

MOORE COLLEGE: BROUGHTON LETTERS

Broughton to Coleridge, 8/1/1846

My dear Coleridge, Last Monday, on returning home from a distant visit for the Consecration of a Church (the 12th during last year) I found your Letter dated 25 August from Folkestone: which had arrived by the September packet during my absence. Earnestly do I wish you could have spent your week of idleness here accompanied by that beloved party whom you speak of as your associates, looking out upon the blue waters of Port Jackson with which you have been made somewhat familiar by the little sketches which I sent you, and with which I am truly gratified to hear that you were pleased. However as that dream cannot be realized, but the expanse of a four or five months voyage must continue to separate us personally, I will not prolong the interval by postponing to write.

My time is short and much interrupted: but there is one subject in your Letter of such overwhelming importance that I should be inexcusable (sic) not to endeavour to put you in possession of my thoughts and purposes regarding it as speedily as possible, even though it must be briefly and imperfectly: I mean of course Calcutta. To speak my own wishes candidly, let me say, in so many words, that I pray most earnestly the proposal may never be made to me; but that events may be so guided by an overruling Providence as to avert me from that which, personally, I should consider the severest of trials. But you will not suspect me, I hope, of any intention to make my own wishes the criterion of what it would become me to do in case such a thing were proposed, as conducive to the advantage of the Church in the opinion of those whose judgment I am bound, in such things, to prefer to my own. But there are many considerations which I should urge against the propriety of such an election: and these I will sit down in regular order and simple words, hoping that you will take care they are all duly weighed in case the contingency ever should arise which would occasion the matter to be discussed.

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MOORE COLLEGE: BROUGHTON LETTERS

Broughton to Coleridge, 8/1/1846 (cont 2)

1. Before this can reach you I shall have completed my 58th year: and this I should submit is too late a period in life for such a change.
2. If promoted (as it wld generally be held) to a station of gter dignity and more lucrative, immediately after having proposed a reduction of my personal emoluments, might it not and wld it not be held that the latter suggestion was a mere feint on my part; and intended to gain credit for disinterestedness which had no real existence? I wish this question to be most scrupulously and rigidly taken into consideration: for whatever casts the shadow of suspicion upon a Bishop's motives in the present day acts as a dagger thrust into the vital parts of the Church.
3. There are others better qualified, and having stronger claims: as the Bishops of Bombay, Madras and Colombo: not to mention many more.
4. Would it be easy to find a man properly qualified, and willing also, to enter upon the charge of this Diocese? Whether upon the expectation that such a one will be found, I ought, after so many years connexion, to forsake this widely scattered flock may admit of question.
5. I have a family to consider as well as myself. To make the removal I must incur considerable expense, which I have not very ready means of doing: and were I to die at an early period after that removal, and before my outlay cld be contrived, I shld leave my wife and children with a worse prospect even than at present. It is also right to say that I doubt whether my wife could accompany me. Indeed my opinion is that she cld not and shld not. A residence in this climate even, has, I cannot but be sensible, impaired and debilitated her constitution. Three years ago you are aware she suffered a severe attack of illness: the seeds of which seem not to have been eraded cated; for she has every now and then indications, though slight, of a return

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MOORE COLLEGE: BROUGHTON LETTERS

Broughton to Coleridge, 8/1/1846 (cont 3)

of the complaint. I make up my mind therefore that she with her children and grandchildren must remain here: and I trust you will not in your own thoughts brand me with the note of pulling uxoriousness when I say, that a separation, probably forever, from one with whom I have spent more than 49 years in intimacy and unbroken affection wld cause it to go very hard with me.

Nevertheless I am, I hope, at the disposal of God and of his Church, as the decision may be conveyed to me by those who are properly ordained to judge. The words which came into my thoughts were these: 'But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus'. I feel, be assured, the presumption, or it may be even termed the arrogance, of my taking such words as these in application to myself: bit in theory at least I fully hold with them, and pray earnestly that, if it be required of me, grace may be given to fulfil them in my practise. But were I required to pronounce judicially upon the proposal, my decision must be that I see no reason for my separation to this especial work, seeing that there must be scores of younger men having no tie or hindrance, or previous occupation; who wld even rejoice to undertake the mission: and that therefore it might be allowed to me to obey my own inclination, and to follow to its termination the obscurer path into which my feet were first led. At the same time do not consider this as any indication of a Jonah-like spirit of unwillingness to go if it be really the opinion of others, qualified to decide for me, that there exists any particular reason for supposing such an appointment likely to conduce to the welfare of the Church. If it be so considered (though I myself cannot see it) it wld be obviously my vocation: and depend upon it, if life and strength remain, you wld not in that case find me backward in obeying; although most anxious beforehand that such a trial shld not be appointed for me to undergo. But, in every consideration of the subject, weigh most

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BROUGHTON LETTERS: MOORE COLLEGE

Broughton to Coleridge, 8/1/1846 (cont 4)

profoundly and attentatively I beseech you the consideration which I have marked (2) among my reasons for hesitation.

I have requested Mr Jones, who is somewhat of an artist and picture fancier, to make research as to anymore paintings of the same descriptions as the two which I sent you last year. He will employ, I am sure, all diligence in the enquiry: and you shall hear the result the next time I write, Mr Melville the artist who accompanied Captain Blackwood in (sic) his late surveying voyage, and is returning now to England on the termination of it, wishes your permission to see his portrait of me in oils, which I sent home the year before last, as it may require varnishing or retouching. I told him my persuasion was that if he called on you he wld readily be allowed to see it. His sketches I think cannot but be interesting to you, and he will be proud to shew them. If you can recommend or assist him in his profession I shall be very glad: but have left matters in such a state that he can have no expectation of anything: and you can do more or less as your own sense of his abilities may lead you to think right. He has painted a picture for me which I had in contemplation to send you: but though it pleases me well in some respects I am not quite sure that it wld be thought worthy of a place in your gallery. He has, I understand a water-colour sketch of the subject (which is the meeting of our Saviour with the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus) which Edward Hamilton says is preferable to the picture itself. If on seeing the one you think the other worthy of notice, it shall be yours and welcome. I think the figure of our Lord, combining the expression of recent agony with the same benignant air of majesty which seems appropriate to him, is well imagined and executed: but the disciples I do not like so well; and whether the composition and colouring be commendable I am not connoisseur enough to pronounce: but am nevertheless my dear friend always yours most sincerely, W.G. Australia.

BROUGHTON LETTERS: MOORE COLLEGE

Broughton to Coleridge, 8/1/1846 (cont 5)

P.S. Mr and Mrs Agnew have arrived. He apparently has been disappointed in all the expectations with which he went thither: whether upon good grounds, or from any defect of firmness in his own nature I may be better able to judge when I have seen more of him. It is plain that he and the bishop, somehow or other, did not understand one another.