

“Inward” and “Outward”

A study in early Quaker language

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I.

ON almost every page of the writings of early Friends the reader feels that he is being challenged to recognize a contrast. This contrast is expressed most frequently in spatial terms by such correlatives as “inward” and “outward”, “within” and “without”, “internal” and “external”. Sometimes these terms are used simply and without elaboration; at other times they are combined with related pairs of contrasting terms, such as “spiritual” and “carnal” or “mystery” and “history”, which are apparently held to be expressing the same contrast. But from even a cursory examination of these writings it is apparent that these and numerous other similar terms are being used in a variety of senses and in quite different contexts, and the question is raised whether the writers were always fully aware of the violence which was being done to the subtleties and complexities of both thought and experience by this attempt to run them into such starkly contrasted moulds.

It was such reflections as these that led me to think it might be serviceable to undertake an examination of this usage, to see what was the primary meaning of this contrast which obviously signified so much in the experience of early Friends, and to enquire how far this contrast necessarily implied the other contrasts from which early Friends did not, generally speaking, distinguish it. Obviously, within the limits of a single address, I can do no more than lay before you, as fairly as I can, a few typical examples of this early Quaker usage, offer some reflections upon it and suggest one or two directions in which further study and discussion might be profitable and in which all this might have a bearing upon some of our present problems.

There are, obviously, at least two ways in which a study of verbal usage—like the study of a human person—may be made. One is to establish what might be called “laboratory conditions”, to record and count and tabulate and calculate.

This way may well lead to an impressive array of statistics and diagrams—and also to an illusion that the subject is now thoroughly investigated. The other way is to watch the subject, so to speak, in his natural surroundings, to note his casual, unselfconscious actions and glances, and to interpret his thoughts and feelings so far as one's own insight and sympathy give one the key to them. This way produces an impression, a sketch which may, indeed, reveal as much about the observer as about the subject. But, if the observer, on the basis of a similarity of experience, has taken pains to enter into genuine rapport with his subject, he may hope to come closer to a real understanding. With all its limitations and risks, I have chosen, in this study, to follow the latter course.

I shall begin by giving a few examples of the early Quaker use of the terms "inward" and "outward". They are drawn mainly from three groups of writings. The first is the epistles of George Fox and the writings of James Nayler and one or two others. In these, I suggest, we hear the authentic accents of a profound and vivid evangelical Christian experience, relatively uninfluenced by formal education or theological and philosophical reflection. The second group comprises the writings of Isaac Penington, in which a no less genuine Christian experience is expressed through a profoundly mystical personality possessed of marked ability for religious introspection and some metaphysical interests, and, with much more insight and sympathy than Fox or Nayler, consciously relating himself to the emphases of contemporary Puritan religion. The third group comprises the writings of Robert Barclay and William Penn in which, added to all the positive characteristics already referred to, there is a conscious and explicit intention to relate Quakerism to the theological and philosophical interests of the age.

Having thus characterized the sources, I propose now, without any elaborate or formal categorization, to illustrate from them the forms in which the contrast between "inward" and "outward" is treated. Before going further, however, a reference to the dictionary may be useful. There, such terms as "inward", "inner", "inwardly" and their antonyms are recognized as being used in both a literal and a figurative sense. Literally, they refer to spatial relationships in the physical world. Figuratively, they refer to that which pertains to the mind or soul or to thoughts as contrasted with the

objects presented to the senses. Thus, in regard to knowledge, they denote "intimate" as opposed to "casual", "sincere" as opposed to "conventional" or "formal". It would indeed be comparatively easy—but of no particular interest—to show that all these uses of "inward" and "outward" can be found in the writings of early Friends. What is more to my purpose is to draw attention to what appears to be the essence of the contrasts which the writers in each of these three groups respectively are concerned to bring out.

II.

The writers in our first group—and, indeed, all the early Friends—were seeking, by every means in their power, to emphasize the fundamental difference known by them in their own experience, between, on the one hand, a formal or conventional or notional knowledge of Christianity as a body of "revealed truths" and religious and ethical practices and, on the other, a transforming and creative personal acquaintance with and relation to Christ in the Spirit. This latter experience had come to them in most cases after a long period of sincere acceptance of what were understood to be Christian doctrines and a sustained and even laborious practice of what were understood to be Christian precepts. Looking back on the transformation that had come over their experience they could find no better way of expressing it than by saying that whereas, formerly, the object and dynamic of their faith had been altogether "without", now they were discovered to be also "within". Deep within their own beings they had learned to catch the accents of the Divine Word addressing them. No less deep within them, too, they discovered a will to obey and a power to overcome all that hindered obedience.

This, or something like this, is, surely, what James Nayler is saying in these words:

"Dear friends, all minde your guide within you, even the pure light of God, which bears witness against all your ungodly wayes, ungodly words, thoughts, works and worships, which are after the world, and leads you without, from the Lord your guide; for what stands in outward things, devised in the will and brain which is the Serpent's seat, is accursed from God. . . . Therefore turn your minds within and waite for a wisdom from above . . . and as you grow in this pure, you will grow in the knowledge of Christ within you, and this is not to be

attained by seeking without . . . but onely by keeping your eye within to the invisible, and giving diligent ear to that voice that speaks to the soul and spirit, for the ministry of Christ is to the spirit in prison, not to the outward but to the inward ear."¹

It is exactly the same note that we hear sounding with endless reiteration throughout George Fox's epistles.

"See", he says, "if ye do not find something in your understandings made manifest which is Eternal, to guide your minds out of all External things, which wither away and fade".²

A favourite theme with him is the contrast between the literal and the spiritual Jew; thus

". . . as the Jew outward was to offer his Sacrifice in the outward Temple . . . all ye Jews inward, in the Spirit, ye must worship in the Truth and in the Spirit. And so, the Jew inward can worship no where but in the Temple. What Temple? It is not a Temple that is made with Hands . . . So to worship in the Spirit, and in the Truth, is to worship in the Temple, and no where else."³

Nayler, too, often makes the same contrast between the Jewish and Christian dispensations in terms of "outward" and "inward", allowing that

"Temple, Circumcision, Sacrifices, Brazen-Serpent" were "good till set in the place of God", but that, with the coming of Jesus Christ, "the Lord departed out of them, and left them empty and desolate and his next appearance cryed them down without, and set up the substance of them within."⁴

Similarly, the literal characteristics of the Christian dispensations are to be known in their "inward" significance if they are to be of any value. Thus Nayler, after speaking of the Sabbath, of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper, asks:

"Are not all these in him?" (i.e. in Christ) "and doth not he minister all these in spirit to everyone that comes to him? and so the shaddow is come into the substance, the end of all shaddows . . . for the outward makes nothing perfect, but the inward doth, all that come into it, and abide in him . . ."⁵

¹ *A discovery of the first wisdom from beneath, and the second wisdom from above*, 1656, pp. 1, 4.

² *Epistles*, 1698, pp. 16-17. Ep. 19 (1652).

³ *op. cit.*, p. 264. Ep. 260 (1668).

⁴ *A salutation to the seed of God*, 1655, p. 33.

⁵ *op. cit.* p. 7.

In similar vein, Fox says:

"So now people are . . . to be brought from their outward Crosses to the Cross of Christ, the Power of God within them. . . . Then the outward, dead Crosses of Stone, Wood, Silver or Gold they shall not need to put them in Remembrance of Christ, or to bring him into their Minds . . ."¹

It is important, however, to observe that, for all this insistence upon the necessity of "inward" acquaintance, there is no intention of minimizing the significance of the given, historical, "outward" events which lie at the heart of the Christian faith. Thus Nayler can say:

". . . he that believes not what Christ suffered at Jerusalem . . . with much more which may be truly said of him . . . cannot be saved neither can he ever come to receive Christ within him, working and witnessing the same in Spirit as is declared in the letter."²

Two more quotations, this time from less prominent early Quaker writers, must suffice to indicate the general intention of this first group. Joseph Coale, after emphasizing the vital importance of a knowledge of Christ inwardly, by the Spirit, continues:

"Now I do not in the least deny that appearance without, and that which Christ did and suffered; and I say None hath any benefit thereby, but such as wait to feel him revealed *in them*: And this is the Appearance of Christ which we in this our age are to wait for, to wit, the appearance of Christ *in us* to destroy sin and unrighteousness, and to work out the evil corrupt nature, and to change man into his own Heavenly Image . . ."³

And William Smith speaks for all the Quaker writers I have already named when he says:

"And Friends, the Seed is known in the inward, and the Fruit of it is Manifest in the outward, and thereby the Father is glorified."⁴

The indispensability of hearing and obeying the voice of God in the deep inner places of responsible personal existence, the necessity of personal response to the acts of God in history

¹ *op. cit.*, p. 83. Ep. 100 (1655).

² *A salutation to the seed of God*, 1655, p. 21.

³ *A testimony to the Father's love*, 1661, p. 16.

⁴ *A real demonstration of the true order in the Spirit of God*, 1663. As printed in *Balm from Gilead* (Collected Works), 1675, p. 43.

as interpreted and transmitted in Scripture, the refusal to place the heart of religion in doctrine unfertilized by practice, or in tradition or authority unilluminated by personal insight and willing acceptance—these, surely, are some of the things which these early Friends were seeking to emphasize by their use of the terms “inward” and “outward”. We may therefore agree with the assertion of the London Yearly Meeting Epistle of 1835 when it says of “our forefathers in the truth” that

“it was evidently their especial duty, in the Christian Church, to call away their fellow-men from a dependence upon outward forms, to invite their attention to the witness for God in their own bosoms, and to set forth the immediate and perceptible operations of the Holy Spirit.”¹

III.

All this is most evidently true of the writings which form our second group, those of Isaac Penington. As he surveyed the contemporary expressions of Puritan religion, Penington believed that they revealed a serious declension in spiritual life and power from the state in which, as a younger man, he had experienced them. There seemed to him to be now an increasing tendency to rest in a “notional” apprehension, and an inability to discern (or, at any rate, an unwillingness to accept) the necessity of inward spiritual and moral renewal. Looking back, he can say of “professors” that

“in former times . . . they had more inward sense of the Mystery than now they have; and were a great deal more tender . . . than now they are . . . They did not mind so much bare reading, or hearing, or praying, or any outward observation whatsoever, as what they felt therein.”²

But by sad contrast, Penington believes that

“by looking so much outward, and beating their brains, and disputing about the outward, many have very much (if not wholly) lost the sense of the inward, and are found contending for the outward against the very appearance and manifestation of the inward.”³

¹ *Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London, 1858*, Vol. 2, pp. 265-6.

² *Works*, 1681, Pt. 2, pp. 185-6.

³ *ibid.*

Emphasizing thus as they did the "inwardness" of true religion, the early Friends were constantly assailed by the accusation that they "deny Christ . . . as he was manifested without us, but look only to be saved by a Christ in us."¹

To such a charge Penington replies:

"We do indeed expect to be saved . . . by the revelation and operation of the Life of Christ within us; yet not without relation to what he did without us . . . Whoever feels the Light and Life of Christ revealed in him, and comes into union with God therethrough, he feels the work of Regeneration, of Sanctification, of Justification, of Life and Redemption; and so comes to reap benefit inwardly, and to partake of the blessed fruits of all that Christ did outwardly."²

In another tract, Penington even claims for Friends, that

"None upon the Earth (as the Lord God knoweth) are so taught, and do so truly, rightly, and fully own Redemption by the Blood of Christ as the Lord hath taught us to do."³

He continues:

"For we own the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ both outwardly and inwardly, both as it was shed on the Cross, and as it is sprinkled in our consciences."

He goes on to argue that in the first days of Christianity the distinguishing mark of a Christian was "to know and own Christ outwardly, as he appeared in that Body". Subsequently, however, "since the Anti-Christian Spirit hath got that", men are deemed to be Christians on a basis of profession of faith in the outward and historical facts of the life of Christ and a doctrinal interpretation of his "work", and so fail to understand that now "the distinguishing knowledge, and owning of Christ, is to know and own him inwardly".

He clearly implies that the relevant message for his contemporaries, who already were united in an acceptance of and belief in the outward and historical and doctrinal aspects of Christian faith, was the Quaker message concerning the primary necessity of an inner acquaintance with the Spirit and power which these made available.

¹ *Works*, 1681, Pt. 1, p. 459.

² *ibid.*

³ *Works*, 1681, Pt. 2, p. 105.

In addition to his sensitive awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary Puritanism, and of the particular vocation of Friends in relation to it, Penington throughout his writings works out, occasionally and unsystematically, indeed, from this fundamental contrast between "inward" and "outward", what might be called a spiritual epistemology. In this, he prepares the way for the developments which we shall be reviewing when we come to deal with the writings of Barclay and Penn in our third group. This theory of spiritual knowledge is expressed in a variety of ways—in terms of his doctrine of the "two Seeds", the "mystery of Iniquity" and the "mystery of Godliness", the Law and the Gospel—matters which I have treated at some length elsewhere.¹ The essence of his teaching is that

"there is a vast difference between knowing the relations concerning a thing, and knowing the thing related of"; and that "spiritual things cannot be savingly known but in union with them in the receiving of them."²

So that, particularly concerning Christ, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, the essential question is not so much whether men "know what is said of him in the Scriptures; but whether they know it savingly, truly, livingly, powerfully". For it is sadly possible that men "may know what is said of him, and yet not know him of whom those things are said". Penington then argues that "Since the prevailing of the Apostles' Testimony, the way of the Enemy hath not been directly to deny Christ, but to bring men into such a knowledge of Christ as saves not". The truth is, Penington says, that "our knowledge is in a Principle, wherein we receive our capacity of knowing, and wherein the Father (from whom the Principle came) teacheth us. And this is his way of teaching us, to wit, by making us one with the thing he teacheth".

Thus, for Penington, every truth of Christian faith may be known in two ways, or at two levels. It may be known "outwardly" or "according to the flesh", by which he means by tradition or through the exercise of ordinary intellectual

¹ *Early Quaker Christology*, 1956 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Leeds; copy in Friends House Library).

² *Works*, 1681, Pt. 2, p. 5.

powers upon the teaching of Scripture. Or it may be known "inwardly" or "according to the Spirit" by a knowledge of the heart rather than of the head, through moral sensitiveness and obedience rather than through intellectual acuteness. One kind of knowledge works from the "outside", so to speak, by analysis and synthesis of "evidence" or propositions; the other from "within", by intuition and obedience. Whereas, says Penington,

"no man can in truth call Jesus the Lord but by the Spirit", yet "any man that is in anything serious, and weighs the Scriptures in the natural part, may so learn to acknowledge his coming into the World, and that he is Lord and King etc., and may thus call him Lord, yea, and kindle a great heat in his affections towards him; but all this (out of the Life, out of the Spirit) is but man's Image, which he forms in his mind."¹

IV.

When we turn from Penington to Barclay, we are conscious of moving, so to speak, from the Meeting to the Study. Here are all the emphases I have already referred to and illustrated—yet there is a difference, hard to define, but readily apparent to anyone who reads at all extensively in the works of the two writers. I wish first to speak briefly of the *Apology*, where the contrast between "inward" and "outward" shapes the structure of the whole book. Having examined all Barclay's references in the *Apology* to this contrast, it seems to me that the important fact which emerges is that a concept which, as we have seen, was originally religious and experiential has to a large extent been replaced by one which is philosophical. Thus, very frequently indeed, the adjective "inward" is linked with the adjectives "immediate" and even "objective", and the whole phrase "inward and immediate" or "inward, immediate and objective" now usually qualifies the noun "revelation". Thus we read of "the Divine Revelation and Inward Illumination" as

"that which is evident by it self, forcing the well-disposed Understanding, and irresistibly moving it to assent, by its own Evidence

¹ *Works*, 1681, Pt. 2, p. 19.

and Clearness, even as the common Principles of natural Truths do bow the Mind to natural Assent."¹

This mode of Revelation is the work of an "Inward and Substantial Seed in our Hearts", by the operations of which, "we are made capable of tasting, smelling, seeing and handling the things of God: For a man cannot reach unto those things by his natural spirit and sense".² Indeed, Barclay says explicitly of this "Light or Seed", "We make it a distinct separate thing from Man's Soul, and all the Faculties of it."³

It will be apparent from even these few examples that the contrast denoted by the words "inward" and "outward" is here not simply that between, on the one hand, formal, conventional knowledge of the Christian revelation and, on the other, a genuine and transforming acquaintance with that same revelation. It is now, rather, a contrast between two modes of revelation, and even a contrast between two distinct organs whereby these modes of revelation are respectively received. There is no recognition of any possibility of mutual interaction or communication or influence between these two modes, or these two organs.

From this development a number of important consequences flow. It is, for example, obvious that, on this interpretation of "inward" and "outward", it is very difficult to accord any fundamental importance to History or to Scripture. In spite of numerous acknowledgements on the part of Barclay—unquestionably sincere and genuine as they are—of the value of both, it is nevertheless possible for him to speak of the testimony of Scripture as being, with "right Reason", merely an accommodation or "condescension" to such

"who not discerning the Revelations of the Spirit, as they proceed purely from God, will try them by these Mediums."⁴

Similarly, Barclay can allow himself to speak, admittedly with some lack of assurance, of the knowledge of the historic life and teaching of Jesus Christ as being analogous to

¹ *Apology for the true Christian divinity*, 1678 Prop. II.

² Props. V-VI. Cap. XIV.

³ Props. V-VI. Cap. XVI.

⁴ Prop. II. Cap. XV.

"The Rudiments which young Children learn; which after they are become better Scholars, are of less use to them; because they have and possess the very substance of those first Precepts in their minds . . ."¹

It is at this point that the similarity is closest between Barclay and Penn, so far as their treatment of the "inward-outward" contrast is concerned. For Penn, the revelation given by God in and through the vicissitudes of the history of the Hebrew people, and through the discipline of cultus and law, priest and prophet, is not seen as a progressive drawing near by God, revealing and effecting that which, apart from these things, must have remained hidden. It is seen, rather, as a somewhat regrettable intrusion of the inferior "outward" mode of revelation, made necessary by the people's failure to make right use of an already fully available "inward" mode of revelation. Thus Penn can say of the Jewish history:

"Alas! there had never been so much need of many exterior dispensations and appearances of God, in reference to religion . . . had not men's minds been departed from the inward light and life of righteousness; so that they being outward and abroad, God was pleased to meet them in some external manifestations; yet so, as to turn them home again to their first love; to that light and life that was given by God, as the way and guide to eternal salvation."²

Penn's attitude to the revelation given in and through the life of Jesus Christ is not dissimilar. For all his rather laboured assurances that he does, indeed, value highly the facts contained in the Gospels, Penn does not altogether avoid giving the impression that, in some way, the Word's becoming flesh is almost an embarrassment to him in his apologetic. Thus he admits that Scripture "by that common Figure, or way of speaking amongst Men" often ascribes to the holy humanity of Jesus Christ, as the "Thing Containing" that which, in reality, is to be ascribed to the "Thing Contained, which was the Eternal Power, Wisdom, Life etc." He continues,

"Not that we would irreverently rob the Holy Body of whatsoever Acknowledgment is justly due, nor yet separate that which God hath joined; Though I confess, with holy Fear, I dare not attribute that to

¹ Props. V-VI. Cap. XXIV.

² *The Christian-Quaker*, 1674. As printed in *A collection of the works*, 1726, Vol. I. p. 526.

an External prepared Being, which is the Natural Proper and Only Work of the Divine Light and Life to Operate and Effect."¹

To similar purpose is such a strange misreading of the New Testament interpretation of the significance of the Incarnation and of its relation to the coming of the Holy Spirit as this:

"They who knew Christ after the Flesh, were to press after some more Spiritual Discovery of him; and who almost doted on his outward Manifestation, it was very expedient that they should be weaned from it, to the End his more interior, and indeed beneficial Revelation of himself might be witnessed by the Soul."²

But for the fullest expression of the development in the usage of such terms as "inward" and "outward" which I am illustrating from these three groups of early Quaker writings, it is necessary to go to a later and lesser known writing of Robert Barclay, *The possibility and necessity of inward immediate revelation* (1686).³

In his "Advertisement to the Reader", Barclay says that the frequently canvassed question "What is the ground and foundation of faith?" admits of only two answers—"Tradition" or "Revelation". The former is, in differing ways, the answer given by both Catholic and Protestant. He continues,

"In short, the matter is easily driven into this narrow compass: We believe either because of an outward or inward Testimony, that is, because it is outwardly delivered to us, or inwardly Revealed to us."

Barclay then begins the main body of the tract by summarizing arguments which purport to demonstrate

"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 proceeding to develop his main line of argument in reply to this position, Barclay lays down some premises among which we may particularly note the following:

1. That the historical facts of Christ's life and our knowledge of them are an "integral" but not an "essential" part of

¹ *op. cit.* p. 575.

² *op. cit.* p. 579.

³ *Truth triumphant*, (Collected Works), 1692, pp. 892-906.

the Christian religion—as a man's hands and feet are “integral” to a man, but not “essential” as are the head and heart.

2. Such “historical knowledge” is “not commonly manifested to us . . . but by the Holy Scripture, as the means . . .”

3. Nevertheless, “God can manifest the Historical Truth of Christ to our Minds without the Scripture.” In proof of this assertion Barclay apparently feels it to be sufficient to point to the fact that the Prophets foretold Christ's coming in the flesh without the possibility of “historical knowledge” and adds: “Now that which hath been, may be.”

4. While conceding that “we cannot *naturally* know any contingent Truth but by the Relation of another, or perception by the Outward Senses,” this does not exclude the possibility that “we may know a Contingent Truth by a Supernatural knowledge, God supplying the place of an Outward Relator.”

Barclay then proceeds to draw three distinctions which prepare the way for his statement of his own doctrine of Revelation.

(a) The first distinction in regard to “Immediate Revelation” is that between the “material” element (i.e. the matter or fact or thing revealed) and the “formal” element (i.e. the form or mode according to which the revelation is made). This “form”, Barclay says, 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.” He continues:

“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 specifick 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 specifick Nature or Property proceeding from its Nature; and hath its proper Idea, by which it's distinguishable from every other thing, if so be it's Idea be stirred up in us, and clearly proposed to us.”

(b) The second distinction is that between Natural and Supernatural Beings and their corresponding Ideas. Barclay expresses it thus:

“Now as some Beings are Natural, some Supernatural; so some Ideas are Natural, some Supernatural; And as when any Natural Idea is excited in us, 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 . . .”

(c) The third distinction is that between the Inward and Outward Senses; and with this is linked, so far as the Inward Senses are concerned, the distinction between those which are called Natural (e.g. Anger, Love, the recognition of logical connections) and those which are called Supernatural (e.g. what Barclay calls “Divine Motions”, “Warmth” or “Melting”).

To come now to the heart of Barclay’s own doctrine of Inward and Immediate Revelation, it may be that the following statement of it, in his own words, will best serve our purpose, and give as fair an account of it as is possible within the limitations imposed by this study. Barclay says:

“As there are then Natural Ideas concerning the things of the Natural World . . . it follows also that there are Ideas of Supernatural things, concerning the Divine and Supernatural things of the Divine and Supernatural 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, which 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. This is that Flesh and Blood of Christ, by which the Saints are nourished; which is a Mystery to all Unregenerated and meer Natural Men, never to be reached by them while they remain in that State.”¹

It is not unlikely, I think, that many who read these words may feel—as I certainly do—that they must number themselves among such “unregenerated and meer Natural Men”—for much of all this “Philosophising” (as Barclay himself calls it) seems indeed to be a “Mystery”, and is certainly a far cry from the straightforward experimental contrast with which

¹ *op. cit.* p. 901.

we began, between a religion of convention and a religion of conviction, between being a "professor" and being a "possessor". The shock we all feel when Barclay, in this last quotation, suddenly identifies the "certain Principle" by which "Divine and Supernatural Ideas are stirred up in us" with "that Flesh and Blood of Christ" which he calls "the Organ or Instrument of God"—this, surely, is a measure of the distance he has brought us away from the world of New Testament teaching and authentic Christian experience.

V.

How, then, are we to interpret the evidence that has just been reviewed? In the first place, I think it can be said that if our interpretation is to have any value, it must begin by recognizing the extent to which, originally, the Quaker usage was seeking to express a contrast which appears in more than one form in the Bible and particularly in the New Testament. It must also recognize how this originally Biblical and experimental religious usage, with its close parallels in contemporary Puritan religious language, became increasingly confused with distinctions of a psychological and philosophical kind, and led those who were apparently unconscious of the extent of this confusion to draw illegitimate or at least questionable inferences from it. These assertions must now be briefly substantiated and illustrated.

The heart of the contrast which the first Friends were making by their use of the terms "inward" and "outward" involves several of those contrasts which, in the New Testament, are described by such pairs of terms as *ἔσωθεν* and *ἔξωθεν*, *ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ* and *ἐν τῷ φανερῷ*.

Thus in Matthew 23, vv. 25, 27-8 (cf. Matthew 7, v. 15 and Luke 11, vv. 39-40) the contrast is between appearance and reality: "So it is with you: outside you look like honest men, but inside you are brimfull of hypocrisy and crime."

In 2 Cor. 4, v. 16 the contrast is between the limitations and frailty of physical existence and the constant renewal of spiritual strength through the faithfulness of God. "Though our outward humanity is in decay, yet day by day we are inwardly renewed."

In Romans 2, vv. 28-9, a text very frequently applied by early Friends to the contrast between themselves and (as they saw it) most of their contemporaries, the distinction is between the ritual or formal aspects of religion and those which are personal and moral, or between the "letter" and the "spirit": "The true Jew is not he who is such in externals . . . The true Jew is he who is such inwardly, and the true circumcision is of the heart, directed not by written precepts but by the Spirit."

In my own judgement, however, the New Testament contrast which, although not using spatial metaphors, comes nearest to what the early Friends meant by the contrast between "inward" and "outward" is that between *λόγος* and *δύναμις*: "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." (1 Cor. 4, v. 20.)

This being the essence of the contrast intended by early Friends, it is important to realize that they were by no means the only people to be recognizing and stressing it in the mid-seventeenth century. It is recognized in more than one place, for example, in the Westminster Confession of 1648, where our "full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority" of Scripture is confessed to be "from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts"; and the "inward illumination of the Spirit of God" is recognized as being "necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word."¹

It would, however, be difficult to find among early Quaker writers a more forceful statement of these emphases than is to be discovered in many places in the writing of John Owen, the great Puritan divine whom Friends regarded as one of their most powerful opponents. Thus, for example, in his massive *ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ* or *A discourse concerning the Holy Spirit* (1674) Owen says:

"It is sottish ignorance and infidelity to suppose that, under the gospel, there is no communication between God and us but what is, on his part, in laws, commands and promises; and on ours by obedience performed in *our* strength, and upon our convictions unto them. To exclude hence the real internal operations of the Holy Ghost is to destroy the Gospel."²

¹ *op. cit.* Chap. I. "Of the Holy Scriptures".

² *Works*, 1850-54, vol 3, p. 200 (Bk. II. Chap. 5).

Again,

“There is a wide difference between the mind’s receiving doctrines notionally, and its receiving the things taught in them really.”¹

And it would be difficult to improve, from any Quaker source, upon Owen’s definition of what it means to receive divine things “spiritually”: it is, he says,

“so to receive them as really to believe them with faith divine and supernatural, to love them with divine love, to conform the whole soul and affections unto them.”²

And John Smith may be taken as speaking for all the Cambridge Platonists in this matter, when he says in his “Discourse of the true Way or Method of attaining to Divine Knowledge”:

“There is a knowing of the truth as it is in Jesus as it is in a Christ-like nature, as it is in that sweet, mild, humble, and loving Spirit of Jesus which spreads itself like a Morning-sun upon the Soules of good men, full of light and life. It profits little to know Christ himself after the flesh; but he gives his Spirit to good men, that searcheth the deep things of God. There is an inward beauty, life and loveliness in Divine Truth, which cannot be known but onely then when it is digested into life and practice.”³

It is important, moreover, to take notice of the fact that there were in the seventeenth century powerful influences at work in the general mental climate of the age which expressed themselves quite naturally in terms of a contrast between “inward” and “outward”—but which were intending something quite other than the early Quakers meant when they used these words. As Professor Basil Willey has shown:

“in its quest for truth the seventeenth century discovered two main kinds of certainty, one objective or external, the other subjective or internal. In respect of the external world, that account was ‘truest’ which explained the mechanics of causation . . . The internal certainties . . . were chiefly relevant in the region of faith and ethics, where truth came to mean that which is vouched for by the ‘inner light’, by ‘Reason’ and the ‘moral sense’, or by ‘nature and good sense’.”⁴

¹ *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 260 (Bk. III. Chap. 3).

² *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 262 (Bk. III. Chap. 3).

³ *Select discourses*, 1660, pp. 8-9.

⁴ *The seventeenth century background*, 1934, Chap. V. p. 76.

A few pages earlier, Basil Willey has expressed the view that

“The ‘inner light’ of the Quakers ranks with the ‘Reason’ of the Platonists, the ‘clear and distinct ideas’ of Descartes, or the ‘common notions’ of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, as another of the inward certitudes by means of which the century was testing the legacies of antiquity and declaring its spiritual independence.”¹

If, therefore, my reading of the evidence is correct, it means that, particularly at the hands of Robert Barclay, and largely in terms of a confused and illegitimate application of the originally clear and valid distinction between “inward” and “outward”, Quakerism became wedded to a prevalent and quasi-Cartesian dualism and, as a consequence, set its feet upon paths which, for many a year, led it into the barren places of quietism and formalism.

A good deal of the evidence for this interpretation is discussed in Lief Eeg-Olofsson’s penetrating study, *The conception of the Inner Light in Robert Barclay’s theology*, the work of a former Woodbrooke student to whom I am glad to acknowledge my indebtedness for stimulus and confirmation in my own studies in this field. In this detailed and scholarly study, Lief Eeg-Olofsson shows that Barclay’s

“main theological problem is the problem of Christian mysticism . . . In order that it may be possible for man to acquire a mystical knowledge, neither intellectualistic nor moralistic, it must be postulated that he has a mystical reason. All rationalistic theory in Barclay’s time assumed an Inner Light as organ for a right knowledge in a theoretical and moralistic respect. It was, therefore, natural to suppose a specially composed Inner Light as organ for a right knowledge of God.”²

As Eeg-Olofsson shows, Barclay is led in this way to apply the distinction “inward-outward” to Revelation, Redemption, Faith, Knowledge, Worship, Silence and Prayer. There is, he says, in relation to each of these, an “inward” (i.e. true) and an “outward” (i.e. false) form. But the value of this distinction is vitiated by Barclay’s failure to distinguish between what Eeg-Olofsson calls the “psychological” and the “mystical” senses of “inward” and “outward”. By this is meant that, for Barclay, “that knowledge which is given through outer happenings” (i.e. events perceptible by

¹ *op. cit.* Chap. IV. p. 73.

² *op. cit.* (Lund, 1954) pp. 59-60.

the physical senses) "must give an outer" (i.e. unspiritual, untrue, not genuine) knowledge. Barclay "owing to his theory of knowledge could not see that a spiritual, inner knowledge can be given through outer things".¹ Thus, for example, in the matter of prayer, Barclay quite rightly lays it down that it is only the inner, spiritual, mystical (i.e. genuine) prayer which is acceptable to God. But in order that the mystical (i.e. genuine) content of prayer should be guaranteed, "Barclay considers it necessary that all prayers established in advance should be abolished, whether the words are bound by ritual or extemporized".² In this way,

Eeg-Olofsson continues,

"the spontaneity of prayer is taken partly in a mystical sense when it signifies its quality of being a fruit of the Spirit without contribution from man's side, partly in a psychological sense when it signifies that prayer times and prayer words are determined by a special infusion."³

It necessarily follows for Barclay—and hence for all who have accepted the prestige of his thinking and so understood this as an essential part of Quakerism, that "the Spirit always extemporizes", that "the Spirit does not tolerate organization but stands in contrast to it", that the Spirit "cannot make use of a ritual".⁴

Furthermore, for Barclay, and for all who, perhaps without realizing it, have come under the influence of this interpretation of Quakerism, the way to a true understanding of the relation between the Old and the New Covenants—a central theme of the early Quaker teaching—is rendered difficult. For

"Barclay never discusses the question as to what message ritual can give, message that in its deepest content is either from the Old Testament or the New, but considers every ritual as such to be from the Old Testament, from the law, an obstruction to the Spirit and not an aid."⁵

¹ *op. cit.* p. 207.

² *op. cit.* pp. 196-8.

³ *op. cit.* p. 198.

⁴ *op. cit.* p. 185.

⁵ *ibid.*

Thus, in his interpretation of John 4, vv. 21-24, Barclay is led astray—though, in fairness it must be added, in company with a good many others—by this confusion of the “psychological” and “mystical” senses of “inward” and “outward”, identifying them with “spiritual” and “fleshly”.

To quote again from Eeg-Olofsson, “The contrast does not lie between flesh and spirit in a psychological sense, between outer in the sense of cult and inner in the sense of cultless . . . It is not a question of cult or freedom from cult but of the contrast between cult in the old situation and cult in the new one, created through Christ.”¹ In this connection it is, perhaps, not without significance to note the fact that in the index to Barclay’s Collected Works, opposite the word “Ceremonies” we read “See Superstitions”!

The main point of this discussion, which I fear may have been obscured by the unavoidable over-compression of the argument, is this. It is one thing to draw attention, as early Friends did, to an “inward” and an “outward” way of apprehending a Revelation which had been, as all agreed, given in History. It is quite another thing to distinguish, within the concept of Revelation, two kinds of Revelation, an “inward” kind alleged to be without any essential connection with History, and an “outward” kind, whose existence cannot indeed be denied and whose value cannot be minimized from the standpoint of Christian faith and experience but which can be accorded only an equivocal and almost marginal status in religious thought. And it is still more obviously another thing to postulate a “separate and distinct” organ within man, which yet is no part of man’s essential being, dependent in no way upon the constitution of man’s mind, whereby alone this inward mode of Revelation is to be received.

But this is precisely the situation towards which the intellectual formulation of Quakerism was led, even in the seventeenth century, by its adoption, in a confused and unanalysed manner, of one of the less happy phases of the philosophy of that century. Retaining the words “inward” and “outward”, and emphasizing no less strongly the contrast between them, Quakerism, without being fully aware of what it was doing, came in many cases to set forth

¹ *op. cit.* p 186.

an untenable, quasi-philosophical dualism, the effects of which have not yet ceased to confuse our vision and impede our progress. A contrast which originally served to emphasize the importance of first-hand, authentic Christian experience thus came to impose upon Friends a scheme of thought scarcely less "notional" than that against which the first Friends had felt called to do battle.

In closing this disquisition we must ask what bearing, if any, all this has upon our situation as Friends in the twentieth century. My own answer to this question would be on some such lines as these. It would begin by recognizing that, in so far as Quakerism has yet received a thorough-going theological analysis and expression, it received these in terms of an always inadequate and now altogether outdated pattern of thought—a pattern of thought deeply influenced by such seventeenth-century philosophers as Descartes and Malebranche. If Cartesianism is, as William Temple called it, a "faux pas" in philosophy, it is no less so in religion and theology; and its untenable dichotomies and no less untenable reconciliations between them cannot, and never could, serve to express intellectually the profoundly spiritual insight into the Christian Gospel which we call Quakerism. I believe, therefore, that in so far as we admit that Quakerism early took the form of a kind of spiritualized Cartesianism, so far as its intellectual content was concerned, we must now recognize the fact that, for a considerable period, Quakerism has been in the unenviable position of a religious movement lacking an adequate intellectual formulation and means of self-criticism.

The effects of this false severance between the "inward" and the "outward", the steps toward which I have tried to suggest, are, I believe, written large upon the life of the Society. We have only to remind ourselves, in proof of this, of our perennial difficulties in relating properly, within a coherent religious experience and outlook, the historic and the experiential, the claims of worship and the claims of thought, and our seemingly insuperable reluctance to recognize the profound difference between a religion of immanence and a religion of incarnation. All these tensions are, of course, inherent in any religion worthy the name. But I believe that our own attempts as Friends to deal with them are less effective than they might be because we approach the task

with preconceptions which belong, not to the genuine and original genius of Quakerism but to the requirements of an antiquated philosophy.

In this situation there have been, of course, not a few attempts to supply this deficiency of which many modern Friends have become aware. There is, indeed, no end to the number of offers of a philosophical interpretation for Quakerism, whether from the side of Western Existentialism or Eastern Zen Buddhism, to take only two examples.

But neither of these can really meet our need. To frame the kind of understanding that is required does not fall within the scope of this study. But I believe it will be found when we learn to heed with full seriousness the Johannine assertion that in Jesus Christ the Word became flesh, the divine and eternal manifested and embodied itself in the human and the temporal, the "inward" made itself known in and through the "outward", and is still to be encountered only so. It will be found also when we recognize that the Biblical contrast between "Spirit" and "flesh" is not a contrast between the mystical or unmediated and the material, historical and mediated. It is rather the contrast between the "mediated immediacy" of the power and presence of the "new being" which Christ bestows and the state of "estrangement" in which, apart from their acceptance of it, all men, even in their most "spiritual" activities, are involved. The purpose of the present study is served if it has in any measure helped Friends to be more aware both of a major need of Quakerism if it is to match itself with the challenge of the hour and also of how this need has grown out of the Society's early history.