

creating hypocrites

extract from Proposition XIV § iv

§ iv. Forcing men's consciences is contrary to sound reason and to the law of nature. A man's understanding cannot be forced by all the bodily sufferings another man can inflict on him, especially in spiritual and supernatural matters. What can change a man's mind from one opinion to another is arguments and conclusive logical demonstration, together with the power of God reaching the heart. Knocks and blows and similar things may destroy the body but they can never inform the soul. The soul is a free agent; it accepts or rejects matters of opinion as they are presented to it by something similar to its own nature.¹ To try to force minds in any other way is to treat men as if they were brutes who lack any understanding; it is also a waste of effort. . . . It is true that people may be made into hypocrites by such methods, but they can never be made Christians that way. Even when such compulsion attains its purpose, an outward assent or conformity in doctrine or worship, surely that outcome cannot be acceptable to God, who does not desire any sacrifice except what comes thoroughly from the heart. God will not accept a constrained sacrifice, and people who have been compelled in this way are far from being members of the Church. Rather they have been made into ten times worse servants of Satan, because hypocrisy has been added to their error. Hypocrisy is the worst of evils in matters of religion, and is the thing which the Lord's soul abhors more than anything else.

¹ Latin: *est agens liberum, & opiniones oportet ut rejiciat, vel accipiat, ut ei evidenter appareant veræ aut falsæ, modo naturæ suæ proportionali*, "It is a free agent, and it is proper that it rejects or accepts opinions as they appear to it either true or false, in a way proportional to its nature."

Objection: Someone might say that their error is suppressed by these methods, and the scandal is removed.

Answer: I answer that I have already proved that this is a method which is not allowed by Christ. Besides this, surely the Church cannot be improved by the acquisition of hypocrites; rather it would be greatly corrupted and endangered. People can be aware of open heresies and shun those who profess them when they are separated from the Church by her censures. But secret hypocrites may corrupt* the body and infect it, before people are aware.

If dissenters from established doctrine are resolute, and boldly suffer for the ideas they consider right, such suffering often leads to a favorable opinion of them, but never of the persecutors. This kind of suffering makes people curious to learn more about the things for which they see dissenters suffer great losses so boldly. It may also make people think that they must be suffering for something good, because it is highly improbable that anyone would risk everything merely to become famous. The accusation of seeking fame* could be used against all the martyrs, unless some better argument could be found against them than a noose or a faggot for burning.²

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XIV § iv (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 417-418 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 322-323.

² Latin: *quam ignis & furca*, “than fire and gallows.”