

On the interpretation of Scripture I shall make a few very brief remarks, as the time will not permit us to enter fully into a question of great extent, as well as of extreme importance. The Philosophy of the Schools, (says a learned and profound writer) sunk, to rise no more, when the true method of science gained its first indubitable triumph; but although the same method is not formally applicable to Theology, yet the principle of it is so. The works of nature and the holy Scriptures proceed from the same fountain of eternal light and truth, and are the two volumes which God has given man to read, as the great Lord Verulam beautifully expresses it. Both must therefore be interpreted and explained by the same method, viz. that of calm and patient induction. "The art of Criticism, and the true logic of interpretation, must restore to the Church (under that guidance what is never denied when ingeniously sought,) the pure meaning of the Scripture." I know it is often said that we are to judge of Scripture by the analogy of faith, but this analogy of faith will generally be found to be the peculiar tenets of the respective denominations into which the Christian world is unhappily divided. When this analogy of faith is laid down as a principle, nothing is admitted which is contrary thereto, or may seem by inference to countenance a different doctrine. Thus the Calvinist, according to his analogy of faith, will find Calvinism to be the doctrine of the Scripture, the Arminian, Arminianism; the Arian and the Socinian will find in the Scriptures no proofs of the sacred Trinity, nor the Universalist any such thing as everlasting punishment, strictly so-called. Upon this subject Dr. Campbell makes the following excellent remarks: "This (says he) was the very source of the blindness of the Jews in our Saviour's time. They searched the Scriptures very assiduously, but in the disposition they entertained they would never believe what the sacred volume testifies of Christ. The reason is obvious, their great rule of interpretation was the analogy of faith; or, in other words, the system of the Pharisean scribes, the devotion then in vogue, and in the profound veneration of which they had been educated."—Campbell's Translation of the Gospel, vol. 1.

Properly to understand the Gospel, we must put ourselves as much as possible in the position of the original hearers or readers of the sacred word. But, it is manifest that this cannot be done without an exercised and critical knowledge of the languages in which they were originally written. Now,

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