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Francis Cunningham**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A LETTER TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD
BEXLEY ***

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**A
LETTER
TO
THE RIGHT HON. LORD BEXLEY,**

CONTAINING A
STATEMENT MADE TO THE COMMITTEE
OF THE
British and Foreign Bible Society,
AS TO THE
RELATIONS OF THAT INSTITUTION,
WITH
FRANCE, THE VALLEYS OF
PIEDMONT, SWITZERLAND AND GERMANY.

BY FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM, M. A.
RECTOR OF PAKEFIELD, SUFFOLK.

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1827.

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PREFACE

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The circumstances which have given rise to the publication of the following letter are briefly these:—At the departure of the Author for the continent, in the month of April, 1826, he tendered his services generally to the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society; and received from that body the power of disposing of a certain number of copies of Bibles and Testaments, at any opportunities which might present themselves to him on his journey. Of this power he availed himself; and, on his return to London, in the month of December, he went to the

Committee to give an account of the trust which had been committed to him. Whilst he was doing this, it was natural that he should add to his statement a few observations, connected with the objects of the Institution itself; and more especially, as various errors, into which it was charged with having fallen, had become the subjects of public discussion, both in Scotland and in England. These observations Lord Bexley, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Bible Society, then occupying the Chair of the Committee, requested, in the name of those over whom he presided, might be communicated in writing; and, in compliance with this request, the following statement was sent.

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After some delay, the author, at the suggestion of several friends, has been led to make it public, hoping that it may supply to the supporters of the Bible Society new motives for earnestly and generously persevering in their efforts to promote the circulation of the Scriptures; and, to the assailants of that Institution, an answer to some of the charges which they, in his apprehension, have hastily and unwarrantably brought forward.

The Author can only hope this document may be a means of forwarding the interests of the Bible Society—an Institution, which, in his mind, whatever may be the evil resulting from the circulation of the apocryphal books, has sown the seed of more important benefits to mankind than even the Reformation itself.

Pakefield, April 5, 1827.

A
LETTER,
&c.

p. 1

MY LORD,

In compliance with a wish so kindly expressed by your Lordship, I shall now endeavour to communicate in writing the substance of what I took the liberty of stating in the Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The observations there made chiefly respected the state of religion on the continent of Europe—especially as connected with that institution whose Committee I had the honour of addressing; and they were exclusively such as had been suggested to me during a journey of eight months through the various countries, to which it was my endeavour to draw the attention of your Lordship and the Committee.

I must beg leave, however, to preface this brief and inadequate statement by two or three observations.

In the first place, I must intreat that if this written document should not be found precisely to correspond in expression or detail with the address to the Committee, the difference may be ascribed, not to intention, but to a defect of memory. That address was altogether extempore; and my recollection of particular expressions I may have employed, is very imperfect.

In the next place, I wish to have it understood, that although I should not have committed this statement to the press, except at the wish of some members of the Committee of the Bible Society, I, myself am alone responsible for the facts and opinions it contains. It was highly satisfactory to me to discover that many of the views taken by myself of the subjects upon which I spoke, corresponded with those of a large proportion of the Committee. In other points, I might not be so fortunate as to agree with that majority. But, whatever might be the amount of that agreement or disagreement, I desire alone to be made responsible for the contents of this paper.

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I must also be permitted to say that, in this communication, a few names and particulars have been suppressed, which I did not hesitate to produce to the Committee. It is obvious that circumstances which might safely be named within walls, from which they were not likely to escape; might produce inconvenience, if published and circulated upon the continent of Europe.

I shall now proceed to give the substance of what I ventured to offer to the Committee.

My first visit was to France, where I remained almost continually journeying for several months. It was a satisfaction to me to arrive at Paris in time to attend the annual public meeting of the Bible Society. I can truly say that the meeting was in the highest degree interesting. The character of the reports, especially those of the Ladies' and Mechanics' Society—the attendance of so many ministers of religion—the introduction of extempore speaking—the feeling of warmth and zeal which seemed almost universally to prevail—left me no doubt but that a deep interest pervaded the minds of large numbers on the subject of the circulation of the Scriptures. I afterwards visited many of the auxiliaries, great and small, of the Society in different provinces, and the hopes formed at the meeting at Paris were not disappointed. It happened to me to pass through one small village in a very solitary situation in the centre of France, where three associations had been formed—one of children, another of young women, and a third of the population at large. In this village, under a very pious and able minister, Mr. Duvivier, it was

interesting to observe to what an extent education had gone hand in hand with the circulation of the word of God. Some of the children in the school repeated, as a Sunday task, not less than two hundred verses of the New Testament.

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With many of the larger auxiliaries of the Society, I was particularly gratified. In some districts the circulation of the Scriptures was very considerable. In others, much still remained to be done. The Protestant ministers were the general agents and protectors of the institution; and, there were many of them full of activity. Two collateral benefits of the Bible Society were particularly obvious in France,—in the first place, the truly valuable object which it supplied to many pious, active, and benevolent minds, which powers might have been otherwise unemployed: and in the next place, the rallying point which it afforded for the really pious of all classes. It is difficult to say to what an extent the society has enlarged the efficiency, and strengthened the union of the religious body amongst the Protestants.

Such was the influence of these and other circumstances on my own mind, that I often found occasion to observe to my fellow travellers, that, if ever I had doubted the benefits of the society, those doubts must now have vanished.

Amongst both Catholics and Protestants much good has been accomplished by the British and Foreign Bible Society. By means of one of the most active agents of this institution, the late Mr. Owen, the society was regularly established amongst the Protestants. And, amongst the Catholics, even where the Bible Society has not been able to obtain any regular establishment by means of our agents, a large number of Bibles and Testaments has been distributed in the schools, hospitals, and prisons, and amongst the population at large. I have seen the Testaments of this society in various important schools; in the hands of the sick, and in the wards of the hospital. I have known them carried to the infirm and the dying by those who are so emphatically and justly called the *Sœurs de la Charité*. I had myself also the happiness of distributing five hundred copies of those so kindly committed to me by the society in a prison containing upwards of four thousand individuals. We cannot believe that these various gifts have been made in vain. Much of the fruit will be discovered only on the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. But in the mean time no man can follow the course of the Bible without perceiving the benefits resulting from its circulation. In one instance, I cannot but doubt that the conversion of a large body from Popery to Protestantism, in a city in the south of France, has been materially assisted by the operations of this society.

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There are yet two points in connexion with France, on which I feel it necessary to trouble the Committee. In the first place, I have a debt of justice and gratitude to render to Professor Kieffer, your society's agent at Paris. I will here say nothing on the subject of his opinions with regard to the distribution of the Apocryphal books, except that, whether he is right or wrong, he has found many both good and wise men on the continent and elsewhere, who agree in the views which he has adopted. With respect to his religious orthodoxy, which I understand has been most unjustly called in question in this country, I feel it right to say, that no one who knows him can entertain a doubt.

As to talents, diligence, vigilance, and zeal, as an agent of this society, he has few equals, and can scarcely have a superior. As a man of business, of regularity, vigour, and dispatch, he is very conspicuous—and those who know the immense deficiency of business-like habits on the continent, will know how to value such important qualities in the agent they employ.

The other subject respects the decision of the British and Foreign Bible Society, as to the distribution of the Apocryphal books. It would be unjust to deny that, when the question concerning the rejection of these books was first proposed to the Bible Societies in France, they almost unanimously declared their strong preference for Bibles with the Apocrypha. In the *Lutheran*, which is the smaller part of the Protestant church of France, this preference still, to a considerable degree, prevails. But among the members and ministers of the *Reformed* church, and especially those who felt the real value of the word of God, I was rejoiced to find, how few dissented from your late resolution. And I feel assured that, when the question comes to be presented to continental churches in all its bearings, and the danger is shown of thus commingling error with truth, their grounds of opposition will be removed; and they will feel it their duty to pursue the same course as that in which your society has so wisely taken the lead.

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It remains only with regard to France, that I should take the liberty of urging upon the Committee the duties of the most strenuous and affectionate co-operation. It is impossible not to consider the general state of the Protestant churches as much advanced during the interval of five years when I before visited them. The political feeling of the Protestants appeared to me a good deal improved; and the government in general of France has done much to deserve their confidence and gratitude. The Protestants themselves seem to me much more sensible of the state of decay in their church; and are in proportion desirous of its restoration to life. It is true that heterodoxy of a very deplorable kind has, to a considerable degree, crept into the universities of that country. But I was often struck by observing, that when some of the clergy taught in those universities, entered upon the discharge of their pastoral office; and it became their direct object to withdraw the profligate from sin, and lead the miserable to comfort—to confirm the wavering, to meet the wants and wishes of our fallen nature, to assuage the sufferings of an awakened conscience, and supply a strong refuge in the hour of death, they have been compelled to desert their own ground, and seek, within the enclosure of orthodox and evangelical religion, the weapons of their warfare, and the means of consolation and of joy. I was delighted indeed to find some of those who had been instructed in the Neological school, among

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the most zealous promoters of the truth as it is in Christ.

I shall next beg of the Committee to pass on with me from France to *Italy*. To the northern parts of this country, however, my visit was alone extended; and there I found the same obstacles to exist against the free circulation of the word of God, of which other travellers have complained. One exception however may be stated, and that with regard to a people whose cause has excited a warm and most honourable interest in this country—the Protestant inhabitants of Piedmont. They, in common with the other Protestant subjects of the King of Sardinia, are now permitted to receive books of every kind, on payment of duty, and, on the condition that they are neither sold, lent, nor given to Catholics. This concession came at a time of peculiar importance; as it facilitated the introduction of the large grant of Bibles lately made by this society to the Protestant inhabitants of the vallies. And I learned from the principal agent of the Bible Society in those quarters, that they had received nearly 5000 [6] Bibles and Testaments from different institutions. These grants are of greater value at this moment, when the Vaudois Committee in London is so wisely and assiduously labouring to establish schools of various kinds in these vallies. I am requested to present the cordial thanks of the ministers of the Vaudois church to this society.

The next point to which I would call the attention of this Committee, is Geneva. The character and services of the Bible Society in that city have, it appears to me, been grievously misrepresented in some of the recent publications in this country, on the subject of the Apocryphal controversy. From the fact of the society in Geneva not discovering much zeal for the distribution of the Geneva version of 1805, of which the orthodoxy was called in question, the consequence has arisen, that the friends of that version have gradually seceded from the ranks of the institution. And, let it be recorded to the praise of the society at Geneva, that, when the great mass of the continental Bible Societies were anxious, by establishing counter resolutions of their own, to manifest a spirit of resistance to the Anti-Apocryphal resolution of the London Committee, the Geneva Society opposed this measure, and publicly manifested its fidelity towards the British and Foreign Bible Society, and its lively gratitude for the favours bestowed upon it through a series of years. Assisted by powerful auxiliaries, and especially by that of Satigny, under the administration of a most enlightened and devout member of the church, M. le Pasteur Gaussen, they are doing much for that part of Switzerland, and supplying an example on the continent, of sending money for the distribution of books in remote parts of the world. Of two individuals, occupying distinguished posts in that society, I must say a few words. Its president, M. Vernet, is a person who has experimentally felt the value of the Bible, and manifested, in circumstances of deep trial, his confidence in its instructions and consolations; and the secretary, M. Gautier, is an individual in whose friendship as a Christian, and zeal as a member of this society, I have found much cause to rejoice. That the Committee is not framed upon a more comprehensive and generous principle, is to be regretted; but it labours assiduously and successfully as to the great object for which it is brought together.

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The Bible Society of the Canton de Vaud has acted upon the principle of securing to itself a permanent income, for the perpetual distribution of the Holy Scriptures, independent of new contributions—by funding its capital. This measure has displeased many individuals in the Canton; and has probably assisted to give birth to other societies in Lausanne and its neighbourhood, acting upon a different principle. I speak from pretty accurate knowledge of that Canton, when I say, that the state of religion is very remarkably improved in it. It is impossible that any one who reads the religious publications of the day should be ignorant of the severe measures adopted by the government of the Canton de Vaud, within a few years, to prevent religious meetings, and otherwise obstruct the course of true religion. But the advancement in piety, and especially amongst the members of the Established Church, is not a little conspicuous. I can truly say, that I visited no place where the spirit of religious enquiry was more alive, and where the taste was more extended for simple biblical reading. The severity of the government has in a great measure relaxed. The piety of the people has increased. Is it unfair to consider as one of the instruments of this improvement, that, in addition to the number of Bibles before in circulation there has been circulated, by the Bible Society of that place, 15,000 copies of the word of God, amongst a population of 160,000 persons?

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As to the newly revised edition of Osterwald's Bible, published at Lausanne, it is impossible not to condemn in it both the deviations from the original, and the employment, in what are called the improvements, of a great deal of paraphrastic language. In speaking of that edition of the Bible, I think it right, however, to bear my humble testimony to the general character of the authors of this revision; and to state my conviction of the facility with which your Committee may have been betrayed into something of undue confidence in them. The gentlemen engaged in that revision, were some of them amongst the persons in the highest general estimation for talents and piety: of Professor Levade, the president of the Lausanne Bible Society, I may say that a more faithful friend to the general distribution of the Scriptures cannot be found. I have myself taken the liberty of strongly expressing my dissent from him upon various subjects connected with the society in general, and the Lausanne edition in particular. But I must be allowed to say to his honour, that, independent of the labour and cost he has sacrificed on this edition of the Bible, he has for a series of years sustained the burden of the Cantonal Bible Society on his almost unassisted shoulders, and continues to exhaust the strength of his declining age in giving efficiency to the operations of this Institution.

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The next Bible Society of importance which I visited was that of Basle. I was there soon brought into communication with the Committee on the subject of their temporary estrangement from

your Society on the ground of the late resolution as to the Apocryphal Books. I endeavoured to explain to the Committee the probable result of the resolutions to which they had come of refusing to be even the agents of those Societies which had resolved in no way to assist in the circulation of the Apocrypha. When they found that the decision of the London Committee was the result, not of prejudice, but of conscience, they at once gave up their own resolutions, and acquiesced in the proposal which was made to them. They passed a resolution expressive of their kind sympathy towards the British and Foreign Bible Society; and they undertook still to serve it as agents; although, at the same time, they could not, according to their judgment of the question, consent personally, and for themselves, to circulate Bibles without the Apocryphal Books. I cannot easily convey to you the high opinion which I formed of the Committee of the Bible Society of Basle, and of its venerable President, the Antistes. The interest which they feel, and the labour which they devote to the distribution of the Scriptures is what I have never seen exceeded in any other place, and I can have no doubt, that whatever commission you are pleased to entrust to them, will be judiciously and faithfully executed.

It is my wish in the last place to say something on the state of Germany. And here the few observations I have to offer will be of a somewhat more general nature, or, at least, less confined to particular societies.

I. As to the question of the Apocrypha.

The German Societies labour under great difficulty respecting the Apocryphal Books; and the greater part of them are not at present disposed to give them up. They ground their determination in general upon the following reasons. 1st. In all cases in Germany the Societies are sanctioned by the government of the respective countries, on the implied condition of distributing the Scriptures as approved by the ecclesiastical authority, i.e. with the Apocryphal Books. In some cases that condition is even expressed. The Societies could not therefore alter the mode of distributing the Scriptures, without the permission of the government, which permission they apprehend would not be granted if it were asked. 2d. There are in Germany a vast variety of moral school books, the lessons of which are taken partly from the Apocrypha, and which they imagine would be useless if the Apocrypha were taken from common use. 3dly. The original principle on which the Foreign Societies formed their alliance with the British and Foreign Bible Society was *conciliatory*. The Anti-apocryphal resolution they hold to be *reforming*; and they think that no Bible Society has a right to establish a reforming principle as a law to other Bible Societies. 4th. The question being, as they conceive, whether each Bible Society shall be permitted to bind the Apocrypha together with the canonical books, at their own expence; they think they may claim for the Apocrypha bound up with the Bible, the same liberty which is exercised in England in the case of prayer books bound up with the word of God. A person, they apprehend, in this country may bind up with the Bible he receives from the Bible Society whatever tract he pleases, without forfeiting his right as a member of that Society.—Some persons desire to retain the Apocryphal books as valuable historical documents; others fear the ill consequences which might result from appearing to the ill-informed to take away a part of Scripture.—Of all these reasons it may be said that they are founded, rather on views of expediency, than conscience; and are not therefore to be put in comparison with the great principle involved in this question, and which has directed the decision of the London Committee, viz. whether that which is *not* the word of God ought to be put on a level with that which *is*. I cannot but think that if our Christian brethren in Germany were led to this view of the question; that if the writers on the subject, in this country, were to direct a little of the zeal for their instruction upon this point; the more pious part of our neighbours would be induced, at no distant period, to adopt the resolution which we have established. In the meantime, there are very many persons and districts, as the correspondence of the Society may testify, who, even now, are willing to receive and distribute the Bible without the apocryphal writings. The example of these societies will, I doubt not, work powerfully upon others.

From all that I was able to learn in Germany, it appeared to me that, to every class of protestants, the resolution of your Committee respecting the Apocrypha will be attended with immense advantage. Great benefit may result, from this resolution, to the general theological teaching of that country. A large proportion of the errors of the German divines, appear to me to have originated in breaking down the boundaries of inspiration. The first work published by Semler, who may be considered as the originator of the new school of Theology, in Germany, is entitled "Apparatus ad liberalem Novi Testamenti Interpretationem." The object of this work is to give extent to the powers of human reason; and, in defiance of the common notions of the authority of inspiration, to accommodate Scripture to the philosophic views of the author.—Subsequent writers have contended for the partial inspiration of the Scripture; others for the unreasonableness of inspiration altogether, &c. till the dignity and authority of the divine sanction, is wholly withdrawn from the word of God, and critics have felt themselves at liberty to discuss both the books of the Bible, and their contents with no other restraint than they would feel in the examination of the most ordinary publication. Now the anti-apocryphal resolution of the Committee will I conceive go far to suggest for each man's consideration, this important question—"What is, and what is not the Bible?" and, thus, a primary and most important question will be discussed, one which must stand at the basis of all sound theology; and this, if rightly determined, will assist to bring back the German divines from the wild notions they have so generally adopted; and the benefit resulting from this resolution will probably be a larger distribution of the Bible itself. In those cases amongst the protestants where the societies may refuse to act as agents for the distribution of our canonical books, which cases will, I apprehend,

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eventually be very few; those societies may be prompted to greater exertion to secure their independent existence; and in the case of most Bible Societies, it will be found that they are capable of doing much more for themselves, and others, than they have done, whilst they continued to receive assistance from this country.

With respect to the Catholic population any considerable distribution of the *Old Testament* will undoubtedly be prevented by the Anti-apocryphal resolution. But this need not hinder the circulation of the *New Testament*. This indeed may be distributed in larger abundance than before. Leander Van Ess told me that he had then before him applications for 30,000 copies of the Catholic New Testament, whilst he had only two or 300 in his depository; and that he waited only for the direction of your Society to encrease his circulation to a very great amount.—I have no hesitation then in offering my cordial approbation to those who have supported the Anti-apocryphal Resolution of the Bible Society. Independently of every other consideration, this resolution will I think, speedily, as well as remotely, be attended with important benefit as respects the advancement of real Christian knowledge.

II. It may be desirable to say a few words as to the *Committees and officers of the German Bible Societies*. It has been a subject of grief to me, on my return to this country, to find these individuals reproached, in very general terms, as ‘infidels,’ ‘Neologians,’ ‘designing men,’ ‘who have taken the offices they hold for their crafts’ sake,’ &c.

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It is true I apprehend that many Neologians are connected with the Bible Societies in Germany,—some by virtue of the offices they hold, and others voluntarily. In Heidelberg for instance the fundamental rules of the Society placed all the professors of divinity attached to the university, ex-officio, upon the Committee of the Bible Society. One of these individuals is the professor Paulus. But from all the inquiries I was able to make, I could never learn that any individual in Germany, publicly holding neological opinions, was an *active agent* of the Bible Society. And how could any thing like an active agency be expected of such individuals. After the Bible Society had been formed in Germany, it soon spread very rapidly. Many Neologians, from various motives no doubt, enlisted themselves in its ranks. But what was the real history of this movement? The religious body were the originators of these societies, but they were soon compelled to seek the protection of others in authority, because the existence of societies in many countries must depend upon their sanction; and they were glad, even in other cases, to make those who heeded not the word of God themselves, the distributors of it to the rest of the world. But if, at this time, there are inactive agents of the German Bible Societies; if there are even secretaries who feel very little of the value of the Bible,—are there no counterparts to these in our own country? We take the best we can get,—lament their deficiencies,—and devoutly wish them better; but still we prefer the deposit for Bibles being placed in such hands, rather than having no deposit at all.

I am able, however, by a convincing document, to shew what is the real estimate taken of the Bible Society by the Neological party in Germany. There is published at Darmstadt what is called the Church Newspaper, which is devoted to the consideration of subjects connected with religion. The editor of this paper, as you will judge by the following extract, is a Neologian, and let us hear the language in which he speaks of the Bible Societies.

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Extract from the Church Newspaper of Germany, Kirchen Allgemeine Zeitung, published at Darmstadt, Sept. 28th 1826.

Heading of the Number.

“Verily were Christ now to appear again he would say, ‘Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites,’ for ye anxiously cling to the letter of the Scriptures, which ye misunderstand; and the spirit, of which ye cannot comprehend; ye insist on the doctrine of a dead faith, but neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy; and ye appear outwardly pious whilst within ye are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Depart from me, he would exclaim, ye workers of iniquity, projectors of heresy, slanderers, and breakers of the peace, I never knew you.”

“ON BIBLE SOCIETIES.”

After stating some general advantages which might result from the distribution of the Scriptures amongst the Heathen, such as “calling into action the slumbering energies of man,” “ameliorating his nature,” and laying the “foundation of his moral improvement;” the editor goes on to mention the ordinary arguments which are made use of against Bible Institutions in Germany, and which arise chiefly from the part which foreigners have taken in their establishment.

He then states some particular reasons which should lead his readers more carefully to consider the mode of conducting Bible Societies, and to greater caution in lending them their support and patronage, particularly at the present period.

I now give the translation of an extract.

“In the first place we feel ourselves constrained to assert, that the dissemination of the Scriptures does not appear to us to be conducted in a proper spirit, and with proper views. If we investigate the character of many of those who distinguish themselves by more than ordinary activity in the cause, it cannot be denied that they very frequently seem to possess only a narrow view of theology, and exceeding littleness of mind. That

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laudable veneration, which they feel for the word of God, easily acts in them, in the absence of more solid theological attainments, as a check to the liberty of thought and judgment, to which Christianity leads; they confound an ecclesiastical system of doctrine with the Gospel, they adhere with enthusiastic devotedness to exterior forms, and sacrifice to these the heavenly spirit of Christianity; they seek the essentials of our religion in the blood and wound theology ^[15] (blut und wunden theologie) of former centuries, and it is sufficiently clear that, by the exertions of such men, a blind adherence to the mere letter of the word of God is again sought to be brought into use, to the great injury of genuine Christianity and moral improvement. The peculiar interest which Mystics and Pietists of the present day take in the advancement of Bible Societies, and the connection in which they frequently stand with those who create disorders, by dissent and separation from the church, is a sign of the times which ought not to be passed over unnoticed."

The editor next objects to the resolution taken in England on the subject of the Apocrypha. This the editor thinks should be opposed, on the ground, amongst other reasons, that two *thirds of the canonical books of the Old Testament* might *with far less injury be withheld than one single book of the Apocrypha*, for instance, the book of Sirach, &c. &c.

I think from this extract it will be obvious, that the Bible Society abroad is regarded by the enemies of the truth as a great instrument for promoting evangelical religion; and, in spite of what has been said against its agents and its apocryphal books, I cannot but concur with the German editor, in his general argument. It is my deliberate conviction, that the Bible Society has been in Germany the instrument of the greatest good; and, if some of the heads of this institution have not profited by it as they ought, the poor at least, in many considerable districts, have been gainers to an extent of which those are little aware who have not carefully investigated the subject.

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In another part of the continent, I certainly found some persons, professedly heterodox in their opinions, who were nevertheless, active friends of the Bible Society. In one case, I heard that the public meeting of a very large city; and in another, that the welfare of a society, in an immense Protestant district, depended upon the exertions of persons of the class above described. But could I fail, in such cases, to thank God, who had kindly placed the antidote so near to the bane, and had employed an enemy of the truth as the destroyer of his own principles?

III. A point, to which I must refer, is that of the *persecution of religious characters* in Germany, and which persecutions have been represented as at least sanctioned by the friends of the Bible Society. This statement as a general fact, I believe to be utterly incorrect. I took great pains to investigate it on the spot. I wish, for obvious reasons, not to enter far into particulars. But of one individual, whose history has been before the public, and whose sufferings have been introduced to their notice with a sort of tragical effect, I can venture, after a minute inquiry, to affirm, that his troubles arose, not so much from his simple proclamation of the truths of the Gospel, as from his indiscretions, from his resistance to civil as well as ecclesiastical regulations, and his general intemperance of conduct. I must also add, that some of the persons who *protected* that individual, were at the very time active agents of the Bible Society in their own country. One simple fact will be sufficient to establish these statements. The truths of the Gospel have been and are proclaimed, and are tolerated, and even approved in several of the places from whence this individual was driven.

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With respect to the Canton de Vaud, a statement to the same effect has been made. It is certain that an angry feeling was excited in the minds of several members of the Committee of the Bible Society of that district, on the occasion which gave rise to the persecutions in that Canton. At the same time, any participation in this persecution is, as to himself, distinctly disavowed by Professor Levade; and certainly those who were the writers or actors in this persecution do not appear in any way in the list of the officers of the Bible Society. Two circumstances connected with the measures which were pursued in this Canton, in opposition to religious meetings, are sufficiently remarkable and interesting to deserve our notice. In the first place, the astonishing progress of religion during this period; and, in the second, the discovery, during the brief continuance of this opposition, of the utter inefficiency of intolerant measures in checking the progress of inquiry after truth.

IV. A point, which I must bring before your notice, is the actual *state of true religion* on the *continent*, and more especially in *Germany*. It is certainly true that Neology has to a lamentable extent taken possession of the universities, the public prints, and the higher orders of society. At the same time I believe, that the statements which have gone abroad, of the extent of its prevalence, are, as to two points, inaccurate. In the first place, they describe only one side of the case; for, if there is much infidelity and neology on the continent, there is also a considerable sprinkling of true religion. And, secondly, The evil which has existed, and does exist, may be said to be every day diminishing. As to the first of these facts, I could point out individuals, parishes, and districts, where real religion is in active operation; places and persons altogether unconnected with those agents from England, who have been said to be the only instruments of doing important good on the continent, and which are therefore unrecognised by them, and possibly unknown to them. I could name one little knot of parishes, all within a small circle, in which are twelve ministers, earnest, orthodox, and devout servants of the Redeemer. I could name another place, where forty ministers were lately assembled for purposes of religious and spiritual communion. I might also allege the fact, that at different universities there are

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professors who openly, and from the heart, confess the true faith. I may indeed affirm that, from the cottages of the poor to the palaces of kings, there are those who walk worthy their high vocation as Christians and as men. The admitted evils are every day diminishing. The number of converts is increasing. The opinions of Paulus and Schulthess seem likely to die away with themselves. What can be more remarkable than the change which has taken place in the kingdom of Prussia, where the leaders of the state and the university may now be said to hold the very opposite creed to that which obtained with their immediate predecessors?

There are two individuals, of whom, as connected with Germany, I feel it right to say a few words—the one is Leander Van Ess, the other your late invaluable Secretary, Dr. Steinkopff.

Leander Van Ess I had the happiness of visiting; and I remained with him during a day, which I passed at Darmstadt. It was impossible not to be prepared, by his writings, to form a very high estimate of his character and his labours; and these expectations were, in my case, in no wise disappointed. I was struck with his holy devotedness to his great object, with his unwearied diligence, with his unbounded charity. He is a man who rises at four o'clock in the morning to his daily task; pursues it often without cessation through the day; and, as I was informed by those best acquainted with his habits, he is often found at midnight occupied with his work. He is making a new version of the Bible, which, by the help of the continental Bible Societies, he is about to print; and, although he holds the opinions of the church to which he belongs on the subject of the Apocrypha, he wishes this opinion to be no hinderance to others; so that they will, in any way, read the word of God. He is, therefore, preparing his version for publication, in three forms. First, with the Vulgate printed in a small type at the bottom of each page, and with the Apocrypha intermixed; this is the form in which the Catholics wish to receive it. Secondly, without the Vulgate, and with the Apocrypha appended, for the Protestants of that country. Thirdly, without the apocryphal books, for the distribution of our own Bible Society, if we are disposed to adopt it. Here is a specimen of that largeness of charity by which every part of his conduct is influenced. So that, by Protestants and Catholics, who are partakers of the same spirit, he is alike esteemed. The king of Wirtemberg has presented him with a medal, in token of his useful labours in his kingdom. The grand-duke of Baden has given him money to purchase Testaments. And the government under which he lives sanctions his proceedings, and one member in particular of the royal family of the grand-duke affords him constant protection and assistance. So that kings, I may say, are “the nursing fathers” of his plans and labours. I consider this society as privileged, in no ordinary degree, in having such an agent and friend on the continent. The assistance which he has already rendered to the Society has been very considerable. He has a great work on his hands. Communications are always to be kept open, letters to be written; and, in a country where there is a fastidiousness in receiving any religious offering from abroad, no one, who has not tried the experiment, can judge how much judgment, care, and delicacy it requires to bestow the gift without injuring the cause it is intended to promote.

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The other individual, to whom I have ventured to refer, is your late dear and honoured Secretary, Dr. Steinkopff. The present was not the first opportunity I had enjoyed of tracing the extent of his labour, and of ascertaining the estimation in which he is held on the continent. It is right to be known, that Dr. Steinkopff, before he came to England, filled an office of large correspondence on the subject of religion, and which gave him perhaps a better acquaintance with the religious state of Germany, than, I may venture to say, any other individual. He has constantly held communications with his successors in the important and influential office which he himself held; and this has given, to himself, a power of judging of the exact state of the continent; and, to his labours, a degree of efficiency, which could scarcely have been possessed without it. But when I speak of the value of Dr. Steinkopff to the Bible Society, it is not to any mere outward circumstance I would mainly advert. I may venture to say, that his character has been one grand instrument of your success on the continent. “If,” said a person, of considerable influence in Germany, to me, “you do not want Dr. Steinkopff any longer in England, send him over here, and he will find friends enough.” Wherever he has appeared, either as the officer of your Society or as a private individual, he has left a name behind him which, next to the favour of the Master he has so affectionately and devotedly served, and the good which he has been the instrument of effecting for his fellow-creatures, may be his comfort in his hours of sickness and of solitude. I saw none who knew him who were not ready to bear testimony to his humility, his conscientiousness, his vigour, his undeviating devotedness to the Society whose officer he was. May God long preserve him to assist us by his counsels, and to advocate the cause of the Society, with a voice which, whether at home or abroad, has been rarely heard in vain.

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I will now venture, in conclusion, to urge upon the Committee, as the plain inference from the foregoing statements, what appears to me to be a most imperious duty. It is that of cultivating and to manifesting a *spirit of kindness, of generosity, and enlarged benevolence towards our continental brethren*. If it be considered as an offence that we express our “unfeigned Christian regards” towards many of our fellow labourers abroad, I trust that we shall continue thus to offend. I had constantly occasion on the continent, whilst speaking on the subject of the Apocrypha to those who most materially differed from us, to urge, that, whereas by the new resolution of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the ground upon which we could unite was somewhat narrowed, our temper of mind, our sympathy, and love might remain the same; and that, if we could hope less than ever to “reconcile all opinions,” we might still endeavour “to unite all hearts.”

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This was the leading principle of our Society in the infancy of its institution; and, now that we are

more matured in age, let us labour not to depart from it. Far then from advising the officers of this Society to suffer themselves, in their communications with the continent, to be lectured into a cold, dry, measured style of writing, I would exhort them to give vent to their warm and generous feelings. They may, in so doing, err in the sight of those disposed to make men "offenders for a word;" but they will better please the compassionate Master they serve; they will, under the divine blessing, cherish the fainting spirit of continental Christianity, and fan that spark of piety and zeal which is lighted up, I trust, never to be extinguished.

I hope too the Committee will be encouraged as to the general objects and operations of the Society. I am, by actual observation, more than ever convinced, that, on a very large scale, this institution is on the continent, a favoured instrument in the hands of Divine Providence. The good which it has accomplished is immense. The evils which have been charged upon it, exist, rather in imagination, than in reality. Let the Committee go on to do what they can, and to do all in the spirit of love and generosity. Let them commit every endeavour to the blessing of Him to whom the souls of the multitudes scattered over the continent are unspeakably dear; let them be confident that the word of the Lord will have free course and be glorified; and that millions will arise, at the last day, to acknowledge with gratitude and joy the labours of this Society. Let the temper of the Society remain unimpaired at home; and it need not be disquieted at objections or assaults which will not at least commend themselves to the world at large, by the general spirit in which they have been defended. And may we never fail to repose an honourable confidence in the officers and friends of the Society; nor forget, in judging of others, to take into account the infirmities of our common nature. May we feel that, having embarked in the glorious enterprise of making all men acquainted with the pure and unadulterated word of God, it is not for us to be checked by slight obstacles; but to go forward, conquering and to conquer, in the name of him who has loved us, and given himself for us, and who has consigned this volume, as his precious legacy, to a perishing and suffering world.

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Believe me, my Lord,

Your Lordship's very obedient servant,

F. CUNNINGHAM.

*Pakefield, Lowestoft,
Jan. 5, 1827.*

LONDON:

IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

Footnotes

[6] 2397 Bibles, 2436 Testaments.

[15] The doctrine of the atonement of Christ, and justification by faith.

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