Letter from Alfred Brunson to James B. Finley

Alfred Brunson

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Dear Brother,

I have the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of yours of the 21st, from a few days since. It was a notable improvement in me, in this distant and long-paused land, to have been such for 2 months and unable to write, and that I have made such progress every day, but two or three of which over the day, as expected to be answered with your proposed. But that same providence that afflicted us, partially supplied our in the presence of the mighty one, Canada. I am to be near that I can ride in a sleigh and that in the mountains to the river, a journey last fall in a two-day meeting, and am going this day to the river.

When I came near Boston, I looked many hours, as much as my heart failed for the first time in a long time. But things have taken a more favorable turn. We have added 10 to society in the city and to the stores. We have 100 dollars for our fire, and quite likely in the present, considering that I have not been in society. Mr. Jones, his every silver, and the people have subscribed 100 dollars for our fire, and quite likely in the present, considering that I have not been in society. Mr. Jones, his every silver, and the people have subscribed 100 dollars for our fire, and quite likely in the present, considering that I have not been in society.

Our circuit is very large, nearly 200 miles round of me here toManipal 26 times a month. But I have a more difficult time steamer than the sailing or furnishing, and I am the fastest swimmer. I am not very dexterous, and I have some difficulty in furnishing, but it is the hands of our work. I shall try to keep any thing to my ends, and I shall always be seen. I am attached to your society, and I always calculate to hear with the rest.
[Handwritten letter discussing various topics, including the current economic situation and the need for salvation and support for the poor and needy. The text is written in a cursive style and is filled with personal reflections and observations.]
February 20, 1823    Detroit

Alfred Brunson

Dear Brother,

I have the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of yours of the 20 Jan. a few days since. It was a welcome message to me in this distant & lonesome land. I have been sick for 2 months and unable to ride, tho I have made out to preach every Sabath but two; one of which was the day we expected to be honored with your presence. But that wise Providence that afflicted you, partially supplied our wants in the presence of Br. Petty from Canada. I have so far recovered, that I can ride in a sleigh. And went in this manner to the River Reason last week to a two day meeting and am going this day to the River Rouge [Rouge].

When I came here things looked very gloomy, so much so that my spirits sunk & my heart failed for the first time in my life. But things have taken a more favourable [turn] since. We have added 19 to Society in this city as ____ in the rest of the circuit. We preach here every Sabath and the people have subscribed 180 dollars for our support; & quite liberal in their presents, considering that we have but 38 in Society. We have 1000 dollars subscribed to build a meeting house, which we design to put up in the Spring or Summer. But your presence is much needed, not only for the help of the house, but for the Society at large.

Our circuit is very large nearly 400 miles round & we have to preach 26 times a round. But I have a worse difficulty to encounter than the riding or preaching, tho’ it is the hardest circuit I ever rode. I feel some delicacies to mention it, from several considerations. I always considered my colleague more intimately connected with me than any other preacher, and resolved never to say anything to my P.E. about the little slips & foibles of his life, at least, until I had tried to cure them myself, (& I wish so to be done by.) and I always calculate to bear with the infirmities of them, as I wish them to do with me. But in my present circumstances perhaps I shall be justified in naming things to you, that cannot be helped with out your interferance. But I do not wish to lead you to any wrong impressions about Br. Baker. He is a pious, holy & zealous man. But he is not received as a preacher, no body doubts his sincerity, yet his manner of address is so displeasing that the people many of them refuse to hear him or pay their subscriptions; my situation under these circumstances you know must be trying; my feelings are deeply interested for him, as a man, a Christian, a minister & especially as a colleague. And my feelings are interested also for my self & family, I have 72 $ rent to pay, & 30 or 40 for wood & 15 or 20 for horse feed, besides the other expences of my family. And if I should not obtain a part at least of the subscriptions in this city, I will end the year in debt; for we have but little prospects in the other parts of the circuit. He is aware of these things & feels wounded to the quick, as well as my self. And I proposed to him to divide the circuit, (however not without your sanction) but your not [coming] to qr meeting left us still in suspense; he agreed [when I] was sick, to take the south end of the circuit, till our two day meeting, when he informed me that he was discouraged, for the people would not come much to meeting, & refused to pay any thing unless I came to that end of the circuit. We are now in
this situation. He thinks it is because he is not a yankee, but that is not the case, for no preacher was ever more popular in this city than your self., & they all know that you are not one. Other preachers as Trader & Strange were well recieved , the people are mostly well informed &enterprising, and having been raised in the Land of Steady habit, are favourable to Methodism, and from its superiority in doctrine & preaching; so if a Methodist preacher is inferior to a Presbyterian in point of tal lent, he will have but few to hear him & less to pay him. Our church is not established here as it is in Ohio, where the majority are inward or outward count Methodist. So that if we do anything in this territory, we must do it by the above mentioned means- with the Blessing of God. Perhaps if I tell you, after making these remarks that we are gaining more in popularity, grace & numbers than all other denominations, you will think that I am Boasting & the whole of this letter perhaps may have this appearance, (and this was one of the greatest objections I had in my mind to writing to you on the subject,) but in a point of so much importance, to me and my charge, I must lay aside all delicacies & speak the naked truth- another reason I have for wishing the circuit divided is, my family circumstances; my wife will be confined in 2 or 3 months, and she is so fearful of getting into debt, that she has taken Boarders & I know of no other way to support my family, & I don’t know that I can do it that way. But this being the case my presence is much needed at home. However, if you think it best, I can go round the whole circuit. But if it could be, I should be glad if a colleague who would be acceptable to the people, & I believe it would be agreeable to Br. Baker if you can get a proper person to fill his place, to make an exchange.

A preacher to do good in this Teritory, must understand our doctrines & be capable of explaining and defending them in a pleasing & fluent manner, and as Methodists are scarce, he ought to know how to sing, other wise he will have no singing , and this you know is a considerable part of worship among the eastern people.

This teritory is settling very fast, & there are but few preachers of any denomination in it; But as soon as the population increases so as to incorage the Presbyterian preachers they will probably swarm in this country; it is important therefore to have Methodism established & to have it keep pace with the population.

Br. Case has been here & left a letter for you enclosed with this, and we have agreed to have a camp meeting on the 23rd of May on the River Roughe [Rouge]. We should be extremely glad to have your company together with Br. Young & other preachers. We are in want of Hymn Books; there are some books here belonging to Br. Case but no Hymn Books. He has left a box with us to sell untill you can supply us. I have many things to write but time &paper grows short. Give me love to Br. Eliot &wife, Sister Finley, Br. Young & all the preachers-

Rev. J.B. Finley

Alfred Brunson

My wife wishes to send her love to you & sister Finley, to Br. & sister Eliot & to Br. Young