11-25-1841

**Letter from James B. Finley to Brother Jordan**

James B. Finley

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Nov 27, 1841 Georgetown

Dear Sir, I received your letter on my return home and as it seems to be written in the Spirit of Convetion and Inquiring I hasten to answer it in the same spirit. The Sentiments you express to me both in your town I believe to be the truth and by what I mean to live and die and that they are universal and applicable to all men and families of all tribes and nations where the god of Nature has given Manhood and as it were to involuntarily having these from my boyhood habits as an elder and holidays love by it as a brute brute civil and religious and contrary to the natural & conventional laws of God and can not conceive of any difference between your sentiments and feelings on this subject and my own on the abstract question of slavery. This question I hold upon as settled by the extract of the Constitution of the State of Ohio. The only difference is the question of expediency which is the bestick of the subject. Most sincerely I beg you to let me have of it and this is a most matter of injustice and on the part of the last and eldest men both in the State and Church never before and unless God himself shall give the Indications of the way and that I claim to all men understand. Again them will a difference of sentiment and their present action to only affect. Not one thing I have some of that god does not require us to do and that these means become to give our impartial exchange of sentiments on this subject. I wish to have seen the last objections but when not contemn to act to the best. I have not been near this place for quite some time and have not seen many of your Mastres and now. I write this in a hurry and have to do what I must with what little I have. I have been in this town the last time and the last Sister of the people I meet. Not withstanding I think this is a manifestation.
Dier Br. I received your letter on my return home and as it seems to be written in the spirit of candor and enquiry I hasten to answer it in the same spirit. The sentiments I preached on Sabbath in your town I believe to be the truth and by which I mean to live and die and that they are universal and applies to all men and families all shapes & colors where the god of Nature has given rationality. And as it relates to involuntary slavery I have from my boyhood hated as an evil and always looked upon it as a curse both civil and religious and contrary to the Natural & Constituted Laws of God and can not conceive of any difference between your sentiments and feelings on this subject and my own on the abstract question of slavery.

This question I look upon as settled by the Discipline of the Church and the Constitution and Laws of the State of Ohio. The only difference is the question of expediency. What is the best and most successful way to get near of it, and this is a mean matter of opinion. And on this question the best and ablest men both in State & Church have opined, and until God himself shall give the indications of the way and that so plain that all may understand I fear there will a difference of sentiment and thus prevent action to any effect. But one thing I am sure of that God does not require us to do evil that good may come to pass and honest exchange of sentiments on this subject. I never had nor have I the least objection but when that controversy pertakes of the bitterness that proceeds from a heart filled with Malice & Envy; I want to have nothing to do with; to slander the character of men and ministers and the very church itself is a poor way to redress the grievances. It is not the Spirit of Christ nor of his apostles.

The bitter spirit of proscription is of the Devil. Let it come from what quarter it may. Myself and others have been slandered as pro-slavery men just because we did not believe in the present movements of the modern abolitionists and they might with the same justice publish that we were horse thieves for there is as much truth in the one as in the other. Thanks be to God my hands and heart and head is clear of Negro blood. I do not live on the sweat and blood of that race of men. If I did as some others do I would first try to heal myself before I proscribe for others. Now how you could draw your conclusions from the expressions I made in my sermon (that some parents never corrected their children until they were in _____ and then beat them like Negroes) is to me strange (that I should approve of the abusing of Negroes).

Suppose I had said they beat them like dogs would you have thought that I was fond or approved of unmercifully beating dogs. I not. If anything could be legibly drawn from it would have been that Negroes were unmercifully beaten for the object was to show by that illustration that children was improperly and unmercifully treated. I do not believe that there was one person in the House (except it was one of your own faith & feeling that even dreamt of such a meaning. You ask why I do not preach against slavery as I used to do. Because I am not in a Slave Country. It would be an insult to the feelings of every hon man to tell him he is a slave holder when there is no truth and when the whole community have put their veto upon it both in their Constitution and Laws and will not permit a man to be a slave any longer then he sets his foot on the soil of Ohio. Would not the whole community think I was a fool or intended to insult them. Now is my turn ask you and your hot abolition brethren why you do not go to the slave states and preach and as you do here; there is the evil; You know the answer. You cannot drive men but by sword & bayonet.
Reason & Religion must do the Deed and this must be effected by the spirit of Paul and Paul's Master not by ridicule and misrepresentation. Means were in _______ of much to emeliorate the condition of the slave if not under the Providence of ____ led to his emancipation but for the violent measures pursued by the ultra abbolitionists. But there are a certain class of men in Ohio which I do frequently preach to and that is those who have sold their slaves and come here and purchased Land and now make the Lowest act being against slavery and some others that have married Virginia ladies and are living on their fortunes. These men may howl to atone for their own shame and inconsistancy. In your _____ you say would like to have a conversation with me about the difficulty took place between me and the Stewards and that I accuse you of being at the head of it. I never had any difficulties with the Stewards for ____. Then they assumed powers which they have no right to do any more then they had to ordain Bishops. To this I remonstrated and have now in possession their letter which I intend to lay before the board of Stewards to meet in Dayton on the 7 of Jany 1843 12 __. I had hoped that they would have abandoned the ground they had taken by a course of forbearance and peace, but I found to the contrary so now I shall take a legal course with and if it cannot be cured I shall carry it to the next annual conference and lay it before the Bishop & Conference. Then I shall have done my duty as officer in the Church that is bound by the most solemn obligations to see that the Discipline be executed in my charge. I am glad that I have the whole in black & white so that their can be no ______. I have nothing personal vs. those men but must say that I have never been so rudely treated by any set of Stewards in my life. The paper around my extra allowance as you called it is to the fore. This was a most grose insult and I have no doubt was intended as such.

My masters who had usurped the authority of making an estimate for my house rent fier wood and table expences allowed a poor ____ 75 cents per quarter for the whole and afterwords in their mercy gave him an extra allowance. Now Br. Jordan you are a man of spirit & feeling. I ask you how would you have felt under such circumstances. An old man of 30 years hard labor by the bishop and elders favored with one appointment less in their distribution of work because of his growing infirmities and this man coming to you asking your district 80 dollars less then any other Presiding Elder in the Conference and then for a board of Stewards who had unanimously accepted the proposition with the whole district for that board without the least shadow of authority in the Discipline to set down and deduct from his allowance all his rest time and then make such an estimate 75 cents per quarter. I ask you would you have bore it. No you would not; then to insult the feelings of an old man that has Braved the Storm of an itinerant life through poverty & affliction until nearly worn. Down with labelling his support with Extra allowance is too mean to be attributed to the hearts of any set of men I have looked at. In this way they know me I am fixed no hope of changing him. He does not like the ______ movements of abbolitionists, nor the circulating of those papers calculated to breed ______ in the church. He is bound to keep the peace of society. He is a hater of stillery industry. He is a hard case, and we can not change him, therefore we'll______ and drive him, but this fit was the ____ of the Stewards was a grate mistake for I will not drive if I think I am right but I have learned since your quarterly meeting that one of your ______ said it was not me but the office of P.E. and that my stewards was determined to _____ cleared in that matter the Discipline and the _____ of the Deligated Steward meeting not withstanding. I hope this is a misunderstanding.