

§ xii. *Objection:* Some unwise and imprudent Protestants sometimes object that if we really have the immediate call we claim, we ought to confirm it by miracles.

*Answer:* This is an objection which the Papists made again and again against the primitive Protestants, and so we only need to answer it as they answered the Papists: We don't need miracles because we are not preaching a new gospel, but only the gospel which is already confirmed by all the miracles of Christ and his apostles. We only offer what we are ready and able to confirm by the testimony of the Scriptures, which both of them recognize as true. John the Baptist and several of the prophets did no miracles that we know of, and yet they were sent in an immediate and extraordinary way. This is the common Protestant answer, and it's enough to repeat it here, though if it were necessary I could say more about this. But I try to be brief.

§ xiii. There is another kind of Protestant, the English Independents.<sup>1</sup> They differ from the Calvinist Presbyterians and deny the necessity of the succession or the authority of any national church. They take another way, affirming that any group of people who have the benefit of the Scriptures and agree in the principles of Truth declared in them may form themselves into a church without any outside authority, and may choose a pastor for themselves. The pastor is authorized by the consent of the church established in this way; they require only the good will\* and

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<sup>1</sup> Predecessors of the Congregationalists.

agreement of the pastors of neighboring churches (if there are any), not really as absolutely necessary but just because it is decent and orderly. They go so far as to say that in a church set up in this way, any gifted brother (which is what they call them) who feels that he is able may teach, exhort, and preach in the church, although since he doesn't have the pastoral office he cannot administer what they call their sacraments.

My answer is that this was a good step out of the darkness of Babylon, and no doubt it came from a real revelation of the Truth and from the sense of great abuse in the general national gatherings. Also, the preaching of the gifted brethren (as they call them) came at first from certain lively touches and movings of the Spirit of God in many people. But alas! because they didn't move forward, that practice has decayed among them, and they have begun to deny and reject the motions of God's Spirit as much as others do.

As for the call from Scripture which they claim to have, I answer: the Scripture just gives a declaration of true things, but does not give a call to specific persons. Though I believe that the things written there are true, and deny the errors against which the Scripture testifies, still I need to look elsewhere for the things which may be my particular duty. Therefore I can never find answers in the Scripture as to whether I, a particular named individual, ought to be a minister. In order to resolve this question, I have to look to the inward and immediate testimony of the Spirit, as is explained more fully in the thesis concerning the Scriptures.

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition X § xii & xiii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 250-252; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 188-189.