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Finley Letters

James B. Finley Letters

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Letter from John Stewart to James B. Finley

John Stewart

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Salenes Va Jan 8th 1846

Rev James B. Finley, My very Dear Sir

I saw a letter in the hands of Samuel Brown from you a few days since, that shows the fact that you feel for us, in this District of trouble we are some relieved when we know that we have the sympathies of our Brethren. you will not fail to pray for us, that is our stronghold for your satisfaction and information. I will state the condition of the district and in doing this you will learn the condition of each Circuit. I begin with the Little Kanawha Ct. Parkersburg Station is now reduced to a common Sabbath appointment and attached to the Little Kanawha Ct. there were 201 members returned to Dillens - some of that No withdrew - some moved away and of the number left 114 firmly adhere to the M. & Church which leave a majority of about 30 under Dillens care those and their Preacher are deprived the use of the Meeting house, but have five times at a private workshop, that say that they are much encouraged. In the rest of the Circuit, the Preachers say out of the 21 appointments returned to them they have lost, but one, the vote has been taken two others but they did not get a majority for the South. Dillen and Mather think the South will not get the Circuit - Ravenswood Circuit is but little affected with Southern Principals perhaps not 10 in its bounds are ready to go South - Levi Cunningham is their Preacher and he is kindling the fires of Reformation and you will hear a good report from there. Ripley Ct is favored with a Southern Preacher (Saml Black) the only one we have in the District. I think he is doing but little either to build up the Church or carry the people South, though he is all South

get as he acts prudently as far as I know he
has some influence in this country. but in my
estimation he is above doing a mean act. he received
his appointment from the Ohio Conference & will
be faithful to it this year. he thinks his Circuit
prepared to go South - others doubt it, Ft. Pleasant
etc has felt the effects of the agitation - from 50. to 60.
passed strong Resolutions. that they would not
receive nor support any preacher from the Ohio
Conference. but the remainder of the Co. profess
to receive and support their Preacher. (Jesse
Maddux) he is the sole Man for that place. I think
he will save the Circuit. but the Southerners
say all manner of evil of him. but falsely. as I
believe. Fugendote etc also has suffered much
from the Southern agitation. there the McComas
and the Spurlocks have their residence they
are strong men. and they are active in this matter
there were returned to David Smith. the Preacher
645 - 454 of them have resolved to receive & support
Smith from the Ohio Conference. of the 454 - 66 -
are members of Colours. they are so conditioned
that it is not necessary to mention them. their
masters are South - but the slaves are not. and
that circumstance is of but little advantage to
us. in this country. so you see there are 191 left
for the South in that Circuit. Smith is the proper
man for that work. none could do better. Wayne
etc has been troubled. McComas & Spurlock
penetrate into it. they have got one whole So-
ciety. and the majority of another to say that
they will go South. perhaps in all near 100.000
of upwards of 600. C. Ferguson is doing what
he can to save it. he thinks that he will suc-
ceed. it is likely that he may - he is gaining ground
he should have labored in Ohio. this I stated

every influence. that can be brought to bear on us
to injure us - is now brought forward. and we must
feel them. in the 1st place. the big Abolition then
is something terrible in that word - and all in Ohio
Preachers and all, are abolitionists. and still in re-
ality they are no more so than the People are
in Western Pa. 2^d the Circuit Judge. a member
of our Church. David McComas Brother to Wm
McComas. takes great Pains when charging
the Jury - to show them that Slavery is an
institution of God - indorsed by the Bible -
and that it is an Institution of our Country - men-
tioned by our Constitution and Laws and if they
are knowing to any person speaking against the
institution. that they are bound by oath to report
the case - then this insinuation thrown out - there
is a class of men among us. who are opposed
to these Institutions of ours perhaps meaning
the Ohio Preachers. and yet none of them have
meddled with the relation of Master & Servant
a 3^d the People are taught by the Southerners to
believe that they are slighted. they get only the
poorest Preachers - and our own People, are too
much inclined to join them in this complaint.
I tell them the Country would cost us too much
to call the Ohio preachers and send the best
here every year - for this must be kept up for-
ever if it is begun on the Complaint will be
renewed - a 4th Complaint is the Preachers
are young and inexperienced - this I tell them
is of necessity - they must have light burdens
and of course single men. and 5th it is in fact
a serious injury to the work here. that but few
stay to form a Character - and if a good one
formed. the Country cannot retain it long.

I have been thinking that we should have a western Virginia Conference. the interests of the country and the interests of the Church I think calls for it - we have members - we have Preachers - and we have - territory and we have large towns in the interior enough - for to make out, and then support a conference - and I think that 9 - 10^{ths} of the - Preachers and members would vote for it, and perhaps more than one half of those now disposed to go South would go in for that measure and continue with the old Church - and it is likely that 9 out of ten of the Southerners - would consent to that - and wait patiently till our next general conference to have it done - as it now is - one District belongs to Ohio - one District and part of two others belong to Pittsburg - one District belongs to Baltimore & one District belonging to Holston - now embraced in the Southerners - all lie in Western Va though the Preachers in the bounds of those districts cover the whole ground - in W. Va. - yet when the time comes to leave for Conference, the Preachers turn back to back - and go - some East, some West, some North and some South - I think it would be better to - turn face to face and march to some town in the interior - and take counsel together - this I think will satisfy the people - they will be apt to keep nearly all the Preachers raised among them, being no out-let for them - at least they would not be as apt to leave - their country - the Preachers from the free States might be exempted from this task of coming to a Slave State - as it now is every thing is very uncertain in reference to the state of the Church, it will divide - and two classes of Preachers as the People will say - alike in Doctrine & Discipline cannot be supported the country will be a bill of expence to both, & a dread to the Preachers

in the Council. the Reports of his color makes much against him, and the Church at this time, though perhaps the whole is a slander yet it is used by the Southerners. that the Ohio Conference sends a Negro - and he, as a white man, eats at their tables, and lodges in their beds - and the sin is unpardonable, he shall leave the State - I close by saying he is a laborious Preacher, a Son of Thunder - Wayne - Logan - Cole - & Fayett are Border Ets but all is quiet in the three last mentioned - Bodkin on Logan - Dolliver on Cole and Morris on on Fayett are well received and bid fair to do well - especially Dolliver he has a fine work and has received many into the Church since Conference. Somerville Et. was visited by a Southerner during the absence A. Fleming for Conference he visited every appointment - got them to discontinue the W. Advocate. to take the Richmond Advertiser and refuse a preacher from the Ohio Conference. Fleming came on for the 2^d year. he felt that he was so poorly received - he applied to me for liberty to go, and remain at home, I encouraged him to hold on - at our first Et. Mt. he was encouraged the agitator has left, and the people are coming to their senses - and he is now pretty well received. the Circuit is now supposed to be safe - Sutton Et. is doing well the Preacher (Loris) is well received and will be useful there - they have some - Southerners. but the Circuit on Elk and later ^{able} Centerable in Western Virginia 100 miles above Charleston Elk River Circuit has been very - fortunate. Whitnell did not come, and the People are all glad, his place is supplied by a young man David R. Majors, Charleston Et. the Last has two good Preachers. S. Brown - & J. J. West but they have hard toiling. the People are hard to please, they are well supplied but don't seem to know it -

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you will Please excuse me for taking this liberty to write to you. I thought you would like to know all about us and our work. and I shall be pleased to receive a letter from you soon. I have all confidence in you that you love the Church. and that your labours have contributed much to its advance. My Prayer is for your success

Mackinac, Mich.

Rev James. B. Finley
Janesville

Also

J. McCann Jr
Jan 10th

C

John Howard
1846 — 5

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Thus I have joyfully spent two hours in composing this letter. its errors in spelling words and constructing sentences you will pass by - and get the ^{point} that is all that I designed for you. I remain yours affectionately
John H. Hart