

kneeling

extract from Proposition XV § vi

§ vi. After the use of titles, our second affirmation deals with the kind of honor Christians use by kneeling, bowing, and taking off their hats to one another. . . .

First, we say that God, who is the creator of man, the one to whom man owes the dedication of both soul and body, is to be worshipped and adored, not only by the Spirit, but also with the prostration of the body. Kneeling, bowing, and removing one's hat are the only outward ways of expressing our adoration of God, and therefore it is not lawful to give this honor to a human being. . . .

Second, because human beings are created equal (though their various stations in life require from them mutual services according to their respective relationships), they do not owe worship to one another. They are all equally supposed to give worship to God, because every knee must bow to him and to his Name alone,<sup>1</sup> and before his throne the four and twenty elders prostrate themselves.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . They accuse us of rudeness and pride, although the testimony of our consciences, in the sight of God, is a sufficient guard against such slanders. But there are people among us who are known to be brought up among the gentry, who do not refuse to do these things because they lack what is called "good breeding." We would lack all good sense if we bought pride at so high a price as many have paid for the exercise of their conscience. Many of us have been severely beaten, and even imprisoned for several months, for no other reason than because we could not satisfy the proud unreasonable tempers of proud people by taking off our hats and bowing our bodies. Our innocent

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10.

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 4:10.

practice of standing still and upright, and not taking off our hats any more than our shoes (one being the covering for our heads, and the other for our feet) does not show as much rudeness as their punching and beating us and more, because we cannot bow to them against our consciences. . . . I can say this boldly in the sight of God, from my own experience and that of many thousands of others: however small and foolish this testimony may seem to the wise of this world,\* yet we would rather choose death than bow, and this is for conscience' sake. And yet the decision to abandon these bowings and ceremonies was like death itself for many of us because it was so contrary to our natural spirits. We could never have given it up if we could have enjoyed our peace with God while continuing to do it.

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XV § vi (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 444-445 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 343-345.