

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

LITERARY ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE FIRST  
EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

i. 10. *That there be no divisions among you.*

“This heroic spirit of daring and endurance, in which all public and private differences were sunk throughout the whole fleet, is Lord Nelson’s great legacy, triply sealed by the victorious impress of the Nile, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar.”—Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea* (xlvii.).

i. 12. *Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas.*

“I—‘Next Poet?’ no, my hearties,  
I nor am nor fain would be!  
Choose your chiefs and pick your parties,  
Not one soul revolt to me!”

Browning, *At the Mermaid*.

i. 17. *Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.*

Describing the missionary efforts of the French and the English in North America, Francis Parkman in his *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac* (ch. iii.) observes that “the French had every advantage over rivals whose zeal for conversion was neither kindled by fanaticism nor fostered by an ambitious Government. Eliot laboured within call of Boston, while the heroic Brebeuf faced the ghastly perils of the western wilderness; and the wanderings of Brainerd sink into insignificance compared with those of the devoted Rasles. Yet, in judging the relative merits of the Romish and Protestant missionaries, it must not be forgotten that while the former contented themselves with sprinkling a few drops of water on the forehead of the war-like proselyte, the latter sought to wean him from his barbarism, and penetrate his savage heart with the truths of Christianity.”

i. 21. *The world by wisdom knew not God.*

Compare Lacordaire’s remark about “la doctrine catholique”:—“si elle était une philosophie, elle ne serait pas une religion.”

“The God of Plato himself or of Aristotle has little to do with the deities of popular Hellenic tradition. He is the supreme Being who is all that mind or intelligence, which is the highest

sort of being there is, can be. But for that very reason it is true emphatically of Aristotle, though not perhaps without some qualification of Plato, that all vestiges of that personal relation of the worshipper to his God which in its earlier form is connected with the tribesman's claim of blood-relationship on his tribal deity have fallen away from his theology. Hence it was that in the view of the Jew, St. Paul, 'the world by wisdom knew not God.' The philosophical theology was too far removed from the definitely religious needs of the unphilosophical."—C. C. J. Webb, *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, pp. 210, 211.

Dean Hole, of Rochester, once told of a discussion between Thackeray and a Cambridge professor. "The professor seemed to think that there would be hardly any limit to these attainments [of science and civilisation]. Thackeray spoke as Newton spoke about gathering pebbles on the shore, and affirmed that one of the best results of knowledge was to convince man of his ignorance. He seemed to preach from the text, though he did not quote it, that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. It was a combat between pride and humility, and pride had its usual fall."

i. 26. *Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*

"Evangelism, in its origin," Mark Pattison writes (in the essay on *Learning in the Church of England*), "was a reaction against the High Church 'evidences'; the insurrection of the heart and conscience of man against an arid orthodoxy. It insisted on a 'vital Christianity,' as against the Christianity of books. Its instinct was from the first against intelligence. No text found more favour with it than 'Not many wise, not many learned.'"

"Not many wise, rich, noble, or profound,  
In science, win one inch of heavenly ground."

Cowper.

In his journal for November 17, 1759, Wesley writes: "I spent one hour agreeably and profitably with Lady G—H—, and Sir C—H—. It is well a few of the rich and noble are called. O that God would increase their number!"

- i. 27. *But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.*

Aristotle, says T. H. Green (*Prolegomena to Ethics*, book iii., ch. 5, 258), knew self-devotion "in no higher form than as it appeared in the citizen-soldier, who faced death calmly in battle for his State. In that further realisation of the soul's capacities which has taken place in the history of Christendom, it has appeared in a far greater wealth of forms. In Aristotle's view the *βλος πρακτικος*—the life of rational self-determined activity—was only possible for a few among the few. It presupposed active participation in a civil community. Such communities could only exist in certain select nations, and, where they existed, only a few of the people contributing to their maintenance and living under their direction, were fit to share in civil functions. These alone had moral claims or capabilities. The rest were instruments of their convenience. In modern Christendom it is not merely our theories of life but the facts of life that have changed. 'Weak things of the world and things that are despised hath God called.' With the recognition of rights in human beings as such, there comes a new realisation of human capacities."

- ii. 2. *I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

Miss Julia Wedgwood notes in her journal (1865) a saying of Erskine of Linlathen : "There was a time when the watchword of a party was so closely linked with the reality that people did not see the difference. I do not think it is so now ; Paul preached *Jesus*. That word was enough then. Now it may mean anything."

William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist writer, once declared : "I am determined to know nothing as a public man save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and in this country I see Him crucified again in the person of the slave."

"All other religions under the sun make man seek God ; this Gospel I preach whets their curiosity, because God is seen seeking man. Beyond all doubt there is such a thing as the scientific study of comparative religions, but Christianity is not one of

them. There is only one Gospel : there are many religions.”—  
D. Crawford, *Thinking Black* (p. 342).

- ii. 4. *My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*

South quotes this in one of his sermons (April 30, 1668), when he insists on plain English in preaching. “The eternal salvation and damnation of souls are not things to be treated of with jests and witticisms. And he who thinks to furnish himself out of plays and romances with language for the pulpit, shews himself much fitter to act a part in the revels than for a cure of souls. ‘I speak the words of soberness,’ said Saint Paul, and I preach the gospel not with the ‘enticing words of man’s wisdom.’ This was the way of the apostles’ discoursing of things sacred. Nothing here ‘of the fringes of the north star’; nothing of ‘nature’s becoming unnatural’; nothing of the ‘down of angels’ wings,’ or ‘the beautiful locks of cherubims’; no starched similitudes introduced with a ‘Thus have I seen a cloud rolling in its airy mansion,’ and the like. No, these were sublimities above the rise of the apostolic spirit. For the apostles, poor mortals, were content to take lower steps, and to tell the world in plain terms, ‘that he who believed should be saved, and that he who believed not should be damned.’ And this was the dialect which pierced the conscience, and made the hearers cry out, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ It tickled not the ear, but sunk into the heart. . . . In a word, the apostles’ preaching was therefore mighty and successful because plain, natural, and familiar, and by no means above the capacity of their hearers.”

- ii. 7. *We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery.*

“St. Paul uses the word ‘mystery’ in very much the same sense which St. Chrysostom gives to it in the following careful definition : ‘A mystery is that which is everywhere proclaimed, but which is not understood by those who have not right judgment. It is revealed, not by cleverness, but by the Holy Ghost, as we are able to receive it.’ In St. Paul the word is nearly always found in connexion with words denoting revelation or publication.”—Dean Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (p. 61).

- ii. 9, 10. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him : but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.*

“ ‘The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ Hereafter, and up there, above the clouds, you have been taught to think ; until you were informed by your land-surveyors that there was neither up nor down, and by aspiring aeronauts that there was nothing in the blue but damp and azote. And now you don’t believe these things are prepared *anywhere* ? They are prepared just as much as ever, when and where they used to be : just now, and here, close at hand.”—Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera* (lxxii.).

“ We often say that we can know at present nothing about heaven ; and are accustomed to quote in support of this a text which proves, when taken in connexion with what goes before and follows it, that we know or may know a great deal. I refer to I Corinthians ii. 9, 10. ‘ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. *But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit* ; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.’ These words, and those which follow in the twelfth verse, ‘ *Now we have received of the Spirit which is of God, to know the things which have been freely given us of Him,*’ and, indeed, the whole tenor of the chapter, make it evident that the Apostle is not looking beyond the time that now is. . . . It is the heaven within us, and not the heaven above us, that the Apostle would here unfold to us.”—Dora Greenwell, *The Covenant of Life*, pp. 100–101.

- ii. 11. *For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him ? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*

“ What then have I to do with men, that they should listen to my confessions, as if they were going to heal all my diseases ? They are a generation curious and enquiring about the life of others, but slow to amend their own. Why do they desire to hear from me what I am, when they are unwilling to hear from Thee what they themselves are ? And when they listen to me

speaking of myself, how do they know if I am telling the truth, since no man knows what is in man, 'except the spirit of man which is in him'? Whereas if they listen to what Thou hast to say about themselves, they will not be able to say, 'The Lord lies,' for what is hearing Thee speak of themselves but learning to know themselves?"—Augustine's *Confessions* (x. 3).

ii. 12. *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

"If acquiescence without insight, if warmth without light, if the habit of taking for granted the words of a catechism, remembered or forgotten . . . if these suffice to make men Christians, in what sense could the apostle affirm that believers receive, not indeed worldly wisdom that comes to nought, but the wisdom of God, that we might know and comprehend the things that are freely given to us of God?"—Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*.

ii. 13. *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.*

"To be the very breath that moves the age  
Means not to have breath drive you bubble-like  
Before it—but yourself to blow."

Browning, *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*.

iii. 1-2. *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.*

"After his new birth, he had continued about a fortnight in heaviness, because of manifold temptations—in peace but not in joy. A letter which he received perplexed him, because it maintained that 'no doubting could consist with the least degree of true faith; that whoever at any time felt doubt or fear, was not weak in faith, but had no faith at all; and that none had any faith till the law of the Spirit of life had made him wholly free from the law of sin and death.' Begging God to direct him, he opened his Testament, and his eye fell on that passage where St. Paul speaks of babes in Christ, who were not able to bear strong meat, yet he says to them, 'Ye are God's

building, ye are the temple of God.' Surely then, he reasoned, these men had some degree of faith, though it is plain their faith was but weak."—Southey's *Life of Wesley* (ch. iv.).

iii. 3. *There is among you envying and strife and divisions.*

"Why has re-action triumphed?" Mazzini wrote, in 1835. "The reason lies in ourselves; in our want of organisation, in the dismemberment occasioned in our ranks by systems, some absurd and dangerous, all imperfect and immature, and yet defended in a spirit of fierce and exclusive intolerance; in our ceaseless distrust, in our miserable little vanities, in our absolute want of that spirit of discipline and order which alone can achieve great results; in the scattering and dispersing of our forces in a multitude of small centres and sects, powerful to dissolve, impotent to found."

"We have just religion enough to make us hate," said Swift, "but not enough to make us love one another."

"However little we may admire a State establishment of religion, it is certain that where such an establishment happens to exist, those who have been brought up in it, and have tranquilly conformed to its usages, escape one source of a certain mental asperity and the spirit of division. This is no credit to them or to the institution; any more than the asperity is a discredit to those who do not conform to the institution. Nay, one strong reason why some disapprove of systems of ecclesiastical privilege, is exactly that in modern societies it necessarily engenders this spirit of division. But in itself the spirit of division is no element of strength, but rather of weakness, for one whose task is to touch doubtful or unwilling hearers."—Morley's *Life of Cobden* (ch. ix.).

In a letter of 1810 to the Master of Sidney, who had attacked his views on holiness, Charles Simeon writes: "Persons who have the same general design, but differ in some particular modes of carrying it into execution, often stand more aloof from each other than they do from persons whose principles and conduct they entirely disapprove. The number of those who are zealous in the cause of religion is not so great but that they may find ample scope for their exertions without wasting their time in mutual contentions."

iii. 4-5. *While one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of*

*Apollos ; are ye not carnal ? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man ?*

“There were few warnings to his pupils,” says Stanley in his life of Dr. Arnold (ch. iv.), “on the entrance into life more solemn than those against party spirit, against giving to any human party, sect, society, or cause, that undivided sympathy and service which he held to be due only to the one party and cause of all good men under their Divine Head. There were few more fervent aspirations for his children than that with which he closes a letter in 1833 : ‘May God grant to my sons, if they live to manhood, an unshaken love of truth, and a firm resolution to follow it for themselves, with an intense abhorrence of all party ties, save that one tie which binds them to the party of Christ against wickedness.’”

In a letter of 1823, upon Erskine of Linlathen’s work, Vinet observes : “Si je ne haïssais par principe ces expressions, ‘Je suis d’Apollos, et de Céphas,’ je me laisserais aller volontiers à dire : Je suis d’Erskine.”

iii. 6. *I have planted, Apollos watered.*

In his sketch of an old Scottish gardener, R. L. Stevenson observes : “If you remarked how well a plant was looking, he would gravely touch his hat and thank you with solemn unction ; all credit in the matter falling to him. If, on the other hand, you called his attention to some back-going vegetable, he would quote Scripture : *Paul may plant and Apollos may water* ; all blame being left to Providence, on the score of deficient rain or untimely frosts.”

iii. 9. *We are labourers together with God.*

Martineau notes, as a great asset of Dr. Arnold at Rugby, that “he wholly lost sight of *himself*, and never gave occasion for even the perversest spirit to suspect that his battle with school evils was a contest for personal dignity or power ; in his dominance all wrong, he was himself but serving the *right*.”

In a letter to a friend, written from Dalkeith in 1844, Dr. Norman Macleod declares : “We want guides, we want reality, we want souls who will do and act before God ; who would have that disposition in building up the spiritual Church, which the reverential Middle Age masons had when elaborately carving

some graven imagery or quaint device, unseen by man's eye, on the fretted roof of a cathedral—they worked on God's house, and before God!"

iii. 11–12. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble . . .*

"The more I think of the matter," Dr. Arnold wrote in 1826, "and the more I read of the Scriptures themselves, and of the history of the Church, the more intense is my wonder at the language of admiration with which some men speak of the Church of England, which certainly retains the foundation as sure as all other Christian societies do, except the Unitarians, but has overlaid it with a very sufficient quantity of hay, and stubble, which I devoutly hope to see burnt one day in the fire."

"There is no alchemy by which we may get golden conduct out of leaden instincts—so Herbert Spencer told us very truly; but if our ideals are of gold, there is an alchemy which will transmute our external activities, so that our contributions to the spiritual temple may be no longer 'wood, hay, and stubble,' to be destroyed in the next conflagration, but precious and durable material."—Dean Inge, *Outspoken Essays* (second series), pp. 182–183.

iii. 15. *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

This was the text which Dr. Arnold used to apply to Dominic, in connexion with his share in the Albigenian Crusade and the foundation of the Inquisition.

"There are lovers of Shakespeare so jealous of his honour that they are unable to suppose that any grave moral flaw could have impaired the nobility of his life and manhood. Shakespeare, as he is discovered in his poems and his plays, appears rather to have been a man who by strenuous effort, and with the aid of the good powers of the world, was saved, so as by fire."—Dowden, *Shakespeare: His Mind and Art* (pp. 395–396).

iii. 21.

iii. 21. *All things are yours.*

"No thing I know,  
Feel or conceive, but I can make my own

Somehow, by use of hand or head or heart ;  
 This is the glory,—that in all conceived,  
 Or felt or known, I recognise a mind  
 Not mine but like mine,—for the double joy—  
 Making all things for me and me for Him.”

Browning, *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*.

“Who,” says Mr. R. H. Hutton, quoting from verses 5–23 of this chapter, “who that has studied St. Paul at all has not noticed that bold, soaring, dialectic, with which he rises from the forms of our finite and earthly thought to the infinite and the spiritual life embodied in them? . . . What ease and swiftness and power of wing in this indignant upward flight from the petty conflicts of the Corinthian Church; an upward flight which does not cease till the poor subjects of contention, though he himself was one of them, seem lost like grains of sand beneath the bending sky!”

iv. 1, 2. *Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

Mr. F. S. Oliver, in his biography of Alexander Hamilton, the American statesman of the eighteenth century, notes that “Hamilton’s idea of statesmanship was the faithful stewardship of the estate. His duty was to guard the estate, and, at the same time, to develop its resources. The emotional spring or motive of his endeavours was not a passionate love or pity for his fellow-creatures, but an overwhelming sense of duty towards his Creator, whose providence had appointed him to the stewardship.”

iv. 2. *It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

In *The Secret Agent* (ch. vi.) Conrad describes a native chief in one of the British colonies “whom it was a tradition for the successive colonial governors to trust and make much of as a firm friend and supporter of the order and legality established by white men; whereas, when examined sceptically, he was found out to be principally his own good friend, and nobody else’s. Not precisely a traitor, but still a man of many dangerous reservations in his fidelity, caused by a due regard for his own advantage, safety, and comfort.”

iv. 3, 4. *With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment . . . He that judgeth me is the Lord.*

"When you play," said Schumann once to musicians, "do not trouble who is listening to you. Yet always play as if a master were listening."

iv. 5. *Judge nothing before the time.*

"While we are coldly discussing a man's career, sneering at his mistakes, blaming his rashness, and labelling his opinions—'Evangelical and narrow,' or 'Latitudinarian and Pantheistic,' or 'Anglican and supercilious'—that man, in his solitude, is perhaps shedding hot tears because his sacrifice is a hard one, because strength and patience are failing him to speak the difficult word, and do the difficult deed."—George Eliot in *Scenes of Clerical Life*.

iv. 8. *Now ye are rich.*

E. Fitzgerald writes thus of the Rev. T. R. Matthews, a powerful evangelist: "Oh this wonderful, wonderful world, and we who stand in it are in a maze, except poor Matthews of Bedford, who fixes his eyes on a wooden cross and has no misgiving whatsoever. When I was at his chapel on Good Friday, he called at the end of his grand sermon on some of the people to say merely this, that they believed Christ had redeemed them; and first one got up and in sobs declared that she believed it; and then another, and then another—I was quite upset—poor people: how much richer than all who fill the London Churches!"

iv. 9. *We are made a spectacle unto the world.*

"How much the world owes to great sorrows!"

Sir John Seeley.

iv. 10. *We are fools for Christ's sake.*

Thomas Boston put these words on the title-page of his *Four-fold State*; but his friend, Mr. Wightman, who was allowed to prepare it for the press, "without any ceremony," says Boston, deleted them. "And I being urged to set my name to the book, which really from the beginning I designed not to do, could not then do it for a new reason, namely, that they had so mangled it: and from my own conviction I dropped that Scripture, forasmuch as I saw I had declined to be a fool for Christ's sake,

in that point ; and therefore the Lord had made me a greater fool than I needed to have been."

iv. 13. *Being defamed.*

"Who—save a few learned people—knows that the Bible records among other things the history of one of the most ambitious and obtrusive souls, of a mind both superstitious and cunning—the history of St. Paul the Apostle?"—Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day* (§ 68).

iv. 14. *I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved sons.*

Speaking of Pope Innocent III, Paul Sabatier remarks, in his *Life of St. Francis* (ch. vi.) that "when he suppressed ecclesiastical disorders it was less for love of good than for hatred of evil ; it was the judge who condemns or threatens, himself always supported by the law, not the father who weeps over his son's offences."

iv. 17. *Timotheus shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.*

"In the business of life I have used prudence and reflection. I have done everything by rules and methods. I have been glad to converse with men of experience and judgment, to find out the reasons why some fail and others succeed in any business. I have taken no step in trade but with great care and caution, considering every advantage or danger that attended it. I have always had my eye upon the main end of business, and have studied all the ways and means of being a gainer by all that I undertook. But what is the reason that I have brought none of these tempers to religion ? What is the reason that I, who have so often talked of the necessity of rules and methods and diligence in worldly business, have all this while never once thought of any rules or methods or managements to carry me on in a life of piety ?"—William Law, *Serious Call*.

"It is not sufficiently considered," says Johnson in *The Rambler*, "that men more frequently require to be reminded than informed."