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MEDITATIONS ON
THE AUTHORITY AND POWER
OF THE WORD OF GOD
UPON THE HEART

By J. C. Philpot

MEDITATIONS ON VARIOUS IMPORTANT POINTS OF OUR MOST HOLY FAITH

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1.—MEDITATIONS ON THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD UPON THE HEART

I.

As we have reason to believe from various communications which directly or indirectly have reached us, that our earlier Meditations on the eternal Sonship, sacred Humanity, and Covenant Offices of the Lord Jesus, and those of a more recent date on the Person and Work of the Holy Ghost, have been favourably received by many of our gracious readers, and been found by them both instructive and profitable, we feel strengthened and encouraged by such testimonies to go on in the same track, and to lay before them in a similar form, as the Lord may from time to time enable us, such other branches of divine truth as have been opened to our understanding, made manifest to our conscience, or endeared to our affections.

As believers in general, we are bidden "to hold forth the word of life," (Phil. 2:16,) and "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints;" (Jude 3;) and as servants of Christ in particular, we are charged "to be instant in season, out of season; to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." And why? Because "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine." (2 Tim. 4:2, 3.) And is not that time arrived? Was there ever a day when "men more turned their ears away from the truth, and were more turned unto fables?" Was there ever a day when the complaint of the prophet was more applicable: "Truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter?" (Isaiah 54:14.) Yea, so fallen into the street that the professing no less than the profane world would gladly see both it and those who hold it swept away altogether into the common sewer, that both it and they might for ever disappear from the eyes of men, the one as an unclean thing too impure for the claims of modern holiness, and the other as too bigoted for the demands of an enlightened liberality.

But besides this general neglect and contempt of truth, there is another feature still more appalling. It is not merely "a day of trouble"—trouble to the Lord's people, "and of rebuke"—in the frowns met with by honest truth, but "of blasphemy;" (Isaiah 37:3;) for not only is the truth of God almost banished from the pulpit and the press, but its very foundations are fast being torn up, and this not as formerly by a few obscure infidels, but by learned divines in high places. Science is mustering all its arts and arms to undermine the veracity of the Bible; talent and learning are uniting all their strength openly to assault its authority; and a cheap press is lending its ready and powerful aid to give the utmost effect to these combined attacks upon the very foundation of all our hopes for eternity. Meanwhile the professing Church stands as it were paralysed, not so much with fear—for that would imply some life—as with apathy. She has indeed a dim view of the approaching danger; but having lost her shield and sword by abandoning the truth, like a man in a dream she strikes her idle blows here and there, and after a show of resistance is even now almost ready to surrender into the hands of her enemies the second best gift of God to man—the inspired revelation of his mind and will in the Scriptures of truth. And need we wonder that the Church, to whom has been entrusted the care of this sacred deposit, should be thus deserted of God when she has been so unfaithful to her trust? By departing from the truth of God she has virtually abandoned her charge. She has thrown away the jewel which gave the value to the casket; for of what value is the Bible separate from the truth of the Bible? When Hophni and Phinehas degrade and disgrace their priestly office, need we wonder that the ark should fall into the hands of the Philistines; or that an enemy should be seen in the house of the Lord's habitation?

When men give up the truth of God they virtually give up the word of God. Those who deny the internal inspiration of the blessed Spirit are not far from denying the external inspiration of the Scriptures; and those who have no living faith in the incarnate Word cannot have faith in the written word. There are, then, evident signs of an approaching compromise between the assailants and the defenders of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Church and the world have long been coming closer and closer together, and now the last wall of separation is fast giving way. The verbal inspiration of the Scriptures will soon be openly or tacitly given up by the leaders of both Church and Dissent; their example, as has invariably been the case in similar instances, will spread itself among the lower ranks of both bodies until there will be a general renunciation of the authority of the Bible as the word of the living God. With that renunciation the whole force and authority of the

Scriptures will be gone; and then they will cease to be what they have been from the earliest period of time—a binding declaration from God to man. Satan, indeed, with his usual craft, is hiding from the eyes of men the certain consequences of denying the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, for it is only as such that they are the word of God at all. Separate from this inspiration, we have no evidence that there is a heaven or a hell, or, even a God, and the Scriptures are no more to us than the poems of Homer or the Vedas of the Brahmins. Men speak justly of the formidable advance of Popery; but behind Popery there looms a much more terrible figure—*Infidelity*. Giants Pope and Pagan were great men in their day; but there is a greater giant to come—Giant Infidel. The Pope and Pagan giants warred against the body; but the Infidel giant wars against the soul. The weapons of Popery and Paganism were the rough and ready bodily application of fire and fagot, rack and thumbscrew; the weapons of infidelity are much more polished and quiet, but addressed with deadly effect to the intellect, and adapted to all classes of society. Scientific discussions of eminent geologists; annual meetings of learned societies in the large towns and prominent centres of civilisation; Essays and Reviews from divines in high places or University professors, address themselves to the educated classes of society; whilst popular lectures, leading articles, half argument, half banter, in Sunday newspapers, trashy tales openly ridiculing religion and covertly advocating infidel principles, with a whole host of cheap publications of a similar character, serve up the same dish for the food and entertainment of the less educated masses.

We may seem to be going out of our usual path to notice these things; but a watchman should not be unobservant of the signs of the times, nor shut himself up in his sentry-box looking only in one direction. If there be a "coming struggle," and if Infidelity be the last enemy of the Church, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. At any rate, if, when the Lord is about to bring a sword upon the land, the watchman see it coming, blow the trumpet, and warn the people, he delivers his own soul from blood, and it may be the souls of others from destruction.

But what we see now in the dim distance is but the beginning of the end. The mischief will not stop here. When the restraint of God's word is gone, society has lost the most binding tie on the lusts and passions of men; for when there is no fear of judgment after death, what is there to keep men back from sin?

To what, then, are we called who have felt the power and authority of the word of God upon our hearts? To bind it more closely and warmly to our

breast; to prize it in proportion to the attacks made upon it; to seek for clearer and more powerful manifestations of its truth and blessedness to our own soul, and, as called upon, to contend for it by tongue and pen. We feel, therefore, a growing desire to devote what remains of life and strength to the defence of the truth as it is in Jesus. Through the good hand of God upon us, we have a large circle of readers, and among them many, very many of the excellent of the earth. We feel bound, then, by every spiritual tie, to avail ourselves of the position in which we trust the Lord has placed us, to be a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, to keep back nothing that is profitable through the fear of man, but by manifestation of the truth to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And may the Lord, dear readers, incline your hearts to pray for us, that he would give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the anointing which teacheth of all things may richly rest upon our soul, and clothe our pen with that power and savour which make truth so precious to the hearts of those who believe in the Son of God unto eternal life.

But though we intend, with the Lord's help and blessing, to pursue the same general method of laying divine truth before our readers in the shape of "Meditations," yet, in order to allow our pen a somewhat freer scope, we shall not tie ourselves down to any one precise subject, or to one limited course, as we have hitherto restrained ourselves. Whilst engaged in handling such deep and important subjects as have already occupied our Meditations, there was a necessity to adhere rigidly to a fixed line of thought and argument, as nothing is more confusing to the mind of both writer and reader than wandering from point to point without any definite order. Such writing resembles an untidy drawer, full of loose papers, where every letter or bill comes to hand that you do not want, but the one that you particularly need is nowhere to be found. We shall therefore adhere to a certain order of thought and arrangement, though we shall not tie ourselves down to a fixed course.

We intend then, with the Lord's help and blessing, to issue "Meditations on various important points of our most holy faith." This title will sufficiently explain our intention. As we shall endeavour to handle none but "*important*" points, we hope to be preserved from vain jangling on minor matters; as these points are "*various*," we trust this may give us that variety without which all writing soon becomes wearisome from continual sameness of thought and expression; and as the truths of "*our most holy faith*" will alone engage our pen, we hope that both writer and reader may be favoured with the enjoyment of their liberating effect and sanctifying influence.

But a few words may be desirable as introductory to the subject of our present Meditations—*The authority and power of the word of God upon the heart.*

In our previous Meditations we have assumed as the basis of our arguments the truth and inspiration of the word of God; for this, among all Christians, is a settled point, the foundation of all their faith, as well as of all their hope. Take away this solid foundation, or in any way impair its stability, and with it all their hopes of eternal life at once fall into utter ruin; for "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psa. 11:3.) But this is the very thing which the enemies of God and godliness are now attempting, with all their might and main, to effect. Hitherto they have only attempted to break down the carved work of the temple of God with axes and hammers; but now they cry out to each other, "Rase, rase it even to the foundation thereof." We, therefore, feel led to examine the foundations of our faith and hope, that we and our readers may see whether we have or have not followed cunningly devised fables, in ourselves believing in and making known unto you, dear friends and brethren, the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 1:16.) We shall therefore, as the Lord may enable, under our present subject of meditation, the authority and power of the word of God upon the heart, consider,

I. The *necessity* of a revelation of the mind and will of God to man.

II. The *nature* of that revelation.

III. The binding *authority* of that revelation on the consciences of *men in general.*

IV. The binding authority of that revelation on the hearts and consciences of the people of God *in particular.*

I. As, from the very nature of our subject, we cannot expect to be able to prove every step of our argument with all the certainty and exactness of a mathematical problem, so at the very outset we must assume certain points as generally admitted by all but avowed infidels, without subjecting them to strict demonstrative proof. These fixed points or data are,

1. That there is a God who, by the exercise of a divine power, created man on earth.

2. That in so doing he breathed into him a rational and immortal soul.

3. That by this act of creative power he made man capable of knowing him, worshipping him, and obeying him.

If these three simple propositions are denied or questioned, there is at once an end to all further argument. Revelation and religion fall at once to the ground, and man has no pre-eminence over the beasts that perish. To this point modern science is fast tending; for the fashionable theory at present is that there was no special creation of man at all, but that by progressive advancement from a lower state of being, he was at last fully evolved out of an ape, and in fact is a kind of improved gorilla; much in the same way as a Ribstone pippin is an improved crab, or a green gage plum an improved bullace. Our readers may disbelieve our assertion, or smile at our illustration, but they may depend upon it that this is the theory which is fast advancing in recognition amongst scientific circles, where it is first elaborated and ripened by the highest intellect of the country. Being thus countenanced and popularised, it will gradually spread itself downwards, until it will fully leaven the minds of thousands, and among them doubtless very many who now profess to believe the Scriptures. It is, in fact, with all its evident absurdity, an attempt to explain the inexplicable, and to account for the presence of man in this world, without his special creation at a definite moment by God himself, according to the testimony of the Scriptures. Now in direct opposition to this ape-into-man theory, which destroys at a blow the immortality of the soul and indeed the possession of a soul altogether by man, the Bible, as a revelation from God, gives us a history of man's creation, and that God not only formed his body of the dust of the ground, but "breathed into him the breath of life," which he did not to any of the lower animals, and thus "man became a living soul." (Gen. 2.) Between this statement and infidelity we have no alternative.

1. If, then, as the Scripture tells us, God created man in his own image after his own likeness, he made man *capable of knowing*, worshipping, and serving him. But this intelligent service man could not render without some special revelation of the mind and will of God how he was to be acceptably worshipped, served, and obeyed; for though worship and obedience are inseparably connected with the claims which God, as the Creator, has upon man as his intelligent creature, yet to be acceptable they must be according to his own prescription. Thus we see the *necessity* of a revelation from God to man, or otherwise there could be no intercourse between man and his Maker, no intelligent service, no acceptable obedience.

These truths seem very simple, almost too evident to require proof, or too commonplace to find admission into our pages. But please to bear in mind, Christian readers, our present object. It is to show *the foundations* on which our faith is built. The house in which you are living does not seem perhaps quite so stable as it was. The autumnal gales have a good deal shaken it. There is a storm abroad in the sky—evident symptoms of an approaching hurricane. Would it not be as well to examine the foundations on which your house rests, lest on some stormy night it fall into ruins? Is it rock or sand? As is the foundation, such is the stability of the house. But what is the foundation of our spiritual building—our house for eternity? The word of the Lord which abideth for ever. Are we then wrong in examining the strength of this foundation, if its stability involves all our clearest hopes, and without which we must be of all men most miserable? Do we err, then, in thus dwelling—commonplace though it may seem—on the *necessity* of a divine revelation as laid deep in the *relationship* between man and his Maker? The craving after God felt by every new-born soul, the eagerness with which it flies at once to get comfort and instruction from the word, the holy joy with which it hails every ray of heavenly light that shines on its dark path, evidently show how deep the necessity of a divine revelation is laid in the relationship between man and his Maker.

2. But we find ourselves not only here in this present stage of time as the creatures of God's hand, but we see and feel that we and all others with us of the human race are *sinful* creatures. This is a fact as plain and as palpable to our mental, as our very existence to our bodily eye—a fact, an appalling fact, which the devil himself, with all his infernal sophistry, can neither dispute nor deny. Can any one whose conscience is not seared as with a hot iron look into himself, or look at others, without seeing and acknowledging that there is in us all an utter contrariety to the image of God in which we were created? Put aside yourself, though that is the surest because the clearest and most deeply felt evidence, and only give one glance at the crimes, the horrid and detestable crimes, which in this civilised England of ours, this land of churches and chapels, books and Bibles, preachers and professors, every day brings to light. And looking beyond the confines of our favoured island—for with all its horrid sins it is a favoured land—view the universality of wickedness rising up as a thick steam from every part of the earth. It matters not where man lives; he is the same sinful being, the same vile wretch, under all circumstances, in all ages, and in all climates. But we need not enlarge on a point so evident. Not to see our own sins or the sins of others is to be stone blind to the common

light of the natural understanding, stone deaf to the common voice of the natural conscience.

3. But now comes the question, "What has been *the cause* of all this?" If we see a river, like the London Thames, carrying down to the ocean a stream defiled with all kind of filth and impurity, we know there must have been a cause for these polluted waters. Did the stream spring so from its earliest birth, or did it contract the pollution in its downward course? Surely a pure and holy God did not create man in his present awful state of iniquity, any more than the Thames sprang out of mother earth, laden with the filth of the London sewers. Man then must have fallen from the state of innocence and uprightness in which he was created; for God cannot be the author of sin, which he must be, had man come from his hands the same sinful being that we now find him. Where and whence then did man become what he now is? Here all is darkness, except so far as a revelation from God has explained the mystery. The only light upon the dreadful fact of the inward and outward sinfulness of man, which meets us at every turn, comes from the Bible. There we have written, as with a ray of divine light, not only man's creation, but man's fall. Men in high places, which they disgrace by their presence; men like Colenso who eat the bread of the Church whose fundamental articles they deny; men of science falsely so called, for the true science is to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent; men of intellect which they pervert to their own ruin and the ruin of others, may ignore the Bible, and pronounce the book of Genesis a myth, a Hebrew tradition, an antiquated document, exploded by the discoveries of modern science; but where else can any account be obtained of two facts, which infidelity itself cannot deny or dispute? 1, That man is an intelligent, rational creature. 2, That man is a sinful being. No sophistry can overturn facts so plain, so palpable, and no infidel scheme can explain them. O that men should spend their days which they hold only by the sufferance of God, and devote their abilities which they possess only by the gift of God, to rob us of the only light which shines in this dark world, and to spoil us of the only hope which can cheer us as we travel through it, and for ever pass away from it.

4. But now, still pursuing the same line of thought, we are brought to another step of our argument to show the *necessity* of a revelation from God, as deeply laid in the relationship between man and his Maker. We have assumed as fixed unquestionable data these three points: the being of God; the creation of man by his divine Maker and his endowment with an intelligent, rational, immortal soul; and his present state as a sinner, before the eyes of infinite purity and holiness. Now without a special revelation from God, in what way

can it be clearly and indubitably known how this sinful being, man, can be happy in a future state of existence? For we have assumed that he was created for immortality. That a soul polluted with every crime should find admission after death into the blissful presence of an infinitely holy God, without some pardon of sin or change of nature, not only shocks every feeling of our mind, but is diametrically opposed to the convictions of our natural conscience.

But apart from revelation, how are we to know in what way this guilty soul can be pardoned—this sinful soul be cleansed—this unholy soul be purified and sanctified? Here all schemes of man's contrivance fail. Here cursed infidelity, when she has dragged her victims to the mouth of the grave, leaves them on the brink of hell to the torment of their own conscience; for even in this life many a dying wretch has felt the very pangs of hell in his awakened conscience; many a bold and daring infidel has howled on his death-bed under the terrible wrath of the Almighty; and thus, whether he would or not, has proved the Bible true. What can science or speculation do for a poor dying wretch with all his sins before his eyes, the wrath of God in his conscience, and hell opening its mouth to swallow up his guilty soul? Only in the Scriptures have we any discovery to our awakened consciences how sin can be pardoned and the soul saved in perfect harmony with the holiness and justice of an offended God.

5. But again, another question here meets us as we advance still further in our proof of the *necessity* of a divine revelation as deeply laid in the very relationship between man and his Maker. And please to bear in mind that though these seem very simple elementary truths scarcely deserving proof, or perhaps even as you think a passing notice, yet that in them is laid the foundation of all that we believe. The next question, then, that arises out of the relationship which man bears to his Creator is, How is God to be acceptably worshipped? That some worship is due to him is a truth so deeply laid in the mind of man that universal homage has been paid to it. Sin has most awfully brutalised the mind of man, defaced the image of God in which he was created, and in many points sunk him lower than the beasts; but it has not stamped out of his conscience the conviction that some worship is due to God. But without a divine revelation of his will, how can we know what is acceptable worship? For unacceptable worship is but adding sin to sin. The idea attached to worship is that it is the suitable acknowledgment of our dependence on God, offering up of petitions and supplications for his favour, with confessions of our sin and unworthiness, and thankfulness for present mercies. But apart from a special revelation, what evidence or assurance have

we of the way whereby our Maker may be acceptably worshipped? We see what men do who are ignorant of, or have cast aside or neglected divine revelation. In almost every case men have worshipped the most brutal idols instead of the only true and living God. That God is a Spirit, and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth; that he can only be approached through his dear Son, as the Mediator between God and man; that the Holy Spirit alone can indite real prayer in the heart; that all our worship is only acceptable as perfumed by the intercession of our great High Priest within the veil—what should we have known or felt of these sacred truths, without a knowledge and experience of which we cannot worship God acceptably, apart from that divine revelation which we hold in our hands and the power of which we have felt in our hearts?

Thanks, then, be unto God for the gift of his holy word. Next to the gift of his dear Son, it is the most precious gift of God to man. May we bind it warmly to our breast, daily dig into it for his treasure, and as the Lord the Spirit opens up its precious contents and seals them with power and savour upon our hearts, may we bless and praise his holy name that he has plucked our feet out of the net of the infidel, and given us to know for ourselves that the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

II.

In our last paper we attempted to show the *Necessity* of divine revelation from the peculiar relationship in which man, as a rational, intelligent creature, stands to his Almighty Creator.

This argument from necessity may seem to be either so self-evident, or so elementary, as to be almost beneath the notice of the feeblest child of grace, and therefore quite unsuitable to our pages, which profess to furnish not only milk for the babe, but meat for the man. But to this objection we may reply, that when the poor child of grace, be he feeble or strong, comes to be knocked about as much as we have been by infidel suggestions from within and infidel arguments from without, he will be glad to lay hold of any clear proof of a divine revelation, however self-evident or however elementary. It is indeed, we freely admit, mere foundation work which we are at present laying; but foundation work is as needful as building-up work, and in some respects more so; for it is not the building which holds up the foundation, but the foundation which holds up the building.

But why should we despise elementary principles as beneath our notice? We do not despise the alphabet because only little children learn it, nor do we condemn the numeration table because taught in the infant school; for we know that, though mere elements, we can neither read nor count without them. So religion has its elements—"the first principles of the oracles of God," (Heb. 5:12,) to which we may refer as the foundation of our faith. If then we are told that we have learnt to read our Bible wrong because Dr. Stanley has discovered some mistakes in the letters, or have counted its treasures amiss because Dr. Colenso has published a new Arithmetic, let us look and see whether we have mistaken A for B, and whether we must set down the five books of Moses as five ciphers without prefixing one figure to turn them into thousands of gold and silver. But why despise foundation work because you happily have got beyond it? The mason will not venture up the scaffolding if he find the poles rotten at the foot; nor will the engine-driver cross the railway bridge if he see, from its sinking, that the abutments are giving way. Why, then, should not we examine the foundations of our most holy faith, and not venture our souls on the great bridge from time into eternity without giving one glance at the strength or weakness of the abutments?

The Bible is put into our hands as a revelation from God. As such we have received it from our fathers. As such, and as such only, does it claim our attention and our obedience. If it is not the word of God—we speak with reverence, it is an imposture. Now, if we can but firmly establish the *necessity* of a revelation from God, we have laid a strong foundation for a belief that the Bible is that revelation; for no other is worth a moment's examination. This argument from necessity, then, is very strong—stronger, perhaps, than it at first appears, and as extensive in application as firm in strength. To feel the force of this argument, cast your eyes for a few moments over creation, and see what a provision has been made everywhere by its All-wise and All-powerful Creator for necessity. From man, at the head of creation, down to the lowest organised structure, there is not a necessity for which provision has not been made, and that in exact proportion to its wants. You yourself came into this world a poor, naked, helpless infant, full of necessities, and must have perished from the womb unless provision had been made for them. Who filled for you your mother's breast with milk and your mother's heart with love? But you have a soul as well as a body—no less naked, no less necessitous. Shall, then, the body have its necessities, and these be provided for, and shall the soul have its necessities too, and for these there be no provision made? Is

there no milk for the soul as well as for the body? no "sincere milk of the word that it may grow thereby?" Look at the new-born soul. How it craves the word of life! As then you need go no farther than yourself in your first birth to find the meeting together of necessity and provision, so you need go no farther than your second birth to the meeting of the same provision for the same necessity.

But let us look at this argument from necessity from some other points of view, for it is too extensive as well as too cogent to be hastily dismissed, and assumes many important aspects.

7. Assuming, as we have already done, then, that man is the creature of God's hand—and how else can we account for his existence? and assuming that he has been endowed with a rational, intelligent soul, capable of knowing, worshipping, and obeying his divine Maker—and of this our own experience is the most clear and indubitable proof—is it *consistent with the goodness of God* to leave man to grope his way to a knowledge of his glorious Creator, without a word of direction, without a ray of light! That God should be good—eternally and infinitely good, is as much a necessary perfection of the divine nature, as that he should be all-wise, or all-powerful, or all-holy. Love, benevolence, good-will, call it by what name you may, to the creatures of his hand are everywhere so conspicuous in God even as a Creator, and form so important an element in all our conceptions of the Almighty, that they have in some minds even overshadowed the severer attributes of his righteous character. We ask then how it would be consistent with this universally acknowledged goodness of God to make a provision for every necessity of man's body, and make no provision for the necessity of man's soul? If I am a father and love my child, as my child, shall I leave him, like the poor outcast babe in Ezekiel, (16,) without one word of kindly notice, or loving instruction? Shall I have been the means of his having birth and being, and then cast him off into the wide world to shift for himself, without speaking one word to him during the whole course of his natural life? To deny, then, a special revelation from God is to ascribe to the most beneficent Father in heaven conduct which we should reprobate with detestation in any father on earth.

8. But put the argument from necessity in another shape, and view it under another aspect. If man were made able to obey the will of his maker, what obedience could be rendered unless to some *prescribed and positive declaration* of that will? And what is that declaration of the will of God but a revelation from himself, and such a revelation as should be not only intelligible by man,

but attended with such indubitable evidence as to be binding on his conscience as well as clear to his understanding? Let us not forget that if God be man's Maker he is thereby man's Master. He who gave him being has a right to his service. This is an acknowledged principle. But service implies a rule, and an expressed rule. If we are masters, do we expect our servants to obey us unless we tell them what to do? Are they to guess at our wishes, or obey our orders? Can we chide them for disobedience to our will, unless we have made that will clearly known to them? The centurion well put the case when he said, "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." But if he had not said to his servant, "Do this," could he have expected him to do, or chidden him for not doing it? Thus these very infidel teachers who deny revelation cannot give an order to their servants, or speak a word to their children without establishing revelation, unless, at least, they mean to assert that they are juster masters to their servants, and kinder parents to their children than God is to any of us. So, unless God has given to man a clear revelation of his will, how can man either know what that will is, or endeavour to obey it?

9. But put the argument under another form, and in a more convincing point of view. God is man's *Judge* as well as man's Master. It is not with him and us as with us and our servants. We and they are of the same flesh and blood, without any natural authority on the one side or subjection on the other. Masters and servants with us are merely matters of work and wages. But God is our Almighty Judge as well as our sovereign Master. Now as a master's will must be known before it can be obeyed, so a judge's law must be declared before it can be transgressed. If, then, no law had been given to man, there could have been no transgression. This is an acknowledged principle in all laws, both human and divine. The Apostle therefore says, "Where no law is there is no transgression." (Rom. 4:15.) Why are theft and murder punished? Because the law expressly forbids them under a prescribed penalty. But why are not ingratitude, infidelity, and seduction punished? Is it a less crime to rob a poor girl of her virtue than to rob her of her pocket-handkerchief? But the judge punishes the thief and lets off the seducer. The one goes after fresh prey, and the other goes to the treadmill. Why? Because the statute book has so determined it. It is the law of the land, from which there is no appeal, which punishes crimes against society, but not crimes against morality.

We see, therefore, the necessity of a direct, positive law being given by God; for without it, there would have been no transgression; and if no

transgression, there could have been no punishment. But what do we see everywhere around us? The most daring crimes, the vilest sins, the foulest abominations, all which are so contrary even to the plainest dictates of natural conscience, that all but the most debased of men view them with indignation, and deem them justly punishable. But how could God justly punish what he has not forbidden? And if he has forbidden them, where or how has he done so? Where is the statute book written by his finger, or by his dictation? We say that it is the Bible; and we ask all who reject the Bible as a divine revelation, to point out to us any other book which bears the least mark or impress of coming from God.

Thus we see that the more we examine the subject the more do we see the *necessity* of a divine revelation. And O, how blessed it is to the child of grace, to find and feel that when he takes up the Scriptures God speaks to him in them; and therein is revealed the mind and will of his heavenly Father; and that, as he believes the testimony which God has thus given of himself, he has, by the power which accompanies it, an inward witness that the Lord of heaven and earth is speaking to his soul.

But enough perhaps has been said about the *necessity* of a revelation from God, as based upon the natural, necessary relationship that exists between man and his Maker. We will, therefore, now pass on to consider the *nature* of this revelation, which we proposed as the second branch of our inquiry.

II. And here we come at once face to face with the infidelity of the human heart; for this wretched disease of the soul, like a deep-seated, incurable cancer in the body, if stopped in one place, breaks out immediately in another. Two objections at once start up to view. 1. That such a direct revelation from God is contrary to all present experience and observation. 2. That it is beyond our conception, if not contrary to our reason, that God should expressly communicate a knowledge of his will to man. But let us see whether these objections are insuperable.

1. What is meant by a revelation from God being contrary to our present experience? Is our experience of a thing to be the proof of its existence? An African king is said to have put a missionary to death, as a liar and an impostor, because he had asserted that in his country he had seen water so hard that persons could walk on it as on dry land. Because God does not speak to infidels *now*, has not he spoken to apostles and prophets of old? Is there no light, because blind men have no sight; or no music, because deaf

men have no hearing? What a weak, what a futile argument that nothing can be true but what we have ourselves witnessed! But there is the best of all reasons why God does not *now* speak to man. He *has* spoken. Need he then speak again? Need he be always speaking? Must he speak to every individual of the human race, or must he call with a voice from heaven to our ears, before we can have sufficient evidence that he has spoken at all? The Bible would be an imperfect revelation of the mind and will of God if it needed continual supplementing by fresh revelations. But this point will more clearly appear when we unfold the *nature* of divine revelation.

2. But let us take up the second stumbling-block—that we cannot understand how God can make his will known to man; *how* he can infallibly assure him what his will is; or *how* he can reveal it to his understanding and make it binding upon his conscience. We fully admit that these are points so beyond the compass of the reasoning mind, and so entirely out of its province, that it halts and staggers at the very threshold with a "How can these things be?" But here again we are setting up our own experience as a criterion of the possibility or impossibility of a thing. Must we believe nothing but what we can understand? Can you understand your own creation? Can you understand how your eye sees objects, or how your ear hears sounds? You can trace with your scalpel and your dissections a certain bodily conformation of eye and ear. You can take the eye to pieces as easily as you can unscrew a telescope, and lay on your dissecting table its lens and its humours, and explain it all on optical principles, that it is an apparatus made to see with. But can you explain how the mind, that last, that subtle principle, can *see* with this beautiful apparatus—that is, how it can form a conception of the various objects which this mere bodily organ presents to it? No; not you, nor all the powers of human reason can explain the action of matter upon spirit—the connection between the brain and the mind. And if you cannot understand the action of matter upon spirit and yet it is a fact of daily, hourly, momentarily observation and experience—why doubt that spirit can act upon spirit; in other words, that God, who is a Spirit, can make his will known to the soul of man? But why should nothing be true but what we can understand? Why should we set up our poor limited faculties as able to hold heaven and earth in their grasp, and boldly and rashly reject whatever they cannot embrace? It is a part of the trial of our faith that we should receive on the testimony of God what is, not indeed contrary to reason, but what is above it. Revelation is supernatural—that is, beyond nature, not contrary to it. If the Bible told us that two and two made five, or that a square and a circle were exactly of the same shape, we might well deny it our credence; but what the Bible reveals

are not physical impossibilities, but spiritual truths, and therefore beyond the province of reason, which can only handle earthly matters.

Having thus disposed of these preliminary objections, we shall now, with God's help and blessing, address ourselves to the present subject of our inquiry, the *nature* of a divine revelation.

To a Christian mind nothing is more evident than that God can and does speak to the sons of men. Still we may with a reverent spirit inquire *how* he has spoken. If God, who made man, cannot make himself known to man, it must be either because he cannot, or because man is not capable of hearing his voice. The first is not so much infidelity as atheism. If there be a God, to deny his power to speak to man is to say he is a limited Being—to deny that he is Almighty. He that made man must be capable of speaking to man. But is man capable of hearing God's voice? You cannot make a gold cup of a mass of lead; not because you cannot make a cup out of metal, but because the base metal, lead, is naturally incapable of being converted by any process into the precious metal, gold. So, were man's soul naturally incapable of hearing God's voice, or of believing what it heard, no revelation of the will of God could be made to man any more than to the brute creation. But we know from daily experience that we are capable of hearing one another speak, of understanding what we hear, of believing what is thus communicated to our mind, and of acting upon it. Supposing, then, that God were pleased to speak to man, there evidently is in him no natural incapability of hearing the voice of God, of understanding what he hears, of believing what might be thus communicated, and of rendering obedience to the will thus made known. When God spake first to Samuel, the child was as much capable of hearing the words, "Samuel, Samuel," spoken to him by God as he was of hearing the same words had they been spoken, as he thought, by Eli. That God *can* speak in an audible voice we can no more doubt than that he has enabled us to speak to each other; for surely he that has power to make us speak to one another has power to speak himself to us, if he will so to do. And he who has given us power to understand the meaning of words which we speak to one another, surely has power to make us understand what he is pleased to say unto us. Thus there is no natural impossibility in the way to bar at once all progress, or any difficulty that cannot be easily removed. When this formidable objection is closely examined, we see that it really resolves itself into this point: "Has God all-mighty power or not? Is he a finite or an infinite Being? Did he make us, or did we make ourselves? And if he had power to make us, has he not power to manifest himself unto us?" Nay, to push the point more fully home,

the question after all is really this, "Is there a God at all?" Infidelity, we have often thought, is only disguised atheism; for once admit, or rather once believe and feel that there is a God, and that as such he possesses infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; and once admit that man is the rational, intelligent creature of his hand, and all the supposed difficulties which an infidel heart within, and infidel hands without have piled up in the way of the possibility or probability of a revelation from God to man, vanish into thin air as so many exhalations from a corrupt heart. We do not say that difficulties may not still remain in revelation itself after we have overcome the grand preliminary objection to there being a revelation at all; but when we are once fully satisfied in our own mind that God has spoken to man, and that the Bible contains what he has thus spoken as the expression of his mind and will, then all these mere minor difficulties, if we cannot explain them, we are content to leave unexplained.

We hope that we have not too severely tasked the patience of our spiritual readers by dwelling so long on these mere elementary foundation points, settling, or as they may perhaps rather think, unsettling what they have never doubted. But all the children of God, dear readers, are not favoured with your strong faith. Many who truly desire to fear God are frequently sorely tried in their minds with infidel thoughts; and as we ourselves have been, especially in times past, much in this furnace, we feel led to take up those stumbling-blocks which lie so thickly strewn in their path. But apart from this, we are free to confess that the natural character of our mind is not to be satisfied with dim, confused views upon any subject to which we apply our thoughts. We cannot bear to lose ourselves in a tangled maze of confusion, without seeing our way clearly before us; and we therefore feel similarly desirous, when we take up our pen, to make straight paths for our feet, and be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But this very aim at clearness of thought and expression is apt sometimes to issue in overlaying a subject with wearisome prolixity, much in the same way as we may weary our servants by repeating our directions to them too often. We must plead, however, for our excuse, the importance of the subject, and the earnest desire that we feel to lay the foundation broad and good.

But though our limits now warn us to come to a close, we cannot comfortably do so without pressing upon our readers two considerations which we wish them steadily to bear in mind.

1. View our Meditations on the subject *as a whole*. Thus viewed, what may now appear at first sight unnecessary or unimportant will drop into its place, and will be seen to be needful to give strength and symmetry to the whole building. When, with God's help and blessing, we shall have finished our task, the preliminary, elementary matter which has thus far engaged our pen will be seen to have contributed a basis on which our subject—the authority of God's word—may firmly rest.

2. Secondly, if your own mind is sometimes agitated with infidel doubts, and you have had certain points, as, for instance, the necessity of a divine revelation cleared up, and firmly established in your own mind, *do not let yourself be driven from it*. Do not always be doing and undoing, setting and unsetting, building up and pulling down. If a point be once firmly settled, let it continue firmly settled. Make the ground firm and good as you go along; but when once you find the ground firm under your feet, do not break up the road again, or let yourself be pushed off the causeway. In this is much of the good fight of faith—to abide by what we believe and know; not to be driven from certainties to uncertainties, but to maintain the ground that we have fairly won from the enemy, and rather die fighting for God and his word, than give in one inch to Satan and your unbelieving heart. Take, for instance, this argument from necessity. Does not every longing desire of your heart Godward convince you of its truth? Every cry for light, every sigh and groan for a word to be spoken with a divine power to your soul; every desire in your breast to know God's will, and do it, are so many standing proofs—proofs within your own personal cognisance and realisation, of the necessity for a revelation from God to man. Now, having got that proof, abide by it as a decided point, a settled matter; and don't be driven from it. When thus firmly established as a fixed principle, you will find, as you proceed, that it will open up to you with greater clearness and strength the *nature* of this divine revelation, in which centre all our faith and hope.

III.

There are some minds naturally so constituted that, whatever be the subject of inquiry, they cannot rest satisfied with any conclusions which are not established by demonstrative proof; and there are others of so peculiar a temperament that, though they may not demand demonstrative proof on every subject, yet they feel so acutely the force of every objection which may be started against a generally received truth, that unless each difficulty, as it

arises, be fully and fairly removed out of the way, no weight of opposing testimony is, to their mind, of any avail. Now as we shall most probably have occasion in the course of our argument to meet with both these cases, we shall address a few remarks to each before we proceed any further with our subject.

1. It would be well, then, if the first of these two classes of mind would remember that there is a vast variety of questions, the truth and certainty of which it would be madness and folly to doubt, which, from their very nature, are incapable of demonstrative proof; in other words, cannot be established by argumentative reasoning step by step, link by link, in the same way as a sum can be proved in arithmetic, or a problem demonstrated in mathematics. That the sun, for instance, will rise to-morrow in the east, and that within the next twenty-four hours it will twice be high water at London Bridge, cannot be demonstratively proved. We are perfectly sure that these two events will occur, and on astronomical principles they may be both explained; but our only real reason for believing that they will take place is past observation, that is, the accumulated experience of countless years and centuries. That some time next winter there will be frost;* that a general once lived, named Julius Caesar, and that he invaded Britain; that there is a large city, called New York, across the Atlantic Ocean; none of these three things can be demonstratively proved. The first is a matter of highly probable conjecture; our belief of the second depends on two or three old manuscripts which might have been forged, or Caesar might have intentionally deceived us; our confidence in the existence of the third rests merely on what we have been told by eye-witnesses, or have read in books. And yet to doubt the truth and reality of any one of these three things would be not so much unbelief or infidelity as madness or folly. So it is impossible to prove demonstratively, that is, formally and mathematically, that God has given a revelation of his mind and will to the sons of men, or even that he exists; and yet it may be established so thoroughly and completely by proof of another kind that to disbelieve or reject it would be the greatest folly and impiety. For instance, that there lived in Judea about 1860 years ago, a person named Jesus Christ; that he wrought many wondrous miracles; that he was crucified by Pontius Pilate; that he rose from the dead and ascended up to heaven, are facts quite as certain, if not more so, than that Julius Caesar ever lived, or that he invaded Britain. Unless a few old manuscripts had been preserved out of the general wreck, or a few old coins been dug up, we should not have known there ever was a man named Julius Caesar; and that he invaded Britain rests only on his own testimony in his "Commentaries," and on some allusions to it in Cicero and

other authors. But that Jesus Christ lived and died and rose again we have the testimony not only of the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, but of hundreds of Christians shortly after the event, and many of them martyrs, who cheerfully shed their blood as witnesses to his death and resurrection. The invasion of Caesar left no more standing mark on the history of England than the waves which then beat on the Kentish shore; but the death and resurrection of Christ have not only saved millions of redeemed souls, but have changed the whole face of Europe, and stamped every feature of its history for thirteen centuries.

* The readers of "Butler's Analogy" will perceive that we have borrowed one or two of these instances from him.

2. And now a few words for that class of mind which demands an answer to every objection. In demonstrative proof, an objection which cannot be removed is fatal to the truth of the conclusion. One error in posting the ledger will spoil the sum total. At the end of the day, if the cash in hand does not exactly agree with the calculated balance, the banker knows there is a wrong entry somewhere. If in measuring what is called the base line of the great Ordnance Survey of Great Britain, about five miles long, an error had been made of 100 yards, it would so have affected every triangle and so vitiated every calculation that not a single town or village, road or river would have been rightly placed in the map. In these cases errors which cannot be detected and rectified destroy the truth of the conclusion. But in subjects where testimony is our only mode of proof, as in all historical questions, errors more or less considerable may exist, and objections, more or less powerful, may be started; and yet, though the former may not be capable of rectification, nor the latter of satisfactory answer, no real injury may be done to the truth of the conclusion.*

* Besides which, an objection is not unanswerable because *we*, with our present means of information, cannot answer it. Dr. Colenso, for instance, has raised an objection to the truth of Leviticus by calculating the number of bullocks, lambs, turtle-doves, &c., which would be required in the wilderness to carry out the sacrifices enjoined, and has endeavoured to show, by arithmetical calculation, that such a number could not have been obtained there. Now suppose that we could not meet that objection, would it overthrow the authority of the Pentateuch, that is, the first five books of the Bible? Not a whit; for the amount of proof on the other side might be so strong as to reduce the objection to a minimum. But we may answer it thus. If circumcision was

not practised in the wilderness, which we know was the case, why might not the sacrifices have been suspended or only partially observed? The wilderness was only a passage to Canaan. It was *there* that the whole ceremonial law was to be carried out. Moses, as the man of God, the typical mediator, received the ceremonial law from God's mouth in the wilderness; but the laws there given were to be the code of the people when settled in the Holy Land.

It is very difficult, for instance, to harmonise and reconcile the accounts which the four Evangelists have given us of the transactions at the last supper, and of Christ's resurrection. But what force have these objections in opposition to the overwhelming testimony that the Lord Jesus supped with his disciples the evening before the crucifixion, and that he rose from the dead?

But now to resume our subject. The point at which we arrived in our last paper was, that assuming the being of God, and that man was the rational, intelligent creature of his hand, there was really no difficulty in the way of a revelation of the mind and will of God to him. If there were any such insuperable difficulty, it could only arise from one of these two causes; 1st, either that God was incapable of giving to man that revelation, which would be a denial of God's omnipotence; or, 2ndly, that man was incapable of receiving it, which would be a denial of man's reason and intelligence. It comes, then, at last to this point as a mere matter of fact: "Has God spoken to man or not? Has he given him or not given him a revelation of his mind and will? We assert that he has done so. We are asked, "Where is that revelation?" We reply, "In the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament." We are then challenged to the proof that these Scriptures are a revelation from God. Here then is the battle-ground. Here the whole gist and force of the controversy lie. To carry this point, we ought now, in all fairness, to bring up all the evidences of the truth of revelation. But it is clear that our space does not admit of this, and that the attempt to do so would carry us altogether away from our present subject. And yet to afford no proof whatever of our assertion that the Scriptures are a divine revelation, would seem like a tacit surrender of the whole position, or a crafty evasion; and this is a charge which we mean not to incur.

Before then we bring forward our proofs of the Scriptures being a divine revelation, we must settle the question which lies more immediately before us, the *nature* of that revelation. To do this we must assume the truth of the Scriptures; for as they profess to contain this revelation from God, it is only by examining them that we can ascertain the nature of revelation at all. This

may seem illogical, and that by so doing we are tacitly assuming the very point in dispute. Strictly speaking it is so; but we must either make this assumption, or depart altogether from our present subject. The *nature* of revelation can only be known from the records of revelation. To explain what they are in themselves, the Scriptures must speak for themselves. They are their own witnesses. Let us call them into court and hear their testimony. Let us examine them and cross-examine them; and surely every witness may be believed to speak the truth until he has been convicted of falsehood.

Now, assuming the Scriptures to be true, nothing to our mind seems plainer than these two points; 1st, that God can and did speak to man so as to convey to his mind a full understanding of his meaning; 2. That when God so spoke, he could and did furnish a sufficient, if not overwhelming conviction to man that it was his voice. Assuming, then, the truth of the account of the creation of man as given in Genesis, that he was created in to image of his divine Maker,* there is nothing inconsistent with that account, nor improbable from the nature of the case, that God could and did converse with man in his state of innocency, and that with an audible voice. If you doubt that point, and will fairly fathom that doubt to the very bottom, you will find that it is infidelity, and nothing else, which makes you doubt it. It is merely because you cannot understand *how* God can converse with man, and therefore you do not believe that he ever did so. But this is not argument or proof. It is sheer scepticism—rank infidelity. There is no natural impossibility in the way, no contradiction in terms, nor even a miracle in question. No one could prove there was anything contrary to our ideas of God as God, or of man as man, if God were to speak to me personally and individually this night with a voice from heaven. Were he to do so, you might doubt it, or you might discredit my assertion; but you could not, on any fair, logical grounds, prove that it was impossible, or even make it out to be such a miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Put back the creation of man as far as you will, it is evident that there must have been a creation of him at some time, or we should not now be here; and that he must have been created an adult—a grown up, fully matured man; for a babe must have perished. Now when once we have fairly admitted the creation of man in his adult, fully formed state of body and mind, what difficulty is there in believing that his divine Creator should make himself known to him? that he should speak to him, and that he should afford him some sensible evidence that it was he, his Lord and God, who thus spoke? And what more simple and, we might almost say, natural way was there than that his divine Maker should put him into a garden, where all his wants would be supplied, and that he should test his obedience by a charge what he might

do and what he might not do? Once get over the difficulty of the first creation of man, and there is nothing in the narrative inconsistent with itself, derogatory to the character of God, or naturally incredible.

* The creation of man in the image of God speaks for itself as an inspired declaration. How different from the disgusting, derogatory ape-into-man theory! Look at man formed in the image of God, possessed of godlike purity and holiness, of an immortal soul, of noble reasoning, intelligent faculties, able to know, worship, adore, and serve his divine Creator. And now view him as just a little beyond a gorilla; a large ape, by some happy accident become somewhat advanced before his brother apes, first learning how to make a fire, then to put a few logs together, next to click, click a few rude sounds, as the beginning of language, until, by gradual improvement, he at last becomes a Newton or a Milton! But this is the theory of the present day, advancing everywhere by rapid strides, and likely to become soon the accepted explanation of man's existence on earth. How disgusting a theory! And how, even as a theory, beset with objections to which the difficulties of revelation are as a molehill to a mountain! Apes have been known since the time of Solomon; (2 Chron. 9:21;) and monkeys are represented in the Egyptian tombs of still earlier date; but has any improved ape ever made his appearance? The monkeys in the Zoological Gardens, after years of observation of their numerous visitors, have never shown any disposition to learn to talk, or improve themselves into gentlemen and ladies.

But now comes the fall; the only explanation, by the way, which has ever been given of that appalling fact which meets us at every turn, the *innate wickedness* of man in his present condition. Now, if we believe that the Lord conversed with man before the fall, there is no difficulty in the way of our believing he conversed with man after the fall. We are not now treating this question on Christian principles, as a point of divine truth, but merely removing what we may call preliminary difficulties which may present themselves to the mind before it can fully admit the idea of a divine revelation. The fall did not destroy the intelligent faculties of man's mind, though it marred and defaced the image of God, in which he was created. It is therefore just as easy to conceive that God spake to man after the fall as before; that is, in an intelligible voice, and in such a manner as to afford him the fullest evidence that it was the Lord who spoke.

If our readers have given us their attention, and thus far travelled with us, they will see that these are the two points which we wish to establish as

unfolding the *nature* of a divine revelation: 1. That God has spoken to man; 2. That what he spoke bore a sensible, unmistakable impress that it was the voice of God. If these two points can be fairly established, we have in them all we want to show, the *nature* of a divine revelation. The *proof*, the *evidence* that we have this revelation in the Bible is another matter, to which we shall come in due time. We mention this lest any of our readers should think that, through ignorance or inadvertence, we are confounding two things so widely distinct as the nature of a revelation, and the proof of it.

1. But as the *nature* of this revelation, it being an important point, demands a fuller explanation, let us take from the Scriptures several instances of it; and first, as one of its clearest illustrations, the various appearances of God to *Abraham*, as recorded in the Book of Genesis. Looking at it from a Christian point of view, we see the wisdom and goodness of God in giving us such clear and ample details of his dealings with Abraham; for in his seed, the promised Messiah, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. But look at it now merely as an illustration of the nature of revelation; and commence with his *call*: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 12:1-3.) How simple is all this; and yet what a light it casts on the nature of a divine revelation! "Now the Lord *had said* unto Abram." Here we have the fact, that is, assuming it as a fact, that God spoke to man; to a certain man; to one whom he had designed for great things; to one from whom a whole nation was to spring; to one from whom the promised Messiah was to come. All must admit that if God ever should speak to man here was an ample, a sufficient, a justifiable reason why he should speak to this particular man. And if he were to be the destined father of a great nation; a nation to be separated from all other nations to the peculiar service of the Almighty; a nation that exists to this day as a separate people, there could not be a more fitting thing than to call him personally, and bid him get out of his own country, and separate himself from all his family and kindred, that he might not only serve God more implicitly and obediently, but also, as if by anticipation, take possession of a land appointed for his descendants to inhabit. But Abraham, when thus called, must have had some clear, indubitable, unmistakable evidence that it was the Lord who so spoke unto him. The Scripture, in its divine simplicity, does not tell us, at least in this place, what this evidence was, but we know it was enough to convince

Abraham that it was the Lord, for we read: "So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him."

2. Now take two other instances of the Lord's speaking to Abraham; and first, that *remarkable appearance* recorded in Gen. 15:1: "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." "The *word* of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision." It was, indeed, in a vision, but it was still the word of the Lord. The same voice spoke to him which had spoken to him before. And Abraham knew his voice, for immediately he answered: "And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed; and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." But now observe how again the same voice of the Lord came to him: "And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." (Gen. 15:4, 5.) And mark the effect: "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:6.) "And he believed in the Lord." But if the Lord had not spoken to him in the promise given; and if he had not had an evidence that it was the Lord who spoke it, how could he have believed the promise, or in the Lord who gave it? Here, then, we see the nature of revelation—God speaking to man, and giving man an evidence that it is he who speaks.*

* We need hardly point out how the justification of Abraham, as here recorded, forms the groundwork of the Apostles' grand argument, Rom. 4. If we allude to it in passing, it is merely to draw our readers' attention to the harmony of Scripture, and how the whole of revelation hangs together as a connected whole. If the inspiration and authenticity of Genesis be denied, it will equally affect the inspiration of the Epistle to the Romans. See what the wretched nibblers at Genesis call upon us to give up! Both Old Testament and New, and with them all our knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent; in other words, all our hope of eternal life.

3. As a further illustration, take that signal event in Abraham's life, *the sacrifice of Isaac*. "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get

thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen. 22:1, 2.) It is most evident from this simple statement that God spoke to Abraham, and in an audible, intelligible voice; and that Abraham knew and recognised it as the voice of God. The trial with Abraham was not to know whether he heard and understood the voice, but whether he would obey it. We know that he did obey it, and that he thus manifested the reality and extent of his faith and obedience. But where would have been either his faith or obedience unless he had had some indubitable evidence that it was the Lord who commanded the sacrifice?

But this beautiful, this touching narrative of Abraham's faith and obedience affords another illustration of the nature of revelation: "And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." (Gen. 22:11, 12.) "The angel of the Lord," we know, was not a created angel, but the Son of God, the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But he "called out of heaven." There was, then, an audible voice which reached the ears, and stayed the hand of the obedient patriarch. It was, therefore, the same voice that bade, which also forbade the sacrifice; or where would have been Abraham's faith and obedience to do or not do as that voice commanded? The same voice in the same way pronounced the blessing: "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Gen. 22:15-18.)

We have said almost enough to show the *nature* of a divine revelation, and yet, as we wish to make the subject as plain and as clear as we can, we shall bring forward a few more illustrations to the same purpose.

Our readers will perceive that we are all along assuming the truth and inspiration of the sacred narrative, and some may even think that we are thereby blinking or evading the whole question. Not so. It is necessary to assume the truth of the narrative to explain the *nature* of the revelation. In due time we shall come to the *evidence* of its truth and inspiration.

4. Next, then, take the case of *Isaac*. We read (Gen. 26:2) that "the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt," &c. Now it would seem that though Isaac was already a partaker of grace, (see Gen. 24:63,) and even his submission to be bound and sacrificed at the will of God would prove it, yet that the Lord had never in any special manner revealed himself to him. He had been blessed, and had had a special answer to prayer; (Gen. 25:11, 21;) but no revelation. We thus establish, as we shall find by and by in the parallel case of Moses, a distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and a special revelation from the mouth of God. But now the Lord appears unto Isaac. *How*, we are not told. It might have been in a dream, or a vision, or by the shedding abroad of his manifested presence. At any rate, it was a special making himself known to him as he had not made himself known before; and then, having thus supernaturally appeared, he spake to him in an audible,* intelligible voice, which Isaac at once know was the voice of the Lord.

* By "audible" we do not mean necessarily audible to others, or even that there was any sound at all made in the air. When, for instance, Paul was called at Damascus' gate, there was evidently a voice which spoke audibly to him, as he himself declares: "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (Acts 26:14.) But this voice was not heard by those who were with him. "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." (Acts 22:9.) But that this voice might have been audible to others, had the Lord so willed it, is plain from John 12:28, 29: "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered; others said, An angel spake to him." By an "audible voice," then, we understand a voice that reached the ears, without determining whether it was the ears of the body or the ears of the soul. It is so now. When the Lord speaks to the soul, it is as with a voice. "My sheep hear my voice." But it is not usually with a voice audible to the outward ear, though it may appear so to the hearer. Mr. Huntington says expressly of his own experience, "Immediately I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me in plain words, 'Lay by your forms of prayers, and go pray to Jesus Christ; do not you see how pitifully he speaks to sinners.' These are the words verbatim, for I think I shall never forget them." ("Kingdom of Heaven," p. 218.) Mr. Hart similarly records the words which were spoken to

his soul, but does not lead us to believe they came with an audible voice to his bodily organs, for he says, "The Lord, by his Spirit of love, came not in a visionary manner into my brain, but with such divine power and energy into my soul that I was lost in blissful amazement. I cried out, 'What, me, Lord!' His Spirit answered in me, 'Yes, thee,'" &c. From this we gather that it was not an audible voice, that is audible by the external ears, but an inward voice speaking in his soul, that Hart heard. This, then, is what we understand by an "audible" voice, without determining whether it was addressed to the bodily organs, though we believe in most cases it was not, or to the inward ears of the soul.

5. The case of *Jacob* will not detain us long, though we adduce it as a further illustration of the *nature* of revelation. Unlike Isaac, Jacob seems to have had no work of grace in his heart before the dream at Bethel. There the Lord for the first time spoke to his soul. And how? In a dream. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed." (Gen. 28:12, 13.) Though Jacob knew nothing of the Lord beyond what he had heard of him by the ear in his father's house, yet immediately that God spoke to him, though in a dream, he knew his voice. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. 28:16, 17.) Here again we have the two elements of revelation: 1. The voice of God. 2. The self-commending power that it is God who speaks. The first is the substance of revelation; the second is the evidence of it. Without the first, there would have been no discovery to man of the mind and will of God; without the second, it would have had no power nor authority. But if we are asked what is this self-commending evidence, all we can answer is: If you have never felt it in your own experience, you must take the Scripture account of it: "Where the word of a king is, there is power." (Eccles. 8:4.) "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:5.) "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:4, 5.)

6. We hope we shall not weary our readers, but we cannot well pass by the instance of *Moses* as a remarkable illustration of our present subject—the *nature* of revelation. Moses was evidently called by grace before he fled out of Egypt. This is most plain from the Apostle's testimony concerning him. (Heb. 11:24-27.) And yet the Lord had not spoken to him, or given him any special, personal revelation of his mind and will. But after many years' sojourn in the land of Midian, when pursuing his ordinary occupation in feeding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, that special, that personal revelation was given him which not only determined the whole character of the remainder of his own life, but in its consequences changed the whole condition of the children of Israel, to whom he was sent as their deliverer out of Egypt. "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law; the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." (Exod. 3:1, 2.) It would seem from the narrative, given with all that divine simplicity which so characterises the Scripture, that it was the extraordinary spectacle of a bush burning and not being consumed, rather than any recognition of the special and personal presence of the LORD therein which attracted the attention of Moses. "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." (Exod. 3:3.) But now it was at this unexpected moment and in this unexpected way that God for the first time spake to him. "And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I." (Exod. 3:4.) It is well to observe that here again we find the same two elements of divine revelation for which we have contended—1. The *voice* of God: 2. The *knowledge* that it was his voice. God "*called* unto him out of the bush, and *said*, Moses, Moses." There was the audible, intelligible voice of God. "And he said, *Here am I*." There was the conviction in the breast of Moses that it was God who spoke. In the case of Moses those two elements of a divine revelation are of signal importance, for on them depends the whole authority of his mission, and indeed we may say, the whole authority of the Pentateuch. We shall most probably have occasion to dwell upon this point more fully hereafter, and therefore merely allude to it now. But just consider this one point. The mission of Moses to Pharaoh, the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, their wanderings in the wilderness, their subsequent occupation of Canaan, and, in a word, their whole history down to the time of Christ all virtually hang upon the appearance of God to him in the desert of Midian. Thus see what we are called upon to give up when we are bidden by such men as Colenso to

surrender the divine authority of the Pentateuch. The special and supernatural call of Moses, as thus recorded in Exodus, of course loses all its authority, unless it be a true and authentic account of a real transaction; and as the whole mission of Moses was based upon that special call, with it goes all the authority of every part of the Bible which stands in connection with the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt; in other words, all the authority of both Old and New Testaments. Take authenticity and inspiration out of the Pentateuch, and what have we left? Nothing but a collection of Jewish legends, with some fragments of history or tradition magnified and distorted, but possessing nothing of a divine character so as to be the express word of God to man. But to throw away the Pentateuch is to throw away the rest of the Scriptures which hang upon the Pentateuch. What! Bid us throw away our Bibles because of a few historical objections, or a few arithmetical calculations! No, Dr. Colenso. Bid the miser throw into the fire all his heaped hoards; bid the sailor burn his chart, and hurl his compass into the sea; bid the gallant Danes cast away their guns and rifles, level their earthworks, and bare their breasts to Prussian bayonets. Were all these to do such biddings, it would only be to sacrifice earthly hopes and happiness. But to throw away our Bibles would be to sacrifice all our hopes of eternal life, when you and such as you are gone to your place. Reader, beware of the first movement of infidel thoughts in your mind, and still more of any parleying with them. The beginning of infidelity is like the beginning of sin. The young, confiding girl who, at this season of the year, takes a walk in the fields on the Sunday evening with her lover, little dreams when she is listening to his treacherous vows that next May's sun may see her a felon in Newgate, convicted of child murder. Who can tell that listening to one infidel objection may not end in shutting you up in the worst prison of infidelity, and under a more dreadful sentence than ever issued from the lips of an earthly judge?

We have spoken enough, we think, of the *nature* of revelation in its simple elements, though there are some other important circumstances connected with them, which we cannot now stay to trace. But having thus far put our readers on what, we hope, is the safe track, we would recommend them carefully and prayerfully to study the calls of Isaiah, (chap. 6,) of Jeremiah, (chap. 1,) of Ezekiel, (chaps. 1, 2,) and of the prophets generally in the light which we have attempted to throw on the nature of divine revelation; and we doubt not that, under the sweet anointing of the Holy Ghost, they will find much in them to instruct and edify their souls, and establish them more fully and firmly in the authority of the Scriptures as being the word of the living God.

IV.

We have undertaken to give our thoughts on a subject, "The Authority and Power of the word of God upon the heart," which is not only in itself of the widest range and of the deepest importance, but one which demands on our part a fulness of understanding, a depth of experience, and a clearness of thought and expression, and on the part of our readers, an amount of divine teaching, a readiness of apprehension, and a fixedness of attention, in which we both may alike much fail. But besides these difficulties, which seem scarcely separable from the subject itself, there are, in our case, other incidental circumstances which much add to the weight of our task. One is our limited space, which necessarily cramps our pen, and prevents that fulness of explanation, of argument, and of illustration which the subject requires that it may be fully understood. Another is, the feeling that to the majority of our readers—the best part of them, in every sense of the word, the introductory portion of our subject, on which we are at present necessarily engaged, is most probably new, and therefore either difficult or uninteresting. The Lord's people generally, from want of education and of mental training, cannot readily understand abstract truths, or steadily follow a chain of argumentative reasoning. They can believe, but cannot argue; feel, but cannot reason. Taught by the Spirit, they know the truth by a testimony as much beyond argument as the witness of God is beyond the witness of man. They therefore consider, and, in some sense justly consider, all reasoning and argument in the things of God unnecessary; and thus instinctively turn away from them as confusing their mind, and rather hindering than helping their faith.

These and other considerations, which it is unnecessary now to mention, would almost induce us to lay aside our present subject, and take up another less extensive, and more adapted to the taste and feelings of our spiritual readers. Still, as we have put our plough into this field, we feel unwilling to leave it in the midst of the furrow, as if either the ground were too hard or too barren to promise a crop, or the ploughman too weak or too unskilful to complete his task. We admit that the present part of our subject is somewhat dry; but we may perhaps apply to it the words of the prophet: "Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the

appointed barley, and the rye in their place?" (Isa. 28:24, 25.) We are now ploughing to sow; opening and breaking the clods of the ground, and making plain the face thereof. But by and by we shall endeavour to cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye in their place; and O, may the gracious declaration be fulfilled in us: "For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him." (Isa. 28:26.) It will then be seen that the ploughing was as needful as the sowing, and that both must be united to give the desired crop. In this hope, then, and confidence, we will again lay our hands on the plough-stilts, and looking to the Lord of the harvest, attempt to draw a fresh furrow from the spot where we last unyoked.

We think that we must have sufficiently opened, in our last paper, the *nature* of divine revelation. We shall now, therefore, advance a step further, and direct the minds of our readers to the *evidence* of revelation; in other words, the *proof* that God has revealed his mind and will to the children of men. This evidence is so large and various, whole volumes having been written on the subject without exhausting the depth and richness of the mine, that it is clearly out of our present compass to furnish anything beyond what may be sufficient to give our readers a general idea of its nature and force. But as we have undertaken to show the authority and power of the word of God, we are bound by our very undertaking to bring forward some evidence that the Scriptures contain a revelation of his mind and will; and though to many of our readers the subject may be new and therefore somewhat difficult to grasp, yet we doubt not that a little attention will easily overcome that apparent difficulty.

But to gain a general idea of the subject, especially if new to us, we must be willing to learn its first principles—to begin with its alphabet. When these simple elements are understood and fairly mastered, the whole subject will become clear. Hebrew and Greek, and indeed many other languages, have their alphabet, which must be mastered before we can read them. So evidence has its alphabet, which we must learn before we can read its open page.

What, then, is evidence, and *why* should it be required? These are two simple questions, and we will endeavour to give them as simple answers.

1. "Evidence," then, means *proof*—proof that a certain occurrence took place; proof that a document, as a lease, a will, &c., really is what it purports to be.

2. But *why* should this proof be wanted in the case of revelation? For this simple reason, that otherwise we should not know that it was a revelation from God. Why do we believe the Bible and disbelieve the Koran of Mahomet, receive the Scriptures and reject the Vedas of the Brahmins? For this reason, that we have the strongest, firmest, most indubitable proof that the Bible is a revelation from God, and that, for want of such or similar evidence, these other professed revelations are lying impostures.

But now, as part of the alphabet, consider the simple element of this necessity apart from the Scriptures. Was evidence needed when there was no Scripture? Yes, certainly. Why? For this simple reason, that though the person to whom the revelation was made, as say, Abraham, had in himself the self-attesting evidence of the voice of God, yet he could not convey that evidence to the mind of another, say Isaac, to whom no such personal revelation was made. Isaac then would want some evidence, some proof that God had spoken to Abraham. What this proof was we shall presently show. We are now merely pointing out the *necessity* of evidence as requisite to establish the truth of revelation. Revelation existed before a line of Scripture was written; for without it there could have been neither faith, nor worship, nor obedience. But those to whom the revelation was not personally made believed it on the testimony of those who had received it from the mouth of God. This testimony was, as we shall presently show, their chief evidence that God had spoken, and to believe and act upon it was their obedience of faith.

Now *we* are similarly circumstanced as regards the Scriptures. *We* need evidence, proof, that they are a revelation from God. Those to whom God immediately spoke needed no evidence beyond his self-attesting voice; but we to whom he has not thus spoken, but to whom he now speaks in the Scriptures, need clear proof, strong evidence, that he speaks to us in them. Thus much for the *necessity* of evidence. Now for its *nature*.

We have seen that evidence means proof. But what kind of proof, for there are many? As applied, then, to the proof of revelation, it means chiefly probable proof, as distinct from, and opposed to demonstrative. Let us show the difference between them. A schoolboy learns from his multiplication-table that 5 times 5 is 25. Now, suppose that the incipient arithmetician, being a boy of a doubting mind, should suspect an error in the multiplication-table, and has a strong opinion that 5 times 5 is 24. How is he to be convinced of his mistake? The patient writing-master sets before the young infidel 5 rows of pebbles or shillings, 5 in a row, and bids him count the whole number. He counts, and counts again, and still he finds that they are 25. This is

demonstrative proof. But this kind of proof is limited to number and figure; in other words, to arithmetic and mathematics. You cannot prove the occurrence of a fact, that, for instance, Charles I. was beheaded at Whitehall in 1649, as the schoolmaster is able to demonstrate that 5 times 5 is 25. But there may be evidence to the occurrence of a circumstance, as the *evidence of testimony*, which though different in kind, may be almost as strong as the multiplication-table. For instance, you believe that Garibaldi has lately been in England. Why? You did not see him land at Southampton. You were not in the crowd which attended him through Lambeth and Westminster. But you as much believe that Garibaldi was lately in England as that 5 times 5 is 25. Why? From the evidence of testimony. Thousands saw him, and on their testimony you rest, though you never saw him yourself. Now apply this to the testimony of the miracles of Jesus. Suppose 5,000 persons were all to testify that they saw, with their own eyes, Jesus take five loaves and two fishes, and with them feed a vast multitude, would not their evidence be as strong to the truth of that miracle as if 5,000 persons said they had seen Garibaldi? Nay, in some sense their testimony would be stronger, for of all the multitude who saw Garibaldi perhaps five had never seen him before, and therefore, as far as they could tell, he might have been an impostor. But of all the 5,000 miraculously fed in Galilee, every individual would know what bread and fish were, and therefore imposture was impossible. This, then, is one evidence of the truth of revelation—the evidence of testimony—that men to whom God specially revealed himself testified to others that he had so revealed himself to them. Take as an illustration the case of Abraham and Isaac, to which we have already referred as showing the general necessity of evidence to prove the truth of revelation. God commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac in sacrifice. This was a revelation made specially to Abraham, and carried with it the self-attesting evidence of the voice of the Lord. But why should Isaac believe it? Why suffer himself to be bound and laid upon the wood? Because of Abraham's *testimony*. This was Isaac's evidence, for he knew that nothing but the voice of God to his father would induce him to do such a deed. Bear in mind, then, that this kind of evidence which we shall have occasion more fully to unfold, as it is one of our main proofs of the truth of revelation, is called the *evidence of testimony*.

2. But there is another kind of evidence, usually called *internal* evidence. It is so named to distinguish it from *external* evidence, such as is the evidence of testimony which we have been just considering.

An illustration will make this distinction abundantly clear. A will is disputed on the ground that the signature of the deceased testator is not genuine—in other words, that it is a forgery. A witness comes forward to testify that he saw the deceased sign the will, and that he attested it at the time by his own signature. This is *external* evidence, and is the very same which we have endeavoured to point out, the evidence of *testimony*. But on investigation it is found that the provisions of the will are contrary to the known wishes of the testator; that the signature does not at all resemble his usual writing; that the date is at the time when it was known that from paralysis he was incapable of signing it; that the property is throughout wrongly described, all which circumstances put together afford a strong presumption that the will is a forgery, and the attesting witness unworthy of credit. This is *internal* evidence. This kind of evidence we shall have occasion to dwell upon hereafter at some length, and shall therefore now pass it by. These two kinds of evidence—the evidence of testimony and internal evidence, are of daily use in the ordinary affairs of life, and consciously or unconsciously are employed by every one. You cannot send a child with an errand to a shop without employing both. The child comes back with the goods in his hand. He tells you whom he saw and what he paid. This is the evidence of testimony. You examine the goods which he brings back. They agree with what you had before at the same shop. This is internal evidence.

But revelation, being a thing altogether extraordinary and supernatural, demands something more than the evidence of testimony or internal evidence, though it possesses the highest degree of both. Testimony can prove a miracle; but testimony cannot prove that God spoke to Abraham so as to leave it without the shadow of a doubt. Jeremiah, as a true prophet, could say from the Lord: "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live." (Jer 27:12.) This was true testimony. But Hananiah could also testify: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon." But this was false testimony, for he was a lying prophet. We see, then, that in the case of revelation we need something more than ordinary evidence; for being of an extraordinary nature, it requires extraordinary proof. We have, then, as proofs of divine revelation, ordinary evidence and extraordinary.

But this extraordinary evidence again is twofold; one addressed to the minds of men generally, or

3. The evidence of *miracles* and *prophecy*; and one addressed to the hearts and consciences of God's believing people, or

4. The *witness of the Spirit* to the authority and power of the word of God.

From this simple sketch we gather that there are four main evidences of the truth of revelation; two ordinary, and two extraordinary. The two ordinary are, 1. Testimony, and 2. Internal; the two extraordinary are, 3. Miracle and prophecy, and 4. The Spirit's witness. We do not say there are no more, nor do we lay down our limitation of them as authoritative; but they have these advantages; 1. That they are eminently scriptural; 2. That they have been worked out in our mind; 3. That they are simple and intelligible; 4. That they can be brought within a reasonable compass, at least in this general outline. The first reason will especially commend itself to our readers; and that they may prove the truth of our words, we will give them the following references.

1. The evidence of *testimony* may be found 1 John 1:1-5; 2 Pet. 1:15-18.

2. *Internal* evidence may be seen Psa. 19:7-11; 119:18, 103, 104, 129, 140, 160.

3. The evidence of *miracles* and *prophecy* may be observed John 3:2; 5:36; 9:32, 33; 11:40-43; 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

4. The evidence of the *Spirit's witness* to the power of God's word may be seen 1 Thess. 1:5, 6; 2:13; 1 John 5:9, 10, 20.

It may be profitable employ for some of our readers to work these passages out for themselves with the clue which we have given, instead of our doing it for them, and thus impress these four kinds of evidence more distinctly on their minds.

But after this general sketch let us now enter a little more fully into the first kind of ordinary evidence—the evidence of *testimony*.

1. Its peculiar feature is that it admits of all degrees of probability from the highest, amounting almost to demonstration, to the lowest, in which it is almost safer to disbelieve than to believe it. What, then, makes it worthy of reception? What invests it with such an amount of probability as to make it nearly a matter of certainty? In order that it should be worthy of reception it must be the testimony of a competent, credible eye-witness, or of eye-witnesses, and the more the better, to the occurrence of a transaction. This definition embraces three things: 1. It must be the testimony of an *eye-witness*. This excludes all mere hearsay evidence. 2. He must be a *competent* witness. A child, a drunken man, a madman, an idiot may be eye-witnesses, but they are incompetent from want of the necessary understanding, and therefore are

evidently untrustworthy. 3. He must be a *credible* witness, that is, his moral character must be beyond suspicion; for who would believe a perjured wretch who would swear his father's life away for half-a-crown? By way of illustration, apply this definition and explanation of the evidence of testimony to the witness borne by the Apostles to the Lord's resurrection. 1. They were *eye-witnesses*. The Lord "showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days." (Acts 1:3.) This indeed was the grand point which in every sermon they insisted upon, and without which they could not have been Apostles, (Acts 1:22,) that they were eye-witnesses that Christ was raised from the dead. (See Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:40, 41; 13:30, 31.) 2. They were *competent* witnesses. Surely Peter and John and James, after three years' daily intercourse with their blessed Master, were fully competent to recognise his Person, his features, his voice, beyond the possibility of a mistake. Even unbelieving Thomas was compelled to cry out, "My Lord and my God." 3. And they were *credible* witnesses, for malice itself has never ventured to cast the least suspicion on their moral character, and they were willing to lay down their lives for the truth of their testimony.

But it may so happen that *ordinary* evidence, that is, the evidence of human testimony, it being at best but probable, may be insufficient to establish a point of great difficulty or importance. The witness of the alleged transaction might be an eye-witness, a competent witness, a credible witness; and yet the occurrence might in itself be naturally so incredible that ordinary evidence would be too weak fully to prove it. For, 1st, though the witness was an eye-witness, yet his eyes might have deceived him, as in the not uncommon case of mistaken identity, where one person is mistaken for another; or, 2nd, though generally competent, in this peculiar case, as in witnessing some difficult surgical operation, his understanding might be deficient, and thus he might be virtually a child; or, 3rd, though generally credible, yet the circumstance might be of so incredible a character that it would be more reasonable to disbelieve the witness than to credit the occurrence. We see, then, that even in human affairs, in the occurrences of daily life, ordinary external evidence, that is, the evidence of testimony, may be too weak to prove the fact of an alleged occurrence. How much more, then, in things divine, in such a supernatural matter as a revelation from God to man. The evidence, then, of testimony has its place, and a very important place, in proof of the fact of a divine revelation, as we have shown in the testimony borne by the Apostles to the Lord's resurrection. It is therefore necessary, nay indispensable; but being inherently weak, it needs to be backed, and, as it were, supplemented by evidence of a stronger nature—evidence more approaching demonstration.

This stronger evidence is the *extraordinary* evidence afforded by miracles and prophecy of which we have already spoken.

Thus we see that there is a connection between ordinary and extraordinary evidences; between the evidence of testimony and the evidence of miracles.

But in order more fully to clear up these points, and to show more distinctly the connection between these two kinds of evidence, we will, by way of illustration, examine the call and mission of Moses, as recorded in Exodus 3 and 4, as, in our judgment, it casts great light on the subject now before us. It may seem, indeed, somewhat illogical in us to assume the truth of the Mosaic record, in order to show the connection between ordinary and extraordinary evidence; but it should be observed that we employ it not as an argument but as an illustration. In our last paper we showed that as regards Moses personally, his call rested on two foundations; 1st, the appearance of God in the burning bush, and the voice with which he spake to him out of it; and, 2nd, the self-attesting evidence in his own bosom that it was the Lord who spoke unto him. Moses then, as regarded his own full conviction and persuasion of the truth of a revelation from God, needed no other evidence but what was then and there given him. It was full and complete. The voice of the Lord, full of majesty, sounded as powerfully and convincingly in his heart as the glory of the burning bush shone brightly before his awe-struck eye. But this special revelation was not given him for himself. It was to be the foundation of a peculiar mission, the effects of which were not only to spread themselves as a mighty sea over the shores of time, but to stretch themselves into the vast ocean of eternity. A mission is given him to bring up the children of Israel out of Egypt. "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Ex. 3:10.) But Moses hesitates. He knew the difficulty of the task. He could believe for himself; but how was he to believe for those to whom he was sent? He felt his own weakness, and confessed it: "And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exod. 3:11.) We need not pursue the inspired narrative further, except so far as it throws light on our present subject. We observe, then, in it, 1st, The evidence of *testimony*. How was Moses to convince the children of Israel that he had seen the LORD in Horeb, and that the God of their fathers had sent him to bring them up from the land of Egypt? By telling them so; by the simple fact of personal testimony. "Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me,

saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt." (Exod. 3:16.) "Go, and say unto them." What is this but testimony?—the testimony of an eye-witness, of a competent witness, of a credible witness; a plain, positive, direct testimony to the truth of what he had seen and heard?

But we see, 2ndly, the inherent weakness of human testimony. Moses felt it to be so. Like the Law, of which he was afterwards the typical Mediator, it was weak, not in itself, but through the weakness of the flesh. (Rom. 8:3.) He therefore still hesitated, for he felt that his personal testimony would not be strong enough to overcome the natural unbelief and infidelity of those to whom he was sent. Now, this brings us just to the point which we are endeavouring to open; that in such a matter as divine revelation which, as being supernatural, is to fallen man naturally incredible, there is a necessity that the ordinary evidence of human testimony should be as it were backed and supplemented by extraordinary evidence—that is, the evidence of miracles and prophecy. "And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." (Exod. 4:1.) Hear the confession of Moses as to the weakness of human testimony: "They will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice." Now, see how the Lord meets and overcomes this objection: "And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand." (Exod. 4:2, 3, 4.) God works a miracle. Why? To confirm beyond all dispute and controversy the truth of Moses's mission. "That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee." (Exod. 4:5.) The Lord then gives him, as an additional confirmation, a second miracle, to which we need only refer—the leprous hand and its restoration; (Exod. 4:6, 7;) and then declares: "And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign." (Exod. 4:8.) But if these two miracles wrought before their eyes were not sufficient to prove the truth of his mission, the Lord gives him power to work a third. "And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land; and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land." (Exod. 4:9.)

But now let us see the combined effect of testimony and miracle when Moses goes to execute his mission: "And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." (Exod. 4:29, 30, 31.)

First, there is *testimony*: "And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses." Next there is *miracle*: "And did the signs in the sight of the people." Thirdly, there is *belief*: "And the people believed." Fourthly, there is *worship*: "They bowed their heads and worshipped." Thus we see that the weakness of testimony is made up for and supplemented by the strength of miracle. Without testimony miracle would be purposeless; without miracle testimony would be inefficacious. Testimony is to miracle what Aaron was to Moses, "instead of a mouth;" and miracle is to testimony what Moses was to Aaron, "instead of God." (Exod. 4:16.)

But why should miracle possess this peculiar strength? For this simple reason, that it shows the special intervention of the Almighty. Thus the magicians, when baffled and confounded, confessed to Pharaoh: "This is the finger of God." (Exod. 8:19.) The words of Nicodemus, we think, contain as good an explanation of the force of miracles as could be well put together in a short compass: "Rabbi, we how that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." (John 3:2.)

The subject is too important for us to conclude in what remains of our present room; and yet, though we shall have occasion to consider it more largely by and by, we hardly like to close our present paper without adding one more illustration of the nature and strength of the evidence of miracle as confirming and supplementing the evidence of testimony, which may furnish some of our readers with food for thought until we meet again.

We will take, then, the miracle wrought on Mount Carmel, not, indeed, by Elijah, but in answer to his prayer, (1 Kings 18,) as a forcible illustration of the point before us. We need not go through the whole history. A few hints will suffice for our present purpose.

There was then a controversy in Israel* which was God, the LORD or Baal. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two

opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." (1 Kings 18:21.) The people were dumb, not knowing how the strife was to be decided. A miracle, then, shall decide it. "Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." (1 Kings 18:23, 24.) Nothing could be fairer than such a proposition; nothing clearer than such a test. This was the universal feeling. "And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." The trial is immediately made; with what results our readers know. But it will be worth our while to consider the prayer of Elijah, as throwing a flood of light upon the evidence of miracle: "And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." (1 Kings 18:36, 37.) What was the miracle to show? 1. That Jehovah was God in Israel; 2. That Elijah was his servant; 3. That he had done these things at the word of the LORD; 4. That the Lord had purposes of mercy to Israel in thus turning their hearts back again to himself. Thus we see how the evidence of testimony was confirmed by the evidence of miracle. Testimony was not enough; for Baal's prophets could set testimony against testimony, and with amazing force, for it was the testimony of 450 prophets against one. But when it came to miracle, to the finger of God, to the special appearance and interposition of the LORD, then the testimony of the one prophet shone forth as the sun in the sky, and the testimony of the 450 vanished like the thin mist before its bright beams.

* The question may arise, perhaps, in the mind of some of our readers how such a strife could possibly have occurred, or such a controversy existed? Could there have been any general, any widespread doubt which was God—the LORD or Baal? In answer to this question, bear in mind, 1st, that the scene of strife was "Israel," *i.e.*, the ten revolted tribes, not Judah, which yet "ruled with God and was faithful with the saints." (Hosea 11:12.) 2. That about 70 years had elapsed since Jeroboam had set up the worship of the golden calves in Dan and Bethel, the two extremities of his kingdom, and therefore two generations had grown up in idolatrous worship. 3. That all the

priests and Levites had left the land, and come to dwell in Judah and Jerusalem; (2 Chron. 12:13, 14;) and that "for a long season Israel had been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law." (2 Chron. 15:3.) 4. That there was constant war between Judah and Israel, and the people on both sides thus prevented from mixing together. All these circumstances will sufficiently account for the startling fact that the people of Israel should not know which was the true God, the Lord or Baal.

As the subject of evidence is not exhausted, we shall hope to meet again upon this ground in a following paper.

V.

The evidences of Revelation are so intimately connected with the "authority and power of the word of God upon the heart," that if we wished to do common justice to our subject, it was impossible for us to pass them by. Indeed, to a believing heart, the strongest of all evidences is the very "authority and power" of the word itself, which forms the subject of our present Meditations,* and which we have already named amongst the proofs that the Lord has spoken to the sons of men. But that the Judge of all the earth should do right; that all excuse might be cut off from the unbeliever and the infidel that they had no positive proof that God had spoken to man; and that his own children might have additional confirmation to their faith and hope, it has pleased God to afford the strongest, clearest evidences that he has given us a revelation of his mind and will.

* So strongly was this the conviction of Dr. Owen that, in his able answer to the inquiry, "How do we know the Scriptures to be the word of God?" he brings forward no other evidence than what he terms "the divine original, authority, self-evidence, light, and power of the Scriptures."—*Owen's Works*, Vol. 4.

The nature and number of these evidences we endeavoured to unfold in our last paper. Amongst them, our readers will recollect, was that of "miracle," and we concluded our article by adducing an illustration from the Scriptures of its authority and effect.

Viewed, therefore, *externally*, that is, distinct from all *internal* evidence, which is quite of a different character, revelation may be said to be based upon

miracle. Thus we saw in our last paper that the mission of Moses rested upon two grand foundations: 1. The personal testimony which God gave him when he revealed himself to him in the burning bush; and, 2. The miracles which he enabled him to work before the children of Israel and in the presence of Pharaoh. The first was for himself, as an internal testimony; the second was for others, as an external evidence. The one was the mouth of God; the other, the hand of God. *He* only heard the voice; but *all* might see the hand. Nor was there any other apparent means of convincing Pharaoh and the Egyptians that God really spake by Moses than by his working miracles before them. God, therefore, said to Moses, "When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you; then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent." (Exod. 7:9.) The Lord thus forewarned, and, as it were, forearmed Moses, that he must expect that Pharaoh should demand a miracle as a proof of his divine mission. But why this demand, unless there were deeply lodged in the human breast a conviction that, as all power belongs unto God, and that as he holds all nature in his hands, he can and will show forth that power as an attestation of his presence and of his authority when he commissions any man to speak in his name? So when Samuel sought to show the people how wickedly they had acted in asking a king, he called unto the Lord for a sign and "the Lord sent thunder and rain that day." (1 Sam. 12:18.)

But not only did the succession of miracles wrought by the hand of Moses leave Pharaoh without excuse when he hardened his heart against them, but even for the children of Israel themselves there was a benefit and blessing in such repeated and indubitable proofs that the God of their fathers was on their side; for if they, as believers in the promises made to Abraham, had the peculiar evidence of testimony that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was now fulfilling his ancient promise of deliverance, and of giving them the land of Canaan for an inheritance, yet certainly the miracles wrought by Moses must have wonderfully strengthened their faith in him as the appointed instrument. Thus, in this sense, the mission of Moses may be said to have been based on miracles; and as it was based on them, so it may be said to have been also sustained by them. The passage through the Red Sea; the healing of the bitter waters of Marah; the daily fall of manna for forty years; the smiting of the rock whence the waters gushed out; the giving of the law from Mount Sinai; the pillar of the cloud day and night upon the tabernacle; the swallowing up of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—these and other miracles recorded in the Pentateuch were so many continual evidences to the children of Israel that God was with Moses, and that as what he did in God's name was

virtually done by God, so what he spoke in God's name was virtually spoken by God. How continually was he upheld in his high and arduous office by express miracle! One instance we have already given—that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. That of Miriam's leprosy is another. (Num. 12:10-15.) Thus whether against friend or foe, the Lord who sent him upheld him by the display of miraculous power on his behalf.

As the divine authority of the Pentateuch has been lately so much called in question, we cannot forbear, though it may seem to be rather digressing from our subject, to drop a few remarks on it. It is the *miraculous* portion which is the subject of attack. Now infidels may cavil at the miracles recorded in the Pentateuch; but nothing can be more certain than that these miracles are so interwoven with the whole narrative that the historical portion and the miraculous portion must stand or fall together. The miracles in Exodus are not like embroidery worked upon a piece of muslin, which may be picked out and the web left uninjured. If we consider the scriptural narrative as the warp, the miracles certainly form the weft, to take either of which away would alike destroy the web.* But the historical part of the Pentateuch is so strongly confirmed by other independent evidence, and that before our very eyes to this day, that it can never be overthrown. The present existence of the Jews as a distinct nation from all others; their observance of circumcision, of the Sabbaths, of the feast of Passover, of the difference between clean and unclean meats, of the public reading of the Hebrew Scriptures in their synagogues, and their adherence to the law of Moses, nominally if not actually, all prove the truth and genuineness of the historical part of Exodus and the three following books. Let us trace the Jewish history as far back as we like subsequently to the Pentateuch, we still find them the same peculiar people, dwelling in Canaan, observing all the rites and ceremonies laid down in the Mosaic law. All this is clearly explained when we read and receive the books of Moses. There all is clear as day. There even their present state is actually foretold (Deut. 28) and the reason given. Every minutia of their national character; every jot and tittle of their political and ceremonial law, and of their distinctive difference from all other nations from their earliest history are clear as interpreted by the books of Moses. But take away the historical part of the Pentateuch, and their whole character and history are an enigma. If the question be asked, Why do they practice circumcision to this day? The only explanation is that it was enjoined by the Lord on Abraham and his seed. Or, why do they observe the feast of the Passover? As a standing testimony to the passing over of the first-born in Egypt. No power on earth can make a whole nation commemorate, and that with distinctive features of celebration,

an event which never took place. If there had been no gunpowder plot, could November 5th ever have been observed all over England, with bonfires, squibs, and crackers? If Charles II. had never been restored, or if he had been an imaginary king,—a myth, could May 29th ever have been kept as a general commemoration of his entry into London? Nothing so commemorates real events for whole centuries as national observances; but mere legends vanish away, and would be utterly forgotten had not poetry and drama seized some of them and breathed into them a fictitious life. The historical part, then, of Exodus is so confirmed by other evidence that it cannot be overthrown. The lineal succession of the high priest from Aaron, requiring an accurate and public genealogical table; the possession of the ark of the covenant down to the burning of Solomon's temple; the division of the whole land of Canaan among the tribes, every man among whom, therefore, had an acknowledged ancestor in one of the sons of Jacob; the whole code of the sacrifices, and especially of that most important, and in a sense, national one, on the great day of atonement; the laws of inheritance, of marriage and divorce, of the treatment of lepers, of the return of mortgaged property to the original owner in the Sabbatical year—these and innumerable other circumstances bound up in the very life of the children of Israel are so many historical links which bind together narrative and miracle, and are irrefragable proofs of the authenticity of the books of Moses.** Thus the historical part and the miraculous part are so entwined that they must stand or fall together. If the historical is true, so is the miraculous; if the miraculous is false, so is the historical.

* In the language of weavers the long threads on the beam are the "warp," the short threads thrown across them by the shuttle the "weft," and the whole fabric the "web."

** It is rather in our mind, if spared, to work out some day these and similar arguments, and to lay them before our readers as a proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch.

A similar argument may be applied to the miracles recorded as wrought by our blessed Lord. They could not be taken out of the gospels without destroying the whole narrative. Take, for instance, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. How can we separate the narrative from the miracle, or the miracle from the narrative? To see this more clearly, let us look at the narrative as distinct from the miracle. How simply and, so to speak, naturally is it related, and with what a minuteness and particularity of circumstances which could not, from their very nature, have been invented. The name of the

sick and dying man; the place where he lived, not far from Jerusalem, and therefore open to the closest investigation and examination; the names of his two sisters; the absence of Jesus at the time; the deep grief of Mary and Martha, and yet the way in which it was shown, so thoroughly in harmony with their character elsewhere given (Luke 10:33-42); the arrival of Jesus; his conversation with them; his weeping at the tomb, and the remarks of the bystanders—what an air of truthfulness pervades the whole! There is nothing exaggerated, nothing out of place, nothing but what is in perfect harmony with the character of Jesus, as reflected in the mirror of the other gospels.

But this narrative portion of the sickness and death of Lazarus cannot be separated from the miraculous portion—the raising of him from the dead. The first precedes, explains, introduces, and harmonises with the second. Without the narrative the miracle would be unintelligible. It would float on the gospel as a fragment of a shipwrecked vessel on the waves of the sea, furnishing no indication of its name or destination. So without the miracle, the narrative would be useless and out of place, and of no more spiritual value than the sickness and death of a good man who died yesterday. But narrative and miracle combined, interlaced, and mutually strengthening each other, form a massy web which no infidel fingers can pull to pieces.*

* To show the shifts to which infidelity is driven, we adduce, with some reluctance, the explanation of the raising of Lazarus, given by the present noted French infidel, M. Renan, in his "Life of Jesus." He cannot deny the general truth of the narrative; but he insinuates that the whole was a got up scheme between the sisters and Lazarus and, we almost shudder to write it, the Lord himself, "to restore his waning credit." Now, apart from the horrible blasphemy of casting such an imputation on the blessed Lord, this wretched infidel cuts thereby the throat of his own description of Jesus, as the purest and most spotless character ever known on earth. But such is infidelity—self-destructive!

What we have thus said with respect to the miracle wrought at the grave of Lazarus is equally applicable to the other miraculous works of the blessed Lord. Narrative and miracle are so intermingled that they cannot be separated. Narrative introduces the miracle, and miracle sustains the narrative—their combined effect being to prove that Jesus was the Son of God, the promised Messiah of whom all the prophets testified.

Now it is evident that our gracious Lord himself appealed to his miracles as proofs of his divine mission. Thus when John sent two of his disciples unto Jesus with the question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" what was his answer? "Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matt. 11:4, 5.) The Lord here clearly made his miracles the proof of his mission—the direct, clear, undeniable evidence that he was the "Shiloh," the promised Messiah, "who should come," according to the universal voice of Old Testament prophecy. In a similar way the Lord appealed again and again to his miracles as the proof of his divine mission: "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." (John 10:24, 25.) And again: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." (John 10:37, 38.)

But it may be asked, "How could the eye-witnesses of these mighty works refuse to believe, in face of all these miracles, if they were indeed proofs of our Lord's heavenly mission?" The Holy Ghost gives the reason: "But though he had done so many miracle before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake; Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." (John 12:37-40.)

Thus far, then, have we given a simple sketch of one grand evidence of the truth of Revelation; and if we have been rather long or discursive, our readers will kindly bear in mind, 1. That the subject itself, of miracles, cannot be discussed in a few words; and, 2. That our very title, "Meditations," allows us the liberty of pursuing, within certain limits, the train of our thoughts.

But now a few words on an evidence scarcely inferior to miracle; and, indeed, so closely allied to it that it may be justly called miraculous—that of *prophecy*.

To unfold this evidence would demand a volume; and, indeed, volumes have been written upon it. All, then, that we can hope to do is, 1. To define its general character as an evidence of the truth of Scripture; and, 2. To point out one or two remarkable prophecies as an illustration of its distinctive character.

1. Prophecy, we have just intimated, is closely allied to miracle, and simply on this ground, that it is in itself strictly miraculous. That an event should be foretold, with the greatest minuteness, hundreds of years before it takes place, is as much the work of Omniscience as a miracle is the work of Omnipotence. If one proclaims the hand, the other proclaims the eye of Deity. A happy conjecture, a probable guess or opinion, formed from a comparison of circumstances, may indeed sometimes look almost like prophecy. Thus Lord Chesterfield predicted the first French Revolution 30 or 40 years before it took place. But this did not make him a prophet; nor did he claim the gift of prophecy. As an experienced statesman, he saw that there must be a break up of the old French despotic system, and from the temper of the people, he foresaw it would be a fearful one. This, however, is not prophecy, but sagacious conjecture, verified by the event. But Scripture gives us, in the name of the Lord, declarations and descriptions of the desolation and destruction that should come upon Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, Edom, and other countries, at the very time when they were the most populous and flourishing countries and cities in the earth, and when there seemed not a passing cloud to dim their sky. This is not probable conjecture, as a historian might now hazard the opinion, that when her coal-fields shall be exhausted the wealth and commerce of England will pass away. But it was the eye of the omniscient God reading the predestinated future, and revealing the secret to his servants, the prophets.

This, then, is true of all prophecy, whether in the Old or New Testament; but when the prophetic scroll contains a series of events, when it holds, as it were, a mass of distinct rays, and yet all converge to one point, and are concentrated in one focus, the Person and work of the Redeemer, what a strong evidence does it then afford that the Bible is a revelation from God. Thus that Christ should be of the seed of Abraham, (Gen. 22:18,) of the tribe of Judah, (Gen. 49:10,) of the house and lineage of David; (Isa. 9:7; 11:1, 10;) be born at Bethlehem; (Micah 5:2;) be rejected of those to whom he was sent, yet be a light to the Gentiles, and God's salvation unto the ends of the earth; (Isa. 49:4-7;) that he should be numbered with the transgressors, and yet bear the sins of many, and make intercession for the transgressors; (Isa. 53:12;) that he

should rise from the dead, (Psa. 16:8-11,) as interpreted by Peter, (Acts 2:25-31,) and ascend up on high, (Psa. 68:18,)—what a concentration of circumstances, all meeting in one point, the Lord Jesus!

2. But to illustrate this point more clearly, take two prophecies, one in the Old Testament, and the other in the New; and let each be not a solitary verse, but a clear, distinct series of predicted circumstances, all of which closely hang together. As an Old Testament example, take Isa. 53, and compare it verse by verse with the character and history of our blessed Lord, as we find it in the gospels. We should like to do it for you, but our space forbids, and it may be more convincing and more profitable if you will do it for yourself.

Now, apart from the spiritual aspect of this remarkable chapter,* as descriptive of the sorrows and sufferings of Jesus, and of the atoning sacrifice which he offered for sin upon the cross, its prophetic bearing is of a most remarkable character, as combining in one portrait the most striking and distinctive features of the promised Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. The Jews, misled by attending only to the splendid train of prophecy which testified of a triumphant Messiah, quite overlooked and disregarded those passages, scarcely less numerous, though more scattered, which, as we now see, as clearly predicted his humiliation, sufferings, and death. The redemption which they wanted was not from the burden and bondage of sin, but from the burden and bondage of the Roman yoke. The exaltation of the promised Messiah, as involving, as they thought, their own exaltation to earthly honour and glory, they could willingly believe; but his humiliation, his being "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," his being "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," they could not see or understand; and yet they themselves, by their very despising and rejecting the promised Messiah, because, in their eyes, he had no form nor comeliness, fulfilled to the letter the very prophecy which they held in their hands as a part of the oracles of God committed to their trust. (Acts 13:27.) Thus are they condemned out of their own scriptures; and if they are "wanderers among the nations," (Hos. 9:17,) they may find in their own inspired record both their sin and its punishment. What stronger evidence can be afforded of the truth of that revelation, which contains in its bosom a prophecy so clear in its description, and so marked in its fulfilment?

* The subject properly commences at Isa. 52:13: "Behold my servant," &c., and this is evident from the words in the next verse: "His visage was so marred more than any man," &c. Chap. 53 is, therefore, merely a

continuation of the prophetic description of the Messiah, commencing with, "Behold my servant."

The prophecies of Daniel and those especially contained in the interpretation of "the image" shown in dream to Nebuchadnezzar, and in his own vision of "the four great beasts," (Dan. 2 and 7,) might be also adduced as instances how prophecy becomes so strong an evidence of the truth and inspiration of the word of God. But as these predictions demand more historical knowledge and a greater access to books than probably most of our readers possess, we shall pass them by, and direct their attention to a prophecy of the New Testament, and that uttered by no less lips than those of our gracious Lord himself.

We mean by this, that prophetic description by Jesus of the destruction of Jerusalem contained in three out of the four gospels. One of the clearest, perhaps, of these, if not the fullest, is contained in Luke 21:5-25, to which we must content ourselves with referring our readers.

We have the singular advantage in this instance of the full account of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, by an eye-witness, and that a Jew—the well-known Josephus, who has in eight books, preserved by the providence of God to our own times, described in the most glowing and yet truthful colours that unparalleled history of suffering. The destruction of Jerusalem took place in the 70th year after the birth of Christ, and therefore about 36 years after the Lord had delivered the prophecy of its coming woes. Now at that time there was little or no probability of such an event as the utter destruction of Jerusalem, and especially of the temple being so thoroughly destroyed that not one stone should be left upon another. The Romans, indeed, were in possession of Judea at the very time that our Lord spoke; but that they should so thoroughly destroy Jerusalem, and especially the temple, its chief beauty and ornament, was wholly contrary to their practice and policy. Indeed, nothing but the inveterate obstinacy of the Jews themselves, as described so graphically by Josephus, could have brought it about. The destruction of the temple was the last thing in the thoughts of Jew or Roman, of besieged or besieger. To preserve their idolised temple was the main-spring of all the labours, and the support under all the sufferings of every soldier and every citizen in Jerusalem. Titus himself was as anxious as they were for its preservation. We read, therefore, that when he had reached the temple and saw the danger it was in of being sacrificed to the obstinacy of its defenders, he was "deeply affected," and appealed to the gods, to his own army, and to

the Jews, that he did not force them to defile the holy house. "If," said he, "you will change the place wherever you will fight, no Roman shall either come near your sanctuary, or offer any affront to it; nay, I will endeavour to preserve your holy house whether you will or not." But the decree had gone forth; the Lord had said, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." He that spake as never man had spake had declared the days would come in which "there should not be one stone left upon another which should not be thrown down." Neither Jew, then, nor Roman, neither besieger nor besieged could turn away the hand that smote city and temple with the same destruction. Josephus gives a most interesting account, well worth reading by those who have the book, of the way in which the temple came to be at first set on fire, and then fully destroyed by the Roman soldiery,* whose sudden fury neither their wonted discipline, nor all the threats and persuasions of Titus and his chief officers could restrain.**

* A short extract will suffice as a specimen: "At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking, and being hurried on by a certain divine fury, snatched somewhat out of the materials that were on fire, and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it. As the flames went upward, the Jews made a great clamour, such as so mighty an affliction required, and ran together to prevent it; and now they spared not their lives any longer, nor suffered anything to restrain their force, since that holy house was perishing, for whose sake it was that they kept such a guard about it."—Josephus, *"Wars of the Jews,"* Book 6, chap. 5.

** The temple being thus burnt down, orders were given by Titus to demolish to the foundation the whole city and temple; and these orders were so fully executed that a captain of his army "did with a ploughshare tear up the foundations of the temple," thus literally fulfilling the prophecy of Micah; "Therefore shall Zion, for your sake, be ploughed as a field." (Micah 3:12.) Prophecy, as an evidence of the truth of Revelation, has also this peculiar feature, that it affords what is called "*cumulative*" proof. Let us explain our meaning by a familiar illustration. A man is found by the wayside, dying or dead of wounds inflicted by a knife or some sharp instrument, and in such parts of his body and of such a nature that there can be no doubt he has been murdered. A man is seized, not far from the scene of death, with blood on his clothes, in great agitation and confusion of mind, of desperate character, a

personal enemy of the dead man, and having on his person a bloody knife, and a purse of money known to have been the property of the poor murdered creature. Now who can doubt that this man is the murderer? But why? Because of the number of circumstances which all combine to point him out as the perpetrator of the foul crime. This is "cumulative" proof, its strength arising from a heap, as the word means, of evidences, each one adding to and confirming the others.

Such is the evidence of prophecy—"cumulative," prophecy upon prophecy, prophecy after prophecy, and all strengthening and confirming one another. Take, for instance, the prophecies concerning the blessed Lord, and especially of his sufferings find death. The treachery and awful end of Judas (Psa. 41:9; 55:12-15;) the precise sum for which he should betray Christ, and the use made of the returned money; (Zech. 11:12, 13;) that his back should be given to the smiters, and his face to shame and spitting; (Isa. 50:6;) that his hands and feet should be pierced, and his body bruised and scourged; (Zech. 12:10; Psa. 22:16;) that he should have gall and vinegar given him to drink; (Psa. 69:21;) that his persecutors should laugh him to scorn in the very words that they used; (Psa. 22:7, 8;) that not a bone should be broken; (Numb. 9:12; Exod. 12:46; Psa. 34:20;) that his garments should be divided, and lots cast upon his vesture; (Psa. 22:18)—what an accumulation of circumstances, all meeting as prophesied in the suffering Jesus. Thus, as in the case of the evidence of the murder, it is the number and character of the various circumstances all put together which form the "cumulative" proof that the prophecies in the Scripture are of divine inspiration. The peculiar force of this argument is that the more it is extended, the stronger it is. Take, as an illustration, the prophecies of Jeremiah that Jerusalem should be taken by the Chaldeans and the people carried into captivity. One solitary prediction might be explained as a probable guess, like Lord Chesterfield's foreseeing the French Revolution. But when prophecy after prophecy, warning after warning fell from the prophet's lips, whether in the king's court or in the low dungeon, and the event confirmed to the letter what he had declared, in the Lord's name, would come to pass, this cumulative proof stamped him as the prophet of the Lord.

But prophecy has also another peculiar feature, with which we close our present paper—*much remains unfulfilled*. The call and restoration of the Jews; the universal spread of the gospel; the happy period when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more—alas! seemingly far distant; and to crown all, the second coming of the Lord

himself, in all the glory of the Father; when the prophetic scroll, which holds in its bosom all those events is unrolled throughout, what an evidence will then be afforded that God has spoken in his word! What is dark will then be light; and when the elect lift up their heads with eternal joy, every promise will have its fulfilment, every prophecy its accomplishment, and each man's final state be determined according to the decision already fixed in the Scriptures of truth.

VI.

What an unspeakable mercy it is for the living family of God that the faith through which they are saved (Eph. 2:8) and by which they are sanctified (Acts 26:18) is not a faith that depends on evidences—at least not on such evidences as those the consideration of which has hitherto occupied our attention. Faith itself, indeed, is an evidence, for it is "the evidence of things not seen;" (Heb. 11:1;) but being "the gift of God," and "a fruit of the Spirit," (Eph. 2:8; Gal. 5:22,) it "stands not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God," (1 Cor. 2:5,) and is, therefore, entirely distinct from those evidences of the truth of revelation which address themselves to, and are apprehended by the reasoning powers of our natural mind.

Why, then, it may be asked, are such evidences needed, and what purpose do they serve? "Is not the Scripture," an objector might urge, "written for the sole benefit of the Church of God? (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) What, then, have the ungodly to do with it? If faith is the gift of God, if none but the elect to whom it is specially given can believe, (Eph. 2:8; Matt. 13:11,) and the rest are hardened, (John 12:39, 40; Rom. 9:18,) all which, according to your own creed, you must admit, what need can there be for those external evidences with which you have been wearying your spiritual readers, and about which, perhaps, not one in a hundred cares or even understands? Do you mean to say that these evidences can convince or convert a natural man, or do him the least good? If you admit this, which according to your principles you are bound to do, you yourself plainly confess that these evidences are of no real use to the non-elect; and as to the elect, they do not want them, for their faith, as God's gift and wrought in them by his divine power, is altogether independent of them." Well, you have shot your arrow from a strong bow, for you have Scripture on your side to strengthen both it and your arms. But let us take your arrow up, and see whether it cannot be shot back from no less strong because no less scriptural a bow.

1. Please, then, first to bear in mind that there is such a thing as *drawing perverse, one-sided conclusions* from Scripture texts, which conclusions the Scripture itself repudiates and rejects. Thus you may pervert the doctrine of predestination into a fatal necessity to commit evil as well as good, delivering men to do all manner of abominations, (Jer. 7:10,) and thus make God the author of sin; from superabounding grace you may argue for a continuance in sin that grace may abound; (Rev. 6:1;) and from our unrighteousness commending (that is, setting off and exalting) the righteousness of God, you may conclude, "Let us do evil that good may come." (Rom. 3:5-8.) But such perverse, one-sided conclusions as these are damnable conclusions, for such we may well call them as already judged and condemned by the word of God. Beware, then, of one-sided conclusions, for such yours is.

2. But now let us come to our point—our shot-back arrow. Has God no other *attribute but mercy*? And does the Scripture which reveals that mercy speak no other language but that of pardon and peace to the elect? Does it entirely ignore and take no notice whatever of the ungodly and the unbelieving? Are there no warnings, or threatenings, or denunciations in the Scripture against the impenitent? If so, which none can deny who read and understand the Scriptures, the Bible has something to do with the ungodly, and the ungodly have something to do with the Bible; and it is not, according to your one-sided view, a book only for the elect.

3. But look at the point under another aspect. View the *justice* of God. He is the Judge of all the earth, and as such must do right. (Gen. 18:25.) If "mercy and truth go before his face, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." (Psa. 89:14.) "Is God unrighteous," asks the Apostle, "who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man;) God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?" (Rom. 3:5, 6.)

Here, then, we see one use and necessity of the external evidence of the truth of revelation, such as miracles, &c. If there were no other proof of the truth, power, and authority of revelation than its internal evidence, of which we shall presently speak, the unbeliever might justly say: "I am condemned for not believing what I had no evidence to believe. Is that just? Would it be just in a judge in a court of law to fine the jury heavily for not returning a verdict of 'guilty,' when not the least evidence was brought forward to sustain the charge against the prisoner? Give me sufficient evidence, and I will believe."

Now, we who know the heart of man are quite certain that no amount of proof can overcome man's natural unbelief, and that this demand for sufficient evidence is like the Jews asking for a sign from heaven, and the cruel taunt of the chief priests and scribes, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." (Matt. 27:42.) But though no amount of evidence, not even such a miracle as raising Lazarus from the dead, (John 11:46,) can be sufficient to convince the heart of man, yet it may be amply sufficient to clear the justice of God in condemning him for unbelief. This, then, is one of the main reasons why external evidence, as miracle and prophecy, has been given—to leave men without excuse for disbelieving and rejecting a revelation attested by such a weight of proof. If you still doubt this point, can you account for the destruction of Jerusalem, the casting off of God's ancient people, and scattering them all over the earth, on any other grounds than their rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God when he came to them as the promised Messiah? And do you not think that the mighty works which the Lord Jesus wrought amongst them were designed to be evidences of the truth of his mission? According to your view that the Bible has nothing to do with the non-elect, the words and works of Christ had nothing to do with the non-elect Jews. But this was not the doctrine which Christ preached and taught. What did the Lord himself say? "But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (John 5:36.) And again: "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered then, I told you, and ye believed not. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." And did not their rejection of him after all his mighty works add to their sin? What are the Lord's own words? "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin." (John 15:22.) Thus we see that one main use of external evidences, such as miracles, is to clear the justice of God, and leave the unbeliever without excuse. It is a great mistake to think that the Bible is only for the elect. Is not the Law in the Bible? And for whom is this? Paul shall tell us, "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers," &c. (1 Tim. 1:9.) And has the Gospel only to do with the elect? Has it nothing to do with the unbeliever? Hear what the Lord says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16.) Then there is a being damned for not believing the gospel. And what

says the Holy Ghost by Paul? "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 1:7, 8.) Then there is flaming fire for those who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. And what think you of another passage? "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2:12.) Then there is a being damned for not believing the truth.

We have enlarged upon this point beyond our desire, because it has already been objected to our dwelling so much on the external evidences of revelation, that we thereby assume some power in man to believe in the strength of those evidences. This assumption we deny. That they may produce a natural faith we fully admit, as is plain from John 6:14; 11:45; 12:42, 43; but spiritual faith it is not in them to raise up, though they may instrumentally strengthen and confirm it when given. So our Lord's disciples believed on his name, as "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," and from "beholding his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." But their faith was strengthened by a sight of his miracles. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." (John 2:11.) Thus, these external evidences which some of our readers will not give themselves the trouble to understand, and others slightly pass by as useless, though given us by God, serve two important purposes: First, they leave the infidel and the unbeliever without excuse, and thus vindicate and glorify the just judgment of God in their condemnation; and secondly, they strengthen and confirm the faith and foothold of the Church of Christ in her arduous and unceasing conflict with sin, Satan, and the world. If you doubt this, take all the miracles of Christ out of the gospel, and especially that last and greatest miracle of all, his resurrection from the dead and ascension on high, and see whether it would not weaken your faith in him as the Son of God, and strengthen the natural unbelief and infidelity of your heart. Thus, though many of the family of God may not be able to enter into the nature of these external evidences, or even fully understand the subject when put before them, yet the evidences themselves are made useful to them, almost without their consciousness, to confirm and strengthen their faith.

But we come now to a distinct species of evidence, and one more generally adapted to the understanding and conscience of the family of God, as being more closely allied to that greatest and most convincing of all evidences, which

forms the title of our Meditations, and to which all we have yet written has been but preliminary and introductory. Our readers will, perhaps, remember that we divided evidences into *external* and *internal*. The *external*, consisting mainly, 1, of Testimony, and 2, of Miracle and Prophecy, we have already considered. We have now, therefore, to examine the *internal* evidences of the truth of revelation, as bearing upon the subject of our present Meditations—the power and authority of the word of God upon the heart.

But as we wish to make the subject as plain and as intelligible as we possibly can even to those of our readers to whom it may be somewhat new, we will endeavour briefly to explain what is meant by *internal* evidence as distinct from *external*.

Internal evidence, then, is that mode of proof which dwells as it were in the very bosom of the subject under investigation. Two simple illustrations, one negative and the other positive, will explain the nature and force of this kind of evidence. 1. Two parties contest in a court of law the fact of a written agreement alleged to have been made between them. The plaintiff produces the alleged agreement, duly signed and sealed, and bearing the date of Sept. 1, 1860. The defendant's counsel asks to look at the deed. It is handed to him. He holds it up to the light, and finds that the watermark of the paper is 1864; in other words, that the paper on which the said agreement was written was not made till at least three years after the date of the forged document. This is *internal* evidence; the proof of the forgery being in the very bosom of the agreement itself. Here internal evidence is *negative*, that is, *against* the authenticity of the deed, and at once settles the question, to the dismay and discomfiture of the forger. 2. Now, take an illustration on the *positive* side, as a mode of proof for the truth and authenticity of a writing; and to make it more forcible and interesting we will give you a real case. A few years ago, at the bottom of an old family chest at Ely, a bundle of letters was discovered, written apparently by Oliver Cromwell. The owner of the chest, an old Tory gentleman, and therefore much prejudiced against the great Puritan captain, carefully copied all the letters, but from some unaccountable reason destroyed the originals. Now when these letters were made known, the natural question immediately arose, Were these letters thus mysteriously brought to light, and professedly copies, really written by Oliver Cromwell, or an impudent forgery? The non-production of the original letters, which, as mere autographs, were exceedingly valuable, and the tale of their being purposely destroyed, were very suspicious, as the well-known handwriting would almost have decided the question of itself; and yet the style and character of the

writer, the minute events of the period, and the historical coincidences form such a body of proof that they were written by the great Protector that they are fully received by our acutest critics as the unquestionable productions of his pen. This is *internal* evidence, as dwelling in the letters themselves, independent of, and in this case almost opposed to external testimony. But how strong this internal evidence must have been to overcome all the doubts and suspicions that they were forgeries, strengthened as they must have been by the unaccountable perverseness, if not stupidity, of the inheritor and owner of the old family chest in burning the originals. Now, dear readers, God has given us similar evidence that the Scriptures are not "cunningly devised fables," but were written by his own divine inspiration; and as this evidence dwells in the very bosom of the Scriptures themselves, and shines through them as with rays of heavenly light, it is called *internal* evidence. Thus, though the original gospels and epistles, as written by the evangelists and apostles, have long since perished, yet we receive them as copied from those manuscripts with as much implicit faith from their internal evidence as though their very handwriting was before us.

But, having thus far explained the nature of internal evidence generally, we will now see how it bears on the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures. When, then, we look more closely into the subject of the internal evidences of the truth and authority of the word of God, we find that we may *divide* them into two distinct classes; 1, those which address themselves to our natural understanding, the reasoning powers of our intelligent mind; and, 2, those of a strictly spiritual and supernatural character which belong especially to the family of God when the word of truth is made life and spirit to their soul. As the distinction we have thus drawn between these two classes of internal evidence may not at first sight be evident, for from their close resemblance to, and their frequent intermingling with each other, even so good a man and so great a writer as Dr. Owen has somewhat confounded them, we will, before we proceed any further, illustrate the difference between them by a Scriptural example of each.

1. Take, then, the teaching and ministry of our blessed Lord, when here below, as an example of the first. His *words* were as striking as his *works*; but they differed in the evidence which they afforded of his being the Christ of God. His *works* were striking as an *external* demonstration of his Messiahship, and were addressed to the senses of the spectators, making them eye-witnesses of his almighty power. But his *words* were striking as addressing themselves to the understanding, the heart, and conscience of his hearers, and

demonstrative of his authority as speaking in God's name. The former, therefore, we call *external*, the latter we term *internal* evidence. Our Lord sometimes wrought a miracle to confirm the authority of his words, as in the case of the man sick of the palsy, (Matt. 9:2-6,) where, "Arise, take up thy bed" confirmed the words: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." But at other times, as in the synagogue at Nazareth, the Lord taught and preached without working any miracle to confirm his word. In this and similar cases (Luke 4:15) there was a power and authority in the words themselves which he spake, which carried conviction to the minds of his hearers. This we call *internal* evidence, because the proof of the power and authority of his teaching lay in the force of the words as they fell from his lips. We therefore read: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." (Matt. 8:28, 29.) So again: "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" "And they were astonished at his word, for his word was with power." (Luke 4:22, 32.) So, also, we read, "As he spake these words, many believed on him." (John 8:30.) Thus we see that there was a power and authority attending the words of our blessed Lord which addressed itself to the intelligent minds and natural consciences of his hearers. (See John 8:9.) But though they felt the power of the word of God, they were not quickened thereby into spiritual life. They were not begotten by the word of truth, (James 1:18,) nor born again of the incorruptible seed of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever; (1 Pet. 1:23;) for to those very persons who are said to believe on him, the Lord said afterwards, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John 8:44.) Can we, then, doubt that there is an internal evidence addressing itself to the understanding and conscience distinct not only from external evidence, but from the inward evidence attending the word when applied by the Holy Ghost to the soul?

2. But now let us find a Scripture example of our second class of internal evidence, viz., when it accompanies the words of the blessed Lord as made life and spirit to the soul: "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." (John 1:47-49.) The internal evidence that he who saw him under the fig tree was the omniscient Son of God, not only fell upon

Nathanael's mind, but the unction of the Holy Ghost attended it with a divine power to his heart. So it was in the call of James and John; (Matt. 4:21, 22;) of Matthew from the receipt of custom; (Matt. 9:9;) and doubtless of the other disciples of the Lord. In these cases, besides the weight of internal evidence on their mind, there was a divine light and power which made the words of the blessed Lord life and spirit to their soul. (John 6:63.)

The subject of internal evidence, when we come to apply it to the word of truth, is so vast and so branching out into a variety of proof that we can only briefly sketch a few of its prominent points as they occur to our mind.

1. Take, for instance, first the *wonderful harmony* which runs through the whole Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Consider that the mere writing of the Bible which you hold in your hand embraces a period of nearly 1,500 years. View the inspired penmen, who lived during the days of the Old Testament, such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, and all the prophets down to Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Remember that they were men of different periods, ranks, ages, and employments,—kings, shepherds, priests, herdmen; and yet observe the harmony which pervades all that they wrote, whether history, prophecy, psalms, or proverbs. Then take a glance at the New Testament, consisting of 27 distinct works written by eight different evangelists and apostles, and see the harmony of truth which runs through the whole of that sacred book. We are so familiar with the fact of this harmonious agreement that it is scarcely observed by us. Ministers take their texts from every part of the Scriptures, and prove their points of doctrine, experience, or practice indiscriminately from any or every book of the Old or New Testament, without perhaps even thinking what wondrous harmony of truth must run through the whole Bible to enable them to quote at pleasure this and that text from Genesis to Revelation, and what an internal evidence this affords of its truth and inspiration.

2. Now consider, as another point of internal evidence, the revelation given in the Scriptures of those glorious *truths* and heavenly *doctrines*, which are the foundation of our most holy faith, such as the existence of one Jehovah in a Trinity of Persons and Unity of Essence, the incarnation, blood-shedding, death, resurrection, and ascension of the co-equal, co-eternal Son of the Father in truth and love; the Personality and operations of the Holy Ghost, with every sacred doctrine, every holy precept, and every gracious promise. Surely to conceive such stupendous truths is as much beyond the natural powers of man as to create light or make a sun. What an internal evidence is

this, what a proof in the very doctrines themselves is thus afforded, that none but God himself could have inspired the holy penmen thus to write what lay hidden in his eternal bosom.

3. Look also at the *character of the Lord Jesus* as represented in the gospels of the New Testament. What dignity, majesty, holiness, purity, tenderness, meekness, wisdom, authority, truth, and grace shine through all his words and works. Infidels themselves, save the vilest and worst, have expressed their admiration of the character of the Lord Jesus, and thousands who will never see him as he is, have admired him as he was. Let any man with ordinary feeling, or common apprehension of what is good and right, tender and affectionate, read the sermon on the mount, the discourses of the Lord to his disciples, (John 14, 15, 16,) and his intercessory prayer, (John 17,) and one must think he could not but see an indescribable force and beauty in them, and that he who thus taught and spoke must be the Son of God.

4. Look again at the *life, character, and writings of the Apostle Paul*. Disjoin from his conversion the miraculous circumstances attending it, and merely view him as a man brought from conviction of mind to embrace Christianity. Trace his character as so faithful yet so tender, so wise and yet so gentle. Look at his unwearied labours, his cruel persecutions, his perils and sufferings, of which he has given us such a catalogue, (2 Cor. 11:23-28,) his undaunted zeal, his glowing love, his godly sincerity, his holiness and self-denial, his deep humility, his prayerful spirit, his contentedness under poverty and shame, his devotedness to the Lord even to willingness to die for his name; and then see what a weight of evidence all this affords to his being an apostle of the Lord Jesus, and, if so, to his inspiration from above. But all this is *internal* evidence which approves itself to the mind from its apprehension of the various circumstances of Paul's character which we have thus faintly sketched out.

5. From his character and labours, turn to Paul's *writings*, those epistles which he sent to the various churches, or to individuals, as Timothy and Titus. Take, as an instance, the Epistle to the Romans. We well know that it needs divine light and life to understand, believe, and feel the glorious truths unfolded in that wondrous epistle. But if you cannot fully enter into the way in which the Apostle has brought all the world in guilty before God, and unfolded the way of justification by grace, through faith, take one chapter, Rom. 8, as an instance of the weight and force of internal evidence to the truth of the word of God. Think who the man once was who wrote that chapter; what he was as brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a blood-thirsty

persecutor of the saints, an approving witness of Stephen's martyrdom. Now, that a wretch who once rode full of fire and fury to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ, should, about 27 years from that time, write in a strain so wise, tender, and affectionate to Christian saints, is little short of demonstrative proof that his whole heart and soul had been changed, altered, and subdued to the faith and obedience of Christ. Is it not as great a miracle of grace as the change of a lion into a lamb would be a miracle of power? Or read the Epistle to the Ephesians, and fix your eye first on the doctrinal part of the epistle, and then on the preceptive. Whence did this Pharisee of the Pharisees get those sublime doctrines, those heavenly truths, which he unfolds with such holy wisdom, and such a demonstration of the Spirit and of power? What an internal evidence does every line afford that he received them by special revelation and divine inspiration from heaven! Then examine the preceptive part of the same epistle, and view the wisdom, the holiness, the tenderness, the spirit of love and godliness which pervade and animate those precepts and directions for conduct under every relationship of life; and think what individual believers and Christian Churches would be, were these precepts obeyed and acted upon. In a similar way and with equal force we might enlarge upon such chapters as 1 Cor. 13 and 15, 2 Cor. 3, 4, 5, Phil. 3, 1 Thess. 1, and show, if time and space admitted, that they bear such a stamp of grace and truth, reality and power, that by nothing short of divine inspiration could they have been written. Nor would the Old Testament afford less striking examples. The separate histories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, &c., might all be drawn out, and shown to carry with them the strongest internal evidence that they were men led, taught, and blessed of God, and that the pen of inspiration has written all that has been recorded of them. The history of Abraham, for instance, as the father of all the children of Israel; of Joseph, as connected with their going down to Egypt; of Moses, as bringing them out of that land of bondage; of Joshua, as taking them into the promised Canaan—if these separate yet connected histories were traced out, and the different marks and proofs of their truth and reality carefully worked out, what a weight of internal evidence would attest the authority and inspiration of the sacred record in which they are contained!

A similar course of argument might be drawn from the Psalms of David, the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and all the prophets, and, in fact, every part and portion of the Old Testament Scriptures. But these are things at which we can only hint. A volume, aye, volumes would be needed separately to unfold the evidence afforded by the peculiar character and nature of the

inspired writings, as bearing upon their face the stamp of their divine Author; and a most instructive, interesting, and edifying work it would be, at least to those who could and would at all enter into and appreciate it. But we trust we have said enough on this subject to give our readers some little idea of the nature of *internal* evidence. It has also peculiar advantages as distinct from external evidence, some of which we will now very briefly enumerate.

1. First, it has a peculiar *persuasiveness*. Read, for instance, Acts 20:17-35—the address of Paul to the elders of the Church at Ephesus. What a sincere, faithful, truthful, affectionate, noble spirit runs through and pervades the whole. And with what tender affection was it reciprocated! How touching, how pathetic the closing scene; and how we seem almost to see with our bodily eyes the kneeling, praying Apostle and the weeping elders: "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship." (Acts 20:36-38.) What conviction does all this carry to every unprejudiced mind of the truth of the events thus recorded! Just read Paul's words again, Acts 20:22-27. How persuaded one feels that this man of God felt every word that he said, and that they came out of a heart overflowing with faith and love. This, then, is what we mean by the *persuasiveness* of internal evidence. Now compare with this Acts 28:3-9, where we read of certain miracles wrought by this same man of God, and their effect on the minds of those who witnessed them. This was *external* evidence; but do you not feel that his address to the Ephesian elders carries with it a persuasiveness of conviction which seems quite equal, if not superior to the miracle of the viper, or the healing of the father of Publius? Thus you may contrast external and internal evidence by the effect produced by each on your own mind. If the former awes, astonishes, and convinces, the latter persuades, allures, gently overcomes. If the one resemble the lightning flash which rives the heavens and the pealing thunder which rolls over our heads, the other is like the succeeding shower which falls upon the bosom of the thirsty earth, sinking into and softening every opening pore.

2. Another advantage of internal evidence is that it is *always present*. The days of miracles are past. We believe them, not because we see them, but from the testimony of the Scriptures. But the word itself, which abideth for ever, is in our hands, and in every open page we may read, spread before our eyes, its truth and inspiration.

3. A third advantage of internal evidence is that, like prophecy, it is what we may call *cumulative*; that is, it is not only abundant, but each testimony confirms and strengthens the foregoing. See how this feature of evidence tells in a court of justice. Witness after witness comes forward, and as each gives in his testimony every fresh proof adds to the weight of the evidence given before, until the case is as clear as day, and the jury at once decide on the verdict without ever leaving their box. We have only brought forward a few witnesses to the truth of the Scriptures; but a whole body remains behind, whose united testimony would gather force till, like a descending avalanche of snow in the Alps, it would bear down all opposition, or like a rain cloud would cover the very face of the heavens before it fell in innumerable drops upon the ground.

4. The last distinguishing feature of internal evidence which we shall name is, that it is *satisfying*. It does not merely convince the understanding, but it comes with a satisfying influence and power into the heart. Take, for instance, the character of Moses as drawn in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, and just by way of concentrating your attention upon it, view him as interceding with God for the children of Israel, after the sin of the golden calf. (Exod. 32:31, 32; 33; 34:1-10.) What a blending and intermingling of holy zeal for the glory of God and indignation against sin with the tenderest pity and affection for his covenant people. If health, strength, and grace should be given us ever to write our meditated work, "A Plea for the Pentateuch," the internal evidence of its authenticity and truth drawn from the character of Moses would form one of its prominent features, for we have felt it so convincing and satisfying to our own mind.

But our limits warn us to pause. Dear readers, highly prize the internal evidence of the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures. It needs no learning, and but little education or intellect to understand, and we may say, enjoy it. All it needs is a simple, open heart; and bear in mind, that though it is in good measure adapted to the intelligent understanding of all who are open to conviction, it possesses peculiar force, as we shall have hereafter occasion to show, when the blessed Spirit illuminates it with his heavenly light, and carries it home to the believing heart with his vivifying power.

VII.

Hitherto we have been dealing more with externals than with internals, more with the outer works and defences of the Scripture than the central, inward citadel of revealed truth, and have been handling the shell rather than breaking through the rough husk, and bringing out the sweet, juicy kernel. Not but what the outer defences, as once at Sebastopol and now at Richmond,* are necessary for the protection of the inner citadel; not but what the rough husk guards and preserves from injury the imbedded kernel; but our heart and home are in the inner city, of which God hath appointed salvation to be for walls and bulwarks. There these walls and bulwarks stand in all their dignity and grandeur. Infidels and unbelievers may indeed walk about Zion and tell the towers thereof; they may mark well her bulwarks, and, on a nearer inspection, wonder at their strength, and the beauty of the palaces which they inclose, (Psa. 48:12, 13,) when they have said in their folly, "If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall;" (Neh. 4:3;) but to enter and dwell within the city is not theirs, for it is only the righteous nation which keepeth the truth that can enter therein. (Isa. 26:1, 2.)

* In reference to the civil war then raging in America.

These outer defences of revelation, then, we could not pass by, though we have felt ourselves, with most of our readers, that the subject was dead and dry compared with that inward experience of the kingdom of God, which is not in word but in power, which it is the peculiar portion of the living family of God to know, realise, and enjoy, and which was to form the main subject of our Meditations. We now, then, come upon ground on which, we trust, we shall see more eye to eye and feel more heart to heart with the poor and needy family of God, and to which all we hitherto have written is but preliminary and introductory—the power and authority of the word of God upon the soul.

God is essentially invisible. "He dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." (1 Tim. 6:16.) When, therefore, he would make himself known to the sons of men, it must be by his works or by his words. The first way of making his power and glory known is beautifully unfolded in Psa. 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." This is the testimony which God gave of himself to the Gentile world, but which, through the depravity of man's heart, has been universally misunderstood, perverted and abused, as the Apostle

speaks: "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom. 1:19-21.)

The secret spring whence this flows, and the eternal foundation on which this rests, is the incarnation of God's dear Son. He is "the Word"—the Word emphatically, originally, essentially; and so called not only because he is the express image of the Father, as the word is the image of the thought, but because he has declared or made him known, as our uttered word makes our thoughts known. John therefore bare witness of him: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Had there, then, been no incarnate Word, there would have been no revealed word; and had there been no revealed word, there would have been no written word; for all that was revealed was not necessarily written, as John was bidden to seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. (Rev. 10:4.) And as without the incarnate Word there would have been no revealed or written word, so the power of the written word is derived from the power of the incarnate Word.

God's witness by his works, then, being insufficient, and failing, so to speak, through the depravity of man's heart, he has revealed himself by and in his word, in those precious Scriptures which we hold in our hands, and the power of which some of us have felt in our hearts. It is, then, of this power of the written word that we have now to speak. But when we speak of the power of the word of God we do not mean thereby to convey the idea that it possesses any power of its own, any actual, original, innate force, which acts of itself on the heart and conscience. The word of God is but the instrument of a higher and distinct power, even the power of that Holy and eternal Spirit, the revealer and testifier of Jesus, by whose express and immediate inspiration it was written. The power of an instrument is the power of him who uses it. This is true literally. The strength of the sword is in the hand of him who wields it. A child may take up a warrior's sword, but can he use it as a warrior? If, then, the word of God is "quick (or living, as the word means) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," it is because he wields it of whom it is said, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh,

O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty." (Psa. 45:2, 3.) John, therefore, saw him in vision, as one "out of whose mouth went a sharp two-edged sword," (Rev. 1:16,) both to pierce the hearts of his people and to smite the nations. (Rev. 19:13.) So with the word which he wields. "Where the word of a king is there is power." (Eccles. 8:4.) And why? Because it is the word of the king. Another may speak the word, but it has no power because he that speaks it has no power to execute it. When "the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken," (Esther 6:10,) it was done. The man whom the king delighted to honour was honoured. (Esther 6:10, 11.) When again the king said, "Hang him thereon," it was done: "So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai." (Esther 7:9, 10.) Here were life and death in the power of the tongue. (Prov. 28:21.) Thus we ascribe no power to the word itself, but to the power of him who speaks it. The Apostle therefore says of his speech and preaching that it was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;" (1 Cor. 2:4;) and of his gospel, that is, the gospel which he knew, felt, and preached, that it came unto the Thessalonians "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:5.) Twice had David heard, that is on two solemn and special occasions, "that power belongeth unto God." (Psa. 62:11.) To understand and explain this power passes our comprehension. It may be and is felt, and its effects seen and known, but "the thunder of his power who can understand?" (Job 26:14.) When God said, "Let there be light," light burst forth at his creative fiat. But who can understand or explain how light came? Yet it could be seen when it filled the future creation with its bright effulgence.

But now let us consider the *exercise* and *display* of this power in its first movements upon the heart. Man being dead in sin, it needs an almighty power to make him alive unto God; for what communion can there be between a dead soul and a living God? This, then, is the first display of the power of the word of God in the hands of the eternal Spirit. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1.) And how? By the word. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." (Jas. 1:18.) So testifies Peter: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:23.) What James calls "begetting" Peter terms "being born again;" and this corresponds with what the Lord himself declared to Nicodemus: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of

God." (John 3:3.) Almost similar is the language of John himself as taken, doubtless, from his divine Master: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13.) So in his first epistle: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." (1 John 5:1.) We need not therefore enter into the controversy about the difference between begetting and being born again, as if the new birth exactly corresponded with the old, and as if the analogy could be precisely carried out between natural and spiritual generation. Figures (and this is a figure) must not be pressed home to all their consequences, or made to fit and correspond in all their parts and particulars. It is sufficient for us to know that the mighty change whereby a sinner passes from death unto life, (1 John 3:14,) is "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son," (Col. 1:13,) is by the power of the word of God upon his soul. Nor shall we, as we wish to avoid controversial topics, enter at any length into the question whether light or life first enters into the heart: "The entrance of thy words giveth light." (Psa. 119:130.) There it would seem that light came first. And so the passage: "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light." (Acts 26:18.) So Saul at Damascus' gate saw and was struck down by the light before the quickening words came: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4.) In grace, if not in nature, it would seem evident that we see before we feel; and thus the disciples "beheld his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father," before they received the Son of God into their hearts and believed on his name. It will be seen from these hints that without entering into the controversy, or pronouncing any dogmatical opinion, our own view inclines to the point held by Mr. Huntington, that light precedes life. And yet, when we look back on our own experience, how difficult it is to determine whether we saw light before we felt life, or whether the same ray which brought light into the mind did not bring at the same moment life into the heart. At any rate we saw what we felt, and we felt what we saw. "In thy light do we see light." To see this light is to be "enlightened with the light of the living." (Job 33:30.) And this our blessed Lord calls "the light of life." "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.) So we will not put asunder what God has joined together—light and life. We know, however, the effect better than the cause; and need we wonder that we can neither understand nor explain the mystery of regeneration? Does not the Lord himself say: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8.) It is our mercy if

we have seen light in God's light and felt the Spirit's quickening breath, if we cannot understand whence it came or whither it goes, except to believe that it came from God and leads to God, it began in grace and will end in glory.

The beginning of this work upon the soul is in Scripture frequently termed "a calling," as in the well-known passage: "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." (1 Cor. 1:24-26.) And thus we find "calling" one of the links in that glorious chain which, reaching down to and stretching through time, is fastened at both ends to eternity: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8:29, 30.) The very word "call" has a reference to something spoken or uttered, that is, a word addressed to the person called. If I call to a man, I speak to that man. My word to him is my call to him. Thus our Lord said to Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, "Follow me." Power attended the word. It fell upon Matthew's heart. Light and life entered into his soul. His understanding was enlightened, his will renewed, his heart changed. What was the instantaneous effect? "And he arose and followed him." (Mark 2:14.) Similar in cause and effect was the calling of Peter and Andrew, of James and John. (Matt. 4:18-22.) This calling is "by grace" or the pure favour of God; (Gal. 1:15;) a "heavenly calling," as coming from heaven and leading to heaven; (Heb. 3:1;) a "holy calling," (2 Tim. 1:9,) not only holy in itself, but leading to and productive of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord;" (Heb. 12:14;) and therefore a calling "to glory and virtue," or excellency, as the word means—excellency here, (Phil. 1:10; 4:8,) glory hereafter. It is also a calling out of the world, as Abraham was called to "get out of his country, and his kindred, and his father's house;" and so we are bidden to "come out from among them and be separate, and not touch the unclean thing." (2 Cor. 6:17.) It is "a high calling," and therefore free from everything low, grovelling, and earthly; "into the grace of Christ;" (Gal. 1:6;) a calling "to the fellowship of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord;" (1 Cor. 1:9;) a calling "to peace" with God and his dear people, and as far as lieth in us with all men; (Col. 3:15; 1 Cor. 7:15; Rom. 12:18;) "to liberty," (Gal. 5:13,) to a "laying hold of eternal life," (1 Tim. 6:12,) and "to the obtaining of the eternal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Pet. 5:10; John 17:22-24.)

As, then, those who are thus called are called to the experimental enjoyment of these spiritual blessings, with all of which they were blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, it is plain that they must have a knowledge of them communicated to their soul; and as we know nothing of divine truth but through the written word and cannot by any wisdom of our own, even with that word in our hands, attain to a saving knowledge of these divine realities, it is equally plain that they must be revealed to us by a spiritual and supernatural power. This is clearly and beautifully unfolded by the Apostle in 1 Cor. 2. We cannot quote the whole chapter, which, to be clearly understood, should be read in its full connection, but we cannot forbear citing a few verses as being so appropriate to, and casting such a light on our subject: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. 2:9-12.) The things which "God hath prepared for them that love him" are the things which his people are called to know and enjoy; and that not merely as regards the future state of glory but the present state of grace—the things to be known on earth as well as the things to be enjoyed in heaven. This is plain from the words, "But God *hath revealed* them unto us by his Spirit,"—not will hereafter reveal and make them known in heaven above, but hath already revealed them on earth below. And where, but in the heart of his people? For it is there that they receive "the Spirit which is of God," and this "that they might know the things that are freely given to them of God."

***Knowledge*, then, is clearly and evidently the first effect of that divine light of which we have spoken; and this corresponds with what the gracious Lord said in his intercessory prayer: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) The knowledge of the only true God must precede any fear of him, or any faith in him. Whilst I am in nature's darkness and death, I do not know God, and, therefore, I neither can nor do fear him. Some of our spiritual readers may feel surprised at our putting the knowledge of God as the first effect of the power of the word upon the heart; and some may tell us that we should put**

conviction of sin, and others might insist that we should place the fear of God first. But if they will bear with us for a few moments, we think we can show them that a true spiritual knowledge of the only true God must go before both right conviction of sin and before the right fear of the Lord. 1. First, then, what is conviction of sin but a conviction in our conscience of having sinned against and before a pure, holy, and just God? But where can be my conviction of having sinned against him, if I have no knowledge of him? In nature's darkness and death I felt no conviction of sin, not only because my conscience was not awakened or divinely wrought upon, but because I knew nothing of him against whom I had sinned—nothing of his justice, nothing of his holiness, nothing of his power. And 2. What is the fear of God but a trembling apprehension of his glorious majesty? But how can I have this apprehension of his glorious majesty if I am ignorant of his very existence, which I am till he makes it known by a ray of light out of his own eternal fulness? Where do we see the fear of God more in exercise or more beautifully expressed than in Psalm 139? But how the whole of it is laid in the knowledge of the heart-searching presence of the Almighty: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me." (Ps. 139:1-5.) We can sometimes read past experience best in the light of present experience, as a traveller emerging from a dark and tangled wood sees from the hill-top the way by which he came far more clearly and better than when he was struggling among the thickets. When, then, *now* do we seem most to see and feel the evil of sin? When do we *now* seem most to fear that Lord in whose presence we stand? Is it not in proportion to our knowledge of him, to our present realisation of his majesty, power, and presence, and to that spiritual experimental acquaintance which we have gained of his dread perfections by the teaching, as we trust, of the Holy Spirit through the written word? And take the converse. When are our views and feelings of the evil of sin comparatively dim and cold, so that we do not seem to see and realise what a dreadful thing it is? Is it not when there is no sensible view nor present apprehension of the majesty, holiness, and presence of God? Similarly with respect to godly fear. When does this fountain of life to depart from the snares of death run shallow and low, so as to be diminished, as by a summer drought, almost to a thin thread? When our present vital, experimental sight and sense, knowledge and apprehension of the majesty of the Lord are become dim and feeble, when the old veil seems to flap back over the heart, and like a half-

closed shutter shuts out the light of day. If we read the early chapters of the book of Proverbs, we shall see how much is spoken in them of wisdom, instruction, knowledge, understanding, and the like, and how closely there the fear of the Lord is connected with the knowledge of the Lord: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Prov. 1:7.) And, again: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. 2:1-6.) And, again: "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee." (Prov. 2:10, 11.) So those that perish, perish from want of this knowledge and of this fear as its fruit: "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. 1:29-31.) And more plainly and emphatically: "Fools die for want of wisdom." (Prov. 10:21.) Indeed, there is such a connection between true wisdom, which is "a knowledge of the holy," (Prov. 30:3,) and the fear of the Lord, and such a connection between ignorance of the Lord and sin, that saved saints are called "wise," and lost sinners are called "fools," not only in the Old Testament, as continually in the Proverbs, but in the New. Many of the Lord's people look with suspicion upon knowledge, from not seeing clearly the vast distinction between the spiritual, experimental knowledge for which we are now contending, and what is called "head knowledge." They see that a man may have a well-furnished head and a graceless heart, that he may understand "all mysteries" and all "knowledge" and yet be "nothing;" (1 Cor. 13:2;) and as some of these all-knowing professors are the basest characters that can infest the churches of truth, those who really fear the Lord stand not only in doubt of them, but of all the knowledge possessed by them. But put it in a different form; ask the people of God whether there is not such a divine reality, such a heavenly blessing, as being "taught of God;" (John 6:45;) having "an unction from above whereby we know all things;" (1 John 2:20;) knowing the truth for oneself and finding it maketh free; (John 8:32;) whether there is not a "counting of all things but loss for the excellency of [the knowledge of] Christ Jesus our Lord," and a stretching forth of the desires of the soul to "know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings;" whether there is not "a

knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins;" (Luke 1:77;) "a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" (2 Cor. 4:6;) a being "filled with the knowledge of his will," (Col. 1:9,) an "increasing in the knowledge of God;" (Col. 1:10;) "a growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," (2 Pet. 3:18,)—ask the living family of God whether there be not such a knowledge as this, and if this knowledge is not the very pith and marrow, the very sum and substance of vital godliness? and they will with one voice say, "It is."

By putting knowledge therefore, as the first effect of the word of truth upon the heart, we are not setting up, God forbid, that vain, empty, useless, deceptive thing, that delusion of the devil, head knowledge, but that divine, spiritual, gracious, and saving knowledge which is communicated to the soul and wrought into its very substance by the teaching and testimony of the Holy Ghost. This knowledge embraces every truth which we learn by divine teaching in living experience, from the first sigh to the last song, from the earliest conviction to the latest consolation, from the cry of despair to the shout of triumph, from the agonies of hell to the joys of heaven. Need any one wonder, therefore, that we put first what stands first, that we lay down the first stone which is the foundation stone, and draw the first line where the Holy Spirit makes his first impression? If, then, this knowledge is communicated by the Holy Ghost to the heart through the written word, two things follow, and we believe that the experience of every child of God will bear testimony to what we now advance concerning them: 1. That the word of God comes into the heart and conscience in and by regeneration, with a new and hitherto unfelt power. How carelessly, how ignorantly, how formally, if we read it at all, did we read the word of God in the days of our unregeneracy. What little heed we paid to the word preached, if we heard it at all. What thorough darkness and death wrapped us up, so that nothing of a spiritual, eternal nature touched, moved, or stirred us either with hope or fear. But at a certain, never-to-be-forgotten time, a power, we could not tell how or why, was put into the word and it fell upon our hearts, as a sound from heaven, as the very voice of God to our conscience. The word of God laid hold of us as the word of God; it was no longer the word of man, a dry, uninteresting, almost if not wholly hated book; but it got, we could not explain how, so into the very inside of us armed with authority and power as a message from God. But here let us guard ourselves. It is not always the exact *words*, or indeed any word of Scripture which lays hold of the conscience; but it is in every case the *truth* contained in the Scriptures. Eternity, judgment to come, the justice of God, his all-searching eye, his almighty hand, his universal presence, from

which there is no escape—these, and other similar truths which fall with such weight upon the quickened sinner's conscience, are all revealed in and only known by the Scripture. The truth of God is, therefore, the word of God, as the word of God is the truth of God. If, then, no particular word or words are applied to the conscience by the quickening power of the Holy Ghost, the truth, which is the word, is applied to the heart, and it is this entrance of the truth as the word of God, which giveth light. As a proof of this, no sooner do we receive the solemn truths, of which we have spoken, into our conscience and feel their power than we run to the Scriptures and find a light in and upon them hitherto unseen and unknown. The light, life, and power, which attended the truth as it fell upon the conscience gave the word a place in our hearts. And we shall always find that the place which the word has in the heart is in proportion to the light and power which attended its first entrance. Let us seek to explain this a little more fully and clearly. The heart by nature is closed, shut, barred against the entrance of light. The light may, so to speak, play around the heart, but does not enter, for there is a thick veil over it. Thus our Lord said of himself, "Whilst I am in the world I am the light of the world." (John 9:5.) The light shone upon the world, but did not enter, for the "light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended (that is apprehended or embraced, for it is the same word as is so rendered, Phil. 3:12, 13) it not." (John 1:5.) "My word," said the Lord, "hath no place in you." (John 8:37.) But when the word comes with power, it seizes hold of the heart and conscience. They give way before it and leave a place for it, where it sets up its throne and becomes their Lord and Master.

Here, then, we shall for the present pause, leaving the word of truth in possession of the heart.

VIII.

However vital godliness, either in its inward experience or in its outward fruits, may be imitated by the craft of Satan or the deceptiveness of man's heart, there is as much real and essential difference between the work of grace on the soul, as begun and carried on by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost, and any base counterfeit, as between light and darkness, life and death, Christ and Belial, heaven and hell. It may indeed be exceedingly difficult for any man or minister clearly, to discern the distinction, or accurately describe the difference between grace in its lowest degree and nature in its highest—between a saint in his worst state and a hypocrite in his best; for there is not a

fruit of the Spirit which cannot be imitated, not a heavenly feeling, divine sensation, or gracious movement which cannot be counterfeited. Who, with all his real or fancied discernment, can at all times and under all circumstances discover all the delusions of Satan as an angel of light, or detect all the turnings and windings of a self-deceptive, hypocritical heart?

"For neither man nor angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible except to God alone,
By his permissive will, through heaven and earth."—Milton.

But of all the varied and intricate circumstances which puzzle the mind and perplex the judgment when we would try our own case or that of others, none seems to us more puzzling and perplexing than this—that every grace and fruit of the blessed Spirit has its corresponding counterpart in the natural mind. Thus is there an enlightening of the eyes of the understanding by the gift of the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ? (Eph. 1:17, 18.) There is a corresponding enlightening of the natural mind to receive the knowledge of the truth. (Rom. 6:4; 10:26.) Is faith the gift of God and a fruit of the Spirit? (Eph. 2:8; Gal. 5:22;) and does it come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God? (Rom. 10:1.7.) There is a natural faith—a believing for a while, and in time of temptation falling away. (Luke 8:13; John 8:30; 12:42, 43.) Is there a conscience made tender in the fear of God, as a choice new covenant blessing? (Jer. 32:40; Acts 23:1; 24:16.) There is a natural conscience bearing witness in a heathen mind in its accusing or excusing thoughts, and convicting a graceless hypocrite with a stone in his hand ready to hurl it at the open sinner. (Rom. 2:15; John 8:9.) Is there a receiving of the love of the truth, so as to be saved and sanctified thereby? (2 Thess. 2:10; John 17:17.) There is a hearing of the word gladly by a Herod, (Mark 6:20,) and a receiving of it with joy by a stony-ground hearer. (Luke 8:13.) Is there "a good hope through grace," an "anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil?" (2 Thess. 2:16; Heb. 6:19.) There is the hope of the hypocrite that perisheth, and a trust which is but a spider's web. (Job 8:13, 14.) So might we run through the various fruits and graces of the Spirit, as repentance, and its natural counterpart in Ahab and Judas; (1 Kings 21:27; Matt. 27:3;) humility, and its imitation in Saul; (1 Sam. 10:21, 22, 27;) zeal, and its fleshly mimicry in Jehu (2 Kings 10:16), and in the false spirit of the sons of Zebedee; (Luke 9:54, 55;) love of holiness, and its sanctimonious counterfeit in the murderers of the Lord who, for fear of defilement, would not enter into Pilate's judgment hall.

(John 18:28.) But we need not enlarge on a point so evident, and of such every-day observation. Suffice it to remark that it is this counterpart of nature to grace, this correspondence of many if not most of the features of the old man to many if not most of the features of the new, which so greatly perplexes our mind when we sit in judgment on our own case or on that of others.

When, then, we attempt to trace out the operation and effects of the word of truth on the heart of the saints of God, and to show the authority and power which in the hands of the Spirit it exercises on their conscience, we are met at the very outset by the perplexing difficulty of which we have just spoken—the counterpart of flesh to spirit, the fruits and effects of the word on the natural conscience, as resembling the fruits and effects of the word on the spiritual conscience. Still, as there is a vital and essential difference between them, we will, with God's help and blessing, make the attempt to trace out that peculiar work and those peculiar effects which seem especially to distinguish the authority and power of the word of God on the heart and conscience of his people from all its imitations and all its counterfeits. And we more particularly dwell on this point as being well convinced that nothing is the true work of grace more distinguished from all counterfeits than by the power which attends the word in the hands of the Spirit to the heart of the elect family of God.

In our last paper we left the word in possession of the heart. At this point, therefore, we now resume our subject. In describing, however, this work, we drew rather a general sketch than worked out our subject in detail. We rather laid down the general truth, that light, life, and power attend the entrance of the word into the heart, than minutely described either the way in which they enter or the effects which they produce. To this more detailed description we now, therefore, come; for truth, it may be observed, is often lost, or if not altogether lost in, is much obscured by generalities. A map of a district to be of any real value must be minute. A school map would be of little service to a belated traveller in a foreign land.* To a wanderer on the mountains of Israel, a map Zionwards must be not only accurate, but detailed, that he may know, not only that he is in the way, but whereabouts in the way. May wisdom and grace be given to us to line out the map not only plainly but accurately. To make it more clear and simple we should go back a few steps, and take the vessel of mercy in his carnal, unregenerate state before the mighty work begins whereby he is turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

*** Some friends of ours, many years ago, taking a walking tour in Switzerland lost their way on the mountains, and would probably have perished if one of the party had not had with him a most minute and accurate map (Keller's) of the country, by following which they soon arrived at a place of safety.**

To help our understanding on this point and establish our faith, the Scripture has given us a variety of figures, such as the quickening of the dead, (Eph. 2:1,) the breathing of life upon the dry bones, (Ezek. 37,) the taking up and rearing of the outcast child, (Ezek. 16,) besides the more ordinary emblems of begetting or being born again, of a new creation, of a resurrection, &c. But we shall, for the sake of clearness, adopt the Lord's own figure of the strong man armed keeping this palace. (Luke 11:21, 22.) View, then, the strong man, strong in his unregeneracy, in his palace and equipped in his armour. His palace is the heart; his armour his defence against the word of truth, the sword of the Spirit. How strong is his armour and how confident his trust in it. See him clothed from head to foot in his panoply; and as every truth has its opposing error, and every grace and fruit of the Spirit its counterfeit, so the armour of the saint has its counterpart in the armour of the sinner. He stands, therefore, in the whole armour of sin and Satan. The girdle of error, the breastplate of unrighteousness, the shoes of enmity, the shield of unbelief, the helmet of perdition, and the sword of the old man which is the word of carnal reason, equip him from head to foot as with armour of proof. And lest these be insufficient, he is firmly entrenched behind all such bulwarks of his palace as the prayerlessness, carelessness, watchlessness, and slothfulness of the carnal mind. Who can overcome this strongman armed? None but the stronger than he, the mighty One, the strength of Israel. His goods are in peace. False peace and security wrap him in their folded arms, and he bids defiance to every fear and every foe. But Jesus comes upon him by the power of his word, assaults him in his castle, overcomes him, and takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted, stripping it off, piece by piece. Whilst this armour was on, no arrow of conviction could reach the heart, for it was at once met and turned off by the shield or breastplate. But when the armour is stripped away, then there lies a naked, exposed, defenceless soul for the sword of the Spirit to enter. Did we not find, when eternal realities were first laid with weight on our mind, that something came over us which we could not describe, but which was sensibly felt? and that under this peculiar power there was a breaking up and a loosening of that ignorance, hardness, unbelief, prejudice, and carelessness which had hitherto held us locked up in carnal security? This was the coming upon us of the stronger than we, and this

falling off of unbelief, hardness, ignorance, &c., was the stripping away of the armour in which we had stood encased, and to which we had trusted.

But now let us move a step onward. We have seen how the soul lies naked and bare, all its armour gone. Now comes the sword of the Spirit. Its operation and execution are clearly and beautifully described by the Apostle: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12.) Before this entrance of the sword of the Spirit, the word of God was not "quick," that is, "living,"* (John 6:63,) but dead, for it did not communicate life; nor "powerful," for it was weak through the flesh; (Rom. 8:3;) nor did it "pierce to any dividing asunder of soul and spirit, or of the joints and marrow," for it did not enter where soul and spirit, joints and marrow are; nor did it "discern the thoughts and intents of the heart," for all things were not yet made naked and opened before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. This sword has two edges, and therefore cuts as it goes, and cuts both ways at one and the same stroke. (Rev.1:16; 2:12.) It is not sharp on one side and blunt on the other, like a table knife, which cuts but does not pierce, but it severs as it enters with both its edges at once, and thus effectually divides asunder soul and spirit, separating, as nothing else can, the natural religion, which is of the soul, from the spiritual religion which is of the Spirit.**

* This is the old English meaning of the word "quick." Christ is therefore said to be "judge of the quick (that is, the living at the time of his coming) and the dead." (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet.4:5.) So we read, "And they go down quick (that is, alive) into the pit." (Numb. 16:30, compared with verse 33.) So "You hath he quickened," (Eph. 2:1,) that is, made alive.

** If any consider this interpretation forced, let them consider the following points: Paul draws (1 Cor. 2:14,15) a distinction between the "natural" man and the "spiritual" man. Now the word there translated, "natural," is literally, if we may coin an expression, "soulish;" that is, the man has a soul, but not a spirit, as not being born of the Spirit; for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." His religion, therefore, in this state is natural, its seat being not the new man of grace, but the mere intellectual, mental part of man—the soul as distinct from the body. So James, describing a carnal, earthly religion, says, it is "sensual," ("natural," margin,) or "soulish." Similarly Jude speaks of certain ungodly characters, and says of them that they are "sensual," using

precisely the same word as is rendered "natural," 1 Cor. 2:14, and "sensual," Jas. 3:15.

It thus also becomes "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," laying the inmost movements of the mind, whether in imagination or intention, naked and bare before the eyes of the omniscient Majesty of heaven. Before this entrance of the sword of the Spirit, it was not known or felt that "the thought of foolishness is sin," (Prov. 24:9,) and that "every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." (Gen. 6:5.) Heart sins were not seen or regarded. As long as the outside of the cup and platter were made clean, the inward part might be full of ravening and wickedness. (Luke 11:39.) As long as the whited sepulchre appeared beautiful outward, the dead men's bones and all uncleanness within were considered of little moment. But God searcheth the heart. And how? By his word. (Prov. 20:27; Psa. 45:3-5; 139:1, 2, 23, 24; 1 Cor. 14:24, 25; Rev. 2:23.) This searching of the heart is effected by the entrance of the law into the conscience, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:20.) This is the coming of the commandment in its spirituality and power, armed with all the authority of God, and discovering to the awakened conscience that to lust is to sin, because God hath said, "Thou shalt not covet." (Rom. 7:7-9.) The light which attends this entrance of the word (Psa. 119:130; Eph. 5:13) reveals his character as a just and holy, righteous and inflexible Judge; the life which accompanies it makes the conscience bow and bend like a bruised reed, or a tender plant beneath the stroke; the power which clothes it awes and impresses the mind with solemn and ineffaceable convictions that it is the voice of the mighty God who speaks, for his voice is now upon the waters of a troubled heart, and as such is powerful and full of majesty; (Isa. 29, 3, 4;) and the knowledge of the only true God which it communicates (John 17:3) fills the soul with godly fear before him. (Hab. 3:16.) It is in this way that the authority and power of the word become established as the lord of conscience. This is the grand point of the Spirit's first work—to make the word master of the heart. Before, it was rather the servant than the master, a book like other books, which we could neglect or despise or criticise at will; air it, perhaps, on the Sunday, and lay it on the shelf or lock it up in a drawer for the rest of the week. But no more neglect, no more cold supercilious treatment, no more secret if not open contempt, no more Pharisaical reading of it now. If we neglect it, it will not neglect us; if we struggle against the convictions it produces, and seek to draw away soul and spirit from the word, there it is firmly fixed; and the more we plunge, the more deeply it penetrates and sharply it cuts. Satan may muster against it all his arts and arms; unbelief, infidelity, love of sin, unwillingness to

part with idol lusts, fear of man, gloomy prospects of temporal loss and ruin, family ties, religious connections, a whole lifetime of schemes and projects, education and prospects toppling to their very base, if these things be true—all these and a thousand other obstacles and objections which array themselves against the power of the word, plead against it, but plead in vain. Where the word has no authority or power on the heart, or only what we may call common power, these, or similar hindrances, either prevent a profession, or induce the professor, after a longer or shorter time, to draw back unto perdition. We see this again and again in the gospels. Many felt the power and truth of the Lord's words with transient flashes of light in the understanding, and of conviction in the conscience, who became his persecutors and murderers. It needs, therefore, a special, an uncommon, a spiritual, and a divine power to give the word that place in the heart and conscience which it is ever after to maintain as its lord and master. Until this power be felt, we do not really know that it is the word of the Lord. To establish, then, its authority and supremacy is the special work of the Holy Ghost. By this peculiar power it is effectually distinguished from the word of man. God himself gives this test: "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:28, 29.) The false prophets had their word; but it was the word of man, and therefore light as chaff, not heavy and weighty as wheat. It had no fire to burn, as shut up in the bones; (Jer. 20:9;) nor was it a hammer, to break to pieces a stony heart. All the killing, (1 Sam. 2:6,) slaughtering, (Ezek. 21:9, 10; Zech. 11:7,) hewing and slaying, (Hos. 6:5,) stripping, (Hos. 2:3,) emptying, (Jer. 48:11, 12,) bringing down, (Psa. 18:27; 107:12,) and laying low (Isa. 26:5; Jas. 1:10) of the soul before God are wrought by the power of the word. God speaks by and in it, as if by a voice from heaven; and what he speaks is listened to because he speaks it. We see this in the saints and prophets of old. The word of the Lord came to Noah, (Gen. 6:13,) to Abraham, (Gen. 12:1; 15:1,) to Isaac, (Gen. 26:2-5,) to Jacob, (Gen. 28:13; 35:1,) to Joseph, (Psa. 105:19,) to Moses, (Exod. 3:4,) to Joshua, (Josh. 1:1) to Gideon, (Judges 6:12-14,) to Samuel, and to all the prophets; and was known by them to be the word of the Lord, by the power which attended it and the effects it produced upon their heart. Surely these men of God knew who it was that spake unto them, and what he said. Sometimes it was "the burden of the Lord," (Jer. 23:33; Hab. 1:1,) or "the burden of the word of the Lord," (Zech. 9:1,) implying the weight with which it pressed upon their minds; sometimes it was "the vision of the Lord;" (2 Sam. 7:17; Isa. 1:1; Obad. 1;) the word coming to them when their bodily senses were

locked up, but their spiritual eyes open; (Numb. 24:4; Acts 10:10; 22:17, 18;) and sometimes God spake to them in a dream in the hours of the night. (Gen. 31:10; Job 33:14-16; Matt.1:20.) But however the mode differed, the power and the effect were the same. It was still the word of the Lord, and known by them to be such. In a similar manner the Scriptures are known by the people of God to be the word of the Lord now by their power and their effects; for they are to us what the direct word of the Lord was to them; and though the same degree of power may not attend the word now as it attended it then, the power is the same and the effects are the same, though bearing each a proportion to the measure of influence put forth. Among these effects is trembling at the word; (Isa. 66:2; Psa. 119:120; Hab. 3:16;) standing in awe of it; (Psa. 119:161;) hiding it in the heart, that we may not sin against God; (Psa. 119:11;) refraining the feet from every evil way, to keep it; (Psa. 119:101;) being afraid of God's judgments; (Psa. 119:120;) receiving it as a lamp unto the feet and a light unto the path; (Psa. 119:105;) choosing the way of truth, and hating every false way. (Psa. 119:30, 104.) By this power of the word experimentally realised and felt the conscience is made tender, the heart humble, and the spirit broken and contrite; and thus, like wax to the seal and clay to the potter, the soul is rendered susceptible of divine teachings and heavenly impressions. Pride and self-righteousness are brought down; human traditions and old ceremonial forms of religion lose their power and influence, and drop off the liberated hands and heart like chains and fetters from a loosened prisoner; an empty profession and a name to live are dreaded as awful delusions, and as stamped with the hateful impress of hypocrisy; all known sins are forsaken and repented of, with many bitter tears and sorrow of spirit; convictions are hugged, lest the guilt of sin should go off the wrong way, and not be purged by the blood of sprinkling; the world is come out of, never to be returned to; retirement and solitude are sought, that far from human eye and ear the almost bursting spirit may pour itself forth in groans and sighs, prayers and tears before the Lord of heaven and earth, the heart-searching, rein-trying God. The word is thus received into an honest and good heart, (Luke 8:15,) made so by divine grace, where it takes root downward and bears fruit upward. Light attending the word in its first entrance, in that light the Scriptures are read; life accompanying the light, in that life the Scriptures are felt; knowledge being the fruit of light and life, of divine teaching and testimony, in that knowledge the Scriptures are understood; and power clothing the word, by that power faith is raised up to believe what the Scriptures reveal and declare. By this power and influence the ear and heart are circumcised to discern truth from error; the veil of unbelief and ignorance is rent off; (2 Cor. 3:16;) obedience to the word is produced; (1 Sam. 3:10;

Acts 9:6; Rom. 6:17; 16:26; Heb. 11:8;) the stony heart taken away and the heart of flesh given; (Ezek. 36:26;) and the soul turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. (Acts 26:18.)

Until the authority and power of the word are thus established in the heart, nothing real, nothing effectual is done for the soul. Look at this point as exemplified in the case of the professors of the day, who, acknowledging the Bible as the word of God, and compassing perhaps sea and land to distribute it, yet have never felt its killing, subduing, renewing and regenerating power in their own soul. What a halting in them between two opinions; what a sheltering themselves under the rags of their own righteousness; what a cleaving to forms and ceremonies, self-imposed rules or traditionary duties; what blind attachment to walls, whether of church or chapel; what love to the world and conformity to its ways, fashions, and opinions; what dread of the cross, of being an object of contempt and derision, or a mark for persecution; what unwillingness to make any sacrifice of money, respectability, or comfort for Christ's sake or his people's; in many what indulgence in secret sin; what dislike to separating truth, to the bold and faithful servants of Christ, and to the poor despised family of God. Why all this, but because they have never felt the keen edge of the sword of the Spirit letting out the life-blood of a carnal, sensual, earthly religion? We can look back and see that such was once our own case; for what they are we, more or less, were; and we can see that it was nothing but the power of the word felt in our heart and conscience that pulled us out of their ranks, and put the Redeemer's yoke upon our necks.

It is the power of God's word which men and devils oppose and hate, as being the only weapon which they really dread. To them the mere letter of the word is as straw, and a form of godliness as rotten wood. Such darts are counted as stubble, and they laugh at the shaking of such a spear. (Job 41:27, 28.) But they dread, though they hate, the power, because it is the very voice of God. By the power of the word the dear Redeemer foiled and defeated the tempter in the wilderness. (Matt. 4:1-11.) By the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony the ancient martyrs overcame the accuser of the brethren; and the remnant of the seed of the woman with whom the dragon made war, were such as kept the commandments of God, and had the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 12:11, 17.) It is against the authority and power of the word that all infidels, unbelievers, and erroneous men set themselves. What are such men as Colenso aiming at, but to destroy the authority and power of God's word, by undermining its authenticity and inspiration? If not authentic, if not inspired, it has no power; and if it have no power, it can have no authority.

The two are proportionate. What gives authority to a magistrate? The power to execute his decisions. Strip him of this power, and his sentences are not decisions, but opinions. So with the word of God. Take away its power by denying its authenticity and inspiration, and its authority to bind and loose, condemn and justify is gone at once. So again, what is Puseyism, or as it is now called, "Ritualism," but a setting up of traditions, forms and ceremonies, kneelings, bowings and intonings, vestments, buildings and decorations in the place of the word of truth? Can a new Gothic window, or a purple velvet altar-cloth, or a pair of huge wax candles lighted or unlighted, or a long procession of surpliced priests and choristers, or all the sounds of the pealing organ point out the way of salvation to a lost sinner, bind up a broken heart, or purge a guilty conscience? What, again, is all error but the setting up of carnal reasonings and natural deductions in the place of, or against a "Thus saith the Lord?" And what do so many preachers and writers really intend when they set their bow against what they call "frames and feelings," but to aim an envenomed shaft against the power of the word of God on a believing heart?

But does not all our daily and dear-bought experience convince us that in this power stands all our hope of eternal life? We have been hunted out of our false refuges by the power of the word, and brought to embrace the Son of God as revealed by the same divine power to our souls. We therefore know that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;" and that our faith "stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:5; 4:20.) The preaching of the cross was once to us foolishness; but it has been made to us the power of God; and Christ crucified has become to us both the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor. 1:18, 24.) After this power we are seeking and feeling, we may say, every day in our lives, and sometimes often through the day and the lonely hours of the night. By this power we live, and in this power we hope and desire to die, as being well assured that nothing but this power can rob death of its sting and the grave of its victory, and land us on that happy shore where ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands will for ever sing, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

IX.

The main point which we endeavoured to establish in our last paper was the way in which the word of God became lord and master of a believer's

conscience. Till this supremacy of the word of truth is established, nothing is really done. Long may be the struggle, for sense, nature, and reason die hard; and as in the case of the children of Israel becoming masters of the land of promise, these opposing nations may be driven out only "by little and little," and even then the Canaanite will still dwell in the land. (Exod. 23:30; Josh. 17:12.) But as Jesus must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet, so will he by his Spirit and grace put down every enemy to the power and authority of his word upon the heart of his people. As by grace we are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; (Col 1:13;) as this kingdom is within us; (Luke 17:21;) and that not in word, but in power; (1 Cor. 9:20;) seeing that it "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," (Rom. 14:17,) it necessarily embraces two distinct things: 1. The putting down of all other rule and all other authority and power; (1 Cor. 15:24;) and, 2, the setting up and enthroning of the Lord Jesus in the conscience, heart, and affections. This double work was beautifully symbolised in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar as interpreted by Daniel: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Dan. 2:34, 35.) The stone that fell upon the feet of the image represents the Lord Jesus, the stone laid in Zion for a foundation, (Isa. 27:16,) and its being "cut out, without hands" symbolises his pure humanity as made of a woman without the help of man. (Mark. 14:58; Heb. 8:2.) The stone thus cut out without hands fell upon the toes of the image; for whilst the image stood upon its feet, the stone could not become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. So in grace. Until the image* of sin, Satan, and self is broken to pieces, and the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold become like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, Christ in his grace and glory cannot fill the heart.

* We do not offer this as an interpretation so much as a spiritual application of the prophecy.

Hitherto, then, we have been considering the putting down of the rule, authority, and power of darkness, ignorance, and death, under the two figures of the stripping of the strong man of his armour, and the entrance of the two-edged sword of the word into the heart. By this effectual operation the word,

as we have shown, becomes lord and master of conscience. This is the hardest part of the work, for until submission is produced, mercy is not manifested. "The arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." (Psa. 45:5.) Where there is no falling under the power of the word, there is no real submission of heart to Jesus; no meek taking of his yoke upon the neck,—for this is only for the labouring and heavy-laden; (Matt. 11:28, 29;) no kissing the Son lest he be angry. (Psa. 2:12.) But when the heart is "brought down with labour so as to fall down, and there is none to help;" (Psa. 107:12;) when the Lord seeth of his servants that "their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left;" (Deut. 32:36;) when there is a putting of the mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope; (Lam. 3:29;) and there is no plea nor cry but, "Lord, save me," "God be merciful to me a sinner," then the scale turns; then it is found that "the Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him, and that it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lam. 3:25, 26.) Being thus made "poor in spirit," a title is given to, an interest secured in the kingdom of heaven; (Matt. 5:3;) and as this poverty of spirit is attended with the docility and teachability of a little child there is an entrance into it; for "of such is the kingdom of God, and whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in nowise enter therein." (Luke 18:16, 17.)

If our readers have thus far, then, followed our train of thought, they will readily perceive that hitherto we have been directing our attention mainly to that first work of the law upon the conscience, whereby the soul is slain, stripped, and emptied of all its self-strength, self-righteousness, and self-sufficiency, and brought into the dust of death. This is analogous to the falling of the stone upon the toes of the image, and corresponds to the first part of Jeremiah's commission: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." (Jer. 1:10.) There we see that the prophet, as having the words of the Lord put into his mouth, was commissioned "to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down," as well as "to build and to plant." And so the Lord speaks elsewhere: "And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to destroy, and to afflict, so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:28.) Both are equally of God; and he as much watches over the soul to pluck and break down as to build and plant.

But as we have endeavoured to show the one and first part of the work, so shall we now attempt to trace out the other; for if the Lord kill he maketh

alive, if he bring down to the grave he bringeth up; and he who maketh poor also raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and make them inherit the throne of glory. (1 Sam. 2:6-8,) Let us see, then, how this gracious work is accomplished, and the effects that follow.

1. Poverty of spirit springing out of the stripping hand of God, as we have described it, brings the soul within the reach of all the invitations of the gospel. "To the poor the gospel is preached," (Luke 7:22,) and for the poor is the gospel supper provided; (Luke 14:21;) To them, therefore, emphatically do the invitations of the gospel belong. The full soul loatheth a honeycomb. What are all the invitations of the gospel to one who is "rich and increased with goods and hath need of nothing?" (Rev. 3:17.) "Ho, every one that thirsteth;" "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" "Call upon me in the day of trouble;" "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you;" "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden," &c., these and similar invitations are all addressed to the poor and needy sinner. There is now a place in his heart for them, as emptied of self; and, as they come home with some degree of sweetness and savour, power attends them, whereby faith is raised up to believe that God speaks in them. This is more especially felt when in some season of distress the invitation is applied, and is thus embraced and acted upon. How many a poor sinner has hung upon the invitations, embraced them, pleaded them, and acted upon them. "Ask and ye shall receive." What an encouragement to prayer. "Look unto me;" "Come unto me." How many a poor sensible sinner has, upon the strength of these words, looked unto Jesus and been lightened; (Psa. 34:5;) come to him and met with a kind reception. By the power which attends these invitations the heart is opened, as was the heart of Lydia, to attend unto the things spoken in the gospel. It is not put away as too holy for a poor polluted sinner to touch, nor is the Lord Jesus viewed as an angry Judge; but in these invitations his clemency, tenderness, and compassion are seen and felt, and beams and rays of his mercy and grace both enlighten the understanding and soften and melt the heart. Thence spring confession of sin, self-loathing, renunciation of one's own righteousness, earnest desires and breathings after the Lord, and an embracing of the love of the truth so far as made known. And as all these effects, so different from the old dead Pharisaic religion, are produced by the power of the word upon the heart, the Bible becomes a new book, and is read and studied with attention and delight. The ears too being unstopped, as well as the eyes opened, if there be the opportunity of hearing the preached gospel,

with what eagerness is it embraced, and what a sweetness there is found in it. All who have passed through these things will agree with us that there are no such hearing days as what Job calls "the days of our youth, when the secret of God is upon our tabernacle." (Job 29:4.)

2. This breaking up of the great image of sin and self by the falling of the stone cut without hands upon its feet prepares a way also for the entrance of the *promises*, as so many earnest and foretastes of that kingdom of God which is peace, and righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is upon the promises that the new covenant stands, as the Apostle says: "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." (Heb. 8:6.) As, then, we are brought within the compass of the promises we are brought within the bonds of the covenant, according to the declaration: "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." (Ezek. 20:37.) As, then, the soul is brought within the compass of the promises, and thus put within the manifested bond of the covenant, these promises become, as they are made sweet and precious, so many breasts of consolation, feeding the new-born babe with the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby. (Isa. 66:11; 1 Pet. 2:2.) Every promise that is made spirit and life to the soul establishes the power of the word in the heart; for by the application of the promises (as Peter unfolds the mystery) "the divine nature," that is, the new man which after God, or after the image of God, (Col. 3:10,) is created in righteousness and true holiness, is brought forth. (Eph. 4:24; 2 Pet. 1:4.) This is a partaking of the divine nature, that is, what is communicable of the divine nature, as being a conformity to the image of God's dear Son, Christ in the heart the hope of glory. (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:27.) By being brought, then, within the compass of the promises we become children and heirs of them; (Gal. 4:28; Heb. 6:17;) and as they are applied with power, they are all found to be "in Christ yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." (2 Cor. 1:20.) It was by thus believing the promise that our father Abraham was justified, as the Apostle declares: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." (Rom. 4:20-22.) In his steps his children walk, and thus are blessed with him. (Rom. 4:11; Gal. 3:9.) The promise comes, faith believes, hope expects, patience waits; and so through faith and patience they inherit the promises. (Rom. 15:4; Heb. 6:12, 17-20.)

3. And as the promises are made sweet and precious, as earnest and foretastes of the gospel, and thus establish the power of the word upon the heart, so when the *gospel itself* is made "the power of God unto salvation," it beyond everything seals and ratifies this power and authority of the word. This is what the Apostle sets forth so clearly and blessedly in his first epistle to the Thessalonians: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord; having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." (1 Thess. 1:4-6.) "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thess. 2:13.) It is the peculiar province of faith to believe the gospel; but this faith must "stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," (1 Cor. 2:5,) that it may be a saving faith. When, then, the gospel comes "not in word only," as it does to thousands, "but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," as it only does to the elect of God, (1 Thess, 1:4,) by this power faith is raised up and drawn forth. By this faith the gospel is received, "not as the word of men," which might be weak and worthless, and is sure to be inoperative and inefficacious, but "as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe." How evidently does this show, not only the power of the word, but that the gospel is that power, and that it is, if we may use the expression, a working power effectually moulding the heart, giving grace to the lips, and producing all holy obedience in the life. But as the gospel is a message from God, a proclamation of mercy and grace—the best news that ever reached a poor sensible sinner's ears, for it proclaims pardon and peace, reconciliation and acceptance, through the blood and righteousness of Christ, so it is but the herald of advance to announce the nearer coming of the Son of God himself. It is, as it were, the chariot in which he rides "paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem." (Song Sol. 3:10.) We do not wish to separate, except for the sake of distinctness, the gospel from him who is the sum and substance of it, nor the belief of the gospel from the revelation of Christ in and by the gospel, as these are often made manifest at one and the same moment. But for the sake of obtaining clearer views of the subject, we shall make a distinction between believing the gospel and the personal manifestation of Christ. Thus the disciples evidently believed the gospel and received Christ's words; (John 15:3; 16:30; 17:8;) and still they were as yet unacquainted with the special manifestations of Christ, as is evident from the question of Judas,

not Iscariot, and the Lord's answer. (John 14:22, 23.) So in many cases now, and we may add it was much our own experience, there is a believing the gospel prior to the revelation of the Son of God with power to the soul.

4. When, then, the blessed Lord *reveals himself* to the soul in his glorious Person, finished work, atoning blood, and dying love, then it is with the willing heart almost as it was when the risen and ascended King of Zion entered the courts of heavenly bliss: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." (Psa. 24:7.) Surely the posts of the doors of the heart are moved at his appearance as of the King in his beauty. (Isa. 6:4; 33:17.) His eternal Deity and Sonship on the one hand and his pure spotless humanity on the other, uniting to form his one glorious Person as Immanuel, God with us, are presented to the eye of faith. As he thus appears in his glory, the understanding is divinely illuminated, the conscience purged, the heart melted and broken, and the affections drawn forth to embrace this glorious Lord as the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. And as this revelation of Christ, though necessarily supernatural, has nothing in it visionary or enthusiastic, but is a most sober and substantial reality, so it is always attended with, or followed by the word of truth, either to communicate or confirm it. Sometimes it communicates it; that is, through the word applied and believed the Lord reveals himself to the soul, as very frequently, for instance, under the preached word, and often in private by the applied, without the medium of the preached word. Sometimes the word does not so much communicate it as it follows upon and confirms the inward revelation of the Son of God: "Or ever I was aware my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib," or "a willing people;" (Song 6:12;) that is, the soul is unexpectedly, as it were, ravished with the appearance of the King in his beauty, without any particular word from his lips. But passages flow almost immediately in to explain, confirm, and settle what has been thus transacted between the Lord and the soul without the immediate instrumentality of the word itself. This is like a second feast, a sitting under the shadow of the Beloved with great delight, and finding his fruit sweet to the taste. (Song 2:3.)

We thus see how the word of God is established in its power and authority in the heart, not only by its strength to pull down, but by its strength to build up; by its mission to heal, as well as by its mission to kill. If we may say of it what the Apostle declares of an earthly magistrate, that it "beareth not the sword in vain," we may also add, it "is the minister of God for good." (Rom. 13:4.) The word of a king would be spoiled of half of its authority if life as well as death

were not in the power of his tongue; (Prov. 18:21;) and if he could not, as supreme, (1 Pet. 2:13,) show mercy as well as judgment, pardon as well as punish. And so, is there not one supreme Law-giver who is able to save and to destroy? (Jas. 4:12.) When David measured Moab with two lines, the one to put to death and the other to keep alive, (2 Sam. 8:2,) the line of life was as much the king's line, and as much stretched by his authority as the line of death. The stretching of both these lines over the heart, of law and gospel, of the curse and the blessing, of the killing and the making alive, of the wrath of the king as the messenger of death and the light of his countenance as life and his favour as a cloud of the latter rain, (Prov. 16:14, 15,) makes the Lord at once both feared and loved. By the one the soul is preserved from presumption, and by the other from despair; and thus by the combined impressions of judgment and mercy, God is served acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Heb. 12:28.)

But this manifestation of Christ to the soul is attended with peculiar blessings which not only are in themselves exceedingly precious, and prove the revelation to be genuine—not "the child of fancy richly dressed," but "the living child," but still more fully confirm the power and authority of the word of the Lord.

1. First, it makes the word itself exceeding *sweet and precious*. Jeremiah knew this experimentally when he said, "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;" (Jer. 15:16;) and so felt the Psalmist: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." (Psa. 119:103.) Nor was Job without an experience of the same sweetness of the word when he said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:12.) Does not, then, this tasting of the sweetness of the word establish its power in the heart in the surest and most convincing way?

2. It *sweeps away the unbelief and infidelity* of the carnal reasoning mind. Perhaps few of his readers have been more tempted by unbelief and infidelity than the writer of these lines; but he knows from blessed experience how a revelation of the glorious Person of the Son of God to the soul sweeps away as with one stroke, at least for a time, all these hosts of hell. Not a single doubt of the Deity, Sonship, and pure humanity of the Son of God can stand before the revelation of the glorious King of Zion; and if the unworthy author of these Meditations has been enabled in former papers to trace out the Deity and Sonship, and the spotless humanity of the blessed Redeemer with any degree

of light and life in his own soul, or with any measure of instruction and edification to his readers, he must thankfully ascribe it to what he has been favoured to see of these divine realities by the eye of faith in the person of the God-man.

3. It therefore *harmonises the whole word* of God from first to last. As the incarnate Word was "set for the fall" as well as "the rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which should be spoken against," so it is with the written word; it is made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block "to those to whom God hath given the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear." (Luke 2:34; Rom. 11:9.) This is the reason why men like Colenso and his followers stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. (1 Pet. 2:8.) Ever on the watch for difficulties and objections, they easily find or make what they seek; and as quarrelsome people readily pick a quarrel, so do they in a moment quarrel with a straw if it seem to lie awry across their reasoning, counting, calculating path. But by so doing they only fall into their own nets, whilst the godly withal escape. (Psa. 141:10.) Truly does Wisdom speak: "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge." (Prov. 8:8, 9.) But being destitute of a heavenly mind and of that divine anointing which teacheth of all things, and is truth and no lie, (1 John 2:27,) such men "speak evil of those things which they know not; and even what they know naturally," as arithmetic and logic, "in these things they corrupt themselves," (Jude 10,) abasing their very knowledge to attempt to prove God a liar.

4. A view of Christ by faith also *produces submission* to the will of God, a leaving of all things in his hand, and a laying at his feet a thousand difficult questions in providence and in grace, which at other times, the more they are thought of, the more do they rack and perplex the mind, both as regards ourselves and others. We cannot enlarge upon this point, but it is surprising to find what hard knots a believing view of Christ unties, what crooked things it makes straight, and what a complete answer it is to the sullen objections of our perverse spirit, bearing the soul, as it were, on a full wave over those sunken rocks on which so many gallant ships founder, into a harbour of peaceful rest.

5. Another effect which we must name as produced by the personal manifestation of Christ to the soul is the *place which it gives the precept* in the

heart. All who study with any measure of divine light and life the pages of the New Testament, and pay any attention to such portions of it as the sermon on the mount and the preceptive parts of the Epistles must clearly see and feel what an important place the precept occupies in the inspired word. Take, for instance, the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the Colossians, and it will be found that at least half of each of these epistles is occupied with the precept, blended it is true with doctrine and experience, but enforcing, in the plainest manner, practical obedience. But these holy, godly, practical precepts are in our day either wholly overlooked, or distorted into legal duties, the reason being that they have not that place in the heart which they have in the word of truth. And yet by this preceptive portion of the gospel are explained and enforced all that practical obedience, all that godliness of life, all that holiness of walk and conversation which mark the followers of the Lamb, and whereby their heavenly Father is glorified. But as this obedience must be spiritual not carnal, evangelical and not legal, of the heart and not of the lip, to the glory of God and not to the exaltation of self, it can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. As, therefore, the Lord Jesus, under the power and unction of the Holy Ghost, reveals himself to the soul, and takes his place as Lord of the heart, obedience to the precept is produced by the same power and influence as the faith, hope, and love by and in which he is received. The precept, therefore, under these divine influences, comes into its right, its scriptural, and spiritual position, occupying that place in the heart which it occupies in the word of truth, and is seen and felt to harmonise in the most gracious and blessed manner with every holy doctrine, every precious promise, and every sweet manifestation. We would willingly enlarge here, and show how productive this is of all practical obedience in attending to the ordinances of God's house, and how it embraces and extends itself to every relationship in life, and is as remote from all Antinomian carelessness and licentiousness as it is from legal service and Pharisaic righteousness. But as it is in our mind, the Lord enabling us, on some future occasion to make this point the subject of our Meditations, as being in our view, though much disregarded, yet full of profitable instruction, we shall content ourselves with thus briefly touching on one of the most important and, we must say, least understood points of our most holy faith.

6. Our limits warn us to close, and yet we cannot bring our subject to a conclusion without naming another point closely connected with the power and authority of the word of God on the heart as established by a believing view of the Son of God. It is this: A *firm support* is needed amidst all the storms of temptation, seas of affliction, and seasons of desertion and distress

which are the appointed lot of the mystical members of Christ, and whereby they are conformed to his suffering image. We see how our gracious Lord was supported and upheld by the word of God from the moment when he said, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart," (Psa. 40:7, 8,) to his last expiring breath, when, with the word of truth in his mouth, he meekly said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."* (Psa. 31:5; Luke 23:46.) In a similar way the power of the word is needed to hold up the soul in seasons of trial and temptation. Abraham's case is full to the point. What but the promise that he should have a son by Sarah held him up for five-and-twenty years, in the very face of carnal reason and unbelief, against hope believing in hope, until after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise? (Rom.4:18; Heb. 6:15.) And what but the word of the Lord strengthened him to offer up Isaac, when grown up, as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah? This hanging of the soul upon the word is beautifully unfolded in Psalm 119, in such expressions as, "Thy word have I hid in my heart;" (ver. 11;) "I trust in thy word;" (ver. 42;) "I have hoped, or I hope in thy word;" (ver. 74, 81; 114, 147) "I rejoice at thy word;" (ver. 162) Thy word is true from the beginning;" (ver. 160;) "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever." (Ver. 152.) All these and similar expressions with which the Psalm is filled show how the man of God hung upon the word as the prop of his soul in every trying hour. "When the enemy," we read, "shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." (Isa. 59:19.) But how? Not in a visionary way, but by the word applied with power, and thus believed, pleaded, hung upon, and its fulfilment patiently expected.

* To open and unfold this point is beyond our present scope, and to handle it properly would require much wisdom and grace; but that our blessed Lord was upheld by the power of the word is plain from the history of the temptation in the wilderness, from his words to Peter before his crucifixion, (Matt. 27:53, 54,) to the disciples going to Emmaus, and to the rest of the disciples just before his ascension. (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47.) That the Scriptures should be fulfilled, and the will of God revealed in them be fully accomplished, held him up in his path of suffering obedience.

But we must draw our Meditations to a close; not that the subject is exhausted, but because our limits warn us to restrain our pen.

It is not our intention to pursue the subject, at least not under its present form, but to close it with the closing year. We have not been able, indeed, to carry out our expressed intention, to show the aspect which the word bears to the world as well as to the Church, and what it will be in the hands and in the mouth of the great Judge to all who have heard it, but disbelieved or disobeyed it. Let it be sufficient for the present to quote the Lord's own words: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48.)

And now what remains but for us to commend our Meditations on "The Authority and Power of the Word of God" to his most gracious disposal, in the prayerful hope that he who has magnified his word above all his name (Psa. 138:2) will attend with the unction of his grace our feeble attempt to set it forth in the light of Scripture and experience? and should he kindly deign to bless it to any of his dear family, to him writer and reader will gladly unite in ascribing all the praise.