discourse seems to have taken place between Jesus and Nicodemus *alone*,—and  
may have been related by our Lord to the  
Evangelist afterwards. If this be deemed  
improbable (though I do not see why it  
should),—of the two other alternatives I  
would rather believe that St. John was present, than that Nicodemus should have so  
minutely related a conversation which in  
his then position he could not understand.

**we know]** This plural may be merely  
an allusion to others who had come to the  
same conclusion, e.g. Joseph of Arimathæa;  
or it may express that Nicodemus was sent  
in the name of several who wished to know  
the real character of this Person who  
wrought such miracles. It is harsh, in  
this private conversation, to take the plural  
as merely of singular import, as Lightfoot  
seems to do. His other rendering, “*it is  
commonly acknowledged*,” is better,—but  
not satisfactory; for the common people  
did not generally confess it, and Nicodemus, as a “*ruler*,” would not be likely to  
speak in their name (see ch. vii. 49). I  
would rather take it to express *the true  
conviction respecting Jesus, of that class to  
which Nicodemus belonged*—the “*rulers*:”  
and see in it an important fact, that their  
persecutions and murder of the Prince of  
Life hence found their greatest aggravation, that they were carried on *against the  
conclusions of their own minds*, out of  
bitter malice, and worldly disappointment  
at His humble and unobtrusive character,  
and the spiritual purity and self-sacrifice  
which He inculcated. Still this must not,  
though undoubtedly it has truth in it, be  
carried too far: compare Acts iii. 17, and  
Acts xiii. 27; 1 Cor. ii. 8. *Some degree  
of ignorance* there must necessarily have  
been in all of them, even Caiaphas included,  
of our Lord’s office and Person. Stier  
seems to think that Nicodemus, by using  
the plural, is sheltering himself from expressing *his own* conviction, so as to be able  
to draw back again if necessary.

**art.... come]** Stier and others think that  
there is involved in this word a *recognition*by Nicodemus *of the Messianic mission of  
Jesus* :—that it expresses His being “*He  
that was to come*” (Matt. xi. 3 al.). It is  
never used of any but the Messiah, except  
by the Lord Himself, when speaking of  
John the Baptist as the subject of prophecy (see Matt. xi.14 al.)

**a teacher]**In this and the following words, Nicodemus seems to be cautiously withdrawing  
from his admission being taken as expressing too much. For who of the Jews ever  
expected a *teacher* to come from God?  
They looked for a *King*, to sit on David’s  
throne,—a *Prophet*, to declare the divine  
will;—but the Messiah was never designated as a *mere teacher*, till the days of  
modern Socinianism. So that he seems  
trying to qualify or recall his “*art...  
come*” by this addition.

The following  
words exhibit the same cautious inconsistency. **No man can do**, &c. **unless**—we  
expect some strong expression of the truth,  
such as we had from Nathanael in ch.i. 50,  
but the sentence drops to merely— *God  
be with him*,’ which is a very poor and insufficient exponent of “**art come** *from  
God*.” Against this inconsistency,—the  
inner knowledge that the Kingdom of God  
was come, and He who was to found it, on  
the one hand,—and the rationalizing endeavour to reduce this heavenly kingdom  
to mere learning, and its Founder to a  
*mere teacher*, on the other,—is the following discourse directed.

**3.]** We are  
not to imagine that any thing is wanting  
to complete the sense or connexion. Our  
Lord replies, It is not *learning*, but *life*,  
that is wanted for the Messiah’s Kingdom ;  
and *life* must begin by *birth*. Luther  
says: “My teaching is not of *doing* and  
*leaving undone*, but of a *change in the  
man* ;—so that it is, not *new works* done,  
but a *new man* to do them; not another  
*life* only, but another *birth*.” And *only  
by this means* can Nicodemus gain the  
teaching for which he is come,— “*see the  
Kingdom of God*,”—‘become a disciple of  
Christ :’—”**see**, *that is, understand*,” says  
Theophylact,—‘*understand, by sharing’* —  
‘have any conception of.’

**anew]** “*some say*, **from heaven**, *some*, **from the  
beginning**.” Chrysostom :—who, as also  
Euthymius, explains it by *‘regeneration*:”  
—Origen, Cyril, and Theophylact taking  
the other meaning.

The true meaning  
is to be found by taking into account the  
answer of Nicodemus, who obviously