov. xx, 10, says, “Divers weights and divers measures are an abomination unto the Lord,” who can doubt that he thought of the other innumerable frauds practised by shopkeepers on their customers ? The Psalmist tells us, that “the good man is ever merciful and *lendeth*.” Accommodating a poor and industrious man with a loan of money, is true kindness, but not the only expression of it. Christ, in Matt. vi. 1, forbids us to do our

alms before men ;” he means that we should conceal, if possible, *all* our benevolent actions. In John xiii. 14, he says, “ Ye ought to wash each other’s feet : ” he might equally have said, for it is what he intended, “ Be humble and mutually affectionate.”

In a like way, those who justify the practice of granting divorce for other causes than adultery, interpret the words of Christ in Matt. v. 32 : “ Whosoever shall put away his wife save for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery, and whosoever shall marry her, that is divorced, committeth adultery.” The fornication here stated, to be the only ground, they view as the *principal* one, standing for others equally serious, as desertion, violence, and continued ill-treatment. They contend, that the scope of the Redeemer is to attack the doctrine of *arbitrary divorce*, not to lay down in form the justificatory causes ; and appeal to the parallel passages, Mark x. 4, Luke xvi. 18, which give the prohibition, without even specifying fornication as an exception. Why, they ask, should the statement of Matthew be consid-

ered a complete enumeration of the justifiable causes of divorce, when the other evangelists give none whatever? declaring, absolutely, "Whoso shall put away his wife, and marieth another, committeth adultery?" May it not rather be viewed as a synecdochical expression of the thought, that no divorce is valid which is not founded on the *strongest reasons*? We think the argument of these gentlemen is exceedingly plausible, if not entirely satisfactory; and remember having so entirely convinced by it a worthy old friend, who paid daily visits with great fear and trembling to an equally worthy lady, divorced for causes not laid down in St. Matthew, that he came to the point at once, and rejoices when he hears the name of our figure mentioned.

We have a lingering doubt, whether the example just given be not somewhat strained. Our next is much more clear and certain. The principle we are illustrating, is of special use in explaining the Mosaic law, which some have degraded into a mere civil institute, enjoining nothing but overt acts and a routine of external observances. Nothing

seems more evident than that in the great majority of cases, the legislator is giving *examples*, leaving the generalization to the understanding of those whom he addressed. Paul was decidedly of this opinion, as appears from his comment on the precept. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." He contends, that Moses designed it not so much for oxen as for *men*, teaching by it, that the labourer is worthy of his hire. Nor can it be reasonably doubted, that the command not to "seethe the kid in its mother's milk"—not to "plough with an ox and ass together"—not to "sow different seeds in the same ground," with a hundred others, must be explained on the same principle. The good old custom, therefore, of spiritualizing, or giving moral extent to the ten commandments, which some modern writers object to, is a sound one, and justified by all the laws of interpretation. The Redeemer has given a most beautiful example of it in his sermon on the mount. This subject is well worth the student's attention. A habit of generalizing, without straining or do-

ing violence to Scripture—of rising from particulars to great catholic principles, which come home to every man's business and bosom, is one of the most valuable acquisitions he can make in his theological course.

3. Metaphor, is founded on *the resemblance between objects* ; being the substitution of one thing for another, which is like it. When I say, "God is my protector," I express the thought in its simplicity : When I say, "He is my shield," I clothe it in metaphor. In no figure are the sacred oracles so rich as in this. But little need be said, as there is seldom any difficulty in explaining it. The great point to be remembered is, not to press the resemblance beyond the boundary intended by the author. When Christ declares, that he will come as a thief, *suddenness of appearance*, not *wickedness of purpose* is the thought which he illustrates. Anthropopatheia is reducible to this class, which exhibits the Divine Being, as clothed *with the attributes, and performing the actions of men*. In explaining passages of an anthropopathic character, the rule is plain.

They must be understood in a way suitable to the infinite majesty of God, and purged from everything savouring of impurity or imperfection. His "eye," is his infinite knowledge : his "arm," is his almighty power : the "sounding of his bowels," is his tender love and compassion : his "repentance," is his purpose to change the course of his providence for good and sufficient reasons, springing out of the moral conduct of his creatures : he is "angry," when he punishes the sinner ; and his "fury," paints the severity of their doom.

Prosopopœia, is another form of metaphor, in which human actions and life are ascribed to inanimate or irrational objects. Examples are very frequent, and some exceedingly beautiful : but they are all easily understood.

4. Allegory, is a figure in which *one thing is expressed, and another understood*. It may be defined a continued metaphor, or an image founded on resemblance, carried out into a variety of details, for the purpose of inculcating some moral truth. Nathan's pa-

parable of the poor man and his ewe-lamb ; the description of the vine in the 80th Psalm ; Jonathan's apologue of the election of a king by the trees, in the ixth of Judges, and Paul's representation of the members of the body in 1. Cor. xii, are fine examples. All the parables belong to this class. Their only peculiarity is, that they narrate a series of fictitious *events* ; other allegories are *descriptive*. But this makes no difference in their nature, or the laws of interpreting them.

Allegories consist of two parts ; the sensible image or similitude, as drawn out into a series of imaginary facts, which we may call the *shell* : and the doctrine or moral truth illustrated, which may be called the *kernel*. The latter, is of course, not expressed, being contained in the shell, which must be broken before we become its masters. Practice, however, and the exercise of a little common sense, makes the operation a very easy one. There is always something in the connection, or the occasion, or the accompanying remarks of the speaker, or the nature of the thing itself, which informs us what great

thought is to be elucidated. There are two important rules which the interpreter must observe in relation to this figure.

1. *Never seek for it*; nor turn into allegory what admits of being understood in a plain and obvious sense. The rage for discovering mystical significations in Scripture, is one of the worst diseases with which a young student can be infected. It has led to that infinite multitude of *types*, which disfigure the writings of many otherwise excellent writers, and throw a darkness, that may be felt over the sermons of many of our preachers. A type is a person or thing in the Old Testament, supposed to prefigure a person or thing in the New. It is, therefore, a divinely appointed practical Allegory, and was designed to prepare the minds of those living in the Theocracy, for the farther developments of truth which should characterize the age of the Messiah. In this point of view, a wise and well arranged system of types was an admirable expedient. They illustrated, in a way peculiarly lively and picturesque, the great principles of moral govern-

ment, which remained to be unfolded in the latter day ; so that no shock should be given to the pious mind by their unexpected novelty. "Sacrifices," made the people familiar with the idea of substitution. The "mercy seat," on which the Divine throne was erected, yearly sprinkled with blood, was a speaking allegory, from which they could not but infer something that prepared them for the Christian doctrine of reconciliation. Their water lustrations suggested the necessities of moral renovation. The like may be said of typical persons. The royal David, assisted them to conceive of a great theocratic monarch, whose kingdom was to be "an everlasting kingdom, and of whose government there should be no end." The mysterious king of Salem, so abruptly introduced in patriarchal history, and so abruptly withdrawn, in whom the attributes of priesthood and royalty were so strangely combined, and to whom Abraham himself paid homage, was well calculated to arrest the reflecting spirit, and induce the suspicion at least, that a new order of things might arise,

which would exhibit the august spectacle of a priest upon a throne. We need not suppose that they perceived the full significance of these symbolical representations. It is enough that they suggested great and important hints—*seeds of truth*, rather than truth itself, which after lying buried and torpid in the depths of the soul during the long winter of the ancient economy, quickened into glorious life, “when the time of the singing of birds was come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in their land.”

If now the question is asked, how far the system may be carried out : we answer, so far as it pleases God, and no farther. It is his prerogative to institute ordinances for his church, and when he does, *he lets us know it*. If Samson be an appointed emblem of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am sure that I shall find it in the Old or New Testament ; if they be silent on the point, all his strength shall not compel my assent. I have no talisman given me, with which I can go into the simple perspicuous narratives of the book of God, and by a *presto passe*, turn its men and

women into types ! To prove their existence, much more must be done, than to show that one object on some points resembles another., Mere similitude may qualify for office, but cannot possibly induct into it, else Capt. Fluellen's celebrated theory of a typical connection between Alexander the Great, and king Harry of Monmouth, would be strictly true, being based on indubitable facts : 1st, that the birth-place of both commenced with an M. ; 2d, that both were great fighters ; and 3d, that there was a river in Monmouth and also a river in Macedon, though the honest gentlemen had forgotten its name. The great point to be established, is, that the likeness was designed in the original institution. It is the *previous purpose and intention*, which constitute the whole relation of type and antitype. Now this must be proved, and there is only one way of doing it. Show me from Scripture the existence of such a connection. Whatever persons or things in the Old Testament are asserted by Christ or his Apostles to have been designed prefigurations of persons or things in the

New, I accept. But if you only presume the fact from a real or fancied analogy, you are drawing on your imagination, and assuming the dangerous liberty of speaking for God.

Nor is it enough to quote passages from the New Testament which refer to incidents in the Old. Many facts of the old economy are adduced simply as *happy illustrations*—to adorn or enliven a sentiment, not to prove it, of which we have no less than two instances in the second chapter of Matthew,—“The voice in Rama, lamentation and great mourning—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted,” spoken of by Jeremiah, was the mourning of the Jewish mothers when separated from their children on the way to Babylon. The evangelist alludes to that catastrophe as resembling the murder of the infants by Herod, and says that the murder was a fulfilment of it, meaning nothing more than that the one illustrated the other. This use of the phrase *οπως πληρωθη* is known to every scholar. “Any thing,” as Dr. Bloomfield observes, “may be said to

be fulfilled, if it admits of being appropriately applied." The quotation in the 15th verse, "out of Egypt have I called my son," is a like instance of accommodation. The departure of Israel from Egypt under Moses, of which Hosea speaks, Hos. xi. 1, was neither a prophecy nor type of the Redeemer's brief residence in that country. But there was a pleasing and interesting coincidence, which attracts the notice of the Evangelist, and induces him to borrow the prophet's words.

The consequence of neglecting these plain and rational principles, may be seen in the writings of divines without number. Large folios have been filled with types and anti-types, which exist only in the brains of their authors. The facility of the operation greatly recommends it to many. To become a good Grecian, and skilful collator of parallelisms, is labour indeed! Nothing more easy than to lie all day on a sofa, tracing likenesses between Delilah and Judas Iscariot—Adam's fig-leaves and the works of the law. It is also very convenient; for each sect may provide itself with its own typology, from

which, as from a fortress built in air, and therefore beyond the reach of human weapons, they may hurl defiance to every enemy. In this way, Pope Innocent the third proved to the Emperor of Constantinople, the immeasurable superiority of his Holiness to his Majesty. God, says he, made two great lights, i. e. he constituted two great dignities—the Papal and the Royal. The greater is the Papal, ruling in spirituals, or over the day: the lesser is the Royal, ruling in temporals, or over the night. From which it clearly follows, that as the sun is superior to the moon, so the Pope is exalted above kings!

This was not bad. What his majesty replied we cannot say—though doubtless he contrived some method of turning the tables. The scheme, after all, in matters of argument at least, is not so convenient as we allowed it to be: as we can seldom bring the adversary to our way of thinking about it, and our best cases may be so easily retorted. The types of theologians much resemble their little namesakes of the printing office, in one respect; however ingeniously set, one stroke

of a mischievous elbow can dash them all into *pi*. Those who desire to see the way in which the subject is treated by some of our evangelical divines, may look into "McEwen on the Types." He is greatly commended by some; and we would not deny him the praise of lively fancy and sincere piety. But it is fancy run wild, and no degree of piety can give respectability to nonsense. We hold an interpretation not based on principles, to be an unprincipled interpretation, though endorsed by all the saints in the calendar. That there are persons and things in the ancient dispensation intended to be prefigurative of persons and things in the new, we have already expressed our belief. We go on solid grounds when we make the assertion, and appeal boldly in support of it to the "Word." But we will not desert that light for ignes fatui, or add our own muddy inventions to divine ordinances. The extravagances of the advocates of typology have done more to make the whole doctrine appear ridiculous than all the sneers and wit of infidelity.

2d, As we are not to seek for Allegory, so we must *consider only the parts which are connected with the doctrine taught*—paying no regard to unessential circumstances.—Having mastered the scope of the writer, we must interpret so much of the figure as directly relates to it, and no more. The remark is of special use in explaining parables, though it applies also to types. The correspondence between them and the antitype must never be pressed beyond the manifest design of God in establishing the relation. Levitical sacrifices prefigured the great atonement of the Redeemer; but we must not turn, as some have done, the tongs and fire-shovels of the altar into symbols. The High Priest typified the person of Christ; but it would be mere trifling, to discover profound meanings in every part of the sacerdotal dress.—With regard to parables, the rule must never be lost sight of. Many circumstances in them are only added to give an air of probability, or render them more lively and interesting.—They are (to use the beautiful expression of Solomon) “golden apples in silver baskets :”

As interpreters, we have concern only with the *apples*. Circumstances, in short, form what may be called the machinery of the parable, and therefore do not always have weight in the investigation of its meaning.

The parable of the ten virgins for instance, is designed to teach the folly of those who neglect preparation for their Redeemer's coming. Virgins are selected, not on account of their purity, but because virgins in those days played an important part at bridals; and a bridal feast was made the basis of the fable. The virginity therefore of the personages is a mere circumstance, which teaches nothing. So is the distinction into "five wise," and "five foolish." Nothing can be inferred as to the comparative number of nominal and sincere professors of religion in the world. The two classes are equalized, to guard against all speculations on a subject foreign to the speaker's object. The "sleeping" of the wise virgins is another mere circumstance, introduced to bring about the catastrophe in a natural way—not to teach the dangerous doctrine that the best Christians

fail in spiritual vigilance, and are very liable to be taken by surprise, when the master calls them. The truth is, that their sleeping was designed to be rather complimentary than otherwise, as it brought out the fact that they were *provided* and *ready*. They had nothing to fear : a little refreshment therefore was not amiss, especially as they had no duties to perform until the arrival of the procession.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, is another example. The angels who carry the soul of Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, probably belong, as well as Abraham's bosom itself, to the machinery, and nothing is deducible from it. The representation of the rich man and Abraham being in the same region, and within sight of each other, is an image taken from the ancient idea of Hades, and must not be listed to prove that the souls of the blessed hold intercourse with those of the wicked in another world.

Great prudence therefore, and good taste are needful, in explaining these interesting compositions. Without such qualifications, and foolishly ambitious of making every thing

out of any thing, interpreters have often made them ridiculous. What can be more simple and intelligible than the parable of the good Samaritan, which so beautifully inculcates universal benevolence ! It is absolutely transparent ! Yet in the hands of some, it turns out a perfect riddle, where the true significance is, not obscured, but utterly lost. The man who fell among thieves, is the *sinner* ; the thieves, are the *devil and his angels* ; the priest who passed by on the other side, is the *law* ; the Levite is *legal obedience*. The good Samaritan is *Christ* ; the oil is *grace* ; the wine comfort from the promises ; the inn-keeper is the *Christian Ministry* ; the coming again is *death, judgment, and eternity*. All this may be very pious ; but we repeat our maxim, that no piety can give respectability to nonsense.

RULE VIII.

Attend carefully to Hebrew and Hebraistic idioms. In reading the Bible, never for-

get that its language, in every thing which distinguishes one from another, is at variance with your own. That this holds true of the language of the Old Testament, no one doubts ; but the remark equally applies to that of the New. In its use of words, its grammar, and syntactical constructions, it has many of the peculiarities of its oriental sister ; so that its authors may be said without much exaggeration, while they spoke in Greek to have thought in Hebrew. It could not be otherwise ; an impure Hebrew being their native tongue, and their Greek style being formed by the constant reading of the Septuagint, which was an extremely literal translation of the Old Testament into that language. There is no reason to believe, that any of them except Paul had ever read a single Greek author. The student should be mindful of this, and keep his Old Testament and Septuagint always before him. A few examples of the Hebraising style shall be given : details would fill a volume.

One striking instance, is the use of the Genitive, which has a much more extensive

signification than is customary with us ; comprehending a greater variety of relations ; and often qualifying the noun which governs them as adjectives. This often occurs in the New Testament. In 1 Cor. i. 5, Paul says, the “ sufferings of Christ abound in us.” He means the sufferings not undergone by Christ, but which we undergo for him. Sufferings for the *sake* of Christ would be the proper English expression. The same is meant by the Apostle, when he calls himself “ a prisoner of Christ.” He was a captive, on *account* of him. In various chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, he speaks of the righteousness of God, by which he plainly signifies, not the excellency of the divine nature, but the righteousness by which the sinner is justified, and which he names “ God’s righteousness,” because he graciously provided and accepts it. In the same way, “ horn of salvation” signifies a horn (the emblem of power among the Hebrews borrowed from their pastoral life) which is the *cause of salvation* ; in other words, (when stripped of its orientalism,) a mighty author of deliver-

ance. The Hebrew mode of employing genitives for adjectives is also common. The Apostle addressing the Thessalonians, speaks of their "patience of hope." He means *patient hope*. "Glory of his power," is equal to *glorious power*.

The Hebrews were fond of giving emphasis to what they said by repetition. Jer. xxii. 29, "Oh earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Isa. vi. 3, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty ;" from which many have drawn a prodigiously silly argument for the Trinity.

Hendiadys is the *joining of two words by the copulative, while a single thing is asserted* ; the one being generally employed as a genitive, or adjective : Acts xxiii. 6, "of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." This is a striking instance. He means *the hope of the resurrection* of the dead. In Acts xiv. 13, it is said that the "priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands to the gates." The garlands were upon the oxen : *crowned with garlands*, therefore, expresses the idea. Many judicious commen-

tators explain by this peculiarity the phrase in Matt. iii. 11, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire :—" i. e. with *the burning Spirit*—with him who is powerful, penetrating, and all-purifying, as the element of fire.

There are singular examples of disregard to the regular construction of sentences in both the Old and New Testaments, which in a classical Greek writer would be offensive, but in our authors is positively agreeable ; being so redolent of primitive simplicity. In Gal. iii. 4, 5, 6 verses, we have a series of propositions, which seem to defy all the efforts of interpreters to disembroil them.—Nothing is more common, than for the Apostle to commence a thought in a particular way, and conclude it in a manner entirely different, as if he had forgotten his beginning. Thus he commences the well-known comparison between Adam and Moses, in Rom. v. with the following sentence, or rather part of one, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned."—

He thus gives us reason to expect a redemptive or corresponding clause to be introduced by the usual formula, *so*, or *thus*. None occurs ; and after examining what follows, we are obliged to conclude that in the onward impetuosity of his movement, he has lost sight of his starting point—without however forgetting the thought, to which he does ample justice.

But it is *in the use of verbs*, that the Hebraism of Scripture appears most clearly.—They very frequently express not the action itself, but something approaching or allied to it—the desire or endeavour to perform it—its commencement, or the giving occasion to it ; its permission, or the obligation to its performance. We shall as usual give some examples.

Things are said to be done, where there is only *endeavour* or *desire*. Thus Reuben is said to “have delivered Joseph out of the hands of his brethren.” He attempted his deliverance, but succeeded very partially.—“Whoso findeth his life,” says our Redeemer, “shall lose it :” i. e. *seeks* to find it, is unduly anxious for its preservation.

Sometimes verbs only intimate that the subject *gave occasion* to the action. In Jer. xxxviii. 23, God says to King Zedekiah, "thou shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon, and thou shalt cause Jerusalem to be burnt with fire." The conduct of the unhappy monarch should *lead* to this catastrophe. "The wrath of man," says the Psalmist, "shall praise God"—not praise him, but be an *occasion* of praise. This explains the apparent discrepancy between Matthew and Luke, in their account of the purchase of the field of blood. The former states that it was bought by the priests and elders with the thirty pieces of silver, which Judas Iscariot had returned to them. The latter, in Acts i. 18, says, "this man (Judas) purchased a field with the reward of iniquity." The fact was, that he *gave occasion* for the transaction, and the historian describes him as the agent.

Frequently, words expressing the power of doing actions only mean *facility*; and the denial of power signifies nothing more than *difficulty*. In Ruth iv. 6, the near kinsman

of Elimelech says, "I cannot redeem his inheritance." He *could* have done it, for he was evidently a man of property, but not without considerable sacrifices. The householder in our Lord's parable, of whom a friend solicits admission at midnight, replies that "the door is shut, the children with him in bed, and that he *cannot* rise." He meant that rising was extremely inconvenient. So it is said of our Lord, in Mark vi. 5, that he could do no mighty works in a particular district, because of their unbelief. He could not with pleasure and satisfaction. It was painful to him to throw his pearls before such swine. The Pelagians appeal to this idiom, when they attempt to explain the sinner's inability to do what is good. He *cannot*; because in consequence of the strength of animal impulses, and of bad education, commencing at the mother's breast, it is extremely, and in the last degree, *difficult*. Their enlightened opponent meets them, not by ringing changes on the words "can," and "cannot," violently torn from their connection, but by a careful study of the passages in which

they are found, directed by the laws of sound interpretation.

Words expressing actions are often only *declaratory*—denoting the recognition of them as having been performed, or about to be.—“Behold,” says Isaac to Esau, “I have made Jacob thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants.” The only agency of the venerable patriarch in this transaction consisted in announcing it. He intended to say “I have *declared* Jacob thy lord.” In a like manner, Jeremiah was set up by God “over the nations to root out, pull down, and destroy.” The Prophet was not a military conqueror; but as a divine messenger, he declared what should be accomplished by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. So also when the priest saw on a man signs of leprosy, he was ordered to “pollute or make him unclean,” Levit. xiii. 3. The meaning is plain enough. He was to *pronounce* him unclean, as it is expressed in our English version, which very properly rejects the grosser Hebraisms.

The 7th verse of the 2d Psalm, receives great light from this declaratory use of verbs.

“The Lord hath said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.” Most of the old divines supposed that David is here describing the actual generation of the son from the father ; having in thought carried himself back to a point in eternity when the generation was supposed to take place. The words “this day,” refer to that imaginary point. The view cannot be sustained, and among other reasons for this, that though certain German theologues of our times have invited themselves to be present at the generation—not only of the son but the father from the great bosom of *Nichts* ; nothing of the kind is found in sacred Scriptures. We do not believe that the most raging delirium could have made the pious, simple-hearted Psalmist imagine to himself a God *beginning to be*—or a God *half formed*. The word “begotten,” is to be taken declaratively.—The point of time assumed by the writer in this noble Messianic ode, is the resurrection of its subject from the dead. God is represented as addressing him on the occasion—presenting him to the admiring gaze of the

whole moral universe ; and acknowledging the endearing eternal relation of which, *on that day*, he had given such magnificent illustration. The clause may be thus briefly paraphrased : “Thou art my only begotten and eternal son. I here avow thee to be such, and require all my subjects to honour thee as partner of my throne.” With perfect propriety therefore, the Apostle connects the passage with our Lord’s resurrection : Rom. i. 4, “declared to be the son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead.”

The last example which we shall give, is of words signifying action, being used to denote the *permission of it* ; as in the prayer of David, Psalm cxix. 31, “I have adhered to thy testimonies, put me not to shame.” A more striking example we have in Isaiah lxii. 17, “O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear.” In this passage and some others, the English reader is startled at discovering indications of the horrible doctrine, that God exercises a positive agency

in the production of moral evil. Thus we are taught to pray, that he "may not lead us into temptation:" He "hardened Pharaoh's heart:" He "shuts the eyes of sinners, and makes their ears heavy, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears." They contain, however, nothing alarming; the whole doctrine which they teach, being approved by the light of reason itself; that God, in righteous judgment gives the presumptuous sinner up to his own evil impulses, permitting him to "harden himself even under those means which he useth for the softening of others."* Misapprehension of this idiom led many excellent men in New-England, to profess without scruple or limitation, their belief, that unholy volitions were the immediate effect of divine agency. The race is nearly extinct, having been succeeded (as might be expected from the usual course of things in the world), by a generation who seem afraid to trust the Supreme Being with any agency even in good. We

* Westminster Confession of Faith.

have always revered those worthy men. We especially admire that iron intrepidity, which enabled them to look in the face and take to their bosoms so ugly a monster, from simple regard to the divine will. Men who could sacrifice to faith the strongest moral instincts of their nature, were prepared for any thing. Yet after all—in the matter of expounding Scripture, *heroism* is a poor substitute for *Hebrew*.

The student will be making small progress in the knowledge of his Bible, who does not soon find that we have been giving only a few specimens of its phraseology. Let him devote his best powers of attention to it : for there is not a tree in the garden which yields more precious fruit. What especially recommends it, is the fact, that in exploring the Hebraisms of the Bible, we go to the very fountain head of knowledge concerning the meaning of those important and constantly recurring words by which the New Testament writers describe the fundamental truths of Christianity ; such as *faith*, *propitiation*, *redemption*, *atonement*, *church*, *baptism*, *regeneration*,

justification and righteousness. Let a young man tolerably versed in the languages, sit down as ignorant as a babe of the gospel, and study these words carefully as he finds them in his Hebrew and Greek Old Testament, with no other human aid but a good dictionary and concordance; we promise him with unbounded confidence, that he will obtain an infinitely clearer notion of them in a single week, than by reading five hundred folios of polemic divinity.

RULE IX.

Much of Scripture being Prophetical, we should acquaint ourselves with the nature and laws of that kind of composition. This is far from easy. No department of theology has occasioned so much perplexity to serious inquirers, and the subject is still beset with difficulties, which we have little hope will soon be removed. God has suffered clouds and darkness to rest on it for the wisest reasons, some of which are obvious. He would

not deprive his Church of the privilege which she has enjoyed in every age and place, of walking by faith. He would not by exhibiting a clear picture of the future, disturb the freedom of his creatures, and the natural course of human events : in short, he would teach, that our religion provides other business for us, than to indulge a childish curiosity as to "times and seasons." We would not therefore encourage the student to speculate much on this subject. The predictions which have been fulfilled, especially those accomplished in the advent of our Redeemer, deserve all attention—being the strongest confirmation of the truth of our holy religion, and arguments of resistless force against the Infidel. As to futurity—let the "sapphire throne," borne by the flaming Cherubim, take its own mighty course. There is a "living Spirit in the wheels," who keeps his own counsel, and seems, if we may judge from the past success of Apocalyptic commentators, to treat with very little respect the numerous attempts to advise him. Scan as curiously as you will, the car of Providence

in its magnificent progress through the earth : but choose wisely your part of observation, and by all means *mount up behind!*

The following hints on the general subject of Prophecy may be of use.

1st. *Remember that the diction of this part of Scripture is intensely poetical.* Not only were its authors poets in the common sense of the word, but in its richest and noblest acceptance. In splendour of imagination—in the gorgeous colouring which they throw over every thing they describe—in boldness of imagery and enthusiastic glow of feeling, they excel all other authors. How miserably such noble spirits will be explained by those who treat their productions as if they were discourses on History or Civil Government, we need not say. Quite as little may be expected from those, who discover in their writings a dark and tangled forest of hieroglyphics; insist that every image is a definite symbol of invariable signification; and actually turn the noblest creations of genius into an Egyptian alphabet, of which these great Champollions have been fortunate

enough to discover the key that enables them to decipher the most crabbed page in the book of destiny !

2d, *They were while composing their predictions in a state of ecstasy or high supernatural excitement*, produced immediately by the inspiring Spirit. The influence they were under, we have reason to think, was of a much more engrossing and controlling character, than that which illuminated the minds of the Apostles. The latter, while they thought the thoughts and spoke the words of God, retained all their mental activity and self-command. Their ideas seem to have risen spontaneously, according to the laws of association, nor do we discover any traces of a compulsory necessity, in the election of some, and the rejection of others. No enlightened reader of Paul for instance, can doubt, that he *thought out* every thing he said, as fully as if he had not been under heavenly influence. His personality mingles itself with every sentiment he utters. He sends courteous salutations to private friends, describes his feelings on hearing favourable

or painful accounts of them, reminds his young favourite Timothy of his ill health, speaks of a certain "cloak" which he had left at Troas, "as also the parchments," hopes to visit some of them, though he is not certain; nay, there are strong indications in one or two cases, of his concluding a letter, and then returning to it for the purpose of adding something new.

With the prophets it was different. They "were carried away," as the Apostle Peter expresses it, by the inspiring God, and seem rather to be acted on, than voluntary agents. Hence those various expressions which represent "the hand of the Lord as coming upon them," and their yielding to his influence as something involuntary on their part, accompanied with a feeling of horror and great darkness, and sometimes a falling to the ground: Gen. xv. 12; Num. xxiv. 4.; 1 Sam. xix. 20. This is, of course, to be understood comparatively; for we have already observed, that even prophecy did not entirely paralyze reason and self-consciousness. But they were certainly wrought upon

in a much more powerful manner, than the other holy men who were honoured with a divine afflatus. Though not mere machines, nor agitated with a blind fury like the ancient Pythia of Delphos, they were yet not entirely themselves. The powers of perception and volition were for a time partially suspended, and their minds became so many placid mirrors, from which were reflected the pure rays of heavenly truth.

3d. In this state, *they saw objects as present to them.* The various incidents and transactions which were revealed, imprinted themselves vividly on their imaginations and with all the force of living truth, so that they possessed an ideal reality, similar to that which objects have in dreams. Hence the frequency with which they are called "Seers," and their revelations "visions." Thus Balaam, who was doubtless a true prophet, describes himself, as "the man whose eyes are opened, who heard the words of God, who saw the vision of the Almighty, having fallen upon the ground." Similar were the revelations of Isaiah: "In the year that king Uz-

ziah died," he says, "*I saw*—the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." On another occasion, *he sees*—a hero marching forward in splendid apparel, stained with the blood of conquered enemies, and exclaims in admiration, as if personally addressing him: "Who is this that cometh from Edom with died garments from Bozrah, that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" Ezekiel, when the hand of the Lord was on him, "*saw* and passed through a valley of dry bones," which, after being addressed by the prophet at the divine commandment, "came together, bone to bone, and the breath came into them, and they stood up an exceeding great army." Habakkuk stands upon his watch-tower, *to see*—what God will say and exhibit to him. These were not rare and isolated cases. They were of a more striking character than many, but they illustrate the general mode in which the prophetic mind was affected. In short, we may consider the future events predicted, as a large and magnificent *panorama*, en-

compassing the sacred visionary on every side, and becoming for a time his whole world of being, in which he breathes, and moves, as if in his proper home.

He did not, however, *see them in their strict relations to each other, nor in their chronological connection.* God did not think fit to exhibit a clear and perfect map, for wise reasons. Each saw pieces, *membra disjecta* of the mighty whole : but in no one place, do we find a prophet giving a symmetrical view of the entire compass of a subject. Sometimes, we find a rich delineation of the person of Christ ; at others, a description of his kingdom and the glories of his reign. Here, note is taken of him, as meek, gentle, compassionate, who “will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” There, he is seen striking through kings in the day of his wrath, filling the places with dead bodies, and wounding the head over many countries. Some prophets, say not a word of his humiliation and cruel sufferings—Malachi for example. Only two, advert to his remarkable forerunner. Sometimes the vision

is sad and melancholy, exhibiting the rejection of the Jews on account of their unbelief, and their utter dissolution as a people. At others, all is joy and sunshine. The city is rebuilt, the sanctuary is restored, all kings of the earth bring their treasures to it, and the ransomed of the Lord return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. This fragmentary character of prophecy, is a very striking and important one. The want of duly considering it, is the principal cause of those complaints we often hear, especially from infidels, concerning the darkness of this part of revelation. Were such to sit down, and carefully unite the scattered pieces into a whole, they would be astonished to find how clearly, as well as fully and consistently, the Christian Saviour is delineated.

Equally deserving notice, is the fact, that they *seldom perceive objects as related to each other in time*. The reason has been already stated. They were in the midst of what they saw, like a man in a dream. The events of the far distant future were so many present realities, on which they gazed with

terror or delight; unsuspicious, probably, that ages would elapse before the fulfilment. Thus Isaiah, chap. ix. 5, speaks of Messiah as if *already* born, and entering into his kingdom. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." In chap. xlii. 1, He directly points to him: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." Instances of this are numberless. It is not surprising, therefore, that events most widely separated from each other, should be blended in prophetic description, and treated as continuous. They saw them *in clusters*—not in chronological succession.

Thus in the 10th chapter of Isaiah, we have a thrilling account of the destruction of the Assyrians, which took place at least six centuries before the coming of Christ. Yet the prophet joins it immediately with that event, by the ordinary copulative: "*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*" The conjunction of this great event

with the return from Babylon, is so frequent, as to strike the most careless reader. Our Redeemer's prophecies display the same character. In the remarkable prediction contained in the 24th of Matthew, two great objects hovered before his mind : the destruction of Jerusalem, to take place in less than forty years ; and his final coming in glory. Yet he passes from the former to the latter at once, and even intimates the succession by a word, (*εὐθὺς*), which seems to exclude all interval or delay : ver. 29 ; “ *Immediately* after the tribulation of those days (the destruction of Jerusalem) shall the sign of the Son of man appear, and all the tribes of the earth shall wail, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and he shall send his angels,” &c. If any wonder that he should have conjoined two events so distinct from each other, by the strong adverb *εὐθὺς* ; let him consider ; that when our Redeemer assumed the prophet's mantle, he voluntarily placed himself under the prophet's laws. He

saw objects, precisely as Isaiah would have done, and *spoke* as he *saw*.

This characteristic of the prophetic writings is inscribed on almost every page. All the Messianic passages exhibit it in a greater or less degree ; many of them, for instance, placing the final consummation of all things in immediate juxtaposition with the first preaching of the Gospel. The field of sacred vision may, in this respect, be compared to a clear midnight sky. We see the stars above our head—star differing from star in magnitude and brightness, but their relative distance from us, or from each other, we are unable even to conjecture.

The subject may be illustrated by a fact in mental philosophy. It is now well understood, that sight gives no primary information concerning distance, in any case whatever. We obtain it from touch. Having acquired by the constant *handling* of objects, notions of their comparative nearness or remoteness, we associate with them the various impressions received by the eye, and learn to infer their distance in the use of this

organ alone. Its informations, however, entirely depend on the previous *handling*. Without experience, sight would be perfectly helpless—as is proved by the fact, that persons born blind who have suddenly obtained their sight, cannot for some time even walk the streets. Every thing appears to them fixed in a plane, till repeated trials have taught them to correct the illusion. Supposing, therefore, a state of things, in which by reason of the great remoteness or inaccessibility of objects, experiment is impossible : it is clear that sight would be forever at fault, and unable to form the least notion of the relations in space, which they bear to each other. Such was actually the state of the prophet. He had no measure by which to judge of the real size or proportion of the events he foresaw. He was ushered into a new world, nothing belonging to which he had ever *touched*—where all was *ethereal*—*boundless*—“dark by excessive bright.” Nothing in his own experience, or that of his nation, or of mankind at large, offered the slightest clue to guide him through the won-

drous scene ; as Isaiah distinctly commemorates, "From the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear ; neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth on him." No wonder that he was utterly lost in the contemplation, and stood amazed—like the man blind from his birth, when his darkened eyeballs first open on the glories of the visible universe !

4th. As the scenes and events described were present to him, *so their dress and colouring were borrowed from objects with which, as a Jew, he was familiar.* The whole representation having the nature of a picture addressed to the eye, it was necessary that a certain system of imagery be adopted, in which the great moral truths should lie enshrined, as in a beautiful casket. This imagery must be familiar to him, and the people ; otherwise it would be unintelligible. Hence we find, that the kingdom of Christ is always exhibited by ideas taken from the national theocracy. Messiah is not only "Son of David," but "David" himself.

Mount Zion and Jerusalem, the religious and civil metropolis of the nation, signify the Church redeemed by the blood of the only true sacrifice for sin, and serving God in spirit and in truth. The aggrandizement and enlargement of Jerusalem, are the enlargement and increase of that church. Her enemies are called by the names of the ancient enemies of Judah—Egypt, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Babylon. The restoration of the Jews in latter days to the blessings of God's covenant, is symbolized by their rebuilding a temple on Mount Moriah: and the union of all nations in the love and worship of God, is shadowed forth by a universal participation in the feast of tabernacles. The extinction of sectarian feuds, and the delightful harmony prevailing among the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the redeemed children of Abraham, is beautifully represented by the healing of the ancient separation between Israel and Judah.

There is nothing strange in this. It is perfectly natural to invest our conceptions with the hue appropriate to our physical and

moral condition, and the objects with which we are daily conversant. Where could the prophet have gone, if precluded from this source of colouring? Besides, there was a most serious truth at the bottom. Our blessed Saviour tells us, that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil—in other words, that his religion is but the purification and expansion of the faith of God's ancient people. How entirely becoming then was it, that the spirit of prophecy should paint its future glory, in those forms of thought to which the people were accustomed, and which were so dear to the national heart.

These remarks have perhaps been unduly protracted. But the subject is important, and we think—not always understood. Besides, our statement of general principles, relieves from the necessity of entering into a minute detail of rules. Two only shall be specified.

1st. *Be not anxious to find chronological connection and order in the prophecies.* They are all fragmentary, and exhibit their subject in detached pieces. We have also seen, that

events the most widely separated in time, are grouped together, as if contemporary, or immediately following each other. Due regard to this, will enable us to dispense with many violent expedients which have been resorted to by the learned ; especially with the irrational assumption of a "double sense" in prophecy. That which gave it favour with commentators, was the fact above stated, that events far separated in time, were closely connected in description—to explain which, they found it convenient to suppose two distinct fulfilments. The first, they imagined to take place in some event which occurred among the Jewish people, during the existence of their economy. The second and more perfect, was realized in the advent of the Saviour. To give the scheme greater respectability, it was married to Typology, who adopted the children as her own, calling the temporal fulfilment—the *type*, and the other the *antitype*. A good example occurs in the 10th and 11th chapters of Isaiah already quoted. The 10th, announces the destruction of the Assyrian empire. In the

11th, the prophet advances at once to the glories of the Messiah's reign—when “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid, and nothing shall hurt nor destroy, in all God's holy mountain.” Yet not a few contend, that this magnificent prophecy had a primary fulfilment in Hezekiah ; though they grant a far more complete accomplishment in our Redeemer, of whom we need not add that they suppose Hezekiah to have been a type !

The view is arbitrary beyond measure, and opposed to facts. We maintain without fear, that wherever Christ is definitely spoken of at all, he is spoken of *alone*, and where the blessedness of his rule is delineated, no other blessedness is delineated. Even in the Messianic Psalms, he is the *entire subject*. David may have gathered materials of his descriptions from incidents in his own life and experience, but in no sense does he speak of himself. His exalted “Lord” is the all in all which occupies his mind. When you meet therefore a passage, connecting at once the coming of a glorious epoch with the re-

building of the temple after the Babylonish captivity, dismiss all anxiety to find it partially or typically fulfilled in Zerubbabel, or Alexander the great, or the Maccabees ; but instantly transport yourselves into Messianic times, or, if necessary, to the consummation of all things. The notion that prophecy has two senses, a primary and secondary, throws a dark cloud of suspicion over both—almost conceding to the infidel, that it is a kind of writing which cannot be understood by the ordinary laws of exegesis. If this were so, Peter, when he spoke of a “sure word of prophecy,” was very unfortunate in his choice of an epithet.

2. *Do not interpret Prophecy too literally.* Its splendid imagery, and glowing pictures must not be tortured into statements, such as a witness makes in a court of justice, or a historian, in describing the campaigns of Wellington or Bonaparte. They are figures and must be treated as figures. Here, our Millenarian Brethren err exceedingly. Their whole hypothesis of the Jews becoming pre-eminent as a nation over all the people of the

earth, the actual subjugation of the latter under their political sway, the rebuilding of the temple, the resurrection of the martyrs, and the personal residence of Christ as a temporal monarch in Jerusalem, rests on no other basis than the assumption, that tropes when found in the Bible tell the literal truth. It is the very error committed by the carnal Jews themselves, and which led to their rejection of the Just One. Inflated with the most fantastic hopes and anticipations nurtured by their mistaken interpretation of Prophetic symbols, they crucified their prince, not because he failed in proving his celestial mission, but because he had nothing to offer them, except a "kingdom, that was righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

To the instances already cited, proving that the imagery taken from the Theocracy was symbolical of great moral and spiritual truths, we add the following, merely as specimens. The student must pursue the investigation for himself. In the latter part of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, we have a magnificent account of the martial gathering of the Jews under the standard of the Messiah, and

their brilliant conquests over enemies. The question is, whether we must understand it literally? Try the principle upon the 14th verse: "But they shall fly upon the shoulders (the figure is taken from the pouncing of a ravenous bird) of the Philistines toward the west; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them." These were the ancient enemies of the theocracy, and are according to our view, selected by the Poet with great taste and appropriateness, as representatives of every thing opposed to the peace and happiness of the covenanted people, when they should have submitted themselves to Christ. If wrong in this, we see no alternative but to expect along with a resurrection of the martyrs, that of all the savage clans who infested Israel during her national existence. Try it on the 15th verse: "The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and shake his hand over the river, and smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry shod." There is here, a beautiful allusion to the Exodus of Israel from

Egypt through the Red Sea. On that occasion, God brought his people safely through the raging waters, but now—he promises that he will utterly destroy the sea itself. Can this mean any thing more, than that when his ancient people are to be gathered into the Christian fold he will *remove every obstruction*; no obstacle shall be so great that he will not put it out of the way by his almighty power.

In Hosea ii. 14, God promises that he will bring his church “into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt, and give her vineyards and the valley of Achor for a door of hope.” No one surely dreams, that the Jews are again to travel through Arabia Petræa, under the guidance of the fire and cloud. The words are plainly allusive, and express the general idea—that God will deliver his people from their spiritual bondage, and give them every proof of his cordial and tender love.

What shall be done with such a passage as that in Malachi, which distinctly states

that the old Prophet Elijah is to come from heaven, and announce the advent of the Messiah? "Behold I send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Nothing is more express; and the literalists would most certainly add to the accompaniments of the personal advent, a mission of this prophet, (as some have done,) if Christ had not determined him in Mat. xi. 14, to be John the Baptist. We are so happy in this case, as to have not only a New Testament interpretation of the phrase as applied to John, but a New Testament statement of the reason for it, which we take leave to employ as our key, in opening other dark chambers in ancient Prophecy. Luke i. 17, "He shall go in the *spirit and power* of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."

The 33d chapter of Jeremiah exhibits the principle for which we contend, in so clear and decisive a manner, that it is quite sufficient of itself to settle the question. God is promising to his people, the advent of their

great spiritual redeemer, and the happy consequences of his reign are graphically described in v. 15 : “ In those days will I cause the Branch to grow up unto David. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely ; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.” That the Prophet is expatiating on the blessedness of the new economy in these words, is beyond a doubt. But what thought immediately follows ? Surely, unless I apply my key, a very singular one : v. 18, “ Neither (in these times) shall the Priests and Levites want a man before me *to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.*” Is it possible to consider this as any thing more than symbol, borrowed from the Levitical service of the old economy ? Will Aaron return from his grave, Christian altars rise to steam with the blood of rams, lambs, and he-goats ; and the purified churches of the Redeemer return to those weak and beggarly elements from which she has been delivered ? The fantastic notion got up to evade the force of many passages resembling this, that

the Jews will return to their own land *unconverted*, and offer sacrifices, is of no service here. The Levitical bondage is expressly declared to be *enduring*, and its continuance is represented as one of the most glorious incidents of King Messiah's reign.

It is needless to dwell on a point so evident. The scheme of these ingenious gentlemen cannot stand. It introduces a worldly element in our holy religion, at utter variance with its genius and spirit. By its dazzling promises of "all the kingdoms of the earth and their glory," it strengthens the earthly principle within us, and greatly lowers the tone of Christian sentiment. It dishonours the glorified person of our Redeemer, by degrading him from the seventh heavens to our miserable earth, from the right hand of the Eternal Father, to a marble hovel in Jerusalem : and all this it does, not only without necessity, but in violation as we think of the plainest rules of sound interpretation.

With regard to the Apocalypse of John, we have made no special reference to it, as its highly figurative and allegorical character strikes every reader at once. Indeed it is

surprising, that persons should be found capable even in their dreams, of putting literal constructions on any part of a book so decidedly and professedly enigmatical, with the exception of the first three chapters. Yet this is done to a certain extent by the expositors above mentioned, though they are far from carrying out the principle with due consistency. They grant all we are disposed to ask concerning the general structure of the poem; for poem, beyond all doubt it is. They allow, that its angels with their trumpets, sickles and vials—its thrones, four living creatures, and elders clothed in white—its “locusts,” like horses prepared unto the battle—“its red dragon with seven heads and ten horns”—its woman “clothed with the sun” and that other female who “sits on many waters and is drunk with the blood of Saints,” are parts of a splendid gallery of emblematic pictures, designed to represent certain great moral truths connected with the state and progress of the church in different ages. But when they come to the *Martyr’s corner*, they suddenly wax literal—insisting that the “souls of them that were beheaded for the witness

of Jesus," are the identical men and women who died at former periods, and are now to rise from their graves and reign with Christ in person, a thousand calendar years ! This theory, they maintain in the face of two plain and undeniable facts ; first, that the resurrection of the martyrs, stands in the very centre of the boldest symbolical imagery which the book contains ; and secondly, that "*resurrection*" is a favourite figure employed by the Prophets, to denote any great moral renovation in general, and is used in cases where physical resuscitation is entirely out of the question. Isa. xxvi. 19, Ezek. xxxvii. 13, Hos. vi. 2. Sober criticism would draw a conclusion directly opposite to that of these gentlemen—would infer that the phrase in question cannot possibly receive any other than a figurative sense, on the very rational and obvious principle, that a symbolical document must be symbolically interpreted.

While, however, we differ from the literalists ; let us avoid the other extreme, that of turning Prophecy entirely into figure. Doubtless many things will take place, substantially as described. Such we think is

the promised return of the Jews to their own land. We build the opinion, not so much on expressions used in the Prophets, which *might all be symbolical of their union to the spiritual theocracy*, as on the covenant stipulations given to the people in the land of Moab, and recorded in the 30th and 31st chapters of Deuteronomy. This legislative edict, which I have no right to treat as a predictive poem, states most emphatically, and with great variety of phrase, that if after being rooted out of their country they should repent, the "Lord their God would bring them back into the land, which their fathers possessed, and they should possess it." Still more confidently do we believe in their conversion to Christ, their holy brotherhood with the Gentiles, and the universal reign of peace on the earth. How far the literal fulfilment will be carried, we are ignorant. God did not give us prophecy, that we might know all things; but might have encouragements to faith, and incentives to holy exertion. The expositor who has not learnt to be ignorant—and to let his ignorance sit gracefully on him, has yet to learn the elements of his art.

ADDRESS

TO STUDENTS OF THEOLOGY.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN,

We have been exhibiting in brief compass, the rules and maxims by which you are to be guided in the study of Holy Scripture. Before parting company, we desire to say a few words on the deep responsibility which you are under in relation to this matter. Mere rules, however clearly laid down and faithfully written on the tablets of memory, will be of little avail, unless accompanied with earnest, vigorous, and untiring labour in reducing them to practice. Allow us then to speak on this point, with frankness and Christian affection. As candidates for the sacred office, you have a duty to perform to the word of God, which requires the devotion of your best faculties, the consecration of all your time, and a fixedness of purpose which nothing can relax. If you doubt it, look at the *nature of that office!*

Perhaps Christianity is in nothing more

strikingly distinguished from other religions, than in the function and duties assigned to its ministers. The priests of heathenism never dared to come out among the people, as simple promulgers of truth. Indeed they could not well give what was not in their possession, and this they knew. Not a philosopher of the porch or academy, laughed more heartily than themselves, at the ridiculous impostures they were daily practising on their votaries ! What their system wanted in solidity, however, they made up in form, and if it could not speak to the understanding, it should at least dazzle the senses, and captivate the imagination. Hence those magnificent structures whose broken fragments are still the worlds admiration, in whose sacred shrines were encased the wonderful achievements of statuary—the all but breathing Gods of stone, which modern virtuosos still worship with little short of heathen idolatry. Hence the expensive sacrificial rites by which these marble gods were propitiated, the pompous festivals and processions, the magnificent exhibitions of

poetry, dance and song, which in their origin were purely religious, and never entirely lost the character of worship rendered to the Deity. Hence the famous mysteries, in the celebration of which every thing was combined to awe—to fascinate—to bind in the chains of an abject superstition, the man who yielded himself to their bewitchments.

But far different is the spell which our holy religion of light and love, casts on the human faculties ! Prejudice itself cannot deny, that whether its principles be true or false, they belong to a system magnificently intellectual. Far, indeed, are we from supposing, that its exclusive aim is to ratify speculative error. Its astonishing power over the heart, is a fact conceded by all. But we mean to say, that this control, it exercises through the previous mastery it has obtained over the understanding—the conscience—the unsophisticated sense of right and wrong. It calls to deep thoughts—grave discourse, soul stirring contemplations. The themes which it brings before the mind, are so magnificent and enchained with infinity itself, that the

sublimest intellect is lost, before it has entered on their investigation, and yet so congenial to reason, that what we do comprehend, appear almost self-evident propositions.

It tells concerning a pure Almighty Spirit, who by a simple act of will, called into being the heavens and the earth. It imparts the most interesting details concerning his providential government, informs us of our primitive condition, and gives the most simple and beautiful solution of the great problem which has confounded the acutest minds, "whence come evils upon men." It tells us when, and where, the first notice was given of that plan of mercy, into which angels are looking with growing wonder and delight. It relates with accuracy the preparatory measures for its execution, unfolding his mysterious dealings for more than a thousand years with that singular people, whom he had selected to be the depository of prophecy and promise, till the advent of *him*, in whom all families of the earth should be blessed. Thus far, we are only in the holy place of the temple—and now the veil is rent in twain, which conceal-

ed the glories of the inner house, allowing us to behold the *true ark* and the *living personal Shechinah*, "God manifested in the flesh;" who, after he had purged our sins, ascended on high, and sat down at the right hand of the heavenly majesty !

In exact cospondence with so thoughtful and suggestive a religion, is the work of its official minister. He is not a master of ceremonies, presiding over a splendid ritual, which fills the eye, but leaves an aching void in the heart. He is by divine institution—a *teacher* ; and in the simple, naked grandeur of this character, he stands before the people. A volume has been put into his hands of rich and various contents, nay, absolutely teeming with matter ; and at the peril of his soul, he must spread it out in its whole length and breadth before his hearers. The principle on which he must act, is this simple and obvious one, that there is nothing in his commission which he may deliberately overlook. He is not at liberty here. Some parts of duty may perhaps be omitted without subjecting him to the brand of gross unfaithful

ness. But if he neglects to expound the sacred volume, if he shows no anxiety to form among his people, habits of carefully reading and inwardly digesting it, he may well tremble at the thought of rendering an account.

Labour then—labour, is heaven's first law of preparation for the gospel ministry. We have seen, that the Bible, though a popular, and in many respects an easy book, presents serious difficulties to him who would become master of its treasures. Both its great divisions are written in languages, which have long ceased to be vernacular. The people who spoke them were distinguished by remarkable peculiarities of opinion, habits, laws, which influenced greatly their modes of expression. Besides therefore, possessing a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, one must be well acquainted with Jewish and classical antiquities, including chronology, geography, civil and religious history. Yet, even this is but preliminary. Now comes the actual tug: the reading of verse after verse with the accurate settling of every philological question that arises, by aid of the dictionary

and grammar ; the examining of scope, context, parallelism, idiom and tropical diction ; the comparing our own results with those of some judicious commentator ; and the careful gathering up of the great truths whether doctrinal or practical, contained in every paragraph. These—are the gymnastics, by which the young Christian athlete learns to endure hardness, and becomes a skilful and gallant soldier in the service of his master ! Do you complain of the arrangement ? Then ask the Lord Jesus Christ, why he ordained it ; why it was not enough to tread the “dolorous way” in his own person, without imposing vigils and self-denials on his followers ? Tell him plainly, that while you like his wages, you dislike the labour ; and wish to share his kingdom without companionship in his patience and tribulation. Does your cheek mantle with shame at the suggestion ? Then be silent young man—and to your work !! It is quite honour enough for the disciple to be as his master, and the servant as his Lord.

But some one asks, in a tone half-apologetical, whether, after all, much of the trouble

we have spoken of may not be spared ? Are we not blessed with "king James' admirable translation of the Bible," and with most judicious commentators, in whom are reposed as much criticism and literary information, as are necessary to a right understanding it ? Why, as the fountain is so difficult of access, not content ourselves with these delectable pipes at our very door ? We confess, that language like this, when heard, (as it sometimes is) ruffles our good humour. God, in his infinite kindness to men, has preserved for them an ample revelation of his will, by a series of dispensations falling little short of miracle. He has set apart an order of men to be its official expounders, and the church is generously sustaining the institution by its munificent provision for the gratuitous education of candidates in all stages of their progress, and when they have entered on their work, by relieving them from every worldly care and avocation, that they may give themselves wholly to it, and their profiting may appear to all men. Yet the question is seriously asked, whether a practical acquaint-

ance with these lively oracles in their proper dialects, should be anxiously cultivated by the Christian minister !!

We blush to think in how many respects the children of the world are wiser than the children of light. The merchant's clerk, if his interest point that way, will sit down and master French, Spanish and German, without heaving a sigh. The gentleman who intends to travel a few years in the east, grudges no pains to make himself acquainted with Turkish, Arabic or *Lingua Franca*. Even the girl scarcely in her teens, wearied of thrumming on her guitar to the harsh strains of her native English, determines, and carries the purpose through in a way that might astonish many a grave student of the other sex, to achieve a conquest over the sweetly flowing Italian. But the professed interpreter of God's holy word, the legate of the skies, is so astounded at the thought of learning effectively a pair of languages—than either of which, a finer never vibrated on the human ear, that he prefers to live and die,

just able to spell the letters of his commission !

With regard to our English translation, much as we admire that noble monument of "English pure and undefiled," which will last probably as long as the world, we say to those who quote it in the present argument, that it is an exceedingly imperfect representation of the original. The venerable men who formed it, were not profoundly versed in either Greek or Hebrew, though their attainments were eminent for the day in which they lived ; and accordingly there are not a few instances in every page, where the sense is not injured merely, but entirely lost. Even where the signification of words is given properly, the transitive and connecting particles which show the relation of the different members of a thought, have secondary meanings so entirely different from those of the corresponding particles in English, that a literal version is often nothing better than a mere travesty of the original. Take St. Paul for an example. It is quite impossible for a mere English reader to peruse his argu-

mentative epistles, without feeling tempted to suspect, that there may be a grain of truth in the profane remark of Dr. Priestly, that his premises are not always sound, nor his conclusions logical. His reverence for inspiration will not allow him to say so in express words. But if asked the question, he will acknowledge his great surprise, at the little profit which he receives from the decidedly most intellectual writer of the Christian school.

Now where in this doubt and darkness shall the interpreter go? To expositors? But expositors often differ; and who shall decide when doctors disagree? The value of this class of authors to the unlearned reader, and to the learned also, if properly used, we are far from denying. But not one is to be absolutely trusted. To none, does the remark of Mr. Locke that "every man has a secret flaw in his cranium, producing some extravagancy in opinion or action, which in that particular, renders him fitter for Bedlam than ordinary conversation," apply with more force than to commentators. The best, has not only faults, but frequently under the influence of secta-

rian bias or mental idiosyncrasy, falls into perfect absurdity. He only therefore uses them with safety, who can compare them together, and exercise an eclectic judgment of his own. Pitiable, most pitiable, is the condition of that professed teacher of Christianity, the only source of illumination to whose darkened mind, are the contradictory opinions of men—who has not the shadow of a reason for his preference of one above another, except that it is more agreeable to the Shibboleth of his sect !

Can a creature thus lame, blind, and shackled, the passive recipient of whatever the adopted lord of his understanding and conscience may choose to impose upon him, be called an authoritative (we grant the “authorized”) expounder of divine truth? Impossible ! and no one is more fully convinced of it, than the man himself. He may not run to the house top, and proclaim it ; for this would greatly lower his estimation with the people, and probably something else. He may even join in the senseless clamor against a learned ministry. But he feels neverthe-

less, that he labours under a dreadful *incompetency*, that he is a *blind leader of the blind*, right only by *chance*, and without even enjoying the happiness of knowing it, that the noblest part of him, his understanding, is prostrate before a miserable creature *as blind perhaps as himself*, whom he often suspects, but *always follows*—with the servility of a dog, not daring to move a hand-breadth from his track. In a word, he cannot help despising himself, and takes refuge probably from the shame of his own thoughts, in the entire neglect of Scriptural inquiries—limiting his ambition to ringing peals from Sabbath to Sabbath, on a few topics of general exhortation!

These remarks may be thought more applicable to those already in the sacred office, than persons who are in a course of preparation. But it is not so. Though the evil is developed in the ministry, its birth-place and cradle are our seminaries of learning. Here, those habits are formed both for good and evil, which mould the character beyond the reach of change, except by the sovereign grace of God. We fear that they are often formed

badly; and that many of our young candidates for the ministry need the application of a little stimulus to their reason and conscience.

The general sincerity of their purpose to serve God faithfully in the gospel of his Son, we do not intend here to question. But that they are far from being awake to the necessity of vigorous and untiring effort, in making biblical preparation for their work, is too evident. They entered the Theological seminary perhaps, full of life and ardor. But, alas! in one short month, a chilling frost came over them, nipping the tender buds of promise, and infusing a deadly torpor through all their faculties. They became fatigued—alarmed—and are evidently disappointed men. They seem to have expected, that after passing through the straight gate of conversion, they should be put on a road strewn with flowers, bordered with groves of citron—and couches of ease at every turn, inviting the traveller to sweet repose. 'Tis hard they think—passing hard, that gentlemen of talent and piety, so devoted to the great work

of converting sinners, that if the church permitted it, they would gladly mount the pulpit at once, should be treated almost as harshly as a galley slave at the oar ; condemned to disinter a thousand Hebrew roots, analyse a legion of Hellenistic idioms, pore over Latin, Greek, Oriental Antiquities ; and be told that when all this is accomplished, preparation for their work may be considered fairly begun !

The effect of such reflections is apparent. They have become listless, inert, melancholy. Study does not agree with their constitution ; producing dyspepsia, palpitations of the heart, "incipient bronchitis," and a determination of blood to the head. A hundred times in the day they exclaim, what a weariness is it ! and gladly seek relief in dull vacuity of thought, idle miscellaneous reading, or talking pretty nothings in a lady's parlour. Perhaps, to make time pass less heavily, they offer their preaching services to a neighbouring prayer meeting, where the plaudits received, give precious omen of more extensive triumphs, and prove, that genius like theirs,

may safely despise the uncouth adornments of Greek and Hebrew. Many of them, deem the irksome season of probation, an admirable time for securing that best of earthly blessings—a *good wife*; and thus, a business in which the wisest man is apt to play the fool, they contrive to despatch, at the period when every faculty, every affection of their being, should be engrossed by the one great object which has received their consecration! This impatience of labour, this morbid desire to engage in an enterprise without submitting to wholesome preparatory discipline, this voluptuous effeminacy of character, is a blight and a curse on all our seminaries of learning.*

* Yet the evil is attributable far more to our literary institutions, than to the young men themselves. The truth is, they have had no opportunity of obtaining suitable preparation, or forming proper habits. We speak at present of the study of languages. They are sent to schools, whose reputation has been established by the magical rapidity with which they turn out finished scholars to the various colleges in their neighbourhood; and when in college, they admirably succeed in losing the scanty modicum which they acquired in school. The writer has heard

All are not thus. We attest it with pleasure, and even fully believe, that could a census be taken, the class described above, would be found in a decided minority. There are many however, who cherish an honest wish and purpose to do their duty, yet are not a little daunted by the prospect before them. It seems to stretch out into immensity ! Is adequate preparation, they ask, feasible ? Are they capable of attaining by conscientious exertion, such a real acquaintance with the languages and literature of Scripture, that on their entering the ministry and applying to the work of exposition, the painful thought

scores of ingenuous youth confess with bitter regret, that their whole course in Alma Mater was a regular business of forgetting the little Greek they had previously acquired. At the same time, we do not think that serious blame should be attached to the professors and tutors in our colleges. No teacher is under obligation to make himself a drudge and a slave, when the only object accomplished, will be the driving students elsewhere. Something might be done to raise the standard of classical (especially Greek) literature, by a united effort of all our institutions. But we have little hope of this taking place before the Greek Kalends. Parents must be accommodated.

will not obtrude, that they have been labouring to no valuable purpose? Assuming, that those who put the question, commence their theological course, possessing that amount of learning which ought to be obtained in a literary college, we answer, Yes! With the ordinary blessing of Him, whose you are, and whom you serve, it depends entirely *on yourselves*. We do not affect to conceal the difficulties which are in the way. The elementary exercises of learning the grammar and vocabulary of a strange language, of impressing on the memory the genders, cases, and other accidents of nouns, of hunting verbs through all the mazes of conjugation, we admit were not exactly the form, in which Satan presented the temptation to aspire after knowledge in Paradise. But what then? Would you expect young men to be placed above the universal law of heaven, that every thing truly valuable is purchased by strenuous exertion?

Far however be the thought, that Preparation is in all its stages a painful drudgery. Only let the student sit down, and make a

fair trial : he will be astonished to find how soon light rises out of darkness, and the impediments which seemed insurmountable disappear, until his path becomes agreeable, and even delightful. The forms of words, with their significations, gradually rivet themselves in his memory, so that he can recal them with ease and pleasure. His dictionary enjoys longer intervals of rest ; the beauties of thought and expression begin to show themselves, like modest daisies in spring—and what a blessed rapture pours its tide through his soul, when he discovers that he can draw the water of salvation directly from the limpid fountain, and with his own hand pluck the healing leaves from the tree of life ! Then his work goes on pleasantly indeed ! A field of delightful employment stretches before him—a garden of the Lord, lovelier than Eden ever was, which he cultivates without pain, whose fruit he gathers without fatigue, while the God who placed him there, walks amid the foliage, and converses with him face to face.

This is no fancy sketch. Those who have

gone through the process. will certify to the truth of every word, and say that after a certain stage of progress, the critical reading of Holy Scripture became one of the most pleasant occupations of their life. Witness the beautiful recital of the learned and pious Bishop Horne of his state of mind while preparing his commentary on the Psalms.—“Could the author flatter himself,” he says, “that any one would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition, which he has taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and noise of folly. Vanity and vexation flew away for a season, care and inquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task, the silence of night invited him to pursue it, and he can truly say that food and rest were not preferred before it. Happier hours than those which have been spent on these meditations on the songs of Zion, he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and moved smoothly and swiftly along; for

when thus engaged he counted no time.— They are gone, but have left a relish and fragrance on the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet.” Will you not feel encouraged, young friends and brethren, by this experience of the venerable bishop, to enter on your work like men? Away with despondency and forebodings of defeat. Away with that ingenuity, which, bribed by indolence, sees monsters and lions in the way. Listen not to those evil spies, those lazy, worthless cowards, who would tell you that the good land which flows with milk and honey, is beset with giants, sons of Anak; that the Amalekites dwell in the south, Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites, in the mountains, the Canaanites by the sea; and that you cannot go against this people! Hear them not, but say in the strength of the Lord, and your own firm purpose, “Let us go up to possess it, for we are fully able to overcome them.” You will not be uttering a vain boast. Victory is certain, and when it comes, you will be more than recompensed for all your toils.

Pardon us, if we dwell a moment longer

on this subject, and remind you what the recompense will be. Are you anxious that one day you may cover with confusion the bold infidel, who defies the armies of the living God, and by calm convincing demonstrations, which shall come home to the honest understandings of men, show the groundlessness of his objections. This you will be able to do, by displaying the truth, beauty and moral dignity of that blessed volume against which his violence is directed—in order to which, you *must have studied it*. Without study, you will scarcely be able to avert the baneful influence of scepticism from your own soul, much less build your hearers on their most holy faith. Do you wish to become vivid, interesting, various preachers, who make their hearers *feel* the commanding energy of truth, and whom they never tire of hearing, as every sermon brings forth new evidences of apostleship? Study your Bible! There, you will find inexhaustible resources of pleasing, impressing, profiting. Prepare yourselves for expounding the word of God from Sabbath to Sabbath. Prepare your-

selves for bringing before the people Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, to unfold its instructive histories, analyze its charming parables, disentangle and develop its sublime reasonings. If such be the character of your exhibitions, we venture to promise you immunity against one sore evil under the sun—that of being waited on by a church session or consistory, in the second year of your labours, and affectionately informed that there is no farther call for your services.

Do you wish to be eminently successful in winning souls to Christ? Study **THE BOOK**. This, is the two-edged sword, that pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Machinery has been invented, which, worked by skilful hands, can furnish to order, a greater number of nominal converts, manufactured in a given period; but “the truth” alone makes children of God, and heirs of immortality!

Have you regard to personal comfort and enjoyment? What an inexhaustible source of amusement—yes, amusement, high and

holy as that of angels, will you possess, when you have acquired the taste, skill, and habit, of reading in its originals the holy Word.— To this mount you will be able to retire at any moment, like the pious Horne, from the cares and turmoils of life, and see more than the three disciples saw, on the hallowed summit of Tabor. When afflicted and almost re-pining at the ways of Heaven, let your old Hebrew Bible introduce you to the bedside of venerable Job, with whom and his friends, you may speculate on the mysteries of Providence, until convicted of your folly, you join with him in his humble acknowledgment, “I have uttered what I understood not, things too wonderful which I knew not !” Are you suffering under hypochondriac depression ? you may order the sweet singer of Israel to strike his lyre. If its music does not expel the evil spirit, as it did from Saul, your case is indeed melancholy.

But the study we recommend will be far more than an occasional solace. The preparation of a series of expository remarks on an important portion of Scripture, which he

knows his people look for on the ensuing Sabbath, furnishes to a pastor a delightful regular employment, that rouses the faculties, gives elasticity to every muscle, fills the blood, and is more conducive to health than all the medicine of the dispensatory. We are not ignorant, that mental application is considered by many unfavourable to a good condition of the physical system, and that by this supposed fact, they explain the meagre and hectic looks of clergymen. Nothing is more absurd. Look through the world, and you will find no class of men more vigorous and long-lived than active thinkers. The truth is, clergymen do not study enough.— That they sit much, and are more sequestered from the hum and tumult of society than members of other professions, is fully granted. But *sitting* is not *studying*, nor are we willing to bestow this respectable name on the mechanical operation of transposing a few stale thoughts, repeated a thousand times, on certain common-places of Didactic Theology. What the ministry need, is an employment bringing them in contact with a succession of

new as well as interesting objects, which will produce an agreeable tension of the faculties, never wearying, or followed by reaction, because sustained by a constant and pleasing variety. Such, you will find to be the regular study and exposition of sacred Scripture. It will do thee good like a medicine, and be "marrow to thy bones."

In view of all these motives, we pray you, as a friend and brother, as one who every day looks back with regret to his own misimprovement of youthful privileges, to exert untiring diligence in biblical preparation for your work. Systems of human concoction have their use : but they are of secondary importance. As such, must you view them. You *must get close up* to the pure crystal fountain, that issues from the heavenly throne. There you must dwell ; thence must you draw for your own souls, and the souls of those committed to your charge. "Blessed is the servant, who, when the Master comes, shall be found so doing."



