

Summary of Proposition XV

extract from Proposition XV § xvi

§ xvi. To conclude: If to give and receive flattering titles which are not based on the virtues inherent in the persons, but rather are mostly bestowed by wicked men on people like themselves; if to bow and scrape and cringe to one another; if to call one another humble servant all the time, and mostly without any intention of real service — if all these things are the honor that comes only\* from God, rather than the honor that comes from below, then indeed our adversaries may be considered believers, and we may be condemned for pride and stubbornness for rejecting these things. But if like Mordecai we refuse to bow to proud Haman;<sup>1</sup> and if like Elihu we do not give flattering titles to men, lest we should be reprov'd by our Maker;<sup>2</sup> and if according to Peter's example<sup>3</sup> and the angel's advice<sup>4</sup> we bow only to God and not to our fellow-servants; and if according to Christ's command we call no man Lord nor Master<sup>5</sup> except under particular circumstances — if refusing to do these things is not wrong, then we are not blameworthy in refusing them.

If to be vain and gaudy in our clothing; if to paint the face and braid the hair; if we are clothed with gold and silver and precious stones; if to be covered with ribbons and lace; if this is modest clothing, if these are the ornaments of Christians and if this is to be humble, meek, and mortified — then our adversaries are good Christians indeed, and we are proud, peculiar, and conceited because we are content

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<sup>1</sup> Esther 3:5 RB.

<sup>2</sup> Job 32:21-22 RB.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 10:25-26.

<sup>4</sup> Revelations 19:10, 22:8-9.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 23:8-10.

with what need and convenience require, and we condemn what is extra as superfluous.

If to practice games and sports; if to play cards, and dice, and dance; if to sing, fiddle, and pipe; if to use stage-plays and comedies, and to lie, counterfeit, and dissemble — if that is to fear God all the time, and to do all things to the glory of God; if that is to pass our time of sojourning here in fear of God; if that is to use this world as if we did not use it; if that is not to behave ourselves according to our former lusts; not to be conformed to the spirit and vain behaviour of this world<sup>6</sup> — then our adversaries, despite the fact that they use these things and advocate them, they are very good, sober, mortified, and self-denying Christians, and we are justly blamed for judging them.

If to profane of the Holy Name of God; if to require oaths from one another on every trivial occasion; if to call God to witness in things in which no earthly king would think himself lawfully and honorably called to witness — if these be the duties of a Christian, I shall confess that our adversaries are excellent Christians and that we are falling short of our duty; but if the contrary is true, our obedience to God in this matter must be acceptable.

If to do the following were to fulfill the law of Christ:<sup>7</sup> [1] to revenge ourselves; [2] to render injury for injury, evil for evil, wound for wound; [3] to take eye for eye, tooth for tooth; [4] to fight for outward, impermanent things; [5] to make war against others whom we never saw, people with whom we never had any dealings or disputes, and moreover we may be completely ignorant of the cause of the war, knowing only that the magistrates of the nations foment quarrels against each other, while the causes are mostly unknown to the soldiers who fight, nor do they know which

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<sup>6</sup> See Romans 12:2.

<sup>7</sup> The translators have introduced these numbers to assist the reader with this very long and complicated sentence.

side is right or wrong; [6] to be so furious and to rage against one another, to destroy and devastate everything so that this or that form of worship may be received or abolished — If to do this, and much more of that kind, is to fulfill the law of Christ, then our adversaries are indeed true Christians and we are miserable heretics who allow ourselves to be robbed and taken prisoner, banished, beaten, and badly treated without any resistance, placing our trust only in GOD, that he may defend us and lead us by this way of the Cross unto his Kingdom. If it is not so, we shall certainly receive the reward which the Lord has promised to those who cling to him, deny themselves, and trust in him.

To summarize it all: If to use all these things<sup>8</sup> and many more that might be mentioned is to walk in the narrow way<sup>9</sup> that leads to Life, is to take up the Cross of Christ;<sup>10</sup> is to die with him to the unruly desires and impermanent vanities of this world and to arise with him in newness of Life<sup>11</sup> and sit down with him in the heavenly places<sup>12</sup> — Then our adversaries may be considered among the faithful, and they need not fear that they are on the broad path that leads to destruction. And then we are greatly mistaken because we have laid aside all these things for Christ's sake, crucifying our own desires and bringing upon ourselves shame, reproach, hatred, and ill-will from the people of this world. We don't do this because we hope to deserve heaven, but because we know these things are contrary to the will of him who redeems his children from the love of this world

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<sup>8</sup> We believe "these things" refers to all the activities condemned in this Proposition: the use of titles of honor and bowing, superfluity in clothing, worldly entertainments, oaths, and violence.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 7:14.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 16:24.

<sup>11</sup> Romans 6:4

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 2:6

and its desires and leads them in the ways of Truth and holiness in which they delight to walk.

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XV § xvi (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 476-478 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 370-372.