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Letter from William J. Thompson to James B. Finley

William J. Thompson

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Rev. James B. Finley

At B. Thompson

Mr

Dr. Dr.

Aug. 11th 1830

It is likely I shall be blamed for non attendance at Conference. But perhaps, if all my reasons were considered, there might be some allowances made. I used to love to go to conference, I have gone hundreds of miles with pleasure, for I loved all the preachers, and they loved me, there was then no jar, that I knew of, would to God it was so now!

I have endeavoured to serve the church in the best way I could more than forty years, I endeavoured to learn Methodist when young, I was soon fired with the Stearnt spirit, but poverty, and family kept me about home ten or twelve years, I then got out, and was kept the best part of four years on Danville circuit, because that was the seat of the war we had to carry on with the O'Kellyites, Newlights, Shakers, Calvinists and Baptists, ~~by~~ the help of the Lord I kept the ground, till necessity called me home to provide for my family, I laboured incessantly, with an eye to travelling again, as soon as possible, misfortunes kept me back longer than I expected, Eleven years ago I was prevailed on, by my old friend Bishop McHendree, to start again, and before I was quite ready, for I was in debt, but able to pay by making some sacrifices, I set out, but through considerable difficulties, for some of the preachers were opposed to me, and I knew not who they all were, however I went on with an intention to do all the good I could, but frequently heard of far off whispers, and insinuations against me, I made myself as easy as I could, knowing I had endeavoured to live in all good conscience, and, as far as possible, in peace with all men, Five years ago I thought my P. Elder did not treat me well, we differed in judgment on several points, and among others on the lawfulness of keeping in society a man, and a woman the wife of another man, then living in that neighbourhood, who had put her away for notorious adultery, I laid the differences of our judgment before the Bishop and Elders, at the conference at Callumbar, for a decision, but could get none, it was laid over to the next Annual Conference at Hillsborough, and there returned to the Bishop as unsettled business, but the matter was so managed, that it was not taken up to this day, And at that conference my P. Elder would not agree for me to have any circuit in his district, except I would take one which I had told him I could not in conscience take, I then applied to another P. Elder but soon found he did not want me, so I requested to be left without an appointment, as I could get none, but was returned Supernumerary, One of my friends, from something he heard, I supposed, advised me to assure the conference I would receive no pay, I did so, and after the conference broke, I returned home to making axes for a livelihood.

The next conference at Cincinnati, the Bishop asked me if I wished my relation changed, from Supernumerary, I told him I did, and to be affected but I was appointed to Straight Creek, ~~the~~ Supernumerary again.

A little before the next conference came on, I concluded, rather than be so much opposed, I would locate, and told my P. Elder to ask for me a location, unless I altered my mind and wrote to him, but I felt distressed,

and the more I thought on locating the more gloomy it appeared, until, to relieve my mind, for it was burthened, I gave myself up to the Lord as I had done before, and laid out my accounts to Travell as long as he was pleased to enable me. I wrote to Mr Jones, and informed him of my resolution at all events to go on. I was disappointed to Straight Creek Circuit, I suppose no one begged to go on. The last fall it was necessary for me to be at home a few weeks, in order to set on foot the building of a meeting house, that could not be done without me, I left my case with Mr Jones again, and requested him to try to have me appointed to some circuit as convenient as might be, as the situation of my weakly family would not admit of my going further than some of the circuits I had travelled one year, I had no thought of any impropriety in being appointed to some one of them, and I had no doubt of ^{being} well received on any of them, by all true hearted Methodists, suffer me here to make a little digression. We have some among us, who are not true hearted Methodists, they are undisciplined, and imprincipled, and are ready to murmur and find fault with any preacher who will do his duty, but a preacher may lie in bed till sun rise, or till waked up to his breakfast, he may be generally an half hour or more behind his appointment, may frequently neglect to meet the classes, and if he does meet it, in stead of a meeting of enquiry, there will be something like a group of doggerel songsters or a twilight dance, and if ^{he} reads the rules at all, it is not more than once for each class in the year, little or no attention to discipline in the classes, turn out none and take in all he can, of almost all sorts, that's the man for them, no complaints against him, such preachers become popular, but they never learn their people their A.B.C.s. in the principles of Methodism, and alas! they do not learn themselves, what would you think, of a Methodist preacher, were you to hear him tell his congregation, that he preferred immersion for baptism, and give his reasons, saying, we are commanded to take up our cross, &c. and immersion is a greater cross than sprinkling or pouring? And another very popular preacher, who said he would immerse any persons who wished it, whether they had been sprinkled or not? And another who would let as many as pleased stay in class, and speak to all at a venture, laying down the paper, and after meeting let all go off without singing or prayer, and plead for propriety in so doing? That preachers can get along, for the judicious hate to complain, and the others will applaud them, but if a disciplinarian comes along, enquires how these people are growing in grace, and find them out to be guilty of wilful neglect of their duty, such as family prayer, or secret prayer he is too particular, ridged strenuous or something the matter. But I will now return to my subject. While I was waiting to hear my appointment from conference, my farm rented out, and my shop partly broken up, arrangements made to travel, and nothing

to do, but set out after one days notice, I received a line from my
P Elder, I was superannuated, as the best thing he could do for me &c.
I went to one of the preachers and enquired for the cause, but could get
no satisfaction, I observed the preachers must have something against me,
he said he did not know, only he had heard some of the preachers saying
I was so particular, rigid, &c. &c. Another preacher gave me about the same
account, that I was so particular ^{about fashions, dress, quarterage} rigid & strenuous, or something that altho'
my preaching was good, I could not get along among the people.
Now my ^{Rev} I think I have described the kind of people, above, and
the preachers too, who would tell and circulate such things as these, but
how can a preacher get along, among a fashionable people, while he obeys
our discipline, speaking against superfluity, &c. when some of our more
popular preachers, will conform to fashions, and bring a daughter ^{was told} I
to Camp Meeting, ~~topped~~ ^{topped} off, with seven combs in her hair, these men can
get along, while an old fashioned preacher, who has been labouring, suffering,
and sacrificing to support Methodism, ever since they were in their
cradles, and not yet quite worn out, but wishing to die in the har-
-ness among the true yoke fellows, must be sent home, he is
too strict, or particular for these times. Well I have been sent
home twice, and hindered from the work, which I have professed
to believe, the Holy Ghost called me to do, and I am willing to do it,
and feel unhappy when I cannot perform it. If there was a drop
of new found radical blood in my heart, it might boil up, but,
blessed be God, I love the good old way, I love the preachers as a body,
though I blame some individuals for their conduct, and desire of
promotion, But Methodist ~~preachers~~ ^{found} me a poor orphan boy, they
took me up and brought me into the Church, she has nursed me,
as a mother, for forty years, and shewed me the way of Salvation.
Can I leave ^{her} ~~her~~ ^{now} ~~no~~, never; if I must be beaten ^{from her bosom} down, I will die at
her feet. Do ^{Pr} pray for me, I am your companion in
affliction and suffering for the cross of Christ.

W. Thompson

P.S. I hope you will remember me for good, and in my behalf, speak a word in season, my ^{family} cannot in justice ~~be~~ be moved, they are too weakly and often afflicted. It has been no uncommon thing for parishes, who have families to be indulged two years on one circuit, and there ^{is} only one circuit out of six to which I had a regular appointment two years. There are five circuits now in my reach, any of which, I have no doubt, would willingly receive me, but I should be unhappy to be under a P. Elder that would still try to set his feet on me.

I am your brother &c

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