

Second Thesis

Concerning Inner and Immediate¹ Revelation*

Since “no one knows the Father but the Son and those to whom the Son reveals him”;² and since the revelation of the Son is in and by the Spirit; therefore the testimony of the Spirit is the only means by which the true knowledge of God has been, is, and can be revealed. By the moving of his own Spirit, he converted the chaos of this world into that wonderful order that was in the beginning, and he created man as a living soul to rule and govern the world. By the revelation of the same Spirit he has revealed himself all along to the children of men, including patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. These revelations of God by the Spirit, whether by outward voices and appearances or dreams, or by the inward subjective³ revelations in the heart, were in ancient times and still are the formal object of their faith;⁴

¹ Latin: *immediata*, “not mediated” This meaning of the word “immediate” —direct, without intermediary— is no longer common in English but it is the most frequent meaning in Barclay’s usage.

² Matthew 11:27 RB

³ The word Barclay uses is “objective” but since the time when he wrote the meaning of this word has changed so that nowadays it is equivalent to “subjective.”

⁴ In Thomas Aquinas’ theology, the words “material,” “substantial” and “formal” have specific meanings which are very different from the meanings in modern English. Aquinas distinguishes between the formal object of faith and the material object. The material object of faith is the substance which is known or believed, while the formal object is the form or means by which it comes to be known or believed. In this case, Barclay says that the formal object of faith is direct inward revelation. See *Summa Theologiae*, Part II-II Article 1: “The object of every cognitive habit includes two things: first, that which is known materially, and is the material object, so to speak, and secondly, that whereby it is known, which is the formal aspect of the object. Thus in the science of geometry, the conclusions are what is

for the object of the saints'⁵ faith is the same in all ages, though expressed under various dispensations.⁶ We believe that these divine inward revelations are absolutely necessary for developing true faith, and that they neither do nor can ever contradict the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or right and sound reason. Nevertheless, that does not mean that these divine revelations are to be subjected to tests based on the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or on the natural reason of man, as if those were a more noble or certain rule or touchstone. This divine revelation, and inward illumination, is clear and evident in itself, by its own evidence and clearness it forces the well-disposed intellect* to a natural assent. For example, that the whole is greater than its part; that two contradictory statements cannot both be true, or both false.⁷

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Thesis II (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 21-22 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiæ verè Christianæ apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 3-4.

known materially, while the formal aspect of the science is the means of demonstration, through which the conclusions are known."

⁵ Barclay is not referring only to the saints canonized by the Roman Catholic Church, but rather to the faithful members of the people of Christ. This usage was common in his time.

⁶ In seventeenth-century Protestant theology, the covenant which God made with humanity is always the same; but God expresses or administers it in different ways, or dispensations, according to the condition of the era. For example, it was thought that before Christ the Jews lived under the dispensation of the Law; when Jesus Christ came that dispensation ended and the dispensation of Grace began. Another new dispensation was expected with the second coming of Christ.

⁷ The version of this thesis in the list of the fifteen theses at the beginning of the book contains an additional three sentences which do not appear in this place, nor in the Latin text.