

*Apology* — Robert Barclay — 303-304

neither words nor silence

extract of Proposition XI § ix

§ ix. I could relate many blessed experiences in this silent manner of worship, but I do not recommend or speak of silence as if we had bound\* ourselves by any law to exclude praying or preaching; not at all. Our worship does not consist of words nor of silence as such, but rather of a holy dependence of the humble\* mind upon God; silence necessarily follows from that dependence at first, until words can be brought forth which are from God's Spirit. And God is not absent and moves in his children to bring forth words of exhortation or prayer when needed. Among the many meetings and gatherings of people who are convinced of the truth, scarcely any meeting happens in which God does not raise up one or another person to minister to the brethren, so there are few meetings that are completely silent. When many people meet together in this one Life and Name, it most naturally and frequently impels them to pray and praise God and to stir each other up by mutual exhortation and instruction. Nevertheless we consider it necessary to have some time of silence at the beginning, during which each one may be gathered inward to the Word and Gift of Grace, from which the person who ministers may receive strength to bring forth the ministry, and so that the listeners may have a sense of discernment between the precious and the vile. We do not rush into doing these things as soon as the bell rings, as other Christians do.

We have no doubt, in fact we know with certainty, that the meeting can be good and fruitful\* even though not a word has been outwardly spoken from the sitting down to

the rising up; and yet each person can know the Life abounding in himself, and can experience an inward growth in and through the Life. And yet since no absolute necessity has been laid on anyone to speak, all may have chosen to enjoy and dwell\* in the Lord quietly and silently; this is very sweet and spiritually delightful to the soul who has learned to be gathered up out of all its own thoughts and workings in this way,<sup>1</sup> to feel that only\* the Lord brings forth both the will and the deed. Many can declare this by their own blessed experience. Indeed, it is necessarily hard for the natural man to receive and believe this doctrine, and so many people can only be convinced by real experience, by the proofs of feeling, rather than by arguments; it is not enough to believe it if they do not also enjoy and possess it. Yet in consideration of people who may be more willing to apply themselves to the practice and the experience of this worship after they find their understandings convinced and know that it is founded upon Scripture and reason, I feel free to add a few points of this kind to confirm it, besides what I mentioned before about our experience.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XI § ix (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 303-304; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 231-232.

---

<sup>1</sup> Latin: *quae hoc modo didicit omnes suas cogitationes & proprias operationes deponere & abjicere*, “who learned to put down and throw away all its own thoughts and workings in this way.”