

sex, &c., differ in meaning, when employed by a heathen, a Jew, or a Christian.

(d) The technical and peculiar sense of language is too well known to need illustration.

To these causes, which operate upon the *usus loquendi*, may be added the style of a writer. We must inquire whether he writes poetry or prose; and whether the writer himself is fervid or cool, turgid or dry, accurate and polished, or the reverse. Every writer has his own particular *usus loquendi*; and most writers, provincialisms; and every one is influenced by his own peculiar circumstances. What writers can be more unlike, in respect to style, than Isaiah and Jeremiah, Paul and John? An interpreter must make himself thoroughly acquainted with all these various circumstances.

17. *Grammatical and historical sense.* The observance of all these matters belongs in a special manner to grammarians, whose business it is to investigate the sense of words. Hence the *literal sense* is also called the *grammatical*; *literalis* and *grammaticus* having the same meaning. It is also called the *historical sense*; because, like other matters of fact, it is supported by historical testimony. (Morus, p. 66, xvii. comp. § 3, note, supra.)

The grammatical sense is made out by aid of the principles of grammar, liberally and philosophically, not technically considered. The historical sense is that which is built on the grammatical one, but modified by historical circumstances. Interpreters now speak of the true sense of a passage, by calling it the *grammatico-historical sense*; and the exegesis founded on the nature of language is called *grammatico-historical*. The object, in using this compound name, is to shew that both grammatical and historical considerations are employed, in making out the sense of a word or passage.

18. *The grammatical sense the only true one.* Those who make one sense grammatical, and another logical, do not comprehend the full meaning of *grammatical sense*. We are not to look, therefore, for a sense of words, which varies (in its nature, or simply considered as the sense) with every department of learning, or with every diverse object. For if this were the case, words would have as many kinds of senses, as objects are multifarious. (Morus, p. 67, xviii.)

In regard to the term *grammatical*, see the note above. The meaning of Ernesti, in this section, is, that the laws of language are the same, in whatever department of writing or speaking it is employed; i. e. the meaning of it is to be investigated by the *usus loquendi*, &c., and not that logic or philosophy can determine what the sense of words must be, in such a way that the sense may be called *logical, philosophical, &c.*

But when he says, as in § 17, that the literal and grammatical sense are the same; and in § 18, that the grammatical sense is the only true one; he does not mean by *literal*, that which is opposed to *tropical*, (for the tropical meaning in thousands of cases is the grammatical one,) but he means by it, the same as the *grammatico-historical sense* above described.

19. *The principles of interpretation are common to sacred and profane writings.* Of course, the Scriptures are to be investigated by the same rules as other books. Those fanatics, therefore, are not to be regarded, who, despising literature and the study of the languages, refer every thing merely to the influence of the Spirit. Not that we doubt the influence of the Spirit, or that men truly pious and desirous of knowing the truth are assisted by it in their researches, especially in those things that pertain to faith and practice. (Morus, p. 69, xix.)

If the Scriptures be a revelation to men, then are they to be read and understood by men. If the same laws of language are not observed in this revelation as are common to men, then they have no guide to the right understanding of the Scriptures; and an interpreter needs inspiration as much as the original writer. It follows, of course, that the Scriptures would be no revelation in themselves; nor of any use, except to those who are inspired. But such a book the Scriptures are not; and nothing is more evident than that "when God has spoken to men, he has spoken in the language of men, for he has spoken by men, and for men."

20. *Language can be properly interpreted only in a philological way.* Not much unlike

these fanatics, and not less hurtful, are those who, from a similar contempt of the languages and from that ignorance of them which breeds contempt, depend, in their interpretations, rather on things than on words. (a) In this way, interpretation becomes uncertain; and truth is made to depend merely on the judgment of men, as soon as we depart from the words, and endeavour to decide upon the sense, by the use of means not connected with them. Nor will this mode of exegesis at all avail to convince gainsayers; who themselves boast of interpreting in like manner by things, i. e., either by their own principles and opinions before formed, or by the sentiments of philosophers. Hence arises the abuse of reason, in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

(a) The meaning is, that they decide from that knowledge of things which they suppose themselves already to possess, rather than from the words of the author; they decide by what they suppose he ought to mean, rather than by what he says.

21. *Any method of interpretation not philological is fallacious.* Moreover, the method of gathering the sense of words from things is altogether deceptive and fallacious; since things are rather to be known from pointing out the sense of words in a proper way. It is by the words of the Holy Spirit only, that we are led to understand what we ought to think respecting things. Said Melancthon very truly, "The Scripture cannot be understood *theologically*, until it is understood *grammatically*." Luther also avers, that a certain knowledge of the sense of Scripture, depends solely on a knowledge of the words.

This section repeats, in another form, the idea of the preceding one. In both, Ernesti means to deny the possibility of truly interpreting any book, by other means than those which are *philological*. By things, he means the application of our previous views of things to the words of an author, in order to elicit his meaning, instead of proceeding to our inquiries, in the way of grammatico-historical exegesis. Not that our previous knowledge of things can never aid us, for it often does so, but that this can serve for nothing more than an assistant to our philological efforts, as the following section shows.

22. *The analogy of faith or doctrine not to guide our interpretation.* Things, therefore, and the analogy of faith, or doctrine, (as it is called,) assist an interpreter only so far, that when words are ambiguous, either from variety or signification, from structure, or any other cause, they may lead us to define the signification of them, or to select some one particular meaning. But here we must take good care, that the considerations which we use for explaining should be deduced from the plain, perspicuous, well understood language of other passages, and that the words which we are endeavouring to explain do not contradict them. For when we investigate the sense in any other way than by a grammatical method, we effect nothing more, than to make out a meaning, which in itself perhaps is not absurd, but which lies not in the words, and therefore is not the meaning of the writer. (Morus, p. 263, xvi—xix.)

Very much has been said both for and against the analogy of faith, as a rule of interpretation. I may safely add, that on this subject, as well as on many others, very much has been said amiss, for want of proper definitions. What is the *analogy of faith*? It is either simply *scriptural* or *sectarian*. By *scriptural* analogy I mean, that the obvious and incontrovertible sense of clear passages of Scripture affords a rule, by which we may reason *analogically* concerning the meaning of obscure passages; or at least, by which we may chew what obscure passages cannot mean. E. g. God is a spirit, is omniscient, supreme, the creator and governor of all things, &c., are truths so plainly and incontrovertibly taught in the Scriptures, that all the passages which would seem to represent him as material, local, limited in his knowledge or power, &c., are to be interpreted agreeably to analogy with the former truths. The same thing holds true of other doctrines taught in the same perspicuous manner. We explain what is doubtful or obscure, by the application to it of what is plain. It is adopted by all good interpreters of profane authors. It is a rule which common sense prescribes, and is therefore well grounded.

If the question then be asked, whether *scriptural analogy of faith* is a rule of inter-

pretation, the answer must readily be given in the affirmative.

But the analogy of the faith or creed of any party of Christians, taken without abatement, cannot be applied as a rule of exegesis, unless it can be assumed that the whole creed of that party is certainly correct. If a Romanist, a Lutheran, a Calvinist, or a Unitarian avers, that the Scriptures are to be construed throughout, in accordance with the respective symbols of each, whom are we to credit? The creed of one party, in some respects, contradicts that of the others. Is the Scripture then to have a contradictory exegesis put upon it? If not, the analogy of party-faith cannot be our rule of interpretation.

In the contest about the analogy of faith, being the guide of interpretation, both parties have usually been in the right in some respects, and in the wrong in others. (Comp. Campbell's Gospels, Prelim. Dissert. iv. § 13, 14.)

23. *The sense of Scripture not arbitrary.* Allowing the above principles to be correct, it is plain that the method of investigating the sense of words in the Scriptures is not more arbitrary than the method used in explaining other books, but equally regulated by laws deduced from the nature of language. Those, then, act very absurdly, who subject the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures to mere human opinion; for example, to the decision of a Roman pontiff, as if this could determine such a matter. (Comp. § 19, note.)

24. *We must not hastily conclude any sentiment of the Scriptures to be unreasonable.* The meaning, which according to grammatical principles should be assigned to any word of Scripture, is not to be rejected on account of reasons derived from things or previously conceived opinions; for in this way, interpretation would become uncertain. In books merely human, if reason and the nature of the subject are repugnant to the apparent sense of the words, we conclude there must have been either a fault in the writer, or an error in the copyist. In the Scriptures, if any sentiment does not agree with our opinions, we must remember the imbecility of human reason and human faculties; we must seek for *conciliation*, and not attempt a correction of the passage without good authority. It is wonderful, that in this matter more reverence should be paid to mere human productions, than to the sacred books.

In ancient authors, when any difficulty occurs, we seek for correction or *conciliation*; as if they must be rendered *anamarteton, faultless*. But occasion is often taken of carping at the writers of the Scriptures, or of perverting their meaning, or the doctrines which they teach.

Nothing can be more appropriate to the present times, than the caution of Ernesti, not to conclude hastily against the reasonableness of scriptural sentiment. Many set the Scriptures at variance with reason, because they do not attain the real meaning of them. Others decide, independently of the Scriptures, what must be true; and then, whatever is found in the sacred books which thwarts their opinions, they reject as unreasonable. The prudent and pious interpreter will suspend his judgment, in cases of difficulty, and investigate with great patience and caution before he decides. Multitudes of passages in sacred writ have been satisfactorily elucidated by critics of this character, which have been given up as unreasonable by those of a different character. The time is coming (I cannot doubt it) when all the dark places of the Bible will be elucidated, to the satisfaction of intelligent and humble Christians. But *how near* at hand that blessed day is, I do not pretend to know. "The Lord hasten it in its time!"

25. *Interpretation should rather be grammatical than doctrinal.* In comparing reasons for the exegesis of particular passages, greater weight should be attributed to *grammatical* than *doctrinal* ones. A thing may be altogether true in doctrine, which yet is not taught by some particular passage. Books of theology exhibit many doctrinal interpretations, consentaneous indeed with Christian principles, but not deduced from the words interpreted, *doctrinally* true, but not *grammatically*.

It is really matter of regret to find, in most of the old and distinguished writers on theology, such a multitude of passages adduced as proof-texts, which, when heretically examined, prove to be in no way adapted to establish the doctrine, in con-

firmation of which they were cited. It must be acknowledged, that the pleasure of reading many very valuable works of this nature, is greatly abated by the study of sacred interpretation, which teaches more correct exegesis. This loss, however, is more than compensated, by the deep conviction which springs from the examination of genuine proof-passages.

26. *Real contradiction does not exist in the Scriptures.* As the books of Scripture were written by men divinely inspired, it is evident there can be no real contradiction in them. God is not incapable of seeing what is consistent, and what is contradictory; nor can he forget, when he speaks, what was said on former occasions. If apparent contradictions then occur, a proper method of conciliation is to be pointed out, of which, in another place. (Morus, Vol. II. pp. 1—19.)

27. *Every interpretation should harmonize with the design of the writer, and with the context.* For the very reason that these books are inspired, every interpretation ought to agree with the design of the writer, or harmonize with the context. We admit this principle in the interpretation of profane writers: much more ought we to admit it in respect to the Scriptures. Mere men, through negligence or want of knowledge, may insert some things that disagree with their principal design; but not so the Holy Spirit. Hence, the certainty of any exegesis is connected with the design and series of the discourse. Rules of caution, however, are important here, as, in its proper place, will be shewn. (Morus, ut supra.)

Biography.

MEMOIR OF MR. ROBERT BULL, OF NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT: BY THE REV. BENJAMIN CARVOSSO.

Concluded.

In the year 1795 Mr. Bull returned to the Isle of Wight, and settled with his family at Rookley. Here, with his hands, he laboured hard six days in the week; and on the seventh, while he changed his occupation, his toils were not intermitted. In those days, preaching-places in the island, belonging to us, were "few and far between," and the labours of the Local Preachers were both hard and discouraging—long walks, small congregations, and often no kind host to offer them a morsel of bread, or a drink of water; so that they had not unfrequently, in the interval of the services, to wander fasting in the fields, both they and their message being lightly esteemed. In some of those places things are much altered for the better; of which Cowes, where Mr. Bull preached his last sermon, is not the least remarkable. It is nine miles from Rookley; and often after the Preacher had walked that distance, he entered the obscure room, and addressed a congregation scarcely numbering as many as the miles he had walked. Cowes is now the second place in the Circuit, with a neat chapel, a Preacher's house, beautifully situated, and a respectable congregation, amounting to four or five hundred persons.

After remaining at Rookley about five years, there was an opening for Mr. Bull to remove to Newport. Judging this opening to be providential, he embraced it, and accordingly took up his subsequent residence in that town. At this time the congregation worshipped in a small chapel in Town-lane; in 1806, a larger and more commodious place of worship was erected in Pyle-street, which was enlarged in 1834. It will now contain about one thousand hearers, and is invariably well attended. Here, in connexion with the Newport society, Mr. Bull's sphere of usefulness in the church was greatly enlarged. The Isle of Wight at this time formed a branch of the Portsmouth Circuit; and Mr. Bull, in addition to other offices, was appointed General Steward of the societies in the island. During the lapse of nearly twenty years he was invariably at the Portsmouth Quarterly Meeting, the esteemed, laborious, and faithful representative of the Isle of Wight. In the year 1814 the Circuit was divided, and the "lovely Isle" became a Circuit of itself; when Mr. Bull was nominated one of the Stewards, and continued to be appointed to the office from year to year, till 1831.

Attending one of his Sabbath-day appointments in a country part of the Circuit, during the winter of 1828, he caught a severe cold, by which his vigorous constitution was so affected, that he never after-