

THE
PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER, 1821.

An Address of the Conductors.

The importance of periodical publications is well understood by reflecting men. The philosopher and statesman, the physician and divine, have recourse to them, as very convenient vehicles for conveying to others the views they wish to prevail in the different branches of science to which they have devoted their lives. A large portion of the information now circulating in the world has been derived from such publications.

They are powerful agents in the religious world. In the hands of errorists and enemies to the truth, they are destructive as the spirits of darkness, beguiling and misleading unstable souls; but in the hands of the friends of truth, they go forth like angels of light, on messages of grace and love, instructing the ignorant, consoling the disconsolate, supporting the weak, succouring the tempted, and encouraging all in the good ways of the Lord. A weapon of such potent efficacy it were treason to our Sovereign Lord to leave in the hands of his enemies. Christians in both hemispheres have felt it to be their duty to avail themselves of periodical publications as powerful auxiliaries in promoting that great cause of truth and righteousness which has engaged the best affections of their heart. In England "The Christian Observer," conducted by members of the established church, and "The Evangelical Magazine," edited by

VOL. I.

Episcopal clergymen and Dissenting ministers, have for a series of years been ably supported and extensively circulated. Blessings to England, they have powerfully maintained the interests of evangelical truth, and widely diffused the influence of genuine Christianity.

Religious Magazines have not prospered so much in this country. After a few years labour, they have been relinquished by their conductors. Various causes might be assigned for their failure. The density of the population in England and the arrangements of business, the result of time, offer facilities for circulating publications and collecting the avails, which cannot be found in a new country, whose population is widely scattered over an extensive territory. Literary men in England are less occupied with business foreign to the life of a student, than that class of society are in this nation; and consequently a larger mass of talents can at any time be put in requisition, for furnishing the necessary materials for a periodical publication of a religious nature.

The difficulties to be encountered in this country in conducting a Magazine, should not deter from the attempt. The best plan, in our opinion, for such a work, would be to commit it to a man of piety and talents, who should devote to it all his time, and derive from it his support. Such a man, properly qualified, consecrating to it all his faculties, aided by a number of literary

3 X

gentlemen, would give to it an interest, and command for it a circulation, which ought not to be expected on a different plan. In such an employment a man of talents might be as useful, as if he were engaged in preaching the gospel. If every Christian denomination of any extent in this country had a person duly qualified employed in conducting a Magazine, they would find their respective interests greatly promoted, as well as benefit resulting to the cause of our common Christianity.

The circulation of a religious Magazine among that numerous class of Christians who go under the name of Presbyterians, has long been felt by some as very desirable. Had the Association which originated this publication been able to procure a suitable individual in circumstances to devote his whole time to its support, they would have gladly availed themselves of his services, and appointed him the Editor. But such a person was not at command. They therefore embarked in their undertaking, not because they had not business enough to occupy their time, but from a conviction that something ought to be attempted; not to promote their secular advantage, but to promote the great cause of truth and piety, to which they have in this undertaking gratuitously lent their aid.

In reviewing their work, they are sensible of its imperfections in several respects. Some of them are to be imputed to the circumstance that, from several concurring causes, the burden of writing has fallen chiefly on a few of the conductors; and others, to the want of sufficient leisure from the pressing avocations of a public nature in which the writers were engaged. Still, however, communications, it is hoped, have appeared in the Presbyterian Magazine calculated to interest the feelings and improve the judgment of its readers. They could wish it

had been much better, and had higher claims on public notice.

The contributors have no cause to complain of the want of patronage. It has been liberal and encouraging. Desirous of repaying the kindness of the public in the flattering support given to their labours the first year, they have contemplated important and beneficial alterations in the mode of conducting their work. They have been in treaty with a brother, respectable for piety and talents, on the subject of his assuming the editorship of the Magazine. From his situation at the time the application was made, they were led to entertain hopes of succeeding; but, from a letter lately received from him, they have been constrained to relinquish their expectations. Sensible, however, of the importance of having a single Editor, who shall devote a considerable portion of his time in superintending the general concern of the work, they have prevailed with the Rev. Dr. Neill to consent to assume the responsibility of such an undertaking. His character for piety, talents and prudence, is too well known to need commendation. The time that he can spare from his official duties as pastor of a church in this city, will be applied to this work.

This appointment involves an alteration in the plan of conducting the Magazine, which it is proper to state. Being all Presbyterians, belonging to churches holding the same doctrines and approving of the same great leading principles in church government, the standards of these churches constituted the basis of their Association; and of course nothing manifestly inconsistent with those standards could with propriety be admitted into this publication. No department of the Magazine was committed to one member of the Association more than to another; each being left to select his subject, and make what

communication he deemed proper. It was anticipated, that perhaps some of the writers might feel inclined to publish their own peculiar views of truth; and it was distinctly understood that, in such case, any other member who did not adopt them, would have the privilege of stating his views of the same subject. Controversy, however, was to be avoided. No attack was to be made by one member on another; no *formal* reply to be published. The writer was to content himself with stating, illustrating, and proving the views he entertained on a point in which he might differ from his fellow contributor.

As each contributor, by signing his name, or the initials of it, to his communication, became responsible for the contents, he had a right to claim the insertion of any paper he might send that did not militate with the basis of the Association. The editing committee consequently inspected the papers of their fellow labourers no further than to ascertain the subject, so as to enable them to make a proper distribution of them in respect to the order in which they should appear in the publication. This committee were responsible only for the admission of selected matter and pieces furnished by individuals who did not belong to the Association. To the principles of the convention they have carefully adhered, and yielded to every one the exercise of his rights as a contributor.

The present Editor will be assisted by an association of literary gentlemen, and will conduct the Magazine with due respect to the standards of the Presbyterian churches. The control of the publication is committed to him; he will have authority to decide on the admission of every communication; and, of course, will assume a general responsibility in respect to the contents of the Magazine. It is, however, to be understood, that he will not stand pledged for the correct-

ness of all the sentiments that may appear in the Presbyterian Magazine; though he will feel it to be his duty to admit no communication militating against those great doctrines of the Bible to which his associates have yielded their assent, unless it be with a design to publish an answer to the erroneous statement it may contain.

By committing the Magazine to the care of a single Editor, it is expected, that, if properly supported, he will, by a steady inspection of it, be enabled to preserve a better proportion between the different kinds of materials of which it will be composed. From a single individual, even if he were released from the important and numerous duties which a pastor of a church in this city has to perform, it would be unreasonable to expect that variety of matter a publication of this description requires. Nor will he depend entirely on the aid of those gentlemen who stand pledged to assist him, for communicating to the work a quality so desirable to meet the various tastes of the numerous subscribers, who honour us by perusing the pages of our Magazine. The Editor has reason to calculate on receiving contributions from several other literary individuals whose pens will do credit to the pages of the Presbyterian Magazine. He is authorized too to make such proposals to others as will, it is expected, call forth the aid of talents that will increase the interest he and his associates wish to impart to this work.

The design of the publication will be the same as stated to the public in the preface to this volume; and the articles contemplated for insertion such as are comprised under the several heads there specified. A larger space will be appropriated to religious intelligence than heretofore. It is proper however to apprise the public, that it is not intended to make this Magazine a vehicle of religious intelligence in

minute detail. Events interesting to the feelings of Christians, are now transpiring in the Christian world so rapidly and in such numbers, that a circumstantial account of them would fill the pages of our Magazine. For minute particulars, our readers must be referred to publications designed expressly for the purpose of diffusing religious intelligence in all its detail. The principal features contemplated for this Magazine, will be composed of the several articles comprehended under the two first heads of materials mentioned in the preface. Nothing more than can be expected than a summary of religious intelligence, together with some "well attested accounts of revivals of religion" that may be obtained for this work.

Objections to the name by which this Magazine is distinguished have been heard; but none of force sufficient in the minds of the Association to induce them to exchange it for another. The fact is, there are so many periodical publications with such different names, that it was a difficult matter to select an appropriate one not preoccupied. At first it was determined to denominate it "*The Christian Watchman*:" but finding afterwards that this was already in use, it became necessary to choose another; and that of "*Presbyterian Magazine*" was deemed proper and characteristic of the members who composed the Association. The objection that this is a *sectarian* name should not, it is conceived, have any weight in reflecting minds. The Christian church is broken down into *sects*; and while this unhappy state of things continues to exist, these sects will be distinguished by characteristic names. The conductors of this work, it is well known, are all avowed Presbyterians; and if the assumption of this denomination involves no offence against Christian charity, it would seem that the application of their name to their work,

should not occasion the slightest pain even to the most delicate sensibility. No reflecting person of a different denomination will be repelled from honouring our pages with a perusal by a bare name. If in our work he meet with sentiments to which he cannot subscribe, he will find other sentiments relating to our common Christianity with which he will accord. Had the name "*Christian Watchman*" been retained, it would have effected no alteration in the contents of this publication; the opinions advanced and maintained would have been precisely the same. The title of the Magazine does not convey so distinct notice of what may be expected in it as the publication of the names of the conductors and their prefatory address to the public. If any individuals have been so influenced by a *bare name* as to refuse to subscribe to our work, we should regret it; still, however, it may be proper to state that the name has gained us many subscribers.

As the use of a larger type will be a real improvement in the Magazine, as well as meet the wishes of some of its readers, the Association have determined that the next volume shall be printed with a type one size larger than the one now in use, and generally in a single column, which will present a handsomer page to the eye.

Should the number of subscribers continue as large as at present, and especially if it should, as is anticipated, be increased, the profit arising from the Magazine, after deducting all necessary expenses will enable the contributors to make a donation to "*The United Foreign Missionary Society*," or to some other charitable institution, as may be judged most useful.

To the present subscribers, the conductors tender their sincere acknowledgments for their liberal patronage, and respectfully solicit a continuance of their subscriptions.

Should any wish to withdraw their names, they are requested to give notice of their determination to the present publishers, by the 25th of December; otherwise they will be considered as subscribers for the next volume. Should others, who have not honoured the *Presbyterian Magazine* with their patronage, feel disposed to peruse it, their names will be thankfully received. The next volume it is hoped, will be found to possess more interest than this. Whatever it may be, we humbly commit it to the blessing of the Great Head of the Church, and earnestly pray that his guidance and assistance may be vouchsafed to the Editor and his fellow labourers.

J. J. J. }
S. B. W. } *Committee.*

Communications.

LECTURES ON BIBLICAL HISTORY.

No. V.

"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth. And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years; and he begat sons and daughters. And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos. And Seth lived, after he begat Enos, eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died." GEN. v. 3—8.

The descendants of fallen Adam are, universally, degenerate plants of a strange vine. Divine grace, however, has, from the beginning, been marvellously manifested in calling and sanctifying a people,—a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and disposed to honour and serve the living and true God. The distinction of righteous and wicked obtained in the days of Cain and Abel; and the Bible, in giving us a faithful history of mankind, as, also, of the providence and mercy of

Heaven towards them, affords us some concise notices of both these classes. Of the wicked, we have information so far only as their general character had a bearing on the interests of society, and as their bad conduct and unhappy end furnish a solemn warning to all the world, that "the wages of sin is death."

When Cain, by evincing his unbelief in the promised Saviour, as well as by murdering his brother, incurred the divine displeasure and proved himself to be "of the wicked one," he appears to have abandoned the worship of God and the society of his people. Retiring to the eastward of Eden, he took up his abode in a place called the land of Nod, a name which signifies vagabond, and which seems to have been so called, in allusion to his character, as a fugitive and outcast from the ordinances of God, and the fellowship of the pious. Here he built a city, and called it Enoch, in honour of his first born son. After Enoch we have barely the names of Irad, Mehujael, and Methusael, without any account of their character, or pursuits. Lamech, the son of Methusael, and the fifth in descent from Cain, was the first transgressor of the law respecting marriage. He had two wives, at the same time; and, though his example was followed by Abraham, Jacob, and others, who appear to have been, in the main, amiable and excellent men, yet the practice is manifestly an infraction of the law of nature, and an unwarrantable departure from the original and benevolent institution of the Creator. The fact, that instances of polygamy are recorded in Scripture, by no means proves that it was right: nay, we are taught, even in the Old Testament, indirectly, at least, that it was wrong; as it was, invariably, a source of family feuds, favouritism, jealousy, and other serious and distressing evils. The names of Lamech's wives were Adah and Zillah.