

6-7-1847

Letter from John McDonald to James B. Finley

John McDonald

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.owu.edu/finley-letters>

Recommended Citation

McDonald, John, "Letter from John McDonald to James B. Finley" (1847). *Finley Letters*. 1153.
<https://digitalcommons.owu.edu/finley-letters/1153>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the James B. Finley Letters at Digital Commons @ OWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Finley Letters by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ OWU. For more information, please contact earutigl@owu.edu.

Poplar Ridge, near Lattas, Prop co. D June 7th 1847

My dear James

When I met you last in Phillippo, at the celebrations of the Sons of Temperance, you were so much engaged, both day and night, that we had not ^{time} to indulge in our usual chit chat. I set down to write to you, not because I have any ^{thing} worth communicating, but just, and long since should not be forgotten.

My caty has been very sick ~~over~~ three weeks past, and for a good part of the term her life was suspended on an even balance, but fortunately the disease took a favorable turn. She is now slowly on the mend. I need not tell you how much all my family respect you nor how ^{much} interest they take in your welfare.

My time of late hangs heavy and dull on my hands. I am breaking down, for want of something to do. I am unable to work on the farm, and have ^{no} business to attend to, and to be idle is the most ^{irksome} life a man can be condemned to. Having written my ^{self} out on the western pioneers, I have no subject on which to amuse ^{my self} by writing.

Our mutual friend the Rev Mr M Marley and my self ^{correspond} occasionally. Our subject ^{is} theology. I contend that men in general have ^{no} control over their faith, than they ^{have} of the ^{circumstances} of what country they were born; the language they speak, or ^{who} are their instructors. I think I have truth on my side, but ^{he} gives ^{me} some pretty hard thrusts, but ⁱⁿ the most kind and affectionate manner. He is a strong writer and should use pen more freely.

Elder J. H. Wright I am much pleased with his manner of preaching, and his manners as a gentleman. He like I B ^{makes} due allowance for the frailties incident to poor human nature. He makes proper allowance for that variety of talents distributed to our race. To one is given five talents, to another two, to another one. To whom much is given, much is required; and as ^{the} husband man ^{does} not expect to reap, where he has not sown intellectually, a sin committed by a man to whom ^{five} times the intellect of another deserves five times the punishment of the other.

It is my belief that a virtuous man can never be miserable; nor a vicious ^{or} dissipated man happy; and ^{if} virtue is rewarded in this life, I have ^{no} doubt it will be a passport to the life which is to come; independent of faith in the dogmas of any prophet. Pope said "For forms of faith let Goats and Zealots fight; he can't be wrong whose life is in the right." St James uses words to the ^{same} import, but more sublime. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the father, is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, and keep himself unspotted from the world." Jesus in the twenty fifth chapter of Matthew, and St Paul in the 13th chapter of 1st corinthians, sums up in a most sublime and masterly manner what constitutes the pulp and essence of religion. Here is no mystery to stumble at, all is plain common sense teaching. May the world profit by those sublime precepts. Amen.

The sons of temperance in this region are not ^{making} that head way that the cause merits. There are divisions formed in Bainbridge, Bourneville, Frankfort, and Lattasville. The latter is mostly formed of young men who ^{have} their characters to form. Scarcely any of the old influential Washingtonians have joined their ranks. Many of the influential Methodists and Presbyterians ^{do} oppose them, on the ground of the secrecy of this mode of initiation. It is a good thing say they, why ^{is} it secret. I am

Rev James Braeley Fairley
Columbus Ohio

Lattas 8th June 8th 47

Received
1847
Wm M. M. M.

119

inclined to think that they will ^{not} succeed well in small villages, or in the country, but ⁱⁿ large towns and cities the plan will work wonders; and their influence on the surrounding ^{country} will have a more happy effect, than in the formation of small societies in the country; with ^{the almost} certain prospect of occasional failures ⁱⁿ small societies, ^{which} will have a tendency to discour-
-age others, and hurry this fall.

I am well aware that Ignorance is by many ^{is} considered a sin; an evidence of over-
-weening vanity. When any ^{with whom} I correspond, talk about themselves I am sure of one thing, that they talk about something they know. When men dive deep to discuss mysteries and attempt to explain what is ^{un}explainable they are ^{soon} lost in a fog of mystification, ^{and} their minds become bewildered. A mystery is a thing unknown.

When I take a retrospective view of my life, I am almost astonished at the indulgence with which I am treated by those who have known me from my youth to present time. When I consider the many foibles, nay errors, ^{which} I have been guilty of. When I reflect on the many things that ^{ought to} have been done, ^{but} ~~that ought not to be done~~, and left undone so many things that I ought to have done; the indulgence exercised by my friends to my frailties cause me to have compassion on the frailties and errors of my fellow men. It is a great consolation to me in my declining years, and when I am almost at ^{the} end of the journey of life, that those who know me longest and best, ^{as} treat me with most kindness and attention. I have ^{passed} through many dangers, and come off unscathed. Providence has blessed me with most uninterrupted health, for which I am grateful.

My children and grandchildren are in good health, my own health is good for my age, but I am getting very clumsy. I must get on a block, or on ^{the} upper side of a hill to put my foot in the stirrup to mount a horse. When you and I, in "long sine" used to ride over the point creek hills, I could jump on a horse when he was going in a long trot. But time and constant use wears out spring steel.

Having no particular subject to write on, I have thrown some better skitter thoughts which I hope you will receive as an apology for a letter. I have ^{not} talents for wit, nor humor, nor have ^{I ever} written a sentence, that ^{would} cause a man to laugh or cry.

I hope providence will preserve your life, just as long as life may be desirable to you, and when you ^{are} called to leave the stage of action may ^{you} go without pain or compunction is the wish of your friend.

John McDonald

Rev James B Finley.