

All this shows how necessary it is to seek the certainty of the Scriptures from the Spirit, and nowhere else. The truth of this is clearly shown by the infinite janglings and endless contests of those who seek their authority elsewhere.

The leaders of the first centuries did not agree among themselves concerning the Scriptures; some of them rejected books we approve, and others approved books which some of us reject. Those who have studied antiquity even a little know what great controversies there were concerning the second epistle of Peter, that of James, the second and third of John, and the Revelation. Many authorities, even very ancient, deny that Revelation was written by the beloved disciple and brother of James, but rather believe it was written by someone else of that name. What would become of Christians, if they had not received that Spirit, and those spiritual senses, by which they know how to discern the true from the false? It is indeed a privilege of Christ's sheep that they hear his voice, and reject the voice of the stranger.<sup>1</sup> If that privilege were taken away, we would be left prey to all kinds of wolves.

§ ii. We recognize that the Scriptures are very heavenly and divine writings; the use of them is both encouraging and necessary to the church of Christ. We glorify the Lord and praise him for his wonderful providence in preserving these writings through such a long night of apostacy, as pure and uncorrupted as we have them, to give testimony for his Truth even against the wickedness and abominations of those he made his instruments in preserving the Scriptures;

---

<sup>1</sup> [John 10:1-5](#)

they preserved them as a witness against themselves. Nevertheless, we cannot call them the principal source of all Truth and knowledge, nor the first adequate rule of faith and conduct, because the principal source of Truth must be the Truth itself, that is, the thing whose certainty and authority does not depend on any other thing. When we have doubts about the water of any river or current, we go back to the spring itself, and having found the source we stop; we cannot go any farther because that is where it springs from the bowels of the earth, which cannot be examined. In the same way we must bring all human writings and sayings to the Word of God, I mean the Eternal Word, and if they agree with the Word we stop there. For the Word always proceeds from God, and the unsearchable wisdom of God, the counsel and will conceived in the heart of God, is revealed to us in and by the Word.<sup>2</sup>

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition III § i, ii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 64-66 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 37-38.

---

<sup>2</sup> This passage has relevance to a controversy about the Bible which has existed in Quakerism since the times of Fox and Barclay; for example see the letter to the Governor of Barbados which insists that the Bible is the words of God while Christ is the Word of God.