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James B. Finley Letters

3-31-1849

Letter from John McDonald to James B. Finley

John McDonald

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Rev. James Bradley Finley
Columbus
Ohio

Latta's
April 2nd

Carl M. Bennett
March 29
Cincinnati
or 21 49

Poplar Ridge, near Latta, Prop county Ohio, March 31st 1849
My well remembered friend. I was gratified in receiving your last letter. Early friendships and early associations should never be forgotten. It is not necessary that men should think ^{alike} on religious or other topics, for men constitutionally differ on many things, and yet are friends, knit together as brothers. Give ^{me} a man of honest candor, and an upright life, and I am willing to embrace him as an associate and friend. The double dealer who is your friend to your face, and a scoffer behind your back, is a wretch who merits the scorn of honest men. In your last you inform me, that you intend paying us a visit the coming summer, let me ^{know} beforehand when you expect to ^{be} with us, I will insure a numerous congregation to hear you preach. Within the last four months ~~four months~~ four of our Grand children have joined the church, this ^{will} be a guard to them in passing through the thorny path of life. We have ~~in~~ fifty six Grandchildren, all of whom that know right from wrong are members of the cold water army, no drunkard nor blackguard among ^{them}. This grateful to my feelings in my declining days.

In your last you preached me a sermon and very good one it is; I will now attempt to preach one to you, although it is quite probable you may not think it quite orthodox. I will take my clue from the book of nature, which needs no commentators, it gods own book, which is palpable to every ^{enlightened} mind eye and ear, and known by the name of common sense, as taught by nature and Jesus of Nazareth: nearly all of whose precepts are palpable to the understanding, every sound mind. How sublime and yet how humane are the precepts taught by Jesus, and who practise and live up to these precepts is a Christian let him be what it may. How sublime, how tender, how humane, are the precepts taught by Jesus, all is love. "Love your neighbor as your self" If this was practised by all what a peaceable moral world we would have. Again "do ^{to} others as we would others would do to us." If we would practise this precept we

we would practise this precept we would ^{have} no use for courts, jails, nor
penitentiaries nor galies. Again "feed the hungry, clothe the naked
and relieve the distress of the widow and the orphan." Was this precept
practised by all this would not need ~~of~~ overseers of the poor, nor poor houses.
Another precept taught us is not pleasant in practice. "To ^{do} good to those who
despitefully us." This goes a little against the grain, but the idea is human
and praise worthy though difficult to practise. To live up to these precepts
constitutes the Christian character, let his faith be what it may: whe-
-ther he be a follower of Moses, a disciple of Mahomet, or follower
confucious. A Great ^{deal} ^{said} is about serving god, I think there some misun-
-standing about this matter, no man can serve god, he does ^{not} need any of our
service: Jesus instructs in this matter. He says, "In as much you do it unto my
brether you do it me". By this it appears, that those who ^{do} the most good to their
fellow man are the most religious, independent of their faith in any
prophet or law giver. "Those who do by nature the things contained
in the law shall be a law unto themselves" How consoling these
precepts are to the ^{mind} seeking after truth. In these precepts there are
^{no} mysteries no ambagueties, all are plain common sense, which any
one of sound mind can understand and practise. Amen.

I do ^{not} write to provoke controversy, but to give you my opinion
on things that ^{the} world of mankind take a deep interest.

When come here, my wish is you could bring your wife ^{with} you, as she
be glad to see both once more she goes hence.

I am as always your devoted friend
John McDonald

Rev^d J. B. Finley.