

§ x. . . . When a man stops being a Christian inwardly in his heart (where Christianity must lie) by turning to Satan and becoming a reprobate, he is no longer a Christian though he still has the name and the form, no more than a dead man is a man, though he has the shape and outward appearance of one, no more than a picture or statue of a man is a man. Although a painter may get from a dead man some imperfect image of a man who used to be alive, and so one picture may be used to make another, that doesn't make a real living man again, nor can it convey the life and spirit of the man. Only God, who made the man at first, can revive him again. Death makes such an interruption of an outward natural succession that no art or outward form can recover* it; a dead man, after he is dead, cannot beget children; and dead images of men cannot make living men — and so only the living are able to succeed one another, and as soon as they die they can no longer transmit succession.

It is the same way in spiritual things: it is the life of Christianity in the heart that makes a Christian, and it is a group of such people, joined together in the life of Christianity, that makes a Church of Christ, and it is all those who are alive in this way, considered together, that make the catholic¹ Church of Christ. Therefore when this life ceases in a person, he stops being a Christian and all the power, efficacy, and authority which he had as a Christian stops also. If he has been a minister or teacher, he is not one any more, and though he keeps the form and holds on to the authority in words, yet that no longer means

¹ The universal Church, not the Roman Catholic Church.

anything, and he has no more real power or authority than does the image of a dead man. This argument is consistent with reason and also with the testimony of Scripture, which that Judas fell from his ministry and apostleship by transgression (Acts 1:25). It was his transgression that made him stop being an apostle. If the apostleship had been legally tied to his person so that transgression could not cause him to lose it until the church formally ended it (which never happened while Judas was alive), then Judas would have been as truly an apostle after he betrayed Christ as he had been before.

As this is true of one person, so it is true of many, indeed of a whole church. Since nothing makes a man truly a Christian but the life of Christianity inwardly ruling in his heart, nothing makes a church except the gathering of a group of true Christians into one body. When all the members lose this life, the church stops being a church, though they still keep the form and the name. When what made them a church, the purpose for which they were a church, stops, then they stop being a church. That is why the Spirit, speaking to the church of Laodicea, threatens to spit her out of his mouth because she is lukewarm (Revelation 3:16).

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition X § x (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 242-243; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 182-183.