

the different English commentators do little more than repeat the common exposition which has been handed down from one generation of critics to another. Little independent thought seems to have been exercised upon this passage; and the history of its interpretation affords an illustration of the danger of running to commentators whenever a difficulty in Scripture occurs, instead of exercising prayerful and independent thought upon it. When the mind is preoccupied by an erroneous view suggested by some great name, even though such view may not be quite satisfactory, it is in a much worse position for discovering the truth, than if it had been left entirely to its own resources. An erroneous exposition is not only worthless, but positively mischievous, for it acts as a screen to prevent the light of truth from entering the soul. The poor student thus misdirected is like a man who has been put upon a wrong road, and after having travelled far must retrace his steps to the point from which he set out, ere any real progress can be made.

The interpretation of this passage usually given proceeds upon the idea, that a worse rent is made in the old garment by the process of mending, than existed in it before. This is the idea which essentially pervades all the various commentaries. Matthew Henry adopting the opinion of Whitby, supposes that our Lord meant to teach in these words, that His disciples had not then strength sufficient for the duty of fasting. "This is set forth in two similitudes," he says,—“one of putting new cloth into an old garment, which does but pull the old to pieces.” Scott explains it more elaborately. “It was not usual,” he says, “to take a piece of woollen cloth, which had never been scoured, or prepared, and to join it to an old garment, because its rough and unpleasant sides would not suit the soft old cloth, but would rather tear it further, and make the rent worse, &c.” Adam Clarke enters a little more fully into the verbal criticism of the passage, but his view is identical with that of Scott. He translates the first clause thus:—“No man putteth a patch of unscoured cloth upon an old garment.” “This,” says he, “is the most literal translation I can give of this verse, to convey its meaning to those who cannot consult the original, *rakos agnaphon* is, that cloth which has not been scoured, or which has not passed under the hand of the fuller, who is called *gnapheus* in Greek.” The latter clause, “for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment,” &c., he thus explains,—“Instead of closing up the rent, it makes a larger, by tearing away with it the whole breadth of the cloth over which it was laid; *airei gar to pleroma autou*, it taketh its fullness or whole breadth from the garment.” Even Dr. Campbell, certainly one of the most acute of our verbal critics, takes the same view. He translates the text thus. “Nobody mendeth an old garment with undressed cloth, else the patch itself teareth the garment, and maketh a greater rent.”

It cannot be disputed that the Greek word *agnaphos*, signifies literally undressed, and is applied to cloth that has not yet undergone the process of fulling. But then there can be just as little doubt that woollen cloth newly taken from the loom is thin, and raw, and not only dirty, but soft with oil; and that the process of the fuller not only dresses and cleans, but thickens it. We contend therefore that unfulled cloth, fresh from the loom, is thinner and would be less likely to tear old cloth to which it was sewed, than dressed cloth, which had been thickened by the art of the fuller. And farther, though the word literally signifies undressed, we can easily see how it might be used also to signify *new*, so that we think our translators were perfectly justified in rendering the word *new*.

It will be universally admitted by our readers, that Scripture best explains Scripture. Let us turn then to the parallel passage in Luke v. 36, and see if it affords us any light upon the subject. “No man putteth a piece of a new gar-