

heart to-day as I have heard the noble sentiments which have fallen from the speakers who, I venture to say, have made this meeting memorable. I have learned two things since I have been here—that there is an anti-Christian scepticism, and a growing belief in Jesus. These two facts appear from the Report and the speeches to-day to be equally conspicuous, and they ought to be mutually self-destructive, but they are not so at present: they will be by-and-by. As for the first, I think we are in danger of exaggerating the power of scepticism. The fact is, that the ungodliness of the present day happens to wear a sceptical guise. It will wear some other guise twenty years hence. It borrows the language of scepticism, it catches the intellectual manner of the moment, but it does not represent the judgment of the masses. As for the other point, my heart warms as I think of it, that there is a growing belief in Jesus, not so much fostered by the publication of books called “The Life of Christ,” as by the dissemination of the words themselves of Jesus. In the blessed Scriptures, recording His sayings, depicting His acts, and unfolding in gradual disclosure, according to the diligent sincerity of the student, His infinite character, Jesus, in the many-tongued Bible, is walking through the nations of the earth, as it were, upon the wings of the wind. Multitudes outside churches, of whom you and I know nothing, are reading the Gospels. They cannot read churches, and do not at present desire to; they cannot decipher ecclesiastical acts; I am afraid they despise the nomenclature of convocations and conferences and creeds; but the Bible is no mere church book, no mere party book. If Christianity be anything, as a learner’s prelate said this morning, that which it is, is found within the records of the Book which this Society is circulating. Here is Christianity; I do not say it is nowhere else, but I say that the authority of Christianity is here: and men are drawing near to this source as travellers in a desert, coming from different directions and drawn by the signs of water, meet at a desert well. It may be that they have nothing to draw with, when they come at present: but they have thirst, and thirst is not only an importunate appetite, but an ingenious one. Thirst will cling to a rock and say, “I will not let thee go unless thou bless me.” If there be a spring of water anywhere, you may leave thirst to find it out. I rejoice in the prevalence of this thirst for the Word of God, and in the fact that He who sat by the Samaritan well is sitting by many wells to-day—not now localised within bodily conditions and national peculiarities, but diffused everywhere, and as intimately in contact with the consciences of men as the air they breathe. I remember with great consolation that incident referred to in the Acts of the Apostles. He who led the eunuch to pause upon the passage of Scripture which contained all he wanted, if he could have the grace to draw it out, did not send that man back to Jerusalem to join himself to the Church, but sent the Church out to him, sent the Evangelist to him; and as the numbers of the readers of the Word of God are increasing, from whatever move, it is the vocation of churches to plant themselves upon the highways of thought and of life, and to look out for travellers who are thirsty and exhausted, and let them hear the voice of the Holy Ghost—not in harshness, for the Holy Ghost never speaks harshly; but in the loving cadences of His own tender love; “Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” At this time of the meeting I will not further detain you; but I have very much pleasure in thus bearing my testimony to the priceless worth of the work this Society is doing, and may God more abundantly prosper it!

The names of the proposed Committee were then read by the Rev. C. E. B. REED, after which the resolution was unanimously agreed to.

Short addresses were given by the ex-secretary, the Rev. C. Jackson, Mr. Braithwaite, and the Earl of Shaftesbury, who expressed much regret at the absence of the Rev. Mr. Berne, whom he called the very prince of Secretaries. The proceedings were then closed with the benediction, pronounced by the Rev. Mr. JACKSON.