

§ iii . . . Finally, although we attribute remission of sins to the righteousness and obedience of Christ when he was in the flesh,¹ as the remote efficient cause, and although we believe that we are formally justified by Christ Jesus who is formed and brought forth in us, nevertheless we cannot (as some Protestants have incautiously done) exclude good works from justification. Although we are not justified *for them*,² still we are justified *in them*; and they are necessary as a *causa sine qua non*, that is, the condition without which no one is justified. Denial of this is contrary to the Scripture's testimony; it has also brought a great scandal on the Protestant religion and opened the mouths of the Papists; and it has also made many people too secure, believing that they are justified without good works. Moreover, though it is not really safe to say they are meritorious, still they are rewarded by God,* and many of those who are called the Fathers³ have not avoided the use of the word "merit," which some of us may have also used in a qualified sense, without in any way favoring the Popish abuses mentioned above.⁴ Finally, if we had the opinion of good works that most Protestants have, we could freely agree not only that they are not necessary, but also reject them as harmful, because most Protestants think that the

¹ That is, the Crucifixion.

² Latin: *propter ea*, "because of them."

³ The Fathers of the Church were the influential Christian theologians in the first few centuries, people like Tertullian, Justin Martyr, and John Chrysostom.

⁴ Latin: *sed nullatenus Pontificiorum figmentis supra nominatis faventes*, "But by no means do we favor the priestly figments mentioned above."

best works, even those of the saints, are filthy and corrupt. Although we think the same about the best works performed by a person who is trying to obey the outward law, trying with his own strength and in his own will, nevertheless we believe that if they proceed naturally from the spiritual birth and formation of Christ in us, such works are pure and holy, like the root from which they spring, and therefore God accepts them, justifies us *in them*, and rewards us *for* them, of his own free grace.

Now that I have explained the basis of the controversy, the following three propositions remain to be proved.

§ iv First, the obedience, sufferings and death of Christ is the means by which the soul obtains remission of sins; this is the efficient cause of that grace and seed* by whose inward workings Christ is formed inwardly, and the soul becomes submissive to him and so becomes just and justified. Therefore, in regard to this capacity and offer of grace, it is said that God is “reconciled,” but that doesn’t mean he actually *is* reconciled, or actually justifies anyone who remains really impure and unjust in their sins.

Second, it is by this inward birth of Christ in man that man is made just, and is therefore considered just by God. To be plain, it is not until that birth is brought forth *in* us that we are made *formally* (if we must use that word) justified in the sight of God. The word *justification* is more correctly and more frequently used in Scripture with its proper meaning, making someone just, and not merely counting him as just. It is the same as *sanctification*.⁵

Third, since *good works* follow as naturally from this birth as heat from fire, therefore they are *absolutely necessary to justification*, as *causa sine qua non*, that is to say, they are not the cause of justification, yet they are

⁵ Latin: & *tunc idem est cum sanctificatione*, “and therefore is the same as sanctification.”

something in which we are justified, and without which we cannot be justified.⁶ And though they are not meritorious and do not put God in our debt, still he must accept and reward them because it is contrary to his nature to deny what is his: since they may be perfect in their way, proceeding from a pure holy birth and root. For this reason people judge falsely and against the Truth when they say that the holiest works of the saints are filthy and sinful in the sight of God, because these good works are not the works of the law which the apostle excluded from justification.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition VII § iii & iv (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 176-177; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 128-130.

⁶ The way Barclay expresses this sounds very contradictory until we consider one of the less common meanings of the word “necessary” — “inevitably determined or produced by a previous condition of things, determined by force of nature or circumstance.” In other words, we believe that when Barclay says good works are “absolutely necessary to justification,” he is not saying they are needed in order for justification to happen, but rather they are an inevitable result of justification. The good works do not come before justification as a cause, but rather they follow from justification as a result or natural consequence. When Barclay says “without which we cannot be justified” he means that if we are without good works, justification has not really happened.