

*Apology* — Robert Barclay — 120-121  
the Seed, Grace, Word, and Light of God  
extract of Proposition V & VI § xiii & xiv

§ xiii. Secondly, we say every man is enlightened by this Seed, Grace, and Word of God, and Light, and that everyone has a measure of it, which strives with them in order to save them. But the stubbornness and wickedness of the human will may quench it, bruise it, wound it, press it down, kill and crucify it. We don't mean this Seed is the nature and essence of God, speaking precisely, for that is not divisible into parts and measures, but God is a most pure, simple being, having no divisions or component parts, and therefore he cannot be resisted, hurt, wounded, crucified or killed by all the efforts and strength of men. Instead, by this Seed or Light we mean a spiritual, heavenly, invisible principle, in which God dwells as Father, Son and Spirit. A measure of that divine and glorious life is in all men, as a seed which of its own nature invites and inclines men to God. This we call *vehiculum Dei* (God's vehicle), or the spiritual body of Christ, the flesh and blood of Christ which came down from heaven, which all the saints eat and are nourished by it into eternal life. This Light and Seed witnesses against and reproves every unrighteous action, and by such actions it is hurt, wounded, and killed, and recoils from them, just as human flesh recoils from what is contrary to its nature. Because it is never separated from God nor Christ, but wherever it is, God and Christ are sort of wrapped up in it; therefore when it is resisted, we say God is resisted, and where it is pressed down, we say God is pressed down, like a cart loaded with grain,<sup>1</sup> and we say

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<sup>1</sup> The "cart loaded with grain" does not appear in the Latin text, an omission which reflects the purpose of the Latin text, written for

Christ is killed and crucified.<sup>2</sup> And on the other hand, when this seed is received in the heart and is allowed to bring forth its natural and proper fruit, Christ comes to be formed and raised, which the Scripture mentions so frequently, calling it “the new man”<sup>3</sup> and “Christ within, the hope of glory.”<sup>4</sup> This is that Christ within, which we speak about so much, preaching him everywhere, and exhorting people to believe in the Light and obey it, so that they may come to know Christ in them, who delivers them from all sin.

By this, we do not at all intend to equal ourselves to that holy man the Lord Jesus Christ who was born of the virgin Mary, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily; nor do we intend to demolish\* the reality of his present existence, as some people have falsely slandered us.<sup>5</sup> Though we affirm that Christ dwells in us, it is not directly and without an intermediary, but rather through an intermediary,<sup>6</sup> since he is in that seed which is in us. On the other hand, he, the Eternal Word which was with God and was God<sup>7</sup>, dwelled in that holy man without intermediary. He is like the head, and we are the other parts of the body. He is the vine, and we are the branches.<sup>8</sup> The soul of man

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scholars, compared with the purpose of the English text, written for a people who were reading in their own language.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 6:6

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:24

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1:27

<sup>5</sup> In Quaker history, this accusation was most famously leveled at James Nayler after his re-enactment of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. He was accused of claiming to be Jesus.

<sup>6</sup> In this sentence we have tried to reproduce the seventeenth century meanings of the words “immediate” and “mediate” which we usually translate “direct” and “indirect.” Immediate means without intermediary and therefore direct; mediate means through an intervening person or entity and therefore indirect.

<sup>7</sup> John 1:1

<sup>8</sup> John 15:5

dwells in a far more direct manner in the head and in the heart, than in the hands or legs. The sap, strength, and life of the vine dwells differently in the trunk\* and root than in the branches. In the same way, God dwells differently in the man Jesus than in us. . . .

§ xiv. Thirdly, we do not think this Seed, Light, or Grace is an accident, as most men ignorantly do, but a real spiritual substance,<sup>9</sup> which the human soul is able to feel and be aware of. From that substance arises the real, spiritual, true birth, called the new creature, the new man in the heart. This seems strange to carnally minded people, because they are not acquainted with it<sup>10</sup> but we know it and feel it by a true and certain experience. It is hard for man in his natural wisdom to understand it, until he comes to feel it in himself, and if he held it as a mere intellectual notion, it would do him little good. Still, we are able to make it clear that this is true, and that our faith concerning it is on solid ground. When this inward and substantial seed in our hearts receives nourishment, and has a birth in us, we find those spiritual senses raised by which we are made able to taste, smell, see, and handle the things of God. No one can reach those things by his natural spirit and senses, as has been said before. . . .

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<sup>9</sup> The distinction between accident and substance appears in Aristotle and was important in the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas and in the theology of transubstantiation. In simple terms, the substance is the essence of something, while the accidents are the characteristics perceived by the senses. For example, a loaf of bread can be white or brown, big or small, soft or hard, etc.; these accidents can vary, but the essential substance is bread. In Catholic theology, in the mass the substance of the wafer changes and it is no longer bread but the body of Christ, although all the accidents remain exactly the same.

<sup>10</sup> Latin: *quia hisce peregrini & alieni sunt*; “because they are strangers to it.”

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition V & VI § xiii & xiv (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 120-122; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 82-85.