

Model

extract from Proposition I

... When someone first thinks of seeking the knowledge of God, from a sense of his own unworthiness and from the great weariness of his mind caused by the secret¹ checks of his conscience and the tender, yet real touches of God's light in his heart; his earnest desire to be rescued from his trouble, and the fervent longings he has to be freed from his disordered passions and desires and to find quietness and peace in the certain knowledge of God and in the assurance of his love and good-will towards him — all this makes his heart tender and ready to receive any impression. Since he doesn't discern distinctly, in his eagerness he embraces any thing that brings immediate comfort. If either through reverence for certain persons, or through a private inclination to something that agrees with his natural disposition, he happens to find any principles or methods by which he believes he may come to know God, and centers himself in that, it will be hard to get him to change to something else, no matter how wrong those principles may be. Having passed through the first anguish, he becomes more confident; also since the enemy is near, he creates a false peace and a kind of certainty, which is strengthened by the mind's unwillingness to enter again into new doubtfulness, or the anxiety of another search. ...

This is also abundantly proved by the experience of everyone who is inwardly touched by the call of God's

¹ The most common meaning of "secret" in Barclay is "private, personal, intimate, inward." Barclay seldom uses the word "secret" to mean "clandestine."

grace,² but apply themselves to false teachers, where the remedy proves worse than the disease. Instead of correctly knowing God or the things related to their salvation, they drink in wrong opinions, from which it is harder to be disentangled than while the soul remains a blank slate. People who imagine that they are wise are worse to deal with than those who are aware of their ignorance.³

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition I (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 19-20 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 1-2.

² Latin: *secretis & internis Divinae gratiae contactibus experrecti*, “awakened by the secret and inward touches of Divine grace.”

³ Latin: *Qui enim se sapere opinantur, magis obstinati sunt, quam qui suæ ignoratiæ sibi conscii sunt*, “For those who are wise in their own opinion are more stubborn than those who are aware of their ignorance.”