

Apology — Robert Barclay — 277-287

maintenance of ministers

extract of Proposition X § xxviii - xxxii

§ xxviii. We freely acknowledge what the thesis itself says, that people to whom God sends a minister, or among whom he raises up a minister, should supply what the minister needs when necessary. Secondly, we say that it is lawful for a minister to receive what is necessary and suitable. I don't need to harp upon this, because our adversaries will readily agree. What we affirm is that this is all that these scripture testimonies allow: Galatians 6:6; I Corinthians 9:11-14; I Timothy 5:18. The first main point of what we oppose in this matter is that this maintenance should be compulsory and fixed. Second, that it should be superfluous, costly, and sumptuous. Third, we oppose the manifest abuse of this maintenance, which I shall also discuss briefly.

Regarding our first main point,¹ our adversaries are forced to resort to the example of the Law, a refuge they use in defending most of their errors and superstitions which are contrary to the nature and purity of the Gospel.

Objection: They say that God assigned tithes for the Levites, and therefore tithes are also due to those who minister in holy things under the Gospel.

Answer: I answer that the only thing that can be gathered from this is that a maintenance was allotted to the priests under the law, and it is also allotted to ministers and preachers under the Gospel. We do not deny this, but that

¹ That maintenance should not be compulsory or fixed. In England the payment of fixed tithes to support the established church was a tax enforced by law, regardless of the religious beliefs of the individual. Quakers and others could be imprisoned for refusing to pay.

does not mean that they should have the very same thing. First, there is no clear Gospel command for it, neither by Christ nor his apostles. Second, the comparison is not valid between the Levites under the Law and the preachers under the Gospel, because the Levites were one of the twelve tribes of Israel and had a right to a part of the inheritance of the land like their brethren, but since they received no land the tithe was allotted to them instead.² Finally, only a tenth of the tithes was allotted to the priests who served at the altar, and the remainder was for the Levites and also* was kept in storehouses for the care of widows and strangers.³ But although these preachers inherit what they have from their parents like other people, they still claim the whole tithe and don't allow any part of it to be used for widows and strangers. But I don't need to say more about tithes because several other people have written about it clearly and learnedly; also several Protestants admit that tithes are not *jure divino*,⁴ and that the comparison does not apply to the exact quota, but only in general regarding the obligation of maintenance.⁵

I can prove that this maintenance should be neither established by custom nor forced, though those who hear the minister have an obligation to give and they fail in their duty if they do not give. When he sent his apostles out, Christ said "You have received freely, so give freely" (Matthew 10:8), but the apostles were free to receive food and drink from people who offered it because they needed

² See Deuteronomy 14:27-29

³ See Deuteronomy 26

⁴ by divine law

⁵ Here the Latin and English versions say the same thing, but the Latin is much clearer: *paritatem no in quota sed in obligatione dandi alimentum consistere*. The English says, "the parity as to the quota doth not hold, but only in general as to the obligation of a maintenance."

it. This shows that they were not supposed to ask or require anything by force, or to hold back or make a bargain beforehand, as the preachers do in these days, both Papists and Protestants. They will not preach to anyone until they have a guarantee of a certain amount per year. On the contrary, the apostles were to do their duty, and (as the Lord commanded them) freely communicate what they themselves had received without seeking or expecting a reward.

The answer which Nicolaus Arnoldus gives to this in his *Theologic Exercitation*,⁶ sections 42-43, is unforgettable; indeed it ought to be recorded as a perpetual remembrance of him and his brethren, for he answers frankly, “We have not freely received, and therefore are not bound to give freely.” I admit that this answer is honest and good; for if those that receive freely must give freely, it would follow from the rule of contraries that those who do not receive freely do not have to give freely. I concede this argument to them, but they must concede to me that they do not preach by and according to the Gift and Grace of God which they have received, nor can they be good stewards of the “manifold grace of God,”⁷ which is what every true minister ought to be. Or perhaps they have obtained this gift or grace with money, as Simon Magus wanted to do,⁸ since they do not think they are obligated to give it without receiving money in return.

To be plain, I believe he did not intend that they were to preach from the gift or grace of God, but rather from their acquired skills and studies, which have cost them a lot of

⁶ previously mentioned in Proposition X, § viii.

⁷ I Peter 4:10

⁸ Acts 8:9

work and some money at the University.⁹ Just as someone who puts his money at risk in a public bank expects to receive interest in return, so these scholars who have spent some money learning the art of preaching think that they can boldly say that they didn't get it for free, because it cost them money and hard work, and therefore they expect both money and leisure in return.¹⁰ Therefore, since Arnoldus gets money for teaching his young students the art and trade of preaching, he expects that they should be repaid before they give it to others. It used to be said, *Omnia venalia Romæ*, that is, "everything in Rome is for sale," but now the same proverb can be applied to Franeker.¹¹ Therefore Arnoldus's students, when they set out to preach, can safely seek payment,* telling their hearers their professor's maxim, *Nos gratis non accepimus, ergo neque gratis dare tenemur*.¹² But then those who hear them may answer, "We do not consider these preachers or their professor to be ministers of the one who, when he sent out his disciples, gave them this command, 'You have received

⁹ Latin: *Sed, ut ipse puto, ea mens es Arnoldi, quasi dicat, si verum decire velimus, nostri Ministri & Professores non a gratia aut dono prædicant & docent, sed ab aquisitis artibus & studiis, quæ non sine labore & pecunia in academiis nacti sunt.* "But I myself think (if we want to say the truth) that Arnoldus was of such a mind as if he said that our Ministers and Professors do not preach and teach from grace, but rather from their acquired arts and studies, which are not obtained in universities without work and money."

¹⁰ Latin: *vere dicere possunt, quod gratis non habeant, cum & pecunia & labore emerint, ideoque sine pecunia & otio vendere nolunt.* They can truly say that they didn't get it freely since they earned it by work and by money, and therefore they don't want to sell it without getting money and leisure.

¹¹ Arnoldus was a professor of theology at the protestant University of Franeker in the Netherlands.

¹² "We have not freely received, and therefore are not bound to give freely."

freely, so give freely' and therefore we don't want your teaching, because we see that you are people who 'all look for their own gain, their own advantage.' "¹³

§ xxix. Second, the Scripture testimonies that urge this are similar to those that urge charity and liberality toward the poor and command hospitality, etc. But those things are not fixed at a certain quantity, and cannot be fixed, because they are merely voluntary actions; the obedience to the command lies in the good will of the giver, and not in the thing that is given, as Christ shows in the example of the widow's mite.¹⁴ Although Christians have an obligation to supply outward things to their ministers, there can be no definition of the quantity except by the consent of the giver; a little from one person may fulfill the obligation more truly than a great deal from another. And therefore this maintenance cannot be fixed in amount nor forced, just like acts of charity and hospitality.

Objection: It might be objected that ministers may and ought to persuade, exhort, and earnestly press Christians to acts of charity and hospitality, if they find them falling short in this; and that ministers may do the same about giving maintenance.

Answer: I answer, that has nothing to do with a fixed and forced maintenance, for which there is not even a trace of one solid argument based on Scripture. I admit that ministers may use exhortation in this case as in many others. That is what the apostle did with the Corinthians, showing them their duty. But so that their testimony may have more weight, and be more free from all suspicion of greed and self-interest, it would be appropriate for ministers that exhort on this subject to be able to say truly in the sight of God what the apostle says on the subject (I

¹³ Isaiah 56:11 RB

¹⁴ Mark 12:42-44

Corinthians 9:15-18): “But I have not used any of these rights, nor have I written these things so that it should be applied to me . . .¹⁵ What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.”

Third, since there is neither precept nor example for this forced and fixed maintenance in the Scripture, the apostle, in his solemn farewell to the pastors and elders of the church of Ephesus, warns them against it (Acts 20:33-35). If the practice had been lawful, or if it was being done, he would instead have exhorted them to be content with their fixed wage and not to desire more. But rather than doing that, he shows them that they were not supposed to desire or expect silver or gold from anyone, first by his own example, and second, saying that they ought to work with their hands for an honest livelihood as he had done. And lastly, he exhorts them with the words of Christ, “because it is more blessed to give than to receive.”¹⁶ He shows that a true minister should not expect or try to get this, and that to be in need of such a thing is rather a burden to a true minister and a cross to him.¹⁷

¹⁵ Verses 16-17 are omitted in the Latin, which leaves the main point clearer. These two verses are included in the original English: “for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my glorying void. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a stewardship of the Gospel is committed to me.”

¹⁶ Acts 20:35

¹⁷ The sentence is clearer in Latin: *ostendens, hoc non debere verum ministrum concupiscere, vel expectare, sed potius, quando necessitate eo ductus est, ut accipiat, quasi afflictionem & onus existimare*. “he shows that a true minister should not desire or expect this, but rather, when he is led by necessity to accept it, he should consider it an affliction and a burden.”

§ xxx. Fourth, a forced and fixed maintenance would make the ministers of Christ the same as those hirelings the prophets denounced. Certainly, if someone makes a bargain to preach to people for a certain amount per year, and refuses to preach unless he gets it, and tries to force the people to pay it with violence, it cannot be denied that he preaches for money and “looks for his own gain and advantage,”¹⁸ and even “declares war against those who don’t feed him.”¹⁹ This is the particular mark of a false prophet and a hireling, and therefore it cannot be at all suitable for a true minister of Christ.

The next point is that Christian ministers should not accept a superfluous maintenance,²⁰ that is to say more than is reasonably needed. This will not need much proof, because the more moderate and sober people readily admit it, both Papists and Protestants. With one voice they exclaim against the excessive revenues of the clergy. As for a proof from Scripture, what can be more plain than what the apostle says to Timothy? (I Timothy 6:7-11) He shows what we ought to be content with, and the danger of those who desire more. The obligation of giving maintenance is based on the needs of the minister, and those who have the opportunity to work are commended for not accepting it. For these reasons it can in no way be supposed that it is lawful for them to receive more than enough. Indeed, if they were truly pious and righteous, though in need, they would rather tend to accept too little, than try to get too much.

§ xxxi. The vast revenues which bishops and priests have, both Papists and Protestants, show plainly that there is

¹⁸ Isaiah 56:11

¹⁹ Micah 3:5

²⁰ Second main point: maintenance should not be superfluous or costly.

great excess and abuse among Christians. I think it can be said without hyperbole that some specific persons receive more payment yearly than Christ and his apostles used in their whole lifetime, who didn't lack what was needed for the outward man, and no doubt deserved it far more than those who enjoy such abundance* today. But it is obvious that these bishops and priests love their fat benefices, and the pleasure and honor they get, so much that they do not want* to follow the example and advice of Christ and his apostles about this subject. . . .

§ xxxii. Lastly,²¹ the abuses of this kind of maintenance are so great and numerous that anyone who tried to list them all, even superficially, would end up with a huge book. This abuse, like others, snuck in with the apostasy. There was nothing like this in the primitive times; then the ministers did not claim tithes nor did they seek a fixed or forced maintenance. The church supplied the necessities of those who were in need, and others worked with their hands.

When the persecutions were over, and the emperors and princes adopted the name and profession* of Christianity, the clergy soon started to abuse by their greed the zeal of those great men. They soon learned to exchange their modest houses for the palaces of princes, and did not stop until little by little some of them became princes themselves, and were nothing less than princes in their splendor, luxury, and magnificence, a method of living that honest Peter and John the fishermen, and Paul the tentmaker, never coveted. Perhaps those apostles never imagined that men who pretended to be their successors could have started to do these things.

As soon as the bishops were established and installed in this way, they forgot the life and work of a Christian and usually started squabbling together about precedence and

²¹ Third main point: the manifest abuse of this maintenance

revenues, each one coveting the most important and fattest benefice. It is also lamentable how soon this infection crept in among Protestants, who had barely started when their clergy started to speak at the old rate²² and to show that although they had abandoned the Bishop of Rome they were not going to give up their old benefices. Therefore as soon as any princes or states shook off the Pope's authority, and demolished the abbeys, nunneries, and other monuments of superstition, the reformed clergy began to cry out to the magistrates to beware of meddling with the church's inheritance; they severely exclaimed against making lawful use for the benefit of the community of those vast revenues that had been superstitiously given to the church (so called), and called it sacrilege.

First, continuing this kind of maintenance for the ministry and clergy, so called, lays a bait for greed, which is idolatry and more hurtful than anything. For the sake of greed many, motivated by the desire for filthy lucre, set out to be ministers in order to get a livelihood. If someone has several children he plans that one of them will be a minister, and if he succeeds the father considers it a good patrimony. Therefore a fat benefice always has many candidates. It is well known and doesn't need proof that there is a lot of bribery, flattery, and shameful work involved in getting a good benefice.

Because of this, there is so much well-known scandal among Christians that it has become a proverb that "the church is always greedy." Since the Gift and Grace of God are neglected, they generally have no other reason for going to one church rather than another, except a fatter* benefice. Though they hypocritically pretend, when they accept a flock* and enter into a church, that they have nothing in

²² Latin: *quam cito cleri cæperunt vetere uti stilo*, "how quickly the clergy began to use the old custom."

mind but the glory of God and the salvation of souls, yet if a richer benefice becomes available, they immediately find that it is more for God's glory to depart from the first church and go there. They don't make any fuss about changing often in this way, but nevertheless they criticize us because we allow ministers to go from one place to another, without being tied to any one place. However we don't allow this for the purpose of getting money but rather when God moves. If a minister is called to minister in a particular place, he should not leave it unless God calls him away, and then he ought to obey. We consider that the will of God inwardly revealed should be the reason for moving, and not the love of money and more profit.

Second, from this abuse there arises the luxury and idleness that most of the clergy live in, among Protestants as well as Papists, to the great scandal of Christianity. Since they have no lawful job to work with their hands, and since they are provided for so superfluously and sumptuously, they live in idleness and luxury. More pride, vanity, and worldly glory shows in their wives and children than in most others, which is evident to everyone.*

Third, because of this they become so glued to the love of money that there is nobody like them in malice, rage and cruelty if they are denied their wages. They rage like drunken men, fret, fume, and seem to go mad. It is easier to satisfy the severest creditor than them; the general voice of the poor confirms this. Indeed they are far more scrupulous in collecting the tithes of sheep, geese, swine, eggs, etc. than in taking care of the members of their flock. They will require even the very smallest coin, and the poorest widow cannot escape their greedy hands. They can hear twenty lies without reproving you, and you can swear twenty oaths in their hearing without offending them, and they can overlook things much worse than this, but if you owe them anything and refuse to pay it, then they will thunder *war*

against you, and stigmatize you with the horrible name of sacrilege, and send you to hell without mercy, as if you had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit.²³

More than anyone else, we can bear witness to this. God has shown us the reality of this corrupt and anti-Christian ministry and has called us out away from it and gathered us into his own power and life to be a separate people; that is why we dare not join with these anti-Christian hirelings, nor listen to them, nor can we put food into their mouths.²⁴ Oh! What malice, envy, and fury has this raised in their hearts against us! Although we don't accept any of what they sell, and refuse to buy it since we know it is worthless, still they want to force us to give them money. Because we cannot in conscience pay them, our sufferings for refusal have been unutterable. An account of their cruelty and inhumanity against us would be no small book. These greedy hirelings have arrived at such a degree of malice and rage that several poor workingmen have been taken hundreds of miles from their homes and shut up in prison for two, three, and even seven years, for the value of one pound sterling or less. I myself know a poor widow who, for the tithe of her geese which was less than five shillings, was kept about four years in prison, thirty miles from her home. They have violently plundered goods worth a hundred times more than the tithe,* and damaged even more. Hundreds have spilled their innocent blood, dying in the filthy noisome prisons. Some of the priests have been so enraged that the goods they have seized could not satisfy them; they also satisfied their fury by flogging, beating and wounding innocent men and women with their own hands, for refusing to put into their mouths for conscience' sake.

²³ Mark 3:29

²⁴ Latin: *ideo nec oribus illorum indere, aut eos fovere possumus.* "That is why we cannot give food to their mouths nor support them."

The only way to soundly reform all these abuses and remove their cause is to take away all fixed and forced maintenance and stipends. Because the people have paid these things since old times, that income should be returned to the public treasury. That way the people may receive great benefit, since that income can replace public taxations and impositions and relieve the people of them. Whoever calls or appoints teachers for themselves should also support them.²⁵ Regarding those who are called and moved to the ministry by the Spirit of God, the people who receive them and taste the good of their ministry will no doubt provide the things they need, and there will be no need of a law to force people to pay a salary for them. He who sends them will take care of them, and they also, “having food and clothing” will be “content with that.”²⁶

Source: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition X § xxviii - xxxii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 277-287; and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 210-217.

²⁵ Latin: *qui autem vocan aliquem ad praedicandum, y sibi doctores & instructores assumunt, etiam eos sustentent & alant*. “Those who call someone to preach, and employ professors and teachers for themselves, should also support and maintain them.”

²⁶ I Timothy 6:8