Apology — Robert Barclay — 310-315

three arguments

extract of Proposition XI § xi, xii, xiii

§ xi. There are two contrary powers or spirits: the power and spirit of this world in which the Prince of Darkness rules over all who act in that spirit and are led* by it; and the power of the Spirit of God, in which God acts and rules over all who act in that Spirit and are led by it. Whatever a person thinks or does, though it may be spiritual or religious in concept or in form, so long as he acts and moves in the natural and corrupt spirit and will and not from the Power of God, he sins in everything and is not accepted by God. For this reason the "plowing and praying of the wicked is sin;"[1] also, whatever a person does in the Spirit and power of God, as long as his understanding and will are influenced and moved by that Spirit, whether the actions are religious, civil, or even natural, his actions are acceptable in the sight of God and he is blessed in them.[2]

Based on this, it is clear that the objection of people who say they wait on God in their praying and preaching is frivolous and irrelevant, since waiting implies passive dependence rather than action. As it has been shown, and will be shown later, praying and preaching by the Spirit presupposes first* waiting in silence to feel the motions and influence of the Spirit leading to those actions. And finally, in several of the places where praying is commanded, such

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[1] Proverbs 21:4: "The plowing of the wicked is sin." Both here and in the Latin, Barclay follows the King James version, translating נִיר as "plowing, tillage" Many other English versions follow the Septuagint and Vulgate in translating that word as "lamp."

[2] James 1:25

as Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33; Luke 21:36; I Peter 4:7, watching is specifically mentioned first as a preparation before prayer. For these reasons we conclude with certainty that since waiting and watching are so particularly commanded and recommended, and since that cannot be truly done except in inward silence of mind from men's own thoughts and imaginations, this silence is and must be a special and principal part of God's worship.

§ xii. Second, the excellence of this silent waiting upon God is apparent because it is impossible for the enemy, the devil, to counterfeit it and deceive or delude any soul while doing it. In all other matters the enemy can mix himself into the natural mind of man, and by transforming himself in this way he can deceive the soul by keeping it busy about things which may be innocent in themselves, while the devil keeps the soul from beholding the pure Light of Christ, and from distinctly knowing its duty and doing it. That spirit who envies human eternal happiness knows well how to adapt himself and make snares for all the various dispositions and inclinations of humankind. If he finds someone who is not likely to engage with gross sins or worldly lusts, but who is averse to them and inclined to religion, the devil can adapt himself to trick that person by letting the imagination run on spiritual matters; in this way he pushes them to work, act and meditate in their own will, because he knows that as long as the self rules, and the Spirit of God is not the chief actor, a man is not out of his reach. So the devil can accompany the priest to the altar, the preacher to the pulpit, the zealot to his prayers, and even the doctor and professor of theology to his study, and there he can cheerfully let him work among his books, and even help him to discover and invent subtle distinctions and quibbles which can keep that man's mind, and others through him, from heeding God's Light in the conscience and waiting upon him.

Except this silent worship, there is no activity whatsoever in which the devil cannot enter and take a chief place, so that many times the soul cannot discern him. For the devil can only work through the natural man and his abilities, by secretly acting upon his imaginations and desires, etc., and therefore when the natural man is silent, the devil must also stop. And therefore, when the soul comes to this silence and, so to speak, is brought to nothingness in her own workings, then the devil is shut out. He cannot stand the pure presence of God and the shining of his Light. As long as a man is thinking and meditating in his own self, he cannot be sure that the devil is not influencing him in that, but when the natural man comes to be wholly silent as the pure Light of God shines in upon him, then he is sure that the devil is shut out, because the devil cannot go beyond the natural processes of the mind, which we have often found by personal experience. . . .

§ xiii. Third, the excellence of this silent waiting upon God is apparent because it cannot be stopped or interrupted by the malice of men or devils, as all others can. Interruptions and stoppings of worship can have two meanings: one when we are prevented from meeting, for example by being outwardly separated from each other by violence, or the other when we are allowed to gather but we are interrupted by tumult, noise, and confusion which malicious people may use to molest and distract us. In both these respects our worship is greatly superior to all others. On one hand, no matter how far apart people are, or are prevented from coming together, still when each one is inwardly gathered to the measure of life in himself, there is a mystic unity and fellowship which the devil and all his instruments can never break or hinder. On the other hand, regarding the harassment which occurs when we are met together, it is also evident that this true and spiritual worship gives us an

advantage above all the others. Despite a thousand interruptions and abuses, one of which would have been enough to have stopped all other sorts of Christians, the nature of this worship has enabled us to keep it uninterruptedly focused on God, and at the same time to give an example of our Christian patience, which often has even reached and convinced our opponents. There is no kind of worship practiced by others which can continue (even when they are permitted to meet) unless they are either authorized and protected by the magistrate or else they defend themselves with the arm of the flesh. At the same time we continue to worship God and also patiently bear the insults and ignominies which Christ prophesied would fall upon Christians so frequently.

How can the Papists say their Mass if anyone is there to disturb and interrupt them? Just take away the Mass book, the chalice, the wafer, or the priest's vestments; indeed just spill the water or the wine, or blow out the candles (which can be done very quickly) and the whole business is spoiled and no sacrifice can be offered. Take away from the Lutherans or Episcopalians their liturgy or Book of Common Prayer and no service can be said. Remove from the Calvinists, Arminians, Socinians, Independents, or Anabaptists the pulpit, the Bible, and the hourglass, or just make enough noise so that the voice of the preacher cannot be heard, or disturb him before he gets there, or take away his Bible and his books, and he has to be silent. They all think that it is heresy to wait and to speak when the Spirit of God gives the message, and so their whole worship can be easily spoiled. But when people meet together and their worship doesn't depend on those outward actions, and they don't depend on the speaking of any particular person, but merely sit down to wait upon God and to be gathered out of everything visible, and to feel the Lord in the Spirit, then

none of these things can hinder them, and we can truly say that we are witnesses of this by personal experience.

When the magistrates, incited by the malice and envy of our opponents, have used all possible means to prevent us from meeting together without success; when death, banishment, imprisonment, fines, beatings, whippings, and other devilish inventions have not succeeded in terrifying us enough to stop our holy assemblies held openly and publicly in places hired for that purpose; when by deep sufferings we have often obtained* our freedom to meet — then our adversaries have used another technique, by sending upon us the worst and most wicked people, indeed the very scum of humanity, who have tried to provoke us, weary us, and molest us by all kinds of inhuman, beastly and brutish behavior, without success. It would be almost incredible to describe, and indeed it is a shame to say it among people who pretend to be Christians, the things of this kind my own eyes* have seen, which I myself have suffered along with others. They have often beaten us and thrown water and mud* on us; they have danced, and jumped, and sung, and have said all kinds of profane and ungodly words; they have offered violence and shameless behavior to grave women and to virgins; they have jeered and mocked and scoffed, asking us "hasn't the Spirit come yet?" and much more which it would be tedious to relate here. And while this was going on, we have been seriously and silently sitting together and waiting on the Lord, so that these things have not hindered our inward and spiritual fellowship with God and with one another in the pure life of righteousness. On the contrary, the Lord, who knows the sufferings and insults we bear for the sake of his testimony, has sent his glory and power among us even more, and has greatly refreshed us by the sense of his love which filled our

souls, so that we found ourselves gathered into the "Name of the Lord" which is the "strong tower" of the righteous.[3]

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XI § xi, xii, xiii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 310-315; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 237-240.

[3] Proverbs 18:10 RB