

oaths, military services, clandestine trade, prize-goods and lotteries ?

We will first consider what is a "free gospel ministry," in favor of which we are asked to "maintain a faithful testimony?" The word "gospel" means "glad tidings," especially the "good news concerning Christ and his salvation." Ministry, in the sense in which we are using it now, means a giving, a dispensing of these glad tidings of salvation; consequently, a "free gospel ministry" is a free dispensing to others, by qualified persons, of those truths concerning this salvation that have been revealed by the Holy Spirit unto them. These truths are within the grasp of every one, (for truth is omnipresent), some being better fitted than others to proclaim them, but that they are *free* to every one, and from the fountain head, even God himself, and have been from early times, is evident by passages from the writings of that grand prophet Isaiah, where, in speaking for the Almighty, he says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." There must have been, even then, false teachers and false teachings, for he further says, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto *me*, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

This much for a definition of a "free gospel ministry." Now, why are Friends' called on to sustain it? George Fox, to whom Friends refer, and justly, as the founder of our Society, noticing how prevalent in his time was the condition spoken of by Micah, when denouncing the sins of Israel, "The heads thereof judge for

reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money," and, seeing the evil results, contrasted it with that command of Jesus, "Freely ye have received, freely give, and was brought to the conviction that the gospel was not a matter of traffic, to be bought and sold, but as man received it *freely*, direct from his Creator, it was truly a *gift*, and could not be *sold* to others; and seeing the abuses into which such a system was leading, indeed, had led, both priest and people, felt it his duty to call all men from a dependence on this spurious ministry to a higher and purer one, even that of the Divine Spirit within each one. The apostle Paul, long before the time of George Fox, sternly rebuked him who offered money in payment for the power to lay hands on others for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought the gift of God may be purchased with money; thy heart is not right in the sight of God." He called it a *gift* that could not be *purchased*; so in our testimony for a *free* ministry, we have the authority of Jesus himself, and one of his chosen followers. George Fox says, "When the Lord God and his son Jesus Christ sent me forth into the world to preach his everlasting gospel and kingdom, I was glad I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit and grace, by which all might know their salvation and their way to God, even that divine spirit which would lead them into all truth; and by this divine power and spirit of God, and the light of Jesus, I was to bring people off from all their own ways to Christ, the new and living way; from their churches, which men had made and gathered, to the Church of God; and off from the world's teachers made by men, to learn of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and off from all the world's worships to know the spirit of truth in the inward parts, and to be led thereby, that in it they might worship the Father of