

voluntary consent to the thousands & tens of thousands of which Believers were unjustly robbed; or they must empower the deacon to take the charge & oversight of it and apply to the benefit of that sacred cause to support of which their all was devoted without reserve. Eleazar

Appendix 7

A few remarks on the subject of Military Pensions.

by Freegift Wells

[VII:B-261, OCIWHI]

This subject being again brought up, thro' the instrumentality (at this time,) of a pretended friend, who has proffered his services in procuring a pension from the general government, for an aged widow, who is now a member of our society, but formerly the wife of a Revolutionary soldier, who is now deceased.

As this subject has again arrested our attention, it appears necessary, (notwithstanding our past discussions & conclusions,) to take a general review of the same; & see, if in this day, there is any insurmountable barrier in the way of receiving from government a just compensation for services actually rendered, & losses sustained; a compensation which they feel it their duty to bestow, and have raised funds for that purpose.

It appears that this is a subject which has been called up in Congress at several different times, & has been thoroughly discussed & weighed by a philanthropical review of the sufferings & losses sustained by the Officers & soldiers of the revolution; and as a remuneration for such losses, in health, limbs & property, they have enacted laws by which appropriations are made, for the purpose of furnishing all such sufferers, with pensions adequate to their losses, and to support them in their old age &c. And in case the pensioner is outlived by his wife, she is entitled to the same during her life.

As the spirit of the gospel positively forbids all wars & fightings among its subjects, it seems to have been strongly imbibed in the minds of some, that whatever they had done to aid in war & bloodshed, even before the sound of the gospel had ever reached their ears, was wicked & offensive in the sight of God, & that an indemnity for such services, could not be received in justification.

This was the impression which Brother Jonathan Slosson received from Mother Ann's answer to him when he asked her counsel respecting

applying to government for a pension to which he was entitled by law; in consequence of a severe wound which he received in his hand, from a musket, or rifle ball, while in their service. Her answer was this. "You are better off without it, than they are with it; and you had better let it alone."

This answer was conclusive with Jonathan, & he thought it sufficient to settle up that subject during life; & in his feelings it has ever remained settled.

But as the subject is again called up, it seems but reasonable to give it another review, & in doing this we are led to the following conclusions.— Firstly, that inasmuch as believers were suspected & accused of being enemies to their country, & of having fire-arms concealed for insurrectionary purposes, and besides this, their bold and undaunted testimony against all sin & uncleanness, (which constitutes the god of this world,) so aroused and exasperated the children of men, that Mother & her little flock received much abuse from their hands, both in their persons & property.

Now in consideration of this is it not reasonable to suppose that an application for pension at that time, would have resulted in disagreeable consequences? Surely it is.

We must therefore acknowledge the wisdom of our blessed Mother, in counseling as she did at that time, while under those distressing circumstances. But the change of circumstances since that time (in our own view,) presents the subject in a very different light.

Another circumstance which seemed to put a final quietus on all prospects of indemnity for revolutionary services, were the conscientious impressions & proceedings of Brother Amos Buttrick, of Shirley Massachusetts, who, in consequence of the loss of an eye, occasioned by a wound received in the revolutionary war, was entitled to a full pension, during life.

This pension he drew for several years after he believed the gospel, but his conscientious impressions restrained him from using it; he therefore laid it aside until he had nearly filled one of his stockings with specie. He then asked Father Joseph's counsel concerning the disposal of it, and was advised to give it up to the Officers of government in that state, with this testimony

viz. That inasmuch as their faith forbid them to engage, or aid in the cause of war, they felt no liberty to receive a reward for what they had previously done in that line.

This circumstance being laid before the legislature was (no doubt,) one principle cause of releasing all the Brethren in that state from militia duty (as they call it,) or any fine in here thereof, which was done by an act of

both houses shortly afterwards.

As it was evident to believers that the hand of God was in this thing, it was easily settled, that it was not right to receive pensions, and there can be no doubt but this conclusion was exactly right at that time there being a considerable number of Brethren who were entitled to pensions. And if all who were entitled, had obtained liberty to draw them, it would have had a tendency to cause much disunion. For it is not to be expected that all who were entitled to pensions in that early day, had gained enough by the gospel to enable them to make a right use of their money; it would therefore have been a snare to many, & probably proved the overthrow of some who, being released from this snare, have always kept the way of God.

From these days, until we began to memorialize the Legislature of this state, hoping to obtain releasement from all militia requisitions, as our Brethren in Massachusetts had done, there was but little said about pensions.

But in the course of our applications to that body, we made use of many arguments which we thought would prove favorable to our cause, among which were the following. Firstly, that our religious and conscientious principles forbid us to comply with their militia system, or to pay an equivalent in lieu thereof & this we could not do, let the consequences be what they might.—And secondly, as a confirmation of our honesty, & sincerity, we stated, that among the members of our society, there were a considerable number of pensioners, who, by the Laws of Congress were entitled to many thousand dollars, in consequence of services, & wounds received in the Revolutionary war—all of which they had relinquished for conscience sake; the amount of which would exceed the amount of fine required of us by the government. And were we not forbidden by our consciences, we could draw this money, pay all our militia fines, & have a large surplus left for ourselves &c.

But all these arguments were unavailing! And altho' the writer of this Article was for a season, zealously engaged in this work, & verily thought he was in his duty; yet he does not feel prepared to say, that he has ever been able to realize one peculiar blessing of God, resting upon all of that labor.

While in this labor, our beloved Mother Lucy told us, that in case we did not set our stakes right, we must pull them up, & set them over again. This has since been done in part—for notwithstanding our firm & positive Declaration, that we would never hereafter pay a fine for not complying with their militia system, we have since found it necessary to pull up that

stake and set it over again, by voluntarily paying our muster fines! And there appears to be much more blessing for us in that line since we removed the Stake, then there was before; therefore we must conclude, that we have well done in that thing.

We shall now take a review of the other Stake.

Since the commencement of the present marvelous work of God, there has been many Inspired communications given, concerning the design of God in liberating the American Colonies, from under the British yoke,—that God raised up George Washington, & endowed him with wisdom to lead on the American armies against their oppressive foe,—That he was an Instrument in the hand of God to establish freedom, & the Rites of Conscience, in this favored land &c.

Now we would ask—Where was the harm—or what blame can there be attached to the citizens of the colonies for enlisting as soldier under Washington, to help do the Lord's work?

We cannot suppose from what we have learned of the work of the Lord in former dispensations, that in this case, he expected to liberate the American Colonies without the shedding of blood.

And altho' this was evident by the Lord's work for the children of this world, yet the true followers of Christ could have no hand in it, they being called out of the world. But if the sons of men chose to volunteer their services to the government and thus help to do the Lord's work; or otherwise were compelled to do it; what harm could there be in taking pay for their labor?

In the wars of the children of Israel against the Canaanites, we read that the Lord employed them himself, and delivered the Canaanites into their hands, & gave them their possessions as a reward for their labor; and who dare presume to say, that this was not right?

But in the American's defensive war against British invaders, it appears that the Lord chose to have the Officers of government enlist, or hire their own Soldiers, and who can doubt but he was as willing to have them paid off in full for their services, as soon as the government were able to do it, as he was to reward the children of Israel for destroying the Canaanites, by giving them their country & possessions?

And is it reasonable that any man who has been a Soldier under Washington, and fought the battles of the Lord with success, and afterwards heard & obeyed the everlasting gospel, should refuse an offered reward for his services, because he did not know when he performed his labor that he was in the Lord's employ?

Again—admitting that a man possessing a large farm, had enlisted as a soldier under Washington; & it had so happened that the division of the Army to which he belonged had fought a severe battle on his own premises, in which much blood was shed, & many lives lost: And he himself had spilt the blood of at least ten human beings, & caused their immediate exit into eternity.

And after the war was over he had sold his farm for its full value, receiving good security for the payment, which was not to be made under three years. And one year after this contract, he heard the gospel and obeyed it. Would it have been the duty of this man when the day of payment arrived, to have refused the money because it was the price of blood, many gallons of which, he had shed with his own hands?

Let justice and Equity, guided by the Wisdom and freedom of the gospel, answer the above questions.

The true definition of the word *pension*, is, a reward from government, for services rendered. And this reward is apportioned out to individuals according to the amount of service which they actually rendered, whenever the claimant can give satisfactory proof of the same.

This may with propriety be termed an inheritance from the government to legal heirs,—and one which they have as just a right to bestow, as parents or ancestors, have to bestow upon their natural heirs.

And those who have performed this service, or become heirs to it, are as justly entitled to a reward from government on account thereof, as they would be from an individual in whose employ (according to contract) they had earned any stated sum of money.

As it appears evident that the counsel of our first parents to those who were entitled pensions in their day, has generally been understood as a rule which must be held inviolable in years to come, it seems altogether necessary at this time, that the whole subject should have a thorough investigation, and a righteous decision; so that in time to come we may neither allow ourselves to lust after unrighteous mammon, nor fear to receive our just due. And for this purpose were the foregoing remarks drawn up.

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