An Essay for the Understanding of St. Paul's Epistles,
By consulting St. Paul himself.

LONDON,
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ST. Paul having told the Corinthians in the last Words of the precedent Chapter, that he would shew them a more excellent way than the emulous producing of their Gifts in the Assembly, he in this Chapter tells them, that this more excellent way is Charity, which he at large explains, and shews the Excellency of.

PARAPHRASE.

1. IF I speak all the Languages of Men and Angels (c), and yet have not Charity to make use of them entirely for the Good and Benefit of others, I am no better than a sounding Brass or noisy Cymbal (c), which fills the Ears of others without any Advantage to its self by the Sound it makes: And if I have the Gift of Prophecy, and ice in the Law and the Pro-

TEXT.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and

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to be the least honoured or valued for the Gift he had, though it were not one of the first Rank. And in this Sense the word ζωιος is taken in the next Chapter, ver. 4, where St. Paul pursuing the same Argument, exhorts them to mutual Charity, good Will and Affection, which he assures them is preferable to any Gifts whatsoever. Besides, to what purpose should he exhort them to cover one self the best Gifts, when the obtaining of this or that Gift did not at all lie in their Desires or Endeavours, the Apostle having just before told them, ver. 11, that the Spirit divideth these Gifts to every Man severally as he will, and those he writ to had their Allotment already. He might as reasonably, according to his own Doctrine, in this very Chapter, bid the Foot cover to be the Hand, or the Ear to be the Eye. Let it be remembered therefore to rectifie this, that St. Paul says, ver. 17, of this Chapter; If the whole Body were the Eye, where were the Hearing? &c. St. Paul does not use to cross his own Design, nor contradict his own Reasoning.

(c) Tongues of Angels are mentioned here according to the Conception of the Jews.

(c) A Cymbal consisted of two large hollowed Plates of Brass, with broad Beams, which were brock one against another, to fill up the Symphony in great Comforts of Music: they made a great deep Sound, but had scarce any Variety of musical Notes.
all knowledge; and tho’ I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.

3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5. Doth not behave it self uncomely, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil,

6. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

7. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophesies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away,

9. For we know in part, and we prophesie in part.

phets all the Mysteries (b) contained in them, and comprehend all the Knowledge they reach; And if I have Faith to the highest degree and power of Miracles, so as to be able to remove Mountains (c), and have not Charity, I am nothing; I am of no value: And if I bestow all I have in relief of the Poor, and give my self to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity is long-suffering, is gentle and benign, without Emulation, Infolence, or being puffed up, is not ambitious, nor at all self-interessed, is not sharp upon others Failings, or inclined to ill Interpretations: Charity rejoices with others when they do well, and when any thing is amis, is troubled, and covers their Failings: Charity believes well, hopes well of every one, and patiently bears with every thing (d): Charity will never cease as a thing out of use, but the Gifts of Propheie and Tongues, and the Knowledge whereby Men look into, and explain the meaning of the Scriptures, the time will be when they will be laid aside, as no longer of any use, for the Knowledge we have now in this State, and the Explication we give of Scripture is short, par-

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2. (b) Any Predictions relating to our Saviour, or his Doctrine, or the times of the Gospel, contained in the Old Testament, in Types, or figurative and obscure Expressions, not understood before his coming, and being revealed to the World, St. Paul calls Mystery, as may be seen all through his Writings. So that Mystery and Knowledge are Terms here used by St. Paul to signify Truths concerning Christ to come, contained in the Old Testament; and Prophecy, the understanding of the Types and Prophecies containing those Truths, so as to be able to explain them to others.

(c) To remove Mountains, is to do what is next to impossible.

7. (d) May we not suppose that in this Description of Charity, St. Paul intimates, and exactly reproves their contrary Carriage in their Emulation and Contests about the Dignity and Preference of their spiritual Gifts?
10. tial and defective. But when hereafter we shall be got into the State of Accomplishment and Perfection, wherein we are to remain in the other World, there will no longer be any need of these imperfecter ways of Information, whereby we arrive at but a partial Knowledge here. Thus when I was in the imperfect State of Childhood, I talk'd, I understood, I reasoned after the imperfect manner of a Child: but when I came to the State and Perfection of Manhood, I laid aside those childish ways. Now we see but by Reflection the dim, and as it were enigmatical Representation of things: but then we shall see things directly, and as they are in themselves, as a Man sees another when they are face to face. Now I have but a superficial partial Knowledge of things, but then I shall have an intuitive comprehensive Knowledge of them, as I myself am known, and lie open to the view of superior Seraphick Beings, not by the obscure and imperfect way of Deductions and Reasoning. But then even in that State, Faith, Hope, and Charity will remain: But the greatest of the three is Charity.

11. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

12. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

13. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.