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James B. Finley Letters

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Letter from J.M. Jameson to James B. Finley

J.M. Jameson

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Somerset O. Feb. 1. 1848.

Brother Finley,

After my respects to you, I wish to express to you some of my thoughts on a subject which, now, is before the Preachers of the Ohio Conference, namely, the division of the Conference. As I have but recently come into the Conference, and can have but little personal interest in the matter, I have not thought it my duty to express my views on this subject through the press, but still I may do so to you as the leading delegate to the General Conference. In the views which I may express on this subject I may differ in judgment from yourself: if so I hope to do it respectfully. I shall then at once say, I am in judgment opposed to the division of the Conference, and especially in the manner in which it is now proposed to be accomplished. I regard such division as an important matter, and one which should be fully understood by all concerned, and, therefore, one which should be agreed upon, after a full and free discussion in open Conference, and mature deliberation on the subject. I may therefore state a few of the reasons which have led me to my conclusions. First— I think a full, and free, and unbiased judgment of the Conference, can not be obtained in the way proposed. Your long experience, and extensive acquaintance with the men will, I doubt not, readily suggest to you the motives which may influence the opinions in the intervals of Conference. We can act more impartially when we have no appointments.

Second— The division of a Conference is, as I think a long stride in our way to a settled ministry. It is of a piece with the dividing of Circuits, and setting off of Stations, and the tendency of such division is to weaken, and, finally, to destroy, the itinerancy. That division is, in certain cases, necessary is admitted; but we should make such divisions cautiously,

Recd
J. W. Finley
Somerset
Feb 1 1848
O. C. M.

1307

1219



Rev. James B. Finley
Columbus
Ohio

Via Fairville }

and never unnecessarily.

Third — That which might be proper and right in this respect, in some other Conferences, might not be so in the Ohio Conference. I think the Ohio Conference is, and ought to be, ~~reg-~~
~~ard to be~~ ~~the~~ considered, the ~~Shut~~ anchor of the M. E. Church in the great Valley. It ought, therefore, to be a large body. It should be, on this side of the mountains, what the Baltimore, or New York Conference is on the other side. But suppose it be divided, (by any given line) it will, as a matter of course, lose its standing and weight of character as a Conference, and consequently its influence on the whole body.

Now it occurs to me, that this single consideration for ~~an~~ ^{weighty} ~~very~~ argument which can be brought against it, in favour of a division. I am aware that the size of the Conference is made an argument, in favour of the division, but this is the very reason why it should not be divided. It should be a large body by all means, because it should exert an influence on the whole Church. Who has not seen the influence which the Baltimore and New York Conferences have had on the entire Church. I know it may be said they will be divided at the next general Conference. Be it so; this only furnishes an additional argument why Ohio should not divide; because in that event she would become the keystone of the Church; and, in my opinion, if she understands her calling in this matter, she will not, without the most imperative necessity divide her strength. Such necessity does not, as I believe, now exist. I think I am aware of all the arguments which are urged in favour of the division, and I believe they may all be obviated without a division of the Conference; thus, let the German work be distributed among the Conferences within whose bounds it lies. This would reduce both the number

and the work of the Conference. Let the Kanawha Dis. be attached to a Western Virginia Conference. This would also lessen the number of preachers, and the work of the Conference; and suit the people of Virginia better than as it now is. And I do not know but such an arrangement might be made as would remove the necessity for a division of old Baltimore; and surely these are not the times in which it is safe or prudent to recommend division. With these views, I can not but regret that the matter has been gotten up in the way it has, and in the section of the Conference in which it has. It can not fail, as I think, to produce, to some extent, a feeling of jealousy among some of the preachers, which would not otherwise be produced.

Now, brethren, truly, I have, thus, freely expressed some of my views, on this subject which I deem of great importance to the whole Church, and I hope, should we differ in opinion, you will not regard this intrusion as altogether unpertinent. I think I feel an interest for the Ohio Conference, but I feel a general interest in the stability and perpetuity of our beloved Methodist Episcopal Church.

We are doing nothing in the matter on the District. In other matters we are doing better than last year. We have revivals in both Charges in Zanesville, also in Putnam, New Ark; On Hebron Cir. Irville Cir. Granville Cir. Richbeth Cir. and Rushville St. And our finances are doing pretty well.

Give my love to brother Cram, and all the friends. "Prox for us";
Yours affectionately

J. M. Jamison

P.S. Write to me at Somerset, C. and visit us if you can.