

Apology — Robert Barclay — 172-176

We all need the Savior

extract of Proposition VII § iii

§ iii. *First*, as the explanation of the prior thesis already makes clear, we do not recognize any natural power or ability in ourselves which might bring us out of our lost and fallen condition and the iniquity* of our first nature. We confess that we are not able to do anything good that comes from ourselves; we cannot obtain remission of sins or justification by any act of our own, we cannot earn it or make it into a debt which God owes us.¹ We acknowledge that it all comes *from* his *love*, which is the original and fundamental cause of our acceptance.

Secondly, God showed this love for us by sending his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world, who gave himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God and a sweet fragrance. He made peace through the blood of his cross so that he might reconcile us to himself, and by the Eternal Spirit he offered himself to God without spot, and suffered for our sins, the just suffering for the unjust, so that he could bring us to God.²

Thirdly, since all grown-up men (except the man Jesus) have sinned, therefore everyone needs this Savior to remove from them the wrath of God which is due to their offenses; in this respect it was truly said that he “bore the iniquities of all of us in his body on the tree.”³ Therefore he is the only Mediator,⁴ because he has lessened⁵ the wrath of

¹ Latin: *aut Deum nobis debitorem reddere*, or make God a debtor to us.

² See Hebrews 9:14 and I Peter 3:18.

³ I Peter 2:24.

⁴ 1 Timothy 2:5.

⁵ Barclay's word is “qualify” which can mean calm, pacify, or lessen. The word in Latin is *amovere*, “to remove or dispel.”

God towards us, so that our past sins do not stand in our way because they have been removed and pardoned by the power of his most satisfactory sacrifice. We do not think that remission of sins can be expected, or sought, or obtained in any other way or by any works or sacrifice of any kind (although, as has been said before, people who are ignorant of the history may receive this remission). So then by his death and sufferings Christ has reconciled us to God, even while we were enemies;⁶ that is, he offers reconciliation to us, we are given the capacity to be reconciled, God is willing to forgive us for our sins and to accept us. This is well expressed by the apostle, “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has put the message of reconciliation into us” (II Corinthians 5:19).⁷ In the next verse, the apostle asks them “on Christ’s behalf, to be reconciled to God”; indicating that since the wrath of God has been removed by the obedience of Christ Jesus, he is willing to be reconciled to them, and ready to pardon past sins, if they repent.

We consider that our redemption has two aspects, both of which are perfect in their own nature though in application to us one does not and cannot exist without the other.⁸

The first aspect is the redemption completed and accomplished by Christ *for us* in his crucified body, outside of us. The second is the redemption accomplished by Christ *in us*, which is just as much redemption as the former. The first is what gives man, in his fallen condition, the capacity

⁶ Romans 5:10.

⁷ The King James translation says “hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” Barclay’s version differs.

⁸ Latin: *in applicatione quoad nos se invicem ita habeant, ut separari nequeant*, in application to us they are so interrelated that they cannot be separated.

of salvation, and has given him a measure of the power, virtue, spirit, life and grace that was in Christ Jesus. This, the free gift of God, is able to counterbalance, overcome, and root out the evil seed which leavens us when we are naturally in the fall.

By the second we experience and know this pure and perfect redemption *in* ourselves, purifying, cleansing, and redeeming us from the power of corruption, bringing us into unity, favor, and close friendship with God....

By the second we experience that this capacity is put into action: if we receive and do not resist the fruit* purchased by his death, that is the Light, Spirit, and Grace of Christ revealed in* us, we experience and possess a real, true and inward redemption from the power and ascendancy of sin. Thus we come to be truly and really redeemed, justified and made righteous; we come to a feeling of unity and friendship with God. So he died “for us, so that he might redeem us from all iniquity,”⁹ and “we know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death.”¹⁰ . . .

Fourth, we do not understand this justification by Christ to mean only good works, even though they are done by means of the Spirit of Christ, for as the Protestants correctly affirm, good works are an effect of justification, rather than the cause of it.

But we understand that justification means *the formation of Christ in us, Christ born and brought forth in us*, from which good works follow as naturally as fruit from a fruitful tree. *It is this inward birth in us that justifies us, bringing forth righteousness and holiness in us.* Having removed and done away with the contrary nature and spirit that used to rule and brought condemnation, this is what now rules over

⁹ Titus 2:14 RB.

¹⁰ Philippians 3:10 RB.

everything in our hearts. Those who come to know Christ formed in them in this way enjoy him wholly and undivided, who is “the LORD our RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:6). This is to be clothed with Christ, to have put on Christ,¹¹ and such people are truly accounted righteous and just by God....

So therefore I may say that the formal cause of justification is not the works, because to speak properly the works are only an effect of justification. But rather the formal cause¹² is this inward birth; Jesus brought forth in the heart; the well-beloved, in whom the heavenly Father is well pleased;* the one whom the Father must accept;¹³ and all those who are thus sprinkled with the *blood* of *Jesus* and washed with it. This is also the way in which all the good things of Christ come to us, “by which we come to be made partakers of the divine nature,” as Peter says in II Peter 1:4, and we are made one with him, as the branches are one with the vine, and have a title and right to what he has done and suffered for us. So his obedience becomes ours, his righteousness ours, his death and sufferings ours. And by this nearness we come to have a sense of his sufferings, and we suffer with his seed which still lies pressed down and crucified in the hearts of the ungodly. We labor with his seed for its freedom¹⁴ and for the repentance of those souls that are still crucifying the Lord of Glory in that seed.

¹¹ Galatians 3:27

¹² Aristotle distinguishes four causes (only one of which is what we would call a cause in the modern sense): the material cause (the material something is made from), the formal cause (the form, shape, or essence of the thing), the efficient cause (what makes the thing become what it is, cause in the modern sense), and the final cause (the purpose of the thing).

¹³ Barclay’s original English says “whom the Father cannot but accept” and the Latin text says *quem Pater non potest non acceptare* “whom the Father cannot not accept.”

¹⁴ Barclay’s word in English and Latin is “redemption, *redemptio*.” As we understand it, in this case he doesn’t mean “redemption” in the sense of salvation from sin, but rather in the more general sense of freeing a prisoner or captive.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition VII § iii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 172-176; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) p. 126-128.