

Apology — Robert Barclay — 153-155

Glory to God forever!

extract of Proposition V & VI § xxiv

§ xxiv. ... Now it can be said, and we say it from a true and certain experience, as it was said long ago (Psalm 118:22, Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, Luke 20:17, Acts 4:11), “The stone which all kinds of builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone for us.” Glory to God forever! He has chosen us as a firstfruits for himself in this time when he has risen up to contend with the nations, and for that reason has sent us out to preach this everlasting Gospel to everyone: Christ very near everyone, the Light in everyone, the Seed sown in the hearts of everyone, so that people may come and pay close attention to it. And we rejoice that we have been made to abandon our wisdom and learning (speaking of those of us who have some education) and our carnal reasoning, to learn from Jesus, and sit down at Jesus’ feet in our hearts and listen to him who shows us everything there and reprove all things by his Light (Ephesians 5:13). For many are wise and learned in notions and in the letter of Scripture, as the Pharisees were, and they can talk a lot about Christ and argue strongly against infidels, Turks,¹ and Jews, and perhaps also against some heresies, and yet at the same time they are crucifying Christ in the small signs of his Seed in their hearts.

Oh! it would be better to be stripped naked of all that, to consider it as rubbish and dung, to become a fool for Christ’s sake, knowing that he teaches you in your heart so that you may witness him raised there, may feel the power of his cross there, and may say with the apostle “I boast in

¹ Muslims. In those days the English knew little about Muslims except for the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire.

nothing except in the cross of Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”¹ This is better than writing thousands of commentaries and preaching many sermons. God has raised us up to preach Christ and to direct people to his pure Light in the heart. That is why the wise men of this world consider us fools, because through the work of this cross of Christ *within* our hearts we have denied our own wisdom and wills in many things, and have abandoned the vain honors, fashions and customs of this world.

For many centuries the world has been full of a dry, fruitless, and barren knowledge of Christ, feeding on the husk and ignoring the kernel, following the shadow but strangers to the substance. For this reason the devil doesn’t care how much of that knowledge is around, provided he can possess the heart and rule the will, and crucify the presence of Christ there, and so keep the Seed of the Kingdom from taking root. For he has led them around in circles, now here and now there, and has made them wrestle with a false zeal one against the other, contending for this outward observation and for that one, seeking Christ in one external thing after another, for example in the bread and the wine. They argue with one another about how he is present there; some saying it’s one way and some another, some say it’s in Scriptures, in books, in societies and pilgrimages and merits.² Some of them trust in an external barren faith and think everything is fine if they only believe firmly that he died for their sins, past, present and future³ but in the meantime Christ lies crucified and

¹ Galatians 6:14

² This is a technical reference to the Catholic theological concept of the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints which the Church can draw upon to help Christian believers. Martin Luther’s objection to the sale of indulgences which drew on those merits was a precipitating factor in the Protestant Reformation.

³ The Latin adds *quod si credere possint, sufficere contendunt* “which, if they can believe it, they contend it is sufficient.”

slain and is daily resisted and contradicted in his presence in their hearts.

Because we have seen this blindness and ignorance which has overwhelmed Christendom, we have been led and moved by the Lord to call on everyone constantly and frequently, to invite everyone, to ask everyone to turn to the Light *inside* them, to pay attention to the light *inside* them, to believe in Christ as he is *inside* them. In the name, power, and authority of the omnipotent* Lord, not in scholastic arguments and distinctions (although for this reason many of the wise men of this world think we are fools and madmen), we charge and command them to lay aside their wisdom, to come down from that proud, airy brain-knowledge, and to shut up that mouth, no matter how eloquent it may appear to the worldly ear, and we command them to sit down in the dust and to pay attention to the Light of Christ in their own consciences. If they paid attention to it, they would feel it like a sharp two-edged sword in their hearts, like a fire and a hammer that knocks down and burns up all that carnal natural stuff which they have gathered, and it would make the strongest of them all tremble and become “Quakers” indeed. Those who do not begin to feel it now, and do not kiss the Son while the day lasts, but rather harden their hearts, will feel this as a certain truth when it is too late. To conclude, as the apostle says, “Everyone should examine themselves to see whether they are really in the faith; and test themselves, because if Jesus Christ is not in them they are certainly reprobates” (II Corintios 13:5).¹

¹ Modernized from Barclay’s text, which differs in certain respects from the biblical text.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition V & VI § xxiv, (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 153-155; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 110-111.