

times and places

extract of Proposition XI § iii, iv, v

§ iii. Although I affirm that worship is not limited to times, places, or persons, that does not mean that I want to eliminate all set times and places for worship. God forbid that I should think such a thing! We are not like those who “give up meeting together;”<sup>1</sup> in fact we have certain times and places in which we diligently\* meet to wait on God and worship him, (and human threats and persecutions cannot force us to stop meeting). We think it is necessary for the people of God to meet together, because as long as we are in this outward tabernacle we need to maintain a shared and visible fellowship in which we can give outward testimony for God and see each other’s faces, so that we can join together with our bodies as well as our spirits. To have company in that inward love and unity of spirit greatly encourages and refreshes the saints.

The Spirit of God should act, move, persuade, and influence man without intermediary in the specific acts of worship when the saints meet together, and so we condemn the limitation on the work of the Spirit by setting up a particular man or men to preach and pray according to human will, while all the rest are excluded, even from believing that they are to wait for God’s Spirit to move them in such things. Neglecting what should bring them life in themselves, and not waiting to feel the pure breathings of God’s Spirit in order to obey them, they are left to depend on the preacher alone and to hear what he chooses to say.

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<sup>1</sup> See Hebrews 10:25

These particular men do not come there to meet with the Lord nor to wait for the inward motions and actions of his Spirit, nor do they pray as they feel the Spirit breathing *through* them and *in* them, nor do they preach as they find themselves actuated and moved by God's Spirit when he gives utterance, so as to speak a word at the right time to refresh weary souls, as the actual condition of the people's hearts requires, allowing God by his Spirit both to prepare the people's hearts and also to lead the preacher to say what may be appropriate to them at that time.

On the contrary, he has hammered it together in his study, according to his own will, using his human wisdom and literature, stealing the words of Truth from the letter of the Scriptures and patching together the writings and observations of other people, to make as much as will last him as he speaks for an hour while the sand runs in the hourglass. Without waiting for or feeling the inward influence of the Spirit of God, he declaims all this haphazardly, whether or not it is appropriate or timely for the people's condition, and when he has ended his sermon he says his prayer also derived from his own will, and that's the end of the business.

This perfunctory worship is not at all acceptable to God, and the present condition of the nations shows how unfruitful it is, and how little it benefits those who do it. . . . And though it is not my present purpose to make a long digression about the debates among Protestants concerning the first day of the week, commonly called "the Lord's day," still since it fits well here I will briefly summarize our opinion about it.

§ iv. Because we do not see any basis for it in scripture, we cannot be so superstitious as to believe either that the Jewish sabbath remains in effect now, or that the first day of

the week is the antitype<sup>2</sup> of the Jewish sabbath, and is the true Christian sabbath. Like Calvin, we believe that the sabbath has a more spiritual meaning, and therefore we do not recognize any moral obligation, based on the fourth commandment or elsewhere, to observe the first day of the week differently from other days, nor to consider that it is inherently holy. But we find ourselves led to use the first day of the week for several reasons: first, because it is necessary that there be some time set apart for the saints<sup>3</sup> to meet together to wait on God; second, because it is appropriate that they be freed from their other external affairs at some times; third because in reason and fairness servants and animals should have some time to rest from their continual work; and fourth, it appears that the apostles and primitive Christians used the first day of the week for these purposes. We do this without superstitiously stretching the Scriptures to provide another reason which isn't really there, as many protestants have fully proved, even Calvin himself in discussing the fourth commandment.<sup>4</sup> And although for these reasons we meet together and abstain from work on this day, that doesn't prevent us from having meetings for worship at other times.

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<sup>2</sup> An "antitype" is the original of which a "type" is a copy. In typological Biblical interpretation, Christ is the antitype, the original, and earlier figures were types of Christ, e.g. Jonah is a type because he was in the stomach of the big fish for three days, while Christ, the antitype, was in the tomb for three days.

<sup>3</sup> The contemporary believers.

<sup>4</sup> Latin: *non superstitiose, ut plerique Protestantes faciunt, Scripturas detorquendo, ad aliam rationem confingendam, quorum ineptias alii Protestantes, imo ipse Calvinus, in quartum mandatum abundé demonstrarunt.* "not superstitiously distorting the Scriptures as many Protestants do, to make up another reason, the foolishness of which other Protestants have abundantly shown, even Calvin himself in discussing the fourth commandment."

§ v. According to the knowledge of God revealed to us by the Spirit through the fuller dispensation of Light which we believe the Lord has brought about in this day, we consider it our duty to uphold the pure and spiritual worship which is acceptable to God and which corresponds to the testimony of Christ and his apostles. We also deny and testify against obvious superstition and idolatry, and also against all formal will-worship which does not dwell in the power of God.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, we do not condemn the whole worship of all those who have borne the name of Christians in the apostasy, as if God had never heard their prayers nor accepted any of them. God forbid that we should be so lacking in charity.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XI § vi, vii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 292-295; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 223-225.

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<sup>5</sup> Latin: *nec non formalem illum, ad libitum humanum, cultum, qui non stat in virtute Dei, & quem Apostolus ἐθελοθησκία nuncupat*, “and certainly that formal worship according to human will, which does not stand in the power of God and which the Apostle calls ἐθελοθησκία (will-worship).” See Colossians 2:23.