

# 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 Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

insulting and cruel, as utterly unwarranted "command," that had just been given by this infamous high priest. We read of it in xxiii. 2: "And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him [St. Paul] to smite him on the mouth." What for? Simply because the arraigned apostle—like Luther at Worms—affirmed his integrity of conscience and life "before God." Was a blow for that not a most unjudicial and scandalous thing? More. It is an old saying, "Strike my dog and you would strike me, if you dared"; and so St. Paul felt that this striking of him on the mouth was aimed not at the mere servant but at the Master for whom that mouth spake. I do not therefore wonder at, much less blame, the fiery yet justifiable retort and designation of the man capable of such an offence, "Thou whitewashed wall!" "Singularly deficient in the meekness and gentleness of Christ!" Why, had Mr. Wright forgotten Christ's own scathing and repeated rebukes of the scribes and Pharisees (St. Matt. xxiii. 27), "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, for ye are like unto *whited sepulchres*, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." I think also of other parallels, and of brave John the Baptist earlier (St. Matt. iii. 7), and of the repetition, as in reverberation of his words, by the Master later (St. Matt. xii. 34), and finally the scorpion-lash of that home-charging remonstrance and interrogation (St. Matt. xxiii. 33), "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" By Mr. Wright's logic all this and much more must be pronounced "singularly deficient in the meekness and gentleness of

Christ." He will hardly dare that. No; no. Jesus Christ was not incarnate good-nature but incarnate Love. There is no wrath comparable with "the wrath of the Lamb." St. Paul's, then, was no "insulting epithet," but a solemn truth-of-fact. As to his so-called admission "when the excitement was over," there was no admission or confession or apology, save in the sense of apologia (defence). He was a true gentleman, meet follower of Him of whom Thomas Dekker says, finely, that He was "the first true gentleman that ever breathed," and so he is courteous in his demand of proof of evil done by him. But not by a hair's-breadth—breadth of a hair—does he resile from his position. As for the clause that Mr. Wright characterises as "untrue in fact and unjustifiable in intent," the one all-sufficient answer is that St. Paul repeated it more strenuously before Felix, as told us in Acts xxiv. 20-21. Let any thoughtful reader and scholar study the two places, and he will, I am sure, see through the pitiable lack of insight and miserable eagerness to make a point in Mr. Wright's charges. An "admission" (if the word be insisted on) of over-hurried phrasing is one thing and an assumption that thereby the apostle admitted in any application whatever "untruth in fact and unjustifiableness in intent" is another and impossible thing. I am far from arguing for the faultlessness of St. Paul, or of any mere man. I accept "compassed with infirmity" as holding of every one save the One. But I repudiate and challenge any such argument as Mr. Wright's for the errancy of Holy Scripture from non-existent admissions.

ALEXANDER B. GROSART.

Dublin.

## Exposition of the First Epistle of St. John.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. RICHARD ROTHE, D.D.

### CHAPTER IV. 7-13.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested among us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit."

VER. 7. Here John resumes his real main theme, from which he has turned aside since ver. 1; he again stirs up his readers to brotherly love. He

first of all expressly repeats his exhortation, and then supports it with a new motive. Love is of God; it is divine; and, consequently, to love is as

much as to be begotten of God, and to know God, and a sure token of that fact. This new thought is only so far connected with ver. 6 as there also mention was made of a token of one's being of God and knowing God. This could naturally lead John to reflect upon the fact that love is also a token of the same thing. The combination of the two thoughts, "being begotten of God" and "knowing God," makes such a connexion exceedingly probable.

*Every one that loveth:* whosoever loveth; not specially, he that loveth the brethren. For the nerve of the thought lies in the loving, not in the object that is loved. So far, no doubt, John also thinks definitely of brotherly love, as he cannot even conceive of love save as being also essentially love of one's brethren (ver. 20 f.). Moreover, it should not be disputed that "love" may possibly stand here simply in the sense of love of the brethren (cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 1; Phil. ii. 2).

Here the gospel comes into contact with universal human feeling. Those who do not rightly understand the gospel are wont, in opposition to the gospel, to emphasise this point, that in the last analysis everything depends upon love; that wherever there is genuine love, there man is undoubtedly the object of the Divine pleasure, so that wherever there is genuine love, Divine sonship cannot be wanting; and that the gospel, on the contrary, lays the whole stress upon faith. Here is one of the passages in which Scripture fully recognises these positions of the natural human mind; and it would be vain to attempt to try to convert them. It is rooted in man's inmost consciousness that love is the sum of all man's moral perfections, that there is an indissoluble relation between love in man and God's love to man, and that he who really and truly loves has peace with God. But a misconception arises from the fact that Christianity understands the term love differently from the natural mind of man. Christianity has deeper respect for love than the natural human consciousness; although the latter is of opinion that it thinks more highly of love. Christianity does not give the name of love to what is merely the semblance of love, nor to the outward action without the corresponding disposition. It holds that love and selfishness are absolutely opposed to one another, and that where the latter is, there can be no talk of genuine love. Christianity also inquires how man can attain to this genuine love; whereas

the natural man does not think of such a question, but looks upon love as being within the power of each man. This fact shows that the natural man's standpoint is lower than that of Christianity; and it also shows how little he has really attempted to love. For genuine love always accuses itself of not being true love. It does not derive at all from the natural human heart, but only from God Himself. God alone loves in the full sense of the word. He alone gives Himself without seeking to receive anything in return. Hence man can really love only in proportion as he is of God, and God is in him. Only the renewed man can love. To the Christian this is an unassailable position; but only in proportion as we are renewed can we love.

Ver. 8. That an "only" is implied in the statement "Every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God," may be made still more evident than has been done in ver. 7. John accordingly adds the consideration mentioned in this verse. Seeing that the being of God Himself is love, it follows naturally that no one can know God who does not know love, and that, too, in the only way in which, from the nature of the case, love can be known, *i.e.* experimentally, through his own loving. John points here to the most universal way of attaining to the knowledge of God. To learn to love is a way to this knowledge which is passable by all; and this way must be traversed even by him who finds his introduction to the idea of God by the way of thought. For by this latter way one can never attain insight into the fact that love is God's characteristic being. The history of the pre-Christian world sets this beyond all doubt. However deeply speculation penetrated into the idea of God, it did not find love therein; whereas to the Old Testament it became plain, not through speculation, but through revelation, that love is the real being of God. Only by means of an unmistakable loving deed on the part of God could this knowledge come to men.

*Knoweth not God.* We should question our knowledge, if it does not stand in intimate connexion with our love; and we should not believe that we know anything regarding God, if we do not know Him as love, and love Him in return.

Ver. 9. The connexion between this and the previous verse is as follows:—We may confidently assert that God is love; *we* know it. God has appeared to us; among us, in our circle, there has been made a revelation of God's love, namely, in

this, that God has sent His only begotten Son. John gives prominence to two facts, which bring out the nature of the Divine love: (1) the sending of His only begotten Son, which marks the greatness of the gift of God to the world (it is as great as if God presented Himself to the world); and (2) the friendliness of God's purpose in connexion with this gift to us (that we might live through Him). For the thought in general, cf. John iii. 16; Rom. v. 6 ff., viii. 32 ff. The expression "among us" is a description of the circle in which the revelation of the love of God (in Christ) has been made, namely, the Christian world, which is thereby sharply contrasted with the non-Christian world as being a world which naturally knows nothing of the love of God. Particular stress is thus laid upon the words "among us." No doubt the love of God is also revealed in the natural course of our life; still this revelation of the Divine love is kept by John in the background, as being a revelation that does not come into account in comparison with the revelation of God's love in Christ. The apostle, therefore, does not admit that there is any comparison between the natural and the Christian revelation of God; and if we are inclined to do otherwise, that should make us question whether we really know His love. And yet even in Christendom it is very common to find men who have no idea of any special manifestation of Divine love in the gift of Christ. What it means to say that God is love, we can of course understand only in proportion as we understand the peculiar nature of man, who alone of all creatures is able to love. The comprehension of love is conditioned entirely by the comprehension of our ethical nature, our ethical needs, and the ethical fellowship, which is possible to us. Consequently, it is only through a revelation, which takes account of man's ethical nature and his ethical needs, that the love of God can be exhibited to us in its true light. Only in so far as God is known to us as one who helps us in our ethical needs and enters into an ethical fellowship with us, does He really reveal His love to us. And this He has done perfectly in Christ, and only in Him.

Ver. 10. John now adds: from this revelation of the love of God the real nature of love has first been actually made known to men; here, first, have they seen what love properly is, namely, such a drawing towards another as is not merely answer-

ing love, but which takes its rise solely in itself and has its principle in the loving subject himself. John does not expressly make this general abstract statement regarding the nature of love, but is satisfied with having given prominence to *this* feature of it in the case he is considering, and leaves it to the reader himself to draw the conclusion that this always belongs essentially to the nature of love. The reader, moreover, is solicited to draw this conclusion by the introductory clause, "herein is love," *i.e.* this is the nature, the essence of love. By means of the clause, "to be the propitiation for our sins" (cf. ii. 2), the greatness of God's loving deed in sending His Son is made still more prominent. God gave His Son to sinners, who were separated from Him in enmity, for their deliverance; and indeed in such a manner that for this end He gave up His Son to the pain of an atoning death.

This verse calls attention to the difference between genuine and spurious love. Genuine love has nothing whatever of selfishness in it. Grateful, responsive love is undoubtedly and essentially love; but wherever love has its source in gratitude, it is not altogether free from selfishness. Such love is consequently not foreign even to the natural man; but love is genuine and pure, only when it does not presuppose any benefit received; for which reason love of enemies is the proper proof of genuine love. We certainly cannot begin our loving with this pure love. As we enter into the world, we are met with the beneficent love of others; and by means of this our own love is awakened as thankful, responsive love. But we must not rest satisfied with this first form of love in us. We must attain to the ability to love, even where we have received no love; and only then may we regard our love as genuine love. The grandest example of such love has been given us in God's love to us; His is a love that is altogether spontaneous and prevenient. God loves us in an absolutely holy manner. Here John expressly sets forth that fact. The absolutely perfect manifestation of God's love as seen in Christ is at the same time the revelation of the august holiness of His love to us. He is not indulgent towards our moral condition; but in proportion as He loves us fervently, He refuses to have any fellowship with our sin. In order to be able to love us, sinners, with His holy love, He has brought about the propitiation of sins by means of His Son. In all our

estimates of our love, and in all its manifestation, we must ever keep in view this example of the love of God. Our love to our neighbour, also, must always be more and more trained up to this purity and sanctity.

Ver. 11. The remarks made in vers. 9 and 10 merely serve the purpose of establishing the assertion that "God is love" (ver. 8). Now, however, John observes that, inasmuch as they at the same time bring out the exceeding greatness of God's love to us, they are calculated to afford us a new reason for brotherly love. He himself now proceeds to use for that purpose what he has just said regarding the greatness of the love of God to us. He deduces from it the moral necessity, the duty incumbent upon us of loving one another, namely, as a grateful response to the unfathomable love of God towards us. This inference is certainly in keeping with the natural feeling of every man. Every one feels that God's love to us must awaken on our part love to God, and that God's love is able to attain its aim as regards us only in so far as we ourselves have love. The validity of the inference that, seeing God loves us, we should love one another, is established in the next verse.

Ver. 12. The natural inference from the fact that "God so loved us" would rather be that we should also love Him, not that we should also love one another. This objection must naturally have occurred to the reader, and the present verse seeks to remove it. Here John says it is impossible for us to offer our grateful, responsive love directly to God, for He is invisible to us; in the fact, however, that we love one another, our responsive love reaches Him indirectly; this love to one another is the way in which He desires our love to Him in return for His to us to be manifested (ver. 20 f.). There is a necessary connexion between faith in God's love to us and love to one another. Whoever really loves must bestow his love upon everything, which is in itself an object of human love. It is psychologically impossible that one who loves should confine his love to God, and should, as it were, let his love be dormant as regards his neighbour. If one professes to love God, and does not love his neighbour, his love of God is assuredly purely imaginary. Here, however, the apostle points to a more special connexion between faith in the love of God, which awakens responsive love in us, and our love of our neighbour. Love to God cannot directly reach its object. This is objected to us also by the world, when we demand

real love to God. Such a demand is foolish, the world says; for we cannot apprehend God with our mind and heart. Indeed, a love that is merely directed to God, is a pure phantom; but when our love turns to God through the channel of our neighbour, it actually reaches Him. If we love God in our neighbour, we in this way actually draw near to Him. From the fact that we (actively) love our neighbour, there is formed within us an ethical life of love, in virtue of which God can let His love really dwell in us, and we reach up to God.

"No man hath beheld God at any time" (John i. 18, v. 37), is simply an expression of the thought that God is invisible to us. Hence it is not possible for us to bring directly to Him the love which is our response to His love to us. John's thought is: if we love one another, this is the way of manifesting our grateful love to Him, in which God takes pleasure. He does not, however, express this thought in a simple manner; but instead of speaking of God's pleasure in such a way of manifesting gratitude, he makes mention of that whereby this pleasure of God is shown to us, namely, God's abiding in us, and therewith also the perfecting of His love to us, which dwells in us. *God abideth in us*, namely, with His love to us; He does not forsake us as being ungrateful, notwithstanding the fact that we do not requite to Himself His love to us. *His love* is God's love to us. Our mutual love is the condition under which God abides in us with His love to us; all uncharity directly excludes Him. By our mutual love we build the temple in which He can dwell in and among us.

The thought that no one has ever beheld God must fall heavy on the heart of the religious man, if he did not know something else. God, in His transcendence, has never been an object of a human consciousness; and yet there is no object of man's longing so absolutely certain as God. Accordingly, along with the fact that "no man hath beheld God at any time," we must take the other fact that He has become man in Christ, and that he that seeth the Son seeth the Father also. The glory of God is revealed to us in the face of Christ; therefore, in this only begotten Son of the Father we are able really to see God. In this Son also the need of the man who loves God is satisfied; and this is the test whereby we should prove the genuineness of our love. He who does not believe that God has really appeared to us in His inmost nature in Christ, and is satisfied with the so-called

merely natural knowledge of God ; he to whom the God who reveals Himself in nature is quite sufficient for his love—such an one's love to God does not properly deserve the name of love, and the longing after union with the object of his love is still foreign to him. The fact that we have seen God in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, constitutes the difference between the consciousness of the Christian and the non-Christian, between his whole theory of the universe and the natural theory of the universe.

Ver. 13. Having just spoken of an abiding of God in us, John is apprehensive lest it should be imagined that such a notion is a mere concert of the fancy. Here again, therefore, as in iii. 24, he expressly guards against such a suspicion by asserting that this abiding of God in us is a real fact apprehensible by us in an unmistakable way. Wherever, namely, God's own Spirit is, there He Himself is. The inference is conclusive. "Of His Spirit," he says, because man only *shares* in the *fulness* of the Divine Spirit (John iii. 34).

We, too, are apt to be haunted by the scepticism which John presupposes here. The thought of an actual indwelling of God in us often seems to us fanatical. But we ought to inquire, on the other hand, whether we can wholly surrender such a thought. Either God has no fellowship with us, or He really dwells in us. We must get rid of the habit of reducing the literal to the merely figurative, if our piety is to have confidence in itself. We, who can regard fellowship with God only as a

literal fellowship with Him, should regard in the same way the possibility of an indwelling of God in us. That which John adduces here as a sure token of the real indwelling of God in us, namely, that we are partakers of the Divine Spirit, we are wont to use as a means of getting rid of the notion that God actually dwells in us. There is no other way in which God exists than as Spirit and in the Spirit. If only we were better able to understand the notion of the Spirit and of our own spirit, we should be the more able to understand how truly divine these truths are when taken in their strict significance. Faith in the fact that spirit is truth, is undoubtedly the basis of all consistent piety. John assumes in this verse that we can have a clear consciousness of having received a Divine Spirit, and therefore that we can distinguish between the supernatural workings of the Divine Spirit and the natural workings of our own spirit. If we could not have such a consciousness, it would be impossible for us to have a consciousness of the history of our awakening and of our regeneration. The whole process of our regeneration is conditioned by our consciousness of it. The clear discernment of this twofold life in us, of that, namely, which is divine and of that which is our own, is an indispensable condition of the healthiness of Christian piety. Upon this depends, not merely the vigour of our new consciousness, but also our security against pride and self-deception, which are unavoidable, as soon as we do not sharply distinguish between these two spirits in us.

## The Books of the Month.

### PART II.

ISAIAH: HIS LIFE AND TIMES. BY REV. S. R. DRIVER, D.D. (*Nisbet*. Crown 8vo, pp. x, 228.) The most conspicuous merit of this, the second edition of Dr. Driver's well-known monograph, is its Index of Texts and Subjects. Other merits are more hidden ; but he who knows Dr. Driver's methods and conscience will know that they are there. Still it is not as a German second edition, rewritten and making a fool of the first. And thus it is a testimony to Dr. Driver's patience and responsibility. It is so cheap a book, there is so much in it for the money, that we can afford to place this second edition beside the first.

STUDENT'S NEW TESTAMENT HANDBOOK. BY MARVIN R. VINCENT, D.D. (*Nisbet*. 8vo, pp. x, 160.) A bibliography of New Testament study, full yet discriminating, has seemed too much to expect from any scholar, so great and growing is the field. Yet Dr. Marvin Vincent seems to have given it to us. Several works of his are known in this country, but they did not prepare us for so satisfactory a work as this is. The whole field is covered within these 160 pages, for the choice is made with excellent judgment, and the critical estimates are as few and pointed as possible. There is also a singular freedom from typographical