

Indianapolis. Feb. 6. 1839.

Dear brother,

I regretted that your engagements gave you so little time to spend with me during your visit to our place. It was my wish to have quite a chat with you in regard to your affairs & my own. Being disappointed in this, I have concluded to send you some of my thoughts on paper. — I am able to sympathize with you somewhat in your trials, having lately had some experience on the subject. Whenever I heard of the charges against you, I at once set them down as unfounded, without knowing what they were. Supposing that all felt so, except a few enemies, I thought it unnecessary for you to take any notice of them. It seems to me now, however, that you probably did right to meet them as you did. So far as I have heard, your answer to those charges was satisfactory & left an impression entirely in your favor. Some of your general remarks, however, made an unhappy & injurious impression on the minds of some. One of the difficulties, which men of station & talents labor under, is that they are watched so closely & ^{are} so liable to be misunderstood. It has been so with you in this case. I suggested to you the following objection to your remarks on sectarianism, viz: They implied that sectarianism was taught in all the Colleges. Now I am ready to believe that this is true of very few, if any, of the Institutions in our land — unless it be in those which are Rom. Cath. So that I suppose that you are not at all singular in not teaching secta-

nianism - & yet this was evidently implied in your address - indeed I believe it was expressly asserted. It certainly is not in Colleges that sect^{ns} is taught. The Methodists & Campbellites & Baptists & Quakers have learned it some where else than in Colleges. — Again - I would venture the same suggestion concerning your remarks about treating deists &c as gentlemen. The manner in which you dwelt upon this point & repeated it, seemed to imply that you were singular in this respect also - & that other christian ministers would not so treat infidels &c. Now where is the minister (at all worthy the name) who would refuse to treat a gentleman as such because he was a deist? — Others have interpreted your remarks very differently. What you said about Pantheism - about the internal revelation - about not interfering between a man & his God &c - all this has left the impression on some that it made but little odds what a man's religion was, so that he was only sincere & well persuaded in his own mind. These inferences cannot be fairly drawn - & yet they were drawn by christians & unbelievers. Your definition of religion, excellent as far as it went, certainly stopped short of the atonement, & (as an intelligent man observed to me) it was one to which Franklin could have heartily subscribed. Is it not one to which Voltaire & Rousseau have actually subscribed? Several infidels, I am told, remarked during y^r address "that's exactly my religion". But while infidels have triumphed, christians have been in grief. Now you are

not the man (any more than myself) to be governed altogether by the opinions of men. But surely a christian minister ought to pause, when his sentiments cause a lamen & grief to God's people & joy & triumph to the unbelieving. It is a fact (as I have learned from several) that intelligent infidels declared your religion to be theirs. It is a fact that one of them (a respectable physician) said that your address had confirmed him in his deistical sentiments - & predicted that in a short time you would openly avow the same sentiments. It is a fact that all the christians, who have mentioned the subject to me, intelligent christians, your friends & admirers, all of them have expressed disapprobation & regret. It is a fact that some of these expressed the opinion that no christian parent could send a son where such sentiments were taught. It is a fact that all these christian friends were impressed with the idea that your address was intended to secure the favor & influence of the 12 out of 13, of the world as distinguished from the christian community - that your expectations being cut off from the O. School & N. School Pres. & the Methodists (each having a College of their own) your attempt was to please the nonreligious part of community. In all this I am giving you no opinion of my own. I only tell you the facts in the case, the impressions others have rec'd. & the remarks they have made, without expressing any opinion about their correctness. And I tell you these facts because I think you ought to know them & because no one else will probably tell them. You will see that I am making large calculations upon your good nature by writing so plainly. And you will believe me that these things are written with

the most friendly feelings. And I know that you will receive them kindly from one, whose attachment to you has been peculiar, & who once tho't you could do no wrong. And altho' time has taught me the folly of such an opinion in regard to any man - & altho' I have regretted the change in your course & in your sentiments - still my attachment remains. - It would be forwardness & presumption in me to offer any advice or exhortation. Therefore I just leave with you the above facts, knowing you will give them the consideration you may believe them to deserve.

In regard to my affairs, I need perhaps not trouble you. ~~Now~~ I will, however, give you a short sketch. New Schoolism burst out upon me last Spring in an unaccountable manner. One complaint was that I was not a sufficiently talented minister. I immediately proposed to retire; but was told that this would not remove the difficulty. Great efforts have been made to injure me. Unpleasant tales were manufactured. And every thing done to excite prejudice against me. My abhorrence of partyism is so deep that, in order to avoid the very appearance of it, I remained quiet all summer & scarcely called to see a family. My friends have pursued the same course. So that the N. S. have had full play. And after all they have not accomplished much - but 15 of our members have withdrawn - how many more will follow I know not. All the members, I believe, are attached to me. But I rec'd some weeks since a hint that some of them thought it wd be best to have a greater man in my place. A hint

(as you said the other night) is enough for me. So I informed the church I w^d. retire & make way for a better man. At a church meeting, however, the opinion was decidedly expressed that I ought to remain. Another meeting was held, from which I have heard nothing officially - but rumor says that the opinion was expressed by some that I would not be able to stand up against the influence of N. S. efforts & a new preacher. If this be true, of course my path of duty will be plain. I think some of my friends have been unnecessarily frightened by N. Schoolism. It is a small thing here. It has commenced in a wrong spirit. It has been guilty of unworthy conduct. It has been unkind & cruel to me, tho' I treated it with all mildness. You must

not think I am full of wrath - far from it - I am perfectly calm - I pity & forgive.

I have tho't from the first that there ought to be a more talented man than myself in this station. (This I mentioned to you before I came.) And I will cheerfully resign my place to a brother of the proper stamp - tho' it will certainly be a stroke to my feelings, my pride & my prospects. You must not indulge regret at any influence you may have had in bringing me here. I have no regret. I fully believe Providence sent me here. And perhaps thro' the troubles times our church has seen, I have done as well here as most men. To the Lord I commit the whole matter, feeling an humble confidence that He will direct me as He has hitherto. I will have an interest in your prayers.

Dr. Foster is to speak tonight. It is, I think, a kind

of understanding among your friends that they will not honor him with their presence. And he will probably have but few hearers.

Give my kind regards to Mrs W. & family.
your brother in the gospel. Ja. W. McKeenan

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Rev Jas McKeenan

Information respecting the
manuscript of W's views -
religion -

Ind.

Bloomington

Rev. Andrew Wythe D. D.



I neglected to express my gratification with your lecture on Sat. night. It cannot fail to have made a good & useful impression. I have been told the same thing of your morning sermon.