

A

MEMOIR

OF THE

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BY WILLIAM MAXWELL.



PHILADELPHIA: 

PUBLISHED BY J. WHETHAM.

RICHMOND:—R. I. SMITH.

1835.

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TO THE REV. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D.

*Theological Seminary, Aug. 6th, 1825.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I presume that you are all safe and settled at home, and that the excitement of a return to your family has subsided.

to settle disputes, which will be sure to rise among readers of the Bible. But is not this, obviously, as much as to say, that we must have an infallible interpreter of the book upon earth? (the very error of the Papists indeed.) Yet he says, "In explanation of this rule, it is to be borne in mind, that while God hath fully and clearly revealed his will to us, yet he hath *so done it as to form a part of our trial.* While all things necessary to salvation are set forth in his word for our learning, Scripture is nevertheless so constructed, that the unlearned and unstable can wrest it to their own destruction; and the word of the gospel is *either a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death,* as we receive and apply it." And he adds, "If this was the case in the Apostolic age, as St. Peter and St. Paul both declare that it was, much more is it possible, and to be expected, in these days of multiplied divisions and latitudinarian departure from the faith." All very true; but is it not perfectly plain then, that if his rule *could* settle these disputes, as he pretends, it would, by his own showing, disappoint the design of the Holy Spirit in "*so*" framing the Scriptures "*as to form a part of our trial,*" in this our mortal state? And ought he not to have been sure, therefore, that the rule itself must be vain? (just as sure as we may be that a medicine made to prevent death must be *quack.*) And why could he not be satisfied to bear his part of the trial, and wait patiently till the day of judgment, when the only infallible Interpreter would interpret his own word, and decide all disputes about its true meaning forever?

Moreover, when he acknowledges that diversities of interpretation prevailed in the days of the Apostles themselves, is it not wonderful that he was not struck with the decisive fact that neither Peter nor Paul ever proposed to cure the evil by summoning the disputants to come to them for the true interpretation of their own writings? For why did they not? Evidently because it was plain that if men of "perverse minds" would "wrest" what they had written, they would be equally apt (and even more so) to wrest what they would say in further explanation of it. The fault was not in the scriptures, but in the

As ill news flies apace, I should surely have heard if any disaster had befallen you. I will take it for granted then, that through your whole journey you had rich experience of the care and kindness of our heavenly Father. And I do hope, that the safety and facility with which you find that you can visit us, will induce you before very long to repeat your excursion. I do believe, that if you could make such an one every year, it would prolong your life, and extend your usefulness. It might be the means of bringing your children acquainted with the children of those who will never cease to love you with a fervour and perpetuity of affection, which is rarely to be found, except among old Virginia Presbyterians. I greatly approve of every thing which extends and strengthens kindly feelings. And I love to see friendships growing up among the children of those who have been fast friends. Come then, often among us; and let us enjoy the pleasure of showing, or rather trying to show how much we love you. I do wish that you could stay some

*hearts* of their readers, and these the Apostles could not change. But the power and authority of the "Catholic" or "Primitive Church" cannot be greater than that of the Apostles who founded it. Indeed I may state the argument still more strongly, and say that the power and authority of the Primitive Church cannot be greater than that of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Apostles to indite the scriptures; and if, as Bishop R. concedes, and indeed contends, all the various forms of expression in which the Divine Inspirer has chosen to communicate the doctrines of the gospel, cannot so fix and ascertain the meaning of his word, as to exclude the misconceptions of men of carnal minds, who may "wrest the scriptures to their own destruction," is it not manifest that no additional statements of any mere men whatever, call them fathers, confessors, martyrs, or what you will, can help the case? Is it not clear, indeed, that they can only embroil the strife by undertaking to compose it, and increase and multiply the grounds of controversy, and points of dispute, by furnishing new materials for difference of opinion, and absolutely interminable debate? Surely "the Bible, and the Bible alone, ought to be, as it is, the religion of Protestants,"—and of all who call themselves christians in our land.

weeks here, and visit your old friends from house to house. I think that it would do good both to them and to you. The stimulus which good, hearty, old-fashioned Virginia friendship would give, would be a better tonic and cordial than wine could furnish.

We are at length in occupancy of a part of our new building. We find it a very pleasant comfortable house, thus far, and I think when all things are fixed about us, that it will make a very desirable residence. It appears to me, too, that there has been a good stirring up of the people in behalf of our Seminary; and that they are more than ever resolved to build it up, and place it on a respectable foundation. Mr. Roy is engaged as our agent, and I hope that he will be efficient. He has not had a fair trial yet, but I think he has the talent for that work.

I have spent all the time I could possibly spare, from home since I saw you. I have made a number of excursions into different parts of the adjacent country, and have been out a week with Mr. Roy as agent. Owing to this, I have it not yet in my power to give you any remarks on your book. I have just run over it in a very hasty manner, so as to have a general view of the arrangement. With this I am greatly pleased. Your management of Hume's sophistry also gratified me highly. On this part of the subject, only one thing occurred to my mind, as a subject worthy of your consideration. You know Brown (see Cause and Effect) denies that a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; but says, if it is, that Hume's objection is unanswerable. Brown's works have considerable influence in some parts. And it has occurred to me, that it would be worth while, in another edition, to take some little pains to settle the true idea of a miracle.

Mrs. Rice joins me in much love to Mrs. A. and the children. If you will come next summer, we can give you much better quarters than you had before. And I hope that you and Mrs. A. know that we think it a high privilege to

minister to your comfort all that is in our power. I am as ever,

Yours most truly,

JOHN H. RICE.

Present us kindly to Dr. Miller and Mr. Hodge.

TO THE REV. LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

*Theological Seminary, Aug. 6th, 1825.*

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Since I wrote last, we have obtained the occupancy of a part of our building; and feel ourselves now at home in the Seminary. It is a plain, comfortable house. May God make it his habitation, and imbue all here, and all who will be here, largely with his spirit.

I have better hopes now than when I wrote last. The Directors of our Institution wanted me to go on again to the North, and solicit aid. But I said that I could not go again, unless I could say and show that our own people had taken hold of the thing in good earnest. If they would adopt a plan for putting the Institution into full organization, send out agents, and make full trial of the Southern people, then I would go to the North, and ask the brethren there to help us. Accordingly a promising agent has set out, and made a very good beginning. I went with him two days, and obtained about four thousand dollars. This however was among my particular friends, and in the best part of our state. How the whole plan will succeed I do not know. Pray for us.

Mrs. Rice intended this day to have written to our beloved Mrs. Woods, but on learning that I was writing to you she declined. She has lately had a terrible inflammation in her eyes, which has left them too weak to be used much. She hopes that this will be a sufficient reason for not writing. Our hearts continually go to Andover with a fervour of love which I know not how to express. My brother, shall we not meet again, and enjoy such communion as we have en-