

**Yasuharu Nakano**

**Self and Other in the Theology of Robert Barclay**

**(University of Birmingham: unpublished PhD thesis, 2011)**

A very detailed and technical critique of the classic Liberal Quaker historical analysis, which sees Robert Barclay as responsible for Quaker 'decline' in the eighteenth century, represented by Quietism. Nakano re-assesses Barclay's ideas of passivity and self-denial, and attacks Liberal Quaker scholars like Rufus Jones and William Braithwaite for projecting their own ideological presuppositions onto Quaker history. He also attacks their theology, drawing on concepts from post-modern philosophy. He assesses Barclay's ecclesiology and peace testimony in the light of this analysis, and compares it with modern Christian pacifist writers.

**Keywords and Themes:** Barclay, passiveness, self-denial, concepts of the self, the self in modern thought and theology, self and otherness, Liberal Quakerism, Liberalism, Liberal theology, Modernity and its origins; Quakerism, Arminianism (a 17<sup>th</sup> c. theological movement emphasising free will), Calvinism and Pelagianism (an early Christian heresy denying original sin); pacifism and theology, peace testimony, ecclesiology. Japanese and western Quakerism.

**Who it would be useful for:** Theologians and historians of ideas; historians of Quakerism.

A copy of the full thesis can be downloaded at

<http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/1584/1/Nakano11PhD.pdf>

## Introductory Chapter

This thesis ‘discovers a way to view self-other relations’ that was ‘unveiled in the traditional Christian message, and by doing so, it explores a new possibility of offering a new story about God and his peaceful Kingdom as a social model within the Quaker peace testimony.’ This approach is defined against a ‘Liberal Quakerism’ – or what Dandelion calls ‘liberal-Liberal Quakerism’ - (and ‘Liberal’ theology in general) ‘based on the appreciation of self’, that ‘utilises the historical heritage of the Quakers’ to adapt to modernity; modernity ‘emphasises the principles of ‘individuality’, ‘freedom’, ‘autonomy’ and ‘self-decision.’ The thesis ‘especially re-examines so-called second-generation Quakerism and its core message of ‘self-denial’, in order to reconsider the ideological values of Liberal Quakerism.’

Liberal Quakerism, notably in the figure of Rufus Jones, came to identify the inner light with the human mental faculties of ‘reason, will and conscience.’ Early Quakers had contrasted it with precisely these faculties. For Jones, ‘conscience’ is even a synonym for ‘self-consciousness’ [namely] the thinking process, or reason.’ The ‘divine and sinless nature’ represented by the inner light thus becomes equated with ‘human subjectivity’, expressly contrary to the view of the early Quakers, and ‘human nature came to be considered as sacred: namely, humanised God’. This had implications for the Quaker peace testimony: early ‘Quakers urged that human beings should bring their selves to nothingness, to receive and partake in inward light, and to silently listen to the word of God’. For Fox and others, this would lead them to ‘seek the peace and good of all men, and to live peaceably’. But Liberal Quakerism instead saw this as the outcome of human reason and will. For the highly influential ‘neo-orthodox’ Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, ‘Liberal pacifism including the Quaker version was an irresponsible attempt to escape from the harsh reality ...that human beings, as long as they live, cannot avoid sin (violent relations with others)’, which was acutely presented for Niebuhr by the rise of the Nazis. For Nakano, the source of the problem identified by Niebuhr was ‘the total absence of otherness’ represented by ‘the identification of God with the self’, or the divinisation of the self, for it led to the ‘oblivion of others’.

Nakano argues that a way out is provided by Barclay, who ‘consciously followed a different path from Rene Descartes [and his *cogito*], a principle which is characterised by the reduction of all things into subjectivity. Barclay provides us with an old-new Quaker perspective on self-other relations, when the concept is neglected in Liberal reductionism.’ He also provides the potential for an answer to the neo-orthodox critique of pacifism, just as

he answered Calvinism in his own time. Overall, Nakano's thesis aims to challenge the centrality of the self in Liberal and Liberal theological thought, reflected in the 'Neo-Hegelian historical view, which is eager for the final completion of the self in unity with the Self of God.'

Nakano writes from the context of Japanese Quakerism, which was seen by its early converts as a useful interface between Christian (Western) and Japanese thought: 'a seeking attitude towards personal spiritual authenticity to help identify the true self, through meditation'. This dovetails neatly with Liberal Quakerism: in Japan Quakerism was 'optimistically accepted as a universal method of self-cultivation which would nurture [the progressive] development of society and the world', with an openness to scientific thought, a mystical view of faith, 'an optimistic view of human nature ... and religious pluralism unbound by a creed.' (These are features which Dandelion and Davie identify as characteristic of Liberal Quakerism.)

*Scholarly appreciation of Barclay:* Though esteemed by Fox, scholars have seen Barclay as responsible for Quietism (Jones) and too Cartesian (Pyper; also as lacking in a living and dynamic relationship with God). Others (Wragge and Trueblood) see his theology as born of experience (and so anti-rationalistic in direct contrast to Descartes, according to the latter). 'Furthermore, Wragge argues that Barclay's spiritual passivity, which is criticised by Braithwaite, is intended to safeguard the work of Christ against human efforts to reach God, such as the efforts of Pelagians and modern Quakers.' Keiser, too, argued that while he used 'Cartesian categories to find common ground with his opponents he explains his own religious experience using a non-dualistic 'relational method'.' These debates are essentially about living faith, and dualism, and are very much affected by the preconceptions of the scholars concerned.

Scholars have rarely mentioned Barclay's peace testimony: Brinton said that he saw pacifism as Christian perfection, which others could only be gently persuaded towards by example; Brock, that Barclay was the first to show pacifism in its true relation to the body of Quaker belief, and that his appeal to human reason was a new element, which anticipated the humanitarian emphasis of later Quakers.

## Part I: Chapter 1: Issues of Self: the Meaning of Passivity in Barclay's Theology

Nakano reviews 'the core concept of Barclay's entire thought', universal redemption: his task is to clarify the meaning of 'passiveness' or 'self-denial', which is pivotal in salvation, for Barclay. He re-evaluates the generally negative treatment of Barclay in Quaker studies; passiveness is often supposed to have caused Quietism but in fact it is an 'intricate idea', indeed, the essence of Quaker faith. Nakano also examines Barclay's view on the self by distinguishing his ideas from Descartes' *cogito*; and finally, assesses the significance of 'nothingness' as the core of Barclay's theology, from the influence of German mysticism.

Barclay is on the side of universal redemption with the Arminians against the Calvinists, but he has a 'unique non-human based interpretation of universal redemption'. This lies in 'passiveness', a concept severely criticised by Liberals but for Nakano the essence of Quaker faith. Ironically, in practice Calvinists vest salvation in the human will, like Arminians: assurance of salvation comes from whether one is being sanctified. For Barclay, redemption has two aspects, 'within' and 'without'; the light/revelation within, and Christ's incarnation and death without. 'Barclay argues that if people attend to the workings of the inward light and do not resist them during their day of visitation, (the coming of which cannot be presaged)' these workings will create redemptive effects in their hearts, first teaching them about their sinfulness, and secondly making them die and rise again with Christ within. 'This constitutes the entire process of salvation, [both] justification and sanctification.' The Spirit is the more original and principal rule, 'which is evident and clear of itself' (Barclay). The Bible is secondary: the 'authority and certainty' of scripture 'rely on the inner manifestation of the Spirit.' Scripture is, however, the only test of controversies among Christians, and the inner light can't contradict its teaching. The light of Christ has a totally distinct nature from human mental faculties, and is not at human command: 'though there be a possibility of salvation to every man during the day of his visitation, yet cannot a man ... stir up that light and grace ... but he must wait for it: which comes upon all at certain times and seasons, wherein it works powerfully upon the soul, mightily tenders it, and breaks it; at which time, if a man resist not, but closes with it, he comes to know salvation by it.' (Barclay.) He rejects the idea that election involves a limited number who are graced with a greater intensity of light, such that they cannot resist: 'in whom grace so prevaieth, that they necessarily obtain salvation; neither doth God suffer them to resist.' The damned are not predestined, but are identified with those who pass over their day of visitation: 'obedience to the light is the point of divergence for partaking in God's salvation' (Nakano). But is this

obedience an act of the will? No: an 'inward silence of the mind' is necessary; 'so long as self bears rule, and the Spirit of God is not the principal and chief actor, man is not put out of [the devil's] reach' (Barclay), for he works through natural faculties, and where these are silent, he must stand. Thus the soul must be 'as it were, brought to nothingness'. The self needs to be brought to nothingness to receive the Spirit of God; crucifixion of self and its will. Passiveness 'means the cessation of the soul's self-workings' (Nakano).

Trueblood thought Barclay was looking for the theological counterpart of the cogito, in the inner light understood as inward and self-evident. Nakano agrees that 'interior manifestation' is 'the fundamental principle of religious truth' for Barclay: in contrast to the Westminster Confession 'inward light', not the Bible, is the 'foundation of religious knowledge'. But the inner light is not to be identified with human faculties, and therefore in contrast to Cartesian teaching human faculties are not the foundation of knowledge. 'Barclay considers the self as *res cogitans* to be the very stage for the devil's workings', so should be broken down. The inward light for Barclay is not a mere substitute for subjectivity. Seed/light/*vehiculum dei* is 'a kind of immanent transcendence of God', that is, a transcendent otherness found within. However, subjective testimony needs to be checked against that of others, and the Bible, and the conclusions of right reason.

Meister Eckhart's exposition of the scriptural description of poverty in spirit as 'desires nothing' 'knows nothing' and 'possesses nothing', especially the first, helps to elucidate Barclay's negation of self or of subjectivity: internal poverty involves giving up the 'I' that seeks or follows the will of God by my efforts. For Barclay 'even the human self-will to have faith is denied or abandoned.' Impossible to realise or understand silence until you lay down your own will and wisdom. Quakerism as a 'counter-faith against ... self-justifying religions that attempt to earn salvation.' In response to the inner light, 'the 'self' is recognised in the dimension of responsibility', in response to God as other, after being abandoned in its own right. The chief business of the soul, then, is not to act in her own right, but to wait upon the Lord.

## **Chapter 2: Changes in the concept of Self in Quakerism and the Liberal Historical view**

This chapter traces changes in the Quaker concept of the self from the early Quakers, through the Restoration, Quietism, Evangelicalism and Liberalism, in the ideological and social context. Broadly 'Quaker theology kept a certain traditional [Christian] theological

framework' concerning the self understood in terms of soteriology, 'with some due alterations according to the different [social and ideological] situations.' Liberal Quaker scholars dubiously identified themselves with the first generation, and criticised subsequent developments, especially Barclay's theology, on account of its self-denying character; in Nakano's view this was because it conflicted with their own 'self-centred ideology'.

Two concepts of self: Christian, defined 'in relationship to God as otherness', and his saving work; and modern or 'Liberal', 'a person's individuality or essence', 'personal identity', or 'ego'.

**Early Quakers:** Jones and Braithwaite thought Barclay's theology distorted Fox's message. However, Nakano points out that 'Fox did not present significantly different positions from Barclay in terms of soteriology.' Humans are fallen and can do nothing good by their own efforts or faculties; but if 'people ... obey the working of the light that enlightens each person during their day of visitation, it will become salvation for them'. There are two differences: Fox has a 'slight Arminian orientation', compared to Barclay's insistence on total self-denial/passivity: for Fox, human attitude in response to the light is important. Barclay says perfection always leaves room for growth, and requires diligent attendance to the Lord; Fox thinks one can be as perfect as Christ, never to go astray again. Elizabeth Bathurst has in common with both what they have in common with each other, but also emphasises a period of struggle to overcome sin, and is more similar to Barclay than Fox in her account of perfection. She tends to see the light as above all other authority.

**Quietism and Evangelicalism:** Jones thought that though Job Scott inherited introverted passive theology from Barclay, he also explicitly developed the view that the inward principle was the sufficient basis of religion, a welcome view for Liberal free thinkers. Jones saw Tuke as a proto-Evangelical. Is this view fair, and was Barclay really responsible for Quietism?

'Scott followed the same theological line as early and second period Quakers in that he presented a typical Quaker soteriological view: human total depravity and their natural state of enmity against God, the inward light given by God for everyone, and obedience or concurrence to the working of the light as the way to salvation.' However, he used the motif of the 'inward birth of God or Christ' to wholly reject all external aspects of Christian faith, reinterpreting everything in inward terms. The Kingdom, for example, would only be realised within. This internalisation also held for Scott's view of truth: unlike Barclay as well as Fox

and Fell, he rejected any external criteria by which to judge the light. Ironically this led to an extreme focus on one's own subjectivity, 'despite his harsh criticism of human reason and self-centredness.' 'Scott's theology was [therefore] differently balanced, compared with previous Quaker thought, in that it moved towards a wholly introverted and personalised faith.' Quietism seems to stem more from Bathurst and Scott than Barclay, on Nakano's account. The Quietists are not really passive in the Barclayan sense: rather, their introverted religion was justly criticised, in Nakano's view.

Jones portrayed Tuke as 'unprecedented' in the extent to which he leaned towards 'orthodox Christianity', effectively defined by Jones as total depravity and submission to Biblical authority, and said that in this respect 'one can hardly fail to feel the difference ... between him and a Friend of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.' With this at least Nakano disagrees. Like Scott, 'Tuke had a theological similarity in soteriology to earlier Quakers: total depravity, the inward principle or light placed in all human hearts by God, and obedience to the working of the light as the way to regeneration and salvation.' Tuke did, however, stress 'the significance of the Bible and discipline, and [like Barclay but unlike Scott] urged the necessity of verifying each person's fallible faith and practice by these standards.' He also placed emphasis on the importance of human reason. Tuke's theology is thus more balanced than Scott's, between the external and internal. But ultimately all external standards in religious matters were still subject to the light.

***Liberal Quakers:*** 'The first and second generation Quakers, [and] Quietist and proto-Evangelical Quakers preserved a peculiar theological structure in soteriology on three points: the total depravity of human nature, the inward light endowed to all humanity by God for their redemption, and obedience to the light as the way to salvation. It is remarkable that such a simple structure was kept for a long time,' given the general Quaker resistance to theological formulation of their faith. The main difference between first and second generation Quakers, on Nakano's analysis, is the recession of the sense that the End was imminent: this led to differences in emphasis regarding perfection, which came to be seen as something progressive rather than instantaneous. There is a difference between Quaker writers regarding the authority of the light relative to external means, but *pace* Jones et al, this is not a difference between the first Quakers and their successors: on the contrary, Fox and Fell began to emphasise structures to prevent extremism, in the wake of the Naylor scandal and similar events, while Bathurst and Scott insisted that the light was self-authenticating. Barclay was not, then, a pioneer of institutionalisation against free inspiration.

Nor was he the proto-apostle of Quietism: the 'introverted' theology of Scott has a better claim in that respect, while Barclay's concept of self-denial or passivity is best seen as an anti-Pelagian strategy, seeking the source of living faith, working by love, in the Spirit rather than the human will.

Jones's interpretation was very much influenced by his own religious and intellectual outlook, which owed a great deal to Idealism and Hegelianism. For the Idealists subjectivity underpinned and encompassed reality, and Hegelianism saw 'social reform and moral development' as 'closely linked with religious self-realisation': history was progressive, towards an external utopia achieved by inner self-realisation, objective good attained by subjective perfection. From these influences, Nakano argues, Jones's theology acquired a 'self-centric' character, involving an over-optimistic appreciation of human nature, and even overtones of a kind of pantheism of the spirit, in which man's 'true self' is identified with the divine, and the divine understood as progressively expressing itself through human self-realisation. This theology has a tendency to make God in man's image, 'divinise' the human and make salvation a human spiritual achievement, at the expense of a profound doctrine of sin and divine initiative: 'Jones's theology makes his faith into a self-contained or self-complete religion, which begins with the self and ends with the Self, forming a quite different religion from earlier Quakerism that stresses human sin and the initiative of God in religious affairs such as salvation.' In a sense salvation is identified with an achievable natural perfection of the individual and the possibility of earthly utopia, in which education becomes as important as any spiritual discipline. For Nakano 'Liberal' theology 'cannot deal with others [in their] otherness': it is based upon self- or human-centric philosophical presuppositions from which all things, including other persons, are judged from the point of view of one's own subjective perception. In keeping with this experience is the main test for authentic religious experience, perhaps under the influence of science and the 'Pragmatist' philosophy of William James.

***Barclay's theology as estimated by the Liberal Quakers:*** They blame Barclay for Quietism (which is problematic according to Nakano, see above;) and say there are three main problems in regard to Quietist thinking: a dualistic way of thinking in which human faculties are opposed to God's grace; a passive attitude to God leading to the 'introverted and inactive nature of Quaker meetings after the second generation'; and the 'lack of [an] ethical and behavioural dimension'.



Concerning 'dualism', for Jones, Barclay endeavoured to fit in his view of the Inward Light with the doctrine of total depravity, which Fox and other early Quakers had rejected. Passivity is essential on account of the corruption of human powers: one must simply wait on the working of the Spirit. 'According to the Liberal researchers, who believe in an organic relation between humans and God, and [a consequent] potentiality of moving towards God, the motifs of self-denial and waiting for God are merely an inactive attitude like a puppet which has not yet been aspirated with God's breath'. Quietism also lacked any criterion to distinguish between true and false motions of the Spirit, on account of its suspicion of human reason. Nakano argues that on the contrary, the first generation did accept the radically fallen condition of human nature. '[T]here were certainly ideological changes between the first and second generations ... but these things cannot be attributed only to the second generation or Barclay's theology, nor to their theological faults. Rather, these shifts were direct results from political, social and ideological changes within and without Quakerism [notably the recession of millenarianism], and from the reconsideration of the teaching of the inner light by early Quaker leaders', not just the second generation. In fact, the 'main body of [Liberal Quaker] arguments on historical matters in many cases [involves] Liberal Quakers' expression and justification of Liberal ideology': it tends to a Whiggish and Hegelian view of history, seen as culminating in and consciously judged from the standpoint of the Liberals' own ideological position. And again, as above, for Nakano, according to this ideological position the human self 'is identified with the [unfolding] process of the whole Self, and therefore, the value of 'intimacy with God' easily goes to imply 'intimacy with [one's own] self': self-obsession or self-centrism: 'the Hegelian motif of the completion of the world as God's self-expansion [in effect reduces to] human self-realisation.'

### **Part II: Chapter 3: Quaker Peace Testimony in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

In this chapter, Nakano argues that there was 'a shift from a Christianity-centred basis to Christian, non-Christian and non-religious bases' for the Quaker peace testimony in the twentieth century. Fox said he 'lived in virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars', being 'the lust' according to James 4.1. 'However, in the twentieth century, the Quaker stance largely changed under the influence of Liberal Quaker theology, which prevailed in Britain and parts of the United States since the Manchester Conference held in 1895.' Jung Jiseok identifies a reduction in a scriptural basis, and an increase in

‘spiritual and humanitarian’ arguments; spiritual referring to the inner light and the mystical aspect of Quakerism, identified with ‘that of God in everyone’ by Rufus Jones. Niebuhr criticised this over-optimistic view of human nature and downplaying of the doctrine of original sin.

While far from accepting the Liberal basis for the peace testimony, pacifists like the Quaker Lonni Valentine and the Mennonite John H. Yoder responded that Niebuhr’s assertion of the necessity of coercion on account of the human condition undermined the idea of *agape* as an effective force in human life, that *agape* was a good in itself regardless of its effectiveness, and that ‘ethics is not interested in what is, but what ought to be’ (Yoder). Stanley Hauerwas argues that transcendental ethical principles can become tools of oppression, in the sense that they can be imposed on others or foster the belief that others ought to adopt them: the principles of Liberal pacifism are of this kind, but Niebuhr’s critique is in fact similar, since it ‘still assumes humans to have the capacity for controlling their own stories by their own power’; a capacity which naturally involves seeking control over the other. Ethics arises from collective stories lived out in community, for Hauerwas, not from abstract principles. Nonviolence is not a ‘strategy to rid the world of war’, so much as a living negation of war: in Christian terms, war is negated by living as the church. The church ought to be a foretaste of the kingdom that works as a ‘counter-testimony against human coercive forces and manipulation’.

Hauerwas identifies his pacifist position with the ‘biblical pacifism’ of Yoder and Reinhold Niebuhr’s brother, Richard. Nakano sees these views as a contemporary version of the peace testimony of the early Quakers, rooted in biblical principles rather than abstract humanitarian arguments. ‘At the same time he admits to the significance of Reinhold’s spirituality, which realistically illustrates the tragic nature of human beings and teaches us to be patient with hope, setting the realisation of the ideal Kingdom beyond history.’ For Nakano Hauerwas and Yoder represent an approach to pacifism which avoids the Liberal ‘method [which connects] nonviolence to benefits, and runs the risk of taking the unbridgeable gap of self-other relations back to the realm of calculability. [On the Liberal model] Quaker pacifism becomes no more than a (group-) psychological strategy to violently use ‘nonviolence’ by making people on the opposing side feel indebted or stigmatised.’

Nakano identifies this ‘implicit violence’ and the ‘other-absence’ in Liberal Quakerism as a theoretical bottleneck, which Yoder and Hauerwas, as well as the analysis of Derrida and Levinas, can help to overcome. He ties it to the Liberal tautology that although nothing can be known absolutely, the claim that absolute truth is unattainable is itself put

forward as an absolute claim: this is insufficiently other-regarding, in that it still makes one's own truth the position from which to judge others. For Levinas, our awareness of the relativity, rather than the absoluteness, of our knowledge, only comes about through our interaction with others: through this we recognise the limitations of our own subjective perspective and by this means come to acknowledge the irreducibility of the other. The awareness of limitation also raises the question of God: 'this consciousness of doubt, implies the idea of the Perfect', albeit the Perfect understood as radically Other, rather than an extension of our own self. Reinhold Niebuhr is right to the extent that 'being with others' inevitably involves people thinking of others and otherness as 'a mere threat to our self-preservation, or [as an] object of manipulation for our subsistence', attempting to control others from our own subjective view. However, Derrida illustrates that there can be contrasting ways to deal with others: 'hostility' and 'hospitality'. Hospitable 'eating well' 'does not mean [the self] above all taking in and grasping in itself, but learning and giving to eat, learning-to-give-to-the-other-to-eat.' Niebuhr's answer, on the other hand, is for Nakano too pragmatic, too much of a compromise with the perverse strategies of the self to gain power over others.

### **Part III: Chapter 4: Perfectionism and God's Kingdom**

In this chapter Nakano argues that the 'unique value of Quaker perfectionism' is realised 'in Barclay's theoretical connection between perfectionism and Christ's command to love one's enemies'. In traditional Quakerism 'a hopeful idea of the Kingdom is closely accompanied by a hopeful sense of human perfection, which finally bears fruit in human attitudes and actions towards others in society as a peaceful testimony to God'. This optimism is not naïve, however, as Niebuhr considered Jones's account of human nature to be. The traditional Quaker account of perfection is contrasted by Nakano with that of the 'Liberal Quakers', who 'project their own will or desires onto God's will or Truth. Then, the Kingdom finally becomes the kingdom dominated by the self, whilst using the mechanism of exclusion of others or alien factors for its self-establishment and self-preservation' (see chapter 3 above). Nakano reaches back to pre-Liberal Quakerism – notably Barclay - to discover 'the way of communicating with others as other' in traditional Quaker faith, and seeks to relate the Quaker doctrine of perfection in this context, to perfectionism in wider Christian tradition.

Nakano surveys biblical, early Christian and Reformation models of perfection, based on Newton Flew's well-known book *The Idea of Perfection*. Nakano traces a certain assimilation of the eschatological idea of the kingdom with the idea of inner renewal, which could be consummated only after death. He also distinguishes between absolute perfection, possible only in heaven, and relative perfection, possible in this life, arguing that Augustine as well as Luther and Melancthon contended for the possibility of the latter, based on one's faith and love, rather than legalistic moral observance. Even Calvinism allowed for some form of relative perfection in the elect, in accordance with the doctrine of perseverance. John Wesley is an important figure for Nakano's discussion: he belongs to the period immediately following the early Quaker movement, and contended for the possibility of a certain temporal Christian perfection which still did not assert the possibility of total sinlessness. Importantly, he made sin conditional on the will, on its being voluntary: as such 'perfection or imperfection depends on the state of human consciousness' (Nakano). Nakano is uncomfortable with this position to the extent that it makes the spiritual condition of persons depend upon their own efforts: a 'Pelagian aspect' to Methodism.

Nakano distinguishes Barclay's understanding of the perfection of righteousness from either the imputation of righteousness doctrine of the Reformers or the emphasis on human will in Arminian/Wesleyan and patristic/Catholic views. For Barclay, Christ within us enables us to overcome sin; but it is 'only a perfection proportionable and answerable to man's measure' (Barclay). However, the important thing to notice is that 'Christians are not urged [by Barclay] to conform to some ethical set of values that are defined as substantially or metaphysically good in some system. [Instead, as] shown in the first chapter, Barclay's theological emphasis is placed upon partaking in the life and death of Christ, and specifically upon following the work of the inward light revealed through self-denial or the annihilation of all human oriented thinking, imaginations and feelings'. To put it another way, 'perfection in Barclay never refers to the static moral status that is generally equated with the ideas of the completion of the self or the collective Self, nor can it be compared to progressive volitional efforts towards a set moral goal.'

Rather, Barclay identifies perfection with 'total self-renunciation', even to the point of renouncing any will of our own to have faith. This is best exemplified his teaching on Christ's exhortation to love one's enemies: this is most unnatural for humans and requires 'the denial of self and entire confidence in God'. For Nakano such self-denial constitutes the ground for the reformation of the self as 'hospitable' rather than 'hostile' in its relations with others (as defined in the previous chapter). This condition of perfection or sanctification

‘received by partaking in the workings of the inward light or the seed of God’ is identified by Barclay with the Kingdom: ‘already realised in the interiors or in the hearts of true believers.’ But the Kingdom also has a communal aspect: it is established in a community of ‘true saints’, defined by their sanctification. It is in these ways, then, that Barclay resolves the tensions inherent in traditional Christian concepts of perfection and the Kingdom: the tension between relative and absolute perfection, the principle of growth (in grace) and the existing possession of righteousness, between the social application of God’s love as the realisation of the Kingdom and its individual realisation, and between the Kingdom as coming and as arrived.

### **Chapter 5: Barclay’s Ecclesiology and Peace Testimony**

The primary question regarding Barclay’s ecclesiology for Nakano is ‘whether church authority is equipped with some aspect or attitude in which some immanentism would be deferred, re-questioned and made forever receptive to the outside as otherness’. This appears to mean that while all forms of authority are necessarily ‘coercive’, they are also inevitable and necessary, and the question is whether their coercive aspect is ameliorated by an inherent capacity for self-criticism and openness to other perspectives. ‘This problem can be comprehensively paraphrased with the following theological question: how Barclay connects his ecclesiology into the central Christian belief in ‘love one’s enemies’,’ which for Nakano constitutes just such a principle of amelioration. Hence the connection to the peace testimony, which is also an expression of this basic belief in terms of radical, transforming ‘hospitality’ towards the other, as discussed in chapter 3. Only in this context can the ‘special nature and task of the Church’, as opposed to purely human institutions, be understood.

For Barclay, the Church is supposed to be a place where, and an institution by which, peaceful relations with others can be established: ‘love one’s enemies’ exemplifies this, in that it overcomes the ‘logic of retribution’ with forgiveness. ‘Retribution or revenge is based on self-regard or self-interest, which accompanies the reduction and re-appropriation of all other things [and persons] according to the nearness or proximity to the self. Christ’s commandment of love demands that his followers challenge this self-value and the violent nature which goes along with it’. (Nakano.) Barclay thinks that a kind of infallibility ultimately attaches to the collective discernment of the Church, but it cannot be identified with particular persons, offices or even decisions or the whole body as such. Nakano argues

that instead it resides in the capacity for self-criticism inherent in Christ's demand that Christians always be open to others, loving and forgiving even their enemies. Individuals and the Church as a whole, still less whole societies and nation states, can never perfectly live up to this ideal, but it forever stands as a challenge and a principle designed to prevent the establishment of a closed and exclusive system. The Church becomes corrupt when it departs from this, forming just such a structure or system.

Yet the contradiction between the need to define the nature of at least the visible Church and the demand for openness is never resolved, and is of its nature insoluble. Barclay attempts to define the Church by moral rather than doctrinal standards, but in the end this is too imprecise a way to define any visible institution or even community. Nakano quotes and is sympathetic to Barclay's definition of a 'sect', which the church must avoid being, and his definition of the church itself; but in the end, for Nakano, they are unrealisable ideals which the Church ought still to strain after: 'a Sect [says Barclay] is a company of people following the Opinions and Inventions of a particular Man or Men, to which they adhere more, and for which they are more Zealous, than for the Simple, Plain and Necessary Doctrine of Christ.' Unfortunately that depends on how you discover and define the simple, plain and necessary doctrine, and makes people partisans of that very doctrine. He calls the Church a gathering of people from 'divers and sundry Sects' who all felt a truly tender and serious need of 'God's righteous Judgement in their Heart to burn up the unrighteous Root and Fruits thereof'; and who now live in the peace, joy, power and life arising from this and the subsequent gifts of the Spirit. On a practical, institutional level, this is too subjective to be a reliable standard, yet for Nakano it is a necessary principle of self-criticism and renewal for all bodies that call themselves Christian.

'Barclay's peace testimony is not intended to have a political effect upon other members of society [and should never be forced on them by legislation] but [is meant instead to] deliver a testimony to God's peace in the world.' In his conclusion to this chapter Nakano cites the modern example of the Amish community offering forgiveness to the family of a gunman who murdered Amish children in a school shooting. He compares this, and Barclay's peace testimony, with the positions advocated by Yoder and Hauerwas in chapter 3, and links them to Barclay's ecclesiology. The Church should offer a moral example of an alternative way of being, a 'city set on a hill', for the rest of society, rather than attempting to impose this testimony, which would undermine and subvert the testimony itself. This has clear implications for freedom of religion: conscience has absolute rights, and should never be compelled. Barclay was an early and a distinguished advocate of this view. Force should

never be wielded by the church, and only by the civil power to prevent harm; ironically, of course, the latter at least is precisely the view of classical Liberalism. In contrast to Liberalism, however, Nakano thinks Quakers have been too individualistic and must emphasise the need for community and narrative more: human beings cannot live without some narrative or scheme to give them cultural patterns particular to [their] society or community'. He links this to his self-critical, undogmatic ideal for the Church: he quotes Hauerwas to the effect that 'the telos [of a community is in fact a narrative, and the good is not so much a clearly defined 'end' as it is a sense of the journey on which that community finds itself'. Nakano comments that this is compatible with the idea that 'the most significant task and goal of the Christian Church is not to think of how members can actually change the world, but to be the people who continue to tell the eschatological hope for God's rule and to show Christ's peaceable way of living', in other words, the 'city set on a hill' ideal.

### **Conclusion.**

Nakano interprets Barclay's structure of redemption, involving passiveness, day of visitation and inward light, as follows: 'passiveness in Barclay's theology is the total renunciation of self to such an extent that even the human will to have faith or to fulfil the will of God is forsaken. In such a way, when a human soul stops its own workings and is brought to nothingness (death on the Cross with Christ), the door of the heart, which otherwise is filled up with voices of the self, is opened to the working of God. Then the inward light comes forth in the heart as the spiritual birth (revival with Christ).' Having been re-made, the self is then able to respond; that is, it is re-conditioned to respond openly to the other, whether God or other finite persons. This represents a self-denying 'counter-faith' to the two mainstream Protestant currents of the time, Arminianism and Calvinism, which both in their own way reduce to self-reliance: voluntary efforts as a condition for Arminians, and the same voluntary efforts as a note of assurance for the Calvinists. (The peace testimony is a public testimony to this inner renewal, which involves a new radical, forgiving, self-denying love, even of enemies.)

For a long time Barclay's theology was negatively estimated as the main cause of the 'decline' represented by eighteenth-century Quietism, on account of the influence of Liberal Quaker scholars notably Jones and Braithwaite. According to Nakano, this analysis must be treated with suspicion on account of the fact that the Liberal Quakers 'actually transformed

Quakerism into a different type of religion based upon self-affirmation. Namely, their religion was under the deep influence of Neo-Hegelianism, which believed that human progress represented divine self-realisation, but had the effect of reducing the divine 'other' to a projection of, or even identity with, the human self: 'it is noteworthy that Liberal Quakerism was based on the peculiar belief in [an] intimate human conjunction with God through human mental faculties such as reason, consciousness and conscience, making Quakerism a religion of human self-realisation.' This constructed 'a different ideological dimension from earlier Quakers' – who are better represented in this respect by Barclay – 'leading to the erasure of several traditional beliefs such as original sin and redemption. Considering these things, it is quite proper to re-check the conventional historical view of Quakerism presented by Liberals'.

For Nakano, the ideology of the Liberal Quakers also had a negative effect upon the understanding of the peace testimony: the Liberal Quakers and their great critic, Reinhold Niebuhr, alike make the self 'fundamental' and all such ideologies reduce relations with others to 'a mere place of conflicts for hegemony, a place of 'hostility'.' Writers such as Yoder and Hauerwas help to show how others can be made graceful or 'hospitable'.

Barclay ameliorated the eschatological perfectionism of the early Quakers: 'for Barclay, perfection is realised 'here and now' in the birth and formation of Christ within human hearts through their response to the inward light, which enables them to do the will of God [become 'selfless' and 'hospitable' to others]. On the other hand, he also argued that perfection is not to be understood as the same as God's pure state; it is proportionate and answerable to each measure, leaving room for daily growth as well as [taking account of] the likelihood of sinning again'. Barclay treats God as 'inward otherness', expressed by the term *vehiculum dei*: 'foreign, never totally confined to the range of our reduction and manipulation', and this retains the renewing self-critical openness of his theology. The recognition of otherness allows him to see the attitude to self-other relations contained in 'Jesus's supreme command to 'love your enemy'' as the essence of Christianity, and 'loving activities in a church community' as 'the very possibility of the Kingdom'. This prevents church authority structures from becoming exclusive and oppressive, 'immanentist'. The Quaker church should be a morally-appealing, persuasive public testimony to Christ's peaceful kingdom, for Barclay, with unity defined by sanctification (individual and communal loving hospitality towards others): Barclay's pacifism 'invites people to see the communal nature of human existence in the framework of inward light, [leading them to] think of the possibility of reconciliation with others.'



Nakano's final section (p310f 'Original Points of the Thesis') should be read in its own right. It once more emphasises Barclay's understanding of passiveness and self-denial as an anti-Pelagian strategy, that is, as a means of combatting spiritual self-centredness and self-reliance; and it again underlines Nakano's concerns regarding the self-centric nature of Liberal theology and the misreading of Barclay consequent upon this, and encourages students of Quakerism to consider the distorting effect the dominance of this perspective has had upon the general reading of Quaker history.

**Summary prepared by Andrew Harvey (2012)**