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Finley Letters

James B. Finley Letters

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## Letter from John McDonald to James B. Finley

John McDonald

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Poplar Ridge January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1837

Dear Sir

Your letter of the 21<sup>st</sup> <sup>of last month</sup> has duly come to hand. I am always Greatful to be remembered, by those who were the companions of my younger days; and such you are, altho I am a few years your sen<sup>r</sup>.

From 1796 your family and me have been intimately acquainted, nor can I call to mind that ever <sup>there</sup> was a far between us to interrupt our social intercourse. It is true in theology we do not ~~exactly~~ think alike, but men of sense, do not <sup>think</sup> the less of each other on account of a difference of faith. It is indeed doubtful, whether men have any controul over their faith, or can believe otherwise than they do. We sometimes hear preachers from the pulpit, pronounce, that the reason men do not believe in Revelation, is because they will not; Such assertions I know to <sup>be</sup> false, by experience - all men have a controul over their actions, and can be moral or immoral at their pleasure. Any man can cease being a thief, a liar, a drunkard, a whore master &c; and of course if he can refrain from any one vice, he can from all immoral practices. In Religion men do not differ but little about <sup>that</sup> which they understand; the most bitter warfare is about speculations on subjects which are incomprehensible to the human mind. It appears to me the poet told truth when he said, "For forms of faith, let Graceless Zealots fight, he can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

It is true as you say, "that the earth, the sun, the moon and other planets are Governed by laws which never err." The stability and <sup>certainty</sup> of these laws, appears to render doubtful, the accounts given by Moses, Joshua, and others of changes in those laws.

I have not written any thing for publication, since I last seen you; I am now about taking <sup>my pen</sup> to finish the biography of Gen Marthar. I expect early in Feby to send some sheets to <sup>the</sup> editors of the W. & Advocate for publication. Some of my friends advise me to send my manuscript to some proposed literary paper for publication, as such papers have General readers, and that <sup>would</sup> <sup>appear</sup> with more eclat in them <sup>than</sup> in a religious paper; but I have <sup>not</sup> listened to their advice. The

The editors of the advocate, through your solicitations having promptly heretofore published my writings, when I had no character as a writer; now if my scribble will be of <sup>any</sup> service to their paper, I feel my self under obligations, to furnish them with such literary works

Rev James B Finley  
Near Ridgerville  
Ohio

From James B. Finley  
Ohio



works as my leisure, and limited capacity will permit me to produce.

you are aware that my brother Tom and my self were of the spies, or rangers, that attended Gen Wayne on his Campaign in 1794 — There was an affair took place on that expedition between some of the spies and a party of Indians which had more daring, or rather desperation in it, than any thing I ever read, or heard of. I have not <sup>thought</sup> of it the last 20 years till a few days since. I intend going to see my brother shortly, it is probable between us we can call to mind most of the particulars of this fearful encounter. Should I be able (which is doubtful) to give a description to the life of this action, it will beat romance hollow. Should I live to write this affair, I will send <sup>it</sup> to the Advocate for publication.

My sister Nancy (Mrs M'Arthur) died on the 23<sup>d</sup> of October last. There were two sisters and 5 brothers, the five youngest are dead; Thomas and me, are all that are on this side of the grave, of my mother's children. Gen M'Arthur is in about the same state of health, that he has been in for the last 2 years: when I look on him now, and <sup>think</sup> of his once vigorous and <sup>powerful intellect</sup> ~~powerful mind~~, it puts me in mind of Milton's description of arch angel Ruined.

My wife, my son, and daughters all join in wishing you peace, health and wealth, and that your life may be spared as long as you may <sup>be</sup> useful to others, and a comfort to your self.

The last I heard from Effy and Henry Gore, they were well. My wife, and children who live around <sup>me</sup> are in good health.

I will be gratified to receive a few lines from you occasionally, on any subject you may think proper.

The Christian who believes in Revelation without doubt or wavering has some advantage of the deist, in that confidence he feels in his reception in a future state; whilst the deist believes he will answer the purpose of his creation, but does not exactly know what purpose God designed <sup>him</sup> for, in a future state of existence. My old neighbor Mr Reed has the strongest faith of any man I ever knew, and his life is as innocent, as his faith is pure: yet I would rather be ~~what~~ I am, than be Mr Reed; How selfish we are?

It is now time I should close my letter skelter letter by subscribing my self your friend

Rev J B Finley.

John McDonald

P S Should <sup>you</sup> have occasion soon after receiving this, of writing to the Editors of the Advocate, you may <sup>say</sup> to them that I will shortly furnish them with the biography of Gen M'Arthur. His life has been <sup>a</sup> constant <sup>scene</sup> of action, and full of events, which should be preserved. The little which I have written, and that which I purpose writing is an interesting part, of the early history of our country. <sup>Edin.</sup> J.M.D.