

use of the holy Scriptures, particularly among the laity; and from the facts which we have mentioned above, in connexion with the actual limited circulation of the Bible in all Catholic countries, it is manifest that she desires the word of God to be cultivated by the faithful at large. If they have recourse to it with the requisite dispositions, they cannot fail to derive the most signal advantages from its sublime teachings. But they should never forget that the first and most essential preparation of heart for the beneficial reading the Bible in a spirit of humility, which will lead them to mistrust their own judgment in all cases of a doubtful or perplexing nature, and to interpret the sacred page in that sense only which is admitted by the pastors of the church. St. Jerome writing to Eustochium, says: "If you meet with any passage which you do not understand, consult some person whose mature age, virtuous life and purity of faith, may render him more competent to explain it; and if you have not the opportunity of doing this, it is much better to remain unenlightened on the subject, than to extend your investigations at the risk of falling into error."

To facilitate the understanding of the sacred volume, we will observe that the Scripture, particularly the Old Testament has frequently two significations, the literal and the spiritual. Speaking of the ancient Jews, and the events which transpired among them, St. Paul says: "All is related of Abraham," adds St. Austin, "was both fact and prophecy." Abel, for instance, put to death his brother, foreshadowed the crucifix of Christ by his own people. Joseph also, who, after having been sold by his brethren, became their benefactor during a time of famine, was a figure of Christ, who was sold by a treacherous disciple to the Jews, and by his death he became the Saviour of them and of all mankind. The prophets, in foretelling future events, sometime makes use of language which expresses a past or present time. Thus Isaiah in alluding to the sufferings of our Lord, employs these words: "Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows, and we have thought him, as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins," &c. It should be observed, also, that every passage of the Scripture which cannot, in the literal sense, be referred to matters of faith or morality, should be understood in a figurative sense. This rule is clearly mentioned by St. Austin, and cautions the reader of the sacred text against the literal interpretation of such expressions, as seem to attribute to God the passions of men, or to suppose him endowed with corporal faculties. Before entering upon the reading of the Bible itself, it would be well, especially for young persons, to peruse some work which may serve as an introduction to it, by giving a general outline of the subjects treated in the inspired books. Fleury's Historical Catechism and Challoner's History of the Old and New Testament, with Milner's Summary, may profitably serve for this purpose. As to the order to be followed in reading

the holy Scripture, that indicated above by St. Jerome will be found of utility.

We have remarked that an essential disposition in the use of the sacred books, is a spirit of humility, or of docility and submission to the authoritative declarations of the church. The object to be attained by this exercise is not the formation of our religious belief, or the discovery of new articles of faith, but the confirmation of the truths which the church of God has transmitted from age to age, and an encouragement to practise with constancy the duties inculcated by the Author of Christianity, and which are more specifically defined by its duly authorized ministers. When the sacred writings are resorted to with this disposition, they cannot fail to nourish the faith and piety of the Christian, because it banishes all the perplexities which may arise from a spirit of curiosity or a presumptuous confidence in his own lights. The most intricate difficulties will then make no dangerous impression upon his mind, because, as Fenelon observes,

"When men sincerely and piously believe that the word of God is deeply mysterious, and therefore impenetrable to our feeble reason, they in this case listen with docility to their pastors explaining and justifying such passages of the sacred text as are difficult and perplexing: they turn their whole attention towards those principles which serve as a key to the truth; they are diffident in themselves, and even timidly careful not to indulge too far either their curiosity or their reasonings. They are experienced directors; and they read it also in the spirit of the church itself. Conducted by the same maxims of Christian wisdom, they pray still: as when they read, convinced that prayer, beyond every other principle, best opens to us the knowledge of truth."

To be Continued.

* Mr. Maitland, an Anglican divine, in his "Dark Ages," has victoriously refuted the calumnies of B. Jenson and other writers who have contended, in opposition to the clearest evidence, that the Bible was scarcely known in the middle ages. See, also, *Dublin Review*, vol. i, p. 367, and vol. v, p. 131, for the Catholic versions of the Bible.

† The original languages of the liturgies have been retained everywhere in the Catholic church, of the East and West, though they are not now generally understood by the respective nations that use these liturgies. Such is the case among the Greeks, the Nestorians, the Armenians, and others, not less than in the Latin church. As the liturgy is, in great part performed in an inaudible tone by the officiating minister, it is a matter of indifference whether he uses a language not intelligible to the people. Luther himself admitted this, and the Anglican church acted upon the same principle in prescribing a form of worship for the Irish people. The wisdom of the Catholic church, in this point of her discipline, is obvious to all reflecting minds: no impartial critic can object to it, when he considers the necessity of guarding the liturgy from the influence of the fluctuations so characteristic of the modern languages. It is but just, too, that a church which is universal in her faith and worship, should possess a universal language. The practical advantages of such a discipline are important, while the objection urged against it by Protestants is altogether removed by the fact, that the laity have the substance or a translation of the liturgy in the vernacular tongue.