

The name of “Quakers”

extract of Proposition XI § viii

§ viii. Therefore when we meet together, our work and worship is this: for each one to watch and wait upon God within themselves, and to be withdrawn from everything visible and toward God.<sup>1</sup> When everyone is in that state, they come to feel\* the good rising over the evil and the pure over the impure, while God reveals himself and draws near to every individual, and so he is in the midst of all. In this way each one not only partakes of the particular joy\* and strength which comes from the good in himself, but also shares in the whole body, since he is a living member of the body and has joint fellowship and communion with everyone. And as this worship is steadfastly practiced\* it becomes easy, though at first it is very hard for the natural man, whose roving imagination and running worldly desires are not so easily silenced. Therefore, when someone comes to the Lord and has a true desire to wait upon him in this way but has great difficulty because of unsteadiness of mind, the Lord often, in condescension and compassion,<sup>2</sup> makes his Power manifest in a stronger and more powerful

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<sup>1</sup> Latin: *ut unusquisque vigilet, & Deo attendat in illo Dei (i.e. in semine Dei) in semetipso, & ab omnibus visibilibus introvertatur*, “that each one should watch and wait on God in *that of God* (that is, in the seed of God) in themselves, and be turned within away from everything visible.”

<sup>2</sup> The word “condescension” refers to the voluntary action of a superior who sets aside privileges to help someone inferior. In speaking of God, it does not carry the negative connotations common nowadays. The Latin says it differently: *secundam amorem & benevolentiam suam*, “in accordance with his love and benevolence.”

manner. When the mind sinks down and waits for the appearance of life, but the power of darkness in the soul struggles and disputes\* against it, then the good Seed arises and works like a medicine in the soul, especially if the weak person is in a gathering of many others in whom the Life has achieved a greater dominion. Because of the contrary actions of the power of darkness there is an inward strife in the soul, which is as real and mysterious as when Esau and Jacob struggled against each other in Rebecca's womb.<sup>3</sup> And from this inward labor of birth,\* while the darkness tries to hide the Light, and the Light breaks through the darkness (which it always will do unless the soul gives its strength to the darkness), the soul will experience birth pangs so strong that they will be expressed in the outward man; often because of this struggle the body is greatly shaken, and seized with many groans and sighs and tears, like the pangs of a woman in labor. This doesn't happen only in one individual. The enemy is not absent when the children of God assemble together, but comes to see if he can prevent their comfort. When he has prevailed in some measure in a whole meeting, he works strongly against it by overshadowing\* them, spreading his dark power and turning the minds of those present away from the life in them. As the worshippers become aware that this power of the enemy is working against them and begin to wrestle with it with the "weapons of light,"<sup>4</sup> sometimes the power of God will break forth in a whole meeting. Then there will be

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 25:22-23

<sup>4</sup> Romans 13:12. The Greek word ὄπλον means "instrument, weapon." Most English versions say "armor of light" following the Wycliffe Bible (1382) and the King James Version (1611). However in those times and in Barclay's, the word "armor" could mean offensive weapons as well as defensive armor. Some recent English translations say "weapons" as do most Spanish versions.

so much inward labor, while each one tries to overcome the evil in themselves, and every individual will be strongly exercised, as if in a battle, by the strong contrary working of these opposite powers, like the motion of two contrary tides. Trembling of the body will overcome most, if not all, of the worshippers, and as the power of Truth prevails in the struggle this trembling changes\* from pangs and groans into a sweet sound of thanksgiving and praise. Because of this we began to be called by the name of “Quakers” (i.e. *tremblers*) as a criticism; though we didn’t choose the name we are not ashamed of it but rather have reason to rejoice in it. And we feel this Power which has often laid hold of our adversaries and made them yield to us and join with us, and confess the Truth before they had any distinct or analytical knowledge of our doctrines. Sometimes many have been convinced in this way at a single meeting, and the Power sometimes reaches to little children and works wonderfully in them, to the wonder and astonishment of many people.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XI § viii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 301-303; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 230-231.