

made known by words which are not perfectly intelligible, so we find the sacred writers so conscious of this, that when they used any word which was not familiar to the readers whom they addressed, they immediately add, "*Which being interpreted, signifies.*" If, then, those writers were accustomed to explain any word not familiar to their readers, does it not undeniably follow that they supposed every word or allusion not so explained, sufficiently plain already? And again, would not the same benevolence and respect to the capacity and understanding of their readers, which induced them to explain some terms of very subordinate importance, such as "corban," "talitha cumi," "Aceldama," "Golgotha," &c. &c. have caused them to explain words of infinitely more importance, such as "repentance," "faith," "hope," "love," "justify," "covenant," "baptism," "ambassador," "Son of God," "eternal life," "everlasting punishment," &c., if they had not supposed such terms sufficiently plain in the common usage, and quite intelligible to all their readers? From these plain facts and arguments we deduce the following rule or direction to all those who, under the guidance of Heaven, desire to understand these sacred books:—*You are to understand the words and sentences in these narratives (and indeed in all the apostolic writings) by the application of all those rules through which you arrive at the meaning of any other book or writing of the same antiquity.*

Next to a regard to the commonly received sense of the words in these writings, nothing contributes more to the clear and certain understanding of them, than a knowledge of *the design* of the respective writers of this volume. In one respect they all may be said to have but one design. Taking the ultimate happiness of man as the grand design of revelation, it must be granted that all the inspired writers had this object in view in all that they wrote. It is, however, capable of the clearest proof; and, indeed, it is universally admitted that every writer who has written different parts of this book, had a specific design in each separate communication. For in the prosecution of one grand design, there are often a thousand items, distinct from each other, to accomplish; each of which may be the design of one particular effort. Now it requires not a moment's reflection to see that Paul had one design in writing to Timothy, another in writing to Philemon, and another in writing to the congregation in Rome.

It is granted by all critics, that when all grammatical rules fail to settle the meaning of any ambiguous word or sentence, a knowledge of the design of the writer or speaker will do it. Even when a writer's terms are badly selected or improperly used, a knowledge of his design makes his meaning plain. Daily experience must convince us that we can more easily solve difficulties and correct mistakes in composition, by a knowledge of the design of the writer, than by any other means we possess. Indeed, the more weighty and important criticisms upon verbal inaccuracies, are predicated upon a knowledge of the design of the writer or speaker. If, then, a suitable regard be paid to the design of any speaker or writer, how ambiguous and incorrect soever his words may be, we shall seldom, if ever fail in understanding him. For example—little children, when they first begin to speak, have but few terms at command, and necessarily apply them very inaccurately, yet their nurses