

**LOCKE'S ESSAY FOR THE
UNDERSTANDING OF ST.
PAUL'S EPISTLES; AND
LE CLERC ON INSPIRATION**

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Locke's Essay for the Understanding of St. Paul's Epistles; And Le Clerc on Inspiration by Jean Le Clerc & John Locke

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JEAN LE CLERC & JOHN LOCKE

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LOCKE'S

ESSAY. *First publ.*
in 1705.

FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES;

AND

par LE CLERC

ON INSPIRATION.

Edited by Andrews Norton.

BOSTON:
WELLS AND LILLY, COURT-STREET.

1820.



P R E F A C E .

THE first of the two following tracts was written by Mr. LÖCKE, to be prefixed to his Paraphrase and Notes on some of the Epistles of St. Paul. That great man rendered the most important services to religion by his different publications ; and has contributed, perhaps more than any other individual, to give correct views respecting the proper method of studying the scriptures. Even if he had not been the first metaphysician of any age, he would still be remembered as the first among the English theologians of his own age. His Paraphrase and Notes constitute perhaps the best exposition for popular use, of the Epistles to which they relate, that has yet appeared in our own language.

The second tract is the substance of two letters on Inspiration, published, and, there is scarcely a doubt, written, by LE CLERC. LE CLERC was the contemporary and correspondent of LOCKE and NEWTON. He was a scholar of the most remarkable compass and variety of learning, and scarcely less distinguished for his clearness of mind, good sense, and acuteness. It may be doubted whether there is any where to be found, a more perspicuous and satisfactory statement on the subject in question, than what this tract presents.

In republishing, however, these two very valuable tracts, it is not intended to vouch for the correctness of every opinion and expression which they may contain. The general views are believed to be correct. But in a few comparatively unimportant respects, both authors might have written somewhat differently, if they had written in our day.

A. N.

AN ESSAY

FOR THE UNDERSTANDING

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES, &c.

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 publick, 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 tem-

per and circumstances of 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, 'tis 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 aftertimes 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, are 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 a 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