

Openness in Receiving and Freedom in Serving

Blackheath, August 31, 1875.

My Dear Brother, . . . Individuals among brethren may urge their private views on evangelists or others; but all such narrowness is censured by every wise man in our midst; and, what is more important, it is dead against that return to keeping Christ's word and not denying His name which characterises the work. The question has often arisen as to fellowship as well as service; and as often those who are entitled to speak have resisted the tendency to a restrictive school. If some have sought to require intelligence in those received, my own answer has been that it is vain and unscriptural; that they themselves when received were the very reverse of intelligent; that if intelligence is to be anywhere, it should be in those who receive; and that those who require it in the received fail in the intelligence they demand from others; else they would not expect it where it could not be. For how could men in sects really understand the church of God? They might see just enough to disturb them from the wrong and attract them to the right; but all true intelligence is acquired in obedience. What is the worth of that which we learn in disobedience? and what the character of the principle which would keep in disobedience, in order to be intelligent, those who can get it only aright in obedience? Hence Scripture *knows nothing of keeping outside a godly-walking member of Christ.*

As little does it countenance the church's interference with the Lord's work, and especially in the gospel. To set the servant in the simplest dependence on the Lord, to foster his immediate responsibility to the Lord, without the intervention of the church, is what every brother holds as a sacred duty and principle. One must not plead, however, one's liberty in order to gain license. *We may not grant a license, but we dare not exact a pledge.*

We would rather trust in the Lord and His grace, while we would warn against all laxity as a scandal to the saint, and the enemy's snare for discrediting grace. When positive sin in word or deed appears, the church is bound to judge; and individuals may warn in love and holy care if they believe there is danger. More than this I should refuse; but this maintains the evangelist intact in his liberty and his responsibility to his Master.

Ever yours,

W.K.