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Finley Letters

James B. Finley Letters

11-25-1841

Letter from James B. Finley to Brother Jordan

James B. Finley

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My Masters who had usurped the authority of making
an Estimate for my House Rent Fire wood and Table Expens-
es allowed poor Jim 75 cents per Quarter for the
whole and after words in their Mercy gave him an
Extra allowance Now for Jordan you are a man
of spirit & feeling I ask you how would you have felt
under such circumstances an old man of 80 years
hard labor by the Misses and Elders favored with one
appointment less in their distribution of work because
of his growing infirmities and this man coming to you
asking for your District 80 Dollars less than 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
next time and then make such an Estimate 75
cents per quarter I ask you would you have boorn
it & you would not; then to smother the feelings
of an old man that has braved the storm of an
stormous life through poverty & afflictions 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 heated move-~~
~~ments of abolitionists nor the circulating of these~~
~~papers calculated to breed divisions in the church~~
he does not like the heated move-
ments of abolitionists nor the circulating of these
papers calculated to breed divisions in the church
he is bound to keep the peace of society he is a
lover of peace & willing to trust he is a hard
core and we can not change him therefore we will
proscribe him and drive him but this is it
was the design of the Stewards was a gross mistake
for I will not drive if I think I am right
but I have learned since your quarterly meeting
that one of your prominent said it was not me but the
Office of P & S and that they Stewards was determined
to ~~do~~ they cleared in that matter the Discipline
and the Decisions of the Synodical Seward meeting
not withstanding I hope this is a misunderstanding

Nov 25 1841 Germantown From J. B. Finley

Dear Bro I received your letter on my return
home and as it seems to be written in the spirit of
candor and inquiry 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 of all climes &
nations where the God of Nature has given nationality
and as it relates to involuntary slavery I have from
my boyhood noted 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 took 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 &
most successful way to get head of it, and this
is a mere matter of opinion and on this question
the best and ablest men both in State & Church
have differed and until God himself shall
give the indications of the way and that so
plain that all may understand I fear there will
be 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 good and honest
exchange of sentiments on this subject I never
had nor have I now the least objection but when
that controversial parties of the bitterness that proceeds
from a heart filled with malice & envy; I want
to have nothing to do with; to slander the characters
of men and ministers and the very Church &
Self is a poor way to redress the grievances
It is not the spirit of Christ nor of his apostles

The better 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
Moderate abolitionists and they might with the same
Justice published that we were more than for them
is as much truth in the one as in the other. Thanks be
to God My hands & 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 proscribed for others.
Now how you could draw your conclusions from
the expressions made in my Sermon (That some parents
never corrected their children until they were in a pious
and then beat them like Negroes) is to me passing
strange (that I should approve of the abusing Negroes)
Suppose I had said they beat them like dogs would
you have thought that I was fond or approved of un-
mercifully beating dogs. I do not. If any thing
could be logically drawn from it would have been
that Negroes were unmercifully beaten for the object
was to show by that illustration that children was
unmercifully & unmercifully treated. I do not believe that
there was one person in the House (except it was one
of your own faith & feeling) that ever thought 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 honest
man to tell him he is a Slave holder when there is
no truth in it when the whole community have put
their veto upon it. ~~to put them in their Constitution &~~
Laws and will not ~~admit~~ admit a man to be Slave
any longer than he sets his foot on the soil of Ohio.
I would not the whole community think I was a fool
or intended to insult them. Now in my turn ask
you and your hot abolition Brethren why you do not
go to the Slave States and preach & print as you do
here, there is the evil; you know the answer
you can not drive men but by sword & bayonet.

Reason & Religion must do the deed and this
must be effected by the Spirit of Paul & Pauls
Master not by Medicine and Misrepresentation.
Means were in progress much to ameliorate the
condition of the Slave if not under the Providence
of have led to his emancipation but for the violent
Measures pursued by the ultra abolitionists.
But there are a certain class of men in Ohio whom 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 out cry against Slavery
and some others that have married Virginia Ladies
and are living on their fortunes then men may
howl to shame for their own shame and
inconsistency in your S. & P. you say you 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 diffi-
culty with the Stewards for then they assumed
powers which they had no right to do any more
then they had to ordain Bishops, to this I remon-
strated 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 June. 1842. I
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 lived I shall carry it to the next
annual Conference and lay it before the
Bishops & Conference there. ~~What have done~~
My duty as an 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
there can be no denying. I have nothing personal vs
those men but must say that I have never been
so much truly trusted by any set of Stewards in my
life. The paper around my extra allowance as you
called it is to the fore. This was almost gross insult
and I have no doubt was intended as such.

Finley_ab975

Germantown

Nov 25 1841

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 Sabath in your town I believe to be the truth and by whitch I mean to live and die and that they are universal and applies to all men and families all shapes & collors where the god of Nature has given rashonality. And as it relates to invollentary slavery I have from my boyhood hated as an evill and allways looked upon it as a curse boath Civil and Religious and contrary to the Natural & Constituted Laws of God and can not conceive of any differance 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 differance is the question of expediency. What is the best and most sucksessful way to get near of it, and this is a mear matter of opinion. And on this question the best and abelest men boath in State & Church have oppined, and until God himself shall give the indications of the way and that so plain that all may understand I fier there will a difference of sentiment and thus prevent action to any effect. But one thing I am sure of that God does not requier us to do evill 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 controver____ pertakes of the bitterness that proceeds from a heart filled with Malice & Envy; I want to have nothing to do with; to slander the carructer of men and ministers and the very church its self 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 Devill. 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 abbolitionists and they might with the same justice published 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 conclutions 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 any thing could be legitably 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 (exept it was one of your own faith & feeling that even drempt 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 boath 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 abbolition brethren why you do not go to the slave states and preach and _____ as you do here; there is the Evill; You know the answer. You cannot drive men but by sword & baynot.

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 ameliorate the condition of the slave if not under the Providence of _____ led to his emancipation but for the violent measures pursued by the ultra abolitionists. 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 inconsistency. 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 than 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 Jan'y 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 gross 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 fire wood and table expenses allowed a poor _____ 75 cents per quarter for the whole and afterwards 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 than 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 borne 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. 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 abolitionists, 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 great 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 Delegated Steward meeting notwithstanding. I hope this is a misunderstanding.