

LETTER TO A BROTHER IN CHRIST,

ON

LIBERTY OF MINISTRY.

INTRODUCTION.

I WOULD say a few words by way of explanation as to the origin of the following letter, and the reasons which now induce me to lay it before the saints of God who meet for worship simply as such, in the name of Jesus. It is well known that within the last two or three years, the question has been seriously raised amongst us, whether we ought not, in part at least, to retrace our steps as to ministry, and restrict the exercise of it to certain persons, recognized as competent to minister,—introducing so much of arrangement as would secure this end, that *these*, and *these only*, be allowed to take part in the meetings of the saints. This, as might have been expected, troubled the souls of many ; but our gracious Lord, who never forsakes his children in their weakness, has overruled this also for good, leading many saints through deeper exercises of spirit on this subject than any they had before experienced, issuing in a much more firm and scriptural conviction of the truth than they had before. Many who had taken the position we occupy, on slight and insufficient grounds, have been in a manner forced *as before God*, to examine this subject by the circumstances just alluded to, and the result has been, that what they had adhered to for other reasons previously, they have since held fast as the truth of God, realizing the power of it in their souls in a way they knew nothing of before. Many valuable explications of Scripture on this subject have been called forth ; and these have been graciously used of God in settling the souls of many. To his name be all the praise.

Still many are exercised. Personal considerations, which were at first associated with the question, have indeed (as all such do in course of time) lost much of their force and interest, and the minds of Brethren are more calm and quiet, and so better prepared to consider the subject in the light of Scripture, and in prayerful

dependance on the Spirit of God. Still many are exercised with the question ;—I doubt not, honestly, sincerely exercised. The tracts too, which have been written on the subject (most of them at least), while perfectly satisfactory to those who can apprehend the force of their statements, take up the question on grounds which cannot so easily be made clear to many. The suggestion to retrace our steps, and restrict the liberty of Ministry which has existed amongst us, rested on these two grounds ;—the denial of the present existence of “gifts” in the Church,—and the idea that their existence in the Apostolic Churches was the only ground on which liberty of Ministry was allowed and enjoined in the Apostolic writings. The valuable tracts above referred to, are chiefly* occupied with the first of these—whether “gifts” do or do not exist in the Church at present ? And as to this, many difficulties may be raised, such as the admitted ruin and disorder of the Church ;† difficulties sufficiently met indeed in Scripture, and in the tracts alluded to ; but it is not easy to simplify those subjects so as to make them intelligible to those saints who have not maturely considered them, and who perhaps have not leisure to examine them so closely as is needful, in weighing well the statements that are made. In the following letter, the subject is considered *chiefly* in reference to the other point :—that if all be true which has been said as to the non-existence of “gifts” at present, *still* we have no warrant for closing or narrowing the door which has hitherto been wide open for anything of Ministry which it might please God, in his infinite grace and condescension, to raise up amongst us. This is ground, which through the Lord’s blessing, may be intelligible to some who cannot as yet deal with the questions which are raised about the other ; and in the hope that it may please the Lord so to use it in blessing to the saints, it is now sent forth.

It is nearly two years since the letter was written, and the interval which has elapsed since then has afforded much opportunity for reviewing the statements it contains, and reconsidering, in the light

* Not altogether, of course. There are many collateral subjects touched upon with great power.

† On this point a most important distinction, largely opened by a beloved brother long ago in several of his writings, cannot, one would think, have been much considered by Brethren. It is referred to here in the hope that through the Lord’s blessing saints may be led to search the Word respecting it. It is this.—Some gifts, such as tongues, were for signs to them which believe not ; and the continuance of these must depend on the Church continuing in such a state morally, that God could identify his glory with it before the world. These have ceased ; nor can we wonder that they should. But there were other gifts, not for display to the world, but for the edifying of the body of Christ ; and we have not ceased to be the body of Christ, though we have ceased to *manifest* that we are such in our walk. We are still members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. The Church cannot be ruined so as to set this aside. And no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, *even as the Lord the church*. The more weak she is, the more does his unfailing love secure to her all that she needs to sustain and nourish her. And it is on this ground that gifts are spoken of in Ephesians. There are no sign gifts referred to there. And as to all others, gifts for the edifying the body of Christ or the members of that body, they can never cease till the Church ceases to need them, or Christ ceases to love his Church.

of all that has passed on the subject, the principles which it maintains. The only result, in the writer's case, is a more deep and solemn conviction of their truth, and (as another has said of the same truths), of their peculiar importance in the present day. May God grant, in his infinite mercy, that the following pages may be used to settle the consciences of some of his weak, but beloved ones, as to these matters.

I would only add, that the name of the beloved brother to whom the letter was written, is omitted ; as also all those passages in the letter which would indicate it to those who are not already acquainted with the circumstances out of which it arose.

October 16th, 1845.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

As you were kind enough to send me a copy of (your recent tract), assigning at the same time, as your reason, that you knew I had got Mr. ——'s reply to your former tract on the same subject, I am sure you will not take it amiss that I trouble you with a few lines on the subject of both tracts. And the more readily do I do this, beloved and honoured Brother, as I find you stating in your last tract, "I will feel myself debtor to him who shews me my error, and I trust, be ready to retract it." God is my witness, that in frankly avowing to you my conviction that you are in error on the point in question, and in presenting you with a few reasons for this my conviction, I do it with the deep feeling before God of how much you are my superior in every thing,—age—endowments—*grace*,—and I would express myself with all the respect and humbleness of mind which become me in addressing one at whose feet I have so gladly sat, and would gladly again and at all times sit.

Permit me, my dear Brother, before I proceed, again to assure you of the deep and unfeigned respect I cherish, and have ever cherished for you, since I was first privileged to know you. A conversation in your breakfast room at ——, on Romans vi., was used of the Lord to open my mind to a subject of immensely greater importance than any of the questions at present disturbing the minds of Brethren,* and under God, I trust ever to feel how much I owe you for the light and blessing communicated through that conversation.

And here let me say, that the direct benefit I received from conversation with you, beloved Brother, on the Friday morning, at

* The writer could hardly express himself so strongly now. There hardly can be a question of more deep and vital importance *to saints*, than the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and our duty to recognize him and wait upon him. But he was not aware, two years ago, of the extent to which this was called in question.

———, was not the only ground of thanksgiving to God, that I had in connexion with that visit. I attended the Scripture reading the evening before, and in that meeting you expressed your views on Ministry, &c., in much the same sort, though of course not so fully, as in your printed tract. And it so happened that *that* was the very subject which at that time was exercising, not my mind only, but my conscience. Up to that time I had acted on views of Ministry which generally obtain; but I was not satisfied with those views, nor with my practical position and course. And then the Quaker view of Ministry had occupied my attention also, and I knew not what to do. On the one hand, I was assured that the prevailing systems put man's choice and man's arrangements in the place of God's calling and the Holy Spirit's guidance; and on the other hand, I could not see clear warrant of Scripture for exclusively insisting on the impulsive Ministry of the Quakers. In this state of mind I attended your meeting at ———. And what was the impression with which I left it? That if Mr. ——— was right, I might quietly settle down in the system with which I was connected, at least as far as all question about Ministry was concerned. But is Mr. ——— right? was a question which had to be tried by an appeal to the only standard of truth; and I trust I can say that I was led earnestly to search the Scriptures on the subject, with prayer to God, *the only wise*, for light and for direction. The result was, the opening to my mind of what I still conceive to be the scriptural principle of Ministry—equally apart from the fleshly assumption of competency to choose a Minister and to arrange beforehand for his labours, on the one hand—and from the constant waiting for felt impulses on the other;—and that is, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the body the Church, maintaining the members in their mutual relationships to each other and to their Head, and using them in mutually ministering to each other's need, and thus to the growth and edifying of the body in love. This is the principle which I understand you to set aside and oppose, at least *as to its present practicability of operation*, in both your tracts. And yet, pardon me for saying so, beloved Brother, this principle appears to me to be untouched by all that you urge in either tract.

Your first tract (I have not it by me, but write from memory), I understand to contain—

1. What you judge to be the scriptural definition of the word *χαρισμα* (charisma or "gift"), or at least of the sense in which you use the word.

2. These propositions—

i. That the existence of the *χαρισματα* ("gifts") in the Apostolic Churches, was *the* ground of an open door for Ministry.

ii. That as far as your knowledge extends, the *χαρισματα* ("gifts") have no existence in the Church now.

iii. That an open door for Ministry should *therefore* cease—that the door should in *whole* or in *part* be closed.

This, I think you will allow to be a fair analysis of your first tract.

But now, supposing for a moment that all this is true (save the last proposition, of course), what, I ask, would you do with respect to *worship*? Does your definition of the word *χαρισμα* affect this? Was *worship* ever an exercise of “gift,” (in your sense of the word)? Was the existence of “gifts” in the early Church, the ground, and the *only* ground of an open door with respect to *worship* as well as ministry? Does the Church occupy any different ground with respect to *worship now*, from what it did in Apostolic times? Does the absence of “gifts” (supposing them to be absent), render it necessary to narrow or close the door with respect to *worship*, as well as ministry, in the Church? May I ask your consideration of these questions, my dear Brother?

To my own mind, nothing is clearer than that all saints are Priests to God, and so *entitled* and *qualified* to worship. “Forever perfected” by the one sacrifice of Jesus, and so *entitled*;—indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and so *qualified*!—qualified to worship in spirit and in truth. As to leading vocally in united worship—what enables one to do it, while another cannot, is not, as I judge, and *never was*, “gift,” in your sense of the word, but the sovereign will of Him who *dwells* in *all* the saints, but chooses to give expression to their holy joy through one whose heart he fills with gladness, and whose mouth he opens in praise; while he lays the wants and sins of the body on the heart of another, and from his afflicted burdened spirit, draws forth the confessions and supplications which the state of the body renders fit. And this from my own experience and observation (narrow and limited and poor as it indeed is), I can witness, is often in *total ignorance* of the state of the body, as to any human means of acquaintance with it. A brother, in total ignorance of the state of a gathering, comes into a meeting for worship, and there he is led to give thanks, to make confession, to offer supplication, so definitely embodying the worship of all present who are in communion with God, that all hearts go with him; and it is assuredly realized by all present, that the Spirit through him is leading the worship of the saints. That there are such cases, I think you will not question. How do you account for them? By “gift” you cannot, for you see it not. Knowledge, through intercourse, information, &c., will not account for them, for I am supposing the absence of all this. The indwelling and sovereign pleasure of the Holy Ghost accounts for such a case. And ought we not to leave him an open door to lead the worship of the saints thus by whomsoever he will? Of course, if any act in the flesh, pretending to do it in the Spirit, the way is always open for loving reproof and faithful discipline: but how you could shut the door without grieving and dishonouring the Spirit, I confess I see not. And all this apart from all question of Ministry or gift.

I would only say further, that I have known cases of most manifest *prayer in the Holy Ghost*, in uneducated persons, and persons who occasionally, and that in their prayers perhaps, drop a word or two which would not be pleasing to ears polite. But I could as soon lay aside prayer myself, as forbid them to pray in the assembly of the saints.

And then, to come to the question of Ministry—Ministry in the word, I mean :—supposing all your data to be good and indisputable, I see not the force of the conclusions you draw from thence. Let us look at it a moment thus :—

There were once “gifts” in the Church—

God directed that there should be an unlimited open door for their exercise—

There are no “gifts” now, or at least we see none :—

Supposing all this—what then? Shut the door? Nay, beloved Brother, who opened it at the first? Was it not He who shuts and no man opens, who opens and no man shuts? And before we can attempt to close a door which he once, *confessedly by all*, opened, ought we not to see one of these two things—either a plain direction *in the word*, that when “gifts” ceased, there should be no open door for their exercise,—or, a plain statement *in the word* that the door was opened *only* for the exercise of “gifts,” and also, that when these were withdrawn, they would never be restored? I have looked for one or other of these in both your tracts, but no proof of either could I find. You do not point us to the passage where we are told to close the door, when “gifts” cease. You do not furnish us with a passage which explicitly declares that the door was opened *only* for the exercise of “gifts.” And you allow, that though you see them not at present, they *may be* restored. Now I feel, beloved Brother, that I could afford to rest the whole case on this admission. God once, in rich and sovereign grace, conferred certain “gifts” on the Church, and authoritatively directed that there should be an open door left for their developement and exercise. We see not these “gifts,” in existence *now*, but *they may be restored*. Now, shall we, during the sorrowful, humbling period of their withdrawal, presume to close the door against their exercise, so that when restored, if ever, there shall no room be found for them, the whole ground being pre-occupied by the ministrations of those who though destitute of these “gifts,” are still able to speak with some comfort to the saints, and *do speak*, and that *by arrangement* too, lest the expectation of “gifts” should be abused by the flesh? Would that be humble? Or would it not rather be the lowly place, supposing that there are no “gifts” at present, but believing that they may be restored, to confess our sin and failure, jealously to guard against all fleshly imitation of “gift,” but *as jealously* to guard against any narrowing or closing of the door, even, as I am supposing, that there was only the possibility of “gifts” being restored, and the hope in the Lord’s

mercy, that they would or might be. I know indeed, that you intimate in your first tract, that "gifts," if restored, would open a door for themselves ; but as you quote no Scripture in proof of this, of course it can only be received as the opinion of a dear and valued Brother in the Lord ; entitled to the fullest consideration indeed, but needing to be attested by the word of God, before it can become a principle of conduct with the saints.

All this, beloved Brother, is on the assumption that your premises are good and unquestionable. But are they so ? Is it, for instance, a certain thing that there are no "gifts" in the Church at present, even in your sense of the word ? *You* may see none : *I* might see none : twenty Brethren might see none ;—but would it in that case be certain that there are none ? There might be none here in this town. But the saints gathered here in the name of Jesus are but a very small portion of his body—a few of his feeblest members. May there not be more favoured ones elsewhere ? And is it not our blessing, amidst all our weakness and disorder, that when we sit down to the table of our Lord, there is an open door for every saint ? That membership in the one body of Christ is the only title to communion that we recognize ? But supposing that there should be somewhere a member of Christ possessed of "gift" in the highest sense, (and that there *may be* one you do not deny) ; and supposing that in the Lord's great grace he should be sent to break bread with the few saints here ; and suppose that acting on the principle of your tracts, there was no open door amongst us for the exercise of his "gift"—that it was arranged for some Brother or Brethren to conduct the meeting ;—suppose all this.—Need I say more ? I leave you yourself to draw the conclusion.

To close the door of Ministry, on the ground that "gifts" no longer exist in the Church, without *the fullest proof that they do not exist*, would, I humbly judge, be rash and premature ; the obtaining of such proof would be a matter of no small difficulty ; inasmuch as the inquiry would have to extend to the whole Church militant, in system and out of it ; and would it not be to more profit, my dear Brother, leaving the door as God has left it in his word—open—to humble ourselves before Him and pray Him to bestow upon us all the "gifts" and graces we need, than to prosecute such an inquiry as to whether "gifts" exist or not ?

But is it certain, I would further ask, that the existence of "gifts," according to your definition of the word, was ever the exclusive ground on which the door for Ministry was opened in the church ? Bear with me, when I say, and endeavour to prove, *that this was not the case in Apostolic times*. Have we not the origin, the blessed source of it, in John vii. 38, 39 ? The Spirit is there presented to us as the endowment of all believers ; and that too, not in order to their individual joy and blessing only, but that the "rivers of living water"

may "flow out;" and whether we regard them as flowing upwards in thanksgiving and praise, (the blessed Spirit being the source and power of all worship, see John iv.), or as flowing outwards in loving testimony to the world or communion with each other as saints, joyfully ministering to one another what has been ministered to our own souls in power and blessing by the Spirit; in either case, who shall presume to set bounds to those streams of blessing? Who shall say that they *may* flow from the glorified Head through this or that member of the body, *but not through others*? If in the sovereign grace of God there be one or more through whom they are wont generally or at all times to flow, surely we are bound in love and gratitude to own the grace which has made such what they are, and to esteem them proportionably; but shall we cut off some lesser rivulet, and say that we can dispense with it? Or shall we say that where, *as yet*, there has been no flowing forth of the living stream, there *never will* be, and so refuse an open channel? It is no question of right to minister. God forbid that I should assert any such thing. But it is whether we are at liberty to make arrangements which shall *practically* say that blessing shall flow to the saints only through one or more persons whose endowments and attainments enable them to speak acceptably in their meetings? I would humbly say, No. If it please the Lord, through a verse of a hymn or a chapter of the word, read or spoken by the most unlearned among the saints, to minister blessing to the rest, we may not close the door against even such ministry as this. For ministry or *service*, it surely may be as refreshing to the heart of Jesus as the most correct and elaborate teaching, and may be the means of conveying really *more* blessing to the saints.

If we turn to 1 Cor. xii., we do indeed find the Apostle opening the chapter with these words—"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." But is his discourse in that chapter limited to the subject of spiritual gifts? "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," he does indeed say. But he adds, "And there are differences of ministries, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." And he goes further still; for after enumerating the gifts, and again asserting the activity and sovereignty of the blessed Spirit in verse 11, he proceeds thus—"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The Apostle begins his discourse with the subject of spiritual gifts; but, as is wont with him, his subject widens as he proceeds, until it embraces all the varied operations of God and ministries of the saints, as well as the formation of the

body, which is the sphere of those diversified gifts, ministries, and operations. And it is this, the essential principle on which the body is constituted, and the dwelling of the Holy Ghost in that body, which, as I humbly judge, is the groundwork of the counsels and exhortations which follow. As for instance, from verse 22 to 27, "Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary : and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour ; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need : BUT GOD HATH TEMPERED THE BODY TOGETHER, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there be no schism in the body," &c. Now, my dear Brother, this appears to me the word of admonition which we need. Surely, if I were so to bandage my little finger as to prevent the vital fluids from circulating through it, as well as the rest of my body, I should not only be injuring it, but injuring my body likewise. The injury would not be so perceptible or so fatal as if inflicted on some other part of my body ; *but it would be as real*. And if by our arrangements we hinder the living and ever-blessed Spirit from ministering in the least degree, through the least learned or esteemed among the saints, to the edification of the rest, there is sin against the body ; and sin against the Spirit too, by which we are all baptized into one body :—sin *as real*, though perhaps not so conspicuous, as if we silenced a Brother who was wont to speak largely and much to edification. "*God hath tempered the body together,*" and surely this should make us jealous of interfering in any way with arrangements of our own.

This is a point, which, for want of time, I cannot pursue ; but I would just notice that I see the same thing in Eph. iv. 16, and in the injunctions to *mutual* care of one another and *exhortation of one another* addressed to all saints in Heb. iii. 13, also x. 24, 25. How these can possibly be acted on without an open door for Ministry, I confess I cannot perceive.

I am aware that you urge the enfeebled, ruined condition of the Church ; and I am free to admit that we are in great danger of losing sight of this. But would a deep sense of this lead us to close the door against anything that God *might be pleased* in pity to us to bestow ?—to say nothing of closing it against anything from him actually existing amongst us.

Your definition of "gift" I will not dispute. I do not exactly see with you in it ; but I feel that I am not sufficiently familiar with the ground on which I should have to tread, to warrant me in maintaining an opposite judgment ; nor do I feel it needful in any wise. I would only say that I have no doubt whatever of the existence of "gifts" in exercise of the highest character,—"*gifts*" answering to your own definition of the word.

One word as to arrangement, and that in two aspects. First, the arrangement in a gathering which you state in your second tract to be the great point, "that an open door for Ministry be left only to those with **PROVED** ability from God to edify;" secondly, arrangement by a Brother in preparation for speaking among the saints. As to the first, it explains to me what you mean in your first tract where you say (I quote from memory) that you do not advocate *formal* ordination*—that is, I suppose, that you would not contend for the form, if the thing could exist without the form. But it is just *the thing*, and not *the form*, which so offends the consciences of saints, and which, as I judge, so limits and hinders and grieves the Spirit of God. To say "such or such a brother has the proved ability from God to edify, therefore no one else must minister," is just, as it appears to me, to deny to the Holy Spirit the liberty to edify through any others—to shut up the Holy One to one line of operation in which it has pleased him to make his power known. But that the Lord has often used a brother to edify his people, is no security that that brother will be invariably so used. And yet, if all others are shut out from ministering, what is he to do? He may have nothing to communicate, and I think we can all remember seasons in which it has been so; and yet, in that case, he must either speak for the sake of speaking, because he is looked to to speak, or else there must be no ministry. And then if there is to be no open door to any but those with *proved* ability, *how is the ability to be proved?* I remember how it was in the denomination I once belonged to. Young men had meetings among themselves in which they made the experiment of speaking; or an old preacher took a young man with him to make the first attempt, that so if he did not succeed the senior brother might supply the deficiency; and then there was the academical preparation and the trial sermon—all to secure this end, that none but "those of *proved* ability" might minister. Surely you would not have us go back to plans and arrangements such as these! and yet I confess I see no difference in *principle* between these things and what you plead for in your tracts.

And then as to arrangement for speaking. God forbid that I should say one word against the diligent searching of the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer! Would that we all knew more of these blessed exercises! But to give ourselves to these, that we may, as the Lord enables us, attain to the knowledge of all that he has revealed, and so be furnished unto every good work, is one thing. The sitting down to prepare a discourse for a certain occasion is another. The former course honours God, and makes any brother who is wont to minister, "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, and like unto a man which is an householder which bringeth

* The words are, "I make it not a question of education any more than I do of formal ordination, but simply of proved ability from God."

forth out of his treasure things new and old." The treasure is there, and it is through prayer, and meditation, and reading of the word, that it has been acquired ; but it is left to Him who alone (fully) knows the necessities of the saints to guide *at the time* as to what portion of the treasure shall be brought forth. In the other case, a knowledge of the state and necessities of the saints is assumed, which none but God can have ; and a line of action is based on that assumption which may serve to shew the ability of the Minister, but can hardly be expected to be owned of God in supplying the real necessities of the saints. How often have we known it that when there has been the least of direct immediate preparation—when a brother has gone to meeting more sensible than usual of his utter emptiness—when he has been led to speak on a subject he has not meditated on for months, perhaps for years—he has spoken with special power, and many have witnessed that it has been as though the word was sent specially to them ? Oh yes, amid all our shameful failure and sad weakness, God, the living God, is still amongst us, and where he is owned and trusted in, he fails not to make manifest his blessed presence.

One word more. I see nothing of "pretension" or "assumption" necessarily associated with the belief in the existence of "gift," and leaving an open door for its exercise. If any one does minister, professing to do so by "gift," or "of the Spirit," when he really does not, but acts from himself in the matter, then there is assumption, then there is pretension indeed. But may not this be as faithfully and fully dealt with in reproof and discipline where "gift" is believed in, as where it is denied ? And is there anything of pretension in our gathering together in the name of Jesus, trusting his word that he will be in the midst, and looking to him for all that he sees fit in his wisdom and grace to bestow, leaving at the same time an open door for all of Ministry and help that he may please to raise up amongst us ? If any one sees pretension here, I confess I see it not myself.

To gather up the points on which I have touched. I understand the definite, practical object of your tracts to be, as you yourself state it—the closing of the door of Ministry against all but those who are of proved ability from God to edify. That such should be recognized, or at least an understanding amongst us that none but these take part in our meetings, and this on the ground of what your tracts teach respecting "gift," and the abuse of the opposite view which (as you judge) prevails—in one word, that *restricted*, and not *open* Ministry should be adopted. To all this I object—

1. That we need an open door for Worship as well as Ministry, and that this is unaffected by any question about "gifts."

2. That the door for Ministry in the Church was opened by God himself—that he nowhere directs it to be closed—that he nowhere

says it was opened *only* for "gift," and dependant on *its* continuance—that you yourself admit the possibility of its restoration—and that, in the absence of any *divine direction* to close the door, surely this is enough to lead us to leave it as open as God has left it in his word.

3. That you have not proved, *and cannot prove*, that "gift," even in your sense of the word, does not now exist. The utmost you can say is, *you do not see it*.

4. That it is evident from Scripture, that the ground of an open door for Ministry and Worship in the Church was not the existence of any particular "gifts," or "class of gifts," but the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the body; and that we cannot, without hindering his blessed operations, limit ministry to those whom he has *already* used in ministry, to the exclusion of others who *have not yet been*, but *may hereafter be so used by him*.

5. That ministry in the flesh may be dealt with in discipline where "gift" is acknowledged to exist, as well as where its existence is denied.

Believe me, dear Mr. ———,
Your affectionate but unworthy Brother in Jesus,

* * * *

P.S.— *It is with God that we have to do* when we meet in the name of Jesus, and in dependance on his blessed Spirit as present amongst us. We may meet on this or that *principle*, seen as a principle, embraced as a principle, sought to be acted on as a principle, *without seeing or having to do with God in it at all*. This I fear has too often been done, and then when trouble has arisen, *principle* has been no defence, security, or comfort; discouragement has ensued, and by and by a return to former things has taken place. On the other hand, where it has been done in faith to God,—where it has really been the meeting *Him, and leaning upon Him*, He has kept down the forwardness of the flesh, or if it has appeared, saints have not been dismayed, but have the more cried to *Him* who is in the midst of every two or three gathered in his name, and have had their faith in *Him* strengthened, by *seeing His hand correct the evil*, instead of seeking to correct it themselves by plans and arrangements of their own. My own experience and observation have been very limited; but within that sphere I have never known any abuse of the open door for Ministry amongst us, except in one or two instances, in which a little patient waiting on God soon brought the remedy, through God's marvellous grace.

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