

JOHN LOCKE, author of "An Essay on the Human Understanding," in the Preface to his Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, after stating internal causes of obscurity, remarks, p. 7,—"To these we may subjoin two external causes; that have made no small increase to 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 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. How plain soever this abuse is, and what prejudice soever it does to the understanding of the sacred and what 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 Scriptures 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 tenor 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