

HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

RELATING TO

REMARKABLE PERIODS

OF THE

SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL.

COMPILED BY

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CONTINUATION TO THE PRESENT TIME;

BY

THE REV. HORATIUS BONAR,

KELSO.

KELSO:

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promising presage. I have distributed sundry of the books among the poorer sort of white people, with this charge, that they would not keep them by them as a private property, (except the Bibles, for which they would have constant use in their families,) but circulate them about among such of their neighbours as would seriously peruse them, that they might be as extensively serviceable as possible. Some of them have since discovered to me what solemn impressions they received in reading them. I sent a few of each sort to my friend and brother, Mr Wright, minister in Cumberland, about ninety miles hence, where there is a great number of negroes, and not a few of them thoughtful and inquisitive about Christianity, and sundry of them hopeful converts. He has been faithful in the distributing, and informs me, they meet with a very agreeable and promising reception. He is very laborious in his endeavours to instruct the negroes, and has set up two or three schools among them, where they attend on Sundays, before and after sermon, for they have no other leisure time. It affords me no small pleasure that you have some more books in reserve for me. I know I have had vastly more than my proportion as a member of the Society, and I cannot have the face to solicit farther benefactions. Nay, it pains me to think, that by directing the channel towards this new world, some places nearer home may have been drained, or left unwatered. But, alas, dear sir, when I reflect upon the almost universal neglect of the many thousands of poor slaves in this wide extended country, that they generally continue heathens in a Christian country, that but few of their masters will furnish them with such means of instruction, and that they are absolutely incapable of furnishing themselves; when I reflect upon the burthen of guilt under which my country groans on this account; when the impressions of these things are fresh upon my mind, I am quite insatiable, and can never say it is enough. Alas, what are 400 or 500 books, among so many thousands. Indeed I believe there are more than a thousand negroes that attend upon my ministry, at the sundry places where I alternately officiate; and sundry of them who are well disposed I am obliged to send away without a book, for they were all distributed in a few days after their arrival, and I took care not to give one of each sort to every particular person, but ordered them to borrow and lend among themselves.

From a Letter to Mr FORBITT from Mr HUTTON at Indian Land, South Carolina, 19th April, 1754.

DEAR SIR,—I wrote to you in January last promising to disperse the books I was favoured with to the best advantage, and to give you an account of the disposal of them. There is a good old gentleman in Charlestown of our denomination, who for many years past has spent the morning and evening of every Lord's day in teaching the poor negroes to read, and instruct them in the principles of religion. A considerable number attend every Lord's day, and there is reason to hope that several have been savingly wrought upon. About eight or nine years ago he was put into prison for this good work, under pretence of being a nuisance to the neighbourhood by assembling the negroes at his house, to sing psalms, &c. But as there was no law by which this mischief could be well framed, much less supported, he was dismissed after a little while, and has

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since met with no disturbance. The second is a minister about fourteen miles distant from any settlement, a gracious, humble man, of a truly catholic spirit. The third is a young man of my own church, of great piety, and well qualified for the instruction of the negroes, having a peculiar talent of expressing himself in such a manner as to be easily understood by them. He was engaged last summer by the executors of two large estates, about thirty miles from my settlement, to instruct the negroes in the plantations under their care. Great numbers attend, and seem exceedingly desirous to know Jesus Christ and him crucified. And as it is in the centre of the province, I am in hopes the work will spread. Each of these three persons assure me in their letters that they have faithfully distributed the books I sent them, which were received by the negroes with great thankfulness, and that the work of the Lord is prospering in their hands.

SOME INSTANCES OF RELIGIOUS CONCERN AMONG THE INHABITANTS OF VIRGINIA, 1755, 1756.

From a Letter to Mr WHITEFIELD from Mr TOD, a minister in Virginia, Hanover, 26th June, 1755.

The impressions of the day you preached last here at my meeting-house, can, I believe, never wear out of my mind. Never did I feel any thing of the kind more distressing than to part with you, and that not merely for my own sake, but that of the multitudes, that stood longing to hear more of the news of salvation from you. I still have the lively image of the people of God drowned in tears, multitudes of hardy gentlemen, that perhaps never wept for their poor souls before, standing aghast, all with signs of eagerness to attend to what they heard, and their significant tears, expressive of the sorrow of their hearts, that they had so long neglected their souls. I returned home like one that had sustained some amazing loss, and that I might contribute more than ever to the salvation of perishing multitudes amongst us, I resolved I would labour to obtain and exert more of that sacred fire which the God of all grace had so abundantly bestowed on you for the good of mankind. To the praise of rich grace be it spoken, I have had the comfort of many solemn Sabbaths since I saw you, when, I am persuaded, the power of God has attended his word for sundry weeks together; and in my auditory, which was perhaps more crowded through your means than it had been before, I could scarce see a countenance often, whose tears did not indicate the concern of their souls about eternal things. And blessed be God, these appearances are not yet wholly fled from our assembly. I was, by order of the presbytery, to attend the installation of Mr Henry, on the 4th of this month, at Lunenburg, about a hundred miles south-west of this place, and we administered the sacrament of the Lord's supper the Sabbath following. We preached Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sabbath, and Monday, when there was comfortable evidence of the power of God with us every day. Believers were more quickened, and sinners were much alarmed. Many of them talked with Mr Henry and me, with great desire to know what they should do to be saved. One, I remember, came to me trembling and astonished, the nearest image I ever saw of the trembling jailor, crying out, "What shall I do to get an interest in

Christ?" In my return home, I made an excursion to preach to a number of people who had never before heard a new light (as they call us). I hope the word of God was attended with Divine power to many of their hearts.

From a Letter to the Publisher, from Mr WRIGHT, a minister in Virginia, 18th August, 1755.

The situation of our colony is most doleful, as the Gazette will inform you. We have not only the sword without, but famine within, and alas our people, till the defeat of our army, quite unalarmed and secure! But now there seems to be a general concern among all ranks. People generally begin to believe the Divine government, and that our judgments are inflicted for our sins; they now hear sermons with solemnity and attention; they acknowledge their wickedness and ignorance, and believe that the new light clergy and adherents are right. Thus you see, dear Sir, that amidst all our troubles, God is gracious, and brings real good out of our real evils: adored be his great name. When the conduct of people lately appeared so differently, it puts me in mind of Zechariah, 8th, ult. I had the sacrament of the Lord's supper administered the last Sunday of July, in my infant congregation, which proved a solemn season. There was a vast concourse of people, about 2000 I daresay. I was installed at the same time by Messrs Davies and Henry of Lunenburg. I have had about 180 communicants, above 80 of them never partook before I came here. There were general awakenings for sundry Sabbaths before the sacrament, and new instances of deep and rational convictions, which I found by examining the communicants. I have had an afflicting winter of it. The rivers were generally so high, that I had but very thin congregations. It was a double winter to your poor countryman. But the Lord heard me out of the deeps, and with the natural spring, made the day spring from on high to visit us. I have seen last Lord's day, above a hundred weeping and trembling under the word. Dear Sir, see how much I need the prayers of the children of God in Glasgow. I now preach any where, being so distant from the metropolis, and the time being so dangerous and shocking; and, I would fain hope, not without success. I again and again beseech you, and the people of God, to join together in prayers for me.

From a Letter to the Publisher from Mr DAVIES, Hanover, 14th July, 1756.

About a month ago, I took a journey to Mr Henry's congregation in Lunenburg, about 130 miles hence, to assist him in administering the sacrament, and in thirteen days I preached eleven or twelve sermons, with encouraging appearances of success. I think Mr Henry's and Mr Wright's labours continue to be blessed in those parts. At the sacrament, in that wilderness, there were about 2000 hearers, and about 200 communicants; and a general seriousness and attention appeared among them. A considerable number of thoughtless creatures are solicitously inquiring after religion. Last Sunday I had a sacrament, assisted by my good brother and next door neighbour, Mr Tod. It was a time of unusual anxiety to me. I hardly ever felt

so much of a pastoral heart, I mean an affectionate concern for my flock; and yet I had not a proportional liberty to vent it: however, I hope it was a refreshing time to some hungry souls. I had the pleasure of seeing the table of the Lord adorned with about forty-four black faces. Indeed, my principal encouragement of late has been among the poor negro slaves. A considerable number of them give good evidences of a sincere conversion to Christianity; and in the land of their slavery, they have been brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. But alas! notwithstanding these promising appearances, an incorrigible stupidity generally prevails through this guilty land; and there is no spot on our globe that more requires the pity and the prayers of God's people.

A DEMAND FOR THE GOSPEL IN SOME PARTS OF NORTH CAROLINA, 1755.

There has been, for some time, a very loud call for the gospel in North Carolina, where, till lately, they had hardly any appearance of public worship: sundry of my brethren of the Synod of New York have been appointed to take a tour in their turns through that province, for three or four months; and they bring agreeable accounts, that congregations are forming fast, and show the most eager zeal to be supplied with ministers. But alas! the labourers are too few with us, for this extensive and growing harvest.

FLOURISHING STATE OF NEW JERSEY COLLEGE, 1755.

I feel the warmest gratitude, dear Sir, to your congregation for exerting themselves so generously to promote the college of New Jersey. By the last accounts I heard of it, it is flourishing under the smiles of God and man.

FARTHER ACCOUNTS OF THE WORK IN ENGLAND FROM 1738 TO 1755, AND OF THE INSTRUMENTS GOD WAS PLEASED TO EMPLOY.

From a Letter to the Publisher from the Rev. Mr WILLIAM GRIMSHAW, at Haworth, 19th July, 1754.

In the year 1738, our gracious Redeemer was pleased to revive his work in the West Riding, as we call it, of this county of York. Now were poor souls amongst us brought to know Jesus alone, for their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The first instrument sent hither by our dear Immanuel, was one Mr Benjamin Ingham, a clergyman, and one of the Oxford Methodists. He was born at Osset, in this Riding. The clergy at first received him into their pulpits, the churches were soon crowded, and a great stirring up of the people to seek salvation by faith alone, in the merits of a crucified Saviour, quickly appeared. But Satan, perceiving his kingdom to be in danger, began to roar, and the clergy (as I have been informed) were forbid to receive Mr Bingham any more. Wakefield, Osset, Leeds, Halifax, and many other churches and chapels he preached in, until he was prohibited. And greatly were the people blessed. He then betook himself (as did Messrs Wesleys, Whitefield, and others at the same time,) to our Saviour's manner, field preaching. As eminently