

consistently with itself. Now it is deserving of remark: (1.) That the five last chapters in this book contain, perhaps, less of the symbolic style, than any preceding part of the book of equal length. (2.) That present things, involving the agency of men, frequently spoken of in scripture in figurative or symbolic terms; while the retributions of eternity are described in plain language, which admits of no possibility of mistake on the part of those who seek the truth. And the language, in these verses, is of this plain kind. (3.) Where symbolic language is used in scripture, it is generally explained. Thus we read, "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." But in the passage before us, there is *no explanation* of the terms as symbolic, in their meaning; nor any hint given of an event which they are intended to symbolize. The inference, therefore is, that we are to understand them in their plain and natural signification. (4.) Where a plain interpretation involves a contradiction; or places the text in opposition to other parts of scripture we are bound to adopt a figurative interpretation. But a plain interpretation of this passage involves no contradiction whatever, nor places the passage in any opposition to the other parts of the Holy Scriptures: it places it in perfect harmony with the other passages in which the **FIRST RESURRECTION** is clearly stated, or necessarily implied. A symbolic interpretation of this passage, then, if it must be admitted, is not required; it is perfectly out of place.

2. "It is a spiritual resurrection which is intended."

A spiritual resurrection is the conversion of a sinner from the error of his ways; that in the text, is the resurrection from the dead of the faithful saint, and of him who has lost his life in the service of his God and Saviour. The two cases are different and dissimilar.

3. "A resurrection of principles is that which is intended."

Is it customary to *behead* principles, raise them from the dead, make them priests of God, and invest them with regale state? This notion requires no refutation.

4. "The apostle mentions only the souls of the martyrs, and uses the Genitive case; a clear proof the persons of martyrs and saints are not intended."

The word souls in Gen. xii. 5., and in about an hundred other places in Scripture, signifies the whole persons; and in Gen. xvi. 15; Numbers xxxi. 35; 1 Chron. ii. 21; and James i. 21,* we have the Genitive, where it is clear the whole person is meant. The objection, therefore, cannot be sustained.

5. "A future state of prosperity in the church is all that is intended in the passage; then the successors of the martyrs, and suffering saints, shall have the ascendancy over

the wicked and exercise dominion in the earth."

The scriptures explicitly state, that, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him;" but this mode of interpretation says, "If we suffer with him others shall reign with him; it thus contradicts scripture; and, for this reason, must be rejected. In the text before us, nothing can be more clear than the fact, that the *same* persons who suffered for the witness of Jesus, are those who were raised from the dead and reigned with him.

These are the principal objections which have been made to a literal interpretation of the passage before us; and a little reflection is sufficient to convince the reader, that they are groundless. It is a waste of time to dwell upon them. We shall, therefore, dismiss them with the following passage from Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies.

"This prophecy therefore remains yet to be fulfilled, even though the resurrection be taken only for an allegory, which yet the text cannot admit without the greatest torture and violence. For with what propriety can it be said, that some of the dead, who were beheaded, lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, but that the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished, unless *the dying and living again* be the same in both places, a proper death and resurrection? Indeed the death and resurrection of the witnesses before mentioned, chap. xi. 7-12., appears from the concurrent circumstances of the vision to be figurative; but the death and resurrection here mentioned must for the very same reasons be concluded to be real. If the martyrs rise only in a spiritual sense the rest of the dead rise only in a spiritual sense: but if the rest of the dead really rise, the martyrs rise in the same manner. There is no difference between them; and we should be cautious and tender of making the First Resurrection an allegory, lest others should reduce the Second into an allegory too, like those whom St. Paul mentions, 2 Tim. ii. 17. 18., "Hymeneus and Philetus, who concerning the truth, erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrew the faith of some." It is to this First Resurrection that St. Paul alludes, when he affirms, 1 Thess. iv. 16., that the dead in Christ shall rise first; and 1 Cor. xv. 23., that every man shall be made alive in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming, and then cometh the end, after the general resurrection."

In looking through these passages, it cannot fail to strike the reader, that we must either reject the plain literal meaning of scripture, or we must admit the doctrine here maintained. If we reject the plain letter of the scriptures, and substitute for it the allegorizing and refining interpretations of men, we adopt a course which must necessarily involve the most danger-

ous consequences. Our faith then no longer stands in the plain and faithful sayings of God, but in the fanciful expositions of fallible men. And as the allegorizing and spiritualizing expositors of holy writ seldom take any notice of the plain grammatical meaning of the Holy Scriptures, they have nothing certain to guide them; they are led by their own fancies. Their expositions are consequently at variance with each other, and as frequently at variance with the sacred text. Their readers and followers are confounded and bewildered in the mazes of uncertainty and contradiction; and, though ever learning are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Let us then learn to receive the words of God as he is pleased to speak them. When he uses figure or symbol, it is either self-evidently such, or it is clearly explained; when this is not the case we are bound to receive his words in their plain and literal meaning. Then we find solid rock, where all is sea beside.

By this simple mode of explaining the Scripture, we are taught the doctrine of the First Resurrection. A doctrine which inspired the songs of the Psalmist; which breathes through the sayings of the Prophets; which lives in the discourses of the Lord Jesus Christ; and which was the blessed hope of the apostles and martyrs, "who loved not their lives unto the death." How mournful the fact, that this cheering doctrine has been banished from the Christian church, and is found in no creed or confession of faith, with which the writer is acquainted. This doctrine, with the deliverance of the creation from its present degraded condition, and the personal reign of our Lord and the saints, in glory over the earth; instead of being viewed as the leading subjects of prophecy, are treated as the vagaries of a disordered imagination; and to scout them is considered a proof of real wisdom. And not only so, but members of the church have been cut off, and ministers have been driven from the sanctuary, for believing and maintaining these doctrines; as though receiving and teaching the words of God, in their plain and obvious meaning, were the greatest crimes of which men could be guilty. Can such a state of things be anything but an approximation to the degeneracy, implied in that strong question of our Lord's "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth?"

Such is the evidence which the Scriptures furnish of the truth of the First Resurrection. Reader be determined to secure a part in this Resurrection. That divine Redeemer, who by the grace of God tasted death for every man, has tasted death for you. In his blood you may find redemption, even the forgiveness of sin. By his Holy Spirit, now placed at your call, you may be sanctified, and sealed unto the day of redemption. That happy

* Investigator, Vol. II. 337.