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BY  
FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM, A.B  
RECTOR OF PAKEFIELD;  
*And Secretary of the Lowestoft Branch Bible Society.*

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**OBSERVATIONS  
ON AN**

# ANONYMOUS PAMPHLET.

THERE are many circumstances which might have induced a friend of the Bible Society to refrain from noticing a work, under the circumstances of the present pamphlet. And, had it strictly adhered to its title, and simply stated the reasons why a churchman might properly refuse to subscribe to this institution, it would probably have remained unnoticed by me. It might, in that case, have been hoped, that statements which are unacknowledged would not have been believed, and the reasonings of the work might have been left, without much alarm, to do their worst. But, as it has been observed to me, that the very circumstance of putting even the most improbable statements in print, invests them with a species of authority; and as there are many persons still unacquainted with the nature and operations of the Bible Society, and who, therefore, may mistake the boldness of assertion in this little work for the confidence of truth, I have yielded to the advice of some of my friends, in attempting to reply to it. Before I proceed, however, to this reply, I will beg leave to make a single observation on the *temper* in which this attempt will, I trust, be made.

The author of this pamphlet has, in the first page of his work, reprobated the "arrogant and dogmatical style" of his opponents; and, in the conclusion of it, he has called their measures "wicked, cruel, and unchristian." It is my hope, that I shall not fall into the same error. I desire "nothing to extenuate, nor set down aught in malice;" to state facts, not from the mere authority of the parties concerned in this controversy, but upon that of the most authentic documents; and, should I fail to convince my readers, it is my confident intention not at once to conclude their opinions "unchristian" and "cruel," because they differ from my own; hard words, I may venture to say, ought not to be the weapons of our warfare, and I trust they never will be of mine. I desire to remember the declaration of our Lord, "they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword."

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I may be permitted also to add, that in entering upon the consideration of this question, I consider myself as approaching a subject of the highest importance. When I am canvassing the merits of an instrument for circulating the Word of God over every part of the world, I tremble lest the ark should suffer in my hands; and I desire to go out to the warfare, not so much with a "sword and a shield" of human fabrication, as, "in the name of the Lord," for the circulation of whose Word I wish to contend.

This pamphlet is entitled "Reasons why a Churchman may with great justice refuse to subscribe to the Bible Society;" and the reasons which are assigned may be said to be of three kinds: First, *That a better Society, of a like kind, exists in the church*; Secondly, *That the Bible Society does not answer to the professions and praises of its advocates*; Thirdly, *That it is injurious to the established church*. Upon each of these points I shall now venture to make a few observations.

*First*, It is said, *That a better Society, of a like kind, exists in the church*. The Society to which the author alludes, is that established more than 100 years since, which is called the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Its object is threefold: To distribute Bibles; also, Prayer Books and Tracts; and to send Missionaries. Every member of this Society is obliged to give good security that he is a churchman, and there is no way in which, by its means, any other denomination of christians can be benefited, but by the hands of churchmen.

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The advantages of this institution over the Bible Society which the author endeavours to establish are four. *First*, It is a *Society which consists entirely of churchmen*; *Secondly*, Bibles can be procured in it at a *cheaper rate*; *Thirdly*, The Bibles which it issues are more *useful*; *Fourthly*, It furnishes *Prayer Books and Tracts*.

As the Society whose cause the author exclusively advocates, is a society of churchmen, he maintains that, by its extension and prevalence, no variety of interpretation in essential points would prevail, and therefore no confusion be introduced amongst the unlearned. All churchmen would, he conceives, teach the same truths in the same manner. But, is this accurate? Is there such a perfect accordance of opinion amongst churchmen? If, for instance, Dr. Marat and Mr. Scott, each of them churchmen, each of them members of the Old Society, and each of them men of respectability, were to circulate Bibles, with their own interpretations, would an exact conformity of opinion be produced? Assuredly not. What, then, is the conclusion from this? That of churchmen, it can only be said as of churchmen and dissenters, they agree in the authority of the Bible; but there is no complete agreement as to the interpretations of the Bible. If churchmen, who are members of the Old Society, widely disagree upon essential points in the interpretation of the Bible, even the Old Society is no guarantee for unity. A person, to be quite right, on the principle of the author, should subscribe exclusively to a Society, where each person would agree to promulgate only the same interpretation of scripture; and where, it may be asked, would such a Society be found?

But, secondly, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge is affirmed to be best, because "*it procures Bibles at a cheaper rate.*" What is meant by this assertion I cannot discover, unless the author designs to say, that Bibles cost less to that Society in their original purchase. This would be very inaccurate, as each are purchased at the same markets—the markets to which the sale is confined by legislative enactment. But the author proceeds to a statement of *facts* on this subject, which it may be well to consider. It is said, page 7, "A 12mo Non-pareil Bible is allowed to the subscribers for Promoting Christian Knowledge for 3s. 3d., but the British and Foreign

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Bible Society expects from its subscribers 4s., 6d., for the same edition." As to this statement, I would say, in the first place, that it is grossly incorrect. By every printed document of the Bible Society, this Bible, which is stated to be charged to its subscribers at 4s. 6d., is offered to them at 3s. 7s. But it may yet be said, The Bible from the Old Society is then at all events cheaper than that of the New: Why are not the prices of the New Society reduced? I answer, that in all the instances, the Bibles of the New Society are within a few pence as cheap as in the Old. But, if not, a most satisfactory reason may be given, in the consideration of the object of the New Society, and of the means it has adapted to pursue that object. Its object is simply this, *to do the greatest possible good*. And, in order to accomplish this, it determines to supply Bibles precisely at the rate which may suit the convenience of individuals, without impairing the general means of the Society; to suit the exigencies of the poor on the one hand, and, on the other, to obtain a suitable return for their money. An exactly parallel case presents itself. The Society for the relief of the Poor, in Spitalfields, are now selling rice at three-pence per pound. Why, it might be asked, is the rice not sold cheaper than this? It would be answered, because the object is to do the greatest possible good. Three-pence per pound is a price which the poor can afford to pay, and, by receiving this instead of a less price, the Society may perhaps be able to encounter the continued pressure of the times. Thus it is with Bibles. The poor (as is evident from their free purchase of them) can afford to pay what they now pay for Bibles, and which is about one half of what they would pay in the shops; whilst the Society is by this return enabled to supply Bibles gratuitously to the destitute, and continue its operations through the world. Nor is this all: One reason why the Old Society originally made its prices so low, was, that it did not allow its subscribers to *sell* their Bibles, even at reduced prices, but constrained them to *give* them away. The New Society first discovered the error of this proceeding, and concluding that a poor man would be likely more to value the Bible which was bought, than the Bible which was given, recommended its subscribers as a general rule, rather to sell than to give. Hence, amongst other advantages, its subscribers might be justly called upon to pay to this Society a higher price. It may be observed, that the Old Society has now extended this privilege to its subscribers, and, on this ground, it is privileged to raise its prices.

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But not only, is it said, are the Bibles *cheaper*, but they are *better*: *better*, because, at the Old Society, may be had a *Bible with a commentary*, the lowest price of which is fifty shillings.

Now it may be observed, that this argument does not very happily square with the last. First, says our author, the Bibles of the Old Society are better, because they are cheaper; next, they are better, because they have a commentary costing fifty shillings. One of these two arguments must be surrendered. The Bibles cannot be at once cheaper, and cost a price which excludes them from general circulation. But, further, it may be said, that every argument which assumes the importance of the commentary to the Society, assumes the accuracy and value of the commentary itself.—Are all commentaries then valuable?—Are there none which might be very dear at fifty shillings?

But a fourth reason, it is said, for the superiority of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, is, that it provides Prayer Books and Religious Tracts. The friends of the Bible Society are charged with saying, "that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants;" and our author affirms, that, but for the exertions of Dr. Marsh, the Prayer Book would not have been circulated.

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As to the first of these charges, the Society pleads guilty. They say, what the immortal Chillingworth said before them, They maintain the principle, for which their ancestors died triumphantly under the axe of a Popish executioner. As to the second, it appeared, upon a pretty rigid scrutiny, that whereas many of the friends of the Bible Society had made large demands upon the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for *Prayer Books*, Dr. Marsh had confined himself, in his own parish, to the circulation of a little volume on the *Value of Tithes*. But let us look at the subject a little more generally.

Of Tracts it may be said as of a commentary that the connection of these with any Society must exceedingly limit its extension, even amongst churchmen. Accordingly, these Tracts have been stated in print by churchmen to be completely inconsistent with one another; some have been called "heretical;" some have been charged with involving "the worst errors of Popery." And, whatever may be the merit of these Tracts, to call them, with our author, "sure and certain guides," is to affirm of them what can be affirmed only of the Revelation of God. Indeed, if there were no other objection to our author's statement, there is this, that these infallible guides are in the unfortunate habit of flatly contradicting each other. In this case, who is to arbitrate between them? I know not what arbitrator our author will propose. I should say the Bible? and I should go on to draw this inference—subscribe than to the Bible Society—and transmit the doctrine of infallible "guides" in the first vessel from Lowestoft to Rome.

I am sorry that I should have felt any obligation to draw up what may bear even the semblance of a charge against the Society, at Bartlett's Buildings, of which I am a member. That Society has many merits, and in its own sphere is capable of doing much good. But, when an attempt is made to canonize this Society; to apply it to objects which it can never reach; and to erect it on the ruins of a Society of wider basis and far more extensive capabilities, it is difficult to be entirely silent. It was heartily to be wished, that these two Societies should never have been brought into invidious comparison, for, in a comparison, one of them must fail; and, which ever suffers, Christianity suffers with it, because the promotion of Christianity is the object of both. As, however, these two Societies have been brought into comparison, by the author of these "Reasons," it seems requisite now to show, that the New Society has certain peculiar and

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exclusive advantages, which justify churchmen in supporting it.

In the first place, then, *the constitution of the Old Society disqualified it from the universal supply of the Word of God*. It had existed for near a century, and during that time, I venture confidently to say, it had, even *at home*, done little of what was necessary for the distribution of the Scriptures; and, *abroad*, scarcely any thing at all.

*At home*, when examinations were made as to the circulation of the Scriptures in many parts of England, especially in Lincolnshire, there were villages where the Bible was alone to be found in the church; within about a mile of the depository of the Old Society, full one half of the families were without a copy of the Scriptures; in this diocese alone, it was calculated that ten thousand families were destitute of the Word of God; in that of Durham, seven thousand five hundred; and, which is a certain proof of this assertion, since that time, nearly one million five hundred thousand copies have been distributed, principally in our own country, without, at the same time, the demand for the Scriptures being by any means supplied.

*Abroad*, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge has been able to effect still less. It had, indeed, only in one instance, attempted the distribution of the Scriptures. This was in the year 1720, when it printed, but not altogether at its own charge, an edition of the Psalms and the New Testament in the Arabic language. And such was the want of facilities for foreign operations, that, till lately, a part of that edition was mouldering in the cellars of the institution. Except this, and the assistance it has given to the Danish mission in the East Indies, it may be said to have done little or nothing for foreign countries. Nor let me be conceived to impute it as blame to this Society that it has done no more in a sphere, from which, from its constitution, it was excluded.

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But what is the inference from this? That when, from the introduction of schools at home, an additional demand was created for the Scriptures, and when abroad the multiplication of missionaries created a new demand for the Bible, in all the languages of the earth, it was not sufficient that a Society existed which had proved itself insufficient for the supply of the Scriptures, even under less trying circumstances. It was necessary that something more should be attempted, and, accordingly, the New Society was constructed—a Society, erected on the widest possible basis, and comprehending all the means and energies of all the worshippers of Christ. The Old Society was left to pursue its domestic career; and the New Society, beginning at home, extended itself over the whole world. The one, as it has been said, is like the lamp at a particular sanctuary; the other, “the pillar which preceded the march of the whole people of God.”

Nor is this wider operation and extension of the New Society the fruit of accident—it is *the result of its constitution*. This constitution acknowledges no sect or party amongst christians; it partakes of no religious system; and therefore is equally applicable to all climates and all governments. Accordingly, in Russia, in England, and in America, in countries divided by the widest intervals in their religious and political administration, it is equally innoxious to the established order of things; it arrests every man who bears the title of a christian; seizes, as by a sort of natural affinity, upon that part of his creed which he holds in common with the whole christian world, and throws it down to form as it were a basis for this institution: he may have much religion, or little; what he has is converted by this Society to the glory of God, and the salvation of man.

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Nor is the universality of that Society its only peculiar property—it is peculiar to that institution *to be incorruptible*. Its object is so simple, that it needs no other safeguards than its own principles. With the Old Society that is not the case. It is entrusted to human agents; and how can a person who lives at too great distance to attend the Committees of this Society, know what Tracts may be admitted, or what may be suppressed; what security has he for the consistency of the proceedings? But the object and proceedings of the Bible Society are always the same. It is to distribute the authorised version of the Bible, without note or comment; and whilst it adheres to this, whether the members of a committee of this Society are well or ill affected to church or state, nothing more than the distribution of the authorised version of the Scriptures can be effected. Their deadliest plot can issue only in the circulation of that book, which is the best antidote to their own wickedness. In the universality of its application, therefore, and the incorruptibility of its plan, the New differs from the Old Society.

But let us now turn to the second objection of the author of this pamphlet, *viz., That the Bible Society has been unduly commended by its advocates*, page 4, “Neither,” says our author, “is the general circulation of the Scriptures enacted by them, nor do their meetings produce love and harmony amongst Christians of various denominations.” The first of those propositions, that the Scriptures are not distributed “*universally*” by the Bible Society is attempted to be proved by this circumstance that they are not circulated “*exclusively*” by it. In what manner one of three facts establishes the other, I am at a loss so discover. I heartily wish that, in the like way of reasoning it could be proved, that because the author is not the only person who has written against the Bible Society, *therefore* he had not written against it at all. But now look at the fact, as to the distribution of the Scriptures. They are distributed to all classes, to heathens even, if they wish to possess them; and they are distributed not merely in the languages of this country, but in fifty-three languages or dialects, of almost every kindred and people over the world. Whatever comes short of a completely general distribution of the Scriptures by the Bible Society, is occasioned by the want of funds.

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But the author is not satisfied with this gratuitous assertion. He goes on, in the same strain of independent and courageous affirmation, to maintain, that a feeling of love and harmony is not

produced by the meeting of various denominations of christians in this Society; and, in proof of this, he appeals to certain recent occurrences. But what are these recent occurrences he leaves us to divine. If, indeed, he were to refer to certain recent occurrences in another quarter, as evidences of "bitter and unseemly contention," <sup>(12a)</sup> and of the "degradation" of a meeting assembled for grave deliberation into "a British Forum, or a Bear Garden," <sup>(12b)</sup> probably every churchman would understand the hint, however obliquely conveyed. But, as to the meeting of the Bible Society, I have attended both those of the Parent Institution, and in various parts of this and the neighbouring county, and I can truly say, that I have never seen any feeling predominate, but that of christian love. I have never known any offensive peculiarity obtruded upon the assembly; and although it might have been sometimes wished, that, in points of taste and expression, some of the speeches had been amended, yet, in point of temper and spirit, and sober adherence to the main objects of the meeting, they have admitted of no improvement.

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The author of these observations has, I should suspect, never attended at a meeting of this Society, or he would not have hazarded so extraordinary a charge. Let him and his friends be persuaded to judge in future, rather from their own experience, than from the representation of others. Let them come to these meetings, and, as men of feeling and principle, they would, I am persuaded, be amongst the first to build up an institution, which they are now in such haste to destroy. They would find the principle of attraction in the Society to be as strong as its advocates pretend; would find even themselves surprised into the vortex, and constrained, by a holy violence, to love the very men whom now they appear to distrust.

But I proceed to notice a third class of objections to this Society, viz.: those which are aimed at it as opposed to the *Established Church*, and to the *Society in Bartlett's Buildings*. How is this objection verified? The Society in Bartlett's Buildings had proceeded for many years with a tolerably even step, and during the four years preceding the establishment of the Bible Society, the average of its subscriptions and donations was about £2,234, whilst its whole income was £11,818. If this New Society had tended to its injury, the subscriptions and income would of course have diminished. But what is now the state of the case? The subscriptions to that Society during the last year amounted to £7,440, and its income to £44,215. And here let it be observed, that, not only has the income of the Society increased, but that part of its income which is applicable to the dispersion of Prayer Books and Tracts has much more increased. For the national supply of Bibles, which are in proportion to their sizes, more costly to the Society than Prayer Books, being at least divided by the Bible Society, a larger fund must remain for the distribution of Commentaries and Tracts.

But we are taught, by the author, that the Society is injurious to the Established Church itself. That the Bible may be injurious to scepticism or superstition is to be believed; but how it can be injurious to a church, founded upon the Word of Truth, it is not easy to comprehend. Will the Bible, like the heathen parent of ancient story, devour his own offspring? But it is said, that the baptist, or the socinian, will give the Word of God the colour of their own creed. This, however, the churchman cannot help. However the baptist, or socinian, may procure a Bible, he will, of course, put his own interpretation to it. But we would ask, how are the baptist or the socinian ever to be converted to what we term orthodoxy? It must be by appealing to the Word of God. They will not accept our interpretation of Scripture, any more than we will theirs. It is, then, only on the Word of God that we can meet for discussion. This is the only remedy which we can propose, in ordinary circumstances, for any error, because it is the only one which the person in error will allow to be applied.

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Let me beg the author to remember the principle upon which our church is founded. It is an appeal to *the Scriptures*. "We do not," says Bishop Jewell, *Apol. Ecc. Ang.*, cap. 4, "betake ourselves to the fire and the sword, but to the *Scriptures*; nor do we assault with force of arms, but with the *Word of God*." "By the *Scriptures*," as says Tertullian, "we nourish our faith; by them we erect our hope; by them we establish our confidence." And, speaking of the churches of England and of Rome, he says, (cap. 5.) "not to mention all the differences, because they are almost infinite; *we have turned the Holy Scriptures into all languages*, and they will scarce allow them to be extant in any tongue; *we invite the people to hear and read the Word of God*, they drive them away from it; we desire the cause in controversy should be understood by all, but they fly from judgment; we trust to knowledge, they to ignorance; we bring truth to light, they to darkness; we venerate, as it is fit that we should, the words of the apostles and prophets, they burn them." Thus we see, that the Scriptures were made the ground of appeal by our ancestors, when they separated from the Established Church, and formed our present establishment. Should we not, therefore, allow others to make the same appeal; and should we not be content to rest our defence upon the same ground?

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But let us next, in considering the influence of the Society on the Established Church, take into account certain facts, which force themselves on the eye of the most cursory examiner. It is obvious, that the attendance at church in these times is considerably increased, and certainly not the least increased where a Bible Society spirit most abounds. In many places, also, great efforts have been made to build new churches, to accommodate an overgrown population; and, moreover, a most extraordinary increase in the circulation of the Liturgy has taken place. A new Society also has arisen, whose only object is to distribute the Formularies of the Established Church.

But we are not yet at the end of the objections of this very industrious opponent. The meetings of the Bible Society, it is said, by breaking in a degree the line of demarcation between churchmen and dissenters, tend to injure the establishment; and that, although the dissenter may gain, the

churchman must lose by them. But how can this be? can the union of persons, where the peculiarities of each is kept out of view, have any bearing upon those peculiarities? Is it the fact, that churchmen have been converted to dissenters by these meetings? If there is a danger of conversion taking place, is it not a bad compliment to the church to suppose that she will be the loser? In physics, when a larger body meets a less, as in the case of the heavenly bodies, the smaller never fails to follow the motion of the larger. Why in the case of the church and dissenters alone, is this law to be reversed?

Will the author allow me to add this observation, that if danger to the establishment need not be apprehended from the distribution of the Bible, it is very much to be feared from the conduct of those who oppose this Society. In the first place, there is something very awful and ominous, in seeing those who are the appointed stewards of the Word of God, rising up to oppose any means by which its circulation is promoted; magnifying mole hills into mountains, if only they can throw them into the course of this Society. Opposition, such as this, is well calculated to shake "opinion," upon which every establishment must mainly, under the blessing of God, depend. May not the enemies of the church, at least plausibly urge, that the church cannot be built upon the Scriptures, when so many churchmen oppose their distribution without their own commentary? And if the persuasion were established among the poor, that our church is erected on the foundation of commentaries and tracts, instead of that of the "apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone," would not popular attachment quickly dissolve?

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There are, however, still two points upon which I would wish to make a few observations. The first is, as to the statement of this writer, "that the income of the Bible Society is larger than its expenditure; that a large sum is invested by this Society in various funds, and, therefore, that the sum which has been obtained by subscriptions from the poor, is unjustly taken from them." Now, to this I answer, that a large sum has indeed from time to time been invested by this Society. But, does the Bartlett's Building's Society, or any other body of men, in their senses, neglect such a precaution? By referring to the Report, we shall see that only so much is reserved by the Society, from year to year, as is necessary to meet the engagements under which it has laid itself. If the sum of stock, now stated by the auditors to be possessed by the Bible Society, is estimated, it will be found hardly more than is sufficient to pay the £36,000 for which the Society stands engaged. Had not such a reserve been made in the last year, from the temporary diminution in the income of the Society, it could not have fulfilled its engagements.

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A second charge is brought against it, on the subject of *Bible Associations*. The principle of these Associations is this—The poor are permitted to pay one penny, or more, per week, to supply themselves with a Bible; and afterwards, if they are so disposed, towards the general funds of the Society. This is called, by the author of these Reasons, a "vexatious impost," and he adds, that it is "wicked, cruel, and unchristian" to "deduct such a sum from a poor family," to "tax the paupers of the kingdom to supply foreign nations."

I wish my readers and myself to forget the epithets which are here bestowed upon some of the most respectable persons in this kingdom; upon the Bishop of Durham, for instance, who is president of one of these associations. It will be sufficient for me to reply to the argument upon which they are founded.

In the first place, it may be observed, that the payment of the sum of one penny per week, is not at all of the nature of a "tax," or "vexatious impost," it is strictly *voluntary*. Nor is it "vexatious," for the disposition of man is not prone to inflict vexatious obligations upon himself. The days of the flagellants, if ever they existed, are over. But this charge of the author seems to me to be founded upon a wrong estimate of the character of the poor, as well as ignorance of the practical effects of the associations.

It arises, in the first place, from a *wrong estimate of the character of the poor*, and especially of the religious poor. The sympathy which is professed by the author of these Reasons, is for suffering which only exists in his own conception. Those who subscribe to Bible Associations have no feeling of the cruelty which they are said to endure. The best delight which can animate a human breast, is afforded to them by the means of the Bible Society, in the easiest manner, as well as in the highest degree.

Persons in higher situations of life, are apt to look upon those beneath them, as incapable of feeling those pleasures which they themselves enjoy. Thus the clean cottage, the small, but decorated garden of a poor man, is passed by with indifference by the rich; yet the poor man has, perhaps, more exquisite pleasure in his enjoyments, than another, pampered with all the superfluities of life. So may it be with these small subscriptions to Bible Associations. Although poor, a man is equally a man; he has drunk "milk sweet as charity from human breasts;" and feeling, as acutely as any other, his own spiritual wants, he may have as earnest desire for the relief of his fellow-creatures. Such I am persuaded is the state of many of the poor, and their language in giving to these Associations is not the pang which *cruelty* extorts, but of this kind—"I am not rich myself, but I will give my money, because I know that he who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord; because the souls of multitudes are perishing for lack of that knowledge, which I am able, in a degree, to impart to them."

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But not only is this charge founded upon a wrong conception of the character and habits of the poor, but upon a mistaken view of the real political and moral influence of these Associations.

It is admitted on all hands, that the best remedy for national distress would be to create in the poor a spirit of independence; to raise them above a state, in which they would stoop to receive

from the public, that support which ought to be procured by their own industry and foresight. On this ground, we establish clubs to provide against sickness; banks to deposit savings; and there is reason to conclude, from the example of Scotland, that if the principle of honest independence were duly cultivated, and means supplied for its full operation, an almost total subduction of our Poor Rate might take place. Bible Associations have, then, a direct tendency to teach and to set at work this very principle. They teach the poor economy, a habit of foresight, the benefit of order and christian co-operation. They raise the poor from the rank of beggars to that of benefactors; and, whilst in common with clubs, they cherish a habit of prudence, they root out the habit of selfishness, which clubs have, perhaps, a tendency to produce.

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I may be permitted to say in conclusion, that although we may lament that such controversies should arise, because, as the author of these Reasons states, our divisions are by these means made greater, still it is our comfort to know, that the effect of such controversies is to create inquiry into the facts upon which they are founded. And this inquiry, all that love truth, must most earnestly desire. The friends of the Bible Society wish to lay open every fact, to offer every plan for investigation, conscious of the simplicity and purity of their object and conduct.

When the members of this Society, those of them, at least, who are not under an error of judgment, are said in this pamphlet to "have the aim and ambition to puritanize the whole community, and to raise the fabric of enthusiasm upon the ruins of church and state," I look to *fact*, which our author will at least allow to be as good a weapon as hypothesis, and having used in vain all my faculties to discover any ground for the assertion, I venture to conclude, either that the author has in his study dreamt of enemies whom he cannot have seen, or that he has inserted this passage for the purpose of concluding his work with a flourish, even at the expence of truth.

I recollect a fable, by which, some years since, this same false and foolish charge was illustrated. It said, that philosophers had fancied they saw a monster in the sun, which, however, upon further examination, proved to be a fly in their own glass. And my firm conviction is, that the supposed monsters in this Society will prove to be flies in the glasses of our opponents. From no single fact, at least, in the constitution and general proceedings of the Bible Society, can these persons shew, that the slightest ground for such portentous apprehensions as are suggested, does exist, but in their own imagination.

The Bible Society has now existed long enough to prove how vain are aspersions of this kind. If such suppositions had been warranted, fourteen years would have developed them; but they still remain utterly unproved, and this Society is sufficiently known, and has been sufficiently examined. We have, indeed, sometimes seen its brilliancy for a short time obscured by works like our author's, where every thing is charged and taken for granted, but these clouds have passed away, and then we have, when they have passed, observed this institution in the mean time risen to a higher meridian, beaming with more pure and brilliant lustre, and imparting more extended and beneficent animation.

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It is a happiness for the friends of the Bible Society to know, that opposition like this, is not new against an institution of the most acknowledged merits; and which has the testimony of the very writer of these "Reasons." At an early period of the existence of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the very same opposition was raised against itself. In the year 1718, that Society thought proper to answer these allegations, and I will extract a passage from a preface which it published to some missionary letters.

Extract from the Preface to a Collection of Letters from Foreign Missionaries, part 3, published by the direction of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. London, 1718, page vii.

"As things of this nature are generally subject to various opinions and reflections, so hath in particular this undertaking met with the same treatment since it came to be known in Europe. It hath been highly approved by some, and disliked by others. Some, who do not suppose an enterprize of this nature to be altogether impracticable, do, however, think it now very improper, when every one *complains of hard times*, and is called upon by *other expences nearer at home*; and, for this reason, they are fur putting it off to a more convenient season. Others have been startled *at the newness of the thing* and are shy to venture into a road so little beaten in this age, and so much exposed to danger and difficulty. Others have been bare spectators in this matter, unwilling to judge of a work, which, like a tender blade, did but just appear above ground, *not discovering as yet what its fruit might prove*. Others again, have taken a transient view of the scheme, but declared their unwillingness to be farther concerned, till they should see some *eminent men espouse it*, and by their example encourage others to engage in the same. Others are displeas'd with the heathen themselves, who, for the sake of a little gain, will conform to the christian name, but, at the approach of danger, quit it again, and relapse into their former ways.

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"It is not the design of this preface to examine at large the various opinions and judgments which hitherto have been passed on this affair, much less to determine how far they might be well-grounded, or how far, perhaps, they might be biassed by mistaken and prejudices. However, thus much may be said in answer to those, who, on the one hand, are so easily terrified by the common calamities of the times, and, on the other, by the expensiveness of the design, that they seem to be little acquainted with the ways and dispensations of Providence. For if we take a survey of the most considerable transactions, both under the law and the gospel, it will plainly appear, that, generally, the *best of works have been carried on in the worst of times*, and that they have triumphed at last (though after much toil and labour) over all the clamours and oppositions that wicked men and devils could raise against them.



"The prophet assures us, that Jerusalem was rebuilt in strait and troublous times. And another of the inspired writers tells us, that they were fain to work with one hand, and to hold their weapons in the other. And yet did the work gain ground in the midst of all those adversities; and the attempts made against it, were so far from disheartening the builders, that they did but more encourage them to go on with their labour, till they saw the design brought to a happy conclusion. However, it cannot be denied, that the opposition is then most destructive and fatal, when it comes from those that are WITHIN THE PALE OF THE CHURCH, AND WHO, UNDER AN EXTERNAL SHEW OF THE SAME CONFESSION, DESTROY THE VITALS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

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"How backward the Jews were in building the Lord's temple, and under what frivolous pretences they put off so unwelcome a work, doth plainly appear from the reproof given them by the prophet. The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built, was the common plea for their sloth and drowsiness; but then the effect was, that whilst governors, priests, and people, were wholly bent on advancing their worldly interest, and shamefully neglected the Lord's house, their vines and olives did not yield their increase, and the earth denied her fruits. All which may possibly convince us, that even *outward prosperity doth in a great measure depend upon the care employed in the worship of God, and its enlargement among JEWS AND HEATHENS.*

"Nor have those a sufficient plea for themselves, that undervalue a design because it is new, and because it hath been little attempted by protestants. Truly, this should rather be an inducement (not to stifle the work in its infancy, but) to inflame that little of the spirit of power and love, which is left among us. Should we be also willing to die, because we see so many dead about us? I mean, so many who are supine and negligent in the greatest concerns of life and happiness. Should we not rather strengthen the more the things which remain, but are ready to die, except they be supported betimes? Which consideration should make us shake off that natural drowsiness, which confineth the mind to narrow ends and purposes, and indisposeth it for any generous enterprise. Nothing is more common, even among those who call themselves christians, than to frame new ways and new methods for increasing their stock, and to improve every opportunity offered for that end. Almost every year produceth new schemes, and these new pursuits after the things of this world. Let a design be never so new and uncommon, it will soon be embraced, if it be but profitable, and conducive to some temporal end or other. Why should a christian, then, be shy of a work because it is new, when it may carry with it a never-fading reward? Should not he be as ready and watchful to lay up riches in heaven, as the profane worldling is to improve his income on earth?"

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Such was the opposition once shown to this venerable Society, and by persons too within the pale of the church. Who these persons were signifies now as little to us, as the arguments which they advanced, and which have so happily failed of success. And such we hope will be the fate of all objections to the Bible Society.

Could these opposers of the Old Society, now contemplate its progress, how would they shrink within themselves, and condemn their own blindness and bigotry. Could they now see the fields trodden by Ziegenbalgh and Swartz, once "a waste howling wilderness," now "rejoicing and blossoming as the rose," with what anguish would they regard their own hostility, and how would they bless the author of all good, for having wrenched the weapons from their hands. Now every thing is seen by them in its proper colour and dimensions; now every object is merged in the one great object of the prevalence of truth. The triumphs of the gospel fills, if we may so speak, their whole field of vision. Let the opponents, then, of the Bible Society, learn a lesson from this. For with them, soon, all the hopes and fears of this world will have passed away; they will see every object in the light of the sanctuary, and measure every institution upon its sacred scale: the world will be nothing, and Christ will be all in all.

May these persons at that awful day be enabled to justify themselves before that God, who would not that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to the knowledge of the truth; before that Saviour who has commanded us to preach his gospel to all nations, and who, in the glowing language of his own book, has shadowed out this and similar institutions, under the image of an angel carrying the everlasting gospel to every nation, and language, and tongue, and people; before those souls, who are now crying to us for help—for that help, which the British and Foreign Bible Society is seeking to impart.

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[12a] Vide British Critic for May 1816, Arte 10.

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