

§ x. Like darkness, the great apostasy did not come upon the Christian world all at once, but by several degrees, one thing making way for another until that thick and gross veil covered and blinded¹ the nations from the seventh and eighth² until the sixteenth century. Just as the darkness of night does not come upon the outward creation all at once, but by degrees as the sun goes down to the horizon, so neither did that full and clear light and knowledge of the glorious dispensation of the Gospel of Christ appear all at once. The work of the first witnesses was more to testify against and uncover the abuses of the apostasy, rather than to establish the Truth in purity.³ He who wants to build a new city must first remove the old rubble before he can see where to lay a new foundation; and he who comes to a house that is filthy and full of dirt will first sweep away and remove the filth before moving in his own good and new furniture. The first dawning of the day dispels the darkness, and makes us see the things that are most conspicuous, but the distinct discovery and discernment of things so as to make a certain and perfect observation must wait for the sun to rise and shine in full brightness.

From definite experience we can boldly affirm that not waiting for this, but building among and with the old Popish rubbish, and setting up before a thorough cleansing, has

¹ Latin: *obnubilasset & obumbrasset*, “darkened and overshadowed.”

² Latin: *sexta vel septima*, “sixth or seventh.”

³ Latin: *quam veritatem rursus stabilire & ad primitivam puritatem restaurare*, “but rather to establish the truth and restore the primitive purity.”

been the foundation of many a mistake, and a cause of unspeakable hurt to most Protestants. Therefore the Lord God, who communicates and makes known to man the more evident, full, and perfect knowledge of his everlasting Truth as he sees fit, has held back until our time the fuller revelation of this glorious and evangelical dispensation (although some noted men in various ages have borne testimonies to it, as shall be explained later).

To augment the glory of his grace, and so that no one could have anything to boast about, God has raised up a few humble and illiterate men, most of them laborers, to proclaim this Truth. . . . The knowledge of this Light and Gospel has been made known to us by the revelation of Jesus Christ in us, fortified by our own experience, and sealed by the testimony of the Spirit in our hearts. By this knowledge we can confidently affirm the following three points, according to the testimony of the holy Scriptures.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition V & VI § x (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 114-115; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 78-79.