

The true call of a minister

extract from Proposition X § xiv

§ xiv. We firmly conclude that it is necessary for people to be extraordinarily called and raised up by the Spirit of God, not only during in a general apostasy but also even when several assemblies or churches are gathered by the power of God — not only gathered into belief in the principles of Truth so that they deny errors and heresies, but also into the life, spirit, and power of Christianity, so as to be the body and house of Christ indeed, and a proper spouse for him. In order to preserve them in a lively, fresh, and powerful condition, God who gathers them by the inward and direct operation of his own Spirit also raises up and sends among them ministers and teachers to instruct and teach and watch over them. Those who are thus called are recognized in the hearts of their brethren, and their call is verified in their brethren who feel the life and power that passes through them, who are daily built up by them in the most holy faith, who become the seals of their apostleship. This agrees with another saying of the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 13:3): “Since you seek a proof of Christ’s speaking in me, who is not weak toward you but rather mighty in you.” This is what gives a true and substantial call and title to a minister, and by it he is a real successor of the virtue, life and power that was in the apostles, and not of the bare name.

We do not think that the outward ceremony of ordination or laying on of hands is necessary to such ministers. We cannot see the use of such outward ceremonies, since our adversaries who use them acknowledge that the virtue and power of communicating the Holy Spirit by this ceremony has ceased among them.

Isn't it foolish and ridiculous of them to keep up the shadow by an apish imitation, where the substance is wanting ? By the same rule, couldn't they, when they see blind and lame people, tell them to see and walk, in imitation of Christ and his apostles? Isn't it mocking God and men to put on their hands and bid people to receive the Holy Spirit when they themselves believe it is impossible, and confess that the ceremony has no real effect?

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition X § xiv (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) p. 252 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) p. 190.