

Confessions - Book Xii - Chapter Xviii

by St. Augustine

Transcript

27. When all these things have been said and considered, I am unwilling to contend about words, for such contention is profitable for nothing but the subverting of the hearer.[484] But the law is profitable for edification if a man use it lawfully: for the end of the law \is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.\"[485] And our Master knew it well, for it was on these two commandments that he hung all the Law and the Prophets. And how would it harm me, O my God, thou Light of my eyes in secret, if while I am ardently confessing these things--since many different things may be understood from these words, all of which may be true--what harm would be done if I should interpret the meaning of the sacred writer differently from the way some other man interprets? Indeed, all of us who read are trying to trace out and understand what our author wished to convey; and since we believe that he speaks truly we dare not suppose that he has spoken anything that we either know or suppose to be false. Therefore, since every person tries to understand in the Holy Scripture what the writer understood, what harm is done if a man understands what thou, the Light of all truth-speaking minds, showest him to be true, although the author he reads did not understand this aspect of the truth even though he did understand the truth in a different meaning?[486]

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