

Letter - to John Fine

by Charles Finney

The church in Ogdensburgh invites Charles Finney to come and minister to them, promising support and encouraging him to come if he believes he can enjoy God's presence and have faith in the promise of the Covenant.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 18:20, Acts 2:17, Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 10:24-25, James 5:16

Topics: "Prayer", "Revival"

Description

In his letter to John Fine, Charles Finney reflects on the challenges and spiritual turmoil faced by the church in Ogdensburgh, New York, while also expressing hope for revival and divine intervention. He acknowledges the difficulties the congregation has encountered but emphasizes the signs of God's favor and the birth of new believers. Finney is invited to return and lead the church, with assurances of support, as the community yearns for a renewed experience of God's presence and guidance. The letter captures the fervent spirit of prayer and the anticipation of a brighter future for the church amidst its struggles.

Transcript

To John Fine of Ogdensburgh, New York

3 March 1826

[MS in American Home Missionary Society Papers, Chicago Theological Seminary. Cited in Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual; History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 153, n. 5, but now reported missing.]

After Finney's successful labors in the small townships of Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties in upstate New York in 1824 and 1825, it was once again his former pastor, George Gale, who opened up the way for him to extend his evangelistic ministry. Gale had moved to Western in Oneida county, New York, where he invited Finney to preach. This was the start of the Oneida county revivals which soon drew Finney into the centre of the religious stage.

Finney had gone to Western in late September 1825. The next January he received a letter from John Fine, a lawyer in Ogdensburgh, New York. John Fine (1794-1867) was a lawyer and judge of the Supreme Court. In his Memoirs, Finney describes how he had become acquainted with Fine while he had been

laboring in De Kalb in St Lawrence County in 1825, and how he had received financial assistance from him.

Fine's letter reads:

Ogdensburgh Jan 13. 1826.

Dear Sir

At a meeting of our Presbytery a few days since Mr McAuley declared that he should no longer hold himself answerable to the Presbytery nor to any other Body in connection with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. The Presbytery thereupon declared this church vacant. We are now released from him. We shall meet in the Court house to worship. His friends have the largest interest in both buildings both the old & new meeting house & will therefore retain them. Mr McA will probably form an independent Church or connect himself with the Canada Presbytery or with the Seceder Presbytery of Washington Cy.

We have had very sore troubles since you were here. We have had distinguishing marks of God's favor in answer to prayer. In some instances when human wisdom failed us & we were almost overcome he manifested himself as near at hand. & if an outstretched arm had been visibly extended it could have given us no firmer belief of an Almighty interposition.

Some few souls have been born into the kingdom. The church is now in difficulty but a brighter day has not dawned on us for 3 years.

Can you come to us. Temporal support you may freely depend on. And if you believe you can enjoy the Light of God's countenance & have the same degree or even a like degree of faith in the promise of the Covenant you must come.

If you can come & wish a more formal request we will send one signed by the Elders.

Your friends here are well. Seely has been thru the furnace of affliction but is still supported. McAuley looks as if he had been in the grave. Remember us to your wife.

Yours truly

John Fine

Speaking of the revival in Western, Whitney Cross wrote :

Rome ignited from Western, and "the explosion of Rome ... scattered the fire over all this region of country", sending sparks to Utica, Boonville, Verona, and other towns. Nash knew "not where to go, or what to do," and Finney felt himself "pulled 40 ways at once." The Excitement retained high pitch even into the mid-summer of 1826. "Never before ... [was] such a spirit of agonizing prayer among Christians as of late. ..." Only in the fall of 1829 could the "moment of delirium" in Utica be pronounced finally passed. ...5

Footnote 5. Daniel Nash and Charles G. Finney, Western, Feb. 3, 1826, to John Fine (enclosure to Absalom, Peters), ... A.H.M.S. MSS; ...

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/letter-to-john-fine/>

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