

of Zion: The benign influences of the spirit are poured upon the Church; and then the reign of religion extends upon every side: He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

From this state of religion in the Church, we naturally turn to the result of the exertions of these societies with respect to the world. The means which they are using to promote religion, are such as itself prescribes; and, therefore, connected as they are with the blessing of God, they will ultimately produce beneficial consequences: sent abroad into the world, they will return to the Church, loaded with the spoils of the nations. It is a circumstance deserving attention, that this affectionate concern for the best interests of men, has its centre in Britain; where the friends of religion, sharing the dominion of the seas, can extend their operations to almost every part of the world. The Church, then has certainly reason to exult in the divine promise; and, from this partial accomplishment, to expect a consummation which will place every kindred and people under the authority of Christ: Then shalt thou see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

Such associations, from their very nature, must possess a moral influence upon the conduct of society. Classed upon the side of virtue, their example and labours tend alike to discourage the practice of vice and to prevent its encroachments; so that in this point of view, they must have already diminished the crimes and miseries of men.

But beside the diminution of evil, much good, it is evident, has also flowed from their exertions. They have exemplified the benevolent nature of the Christian religion; and a pattern of Christianity is a fruitful recommendation of its principles. From its nature it is calculated both to reach conviction to the mind, and to engage its affections; and it is rarely without a congenial result. For these reasons, it is enjoined in scripture, as one of those means by which persons are induced to glorify God in the day of visitation; and, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude, that the Christian benevolence of these societies has not been exemplified in vain.