

THE
WORKS
OF
JOHN LOCKE.

A NEW EDITION, CORRECTED.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

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A

PARAPHRASE AND NOTES

ON THE

EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

GALATIANS, CORINTHIANS, ROMANS, EPHESIANS.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A N E S S A Y

FOR THE

UNDERSTANDING OF ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES

BY CONSULTING ST. PAUL HIMSELF.

AN

ESSAY

FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES,

BY CONSULTING ST. PAUL HIMSELF.

THE PREFACE.

To go about to explain any of St. Paul's epistles, after so great a train of expositors and commentators, might seem an attempt of vanity, censurable for its needlessness, did not the daily and approved examples of pious and learned men justify it. This may be some excuse for me to the public, if ever these following papers should chance to come abroad : but to myself, for whose use this work was undertaken, I need make no apology. Though I had been conversant in these epistles, as well as in other parts of sacred Scripture, yet I found that I understood them not ; I mean the doctrinal and discursive parts of them : though the

practical directions, which are usually dropped in the latter part of each epistle, appeared to me very plain, intelligible, and instructive.

I did not, when I reflected on it, very much wonder that this part of sacred Scripture had difficulties in it : many causes of obscurity did readily occur to me. The nature of epistolary writings in general disposes the writer to pass by the mentioning of many things, as well known to him to whom his letter is addressed, which are necessary to be laid open to a stranger, to make him comprehend what is said : and it not seldom falls out that a well-penned letter, which is very easy and intelligible to the receiver, is very obscure to a stranger, who hardly knows what to make of it. The matters that St. Paul writ about were certainly things well known to those he writ to, and which they had some peculiar concern in ; which made them easily apprehend his meaning, and see the tendency and force of his discourse. But we having now, at this distance, no information of the occasion of his writing, little or no knowledge of the temper and circumstances those he writ to were in, but what is to be gathered out of the epistles themselves ; it is not strange that many things in them lie concealed to us, which, no doubt, they who were concerned in the letter understood at first sight. Add to this, that in many places it is manifest he answers letters sent, and questions proposed to him, which, if we had, would much better clear those passages that relate to them than all the learned notes of critics and commentators, who in after-times fill us with their conjectures ; for very often, as to the matter in hand, they are nothing else.

The language wherein these epistles are writ is another, and that no small occasion of their obscurity to us now : the words are Greek ; a language dead many ages since ; a language of a very witty, volatile people, seekers after novelty, and abounding with variety of notions and sects, to which they applied the terms of their common tongue with great liberty and variety : and yet this makes but one small part of the difficulty in the language of these epistles ; there is a peculiarity in it that

much more obscures and perplexes the meaning of these writings than what can be occasioned by the looseness and variety of the Greek tongue. The terms are Greek, but the idiom, or turn of the phrases, may be truly said to be Hebrew or Syriac. The custom and familiarity of which tongues do sometimes so far influence the expressions in these epistles, that one may observe the force of the Hebrew conjugations, particularly that of Hiphil, given to Greek verbs, in a way unknown to the Grecians themselves. Nor is this all ; the subject treated of in these epistles is so wholly new, and the doctrines contained in them so perfectly remote from the notions that mankind were acquainted with, that most of the important terms in it have quite another signification from what they have in other discourses. So that putting all together, we may truly say that the New Testament is a book written in a language peculiar to itself.

To these causes of obscurity, common to St. Paul, with most of the other penmen of the several books of the New Testament, we may add those that are peculiarly his, and owing to his style and temper. He was, as it is visible, a man of quick thought and warm temper, mighty well versed in the writings of the Old Testament, and full of the doctrine of the new. All this put together, suggested matter to him in abundance on those subjects which came in his way : so that one may consider him, when he was writing, as beset with a crowd of thoughts, all striving for utterance. In this posture of mind it was almost impossible for him to keep that slow pace, and observe minutely that order and method of ranging all he said, from which results an easy and obvious perspicuity. To this plenty and vehemence of his may be imputed those many large parentheses which a careful reader may observe in his epistles. Upon this account also it is, that he often breaks off in the middle of an argument, to let in some new thought suggested by his own words ; which having pursued and explained, as far as conduced to his present purpose, he re-assumes again the thread of his discourse, and goes on with it, without taking any notice that he returns again to what he had been before saying ; though some-

times it be so far off, that it may well have slipped out of his mind, and requires a very attentive reader to observe, and so bring the disjointed members together, as to make up the connexion, and see how the scattered parts of the discourse hang together in a coherent, well-agreeing sense, that makes it all of a piece.

Besides the disturbance in perusing St. Paul's epistles, from the plenty and vivacity of his thoughts, which may obscure his method, and often hide his sense from an unwary or over-hasty reader; the frequent changing of the personage he speaks in renders the sense very uncertain, and is apt to mislead one that has not some clue to guide him; sometimes by the pronoun, I, he means himself; sometimes any Christian; sometimes a Jew, and sometimes any man, &c. If speaking of himself, in the first person singular, has so various meanings; his use of the first person plural is with a far greater latitude, sometimes designing himself alone, sometimes those with himself, whom he makes partners to the epistles; sometimes with himself, comprehending the other apostles, or preachers of the Gospel, or Christians: nay, sometimes he in that way speaks of the converted Jews, other times of the converted Gentiles, and sometimes of others, in a more or less extended sense, every one of which varies the meaning of the place, and makes it to be differently understood. I have forbore to trouble the reader with examples of them here. If his own observation hath not already furnished him with them, the following Paraphrase and Notes, I suppose, will satisfy him in the point.

In the current also of his discourse he sometimes drops in the objections of others, and his answers to them, without any change in the scheme of his language, that might give notice of any other speaking besides himself. This requires great attention to observe; and yet, if it be neglected or overlooked, will make the reader very much mistake and misunderstand his meaning, and render the sense very perplexed.

These are intrinsic difficulties arising from the text itself, whereof there might be a great many other named, as the uncertainty, sometimes, who are the persons he

speaks to, or the opinions, or practices, which he has in his eye, sometimes in alluding to them, sometimes in his exhortations and reproofs. But those above-mentioned being the chief, it may suffice to have opened our eyes a little upon them, which, well examined, may contribute towards our discovery of the rest.

To these we may subjoin two external causes, that have made no small increase of the native and original difficulties, that keep us from an easy and assured discovery of St. Paul's sense, in many parts of his epistles; and those are,

First, The dividing of them into chapters and verses, as we have done; whereby they are so chopped and minced, and, as they are now printed, stand so broken and divided, that not only the common people take the verses usually for distinct aphorisms; but even men of more advanced knowledge, in reading them, lose very much of the strength and force of the coherence and the light that depends on it. Our minds are so weak and narrow, that they have need of all the helps and assistances that can be procured, to lay before them undisturbedly the thread and coherence of any discourse; by which alone they are truly improved, and led into the genuine sense of the author. When the eye is constantly disturbed in loose sentences, that by their standing and separation appear as so many distinct fragments; the mind will have much ado to take in, and carry on in its memory, an uniform discourse of dependent reasonings; especially having from the cradle been used to wrong impressions concerning them, and constantly accustomed to hear them quoted as distinct sentences, without any limitation or explication of their precise meaning, from the place they stand in, and the relation they bear to what goes before, or follows. These divisions also have given occasion to the reading these epistles by parcels, and in scraps, which has farther confirmed the evil arising from such partitions. And I doubt not but every one will confess it to be a very unlikely way, to come to the understanding of any other letters, to read them piece-meal, a bit to-day, and another scrap to-morrow, and so on by broken intervals;

especially if the pause and cessation should be made, as the chapters the apostle's epistles are divided into, do end sometimes in the middle of a discourse, and sometimes in the middle of a sentence. It cannot therefore but be wondered that that should be permitted to be done to holy writ, which would visibly disturb the sense, and hinder the understanding of any other book whatsoever. If Tully's epistles were so printed, and so used, I ask, Whether they would not be much harder to be understood, less easy, and less pleasant to be read, by much, than now they are?

How plain soever this abuse is, and what prejudice soever it does to the understanding of the sacred Scripture, yet if a Bible was printed as it should be, and as the several parts of it were writ, in continued discourses, where the argument is continued, I doubt not but the several parties would complain of it, as an innovation, and a dangerous change in the publishing those holy books. And indeed, those who are for maintaining their opinions, and the systems of parties, by sound of words, with a neglect of the true sense of Scripture, would have reason to make and foment the outcry. They would most of them be immediately disarmed of their great magazine of artillery, wherewith they defend themselves and fall upon others. If the holy Scripture were but laid before the eyes of Christians, in its connexion and consistency, it would not then be so easy to snatch out a few words, as if they were separate from the rest, to serve a purpose, to which they do not at all belong, and with which they have nothing to do. But as the matter now stands, he that has a mind to it, may at a cheap rate be a notable champion for the truth, that is, for the doctrines of the sect that chance or interest has cast him into. He need but be furnished with verses of sacred Scripture, containing words and expressions that are but flexible (as all general obscure and doubtful ones are), and his system, that has appropriated them to the orthodoxy of his church, makes them immediately strong and irrefragable arguments for his opinion. This is the benefit of loose sentences, and Scripture crumbled into verses, which quickly turn

into independent aphorisms. But if the quotation in the verse produced were considered as a part of a continued coherent discourse, and so its sense were limited by the tenour of the context, most of these forward and warm disputants would be quite stripped of those, which they doubt not now to call spiritual weapons; and they would have often nothing to say, that would not show their weakness, and manifestly fly in their faces. I crave leave to set down a saying of the learned and judicious Mr. Selden: "In interpreting the Scripture," says he, "many do as if a man should see one have ten pounds, which he reckoned by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, meaning four was but four units, and five five units, &c. and that he had in all but ten pounds: the other that sees him, takes not the figures together as he doth, but picks here and there; and thereupon reports that he had five pounds in one bag, and six pounds in another bag, and nine pounds in another bag, &c. when as, in truth, he has but ten pounds in all. So we pick out a text here and there, to make it serve our turn; whereas if we take it altogether, and consider what went before, and what followed after, we should find it meant no such thing."

I have heard sober Christians very much admire, why ordinary illiterate people, who were professors, that showed a concern for religion, seemed much more conversant in St. Paul's epistles than in the plainer, and (as it seemed to them) much more intelligible parts of the New Testament; they confessed, that, though they read St. Paul's epistles with their best attention, yet they generally found them too hard to be mastered; and they laboured in vain so far to reach the apostle's meaning, all along in the train of what he said, as to read them with that satisfaction that arises from a feeling that we understand and fully comprehend the force and reasoning of an author; and therefore they could not imagine what those saw in them, whose eyes they thought not much better than their own. But the case was plain; these sober inquisitive readers had a mind to see nothing in St. Paul's epistles but just what he meant; whereas those others, of a quicker and gayer

sight, could see in them what they pleased. Nothing is more acceptable to fancy than pliant terms, and expressions that are not obstinate; in such it can find its account with delight, and with them be illuminated, orthodox, infallible at pleasure, and in its own way. But where the sense of the author goes visibly in its own train, and the words, receiving a determined sense from their companions and adjacents, will not consent to give countenance and colour to what is agreed to be right, and must be supported at any rate, there men of established orthodoxy do not so well find their satisfaction. And perhaps, if it were well examined, it would be no very extravagant paradox to say, that there are fewer that bring their opinions to the sacred Scripture, to be tried by that infallible rule, than bring the sacred Scripture to their opinions, to bend it to them, to make it, as they can, a cover and guard to them. And to this purpose, its being divided into verses, and brought, as much as may be, into loose and general aphorisms, makes it most useful and serviceable. And in this lies the other great cause of obscurity and perplexedness which has been cast upon St. Paul's epistles from without.

St. Paul's epistles, as they stand translated in our English Bibles, are now, by long and constant use, become a part of the English language, and common phraseology, especially in matters of religion: this every one uses familiarly, and thinks he understands; but it must be observed, that if he has a distinct meaning when he uses those words and phrases, and knows himself what he intends by them, it is always according to the sense of his own system, and the articles, or interpretations, of the society he is engaged in. So that all this knowledge and understanding, which he has in the use of these passages of sacred Scripture, reaches no farther than this, that he knows (and that is very well) what he himself says, but thereby knows nothing at all what St. Paul said in them. The apostle writ not by that man's system, and so his meaning cannot be known by it. This being the ordinary way of understanding the epistles, and every sect being perfectly orthodox in

his own judgment; what a great and invincible darkness must this cast upon St. Paul's meaning, to all those of that way, in all those places where his thoughts and sense run counter to what any party has espoused for orthodox; as it must, unavoidably, to all but one of the different systems, in all those passages that any way relate to the points in controversy between them!

This is a mischief, which however frequent, and almost natural, reaches so far, that it would justly make all those who depend upon them wholly diffident of commentators, and let them see how little help was to be expected from them, in relying on them for the true sense of the sacred Scripture, did they not take care to help to cozen themselves, by choosing to use and pin their faith on such expositors as explain the sacred Scripture in favour of those opinions that they beforehand have voted orthodox, and bring to the sacred Scripture, not for trial, but confirmation. Nobody can think that any text of St. Paul's epistles has two contrary meanings; and yet so it must have, to two different men, who taking two commentators of different sects for their respective guides into the sense of any one of the epistles, shall build upon their respective expositions. We need go no further for a proof of it than the notes of the two celebrated commentators on the New Testament, Dr. Hammond and Beza, both men of parts and learning, and both thought, by their followers, men mighty in the sacred Scriptures. So that here we see the hopes of great benefit and light, from expositors and commentators, is in a great part abated; and those who have most need of their help can receive but little from them, and can have very little assurance of reaching the apostle's sense, by what they find in them, whilst matters remain in the same state they are in at present. For those who find they need help, and would borrow light from expositors, either consult only those who have the good luck to be thought sound and orthodox, avoiding those of different sentiments from themselves, in the great and approved points of their systems, as dangerous and not fit to be meddled with; or else with indifference look into the notes of all commentators pro-

miscuously. The first of these take pains only to confirm themselves in the opinions and tenets they have already, which whether it be the way to get the true meaning of what St. Paul delivered, is easy to determine. The others, with much more fairness to themselves, though with reaping little more advantage (unless they have something else to guide them into the apostle's meaning than the comments themselves), seek help on all hands, and refuse not to be taught by any one who offers to enlighten them in any of the dark passages. But here, though they avoid the mischief, which the others fall into, of being confined in their sense, and seeing nothing but that in St. Paul's writings, be it right or wrong; yet they run into as great on the other side, and instead of being confirmed in the meaning that they thought they saw in the text, are distracted with a hundred, suggested by those they advised with; and so, instead of that one sense of the Scripture, which they carried with them to their commentators, return from them with none at all.

This, indeed, seems to make the case desperate: for if the comments and expositions of pious and learned men cannot be depended on, whither shall we go for help? To which I answer, I would not be mistaken, as if I thought the labours of the learned in this case wholly lost and fruitless. There is great use and benefit to be made of them, when we have once got a rule to know which of their expositions, in the great variety there is of them, explains the words and phrases according to the apostle's meaning. Until then it is evident, from what is above said, they serve for the most part to no other use, but either to make us find our own sense, and not his, in St. Paul's words; or else to find in them no settled sense at all.

Here it will be asked, "How shall we come by this rule you mentioned? Where is that touchstone to be had, that will show us, whether the meaning we ourselves put, or take as put by others, upon St. Paul's words, in his epistles, be truly his meaning or no?" I will not say the way which I propose, and have in the following Paraphrase followed, will make

us infallible in our interpretations of the apostle's text: but this I will own, that till I took this way, St. Paul's epistles, to me, in the ordinary way of reading and studying them, were very obscure parts of Scripture, that left me almost every where at a loss; and I was at a great uncertainty in which of the contrary senses, that were to be found in his commentators, he was to be taken. Whether what I have done has made it any clearer and more visible, now, I must leave others to judge. This I beg leave to say for myself, that if some very sober, judicious Christians, no strangers to the sacred Scriptures, nay, learned divines of the church of England, had not professed, that by the perusal of these following papers, they understood the epistles much better than they did before, and had not, with repeated instances, pressed me to publish them, I should not have consented they should have gone beyond my own private use, for which they were at first designed, and where they made me not repent my pains.

If any one be so far pleased with my endeavours, as to think it worth while to be informed, what was the clue I guided myself by, through all the dark passages of these epistles, I shall minutely tell him the steps by which I was brought into this way, that he may judge whether I proceed rationally, upon right grounds, or no; if so be any thing, in so mean an example as mine, may be worth his notice.

After I had found, by long experience, that the reading of the text and comments in the ordinary way proved not so successful as I wished, to the end proposed, I began to suspect, that in reading a chapter as was usual, and thereupon sometimes consulting expositors upon some hard places of it, which at that time most affected me, as relating to points then under consideration in my own mind, or in debate amongst others, was not a right method to get into the true sense of these epistles. I saw plainly, after I began once to reflect on it, that if any one now should write me a letter, as long as St. Paul's to the Romans, concerning such a matter as that is, in a style as foreign, and expressions as dubious, as his seem to be, if I should divide it into

