

Throughout its history the church has struggled to be faithful to God in political situations: under persecution, or as an established arm of the state, or in separation from it. God rules over both political and religious institutions. We must confuse neither with the kingdom of God. We must not equate the Christian faith with any nation's way of life or with opposition to the ideologies of other nations. We hold Christians are to be law-abiding citizens unless the state commands them to disobey God, or claims authority that belongs only to God. We must not allow governments to impose Christian faith by legislation, nor should we demand undue advantages for the church. The church must be free to speak to civil authorities, neither claiming expert knowledge it does not have, nor remaining silent when God's Word is clear.

Presbyterian Declaration of Faith

Question 52.

How should I treat non-Christians and people of other religions?

As much as I can, I should meet friendship with friendship, hostility with kindness, generosity with gratitude, persecution with forbearance, truth with agreement, and error with truth. I should express my faith with humility and devotion as the occasion requires, whether silently or openly, boldly or meekly, by word or by deed. I should avoid compromising the truth on the one hand and being narrow-minded on the other. In short, I should always welcome and accept these others in a way that honors and reflects the Lord's welcome and acceptance of me.

1998 Presbyterian Study Catechism

Humility is nothing else but a true knowledge and awareness of oneself as one really is.

The Cloud of Unknowing

Monday Morning

Love never fails. But prophecies will be abolished; tongues will stop; and knowledge, too, be done away. We know, you see, in part; we prophesy in part; but, with perfection, the partial is abolished. As a child I spoke, and thought, and reasoned like a child; when I grew up, I threw off childish ways. For at the moment all that we can see are puzzling reflections in a mirror; then, face to face. I know in part, for now; but then I'll know completely, through and through, even as I'm completely known. So, now, faith, hope, and love remain, these three; and, of them, love is the greatest.

1 Corinthians 13:8-13,
New Testament for Everyone

At present we are men looking at puzzling reflections in a mirror. The time will come when we shall see reality whole and face to face! At present all I know is a little fraction of the truth, but the time will come when I shall know it as fully as God now knows me! In this life we have three great lasting qualities—faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them is love.

J. B. Phillips translation (1960)

For now, we can only see a dim and blurry picture of things, as when we stare into polished metal. I realize that everything I know is only part of the big picture. But one day, when Jesus arrives, we will see clearly, face-to-face. In that day, I will fully know just as I have been wholly known by God. But now faith, hope, and love remain; these three virtues must characterize our lives. The greatest of these is love.

The Voice translation



Paul's eschatological convictions shape what he says here. The present, graced as it is with God's love alive in the community at Corinth, is still only a partial reflection, like that of a mirror whose glass is not clear, of what is yet to come. Paul thinks believers live with a present down payment, with partial insight, or as he will develop it in chap. 15, with the perishable and mortal but in full anticipation of the imperishable and immortal. Paul's vision stretches from his recognition that all believers are somewhere on a pilgrimage from being children in the faith, as he thinks the Corinthians are, to the time when maturity or the perfect arrives, to that time when believers no longer walk by faith but by sight, when in the eschaton they see "face to face." So Paul anticipates that faith, as important and central as it is, will someday be transcended by the most intimate presence with God. In the meantime, Paul offers himself once again as the model of the person who is no longer a child, who has set aside childish things. When the perfect arrives, when believers see face-to-face, then Paul expects to exchange his own partial knowledge for a full knowing, then his knowing will correspond to the knowing (God's, assumed but not stated) that has preceded and made possible Paul's partial and proleptic knowing.

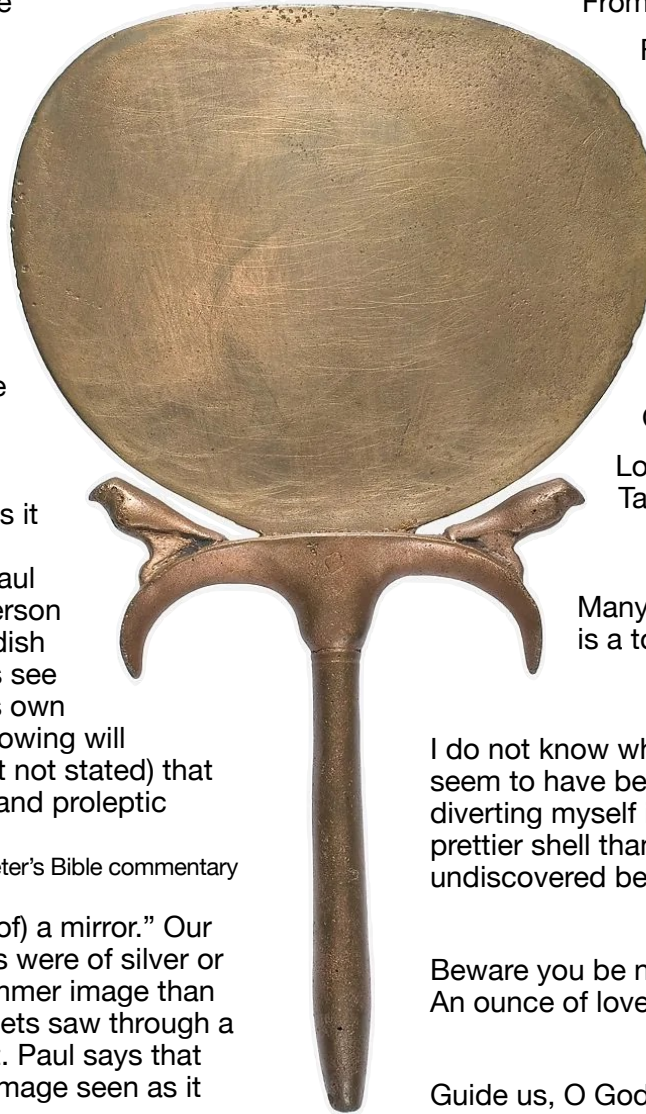
New Interpreter's Bible commentary

"Through a glass; rather, through (or, by means of) a mirror." Our "glasses" were unknown in that age. The mirrors were of silver or some polished metal, giving, of course, a far dimmer image than "glasses" do. The rabbis said that "all the prophets saw through a dark mirror, but Moses through a bright one." St. Paul says that no human eye can see God at all except as an image seen as it were behind the mirror.

Pulpit Commentary

From the cowardice that dare not face new truth
From the laziness that is content with half truth
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth
Good Lord, deliver me.

Prayer from Kenya



From all my lame defeats and oh! much more
From all the victories that I seemed to score;

From cleverness shot forth on thy behalf,
At which, while angels weep,
the audience laugh;

From all my proofs of thy divinity, Thou,
who wouldst give no sign, deliver me.

Thoughts are but coins.
Let me not trust instead
Of thee, their thin-worn image of their head.

From all my thoughts,
even from my thoughts of thee,
O fair silence, fall, and set me free.

Lord of the narrow gate and needle's eye,
Take from me all my trumpery, lest I die.

C. S. Lewis

Many a man's knowledge
is a torch to light him to hell.

Thomas Watson

I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.

Sir Issac Newton

Beware you be not swallowed up in books!
An ounce of love is worth a pound of knowledge.

John Wesley

Guide us, O God,
by your Word and Spirit,
that in your light we may see light,
in your truth find freedom,
and in your will discover your peace,
through Jesus Christ,
our Lord.
Amen.

Worship Sourcebook