

Third Thesis

Concerning the Scriptures

The Scriptures of Truth have come from these revelations of the Spirit of God to the saints. They contain:

1. A faithful historical account of the actions of God's people in various eras, with many singular and remarkable divine interventions for them.
2. A prophetic account of several things, some of which are already past and others yet to come.
3. A full and ample account of all the chief principles of the doctrine of Christ, expressed in various precious declarations, exhortations and sentences, which were spoken and written by the moving of God's spirit at various times and directed to some churches and their pastors.

Nevertheless, because they are only a declaration of the fountain, and not the fountain itself, therefore the Scriptures should not be considered the principal basis of all Truth and knowledge, nor even the "adequate primary rule of faith and behavior."

Still, since they give a true and faithful testimony of the first foundation, they are and may be considered *a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit*, from which they receive all their excellence and certainty.¹ We only truly

¹ In this sentence there is a phrase in Latin (indicated in bold) which is not present in the English and which changes the meaning in an important way:

Latin: *licet cùm dent verum & fidele testimonium primæ originis, sint, & possint existimari regula secundaria, subordinata Spiritui, à quo, **quam habent**, excellentiam & certitudinem derivant.*

"But since they give a true and faithful testimony of the first source, they are, and may be considered, a secondary rule, subordinate to the

know them by the inward testimony of the Spirit, and they testify that the Spirit is the guide by which the saints are led into all Truth.² Therefore, according to the Scriptures, the Spirit is the first and principal guide. Since we therefore receive and believe the Scriptures because they came from the Spirit, therefore the Spirit is more originally and principally the rule, according to the scholastic maxim, *Propter quod unumquodque est tale, illud ipsum est magis tale*. In English: "The thing because of which something is a certain way, that thing itself is more that way."

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Thesis III (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 62-63 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiæ verè Christianæ apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 35-36.

Spirit, from which they derive all their excellence and certainty, **when they have them.**"

² John 16:13; Romans 8:14 RB