

4-9-1839

Letter from John McDonald to James B. Finley

John McDonald

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ps My wife is very particular in sending you, your wife, and your friends her best wishes.

from Lattas Ross Co.
12 April 10

Rev James B Finley
German Town
Montgomery county
Ohio
Single

Topler Ridge near Lattas Ross county Ohio
April 9th 1839

My dear friend

I have ^{been} thinking of writing to you for some time but could not ^{think} of a subject to write about. I am still in the same dilemma, and have now concluded to write you a letter ^{at random} but what kind of stuff it will be made of, I cannot tell till I come to the close. A letter without an object is a poor thing, and ^{this} is almost my case, but still I have a motive, and that motive is to continue to merit your friendship. Men of sense when ^{they} associate with men of candor and moral habits never quarrel about speculative differences either about politics or Religion: each having his peculiar way of thinking, and each thinking themselves in the right. I hold it as an undoubted principle, that good sense, and a correct moral deportment go hand and hand. When I see a man, whether in or out of the church, whose ^{are loose} morals, and ^{are} at variance with the habits and feelings of the society around him, I am ready to conclude there is something wrong in his heart, or in his upper story.

I am again in the papers, as you have no doubt seen. I bestowed a good ^{deal} of labor on the Whetzel narratives. The subject was interesting to me, and the study most pleasing; as it recalled to my mind, names and scenes long since gone by. The story of Martin Whetzel ^{the three Indians} killing, I had from your old friend Jacob Homes of Highland county. How few of those manly, warm, and independent spirits, with whom I associated in the days of my youth, now remain on the stage of action - scarcely none. Like Job's servant, I am left almost alone to tell of their deeds of noble daring. They ^{are} gone on their last tour and stationed in their last camp. There ^{was} many foibles, many errors and many virtues in their lives. As they ^{know} nothing about the techniques of Religion, how will it ^{be} with their immortal spirits, in that country which lieth beyond the grave; no one can tell. One thing is certain, they will appear before a Judge, who will know

the motives which led them to action. It would not ^{be} difficult to imagine something like what Sterne said of uncle Toby's oath - "The accusing spirit which flew to heaven's chamber with the oath, blushed as he gave it in; and the recording angel as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word and blotted it out for ever." - "They are gone - their Genius fled up to the stars from whence they came; - and their warm hearts, with all their generous vessels, compressed into a clod of the valley." "Read lightly on their ashes ye men of Genius - for they your kinsman weed their Graves clean ye men of Goodness for they were your brothers" How thankful we should be to God for the blessings of furnishing us with sound tenacious memory. When our minds are exercised like a weavers shuttle, in flying backwards and forward on the track of our past lives; how many pleasing halts we can make to reflect on the merry and happy scenes through which we have passed. True the retrospect sometimes brings to recollections sufferings and vexations, that can only be appreciated by our selves: and some egregious follies which we have been guilty of, these ^{we} can skip over as rapidly as possible.

In all probability I have closed writing for the public on the subject of the early history of our country. Agreeably to your request, as soon as I feel in a proper mood, I intend to give you an account one of my Races with the Indians ⁱⁿ 1794 on the Scioto near the mouth of dear creek.

Effie Rose had a daughter last winter, the family ^{are} all well as are all our relations in this part of the country. My son in law Col. Morgan (Maria's husband) joined the church last Sunday. My wife and nearly all my children are methodist, and I about half a one. In faith I am the poorest trembling thing in the world. Every man if he will can control his actions. The latter part of my life, I have studiously endeavored to

to keep clear of vice, and find the easiest ^{way} to succeed is to keep aloof from vicious company. Your friend Mr Estel requests me to send you his respects. If not a great, he is what is better, he is a worthy man. He is much improved in preaching. Mr Smith his colleague, has roused a honets about his ears, by preaching ^{political} abolition, his usefulness as a preacher in this part of the country is done - done. The Methodist ^{here} wish a Gospel preacher, and not a political demagogue. . . . Although my health is tolerable, I feel my self gradually declining in bodily powers. Every line I write admonishes me, that so much of life is past over hold is on the present, the future is uncertain and the past has escaped our grasp. The certainty that I must shortly be laid in the silent dreary Grave, is not to me a pleasing reflection. Had I the faith of my old neighbor Reed, I would feel

different. When reflecting on this gloomy subject one consolation cheers my spirits, that is, I see every thing in creation answers its purpose, and I can't ^{see} any good ^{reason} why man should be ^{an} exception.

I intend going to Indiana some time in June, and intend taking German Town in my rout, and rest a day or two, should I find you at home. Give my respects to your father, wife, and the Brooks - and to Brooks partner, and the Doctor who treats us so kindly; I have for gotten their names. . . . May the Great spirit bless you with peace and health, and life as long as life may be desirable. I wish you to out live me, that you ^{may} say my funeral oration; then you may die as soon as you please.

Write to me shortly. Adieu. John McDonald

Rev J B Finley