

ROBERT BARCLAY (1648 - 1690),
THE FATHERS AND THE INWARD,
UNIVERSAL SAVING LIGHT:
A TERCENTENARY REAPPRAISAL

Let the *Quakers* henceforth cease to lay any claim to the Authority of St. Augustine, or any other of the *Ancient Fathers, Greek or Latin*, that lived either before him, or in his time; as if they favoured this Vile Error; for no doubt St. *Augustine* better knew the mind of those holy Ancients, than any of the Quakers, or this their Apologist.¹

Such was the stern judgment of George Keith (1638 - 1716). Raised a Presbyterian, Keith became a Quaker in 1664. He was Robert Barclay's mentor and friend, though ten years after Barclay's death he left the Friends and was ordained in the Church of England in 1700.² Keith directs us to our task, for he prompts the questions, to what extent did Barclay draw upon the Fathers? why, and with what degree of success, did he have recourse to them?

It is noteworthy that of Barclay's contemporary critics, Keith alone makes extensive reference to Barclay's use (or, as he thinks, abuse) of the Fathers; nor is this subject investigated in detail by recent expositors of Barclay's thought.³ It may be suggested, as a reason for this neglect, that Barclay's appeal to the Fathers was, if not purely formal, at least not original – on the contrary, it was at secondhand. On this matter Keith, by now a hostile witness, 'spilled the beans'. Barclay, he alleges, took most of his references 'at Second Hand, as I myself did the like, as touching many of them, which he had from me...'⁴ Keith hastens to point out that he has subsequently returned to the original sources.

What shall we make of Keith's charge? As a person of integrity, he is *prima facie* trustworthy. He admits that he had plundered Vossius and Grotius for patristic references, and that he had shared these with Barclay. By tracing Barclay's identifiable patristic quotations to their sources in the Greek and Latin, we shall show that he did not always attend to the context of the passages plundered, and that he was selective in his usage of the Fathers: he takes little account of them where they appear to oppose him. This, coupled with Keith's suggestion of a 'crib list', may suggest that Barclay was unaware of contrary points. In any

case, of his general indebtedness of Keith there can be no doubt, as witness the linguistic echoes of Keith's earlier works in Barclay's *Theses* of 1674.⁵

Despite the lack of originality in Barclay's appeals to patristic sources, it is our contention that the fact that he made the appeal at all is illuminating in respect of his apologetic objectives and method, and it poses a serious question to present-day Friends. Accordingly, we shall proceed to a consideration of Barclay's objectives and method in the *Apology* (Latin 1676, English 1678). We shall then investigate his actual use of the Fathers. Scattered references to patristic sources may be found throughout the *Apology*, but since the Fathers are quoted (as distinct from listed) in significant numbers in connection with the themes of inward and immediate revelation and the universal saving light, and since these are Barclay's major doctrinal distinctives, we shall concentrate upon these matters. Finally, we shall presume to offer some kindly-intentioned, albeit non-Friendly, reflections upon our findings.

I

No doubt, as W.C. Braithwaite averred, one of Barclay's motives in writing the *Apology* was domestic, so to speak: 'The corporate consciousness that had come to Friends with the organization established by Fox was bound to crave for some systematic manual of Quaker principles...'⁶ But there was more to it than that: Barclay's purpose was political as well as "denominational". He wished to assert and defend Quaker teachings in such a way as to show the authorities that they had no need to continue persecuting so peaceable, upright and orthodox a people. In pursuing this line Barclay was also, by implication, distancing the Friends from more violent and seditious groups. As Alexander Gordon explained,

Apologia is of course a vindication, yet it is clear that Barclay did not understand by this a defence in the nature of a justifying explanation, which is the meaning Dr. Newman has taught us to attach to the word, but rather a defence in the nature of a fortifying outwork or advanced guard... His object was to secure for [Friends] an immunity from misrepresentation, a liberty of development, a position of acknowledged respect and weight.⁷

The benefits here mentioned were nowhere more to be desired than in Barclay's Aberdeen, where Quakers were represented as 'demented, distracted, bodily possessed of the devil, practising abominations under cover of being possessed by the Spirit and as to their principles, blasphemous deniers of the true Christ, of Heaven, Hell and Angels'.⁸

As if this were not enough, Quakers were accused of being agents of Popery.⁹

A third motivation was Barclay's desire to defend God's honour, as he understood it, from Calvinism's sterner features. In this respect the *Apology* is a reply to the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647), and Barclay's first thirteen *Theses* follow the order of the latter's questions. In this connection it is not without significance that (assuming Keith to be a reliable witness) Barclay utilised references culled from Gerard Jan Vossius (1577-1649) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), both of whom were Arminians who wished to distinguish their position from Pelagianism, and the former of whom argued in his *Historia de controversiis quas Pelagius ejusque reliquiae moverunt* (1618) that the doctrine of predestination was unknown in the early Church. Barclay made it quite clear that he 'intended never to write of those things concerning which we do not differ from others'.¹⁰ This decision undoubtedly focused his polemics and enabled him to emphasize Quaker distinctives but, as we shall see, it had the effect of diverting attention from some of the fundamental Christian doctrines.

The fact that Barclay is fighting on more than one front influences his method. Thus, in introducing himself to 'the friendly reader', he cautions that his method may appear not only deficient, but contrary to that of 'the men called *divines*'. He explains that, far from admiring *school-men*, he despises them, for they destroy the Christian religion. He has not sought to accommodate his work to 'itching ears' – rather, 'what I have written comes more from my heart than from my head'. He has 'followed the certain rule of the *Divine Light*, and of the *Holy Scriptures*'.¹¹ Consistently with this, he later distinguishes between 'the saving heart-knowledge, and the soaring, airy head-knowledge'.¹²

On the other hand, when addressing Charles II the political motive is to the fore: 'if thou wilt allow thyself so much time as to read this, thou mayest find *how consonant [Quaker] principles are both to scripture, truth, and right reason*'.¹³ Similarly, in the complete title of the *Apology* Barclay declares that he intends to offer 'A full explanation and vindication of [Quaker] principles and doctrines, by many arguments deduced from Scripture and right reason, and the testimonies of famous authors, both ancient and modern'.

Finally, with Christians of other traditions in mind Barclay appeals to the tradition at large, and to the Fathers in particular. He piles up his authorities with a view to showing that 'it was the consensus of Christian authorities that there is something better than the authority of men'.¹⁴ Not indeed that Barclay's opinion of the Fathers was particularly high. Thus, in a 'Table of Chief Things' prefixed to *Truth Triumphant*, he points

out that the Fathers did not always agree on points of biblical interpretation, and that they sometimes contradicted one another – and themselves. On which theme Barclay is in the line of the Reformed pastor of Paris, John Daillé, whose *A Treatise Concerning the Right Use of the Fathers, in the Decision of the Controversies that are at this Day in Religion* had been translated into English in 1651. Nevertheless he does think it worthwhile to make his appeal to the Fathers.

II

Having affirmed, in his first Proposition, the necessity of that knowledge of God which brings life eternal, Barclay proceeds in Proposition Second to elucidate the nature of ‘inward and immediate revelation’ (to use the *two* adjectives in the Latin text: the English gives only the latter). Divine revelation, he declares, is not subject to rational or scriptural tests; it is self-authenticating. It ‘is that which is evident and clear of itself, forcing, by its own evidence and clearness, the well disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly moving the same thereunto, even as the common principles of natural truths do move and incline the mind to a natural assent; as, *that the whole is greater than its part; that two contradictories can neither be both true, nor both false*’.¹⁵ He proceeds to distinguish between literal (in the head) knowledge and spiritual (in-the-heart) knowledge. The latter alone is true knowledge of God, and it ‘is revealed inwardly by his own Spirit’.¹⁶ At this point Barclay produces his first batch of ‘testimonies of the ancients’.

He first summons Augustine who, in his homily upon 1 John 3: 18-27, declares that there is an inward teacher, Christ, and that in the absence of his inspiration and unction, ‘it is in vain that words are beaten in [or, make a noise?] from without’.¹⁷ Clement of Alexandria is next invoked for the way in which he distinguished between what anyone may say of the truth, and what the self-interpretative truth itself declares. The former derives from ‘exercise and discipline [learning and practice?]’, the latter from ‘power and faith’.¹⁸ However, Clement immediately proceeds to quote John 7: 17 to the effect that we come to know the truth by doing it. Barclay does not follow him here, though he may not necessarily deny the point. Even so, the impression he leaves, consistently with his other citations, is that the truth is within, whatever we do: it is not (as Clement thinks it is) acquired as we ‘walk the paths of righteousness’. Barclay’s desire to shun Pelagianism (of which heresy Clement was, of course, happily innocent), would probably have restrained him at this point had he read Clement in detail.

Tertullian is called next. In his *Liber de Virginibus Velandis* Tertullian designates the Comforter, the Spirit, the Scripture-revealing ‘Vicar of the Lord’.¹⁹ Jerome further assists with his conviction that a revelation is required if we are to understand the law, which is spiritual.²⁰ Jerome reiterates his point in more general terms later in the same letter: ‘in the holy scriptures one can make no progress unless one has a guide to point the way’.²¹ Barclay does not quote this remark, nor does he treat us to Jerome’s delightful analogy drawn from Horace on poetry: ‘We all write poetry, whether we are taught or not’.²² ‘The garrulous old woman’, Jerome complains, ‘the feeble-minded old man, the verbose sophist – all take up [the Scriptures], tear them to pieces and teach them before they have grasped their meaning’.²³ Barclay does, however, quote Jerome writing to Hedibia to the effect that we need the Holy Spirit if we are to find our way through the ‘great obscurities of Paul’s Romans’.²⁴

Barclay’s fifth supportive Father is Athanasius, who rejoices that ‘The Saviour daily expends great effort to draw us towards religion [or, piety]’.²⁵ With Barclay as our only guide we should not know that Athanasius’s assertion falls in the context of his discussion of the implications of Christ’s resurrection. His point is that, by contrast with the risen Saviour, the gods and evil spirits of those who disbelieve the resurrection of Jesus are dead. *They* cannot teach about immortality, reveal the knowledge of the Father, or inspire faith in the face of death. On the contrary, they ‘become dead at the appearing of Christ’. No one else can achieve all of this, and hence Christ’s resurrection is proved.

Gregory the Great and Cyril of Alexandria are Barclay’s final witnesses on this point. Gregory argues that apart from the inward teacher, a teacher’s efforts are in vain,²⁶ while Cyril insists that without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we cannot know that Jesus is Lord.²⁷ It is noteworthy that while, on this occasion, Barclay does not violate his authors’ meanings, the context of their remarks has to do with the activities of the triune God. If Keith is to be believed, Barclay may not have known this; if he did know it, it is perhaps surprising that he did not take the opportunity of adverting to it, since Quakers, especially Penn, had been accused of disbelieving in the Trinity.²⁸

The question cannot but arise, ‘What is the relation of the inward illumination to tradition and Scripture?’ As to the former, Barclay deems it an unreliable guide, citing as evidence the disagreement between Polycarp and Anicetus over the proper way of celebrating Easter.²⁹ In this matter, unwittingly or not, Barclay is selective in quotation. Thus, for example, when arguing that because of the errors

of copyists the Bible cannot be finally authoritative, he quotes the complaint of Jerome to the wealthy Spaniard, Lucinius, that the scribes ‘wrote not what they found but what they understood’.³⁰ However, Barclay is silent upon Jerome’s reply in the same letter to Lucinius’s query concerning fasting on the Sabbath and the daily reception of communion: ‘The best advice I can give you is this’, writes Jerome: ‘Church-traditions – especially where they do not contradict the faith – are to be observed in the form in which previous generations have handed them on; and the use of one church is not to be annulled because it is contrary to that of another’.³¹

Despite the perils of transcription, Barclay quotes Augustine with approval to the effect that if anything in the canonical Scriptures should seem ‘repugnant to truth, I shall not doubt to say, that either the volume is faulty or erroneous; that the expounder has not reached what was said; or that I have in no way understood it’.³² As to ‘those great heaps of commentaries’ which have been written on the Scriptures, Barclay agrees with Jerome that it is harder to understand the expositions than to understand what is being expounded.³³ [A lever this for those Quakers who gloried in their *uneducated* state.] Important though the Scriptures are, ‘they are only a declaration of the fountain, and not the fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manners...they are and may be esteemed a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit...Seeing then that we do therefore receive and believe the Scriptures because they proceed from the Spirit, for the very same reason is the Spirit more originally and principally the rule’.³⁴

None of which pleased John Brown of Wamphray. Known as ‘the Presbyterian David’ on account of his small stature and pugilistic aptitudes, this ardent Calvinist rushed into print before the English edition of the *Apology* appeared, and produced a reply which was longer than the text to which it was an answer.³⁵ He is especially opposed to Barclay’s understanding of the immediacy of revelation. To him, revelation is *via* the Scriptures, and he considers that Barclay’s position necessarily demotes the Bible. He claims the Fathers (and others) whom Barclay cites as belonging to his own camp, and throws down his challenge thus:

can he produce any of the Fathers, or of our Reformers, maintaining such Inward and Immediate Revelations of the Spirit, as the *Quakers*, with their predecessors, the *Enthusiasts*, do assert now to be necessary, and do pretend to? If he is so well acquainted with the writings of the Fathers, as by these his citations, he would have us believe, he hath done wisely for himself, but not very honestly, in concealing what several of the same Fathers, and Others, write expressly against

such high Pretenders, as the *Quakers* now are, and in whose footsteps they, in many things, now tread...³⁶

Brown proceeds to catalogue a list of patristic and later sources against imposters such as Valentinus and enthusiasts such as the Montanists, and here he is on firm ground. He takes Barclay's point that spiritual illumination is essential, denying only that it is immediate. But, alas, 'it is usual with this sort of men, to speak...after an high and loftie manner, as if they were alwayes ravished in an ecstasy; for as they alwayes have the Spirit in their mouth, so they use a strange idiome, that such as hear them are at the first amazed; and this they affect of purpose to deceive their hearers, and raise in them an admiration of them and their Opinions'.³⁷

No doubt Barclay's emphasis upon inward and immediate revelation was in part prompted by his realisation that literalistic biblical interpretation is a game that more than one can play. It could, as he was well aware, lead to Socinian reductionism.

III

Although in Proposition IV Barclay has taken sin and humanity's resulting estrangement from God with full seriousness, in Propositions V and VI he contends against the 'horrible and blasphemous' doctrine of reprobation, and in favour of his view that Christ's redemption is universal in scope, and that everyone is a recipient of saving and spiritual light.

Barclay refers, without quoting, to Augustine in support of his view that until the Pelagian heresy broke upon the world, the doctrine of reprobation, which is 'contrary to the scripture's testimony, and to the tenor of the gospel' was passed over 'with a profound silence'.³⁸ This, declares Brown in his rejoinder, is simply, 'the old saying of the *Arminians*'. In fact, he continues, the doctrine of reprobation is to be found in the Scriptures, though it is true that before Pelagianism, 'that Enemy of the grace of God arose, the Church had no occasion to debate such questions...'³⁹ Brown further notes that Augustine does cite Ambrose, Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyprian as agreeing with him. But his most telling point against Barclay is the *tu quoque*: 'Is this mans Religion grounded upon the authority of men? And will he beleieve no more, than what the Fathers said in the first foure ages? Let him follow what cisterns he pleaseth, we will satisfie ourselves with the Word, as ther ground of our Faith...'⁴⁰ In other words, on Barclay's own principles concerning the primacy of inward, immediate revelation, he should not make so much of an appeal to patristic silence.

Barclay proceeds to produce a further catalogue of quotations from the Fathers by way of underscoring his point that while ‘there is not one scripture, that I know of, which affirms, *Christ not to die for all*, there are divers that positively assert, *He did*’. Furthermore ‘all the *fathers*, so called’, of the first four centuries ‘boldly held forth the gospel of Christ, and efficacy of his death; inviting and entreating the *heathens* to come and be partakers of the benefits of it...not telling them that God had predestinated any of them to damnation, or had made salvation impossible to them, by withholding power and grace, necessary from them’.⁴¹ Barclay’s case thus is that the universal call of the Gospel is meaningless if the reprobation of any is predestined. He turns to Augustine for support, which he presents thus: ‘The blood of Christ is of so great worth, that it is of no less value than the whole world’.⁴² The reference is indeed to Augustine’s *Enarrationes in Psalmos* XCV.5, but Barclay has telescoped his words, which are as follows:

The blood of Christ was the price. What is equal to this? What, but the whole world? What but all nations? They are very ungrateful for their price, or very proud, who say the price is so small that it bought the Africans only; or that they are so great, as that it was given for them alone. Let them not exult, let them not be proud: He gave what He gave for the whole world.⁴³

This, of course, is a long way from the claim that all will actually be saved, but Brown took Barclay as intending this. Barclay, he loftily replied, ‘bewrayeth much impudence, seeing it is sufficiently known to all, that are acquainted with [Augustine’s] writings, that he was of a far other opinion’.⁴⁴ Brown lists a dozen passages from Augustine in support of his view that Barclay is quoting selectively, among them one from *De Trinitate* in which Augustine declares that the devil cannot draw to himself ‘anyone of those whom Christ...had redeemed by pouring out his blood without being obliged to do so; but that they belonging to the grace of Christ, foreknown, predestined, and chosen before the foundation of the world, should die only in so far as Christ Himself died for us, by the death of the flesh only, not of the spirit’.⁴⁵ It cannot be said that Barclay positively asserts that all will be saved in the section under review, but his use of the Fathers when they are emphasizing the universal call of the Gospel, and his relative shunning of them when they are proclaiming predestination, makes Brown’s anxiety intelligible.

Prosper of Aquitaine is next in line. Barclay quotes accurately the first sentence of Prosper’s *Responsiones ad Capitula Gallorum*, and then adds other material:

the Redeemer of the world gave his blood for the world, and the world would not be redeemed because the darkness did not receive the light. He that saith, the Saviour was not crucified for the redemption of the whole world, looks not to the virtue of the sacrament, but to the part of infidels, since the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the price of the whole world; from which redemption they are strangers, who either delighting in their captivity would not be redeemed, or after they were redeemed returned to the same servitude.⁴⁶

In context, however, Prosper is not advocating a universal light which actually saves all – as Brown was quick to point out.⁴⁷ Not indeed that Barclay says he did – he is still concerned with the universal call of the Gospel. But he certainly makes no reference to Prosper's 'inconvenient' point in the same passage to the effect that 'though it is right to say that the Saviour was crucified for the redemption of the entire world, because He truly took our human nature and because all men were lost in the first man, yet it may also be said that He was crucified only for those who were to profit by His death'.⁴⁸ Prosper does make much of the fact that salvation is not limited to the Jews, but he also, in the same passage from which Barclay quotes, declares that 'no man attains eternal life without the sacrament of baptism' – a complicating ecclesiological point on which Barclay is silent. A similar silence is detectable in Barclay's immediately following, and seriously garbled, quotation from Prosper. In his version, Barclay refers to Christ, 'whose death was so bestowed upon mankind, that it belonged to the redemption of such who were not to be regenerated'.⁴⁹ Prosper has nothing like this. On the contrary, he writes, '[Christ's] death did not act on all of humanity in such a way that even those who would never be reborn in baptism would share in the redemption, but so that the mystery accomplished once and for all in the person of Christ should be renewed in each and every man by the sacrament of baptism which he is to receive once also'.⁵⁰ As before, Barclay makes no reference to the necessity of the sacrament of baptism. His third quotation, from Prosper's *De Vocatione Omnium Gentium* (*The Call of All Nations*) is correctly given (though wrongly placed in chapter 6). Prosper's emphasis here is upon the fact that people of all nations are called, and that the grace of Christ cannot be confined within Roman territorial boundaries.⁵¹

Barclay proceeds to cite John Chrysostom once and Ambrose twice, to the effect that if the light is not received, it is not because it is unavailable, but because it has been spurned.⁵² Barclay omits from his second quotation from Ambrose the telling words, 'Those who perish, therefore, perish through their own fault, while the saved are freed by the judgment of Christ, who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the recognition of truth'. As before, Brown cites John Chrysostom and

Ambrose against Barclay, as if Barclay were claiming that the Fathers teach that all will in fact be saved.

Barclay takes an important step further when he affirms

*That God, in and by this Light and Seed [that is, by the inward Christ], invites, calls, exhorts, and strives with every man, in order to save him; which, as it is received and not resisted, works the salvation of all, even those who are ignorant of the death and sufferings of Christ, and of Adam's fall, both by bringing them to a sense of their own misery, and to be sharers in the sufferings of Christ inwardly, and by making them partakers of his resurrection, in becoming holy, pure, and righteous, and recovered out of their sins.*⁵³

Clearly, the patristic emphasis upon baptism and the Church is far from his mind at this point. He does not invoke the Fathers here, and hence Keith's rebuke, in which he refers to the divines just named as if Barclay attributed the point now made to them, is unjust.⁵⁴

It must be emphasized that to Barclay the light, the seed, is, or contains, *Christ*. Barclay is not advocating the presence of a natural light, or of a general principle of illumination in all human beings as such. Indeed, he can speak of the light in strongly trinitarian terms. He says that the light which enlightens everyone is

*not the proper essence and nature of God precisely taken, which is not divisible into parts and measures, as being a most pure, simple being, void of all composition or division, and therefore can neither be resisted, hurt, wounded, crucified, or slain by all the efforts and strength of men; but we understand a spiritual, heavenly, and invisible principle, in which God, as Father, Son, and Spirit dwells; a measure of which divine and glorious life is in all men as a seed, which of its own nature draws, invites, and inclines to God; and this we call *vehiculum Dei*, or the spiritual body of Christ, the flesh and blood of Christ, which came down from heaven, of which all the saints do feed, and are thereby nourished unto eternal life...but we are far from ever having said that Christ is thus formed in all men, Or in the wicked.*⁵⁵

Negatively, he continues, the light is not our natural conscience or reason, both of which are liable to corruption.⁵⁶

Against the suggestion that, by denying predestination and asserting the free offer of the Gospel, Barclay has embraced Pelagianism, Barclay reiterates his view that the creature is called not to *resist* grace – in other words, passivity is what he has in mind. At which point he enlists the aid of Cyril of Alexandria: 'Let not the world accuse the word of God, and his eternal light, but his own weakness; for the sun enlightens, but the creature rejects the grace that is given unto it...'⁵⁷ Two further barrages of patristic quotations (some garbled) are presented in support of belief in the universal light. The first comprises references to Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr and Prosper of Aquitaine;⁵⁸ the second, to

Lactantius (citing Cicero), Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine.⁵⁹

We have already noted Barclay's view that, provided they did not resist it, even those who had not heard of Christ could be saved by the universal light. The reference to Justin just noted strongly reinforces this point, for Justin declares that Socrates, Heraclitus, and others who lived according to the light, were Christians.⁶⁰ No doubt in Justin and others the Logos can signify both God's eternal reason and his outgoing Word,⁶¹ but the question of the relation of the former to the latter remains. Barclay, as we have seen, does not intend to denigrate the Scriptures; rather, he holds that apart from divine illumination their meaning will not come home to us. So far, so good: the difficulty is with the converse. If *knowledge* of Christ's saving act is not necessary for salvation, how far is the act itself necessary – will not the inward universal light suffice by itself? George Keith certainly thought that Barclay was tending towards an affirmative answer at this point, and he has a number of polemical pages in which he turns Barclay's sources against him by claiming that the Fathers cited did not intend to suggest that any could be saved apart from the historic act of God in Christ, to which the Scriptures testify. The Christian cannot but construe the inward divine light very differently from the heathen.⁶² Keith concludes that when it serves their purpose, the Quakers 'magnifie the Fathers'; when it does not, they 'slight them, and prefer their own writings to them'.⁶³ He even invokes the Quaker Thomas Ellwood, who had charged Keith with 'supposing Friends Books to have been written with no better Guidance nor clear sight than theirs, who lived and wrote in those dark Times'.⁶⁴ Keith clearly felt that patristic darkness would have served Friends better than Quakerish light.

IV

What are we to make of our sometimes agonised pursuit of Barclay's patristic sources? We have seen ample proof that he is not always accurate in quotation or referencing; and that he selects what suits his case (or relies on his 'crib list' for it), whilst neglecting contrary opinions expressed by the Fathers whom he cites. Brown and Keith were by no means entirely unprovoked in giving their counter examples. Barclay, as we saw, did not take too lofty a view of his patristic and other authorities but, and this leads us to our first concluding reflection, he did think it appropriate to draw upon the heritage of Christian testimony.

Three hundred years after Barclay's death, where do Friends stand on this point? This is by no means only an 'in house' Quaker matter. It is of

some ecumenical importance, and that is why an outsider is impertinent enough to raise it. Not, indeed, that voices within the Friends are altogether silent on the subject. For example, the contemporary Friend Alastair Heron has recently expressed his conviction that 'we must look more closely at the fact of our Christian heritage, and what it means to Friends today'.⁶⁵

Friends seriously intent upon addressing this matter will find a perusal of Barclay very revealing. For in Barclay we have one who, of set purpose, did not set out to elaborate upon those doctrines held by all Christians in common. Rather, he wished to emphasize Quaker distinctives in such a way as to show that they were not hostile to the public authorities, or to the generally received tradition. Thus, while he makes a number of references to the Trinity and to the Atonement,⁶⁶ he does not elaborate upon these, or refer them unproblematically to the inward, universal light. To put it otherwise, while he wishes to counter what he regards as Calvinism's predestinarian slighting of God's justice, he is so convinced of humanity's total depravity that he knows that the forgiveness of sins is by the sacrifice of Christ alone. Yet the universal light, which shines upon those who have never heard of Christ, and can save them provided they do not resist it, cannot but divert the gaze from the historic Cross and raise the question of the relation of the universal light to a particular Calvary. Our second concluding reflection may be encapsulated in the question, 'How do contemporary Friends stand on the relation of inward Christ to the outward?'

Barclay's lack of definition at this point opened the way for some later Friends, under the influence of Enlightenment rationalism, or under that of post-Hegelian immanentism, to sit loose to the historic events, and to focus upon the inward light, now construed not Christologically, but as a natural possession of all people. The Cambridge Platonist Henry More went too far in saying that the Quakers excluded 'the external Christ from the business of Religion' in favour of the 'internal Christ',⁶⁷ but it is not difficult to see how the balance of Barclay's material could tempt others in this direction. Later Quakers have taken the point,⁶⁸ none more bluntly than D. Elton Trueblood.

There are many things wrong with 'that of God in every man' as an effort to state the essence of Quaker faith and life. One is that it makes no reference to Christ. This, of course, is one of the reasons for its popularity in our generation, for there are some who do not want to face the fact of the Christ-centredness of the Quaker commitment. They want an eclectic system which they think is superior to a faith centred in Christ... We do not need to be very astute to see that this is

really a disguised humanism...It is partly because of the intellectual vigour of Robert Barclay that Quakerism is not tied to such a position.⁶⁹

Francis B. Hall's rueful comment is similarly motivated: 'Most Quakers accept the universalism of Barclay and of the early Friends, but some are happy to drop entirely the particularity'.⁷⁰

Our own conclusion is that Robert Barclay did not draw *enough* on the Fathers. They could have helped him – and perhaps later Friends – on the questions: What was done for our redemption? Who alone could do it? How is the Christian understanding of redemption to be expressed in trinitarian terms? As it is, there is some justification for Alexander Gordon's judgment:

No doubt [Barclay's] theology is of the *solus Pater supremus* type. It would not be fair towards Barclay's own estimate of his position, or we should on this ground characterize his Confession as in its essence Unitarian; not that this would be true, in the sense of identifying it with any extant school of Unitarian faith; but the reason is mainly this, that no existing Unitarian school is strong enough to take up and assimilate Scripture so completely and *ex animo* as Barclay does.⁷¹

This suggests a somewhat cheekier way of posing our question: 'How happy are contemporary Quakers to be endorsed, on doctrinal points, by a distinguished Unitarian?'

May it be that Friends and others need to return to the heritage of Christian testimony in order to recover emphases which Barclay did not dwell upon because they were common currency? If so, our reason for doing so will be that the currency has subsequently been devalued.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ George Keith, *The Standard of the Quakers examined, or An Answer to the Apology of Robert Barclay*, (1702), 240.
- ² For Keith see *DNB*; E.W. Kirby, *George Keith, 1638-1716*, 1942; J. Philip Wragge, 'The debt of Robert Barclay to George Keith', unpublished typescript, 1946; id., *The Faith of Robert Barclay*, (1948), 21-34; John Eliot in *The Yorkshireman*, III, (1834), 4-15.
- ³ Eleanor P. Mather, *Barclay in Brief*, 1942; J.P. Wragge, op.cit.; Brand Blanshard, 'Early thought on the Inner Light', in Howard H. Brinton (ed.), *Byways in Quaker History. A Collection of historical essays by friends and colleagues of William I. Hull*, (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1944); Gerardina L. Van Dalfsen, 'The faith and theology of Robert Barclay', *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, XXXVII, no. 2, (1948), 51-62; Leif Eeg-Olofsson, *The Conception of the Inner Light in Robert Barclay's Theology*, (Lund, 1954); Francis B. Hall, 'The thought of Robert Barclay: An

evaluation', *Quaker Religious Thought*, VII, no. 1, Spring 1965, 2-31, with replies by Maurice A. Creasey, 32-5, James Flood, 35-8, and D. Elton Trueblood, 38-43; D. Elton Trueblood, *Robert Barclay*, 1968; Donald S. Nesti, *Grace and Faith: the means to salvation. An analysis of early Quaker soteriology and sacramentality: 1650-1689*, (Pittsburgh: Catholic and Quaker Studies, 1975); and the following unpublished theses: George Passmore Hayes, *Robert Barclay: His Life, Works and Position in the History of Quaker Thought*, Harvard University, 1927; Maurice A. Creasey, *The Theology of Robert Barclay*, University of Leeds, 1951; James J. Flood, *A Catholic Critique of the Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light*, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 1963.

- ⁴ G. Keith, *The Standard*, 230. Keith repeats his confession on p.241.
- ⁵ See P. Wragge's tables of parallels between Barclay's *Apology*, and Keith's *Immediate Revelation* (1668, but written 1664-5), op.cit., 31-33.
- ⁶ William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 2nd edn., 1961, 386.
- ⁷ A. Gordon, 'The marrow of Barclay', *The Theological Review*, XII, (1875), 389-90.
- ⁸ R. Barclay, *Truth Clear'd of Calumnies*, 1670, Preface.
- ⁹ E.g. by Henry More the Cambridge Platonist. See M.H. Nicolson (ed.), *Conway Letters: The correspondence of Anne, Vicountess Conway, Henry More, and their friends, 1642-84*, (1930), 416. the Aberdeen divinity students were among others who reiterated the charge - well aware that Barclay had been educated in the (Roman Catholic) Scots Theological College in Paris, of which his uncle Robert was Rector. See Barclay's vindication of the Quakers in *A True and Faithful Account*, 1675; also his *Quakerism No Popery* 1675, a reply to the accusations of John Menzies in his *Roma Mendax* 1675. Menzies was Professor of Divinity at Aberdeen University.
- ¹⁰ R. Barclay, *Truth Triumphant*, 1st edn., 1692, 732.
- ¹¹ *Ib.*, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity as the same is held forth and preached by the people, in scorn, called Quakers, etc.*, xi. We here use the widely-available 14th edn., 1886.
- ¹² *Ib.*, 12.
- ¹³ *Ib.*, vi.
- ¹⁴ D. Elton Trueblood, *Robert Barclay*, 134.
- ¹⁵ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 11.
- ¹⁶ *Ib.*, 13.
- ¹⁷ See Migne, PL XXXV, 2004, where the last words are: *Ubi illius inspiratio et unctio illius non est, forinsecus inaniter perstrepunt verba.*
- ¹⁸ R. Barclay, *Apology*, *ib.*, referring to Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I.vii = Migne, PG VIII, 733-4.
- ¹⁹ Tertullian, *Liber de Virginibus Velandis* = Migne, PL II, 889-90.
- ²⁰ Jerome to Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, Ep. LIII.4 = Migne, PL XXII, 543. The *Apology* wrongly cites Ep. CIII. In *Barclay's Apology in Modern English*, 1967, 19 n. 5, Dean Freiday mistakenly describes this letter as a 'commentary on the Epistles of Paul'.
- ²¹ *Ib.*, = Migne, PL XXII, 544.
- ²² Horace, Ep. II.117: *Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim.*
- ²³ Jerome, Ep. LIII.7 = Migne, PL XXII, 544.
- ²⁴ Jerome, Ep. CXX, question 10 (though in the *Apology* Ep. CL, question 11 is wrongly given).
- ²⁵ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 14, quoting Athanasius, *De Incarnatione* XXXI = Migne, PG XXV. 149-50.

- ²⁶ Gregory the Great, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, Hom. XXX on John 14: 23-31 = Migne, PL LXXVI, 1222.
- ²⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de Sancta et Consubstantiate Trinitate* = Migne, PL LXXV, 206ff.
- ²⁸ A fact of which I am reminded by Dr. Geoffrey F. Nuttall.
- ²⁹ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 38. The correct reference is Eusebius, *Eccles.Hist.*, V.24 = Migne, PG XX, 507.
- ³⁰ *Ib.*, 56. The correct reference is Jerome, Ep. LXXI,5 to Lucinius = Migne PL XXII,671. Jerome here refers to the transcribers of his own writings, explaining that although he had ordered corrections to be made, he had been so occupied with passing pilgrims that some errors had no doubt gone uncorrected.
- ³¹ Jerome to Lucinius, Ep. LXXI,6 = Migne, PL XXII,672. Cf. Augustine to Jerome, Migne, PL XXXIII,281.14, from which Barclay next quotes a different point.
- ³² R. Barclay, *Apology*, 57, quoting Augustine's letter to Jerome, Migne, XXXIII, 277.3.
- ³³ *Ib.*, 59. The correct reference is Jerome's letter to Cyprian, Ep. CXL.1 = Migne, PL XXII,1166.
- ³⁴ *Ib.*, 46.
- ³⁵ For John Brown (1610? – 1679) see *DNB*.
- ³⁶ J. Brown, *Quakerisme the Path-Way to Paganisme...an examination of the Theses and Apologie of R. Barclay, etc.*, (1678), 21.
- ³⁷ *Ib.*, 23.
- ³⁸ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 78.
- ³⁹ J. Brown, *Quakerisme*, 145.
- ⁴⁰ *Ib.*, 145-6. For John Owen and Richard Baxter on this point see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints. The Congregational Way 1640-1660*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 59 and n. 2.
- ⁴¹ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 88.
- ⁴² *Ib.*
- ⁴³ Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, XCV,5. The reason for the telescoping is that Grotius copied incorrectly from Vossius, Keith made the best sense he could of the mangled Latin, and passed the result to Barclay. See A. Gordon, 'The Marrow of Barclay', 403 n.3.
- ⁴⁴ J. Brown, *Quakerisme*, 211.
- ⁴⁵ Augustine, *De Trinitate* XIII,15 = Migne, PL XLII,1029.
- ⁴⁶ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 88.
- ⁴⁷ J. Brown, *Quakerisme*, 211.
- ⁴⁸ Prosper of Aquitaine, *Pro Augustino Responsiones ad Capitula Gallorum*, IX = Migne PL LI,165-6.
- ⁴⁹ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 88.
- ⁵⁰ Prosper of Aquitaine, *Pro Augustino Responsiones ad Capitula Objectionum Vincentianarum*, I = Migne, PL LI,177-9.
- ⁵¹ *Id.*, *De Vocatione Omnium Gentium*, II.16 = Migne, PL LI,702.
- ⁵² R. Barclay, *Apology*, 88-9, citing John Chrysostom, *Homiliae LXXXVIII in Joannem*, Hom. VIII on John 1:9 = Migne, PL LIX,641. Ambrose, *Expositione psalmum CXVIII, Sermon VIII* = Migne, PL XV,1318.57, and *id.*, *De Cain et Abel*, Lib. II, III,II = Migne, PL XIV,346.
- ⁵³ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 93.
- ⁵⁴ G. Keith, *The Standard*, 230.
- ⁵⁵ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 96-7, 100.

- ⁵⁶ *Ib.*, 102; cf. 351. This is the most interesting *philosophical* contention in the whole of the *Apology*. Barclay's denigration of reason in the cause of his light, and his differentiation of the latter from the former, placed him at odds with his Cambridge Platonist critic, John Norris, who found Barclay's *Vehiculum Dei* 'gross' and 'material', given that, in his own opinion, there is 'no medium between God and the creature'. (See his *Two Treatises Concerning the Divine Light*, 1692, the second of which is addressed to Barclay). The pressing of the Platonist way of asserting the matter/spirit dualism cannot but threaten a doctrine of Incarnation; but that doctrine is likewise threatened by Barclay's view – if the seed is utterly apart from conscience and reason. (Cf. Brand Blanshard in the chapter cited at n. 3 above; and for a contemporary Quaker advocate of dualism see D. Elton Trueblood, *art.cit.* n. 3 above.) As to the degree of affinity between the Cambridge Platonists and the Quakers, Geoffrey F. Nuttall has written, 'In actual fact there is...an utter difference of spiritual climate between the rationalist Cambridge men's *logos* theology and the theology of the Holy Spirit which the untutored Quakers worked out in their own experience'. (See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 1946, 18.) On the other hand, Melvin B. Endy, Jr. thinks that 'Even Nuttall was misled here', because 'The Spiritualists' conviction that the inward Christ provided them with a direct knowledge of divine realities was similar in certain ways to the rationalists' conviction that the structure of the human mind was congruent with, if not a replica of, the structure of the divine mind, and both epistemological principles were used to put forward the belief that true knowledge of God was universal'. (See his 'The interpretation of Quakerism: Rufus Jones and his critics', *Quaker History*, LXX, Spring 1981, 20.) To us it appears that Mr Endy is misled in not distinguishing the psychological-charismatic import of the position he is attacking from his own epistemological concerns. However the matters here broached are finally to be resolved, there is *prima facie* evidence that when Quakers have misconstrued Barclay's 'light' as 'natural light', and when Platonists have contented themselves with immaterialism, fundamentals of the Christian Gospel have been at risk.
- ⁵⁷ *Ib.*, 115.
- ⁵⁸ *Ib.*, 120-22. The readily identifiable quotations are to be found in Clement of Alexandria, *Stomateis*, II.6 = Migne, PG VIII,961-2; *id.*, *Cohortatio ad Gentes* XI = Migne, PG VIII,227-38; *id.*, *Paedagogus* 1.3 = Migne, PG VIII,257-8.
- ⁵⁹ R. Barclay, *Apology*, 134-7, citing Lactantius, *Divinarum Institutionum* VI.8 = Migne, PL IV,660-1; Justin, *1 Apology*, LXI; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* XVIII,47 = Migne, PL XLI,609; *id.*, *Confessionum* XI (wrongly given as II) 9 = Migne, PL XXXII,813-4.
- ⁶⁰ *Ib.*, 135.
- ⁶¹ Cf. Maurice Wiles, *The Christian Fathers*, (1966), 27.
- ⁶² G. Keith, *The Standard*, 240-8, 276-7. For the 'historic act' see further Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 159, and the cited reference to H.G. Wood, 'William Penn's Christian Quaker', in H.H. Brinton (ed.), *Children of Light*, (New York, 1938), 23.
- ⁶³ *Ib.* 346.
- ⁶⁴ *Ib.*
- ⁶⁵ Alastair Heron, *Speaking to Our Condition: A Ministry of Friends*, Canadian Quaker Pamphlets, 30, (Argenta, BC: Argenta Friends Press, 1989), 5.
- ⁶⁶ We have quoted him on the Trinity; for the Atonement see *Apology*, 143-4, 159.
- ⁶⁷ Henry More, *Divine Dialogues*, (2nd edn., 1713), 565.

- ⁶⁸ E.g. Edward Grubb, *The Historic and the Inward Christ*, (1914) 51; Maurice A. Creasey, 'Comment' on F.B. Hall's paper (see n. 3 above), 34-5; P. Wragge, op.cit., 43, 46; D. Elton Trueblood, *Robert Barclay*, 127; M.A. Creasey, review of L. Eeg-Olofsson, op.cit., in *Journal of Theological Studies* N.S. V, (1954), 288; H.G. Wood, review of same, *Theology* LVII (1954), 351.,
- ⁶⁹ D. Elton Trueblood, 'Comment' on F.B. Hall's paper (see n. 3 above), 40-41.
- ⁷⁰ Francis. B. Hall, *ib.*, 19.
- ⁷¹ A. Gordon, 'The Great Laird of Urie', *The Theological Review* XI, (1874), 545-6.