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Letter to Philander Chase

I H. Brooks

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Retford 27 May 1824

Rev^d & dear Sir/

Among the numerous clergymen who have been introduced to you at the various places you have visited, you perhaps will not be able to recollect one of the name of Brooks who had that pleasure at the house of Mr Shaw of Halifax. I think I understood from you at that time, not only that your object was to raise a Fund for a College in the Diocese of Ohio, but also that you would be happy to meet with suitable persons to go out with you as preachers of the Gospel, and such a one I am inclined to think I can recommend to your notice from this neighbourhood. ~~There~~ I will endeavour, without further preamble, to describe both what he is, & what he is not. His name is William Cockren, he is a native of Chlingden near Wooler Northumberland.

W. Brooks
27 May
1824

but his dialect so broad, that I always supposed
him to be a Scotchman, till he wrote his ad-
dress &c; and ~~he~~ indeed he considers himself one,
and was educated & brought up ~~in~~ a Presbyterian
His origin is mean; he has been trained up
in his youth (but he is now only 27 years of
age) to agriculture; with every branch of
which he is well acquainted; & I apprehend
possesses rather superior abilities in that
way, ~~for~~ he has had the situation of Bailiff
of a gentleman's estate offered him more
than once; and more particularly I understand
^{that} John Smart Esq^r of Trewitt House near Alwinton
with whom he served three years, would be
likely to give him a good character as a
husbandman, should it be needed. His reason
for refusing the eligible situations which ~~had~~
presented themselves in this department was,
that as soon as he received serious religious
impressions, his desire was to preach the
Gospel he had received to others; and though

his circumstances almost led him to despair of ordination, yet he determined at all events to keep his object steadily in view, and to pursue such avocations as might rather facilitate his preparation, than retard it; or at least afford him opportunities for study. Consistently with this resolution he ~~commenced~~ commenced teaching, as a village schoolmaster, in a very humble way in this neighbourhood; his school is in a house formerly licensed as a Methodist meeting, and Mr Coakley ^{used to} ~~formerly~~ co-operate in religious matters with that body, though he never was a member of their society. As he became better acquainted with them, he had reason to condemn, in his own judgment, many of their sentiments, and much of their system; which embroiled him with them: & his proceedings, in his endeavours to benefit the souls of those around him, had well nigh got him into difficulty, ^{owing to the jealousy of some of} ~~with~~ the surrounding clergy. As he had been a hearer of mine when

Curate of this Parish, he applied to me for advice, and as I deemed his conduct irregular in several points, I condemned it, and advised such a course as was doubtless, to a member of another Community, a great trial of his humility, & self denial, & of his sincerity in applying to me for advice. He nevertheless, after due discussion, adopted it; and I can truly say, that ever since my acquaintance with him (which commenced at this time) I have found him teachable; and tenderness of conscience, and a desire to win souls, have ever seemed ~~to be~~ predominant in all his proceedings & determinations. From his application to me, and the advice which arose out of it, the question as to what is really an Apostolic Church came on the tapis; which led to much earnest enquiry on his part, and I am happy to say, that the result is, he is now a consistent Episcopalian and I should add, that the curate of the Parish in which he teaches & catechises; ~~and~~ who is also the vicar of Pontefract (alias Pomfret)

and who was in the first instance very prejudiced against ^{him,} has been so won by his prudent & Christian conduct, that he is now his warm friend, has him frequently to his house to tea, helps him in Greek & Latin, & strongly advises his entering the Church. This is the more remarkable, as I am satisfied, that Mr Cochrer has never compromised his principles, nor concealed his sentiments; and Mr Marshall, the Clergyman in question, is opposed professedly to men of evangelical sentiments. When he consulted me about entering the Church, I dissuaded him from the idea of ever seeking to become a minister of the establishment in this country; for such is prejudice, that the circumstances of his birth, which would soon be blazed abroad ~~was the cause~~ were he likely to become useful; - his marriage also, for he is united to a young woman, who, though a suitable match for him, was a servant in a gentleman's family in this neighbourhood, - his manners, which though meek and Christian, have not that polish which bespeak the gentleman; and lastly his dialect, & great want of information connected with all that is associated with genteel society in this part of the world; - these circum-

stances, ^{repeat,} would I am sure prevent his usefulness,
if he exercised his ministry in connection with the
establishment in this country. Thinking him, how-
ever, well fitted for the Christian ministry, I
wrote to the Church Missionary Society, and
communicated all particulars respecting him;
the result was, an offer, on their part, in
the first instance, of the situation of Farmer
or superintendent of the land ceded by the King
of Travancore to the Syrian College; but as
that situation would, as he conceives, close the
door upon his hopes of preaching the Gospel,
he has declined it, though eligible in a pecuniary
point of view. I then determined to wait
Mr Pickett's (the Secretary's) annual visit
to this place, that he might see & converse
with Mr Cockren; but in the mean while
I thought from his knowledge of agriculture,
his ability & readiness to endure hardships &
privations, and the circumstance of there being
so many Scotch in Ohio, ^{he} would be so desirable

a coadjutor in your diocese, that I wrote to the
Missionary Society for the printed statement con-
cerning your visit, which I put into his hands.
The result is, a most earnest desire on his
part to be with you; & Mr Bickersteth after
conversing with him the day before yesterday, told
me, he found his mind so biased towards Ohio,
that tho' he was much pleased with his spirit
& character, & could wish to have him in the
employ of our Society as a missionary, he thought
it better that I should write to you. Of his other
acquirements I have to notice that he is self-
taught in Latin & Greek (with the exception of
Mr Marshall's assistance) and is deficient in
those languages. I have a brother whom I am
preparing for the Church, & by way of improving
him, & doing Mr Cockren a service, I have set
them to read Prolegomena & the Greek Testament toge-
ther; occasionally examining them as they pro-
ceed. Mr Cockren has since made a stride, but
he is quite ignorant of prosody, and I have not
to touch it; as I think, in his case, it is
secondary consideration. Besides this how-

ever, he is well acquainted with Arithmetic and practical mathematics, so as to be able to teach them; and I think would soon recover the Elements of Geometry (which he has formerly studied) so as to be able to do the same.

Under these circumstances, dear Sir, I introduce him to your notice; not so much in the way of recommendation, as wishing you to exercise a cool & deliberate judgment. — Have the goodness, however, to let me hear from you soon, that I may not keep him in unnecessary suspense; & if you do not think his services desirable, I have little doubt but he will be acceptable to the Church Missy Society. I should add, that he has no property; if therefore you feel disposed to ordain him, be so kind as to say whether he is to accompany, or to follow you to America; & whether any assistance could be afforded him toward his Passage out: I think I might be able to raise a trifle here. I am so ignorant of ~~the~~ etiquette in America, that I hope you will excuse any irregularity or omission in my mode of addressing you, believe me to remain, with sincere respect & prayers for the success of your object, Rev^d & dear Sir, ^{affectionally} yours, 19th Nov. 1801.