My Friend,

Albeit I judge I did fully answer to all thy arguments in that conference we had, concerning the necessity and possibility of inward immediate revelation, and the certainty of true faith from thence proceeding; nevertheless, because after we had made an end, and were parting, thou wouldest needs remit to my further consideration the strength of thy argument, as that in which thou supposedst the very hinge of the question to lie: that I might satisfy thy desire, and that the truth might more appear, I did further consider of it, but the more I weighed it, I found it the weaker. And therefore that thou thyself mayest make the truer judgment of it, I thought meet to send thee my further considerations thereon; (which I had done ere now, had not I, both at London and elsewhere, been diverted by other necessary occasions,) wherein I doubt not, but thou wilt perceive a full and distinct answer to thy argument. But if thou canst not as yet yield to the truth, or thinkest mine answer in any part to be defective, as that there yet remains with thee any matter of doubt or scruple; I do earnestly desire thee, that as I for thy sake, and out of love to the truth, have not been wanting to examine thy argument, and to transmit to thee my considerations thereon; so thou mayest give thyself the trouble to write and send me what thou hast further to say: which my friend, N.N. who delivers thee this will, at what time thou shalt appoint, receive from thee, and transmit to me thy letter; that at last the truth may appear where it is.

And that the whole matter may the more clearly be understood, it will be fit in the first place, to propose thy argument, whereby thou opposest the immediate revelation of God in the Saints: thence concluding thou hast fully overturned the foundation of the people called Quakers. Which argument of thine is;

That since, (as thou judgest,) the being and substance of the Christian religion consisteth in the knowledge of; and faith concerning, the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ Jesus, thou considerest the substance of the Christian religion as a contingent truth; which contingent truth is matter of fact. Whence thou reasonest, that:

Matter of fact cannot be known but by the relation of another, or by perception of the outward senses; because there are naturally in our souls no ideas of contingent truths, such as are concerning necessary truths: to wit, that God is; and that the whole is greater than the part.--And since it may without absurdity be said that

God cannot make a contingent truth to become a necessary truth; neither can God reveal contingent truths or matters of fact, but as contingent truths are revealed: but matters of fact are not revealed but by the outward senses.--From whence thou concludest that

Men are not even obliged to believe God producing any revelation in the soul concerning the matter of fact, whether of a thing done, or to be done, unless there be added some miracles obvious to the outward senses, by which the soul may be ascertained, that the revelation cometh from God

All this thou endeavourest also to prove from the Scripture, Romans 10, where the saith, "Faith cometh by hearing:" and because the apostle speaketh afterwords of those who were sent in the plural number; thence thou concludest that to be spoken of outward preaching by the ministry of men: and since the apostle uses a question, saying, "How shall the believe unless they hear," thou gatherest from the indiction and connection of the text, that the apostle treats only of outward hearing; thence concluding, that without outward hearing, faith cannot be produced: and therefore, that there can be no immediate
revelation by the simple operation of the Spirit in the mind, unless there be somewhat proposed to the outward senses.

Before I proceed to a direct answer to this argument, some things are necessary to be premised:

First, then; that is falsely supposed, that the essence of the Christian religion consists in the historical faith and knowledge of the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. That faith and historical knowledge is indeed a part of the Christian religion; but not such an essential part, as that without which the Christian religion cannot consist: but an integral part, which goes to the completing of the Christian religion; as the hands of feet of a man are integral parts of a man, without which nevertheless a man may exist, but not an entire and complete man.

Secondly, if by immediate revelation be understood such a revelation of God, as begets in our souls an historical faith and knowledge of the birth of Christ in the flesh, without the means of holy Scripture, we do not content for such a revelation, as commonly given, or to be expected by us, or any other Christians. For albeit many other evangelical truths be manifested to us by the immediate manifestation of God, not using the holy Scripture as the means; yet the historical knowledge of Christ is not commonly manifested to us, nor to any others, but by the holy Scripture, as the means, and that by way of a material object: even as when we see the person of Peter or Paul to our visive faculty immediately, yet not without the medium of that person concurring as a material object to produce that sight; while the light of the sun concurs, as the formal object of that visit or sight. So then when we livingly and spiritually know the history of the birth of Christ in the flesh; the inward revelation or illumination of God which is like the sun's light, proceeding for the divine sun, doth shine into the eye of the mind, and by its influence moves the mind to assent unto the historical truth of Christ's birth, life, &c. in the reading or hearing the Scripture, or mediating therein.

Thirdly, nevertheless, we do firmly assert, that God can most easily, clearly, and certainly manifest to our minds the historical truths of Christ's birth, &c. when it so pleaseth him, even without the Scripture, or any other outward means. And because this argument seems to be formed against the possibility of such a revelation, therefore I shall proceed to discuss it: but first thou mayest mind, that the prophets who foretold Christ's coming in the flesh, and being to be born of a virgin, and afterwards to suffer death, did know these truths of fact by the inward inspiration of God, without outward means: for which see I Peter 1:10-11. Now that which hath been may be.

Fourthly, this argument doth conclude, that we cannot naturally know any truth of fact, but by the relation of another without us, or by the perception of the outward senses; because there are naturally in our minds no ideas concerning contingent truths, (and every truth of fact is a contingent truth,) as there are of necessary truths. This then proveth, that we cannot naturally know any contingent truth, but by the relation of another, or perception of the outward senses: but that hindreth not, but we may know a contingent truth by a supernatural knowledge, God supplying the place of an outward relator; who is so true, that he may, out ought to be believed, since God is the fountain of truth.

Fifthly, when God doth make know unto men any matter of fact by divine immediate revelation or inspiration, God speaking as to the ear of the heart, of the inward man, or as by his finger writing therein, two things are to be considered in such an immediate revelation.

The material, the matter of fact, or thing revealed, which is contingent,

The formula, the form or mode, how the revelation is made: which form is an inward, divine, and supernatural revelation, which is the voice or speech of God, inwardly speaking to the ear of the inward
man or mind of man, or a divine writing supernaturally imprinted therein. Now as to the material part, or the thing and matter revealed, this is indeed a contingent truth, and of itself is not manifest to the mind; but because of the form, that is, because of the divine mode, and supernatural inward operation, the matter is known to be true. For that divine and supernatural inward operation, which the mind doth feel and perceive in itself, is the voice of God speaking unto man, which by its nature and specific property is as clearly distinguished and understood to be the voice of God, as the voice of Peter or James is known to be the voice of such men. For every being as a being is knowable, and that by its own specific nature, or property proceeding from its nature; and hath its proper idea, by which it is distinguishable from every other thing, if so be its idea be stirred up in us, and clearly proposed to us.

Sixthly: now as some beings are natural, some supernatural, so some ideas are natural, some supernatural: and as when any natural idea is realised, we clearly know it; so also when a supernatural idea is raised, we clearly know that, whereof it is the idea. But the voice of God speaking to the mind of man, is a supernatural being, and stirreth up in us a supernatural idea, by which we clearly know that inward voice to be the voice of God, and not the voice or operation of another, or of any evil spirit, or angel, because none of these have a supernatural idea, as the voice of God, and his divine operation hath: for it is full of vigour, virtue, and divine glory, as saith the psalmist, who had often experience of it; and we also in our measures are witnesses thereof, for the voice of God is known to be his by its divine virtue.

Seventhly: the senses are either outward or inward: and the inward senses are either natural or supernatural; we have an example of the inward natural sense in being angered or pacified, in love and hatred; or when we perceive and discern any natural truth, such as the natural maxims, to wit, that the whole is greater than the part, &c. or when we deduce any conclusion by the strength of natural reason, that perception also in a larger sense, may be called an inward sense. But an example of an inward supernatural sense is, when the heart or soul of a pious man, feels in itself divine motions, influences, and operations, which sometimes are as the voice or speech of God, sometimes as a most pleasant and glorious illustration or visible object to the inward eye, sometimes as a most sweet savour or taste, sometimes as an heavenly and divine warmness, or, so to speak, melting of the soul in the love of God. Moreover, this divine and supernatural operation is in the mind of man, is a true and most glorious miracle; which when it is perceived by the inward and supernatural sense divinely raised up in the mind of man, doth so evidently and clearly persuade the understanding to assent to the thing revealed, that there is no need of an outward miracle: for this assent is not because of the thing itself, but because of the revelation proposing it, which is the voice of God. For when the voice of God is heard in the soul, the soul doth as certainly conclude the truth of that voice, as the truth of God's being, from whom it proceeds.

These things being thus premised, I now proceed to a direct answer. For what is said, that God cannot make a contingent truth to become a necessary truth, I agree; but when any contingent truth is manifest to us by the immediate revelation of God, there is in it two things to be considered, to wit, the thing revealed, which is contingent; and the revelation itself: which upon the supposition, that it is a divine revelation, is no contingent truth, but a most necessary truth. And this all mankind will say, that this proposition, every divine revelation is necessarily true, is as clear and evident, as that proposition, that every whole is great than its part.

But thou wilt say; how knowest thou that a divine revelation is a divine revelation? I answer, how knowest thou that a whole is whole, and a part is a part? thou wilt say, by the natural idea excited in me of a whole, and of a part. I answer again; even so a divine revelation is know to be such by a supernatural idea of divine revelation stirred up in us, and that by a divine motion, or supernatural operation. But it is no wonder that men, who have no experience of supernatural ideas, or at least do not heed them, do deny them which is, as if a man naturally blind denied light or colours; or a deaf man
sounds, because they experience them not. Therefore, we cannot dissemble, that we feel a fervent zeal
even divinely kindled in us against such an absurd opinion, as affirms, that God cannot ascertain us of
his will in any contingent truth, but by proposing it to the outward senses. This opinion does in a manner
turn men into brutes., as if man were not to believe his God, unless he propose what is to be believed to
the outward senses, which the beasts have in common with us; yea, it derogates from God's power, and
imputes weakness to him, as if he could not do that, which not only both good and evil angels can do,
but which the meanest creatures can do, and the most insensible. As for instance: the heat of the fire, the
coldness of the air and water worketh upon us; yea, if a pin prick us, we feel it, and that by the outward
sense; because the object are outward and carnal: but since God is a most pure and glorious spirit, when
he operateth in the innermost parts of our minds by his will; shall not he and his will be clearly felt
according to his nature, that is, by a spiritual and supernatural sense? For as the nature of God is, so is
the nature of his will, to wit, purely spiritual, and therefore requireth a spiritual sense to discern it; which
spiritual sense, when it is raised up in us by a divine operation, doth as clearly and certainly know the
voice or revelation of the will of God, concerning any thing which God is pleased to reveal, however
contingent, as the outward sense knows and perceives the outward object. And it is no less absurd, to
require of God, who is a most pure spirit, to manifest his will to men by the outward sense, else not to be
credited; as to require us to see sounds, and hear lights and colours. For as the objects of the outward
sense are not to be confounded, but every object is to have its proper sense; so must we judge of inward
and spiritual objects, which have their proper sense, whereby they are to be perceived. And tell me, how
God doth manifest his will concerning matters of fact, when he sends his angels to me, since angels, (as
is commonly received,) have not outward sense, or at least not so gross ones, as ours are? Yea, when
men die, and appear before the tribunal of God, whether unto eternal life or death, how can they know
this, having laid down their bodies, and therewith their outward sense? And nevertheless this truth of
God is a truth in fact, as is the historical truth of Christ's birth in the flesh. And which is yet more near:
how do good and holy men even in this life most certainly know, that they are in the favour and grace of
God? no outward revelation doth make this know unto them; but the spirit, as saith the apostle, bearth
witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.(5) For the mere testimony of a human
conscience, without inward testimony of the holy Spirit, cannot beget in us a firm and immovable
testimony of our sonship, because the heart of man is deceitful; and if the testimony thereof were true, at
most it is but a human testimony, which begeteth in us only a human faith: but that faith, by which holy
men believe they are the sons of God, is a divine faith, which leans upon a divine testimony of the holy
Spirit, witnessing in them that they are the sons of God. Moreover, when a good man feels in himself
that undeclarable joy of the holy Spirit, concerning which the holy Scripture speaks, and which is the
common privilege of the saints, how or whence feels he this joy? Truly, this argument concludes no less
against this heavenly joy, which is begotten in the souls of the saints by the holy Spirit, than it does
against the immediate revelation of God: for there is no natural idea of this spiritual joy, else mere
natural men, yea, such as are profane and ungodly, would feel it as much as the godly: but because it is a
supernatural thing, therefore it can have no true idea but what is supernatural. Moreover, whence is it
that profane men feel sometimes in themselves the wrath of God as fire, when all things, as to the
outward, go as prosperously with them as with the godly, and oftentimes more prosperously? For there
is no natural idea in men of this inward wrath of God. There is also an inward grief oftentimes raised up
in wicked men from the sense of this wrath of God, which very much vexeth and tormenteth their
minds; and nevertheless this grief hath no natural idea in us: for oftentimes wicked men feel not this
sorrow; for God sometimes is, as it were, silent, while the wicked sin, as in Psalm 50.(6)

All which things do clearly demonstrate, that there are in men supernatural ideas of supernatural beings;
which ideas are nevertheless not perceived by us, unless they be stirred up by some supernatural
operation of God, which raiseth up in us supernatural and spiritual senses, which by their nature are as
distinguishable from the natural senses, whether inward or outward, as the natural senses are
distinguished one from another by their specific difference. Of which spiritual senses the Scripture
speaks frequently, as Hebrews 5 and 14,\(^{(7)}\) where is spoken of the spiritual senses in general, by which the spiritual man hath the discerning of good and evil; which good is of a spiritual nature, and conduceth to feed us in a spiritual and divine life; and the evil is of that kind, buy which the spiritual life is in us hurt; to wit, sins, whether carnal or spiritual; all which cannot be discerned but by such who have spiritual senses stirred up in them, as saith the apostle. In other places the Scripture also speaketh of these spiritual senses in particular, as of the spiritual seeing, Psalm 34:9.\(^{(8)}\) Of spiritual hearing, Psalm 85:9.\(^{(9)}\) Of spiritual tasting, Psalm 34:8.\(^{(10)}\) Of spiritual smelling, Song of Songs 1:3.\(^{(11)}\) Of spiritual touching, Acts 17:8\(^{(12)}\) and in many other places of Scripture we read of those spiritual senses in particular. Yea, it is the promise of the gospel, that the glory of God shall be seen of holy men, such as are clean of heart, even in this life: Isaiah 33:17,\(^{(13)}\) Matthew 5:8.\(^{(14)}\) Which were fulfilled in the primitive Christians, see John 1:14,\(^{(15)}\) I John 1:2-4\(^{(16)}\) and in other places of Scripture. 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 4:6.\(^{(17)}\) But what is this vision of God and divine glory, which the souls of the saints enjoy in this life, which is only as the earnest or first fruits of that more abundant glorious vision in the life to come, concerning which the Scripture so much declareth, which is the highest happiness of the immortal soul.

For this argument seemeth to do no less injury to the saints, than to rob them of this most glorious treasure both in this life, and that to come. For there is in us no natural idea of this divine glory, as there is not of God himself which is any ways proportionable unto so great happiness, which the Scripture so much declareth of, by which the godly are rewarded partly in this life, and plenarily in that which is to come. We confess indeed, there is in all men, as well the godly as the ungodly, some sort of idea of God, as of a most perfect being; and that therefore this proposition, there existeth a most perfect being, doth as clearly appear to human understanding, as that the whole is greater than the part: and therefore this proposition, that a most perfect being existeth, ought to be numbered among the principles, that of themselves are manifest. But this idea of God is as manifest to ungodly, as to godly men; yea, it is clearly perceived by the devil, as by the most holy angles: for all the devils know that God is; but yet how blind is the devil, and all wicked men, as to the vision of God, which is the chief reward of the saints.

There is then either no such vision of God, neither in this life, nor in that to come; or there is a supernatural idea of God in us, by which we are made capable of this vision; which supernatural idea of God differeth much from that natural idea of God, which Cartesius and his followers so much talk of, (albeit others long before Cartesius did observe this natural idea of God and spoke of it.) But the happiness of the saints consists not in contemplating this natural idea of God, else the wicked would be as happy as the godly; yea, the very devil as the most holy angel: since, as is said, both the devil and the most wicked men do as clearly perceive this natural idea of God, as the most holy men or angels.

If the Scripture then be true, there is in men a supernatural idea of God, which altogether differs from this natural idea: I say, in all men; because all men are capable of salvation, and consequently of enjoying this Divine vision. Now this capacity consisteth herein, that they have such a supernatural idea in themselves: for if there were no such idea in them, it were impossible they should so know God. For whatsoever is clearly and distinctly known by its proper idea; neither can it other ways be clearly and distinctly known: for the ideas of all things are divinely planted in our souls; for they are not begotten in us by outward objects, or outward causes, as the better philosophy teacheth, but only are by these outward things excited or stirred up. And this is true not only in supernatural idea of God, and things divine, and in natural ideas of the natural principles of human understanding, and conclusions thence deduced by the strength of human reason: but even in the ideas of outward objects, which are perceived by the outward senses; as that noble Christian philosopher Boetius hath well observed; to which also the Cartesian philosophy agreeeth. For when I see any outward object, whether it be a man, or horse, or bird, the outward object does not treat in my yea, nor yet in my mind the idea of those things; for the outward
object does nothing but imprint in our sensible organs a corporeal motion. Now there is nothing in a corporeal motion that can form in us the ideas of those things; for all ideas are of a spiritual nature: now because nothing that is corporeal can produce that which is spiritual, because the less excellent cannot produce the more excellent, else the effect would exceed its cause: which is against all sound reason, that is should bring forth what were of higher and more excellent kind. Therefore all ideas, whether of natural or spiritual things, are divinely implanted in our minds; which nevertheless do not always appear, but sometimes appear, and sometimes are as it were hid in us, and sometimes are stirred up in us by causes outward or inward, and again do as it were sleep and shun our observation, and seem not to be otherways distinguished by our minds, but as thoughts and perceptions of the mind from the mind itself; that is, as the mode from the subject, or as a bodily motion from the body, whereof it is the motion: for as is the relation of a bodily motion to the body, so is the relation of a thought or perception of the mind to the mind. In this nevertheless they differ, that the mind can move itself, and operate in itself: which a body cannot do: but as a body can be moved by another, so also can the mind after this manner be moved by another, and that both by outward and inward causes, but chiefly by God himself, in whose hand all souls and creatures are. But of these things there is enough said at present; and I hope, I have not thus far impertinently philosophised.

As there are then natural ideas concerning the things of the natural world; as for instance, ideas of light and colours, ideas of voice and sound, ideas of savouring and smelling, ideas of tasting and feeling, as of heat and cold, of grief and joy; it follows also, that there are ideas of supernatural things, concerning the divine supernatural things of the divine and supernatural world; as ideas of those things above mentioned in the spiritual world. And as the natural ideas are stirred up in us by outward and natural bodies, so those divine and supernatural ideas are stirred up in us by a certain principle, which is a body in naturals, in relation to the spiritual world, and therefore may be called a divine body; not as if it were a part of God, who is a most pure spirit; but the organ, or instrument of God, by which he worketh in us, and stirreth up in us these ideas of divine things. That is that flesh and blood of Christ, by which the saints are nourished; which is a mystery to all unregenerated and mere natural men, never to be read by them, while they remain in that state.

Now if there be such supernatural ideas, there are also sense, or perceptive faculties, by which those ideas are perceived; for those are two relatives that suppose and infer one another; but in wicked men those senses or faculties do as it were sleep, as the visive faculty of a blind man; but in the godly they are stirred up. Now by these divine and spiritual senses, which are distinct and distinguishable from all the natural faculties of the soul, whether of imagination, or natural reason, spiritual minded men do behold the glory and beauty of God, in respect whereof, and for which, all the glory of this world is despicable to them; yea, even as dross and dung. And they also hear God inwardly speaking in their soul, words truly divine and heavenly full of virtue and divine life; and the savour and taste of divine things, and do, as it were, handle them with the hands of their souls. And those heavenly enjoyments do as really differ in their nature from all false similitudes, and fictitious appearances of them, which either the mind of man by its own strength can imitate, or any evil spirit to deceive man can counterfeit; as a true man differs from the dead image of a man, or true bread, honey, wine or milk, doth differ from the mere picture of those things. And albeit either the imagination of man, or subtilty of the devil may counterfeit false likenesses of these enjoyments, but which men may be deceived; and no doubt many are deceived; that doth not hinder, but that those divine enjoyments are clearly perceived in such, in whom the divine and spiritual senses are truly opened, and the true supernatural idea of those things truly raised up.

And if there be at any time a mistake, the divine illumination is not the cause of that mistake, but some evil disposition of the mind; as happeneth in those things relating to natural reason. For there are many false appearances of reason, which differ as much from true reason, as those false and pretended revelations, and diabolic inspirations from such as are truly divine. Now, how many men who would be
esteemed philosophers, are miserable deceived by those false likenesses of reason, judging their false reasons to be the true similitudes of things and solid ratiocinations; which nevertheless moveth no man of sound reason, to reject sound and solid reason, as doubtful and uncertain? For even sound natural reason is an excellent gift of God, and very useful to mankind, when used in its proper place: but let none think to comprehend by their natural reasons things that are of a divine and supernatural kind. And as we use to do, when any one is deceived by false appearances of reason, we endeavour to reduce them to contemplate the first natural ideas of things, and to meditate therein, which is as a test or touchstone, by which all the appearances and likenesses of reason are to be examined; if they contradict them, to be rejected; so also when any one is deceived by his own imagination, or the cunning of Satan, thinking any evil inspiration of the devil to be a true divine revelation, he that is so deceived, is to be reduced to the natural ideas of things, (if so be that pretended revelation doth contradict them, for no true divine revelation can contradict the true natural ideas,) or to the supernatural ideas of divine things, which are most simple, clear, and obvious to the minds of men, if they will turn their minds to the divine seed in them; or at least those ideas that are readily and easily stirred up. For as in natural ideas, so in supernatural, some are more easily raised than others: for there is a certain order both of natural and supernatural ideas, whereby they are gradually excited: nor is there any mortal man, in whose mind at some time or other there is not stirred up some idea that is truly supernatural and divine, and who hath not felt in himself both the wrath and judgment of God for his sins; and also some tender and gentle taste of God's love and goodness, by which wicked men are invited to repentance. Now that which is thought to be a divine revelation, and is felt to contradict any divine and supernatural idea, which is clearly perceived in the soul it is a manifest token that it is not a divine revelation, but either a false imagination, or the wicked suggestion of some evil spirit.

But to proceed: if we will hear the Scripture, (as all Christians ought,) it testifies to us, that God hath declared his mind and will even concerning contingent truths to come, in the prophets; as that of the first to the Hebrews doth evidently declare: "God, who as sundry times, and in divers manners spoke to our fathers in the prophets."[18] Yea, let us hear the prophets themselves; Hosea, chapter 1, saith plainly, "That the word of the Lord was made in him,"[19] as it is in the Hebrew. Habakuk also says, as he was standing on his watch to see what Jehovah would speak in him.[20] And it is so manifest that the most heavenly revelations are by inward illustrations, and inspirations in the very minds of the prophets, that it is strange how any that believe in the Scripture should doubt of it. And if it happened at any time, such revelations were made in the natural imaginings of the prophets, or any of their inward natural senses, then it may be confessed, they could not be infallibly certain they came from God; unless they also felt God in the divine and supernatural senses, by which they did most nearly approach to him, from these superior and most inward senses, working upon the lower and less noble faculties of the mind. But whichever way the prophets were certain, that they were inspired of God, even when they foretold contingent truths to come, it is without doubt, they were most certainly persuaded, that they were divinely inspired, and that frequently without any outward miracle. For John the Baptist did no miracle; and many prophesied, where there appeared no miracle: as in the Scripture may be often observed. And we also by the inspiration of the same Divine spirit, by which the prophets prophesied, do believe their words and writings to be divine, concerning contingent truths as well past as to come; else that faith, by which we believe the Scripture, would not be divine, but merely human. And thence we need no outward miracles to move us to believe the Scriptures; and therefore much less were they necessary to the prophets who wrote them. For we see in many places of the prophets, where they declare prophesies as revealed to them of God, there is not a word mentioned of any outward miracle, as that by which alone they were certain of it.

Moreover, the falseness of this argument doth appear, in that the Scripture doth declare many contingent truths to have been revealed to the prophets in dreams. Now as natural and wicked men do not see what they dream by a real perception of the outward senses, but by inward ideas which are presented to the
mind, and perceived by it, so it is also in divine revelations of this nature. Of which we have a clear example in Joseph, the husband of the blessed Virgin, who, when he observed his wife with child, was told in a dream, that she had conceived by the Holy Ghost: now I would know, to which of Joseph's outward senses was this revealed? or what miracle had he to induce him to believe? which could neither be proved, so as to make an infallible application to Mary, by the testimony of the Scripture; and which being against the natural order, did chokc his reason. The Scripture mentions no miracle in this matter; and yet no doubt Joseph had highly sinned had he not believe this revelation, and notwithstanding, rejected his wife as an adulteress. But if thou sayest, that according to thy hypothesis, there must have been a miracle; that is only to beg the question: and how false this hypothesis is the apostle shows clearly, 1 Corinthians 2:14 \(^{22}\) the natural or animal man knoweth not, receiveth not, the things of God. 

Now divine revelations are of this nature; if either chiefly or only those things were to be judged by the outward senses, it would contradict the apostle. For natural men, yea, the most wicked, haveth the use of the outward senses as true and exact as the most godly. And whereas the apostle adds, "for they are spiritually discerned," it puts the matter out of all question: for thence it abundantly appears, that this discerning is not by the outward senses according to the follow verse; for the apostle saith, "the spiritual man judgeth all things;" this then must be done by some senses or properties peculiar to the spiritual man, and in which he excels the natural man, which is not in the outward senses, as we all do know. Therefore the perception of spiritual things cannot be by the outward senses, either as the chief or only means as is falsely contended for.

Now as to these words of the apostle, Roman 10. \(^{24}\) That faith comes by hearing; Zuimglius observed well, that the apostle intended not to affirm faith to come by the hearing of the outward word; neither do the following words prove it, "How shall they believe, unless they hear? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, unless they be sent?" for the apostle uses these words, not as arguments, but as objections which might be formed; as the same apostle uses in other places; to which objections he answers in the same chapter, as appears verse 18. "But I say, have not they all heard? yes, truly their voice went into all the earth:" that is, of the Father and Son, or the Father in the word; which word is not only near us, but according to the same apostle in the same chapter, in our mouths, and in our hearts. But further thou canst conclude nothing from this, but that faith is begotten by outward hearing only, an no otherwise: for this is the strength of thy argument, that since faith cannot be without outward hearing, therefore nothing can certainly be believed, but where somewhat is proposed to the outward hearing. For if thou acknowledge faith can be begotten any otherwise than by hearing, thou losest the strength of thy argument: and if that argument hold, that faith comes only by outward hearing, the destroyest the whole hypothesis. For having before affirmed, that outward miracles are sufficient to render one certain of the truth of any revelation, whether it be the healing of the sick, or the raising of the dead, would avail nothing, because those, (as for the most part all miracles,) are obvious to the sight, not to the hearing: and if it be not by outward hearing only, thou canst conclude nothing from this place.

But I the more wonder thy using this argument, considering the discourse we had together before we entered upon this debate: for when we were speaking of the opinion of a certain person, who denied the certainty of every thing, but what was discerned by the outward senses, thou condemnest it as most absurd; but why, I cannot conceive, since there is no great difference betwixt these two opinions; the one saith there can be no great certainty concerning any truths, whether they be necessary or contingent, but by the perception of the senses: the other affirms the same of contingent truths, though not of necessary truths. But among the number of contingent truths thou esteemest what belongs to Christian religion, for thou reckons the necessary truths only to belong to natural religion. This then is all the difference, that that other person says, there is no certainty of any religion, neither natural nor Christian, but by the perception of the outward senses: but thou sayest though thou esteemest the certainty of natural religion to be without them, yet not of the Christian religion. But again, since thou esteemest that not natural religion but the
Christian religions is necessary to salvation, thou must necessarily conclude, that those truths which are necessary to salvation, are only know and believed by the benefit of the outward sense: in which conclusion, (which is the sum of all,) thou yieldest the matter to that other person.

But lastly: if all the certainty of our faith, hope, and salvation, did depend upon the infallibility of the outward senses, we should be the most miserable; since these senses can be easily deceived, and, by many outward casualties and natural infirmities, whereunto the godly are no less subject than the wicked, are often vitiated; and there are, (as the Scripture affirms,) false miracles, which, as to the outward, cannot be distinguished from the true; of which we cannot infallibly judge by the outward sense, which only discern what is outward.

There is a necessity then to have recourse to some other means.

From all which it does appear, how fallacious and weak this argument is: but thanks be unto God, who would not that our faith should be built upon so uncertain and doubtful a foundation. And whoever hath known true faith, or hath felt the divine testimony of God's spirit in his soul, will judge otherwise, neither will be moved by such reasonings. I pray God therefore to remove these clouds, which darken thy understanding, that thou mayest perceive the glorious gospel of Christ; that is that saving word of grace which I commend thee unto; and that God may give thee a heart inclinable to believe and obey the truth, is the desire of

Thy faithful friend

R. Barclay

From the prison of Aberdeen, in Scotland, where I am confined for the sake of the testimony of Jesus. November 14, 1676.

-------------

This letter, a year ago, at the desire of my friend R.B. I delivered into the hands of the aforesaid ambassador, desiring his answer in writing, which he then promised; but not having as yet done, it was seen meet to be published.

B.F.(25)

Rotterdam, the 28th of March, 1678.

-------------


As to his argument, as it was transmitted to us, if he considers the strength and substance of it, thus it stands: "the history of the outward coming, nativity, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, is either necessary to their salvation, to whom the Scriptures came, or it is not necessary, viz. to be known and believed. If we say the second, namely, that the history is not necessary to be known and believed in order to the salvation of us Europeans who have the Scriptures, then it will follow that we are not
Christians, because we deny that true, essential, and constitutive character of the Christian religion, which consists in believing that Christ was sent into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, dead and buried, rose again the third day, ascended into heaven, where he sitteth at the right hand of the Father, &c. But if they say the first, viz. that the knowledge and faith of the history are necessary to our salvation, then it will follow, that the Scripture, and not the inward revelation of the holy Spirit, is the principle rule and foundation of that historical faith and knowledge.

Now this endeavours to prove, both from some other principles, of the Quakers, so called, and from R.B.’s sixth Thesis after this manner:

That, said the ambassador, is the principle rule and foundation of our faith, which is the only medium or mean, whereby that historical knowledge and faith are brought unto us: but, according to the Quakers, and the sixth thesis, the Scripture is the principle rule and foundation of our faith.

The minor he proves thus: the author of the thesis, (says he,) confesseth in his sixth thesis, that there is a people, to whom God, by some inevitable accident, hath made that historical knowledge and faith possible: and the reason why that historical knowledge and faith are impossible to that people is because they are destitute of the Scriptures, and live in those corners of the world, whereunto the outward preaching of the history never came; from which argument it will follow, that the Scriptures are the only medium or mean, whereby the historical knowledge and faith of Christ came to any people.

For the clearer understanding the solution of this argument, some things worthy of observation are to be considered:

1. First then observe, that the force of this argument at most intends to prove this, viz. that the Scripture is the principle rule and foundation of historical faith and knowledge; but we with good reason, distinguish between historical and saving knowledge, and between historical and saving faith; because many may have an historical knowledge and faith who have not that which is saving. Yea, it is possible, that a man, by the inward revelation of the holy Spirit, may have an historical knowledge and faith, who yet may not have that faith which is saving; because saving faith hath regard to God, not precisely as revealing some outward history concerning God and Christ but as revealing very God and Christ by his grace, goodness, mercy, and power, ready and willing to save us, according to his unspeakable good will towards us: by which saving faith we rest upon God through Christ, our light and life, as upon our most merciful Father; which faith can neither exist, nor be conceived without love to God, humility before God, denial, and diffidence of self; and therefore such a faith is saving. But historical faith, though wrought in the hearts of men by the inward revelation and operation of the holy Spirit, may be without that divine love, humility, and self-denial: wherefore precisely considered in its own nature, is not saving. It was this kind of knowledge and faith which wicked Balaam had, who saw and knew many historical futurities, and believed them, but had not saving faith.

2. Observe, secondly, that the knowledge and faith necessary to salvation, are to be understood two ways, either by a necessity antecedent, or in way of priority, or by a necessity consequent, or in way of posteriority. Necessity antecedent, or in way of priority, is when something is when something is absolutely necessary to our salvation, that we both know and believe it; and because it is necessary, God doth therefore reveal it to us; of which sort are such principles as these, viz. that God follows men with his love and good will; that he invites and persuades them to come unto him; that he is ready to show favour to men, and pardon their sins, if they sincerely repent themselves of their past misspent life, and lead a new one from the time to come; that God hears the prayers of those that are truly humble and suppliant; that he is a glorious rewarder of all the live soberly, righteously, and godly; that he is a most just avenger against all those who despise his grace and love, and repent not of their sins, &c. All which,
in some degree, are to all men, even to those who are destitute of the Scriptures, revealed by that inward evangelical light, which enlightens all men. Necessity consequent, or in way of posteriority, is when something is not absolutely necessary to our salvation, but after a certain sort, or under some respect, condition, or limitation; of which kind are those things which are not revealed, because they are necessary; but because they are revealed, they are necessary to be believed by us: for example, if God should reveal to any man, that it was his will and command, he should go to Rome to reprove tyranny and superstition; certainly this revelation were necessary to be believe to that man's salvation, by a necessity consequent, because that faith is an act of obedience; and to obey God is necessary to salvation.

3. Observe in the third place, that among those things that are necessary to be believed to salvation by a necessity consequent, there are some things, though not absolutely necessary, yet are they very profitable and conducive means to our salvation; of which sort are the historical knowledge and faith concerning God, the creation and government of the world. Christ's taking flesh, and dying therein for our sins, &c. whether that historical knowledge come to us, either by the sole inward revelation of the holy Spirit, without the medium, or mean of the Scripture, or also by both, to wit, both by the inward inspiration of the holy Spirit, and by the Scriptures; which two mediums or means, do sometimes concur in producing in men historical knowledge and faith concurring God and Christ, as is said before, but in a different manner. The outward revelation, as it is called, of Scripture, is a medium or mean, by way of material object, in producing that historical knowledge and faith: but the inward inspiration and revelation wrought in the hearts of men by the holy Spirit, are a medium or means by way of formal object, in producing the same historical knowledge and faith. By the material object we understand that which is believed; and therefore the Scriptures which are believed, are the material object of historical knowledge and faith. By the formal object we understand the principle motive in respect to the object, for which the Scriptures are believed. But the principle motive in respect of the object, is not the Scripture itself, but that inward testimony of the holy Spirit, which when we hear or read the Scriptures, when it pleaseth the most good and great God to inspire the hearts of men, works an assent in us, whether it inclines us to assent to the historical truths hitherto declared in the Scriptures or no: wherefore we do not affirm that the holy Spirit doth ordinarily and commonly speak in us something that is new, or declare to our inward hearing those particular histories of God and Christ, (though God may, if he shall please, do it at this day;) but we say, that God doth by his holy Spirit, through his sensible and perceptible motions and operations objectively representing themselves, move and incline us to assent unto, and believe the Scriptures, and the historical truths declared of in the Scriptures.

These things considered, we affirm, that though the Scriptures are ordinarily and commonly a certain medium or mean by way of material object or condition, for the producing of historical knowledge and faith in us; and that, commonly speaking, a necessary mean too, as being that without which God doth not ordinarily reveal the outward history of God and Christ; yet we utterly deny that in true Christians the Scripture, or outward history in the Scriptures, is the principle motive, foundation, or principle rule of that historical faith, much less of saving faith, to the producing of which the letter of the Scripture doth very frequently, (as to many of its acts, if not all,) not concur or cooperate, either as a material object, or as a necessary condition, which is wont commonly to be called in the schools, \textit{cause sine qua non}, or a cause or condition without which a thing cannot be done, though it doth not influence the effect.

Now for a direct solution of the argument aforesaid, we answer, that the historical knowledge and faith concerning Christ's being born, dead, buried, &c. to us Europeans, who have the Scriptures, are necessary to salvation, that is to say, by a necessity consequent, or in way of posteriority, (as was before explained,) which assertion of ours revelations militates not against the sixth thesis, which granteth, that that historical knowledge and faith are impossible to those who live in those corners of the world, where the knowledge of the history is wanting: which impossibility is not absolutely to be understood, but after
a sort, and in some respect; because, without doubt, God doth ordinarily communicate that historical knowledge unto men, by the medium or mean of the Scriptures; yet not as the principle medium or mean, much less as by the only one: because certainly that inward motion of the holy Spirit wrought in our hearts, moving and inclining us objectively to assent unto, and believe the Scriptures, is the principle motive in respect of the object, for which we believe the Scriptures, and therefore is the foundation and principle rule of our historical faith also.

Wherefore we answer unto the minor proposition of the last syllogism, by plainly and directly denying that minor proposition, viz. that the Scripts are the only medium or mean for attaining to the knowledge of the history: they are indeed one certain medium or mean, and that necessary; but they are not the only or principle. An example for the illustration hereof, occurs in natural and outward vision: for when I see a white or red rose, that white or red rose is the material object of my sight, and one necessary medium for the producing of that sight; yet that rose is not the only medium or mean; for the light is another, no less necessary, concurring to produce my sight, by way of formal object, by means of which I see that rose represented under such or such a colour and figure. Moreover, in that he asserts, these inward motions wrought by the holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, are so indiscernible by us, that believers cannot clearly and infallibly distinguish them from their own private and proper motions; this he supposes but proves not. And therein he is deceived, either through his inexperience, or want of that due waiting, and attention to those motions in the divine illumination of Christ, wherewith he hath enlightened both him and all men coming into the world. But our experience, together with the experience of the holy prophets and apostles, is a stronger motive to induce us to believe, that divine inward revelation is sufficiently clear and convincing by its own light and evidence, than his own bare and jejune supposition to the contrary, by reason of his want of experience or attention.

As to the Latin, we have not been very curious in this writing, by reason of haste; yet have briefly answered the argument as a friend communicated it to us by letter; if he hath omitted any thing in this transmission, or we may seem not to have understood, or touched the strength of the argument, let it be remitted to us; and we, through divine assistance, shall answer it at large.

George Keith and
Robert Barclay


2. The friend (Benjamin Furly) was apparently not yet known at the time Barclay was writing.

3. Roman 10:14-15: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

4. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

5. Romans 8:16-17: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

6. 6. Psalm 50:16-21: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hastest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother’s son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."

7. 7. Possibly Hebrews 5:11: "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing." The reference to Hebrews 14 is presumably a printing error, given that there is no fourteenth chapter to the book.

8. 8. Also in error; the actual text of Psalm 34:9 reading "O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him."

9. 9. Actual text reads "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land."

10. 10. "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

11. 11. "Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." This is definately stretching the context.

12. 12. Another error; "And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things."

13. 13. Isaiah 33:14-17: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

14. 14. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

15. 15. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

16. 16. "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

17. 17. "But we, all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" and "For God, who commanded the
light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."


19. Probably Hosea 1:1-2: "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.

20. Probably Habakkuk 2:1-2 1: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."

21. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

22. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

23. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

24. Romans 10:12-21: For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

25. Benjamin Furly.

26. "Rule," as in ruler, a scientific instrument used measurement, not rule as in regulations or laws.

27. The sixth thesis from Barclay's Apology: "According to which principle (or hypothesis), all the objections against the universality of Christ's death are easily solved; neither is it needful to recur to the ministry of angels, and those other miraculous means, which, they say, God makes use of, to manifest the doctrine and history of Christ's passion unto such, (who, living in those places of the world where the outward preaching of the gospel is unknown) have well improved the first and common grace; for hence it well follows, that as some of the old philosophers might have been saved, so also may now some (who by providence are cast into those remote parts of the world, where the knowledge of the history is wanting) be made partakers of the divine mystery, if they receive and resist not that grace, "a
manifestation whereof is given to every man to profit withal." (I Corinthians 12:7) This certain doctrine then being received, (to wit) that there is an evangelical and saving light and grace in all, the universality of the love and mercy of God towards mankind (both in the death of his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the manifestation of the light in the heart) is established and confirmed against all the objections of such as deny it. Therefore "Christ hath tasted death for every man:" (Hebrews 2:9) not only for all kinds of men, as some vainly talk, but for every one, of all kinds; the benefit of whose offering is not only extended to such, who have the distinct outward knowledge of his death and sufferings, as the same is declared in the scriptures, but even unto those who are necessarily excluded from the benefit of this knowledge by some inevitable accident; which knowledge we willingly confess to be very profitable and comfortable, but not absolutely needful unto such, from whom God himself hath withheld it; yet they may be made partakers of the mystery of his death (though ignorant of the history) if they suffer his seed and light (enlightening their hearts) to take place; (in which light, communion with the Father and Son is enjoyed) so as of wicked men to become holy, and lovers of that power, by whose inward and secret touches they feel themselves turned from the evil to the good, and learn to do to others as they would be done by; in which Christ himself affirms all to be included. As they then have falsely and erroneously taught, who have denied Christ to have died for all men; so neither have they sufficiently taught the truth, who affirming him to have died for all, have added the absolute necessity of the outward knowledge thereof, in order to the obtaining its saving effect; among whom the Remonstrants of Holland have been chiefly wanting, and many other asserters of Universal Redemption, in that they have not placed the extent of this salvation in that divine and evangelical principle of light and life, wherewith Christ hath enlightened every man that comes into the world, which is excellently and evidently held forth in these scriptures, Genesis 6:3, Deuteronomy 30:14, John 1:7-9, Romans 10:8, Titus 2:11. Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1850, pages 16-18.

28. See Numbers, chapter 22.

29. The Ambassador.