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TERMS.

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CIRCULAR LETTER.

Written by Thomas B. Barnall, a lay member.

DEAR BRETHREN—

The subject of our present letter is Ministerial support, to which we invite your earnest and prayerful attention and consideration. This we know is a subject of some delicacy, but it is hoped that will be considered no reason for ever avoiding a subject which the scriptures plainly reveal as a Christian duty, and as a strict command of heaven. Some may be disposed to deny its being a command of God; but the scripture authority that we shall exhibit to you on this occasion does prove, we think, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it is provided a proper, ample support for the ministers that we have freely chosen and called to serve us, or under whose ministry we of choice sit, as a matter of gospel obligation and justice, and not a matter of alms-giving; and so long as we solicit and continue their services, we are in duty bound to reward them faithfully for their labors—(and should there be a minority who do not of choice sit under the ministry, they are, no means exempted from this obligation, as it is the duty of the majority to submit to the majority.) This obligation is clearly and distinctly expressed in the scriptures, and we enter into it and make it binding upon us by our own voluntary act in procuring their services. The Lord is a sovereign, wise and merciful purpose to accomplish in the salvation of sinners, which all the malice and rage of hell, with the opposition of wicked men, will never frustrate. The children of God, in His strength, will overcome them; because (says John) "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world;" but he has in infinite wisdom determined also that he will accomplish all this by the use of means. As to the abstract question of power, the Omnipotent Jehovah has power to accomplish his purpose without the use of means, by a single volition of his will, in the twinkling of an eye. As to the power in the use of means, he might have accomplished his purpose in a diversity of ways and means different from those which he has in wisdom ordained. Angels for instance might have been exclusively engaged to the administration of his purpose for aught that we know. But it is the pleasure of the Lord to save sinners in no other way than that which is exhibited in the scriptures. This method is briefly stated by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. He first shows that all the world have become guilty under a holy, just and good law—then in reference to the purpose of God in the salvation of sinners, he exhibits "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" and declares that "whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved;" and as the means by which they are to be brought to call on the name of the Lord, (without which none can be saved,) he shows that it is absolutely necessary that the gospel should be preached, since there can be no true calling upon God without faith, no faith without hearing, no hearing without preaching, no preaching without divine authority—Romans 10.

Reconciliation was not committed unto angels, but unto men. The Apostle saith, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us—2 Cor. iv. 7. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament—2 Cor. iii. 5. The Lord has made it the solemn and indispensable duty of his ministers to "preach the word;" to be instant in season and out of season, to watch in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of evangelists, make full proof of their ministry—2 Tim. iv. 2, 5.—Not to be entangled with the affairs of this life, to labor and suffer reproach in his cause, to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, not to neglect the gift that is in them, to meditate upon these things, to give themselves wholly to them, &c.—1 Tim. iv. 10, 15.—To approve themselves as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in journeyings, in weariness, in painfulness, in hunger, in cold, in heat." Has the Lord made it to be the duty of his ministers to give up their time and talents, and to relinquish the secular pursuits of men in common for a living, and to bear and patiently endure the foregoing catalogue of privations, sufferings and woes for the good of mankind, without laying for them a good foundation in the authority of his word for a rational calculation on an ample support in return for themselves and families from those for whose spiritual good they are called thus to suffer, strive and labor? To this weighty question we ask your solemn attention, and wish your faithfulness to your heavenly master.

When the Lord sent out his seventy disciples to labor in his harvest, he said in relation to this subject, "the laborer is worthy of his hire"—Luke x. 7. The apostle having referred, beyond all manner of doubt, to the support of the gospel ministry, asserted and defended the right as follows: "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things"—Gal. vi. 6. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God;" also see 1 Cor. ix. 4, 11, which shews beyond contradiction that the Lord has ordained that they who preach the gospel shall

live of the gospel, not starve of the gospel, but so live by it as they who served at the altar, of old, lived of the altar.

We feel confident that we have proven to every unprejudiced mind, from the scriptures, that the ministers of God are justly entitled to an ample support for himself and family. Set aside all express authority from the scriptures, and the claim is sustained by the plainest dictates of justice and equity,—it is upon the plainest principles of justice and equity, that if a minister of the gospel, possessing ample qualifications to provide the blessings of this life in great abundance for his family, and also to provide for his children a parent's benediction in common with other men, shall devote his time and talents to the service of his fellow-beings in their spiritual and better interest, they should render to him that inferior good which would enable him and his family to enjoy in an equal degree with them the lawful use of the things of this life. The Apostle Paul argues the right of their maintenance upon these principles; for, says he, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" We can produce any passages of scripture to prove that God does require of men support for his ministers. When Christ sent forth the Apostles for a short excursion while he was with them, that these newly fledged eaglets might try their wing before he should be taken from them, and they should fly through the world having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation under heaven, he said, "provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat." Now hear the dreadful consequence of those who neglected or refused to receive them. "Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for them." Alas, how many of us will be found in that awful situation, neglecting to support those whom Christ has sent to labor for the good of our souls! Christ could have wrought miracles for them every day, and supplied all their needs each moment—for he who raised money from the bottom of the sea in the mouth of a fish to pay the tribute money, could in a moment have filled their purses with all that their journey required, but he knew "the laborer was worthy of his meat;" and he could supply the wants of all his ministers in the same way, but he knows the churches are able to support them, therefore he requires them to do it.

Many objections have been raised against the support of the gospel ministry, but since the Lord hath ordained, directed or ordered that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel, it is very irreverent, to say the least of it, on the part of any one, to object to his commandments.—Every objector therefore, will do well to examine his own heart to ascertain whether he be not rather under the influence of a lurking covetousness, than an honest desire to render justice, and to glorify God by living in holy obedience to his word. We shall now notice some of the objections: Some may say, That no preacher who is called of God, can neglect to preach, because God has made it his indispensable duty to preach the word. To which we reply, that the Lord has made it no less the duty of him that is taught in the word, to communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things. And if you think the minister cannot neglect his preaching with impunity, how can you, living in the neglect of your duty towards him, expect to escape? Is the command more obligatory on him than you? We hear some say, our minister is rich, or is not in want, or is in better circumstances than we are, therefore we ought not, or need not contribute to his support. Let us for a moment admit the truth of your premises, that your minister is rich, is your conclusion properly drawn from them? Do you reason thus on other subjects? You doubtless sometimes dispose of produce to a poorer neighbor;—in such a case, are you ready to admit the plea, that as your neighbor is poorer than you are, your claim on him is unjust? Do you ever judge that a merchant's bill against you ought not to be paid, because he is richer than you are? Does your plea discharge you from an obligation to pay your debts? Or are you like the lawyer ready to exclaim, "indeed, that alters the case." We think that a parallel case. Our Lord has said, "the laborer is worthy of his hire;" that is, it is due to him, it is just and honest in him to receive, and even to claim it, and it is unjust and dishonest to withhold it from him, or to dispute his claims to it. But ought we to admit the truth of your premises? Is it true that your minister is as rich as you consider him? How do you judge of their wealth? By their appropriations to public religious objects? These prove only their liberality, and not their wealth.

We plead for ministers with more earnestness, because we believe that they are often the most liberal subscribers to the cause of religion, which the church of God contains. Many who are quite poor, contribute with a spirit which ought to put others to shame. We hear the third man say, it is dangerous for ministers to be rich.—We ask, is it not for the hearers too? Are you not adding to your wealth all that you withhold from him? Are you not afraid of increasing the hazards of your own souls?—or have you sincerely risen to that exalted height of loving your minister better than yourself, so that you would watch for his security from the shares of wealth, at the price of increasing your own danger of being found among them which shall hinder of the kingdom of God. The fourth will tell us, that troubles are good for ministers; they preach better under the rod. Thus the epicure torments the creatures of God, that they may afford him a more delicious treat, as if the world, the flesh and devil would not furnish ministers with troubles enough, unless the flock for whom he labours add starvation to the list. A broken heart we know is good for prayer, but bad for preaching. Let the minister arise in the pulpit to address his audience; on his right hand he views the man whom he has bought his corn or

pork of; on his left there, sits the merchant from whom he has bought the necessities for his family, and in front there, sits his blacksmith and physician, all of whom he is justly indebted to. He feels sensible of his duty to pay them—expects of course they need their money; he knows his pocket is penniless; from his honest creditors his mind flies away to his dear wife and tender babes who are dependent on him for support and education; he knows they must suffer unless his churches pay that which they justly owe him, or he abandons his high calling, and comes down to help them by the labor of his own hands.—Thus you see, instead of his mind being engaged about the important truths which he is expressing from the sacred desk, his mind is drawn off on the things of this world. The call brethren, of a hungry wife and children, no man can resist; neither does the word of God require him to resist them; and if he does, he justly incurs the censure of "denying the faith, and being worse than an infidel." If ministers preach better under the rod, it is when that rod is in the hand of God, and not of men. If we neglect to support our minister from the want of an inclination, to God we are accountable, and that accountability will be aggravated by all the weight of the Saviour's anger, who will call them to answer for their sins when pastor and people shall be judged at his bar. It is admitted on one hand that the minister should be supported by the churches, but they ought not to require any positive assurance of support, but rely on the charity of the brethren. Rely on the charity of the brethren, *in deo!* Will any one pretend to say that they may feel encouraged to do this, because they are generally speaking so remarkably charitable? How can we suppose that poor ministers, who have large families, can reconcile it to themselves to leave home weeks together, and leave those dependent on their labor for support destitute at the same time of the necessities of life? Brethren, would you be willing to leave your families in such circumstances? And why will you who do not preach, require of those who do, to pursue a course which you yourselves could not think of doing? Do you love your families better than your minister does his? or has your family higher claims on you than the poor minister has on him? Some churches soothe themselves by saying, our minister is contented.—How do they know? Because he does not complain? Is this generous? Ought not the people to think it their duty to consider whether he has no reason to complain? And if they are conscious that he has, should they not determine to spare his feelings, by never leaving him to ask for that addition to his income which they feel to be his due? Some we fear are trying to ease their conscience by saying, we do pay our minister, when at the same time their pay is mere mockery, about one fourth part of what they justly owe him, not recollecting half the expenses which the minister is at, forgetting that the minister ought to dress decent, and keep a good horse, that he needs books, &c. &c. Also that he ought to provide well for his table, &c.—his acquaintance is extensive; whenever a friend or brother passes through his neighborhood, they are apt to call on him with whom they are acquainted, and whom they love. He must entertain them as well as he can, for he has visited them, and enjoyed their hospitality. Now how can he do this unless his churches enable him? We often hear men pleading with God to bless their minister in his basket and his store, while alas! poor man, they have taken care that his basket should be empty, and his store nothingness itself. Their prayers are always ready, but their purse is ever closed. Is not this mocking both God and his minister, with a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue? We love to hear men pray for their minister; it is a strict command of God, and we love to see their acts correspond with their prayers. Brethren, it is high time that we were examining the subject more closely, for be assured that the religion which costs nothing, is worth nothing. As well might we think of crossing the ocean in a worm-eaten boat, as to think of getting to heaven with that religion which cost nothing. While the weather was mild and the sea calm, you might float in apparent security, but should the heavens grow dark and the billows begin to beat upon the boat, you would fall a speedy prey to the all devouring wave. The professor who has no better basis than penniless religion to rest upon, may live on amid the sunshine of life in apparent ease and comfort, but in that hour when God taketh away the soul, he will long for something more substantial to cling to. When he shall hear that blessed Saviour say, I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.—Matt. xxv. 42, 43. Then he will see, feel and know the dreadful consequence of a covetous hope. We fear many an awful groan will be heard from that lone land of dark despair on account of that soul-destroying sin—covetousness. By this deplorable omission, the faithful minister of the gospel is compelled of necessity and with great reluctance to yield most of his time to manual labor, or some honest avocation for the support of his family. In pursuing of this course, he incurs censures—he is prevented from studying the scriptures, and giving himself wholly to the affairs of this world; his labours in the ministry consequently become cold and formal—the flock is not sufficiently fed, and they become in a degree barren and unfruitful—the wicked are not faithfully warned, and iniquity abounds. In this state of things, that covetous professor perhaps is the first to find fault, and charge his minister with being worldly-minded. If on the contrary he should be excited by an ardent zeal for the good of souls, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, to give himself wholly to the things of the ministry, or to be diligent in the work though his family suffer, he is charged with neglecting his own family: so that on either hand he is blamed through the neglect of those who should minister unto his temporal wants. We hear many excuses for not paying the minister that which he is justly entitled to, but surely if we had the spirit of him who was rich, but became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich; or if we would set a proper value on our own souls or the dear offspring which God has committed to our care, or those of our neighbors, friends and relations, which are to be saved by the preaching of the gospel if saved

at all, there would not be so many excuses rendered for not doing our duty. Let us remember that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Our gracious Redeemer felt a perpetual joy under all his grief in doing good. Love filled his whole nature, and ran over with streams of benevolence.—Let us act now as if Christ were personally present with us. When we pay our minister, let us pay him that amount which we are willing for Jesus Christ to inspect, believing it will bear an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well pleasing to God, and that God will supply all our wants. Who can refrain from tears when he thinks of those from whom Christ never receives those odours, but is insulted with nauseous stench of their covetousness and injustice.

As that he should have to look down and blush to know that these persons are called by the sacred name of him who impoverished himself to make others forever rich!! For the liberal friends whose hearts have echoed as we know some do to all we have said on the ministers's behalf, we return to heaven our grateful vows; that the generous sacrifices which you have made for their support may be abundantly repaid; but this we say, "he who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth abundantly, shall also reap abundantly, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth the cheerful giver, and the liberal soul shall be made fat." We admonish those who are indifferent, that God admits of no neutrality, but saith, he that is not with me is against me; and the best evidence of being the friend of the Saviour, is the keeping his commandment. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." To those who feel disposed to oppose, we say, your controversy is with God, and not with us; but shall he that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproveh God, let him answer." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

From the London Christian Observer.

THE RETROSPECT OF TIME & GRACE NEGLECTED.

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.—Jer. vii. 20.

In traversing a deep and shaded valley, buried amid the interior recesses of a wild mountain, I lately marked a patch of thin and stunted corn, but imperfectly fenced in from the jealous encroachment of the surrounding heath. It seemed as if unaccountably forced upon this cheerless and ungrateful soil, and still exhibited a pale and sickly green, amid the yellow ripeness and fading maturity of the declining year. The year had now arrived at the crisis of its great change; about to labor in the birth, and die. The slanting beams of a horizontal sun shed that softened lustre, but without its prolific warmth, which carried memory back to the summer evenings of its more youthful and vigorous days; and even the heat which still lingered in its noontide rays, passed over this deserted spot, and rested upon some more favored object on the opposite hill. The sun had now wholly withdrawn its ripening influences; the soft dews of heaven congealed as they descended; the warm zephyr breathed no more upon it; but the chilling frost and biting wind proclaimed that the harvest was past, the summer was ended. And to complete the desolation, the summer rivulet, which lately betrayed but by gentle murmuring its moist and unobtrusive course, veiled with the luxuriance of the valley, was now swollen into a rushing and thundering torrent, by the floods which heralded the coming winter, and threatened sudden and inevitable desolation to the scene.

Such an object not infrequently meets the eye of him who wanders among the neglected wastes of nature's wilder havens; and it seldom fails to solemnize the spirit. Even the most thoughtless will at least pause and think, how this abortion of nature—who has just come to birth, and has not strength to bring forth—will mock the anxious hopes and patient toils of the disappointed husbandman, doomed to

"Face this stubborn soil for scanty bread."

and how its unprofitable crop will be to him as the grass growing upon the house-top, whereof the mower filleth not his arms, neither he that bindeth on the sheaves his bosom.

Such was the lively emblem of the barrenness of an unsanctified soul, which some rugged and gloomy valley of Judah's land suggested, and which filled the weeping prophet's mind when he uttered his pathetic lamentation: such the gloomy picture of moral desolation which Judah's people suggested, when the day of grace has closed for ever; when the sun of spiritual light and life has set, and the shades of its evening have descended upon the soul; when the thick gloom of spiritual night have enveloped it, and it is reserved, in chains of darkness, to the judgment!

To the animal nature and unawakened mind, earth has much to minister of sordid and base enjoyment; and when the higher principle has been put down in the soul, it may wallow amid the impurities of sense, and riot amid the low gratifications of a short-lived paradise. Imprisoned, indeed, within its own contracted limits, it will sometimes be disturbed by the clashing interests and opposing pleasures of its fellows; by the conflicting appetites and passions which agitate and torment it; and by the counteracting dispensations of an overruling and hostile Providence. Still, the animal nature is at home on earth, and has its pleasures. But who can adequately describe the great famine which shall be in the land, when the soul has cast off forever this grosser body, and yet retained all those craving appetites—nursed, too, in the lap of indulgence; trained to habits of arbitrary and insatiable tyranny—and to which that body alone can minister? What must be the gnawing hunger which will prey upon the soul, when every avenue to this paradise of sense is barred against it; and thus, shut out forever from its accustomed haunts and sole enjoyments, it famishes in want of its congenial food? What, for instance, must be the drunkard's misery, when his parching soul shall pant for its gratifications, and he cannot, by the very constitution of his unembodied essence, receive one drop of water to cool his

tongue, tormented in this flame? When those who love the din and riot of dissipated pleasure, and the harp and the viol, the tabor and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of his hands—when these lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, shall anxiously look around for the materials of that animal excitement which was the source of all their enjoyment while upon earth, what will be their agony, when, instead of music, and mirth, and laughter, and the jocular song, and shout of revelry, they shall bear but the calm Hosannahs of the redeemed—and these waited, in the heart-sinking faintness of immeasurable distance, across the impassable gulf? And if there be any voice, or eye that answers to the piteous cry of him who lifteth up his eyes, being in torments, it will scarce but to aggravate his misery and despair, by referring him to the calm decisions of retributive justice, and to the memory of pleasures lost forever. "Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things"—the things, earthly and sinful though they were, in which alone your affections were then centred; and which alone, since your nature is unchanged, you could even now enjoy; and in the necessary and unavoidable absence, the strict and eternal exclusion, of which from the realms of a holy God, "thou art tormented."

All can form some conception, however faint of that bitter sorrow which depresses and rends the heart when some afflicting loss, or some straits it has been irremediably sustained by our own fault or carelessness; or when the opportunity of obtaining some important and highly valued object, once within our easy grasp, has been irrevocably forfeited; when hope, supplanted by remorse, has passed away forever. He who has just received intelligence that his property, or his appointment, has been hopelessly lost through some defect, of which his indolence or misconduct was the sole cause—he who sits by the dyer's bed of a beloved friend, while conscience stings him with the reproach that his negligence, his waywardness, his unkindness, has prepared it—he can keenly feel, and thoroughly understand, this. But, in fact, all can, in some measure, understand it by their own experience. This anguish for temporal happiness irretrievably thrown away, we all have faculties and experiences which enable us in some degree to conceive. But who can paint the hell of horror and desolation which the soul of an unrepentant and unsanctified sinner anticipates, while he yet stands, reluctant, self-condemned, and hopeless, before the bar of final judgment, when he sees around him the waste and howling wilderness of infinite space which is to be his unchangeable prison; which his selfishness has desolated of every object of affection; which his guilty conscience has peopled with enemies; and which his carnal imagination, hostile to every spiritual object, has filled with ghastly beings and with sounds and forms of terror; while he feels eternity within him, without enjoyment and without hope; looks back, upon the fast parting rays and warm glow of earth's setting sun; looks forward, upon the blackness of darkness for ever.

But no language can describe the agonies of that moment—agonies never to be relieved; no colors can depict the desolation of that state when, the sun of the day of grace setting, for the last time, in mild majesty, behind the everlasting hills, has left the scene to the blackness of darkness for ever: when the sinner, isolated by death, as he enters upon the dark valley, may adopt, with fearful emphasis, the poet's expressive words,

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,"

"And leaves the world to darkness, and to me."

What must be its agonies, when the soul suddenly finds itself, as if by some magical transportation, on the other side of a great gulf fixed, and never to be repassed! surrounded by strange & ghastly objects, and filled with new and horrid experiences, of which the fearful illusions of a troubled dream can give but a faint and shadowy conception! Oh! what eternal agonies may be crowded into that moment, when the soul has fully awakened to that deep sense, that abiding conviction, which experience alone can give, of the utter misery and hopelessness of its condition; and when despair, flashing upon it from the light of actual hell, wrings from the soul that bitter exclamation, Yes! all is true, and I am lost forever! The day of grace has closed: the night has come when no man can work. The harvest is passed, the summer is ended; and I am not saved!

But even time and space forbid to disclose these secrets of the prison-house; to penetrate into the bottomless abyss, and drag to hated light a lost soul. The task were painful; the duty unacceptable—perhaps too unprofitable—"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

No year passes, in which our various parish registers do not receive the names of some from amongst us, whose bodies have been committed to the ground: "earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust;" and whose spirits have been summoned to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Should it not be a solemnizing thought, that death is, even now, among us, selecting his victims for the coming year—and we see him not: that the dying are, now, among us, in our homes and in our hearts—and we know them not. In all human probability, the eye of God marks many a one, among those whose eyes these lines will meet, of whom it is written, in the immutable decrees of eternity, that a few short months, and his place shall know him no more. Perhaps the hand of God is now turning, with the revolving year, that page in the book of providence which sums up and closes your mortal history, by consigning your body to the grave, and summoning your naked spirit to appear in the unveiled and unclouded presence of God. Oh! remember that there are but two states, in either of which we must stand before the bar of judgment; and that those two states