

A

MEMOIR

OF THE

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BY WILLIAM MAXWELL.



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TO THE REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.

*Richmond, Va., Aug. 14th, 1819.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

A direct conveyance offers from this place to Glasgow, and I eagerly embrace the opportunity which it presents of communicating to you on a subject in which I take a very lively interest.

You will receive with this several pamphlets, and among them several extracts from the minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, for 1819.

I refer you to the passage marked on page 158 of this pamphlet for the object of this letter.

In considering the signs of the times, it has appeared to me that if in any one thing the intimations of heaven are more prominent and decisive than in all others, it is in the favour shown to the united efforts of christians to promote true religion. Protestants of different denominations endeavoured for ages to sustain and advance the truth by controversy; and they had well nigh disputed vital religion out of the world. Within the last twenty-five years, they have combined in various associations, such as Bible and Missionary Societies, for the promotion of christianity, and now the word of God is going forth into all the world; and while evangelical piety is growing among Christians, Heathens, Mahometans, and Jews, are gathering into the fold of Christ. It is by the *zealous co-operation* of Christians that the glorious things foretold in the Bible are to be accomplished. The Romish church brings all its energies to bear on any point sufficiently important to call them forth. Cannot Protestants devise some means by which their united strength may be employed for the accomplishment of the great purposes and plans undertaken in the present day? Have not Christians in this age given a pledge that they will neglect

no measures within the compass of their ability, to make known the saving health of Christ to all nations? The Bible Society, wherever its branches extend, is but one association, and the wonderful favour shown by heaven to this institution seems to me to point to the adoption of other measures of universal co-operation. And I do think that such a correspondence between all Protestant churches as would cause all to recognise the unity of the Church of Christ, however its parts may be separated, and diffuse a common feeling through the whole body, would be productive of the happiest effects. Besides the delightful communion that would then exist, many important benefits might be conferred. For instance, you have a missionary society for the purpose of sending the gospel to the Tartar tribes, and when once you shall have succeeded in firmly planting christianity in the place selected for the field of your operations, its local situation will, I suppose, afford you very great facilities for a wider display of your benevolence. There may be most important and urgent calls which your resources may not enable you to meet. In this case, the whole Protestant world ought to step forward, and afford you aid. The ability of American churches might enlarge your means, or relieve your embarrassments. And so of us. We have a mighty field for domestic missions. We have Indians and blacks, and Spaniards to christianize; and at the same time are obliged to support Theological Seminaries for the education of young men for the ministry. In some urgent case, then, you might help us, and draw our hearts to you by a sense of obligation. So throughout Protestant christendom. It was with views of this sort that the overture was brought forward by the Assembly.

Now, I wish to know of you whether in your judgment any correspondence can be established between the church of Scotland, and the Presbyterian church in the United States, that would promise an increase of affection and brotherly co-operation in the important measures now car-

rying on for evangelizing the world. We have the same confession of faith, the same discipline, the same mode of worship. In fact, the Presbyterian church here is a descendant of the church of Scotland. And the great mass of our people are descendants of the English, Scotch and Irish. We use the same language, have the same stock of literature; in general the same usages, and fundamentally the same laws. The intercourse between us and Great Britain is more than between us and all other parts of the world. Harmony and peace ought always to prevail among us. Your Reviews and our Newspapers seem to forbid this; but christians ought to counteract their influence. The present is a most favourable time for them to step forward, and "brighten the chain of love." We are at peace, and the hostile feeling produced by the late war, is giving way to kindly sentiments. Our government and our people are generally disposed to cultivate a friendly disposition towards you. I wish the christians in each nation so to draw the cords of love that ambitious rulers shall be unable to divide us. Men will learn war no more, when the majority of the people are christians, and love as brethren.

This object interests me so, that I talk at a great rate. Excuse my loquacity. I wish that your Reviewers would alter their tone respecting America. They suffer themselves to be greatly imposed upon by garrulous travellers, who go home and *play the traveller*, as the French say, most egregiously. But they seem to obtain easy credit with their countrymen; and their wonderful stories are repeated of a state of morals and manners not known in this country. Some of the people here laugh at their mistakes, and others are angry at their abuse. The general effect of the scant praise and abundant censure bestowed on us, convinces me that the people of this country, in general, esteem the British more than they do any but themselves, and would rather have their praise, and enjoy their friendship, than that of all the world beside. If this be so, how easy

would it be to perpetuate peace, and how deadly must be the hatred when all these feelings are changed into malignity?

You see that I write to you with the freedom and confidence of an old acquaintance. I regard you as a brother in the gospel,—rejoice in your reputation, and much more in your widely extended usefulness, and pray that your labours may be crowned with more, and yet more success, and I am

Most truly yours,

JOHN H. RICE.

P. S. Your sermons in the Tron church have been republished here, and are highly esteemed.

TO WILLIAM MAXWELL, ESQ.

*Richmond, Sept. 16th, 1819.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I have been thinking on the subject of your last letter ever since I received it. You well know the interest that I take in the prosperity of the church in Norfolk. Any thing that I can do shall be done.

There are three things to which you must especially have reference in your next choice.

1. That the object of it be a man of unquestioned piety and active zeal.

2. That he have *a voice, gestures, and manners in and out of the pulpit*, acceptable to the people. [How did such a plain man as I am ever become acceptable to the Norfolcensians?]

3. That he have good *intellectual bottom*. This last is an affair not sufficiently attended to in the settlement of ministers in town. Any young fellow who has a smooth face and a fine voice can run away with the people for three months. But by that time, the perpetual recurrence of the same set phrases, and the same ideas, wearies the audience. No man can long retain his popularity, who has