

are resorted to in the interpretation of an ancient classic, are requisite, in order to a perfect understanding of the inspired language of the Scriptures.

The object and character of each portion of the Scriptures, and also the persons addressed, should be continually kept in view. Is one of the Apostolic epistles the subject of examination? the inquiry should be made: To whom was it addressed? what were their character and circumstances? and for what object or objects was it written? The solution of these queries will furnish a key to its interpretation, which will obviate many difficulties, and impart clearness and comprehensiveness to our views of its meaning. We cannot rightly interpret an ordinary letter, without pursuing this course; how much more necessary is it, when we attempt to interpret epistles which were written to settle questions of eternal moment, and to develope the grand scheme of human redemption in all its details?

Every portion of the Bible must be construed with a reference to its context, to the connection in which it stands, in order to ascertain its meaning. No sensible man would attempt to interpret a part of any common written instrument, relating to the ordinary transactions of life, without carefully examining the scope of the whole. Yet from a disregard of this plain common sense and universally admitted principle of interpretation, the most erroneous, fantastic, and absurd meanings have been attributed to many portions of Scripture: and doctrines and notions utterly at war with the plainest teaching of Divine Revelation, have been deduced from the words of that revelation, and promulgated under its pretended sanction.

But, perhaps, the right interpretation of the Bible depends more upon the spirit and disposition of mind with which it is read, than upon any other qualification. A controversial spirit is the most inimical to a correct understanding of the Scriptures: under its influence the controversialist reads them not to conform his faith to the Word of God, but to conform that Word to his faith; he searches for proofs of his own opinions, not for the truth of God; the Scriptures are wrested and distorted to accord with his pre-conceived notions; he sees with eagle glance all that seems to favor his system, but is blind to all that opposes it—every truth, however important, that lies beyond the pale of his system, is excluded from his vision. To study the Bible aright, it must be approached in humility, in a teachable spirit—with a sincere desire