

The Christian Recorder

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THE
CHRISTIAN RECORDER.

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SOUTHEY'S LIFE OF WESLEY.

MR. SOUTHEY introduces this long-promised work by observing that the sect or society of Methodists has existed for the greater part of a century, that they have their seminaries, and their hierarchy, their own regulations, their own manners, their own literature; form a distinct people, an *imperium in imperio*, in England; are extending widely in America, and in both countries number their annual increase by thousands; and that yet the history of their founder is very little known beyond the limits of those who are termed the religious public. He might have added, that even this limited public is much better acquainted with the leading events in Wesley's life, than with the nature, or origin, or tendency of his system. In one quarter he is confounded with his own illiterate teachers, and in another he is regarded as a patron saint. One class, which has the honour to reckon Mr. Southey among its members, is aware of his errors, but still considers him a public benefactor—another in which we are desirous to be enrolled, is not blind to his various and very uncommon merits; yet thinks that, on the whole, he did more harm than good.

We feel convinced that this last opinion will eventually prevail—and, though it obviously is not the opinion of Mr. Southey, yet we suspect that his labours will contribute to give it strength.—His well merited popularity will recommend the history of Methodism to the attention of numbers who had previously treated it with unmerited neglect—his candid and perspicuous narrative will guide them gently through the labyrinth, without giving any violent shock to their prejudices, or producing any unnecessary intellectual fatigue; the peculiar merits and failings of his hero, will be perceived, and Wesley's life will be contemplated in the light of a curious problem, which the historian, the politician, the philosopher, and the Christian are alike

concerned to solve. It will soon appear that Wesley was no ordinary fanatic—that methodism, in his hands, was not a mere religious faction, begotten by pride, and nursed by ambition and hypocrisy; that he laboured sincerely to improve his fellow creatures by the application of that remedy which God himself has given us, and that his virtues and vices, his opinions and actions, his success and his failure are interesting to every friend to Christianity and to mankind.

The shortest and best method of establishing this position will be to take a brief view of Wesley's life. Some remarks upon his character may be introduced as we proceed; and the more particular consideration of his doctrine, and system, its origin, and its consequences, its merits, and its defects, shall be resumed in the next Number of our Review. The founder of the Methodists, says Mr. Southey, was emphatically of a good family, in the sense wherein he himself would have used the term; his father, grandfather, and great grandfather were all clergymen. The second was patronised in the time of the Commonwealth by the famous John Owen; was ejected for non-conformity at the period of the Restoration, and died at the age of thirty-three, leaving two sons. The younger of these, disgusted by the violence of the party among which he had been brought up, was reconciled in his youth to the Church, and continued through life a zealous Churchman. At Oxford, he supported himself, while an under-graduate, by giving instruction to others; and after he had been two years in orders, he settled upon a curacy in the metropolis, and married a daughter of Dr. Annesley, one of the ejected ministers. Mrs. Wesley, like her husband, had renounced the dissenters in early youth; and, like him, was remarkable for a strong understanding, and a pious blameless life. They had no less than nineteen children; but only three sons and three daughters seem to have grown up.

Mr. Wesley was thought capable of forwarding the plans of James II. and preferment was offered to him if he would preach in their behalf. But, instead of accepting the offer, he refused to read the King's declaration—preached pointedly against his conduct; and when the Revolution was effected, was the first who wrote in its defence, and was rewarded with the living of Epworth, in Lincolnshire. The rectory of another small parish in the same county, was the only additional preferment which he ever obtained. His prospects, at one time appeared to brighten; but the dissenters resented his desertion, and had interest enough to thwart his plans. His second son, John, the founder of the Methodists, was born at Epworth on the 17th June, 1703. When John was six years of age, the parsonage-house was set on fire; in the confusion, he was left behind in the nursery, and did not awake till the stair-case had fallen in, and the flames already blazed in the room. No ladder

could be procured—and he was saved with great difficulty. He ever remembered this deliverance with the greatest gratitude; and in reference to it, he had a house in flames engraved as an emblem under one of his portraits, with the motto “Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning.”

In 1715, while John was at school, a singular circumstance happened to the family, which became the subject of his serious attention at a latter period of his life, and is recorded minutely by Mr. Southey in an Appendix. This circumstance was a loud and long continued knocking in different parts of the house—the cause of it was never discovered, and the family seem to have been satisfied that it was preternatural. Wesley was evidently of the same opinion; and Mr. Southey, though aware that he must expect to be ridiculed for not treating the story as utterly incredible and absurd, maintains that the testimony upon which it rests, is far too strong to be set aside upon account of the strangeness of the relation. We are unable to discover where this strength lies. If due allowances be made for imagination and exaggeration, all that remains might have been contrived by the servants or the daughters: the latter were told by their father that their lovers had probably something to do with the mystery; and though this opinion was afterwards rejected, it was never disproved; the outside of the house was never watched, nor was any sufficient investigation ever instituted. It was plainly a Jacobite goblin, and was particularly outrageous when Mr. Wesley prayed for the king. Mrs. Wesley and her sons were of the same politics as *Jeffery*, (the name by which the spirit was known in the house) and we presume that the daughters also took part with their mother, who had once been separated from her husband in consequence of political disputes. The oldest son, Samuel, was in London, and, upon being informed of this last circumstance, he observed “As to the Devil’s being an enemy to King George, were I the King myself, I should rather Old Nick should be my enemy than my friend.” We infer from this, that Samuel was not completely convinced; he asked repeatedly for more information, and though of course he spoke with caution to his parents who believed the story, and to his sisters who were in the house with them and under their care, he might still have remained as incredulous as we are. The noises continued nearly two months, and then finally ceased: they had been heard by the children for a fortnight, before Mr. Wesley was informed of them; the family was well acquainted with the manner in which goblins usually conduct themselves; and Mrs. Wesley having specially prayed that she might not be interrupted at her devotions, the request was granted. If Samuel Wesley was in possession of all these facts, he will be excused by our readers if not by Mr. Southey, for suspecting, that the agents were merely human.

Samuel was at this time an usher at Westminster; his rise in the world was prevented by his Jacobitism; but he was distinguished for integrity, piety, learning, and wit. The third son, Charles, was placed under him at Westminster; John was educated at the Charter House, and became remarkable for his quietness, regularity, and application. He went to Christ Church at the age of seventeen; and it is supposed that both he and Charles were supported at the University by the kindness and liberality of their brother Samuel.

When John Wesley had passed through the ordinary course of study, and was of an age to take orders, he applied himself closely to theological studies, and two books which he read laid stronghold upon him; Kempis *de Imitatione Christi*, and Taylor's Holy Living and Dying. At first he thought the former too severe, and his mother, whom he consulted was of the same opinion. But Jeremy Taylor obtained complete possession of his mind; "he resolved to give up all his life, all his thoughts, words and action to God, being thoroughly convinced that there was no medium, but that every part of his life, not some only, must either be a sacrifice to God or to himself, that is in effect to the Devil." The *imitation* which had been found repulsive, appeared so no longer; on the contrary, it was perused with sensible comfort. His father perceived the change with joy, and said to him, "God fit you for your great work; first, watch, and pray, believe, love, endure, and be happy; towards which you shall never want the most ardent prayers of your affectionate father." At this period Wesley also declared his strong dislike to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and advanced opinions and arguments upon the subject, from which he never afterwards swerved. He was startled at first by the seventeenth article; but was convinced upon enquiry that it no wise derogated from God's free grace, nor impaired the liberty of man. These studies produced a great change in his frame of mind; and having prepared himself in heart as well as knowledge, he was ordained Deacon by Bishop Potter in 1725, and was elected a fellow of Lincoln College in the following year.

His removal to this new abode enabled him to break off most of the connections which he had formed in Oxford, and he determined never again to have a chance acquaintance. He formed and pursued a scheme of severe and extensive study, and being also much engaged in conducting the business of his college, his time was completely occupied. His religious feelings, however, increased, and made him wish for retirement, and he was glad to take the curacy of his father's living of Wroote. There he resided two years, at the expiration of which he was again summoned to Oxford to serve the office of tutor and moderator in his college. His brother Charles was now

at Christ Church, and being convinced of the necessity of that austere and serious life which had long been practised in his family, he formed an association with a few under-graduates of similar sentiments for the purpose of religious improvement. They lived by rule, and received the sacrament weekly; and when John Wesley returned to Oxford he became their director and guide. The name of Methodists, was now given to the Society, and various other designations were invented. "I hear," says old Mr. Wesley, "my son John has the honour of being styled the father of the Holy Club, if it be so, I am sure I must be the grandfather of it, and I need not say I had rather any of my sons should be so dignified and distinguished than to have the title of his Holiness." Among the members of this singular and celebrated association we find the names of Harvey and Whitfield.

"They were now fifteen in number: when first they began to meet, they read divinity on Sunday evenings only, and pursued their classical studies on other nights; but religion soon became the sole business of their meetings: they now regularly visited the prisoners and the sick, communicated once a week, and fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, the stationary days of the Ancient Church, which were thus set apart, because on those days our Saviour had been betrayed and sacrificed. They also drew up a scheme of self-examination, to assist themselves, by means of prayer and meditation, in attaining simplicity and the love of God. Except that it speaks of obeying the Laws of the Church of England, it might fitly be appended to the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola. Its obvious faults were, that such self-examination would leave little time for anything else; that the habits of life which it requires and pre-supposes, would be as burthensome as the rules of the monastic orders; and that the proposed simplicity would generally end in producing the worst of artificial characters; for where it made one out of a thousand a saint, it would make the rest inevitably formalists and hypocrites. Religion is defined in this scheme to be *a recovery of the image of God*. It cannot be doubted that they who framed it were filled with devotion the most fervent, and charity the most unbounded, however injudicious in many respects the means were whereby they thought to promote and strengthen such dispositions in themselves. But Wesley, when he had advanced in his career, looked back upon himself as having been at this time in a state of great spiritual ignorance: and the two leading ministers, who drew up for the use of the Methodists, and under the sanction of the collected preachers, the life of their founder, remark, that in this scheme the great sincerity and earnestness of Wesley and his friends are discernible, but that 'the darkness of their minds as to gospel truths is very evident to those who are favoured with true evangelical views.' "

About this time Wesley became acquainted with William Law, whose writings completed what the “Holy Living” had begun. Law was now at the height of mysticism; and his works have exerted a permanent influence over the peculiar tenets of Wesleyan Methodism; he furnished John Wesley with the substance of many an impressive sermon when he said, “Religion is the most plain simple thing in the world. It is only *we love him because he first loved us.*”

About this time Samuel Wesley began to suspect the wisdom of his brother’s proceedings, and repaired to Oxford to satisfy himself on the subject. The general conduct of the association, and all their principles, received his unqualified approbation; but he condemned John’s excessive austerity, and perceived that some of his companions were diseased both in mind and body. He joined his father in an attempt to persuade John to settle at Epworth, urging more especially the declining state of the father’s health and his wish that a parish in which he had laboured so long and so carefully, should not be handed over at his decease to a careless successor, and that his wife and daughters might not be forced to quit a home to which they were attached. The attempt did not succeed. John argued as if his own salvation would be rendered impossible, if he settled at Epworth. He said he could not stand his ground there for a month against intemperance in sleeping, eating, drinking: he dreaded the company of good sort of men as the bane of piety; the point was whether he should serve Christ or Belial. More good also he averred was to be done at Oxford; the schools of the prophets were there—was it not a more extensive benefit to sweeten the fountain than to purify a particular stream?—Mr. Southey observes that this answer was more characteristic of the man than creditable to his judgement. The truth of this remark will not be questioned when we find Wesley, after his return from Georgia, arguing against a residence at Oxford, because it did not appear that God had any work for him there!! He did not like retirement at Epworth; and therefore he persuaded himself that Oxford was the school of the prophets and the fountain. He did like itinerating and field-preaching, and then he had no particular call to the University!

Old Mr. Wesley died soon after “at a good old age and ripe for immortality.” The widow and daughter, (only one remained unmarried,) were left with little or no provision; and Samuel was their main support. John proceeded to London with a manuscript work upon the Book of Job, which his father had been anxious to finish before his death. The trustees of the new colony of Georgia happened to be at this time in search of persons who would preach the Gospel to the settlers and Indians, and their attention was soon directed to Wesley and his society. The situation was pressed upon

him with so much earnestness, that he said at last, they might ask his mother's approbation, and determined that if she was willing he would receive her assent as the call of God. Her answer was, had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I never should see them more. His brother Samuel, and William Law, likewise approved of the plan; the former thinking that Georgia would be a proper field for Wesley's ardent spirit; and Wesley himself imagining that the conversion of the Indians would be comparatively an easy task. His brother Charles, who was now ordained, went out as secretary to General Oglethorpe, and Ingham, one of the Oxford Society, likewise accompanied him; they embarked at Gravesend on the 14th Oct. 1735.

Wesley had hitherto been restrained by some regard to appearances; but his ascetic principles were now reduced to practice. He and his companions wholly left off the use of flesh and wine; and confined themselves to vegetable food, chiefly rice and biscuit. Having slept on the floor one night, because his bed had been wetted in a storm, he thought he should not find it needful to sleep in a bed any more. He wrote to his brother Samuel, beseeching him, by the mercies of God, to banish all such poison from his school as the classics, which are usually read there, and his course of life was altogether as severe as the rule of a monastic order. There were six and twenty Moravians on board the vessel going to join the party of their brethren from Herrnhut. Their piety, simplicity and equanimity, made the strongest impression upon Wesley; and an intimate acquaintance was presently formed, which had a most important influence upon the rest of his life.

Immediately after his arrival at Savannah, Wesley entered on the duties of his appointment as chaplain to the colony; but obstacles arose which prevented all attempts to convert the Indians. At first he was well pleased with his new situation. "All was smooth, and fair, and promising; many seemed to be awakened, all were full of respect and commendation."

"All might have continued well, could he but have remembered the advice of Dr. Burton, to consider his parishioners as babes in their progress, and therefore to feed them with milk. Instead of this, he drenched them with the physic of an intolerant discipline. Following the rubric in opposition to the practice of the English Church, he insisted upon baptizing children by immersion, and refused to baptize them if the parents would not consent to this rude and perilous method. Some persons he would not receive as sponsors, because they were not communicants; and when one of the most pious men in the colony earnestly desired to be admitted to the communion,

because he was a dissenter he refused to administer it to him, unless he would submit to be re-baptized; and he would not read the burial-service over another for the same reason, or for some one founded upon the same principle. He was accused of making his sermons so many satires upon particular persons, and for this cause his auditors fell off; for though one might have been very well pleased to hear the others preached at, no person liked the chance of being made the mark himself. All the quarrels which had occurred since his arrival were occasioned, it was affirmed, by his intermeddling conduct. ‘Besides,’ said a plain speaker to him, ‘the people say they are Protestants, but as for you they cannot tell what religion you are of; they never heard of such a religion before, and they do not know what to make of it.’

“It was not merely by his austere opinions and ascetic habits that Wesley gave occasion to this notion. With all his rigid adherence to the letter of the rubric, his disposition for departing from the practices of the Church, and establishing a discipline of his own, was now beginning to declare itself. He divided the public prayers, following, in this respect, the original appointment of the Church, which, he said, was still observed in a few places in England; so he performed the morning service at five, and reserved the communion office, with the sermon, for a separate service at eleven: the evening service was at three. He visited his parishioners from house to house, in order, setting apart for this purpose the hours between twelve and three, when they could not work because of the heat. And he agreed with his companions to form, if they could, the more serious parishioners into a little society, who should assemble once or twice a week for the purpose of improving, instructing, and exhorting each other: from these again a smaller number was to be selected for a more intimate intercommunion, which might be forwarded partly by the minister’s conversing singly with each, and partly by inviting them altogether to the minister’s house on Sunday afternoons. Mr. Oglethorpe so far accorded with his views of reformation, as to give orders that no person should profane the Sabbath by fishing or fowling upon that day: but the governor, who had cares enough to disquiet him, arising from the precarious state of the colony, was teased and soured by the complaints which were now perpetually brought against the two brothers, and soon began to wish that he had brought out with him men of more practicable tempers.”

These difficulties and disputes were brought to a crisis by a love affair. General Oglethorpe was of opinion that a good wife would be the most effectual remedy for Wesley’s distemper; and accordingly determined to make a match between him and Miss Sophia Causton, a niece of the chief

magistrate at Savannah. She was a woman of fine person and polished manners, and was easily induced, says Mr. Southey, to bear her part in the design which was to cure an excellent man of his extravagancies, and give her a good husband. She was introduced to him as one suffering under a wounded spirit; and placed in a particular manner under his spiritual guidance. Female attentions were perfectly new to Wesley, and they so far succeeded as to make him entertain serious intentions of marrying the lady by whom they were bestowed. His friends, however, and especially the Moravians, saw through the scheme; he referred the matter to their decision; it was discussed in full conclave by the bishop and elders, and their advice, that he should proceed no farther in the business, was implicitly obeyed. The lady immediately made another choice; and the reflections entered on the manuscript journal on the day of her marriage, prove the greatness of the sacrifice which he had made. Hitherto no blame can be attached to Wesley; but his subsequent conduct was something more than imprudent. He first reprehended the new-married lady privately for some things in her conduct which he thought reprehensible, and very shortly after expelled her openly from the communion. The consequence was a complete breach with her uncle Mr. Causton, and an action at law against Wesley for defaming his niece. The treatment which he now experienced was altogether inexcusable, his private letters to Miss Causton were published by her family; an indictment was preferred against him upon various frivolous charges, and he was not permitted to leave Savannah without finding bail. The reasons which he assigned for wishing to return to England, were that there was no possibility of instructing the Indians, and that he had neither found nor heard of any one who was desirous of instruction. Thus in the same manner in which he refused first to quit, and afterwards to return to Oxford, he gave a plausible, but incorrect account of his motives; for in reality he could not have expected to find what he never sought, and the main object for which he had proceeded to Georgia was relinquished without one serious effort for its accomplishment. As his enemies were anxious to hasten his departure, they contented themselves with formally protesting against it, but left him in reality at liberty to follow his inclinations. He arrived at Charles-Town with some difficulty, and embarking there for England, he reached his native land in safety after an absence of two years and four months.

The greater part of his voyage had been passed in heaviness and fear; he reflected upon all the circumstances of his past life, and found himself still deficient in that readiness to die which he thought must inevitably result from an assurance of his own salvation. The inference which he drew was, that having gone to America to convert others, he had himself need of

conversion to God; that he was in want of that faith which frees from sin, and by which the whole body of sin is destroyed. With the assistance of the Moravians this faith was soon obtained, and thus Wesley's great departure from doctrinal truth and soberness, is traced up to an impatience of that dejection to which we all are liable; to a longing after the untroubled serenity which he afterwards obtained, and considered as the special Gift of God.

He arrived in London at a time when the minds of *the religious public* were strongly excited by the preaching of his old pupil, George Whitfield. Whitfield had preserved and enlarged the Society at Oxford, and had adorned it by a life of greater abstemiousness, and more uninterrupted mortification than Wesley had ever been able to exhibit. The consequences were a dangerous illness, a narrow escape from death, and after innumerable buffetings of Satan, and many months inexpressible trials, a sudden and perceptible relief from the burthen of sin, an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith. In this frame of mind was George Whitfield ordained—the doctrines which he preached may be easily imagined; but the effects produced by his sermons will be altogether incredible, unless we remember his extraordinary natural qualifications for the office of a public speaker. His voice and action are described as perfect; his language was uninterrupted, forcible, and persuasive; and his hearers were alarmed or consoled at his pleasure. So great was the curiosity which he found or created in the metropolis, that on Sunday mornings in the latter months of the year, the churches were thronged, though he preached at six o'clock; and even the streets were filled with people going to hear him with lanthorns in their hands. Wesley had strongly pressed him to come out to Georgia, and it was on the eve of his departure thither that he had been preaching in London. He sailed from the Downs a few hours only before Wesley's vessel arrived there; the ships passed within sight of each other; and when Wesley learned that his coadjutor was on board, he would fain have persuaded him to return; but Whitfield saw the impropriety of so sudden a change, and proceeded on his voyage.

Upon the second day after his arrival in London, Wesley preached from these words—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." His doctrine accorded with what had been previously said by Whitfield, and he was informed that he was not to preach again in that pulpit. He now became a regular disciple of the Moravians. Peter Bohler, a distinguished man among them, was his constant companion and teacher, and by him, says Wesley, "I was clearly convinced of unbelief and of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved." Bohler advised him "to preach faith till he had it, and

then *because* you have it, you *will* preach faith.” This direction was followed; and produced the intended effect; a better rule can hardly be conceived for the propagation of error; and there can be no doubt that the secret which was communicated to him by Boehler, served subsequently to increase the number of Wesley’s disciples. His eloquence and their own consciences convicted them of sin—he proposed his New Birth as a remedy to be taken upon trial; and they deceived themselves by the very words which they were using merely for an experiment. A similar delusion has been practised by the infidel—the doubting disciple has been too often assured that if he will venture to act as if Christianity were not true; his prejudices will vanish, and he will soon perceive its falsehood.

About this time Wesley addressed a remarkable letter to his old spiritual instructor William Law, in which the latter was roundly charged with ignorance of the Gospel; and asked how he could answer it to their common Lord for never having preached “believe and thou shall be saved,” and for scarcely ever naming the name of Christ, so as to found any thing upon faith in his blood. Law’s answer is very temperate, and well deserves to be remembered.

“‘As you have written,’ said he, ‘in obedience to a divine call, and in conjunction with another extraordinary good young man, whom you know to have the Spirit of God, so I assure you, that considering your letter in that view, I neither desire, nor dare to make the smallest defence of myself. I have not the least inclination to question your mission, nor the smallest repugnance to own, receive, reverence, and submit myself to you both in the exalted character to which you lay claim. But upon supposition that you had here only acted by that ordinary light, which is common to good and sober minds, I should remark upon your letter as follows: How you may have been two years preaching the doctrine of the two Practical Discourses, or how you may have tired yourself and your hearers to no purpose, is what I cannot say much to. A holy man you say, taught you thus: *Believe and thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. Strip thyself naked of thy own works and thy own righteousness, and flee to him.* I am to suppose that till you met with this holy man you had not been taught this doctrine. Did you not above two years ago, give a new translation of Thomas a Kempis? Will you call Thomas to account, and to answer it to God, as you do me, for not teaching you that doctrine? Or will you say that you took upon you to restore the true sense of that divine writer, and to instruct others how they might best profit by reading him, before you had so much as a literal knowledge of the most plain, open and repeated doctrine in this book? You cannot but remember

what value I always expressed for Kempis, and how much I recommended it to your meditations. You have had a great many conversations with me, and I dare say that you never was with me for half an hour, without my being large upon that very doctrine, which you make me totally silent and ignorant of. How far I may have discerned your spirit, or the spirit of others that have conversed with me, may, perhaps, be more a secret to you than you imagine. But granting you to be right in the account of your own faith, how am I chargeable with it?’ ”

Charles Wesley, whose sojourn in Georgia had been chiefly remarkable for the extraordinary treatment which he had received from Oglethorpe, returned to England before John; and having been at the point of death in Oxford, from repeated attacks of pleurisy, and having been visited when in that condition by John Wesley and Boehler, had now, in the words of the former, found peace for his soul; and the great event of John’s conversion was also at hand. It took place on Wednesday, May 24th, 1788.

“On the evening of that day he went very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate Street, where one of the assembly was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans.—What followed is considered by his disciples as being of deep importance; it may therefore best be given in his own words: ‘About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, this cannot be faith, for where is thy joy?’—How many a thought arising from that instinctive logic which is grounded on common sense, has been fathered upon the personified principle of evil. Here was a plain contradiction in terms,—an assurance which had not assured him. He returned home and was buffeted with temptations; he cried out and they fled away; they returned again and again. ‘I as often lifted up my eyes,’ he says, ‘and He sent me help from his holy place. And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace: but then I was sometimes, if not often conquered; now I was always conqueror.’ ”

The older brother Samuel, of whom we have lost sight for some time, was now informed of the lamentable errors into which his brothers had

fallen. When Samuel left Westminster and removed to Tiverton, a family of the name of Hutton, who were much attached to him, desired John and Charles to make their house a home; and thither, on their return from Georgia, both of them had repaired. But Charles now took up his quarters at a brazier's in Little Britain, that the brazier might help him forward in his conversion: and John was the cause of much grief to the Huttons by gaining a complete ascendancy over the mind of their son. Shortly after John's conversion, he stood up on a Sunday evening after prayers, and assured Mr. Hutton and his family that he had never been a Christian till within the last five days; and that the only way for them to become Christians was to believe and confess that they were not so now. Mrs. Hutton answered, "If you were not a Christian ever since I knew you, you was a great hypocrite, for you made us all believe you were one." The good woman complained to Samuel; relating these and other circumstances, and adding, that her son would no longer obey his parents, if John Wesley should happen to think that the conduct of which they disapproved would tend to the glory of God. Samuel's answer is *unanswerable*.

"'Falling into enthusiasm,' said he, 'is being lost with a witness; and if you are troubled for two of your children, you may be sure I am so, for two whom I may in some sense call *mine*,^[A] who it once turned that way will do a world of mischief, much more than even otherwise they would have done good, since men are much easier to be led into evil than from it.—What Jack means by his not being a Christian till last month, I understand not. Had he never been in covenant with God?—'then,' as Hutton observed, 'baptism was nothing.' Had he totally apostatized from it?—I dare say not: and yet he must either be unbaptized, or an apostate, to make his words true. Perhaps it might come into his crown, that he was in a state of mortal sin unrepented of, and had long lived in such a course. That I do not believe: however he must answer for himself. But where is the sense of requiring every body else to confess that of themselves, in order to commence Christians? Must they confess it whether it be so or no? Besides a sinful course is not an abolition of the covenant; for that very reason because it is a breach of it. If it *were* not, it would *not* be *broken*."

[A] "Mrs. Hutton says in one of her letters, 'your brothers are much more obligated to you than many children are to their parents; you doing for them as a most kind and judicious parent when you had not the same obligation'—It seems probable that both John and Charles were beholden to him for the means of their education."

“Renouncing every thing but faith, may be very evil, as the world, the flesh, and the devil: this is a very orthodox sense, but no great discovery. It may mean rejecting all merit of our own good works. What Protestant does not do so? Even Bellarmine on his death-bed is said to have renounced all merits but those of Christ. If this renouncing regards good works in any other sense, as being unnecessary, or the like, it is wretchedly wicked; and to call our Saviour’s words *the letter that killeth*, is no less than blasphemy against the Son of Man. It is mere Quakerism, making the outward Christ an enemy to the Christ within.”

“I do not hold it at all unlikely, that perpetual intenseness of thought, and want of sleep, may have disordered my brother. I have been told that the Quakers’ introversion of thought has ended in madness: it is a studious stopping of every thought as fast as it arises, in order to receive the Spirit. I wish the canting fellows had never had any followers among us, who talk of in-dwellings, experiences, getting into Christ, &c. &c.; as I remember assurances used to make a great noise, which were carried to such a length, that (as far as nonsense can be understood) they rose to fruition; in utter defiance of Christian hope, since the question is unanswerable. What a man hath, why does he yet hope for? But I will believe none, without a miracle, who shall pretend to be wrapt up into the third heaven. I hope your son,’ he continues, ‘does not think it as plainly revealed that he shall print an enthusiastic book, as it is that he shall obey his father and his mother. Suppose it were never so excellent, can that ever supersede your authority? God deliver us from visions that shall make the law of God vain! I pleased myself with the expectation of seeing Jack; but now that is over, and I am afraid of it. I know not where to direct to him, or where he is,—I heartily pray God to stop the progress of this lunacy.’ ”

We regret our inability to follow Mr. Southey through the very interesting chapter in which he details Wesley’s visit to the Moravians in Germany. The value of the narrative is increased by containing much information which Wesley’s Journals do not afford; and the history of the Moravians alone might furnish matter for a longer article than we can bestow upon the whole of the present work. The principal effect produced upon Wesley by what he heard and saw at Herrnhut, was a firmer conviction of the reality of instantaneous conversions and a further experience of the peace and joy by which they were followed; and his journal relates the *experiences* of the most remarkable men with whom he conversed. His spirit, however, rebelled against the despotic authority of Count Zinzendorf, and the unvaried life at Herrnhut must have possessed few real charms in the

eyes of one who never wished to remain a week in the same place. He became acquainted in Germany with the bands and classes, the love-feasts, and watch nights of the Moravians, and similar regulations were adopted in his own society. Upon his return to London, Wesley found that this Society, which had been kept together by his brother Charles, consisted of thirty-two persons; many misunderstandings and disputes had arisen among them; but Wesley's presence appeared to restore harmony, and he had quickly eight bands of men, and two of women, under his spiritual direction.

Gibson was at this time Bishop of London; and the two brothers waited upon him to justify their conduct. The Bishop said, "if by assurance you mean an inward persuasion whereby a man is conscious in himself after examining his life by the law of God, and weighing his own sincerity, that he is in a state of salvation and acceptable to God I do not see how any good Christian can be without such assurance." The Wesleys answered, that they contended for this!! The rest of the conversation is equally creditable to Gibson, and equally unworthy of the Wesleys.

Whitfield returned in a short time from Georgia, for the purpose of receiving Priest's Orders, and of obtaining contributions for the foundation and maintenance of an Orphan House in the colony. And inferior as Whitfield was in most respects to Wesley, it must be confessed that the steadiness with which he pursued this object throughout life, the alacrity with which he crossed and re-crossed the Atlantic, risking, and in some degree sacrificing, his power and popularity in England, and of course increasing the influence of his formidable competitor, is no slight proof of the sincerity and disinterestedness of his character. He had not Wesley's wisdom, or his learning, or his ambition. The preaching talents of both continued to attract immense congregations; their zeal, which became more irregular every day, gave offence to many respectable clergymen; and the pulpit was properly refused to men who set prudence at defiance. These were the joint pretexts for Whitfield's first field-preaching; and the ice being broken, he had other reasons for persevering. Crowds were drawn together by the novelty of the practice. The preacher's voice, as he assures us, was heard at the distance of a mile; and the number of his congregation often exceeded twenty thousand!! Whitfield had also a great longing to be persecuted, as Mr. Southey clearly proves; and, as the Ecclesiastical courts were too lenient or too feeble, he sought for opponents in the Whitsuntide rabble, and voluntarily exposed himself to the practical jokes of Moorfields.

"While Whitfield thus with such signal success was renewing a practice which had not been seen in England since the

dissolution of the monastic orders, Methodism in London had reached its highest point of extravagance, and produced upon susceptible subjects a bodily disease, peculiar and infectious; which both by those who excited and those who experienced it, was believed to be part of the process of regeneration, and therefore the work of God. The first patients having no example to encourage them, naturally restrained themselves as much as they could; they fell however into convulsive motions, and could not refrain from uttering cries: and these things gave offence at first, and occasioned disputes in the society. Charles Wesley thought them ‘no sign of grace.’ The first violent case which occurred, was that of a middle-aged woman in the middle rank of life, who for three years had been ‘under strong convictions of sin, and in such a terror of mind, that she had no comfort in any thing, nor any rest day or night.’ The minister of her parish, whom she had consulted, assured her husband that she was stark mad, and advised him to send immediately for a physician; and the physician being of the same opinion, she was bled, blistered, and drenched accordingly. One evening in a meeting where Wesley was expounding to five or six hundred persons, she suddenly cried out as if in the agonies of death, and appeared to those about her almost to be in that state; others, however, who began to have some experience in such cases, understood that it was the crisis of her spiritual struggles. ‘We prayed,’ says Wesley in a letter to Whitefield, ‘that God who had brought her to the birth would give her strength to bring forth, and that he would work speedily that all might see it, and put their trust in the Lord.’—‘Five days she travailed and groaned being in bondage, then,’ he continues, ‘our Lord got himself the victory,’ and from that time the woman was full of joy and love, and thanksgivings were rendered on her account.

“Another woman was affected under more remarkable circumstances—Wesley visited her because she was ‘above measure enraged at the new way, and zealous in opposing it.’ He argued with her till he perceived that argument had its usual effect of inflaming more and more a mind that was already feverish. He then broke off the dispute, and entreated that she would join with him in prayer, and she so far consented as to kneel down: this was, in fact, submitting herself. ‘In a few minutes she fell into an extreme agony both of body and soul, and soon after cried with the utmost earnestness, ‘Now I know I am forgiven for Christ’s

sake!’ Many other words she uttered to the same effect, witnessing a hope full of immortality. And from that hour God set her face as a flint to declare the faith which before she persecuted.’ This Wesley calls one of the most surprising instances of divine power that he ever remembered to have seen. The sincerity of the subject he never questioned, and perhaps there was no cause for questioning it; like Mesmer and his disciples he had produced a new disease, and he accounted for it by a theological theory instead of a physical one. As men are intoxicated by strong drink affecting the mind through the body, so are they by strong passions influencing the body through the mind. Here there was nothing but what would naturally follow when persons, in a state of spiritual drunkenness, abandoned themselves to their sensations, and such sensations spread rapidly, both by voluntary and involuntary imitation.”

This is the explanation proposed by Mr. Southey of the most extraordinary circumstance in the history of Methodism; and, as we have not got a better to offer in its stead, we shall perhaps be deemed fastidious for pronouncing it unsatisfactory. That a bodily disorder was produced among the hearers of Wesley, may now be regarded as an undisputed fact. That many of those who suffered from it, are above all suspicion of being deceivers, will also be allowed. And that Wesley himself, though disingenuous and jesuitical, was incapable of participating in a system of imposture, can be doubted only by those who are utterly ignorant of his character. Yet still we must think that on almost every occasion there was premeditated fraud on the part of the actors, and infantine credulity in the spectators of these scenes. There was no instance previously on record of a parallel case. Bishop Lavington, it is true, compares the fits produced by Wesley, to the hysterical affections of the Popish impostors and devotees; and shews that such affections may both be counterfeited exactly, and also may really be brought on at the option of the patient. But he does not cite a single instance from all the volumes he had consulted, in which a preacher went about the country throwing his congregations into fits. The Bacchanals of old times, and the modern French prophets, and the various fanatics or lunatics, alluded to by Lavington, are examples of what we may perhaps term religious convulsions, and which no one in his senses can attribute to divine inspiration.—These convulsions, once excited, would spread with rapidity; and they might be excited regularly in a particular person by thinking on a particular subject: but that in different places, and at different times, a given subject should never be discussed without the accidental

presence of some individual whom it would thus affect; that this should never have occurred until the days of John Wesley; and that the privilege of producing and suffering such things should have been reserved for him and his followers, is in fact more incredible than that he should be in possession of miraculous power. At one time Wesley certainly claimed such power; and if we suppose that he merely relates what he saw, and that there were no impostors among his congregation, the claim is less extravagant than we have been accustomed to consider it. Admit on the other hand that Wesley has coloured his descriptions somewhat highly; and that there were a few worthless hypocrites among his ordinary hearers, and the deficiency in Mr. Southey's hypothesis may be easily supplied. We are not sure, indeed, that he would object to the addition, though the passage just quoted would seem to prove it. In a subsequent chapter, he distinctly says, that some of the convulsions were feigned; and we have only to suppose that a trick which was discovered at Everton escaped without detection in London and Bristol.

Wesley's own explanation of the fits which he was accustomed to produce, has been placed in its proper light by Warburton and Lavington. They erred, as it has since appeared, in charging him with hypocrisy and imposture.—The good old age to which his life was protracted, gave him ample time for recovering the ground which he had lost, and for establishing his integrity upon unquestionable evidence. But that evidence is not contained in the first volume of his Journals; and if such a book appeared now in the name of any living Methodist, no man could be thought uncharitable for doubting his sincerity. Wesley was exposed by his opponents with the full force of learning and of wit: and Warburton cannot be altogether acquitted of unfairness. Yet on the subject of the extacies he has not exceeded the truth, when he accuses Wesley of continual shifts and doubles; nor is there any misrepresentation in those extracts from the Journals, which prove that the very same symptoms were ascribed to the spirit of God and to the devil; and which charge Wesley with making full as good an use of a possession from below as of an inspiration from above. It is certain that there was no consistency in his explanation of the extacies; he leaned, as at all other times, to the theory which suited his purpose, and saved his credit; and he left his self-contradictions to shift for themselves.

It is lamentable to observe, while this part of his character has so many imitators, and his other and better qualities so very few, that the power of producing extacies has been transplanted into America, and is returning thence to Britain. Fearon has described Transatlantic Methodism in language quite as horrid as any that was quoted by Warburton or Lavington; and there are preachers now in England who are determined not to be outdone.

The first Methodist preaching-house was built at Bristol; the foundation was laid in May, 1739. Wesley did not originally intend to be the proprietor, but he found it necessary to become so before the building was finished. His classes and bands were introduced at Bristol at the same time. He justified them all upon the same convenient principle, that they did good; and thus silenced his conscience on the subjects of canonical obedience and schism. His brother Samuel, who died in the year 1739, had warned his family of the inevitable consequences of this conduct.—“Their societies,” he said, “are sufficient to dissolve all other societies but their own. He only can stop them from being a formed sect in a very little time, who ruleth the madness of the people.” That Wesley had no such intention we readily believe; but the people who came to his preaching, were less inconsistent than their teacher, and a considerable body of them, at this period, left the church. The connection with the Moravians was concluded about the same time. There was a real difference of opinion upon mystical subjects; and what was more, the German brethren bore true allegiance to Count Zinzendorf, and could not be brought to acknowledge the supremacy of Wesley.

Accordingly he took a large building in Moorfields which had been a cannon foundry during the civil wars; and being thus prepared he called upon his old Society to renounce the antinomian tenets which had crept in upon them; and upon their refusal *he delivered his own soul*, by declaring them in error, giving them up to God, and desiring those that were of his judgement to follow him: a few persons, and but a few withdrew with him; and became the original members of his first distinct Society; his oldest friends and his pupils, Hutton, Ingham, and Delamott continued with the Moravians. Zinzendorf came to England, and had an interview with Wesley in Gray’s Inn Walks; but the minds of both were too aspiring to yield, and the breach being irreparable, was formally announced to the world. Wesley’s conduct upon this occasion can add nothing to his reputation; and it is astonishing that it did not put an end to his career. The men with whom he had lived for several years in such intimacy, he now described as stained with the grossest pollutions: they were proud, they were hypocritical, indolent, sensual, and treacherous—and all this he must have known a long while, and carefully concealed it from the world; or else, as is most probable, he must have invented it since the quarrel. We are aware of no other instance in which Wesley conducted himself so indecently—his temper never led him so far astray again.

And yet it was tried shortly after in as tender a point. He differed from his coadjutor Whitfield on two important points;—The free, full, and present salvation from all the guilt and all the power of sin, was maintained by the

former and not admitted by the latter; and while Whitfield supported the Calvinistic doctrine of election and irreversible decrees, Wesley preached universal redemption and universal grace. They disputed on these subjects at first with moderation; but controversy by degrees produced its usual effect. Wesley had for some time been accustomed to make up his mind on every important occasion by drawing lots. His general method was to open the bible, and to follow the advice which appeared to be contained in the first text that he read. Thus his separation from the Moravians had been determined upon, when he consulted the Testament, and opened it at these words, "What is that to thee; follow thou me;" and the die was now cast, and a breach with the Calvinists rendered it inevitable, because having prepared two lots, the one that he drew bore the inscription, "Preach and Print," and a celebrated sermon against Calvinistic predestination was preached and printed accordingly. This fact was communicated to Whitfield; and in answer he commented justly upon the absurdity and presumption of the practice: and reminded Wesley that on a former occasion he had used the same argument, and afterwards confessed that "God had given him a wrong lot." This answer was published, and naturally excited Wesley's anger; he spoke of it in his Journal as a betraying of secrets; and Whitfield subsequently acknowledged that it was an improper breach of confidence. It is to be observed, however, and lamented that this check did not cure Wesley of his very objectionable habit.—He persisted in it more or less to the end of his life; preaching on chance texts, and frequently drawing lots both on trifling and important subjects. The immediate cause of the separation from Whitfield, was the violence of some of his partizans. They accused John and Charles Wesley of preaching against predestination more than any Atheist, and of pleasing the world with universal redemption. Wesley discovered that these charges were in circulation, and produced a proof of the fact at a meeting near Bristol. The authors of them were present, and maintained that the charges were true; and Wesley had again recourse to the same skill and management, which had stood him in so much stead upon his separation from the Moravians. He recommended and obtained an adjournment of the discussion; and at the next meeting he produced and read the following paper,

“By many witnesses it appears that several members of the Band Society in Kingswood have made it their common practice, to scoff at the preaching of Mr. John and Charles Wesley; that they have censured and spoken evil of them behind their backs, at the very time that they professed love and esteem to their faces; that they have studiously endeavoured to prejudice other members of

that society against them, and in order thereto, have belied and slandered them in divers instances; therefore, not for their opinions, nor for any of them (whether they be right or wrong) but for the causes abovementioned, viz. for their scoffing at the word and ministers of God, for their tale-bearing, backbiting, and evil-speaking, for their dissembling, lying, and slandering; I, John Wesley, by the consent and approbation of the Band Society in Kingswood, do declare the persons abovementioned to be no longer members thereof. Neither will they be so accounted until they shall openly confess their fault, and thereby do what in them lies to remove the scandal they have given.’

“No founder of a sect or order, no legislator, ever understood the art of preserving his authority more perfectly than Wesley. They came prepared for a discussion of their opinions and conduct, and they were astonished at hearing themselves thus excommunicated.”

The result was that the rebel leaders withdrew, and were followed by about half the meeting. Whitfield now returned a second time from America; his affections were evidently alienated from Wesley: the falling off in his congregations he attributed to the poisonous doctrines of Arminius, and at last he honestly declared that they preached two different gospels, and could therefore no longer act together. Wesley’s resentment was confined within very narrow bounds; he reproached his old pupil somewhat too coarsely with ignorance and inability to argue; but seems to have entertained no feelings of permanent hostility.

Methodism was now reduced to the shape on which we shall hereafter comment, and Wesley entered immediately upon that system of itinerant preaching, in which he persevered for fifty years. Newcastle was the first scene of his labours and his success. There was some difficulty however in obtaining a place whereon to build the meeting-house; and Wesley observes, “We can get no ground for love or money. I like this well; it is a good sign; if the devil can hinder us, he shall.” The devil was foiled, and the meeting-house built. The next place at which Mr. Southey introduces us to him is at Epworth, his native village; where, as he says of himself, according to the strictest sect of his religion, he had long lived a Pharisee. He was repelled from the communion by the curate, and bore the insult with meekness; but it does not appear that his thoughts reverted to the time in which the strictness of his own discipline was complained of at Savannah, and in which he would indubitably have rejected a schismatic.—He preached in Epworth

church-yard, standing on his father's grave, and the impression which he made was prodigious. His character was very well known in the neighbourhood; and there was consequently no disposition to question his sincerity. At many other places he was less fortunate; and while we laugh at the absurd tales which were circulated and believed respecting him; while the national character is dishonoured by the brutality with which he was occasionally treated, and by the indifference or impotence of the magistrates who should have protected him; it is still certain that in the earlier scenes of his itinerancy his conduct was well calculated to produce an outcry against Methodism. The extacies and fits of his hearers increased; a day seldom passed in which the miraculous interposition of Omnipotence was not loudly proclaimed.—Every change of weather was a special interference in his favour. His own health, and his disciples' health, and even his horse's health was restored as often as Wesley prayed with faith. Even in his latter Journals we find him praying and preaching for a wind, and the wind rose or fell, shifted or continued stationary, was fair and was foul, pretty much according to the warmth of his devotions. It cannot be thought that these statements are false, still less can it be believed that they are the whole truth. The fact, we have no doubt, is that Wesley prayed on all occasions; but when his prayers were not effectual, he took no notice of them in his memorandum book. This distinction was not attended to, nor would it have been valid in those days. His character was not then established; the consequence was, that he was regarded generally as an impostor, or a madman, and a horse pond was prescribed both by way of punishment and cure. In the neighbourhood of Birmingham and Wolverhampton his life was really in danger from the brutal fury of a mob—the whole scene is minutely described by Mr. Southey: and the historian of Nelson and Wellington is evidently delighted with the coolness, intrepidity and decision of a third hero, who in point of courage and of skill was inferior to neither of them. Our limits not permitting us to enter into many of these events, we shall not present the reader with any martial stories, but we give an extract from a more peaceful and equally characteristic scene.

“The situations in which he preached, sometimes contributed to the impression; and he himself perceived, that natural influences acted upon the multitude, like the pomp and circumstance of Romish worship. Sometimes in a hot and cloudless summer day, he and his congregation were under cover of the sycamores, which afford so deep a shade to some of the old farm-houses in Westmoreland and Cumberland. In such a scene, near Brough, he observes, that a bird perched on one of the trees,

and sung without intermission from the beginning of the service till the end. No instrumental concert would have accorded with the place and feeling of the hour so well. Sometimes, when his discourse was not concluded till twilight, he saw that the calmness of the evening agreed with the seriousness of the people, and that ‘they seemed to drink in the word of God, as a thirsty land the refreshing showers.’ One of his preaching places in Cornwall was in what had once been the court yard of a rich and honourable man. But he and all his family were in the dust, and his memory had almost perished. ‘At Gwenap, in the same county,’ he says, ‘I stood on the wall, in the calm still evening, with the setting sun behind me, and almost an innumerable multitude before, behind, and on either hand. Many likewise sate on the little hills, at some distance from the bulk of the congregation. But they could all hear distinctly while I read, *‘the disciple is not above his Master,’* and the rest of those comfortable words which are day by day fulfilled in our ears.’ This amphitheatre was one of his favourite stations. He says of it in his old age, ‘I think this is one of the most magnificent spectacles which is to be seen on this side heaven. And no music is to be heard upon earth comparable to the sound of many thousand voices, when they are all harmoniously joined together, singing praises to God and the Lamb.’ At St. Ives, when a high wind prevented him standing where he had intended, he found a little enclosure near, one end of which was native rock, rising ten or twelve feet perpendicular, from which the ground fell with an easy descent. ‘A jetting out of the rock, about four feet from the ground, gave me a very convenient pulpit. Here, well nigh the whole town, high and low, rich and poor, assembled together. Nor was there a word to be heard, nor a smile seen, from one end of the congregation to the other. It was just the same the three following evenings. Indeed I was afraid, on Saturday, that the roaring of the sea, raised by the north wind, would have prevented their hearing. But God gave me so clear and strong a voice, that I believe scarce one word was lost.’ On the next day the storm had ceased, and the clear sky, the setting sun, and the smooth still ocean, all agreed with the state of the audience.” Vol. II. p. 61.

It is to such passages as these that Wesley’s Journals owe their charms. Ambitious sectaries, and persuasive preachers, and indefatigable, devoted, pious missionaries have existed in numbers before his time. But it is the

union of these characters with a cheerful and happy temper, with a refined and cultivated taste, a keen relish for the beauties of nature, and a due value for the wonders of art that raises Wesley so far above the level of ordinary men, and render him almost as admirable and astonishing, as he has appeared to the mind of Mr. Southey. The itinerant preaching in England and Ireland, and especially in the remoter parts of them, and in the latter part of Wesley's life, are the bright spots in the history of Methodism. We forget that the ruler is making his progress through his territory, delighting in the exercise of absolute power, and receiving the adulation and homage of his subjects, and we look only to the lamentable ignorance of his hearers, to his earnest desire to supply all their wants, to his impressive instructions, exhortations and warnings, and to the beneficial effects which they appeared at least to produce: and nothing is wanting but a legitimate commission, and a more scriptural doctrine, to make him a pattern for the ambassadors of Christ.

We must pass with great rapidity over the remainder of his life: it was devoted without interruption to the cause in which he had embarked. His societies gradually spread over Great Britain and Ireland, and his visits to them in every quarter were surprisingly numerous. No bagman in quest of customers travelled more regularly than Wesley, and the difference between them was, that he travelled in all seasons, and in all directions. In Ireland his success was as signal as in England; in Scotland he was heard with much pleasure on a Sunday, but he had frequently occasion to observe, that the Scotch loved the *Lord's word* on the *Lord's day*: that is to say in plain English, they had no relish for his system of preaching each day in the week, and at every hour of the day, and of the night. His first service commenced at five in the morning, and he pressed the necessity of this practice upon all his congregations.

He seldom passed a day without preaching; and he officiated twice or thrice much more commonly than once. His other regular employments were instructing, advising and superintending his preachers visiting the classes of his society; expelling unworthy members, composing differences, assisting the distressed, preparing materials for the Arminian, or Methodist Magazine, and keeping up an immense correspondence with every quarter of the globe. Notwithstanding these engagements his reading was never discontinued. His Journals contain many remarks upon the books with which he was engaged, and he does not appear to have neglected any branch of literature. We have critiques, for instance, upon Gerard's Essay on Genius, and Lord Littleton's Dialogues of the Dead. Home's tragedy of Douglas is also highly praised; and no modern work of any reputation

appears to have been passed over. But the privilege of miscellaneous reading was not intended for his disciples; and perhaps one cause of their great inferiority to their founder may be traced to this circumstance. He encouraged them, especially the preachers, to study; but they were to study as he directed; they were always in leading strings; and their gait was consequently ungraceful; his own steps were free and unconfined.

Nor was the effect of his early and sincere attachment to the Church, and of his long residence at Oxford ever effaced from his mind. The latter confirmed his love of method, decorum and subordination; and his logical faculties acquired an edge at the University, which neither Moravianism nor Methodism could blunt. The former was insufficient to restrain the love of power, which was unsubdued though not unrivalled in the bosom of Wesley; yet still it retained a perceptible influence over his conduct. One instance of this may be found in the lame excuses with which he quieted his conscience upon every fresh violation of order and unity. Thus lay-preachers, as he often declared, were not authorised by him, but tolerated; and this word toleration, had a very novel signification—for Wesley selected the preachers; heard them preach, pronounced upon their qualifications, fixed the circuits in which they were to labour, and suspended or dismissed them at pleasure. Another and a more creditable proof of attachment to the Church, was the sorrow with which he always contemplated a final separation from it. He saw plainly that his disciples were inclined to dissent, and his forebodings were frequent, melancholy, and sagacious. On his last visit to Glasgow he said, “Our new preaching-house will, I believe, contain about as many as the Chapel at Bath. But O the difference, it has the pulpit on one side, and has exactly the look of a Presbyterian meeting-house. It is the very sister of our house at Brentford. Perhaps an omen of what will be when I am gone!” The unfortunate house at Brentford is mentioned in another place with great contempt; and the Deptford people, a few years before, being “mad for separating from the Church,”—Wesley said to them emphatically, “If you are resolved you may have your service in Church hours. But, remember, from that hour you will see my face no more. This struck deep, and I heard no more of separating from the Church.” It is to be remembered, however, that though he resisted in this particular instance, and though he said that the practice was inexpedient, and even unlawful, he was yet constrained to yield when the congregation proved obstinate. His consummate skill in government told him how far he might go; and when courage and decision would no longer avail, he always secured a safe retreat. The political principles and conduct of Mr. Wesley were remarkable. In his youth he gave great offence at Oxford by a Jacobite sermon, and Mr.

Southey seems to have forgotten that a part of the evil treatment which was experienced by the Methodists between the years 1740 and 1750, may have originated in that circumstance. In later days Wesley was firmly attached to the house of Hanover; and took a very decided part in opposition to levellers and Jacobins.—He justified the conduct of the Parliament which taxed America; and when the French menaced us with an invasion, offered to raise a regiment of soldiers. He lived only to witness the commencement of the French revolution; but he was thoroughly well acquainted with its principles and tendency, and did not hesitate to declare his opinion. The Methodistic leaders of the present day, have proved themselves, in this respect, not unworthy of their founder. But we fear that if John Wesley could revisit the classes in Cheshire, and Lancashire, Leicestershire, and Yorkshire, the expulsions for radicalism would form a serious set-off against the annual increase of his disciples.

Although this article has extended to an unusual length, many parts of Wesley's life are still unnoticed: and we must content ourselves with referring the reader for further information to Mr. Southey. He relates the actions of his hero in a very pleasing manner, and the only thing of which we can complain in this department of the work, is the want of a complete summary of Wesley's character. Parts of it are unfolded on various occasions with impartiality and skill; but we have so long been indulged in the luxury of concluding chapters, that the appetite is disappointed when the volume closes without one. The following extract will serve for a sample of the style in which Wesley is painted, and while it makes us regret our inability to produce a whole length by the same master, it will furnish us at the same time with a convenient resting-place.

“Mr. Wesley still continued to be the same marvellous old man. No one who saw him, even casually, in his old age, can have forgotten his venerable appearance. His face was remarkably fine; his complexion fresh to the last week of his life; his eye quick, and keen, and active. When you met him in the street of a crowded city, he attracted notice, not only by his band and cassock, and his long hair, white and bright as silver, but by his pace and manner, both indicating that all his minutes were numbered, and that not one was to be lost. ‘Though I am always in haste,’ he says of himself, ‘I am never in a hurry; because I never undertake any more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit. It is true, I travel four or five thousand miles in a year, but I generally travel alone in my carriage, and, consequently, am as retired ten hours a day as if I were in a wilderness. On other days,

I never spend less than three hours (frequently ten or twelve) in the day alone. So there are few persons who spend so many hours secluded from all company.' Thus it was that he found time to read much, and write voluminously. After his eightieth year he went twice to Holland, a country in which Methodism, as Quakerism had done before it, met with a certain degree of success. Upon completing his eighty-second year, he says, 'is any thing too hard for God? It is now eleven years since I have felt any such thing as weariness. Many times I speak till my voice fails, and I can speak no longer. Frequently I walk till my strength fails, and I can walk no farther; yet, even then, I feel no sensation of weariness, but am perfectly easy from head to foot. I dare not impute this to natural causes. It is the will of God.' ” Vol. II. p. 555.

BIBLE SOCIETY OF UPPER CANADA.

YORK, 8TH DECEMBER, 1820.

At a general meeting of the Bible Society of Upper Canada, held here this day—

His Excellency, Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lieut. Governor of the Province, in the Chair.

After an appropriate Prayer, the Report was read by the Rev. Doctor Strachan.

“In presenting an annual Report of their proceedings to the Society, I have much gratification in stating, that it has been marked by an increased call for the Holy Scriptures; and this not only among recent, but likewise among the first settlers. But the stock of Bibles and New Testaments on hand being limited, rendered it necessary to be cautious in the distribution, more especially as great numbers applied who were able to purchase. Some, when they found that they could not procure the Bible gratis, were induced to pay a small part of the price; and therefore all that have been given in donations, have been, it is presumed, issued judiciously. The amount sold is £34 4 3. Two hundred and ten Bibles and New Testaments have been distributed during the last year; which makes the whole issued by the Society since its commencement, five hundred and fifteen. That a greater

number was distributed last year than this, arises not from a falling off in the demand, for it has greatly increased, but from a more careful discrimination in selecting proper objects, and especially from the active exertions of the Diocesan Committee for promoting Christian knowledge, which distributed Bibles and New Testaments as well as Prayer books, and consequently supplied many that would have otherwise applied to this institution.

“The Committee appointed by this Society at its last annual meeting, to consider what measures could be adopted towards instructing the Mississagua Indians, and converting them to the Christian religion, have had several meetings, the result of which is a recommendation to assist in procuring a translation of the New Testament into their language, as the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures is the only thing that this Society can promote agreeable to its constitution.

“The Committee therefore beg to be discharged from any farther consideration of the subject, with this closing remark, that civilization, if it do not precede, must go hand in hand with religion; and that it will be impossible to tame the wild heart of the Indians, without collecting them in societies, and making them feel the comfort of a fixed habitation; which can only be done by placing a zealous Missionary or Missionaries among them; matters which come more properly under the cognizance of the Committee for promoting Christian Knowledge than under this Society.

“In this new country, the distribution of the sacred Scriptures, is attended with the happiest effects. On going into the woods, the new settlers are separated from one another, and left in a dismal solitude; they feel therefore more strongly impressed than usual with religious truths, and are more directly called upon to confide in the protection of a superintending Providence. Here there are no secondary aids to distract their thoughts; for amidst the solitude and gloom around them, they can have no hope of assistance from man; their only dependance is upon God. Indeed the very nature of their labours, which bring them hourly into danger, forces reflection and serious meditation; and their frequent miraculous escapes from the falling of trees, continually remind them that they are left to the protection of Heaven; and hence a spirit of devotion naturally arises in their breasts. Living by themselves, and insulated as it were from the rest of the world, they feel their relationship to the ruler of the Universe in a manner which perhaps they never before experienced, and which cannot be done away. At such times, reading and meditating upon the Scriptures, strengthen the bonds which connect us with heaven and one another.

“It is pleasing to remark that the religious character of the Province, becomes daily more interesting. Churches are building and the desire for Christian instruction greatly increasing.

“It must be admitted by all who are in the habit of reflecting upon the Prophecies, and especially those which foretell the universal spread of the Gospel, and of comparing them with the melancholy dispensations which distract the Christian world, that some point of unity was wanting in which all the followers of the cross might join, and which in its development would inculcate every thing essential in the word of God; now this has been brought about in the most effectual manner by the simple determination of disseminating the Holy Scriptures and them only. The Parent Society acting upon this principle (as is well known) was established by a very few persons, altogether destitute of political power and influence, and in times of great perplexity and distress at home; and of political struggles and convulsions abroad. It soon attracted universal attention—received support from persons of every rank and creed. And not only diffused itself over the British Isles, over the Christian world, but over the heathen nations, and is now a stupendous and glorious institution, emitting its beams over the whole globe. Its progress has been most wonderful; and to what can it be ascribed? Was it suggested, and has it been guided by human wisdom? Has it been fostered and rendered successful by worldly favour and influence? Its object is the diffusion of the pure word of God; and consequently the glory of God and the good of immortal souls; and its astonishing success in circumstances so unfavourable, answers the question in the negative.

“It must indeed be admitted, that many Societies suggested by avarice or ambition, have existed long, and spread their influence far and wide, for they were united with worldly and political interests and preserved for a time by the passions of men, but this Society is founded on principles to which the human heart is not of itself inclined. And a connection with it promotes no political, no worldly, no party interests; on what grounds then can its success be accounted for, but that it is of God and not of man.

“One great advantage has arisen from this institution; namely, that it has roused the friends of religion to adopt and pursue the best plan for restoring to the Gospel that general sense of its great value and importance which seemed to have passed away. It had been neglected and despised so much by the wealthy and fashionable—spoken, written against, misrepresented and ridiculed, by the sceptical Philosophers and their adherents, that thousands considered it of no moment. But now it rises daily in general estimation, and promises to become, as it ought to be, the universal book, while its fiercest

opposers are lying in their graves their memories passing fast into oblivion, and their books mouldering on the shelves detested or forgotten. Thus the friends of religion joined in one great object, shew their strength and appal their enemies.

“Before the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society, there appeared among the Protestants of all denominations an astonishing apathy about religion. There was little or no communication among Christians of different nations, nor any desire to become acquainted with each other; but no sooner was the Bible Society established, than all denominations perceived in it a foundation laid for the growth of Christian love and fellowship, without compromising their particular opinions. Accordingly mutual intercourse has sprung up and a spirit of harmony and conciliation has uniformly directed all their communications.—And the friends of the Bible have found an ample requital for all their exertions in disseminating it, in those feelings of affection and attachment which the principles of the association and its simple but magnificent design, are so well calculated to foster and increase.

“Amidst the rancour of war and the most bloody commotions, the friends of the Bible never forgot the principles it inculcates, but endeavoured to inspire a better spirit. I hold in my hand a specimen of this conciliatory spirit, which will gradually triumph over all those wicked and violent passions which raise up nation against nation, in a report of the American Bible Society, sent to be communicated to this association. It is most gratifying to learn by this communication, that our neighbours are proceeding with such energy in emulating the Parent Society. Already have they distributed upwards of ninety thousand Bibles and New Testaments: nor is it less grateful to behold their warmth and affectionate acknowledgements to the British and Foreign Bible Society, which they style, with great truth, their venerable Parent, and express their joy that it proceeds with unrelaxed exertions and undiminished means in its illustrious career; acknowledging their utter inability to exhibit any thing like an adequate representation of the share which it is taking in the great work of disseminating the Holy Scriptures. May we not rationally hope, that the spirit of Christian love which dictated this eulogy, will prevail in both nations till their mutual heats and jealousies shall have disappeared? May we not farther hope that the intimate connection between the members of the Bible Societies of different nations, will engender a spirit of affection through them all, and become the rapidly spreading commencement of that blessed æra, when peace shall universally prevail?

“Another great advantage arising from the exertions of the British and Foreign Bible Society is, that of translating the Scriptures into all languages. This could not have been effected by individuals. It required vast means and great excitement, both of which it finds in the bosom of this Society. The Bible has been translated into almost every tongue; and all nations and languages are becoming interested in its favour. It has indeed been said, that to send the Bible alone, is of little use; for without preaching, the world will never be converted. This is certainly true; because our Lord commanded his disciples to go into all nations and preach the Gospel to every creature; but though the Bible alone, cannot convert nations, it may be of infinite advantage; and even to the living Missionary, how beneficial is it to find in every Pagan house that he enters, a Bible, and many impressions made by its perusal in favour of what he is going to teach. Both together are to convert the nations; but God by his efficacy may call some by his word alone; and this has been done in the case of two Priests of Budha, who found some copies of the Scriptures which had been translated by the Society into the Cingalese, and were so much astonished and affected that they forsook their superstition, and prevailed with Sir Alexander Johnson to bring them to England, where they might be more perfectly instructed in the truths of revelation. They have been baptised according to the rites of the Church of England, admitted to the Sacrament, and are preparing to return to Ceylon, to preach the Gospel. Now had not the Scriptures been translated and sent to Ceylon by the Society, these two men had remained heathens, but now they may be most advantageously employed in converting their countrymen, as may be reasonably hoped from their excellent talents and extensive influence.

“Nor is it possible that a book, which its very enemies have been compelled from its excellence to call divine, the only book necessary for a Christian, and the most useful of all even to persons not of that belief—a book which requires only to be attentively read to convey into the soul the love of its Author and the will of fulfilling his precepts, can be of no use. “Never,” says Rousseau, “did virtue speak a language so sweet—never did external wisdom express itself with such energy and simplicity. There is no quitting the perusal, without feeling oneself a better man than he was.” “If any one,” says Jenyns, “doubt of the superiority and excellence of this religion beyond all that were ever taught before, let him read attentively those incomparable writings by which it has been handed down to us. Let him compare them with the most celebrated productions of the heathen world—if he does not feel, that more than any other writings, they are beautiful, simple and original. I do not hesitate to pronounce him as destitute

of judgment as of faith.” The Scriptures cannot be read without producing the most blessed results, and God in due season will send forth labourers into his vineyard. In the mean time, it is our duty to disseminate the Scriptures as a preparation for the lips of flesh and blood to convey peace, life, holiness and happiness.

“I cannot close this report in a manner more agreeable to this Society, than by reading the speech of Lord Teignmouth, the venerable President of the British and Foreign Bible Society, on receiving a vote of thanks at the annual meeting last May. This pious Nobleman having had the satisfaction of hearing the report state that two millions five hundred thousand Bibles and New Testaments had been distributed by the Society, and beholding two converts from the efficacy of the Scriptures standing before him, spoke as follows—

“Gentlemen,

“Whatever anticipations we may have formed, of the progress of the great cause in which we are engaged, we have hitherto had the satisfaction to find them realized; and the facts which have this day been laid before us, have added to the numerous proofs of the happy effects of that impulse which has been imparted to the Christian world by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

“Never has the benign spirit of our holy religion appeared with a brighter or a more attractive lustre, since the Apostolic times, than in the zeal and efforts displayed, during the last sixteen years, for disseminating the records of divine truth and knowledge. The benefit of these exertions has already extended to millions, and while we contemplate the vast machinery now in action for the unlimited diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, the energy which impels its movements, and the accession of power which it is constantly receiving, we cannot but indulge the exhilarating hope, that the Angel, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that are upon the earth, has commenced his auspicious career. Even now, the light of divine revelation has dawned in the horizon of regions which it never before illuminated, and is again becoming visible in others in which it had suffered a disastrous eclipse.

“But, while relying on the prophetic word, we rejoice in the anticipation of a period, however remote, when this glorious light shall shine in all the fullness of meridian splendour, diffusing life and joy to the remotest corners of the earth, we have the satisfactory assurance, that we are discharging a Christian duty of paramount obligation, comprehending in its object the

glory of God and the salvation of man. It is our endeavours to raise our fellow creatures from this state of moral degradation and spiritual darkness, resulting from ignorance of the word of God, in which such numbers of them are still unhappily placed, leading them to the pure inexhaustable fountain of heavenly wisdom, from which they may derive light and knowledge to guide them through the intricacies of their mortal pilgrimage, and the hope of everlasting bliss in the life to come; and imbibe that spirit of love which gives animation and warmth to the charities which constitute the ties and happiness of all human relations: and our satisfaction is enhanced by the confidence, that it is an undertaking in unison with the gracious purposes of a merciful God, who wills ‘that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth,’ and who, on opening the springs of eternal felicity, proclaimed to the uttermost bounds of the earth, ‘Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of eternal life freely.’

“This gracious invitation has been proclaimed to the world through the instrumentality of the Bible institutions; and the eagerness delight and gratitude with which it has been accepted by thousands, authorize the pleasing conviction, that the water of life has not been distributed in vain. Indeed we have ample evidence to support this conviction. We have the testimony of those who have penetrated the abodes of sorrow, disease and crime, into which the word of God had been introduced, perhaps for the first time, by this, or a kindred Society, that they had the happiness to find in them many witnesses to its cheering and consoling efficacy.

“We have satisfactory information of its influences in promoting extensive moral reformation. We have Catholic attestation, that in schools of that Communion a new spiritual life, a sense of, and taste for religion, an aspiration after higher heavenly objects, had been excited in many youthful minds, by the perusal of the New Testament, and that impressions had been made on them, which justify the most pleasing hopes with respect to future generations. And what is said of the inhabitants of one country, may, it is to be presumed, be applied to those of others: Fruits of piety and good works, the genuine produce of the seed of the divine word, are seen to adorn the lives and conversation of thousands.

“In these testimonies, the members and friends of the Bible Cause, have ample remuneration for their exertions, as well as the most encouraging motives for perseverance in their work of benevolence. But I do not hesitate to say in the pious and impressive language of a continental Bible Society—

“‘If among the thousands to whom the Bible is given, only one weary pilgrim of this earth should be refreshed, one sufferer relieved, one weak

believer strengthened, one thoughtless sinner roused, one wanderer led back to the right way, one who has fallen raised up, one soul saved, who would not gladly co-operate in such a work, and cheerfully bestow his mite in its behalf?"

The Honorable Justice Campbell moved, That the Report now read be received.

"I beg leave to congratulate your Excellency as President of the Bible Society of Upper Canada, on the great progress made of late years in the dissemination of moral and religious instruction amongst the inhabitants of this extensive Province. Of all human means for accomplishing so desirable a purpose, surely none can be more efficient, under the Divine blessing, than the general distribution of the Holy Scriptures amongst the poor and uninformed part of the community. The amazing extent to which this truly benevolent purpose has been carried into effect by our Parent Society in England and its various auxiliary Societies in different parts of the world, must be a subject of pleasing contemplation to all well disposed persons, of whatever country or religious persuasion, and it cannot but be particularly gratifying to your Excellency and to the members of this Society to reflect that we have not been found wanting in contributing our mite to this great and good work. What has already been effected by us, seems far beyond the expectation of the most sanguine, and may indeed be termed extraordinary, considering our very limited means, and the short time that has elapsed since the establishment of our Society. This appears in a most satisfactory manner from the Report just read by our Reverend and worthy Treasurer, to whose active exertions, under your Excellency's patronage and liberal assistance it is chiefly to be attributed. I therefore move that the Treasurer's Report of the proceedings of this Society, as now read, be received."

Doctor Powell then moved, That the Treasurer be directed to send for Bibles, in the name of this Society, to the depository of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, which was seconded and unanimously carried.

Doctor Baldwin.

"Mr. President—I cannot proceed to remark upon the subject of the resolution I shall have the honour of submitting to the Society, without first expressing the great gratification I feel, and in which no doubt every member present participates, in witnessing your Excellency not only honouring us with your patronage, but by your presence animating and assisting us in our work.

“Our worthy Treasurer, Sir, has in his report noticed the flattering prosperity of the exertions of the Parent Society in various quarters of the world; and while, as Englishmen, we must feel peculiar pride in the political eminence of Great Britain, we should entertain a still more exalted love of country towards her in the triumph of her Church, in all its pious march; I do not mean the Episcopal Church alone, but the truly Catholic Church in all its denominations, and all her religious Societies; the united result of which cannot fail to give a lustre to her national character that will, please God, never tarnish.

“But, Sir, while we look with pleasure on all these pious labours of our mother country, yielding their golden increase on the Indies and the Ganges, and from Southern Africa even to Siberia, let us not be lost in mere contemplative admiration; rather let us turn our eyes towards home, to these Provinces, and we shall see a field for Christian exertion as extensive, noble, and fertile, as any in the world, and under the blessing of Providence, about to yield as luxuriant a harvest. I allude to the conversion of the Indian tribes, to Christianity. And here let me observe that while I repeat what the report has just stated, that the Committee to whom was referred the important consideration of the means of communicating the Christian faith to these tribes, found the constitution of this Society such as does not admit of any thing being done by us in that respect, the object of this Society being merely that of circulating the Bible; it would in such an attempt depart from its constitution, in some measure invading the province of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and would involve the necessity of sending Missionaries, a matter quite beyond the power of the friends of this incipient branch of the Bible Society; and therefore the Committee have requested to be discharged from that duty; yet let it not be supposed that the Committee have any doubt of the practicability of civilizing the Indians. No, Sir, the Committee have sanguine hopes of the result, if a plan and means were set in operation, but it belonging to other authorities to undertake a matter of this nature, the Committee could not with any benefit enter on the consideration. To conclude, let it not be forgotten, that omitting all care of the Indian’s condition, is omitting a serious duty; that he is our brother, and that if we do not make some exertion to stay the desolating degradation that seems to have seized upon him, we cannot be Christians. I move, Sir, that it be resolved that the Society views with great pleasure the success of the continued exertions of the Parent Society in translating the Scriptures into various languages.” Carried unanimously.

After a conversation of some length, in which most of the Members took a part, it was unanimously resolved: That for want

of any translation of the Scriptures in the prevailing language of the Indian tribes, within this extensive Province, numbers are unavoidably without that religious instruction necessary to their happiness, but the means of removing this evil are not within the reach of the limited funds of this Society.

The Solicitor General begged leave to propose, That this Society views with affectionate interest the mighty progress now making through all the Christian world in disseminating the Scriptures.

“Mr. Chairman—After having heard the very admirable and highly animating Report just read by the Rev. Doctor Strachan, and observing the benevolent and sympathetic feelings exhibited by this meeting towards our Savage brethren in this extensive colony, and the earnest desire they have expressed of extending to them as far as possible the benefits of this Society, I am sure there will not be one dissentient voice to the sentiments contained in the Resolution I have just submitted.”

The Attorney General,

“Mr. Chairman—I do not rise for the purpose of attempting to strengthen, by any thing I can say, the conviction which must prevail in every pious and well ordered mind, of the great importance of the benevolent work to which, according to our ability, we are lending our humble efforts. If we are Christians more than in name, we must think and feel as Christians, and if we have brought ourselves to think and feel as Christians, we shall never be backward in acting as Christians.

“I take it for granted that our assembling here is a proof of the sincerity of our Christian profession, and I congratulate the Society that in this infant Colony, so lately redeemed from the wilderness, adequate evidence is afforded of the same holy zeal which is at this moment engaging the Christian world in one common cause.

“Indeed it is matter of surprise by what arguments those can satisfy their consciences who abstain from uniting in the pious work of distributing the Holy Scriptures. To most or certainly to many other charitable and benevolent institutions, objections may be raised plausible enough, and to a certain extent, just, in some instances. It may be said, and is often urged, that by too readily

relieving want, we are encouraging idleness; and often no doubt the exertions of the humane have only the effect of tending to prolong an existence, which crime or disease has rendered miserable or irksome; but surely it is not questionable whether good or evil results from disseminating the treasures of divine knowledge. The Scriptures are given to man as his guide to eternal happiness, if therefore our exertions to place that instruction within every person's reach are *at all* successful, that success is infinite in its value. If one soul be saved by it, it is saved from the endurance of eternal misery. If one soul be made blest by it, it is made blest in the enjoyment of never ending happiness.

“The object is beyond all price. It may be said all this we know—we feel the necessity of religious instruction, we know the good that may be done by extending it. Then let us remember that it is said in the Holy Writings “If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them,” and let us take to ourselves the inevitable consequence if we know these things, *guilty* are we if we do them not.

“But among the most important temporal benefits that may be expected from the zealous union of different Christian nations in spreading the Gospel through all lands, is the community of Christian feeling which such exertions must produce. The Gospel they are thus extending is the Gospel of peace, and may we not, must we not believe, that in this general awakening of the Christian world to this pious duty, we see the visible operations of God accomplishing the prophecy of that blessed time when nation shall no longer rise against nation, nor shall there be war any more. It may tend perhaps in some degree to this happy consequence that all who join in this Christian work should express their hope that such may be one blessed effect of their exertions; and I therefore move that the Society express their conviction, That the religious communication; which the distribution of the Scriptures promotes between Christians of different nations, may, under the blessing of God, produce the happiest and most important results.”

Doctor Strachan, in seconding this motion observed, “That it was evident to every person who took the trouble to examine the state of Christianity twenty years ago, that a mighty change was effecting. That already much had been done, and the foundation

laid for the most important revolutions in the religious opinions of the heathen. In the East, a spirit of enquiry has been awakened among the natives, and they are becoming eager for instruction. Persons recently returned from that distant portion of the British Empire, had observed that a wonderful change had taken place there within a very few years both in the disposition of the natives to receive instruction and in the opinions and views of the Europeans resident among them. A similar change is gradually taking place in this country: in truth it appears that the zeal which gave rise to so many religious Societies in London, and which has added new strength and energy to those already existing begins to manifest itself where it was the least expected. Those who are conversant in the narratives of travellers, will recollect that it was their boast to refer upon every possible occasion to the Classics. One boasted that he travelled through Italy with Virgil in his hand, and derived great delight from examining on the spot the various descriptions of this excellent Poet. Others in visiting the different parts of Greece and the plains of Troy, have endeavoured to discover the names of places from their resemblance to the description of Homer. To discover classical allusions was to obtain a triumph to which the traveller did not fail to attach much importance. But even here, there is a change, and many travellers are now found with their Bibles in their hands, instead of the Classics, comparing the present state of various places with what they were when visited by the Apostles and their first disciples. I met lately with an example of this, which may be as interesting to this Society as it was to me.

“The traveller set out from Constantinople to visit the Apocalyptic Churches in Lower Asia.—On arriving at Ephesus, which was blessed so long with the Apostles labours, he found no vestige of its ancient splendour remaining; and only fifteen cottages forming a miserable village, near the place where it must have once stood. Here he saw only three Christians; and these so lamentably ignorant, that they never heard of St. Paul, or only recognized his name as one in the Calendar of their Saints.

“When he arrived at Smyrna, he found the Christian Church, in point of numbers, still respectable, consisting of nearly 20,000 Greeks, 6,000 Armenians, 5,000 Catholics, and 140 Protestants; but deplorably ignorant; the people not having access to any copies of the Sacred Scriptures.

“In Pergamos, now called Bergamo, the Church in respect to numbers may still be said to flourish. The Greek Christians have a Bishop and several Priests, and may amount to 3,000. There is likewise a small congregation of Armenians, consisting of about 200. The clergy were found exceedingly ignorant of the Sacred Scriptures.

“On visiting Sardis, the traveller was sadly disappointed, for he had trusted that in its utmost trials this Church would not have been suffered to perish; yet he was told that not a vestige of it remained. But on farther enquiry he was agreeably surprised to find a small Church establishment in a neighbouring village, to which the Christians in the city resorted, as they had been forbidden by the Turks to build a Church in Sardis.

“In Philadelphia he was gratified to discover some surviving fruits of early zeal and the form of a Christian Church. There are about 1,000 Christians who have a Bishop and about twenty resident Clergymen.

“Laodicea is now a heap of ruins; but near it there is a village containing about fifty poor inhabitants, in which number are two Christians, who cannot read. The prayers of the Mosque are the only prayers which are heard near the ruins of this once flourishing city, on which the threat seems to have been fully executed, in its utter rejection as a Church.”

The Honourable Chief Justice here rose and proposed the thanks of the Society to the Secretary and Treasurer.

It was then ordered that the Report be printed and a copy forwarded to the Parent Society.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Christian Recorder Vol. 2, Issue 10 (1820-December)* by Various]