

I. I. My wife desires her kindest  
 regards to you & says she might  
 have apologized to you for  
 the pencilings in foul-  
 I burnt book which she  
 forgot to rub out. She  
 had to go she had not time  
 to send for a new one -  
 but it is for like to return  
 it she will send you her  
 new one; which is an  
 enlarged & better  
 edition (the 7th) - She  
 is very busy preparing  
 a printing for Manders  
 it is also going to send  
 the second sketch  
 of Birmingham. She  
 sure you must be  
 quite sick of her  
 writing by this time  
 (finished Aug. 1.)

have been thinking, and thinking, of  
 writing - but never doing it - and rather sheltering  
 my omission under the right pleasant correspondence  
 which has been going on between my dear wife and  
 yourself. But I am conscious that this will not do -  
 - and though you will I know make all allowance  
 for a busier man than I may have appeared during  
 your visit - which was holiday-time for me, still you  
 will think, and very justly, that I might squeeze  
 out a little time for you - -

In fact I have been thinking much though  
 writing little - thinking with much sympathy and  
 regret upon your trying position in the University -  
 and earnestly hoping it may please a merciful Pro-  
 vidence to direct you to some good, wise, steady friend  
 who may counteract the evil influence which is  
 being brought to bear so extensively against you

stability and happiness. I believe you thought when  
found that friend in me - and I am sure you must to  
a certain extent have been disappointed - and this, I  
am sorry to think, must have made your little visit  
less pleasant and profitable than you had expected.  
But however I may regret this, I do not feel to blame  
for it - as I have no idea what might have led you to  
think of me as I believe you did, before you found  
out more about me. We do not usually show our  
colours - at least I do not - in ordinary & mixed soci-  
ety - but I can resist myself of sailing under any  
but my own.

Well - if this should lead you not to trust in the  
arm of flesh it may be well. It certainly will be  
well if it should prove the means of your closer  
recourse to the Great Teacher of Divine Truth. -

But you must not suppose that I am not most  
willing, and more than willing, anxious to help you  
as far as my little ability and acquaintance with  
these subjects extends, and as far as you may be wil-  
ling to accept help from one whose education & ha-  
bits of thought are so unlike, not merely your own,

but the picture of him which you had - I know not  
how or why - I saw in your own imagination. But, were  
if you felt disposed, in your great kindness and charity,  
to overlook some matters of difference, what could be  
done at such a distance? You want some one to re-  
fer to frequently, as fresh puzzles and annoyances arise.  
Some one to whom you can open your mind with all  
that readiness and freedom which are so hard on pa-  
per & so easy in conversation.

Still, there were some things quite evident to  
me - on which I did not hesitate to say what I  
thought - and if you please I must by permission  
to say those things again - because our talks were  
so discursive & took in such a multitude of subjects  
scientific, social, historical, political, and ecclesiasti-  
cal, that it would be no wonder if, according to the  
old proverb, you "could not see the wood for trees" - for  
which I was somewhat to blame. But I rather  
fancied that, especially towards the close of our time  
together, you became more shy of the most central &  
vital matters - & I felt unwilling to intrude upon  
you. It might have been wiser had I held you more

closely to certain points - & let the rest take their chance - for a wasted opportunity is a sad reflection, and I have too many upon my conscience already.

First of all, I think it is of the highest consequence that you should exercise self-denial as to the reading of sceptical books. You may be told that this is mere enquiring after truth. I believe it to be tempting God to leave you to yourself. It is not a search after truth unless you had time & opportunity to study both sides fully. Even this is not desirable for a young mind, which is apt to catch at appearances & be more easily unsettled than got straight again. In this matter I certainly think you went out of your way to do yourself harm - & it will even be true, to the end of the world, "He that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him." You will tell me perhaps, you must give up what is very congenial to your tastes & feelings if you refuse such study. But this must not be tampered with. You partly see your own danger, & you will therefore be inexcusable if you persist in putting yourself in the way of it. ~~And as for companions though I cannot~~ ~~help~~ and there never can be any pretext for reading

more of what you have already found injurious. It is  
but the intoxication of error instead of alcohol. —

But as to the question of companions — there I must  
truly sympathize with you. You can more easily ex-  
ercise due self-denial as to reading, than hearing, scepti-  
cism. It seems to me your positive duty to seek sup-  
port against their evil influence by getting amongst a  
sounder class of men — These may not be so much to  
your natural taste — I dare say they would not be so  
much to mine — for I have found so called "religious"  
people — & certainly religious — party — people — very dis-  
agreeable. But where your first principles are con-  
cerned, natural taste must not be too much listened  
to — and if you ask him, I can well believe that  
your Heavenly Father would direct you to some friend,  
or friends, who, without annoying your feelings, would  
strengthen your good resolutions, & keep you more steady  
in the narrow path. If you cannot <sup>find</sup> ~~do~~ this help, it  
does seem to me positive duty that you should be reserved  
in these subjects with your present acquaintances, & let  
them perceive that such discussions are unwelcome to  
you. —

2. Do let me beg of you to make a strict practice of diligently, perseveringly, and humbly studying God's word. I believe that many of those who are now slighting its authority are "speaking evil of those things which they know not." Nor do I think that, had you endeavored it to yourself as David did, and as so many thousands have done, you would so ~~easily~~ easily have listened to attacks upon it. I do not venture to say that you do not know it very well - But I am at any rate sufficiently observant in such matters to entertain suspicions - the truth of which you best know. -

And you will bear in mind that if we acknowledge our Lord, in the first instance, to be a teacher come from God (to say nothing of His being infinitely more) and if we believe the Apostles & prophets to have spoken by His Spirit, we must come to Scripture, not to sit in judgement upon it, but to learn from it, and to submit ourselves to that fulness of adorable wisdom which it contains. It may be, that a diligent, prayerful, impartial study of it may lead us to question some ~~fallible~~ schemes of doctrine deduced from it by fallible men - or rather invented by themselves, and attempted to be supported by Divine authority - But we shall only

gain, by such rejection I will not call it, but avoiding  
of "wood, hay, & stubble" - The "gold, silver, & precious  
stones" would only gain in brightness by separation from  
such admixtures as the Apostle foresaw & foretold. The  
Church of Rome is the most glaring instance of a super-  
structure of utter rubbish upon the true foundation,  
which nevertheless they do certainly hold in its essential  
truths - but it is not difficult to trace the working of hu-  
man infirmity in the interpretation of Scripture, in ma-  
ny other quarters, comparatively free from glaring error.

All this careful examination, which is the duty of  
every Christian who has opportunity for it (and you ought  
to make opportunity) will be the most different thing  
possible from the irreverent "higher criticism" (so called)  
of the present day, which ~~exam~~ scrutinizes God's word  
with a view, not of ~~discovering~~ discovering truths, but of  
detecting error.

I hope I need not add, in the next place, the necessity  
of earnest and humble prayer - I may add - at the risk  
of being thought prejudiced (for which I care right little)  
my suspicion that not all of ~~you~~ those who have been  
influencing you, have sought for that knowledge which  
they fancy they possess, as the gift of God. -

You will consider me very one-sided if I add my full persuasion that you have listened to a greater amount of historical untruths - I mean not merely as regards past but present times - than you have any idea of. Blame me as you will, & think of me as you will, facts are facts in spite of the "Liberation Society" and its admirers. I more than suspect that a large proportion of good, pious, estimable & valuable non-conformists know as much of historical fact as the French in Napoleon's time did of the battle of Trafalgar.

The reluctance which you spoke of, as having met with in many persons to speaking on the subject of the Atonement I cannot say I feel - what subject can be more worthy of that devout & affectionate study out of which the mouth will speak? What I do feel, perhaps, is the great ~~and~~ inadequacy of some phraseology often used about it by pious people, to express anything like the extent of this glorious provision of Divine love - not ~~so much~~ <sup>merely</sup> I venture to think for the harmonizing of His own justice & mercy ~~as for~~ but (with which I think many statements stop short) but for the reconciling of the sinful nature of man. - But I must not go on in this way, or I shall completely exhaust your patience and make you wish never to hear from me again. Will you please accept this, at any rate, as some proof of my real & deep interest in you & anxiety for your best interests, & believe me (whatever you may think of my notions),

Yours very affectionately  
Thos. W. Webb