

ON MINISTRY AMONG FRIENDS

A discussion of Samuel Bownas' book:

A Description of the Qualifications Necessary to a Gospel Minister (1750)

Place: Albuquerque Meeting House

Time: Sundays, March 7, 14, 21 from 9:00-10:00 (before Meeting for Worship)

Book: available to buy (\$15) or borrow, contact Rob Pierson, piersro@earlham.edu, (505) 237-2565

"I advise to an inward waiting upon thy gift, to feel the moving thereof in thy own mind, ... follow thy guide in all circumspection and humility, beginning, going on, and concluding in thy gift." – Samuel Bownas

MARCH 7: read: Foreword, Editor's Preface, Introduction, Ch. I & II (p.1-25)

MARCH 14: read: Ch. III, IV, & V (p.26-63)

MARCH 21: read: Ch. VI, VII & VIII (p.64-104)

Some advice and queries:

- Read Bownas slowly! *"The reader is... encouraged to meet Bownas in his own literary world by adopting a slowed, meditative pace."* [xiv]
- Because of the time, culture, language and style, the book may at first seem very foreign.
 - *What words and phrases seem particularly alien?*
- To help understand our Friend Samuel, try reading the Introduction (xvii-xxxvii) and the letter on back of this page.
 - *What can you say about Bownas? What do you wish you knew about him?*
- Like most early Quakers, Bownas is steeped in biblical language. The major references are noted in the margins. It may help to look them up in a modern translation.
 - *What do you think of his quotes and echoes of scripture?*
- I'll bring some handouts as appropriate, but we'll mainly focus on Bownas' own words and these questions:
 - *What is Bownas trying to say? To whom?*
 - *Why was this relevant in 1750? In 2010?*
 - *What is Ministry? How are we / how are you called to minister today?*

TO THE MEETING OF MINSTERS AT KENDAL IN WESTMORELAND.

My dearly beloved Brethren and Sisters:

In that love which in time past we have enjoyed together. do I heartily salute you. having in mind some few things to impart. As counsel and caution to us all, including myself therein.

We who apprehend ourselves called into this public station of preaching ought closely to wait on our Guide to put us forth in the work. And dear friends. I see great need for us to carefully mind our openings. and go on as we are led by the Spirit; for if we overrun our Guide and opening we shall be confused, not knowing where, or how to conclude: But if we being and go on with the spirit we shall conclude so that all who are truly spiritual will sensibly feel that we are right. Thus will our ministry edify them that hear it.

And dear friends. let us be singly and in sincerity devoted to the will of God. whether to preach or be silent; for it we are not sensible of such a resignation, it is doubtful that we may set ourselves at work, when we should be quiet, and so bring an uneasiness upon our friends, and burthen upon ourselves. And this conduct will shut up Friends hearts against our service and ministry. And my dear friends, every time you appear in the ministry, when it is over, examine yourselves narrowly, whether you have kept in your places, and to your Guide; and consider whether you have not used superfluous words that render the matter disagreeable, or such tones or gestures as misbecome the work we are about, always remembering, that the true ministers preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us bear this in mind, that neither arts, parts, strength of memory, nor former experiences will, without the sanctification of the spirit, do anything for us to depend on. Let us therefore, I entreat you, keep to the living fountain, the spring of eternal life, opened by our Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts.

I also desire, that you would not neglect your day's work, in visiting the dark corners of the counties about you; but be mindful of your service therein, as the Lord shall make way for it.

The things above written have been on my mind to communicate to you, my dear friends, with desires that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with your spirits, Amen. Hoping, also, that I shall not be forgotten by you, in your nearest supplications to the God of the spirits of all flesh; remembering me, that I may be preserved by sea, and in the wilderness, through the many and various exercises and baptisms that I may be suffered to undergo for the services sake; and that I may be preserved in humility and self-denial, under the power of the cross, the most beautiful ornaments a minister can ever be clothed with; that if it please Him we should meet again, and our joy may then be full in the Holy Ghost, which is the fervent prayer of your exercised friend and brother,

SAMUEL BOWNAS.

This was written in the Second month 1702, and left with my friends John Tomkins, not to send it until he heard I was gone off.