

A

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. JOHN H. RICE, D.D.

First Professor of Christian Theology in Union Theological Seminary, Virginia.

BY WILLIAM MAXWELL.



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5

much might at this time be effected for the cause of the destitute in our own country, and more for the benefit of the Foreign Missionary Society, recently established in New York. I believe this principally because of the deep interest which is taken in the affairs of South America by the people in our region. Any measure that would promise to emancipate the people of that country from the slavery of superstition and Popish jugglery, would take greatly among us. There are several other important matters which a missionary officiating as we wish might attend to. I pray you endeavour to send us one of the right stamp. Be so good as to let me know as soon as you can, whether you can point out one who would suit this climate. In the winter we would place him at Portsmouth, or in some other town, and give him quite labour enough as a stationary preacher; and during the rest of the year he might ride partly in the lowlands, and, as the sickly season should advance, up the country among the mountains. We have this scheme very greatly at heart, and look to you for aid.

Things in Richmond go on very much in the old way. We of this house love you and yours as much as ever. My brother is with me. He is very well. Sister Martha and the child are gone to Rockbridge.

Every blessing on you and yours.

As ever,

JOHN H. RICE.

TO THE REV. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D.

*Richmond, Dec. 31st, 1817.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I suppose you have heard before this of a scheme which we have in view of publishing a monthly magazine. I have intended all along to send you a prospectus, and endeavour to lay your talents under contribution. Why I have not before now made this communication, I can hardly tell:

only every hour of mine has its full employment. I am very desirous that our work should be respectable; and more so that it should be useful. I wish to make it a fair representative of the principles, talents, and piety of the Presbyterian church in this country. Now, will not you, a native of Virginia, with all the feelings of a Virginian warm in your bosom, afford us your assistance? If you will write a piece once a month, and send it on by mail, if private opportunities fail, I will very willingly pay the postage, and be much obliged to you for your labour, as will be many a Virginian besides. I hope then that you will not refuse this request.

I understand that the Episcopal brethren are greatly alarmed at the prospect of our magazine. However that may be, we have no intention of kindling the flame of controversy. We think that we may tell what Presbyterians believe, and why they believe it, without attacking others. And this is all that we propose, as far as our work shall be peculiarly Presbyterian. This is hardly the era for religious controversy. The Bible is to be the rallying word for all christians, and he who does most to turn the attention of the people of God from the petty matters which separate true disciples, to the great work of promoting the kingdom of our Lord, is most properly employed.

Mrs. Rice joins in most affectionate remembrance of Mrs. Alexander and the children, with yours assuredly.

JOHN H. RICE.

Will you try to enlist the zeal and talents of Dr. Miller in our behalf? We want the aid of his historical knowledge. All that we can find concerning the rise and progress of the Presbyterian church in the country, will furnish very acceptable matter for the Magazine."

On the first of January of the following year, (1818,) or shortly afterwards, he issued the first number of his proposed periodical, entitled the Virginia Evangelical and Literary Magazine, in a handsome pamphlet of forty-eight pages

octavo, to be continued every month; a work to which we shall find him devoting a large portion of his time and attention for some years to come; and by which he fondly hoped that he should render the most important services to the cause of religion, and letters, and all that was good, in his native state, and in the country at large. The design of it, indeed, as stated in his "Introduction," is certainly every way and altogether as fair and liberal as could have been wished.

"The title of our Magazine," says he, "has been adopted as significative of our purposes and feelings. Disclaiming as we do, all local prejudices, and acknowledging the United States as our country, we confess that we take a peculiarly lively interest in the prosperity and welfare of that section in which we were born and educated; and therefore we have prefixed the name *Virginia* to the general terms which characterize the nature of our work.

"Religion is, in our estimation, a subject of pre-eminent and inexpressible importance. We regard it as connected with our personal and most private interests, our domestic enjoyments, the peace of society, the permanence of our happy institutions, and the everlasting welfare of our fellow men; and we therefore feel ourselves bound by every obligation, to promote it to the utmost of our power."

"The term religion, however," he observes, "has been applied to the worship of calves and crocodiles, to the mythological fictions of Greece and Rome, to the brutal and fiendlike service of Juggernaut, to the bloody superstitions of Mahomet, to the pompous ritual of the Roman Catholics, and to the simple and unadorned observances of the various classes of Protestants. Hence it is obvious that a word more undefined and vague in its signification could hardly be used. Of course, we have chosen to express ourselves by a term of much less latitude. Our Magazine, therefore, as respects religion, is to be *Evangelical*; a term which, (in present

usage) designates a peculiar class of sentiments, and system of doctrines, derived from the holy scriptures, in opposition to other systems which are professedly supported by the same authority. Of this system the principal articles are, 1. The total depravity of man. 2. The necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. 3. Justification by faith alone, and 4. The necessity of holiness as a qualification for happiness." He proceeds to state that in maintaining these doctrines, his expositions of them would necessarily be modified by his peculiar views as a christian and a Presbyterian, calling no man master upon earth, and bowing to no authority but that of God. These, however, were happily of the most liberal order; for the standards of the church to which he belonged expressly recognised all christians of all denominations who held the fundamental articles of the christian faith, as members of the same church of Christ. Then as to the subjects of difference which might be introduced into such a work, no apprehension need be felt of any polemical or sectarian spirit. "What is called religious controversy," says he, "has had an effect so disastrous, that we need not be surprised when the lovers of peace protest against it. We hold it in abhorrence; yet we love amicable discussion. It is an important means of arriving at the truth; and among christians is admirably calculated to promote forbearance and charity."

"In conducting the *Literary* department of our Journal," our editor continues, "we shall allow ourselves very great latitude. We have adopted this general term indeed because no better occurred; but the truth is, we intend that our Magazine shall occasionally serve as a vehicle of valuable essays on Agriculture, Inland Navigation, the construction of Roads, the great concern of Schools, and whatever our correspondence will furnish for the promotion of Internal Improvement. We believe that the enterprising people of this country only want information on this subject, to stir them up to a degree of zeal and activity which has never yet been wit-

nessed among us. In this view, we not only freely offer our pages for communications of this kind, but we earnestly entreat those who possess knowledge to impart it for the benefit of their country. Our limits are circumscribed. We are, however, not without hope that we shall be enabled to extend them, and thus afford an opportunity to the pious and enlightened, the theologian, the philosopher, the economist, and the man of letters, to diffuse useful knowledge among his fellow citizens."

"And may the Great Head of the Church bless these humble efforts, for the promotion of his glory, and the best interests of our fellow men."

Such was the idea of the periodical now presented to the public, a little too broad perhaps in its plan, but altogether pure and admirable in its spirit. The first number contained several valuable articles, as No. 1. of Essays on Divinity, by Dr. Hoge, Reflections on the New Year, by Dr. Mathews, No. 1. of Short Discourses for families, by the Rev. Mr. Lyle of Prince Edward, a Review of Mr. Wirt's Life of Patrick Henry, and some others; with several columns of religious and miscellaneous intelligence; and was well received by the public, who regarded it as the first sample of a very promising work.

TO MR. JOHN KELLY.

*Richmond, January 19th, 1818.*

MY DEAR SIR,

The box of books of which the inclosed is a bill, has been lying at Higginbotham and Barrett's almost ever since I last wrote you. I was very much surprised the other day to find that you had not received them. I can only say that the selection is as good a one as I could make; and the terms are such as I hope you will approve. It would give me very great pleasure to serve you in any way. I am very