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Letter from George S. Houston to James B. Finley

George S. Houston

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Dear Brother,

It is sometimes possible that one may be inclined to do wrong or not do what is right, but I trust that you will not feel disposed to do anything of the sort. I have been truly and sincerely devoted to my friends, and I trust that I have been faithful to them. I am sorry that I have been unable to do more for you personally, but I am sure that you will understand and forgive me for not being able to do more. I have always been devoted to you, and I trust that you will not feel that I have been neglectful.

With fraternal affection,
Your friend,

May 10, 1862
Dear Sir,

I am writing to you from the [location]. The weather here is [description]. I have been thinking about your recent letter, which arrived on [date]. I was pleased to hear that you are [status].

I am sorry to hear about the [event]. I hope that you are doing well in [context].

Thank you for your kind words in your letter. I was touched by your [emotion].

I have been [activity]. I hope that you are [activity].

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]
Dear Brother,

It is some time since I have seen or heard from you. You will excuse me I trust in now writing you respecting a matter that has been truly unpleasant not to myself alone but to your friends in Dayton and the Society generally. I refer to the conduct of your nephew James at Urbana in time of Conference, previous at other places or in Dayton, by statements he made respecting the Society here, and particularly my family at the time. Bro Sales’ corpse was brought to Dayton and to my house. I wrote to Bro Jones the Presiding Elder a letter, naming what I was respectably informed James had said in Urbana, requesting Brother Jones to show him my letter in which I further requested him to prove what he had stated. Bro Jones wrote me he would attend to my request. When I consider the places and manner and the persons to whom he has made this statement, I regret it on his own account as well as that such a statement should be circulated in at least four counties, that might be supposed there was some foundation for, when much of it is destitute of truth. All of it respecting Bro Sales I can prove to be false, and deeply do I regret to pronounce the young man to have been guilty of falsehood, calumny and detraction. Even more I could say, but enough to disown a member of our church.

He may have had a right to say he was opposed to the Conference being held at Dayton, but he had no vote and it would have been prudent in him to have remained silent, but in reverting to falsehood to prevent it he acted very wrong.

I had for the first time heard something of the tale he related at Urbana, his time of the camp meeting near Centerville, this summer, but did not then know who was the author. I have since found he circulated it also at Xenia, and being told of it presented it to Brother A & B in Dayton.

I say it is false that Bro Sales’ corpse was carried from house to house, that fire and candle was refused, and that we would not allow anyone to sit up with the corpse. As respects the Society being so mean and pernicious, it did not become him to detail such a thing. As for paying the preachers, I know not how he got the information. I should be sorry if it was so, and I know some beside Bro Dodson have paid their part, and I think there are some have done a greater share than Bro. D who James said was the only one who “said he had a soul as big as his body.” That Bro Dodson is a worthy man is not disputed, but any one acquainted with the rise of Methodism, knows that Aaron Baker’s house was first opened for preaching, that he has acted the Christian in the outward matters at any rate. James cannot but suppose he would feel hurt at his expressions. Of myself I have no desire to detail matters, but believe if things were investigated, it would be found that I have according to my situation and circumstances done as much for the bretheren as I well could, that I have befriended, obliged and served all when in my power, until ____ Conference. Was I to exhibit a statement to James Finley Jr. I think he would have to blush for calumnating one old enough to be his father. I may here say I am getting old, feeble and barely able to attend to a little business. I came to Dayton poor and have not been in any business to disseminate wealth but all I could throw in the way of the bretheren I have, until I found myself wronged by them, and that they have taken up the idea I am
weak. And as I find I can get anything done on better terms by others, though reluctantly, I must do it, for I must now take care of myself. I have had very few favors of any of them in any way, but I love Methodism, its doctrines and am satisfied with the discipline. I have felt better toward my bretheren, and I wish I would feel so as I have in days bygone. It is to be regretted we have so much profession and so little principle, that while we profess to believe in so good a religion, we do not line up to its precepts, that the former days are different from the present, and that the Methodists are not that faithful zealous people they once were.

My dear Brother, from the long existing friendship between us, the friendship with your deceased brother and the good feelings, I really think, James had for the whole family, I regret that James should have acted in a manner to impair the good will I had for ______ He may say in defense I know not, but ________ every disposition to do him justice, I wish him to name sometime when he can attend in Dayton, to be present, when some proper person shall take down the statements, in writing of Bro Kirk, Baker and Alexander, or he can write Bro Dodson to attend for him. I know not where to address a line to him that he will be sure of getting, but he may say what he may, he may rest assured he has said too much to pass over without some notice.

Again let me say I regret to write you this letter, but you may not have heard of it, and your advice may have some influence in checking the young man, in such practices.

My kind remembrance to Sister Finley. My anxious desire is that God may bless you, prosper your labors and grant you every consolation while travelling down the vale of life and a happy admittance to everlasting Glory when time shall be no more. Pray for your unworthy brother who amid many temptations and trials is still straining to make the port of everlasting delivery.

With Christian affection, as ever yours

Geo S. Houston

22 Nov. 1829