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Letter from Thomas Mason to James B. Finley

Thomas Mason

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B. Watson
S. York

Rev. James B. Finley

Urbanas

Ohio

NEW-YORK
AUG
18

Rev. James B. Finley

New York August 15. 1823

Dear Brother,

I have just rec^d information that the managers of the Juvenile Finleyan Missionary write Society, have passed a resolution to, authorize and request you to select and receive into ~~the~~ Mission School, another Indian Male child, to be called John Sumner merfield. with which I am requested to make you acquainted that you may take the necessary steps to comply with the wishes of this pious worthy Juvenile Society. When you have made the selection please give them the information directly, or through me. They have appropriated One hundred dollars for the education & maintenance of the child to be so selected for four years—

I wrote you from the Seneca Conference last month, by brother Francis Hall of this City, who intended to visit your mission establishment, should he have it in his power. In that communication I mentioned the propriety and utility of having our Missionary Schools organized and conducted upon the Lancasterian plan of teaching. The subject has occupied the attention of the Board & they have recommended it if the Bishops concur. One Teacher can as easily instruct 300 to 500 on that plan as 30 to 50 in the ordinary way; which would be a

very great saving of labour and expense, not only in teaching but in the article of Books & Stationary. This is not a visionary theory, it is reduced to demonstration in this City. I have conversed with some of the teachers on the subject, and they recommend it in strong & decided terms. The plan which I propose is, that the Bishops should select a man, (or authorize the Managers in N York to select one) to acquire a knowledge of the system in this City, (which can be done in six weeks and that without expense) and then let that person visit Sandusky and the other Schools ~~and~~ ^{to} set them in operation & communicate the plan to the teachers - two, or three months at most, would be sufficient to spend at each Mission School & in one year all our establishments might be organized on this plan. I would have the person so employed to be a preacher of talents and without family - his expenses would consequently be small & he might serve the interests of the missionary cause by obtaining donations & promoting of ~~the~~ the formation of Miss^y Societies. By direction of the Board of Managers I addressed a letter to the Bishop attending the S.C. Conference (not knowing which would be there) on this subject - but have rec^d. no reply.

Another subject in relation to the efficient operation of our missionary ^{system} operations ought to occupy our

attention. The Constitution cannot be altered by the Genl. Conference but by a recommendation from the Board of Managers in New York; any alterations therefore which experience or observation may suggest to be necessary for the better management of the institution ought to be communicated to them either by the Bishops or missionaries; or the Conference. The Board wish the institution to be managed in the most efficient manner possible. To me it appears expedient to have a missionary Committee in every Conference, who with the Bishop when present ^{recommended to the Conf.} shall ~~select~~ ^(which the Conf. shall determine) the ground to be occupied by missionaries, have the charge of raising supplies for the missionary stations with their respecting Conferences, and authority to draw on the Genl. Fund for a given sum, in case a Bishop should not be present to sign a draft, or should not deem it expedient to draw to the full amount at once. Something of this kind appears to me to be necessary for at present, if a Bishop should fail to attend a Conf. no draft can be made on the fund to supply the wants of Mission or missionaries in that Conf. although there may be money enough for the purpose - and it might so happen that a Bp. would refuse to make appropriations, altho' in the judgement of the Conf. it ought to be done.

Your brother in Gospel fellowship

Thomas Mason Cor. Secy
M. S. M. E. C.