

*thing* to suppose he *meant another*: where the letter and literal interpretation conveys an unchristian sentiment, or a false doctrine of philosophy, to allegorize it, and attach to the words some figurative meaning.

This was a very ancient plan. It was invented by the Jews; but they did it systematically, openly, and knowingly; whereas now it is most frequently done unintentionally, with perfect good faith that by so doing they are getting nearer the true, because a better—a more holy, meaning.

The Jews had three or four methods of interpretation. Besides the literal historical sense, they used an allegorical and a magical. By the latter was meant that each separate letter conveyed some mystical idea by which they obtained, as they thought, an additional sense from scripture. This system was adopted by the Gnostics of Alexandria, an early sect of christians, and was thus regarded by some of them about the year 150, the literal interpretation was suited for animal man, and the mystical and spiritual served for those who had become spiritual.

Origen in some degree followed up this system. He declares that there is a threefold mode of interpreting to be found in the Divine Writings,—an historical, a moral, and a mystical one; by which he understood that the scriptures possess as it were a body, a living principle, and a spirit within them. He however did not invent this system; but, on the contrary, did much service to christianity by clearly distinguishing the historical, or which is the same—the grammatical and literal, interpretation from the other two; and by contributing much learning towards *thus* understanding them.

Unfortunately this method has not been confined to the