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364

Chapter III: On the Evangelists and Prophets of the New Testament

Evangelists were specifically and strictly referred to as extraordinary ministers of the New Testament. They were sent by the Apostles, either jointly or individually, to plant or water churches as auxiliaries and collaborators. This description is explained in parts as follows:

1. In Scripture, Evangelists are named for their preaching of the Gospel, which is imposed upon them in Ephesians 4:11-12, Acts 21:8, and 1:5. For discussion on the voice and definition of the Gospel, refer to common scripture sources and accurately to our teacher Gomarus in his treatise on the Gospel.
2. Their vocation and rank were peculiar and distinct from the apostolic rank, as noted in Ephesians 4:11.
3. Their ministry and office were extraordinary and distinct from the ordinary functions of pastors or presbyters, doctors, or deacons. Ephesians 4:11 and Titus 1:5-7 indicate that the Evangelist's role was to appoint ordinary presbyters or bishops in each town, not to appoint multiple Evangelists according to his own judgment.
4. Whatever ordinary pastors, presbyters, bishops could do in their respective churches regarding the preaching of the word, administration of sacraments, governance, and discipline, Evangelists could also do in any church or churches to which they were sent for planting or watering. This can be proven in parts from Philippians 2:22, Acts 8:5-12, and from the instructions Paul gives to Timothy and Titus.
5. Their vocation and mission were either purely mediated or partly immediate. The former was done through the Apostles alone or with presbyters. An example of the former is Titus, whom Paul sent to Crete to organize the churches there (Titus 1:5). An example of the latter is Timothy, as described in 1 Timothy 4:14. The latter occurred through presbytery but with direct

and immediate inspiration and designation by the Holy Spirit, as in Acts 13:2-3. Hence, they are said to be sent by the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:4.

6. They executed their office either solely or in cooperation and under the ongoing and continuous inspection and direction of an Apostle. An example of the former is Titus, whom Paul left in Crete (Titus 1). An example of the latter is Barnabas, whom the church of Jerusalem sent to the lands of Antioch and nearby areas (Acts 11:22).

365

1. Timothy was sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:22) and Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17), and left Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3; 3:14-15). Examples of others include Barnabas, who ministered with Paul in various places (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2-8; 14:1-28; 15:23). Timothy and Silas were with Paul in Athens (Acts 17:15). In these cases, they are particularly said to have served the Apostles (Acts 13:5), just as they are said to have served the churches in other respects (Philippians 2:25). Both in these respects, they are called "brethren" of the Apostles (2 Corinthians 2:13), "helpers" or "co-laborers" and "fellow soldiers" (Philippians 2:25), "servants" (Colossians 1:7; 4:7-8).
2. It is undoubted that there were many such Evangelists, since the Apostles could not always directly plant, water, or reform every particular church. Paul had concern for all churches (2 Corinthians 11:28) and filled the Gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Romans 15:19), which implies the use of many Evangelists. At least those mentioned in Scripture are mostly recorded as having been taken and sent by Paul, such as Timothy (Acts 16:20; Romans 16:20) and in the subscriptions and inscriptions of some of Paul's letters, though they may not be authentic. Titus, from the letter written to him; Silvanus, from 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Luke and Demas, from the letter to Philemon 14; Tychicus, from Ephesians 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:12; Sosthenes, from 1 Corinthians 1:1; Apollos, from Acts 18, with 1 Corinthians 3:5-6; Epaphroditus, from Philippians 2:25 and 4:18; Epaphras, from Philippians 1:7. Other Evangelists taken and sent include Philip, by the Apostles and the Jerusalem church (Acts 8); Mark, partly by the Antiochian

church and the Apostles (Acts 13:13), partly by Paul (2 Timothy 4:11), and partly by Peter (1 Peter 5:13); Silas, partly by the Apostles and the Jerusalem church (Acts 15), and partly by Paul (Acts 15 and 16); Barnabas, partly by the Apostles and the Jerusalem church (Acts 15) and Antioch (Acts 13), and partly by Paul. For further understanding of the ministry, the following questions are proposed:

3. **Question:** Is the role of an Evangelist ordinary and coincident with the role of an ordinary pastor or bishop, so that the successors of these Evangelists are called bishops after the apostolic age, with the custom and human law making them pastors or rectors of many churches, and even pastors and overseers of all diocesan bishops and presbyters? Response: No, just as the role of the Apostles was not ordinary and perpetual in the church. Those who defend the episcopate seem to contradict themselves and align with the Papists. Just as they appeal to certain scriptures (e.g., Zechariah 9) in questions about purgatory, and similarly in questions about the limbo of the fathers, so do others seek refuge in distinguishing between the 70 disciples and their successors, making these successors the said bishops.

366

...: and nonetheless concerning the Evangelists, specifically Timothy and Titus, who are made bishops by some, distinct from other presbyters and ministers of the Word both essentially and in appearance. But this controversy is discussed elsewhere. It suffices here to note that the role of the Evangelists was extraordinary, not ordinary; transitional and temporary in the church, not perpetual or successive; and their rights and privileges, which were above those of other presbyters, were personal, not real.

Objection: In the post-apostolic centuries, they were called Evangelists, and today they are still called so.

Response:

1. Broadly and according to the etymology of the term, all preachers of the Gospel might be called Evangelists in Hebrew, דְּמַשְׁרִים (d'mashrim), and the text from Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful are the feet...", might be applied to them. However, in the New Testament Scriptures (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 21:8; 2 Timothy 4:5), the term Evangelist is used strictly and specifically to denote the extraordinary office in the early formation and constitution of the New Testament church, as described above. In this sense, no ministers of the church after those Evangelists could be called Evangelists, just as they could not be called Apostles.
2. Improperly, by analogy or similarity, those who are not devoted to the ministry of a single church but who travel clandestinely or among unbelievers, idolaters, or heretics to plant and gather churches, or who endeavor to establish churches through public preaching or private talks and conversations, or who temporarily assist in the planting and ordination of new churches or churches in the vicinity or elsewhere, may be called Evangelists. For example, the pastor of the church of Heusden is referred to as an ordinary minister, and Sylva-ducens, who temporarily assisted in planting and ordaining a church, is called an Evangelist by a prominent theologian in the inscription of letters from 1629. But this does not pertain to the role of the Evangelist as properly defined, as described above.

Question: Were all Evangelists immediately inspired or infallible?

Response: I do not dare to affirm this, except perhaps concerning Mark and Luke, about whom we will soon speak. This privilege was Apostolic, promised to them in John 16:13, Acts 1:4-5, and conferred with Acts 2:4 and Ephesians 2:20 (built upon the foundation of the prophets and Apostles).

367

This can be related to Ephesians 3:3 and 5, where God is said to have made known to Paul by revelation the mystery, etc. And, what was not made known to other generations of men, is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

To the doubts and objections that could be raised or have been raised, we respond:

1. **Objection:** Since they wrote canonical books, they must have been infallible. **Response:** This could be said of Mark and Luke, but not of all others. The legends about the Gospel of Nicodemus, Barnabas as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the contest of Abdias of Babylon with the Apostles, etc., have long been discredited. See the papal authorities, Baronius, Possevinus, and Senensis on Nicodemus, Barnabas, and Abdias, as cited by Coco and Rivetus.

Response 2: It could be questioned whether the Gospels of Luke and Mark were dictated by the Apostles, namely Mark by Peter and Luke by Paul, so that the authentic authors were Peter and Paul, with Mark and Luke as mere scribes. Papias seems to affirm this about Mark, claiming he received it from John the Presbyter according to Eusebius, Book 3, Chapter Final. This view is followed by Tertullian, Book 4, Chapter on Marcion, Jerome in the catalog of ecclesiastical writers and Epistle 150, Question 11. Among the later scholars, Cornelius à Lapide in his commentary on the Gospel of Mark and Luke, and Baronius in his Annals for the year 45.30 affirm this from the testimonies of some ancient authorities. Grotius refers to the opinions of the ancients in his notes, though he himself does not affirm anything. If indeed Mark and Luke are the authors of these Gospels, as the inscriptions suggest, we would have to say they were infallible, directly guided by the Holy Spirit; and whatever they wrote was inspired by the same Spirit according to 1 Peter 1:21, in conjunction with 2 Timothy 3:16. Concerning the inscriptions, we say that they are not authentic, nor parts of the sacred text; thus, the thesis that Mark and Luke are the authors of these Gospels is not a matter of divine faith. However, the issue of titles and inscriptions in books has been previously discussed in problems concerning Scripture. At least if in ancient churches it was believed that the Gospels of Peter and Paul, with their scribes Mark and Luke, were genuine, the public title of the Gospel of Mark or Luke should not have been more accepted than the Epistle to the Romans or the Epistle of Tertius, who served as Paul's scribe (Romans 16:22).

2. **Objection:** Many after the Apostolic times were prophets to whom God revealed certain things immediately and extraordinarily. Why then would the Evangelists not have had revelations in the time of the Apostles, and thus be infallible?

Response: When God reveals something particular, whether present or future, extraordinarily and specifically to someone, that person is not immediately considered a divine prophet endowed with the gift of prophecy and universally infallible in matters of faith:.....

368

... as we have shown in the second part of the selected discussion on the title of prophecy. We have examined who and what those prophets were after the Apostolic times.

3. **Objection:** Sosthenes, Silas, and Timothy, according to the Apostle, subscribe to the epistles to the Corinthians and the Thessalonians; therefore, as writers, they were infallible. **Response:** If they subscribed as writers or compilers of the canonical epistle, the consequence would hold; but we deny this. They agreed with Paul's writing, not otherwise than the presbyters and brethren in the Council (Acts 15:22, 23, 28), who, nonetheless, did not possess Apostolic authority and infallibility.
4. **Objection:** Many saints of the New Testament after the Apostolic times had the theology of revelation, or infused knowledge; therefore, this should be attributed even more to the Evangelists? **Response:** A distinction must be made between the gift of infallibility and the charisma of prophecy or infused theology. Later, some prophets had such gifts (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Acts 13), as discussed in the second part of the selected discussion on charisms. Jesuit Maximilian Sandus in Book 3 of "Theologia Varia" and others such as Francisco Assisio, Joachim of the Abbey, Thomas, Bonaventure, Ignatius Loyola, Balthazar Alvarez, Francisco Ribera, Catherine of Alexandria (Saint, though chimerical), Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Bologna, Agnes of Politian, Teresa of Jesus, Mary of Egypt, Bridget, etc., were attributed with infused theology; they are called Jedidax by some. I leave this to them, but it does not attribute infallibility to them.
5. **Question:** Were all New Testament prophets, so called, endowed with prophetic capability either through infusion or through ordinary study and practice? Were they Evangelists? **Response:** No. Although many had some

ability and gifts, not all were called and set apart for the role of Evangelists: just as not all are teachers, or prophets, or interpreters (1 Cor. 12:29, 30).

6. **Question:** Were the 70 disciples Evangelists? **Response:** No. Although they were sent by Christ for an analogous task (Luke 10), they should not be called Evangelists as described above. It could have happened that some among them, whose gifts and abilities were so inclined, were chosen by the Apostles among the Evangelists; but that all of them, simply because they were disciples and fulfilled that mission or service, were considered and used by the Apostles as Evangelists, cannot be proven.
7. **Question:** Will none of the ministers of this rank succeed as Evangelists perpetually until the end of the world? **Response:** No, not more than the Apostles in the Apostolic rank or Apostolic power, or quasi-Apostolic.

369

... will have successors, whether clerics or laics (so to speak), for planting, organizing, restoring, and reforming churches.

On the Prophets and Prophetesses of the New Testament

Among the extraordinary ministers of the New Testament, there are the prophets. These can be conceived in threefold categories:

1. **Those endowed with the gift of prophecy** (which is the understanding, interpretation, and application of the Scriptures): as mentioned in Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 14:3, 22, 24, 30; and Acts 13:1. We have discussed such individuals in the first part, book 2, treatise 3, chapter 2, and in the second part of the selected discussions on charisms.
2. **Those endowed with the gift of predicting future events**, such as Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10) and the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). It is not clear from the text cited whether other prophets, who ascended to Jerusalem with Agabus (Acts 11:28), also possessed the gift of prediction.
3. **Those endowed with both gifts**: such as John the author of Revelation; and possibly Agabus and others with him (Acts 11:28). Beza in his notes on

Ephesians 4:11 thought that among the prophets (whom one might call interpreters or theologians) there were some also endowed with the gift of prediction.

We have previously explained what prophecy or prediction of future events entails in the second part of the selected discussions on prophecy.

Question: Were the Apostles, or at least some of them, simultaneously prophets of the New Testament, endowed with the gift of prediction?

Response: I do not see how this can be definitively affirmed. It is true that Paul (1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy 3; 1 Thessalonians 4; 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 Corinthians 15) and Peter (2 Peter 2; 3) and John (1 John 2) spoke about certain future events. However, since these pertain to the state of the church under the New Testament and common doctrines about the advent of Christ, the end of the world, and the consummation of Christ's kingdom on earth, I do not think they should be considered prophets of the same kind, especially concerning doctrines about the future resurrection of the dead and the final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 24:15). Divine revelation and prediction of a particular event (2 Peter 1:14) such as the time of one's death (Paul in 2 Timothy 4:6) does not necessarily indicate the gift of prediction, especially since both only predict the time indefinitely. The rapture of Paul (2 Corinthians 12:4) and Peter (Acts 10:11) does not reveal any particular future event to them. What the Spirit indicated to Peter about three men in Acts 10:19 can be compared with the indication in Acts 8:26, although it is not certain that Philip the Evangelist had the prophetic gift, as previously mentioned.

370

II. Question: Should Blessed Mary be counted among those endowed with the gift of prophecy or prediction of future events under the New Testament?

Response: In the revelations of Bridget of Sweden, it is said in book 6, chapter 61, that Mary revealed to Bridget that she lived on earth for a long time after the Ascension of Christ, so that many souls would be converted to God through her patience and virtues, and the Apostles and other elect would be strengthened. Gonçalvus Durandus in his notes there interprets this as follows: she was the leader

and teacher of the Apostles. This has been stated and expanded upon by Maximilian Sandus in book 3 of his *Theologia Varia*, and by Cornelius à Lapide in his commentary on Acts 1:13, chapter 2, verse 4. Zwaerzio in part 3, question 37, discussion 20, also discusses and elaborates on these claims.

Cornelius à Lapide notes in Acts 1:14 that among the virtues that the Apostles practiced to prepare for the coming of the Holy Spirit, there was a devotion and familiarity with the Blessed Virgin. Since she is the daughter of God the Father, the mother of the Son of God, and the spouse of the Holy Spirit, she has influence over everything. In Acts 2:4, he argues that Mary received the gift of tongues, citing that she was a teacher and comforter for the Apostles and all the faithful, as if she were the mother of Christ, visiting them all over the world. Zwaerzio adds that she had this gift even before the coming of the Holy Spirit. Sandarus in book 3 of *Theologia Varia*, exercise 9, explains in more detail that she could be called the teacher and mistress of the Apostles because she had imparted some theological knowledge to them regarding the articles of faith, and that they were instructed by the Holy Spirit, with John being particularly taught by her. The Evangelists wrote under her instruction and narrative; thus, she is rightly called the mistress of the Evangelists, the teacher of the Apostles, the teacher of the Gentiles, the oracle of the Holy Spirit, and a prophetess of God, in the opinion of both the Pontifical and the ancient doctors cited there.

Finally, it is said that her prophecy is supported by Rupert of Deutz in book 5 on the Canticles and by Isidore of Seville in his sermon 11 on the Assumption. He adds that it is probable that on the day of Pentecost, she was extraordinarily instructed about the Christian Church, both in its present and future state.

Yet this prophecy of Blessed Mary, as certain and perfect in its use, is compared to her justification in the womb of her mother through an act of grace at the very moment of conception, and in her first sanctification, where she received not only infused virtues but also acquired moral virtues. Her soul, through a free and meritorious act, tended towards God; hence, at that time, she was a more perfect contemplative than anyone else ever has been, as she remained vigilant.

As noted by Bernardino, Zwaerzio, Vasquez, Barradus, Carthusian writers, and the revelations of Bridget, one can see that the idea of infants in the womb

contemplating is not a recent invention but rather a hypothesis built upon the notion that the human soul is a form of thought.

371

III. Question: Did the daughter of Philip (Acts 21) as a prophetess of the New Testament, and Anna, the daughter of Phanuel (Luke 2), who is somewhat in between the Old and New Testaments, publicly minister in the churches or oversee divine worship?

Response: It seems entirely denied regarding sacrifices, offerings, and incense. However, it could be conceded that they might have been involved in some form of preaching, prayer, or blessing of the people, or provided extraordinary guidance on occasion. Compare this with what we discussed above in Chapter 1 about Old Testament prophetesses such as Miriam and Deborah. Regarding the divine inspirations and visions of New Testament prophetesses concerning specific matters—whether absent or future—whether given to priests, kings, people, or anyone among them whom God wished to inform through them, either by voice or in writing, assisting and directing the church and its ordained ministers; I would not wish to deny this. Just as I believe Deborah and Huldah exercised their extraordinary gifts in a similar manner under the Old Testament. Our opinion on Miriam’s role in the canticle and hymn in Exodus 15:20 and Deborah’s song in Judges 5 was previously expressed.

IV. Question: Were the prophets of the New Testament more distinguished than the prophets of the Old Testament?

Response: A certain renowned theologian seems to affirm this and says that among the prophets of the New Testament, the Apostles are far superior. I would distinguish if we compare the state of persons in the promise of the Gospel with the state of persons in the fulfillment of the Gospel. I would say that not only the New Testament prophets (e.g., Agabus) but also every faithful person in the New Testament is more distinguished; much more so the Apostles, and among them John, who is both an Apostle and a Prophet. See Matthew 11:11 and 13:16-17. If

you establish a comparison in terms of the gift and ministry of preaching—not only what was to come in the advent and after the advent of the Messiah but also other particular matters, whether future or absent—I do not see why New Testament prophets like Agabus or Philip’s daughters would be considered more distinguished in this respect; nor even the Apostles themselves: for they either were not prophets, or if they were, like John alone, they did not have predictions of many particular absent or future events, surpassing Samuel the seer, Elijah, Elisha; nor did they have any predictions about the Messiah and his advent, doctrine, gestures, passions, because these had already passed.

V. Question: Does the New Testament church continuously and perpetually possess an extraordinary ministry, assistance, and direction from prophets,.....?

372

... to be considered a true church, from which it could be derived. **Response:** This is what Bellarmine seems to want in his discussion of the marks of the church, but without reason. For the appearance and speech of angels, or similar gifts, and the perpetual succession of the prophets’ assistance and direction cannot be demonstrated any more than that of the Apostles and Evangelists.

We, on the other hand, propose the following:

1. **God has never promised the continuation of charismatic gifts** such as speaking in various languages, interpreting languages, casting out demons, and performing miracles.
2. **Most of the prophecies and revelations that exist** (which some intend to prove the perpetuity or succession of this gift) have been so discussed with their authors that hardly one or two remain, which someone might prefer to argue about. Even if this were granted, it does not allow for the conclusion that one swallow makes a summer.
3. **It is sufficiently probable from the following reasons** that God no longer speaks to His people through such extraordinary means or through extraordinary ministers, nor is it necessary:

- First, because He has spoken last through His Son (Hebrews 1:1).
- Second, because the canon of Scripture is now more extensive than it was under the Old Testament or at the beginning of the planting and collection of the New Testament church, having been greatly expanded by the addition of New Testament books.
- Third, because the church is no longer in a state of infancy under tutors, as it was in the Old Testament (Galatians 4:1-8). Therefore, as the church does not need the ordinary supports and helps of ceremonial law with Urim and Thummim, neither does it need the extraordinary assistance and ministries of prophets.