

The Spirit is the Source

extract from Proposition II § xv, xvi

§ xv. Because the Spirit of God is the source of all truth and sound reason, we are correct in saying that it cannot contradict either the testimony of Scripture nor right reason. As the thesis concludes (now that I come to its last part), it does not follow from that, that these divine revelations are to be subjected to tests based on the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or on the human or natural reason of man, as if those were a more noble or certain rule or touchstone. This divine revelation, and inward illumination, is evident in itself, and by its own evidence and clearness it compels the well-disposed intellect* and irresistibly moves it to assent, just as the common principles of natural truths bend the mind to a natural assent.

Anyone who denies this part of the thesis must necessarily affirm two things: [a] that the Spirit of God cannot, and never has revealed itself to man without Scripture or a distinct discussion of reason; and [b] that the efficacy of this supernatural principle when it operates in the human soul is less evident than the principles of natural law in their common operations. Both of these are false.

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§ xvi. . . . If anyone reading these things finds himself moved by the strength of these Scripture arguments, to assent and believe that such revelations are necessary, and yet doesn't know them by experience (which is the reason that this idea is so much denied and contradicted), let him know that the reason he does not feel it is not because it has ceased to be the privilege of every true Christian, but rather because he is a Christian in name rather than by nature. Let

him know that the secret Light which shines in the heart and reproves unrighteousness is the small beginning of the revelation of God's Spirit, which was first sent into the world to reprove it for sin (John 16:8). When by abandoning iniquity you come to be acquainted with that heavenly voice in your heart, you shall feel, when you begin to put off the old man, the natural man who does not taste the things of God's kingdom, with all his evil and corrupt inclinations and desires — I say, then you will feel the new man, the spiritual birth and the baby born, which has spiritual senses and can see, feel, taste, handle and smell the things of the Spirit. Until then the knowledge of spiritual things is only an historical faith. A blind man, though extremely intelligent, cannot understand the light of the sun or the various colors, even by the most acute and lively description, as well as a child can by seeing them. In the same way the natural man, though extremely intelligent, cannot understand the mysteries of God's kingdom by the best words, even words of Scripture, as well as the smallest and weakest child who tastes those mysteries, by receiving them revealed inwardly and subjectively by the Spirit.

So wait for this in the small revelation of the pure *Light* which first reveals more familiar things, and as you become more fit for it, you will receive more and more, and by a living experience you will easily refute the ignorance of those who ask "how do you know that you are moved by the Spirit of God?" That will appear to you a question as ridiculous as asking someone whose eyes are open, how he knows the sun shines at noon.

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition II § xv, xvi (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 58, 61-62 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 31-32, 34-35.