

§ viii. *Objection:* Their reply to all this is the succession of the church: they allege that, since Christ gave a call to his apostles and disciples, those apostles then conveyed that call to their successors, and had power to ordain pastors and teachers, and by that power the authority of ordaining and making ministers and pastors has been successively conveyed to us. They say that those who are ordained and called by the pastors of the church are therefore true and lawful ministers, and that others who are not called in this way must be considered mere intruders. Some Protestants also add, though they do not call it essential, that everyone who is called by the church ought also to have the inward call of the Spirit, which inclines him to this work after he has been chosen; but they say this is subjective and not objective, which has been discussed before.

Answer: Regarding the inward call of the Spirit, an addition which they do not consider essential but rather sort of extra, it is obvious how little importance they give it, since those whom they admit to the ministry are not even questioned in their examinations about whether they have it or not.¹ Because it has often been mentioned, especially

¹ Latin: *Quod ad illud, quod subjungitur de interna Spiritus vocatione, cum non essentielle veræ vocationi judicent, sed tantummodo quid quasi supererogatorium, inde patet, quam leviter id transeunt, "As for that which is added on about the internal calling of the Spirit, since they don't consider it essential to a true calling but only sort of something over and above what is required, that makes it clear how lightly they dismiss it."*

by the primitive Protestants in their treatises on this subject, it shows how much they were secretly convinced in their minds that the inward call of the Spirit was most excellent, preferable to any other. Therefore in the most noble and heroic incidents of the reformation they laid claim to it. Many of the primitive Protestants did not hesitate to despise and reject that outward call² when the Papists used it as an argument against them. But now the Protestants, having gone away from the testimony of the Spirit, argue in favor of that same succession. God is now raising up a people by his Spirit to reform the abuses that have crept in* among the Protestants; when these people put them under pressure with the example of their forefathers' resistance against Rome, the Protestants are not at all ashamed to utterly deny that their predecessors were called to their work by the inward and immediate calling of the Spirit, and instead they defend themselves with that call which they say their predecessors had as pastors of the Roman church. This (to say no more) is what Nicolaus Arnoldus³ says in a pamphlet he wrote against these very theses,* called *A Theologic Exercitation*,⁴ section 40, where he says that they did not pretend to an immediate act of the Holy Spirit but reformed by virtue of the ordinary vocation which they had in the church as it then was, the church of Rome, etc.

§ ix. The Protestants have fallen into many absurdities by deriving their ministry through the church of Rome in this way. First, they must acknowledge her to be a true church of Christ, although erroneous in some things, which

² succession RB

³ Who claims to be a Doctor and Professor of sacred theology at Franeker. RB

⁴ Latin: *Exercitatio Theologica*, "a theological exercise"

contradicts their forefathers who so frequently, and truly called her Antichrist.

Second, they have to acknowledge that the priests and bishops of the Roman church were* true ministers and pastors of the church of Christ in what is essential, or else that power and authority could not have resided in them, nor could they have been vessels able to receive that power and transmit it to their successors.

Third, it would logically follow from this that the priests and bishops of the Roman church still really are true pastors and teachers: After all, our adversaries claim that Protestant ministers have no authority but what they received by succession from the Catholic bishops. They also say that in doctrine and customs the church of Rome is the same now as she was at the time of the reformation. If that church has the same power and authority now as she had then, and if the power lies in the succession, then the priests of the Roman church nowadays, who derive their ordination from the same bishops who also ordained the first reformers, have the same authority which the successors of the reformers have. Consequently the priests of the Roman church would be no less ministers than the Protestants are. But how can all this be reconciled with the opinion which the primitive Protestants had about the Roman priests and clergy? Luther not only denied that they had any power or authority, but on the contrary said it was wicked of them to claim for themselves alone this authority to teach and be priests and ministers, etc. He himself said that “every good Christian (not only men, but women also) is a preacher.”

§ x. Against this useless succession, asserted by either Papists or Protestants as necessary for the call of a minister, I answer that people who argue that it is sufficient and necessary for the call of a minister only show their ignorance of the nature of Christianity, and show how much

they are strangers to the life and power of Christian ministry, which is not conferred by succession like an outward inheritance. As has been said often before, such people not only don't make the Gospel better than the law, but rather they make the Gospel far less than the law. For Jesus Christ does not prefer any particular family or nation as he gathers his children, but rather chooses those who are united with and leavened with his own pure and righteous Seed. In the same way he does not accept a bare outward succession where his pure, immaculate, and righteous Life is not present.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition X § viii, ix, x (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 239-241; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 179 - 181.