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James B. Finley Letters

5-28-1848

Letter from John McMahon to James B. Finley

John McMahon

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Recommended Citation

McMahon, John, "Letter from John McMahon to James B. Finley" (1848). *Finley Letters*. 578.
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Monroe County Ohio May 28 - 1848

Riding slowly home on a sick beast from visiting a patient on Friday last, I fell into singular train of thoughts, the scenes of days, the deeds of other years seemed successively to pass in review before me, All that association which may be termed ideal, with lively realities which had slept in the archives of memory for the greater part of half a century were suddenly brought into action, & rendered more or less efficient in aiding the mind in its operation. The 1st Camp meeting that I ever was at on the Walnut plains near the Sciota, in 1809, where Bishop McKim preached his convincing sermon from Ezekiel. The "son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son; the soul that sinneth it shall die" It was there that I heard J. H. Finley give his fiery & hortatory "On Sunday night, in which he conclusively showed that all deliberate sinners were robbers - robbing God of his glory. He commenced by saying "my friends there are thieves & robbers in the Camp - An hour before that a woman had come to a tent where I was staying, declaring some body had stolen a petty coat from her - when I heard Finley begin I thought he had seen the thief and was going to expose him which gave me much satisfaction, as I was afraid the woman might suspect me. Associating his manner & zeal 39 years ago with his present position in the general conference with reference to the Oregon question brings the mind to this conclusion that neither age or ~~circumstances~~ circumstances diminish the zeal of the humble faithful Christian - And then old Bro. J. Young 50 years a trumpeter on the walls of Zion, half the gentile world have fallen into the ranks, & are moving on in the mighty train since he entered. Still he talks of Wilamette Valley, & of planting the cross in that garden of the world with as much grace as we do here in mona of establishing a common Sunday School - This reminds me of an expression used by a great character

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Rev James B. Finley, Member
of the General Conference of the Mth Church
at Winnsboro, Ga
Columbus Ohio



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And wonderful teacher who on a like occasion when one of his declarations had staggered the faith of his whole school replied 'With God all things are possible. Abraham made doleary and cents no part of his calculation when called to go out from us of Chaldea, & sojourn in a strange land - Faith is an earth quaking power.

Pushing forward like the mountain torrent
Drowning rocks, trees & rubbish before it, scooping
out its own channels, & inundating all the surround-
ing plains. Faith like God is Omnipotent, inspiring
the soul with an impassable courage. Under its influ-
ence - The soul courageous may the earth quake brave

May mount the storm and dare the curling wave
With the wet sea boy slumber on the mast
Midst groaning thunders and the lurid blast
~~Plough the rough seas with songs triumphant~~

~~Plough the rough seas with songs triumphant~~
And light the torch in Willamette's vale.

The main question ^{seems to be the se-1 Is it} God's field & does he want
labourers & is he able & willing to pay them? If so
it is preposterous to wait for dollars & cents, surely
we would not question the ability of Jehovah

Methodism is his child, he intends to invest the earth with
the wheels of her itinerancy, and to fill it with the glory of her
religion. 8 years ago I dreamed I saw a company of fine
robust plain dressed preachers riding through the air
on their way to the Oregon & in their rear Mr Wesley
I took it to be snugly & neatly wrapped in his cloak
and how the men were in fine spirits talking pleasant-
ly their horses were in a fast walk. Mr W. rode in
the rear deeply immersed in thought as though he
was maturing some grand design. When I awoke I
said to my wife God is about to fill the Oregon with
Methodism, she said 'why cant we be among them'
Faith will open a conference there speedily. I mean Christian
faith - what is it? It is simply taking God at his word

Away with your cold metaphysical calculating dollar and
Cent faith, this smacks of the polar circle - it gives the
soul a tertian ague, O God banish it from the
councils of the church - Open the Oregon conference
those who can't open and none dare to shut, and let
the high praises of God echo from the heads of the mississippi
valley to the vale of Willamette, and from the vale of Willamette
to the heads of the mississippi reecho, until from sea
to sea & from the river to the ends of the earth it shall
be sung halleluya for The Lord God Omnipotent
Reigns. The Geographical distance from Oregon to
heaven is about the same as from Pittsburg to heaven
He who holds the stars of the church now in Pittsburg
in his right hand, will yet walk amid the golden
candlesticks in Oregon. And Oh what a thrilling
sensation will it produce in the soul who volunteers in this
grand and sublime enterprise - when he comes to leave
the world, He will say I have been among the first
who have planted the cross in the far distant shores of the
western horizon, who have ^{wake'd} the songs of Zion on the ^{sin} ^{gion}
of the blue rolling deep in the Pacific oceans
I have been honoured with this Great honour to blow
the trumpet of Zion on the ends of the earth and to
raise up a holy people for the Lord.

So Lord lettest thou thy servant depart in peace
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation -
From this reverie of thought, I was in imagin-
dently transported to Pittsburg, and standing in the general
conference room, where a rare worthy man was
about to preach a sermon with reference to the
itinerancy, His text was in act 16 ch 16 & include
ing the 18th verse. That rise and stand upon thy feet for I have
appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a
witness both of these things, which thou hast seen and of those
things in the which I will appear unto thee
Delivering thee from the people & from the Gentiles unto whom
I now send thee

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and
from the power of Satan unto God

That they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance
among them ^{which are} sanctified by faith that is in me

On the word Minister. The preacher made a singular re-
mark. He said the Original word in ^{the} scripture was a
word strictly nautical, it was applied to sailing - and that
it did not well bear the translation minister - But an
under rower, one who tugged at the oar under the
directions of a superior officer. He then read the sentence
as corrected, "Arise and stand upon thy feet for I have
made thee an under rower &c."

He then took up the member of the text & treated it meta-
phorically - 1) the old ship of Zion under the direction of
the Sanhedron - was wrecked, & lay in ruins, it had been
repaid, & in as much as the old crew had ^{maintained}
it was manned by a set of more intelligent and
faithful men - that the time had come for it to
plough, the gentle seas, that about the time it
was ready to sail the great master of the vessel had
passed Paul as an expert seaman - that the apostle
was not disobedient, but tugged manfully at the oar
until the vessel had sailed round a large part of the
Globe, touching at every port & taking in passengers
for the heavenly land.

When his tower of rowing was over he left her anchor, at Rome
Soon after this her crew were murdered by little & little
till the old hands were all cut off, yet she was remain'd &
continued to sail, through ~~through~~ seas of blood & sore dis-
tress until the days of Constantine, who cleared the
seas of sacrilegious pirates & gave her a free passage
over the world, under this state of things she sailed
Prosperously & gloriously unfurling the pennants of
the cross on every sea & planting them in every port

unmolested, until the Roman pontiffs, bred a mutiny in
the ship. found a conspiracy against the great
master, put most of his faithful subjects to the sword,
deluged his empire with innocent blood, and arrogated to
themselves his whole power and dominion. From that time
old Zion had sore work, fire, faggot, exile, imprison-
ment & martyrdom was the order of the day -

She lay in port in wreck & ruins, until the days of the
Mouth of Wertemburg, who after the Council of Worms
having sworn fealty to the Great Chart of her lawful
Captain, she entered on board & fitted the vessel & with
a few faithful men soon succeeded in spreading her
sails to every wind. From that time she sailed as though
it was through frowning skies & stormy seas tinged with blood
under the sound of the cry of her martyred seaman, resound-
ing from the throne of the eternal, which became the dearest
resort, from which there is no appeal - How long O Lord God
ere thou shalt avenge our blood, but she found a
resting place in the British seas, where obtaining safe
anchorage she seemed inclined to stay, till better days
should open a passage for more secure sailing -
In the midst of this calm, her sailors slumbered, many
of them grew tired of the service, & the spirit of enterprise
became dormant, the heavenly land was seldom talked of
now and then one set his face Zionward but all who did so
were hooted at, the ship was incorporated in ^{the} naval
line, & sustained by government, she had a nominal
power assigned her & all her officers were pensioned for
life, here she seemed likely to stay for ever - and the then
light of the whole world, burnt but faintly in the
sea girt Isle - In this state of things when darkness was
covering the earth & gross darkness the people it pleased the
Great Captain, to refit old Zion - & illumine her with fresh
more brilliant & apostolical light, than had burn'd in
her from the days of Sufferer -

She was now destined to sail round the world & never to
slumber in port again until the last trump, should
cause the spheres to halt in their course.
The Great & Good Mr Wesley was appointed to conduct
the enterprise, who began by making just short
excursions - training his hands, to hardships & leading
them on to victory & success, & before his departure
he saw old Zion multiplied into a navy & receiving
passengers from every port, of the British empire -
Since his departure, men of the same order have
ploughed the high seas in all directions touching
at every port & taking passengers on board.
The crew have lately projected an Expedition to Oregon,
old Zion is now at anchor at the head of the Great
Mississippi Valley, She wants a few hardy seamen
who are willing at the command of the great Master to
launch into the deep, One of her delegates has arrived
in the City of Pittsburg, and stands in the midst of this august
assembly to solicit volunteers. The margin of the blue
rolling deep in the far distant west is the place
of destination, The bounty proposed in accordance with
the sacrifice to be made, "If a man leaves father or mother
or sister or brother, or houses or lands &c. and embarks in
this enterprise without any stipulation for dollars and cents
The bounty, will be ten fold in this present mode of existence
10. Fathers in the Zion of the Lord to one given up for the sake
of the Master of the vessel, 10 mothers for one left, 10 Brothers
for each one left 10 Sisters - 10 houses for one sacrificed
10 Acres of Land for every one left. For you will not for-
get that the owner of old Zion is very rich and able to do all
this & as willing as able - this is the bounty But in addition
to this there is a legacy of everlasting life connected with
it which the volunteer shall receive in the world to come
Yes in the world to come - everlasting - life

Who will voluntarily At this a number of voices cried out simul-
taneously - I. I. I & I. The preacher paused for a
while & then said Permit me then to state to you, the work
which you are required to do among the people of Oregon.
You are not sent there on a matter of speculation - You
are sent among them to "Open their eyes. This implies that
they are blind - yes blinded to their best interest by the
God of this world - You will have to cry aloud & spare not
but lift your voice each one like a trumpet before
they will awake - open their eyes & look around them
You must turn them from darkness to light - you
point them to the sun of righteousness, who is now
rising on Oregon with healing in his wings - You
must say & say feelingly, powerfully and eloquently
Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the
Sin of the world - You must do more you
must turn them from the power of Satan, the dominion
of Satan. Unto God - say your mission stops not here
You are to see that they obtain remission of sins, that
they have the witness of the holy Ghost as to the test
of this important fact, & onward still in your mission
You must not rest until, they receive an inheritance
among the sanctified - which is only gained
by an Omnipotent faith in an Omnipotent God.
Who is sufficient for these things - Let such go aboard;
old Zion is in waiting her sails are ready, to unfold
to the breeze & the crew have risen up to do you hon-
age on your entrance. In the midst of this reverie
my horse blundered & fell headlong down hill, I shouted
woe at the top of my voice but he heeded not until the
gravity of earth arrested his motion - yet even the pleasing
of imagination did not forsake me. for what a man
thinks in accordance with reason and revelation
may & some times does come to pass
Wm. McArthur

Dr. J. McMahon to Rev. J. B. Finley. Sends greetings

In your Conclave one doth stand
With the stars in his right hand
Awaiting your decisions to know
The west he will illumine
And disperse its nightly gloom

~~Where~~ the soft wilamette doth flow -

He calls for volunteers

Who are not immersed in cares

Say Sir will you cut loose & go

To the wilamette wail

In old Zion will you sail

Where the far distant Streamlets doth flow.

In this garden of the world

Must his banners be unfurled

The Cross must be planted you know

The trumpet will you sound -

On this enchanted ground

Say Sir will you go, will you go -

Then hoist your every sail

And move on before the gale

He'll be in the ship that you know

Thousands wait ^{ing} on the strand

On high excitement stand

O Sir will you go will you go

In the far distant west

Jesus promises rest

To those who are weary you know

Would you not like to stand

With the promise in your hand

Hold, out to the thirsty, will you go -

Dear Sir,
I have the honor to acknowledge
the receipt of your letter of the
10th inst. in relation to the
above mentioned matter.
I will endeavor to give you
a satisfactory answer as soon
as possible.

Yours truly,
John W. Mahon

John W. Mahon
Albany

The enclosed papers
will be forwarded to you
by the next mail.
I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
John W. Mahon