

He was true and loyal in his friendship. This is not a small thing in a world where there are so many who will stand by friends only so long as it costs them no loss of any one's favour which they desire to retain. I might have doubts about the attitude of other men of smoother speech, but I always felt confident that John A. Williams would be as true to me behind my back as before my face.

He was a manly, independent man. This was his most distinguishing characteristic. He had opinions of his own, and was not afraid to express them. He often spoke out where more timid men would be silent. He thought for himself, and, whether his conclusions were popular with others or not, he stood firmly by what he believed to be right and true. Men of this type will not find it as smooth sailing as men who drift with whatever wind happens to blow. Yet in this he was right. Better stand alone and be true to our convictions of what is right, than to gain popular favour by time-serving conformity to what the policy of a shifting expediency may demand.

He was an extensive reader and kept well abreast of the best progressive thought of the day. Stanley's "Life of Thomas Arnold," and Farrar's "History of Free Thought," were books which, though he did not fully agree with them, enlarged the range of his thinking, and made a permanent impression upon his mind. He did not believe in men substituting their own interpretations of truth for the living word, and counting those who reject their opinions rejectors of the very truth of God. He often expressed the opinion that many put forth teachings about the Bible which the Bible does not claim for itself. He could appreciate what was good in the writings of men from whom he differed widely, such as James Martineau, Dean Stanley and Cardinal Newman; and yet he held with the firm grasp of a sturdy faith the simple truths of the Gospel relating to conversion and sanctification, and preached them explicitly and fervently. He united in an unusual degree a strong sympathy with the catholic and progressive spirit of the age with most of the characteristics of an old-fashioned Methodist preacher.

In this union of liberal thinking, with a steadfast adherence to the great central doctrines of our holy religion, I have never known any one just like him. It is easy to find men of liberal views and sentiments, and men who are zealous for orthodoxy; but rarely are these characteristics united in the same man. Though in strong sympathy with the spirit of the age, he was a man of a devout and godly spirit, who kept the fire burning in his own soul by frequent communion with God. He never outgrew.