

Robert Barclay and Kabbalah

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Abstract

Robert Barclay inhabited a broad spiritual and theological cosmos. Long recognised as a Jesuit-trained ex-Calvinist well versed in Protestant scholastic theology, Barclay was also acquainted with Jewish Kabbalistic writings through Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala denudata*. A comparison of Barclay with his friend George Keith, also influenced by von Rosenroth, reveals new layers of meaning in Barclay's work, particularly in applications of Kabbalistic terms to Christology.

Keywords

Adam Kadmon, George Keith, Kabbala, *Kabbala denudata*, Knorr von Rosenroth, Robert Barclay.

Introduction

We read texts with assumptions, usually well grounded, about their contexts. We hear a theological text as a melody against background harmonies. What happens when the music changes?¹

Two major voices in early Quaker theological writings were Friends from Scotland, Robert Barclay and George Keith. Barclay is remembered most for his *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, which became the canonical expression of Quaker theology for over 200 years. After his friend Robert's death, George turned schismatic and then defector, spending his final years as an Anglican cleric attacking Quakers, but if he had died when Barclay did, Keith would have been remembered as a major Quaker theologian rather than as the great apostate that he became.

1 For an exploration into Robert Barclay's echoes of John Cassian, see Birkel, Michael, 'Dean Freiday, Robert Barclay, and John Cassian', *Quaker Religious Thought* 110 (2007), pp. 47–51.

Recent work on George Keith has proposed that there were significant echoes of concepts from Jewish mysticism to be found in his early writings.² Through his association with Keith, Barclay was also exposed to Kabbalistic thought, which invites a reconsideration of some of his ideas as well.

First, the melody: the following passage is found in the portion of Robert Barclay's *Apology* known as Propositions V and VI, 'Concerning the Universal Redemption by Christ, and also the Saving and Spiritual Light, wherewith every Man is enlightened.' In it, Barclay strongly opposed Calvinist predestination, especially to damnation, which to his Quaker sensitivities rendered God the author of sin. This passage develops the central Quaker tenet of the Light. The Light, of divine origin, is available universally to all people. This Light from Christ is salvific and provides concrete guidance for action.

By this Seed, Grace, and Word of God, and Light... we understand a spiritual, heavenly, and invisible principle, in which God, as Father, Son and Spirit, dwells: a measure of which divine and glorious life is in all men, as a seed, which of its own nature, draws, invites, and inclines to God; and this we call *vehiculum Dei*, or the spiritual body of Christ, the flesh and blood of Christ, which came down from heaven, of which all the saints do feed, and are thereby nourished unto eternal life... as this seed is received in the heart, and suffered to bring forth its natural and proper effect, Christ comes to be formed and raised, of which the Scripture makes so much mention, calling it 'the new man': 'Christ within, the hope of glory'.³

Biblical echoes resound in this passage, and these had particular significance for early Friends. In John 6, Jesus spoke of himself as the bread of life that comes

2 For a fuller discussion of George Keith and Kabbalah, see Birkel, Michael, 'Immediate Revelation, Kabbalah, and Magic: the primacy of experience in the theology of George Keith', in Angell, Stephen W. and Dandelion, Pink (eds), *Early Quakers and Their Theology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 256–72.

3 Barclay, Robert, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity: being an explanation and vindication of the principles and doctrines of the people called Quakers*, Glenside, PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002, p. 120. In the original Latin edition of the *Apology*, after the word 'principle', the text states 'and organ' ('& organum'). The use of the word 'organ' may be elucidated by the following passage from Barclay's 1682 treatise *The Possibility and Necessity of Inward Revelation*:

And as the natural ideas are stirred up in us by outward and natural bodies, so those divine and supernatural ideas are stirred up in us by a certain principle, which is a body in naturals in relation to the spiritual world, and therefore may be called a divine body; not as if it were a part of God, who is a most pure Spirit, but the organ or instrument of God, by which he worketh in us, and stirreth up in us these ideas of divine things. This is that flesh and blood of Christ, by which the saints are nourished; which is a mystery to all unregenerated and mere natural men, never to be reached by them, while they remain in that state. (*Truth Triumphant...*, London, Thomas Northcott, 1692, p. 901)

For a fuller discussion of this passage and its concepts, see Creasey, Maurice A., *'Inward' and 'Outward': a study in early Quaker language*, London: Friend's Historical Society, 1962, especially pp. 14–17.

from heaven, upon whose flesh and blood believers eat and drink. Quakers seized upon this text for support for their abstinence from external observance of the bread and cup of what other Christians called the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In Galatians 4:19 the apostle Paul described Christ being formed in the faithful. For Barclay, this inward formation of Christ is the means of justification, a central theological concept.⁴ Colossians 1:27 speaks of Christ in you, the hope of glory, another treasured image among early Friends. Ephesians 4:24 (and Colossians 3:10) refer to putting on the 'new man' (τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον). Elsewhere in the *Apology* Barclay links the images from Galatians and Ephesians in his treatment of the Quaker doctrine of perfection:

we do believe that to those in whom Christ comes to be formed and the new man brought forth and born of the incorruptible seed, as that birth and man in union therewith naturally doth the will of God, so it is possible so far to keep to it as not to be found daily transgressors of the law of God.⁵

So far all seems properly Protestant and perhaps even orthodox—and a presentation of Quakers as doctrinally orthodox was a major concern for Barclay, as the genre of the apology is a theological defence. The fact that it is an apology influences readers to hear the 'melody' of his words against the harmonic accompaniment of Protestant Scholasticism. There remains that enigmatic, non-biblical sounding phrase 'vehicle of God', but otherwise all appears to be in order—until the background music changes.

George Keith and Kabbalah

George Keith spent time with Quaker philosopher and countess Anne Conway at her estate Ragley Manor, where he met Henry More and others of the Cambridge Platonists. There he came to know Francis Mercurius van Helmont, a lover of speculative and theosophical thought, with whom Keith collaborated on a treatise on reincarnation or 'revolution', the latter term a translation of *gilgul*, a Kabbalistic concept of recycling human souls. Christian Kabbalists in that time had surprisingly little access to genuinely Jewish texts. They mostly substituted works from the Hermetic and Neoplatonist traditions.⁶ Van Helmont changed this. His German

4 For more on Barclay's use of Gal. 4:19, see Birkel, Michael, 'A Translation from Latin and Introduction to Robert Barclay's *Christianae quaedam animadversiones in Nicolai Arnoldi: (qui S.S. theol. doct. & profess. se praedicat) exercitationem theologicam de Quakerismo, ejusque brevis refutatio*, Rotterdam, 1675', *Quaker Theology* 11 (2012), pp. 41–59 (introduction in print version, translation in online supplement, 1–35 [<http://www.quaker.org/quest/Quaker-Theology-20-Contents.html>], accessed 24/05/2016], especially p. 53). Barclay also discusses these matters in the first section of Proposition VIII of the *Apology*.

5 *Apology*, p. 206.

6 Francis Mercurius van Helmont, *Two Hundred Queries Moderately Propounded Concerning the Doctrine of the Revolution of Humane Souls, and Its Conformity to the Truths of Christianity*, London: R. Kettlemell, 1684. See also Coudert, Allison P., *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the*

friend Christian Knorr von Rosenroth produced, with help from van Helmont, the voluminous *Kabbala denudata* [*Kabbala Unveiled*], truly Kabbalistic works translated into Latin, from both the *Zohar* and the Lurianic school of Jewish mysticism.⁷ Van Helmont shared Knorr von Rosenroth's work with Keith, who was so moved by it that he wrote two letters to him in Latin. Like von Rosenroth, Keith saw the primordial Adam of the Kabbalists as Jesus Christ, whom the apostle Paul himself had referred to as another Adam (1 Cor. 15:45): 'The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.'

Kabbalistic Traditions: The *Zohar* and Isaac Luria

Since many scholars of Quakerism are not deeply acquainted with historical Kabbalah, some words of introduction are in order. The most influential of texts among Kabbalists is the *Zohar*, an enormous, wide-ranging, inspiringly poetic, deeply complex and at times impenetrable text, described by Daniel Matt as 'a commentary on the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, written in the form of a mystical novel',⁸ in which the ancient rabbi Shim'on Bar Yohai and his companions wander the countryside telling stories and expounding on the mysteries of God, creation and the community of Israel. A central concept to the *Zohar* is that of the ten *sefirot*. These are emanations of divinity, through which the utter and incomprehensible oneness of God stretches towards the multiplicity of the created world. The final emanation, the divine Presence (*Shekhinah*), dwelt with the Jewish community as it endured the tribulations of exile, though she longed for reunion with her husband, the emanation *Tiferet* or Beauty, symbolically linked with the figure Moses. The human quest is an ascent through these emanations, thereby not only achieving personal spiritual growth but also reintegrating scattered dimensions of Godhead, restoring God, the world, the Jewish community and the individual soul.

In medieval Kabbalah the *sefirot* became stages of God's being, aspects of divine personality. Their pattern and rhythm inform all the worlds of creation. Prior to the emanation of the *sefirot*, God is unmanifest, referred to as *Ein Sof*, Infinite... The *sefirot* are often pictured in the form of Primordial Adam [*Adam Kadmon*].⁹

Seventeenth Century: the life and thought of Francis Mercury Van Helmont (1614–1698), Leiden: Brill, 1999. George Fox accompanied Keith on a journey to Ragley, as Geoffrey Nuttall discusses in his consideration of Fox's acquaintance with Hermetic esoterica in Nuttall, Geoffrey, "'Unity with the Creation": George Fox and the hermetic philosophy', *Friends Quarterly* (1947), pp. 134–43.

⁷ Joseph Dan points out that Guillaume Postel had published the Kabbalistic text *Sefer Yetsirah* with a Latin translation and commentary earlier, along with some selections from the *Zohar*. The distinction of first presenting Luranic traditions to the Christian world belongs to von Rosenroth. Dan, Joseph, *Kabbalah: a very short introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 66.

⁸ Matt, Daniel C., *Zohar: annotated & explained*, Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths, 2002, p. xxi.

⁹ Matt, Daniel C., *Zohar: the book of enlightenment*, New York: Paulist Press, 1983, p. 33.

The word 'Adam' in Hebrew means not only the name of the first human but is also used to refer to a person or to all of humankind. Hence Primordial Adam, who dwelt in the heavenly sphere, was also called 'the Heavenly Man'.

The *Zohar* emerged in medieval Spain and is widely regarded as chiefly the work of Moses de León. It remains the prominent book of Kabbalah. During the sixteenth century, a new school of mystical thought arose in Safed in Galilee. Isaac Luria reinterpreted concepts in a new cosmogony, and the text of the *Zohar* came to be read by Kabbalists in Lurianic terms.

Luria imagined the very first gesture on the part of God as an act of *retreat* or *withdrawal*, known in Hebrew as *tsimtsum* (literally, 'contraction' or 'shrinkage'). Insofar as the entirety of the creation was originally filled with the light of divinity, creation required a space within which to become manifest.¹⁰

This divine contraction of God's light that had filled the universe made possible room for God's creative activity, beginning with the *sefirot* themselves. This entailed a new understanding of *Adam Kadmon*, the primordial human.

Adam Kadmon is... a first configuration of the divine light which flows from the essence of *En-Sof* into the primeval space of the *Tsimtsum*—not indeed from all sides but, like a beam, in one direction only. He therefore is the first and highest form in which the divinity begins to manifest itself after the *Tsimtsum*.¹¹

Adam Kadmon is light without vessels. The *Zohar* understands the heavenly man or *Adam Kadmon* as the embodiment of all divine manifestations in the emanations of the *sefirot*. In Lurianic thought, *Adam Kadmon* becomes a mediator between the ineffable God and the four worlds of creation. *Adam Kadmon* comes to be understood by some as the soul of the Messiah. Lurianic Kabbalah speaks of a Greater Countenance (or Long-Suffering Face), *Arikh Anpin*, to refer to the upper *sefirot*, and a Lesser Countenance, *Zeir Anpin*, to refer to the lower. *Adam Kadmon* comes to be identified with *Arikh Anpin*, also referred to as *Attiq Yomim*, the Ancient of Days.

The Lurianic universe is richly complex, consisting of multiple worlds mediating between God in God's utter mystery (*Ein Sof*) and our mundane cosmos.

The four worlds are: (1) Atsiluth, the world of emanation and of the divinity; (2) Beriah, the world of creation, i.e. of the Throne, the Merkabah [chariot] and the highest angels; (3) Yetsirah, the world of formation, the chief domain of the angels; and (4) Asiyah, the world of making.¹²

10 Fine, Lawrence, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and his Kabbalistic fellowship*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 128.

11 Scholem, Gershom, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1954, p. 265.

12 Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 272. Keith referred to the four Lurianic worlds in Keith, *The True Christ Owned As He Is, True God and Perfect Man...*, London, 1679, pp. 48–49.

In Lurianic thought, Adam Kadmon dwells in the realm of Atsiluth, the highest, most sublime and immaterial of the four worlds.

Lurianic myth has much more to it, including a primordial cataclysm, the shattering of the vessels, when the divine light was too much for the sefirotic containers to hold, resulting in divine crisis and the human responsibility to repair the damage. Von Rosenroth's Latin translation of Kabbalistic texts, *Kabbala denudata*, is richly Lurianic. According to Alison Coudert, this 'provided its readers the intellectual rationale for restoring the world to its idyllic state before the Fall'.¹³ Early Quakers shared this same hope for restoration, as famously demonstrated in George Fox's experience of Edenic renewal:

Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new, and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness, and innocency, and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus, to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell... I was immediately taken up in spirit, to see into another or more steadfast state than Adam's in innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus that should never fall.¹⁴

This is not to argue for Kabbalistic influence on George Fox but instead to suggest that early Friends, such as George Keith and Robert Barclay, were disposed to read Kabbalah in light of their own similar concerns.

The Heavenly Man, Christ the New Adam

Like other Christian Kabbalists, George Keith appropriated many of these concepts and applied them to Christ. In a letter to Knorr, he identified Christ as the 'heavenly man' (*homo coelestis*) in whom there was a 'most divine soul extended everywhere' and that touched and enlightened human souls, thereby enlightening and enlivening them by its strength.¹⁵ In his treatise *The Way Cast Up*, he wrote that Christ 'is extended to us by way of emanation'.¹⁶ Keith identified 'emanation' with Atsiluth, the highest of the four worlds in Lurianic cosmogony¹⁷ and wrote that

13 Coudert, Allison P., 'Christian Kabbalah', in Greenspahn, Frederick E., (ed.), *Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah: new insights and scholarship*, New York: New York University Press, 2011, p. 167.

14 Fox, George, *The Journal of George Fox*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952, p. 27.

15 Quod enim volebam hoc est, esse in Christo animam quondam divinissimam ubiq̄ extensam; qua omnes animas humanas attingens, sua virtute eas illuminet et vivificet. Wolfenbüttel Herzog-August-Bibliothek, Cod. Guelph extrav. 30.4, fol. 16, <http://diglib.hab.de/mss/30-4-extrav/start.htm?image=00039>, accessed 24/05/2016.

16 Keith, George, *The Way Cast Up, and the Stumbling-Blocks Removed from Before the Feet of Those Who Are Seeking the Way to Zion, with Their Faces Thitherward...*, s.n., 1677, p. 129.

17 Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 272.

the Man Christ Jesus is really present in and among us (and consequently everywhere)... not... by his external or outward person, for that is ascended into Heaven, but in virtue of his Divine Life and Spirit, or Soul extended into us in his Divine Seed and Body, which is his Heavenly flesh and blood, wherewith he feedeth the Souls of them that believe in him.¹⁸

Friends are disposed to hear the opening chapter of the Gospel of John as the background music to discussion of the Light. Quaker use of Kabbalistic ideas suggests that the harmonies are more complex. This is addition, not subtraction or substitution. The Light was still the Word that was with God from the beginning. It still enlightened everyone, as the Prologue to John stated. Yet the Light of Christ was now also the primordial emanation from the unknowable God, the first and most sublime of the four realms of creation. Christ the new Adam of the apostle Paul was also the Primordial Adam, the Heavenly Man whose soul extended to all and who nourished believers thereby.

The following excerpt from *The Way Cast Up* echoes many of Keith's Kabbalistic borrowings, in which he is reflecting on the meaning of the Ancient of Days, drawing on Daniel 7:9–10:

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

And what doth that fiery streame or river signify, that issued and came forth from the Ancient of days, but the extension of the Life and Spirit of Christ, as he is the Heavenly Man... even that Son of man, whom Iohn saw... his Soul... is extended into us here upon Earth, in his Heavenly body that he giveth us to feed upon.¹⁹

Again, it is possible to read these words without their Kabbalistic undertones, but to hear the Kabbalistic influences suggests a layered complexity that enriches the text. Such a reading does not erase the eschatological dimension that early Quakers shared with other Christian apocalyptic groups at that time. It does, however, deepen the inward meanings of the biblical text as read by Keith and others, including Barclay.

Summing up to this point, under the influence of Kabbalah, Keith pictured Christ as Adam Kadmon, the divine light, the soul of the Messiah, that extends to all souls and feeds the souls of believers with his celestial flesh and blood. The *Kabbala denudata* offered Keith imagery and language to describe the Quaker concept of the universality of the Light of Christ, the central concern of the passage quoted earlier from Barclay's *Apology*.

18 Keith, *The Way Cast Up*, p. 123. See also pp. 130, 145, 153.

19 Keith, *The Way Cast Up*, pp. 141–42.

Barclay and Keith's Adaptation of Kabbalah

George Keith and Robert Barclay were intimate friends. Together they travelled, endured imprisonment, debated theological students in Aberdeen, developed Quaker theology and published.²⁰ As Keith's biographer Ethyn W. Kirby put it, 'Robert Barclay went about the countryside with Keith, organizing meetings, and, as the two men discussed their reading and formulated Quaker dogma, they found in each other a close intellectual companionship.'²¹ In 1676, for example, they collaboratively produced *Quakerism confirmed, or, A vindication of the chief doctrines and principles of the people called Quakers from the arguments and objections of the students of divinity (so called) of Aberdeen*. In 1677, Barclay and Keith accompanied Quaker leaders George Fox and William Penn on their travels to the Netherlands and Germany.

It seems likely that they also talked about Kabbalah: Barclay makes reference to a section of von Rosenroth's *Kabbala denudata* to defend his use of the phrase *vehiculum Dei*. In his tract *The True Christ Owned*, Keith made reference to the same portion of von Rosenroth's voluminous *Kabbala denudata* entitled *Apparatus in librum Zohar*.²²

Late in life, after Barclay's death and Keith's apostasy, Keith wrote a lengthy and tedious rebuttal to his friend's *Apology*, in which Keith claimed that Robert Barclay had obtained both the 'term' and the 'notion' of *vehiculum Dei* from Keith. Keith refrains from much further discussion, noting conveniently that debate would only lead 'into Philosophical Disputes, not fit for Vulgar Capacities'.²³ This claim is a smokescreen, a subterfuge to mask Keith's indebtedness to von Rosenroth's *Kabbala denudata*. *Vehiculum* is the Latin term used at times to translate the Hebrew word *merkabah*, often rendered as 'chariot'. This is a central term in Kabbalah and refers to Ezekiel's chariot, described in complex imagery in Ezekiel 1, a passage that was widely regarded as containing celestial secrets not fit for the uninitiated. Among the esoteric Jewish treatises from late antiquity, the term came to mean the secret divine realm.²⁴ The term continued to have importance among Kabbalists over the centuries. As seen earlier, the chariot dwells in Beriah, the second of the four worlds in Lurianic cosmology. When justifying the expression *vehiculum Dei* in response to an attack on the *Apology*, Barclay himself refers to Knorr's *Kabbala denudata*:

20 Trueblood, D. Elton, *Robert Barclay*, New York: Harper & Row, 1968 mentions George Keith on pp. 46–47, 63, 67, 72, 79, 88–89. See also Miller, William Frederick, 'The Record Book of the Monethly Meeting att Urie', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 7 (1920), p. 92.

21 Kirby, Ethyn W., *George Keith (1638–1716)*, New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1942, p. 15.

22 Keith, *The True Christ Owned*, p. 68.

23 Keith, George, *The Standard of the Quakers Examined or an Answer to the Apology of Robert Barclay...*, London: 1702, p. 212.

24 Dan, Joseph, *Kabbalah*, p. 13.

As for the word *vehiculum Dei*, as having a respect to Christ's body or flesh and blood from heaven, that it is a scripture word, see Cant. 3. 9, 'King Solomon made unto himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon': and v. 10, *vehiculum ejus purpureum*: the Hebrew words for chariot and *vehiculum* are אפריון *Appirion* and מרכב *Merkabh* or *Merkaba*, both which signify a chariot and vehicle; and that by *Solomon* is mystically understood Christ, of whom Solomon was a figure or type, none who are spiritually-minded can deny... But for the further understanding of these Hebrew words see *Buxtorff* his Hebrew lexicon, and the book called *Apparatus* in lib. *Sohar*, part 1, p. 144, and 553.²⁵

Looking at the original use of *vehiculum Dei* in Barclay's *Apology*, it is to be noted that although he does not use the term 'heavenly man' (but does use the expression 'new man' of Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10), he nonetheless speaks of the heavenly flesh of Christ that feeds the saints, which is a striking echo of Keith's words above. One is tempted to speculate on the conversations that took place between these two friends.

Revisiting the passage from the *Apology* discussed earlier, the same words now sound different after this excursion through Kabbalah as used by Keith.

By this Seed, Grace, and Word of God, and Light... we understand a spiritual, heavenly, and invisible principle, in which God, as Father, Son and Spirit, dwells: a measure of which divine and glorious life is in all men, as a seed, which of its own nature, draws, invites, and inclines to God; and this we call *vehiculum Dei*, or the spiritual body of Christ, the flesh and blood of Christ, which came down from heaven, of which all the saints do feed, and are thereby nourished unto eternal life... as this seed is received in the heart, and suffered to bring forth its natural and proper effect, Christ comes to be formed and raised, of which the

25 Barclay, Robert, *Robert Barclay's Apology For The True Christian Divinity Vindicated From John Brown's Examination And Pretended Confutation Thereof In His Book Called, Quakerism The Path-Way To Paganism...*, London, 1679, reprinted in Barclay, Robert, *Truth Triumphant*, London: Benjamin C. Stanton, 1831, vol. iii, pp. 495–96. 'Buxtorff' refers to Buxtorf, Johann, *Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum...*, Basil, 1676, p. 736. To alleviate possible confusion, it should be noted that *Sohar* is the same as *Zohar*. In fact, von Rosenroth uses the former. As elsewhere in his translation, he transliterates Hebrew and Aramaic letters into their German equivalents. The Hebrew word *Zohar* begins with the letter *zayin*, which sounds like the English pronunciation of the letter *z*. In German, that sound is represented by the letter *s*.

It should be noted that Sarah Hutton (*Anne Conway: a woman philosopher*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 85) points out that Cambridge Platonist Henry More held to a 'Platonist doctrine of the vehicle of the soul, according to which the soul inheres in a body so fine and diaphanous as to be almost immaterial', but this does not seem to be the concept that Barclay promotes in this passage, and Barclay himself explicitly cites a Kabbalistic text. Hutton further notes (*Anne Conway*, pp. 190–99; see also 'From Christian Kabbalism to Kabalistic Quakerism: the Kabalistic dialogues of Anne Conway, Henry More and George Keith', in Schmidt-Biggemann, Wilhelm, (ed.), *Christliche Kabbala*, Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2003, pp. 199–209) that More was quite critical of George Keith's adoption of Kabbalistic ideas, particularly with regard to applications of them to Christology. In sum, it seems unlikely that More was the decisive influence on Barclay here.

Scripture makes so much mention, calling it ‘the new man’: ‘Christ within, the hope of glory.’²⁶

Barclay’s words, the melody, remain the same, but the background harmonies have changed, and the music takes on new qualities. Expressions such as the light that extends to all people, ‘*vehiculum Dei*’, the spiritual flesh of Christ that feeds the believers, and the ‘new man’ as a possible reworking of Keith’s adaptation of ‘heavenly man’ take on new qualities, not replacing the traditional later Quaker understandings of these terms but enriching them by enabling readers to hear the Kabbalistic resonances by way of Keith’s use of them. This does not make Barclay a crypto-Kabbalist, but it does suggest that he inhabited a broader spiritual and theological world than many have imagined previously. It no longer suffices to see him simply as a Jesuit-trained ex-Calvinist Quaker.

This exercise suggests that early Quakers read texts that were outside mainstream theology but did not always refer to them very explicitly in print. The same might be noted of other periods of Quaker history. John Woolman, a Quaker of the following century, read and lent from his personal library works by theosophist Jakob Boehme (or Jacob Behmen, as often rendered in English texts at that time), but one searches in vain for direct evidence of references to Boehme, or even echoes of his singular spiritual vocabulary.²⁷ It raises the question of how wide the gate of acceptable theology was among earlier Friends. As a historical analogy, in the late fourth century, monastic writer John Cassian was deeply influenced by the spirituality of Evagrius Ponticus, whose heterodox speculations resulted in a post-mortem declaration of heresy. Cassian, however, dropped the unique terminology of Evagrius, renamed the concepts in biblical metaphors. Evagrius’ impassibility (*apatheia*), for example, became the familiar ‘purity of heart’ (*puritas cordis*) of the Beatitudes. Cassian thus kept his indebtedness a secret for a sesquimillennium.²⁸ Might analogous discoveries lie ahead for historians of Quakerism? It is not the purpose of this article to claim widespread Kabbalistic influence or even acquaintance among early Friends. Yet this exploration may suggest how little may ever be known about the interior world of early Quakers. The matters that are assumed to be the best known, such as their theology, may in fact be only partially grasped. It may be best to proceed with openness and humility, to hear the familiar in new ways.

26 Barclay, *Apology*, p. 120.

27 Tolles, Frederick, ‘John Woolman’s “List of Books Lent”’, *Bulletin of the Friends Historical Association* 31 (1942), pp. 72–81. John Woolman does use the word ‘tincture’ once, but not at all in its Behmenist alchemical sense. It is possible that his use of ‘resignation’ may benefit from comparison with Boehme’s yieldedness (*Gelassenheit*). More broadly, he might have felt a kinship to Boehme’s concept of the new birth. For a general introduction to Boehme’s thought, see Birkel, Michael, and Bach, Jeff, *Genius for the Transcendent: mystical writings of Jakob Boehme*, Boston: Shambhala, 2010.

28 Marsili, Salvatore, *Giovanni Cassiano ed Evagrio Pontico: dottrina sulla carità e contemplazione*, Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1936.

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