*pneuma* is not the violent wind, which is  
otherwise expressed, but the *gentle breath*of the wind ;—and it is *heard, not felt*;—  
a case in which “*thou knowest not, &c.*”  
is more applicable than in that of a  
violent wind steadily blowing. It is one  
of those sudden breezes springing up on a  
calm day, which has no apparent direction, but we hear it rustling in the leaves  
around. The **where it listeth**, *in the application*, implies the *freedom* (2 Cor.  
iii. 17) and *unrestrained working of the  
Spirit* (1 Cor. xii. 11).

**every one that is born of the Spirit]** Our Lord can  
hardly, as Stier explains, mean *Himself* by  
these words; or if He does, only *inclusively*, as being *one born of the Spirit*,—  
not principally. He describes *the mystery  
of the spiritual life*: we see its *effects*, in  
ourselves, and others who have it; but we  
cannot trace its beginnings, nor can we  
prescribe to the Holy Spirit His course:  
He works in us and leads us on, accompanying us with His witness,—*His voice*,  
spiritually discerned.

This saying of  
the Lord—in contradiction to all so-called  
Methodism, which prescribes the time and  
manner of the working of the Spirit—  
assures us of the manifold and undefinable  
variety of both these. ‘The physiognomies  
of those who are born again, are as various as  
those of natural men.’ Draseke.

**9.]** The  
question of Nicodemus is evidently still one  
of unbelief, though no longer of frivolity  
see ver. 12.

**11.]** Henceforward the  
discourse is an answer to the *unbelief*, and  
in answering that, to the *question* (**How  
can these things be?**) of Nicodemus: by  
shewing him the appointed means of this.  
new birth, and of being upheld in the life  
to which it is the entrance, viz. *faith in the  
Son of God*.

**We speak that we do know ...]** Why these plurals? Various  
interpretations have been given: “Either  
He speaks concerning Himself and the  
Father, or concerning Himself alone.”  
Euthymius ;—‘He speaks of Himself and  
*the Spirit’* (Bengel) ;—of Himself and *the  
Prophets* (Beza, Tholuck);—of Himself  
and *John the Baptist* (Knapp) ;— of *Teachers like Himself* (Meyer);—of *all the born  
of the Spirit* (Lange, Wesley) ;—*of the  
three Persons in the Holy Trinity* (Stier);  
—or, the plural is *only rhetorical* (Lücke,  
De Wette). I had rather take it as a *proverbial* saying ; q.d. “I am one of those  
who,” &e. Our Lord thereby brings out  
the unreasonableness of that unbelief which  
would not receive *His witness*, but made  
it an exception to the general proverbial  
rule.

**ye receive not**, addressed still  
to Nicodemus, and through him to the  
Jews: not to certain others who were present, as Olshausen supposes.

**12.]** The words **receive our testimony** prepared the  
way for the new idea which is brought  
forward in this verse—**believing**, Faith  
is, in the most pregnant sense, ‘the receiving of testimony ;” because it is the  
making *subjectively real* the contents of  
that testimony. So the **believing in him**(see ver. 15) is, *the full reception of the  
Lord’s testimony*; because the burden of  
that testimony is, *grace and truth and  
salvation by Himself*. This faith is neither  
reasoning, nor knowledge, but a *reception*  
of divine Truth declared by One who came  
from God; and so it is *far above* reasoning and knowledge:—**we believe** above  
**we know**.

But what are the **earthly  
things**? The matters relating to the new  
birth which have hitherto been spoken of ;  
—called so because *that side of them* has  
been exhibited which is *upon earth*, and  
happens among men. That the *parable  
about the wind* is not intended, is evident  
from “*and ye* **believe** *not*,” which in that  
case would be ‘ye *understand* not.’ And  
the **heavenly things** are the things of  
which the discourse goes on to treat *from  
this point*: viz. the *heavenly side* of the  
new birth and salvation of man, in the  
eternal counsels of God regarding His only-  
begotten Son.

Stier supposes a reference in this verse to Wisd. ix. 16, “Hardly  
do we guess aright at things that are upon  
the earth, and with labour do we find the  
things that are before us: but the things