

WAITING UPON THE LORD

**TO EXPERIENCE THE INWARD
MOVING AND DRAWING OF HIS SPIRIT
TO THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP,
PRAYER, PREACHING, AND PRAISE.**

**BY
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WITH A SHORT APPENDIX WRITTEN BY

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FORWARD

The greatest part of this booklet is an updated version of the eleventh proposition of Robert Barclay's *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*.¹ The entire volume of Barclay's *Apology* (consisting of fifteen propositions in all) is a tremendous and compelling work that I strongly recommend to every serious seeker of the Truth. I have chosen to modernize and republish just this one proposition because it seems to me that the invaluable practice of waiting upon the Lord has been especially neglected, and has all but disappeared from the church today.

The short appendix that begins on page 59 is an excerpt from the Works of Isaac Penington on the same subject.

Jason R. Henderson
April, 2016

¹ Robert Barclay's *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* is made available online for free, and in print for sale by Quaker Heritage Press. www.qhpress.org

My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.—Psa 62:5

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The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him. Let him put his mouth in the dust; there may yet be hope.—Lam. 3:25-29

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I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning—Yes, more than those who watch for the morning. —Psa. 130:5-6

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Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us. —Psa. 123:2

WAITING UPON THE LORD

I come now to speak of worship, or of those things, whether private or public, general or individual, whereby man renders to God that part of his duty which relates immediately to Him. Now, since we are told that “obedience is better than sacrifice,” so then, no sacrifice is acceptable except that which is done according to the will of Him to whom it is offered. But men, finding it easier to sacrifice in their own wills than to obey God's will, have heaped up sacrifices without obedience, and thinking to deceive God (as they do one another), give Him a show of reverence, honor, and worship, while they are both inwardly estranged and alienated from His holy and righteous life, and wholly strangers to the pure breathings of His Spirit, in which the acceptable sacrifice and worship is alone offered up. As a result, there is nothing relating to man's duty towards God which (among all sorts of people) has been more perverted, and in which the devil has more prevailed, than in corrupting man's mind concerning the worship of God.

Now, I freely approve whatsoever the Protestants have reformed from the Roman Catholics in this respect; and I also deny, as any part of the true worship of God, the abominable superstition and idolatry of the Popish mass,

the adoration of saints and angels, the veneration of relics, the visitation of sepulchers, and all the other superstitious ceremonies and endless pilgrimages of the Romish synagogue. But it concerns the Protestants to carefully consider whether they have made a clear and perfect reformation, for indeed, we find many of the dead branches lopped off by them, but the root yet remaining, namely, *a worship acted in and from man's will and spirit, and not by and from the Spirit of God*. For the true Christian and spiritual worship of God was very early lost, and man's wisdom and will so quickly and thoroughly mixed with it, that the apostasy in this respect has become very great, and so a true reformation from this evil root has become most difficult.

Therefore, let the reader not stumble at our proposition in this matter, but hear us patiently as we explain ourselves. I hope (by the assistance of God) to make it appear that though our view on this subject may seem quite different from all other sorts of Christians, yet it is most according to the purest Christian religion, and indeed most needful to be observed and followed.

First, let it be considered that what is here affirmed is spoken with respect to the worship of God in these Gospel times, and not of the worship that was under or before the Law. For the particular commands of God to men in those times are not sufficient to authorize us to do the same things now; or else it might be suggested at present to offer animal sacrifices as they did (which all acknowledge to have ceased). Indeed, some of what was commendable and acceptable under the Law would now (if practiced under the Gospel) be justly called superstition or idolatry. For many of the ceremonies that God dispensed to the Jews were not essential to true, spiritual worship, or necessary

in themselves for experiencing holy fellowship between Him and His people, but were given in condescension to a people inclinable to idolatry. So it was that the Substance was enjoyed under the Law by such as were spiritual indeed, yet it was veiled and surrounded with many shadowy rites and ceremonies which are not lawful for us to use now under the Gospel.

Secondly, though I say that this worship is neither limited to times, places, nor persons, yet I would not be understood as if I intended the putting away of all set times and places in worship. God forbid I should have such an opinion. No, we are none of those that “forsake the assembling of ourselves together,” but indeed have certain times and places in which we carefully meet together to wait upon God and worship Him (and we have not been driven from these by the many threats and persecutions of men). To meet together we think necessary for the people of God because, as long as we are clothed with this outward tabernacle, there is a necessity of a joint and visible fellowship, and the bearing of an outward testimony for God, and also of seeing the faces of one another, so that we assemble in our outward persons as well as in our spirits. To be outwardly gathered together in that inward love and unity of spirit does greatly tend to encourage and refresh the saints.

But we insist upon these following things: First, that the Spirit of God should be the immediate actor, mover, persuader, and influencer of man in all particular acts of worship when the saints are met together; and secondly, that this Spirit must not be limited in its operations by setting up a particular man or men to preach and pray in man's will, while all the rest are excluded from so much as

believing that they are to wait for God's Spirit to move them in such things. In doing so, these are neglecting that Spirit which would quicken them in themselves; and so, not waiting to feel and obey the pure breathings of God's Spirit, they are led merely to depend upon the preacher and to hear what he will say.

For all who minister, should gather to meet with the Lord, and to wait for the inward motions and operations of His Spirit, and so to pray as they feel the Spirit breathe through them and in them, and to preach as they find themselves acted upon and moved by God's Spirit as He gives utterance. Only then can they speak a word in season to refresh weary souls, according as the present condition and state of the people's hearts requires, allowing God by His Spirit both to prepare people's hearts and also give the preacher to speak what is fitting and seasonable for them. But the ministers of this day hammer together a sermon in their office, according to their own will, by their human wisdom and literature, and by stealing the words of Truth from the letter of the Scriptures and patching together other men's writings and observations. Thus they devise a sermon that will keep them speaking one hour while the hour glass runs, without waiting or feeling the inward influence of the Spirit of God, or knowing if it be fitting or seasonable for the people's condition. And when he has ended his sermon, the minister says his prayer also in his own will, and so there is an end of the business. This customary way of worship is in no way acceptable to God, and the present condition of the nations does sufficiently declare how unfruitful and unprofitable it is to those who are found in it.

Therefore, we are not at all against set times for

worship, and do indeed appoint such times for outward convenience. We do not, however, believe with the Roman Catholics that these days are holy, nor do we lead people into a superstitious observation of them, for we are persuaded that all days are alike in the sight of God.

Silent Waiting Upon God

We come then to the subject of the controversy. With regard to public worship, we judge it the duty of all to be diligent in the assembling of themselves together, and when assembled, the great work of one and all ought to be to wait upon God, and returning out of their own thoughts and imaginations, to feel the Lord's presence and know a true "gathering into His Name," where He is "in the midst" according to His promise. And as everyone is thus gathered, and so met together inwardly in their spirits as well as outwardly in their persons, there the secret power and virtue of life is known to refresh the soul, and the pure motions and breathings of God's Spirit are felt to arise. From this spring forth words of declaration, prayers, or praise, and the acceptable worship is known which edifies the Church and is well-pleasing to God. Here no man limits the Spirit of God, nor brings forth his own researched and gathered stuff, but everyone sets forth that which the Lord puts into their hearts, and it is spoken not in man's will and wisdom, but "in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Yes, and though not a word be spoken, yet the true spiritual worship is performed and the body of Christ is edified.

Indeed it may be, and has often happened among us, that various meetings pass without one word, and yet our souls are greatly edified and refreshed, and our hearts

wonderfully overcome with the secret sense of God's power and Spirit, which (without words) has been ministered from one vessel to another. This is indeed strange and incredible to the mere natural and carnally-minded man, who is apt to judge all time lost where there is not something spoken that is obvious to the outward senses. Therefore I shall insist a little upon this subject, as one who can speak from a certain experience (and not by mere hearsay) of this wonderful and glorious worship. For though it is contrary to the nature of man's spirit, will, and wisdom, yet it overflows with the wisdom and glory of God.

Since there is nothing more opposite to the natural will and wisdom of man than this silent waiting upon God, it therefore cannot be obtained or rightly comprehended by man except as he lay down his own wisdom and will, and so become content to be thoroughly subject to God. Such waiting upon Him will therefore not be preached, nor can it be practiced, except by those who find no outward ceremony, no observations, no words (yes, not the best and purest of words, even the words of Scripture), able to satisfy their weary and afflicted souls. For though all these may be present, still the life, power, and virtue which make such things effectual may be lacking.

Such desperate souls found it necessary to cease from all outward things and to be silent before the Lord; and being directed to that inward gift of Life and Light in themselves as the most excellent Teacher, which "can never be removed into a corner" (Isa. 30:20), they came thereby to learn to wait upon God in the measure of life and grace received from Him, and to cease from their own forward words and actions in the natural will and comprehension, feeling after this inward Seed of Life. Here they found that, as this Seed moves, they may move with it; as

they are acted upon by its power, they are then influenced whether to pray, preach, or sing. And so, from this principle of man's being silent and not acting in the things of God until first acted upon by God's light and grace in the heart, there naturally arose that manner of sitting silently together, and waiting together upon the Lord. So these, meeting together in the pure fear of the Lord, did not right away apply themselves to speak, pray, or sing, etc., being afraid to be found acting forwardly in their own wills. Instead, each made it their work to retire inwardly to the measure of grace in themselves, not only being silent as to words, but even abstaining from all their own thoughts, imaginations, and desires, watching in a holy dependence upon the Lord, and meeting together not only outwardly in one place, but inwardly in one Spirit and in the one name of Jesus, which is His power and virtue.

In this way, these have come to enjoy and feel the arisings of this Life, which, as it prevails in each person, becomes like a flood of refreshment that overspreads the whole meeting. For as man and man's ability and wisdom are denied and chained down in every individual, and God exalted, and His grace rises into dominion in the heart, so His name comes to be one in all, and His glory breaks forth and covers all. Indeed, there is often such a holy awe and reverence upon every soul that if the natural part should arise in any, or man's wise part, or whatever is not one with the Life, it is immediately chained down and judged out. And when any are constrained (through the breaking forth of the Lord's power) to utter a sentence of exhortation or praise, or to breathe to the Lord in prayer, then all are made sensible of it; for the same Life in them answers to it "as in water face answers to face" (Prov. 27:19).

This is that divine and spiritual worship which the

world neither knows nor understands, and into which the vulture's eye cannot see. Yet many and great are the advantages which my soul (with many others) have tasted by it, and which would be found by all who seriously apply themselves to it. For when people are gathered together in this way, not merely to hear men or depend upon them, but instead are inwardly taught to stay their minds upon the Lord (Isa. 26:3) and wait for His appearance in their hearts, then the forward working of the spirit of man is stopped and hindered from mixing itself with the worship of God. Indeed, this way of worship is so naked and void of all outward and worldly splendor that all occasion for man's wisdom to be exercised in superstition and idolatry has no place here. Instead, there is an inward quietness and retiredness of mind, and the witness of God arises in the heart, and the Light of Christ shines whereby the soul comes to see its own condition. And when there are many joined together in this same work, there is an inward travail and wrestling, and as each abides in their measure of grace, the power and spirit of darkness is felt to be overcome. Thus we are often greatly strengthened and renewed in the spirits of our minds without a word, and we enjoy and possess the holy fellowship and "communion of the body and blood of Christ," by which our inward man is nourished and fed (which also makes us not focus upon outward water, bread, and wine in our spiritual things).

Now, as those who are gathered together in this way grow up in the strength, power, and virtue of Truth, and as Truth comes to have victory and dominion in their souls, then they receive an utterance and speak steadily to the edification of their brethren, and the pure Life has a free passage through them, and what is thus spoken edifies the body indeed. And sometimes, when one has come to a

meeting who has been unwatchful, and wandering in his mind, or distracted by outward business, and so not inwardly gathered with the rest, just as soon as he retires inwardly, this Power (being in a good measure raised in the whole meeting), will suddenly lay hold upon his spirit, and wonderfully help to raise up the Seed in him and beget him into the sense of the same Power. This brings to a melting and warming of his heart, even as natural warmth takes hold of a man that is cold when he has come in to a stove, or as a flame will lay hold upon some little combustible matter lying near to it. Or if it happens that several are straying in their minds, though outwardly silent, and so are wandering from the measure of grace in themselves (which, through negligence and the working of the enemy may happen), and another comes in who is watchful, and in whom the Life is raised in a great measure, as this one keeps his place he will feel a secret travail for the rest in a sympathy with the Seed which is oppressed in the others and kept from arising by their thoughts and wanderings. And as this faithful one waits in the Light, and keeps to this divine work, God oftentimes answers the secret travail and breathings of His own Seed through him, so that the rest will find themselves secretly struck without words, and the faithful one becomes like a midwife, through the travail of his soul, to bring forth the Life in the others. In this way the Life of Christ comes to be raised in all, and the vain imaginations are brought down, and the one is felt by the rest to minister life unto them without words.

Yes sometimes when there is not a word uttered in the meeting, but all are silently waiting, if one comes in that is rude and wicked, and in whom the power of darkness much prevails (perhaps with an intention to mock or do

mischief), if the whole meeting is gathered into the Life, and it is raised in a good measure, it will strike terror into such a one, and he will feel himself unable to resist it. Indeed, the secret strength and virtue of the Life will chain down the power of darkness in him, and if the day of his visitation has not expired, it will reach to the measure of grace in him and raise it up for the redeeming of his soul. This we have often witnessed, so that we have had frequent occasion to renew the old saying, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" For many have come to be convinced of the Truth after this manner, of which I myself, in part, am a true witness. For it was not by strength of arguments or a discussion of each doctrine, or by convincement of my understanding that I came to receive and bear witness of the Truth, but by being secretly reached by this Life. For when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a power among them that touched my heart, and as I gave way to it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good rising up. In this way I became knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of the Lord's Power and Life whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed. Indeed, this is the surest way to become a Christian, and afterwards, the knowledge and understanding of principles will not be lacking, but will come naturally (as much as is needful) as the fruit of this good root, and such a knowledge will not be barren nor unfruitful.

We desire therefore that all who come among us be converted to this Power and Life. For we know that though thousands should be convinced in their understandings of all the truths we maintain, yet if they are not sensible of this inward Life, and their souls not changed from unrighteousness to righteousness, they can add nothing to us. For

this is that cement by which we are joined "as to the Lord," and to one another, and without this none can worship with us. Yes, if such should come among us and, from an understanding and convincement they have of the Truth, speak ever so true things, and utter them with ever so much excellency of speech, yet if this Life is lacking it will not edify us at all, but rather be as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1).

The Believer's Role in Worship

Therefore, when we meet together, our work and our worship is for everyone to watch and wait upon the appearance of God in themselves, and to be gathered out from all visible things unto Him. And as everyone is thus turned and waiting, they come to find the good arise over the evil, and the pure over the impure, and God reveals Himself and draws near to every individual, and so He is in the midst of the assembly. In this way, each not only partakes of the particular refreshment and strength which comes from the Lord's work in himself, but is also a sharer in the whole body, being a living member of the body, and having a joint fellowship and communion with all.

Now as this worship is steadfastly preached and kept to, it becomes easy, though it is very hard at first to the natural man whose roving imaginations and running worldly desires are not so easily brought to silence. Therefore, when any turn to the Lord with true desires to wait upon Him, but find great difficulty through the wandering of their minds, the Lord oftentimes (in condescension and compassion) causes His Power to break forth in a more strong and powerful manner. And when the mind sinks down and waits for the appearance of Life, and the power

of darkness in the soul is found wrestling and working against it, then the good Seed arises and works like medicine in the soul. This more especially happens when a weak one is in the assembly of many others in whom the life has arisen in greater dominion. And because of the contrary working of the power of darkness, there is often found an inward striving in the soul, as real spiritually as ever Esau and Jacob strove against each other in Rebecca's womb. And from this inward travail, while the darkness seeks to obscure the Light, and the Light seeks to break through the darkness (which it will always do if the soul does not give its strength to the darkness), there will be such a painful travail found in the soul that it even manifests in the outward man. So it is that oftentimes, through the working of this struggle, the body of the individual will be greatly shaken, and many groans and sighs and tears, even as the pangs of a woman in travail, will lay hold upon it.

At other times, the enemy (who is not absent when the children of God assemble together, to see if he can hinder their comfort) seems to prevail in measure over an entire meeting, strongly working against it by spreading and propagating his dark power, and drawing minds away from the Life in them. But when those who are gathered become sensible of his power working against them, and begin to wrestle with it by the "armor of light," sometimes the power of God breaks forth into the whole meeting. Then there is such an inward travail by the strong contrary workings of these opposite powers (like the moving of two contrary tides), that every individual is strongly exercised as in a day of battle. Here, a trembling and motion of body comes upon most, if not upon all, which, as the power of Truth prevails, will bring the assembly from pangs and

groans into the sweet sound of thanksgiving and praise. From this the name "Quakers," i.e., tremblers, was first reproachfully cast upon us. But though this name is not of our choosing, yet in this respect we are not ashamed of it, but rather have reason to rejoice for it, being sensible of His Power. And indeed, this same Power of God has oftentimes laid hold of our adversaries and made them yield to us, and join with us, and confess to the Truth before they had any distinct knowledge of our doctrines. Sometimes many at one meeting have been convinced in this way, and at other times this Power has reached to and wonderfully worked even in little children, to the admiration and astonishment of many.

Many are the blessed experiences which I could relate of this silence and manner of worship. However, I do not commend and speak of silence as if we had a rule to shut out praying or preaching, or tied ourselves to silence; not at all. For just as our worship does not consist of words, so neither does it consist of silence for silence's sake. Rather, it consists of a holy dependence of the mind upon God, from which silence necessarily follows in the first place, until words can be brought forth which are from God's Spirit. And God is not lacking to move in His children to bring forth words of exhortation or prayer when it is needful, so that, of the many gatherings and meetings among us, there is scarce any that are altogether silent, in which God does not cause someone to minister to his brethren. For when many are truly met together in this one Life and Name, He most naturally and frequently induces them to pray and praise, and to stir up one another by mutual exhortation and instruction. Yet still we judge it needful that there be some time of silence in the first place, during which everyone may be gathered inward

to the Word and Gift of grace. Then, from this grace, he that ministers may receive strength to bring forth what he ministers, and they that hear may have a sense to discern between the precious and the vile, and not hurry into the exercise of these things as soon as the bell rings, as other Christians do.

However, we also most certainly know and can testify, that a meeting may be good and refreshing even though, from the sitting down to the rising up, not a single word has been outwardly spoken. For in such meetings, the Life has still been known to abound in each individual, and many have known an inward growing up in and by the power of the Lord. And even when words might have been acceptably spoken from the Life, yet there is at times no absolute necessity laid upon any to do so, and all may choose rather to quietly and silently possess and enjoy the Lord in themselves. Indeed, this is very sweet and comfortable to the soul that has learned to be gathered out of all its own thoughts and workings, and feel the Lord bring forth both the willing and the doing (which many among us can declare from blessed experience).

This doctrine is decidedly difficult for the natural man to receive or believe, and therefore must be known by a sensible experience, and by coming to make proof of it, rather than by arguments; for it is not enough to believe it if they do not come also to enjoy and possess it. Nevertheless, for the sake of those who may be more willing to apply themselves to the practice and experience of it if they find their understanding convinced, and also see that it is founded upon Scripture and reason, I find a freedom of mind to add some few considerations for further confirmation, in addition to what is before mentioned of our experience.

I suppose none will deny that to wait upon God, and to watch before Him, is a duty incumbent upon all; and that this is also a part of worship will not be called in question, since there is hardly any other thing so frequently commanded in the holy Scriptures, as is evident from the following Scriptures: Ps. 27:14; 37:7,34; Prov. 20:22; Isa. 30:18; Hosea 12:6; Zach. 3:8; Matt. 24:42; 25:13; 26:41; Mark 13:33,35,37; Luke 21:36; Acts 1:4; 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:6; 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 4:7. Also this duty is often recommended with very great and precious promises, as in Ps. 25:3; 37:9; 69:6; Isa. 40:31; Lam. 3:25-26, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," etc.

Now, how does one wait upon God, or watch before Him, except by this silence of which we have spoken? This is clearly a great and principal duty, and it necessarily (both in nature and time) precedes all others. But in order that it may be more perfectly understood, as being not only an outward silence of the body, but an inward silence of the mind from all its own imaginations and thoughts, let it be considered that man is to be understood in a twofold respect—namely, in his natural, unregenerate, and fallen state, and in a spiritual and renewed condition. From this arises that distinction of the "natural" and "spiritual man" so much used by the apostle, and these two births in the mind or heart proceed from the two seeds in man respectively—namely, the good Seed and the evil. Now, from the evil seed does not only proceed all manner of gross and abominable wickedness and profanity, but also hypocrisy, and the wickedness which the Scripture calls "spiritual," (Eph. 6:12) because it is the serpent working in and by the natural man in things that are spiritual. These things may have a show and appearance of good, but they are rather

the more hurtful and dangerous, for it is "Satan transformed and transforming himself into an angel of light." For this reason the Scripture so strongly and frequently shuts out and excludes the natural man from meddling with the things of God, denying his endeavors therein, though they be acted and performed by the most eminent of man's abilities, such as wisdom and utterance.

Furthermore, this spiritual wickedness is of two sorts (though these two are one in kind, as proceeding from the same root). The one is when the natural man meddles and works in the things of religion, and from his own conceptions and deductions, affirms or proposes wrong and erroneous notions and opinions of God and spiritual things, and invents superstitions, ceremonies, observations, and rites in worship. From this sort have sprung all the heresies and superstitions that are among Christians today. The other is when the natural man, from a mere conviction in his understanding, runs ahead in his own will and natural strength without the influence and leading of God's Spirit, and goes about either to understand or imagine the things of God, or to actually perform them by preaching or praying. Now the first of these is a missing of both the substance and form. The second may retain the outward form of Christianity, but it lacks the Life and Substance. For the true Christian religion does not consist in a mere belief of true doctrines, or a mere performance of good acts, or else the bare words of the Scripture, though spoken by a drunkard or a devil, might be said to be Spirit and life, which I judge none will be so absurd as to affirm.

Now though the latter sort is not as bad as the former, yet it has made a way for it. For men having first departed from the Life and Substance of true religion and worship—that is, from the inward power and virtue of the Spirit, so

as to act by it—they can then only retain the form and show, i.e. true words and good appearances. And then, as these continue to act in their own natural and unrenewed wills, the form also cannot help but quickly decay and become corrupted. For the busy spirit of man will not remain within the simplicity and plainness of Truth, but quickly gives way to his own numerous inventions and imaginations, so that the form adapts to his own inventions, until (by degrees) the form of godliness comes to be lost, along with the power. With this kind of idolatry, man loves, idolizes, and hugs his own conceptions, inventions, and the products of his own brain. And indeed, this is so inherent in him, and so seated in his fallen nature, that so long as his natural spirit is the first author and actor in him, and is that by which he is guided and moved in his worship towards God (not waiting first for another Guide to direct him), he can never perform the pure spiritual worship, nor bring forth anything but the fruit of the first, fallen, natural, and corrupt root.

But the time appointed of God has long come, in which He has been pleased to restore the true spiritual worship by Jesus Christ. And after the outward form, time, and manner of worship which was appointed by God to the Jews did come to an end, we find that Jesus Christ (the Author of Christianity) prescribes no set form of worship to His children under the more pure administration of the New Covenant, except to insist that the worship is now spiritual and in the Spirit. It should be observed that in the whole New Testament, there is no specific order or command given about the manner or form of worship, except that believers follow the revelation of the Spirit, and not forsake meeting together (a thing dearly owned and diligently practiced by us). It is true that mention is made

of the duties of praying, preaching, and singing; but as to what order or method should be kept in so doing, or that these should be immediately performed as soon as the saints are gathered, there is not one word to be found. In fact, these duties (as shall afterwards be shown) are always spoken of in association with the assistance, leadings, and motions of God's Spirit.

Since then man, in his natural state, is excluded from acting or moving in spiritual things, how, or in what way, should he exercise his first and previous duty of waiting upon God except by bringing the natural part to silence? And this comes through no other way but by abstaining from his own thoughts and imaginations, and from all the self-workings and motions of his own mind, both in things good and evil, so that, being silent, God may speak in him, and the good Seed may arise. Though this is hard to the natural man, it is so consistent with reason, and even natural experience in other things, that it cannot be denied. For he that comes to learn of a master, if he expects to hear his master and be instructed by him, must not continually speak of the thing to be taught and never be quiet; otherwise how shall his master have time to instruct him? And even if the student is ever so earnest to learn, the master would have good reason to reprove him if he is always meddling and speaking and not waiting in silence to patiently hear the master's instruction. Clearly, the student ought not to open his mouth until he is commanded or permitted by his master to do so.

Or if one was called upon to serve a great prince, he ought to patiently and readily wait so that he may answer the prince when he speaks, always keeping his eye upon him to observe the least motions and inclinations of his will, and then to do accordingly. But he would surely be

thought an impertinent and imprudent servant if, instead of this, he deafened the prince with discourse (even though it were in praises of him), and ran to and fro doing things that were perhaps good in themselves, but without any particular command to do them. Would the kings of the earth accept such a servant?

Since then we are commanded to “wait upon God diligently,” and in so doing it is promised that our “strength shall be renewed,” this waiting cannot be performed except by a silence or cessation of the natural part on our side, seeing that God manifests Himself not so much to the outward man or senses, but to the inward man, that is, to the soul and spirit. Now if the soul is still thinking and working in its own will, and busily exercised in its own imaginations (even though the matters may be good in themselves, or even things concerning God), yet the soul thereby incapacitates itself from discerning the “still, small voice” of the Spirit, and does itself great hurt, neglecting its chief business of waiting upon the Lord. Indeed, this would be like one crying out and speaking continually of their business, while in the meantime neglecting another who is quietly whispering into their ear, informing them of needful information about their business.

Therefore, since it is the chief work of a Christian to know the natural will (and its motions) crucified, so that God may work in him both the willing and the doing, so it is that the Lord greatly regards the profound subjection and self-denial inherent in waiting upon Him. For there are many who please themselves in the things of religion, gratifying their own sensual wills and humors in lofty and curious speculations, making for themselves a name and reputation that way. Others, because of custom or education, find religion pleasant and habitual. But such persons

are often not a bit more regenerated or inwardly sanctified in their spirits than others who openly gratify their lusts. Indeed, both sorts are equally hurtful to men, and sinful in the sight of God, bringing forth nothing more than the fruit and effect of man's natural and unrenewed will and spirit. For even if a man, from a sense of sin and fear of punishment, sought to keep himself from sinning by multiplying thoughts of death, hell, and judgment, and also, by presenting to his imagination the joys of heaven, multiplied prayers and other religious performances, these things could not deliver him from a single iniquity without the secret and inward power of God's Spirit and grace. Indeed, this would accomplish nothing more than the fig leaves with which Adam thought to cover his nakedness, for such things are merely the product of man's natural will, proceeding from self-love and seeking to save himself, and not arising purely from that divine Seed of righteousness which is given of God to all for grace and salvation. Such religion is therefore rejected of God and in no way acceptable to Him, since the natural man, with all his arts, skills, and activities, is reprobated by Him while he stands in that natural state.

This great duty then of waiting upon God must necessarily be exercised in man's denying self, both inwardly and outwardly, in a still and total dependence upon God. He must withdraw from all the workings, imaginations, and speculations of his own mind, so that being emptied of himself and crucified in measure to the natural products of self, he may be fit to receive the Lord, who will have no co-partner or co-rival in His glory and power. And when man is positioned in this way before the Lord, the little Seed of righteousness which Christ has purchased and God has planted in the soul, even the measure of grace and life

(which is burdened and crucified by man's natural thoughts and imaginations), receives a place to arise and becomes a holy birth or generation in man. This is that heavenly gift of life in and by which man's soul and spirit comes to be leavened. And by waiting in this gift, man comes to be accepted in the sight of God, to stand in His presence, hear His voice, and observe the motions of His Holy Spirit.

So then, it is man's place to wait in this. And here, when things are presented to his mind concerning God or relating to religion, his soul may be involved in these to no hurt, but rather to the great profit of both himself and others, because here things rise up not from his own will but from God's Spirit. And as the Spirit arises, moves, and teaches in his mind, he may become active in thinking and meditating, or in preaching and praying. By this it may also be seen that we are not against meditation (as some have falsely charged); but we are against the thoughts and imaginations of the natural man in his own will, from which all errors and heresies concerning the Christian religion in the whole world have proceeded.

But if it please God at any time, when one or more are waiting upon Him, not to present such objects as tend to exercise their minds in thoughts and impressions, but simply to keep them in holy dependence, and, as they persist in this, to cause His secret refreshment and the pure touch of His holy life to flow in upon them, then they have good reason to be content. For by this (as we know by good and blessed experience), the soul is more strengthened, renewed, and confirmed in the love of God, and armed against the power of sin, than by any other way. Indeed, this is a foretaste of that real and sensible enjoyment of God which the saints in heaven daily possess,

which God frequently affords to His children here for their comfort and encouragement, especially when they are assembled together to wait upon Him.

For there are two contrary powers or spirits, namely: the power and spirit of this world, in which the prince of darkness rules, and thus reigns over as many as are moved by it and work from it; and the power of the Spirit of God, in which God works and rules, and thus reigns over as many as act in and from it. So then, whatever a man thinks or acts, regardless how spiritual or religious the notion or form may be, so long as he acts and moves in the natural and corrupt spirit and will (and not from, in, and by the Power of God), he sins in all that he does, and is not accepted of God. So it is that "both the praying and the plowing of the wicked is sin" (Prov. 28:9, 21:4). Accordingly, whatever a man does in and from the Spirit and power of God, having his understanding and will influenced and moved by it, whether it be things religious, civil, or even natural, he is accepted in so doing in the sight of God and is blessed in them (Jam. 1:25).

Furthermore, the excellency of this silent waiting upon God does also appear in that it is impossible for the enemy (that is, the devil) to counterfeit it, and so to deceive or delude those who rightly practice it. Now, in all other matters he may mix himself with the natural mind of man, and by "transforming himself" (2 Cor. 11:14) he may deceive the soul, busying it with other things (perhaps innocent in themselves) while he yet keeps them from beholding the pure Light of Christ, and knowing and doing His will. For the envious spirit of man's eternal happiness knows well how to accommodate himself and fit his snares to all the several dispositions and inclinations of men. If he finds a person not fit to be tempted with open sins or

worldly lusts, being rather averse to such things and more religiously inclined, he can entice such a one by allowing their thoughts and imaginations to run into spiritual matters, exciting them to work, act, meditate, etc., in their own will. Indeed, he knows well that so long as self bears rule, and the Spirit of God is not the principal and chief actor, then man has not come out of his reach. In this way the enemy of mankind can accompany the priest to the altar, the preacher to the pulpit, the zealot to his prayers, and the doctor of divinity to his study. And here he will cheerfully allow professing Christians to labor and work among their religious books, yes, even help them discover and invent subtle distinctions and concoctions by which both their minds, and others through them, may be kept from heeding God's Light in their conscience and waiting upon Him. Thus there is not any activity into which the enemy cannot enter and have a chief place (often without the soul's discerning it), except for this silent waiting upon God. For he can only work in and by the natural man and his faculties, secretly acting upon his imaginations and desires. Therefore, as long as a man is thinking and meditating of himself, he cannot be sure that the devil is not influencing him. But when the natural man is brought to silence and to nothingness with respect to its own workings, and the pure Light of God shines in upon him, there the enemy must also cease, for he cannot abide the presence and shining of God's light.

It is true that the enemy is not lacking to come to our assemblies, and he can indeed enter and work in a meeting that is silent only as to words, either by keeping the mind in various thoughts and imaginations, or by dulling and overwhelming it with a spirit of heaviness and slothfulness. But when we retire out of all, and are turned inward

to the Lord, and we are both diligent and watchful on the one hand, and also silent and retired out of all our thoughts on the other, and as we abide in this sure place, we feel ourselves out of his reach. Yes, oftentimes the power and glory of God will break forth and appear, just as the bright sun breaks through many clouds and mists, to dispel that power of darkness which we often sensibly feel seeking to cloud and darken the mind, and to keep it from purely waiting upon God.

Moreover, the excellency of this worship does appear in that it can neither be stopped nor interrupted by the malice of men or devils, as all others can. Now interruptions and stoppings of worship may occur in two ways: either as we are hindered from meeting by outward violence, separating us one from another; or when we are permitted to meet together, but are interrupted by tumult, noise, and confusion which the malicious may use to abuse or distract us. Now in both these respects this worship does greatly surpass all others, for firstly, though we be hindered from coming together, yet as everyone is inwardly gathered to the measure of life in himself, there is a secret unity and fellowship enjoyed, which the devil and all his instruments can never break or hinder. And secondly, with regard to the disturbances which occur when we are met together, we have been able (through the nature of this worship), to keep uninterrupted as towards God, and also to show forth an example of Christian patience towards all, oftentimes even to the affecting and convincing of our opposers. For there is now no sort of worship used by others which can continue without being authorized and protected by the magistrate, or defended by fleshly weapons. But we often exercise our worship towards God while also patiently bearing the reproaches

and abuses which Christ prophesied should be frequent to Christians. For how can the Catholics say their Mass if there be any present to disturb and interrupt them? Simply take away the Mass book, the chalice, the host, or the priest's garments, or but spill the water or the wine, or blow out the candles, and the whole business is stopped. Take from the Lutherans or Episcopalians their liturgy or Common Prayer Book and no service can be said. Remove from the Calvinists, Arminians, Independents, or Anabaptists, the pulpit, the Bible, and the hourglass, or make a noise so that the voice of the preacher cannot be heard, or strip him of his Bible and his books, and he must be silent. For these have all declared it heresy to wait to speak as the Spirit gives utterance, and so their whole worship may easily be marred.

However, where people meet together and their worship consists not in outward acts, nor depends upon anyone's speaking, but rather upon sitting down to wait upon God, and to be gathered out of all visible things to feel the Lord in Spirit, then none of these things can hinder them. And of this, we may truly say we are sensible witnesses. For when the magistrates, stirred up by the malice and envy of our opposers, have used all means possible to deter us from meeting together—by finings, beatings, whippings, banishment, and even death—all has proved ineffectual to scare us from our holy assemblies. Indeed, it would be almost unbelievable to declare the evil that men (claiming to be Christians) have brought upon us. For they have often beaten us, and cast water and dirt upon us during our meetings. There they have danced, leaped, sung, and spoken all manner of profane and ungodly words, offered violence and shameful behavior to grave women and virgins, jeered, mocked and scoffed,

asking us, “if the Spirit had not yet come,” and much more which would be tedious here to relate. But through all of this we have continued seriously and silently sitting together and waiting upon the Lord, so that by these things our inward and spiritual fellowship with God and with one another in the pure life of righteousness, has not been hindered. On the contrary, the Lord, knowing our sufferings and reproaches for His testimony's sake, has caused His power and glory even more to abound among us, and has mightily refreshed us by the sense of His love, which has filled our souls and made us to feel ourselves gathered into the “name of the Lord,” which is the “strong tower” of the righteous. Yes, sometimes in the midst of this tumult and opposition, God has powerfully moved us by His Spirit both to testify of that joy which we enjoyed, and to powerfully declare (in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit) against their folly and wickedness. And so we have at times witnessed the power of Truth bring them to some measure of quietness and stillness, stopping the impetuous streams of their fury and madness. Indeed, even as Moses, by his rod, divided the waves of the Red Sea so that the Israelites might pass through, so too God, by His Spirit, has made a way for us in the midst of this raging wickedness to peaceably enjoy and possess Him, and to accomplish our worship unto Him. And sometimes upon such occasions, several of our opposers and interrupters have hereby been convinced of the Truth and gathered from being persecutors to become sufferers with us. And let it not be forgotten, but let it be inscribed and abide for a constant remembrance, that in these beastly and brutish pranks used to molest us in our spiritual meetings, none have been more busy than the young students of the universities who were learning philosophy and divinity (so

called), many of whom were preparing themselves for the ministry. Should we commit to writing all the abominations committed in this respect by the young clergy, it would make no small volume.

Thus we know that we are partakers of the New Covenant dispensation, and disciples of Christ indeed, sharing with Him in that spiritual worship which is performed in Spirit and in Truth, because as He was, so are we in this world (1 John 4:17). For the Old Covenant worship had an outward glory, temple, and ceremonies, and was full of outward splendor and majesty, having an outward tabernacle and altar, beautified with gold, silver and precious stones. Their sacrifices were tied to an outward particular place, even the outward Mount Zion, and those that prayed did so with their faces towards that outward temple. And all of this had to be protected by an outward arm, for the Jews could not peaceably enjoy these things except when they were secured from the violence of their outward enemies. Therefore, when at any time their enemies prevailed over them, their glory was darkened, their sacrifices stopped, and the face of their worship marred. For this reason they complained, lamented, and bewailed the destroying of the temple as an irreparable loss.

But Jesus Christ, the author and institutor of the New Covenant worship, testifies that God is neither to be worshipped in this nor that place, but rather in Spirit and in Truth. And since His “kingdom is not of this world,” so then His worship does not consist in worldly things, nor require any of the wisdom, glory, riches, or splendor of this world to beautify or adorn it, nor need an outward power or arm of flesh to maintain, uphold, or protect it. Instead, it may be performed by those that are spiritually minded

despite all the opposition, violence, and malice of men. For since it is purely spiritual, it is out of the reach of natural men to interrupt or disturb it.

Now it is most certain that Jesus Christ did enjoy and possess His spiritual kingdom even while being oppressed, persecuted, and rejected of men. And despite the malice and rage of the devil, "He spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them, and through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Accordingly, all of Christ's followers can and do worship Him, not only without an arm of flesh to protect them, but even when they are oppressed, for their worship (being spiritual) is defended and maintained by the power of the Spirit. But such worship as is carnal, and consists in carnal and outward ceremonies and observations, needs a carnal and outward arm to protect and defend it, or else it cannot stand and subsist. It is therefore evident that the worship of our opposers (both Protestant and Catholic), is not the true spiritual and New Covenant worship of Jesus Christ, for it has long been observed that they cannot stand without the permission and protection of the outward magistrate, nor can their worship be performed amidst the least opposition, for they are not in the patience of Jesus, to serve and worship Him with sufferings, dishonor, slander, and reproaches. And from here have sprung up all the wars, fightings, persecution, and bloodshed among Christians, while each (by the arm of flesh) have endeavored to defend and protect their own way and worship.

Now, the nature of this worship which is performed by the operation of the Spirit (the natural man being silent) is given forth in these words of Christ (John 4:23-24): "But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth: for the

Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth." This declaration should be carefully observed, since it is the first, chief, and most ample testimony given by Christ of true Christian worship, showing it to be different and set apart from the worship under the Law. Here He shows that the season is now come in which the worship must be "in Spirit and in Truth, for the Father seeks such to worship him." So then, it is no more a worship consisting in outward observations to be performed by man at set times or opportunities, which he can do in his own will and by his own natural strength, otherwise it would not differ in substance but only in some particulars from that under the law. And as for the reason of this worship, we can give none better than that which Christ here gives, which should be sufficient to satisfy every Christian, namely, that "GOD is a SPIRIT, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth." And though this ought to be received by all by simple virtue of being Christ's words, it is also founded upon a clear demonstration of reason. For Christ argues simply and excellently that, since God is a Spirit, He must therefore be worshipped in Spirit. This is so evident and certain that it allows no contradiction.

For under the Law, when God instituted and appointed that ceremonial worship to the Jews, since that worship was outward, He saw it necessary to condescend to them in a special manner, and to dwell between the cherubim in the tabernacle, and afterwards to make the temple in Jerusalem His habitation. He also caused something of His outward glory and majesty to appear to them, raining fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices and filling the temple with a cloud. In these ways (all visible to the

outward eye), He manifested Himself proportionately to that outward worship which He had commanded them to perform. But now, under the New Covenant, God has seen fit in His heavenly wisdom to lead His children in a more heavenly and spiritual path, purposing to disappoint carnal and outward observations, so that His people may have an eye more to the inward glory and kingdom than to the outward. He has instituted an inward and spiritual worship, and so does not now tie His people to the temple of Jerusalem, nor to outward ceremonies and observations, but rather takes the heart of every Christian for a temple to dwell in, and there He immediately appears and teaches how to serve Him in any outward acts. Since, as Christ argues, "God is a Spirit," He will now be worshipped *in the Spirit*, where He reveals Himself and dwells with the contrite in heart. Indeed, it is the heart of man that has now become the temple of God in which He will be worshipped, and no longer in particular outward temples (since, as it is written, "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands"). And even as the glory of the Lord formerly descended to fill the outward temple, and thus it was necessary to be purified and cleansed, having all pollution removed, yes, and the things of the tabernacle overlaid with most precious gold, and with clean and costly metals; so also, before God can be worshipped in the inward temple of the heart, it must also be purged of its own filth, and of all its own thoughts and imaginations, so that it may be fit to receive the Spirit of God and to be moved by it. Thus, this worship is in Spirit, and is also "in Truth," meaning that (for the reasons mentioned above), it is the only proper and true worship, which cannot be counterfeited by the enemy, or performed by the hypocrite.

Now, though this spiritual worship is indeed very

different from the diverse established, invented worships among Christians, and therefore may seem strange to many, yet it has been testified of, commended, and practiced by the most pious of all sorts, in all ages. This can easily be demonstrated by a multitude of testimonies, and it is from the professing and practicing of these very things that the name “mystics” has arisen. These so-called mystics are a sect generally commended by all (both Catholics and Protestants), and their writings are full of both the explanation and commendation of this sort of worship, insisting upon the inward introversion and abstraction of the mind (as they call it), from all images, thoughts, and prayers of man's will. Indeed, they look upon this as the height of Christian religion, so that some of them, though professed Roman Catholics, do boldly affirm, “That such as have attained this method of worship, or are aiming at it, ought not to trouble or busy themselves with frequent and unnecessary confessions, with exercising bodily labors and austerities, with the use of vocal, voluntary prayers, the hearing of a number of masses, set devotions, exercises to saints, prayers for the dead, indulgences, or entangling oneself with vows and promises; for such things tend to hinder the soul from observing the operations of the divine Spirit within, and from having liberty to follow the Spirit wherever it might draw.”² And yet, who does not know that the very substance of the Roman Catholic religion consists in such outward observations and performances! Nevertheless, it appears by this and many other passages of their own mystic writers, that these men and women looked upon

² *Sancta Sophia*, put out by the English Benedictines, printed at Douay, anno 1657, tract. I, sect. ii, cap. 5

this spiritual worship as excelling all others, and that those who had attained to it had no need of the others. Indeed, such as tasted of this quickly confessed that all other forms and ceremonies of worship were useless for them; neither did they perform them as necessary things, but merely for the sake of order or example.³ Therefore, though some of these men and women remained clouded with the common darkness of their religious profession, yet they did still affirm that a spiritual worship was to be retained and sought for, even if it required the omission of their outward ceremonies. Accordingly, Bernard of Clairvaux once wrote, "Take heed to the rule of God, the kingdom of God is within you;" and afterwards saying that their outward orders and rules should be observed, he added, "But when it shall happen that one of these two must be omitted, in such a case the outward rules are much rather to be omitted than the inward; for by how much the Spirit is more excellent and noble than the body, by this much are spiritual exercises more profitable than bodily."⁴

Therefore, should not that kind of worship be followed and performed which the best of men in all ages and of all sects have commended, and which is also most agreeable to the doctrine of Christ? Should not all men worship Him in Spirit and truth, especially since He has now raised up a people to testify of and preach this worship in the very face of the world, despite great opposition? And these ministers of Christ do not now (as the mystics mistakenly did) make this worship a mystery only to be attained by a few men or women in a cloister, or

3 Life of Balthazar Alvares, in the same *Sancta Sophia*, tract. III, sect. i, cap. 7

4 In his Epistle to one William, an abbot of the same order.

suggest it to be reached only after laboring under many outward ceremonies and observations, as if it were the consequence of such exertion. But rather, they preach the free love of God, who is no respecter of persons, and who was near to hear and reveal Himself to Cornelius, a centurion and a Roman, and to Simeon and Anna, and who revealed His glory to Mary, a poor handmaid, and to the poor shepherds, rather than to the high priests and devout converts among the Jews. And in and according to His free love, they are finding that God is revealing and establishing this worship in multitudes, and making many poor tradesmen (yes, even young boys and girls) witnesses of it. And these are entreating and beseeching all to lay aside their own will-worships and voluntary acts performed in their own wills and by their own mere natural strength and power (without retiring out of their vain imaginations and thoughts, or feeling the pure Spirit of God to move and stir in them), that they may come to practice this acceptable worship which is “in Spirit and in Truth.”

Objections Answered

But against this worship they object:

Objection: First, it seems to be an unprofitable exercise for a man to be doing or thinking nothing. One might be much better employed either in meditating upon some good subject or in praying to or praising God.

Answer: I answer, that which is absolutely necessary before all other duties can be acceptably performed (as we have shown) cannot be unprofitable. Moreover, those who imagine that God is pleased by their own workings and

actings have but a carnal and brutish apprehension of God and of the things of His kingdom. For clearly, as has been demonstrated, man's first step toward the fear of the Lord is to cease from his own thoughts and imaginations and allow God's Spirit to work in him; for we must "cease to do evil," before we "learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16-17). Indeed, this meddling in spiritual things by man's own natural understanding is one of the greatest and most dangerous evils that man is inclined to, being the occasion of our first parents' fall, namely: a forwardness to desire to know things, and a meddling with them both without and contrary to the Lord's command.

Objection: Secondly, some object, "If your worship consists merely in inwardly retiring to the Lord, feeling His Spirit arise in you, and then doing whatever acts you are led to by Him, then what need do you have of public meetings at set times and places, since everyone may enjoy this at home? Should not everyone just remain at home until they are moved to go to a particular place or do a particular thing? And is not meeting at set times and places an outward observation and ceremony, contrary to what you assert?"

Answer: I answer, to meet at set times and places is not a religious act or a part of worship in itself, but only an outward convenience necessary for seeing one another, so long as we are clothed with this outward tabernacle. Nevertheless, God has seen fit, so long as His children are in this world, to make use of the outward senses as a means to convey spiritual life, by such things as speaking, praying, praising, etc., which cannot be done to mutual edification except as we hear and see one another. There-

fore, the Lord often causes the inward life (which also many times is not conveyed by the outward senses) more to abound when His children assemble themselves diligently together to wait upon Him. So that seeing one another, when all are inwardly gathered unto the Life, an occasion is given for the Life to secretly arise and pass from vessel to vessel, even as “iron sharpens iron.” Or even as many candles in one place do greatly increase the light and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together into the same Life, there is more of the glory of God, and His power appears to the refreshment of each individual, who partakes not only of the Light and Life raised in himself, but in all the rest as well. In this way Christ has promised a particular blessing to those who assemble together in His Name, saying He will be “in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

Furthermore, the author of Hebrews does expressly prohibit the neglect of this duty, as being of very dangerous and dreadful consequence, saying: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some... For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:24-26). Therefore, the Lord has manifested a particular regard to those who assemble themselves together in this way, not only for the mutual edification of each member, but also that a public testimony for Him may be upheld in the earth and His Name may thereby be glorified. And certainly, those who are right in their spirits are naturally drawn to keep the meetings of God's people, and they never lack the Spirit's influence to lead them to it.

Objection: Lastly, some object that this manner of worship in silence is not to be found in all the Scripture.

Answer: I answer; first, we do not make silence the chief matter of our worship, since (as I have above said) there are very few meetings that are altogether silent, where some are not moved either to preach, pray, or praise the Lord. In this way, we believe our meetings to be much like the meetings of the primitive churches recorded in Scripture, since even our adversaries will confess that they did not preach and pray except by the Spirit. Consequently, must there not have been times in the primitive church when the Spirit did *not* move them to speak or act, at which times they were silent? Indeed, there was no doubt some times of silence before the Spirit came upon them. For they were told to “tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high.” And when “They were all with one accord in one place;” then, “The Spirit suddenly came upon them.” No mention is made here of anyone speaking at that time, and it cannot be thought absurd to conclude they were silent a while.

But if it be urged that a whole silent meeting cannot be found in Scripture, I answer; supposing such a thing were not recorded in Scripture, it will not therefore follow that it is not lawful, seeing that it naturally follows from other Scriptural precepts already mentioned. For the Scripture often commands us to wait upon the Lord, and also to meet together. And when we are assembled, the Scripture prohibits prayers or preaching except as the Spirit moves and directs. Therefore, if people have met together and the Spirit does not move to speak or act, it will necessarily follow that they must be silent. And

indeed, there might have been many such things done among the saints of old though not recorded in Scripture; yet we have enough in Scripture to signify that such meetings did take place. For Job sat silent seven days together with his friends (Job 2:13); here was a long silent meeting. See also Ezra 9:4 and Ezekiel 14:1 and 20:1.

Thus having shown the excellency of this worship, proven it from Scripture and reason, and answered the objections which are commonly made against it, I shall add something more particularly concerning preaching, praying, and singing.

Preaching

Preaching, as it is practiced both among Roman Catholics and Protestants, is when a man takes a passage of Scripture, and then speaks about it for an hour or two according to what he has studied and premeditated in his chamber and gathered from his own inventions, or from the writings and observations of others. Then, having got it by heart (as a schoolboy does his lesson), he brings it forth and repeats it before the congregation. And the more lively and strong a man's invention is, and the more industrious and laborious he is in collecting his observations and uttering them with the excellency of speech and human eloquence, so much the more is he accounted an able and excellent preacher.

This we oppose, believing that when the saints are assembled together, everyone should be inwardly gathered to the gift and grace of God in themselves, and he that ministers ought to be moved thereto by the arising of the grace in himself. He ought to speak forth what the Spirit of

God provides him with, not minding the eloquence and wisdom of words, but rather the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Here he may interpret some part of Scripture which the Spirit brings to his mind and leads him to, or offer words of exhortation, advice, reproof and instruction, or relate the meaning of some spiritual experiences, all which will still be agreeable to the Scripture, though perhaps not founded upon any particular chapter or verse as a text.

Now let us examine and consider which of these two sorts of preaching is most agreeable to the precepts and practices of Christ and His apostles and the primitive church as recorded in Scripture. First, with regard to preaching upon a text, if this were not merely customary and premeditated, but rather done by the immediate motion of the Spirit, we should have nothing against it. But to do this in the manner that is common among most professing Christians today, there is neither precept nor practice in all the New Testament, so far as I can observe.

Objection: But they allege that Christ took the book of Isaiah and read out of it, and then spoke from it. And likewise, that Peter preached from a passage of the prophet Joel.

Answer: I answer, that Christ and Peter did not do it except as they were immediately acted upon and moved thereto by the Spirit of God, and without premeditation (which I suppose our adversaries will not deny); in which case we willingly approve of it. But this is far from the customary and contrived way in which it is practiced today, without either waiting for or expecting the movings or leadings of the Spirit of God. Moreover, it is clear that

neither Christ nor Peter did this as a settled custom or form to be constantly practiced by all the ministers of the Church, for it does not appear in most of the sermons of Christ and His apostles recorded in Scripture (see Matt. 5:1; Mark 4:1, Paul's preaching to the Athenians and to the Jews, etc.) Much to the contrary, when Christ sent forth His disciples, He expressly mentioned that they were not to speak of or from themselves, or to prepare something beforehand, but rather to say that which "the Spirit in the same hour should teach them," as is particularly mentioned by the three evangelists (Matt. 10:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12). Now, if Christ gave this order to His disciples before He departed from them as that which they were to practice, much more were they to do it after His departure, since then they were more especially to receive the Spirit who would "lead them into all truth" and "bring all things to their remembrance" (John 14:26). And if they were to do so when they appeared before the magistrates and princes of the earth, much more should they do it in their worship of God when standing before Him, seeing that His worship is to be performed in Spirit. Therefore, after their receiving of the Holy Spirit, it is said, "They spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4), and not what they had studied and gathered from books in a premeditated way.

Francis Lambert speaks well, and shows their hypocrisy, saying:

Where are they now that glory in their spiritual inventions, who say, "A fine invention! A fine invention!" referring to that which they have concocted from Scripture. But what have the faithful to do with such inventions? No, we will have no inventions, but

rather things that are solid, invincible, eternal, and heavenly—not that which men have invented, but which God has revealed. For if we believe the Scripture, our inventions profit nothing but to provoke God to our destruction.

And afterwards he writes,

Beware, that you determine not to speak precisely what you have before meditated, whatsoever it is. For though it is lawful to determine the text which you are to expound, yet not so the interpretation; lest, if you do, you take from the Holy Spirit that which is His, namely, to direct your speech so that you may prophesy in the name of the Lord, stripped of all learning, meditation, and experience. You are to commit your heart, your tongue, and yourself wholly unto His Spirit, trusting nothing to your former studying or meditation, but saying within yourself (in great confidence of the divine promise), 'The Lord will give the word with power unto those that truly preach the gospel.'

But above all things be careful that you do not follow the manner of hypocrites, who have written almost word by word what they are to say, as if they were to repeat some lines in the theater. Indeed, these pray the Lord to direct their tongue, but in the meantime shut up the way of the Holy Spirit, determining to say nothing but what they have written. O unhappy kind of prophets! Yes, and truly cursed are they who depend not upon God's Spirit but rather upon their own writing or meditation! Why do you pray to the Lord, you false prophet, to give you His

*Holy Spirit by which to speak profitable things, and yet repel His Spirit?*⁵

Now, this manner of premeditated preaching (as all confess) may be, and often is, performed by men who are wicked or void of true grace, and so it not only fails to edify the church or beget and nourish true faith, but is rather destructive to it, being directly contrary to the nature of the Christian and apostolic ministry mentioned in the Scriptures. For the apostle preached the gospel “not in the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be of none effect” (1 Cor. 1:17). But this preaching, not being done by the acting and moving of God's Spirit, but by man's invention and eloquence in his own will and through his natural and acquired skills and learning, is clearly in the wisdom of words, and so the cross of Christ is thereby made of none effect. The apostle's speech and preaching was not “with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” so that the faith of their hearers “should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:3-5). But this preaching, having nothing of the Spirit and power in it (for both the preachers and hearers freely confess that they wait for no such thing, nor are often sensible of it), must necessarily stand in the enticing words of man's wisdom. And since such preaching is sought after by the wisdom of man, and uttered in the strength of man's eloquence and enticing words, it is therefore no wonder that the faith of those who hear and depend upon such preachers and preaching stands in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God. The apostles declared that they “spoke not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches”

5 Tract. 5, of Prophecy, chap. 3

(1 Cor. 2:13). But these preachers confess that they are strangers to the Holy Spirit and to His motions and operations, nor do they wait to feel them. They therefore speak with the words that their own natural wisdom and learning teaches them, mixing in and adding such words as they steal out of Scripture and other books, and therefore do not speak what the Holy Spirit teaches.

Furthermore, this preaching is contrary to the method and order of the primitive church mentioned by the apostle in 1 Cor. 14:30, etc., where in preaching everyone was to wait for his revelation, and to give place one to another according as things were revealed. But now there is no waiting for a revelation, and yet the preacher must speak—not that which is revealed unto him, but what he has prepared and premeditated beforehand.

Lastly, by this kind of preaching, the Spirit of God (who should be the chief instructor and teacher of God's people, and whose influence is that alone which makes all preaching effectual and beneficial for the edifying of souls) is shut out, and man's natural wisdom, learning, and skill is set up and exalted. This (no doubt) is a great and chief reason why the preaching among the majority of Christians is so unfruitful and unsuccessful. Indeed, according to this doctrine the devil may preach, and ought to be heard also, seeing he both knows the truth and has as much eloquence as any. But what avails excellency of speech, if the demonstration and power of the Spirit which touches the conscience is lacking? We see in Scripture that when the devil confessed to the truth, still Christ would receive none of his testimony. And even as these testimonies of the Scripture do prove this kind of preaching to be contrary to the doctrine of Christ, so they also prove ours to be affirmed.

Objection: But some may object in this manner: Have not many benefited, yes, and been both converted and edified by the ministry of those who have premeditated their preaching? And has not the Spirit often concurred by divine influence with premeditated preachings, so that some have powerfully impacted the souls of the hearers to their advantage?

Answer: I answer, though this be granted (for I will not deny it), it does not infer that the thing was good in itself, any more than to suggest that Christ's appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus proves he did well in his errand to persecute the saints. For as we have elsewhere said, neither particular actions, nor entire congregations, should be evaluated by the acts of God's condescension in times of ignorance. Indeed, it has oftentimes happened that God, having a regard to the simplicity and integrity of either the preacher or the hearers, has fallen upon the heart of a preacher by His power and holy influence, and thereby led him to speak things not in his premeditated discourse, or perhaps even things he had never before conceived. And these passing exclamations and unpremeditated but living exhortations have often proved more beneficial and refreshing both to the preacher and hearers than all their premeditated sermons. And yet, the Lord's kind condescension in this way should not at all encourage the continuance of those things which in themselves are not approved, but are in fact contrary to the practice of the apostles, especially now that God is raising up a people to serve Him according to the primitive purity and spirituality. Indeed, such acts of God's mercy in times of darkness and ignorance should all the more engage us to follow Him according as He reveals His most perfect and spiritual way.

Prayer

Having spoken of preaching, it is fitting now to speak of praying, concerning which subject a similar controversy arises. Our adversaries, whose religion is principally external, and whose actions are the mere products of man's natural will and abilities, can pray even as they preach—whenever they please—and therefore have their set particular prayers. I do not intend to meddle with the controversies among themselves concerning this, some of them being for set prayers, such as a liturgy, and others for prayers that are extemporaneously conceived. It suffices me that all of them agree in this—that the previous motions and influence of the Spirit of God are not necessary. These therefore have set times of prayer in their public worship, such as before and after preaching, and also in their private devotion, such as morning and evening, or before and after meals, and other such occasions, at which times they go about the performing of their prayers by speaking words to God, whether they feel any motion or influence of the Spirit or not. Indeed, some of the chiefest of them have confessed that they have prayed in this way without the motions or assistance of the Spirit, acknowledging that they sinned in so doing, yet they look upon it as their duty to do so.

We freely confess that prayer is a very profitable and necessary duty, commanded and fit to be practiced frequently by all Christians. However, as we can do nothing without Christ, so neither can we pray without the concurrence and assistance of His Spirit. Now, that the state of the controversy may be better understood, let it first be considered that prayer is twofold: inward and outward. Inward prayer is that secret turning of the mind

towards God whereby, being secretly touched and awakened by the Light of Christ in the conscience, and bowed down under the sense of its iniquities, unworthiness, and misery, it looks up to God, and then, joining with the secret shinings of the Seed of God, it constantly breathes forth secret desires and aspirations towards Him. It is in this sense that we are so frequently in Scripture commanded to “pray continually” (Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18; Luke 21:36), which cannot be understood of outward prayer, for it is impossible that men should be always upon their knees, expressing words of prayer, etc. Indeed, this would hinder men from the exercise of other duties which are no less positively commanded by Scripture. Outward prayer then, is when the soul (being already in the exercise of inward retirement, and feeling the breathing of the Spirit of God to arise powerfully) receives strength and liberty by an additional motion and influence of the Spirit, to bring forth either audible sighs, groans, or words, in public assemblies, or in private, at meals, etc.

Now, inward prayer is necessary at all times, and so man never lacks some influence (in varying degrees) for the practice of it, as long as the day of his visitation lasts. For no sooner does he retire his mind and consider himself in God's presence, then he finds himself in the practice of it.

But the exercise of outward prayer (as needing a greater and additional influence and motion of the Spirit) cannot be effectually performed until the mind is somewhat acquainted with the inward. So it is that those who are diligent and watchful in their minds, and much retired in the exercise of this inward prayer, are more capable to be in the frequent use of the outward, because this holy influence does more constantly attend them. And these,

being better acquainted with, and accustomed to, the motions of God's Spirit, can easily perceive and discern His influences. And since those who are most diligent in this way experience near access to God, so He takes most delight to draw them by His Spirit to approach and call upon Him.

So when many are gathered together in this retired and watchful state of mind, God does frequently pour forth the Spirit of prayer among them, and stir them to pray vocally for the edifying and building up of one another in love. But because this outward prayer depends upon the inward, and also cannot be acceptably performed except by an additional influence and motion of the Spirit, we therefore cannot set fixed times to pray outwardly, or make it necessary to speak words at such and such times whether we feel this heavenly influence and assistance or not. For this we judge to be a tempting of God, and a coming before Him without due preparation. Instead, we think it right for us to first present ourselves before Him by this inward retirement of the mind, and then to proceed further only as His Spirit does help and draw us. Indeed, we find that the Lord accepts this, though He sometimes sees fit to exercise us in silence without allowing us to speak for the trial of our patience, that He may teach us not to rely upon outward performances, or to satisfy ourselves (as too many do) with the saying of many words or prayers. In this way our dependence upon Him becomes more firm and constant, as we wait for the holding out of His scepter, and for the ability to pray by His Spirit. Nevertheless, we do not deny that God, upon particular occasions, very suddenly (even upon the very first turning in of the mind), may give power and liberty to bring forth words or acts of outward prayer, so that the soul can scarcely discern any

previous motion. Yet in every case the saying of Bernard holds true, that "all prayer is tepid which has not divine inspiration preceding it."

Now, though we affirm that none ought to go about prayer without the motion of the Spirit, yet we also maintain that it is sin to neglect prayer—the sin being that they do not come to the place where they would most certainly feel the Spirit lead them into it. Indeed, we do not doubt that many, through neglect of this inward watchfulness and retiredness of mind, miss many precious opportunities to pray, and thereby incur guilt in the sight of God; and yet it would also be sin if they should set about to pray before first feeling the Spirit's influence. For a servant plainly offends his master when he lies in his bed and sleeps, and neglects to do his master's business. However, if he should suddenly get up without putting on his clothes or taking along his necessary tools and instruments (without which he could not possibly work), and then throws himself into much activity without purpose, he would be so far from rectifying his former fault, that he would rightly incur a new rebuke. And just as one that is careless and busy with other matters may miss hearing another speak to him, or even fail to hear the loud chime of a clock, so may many through negligence miss hearing God's frequent calls to them, giving them access to pray unto Him. Nevertheless, this by no means allows them to pray in their own wills without receiving liberty from God.

Lastly, though this is the only true and proper method of prayer, and that which alone is acceptable to God, yet we do not deny that He has oftentimes answered the prayers, and consented to the desires, of those (especially in times of darkness) who have greatly erred in these things. We doubt not that many have sat down in formal

prayers, and though being very mistaken in both the matter and manner of prayer, and without the assistance or influence of God's Spirit, still have found Him to take occasion to break in upon their souls and wonderfully tender and refresh them. Yet, as was before observed with preaching, God's kind condescension does not signify His approval of superstitious and empty formalities, nor should it deter any from coming to practice that pure, spiritual, and acceptable prayer which God is again restoring and leading His people into.

Now I intend to first prove the rightness of this spiritual prayer by some short considerations from Scripture, and then answer the common objections of our opposers, which will also serve to refute their method and manner.

First, the necessity of a previous retirement of the mind, in order that the Spirit may be felt drawing into prayer, can clearly be seen in many Scriptures. Indeed, in most places where prayer is commanded, "watching" is mentioned as that which must necessarily go before it. See, for instance, Matt. 24:42; Mark 13:33, and 14:38; Luke 21:36, where it is evident that this watching is to go before prayer. Now, to what end is this watching? Or what is it, except a waiting to feel God's Spirit drawing us unto prayer so that it may be done acceptably? For since we are told to "pray always in the Spirit," and we cannot pray of ourselves acceptably without it, this watching must be recommended for this purpose, namely: that we may watch and wait for the seasonable time to pray, which is when the Spirit moves us thereto.

Secondly, this necessity of the Spirit's moving and enabling appears abundantly from the language of the apostle Paul in Rom. 8:26-27: "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we

should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” First, this scripture holds forth the incapacity of men, as of themselves, to pray or call upon God in their own wills, even those who have received the faith of Christ and are in measure sanctified by it (as was the case in the church of Rome, to whom the apostle then wrote). Secondly, this scripture calls attention to that alone which can help and assist men to pray, which is the Spirit, and insists that without this they can neither pray acceptably to God or beneficially to their own souls. Thirdly, it establishes the manner and way of the Spirit’s intercession, which is “with sighs and groans which are unutterable.” And fourthly, it asserts that God graciously receives the prayers that are presented and offered unto Himself by the Spirit, knowing them to be according to His will. And since what is asserted here by the apostle is most consistent with the other testimonies of Scripture that commend and recommend the use of prayer, I argue as follows:

Argument: If man knows not how to pray, nor is able to do it without the help of the Spirit, then it is without purpose and unprofitable for him to pray without it.

Thirdly, the necessity of the Spirit in true prayer appears from Eph. 6:18 and Jude 20. For in his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle commands us to “pray always in the Spirit,” and adds, “watching thereunto;” which is the same as if he had said we are not to pray without the Spirit or watching thereunto. And Jude shows us that only such

prayers as are “in the Holy Spirit” tend to the “building up of ourselves in our most holy faith.”

Fourthly, the apostle Paul expressly says in 1 Cor. 12:3 that “no man can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” If then Jesus cannot even be rightly named except by the Holy Spirit, far less can He be acceptably called upon in prayer. Accordingly, the same apostle declares (in the same letter, 1 Cor. 14:15) that he “will pray with the Spirit,” giving clear evidence that it was not his method to pray without it.

Fifthly, the confidence that the saints have that God will hear them, is if they “ask anything according to His will” (1 John 5:14). So if the prayer is not according to His will, there is no ground of confidence that He will hear. For indeed, to bid a man to pray without the Spirit is the same as to bid him to see without eyes, work without hands, or walk without feet. And to expect a man to begin to pray before he feels the Spirit moving and enabling him, is to expect a man to see before he opens his eyes, to walk before he rises up, or to work before he moves his hands.

But lastly, from this practice of praying without the Spirit, and not judging it necessary to wait for its moving and enabling, has proceeded all manner of superstition, idolatry, and abomination among so-called Christians, by which the Lord is so often provoked and His Spirit grieved. Indeed, many deceive themselves now (as the Jews did before) in a false peace with God, thinking that all is well because they have offered up their sacrifices of morning and evening prayers. And yet it is often manifest that their constant use of such prayer does not influence their lives and conduct one bit, for they remain, for the most part, as bad as ever. Yes, it is frequent among both Roman Catholics and Protestants for them to leap (so to speak)

out of their vain, light, and profane conversations at their set hours and seasons, in order to enter upon their customary devotion. And then, when this is scarcely finished, and their words to God are barely out of their mouths, they return immediately to their former profane talk. Thus it is evident that the same wicked spirit of this world is acting in them in both these activities. Now, if there be any such thing as vain offerings, or prayers that are an abomination which God does not hear (as there certainly are, for the Scripture so testifies, Isa. 66:3; Jer. 14:12), certainly these prayers which are acted in man's will and by his own strength, without God's Spirit, must be of that number.

Let this suffice for proof. Now I will proceed to answer some objections of our opposers.

Objection: First, they object that if such particular influences of the Spirit are necessary for outward acts of worship, then they should also be necessary for inward acts, such as to wait, desire, and love God, as well as for outward moral duties such as honoring parents or doing right to neighbors, etc.

Answer: I answer, that which has already been said sufficiently answers this objection. For with regard to the general duties of man towards God and towards his neighbor, man never lacks a heavenly influence so long as the day of his visitation lasts, during which time God is always near to him and is wrestling with him by His Spirit to turn him to Himself. But as for the outward acts of preaching and prayer, which are commanded of God to be performed by His Spirit (see 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Pet. 4:11), and are for the benefit of the public gathering, these need a more special motion and influence, as has been demonstrated.

Objection: Secondly, they object that, according to this doctrine, wicked men may neglect prayer for years together, alleging that they lack God's motion to do it.

Answer: I answer, the false pretenses of wicked men do nothing to invalidate the truth of this doctrine. For though we grant that they should not pray without the Spirit, yet they indeed should come to the place of watching where they become capable of feeling the Spirit's motion. They indeed sin by not praying, but the cause of this sin is their not watching unto prayer.

Objection: Thirdly, they object that many prayers which began without the Spirit have proved effectual, and that even the prayers of wicked men have at times been heard and accepted (as in the case of Ahab).

Answer: This objection was solved before; for the acts of God's compassion and indulgence at some times and to some persons, upon singular or extraordinary occasions, are not to be the rule of our actions. For if we should make such things our rule, great complications would follow, as is evident and will be acknowledged by all. Moreover, we do not deny that wicked men are sometimes sensible of the motions and operations of God's Spirit before the day of their visitation has expired. And from these influences of the Spirit they may at times pray acceptably, though not unto remaining in wickedness, but unto growing in godliness.

Objection: Lastly, some object that the so-called Lord's Prayer is a prescribed form of prayer or worship given by Christ to His disciples.

Answer: I answer, firstly, that this prayer was given to

the disciples while they were still weak, before they had received the new covenant dispensation of the Spirit, and it was not given as a method or formality, nor as the only means of addressing God, but rather that Christ might show His disciples, by one example, how their prayers ought to differ from the long and lifeless prayers of the Pharisees. Secondly, that the Lord's Prayer was not given to the church as a prescribed method can be clearly seen in the recorded prayers of apostles, who never made use of this prayer, nor repeated it, but rather used other words according as the Spirit gave them utterance. Thirdly, the apostle says, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us." But if the Lord's Prayer had been given as a prescribed form of prayer to the church, then this Scripture would not be true, nor would they have been ignorant what to pray for, nor would they have needed the help of the Spirit to teach them.

Singing

As to the singing of psalms, there is no need of any long discourse, for the case is just the same as in the two former of preaching and prayer. We confess this to be a part of God's worship, and it is very sweet and refreshing when it proceeds from a true sense of God's love in the heart, and arises from the divine influence of His Spirit. For the Spirit does at times lead souls to breathe forth either a sweet melody, or words suitable to their present condition, which may consist of words formerly used by the saints and recorded in Scripture (such as the Psalms of David) or other words spontaneously given by the Spirit

(like the hymns and songs of Zacharias, Simeon, and the virgin Mary).

But as for the formal customary way of singing that abounds at this day, it has no foundation in scripture, nor any ground in true Christianity. And in addition to all the abuses that often accompany prayer and preaching, this manner of singing has one other unique offense—that oftentimes great and horrid lies are sung in the sight of God. For all manner of wicked and profane people take upon themselves to sing the experiences and conditions of blessed David, which are entirely false as to them. Indeed, in their hymns they will sometimes sing, “My tears have been my food day and night,” or “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and you have brought me into the dust of death,” or “I am weary with my groaning, all the night I make my bed to swim. I water my couch with my tears.” Many similar things do men and women sing unto God, knowing them to be false as to them. Now, who can suppose that God accepts such deceitfulness? Truly, such singing does far more please the carnal ears of men than the pure ears of the Lord, who abhors all lying and hypocrisy.

The singing, then, which pleases God must proceed from that which is pure in the heart (even from the Word of Life within). It is in and by this indwelling Word, which richly dwells in us, that spiritual songs and hymns are returned to the Lord, according to the words of the apostle (Col. 3:16).

Conclusion

The last great advantage of this true worship of God

which we profess and practice is that it consists not in man's wisdom, arts, or industry, nor does it need the glory, pomp, riches, or splendor of this world to beautify it. Indeed, this worship is of a spiritual and heavenly nature, and therefore appears too simple and contemptible to the natural mind and will of man, which has no delight in it, finding no room here for his imaginations and inventions, nor opportunity to gratify his outward and carnal senses. For this reason, none are likely to observe this worship for long without an accompanying sense of the power of God; for without the power, it is naked and empty, having nothing to invite and tempt men to esteem it.

However, the worship of our adversaries, being performed in their own wills, is self-pleasing, being an activity in which they can largely exercise their natural skill and invention. And because it has something of an outward and worldly splendor (enticing to the carnal and worldly senses), they can pleasantly continue in it and satisfy themselves even without the Spirit and Power, which they admit is in no way essential to the performance of it, and therefore neither wait for nor expect it.

So to conclude: the worship, preaching, praying and singing which we plead for is such as proceeds from the Spirit of God and is always accompanied with its influence. It begins by the motion of the Spirit, is carried on by its power and strength alone, and so is a purely spiritual worship, such as the Scripture holds forth (John 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 6:18, etc.).

But the worship, preaching, praying and singing which our adversaries plead for, and which we oppose, is a worship which is both begun, carried on, and concluded in man's own natural will and strength, without the motion or influence of God's Spirit, which they judge not necessary

to wait for, and therefore may be performed, both as to the matter and manner, by the wickedest of men. Such was the worship and vain offerings which God always rejected, as appears from Isa. 66:3; Jer. 14:12, etc.; Isa. 1:13; Prov. 15:29; John 9:31.

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A Brief Account Concerning Silent Meetings⁶

by Isaac Penington

This is a great mystery, hidden from the eye of man, who has run from the inward life into outward observations. He cannot see that this is required by the Lord of his people, or acknowledge any edification therein, or benefit thereby. But to the mind that is drawn inward, the thing is plain, and a true building up in the life of God, and a fellowship one with another is therein sweetly felt. For there is precious refreshment from the presence of the Lord received by them who singly wait upon Him according to the leadings and requirings of his Holy Spirit. Now, if the Lord please, I will open the thing a little more for the upright-hearted.

After the mind is in some measure turned to the Lord, and his quickenings are felt, and his seed begins to arise and spring up in the heart, then the flesh is to be silent before Him, and the soul is to wait upon Him (for his further appearings) in that measure of life which is already

⁶ Taken from The Works of Isaac Penington, Volume 4, pg. 47. Quaker Heritage Press. www.qhpress.org

revealed. Now, this is a great thing to know the flesh silenced, to feel the reasoning thoughts and discourses of the fleshly mind stilled, and the wisdom, light, and guidance of God's Spirit waited for. For man is to come into a poverty of self, into true humility, into the nothingness, into the silence of his spirit before the Lord. He must come to put off all his knowledge, wisdom, understanding, abilities, all that he is, has done, or can do, that he may be clothed and filled with the nature, Spirit, and power of the Lord.

Now, in this measure of life which is of Christ, and in which Christ is and appears to the soul, there is the power of life and death. There is power to kill the flesh, and power to quicken to God. There is power to cause the soul to cease from its own workings, and power to work in and for the soul what God requires, and what is acceptable in his sight. And in this God is to be waited upon and worshipped continually, both in private and in public, according as his Spirit draws and teaches.

For the Lord requires of his people not only to worship Him privately, but also to meet together to worship Him, in the seasons, and according to the drawings, of his Spirit. And those who are taught of Him dare not forsake the assembling of themselves together, as is the manner of some, but rather watch against such temptations and snares of the enemy.

And this is the manner of their worship—they are to wait upon the Lord, to meet in the silence of flesh, and to watch for the stirrings of his life and the breakings forth of his power among them. And in the breakings forth of that power they may pray, speak, exhort, rebuke, sing, mourn, etc., according as the Spirit teaches, requires, and gives utterance. But if the Spirit does not require to speak, and

give to utter, then everyone is to sit still in his place (in his heavenly place I mean), feeling his own measure, feeding upon it, receiving from it, into his spirit, whatever the Lord gives.

Now, in this is edifying, pure edifying, precious edifying. The soul who waits in this way is hereby particularly edified by the Spirit of the Lord at every meeting. And also there is the life of the whole felt in every vessel that is turned inward to its measure. For the warmth of life in each vessel does not only warm the particular, but they are like a heap of fresh and living coals, warming one another, and a great strength, freshness, and vigor of life flows into all. And if any be burdened, tempted, buffeted by Satan, bowed down, overborne, languishing, afflicted, distressed, etc., the state of such is felt in Spirit, and secret cries ascend up to the Lord for them. And many times these find ease and relief in a few words spoken, or even without words.

Now, as for absolutely silent meetings, wherein there is a resolution not to speak, these are unknown to us; rather, we wait on the Lord, either to feel Him in words, or in silence of spirit without words, as he pleases. And that which we aim at, and are instructed to by the Spirit of the Lord as to our meetings, is that the flesh in everyone be kept silent, and that there be no building up except in the Spirit and power of the Lord.

Now, there are several states of people. Some feel little of the Lord's presence, but rather feel temptations and thoughts, with many wanderings and roving of mind. These are not yet acquainted with the power, or at least they do not know its dominion, but still feel dominion of the evil over the good in them. And this is a sore travailing and mournful state, and our meetings to such as these

(many times) may seem more for the worse than for the better. Yet even these, while turning, as much as they may away from such things, and cleaving (or at least in truth of heart desiring to cleave), to that which witnesses against the flesh, have acceptance with the Lord herein. And continuing to wait in this trouble and distress (keeping close to meetings, in fear and subjection to the Lord who requires it, though with little apparent benefit), do reap a hidden benefit at present, and shall reap a more clear and manifest benefit afterwards, as the Lord wastes away and wears out in them that part wherein the darkness has its strength.

God is to be worshipped in spirit, in his own power and life, and this is at his own disposal. His church is a gathering in the Spirit. If any man speak there, he must speak as the oracle of God, 1 Pet. 4:11, as the vessel out of which God speaks, as the trumpet out of which he gives the sound. Therefore, there is to be a waiting in silence till the Spirit of the Lord moves to speak, and also gives words to speak. For a man is not to speak his own words, or in his own wisdom or time, but rather the Spirit's words, in the Spirit's wisdom and time, which is when he moves and gives to speak. And seeing that the Spirit inwardly nourishes even when he does not move to speak words, so this inward sense and nourishment is to be waited for and received when there are no words. Yes, the ministry of the Spirit and life is more close and immediate when it is without words than when it is with words, as has been often felt, and faithfully testified to by many witnesses. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, how and what things God reveals to his children by his Spirit when they wait upon Him in his pure fear, and worship and converse with Him in Spirit. For

then the fountain of the great deep is unsealed, and the everlasting springs surely give up the pure and living water.