

## Clothing

extract from Proposition XV § vii

§ vii. The third affirmation is about vanity and superfluity of clothing. Two things need to be considered, the condition or social status of the person, and the country he lives in. We do not say that all people must wear the same clothes, because perhaps it will not suit their bodies, nor their condition. If someone is clothed soberly and without superfluity, we do not blame him because his clothes may be of higher quality than those of his servant. Abstaining from extras which his condition and education have accustomed him to may be a greater spiritual discipline to him than not wearing finer clothing would be to a servant who was never accustomed to it. As for the country, it may not be vanity for the inhabitants to wear what it naturally produces, or what is commonly brought to them through trade, because without doubt the creation is for human use. So where there is a lot of silk, it may be worn as well as wool, and if we lived somewhere where gold or silver was as common as iron or brass, the one might be used as well as the other.

The iniquity lies in this: when from a desire for vanity and to adorn themselves, men and women who are not content with what their condition can provide nor what is easily available, stretch themselves to get things which seem to be precious because of their rarity and their price. In this way they feed their immoderate desires more, and all sober people will readily agree that this is evil.

Second, people are not content to make a correct use of the creation, whether the things are fine or coarse, and they do not satisfy themselves with what is necessary and convenient. They add on things which are merely superfluous, such as ribbons and lace and much more of

that kind of stuff, painting the face and braiding the hair. These are the fruits of the fallen, desirous, and corrupt nature and are not part of the new creation, as all will acknowledge. Sober people, among all groups, will say that it would be better not to do such things, but they will not say that they are unlawful, and therefore they permit them among their church members. But we consider them altogether unlawful and unsuitable for Christians. . . .

There are many who insist on adorning themselves with their clothing, and add on things which have no real use or necessity but are merely for ornament. In doing so they openly declare that the purpose of it is either to please their immoderate desires (and these things are chiefly invented and contrived for that purpose) or else to gratify a vain, proud, and ostentatious mind. It is obvious that these are their purposes when they do it. We see how easily people are puffed up with their garments, and how proud and vain they are when they are adorned as they wish. There is no great need of proof that these things are unsuitable and far below a true Christian. Those who love to wear gaudy and superfluous clothing show that they are not concerned with mortification and self-denial, and that they are more concerned to beautify their bodies rather than their souls. This shows that they don't consider their mortality, and certainly are Christians more in name than in reality.

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XV § vii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 446-448 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 346-347.