

—all have received in different degrees. The most gigantic intellect, and the most accomplished scholar, who participates not in "the Divine nature," is utterly ignorant of it. It is hid from the noise and prudent while it is "revealed unto babes." The simple and sufficient reason why "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," regards them as "foolishness," and cannot know them, is—he has not spiritual discernment, and they can only be "spiritually discerned."

Now it is perfectly different with all who are "born of the Spirit." They see Him who is "the light and life of men" in virtue of the light which He has poured into their souls by the operation and indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Hence we hear the bride exclaiming—"The voice of my beloved!" as she hears the melody of the words of Him whom her soul loveth.

By what instrumentality this great change from the blindness and deafness of fallen nature to the light and hearing of the new creation in Christ Jesus has been brought about, is of only secondary or small moment. It may have been by parental instruction and training, by sudden conviction under stirring or in most ordinary circumstances, by conclusions arrived at after sceptical resistance and protracted enquiry, or by the blessing from on high on the hearing and reading of the Word received without doubting. Yet in every case we see knowledge of Christian truth employed by the Spirit of God for quickening and holiness.

Nor must we fail to mark that always there is a contact and recognition between the Saviour-Almighty in His grace and the soul of the sinner who has been delivered by Him as a brand plucked from the burning fire. The glorious Ransomer can say to each of them—"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Of them all He declares—"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Do we consider the suasive style of education preferable to the coercive? Does the wise parent strive to win by affection? Do we hold that drawing is better than driving? This method is taught us in perfection by God. If we advert to the history of the "peculiar people," we shall see that beneficence, forbearance, and most singular favour characterise all the deliverance from Egypt, the guidance to the promised land, and the whole of the distinguishing theocratic government. How admirably adapted was the ministry of the illustrious paternal Lawgiver to harmonise, elevate, and ennoble the frail nature of man! How instructive is the narrative—"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpets, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." May we not in this utterance obtain some light upon how Jehovah draws "with cords of a man"? The faithful historian tells us—"And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken." Surely this is tantamount to the avowal of the immensely important truth, that such is the nature of man that he who would be man's Saviour, Deliverer, Rescuer, Elevator, must be man. But that man's necessities equally require that his Restorer shall be God. This does not in the slightest degree conflict but on the contrary thoroughly concurs with the other truth that the Redeemer and Instructor of man must be his brother. It homologates the desire of the human spirit in its finest depths of thought and feeling to have

God whom we can worship in the person of man whom we can love.

How admirable, then, in this point of view is the gracious prediction communicated by Moses—"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." We know that this glorious prophet, who was of "the seed of Abraham," came preaching peace to them that were far off and to those that were nigh,—to the Gentiles and to the Jews,—to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." We have accordingly the incarnate "Son of the Highest" thus calling to the children of men—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lonely in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." This call was spoken with man's voice, man's sympathy, man's affection; but who cannot perceive that this "still small voice" is more potent than that of the tornado, the earthquake, or the fire? It overcame the unbending prophets who stood unmoved amidst tempest, windings, and conflagration. It is the voice of Him who, though verily man, is also the Eternal "God over all, blessed for evermore." We can see the Deity in and through the man Christ Jesus. As the beloved disciple listens to Him, and notes the person, he "saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." You are aware how that fervent friend was instantly affected. The same voice overcame the scepticism of the incredulous Thomas. The loving omnipotency with which it was associated caused him to exclaim, "My Lord and my God." "No man," said Jesus, "can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." It is written in the prophets, "And they shall be all taught of God." "Every man therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." How wondrously was this truth illustrated in the pious Israelites who came to Messiah personally during His public ministry, and in the multitudes of Jews and Gentiles who believed on Him in the apostolic day! Verily all those who were alive unto God became fully satisfied that He was the anointed Saviour of mankind and that there was and could be no other. His voice they knew to be that of "the good Shepherd," and as His "sheep" they "followed" Him.

The desires and feelings of all the children of God to their Lord are most felicitously expressed by the bride to the bridegroom—"Draw me, we will run after thee." This is the responsive address of every Christian. Each becomes conscious that the sacrifice of the Son of God was for him, for her: to atone for my sins, the now adoring, grateful, loving believer will say—He bore for me the dread load of guilt and its merited punishment, which otherwise I must have endured. This is my Master and Redeemer. For me, and such as I am, He was born in Bethlehem, and lived the embodiment of all holiness; died on Calvary cross after Gethsemane's terrific agony, and the shame and pain of the unjust and impious decisions of the Sanhedrim, and Pilate and Herod:—all, that sins might be forgiven, yea, my odious sins, as well as those of every child of Adam who looks to Him for pardon, and that the godlike character of holiness might be recovered and eternally retained.

Such is the faith—the appropriating faith of the followers of the Lamb. Writing on their behalf, the Apostle says—"And we know that the Son of God has come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that

is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." They can individually say when the Redeemer speaks—"The voice of my beloved!" "Yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this is my friend." "We love him because he first loved us," is the grateful sentiment of "the Church of the first-born." They appreciate that love which has no parallel on earth or in heaven,—that love which "God commendeth toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How evident is it that all such are taught of the Spirit! They have received the truth in the love of it. When it is preached, they recognise it as the voice of Christ. His word they receive as that of the living God, even when spoken by men of like passions with themselves.

Here I may remark as important to note, that the members of the fold of the good Shepherd will know his voice even when the sound or utterance of it proceeds from a quarter, a society, or a person naturally distasteful to them. Suppose for instance that the grand doctrines of the Gospel in their distinctiveness respecting justification and sanctification and the whole scheme of salvation through grace alone, were to issue from the lips of a preacher still within the pale of Rome. The vigorous and healthful sheep of the good Shepherd will rejoice there to hear His voice. Why it is that the earthly speaker has not yet heard the mandate of the Divine Angel—"Come out of her," they may wonder, but, that he has declared the message of truth, they are happy to admit. And, while they may pray for him that he may be brought out of the mystic Babylon, and press upon him this obligation as resting upon him, they will also devoutly hope that the gracious Sovereign of Zion will abundantly bless such efforts for the ingathering of many, who are as sheep going astray, to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

Or suppose some Christian Society or Church which professes to take the Holy Scriptures for its standard and guide, but which unhappily manifests an antagonistic spirit to our communion: let the truths which the Spirit of life is wont to bless for the highest and everlasting good of man be published with fidelity and love by any of its channels, and again the same results will follow. As certainly as we are "the sheep" of "the good Shepherd," we will "know His voice" and gladly yield it reverence. We may deeply regret some things in the connection, but with joy and thankfulness we perceive such messages are of God.

2. The text intimates that genuine Christians will not give the sanction of their approbation to any teaching or practices that estrange the souls of men from Christ. "They know his voice, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." We are all well aware that not only is it possible to preach a counterfeit Gospel, but also to bring into operation the aid of oratory that may be seraphic in support of it. Thus unwary and unstable hearers may come under its power. Hence the necessity that rests on the Christian people to comply with the exhortation of the Apostle—"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Whether then within or without the precincts of their own ecclesiastical community, it is the obligation of the enlightened and sanctified in Christ Jesus to signify in the wisest practicable manner their disapproval of man preaching himself or preaching any other system than that of Christ and Him crucified.

8 Jeremiah xxxi. 3. 9 Hosea xi. 4.
1 Exodus ix. 18, 19. 2 Deut. xviii. 17.

3 Deut. xviii. 15. 4 Matthew xii. 28, 30. 5 John xxi. 7. 6 John vi. 44, 45. 7 Song of Solomon i. 6.

1 1 John v. 20. 2 Song of Solomon ii. viii. 5, 16.
3 1 John v. 19. 4 Romans v. 8. 5 Revelation xviii. 4.
1 1 John iv. 1.