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James B. Finley Letters

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Letter from Cyrus Brooks to James B. Finley

Cyrus Brooks

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Recd & Brooks
 July 17 49

Columbus, July 18. 1849

Dear Bro. Finley,

I was out at the prison this morning, and Col. Sewey showed me a letter which he had just received from you. From this letter, I think you are under a misapprehension in regard to the appointment of Bro Donahoo as Chaplain. I may be mistaken, but so far as I am informed, I supposed it was a mere temporary arrangement, to meet the present terrible emergency. I do not think ^{the} Board of Directors dismissed you, or intended to dismiss ^{you}, only in so far as your feeble health rendered it necessary that you should be released from the onerous duties of the station. On the other hand I doubt not that if you were able to return tomorrow, you would be cordially welcomed as Moral Instructor.

Certain I am, that most if not all the Directors, together with Col. Sewey, and I may say all others of correct feelings, who know your state of health, so far from blaming you for being absent, are satisfied that it is best you are away. They say that if you had been there they would have had you to nurse, and probably to bury, as they are satisfied that, at your age and in your state of health, you could not have endured the fatigue and exposure at all. I have no idea that the Board intended the slightest censure upon you, by appointing some one to attend upon the poor sufferers as a spiritual adviser, in your absence.

And I never saw any men more in need of the counsel and support of a minister of Christ, in my life. They were dying off in great numbers, a general feeling of alarm, amounting to an actual panic, pervaded the prison, and there was no one there to administer the consolations of the Gospel, or point the poor creatures to the Lamb of God. Father Finley was not there, and all judicious persons thought you ought not to be there—that it would be murderous to thrust you in there if they could, and little less than suicidal for you to undertake it.

They came to me, and asked me if I thought Bro. Crum would go out. I told them that such was his health, and such the condition of his family, that I thought he ought not to go, and they ought not to urge him to go. They inquired if I knew of any one that could be obtained. I told them I did not, unless Bro. Donahoo would go. They saw him, and he consented to undertake it, and the next day when I went out to visit the prisoners, I found him among them, laboring like a man of God. From what I saw then, and what I have seen and heard of his labors there since, I doubt not he has done much good, and has directed many a dying eye to the cross of Christ.

Things are much improved there now, but when I first went out, the scene was such as beggars description. And then, to see with what eagerness many of the poor fellows would grasp the precious promises of the Gospel, while the tears rolled down their cheeks,

it seemed enough to melt the hardest heart. It was a precious privilege to come to them with the message of mercy, and tell them of Jesus and his great salvation.

Through God's mercy my own health is good, and my family much as usual. I suppose you have heard of the death of Drs. Gard and Lathrap. I was with them at the prison on Tues., and that night they were both taken. Doct. Gard died Wed. evening, and Doct. Lathrap lingered along several days. Genl. Gale died on Mond. and there are more or less cases, and one or two deaths about the city, almost every day. I have heard of no cases to day, and it has been thus far exceedingly light compared with with Dayton.

I am sorry to hear of your feeble health and hope you may soon be better. Pray for us.

Yours in the Gospel of Christ
Cyrus Brooks

There have been some very hard things said about your being away, by some that know not whereof they affirm, and by some that hate God and religion, and would be glad to butcher the character if not cut the throats of Gospel ministers, especially Methodist preachers. But your friends here, some of them at least, have stood by you, and I think public sentiment is getting right in regard to it.