

A new Catena on St. Paul's Epistles.

A

PRACTICAL AND EXEGETICAL

Commentary

ON

THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

EPHESIANS:

IN WHICH ARE EXHIBITED THE RESULTS OF THE MOST LEARNED
THEOLOGICAL CRITICISMS, FROM THE AGE OF THE EARLY
FATHERS DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIME.

EDITED BY THE

REV. HENRY NEWLAND, M.A.,

VICAR OF ST. MARY CHURCH, DEVON, AND CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF EXETER.

“Erudite Lector, in hoc libro si aliquid tibi supervacaneum visum fuerit, id
minus eruditis relinque.”

Oxford and London:

J. H. AND JAS. PARKER.

1860.

COMMENTARY ON

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

THIS Epistle presents many and great difficulties, as most of those who have written upon it have confessed, on account of the sublimity of the doctrines with which it deals. The language, particularly in the earlier chapters, is much involved, and requires the closest attention to unravel its meaning. The following excellent remarks from Alford's Prolegomena may help to shew some of the difficulties that a commentator has to contend against in approaching this Epistle. He says, following Sedulius^a, that it is "by far the most difficult of all the writings of St. Paul. Elsewhere, as in the Epistle to the Romans, Galatians, and Colossians, the difficulties lie for the most part at or near the surface; a certain degree of study will master, not indeed the mysteries of redemption which are treated of, but the contextual coherence, and the course of the argument: or if not so, will at least serve to point out to every reader where the hard texts lie, and to bring out into relief each point with which he has to deal: whereas here the difficulties lie altogether beneath the surface; are not discernible by the cursory reader, who finds all very straightforward and simple. . . . All on the surface is smooth, and flows on unquestioned by the untheological reader; but when we begin to enquire why thought succeeds to thought, and one cumbersome parenthesis to another, depths under depths disclose themselves, wonderful systems of parallel allusion, frequent and complicated underplots. Every word, the more we search, approves itself, as set in its exact logical place; we see every phrase contributing, by its own similar organization and

^a "Inter omnes Pauli Epistolis vel maxime et verbis et sensu involuta est."—*Sedulius, Introduction.*

articulation, to the carrying out of the organic whole. But this result is not won without much labour of thought, without repeated and minute laying together of portions and expressions, without bestowing on single words and phrases, and their succession and arrangement, as much study as would suffice for whole sections of the more exoteric Epistles."

The following argument is taken from St. Chrysostom:—

"Ephesus is the metropolis of Asia. It was dedicated to Diana, whom they worshipped there in an especial manner as their great goddess. Indeed so great was the superstition of her worshippers, that when her temple was burnt they would not so much as divulge the name of the man who burnt it.

"The blessed John the Evangelist spent the chief part of his time there: he was there when he was banished, and there he died. It was there, too, that Paul left Timothy, as he says in writing to him, 'As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus^b.'

"Most of the philosophers also, those more particularly who flourished in Asia, were there; and even Pythagoras himself is said to have come from thence; perhaps because Samos, whence he really came, is an island of Ionia. It was the resort also of the disciples of Parmenides, and Zeno, and Democritus, and you may see a number of philosophers there even to the present day.

"These facts I mention, not merely as such, but with a view of shewing that Paul would needs take great pains and trouble in writing to these Ephesians. He is said indeed to have entrusted them, as persons already well instructed, with his profoundest conceptions; and the Epistle itself is full of sublime conceptions and doctrines.

"He wrote the Epistle from Rome, and, as he himself informs us, in bonds: 'Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds^c.' It abounds with sentiments of

^b 1 Tim. i. 3.

^c Ephes. vi. 19, 20.

overwhelming loftiness and grandeur. Thoughts which he scarcely so much as utters anywhere else, he here plainly declares; as when he says, 'To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God^d.' And again, 'He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places^e.' And again, 'Which in other places was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and partakers of His inheritance in Christ^f.' "

It is satisfactory to know that the authorship of this Epistle was never called in question until very recent times, it having been universally ascribed to St. Paul. Some moderns, however, as De Wette and Bauer, have maintained that St. Paul was not the author. The former sees in it nothing but an expansion of the Epistle to the Colossians, written probably by some disciple of the apostles; while the latter imagines that he can trace in it the ideas and phraseology of Gnostic and Montanistic times. It is needless to say that such theories, however ingeniously framed, are worthless as opposed to the consentient voice of the Church.

But though there can be no doubt as to the *authorship* of the Epistle, much question has been raised as to *whom* it was addressed. In consequence of the words ἐν Ἐφέσῳ^g being a disputed reading, many have thought that it was *not* addressed to the *Ephesians*. Those, however, who maintain this opinion, have not been able to agree as to whom it was addressed. Some, including Grotius, Hammond, Mill, Venema, Wetstein, Paley, &c., follow the idea started by the heretic Marcion, and think that the Epistle was written to the Church at *Laodicea*, and that we have here the Epistle addressed to that Church which is mentioned Col. iv. 16, and which is generally supposed to have been lost. Archbishop Usher and others maintain that this was a *circular Epistle*, addressed to no Church in particular, but belonging

^d Ephes. iii. 10.^e 1b. ii. 6.^f 1b. iii. 5, 6.^g 1b. i. 1.

equally to all in the district to which it was sent. This opinion has been stoutly defended by Michaelis.

It may be well briefly to mention the reasons which have led so many writers of eminence to deny that the Epistle was addressed to the Ephesians:—

1. On account of the passage in Tertullian *adv. Marcionem*, lib. v. c. 17, where he writes, “*Ecclesiæ quidem veritate (i. e. testimonio Ecclesiæ fide digno) epistolam istam ad Ephesios habemus emissam, non ad Laodicenos; sed Marcion ei titulum (inscriptionem) aliquando interpolare gestiit, quasi et in isto diligentissimus explorator.*” And again, chap. xi.: “*Prætereo hic de aliâ epistolâ quam nos ad Ephesios perscriptam habemus, hæretici autem (Marcionitæ) ad Laodicenos.*” But since the *reason* is not stated why Marcion affirmed that this Epistle was written to the Laodiceans, it is plain that his mere assertion is valueless, as opposed to common consent.

2. Because in some old codices the words *ἐν Ἐφέσῳ*^h are omitted. Reference is made to St. Basil *adv. Eunom.*, lib. ii. c. 19, where he quotes Ephesians i. 1 thus, *τοῖς ἀγίοις οὖσι, καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, and adds, “*οἱ ὄντες* are men united with *τῷ ὄντι*, with Him who is, i. e. with God. He calls these *τοὺς ὄντας, κατ’ ἐξοχήν*, as God is *κατ’ ἐξοχήν* called *ὁ ὢν*. So also those who were before us handed it down, and we have found it in ancient codices.” It is evident, however, that this is nothing more than play of the fancy. And it may be added that St. Basil, in what has gone before, has spoken of the Epistle as having been written to the *Ephesians*; he merely omitted the words *ἐν Ἐφέσῳ* in ver. 1. Let it be granted also that in some ancient codices these words are omitted, yet nothing follows from this but that those codices which omit the words may possibly be traced to Marcionite sources.

3. On account of some internal evidence which is thought to prove that the Epistle could not have been written to the Ephesians. These arguments are summed up by Conybeare and Howsonⁱ, and may be given as follows:—

^h Ephes. i. 1.

ⁱ Life and Epistles of St. Paul, vol. ii. p. 405.

1. It would be inexplicable that St. Paul, when he wrote to the Ephesians, amongst whom he had spent so long a time, and to whom he was bound by ties of such close affection^j, should not have a single message of personal greeting to send. Yet none such are found in this Epistle.

2. He could not have described the Ephesians as a Church whose conversion he knew only by report^k.

3. He could not speak to them as only knowing himself (the founder of their Church) to be an apostle by hearsay^l, so as to need credentials to accredit him with them^m.

4. He could not describe the Ephesians as exclusively Gentilesⁿ, and so recently converted^o.

It would occupy too much space to reply to these objections. They are met and triumphantly refuted by Alford in his Prolegomena to the Epistle. It will be enough to say, in concluding this branch of the subject, that St. Ignatius^p, Clemens Alex.^q, and Origen^r affirm that this Epistle was addressed to the *Ephesians*, and that it will be safest and wisest to adhere to this view.

St. Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this Epistle^s, and it is generally believed that it was written during his imprisonment at Rome. Dr. Lardner fixes the date of it A.D. 61. It may, however, have been written any time between 61 and 63. Its object is so fully treated of in the observations which follow, that it will only be necessary to say here that it did not arise out of any circumstances peculiar to the Ephesian Church, but must be regarded as *general* in its character.

CHAP. I.

VER. 1. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ

St. Paul uses this high title to shew, 1, that he is not acting under a mere earthly authority; and, 2, that he is not in league with the powers of darkness, as the false apostles were.

^j Acts xx. 17.

^k Ephes. i. 15.

^l Ib. iii. 2.

^m Ib. iii. 4.

ⁿ Ib. ii. 11; iv. 17.

^o Ib. i. 13; ii. 13; v. 8.

^p Epistle to the Ephesians.

^q Pæd. i. 5, and Strom. iv. p. 364, edit. Sylb.

^r Cont. Cels., p. 122, edit. Spenc.

^s Ephes. iii. 1; iv. 1; vi. 20.

This assertion of the true nature of his commission would be specially needed in dealing with people who, like the Ephesians, were conversant with magical arts †.

by the will of God,

Understand the Father: (cf. 1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; Col. i. 1; see also Gal. i. 1;) i. e. called to the apostleship by the will and command of God, not by my own merits. The use of this expression does not imply any inferiority of the Son to the Father, as the Arians maintained; for, as St. Chrysostom says on verse 10, "The Father willed, the Son wrought. But neither does it follow, that because the Father willed, the Son is excluded from the working, nor because the Son wrought, that the Father is deprived of the willing. But to the Father and the Son all things are common. 'For all Mine are Thine,' saith He, 'and Thine are Mine.'"

The use of this expression is calculated to teach us how highly the doctrine of St. Paul should be prized; and we may also learn by inference the dignity of those who are rightly called to the ministerial office.

to the saints which are at Ephesus,

For the meaning of the word 'saint,' see observations on Phil. i. 1. Œcumenius says,—“Consider how great was the virtue of that time, that he addresses even men of the world as saints and faithful.” And St. Chrysostom, lamenting the degeneracy of his flock, exclaims, “How great must the abundance of virtuous men then have been, (i. e. at Ephesus,) when even secular men could be called 'saints' and 'faithful.'”

and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Πιστοὶ, in other places, are simply *οἱ πιστεύοντες*, but in this place they seem to be those who abide in the faith^u. The use of this word is remarkable, following so closely upon *ἅγιοι*, and involves the notion of perseverance. Cf. Rev. xvii. 14: *καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί*. It is as if he were not content with merely calling them 'saints,'

† Acts xix. 19.

^u Rosenmüller.

since "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband^x," and in a certain sense the vessels used in the service of the temple, and the victims slain in sacrifice, were holy; therefore he adds the title 'faithful,' because, as St. Jerome says, "Faith proceeds from the will of one's own mind, but sanctification is sometimes received from the bounty of the sanctifier, apart from our own will^y."

The addition of the words, "in Christ Jesus," is to be observed. "Many are faithful, but not 'in Christ;'" for example, if one punctually restore a pledge. Therefore he set down, 'in Christ,' by way of distinction^z." St. Jerome has nearly the same.

St. Cyril^a, speaking of the dignity of those who are about to be transferred from the order of Catechumens to that of the faithful, dwells with great force on the solemn character of this word. "For as God," he says, "is called Faithful, thou likewise receivest this title, receiving in it a great dignity. For as God is called Good, Just, Almighty, the Artificer of the universe, so also is He called Faithful; think, then, to how great a dignity thou art rising, being on the eve of sharing a title of God." And again^b: "Think not it is a trifle thou receivest; thou, a wretched man, receivest the Name of God: for hear the words of Paul, 'God is Faithful;' and another Scripture, 'God is Faithful and Just.'"

2. The Apostle's salutation. Cf. Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 2; Gal. i. 3. *Χάρις* and *εἰρήνη* are connected together

^x 1 Cor. vii. 14.

^y Alford, quoting from Stier, says that in the use of these two expressions, 'saints' and 'faithful,' may be noticed already a trace of the two great divisions of the Epistle,—God's grace towards us and our faith towards Him. The remark is a good one.

This, in all probability, is the distinction which the Apostle meant to convey by the words *ἅγιοι* and *πιστοί*. There is, however, another interpretation which has been put upon these words, which must not be passed

over, especially as it seems to have received some countenance from Bingham. "*Ἄγιοι*, as opposed to *πιστοί*, is sometimes used to signify 'the consecrated,' or the 'clergy,' as distinguished from those of the laity who were also communicants, which last were called generally *πιστοί*. The reading, under this supposition, would be, "Paul, &c., to the clergy and laity at Ephesus."

^z Sedulius.

^a Lecture v. 1.

^b Introd. Lect. 4.

as cause and effect, for *χάρις* is the cause of peace. These words may be referred alike to the Father and the Son, or they may have reference to each individually; so that, as St. Jerome says, "*Grace* may relate to God the Father, while *peace* is assigned to the Son^c."

"He justly commenced with *grace*; for by grace both God is the Father of men, and by grace the Son also gave Himself a Ransom for us^d." Hemmingius well says that "this prayer of the Apostle embraces the sum of the benefits of the Gospel." St. Jerome makes use of this verse to shew the unity of the Father and the Son. Although there is here no special mention of the Holy Ghost, yet His agency must be understood as being implied^e; for when the Apostle said, "Grace be to you," he included the Person of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as we receive grace, that is, the remission of sins, through the gift of the Holy Ghost.

3. Blessed be the God, &c.

Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεός, scil. ἔστω,—"laudandus est Deus,"—let the highest praises be given to Him by me, by you, and by all; for, as far as man is concerned, to *bless* God is to praise Him; for we must remember that the word *εὐλογητός*, 'well spoken of,' is not adequately rendered by our word 'bless,' which generally implies to wish happiness to another^f.

Εὐλογητός is a Hebrew form of expression, cf. Luke i. 68; Rom. i. 25, ix. 5; and even when standing by itself, without the addition of *ὁ Θεός*, is in the New Testament a title of God. Thus Mark xiv. 61: *Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ*. It is to be observed that St. Paul begins his Epistle with the praise of God^g, as is the case with nearly all his other Epistles, that to St. Titus forming an exception; a lesson to us to preface all our undertakings with thanksgiving, and "to offer God the firstlings of our good deeds and words^h,"

^c "*χάρις* recte Deo Patri tribuitur, tanquam Fonti bonorum, contra pax Christo, quia Pacificator noster est."—*Aretius*.

^d Ecumenius.

^e "Spiritum Sanctum non nominat, quia cum sit nexus Patris et Filii in-

telligitur in extremis. Vel intelligitur in donis sibi appropriatis, quæ sunt gratia et pax."—*Gorranus, in loc.*

^f Johnson.

^g 2 Cor. i. 3.

^h Chrys., Hom. ii. in Rom.