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ART. IV. ARE THE SAME PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION TO BE APPLIED TO THE SCRIPTURES AS TO OTHER BOOKS ?

By M. Stuart, Prof. Sac. Lit. in Theol. Sem. Andover.

A question this of deeper interest to religion and sacred literature, than most persons would be apt at first to suppose. In fact, the fundamental principles of scriptural theology are inseparably connected with the subject of this inquiry ; for what is such theology, except the result of that which the Scriptures have taught ? And how do we find what the Scriptures have taught, except by applying to them some rules or principles of interpretation ? If these rules are well grounded, the results which flow from the application of them will be correct, provided they are skilfully and truly applied ; but if the principles by which we interpret the Scriptures are destitute of any solid foundation, and are the product of imagination, of conjecture, or of caprice, then of course the results which will follow from the application of them, will be unworthy of our confidence.

All this is too plain to need any confirmation. This also, from the nature of the case, renders it a matter of great importance to know, whether the principles by which we interpret the sacred books are well grounded, and will abide the test of a thorough scrutiny.

Nearly all the treatises on hermeneutics, which have been written since the days of Ernesti, have laid it down as a maxim which cannot be controverted, that the Bible is to be interpreted in the same manner, i. e. by the same principles, as all other books. Writers are not wanting, previously to the period in which Ernesti lived, who have maintained the same thing ; but we may also find some, who have assailed the position before us, and laboured to shew that it is nothing less than a species of profaneness to treat the sacred books as we do the classic authors, with respect to their interpretation. Is this allegation well grounded ? Is there any good reason to object to the principle of interpretation now in question ?

In order to answer these inquiries, let us direct our attention, in the first place, to the nature and source of what are now called *principles* or *laws of interpretation*. Whence did they originate ? Are they the artificial production of high-wrought skill, of laboured research, of profound and extensive learning ? Did they spring from the subtilties of nice distinctions, from the phi-

losophical and metaphysical efforts of the schools? Are they the product of exalted and dazzling genius, sparks of celestial fire which none but a favoured few could emit? No; nothing of all this. The principles of interpretation, as to their substantial and essential elements, are no invention of man, no product of his effort and learned skill; nay, they can scarcely be said with truth to have been discovered by him. They are coeval with our nature. They were known to the antediluvians. They were practised upon in the garden of Eden, by the progenitors of our race. Ever since man was created, and endowed with the powers of speech, and made a *communicative*, social being, he has had occasion to practise upon the principles of interpretation, and has actually done so. From the first moment that one human being addressed another by the use of language, down to the present hour, the essential laws of interpretation became, and have continued to be, a *practical* matter. The person addressed has always been an *interpreter*, in every instance where he has heard and understood what was addressed to him.

All the human race, therefore, are, and ever have been, interpreters. It is a law of their rational, intelligent, communicative nature. Just as truly as one human being was formed so as to address another in language, just so truly that other was formed to interpret and to understand what is said.

I venture to advance a step farther, and to aver that all men are, and ever have been, in reality, good and true interpreters of each other's language. Has any part of our race, in full possession of the human faculties, ever failed to understand what others said to them, and to understand it truly? or to make themselves understood by others, when they have in their communications kept within the circle of their own knowledge? Surely none. Interpretation, then, in its basis or fundamental principles, is a *native* art, if I may so speak. It is coeval with the power of uttering words. It is of course a universal art; it is common to all nations, barbarous as well as civilized.

One cannot commit a more palpable error in relation to this subject, than to suppose that the art of interpretation is one which is like the art of chemistry, or of botany, or of astronomy, or any of the like things, viz. that it is in itself wholly dependent on *acquired* skill for the discovery and developement of its principles. Acquired skill has indeed helped to an orderly exhibition and arrangement of its principles; but this is all. The materials were all in existence before skill attempted to develop them.

Possibly it may excite surprise in the minds of some, to be told that, after all, hermeneutics is no science that depends on learning and skill, but is one with which all the race of man is practically more or less acquainted. Yet this is true. But so far is it from diminishing the real value of the science, that it adds exceedingly to its weight and importance. That it is connate with us, shews that it is a part of our rational and communicative nature. That it is so, shews also that it is not, in its fundamental parts, a thing of uncertainty, of conjecture, of imagination, or of mere philosophical nicety. If it were a far-fetched science, dependent on high acquisitions and the skillful application of them, then it would be comparatively a useless science; for, in such a case, only a favoured few of the human race would be competent to understand and acquire it; still fewer could be satisfactorily assured of its stable and certain nature.

An interpreter well skilled in his art, will glory in it, that it is an art which has its foundation in the laws of our intellectual and rational nature, and is coeval and connate with this nature. He finds the best assurance of its certainty in this. It is only a quack (if I may so speak) in this business, that will ever boast of any thing in it which is secret, or obscure, or incomprehensible to common minds.

All which has ever led to any such conclusion, is, that very few men, and those only learned ones, become critics by profession. But the secret of this is merely, that professed critics are, almost always, professed interpreters of books in foreign languages, not in their own mother-tongue. Then again, if they are interpreters of their own vernacular language, it is of such exhibitions of it as present recondite and unusual words. Now in order to interpret a foreign language, or in order to explain the unusual words of one's own vernacular tongue, a good degree of learning becomes requisite. This is not, however, because the rules of interpretation, when applied either to foreign languages, or to unusual words or phrases in one's own language, are different from the rules which all men every day apply to the common language employed by them in conversation. Learning is necessary to know the meaning of foreign words, or of strange vernacular words, on the same ground, and no other, as it was necessary for us to learn originally the meaning of the circle of words which we usually employ in speaking or writing. The same acquaintance with foreign words that we have with our every-day ones, would of course make them equal-

ly intelligible, and equally supersede any *studied* art of hermeneutics, in order to interpret them.

When a man takes up a book, which contains a regular system of hermeneutics all arranged and exhibited to the eye, and filled with references to choice and rare volumes, he is ready to conclude, that it contains something almost as remote from the common capacity and apprehension of men as Newton's *Principia*. But this is a great mistake. The *form* of the treatise in question, it is true, may be altogether a matter of art. The quotations and references may imply a very widely extended circle of reading and knowledge. But after all, the principles themselves are obvious and natural ones; at least if they are not so, they are worth but little or nothing. The illustration and confirmation of them may indeed be drawn from a multitude of sources widely scattered and some of them very recondite, and a great display of learning may be made here; but still the same thing is true, in this case as in many other departments of learning and taste. Nature first teaches rules; art arranges, illustrates, and records them. This is the simple truth as to hermeneutics. Systems have digested and exhibited what the rational nature of man has taught,—of man who was made to speak and to interpret language.

I may illustrate and confirm this by a reference, for example, to epic or lyric poetry. Men did not first invent rules by the aid of *learned* art, and then construct epic and lyric poems by the aid of these rules. Nature prescribed these rules to a Homer, a Pindar, and to others. They followed nature; and therefore wrote with skill and power. That they have become models for all succeeding epic and lyric writers, can be accounted for only from the fact, that they followed the promptings of nature in their respective kinds of composition; and others cannot swerve essentially from their course without swerving from nature; and then of course they will offend against what we may truly call the common sense of mankind.

It is the same in hermeneutics. Many a man has, indeed, laid down rules in this science, which were a departure from the principles taught us by our reasonable nature; and where he has had personal influence, he has obtained disciples and imitators. But his popularity has been short-lived, or at least he has sooner or later been taken to task for departing from nature, and has been refuted, in the view of sober and unprejudiced men, in regard to such principles as violate the common rules of interpretation which men daily practise.

There are only two ways in which men come to the knowledge of words ; the one is by custom, education, the daily habit of hearing and speaking them ; the other is, by studying them in books, and learning them in the way that philology teaches. Now the first method supersedes the second. But as the second is the only way left for all such as wish to understand the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, so the thorough study of those books which are necessary to impart the knowledge in question, renders a good degree of learning a matter which of course is necessary. All this occupies time, and costs labour and effort. Few succeed, after all, to any great extent, in making the acquisition under consideration ; and hence the general apprehension of its difficulty. Hence too the idea, that the art of interpretation is the result of learned skill, rather than the dictate of common sense.

I do not aver, indeed, that a man destitute of learned skill can well interpret the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. But this I would say, viz. that his *learning* applies more to the proper knowledge of Greek and Hebrew words in themselves considered, than it does to the principles by which he is to interpret them. In the estimation of men in general, however, these two things are united together ; and it is in this way, that hermeneutics comes to be looked upon as one of the more recondite and difficult sciences.

I certainly do not wish to be understood as denying here, that the *practice* of the hermeneutical art in a successful manner does require learning and skill. Surely this must be true, when it is applied to the explanation of the original Greek and Hebrew Scriptures ; because no one can well understand these languages, without some good degree of learned skill. But I say once more, that the learning necessary to understand the meaning of particular words in these languages, and that which is employed in the proper *interpretation* of them, are not one and the same thing. When the words are once understood, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are interpreted by just the same rules that every man uses, in order to interpret his neighbour's words. At least this is my position, and one which I expect to illustrate and confirm, by shewing more fully still, that from the nature of the case it must be so, and moreover that it is altogether reasonable and proper.

I have urged at so much length, and repeated in various forms, the sentiments contained in the preceding paragraphs, be-

cause I view them as of essential importance in respect to the subject before us. If God has implanted in our rational nature the fundamental principles of the hermeneutical art, then we may reasonably suppose that when he addresses a revelation to us, he intends and expects that we shall interpret it in accordance with the laws of that nature which he has given us. In shewing that the science of interpretation is not a production of art and learned skill, but that it is merely developed and scientifically exhibited by such skill, I have shewn that the business of interpreting the Bible need not necessarily be confined to a few, but may be practised, in a greater or less degree, (if we except the criticism of the original Scriptures,) by all men who will attentively study it. It is true, that all men cannot be critics upon the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures; for the greater part of them never can obtain the knowledge of the words necessary for this purpose. But still, there is scarcely any man of common understanding to whom a truly skilful critic may not state and explain the *principles* of interpretation, by which he is guided in the exegesis of any particular passage, in such a way that this man may pass his judgment on the principle and make it the subject of his approbation or disapprobation. This proves incontrovertibly, that the principles of the science in question are in themselves the dictates of plain common sense and sound understanding; and if this be true, then they are principles which may be employed in the interpretation of the word of God; for if there be any book on earth that is addressed to the reason and common sense of mankind, the Bible is pre-eminently that book.

What is the Bible? A revelation from God. A REVELATION! If truly so, then it is designed to be *understood*; for if it be not intelligible, it is surely no *revelation*. It is a revelation through the medium of human language; language such as men employ; such as was framed by them, and is used for their purposes. It is a revelation *by men* (as instruments) and *for men*. It is made *more humano*, because that on any other ground it might as well not be made at all. If the Bible is not a book which is intelligible in the same way as other books are, then it is difficult indeed to see how it is a *revelation*. There are only two ways in which the Bible or any other book can be understood; the one is by miraculous illumination, in order that we may have a right view of contents which otherwise would not be intelligible; the other is, by the application of such hermeneuti-

cal principles as constitute a part of our rational and communicative nature.

If you say, now, that the first of these ways is the true and only one ; then it follows that a renewed miracle is necessary in every instance where the Bible is read and understood. But, first, this contradicts the experience of men ; and secondly, I cannot see of what use the Scriptures are, provided a renewed revelation or illumination is necessary, on the part of heaven, in every instance where they are read and understood. It is not the method of God's wisdom and design, thus to employ useless machinery ; nor does such an idea comport with the numberless declarations of the Scriptures themselves, that they are plain, explicit, intelligible, perfect, in a word, all that is requisite to guide the humble disciple, or to enlighten the ignorant.

I must then relinquish the idea of a miraculous interposition in every instance where the Bible is read and understood. I trust that few enlightened Christians will be disposed to maintain this. And if this be not well grounded, then it follows that the Bible is addressed to our reason and understanding and moral feelings ; and consequently that we are to interpret it in such a way, as we do any other book that is addressed to these same faculties.

A denial of this, throws us at once upon the ground of maintaining a miraculous interposition, in all cases where the Bible is understood. An admission of it, brings us to the position that the Bible is to be interpreted in the same way as other books are.

Why not ? When the original Scriptures were first spoken or written, (for very much of them, in the prophets for example, were *spoken* as well as written,) were they designed to be *understood* by the men who were addressed ? Certainly you will not deny this. But who were these men ? Were they inspired ? Truly not ; they were good and bad, wise and foolish, learned and ignorant ; in a word, men of all classes both as to character and knowledge.

If now the prophets, in addressing such men, expected to be understood, intended to be so, (and clearly they did,) then they expected these men to understand them in a way like to that in which they understood any one else who addressed them, i. e. by means of applying the usual principles of interpretation to the language employed. Any thing which denies this, of course must cast us upon the ground of universal miraculous interposition.

Let us now, for a moment, imagine ourselves to stand in the place of those who were addressed by the prophets. Of course we must suppose ourselves to have the same understanding of the Hebrew language, to have been educated within the same circle of knowledge, and to be familiar with the same objects both in the natural and spiritual world. Should we need lexicons, grammars, and commentaries, in order to understand Isaiah, or any other prophet? The supposition is, upon the very face of it, almost an absurdity. Are our common people, who have the first rudiments even of education, unable to understand the popular preachers of the present day? If it is so, it is the egregious fault of the preacher, and not of his hearers. It is because he chooses words not contained in the usual stores of language from which most persons draw, and which he need not choose, and should not select, because he must know that such a choice will make him more or less unintelligible. But who will suppose the prophets to have acted thus unwisely? The inspiration by the aid of which they spake and wrote, surely enabled them to speak and write *intelligibly*. If so, then were we listeners to them, and in the condition of those whom they actually addressed, we could of course understand them, for just the same reasons, and in the same way, that we now understand the popular preachers of our time. All our learned apparatus of folios and quartos, of ancient and modern lexicographers, grammarians, and critics, would then be quietly dismissed, and laid aside as nearly or altogether useless. At the most, we should need them no more than we now need Johnson's or Webster's Dictionaries, in order to understand a modern sermon in the English language.

All this needs only to be stated, in order to ensure a spontaneous assent to it. But what follows? The very thing, I answer, which I am labouring to illustrate and establish. If the persons addressed by the Hebrew prophets, understood them, and easily and readily understood them, in what way was this done? Plainly by virtue of the usual principles of interpretation, which they applied in all the common intercourse of life. They were not held in suspense about the meaning of a prophet, until a second interposition on the part of heaven took place, i. e. a miraculous illumination of their minds in order that they might perceive the meaning of words new and strange to them. Such words were not employed. They were able, therefore, at once to perceive the meaning of the

prophet who addressed them, in all ordinary cases ; and this is true throughout, with exceptions merely of such a nature as still occur, in regard to most of our preaching. Now and then a word is employed, which some part of a common audience does not fully comprehend ; and now and then a sentiment is developed, or an argument is employed, which the minds of some are not sufficiently enlightened fully to comprehend. But in such cases, the difficulty arises more from the *subject* than it does from the language.

The prophets indeed complain, not unfrequently, that the Jews did not understand them. But this complaint always has respect to a spiritual perception and relish of the truths which they delivered to them. 'They heard but understood not ; they saw, but perceived not.' The fault, however, was the want of spiritual taste and discernment ; not because the language, in itself, was beyond human comprehension.

Admitting then that the prophets spake intelligibly, and that they were actually understood by their contemporaries, and this without any miraculous interposition, it follows of course, that it was the usual laws of interpretation which enabled their hearers to understand them. They applied to their words, and spontaneously applied, the same principles of interpretation which they were wont to apply to the language of all who addressed them. By so doing, they rightly understood the prophets ; at any rate, by so doing, they might have rightly understood them ; and if so, then such laws of interpretation are the right ones, for those laws must be right which conduct us to the true meaning of a speaker.

I can perceive no way of avoiding this conclusion, unless we deny that the prophets were understood, or could be understood, by their contemporaries. But to deny this, would be denying facts so plain, so incontrovertible, that it would argue a desperate attachment to system, or something still more culpable.

In view of what has just been said, it is easy to see why so much study and learning are necessary, at the present time, in order to enable us correctly to understand the original Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. We are born neither in Greece nor Palestine ; we have learned in our childhood to read and understand neither Greek nor Hebrew. Our condition and circumstances, our course of education and thought, as well as our language, are all different from those of a Jew in ancient times. Our government, our climate, our state of society and manners

and habits, our civil, social, and religious condition, are all different from those of Palestine. Neither heaven above nor earth beneath, is the same in various respects. A thousand productions of nature and art, in the land of the Hebrews, are unknown to our times and country; and multitudes of both are familiar to us, of which they never had any knowledge. How can we then put ourselves in their places, and listen to prophets and apostles, speaking Hebrew and Greek, without much learning and study? It is plainly impossible. And the call for all this learning and study, is explained by what I have just said. All of it is designed to accomplish one simple object, and only one, viz. to place us, as nearly as possible, in the condition of those whom the sacred writers originally addressed. Had birth and education placed us there, all this study and effort might be dispensed with at once; for, as has been already stated, we could then understand the sacred writers, in the same way and for the same reason that we now understand our own preachers. When we do this, we do it by spontaneously applying the laws of interpretation which we have practised from our childhood; and such would have been the case, had we been native Hebrews, contemporary with the prophets and apostles.

When the art of interpretation, therefore, is imagined or asserted to be a difficult and recondite art, dependent on great learning and high intellectual acuteness, the obvious mistake is made of confounding with it another sort of learning, which is only preparatory and conditional, but does not constitute the principles themselves of hermeneutics.

It seems to my own mind, that we have arrived at the conclusion which it was proposed to examine and confirm, in a very plain, natural, and simple way. The substance of all is: The Bible was made to be understood; it was written by men, and for men; it was addressed to all classes of people; it was for the most part understood by them all, just as our present religious discourses are; and of course it was interpreted in such a way, or by the aid of such principles, as other books are understood and explained.

But there are objectors to this position. Some of them, too, speak very boldly, and with great zeal and confidence. Candour requires that we should listen to them, and examine their allegations.

OBJ. 1. 'How can the common laws of interpretation apply to the Scriptures, when confessedly the Bible is a book which

contains revelations in respect to supernatural things, to the knowledge of which no human understanding is adequate to attain?"

The fact alleged I cheerfully concede. But the inference drawn from it, I do not feel to be at all a necessary one, nor in fact in any measure a just one. So far as the Scriptures are designed to make known a *revelation* to us, respecting things that are above the reach of our natural understanding, just so far they are designed to communicate that which is intelligible. If you deny this, then you must maintain that to be a revelation, which is not intelligible; or, in other words, that to be a revelation, by which nothing is revealed.

If you say that a new interposition on the part of heaven is necessary, in order that any one may understand the Scriptures, then you make two miracles necessary to accomplish one end; the first, in giving a so called revelation which after all is unintelligible; the second, in supernaturally influencing the mind to discern what is meant by this revelation. The reply to this has been already suggested above, viz. it contradicts experience, and it is contrary to the analogy of God's dealing with us in all other respects.

As far then as any *revelation* is actually made in the Scriptures, so far they are intelligible. But perhaps some one will here make another objection, viz.

OBJ. 2. 'Intelligible to whom? A man must be enlightened in a *spiritual* respect, before he can understand the Scriptures. How then can the *usual* laws of interpretation enable him to understand and to explain them?'

The fact here alleged is rather over-stated; I mean to say, the assertion is too general. That there are parts of the Scriptures which no unsanctified man can fully understand and appreciate, is and must be true, so long as the fact is admitted that there are parts which relate to *spiritual* experience. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Most freely and fully do I concede what is here meant to be affirmed. How can any man fully understand what is said of religious experience and feelings, who is not himself, and never has been, the subject of such experience and feelings?

After all, however, there is nothing new or singular in this, at least so far as the *principle* itself is concerned. The same

principle holds true, in regard to other things and other books. Before a man can understand them, he must be in a condition to do so. Who can read Newton's *Principia* or the *Mecanique Celeste* of La Place, and understand them, unless he comes to the study of them with due preparation? Who can read any book of mental or moral science, and enter fully into the understanding of it, unless he is himself in a state which enables him throughout to sympathize with the author, and to enter into all his feelings and views? Who, for example, can read and fully understand Milton and Homer, without the spirit and soul of poetry within him which will enable him to enter into their views and feelings? Who can read intelligently even a book of mathematics, without sympathizing with the writer?

The answer to these questions is too plain to need being repeated. How then does the *principle* differ, when I ask: 'Who can read the Scriptures intelligently, that does not enter into the moral and religious sympathies of the writers?' I agree fully to the answer which says, 'No one.' The thing is impossible. But it is equally impossible in all other cases to read intelligently, without entering into the sympathies of the writers.

Those then who are solicitous for the honour of the Scriptures, have in reality nothing to fear from this quarter, in respect to the principle which I have been advocating. A demand for *religious feeling*, in order fully to enter into the meaning of the sacred writers, rests on the same principle as the demand for a poetic feeling in order to read Milton with success, or a mathematical feeling in order to study intelligibly Newton and La Place. How can any writer be well and thoroughly understood, when there is not some good degree of community of feeling between him and his reader? This is so obvious a principle, that it needs only to be stated in order to be recognized.

But still, it would be incorrect to say that Newton or Milton is unintelligible. They have both employed language in its usual way; or if not always so, yet they have furnished adequate explanations of what they do mean. The laws of exegesis are the very same, in reading and explaining Milton, as they are in reading and explaining Pope or Cowper; they are the same in respect to La Place, that they are in respect to Day's mathematics. But in both these cases, higher acquisitions are demanded of the reader in the former instance than in the latter.

It is incorrect, therefore, to say that the Bible is unintelligible, or to say that the usual laws of interpretation are not to be ap-

plied to it, because an individual's feelings must be in unison with those of the writers, in order fully to understand all which they say.

Let me add a word also by way of caution, in regard to the subject now under consideration. There is a way of inculcating the truth, that "the natural man receiveth and knoweth not the things of the Spirit," which is adapted to make a wrong impression on the minds of men. They are prone to deduce from certain representations of this subject which have sometimes been made, the conclusion that natural men can understand no part of the Bible, and that they must be regenerated, before they can have any right views of the Scriptures. But this is carrying the doctrine much beyond its just limits. A great part of the Bible is addressed to intelligent, rational, moral beings as such. All men belong to this class; and because this is so, they are capable of understanding the sacred writers, at least so far as they designed originally to be understood by all, and so far as the great purposes of warning and instruction are concerned. It is the condemnation of men, that "light has come into the world, and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Our Saviour could not have said, that if 'he had not come and spoken to the Jews, they would not have had sin,' except on the ground that the light which he communicated to them, rendered them altogether inexcusable. Let the preachers of the divine word take good care, then, that they do not so represent the ignorance of sinners as to diminish their guilt. When this ignorance is represented as involuntary, or as a matter of dire necessity, then is this offence committed.

OBJ. 3. 'But is it not *God* who speaks in the Bible, and not man? How can we expect the words of God himself to be scanned by the rules of human language?'

The answer is brief, and like to that which has already been given. When God speaks to men, he speaks *more humano*, in human language; and this, in condescension to our wants. Does he expect us to understand the language of angels? He does not. The Bible is filled with the most ample illustrations of this. Every where, *human* idioms and forms of speech, common to the Jewish nation and to individuals, are employed by the sacred writers. All the varieties of style and expression are observable in these writers, which we see any where else. The same figures of speech are employed; the same modes of address and instruction. We have historic narration, genealogical

catalogues, prose, poetry, proverbs, addresses, sermons, parables, allegories, enigmas even; and all this in a way similar to that found in the works of uninspired writers. It is the *matter* rather than the *manner*, which characterises the superiority of the Scriptures. The manner indeed is sublime, impressive, awful, delightful. But this is intimately connected with the elevated matter, the high and holy contents, of the Bible. After all due allowances for this, we may say, that the manner is *the manner of men*; it is *by men and for men*.

We come then, after canvassing these principal objections against the position which has been advanced, to the conclusion before stated, viz. that the rules of interpretation applied to other books, are applicable to the Scriptures. If their contents are peculiar, (as they are,) still we apply the same laws to them as to other books that are peculiar, i. e. we construe them in accordance with the matter which they contain. If there are peculiarities belonging to individual writers, as is the fact with respect to several of them, we still apply the same principles to the interpretation of them which we do to other peculiar writers, i. e. we compare such writers with themselves, and illustrate them in this way. In short, no case occurs to my mind, in which the general principle above stated will not hold good, unless it be one which has been often proposed, and strenuously asserted, and which still has deep hold on the minds of some in our religious community; I mean the position, that some part of the Scriptures has a *double* sense, a temporal and spiritual meaning at one and the same time. If this be true, it is indeed an exception to all the rules of interpretation which we apply to other books. But whether it be well grounded, in my apprehension may be doubted, *salva fide et salva ecclesia*. The discussion of the question respecting this however, would occupy too much room for the present. If Providence permit, it will be made the subject of examination at some future period.