The Blind Men and the Elephant  
by John Godfrey Saxe

American poet John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887) based the following poem on a fable which was told in India many years ago.

It was six men of Indostan  
   To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant  
   (Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation  
   Might satisfy his mind

The First approached the Elephant,  
   And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,  
   At once began to bawl:
“God bless me! but the Elephant  
   Is very like a wall!”

The Second, feeling of the tusk,  
   Cried, “Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
   To me ’tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant  
   Is very like a spear!”

The Third approached the animal,  
   And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,  
   Thus boldly up and spake:
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,  
    And felt about the knee.  
“What most this wondrous beast is like  
    Is mighty plain,” quoth he;  
“‘Tis clear enough the Elephant  
    Is very like a tree!”

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,  
    Said: “E’en the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles most;  
    Deny the fact who can  
This marvel of an Elephant  
    Is very like a fan!”

The Sixth no sooner had begun  
    About the beast to grope,  
Than, seizing on the swinging tail  
    That fell within his scope,  
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant  
    Is very like a rope!”

And so these men of Indostan  
    Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion  
    Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in the right,  
    And all were in the wrong!

Moral:

So oft in theologic wars,  
    The disputants, I ween,  
Rail on in utter ignorance  
    Of what each other mean,  
And prate about an Elephant  
    Not one of them has seen!