

A

MEMOIR

OF THE

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think that a spirit of prayer is in some degree poured out, and that at least a few are wrestling with God. The missionary business is going on with some success. Clem. Read, Charles Kennon, and James Wilson, are riding very constantly between this and Petersburg. Kennon writes that immense crowds attend him almost constantly, that the cry for preaching is great, and that it is recommendation enough for any man that he is a Presbyterian. We want preachers, we want a great many more preachers!—preachers of zeal and of talents, who will give themselves up with unreserved devotion to the great work of preaching salvation. But I shall make a fuller communication on this subject before long to the Committee of Missions.

TO THE REV. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER.

Charlotte, Oct. 17th, 1810.

I believe that when I last wrote, I observed that the cause of religion was looking up. Although we have nothing that can be called a revival, yet we are still more encouraged. I think that Christians are in some degree revived. Many seem to have a spirit of grace and supplication, and are wrestling with God in prayer. There have been more added to the church at our last sacraments than usual. Numbers in Cub Creek, Briery, and Cumberland, seem to be anxiously inquiring on the subject of religion. You remember that in Virginia there was a class of persons who never went to church at all; they thought it beneath them. That class is diminishing in numbers pretty rapidly. And now and then, persons of this description are entering into the church. Mrs. Judith Randolph, of Bizarre, lately made a profession of religion. I have been much in her company since, and I think her among the most truly pious in our country. John Randolph attended the sacrament when his sister joined with us, and seemed to be much impressed. He invited Mr. Hoge home with him, and conversed much upon religion. Mr. Hoge is fully persuaded that he is, as it

is expressed here, an *exercised man*. Wm. B. Giles regularly attends our missionaries who preach in Amelia. Mr. Speece preached in his neighbourhood not long ago. He was present, and remarkably attentive. In the evening he repeated to a lady who could not go to church, Mr. Speece's sermon almost verbatim, adding when he was done, that it was the best sermon he ever heard or read. Joseph Eggleston, formerly member of Congress, entertains our missionaries at his house with the utmost cordiality. The wife of John W. Eppes is said to be under very serious religious impressions. There were at the last Cumberland sacrament from eight to ten of the Randolph connections at the table of the Lord. These are a few instances among the many that might be mentioned of the truth of the observation made above. Upon the whole, we are encouraged. And I hope that we shall have greater grounds for encouragement. Pray for old Virginia."

About this time, we learn, he received an intimation from some persons in Richmond, that they would be very glad if he would come down and lead them in getting up a new church which they were proposing to raise in that place, and which seemed to be sadly needed. The state of religion, indeed, in our metropolis, at that period, was deplorably low. It is true that in the Methodist and Baptist churches there was, no doubt, much real piety; mixed, however, as it seemed, with no small portion of enthusiasm, and confined, moreover, chiefly to persons in the humbler walks of life, who were, of course, without any great influence; while those in the higher and more fashionable circles of society, embracing the Episcopal and Presbyterian denominations, were fallen into a state of the greatest apathy; for the spirit of infidelity and the spirit of the world had poisoned the minds of many of them to a sad degree, and the sanctuary was almost extinct. There was at least no regularly organized church of either of these names in the place, (or none that was visible,) but all of both of them who retained any respect for religion

went together to hear a sermon, in the forenoon only of every Sunday, in the Hall of the House of Delegates, in the Capitol; (for the Presbyterians had no house of worship in the city, and the Episcopalians used their old church on the lower hill, only at Easter and Christmas). And here the Rev. Mr. Blair of the Presbyterian, and the Rev. Mr. Buchanan of the Episcopal church, who were linked together in a very warm and intimate friendship, officiated alternately, according to the forms of their respective churches. On one Sunday the people were Presbyterians, in outward appearance, and the next they were Episcopalians, in aspect; but still all the same. In either phase, the great body of those who attended the service appeared to have no idea of vital religion, and the few pious people who perhaps still lingered among them, (hovering, as it were, over the ashes of the altar, and dying away with its embers,) were themselves very nearly *ready to perish*. In short, there was nothing but the form, or rather the shadow of a church, among them; and hardly that; for the sacrament, I believe, was never administered in the Hall, and the rite of baptism, which had got to be the mere ceremony of christening (as it was called) to give the child a name, was performed only in private houses.

To finish the picture, I am sorry to be obliged to add that the ministers themselves, though both very worthy and amiable men, were yet most insipidly lukewarm in their public services, and, in their private habits and manners, as I understand, were not exactly the best *examples to their flock*. They partook, at least, without scruple, of the pleasures of the table, and winked at all the *innocent amusements* of the gay and fashionable circles in which they moved. The people, of course, felt themselves authorized to go a little beyond their pastors; and the church and the world were completely mingled and confounded together.*

* It is due to the memory of both these worthy men, who have since died, to add here, that the gross impropriety of their clerical

In this state of things, a few pious persons who had become disgusted with the cold and heartless services of the capitol, conceived the idea of establishing a Presbyterian congregation in the city, and of building a church for it, near Rocketts, and looking about for some evangelical preacher to lead them in their enterprise, they had turned their eyes towards Mr. Rice; for they had heard him preach several times, on his occasional visits to Richmond, and elsewhere, and were satisfied that he would be the very man for their purpose. Some of them, accordingly, had broached their wishes to him, which he could not, of course, help hearing with interest; but their whole plan was as yet too immature, and too uncertain, for him to embrace it at once; and he could, therefore, only encourage them to proceed, and allow them to hope that he might perhaps be brought to aid them in it at some future day. So the project had rested, until the Rev. Drury Lacy, it seems, paid them a visit, and preached with so much effect, that their desire to enlist Mr. Rice in their service, was greatly increased; and they now renewed their application to him in more definite terms.

The following letters will show the progress of the movement, (with some other matters,) and we shall, by and by, see its effect.

TO THE REV. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER.

Charlotte, January 3d, 1811.

There is great uncertainty in my going to Philadelphia de-
portment was owing, in some measure at least, to the times in which they lived, when neither the world nor the church was yet awakened to a sense of religion as it has since been; and that they both lived to see and acknowledge the error which they had committed. I have been told, that Mr. Blair, particularly, who was a man of real piety, and greatly esteemed by his brethren, confessed his fault publicly to the Presbytery to which he belonged, even with tears.