

The Ministry: summary

extract from Proposition X § xxxiii

§ xxxiii. To summarize what has been said: The ministry we advocate, which we defend and desire,<sup>1</sup> and which the Lord has raised up among us, is in every way like the true ministry of the apostles and the primitive Church. On the contrary, the ministry which our adversaries uphold and advocate differs from the early Church in every way, and is very similar to the false prophets and teachers which the Scripture testifies against and condemns. This can be briefly explained:

1. The ministry and ministers we advocate are those who are directly called and sent forth into the work of ministry by Christ and his Spirit. The same is true for the holy apostles and prophets, as is shown in these places: Matthew 10:1; Ephesians 4:11; Hebrews 5:4.

(1) But the ministry and ministers which our opposers advocate are people who have no direct call from Christ. For them the leading and motion of the Spirit is not considered necessary; they are called, sent forth, and ordained by wicked and ungodly men, as were the false prophets and teachers in the old days, as is shown in these places: Jeremiah 14:14-15; 23:21; and 27:15.

2. The ministers we advocate for are those who are moved and led by God's Spirit, and their hearts are in some measure converted and regenerated by the Power and operation of his Grace. So they are good and holy men, full of grace, as were the holy prophets and apostles, as is shown in these places: 1 Timothy 3:2-6; Titus 1:7-9

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<sup>1</sup> Latin: quod nos defendimus, tuemur & volumus, which we uphold, defend, and desire.

(2) But the ministers our adversaries advocate for<sup>2</sup> are people to whom the grace of God is not a necessary qualification. According to them these people may be true ministers although they are ungodly, unholy, and profligate; the false prophets and apostles were the same, as is shown in these places: Micah 3:5, 11; 1 Timothy 6:5-8 etc.; 2 Timothy 3:2; 2 Peter 2:1-3.<sup>3</sup>

3. The ministers we advocate for are people who do not act, move, and work in the ministry based on their own mere natural strength and ability, but rather as they are impelled, moved, sustained, assisted, and influenced by the Spirit of God. They minister according to the gift they have received, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, like the holy prophets and apostles: 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 1:17, 2:3-5, 13; Acts 2:4; Matthew 10:20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12; 1 Corinthians 13:2.

(3) But the ministers our adversaries advocate for are people who do not wait for, nor expect, nor need the Spirit of God to move and impel them in the work of the ministry. What they do is done by their own mere natural strength and ability, plus what they have gathered and stolen from the text of the Scripture and other books. They proclaim it in the strength of their own wisdom and eloquence and not as evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and power. The false

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<sup>2</sup> Latin: quos defendunt & quibus patrocinantur, whom they defend and to whom they are patrons.

<sup>3</sup> In this text, there is a certain amount of confusion about the question of priesthood. In the established church of Barclay's time there was a struggle between the remaining influences of Roman Catholicism and the Protestants, especially the Calvinists. Since early days, the tradition of the Roman church considered that a man can be a valid priest although he is sinful, because the qualities of the individual neither give nor take away the sacramental value of the rites he performs. Barclay attributes this attitude to his adversaries, although certainly it did not prevail among all Protestants.

teachers and prophets were like that: Jeremiah 23:30-32, etc.; 1 Corinthians 4:18; Jude 16.

4. The ministers we advocate for are people who are holy and humble; who do not contend for precedence and priority, but rather try to give precedence to each other and to serve one another in love. They do not desire to be distinguished from other people by their garments and broad phylacteries; they do not seek greetings in the markets, nor uppermost places at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues; they do not want to be called Rabbi, etc. The holy prophets and apostles were like that, as is shown in Matthew 23:8-10 and 20:25-27.

(4) But the ministers our adversaries advocate for are people who strive and contend for superiority, and claim precedence over one another. They like and seek all the things mentioned above. The false prophets and apostles in the past were like that: Matthew 23:5-7.

5. The ministers we advocate for are people who have freely received and freely give; who do not seek anyone's goods but rather seek the person, and the salvation of their souls. Their own hands supply what they need, since they work honestly to provide bread for themselves and their families. If at any time God calls them in such a way that the work of the Lord prevents them from practicing their trade, they accept what is freely given to them by people to whom they have given spiritual ministry; they are content if they have food and clothing. The holy prophets and apostles were like that, as is shown in Matthew 10:8; Acts 20:33-35; 1 Timothy 6:8.

(5) But the ministers our adversaries advocate for are people who have not freely received and will not freely give. They are covetous, and do things they should not do for the sake of filthy lucre;<sup>4</sup> for example they preach

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 5:2

for hire and theologize for money, and look for profit from their district, and prepare war against those who do not fill their mouths, etc. Greedy dogs which can never have enough. Shepherds who feed themselves and not the flock, eating the fat and clothing themselves with the wool, making souls into merchandise and following the way of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness. The false prophets and apostles were like that: Isaiah 56:11; Ezekiel 34:2-3, 8; Micah 3:5, 11; Titus 1:10-11; 2 Peter 2:1-2, 14, 15.

In a word, we are for a holy, spiritual, pure and living ministry where the ministers are called, qualified, and ordered, moved and influenced in all the steps of their ministry by the Spirit of God. People who lack that, we believe, cease to be ministers of Christ.

But they believe that this Life, Grace, and Spirit is not an essential part of their ministry, and therefore uphold a human, carnal, dry, barren, fruitless, and dead ministry. Alas, we have seen the fruits of this in most of their churches. They show the truth of that saying of the Lord (Jeremiah 23:32): "I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not benefit this people at all, says the Lord."

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition X § xxxiii (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 287-289 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 218-220.