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A Description of Gospel Ministers.

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DESCRIPTION

OF

GOSPEL MINISTERS,

AND THEIR

INTERNAL CALL.

TOGETHER

WITH THE DUTY OF CHURCHES TOWARDS SUCH
MINISTERS.

Presented to the public by their humble servant

NEHEMIAH DODGE,

Pastor of the Baptist Church in Lebanon, Conn.

EXETER:

Printed for JOSIAH RICHARDSON preacher of
the Gospel.
1819.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, 1808

Feb. 8, 1922

TO THE READER.

Being appointed, heretofore by the Stonington Association, to write a Circular Letter suitable to be inserted in their Minutes: the following was written for that purpose. But finding it longer than the common limits of their Minutes would contain, it is presented to whosoever hath ears to hear, in this way, by their affectionate servant,

THE AUTHOR.

September, A. D. 1808.

*Christian Friends, interested with me in the holy
cause of our common Lord.*

THE constant enlargement of Zion's borders, affords joy unspeakable and full of glory to all christians who are acquainted with the present existing prosperity of the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, in general through this part of the world !

While the good news of peace, pardon, life and salvation echoes in our ears from many places, where God has been graciously pleased to pour out his spirit of late ; our hearts are filled with holy pleasure, and humble praise ; with fervent prayer to Almighty God, that he will continue his work of reformation, until it is extended among all the inhabitants of the earth : and that we may be made workers together with him, and not grieve the holy spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of Redemption.

In order for which, many things are necessary, which I have not room to illustrate in this short address ; but while we view the pernicious consequences of introducing those ministers into public use, whom God never called ; and realize the necessity of the people's doing their duty to such as are called and owned of God in his cause ; I hope it may be of use to some, and not unwelcome to any, for me to exhibit a few thoughts upon each of these particulars.

The question is not whether false teachers are a curse to their hearers in general, all agree, they are. But the interesting, important question which I wish to answer is, Who are called of God to preach ? In answering which, many contradictory opinions are offered to the public, which I shall not pay particular attention to at this time. If we can be so happy as to understand the right answer, erroneous opinions cannot long continue where truth reigns !

Here let it be observed, that God deals variously with different persons who are called to preach the gospel ; as to the means used, and many circumstances relating thereto ; as really, as in the conversion of souls to him-

self by gospel grace ; so that no man can lay out an exact method, and determine that every soul who is truly called of God to preach, must be led exactly in that particular path : yet as to the nature and essence of the call it always amounts to the same thing ! God has not, indeed, limited the efficacy of ordinances, by the characters of those who administer them. But the scriptures warrant us to say, that wicked Ministers run unspent, and that generally God frowns upon and blasts their labors. Psal. 50. 16, and Jer. 23. 21, 22, 23. Hence in answering the question directly we will say, he must have the qualifications of Barnabas !

1st. *“ He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, and of Faith.”* Acts 11. 24. Every Minister of Christ is not only a regenerate man, but one that more than ordinarily shines in piety, meekness and kindness, so that it may be said with propriety, and a degree of emphasis, *“ he is a good man.”* He values goodness more than worldly greatness !

In his private retirements, he gives up himself to the word of God and to prayer. It is his delight to meditate on these things, and to give himself wholly to them. He delights to converse with God in secret prayer by which the fire of devotion is kept alive in his soul, and all his graces brightened, and his mind led to a right choice of subjects, by the influence of God's spirit, desiring to be good in the view of God, more than to be great in the view of mankind.

He values it at home, in his family. It is his concern to recommend Christ and the gospel to them : to walk circumspectly before them : constantly worship God with them : offer up secret prayer for them, and exercise a proper authority over them. Not like those who are gossiping and loitering about perpetually at the houses of their friends, and taking no delight in their own ; which conduct in a minister or master of a family, must of necessity, root out all family order, and to a great degree family worship, and expose him to the just censure of his friends.

The minister of Christ values goodness in others, as well as in himself, and seeks to promote both, in public

and in private ! In the general tenor of his behaviour, will cultivate a meek, modest, peaceful, and friendly temper. He will be generous and humane. He will prove by his spirit and conduct, that he is a lover of all mankind.* To men in general, but especially to the poor and the afflicted, he will be pitiful and courteous.

Also full of the holy ghost : which in this place is supposed to signify, his *indwelling*, and *ordinary operations*, or what is elsewhere called *an unction from the holy one*, 1 Jeh. 2, 20. This, though less brilliant than some other advantages, is far more excellent. To be able to surmount a difficulty by Christian patience, is far better than to remove a mountain.

When the holy ghost dwells in the saints, by the ordinary operations of his grace, his own holy nature is communicated : the heart being full of the *dove*, the fruit will be love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness. To be *full*, the term full is not here to be understood in an unlimited sense, not in so ample a sense as when it is applied to Christ. He was filled with the spirit without measure ; but we in measure ! The word is doubtless to be understood in a comparative sense, and denotes as much as that he was habitually under his holy influence. A being overcome with the holy influences and fruits of the blessed spirit.

It is this that enables ministers of Christ, to enter into the spirit of the gospel, and that which will preserve them from destructive errors concerning it. This will give a holy tincture to their meditation and preaching. This will make the doctrine they preach and the duties they inculcate, seem fitted in their lips, Pro. 22, 18. This will give a spiritual savour to their conversation, in their visits to their friends. This will teach them how they ought to behave themselves in every department they are called to occupy. This will denominate *the man of God*.

Also the minister of Christ is full of faith. By which we may understand, that his mind is well occupied and stored with divine sentiment. Not like those who rush into the work without any sentiments of their own ! He

has a firm persuasion of the truth of that gospel which he preaches to others. He is rooted and grounded in the gospel. He is decidedly on the Lord's side. Not like those who are always hovering upon the borders of scepticism. Being full of faith also implies that the gospel which he preaches to others, he lives upon himself. He is profited thereby unto eternal life. Not like those who heard the word without profit for want of faith.

2d. As no man took on him the honours of priesthood under the law, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron: so no man, however great and good his abilities, ought to engage in the gospel ministry, who has not a divine call to it. This call contains a discovery of the present state of God's people;—The treasure of the gospel's being opened and committed to the soul—and God's command therewith, to go and feed his sheep and with such clearness as to answer all objections: and sweetly and powerfully to constrain the person to go into that great work.

It is as necessary for a gospel minister, to discover the present state of God's people, as it ever was for a watchman upon the wall of any city, to be set where he could clearly view the state and circumstances of the army, and where they were exposed; and discover the advances of the enemy; and give some true account of the danger and duty of the citizens. They need such divine teachings as the wise, prudent, sagacious and learned scribes and pharisees never had, who were blind leaders of the blind, from whom God hid the mysteries of his kingdom, when he revealed them unto such babes in Christ, as were called to preach his gospel. All christians have some understanding of the state of Zion, but to those whom the Lord calls to be his watchmen, he gives more special and clear discoveries. That God who said to Moses, *I have heard the cry of thy brethren under their bondage, and am come down to deliver them*, Exo. 3, 7, &c. said also unto his disciples, *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest*, Joh. 4, 35. The same God now presides and gives his ministers understanding according to his word. The treasure of the

gospel is opened and committed to the soul. When the Lord sends a man to preach, he gives him his errand. He commits that treasure to earthen vessels, which he designs to feed his sheep with. Not that ministers have any inherent stock given to them, so that they can do without constant supplies from Christ, any more than the branch without the vine. But Christ has promised to be with them always! He will fill the earthen vessels as fast as he calls his ministers to empty them in his service: When God has given a man a discovery of the present state of mankind, and that treasure of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, which his people need; he powerfully disposes to the sacred employment of preaching his gospel, by inspiring him with a prevailing desire to devote himself to it, at all events, not from motives of ease, honour, or profit, but from love to God and precious souls! Not like those who can preach or let it alone, as best suits their worldly interest, and say all are deluded who pretend to an internal call of this sort. But like the apostle, who said necessity was upon him, he can no more dispense with it, than with regeneration, when the power of grace constrains the heart with a sweet omnipotence, and with an omnipotent sweetness to love a precious Saviour! Herein I am constrained to differ from many who pretend to be ministers of Christ, who say if any christian man can get learning sufficient, and has an inclination to be a preacher, he has a gospel right to an induction to the sacred office, and all the blessings of those who are called of God to preach! And further say to my astonishment, that the man called, has an innocent right to quit preaching, and attend to any other business whenever he thinks it more for his worldly advantage, and say that all who pretend to any other call are deluded! We have not so learned Christ; we believe all God's ministers can say in truth, *woe is me if I preach not the gospel.*

In addition to what is said above I further add. If God designs a man for the work of the ministry, he will open a door to his regular entrance upon it, for whatever end he hath in view, he will overrule every circumstance to bring it to pass; consequently he whom he

hath internally called as above stated, shall be external-ly called also. This lies with the Church to which the person belongs; who being satisfied of his grace and gifts, invite him to the exercise of them in a public manner, and appoint him a preacher of the gospel.

The preacher thus constrained by the spirit of God, and set apart by his brethren; feels it to be his duty to attend to his sacred function; whether he is thereby reduced to poverty, or blessed with riches; whether he procures him honour or disgrace amongst men; or if in consequence of his ministerial labours his health and life are worn out with fatigues, he cannot, he dare not neglect and desert the work of the ministry on these accounts, for the sake of more ease, honour, or profit in any other employment; If he does, God frowns upon him, and sends leanness into his soul. When God thus calls men from those employments by which they have gained an honest and competent livelihood, he directs them not to take with them either purse or scrip for their journey in the path of ministerial duties, for saith he, *the workman is worthy of his meat*. Conveying this idea, that the preacher of the gospel deserves as compensation from his hearers, for his labours, a suitable and sufficient maintenance. When our Lord commissioned his 70 disciples to the same blessed work, he told them for their encouragement that *the labourer is worthy of his hire*. St. Paul has treated largely upon this duty in the 9th chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. *Have we not power, saith he, to eat and to drink? That is, have not the ministers of Christ a right to expect of those to whom they preach the gospel, those things which are necessary for their sustenance? The Apostle goes on, have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles? Which teaches us that the ministers of Christ have a right to a support from their brethren, not only for themselves but for their families also. The Apostle proceeds to illustrate, establish and enforce the duty of christians to support their ministers, by parity of reason thus: *Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit of it? Or who**

feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the p^rock?

As much as to say, if other men gain a living by their professions, and receive a compensation for their labours why should not the preachers of the gospel? If soldiers, vine-dressers and shepherds, are supported in their several callings by their assiduity, what reason can be given why the ministers of Christ should spend their time and talents without providing for their own, especially those of their own house. 1 Tim. 5, 8. These dear brethren are the arguments of an inspired apostle; and those who profess to be guided and governed by scripture authority, should of all men be the last to despise or reject them. St. Paul goes on to argue, not only from the reason and natural fitness of things, and the principles of common equity and justice between man and man; but likewise from the divine law. Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, *thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.* Doth God take care for oxen? Importing that it was not so much the design of God in giving this law, to provide for oxen, as to teach us what equity we should observe in rewarding those who labour for us. Or, saith he, *is it altogether for our sake? For our sakes no doubt this is written, that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope.* By this we are taught, that those who are employed by us, and labour for us, should have a certain expectation, a well grounded hope of receiving a just reward for their labour, and especially that the ministers of the gospel should hereby be encouraged in the great work of preaching the word of God. Are there not many professed brethren, who would think it a degradation of their christian characters, to defraud a mechanic, or labourer, out of the wages due for his work; who at the same time can very easily reconcile it to their consciences to defraud their minister out of the labours of his whole life? As if he who has shod their horse, made a pair of shoes, or mowed an acre of grass for them, has done them a greater kindness than he who has preached unto them the word of life! Our apostle

did not estimate the labours of the ministers of Christ at this rate. *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing, if we shall reap your carnal things?* As there is a vast difference between spiritual things, and those which are merely carnal and temporal, so our obligations to reward those who preach the gospel, are vastly greater than those which lie upon us to recompense those who labour for us in secular business. St. Paul derives an argument for the maintenance of ministers from the custom under the law: *Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? And they who wait at the altar are partakers of the altar? even so hath the Lord ordained, that those which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.* The argument runs thus: If the priests and levites under the law, received a stated and competent support, there is the same reason that the ministers of Christ should be supported in their work. This apostle urges the duty of maintaining Ministers in his Epistle to the Galatians. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things.* The very nature of the ministerial duty is a sufficient proof that he who has been called and devoted himself to the great work of a preacher of Christ as above described, is to receive his temporal support from those to whom he ministers. Saith St. Paul to Timothy, which direction applies to all God's ministers, "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine: Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophesy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbyter. Meditate upon these things, *give thyself wholly to them.*" If a minister cannot rightly discharge the duties of his office unless he gives himself wholly to the work, how is he to be supported, have food to eat, raiment to put on, where to lay his head, feed his wife, his children and dependants, and discharge the rights of hospitality, and maintain a character of uprightness and integrity among men; unless he has a right to expect a compensation for his labors of his hearers? Here several important questions arise, which shall be answered according to my understanding, viz. What prop-

er measure can be recommended to Churches, that they who are disposed may do right in the discharge of this duty? Answer. The Apostle saith, *let all things be done by equality, that one be not eased and another burthened.* This is necessary in order that we may have fellowship with those who do their duty, and withdraw fellowship from those who indulge covetousness which is idolatry. Another question is:—What shall be done when brethren are unwilling to comply with this scriptural rule? Answer. Those who cannot honor God with their substance, are as unworthy of a place in the church as those who cannot love their enemies. But what shall the Minister do when the majority of the Church despise the reasoning above, and refuse to give him comfortable support for himself and family, while he does the work of a minister among them? Answer. Consider them *unworthy of his continuance*, or support himself, as duty may appear under existing circumstances. But suppose they are poor and not able to support a Minister? Answer—Bear burthens with them, and let not the poor oppress the poor, lest it be like a sweeping rain. Remember *the poor have the gospel preached to them.* Let brethren in the ministry remember the ancient Apostles, who endured crosses, hatred, reproach, imprisonment, tortures and death, rather than desert the post where God had placed them. In the most public and undaunted manner, in the face of danger and death, amidst deepest poverty, cruel hatred, calumnious reproach, and inhuman persecution, with unwearied zeal and cheerfulness, they endured unto the end, viewing him who is invisible, without appearing to covet any outward honor or wealth! Without any civil law in their favor, in the name of Christ, and by the influence of the holy spirit, they humbly triumph over the craft, the rage and power of infuriated Jews. Over the pride, the policy, and the power of the Roman Empire, when at its full strength and maturest sagacity! Yea, notwithstanding every conceivable form of opposition, the gospel has flourished, and still continues to flourish; and will, no doubt until the end of the world.

Dear brethren in the Ministry, could we spend and

be spent all our lives in painful, disinterested, indefatigable service for God and the Church; how serene and bright would it render the swift approaching eve of life! Keep in view what God has said to Baruch, Jer. 45, 5, **seekest thou great things for thyself, seek them not. Remember covetousness is Idolatry. Col. 3, 5, No Idolater shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1. Cor. 6, 9, God has not called you to preach conditionally, saying, preach if the people will do their duty and support you! But, go preach my words unto them whether they will hear or forbear! Ministers must not readily complain because some are negligent about giving. The husbandman waiteth long for the precious fruits of the Earth! Perhaps you have never commended yourselves to their consciences in the sight of God, like St. Paul. 2. Cor. 4. 2, Perhaps some have ministered the chaff of man's invention instead of spiritual doctrine! If so there is no propriety in repeating the Apostles words to hearers, saying "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" It is to be lamented that many things are sown in churches, by some who pretend to be Ministers of Christ, which cannot be called spiritual things, in the sense of the text above cited!**

If any are tempted to covet elegant houses, remember our Saviour had not where to lay his head! The Apostles sometimes dwelt in dens and caves of the earth! And all who possess their disposition are content with such things as they have! (*of God.*) Let others do as they will, faithful Ministers of Christ will endeavour to give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed. *But in all things approve themselves as the Ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the holy ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and*

behold they live, as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.

A short address to hearers in general, but especially to church members, shall close the present Epistle. *We beseech you to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. 1 Thes. 5. 12, 13.*

Consider while you are engaged about your husbandry, housewifery, and other lucrative employments; and with pleasing satisfaction accumulating property for your children: the ministers of Christ are constrained by love to God, and your immortal souls, to quit their domestic employments, and give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and doctrine—to meditate upon these things, and give themselves *wholly* to them. They are charged before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom to preach the word, to be instant in season, out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine, and study to show themselves approved of God, as workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth: to make the scriptures of the old and new testament the man of their council: that they may be able to find the most salutary cordials for babes in Christ, as well as for nourishment for those who are strong in faith; to procure from scripture those weapons necessary for themselves and you, when you are confronted by the hardened inclinations, deep rooted prejudices, long confirmed customs, and long fixed laws of both Jews and Gentiles. They are charged in the most authoritative manner, to let divine truth constantly and deeply impress their minds with a lively apprehension of a future appearance, before the august tribunal of the supreme head of the church! to be faithful and sincere in the constant discharge of the several duties, relative to the ministerial office.

Under this sacred charge, conscience and the spirit[†]

of God oblige them to sacrifice their honor, ease, wealth health and life rather than make a shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. When they look upon their wives, children and dependants; they have as great a desire for their prosperity as you have for yours. They are as loth to see their children strolling like vagabonds upon the face of the earth, and crying for bread, as you are to see yours in similar distress. Consider! Dear hearers, by your means the Ministers of Christ, and their families, are exalted to that sunshine of prosperity which you so much delight in; or sink in the blackest adversity which you so much dread. Doubtless you have often enquired why so many of our brethren in the ministry, who have naturally good talents, and pious hearts; come to their people so often with a disagreeable sameness? The answer is plain; their brethren and hearers neglect them, they become shackled with the affairs of the world, which they ought to be released from by your means; in distressing anxiety they spend that time in the shop or field, which ought to be spent in the study; the consequence is, you eat the fruit of your own doings, and are filled with your own devices.

Let your minds be deeply impressed with the serious consequences of neglecting such men as God has called into his vineyard; who are qualified like Barnabas and recommended like St. Paul.

In the 1st place, the church lacks instruction and is liable to be filled with difficulties!

In the 2d place, the minister is almost rendered useless in the world: for dividing his attention between ministerial duties, and secular avocations, it is quickly found that half a man is worth but little in any place.

In the 3d place, his family is greatly distressed thro' life! His wife goes to work like one accustomed to defeats; his children finding themselves worse off than others, are led to enquire the cause, which has a tendency to make them deists, if sovereign grace does not prevent.

In the 4th place, a covetous people are considered guilty of neglecting their duty, and obliging their minister to move out of town! After which one is too often

introduced who knows no better than to fellowship them in their covetousness; God refuses to own them, for wounding the Saviour in the house of his friends, the candlestick becomes removed, and the works of darkness fill the place; while many who do not fully understand the gospel scheme, honestly conclude through ignorance, there is not virtue and energy enough in religion to support itself, try to prop it up with civil law, which is vastly worse than nothing.

Once more, seriously consider the consequences of a promiscuous uncertain contribution. Though much better than a total neglect, or than to call in the aid of civil law; and even commendable in an occasional way for travelling ministers, who are among you occasionally: yet when this becomes the common mode, where you have steady preaching, the following difficulties are apt to attend, viz:

1st. Men are often at a loss to know what duty is, who are willing to do right.

2d. Covetous persons have opportunity of indulging themselves in the sin which most easily besets them; while the Church becomes guilty of laying a temptation before them!

3d. If a person does right or wrong, we know it not, which opens a door for jealousy! whereas *if we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.*

4th. It opens a door for introducing idolatry into the Church, where it may remain undiscovered as long as this mode is continued!

5th. All things are not done by equality, as saith the scriptures; of course one is eased and another burthened, and God's rule trampled under foot!

6th. The minister never knows what to depend upon, which deprives him of adding his own economy to their liberality, which would be of great advantage in many cases was it in his power.

While we loudly proclaim the absurdity of being dictated in our religious affairs by the laws of men, let us convince gainsayers by our regular walk, that we are governed by the laws of God. We can never convince

the world we are right, until we avoid such absurdities as are contrary to the plainest dictates of common sense.

While the blazing beams of heavenly day, are bursting through mystic fogs, let us avail ourselves of the light of the day in which we live, while Zion is rising and advancing out of the wilderness, let us become workers together with God, and those who put off and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Being already convinced that false ministers are a curse to all their connections, may God's word and spirit convince you that false brethren are the same. In this day of ingathering, while many flock to our churches in clouds, like doves to their windows, we have great need of special care that we are not deceived with wolves in sheep's clothing. May God increase your union with himself, and one with another in the holy ghost, until idolatry shall be purged out, and the glorious extension of the Redeemer's kingdom reach in every direction to the world's remotest end for Jesus Christ.

N. B. The foregoing is what was written and designed for a circular letter, with such alterations as are necessary in order to express the ideas of an individual in distinction from a collective body:—viz. inserting the pronoun *I*, instead of *we*, &c.

I will further add, it has been observed that though the sentiments exhibited above are just, they do not remedy the difficulty. To which I reply, that as it is of little use to recommend a Saviour to sinners who are not convinced of their wretched condition by nature: so it is of little use to prescribe remedies in this case, until Ministers and Churches understand the complicated perplexities which are constantly taking place with regard to the call of ministers and their support.

Again it may be said by way of objection, that a man cannot be qualified like Barnabas, and recommended like St. Paul, unless he can work miracles as they did.

Answer—The foregoing defines in what sense the analogy between ancient and modern ministers is supposed to appear.

Again further. Before the canon . scripture was completed, it was necessary that the principal publishers of God's mind and will to mankind, should evince their heavenly mission in a miraculous way and manner. But since bible is completed, there is no need of any thing more conclusive than the writings of Moses, the Prophets and Apostles, accompanied with the preaching of the word, attended with the influences of the Spirit.

However, we must yet say as formerly, *if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Rom. 8. 9. *For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* Rom. 8. 14. *How can they preach except they be sent?* Rom. 10. 15. Implies something more than being sent to school, by fancy, or parents. More than being sent to a trade, for the sake of a livelihood. More than ever influenced an unregenerate man, in any case. It implies supernatural influence from the spirit of God, opening the scriptures to the understanding, and guiding his mind in all ministerial duties, to the glory of God.

Hence I think it is improper for a gospel minister to receive a text from any person, and preach from it, for the sake of gratifying a curious fancy in himself, or any other. Yet never improper to receive any text, and preach from it, under the influence of the holy spirit, however short or sudden the notice. For the spirit shall lead them into all truth!

Also, I believe all hearers under the influence of gospel grace, will cheerfully communicate to the support of such ministers according as the Lord hath prospered them, from the same motive, viz. The glory of God. Nor did I ever think it improper, (however others may have understood me) for a Society of such hearers as are disposed to do as the gospel directs, *voluntarily*, to let their preacher know beforehand, how much they are able and willing to do for him, that he may know how to calculate for the support of his own household. Nor do I think it improper, but highly commendable, and by far the most christian-like, where

a society are all agreed to have all these things done by equality, viz.—For every person concerned to do according to his ability. And I heartily recommend to every Baptist church, not to accept, nor in any sense consider any person a member of their society, who has neither christianity nor manhood enough to comply with such proposals.

Yet I think it very improper, for a majority of any society to vote a tax upon the minority, or even upon one who never consented to it, and collect it by **LAW**.

My reasons are, 1st. I think there is energy enough in **True Religion** to support itself.

2. I think there is virtue enough in **Bible Christians** to support the gospel, which has proved the power of *God to their salvation*. Rom. i. 16.

3. I think it implies contempt upon the great Author.

Once more. Notwithstanding all that is said above, when any person or persons have voted a tax upon themselves, signed a subscription, or bound themselves any other way voluntarily; I think there is as much propriety in obliging them by law to pay the same (in case they refuse) as there is in keeping money they voluntarily paid out of their hands seven years before.

As many as wish to know my mind upon these matters, whether friends or foes, may find it here expressed unequivocally.

A FEW THOUGHTS IN POETRY,

Presented to all the unregenerate ; but especially unconverted Ministers.

[Please to commit the following lines to memory, and think of them whenever you hear, or see a CLOCK.]

- 1 I hear the clock both night and day,
It tells the time without delay,
And though the strokes may seem but few,
Yet every hour their sound renew.
- 2 The Goldsmith does the time thus fix,
It strikes one hundred fifty-six,
It strikes but once an hour we say,
Yet strikes this number every day.
- 3 Fifty-six thousand times a year,
Nine hundred forty more we hear ;
This is the number they can tell,
Who always stand to hear the bell.
- 4 It seems quite strange unless you count,
To think the number should amount
To such a great enormous size,
You hear the same, with some surprise.
- 5 But more surpris'd you'll be to hear,
That which will tingle every ear ;
When God makes up your last account,
You'll see to what your sins amount !
- 6 Sins are committed every hour,
Against a God of love and power !
Which will amount to more a year,
Than you will then desire to hear.
- 7 Sins are committed ev'ry day,
In all you do, or think, or say ;
The number you nor I can't tell ;
Because they far exceed the bell.
- 8 If but one year amount to this,
What special need have they of grace,
Who've lived twenty years or more,
And some have liv'd till quite four score !
- 9 When you're alarmed by the bell,
Pray think of judgment, death and hell ;
Unless the saviour Christ you love,
You cannot reign with him above.
- 10 The constant ticking which your hear,
Bespeaks your death and judgment near ;
And ev'ry stroke upon the bell,
Says you are near to death and hell.

The following is presented for the encouragement of weak christians, and especially of ministers, in the improvement of their gifts, in prayer, exhortation, or preaching, wherever there are ears to hear.

Learn the following poem, and be encouraged as often as you see your watch.

- 1 My watch much smaller than the clock,
Keeps time as true and well as that !
So little gifts, though fools may mock,
Tell us what christians would be at !
- 2 These little wheels I'll not despise,
So long as they will tell the time ;
All little christians I will prize,
So far as they appear sublime.
- 3 My watch with nimble ticks goes on,
Though much inferior as to size ;
So every talent, though but one,
If well improv'd, to ten may rise.
- 4 It's not the size nor painted face,
That makes our clocks or watches good ;
So learned scholars without grace,
Bring no internal Heavenly food.
- 5 Internal work well put together,
Makes clocks and watches keep good time ;
So when the christians love each other,
Devotion will appear sublime.
- 6 My watch has got a regulator,
Which makes it useful unto me :
So christians need a conservator,
The holy, just and sacred Three.
- 7 Come little christians view the watch,
Compare yourselves as well you may ;
And think, your gifts esteem'd not much,
Are useful if you watch and pray.
- 8 No more complain that you are small,
If God your regulator is ;
Devote yourselves and bring your all,
Remembering you are always his.
- 9 The watch makes very little noise,
Compar'd with every sounding bell ;
Elijah's still, small, heavenly voice,
Caus'd him at Jesus' feet to dwell.