

HEAVENLY TEACHING

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 6, 1843

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Isaiah 54:13

The full extent of the "spiritual blessings" wherewith God has blessed the church in "heavenly places in Christ" can never be thoroughly known in this time-state. It is only when the ransomed of the Lord shall reach the heavenly Canaan, that they will fully know either the awful gulf of misery from which they have been delivered, or the height of bliss and glory to which they are exalted in Christ. But sufficient is revealed in the word of God to shew that they are indeed blessed with peculiar privileges and mercies; and that in being thus blessed their distinction as "a peculiar people" chiefly consists. Moses, therefore, on one occasion thus pleaded with God: "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? *so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth*". (Ex. 33:16.)

But of these peculiar blessings that God has blessed his church with in Christ, four seem especially prominent above the rest—their *eternal election*—their *particular and personal redemption*—their *regeneration*—and their *heavenly teaching*, which last is the promise contained in the text, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

But why should this last occupy a prominent place in the catalogue of covenant blessings? Because without it the others would be in a measure nugatory; for such is the blindness of man's heart by nature, so thick a veil of

ignorance is spread over his understanding, and so completely is he "alienated from the life of God," that he never can have any spiritual knowledge of the "only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent" (*in which knowledge eternal life consists*), until he is made a partaker of this *divine teaching*.

We will endeavour, then, with God's blessing, to trace out a little of the *nature and effects* of this divine teaching in the soul. And as it consists for the most part of two leading branches: *first*, the teaching whereby *we know God*; and *secondly*, the teaching whereby *we know ourselves*, we will look at each of these in their order.

I.—But it will be desirable, first, to consider what is the *nature* of this heavenly teaching. And as the Holy Ghost certainly knows and has described its nature best, we cannot do better than examine one or two of the scriptural figures and explanations given of it.

1. This divine teaching, then, is compared in one place to dew and rain: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew" (Deut. 32:2). But what is the nature and effect of rain, and more particularly of dew? It falls gently; and yet, though it falls so quietly and stilly, it has a penetrating and softening effect. Thus it is with God's teaching in the soul: like dew, it falls from heaven stilly and gently into the heart, and yet it penetrates the soul with a secret and invincible power, that opens whilst it softens it. It does not tear it up, like hail or lightning, but it sinks deeply and yet quietly into it, and with a peculiar softening power so pervades it as to take a thorough and entire possession of it.

2. Another thing to which it is compared in scripture, is *oil*, or *unction*, as the apostle John says, "Ye have an *unction*

from the Holy One;" and again, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the *same anointing* teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John 2:20; 2:27). This figure does not differ very widely from the one just mentioned, but contains three leading ideas—that it *penetrates, softens, and spreads*. Thus the unction of God's teaching in the soul not merely penetrates and softens the heart into which it comes, but also gradually spreads and sinks into it more and more deeply; it supple the conscience and makes it tender, and penetrates into the inmost roots and fibres of a man's heart.

This teaching is the special work of God the Holy Ghost on the soul, and is as distinct from our own wisdom, or from any knowledge that we may obtain by the exercise of the natural understanding, as eternity from time, heaven from hell, and Christ from Belial.

II.—But we pass on to consider what are the *special effects and fruits* of this divine anointing.

The nature of this teaching is less plainly revealed in the scriptures than its *effects*. And therefore though the figures above quoted sufficiently shew that there is in its nature something soft and gentle, falling like rain upon the new mown grass, or like oil penetrating the heart into which it comes, yet, for the most part, we cannot, except by its fruits and effects, be certain that we are partakers of this divine teaching. But when we look at them (*for it always will produce fruits and effects*) we may sometimes, when the Lord is pleased to shine into the soul, come to a blessed conclusion, that we are anointed with this unction from the Holy One.

1. I believe, then, that the *first effect* of this special teaching of God in the soul is, to convince us of the *truth and authority of God's word*. We may have professed to believe the word of God from our infancy; we may have been instructed by our parents or in the Sunday School as to the truth of the scriptures; we may have studied in books the evidence of their authenticity and inspiration; but all the while our heart was not touched with any divine power. The head might have been enlightened, but no enlargement of heart was ever sensibly felt under the power of truth, nor any powerful conviction wrought in the soul by the application of it, so as positively to convince us that God himself speaks in the scripture.

But when the "unction" of "the Holy One" drops into the soul with power, it speaks with such authority through the scriptures, that they are at once known and felt to be the word of the living God. If previously one had been tempted with infidelity, if the mind had been puzzled by apparent contradictions, so as to be almost on the point of giving up the scriptures as a divine revelation, yet when this special teaching and divine unction come into the heart, the word of God carries with it a power and authority that put every infidel argument, to the rout, and disperse every objection as the sun dissipates the morning mists: and the soul is abundantly satisfied that the scripture is the revelation of the mind and will of the blessed God. And whatever infidel objection may afterwards arise, whatever doubts may assault the mind. whatever contradictions may seem to unsettle the foundation of his hope, he never thoroughly loses the solemn conviction which God himself has given him, that the scripture is the truth of the living God.

2. The next thing, I believe, that this "unction from the Holy One" teaches is, *the being of a God*. Now, of the being of a God, we might have been persuaded by traditional religion, or we might have been convinced of it by natural conscience: but these could never give us a feeling conviction of the being of such a God as the scripture sets forth. The apostle Paul declares, that all men by nature are "without Christ... having no hope, and *without God* in the world" (Eph. 2:12), literally 'atheists.' And not only have they no knowledge of the being of God, but as he again says, quoting from the Psalms, "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). They have no inward conviction that there is a self-existent Jehovah, whose "eyes are in every place;" that he is an omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, eternal, and just God; that his eye sees into the secret and inmost recesses of the soul, and that he will one day bring them into judgment. But no sooner does "an unction from the Holy One" convince us of the power and authority of the inspired scriptures, than we learn through it the being and existence of a great and glorious Jehovah, who is around our bed, and about our paths, and spieth out all our ways.

3. But with this inward spiritual conviction of the ***being*** of God, there is manifested by this divine unction the *character* of Jehovah. Not merely that he exists, but that he is what he declares himself to be in the revelation of his holy character and attributes. His word is brought home with divine authority to the soul, and with a living power to the conscience; and thus it is taught to see him as a holy and a just God who will "by no means clear the guilty;" that he hates sin with a perfect hatred, and will infallibly punish all those who are found under the curse and condemnation of the law, when they stand before his dread tribunal. So that here the holy character of God is opened up with power to the soul by the work of the law in a man's conscience.

Many, I believe, of God's people, who have had a work of the law on their conscience, are at times much exercised and tried in their minds, whether they have really known it, for this reason, because no sentence of the Decalogue. or particular portion of the Old Testament has come with power into their heart. But, wherever the character of Jehovah, as a just and holy God. has been spiritually made known to the soul, there the law has done its work on the conscience. God, as the Lawgiver, is known, though the exact letter of the law may not be felt. The spirit of the law, in the hands of a just and a holy God, is made known to the heart and conscience, producing conviction, condemnation, guilt, and a sense of ruin, where the exact letter of the law is not made use of by the Lawgiver to do the work. But the spirit of the law, in the hands of the Lawgiver, has produced condemnation, fear, guilt, and a sense of misery and ruin, so as to cut away all legal hopes, pull down self-righteousness, and lay the soul in ruins before God's footstool. And wherever this is experienced, there is a work of the law on the conscience.

4. But this teaching of the Spirit, when the soul has learned the holiness of God, and has felt itself condemned by his righteous law, and cut off from all hope or help in self—this same "unction from the Holy One," which "is truth and is no lie," unfolds to the heart, and brings into the conscience experimentally, *a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Those are striking words, and they have often rested with weight and power on my mind, perhaps no part of scripture more so, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). How briefly the Lord of life and glory has here summed up in what eternal life consists!

How many are anxious to know what is the way of salvation, how eternal life is to be obtained, and how to "flee from the wrath to come!" but the Lord Jesus has shewn in one short sentence in what eternal life consists, that it is in the knowledge of the "only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent." He therefore that knows the Father and the Son has eternal life in his soul. The Lord Jesus, in the chapter, which I read this morning, quoted this amongst other passages of the Old Testament, and says, "It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). He lays this down, then, as one especial fruit of divine teaching, that it produces a *coming unto him*.

The Spirit, who teaches to profit, holds up before the eyes of the soul, the Person, work, blood, love, grace, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He shews the soul that he is just such a Saviour as it needs. He opens up the dignity of his Person, and shews that he is God-man. He makes known in the conscience that he has offered up himself a sacrifice for sin: that he has shed his atoning blood so that the sin of the church is for ever put away from the sight of a just God. He opens up before the eyes of the mind his glorious righteousness, as that in which, the Father is well-pleased, and in which, if the soul has but an interest, it is secure from the wrath to come. He unfolds to the heart the willingness of Christ to receive every coming sinner; he shews the treasures of mercy and grace which are locked up in him: and brings down in the heart the comforting words that he spake in the days of his flesh, such as, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37).

And sometimes he unfolds to the understanding, and brings into the heart a sweet melting sensation from seeing how, when Christ was upon earth, he healed the sick, gave eyes to the blind, and ears to the deaf; raised the dead, went about doing good; and how that in everything he said or did, he spake forth the kindness and compassion of his loving heart. Thus, he sweetly draws the soul on, whereby it comes to Christ, casts itself at his blessed footstool, and looks upon him with the eye of faith. And whenever he brings the soul thus to come to Christ, with a real feeling of ruin and misery, with a true sense of guilt and condemnation, with a sincere submission to God's righteousness (as the apostle says), "Not going about to establish our own righteousness," but a "submitting of ourselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3), and a yielding up of ourselves into his hands, there is a proof of heavenly teaching. And whenever that blessed union of humility and love is felt, whereby the soul lies at the feet of the Lord, as Ruth lay at the feet of Boaz, beseeching him to cover it with the skirt of his garment, the Holy Ghost has wrought with power in that soul: it is taught of God: and has an interest in that special teaching, the result of which the Lord has declared to be, "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45).

5. This blessed teaching also leads the soul up into a *knowledge of the Holy Ghost*. All God's people are led into a knowledge of the Trinity: not indeed by metaphysical reasoning or subtle arguments addressed to the understanding. The Spirit teaches them, not by reasoning addressed to the head, but by the power and dew of divine truth resting upon the heart. All God's people learn the doctrine of the Trinity in their souls. They learn, under divine teaching, the authority, justice, majesty, holiness, and in due

time feel the love of God the Father. They learn the Godhead of Christ in their souls, by seeing and feeling the power of his blood, as the blood of God (Acts 20:28), and his righteousness as the "righteousness of God." And they learn the Deity and Personality of the Holy Ghost by feeling the divine power of his operations on their hearts. They learn also that he is God, by perceiving how he scrutinizes all their actions, brings to light every secret thought, and applies passages of scripture to their souls, which none but God could produce, or so suitably apply. And when they are thus led by divine teaching, into the Three Persons of the Godhead, they are brought to know and feel in the depths of conscience, that there are three Persons, equal in power, will, essence, and glory, and but one Jehovah.

Now these truths no man can learn in a saving manner, except by this special teaching. He may know all this, and much more than this, in his understanding and judgment: but a sensible realization of the power of these things in the conscience, a divine melting of the heart under them, with an enlargement of soul, and an experimental enjoyment of them, is the alone fruit of God's teaching resting on him, so as to make him "a new creature" in Christ.

III.—But, as I before hinted, a considerable branch of this heavenly teaching consists also in producing in us a *knowledge of ourselves*, for spiritual acquaintance with ourselves runs ever side by side with a spiritual knowledge of God.

1. We know not, for instance, *the evil of sin* till God makes it effectually known in the conscience. We may, indeed, by the workings of natural conviction know *this* and *that* outward crime to be sin. We may at times, too, have had some sharp pangs of conscience on account of committing open sins

against light and knowledge. But the *evil* of sin, its horrible and dreadful nature, we cannot know, except by this special teaching.

Now there are two ways whereby God makes us to know and feel the evil of sin; first, by the law; and secondly, by the gospel.

In the law, in the light of God's justice, we see the damning power of sin. We find God's justice arrayed against it, that it is totally contrary to his holiness; and that he could not be just, unless he visited it with his eternal wrath and displeasure. But though the law shews us the evil of sin, as committed against justice and holiness, it does not convince us of its evil as committed against love and mercy; it does not, therefore, teach us to hate and abhor it; nor does it produce any sensations of godly sorrow on account of it; but it rather stirs up rebelliousness, and genders to bondage; it rather works up enmity against God, because he has condemned sin, and will not let us commit it. In order, therefore, to teach the soul the evil of sin as exceedingly sinful, we must see it in the light of a suffering Jesus.

We must view by faith the Son of God, equal with the Father in essence, glory, and power, come down to the earth; we must behold him by the eye of faith as "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" we must trace out all his life of humiliation from the cradle to the cross; we must go with him to the garden of Gethsemane; from Gethsemane to Calvary, and there behold God's only begotten Son, stretched betwixt heaven and earth, as "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men," groaning out his soul under the weight of sin laid on him, and the hidings of his Father's countenance. And only so far as the Spirit leads the soul into the sufferings and agonies of a bleeding Jesus, does it really

see and feel, and truly hate and abhor sin and itself as extremely sinful.

2. But heavenly teaching is also necessary to shew us *what our hearts are*. We may, by observing the workings of the natural mind, come to some conclusion that we and all men are naturally very selfish, very proud, and very worldly: but all this does not produce any sense of godly sorrow, or any self-loathing on account of indwelling sin. But when the blessed Spirit takes us in hand, strips away the veil of delusion from our hearts, and opening up the depths of our fallen nature, discovers the secret recesses where everything that is filthy and loathsome hides itself,—*then* we begin to see and feel that we are sinners indeed; inwardly as well as outwardly, in thought and imagination, as well as by habit and practice.

It was this special teaching in the conscience that made Isaiah, when he saw the vision in the temple, cry out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. 6:5). It was this sight of the purity of God, that made Daniel say, that "his comeliness was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength" (Dan. 10:8). It was this that made Job exclaim, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6). And if any of us have ever learned to loathe ourselves before God, it is by having some special discovery of the purity and holiness of God, contrasted with our own vileness and filthiness.

3. Another fruit and effect of this divine teaching is, to *cut in pieces, and root up all our fleshly wisdom, strength, and righteousness*. God never means to patch a new piece upon

an old garment; he never intends to let our wisdom, our strength, our righteousness have any union with his; it must all be torn to pieces, it must all be plucked up by the roots, that a new wisdom, a *new* strength, and a *new* righteousness may arise upon its ruins. But till the Lord is pleased to teach us, we never can part with our own righteousness, never give up our own wisdom, never abandon our own strength. These things are a part and parcel of ourselves, so ingrained within us, so innate in us, so growing with our growth, that we cannot willingly part with an atom of them till the Lord himself breaks them up, and plucks them away. Then as he brings into our souls some spiritual knowledge of our own dreadful corruptions and horrible wickedness, our righteousness crumbles away at the divine touch: as he leads us to see and feel our ignorance and folly in a thousand instances, and how unable we are to understand anything aright but by divine teaching, our wisdom fades away: and as he shews us our inability to resist temptation and overcome sin. by any exertion of our own, our strength gradually departs, and we become like Samson, when his locks were cut off.

Upon the ruins, then, of our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, does God build up Christ's wisdom, Christ's righteousness, and Christ's strength: as Jesus said to his servant Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness:" and this brought him to that wonderful conclusion, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9). But only so far as we are favoured with this special teaching are we brought to pass a solemn sentence of condemnation upon our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness, and feelingly seek after the Lord's.

4. Another fruit and effect of divine teaching is, *faith*, whereby Jesus is believed in to the saving of the soul. There is not a grain of living faith in the heart by nature. We may indeed have a certain sort of belief, we may have the workings of a natural faith: but as to any real spiritual faith, such as the apostle describes, as "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" such a faith as was possessed by the Old Testament worthies recorded in the eleventh of Hebrews; such a faith as saves the soul from "the wrath to come," we know absolutely nothing of, until God is pleased to kindle it by his special teaching in our hearts.

5. Nor, again, have we any *hope* worth a straw, except what springs from divine teaching. We may indeed have the "hope of the hypocrite" which perisheth, but "a good hope through grace," as "an anchor of the soul;" the hope whereby "we are saved" (Rom. 8:24), which "maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:5): a "good hope" like this must spring up alone through the teaching of God, a making known of the Lord of life and glory, and raising up that power in our souls whereby anchor is cast on his blood and righteousness.

6. And *love*: that also is a fruit and effect of this heavenly teaching. There is no love to God, except as he is pleased to shed it abroad in the heart: teaching the soul to know him as the God of love. We may try to love him. and set him before the eyes of our mind: but love cannot be thus compelled to flow out to him: our hearts remain dead, cold, and stupid. And it is only as he is pleased to let a drop of love fall into the soul, that it flows back unto the eternal fountain whence it came down.

And so, with respect to *love to the brethren*. The apostle says, "Ye are taught of God to love one another." This,

therefore, can only flow from divine teaching, by the Spirit of God communicating his blessed unction to the soul, whereby when we see grace in them, we feel a sweet melting down of heart, a flowing together of spirit, and a knitting of affection to them. We may have had a selfish love in the flesh; but there can be no real love towards God's people, except as the Lord is pleased to teach us by his Spirit to love one another.

7. Nor is there any *humility*, except as the Lord is pleased to teach the soul to be humble. And how does he produce genuine soul humility? By shewing us what we are, opening up the secrets of the heart, discovering the desperate wickedness of our fallen nature, and convincing us that sin is intermingled with every thought, word, look, and action.

8. Nor is there any spiritual *patience*, except what springs from this special inward teaching. Trials do not bring patience; they only stir up rebellion. We may pass through the heaviest afflictions, and so far from feeling patience under them, be worked up almost into desperation. But patience and resignation to the will of God flow immediately from the Lord himself; he alone can teach the soul to be patient under his strokes, and shew us that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground" (Job 5:6). He alone can make the soul feel that chastisement comes from the hand of a Father, and open up to the heart that it is for our spiritual good; and thus give it to realize the blessed and happy results which flow therefrom, when it "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

9. Nor is there any *spirit of prayer*, except as the Lord teaches us how to pray. The apostles felt this when they

said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). We cannot pray spiritually and acceptably, except as God teaches us. Parents sometimes try to teach their children to pray; and Sunday School masters and mistresses attempt the same thing with their scholars. But how grating these things are in the ear of a God-taught soul! Scarcely anything used to grate more upon my ears, when I had to attend the Church of England services, than hearing the Sunday School children shout out, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from us," and other similar petitions with which they had no spiritual acquaintance. And few things I believe more hurt the ears of godly parents than to hear their carnal children idly repeating to the Lord words of which they neither know nor feel the meaning; and generally, I may remark, nothing is more offensive to a spiritual ear, than to hear carnal persons make use of petitions the power and sweetness of which they have never felt. God must teach the soul to pray. We may teach children collects and prayers, and to say a blessing before meals; but these man-made petitions do not please God, nor reach his approving ear. But when he himself imparts a spirit of prayer, he teaches the soul in sincerity and godly simplicity to seek his face, and to call upon his name. He teaches us our ruin and his mercy, our malady and his remedy, our lost estate and his salvation. No human teaching can make us know these things; but when he teaches, he draws forth the secret desires and breathings of the soul after himself.

10. *Deadness to the world, and inward as well as outward separation from its company and wretched spirit,* is an effect too of divine teaching. Until God is pleased to teach us, we do not see the evil of the world; but when the Spirit makes the conscience tender in his fear, we find that going into the world is like touching pitch; our hands become defiled, and we feel at once that "evil communications corrupt good

manners." When the Lord teaches us what we are, we find we carry about with us such combustible materials, so much gunpowder, that if a spark come near us an explosion may take place. And as those who are careful of their lives would not enter a powder magazine with anything that might cause an explosion: so when the child of God is under the power of divine teaching, and feels sensibly what a vile nature he has, he will be afraid of carrying his heart into the world, lest a spark might come in from some unexpected quarter, and in an instant set all his corruptions on flame.

11. By God's teaching, also, we learn what a wretched evil *covetousness* is. It is indeed a sin, which it is to be feared many of God's people are deeply tainted with: but its tendency is to eat out the very heart of vital godliness, and its very essence and spirit is idolatry; for the man who bows down before gold and silver, is as much an idolater as though he bowed his knee before stocks and stones. But when God teaches his people to profit, he fixes their heart on better things; he shews them the unsearchable riches of Christ, and thus unlocks their mind from that wretched love of money which is "the root of all evil."

12. It is only by God's teaching that we are enabled *to feel for the wants of his children*, that our hearts are moved with a sense of their many temporal sufferings, and have a disposition given to administer to their wants. But when you look at some who pass for God's people, who have so much of "this world's goods," and yet appear so insensible to the wants of their poorer brethren, you wonder what they think of that scripture, "All ye are brethren." But God must teach us to feel for their wants, and make us liberal towards them according to our means, by laying them on our heart, and drawing out our affections towards them.

13. Every *good word that we speak* for the honour and glory of God must arise from his special teaching. However clearly and ably a minister, for instance, may preach the truth, every word will be utterly lost upon his hearers unless God is pleased to inspire thoughts and dictate words, and speak by him to the conscience. Every action, too, of our life will surely go wrong, unless it is under God's special guidance; and every step in providence we take will not be right, unless it is specially directed by God himself.

IV.—The *teaching of God* is not confined to shewing a man a few grand truths, and then leaving them to have a certain effect upon the conscience. But God's people need his teaching perpetually; and, in providence as in grace, we need unceasing instruction. I believe many a poor child of God often does not know how to do the simplest thing in providence, not even how to carry on his daily business, or execute his manual labour, except as the Lord is pleased to teach him: God must guide his eye and direct his hand, in the least things as well as the greatest. He needs divine teaching in every action if it is to be done to God's glory, and for every word if it is to be spoken in his fear.

But this special teaching of God can only be known and realized by those who have seen an end of all creature perfection, and who are completely and experimentally destitute of all wisdom in the flesh. Until a man is brought to see that he has no wisdom of his own, he will never seek after God's wisdom. But when he is brought to walk in darkness that may be felt, when the thick veil gathers over his mind, and God hides himself from his view; when eternal things are wrapt up in obscurity, and he cannot see the things of God, nor feel his interest in them; when "he gropes for the wall like the blind, and gropes as if he had no eyes;" when he is "led into darkness and not into light," he is

brought to see that the Lord alone can teach his soul to profit.

God's teaching does not leave a man where it found him, dead, stupefied, worldly, unfeeling, and carnal. If he is in distress, it does not leave him in distress; if he feels guilty, it does not leave him guilty; if he is in darkness, it does not leave him in darkness; but it lifts him out of these evils. Thus God's people are continually led to come unto him for his instruction, because they feel that without his special teaching they can know nothing as they ought to know. Nay, the more they have, the more they want to have; for no sooner is the light withdrawn, than the darkness is more sensibly felt. If any text of scripture has been opened up to them, it makes them want to have others made known in a similar way; if they have had any consolation, and it is taken away, it makes them want it again. So that the more wise and spiritual God's people become, the more foolish and carnal they appear in their own eyes; the stronger they are in the Lord and in the power of his might, the more sensibly do they feel the weakness of their flesh: and the more they are enabled to walk closely with the Lord, the more they discover the wretched wanderings of their base and sinful hearts.

Here, then, we see how God's people are distinguished from all heady, high-minded professors. They grow upward. but God's people grow downward. Special and divine teachings do not lead the soul into pride, arrogance, and presumption: but they lead to humility, simplicity, sincerity, contrition, brokenness of heart, low views of self, and admiring views of the Lord.

Natural wisdom only hardens a man's heart, sears his conscience, and makes him more worldly-minded: spiritual

teachings make the heart tender, the glory of God its great object, and spiritual communion with the Lord ardently desired.

How, then, shall we know if we are God's people? Because we believe in election, particular redemption, effectual calling, and the final perseverance of the saints? Because we go to hear a certain minister, or belong to a certain church? A man may have all these things, and ten thousand times more, and sink to hell at last as a deceived hypocrite. But can we trace in our souls anything of this divine teaching?

The Lord has given us two marks or tests whereby it may be proved; let us then confine our attention to them for a moment or two, and see if we can find them manifested in us.

One is, "Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father *cometh unto me.*" Are you from time to time coming unto Christ, and breathing forth your desires and pantings after him, that he would reveal himself in your soul? Are you more or less daily seeking to "know him, and the power of his resurrection," and to enjoy the sweet manifestations of his love? Then you have a scriptural proof that *you are taught of God.*

But let us take the other test: "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). Do you know anything experimentally of love to God's people? I mean a real, spiritual love to the poor, exercised, tempted, sin-burdened, and Satan-harassed family of God? Then, I will say *you are taught of God!*

The Lord enable us to see that we are taught of him. The Lord enable us to believe that we have received "an unction

from the Holy One," that "anointing which is truth and is no lie"—the sure pledge and foretaste of eternal life.

But remember that the promise runs, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." There is no exception here. "All shall know me, from the least unto the greatest." It is very plain, then, that those who know nothing of this divine teaching are not manifestly the children of God: what they may be in the purpose of God we know not: but in their present state and standing they *are not* manifestly his children.

The Lord enable some of you to lay this to heart. And if it be his pleasure, may he touch the consciences of some who have never yet sought his face, and bring them to cast themselves as ruined sinners at the footstool of his grace and mercy! For he, who said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me:" also added, "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."