

A LETTER

The Hon. & Ven. ARCHDEACON STRACHAN

IN

REPLY

TO SOME PASSAGES IN HIS

*“LETTER TO DR. CHALMERS ON THE LIFE AND
CHARACTER OF BISHOP HOBART;”*

RESPECTING THE

PRINCIPLES AND EFFECTS

OF

THE BIBLE SOCIETY.

YORK, UPPER CANADA.

1833.

A LETTER, &c.

VENERABLE SIR,

I beg to return you my acknowledgments for the copy of your letter to Dr. CHALMERS, on the life and character of the late Bishop HOBART: and, tho' the expression of my opinion, brief as was the term of my acquaintance with that Prelate, and stranger as I was at the time to the United States, and their institutions, can add nothing to the warm panegyric of one so much better qualified to judge of his public character, as yourself; I may be allowed to indulge in the expression of sincere esteem, and respect, with which that short acquaintance inspired me; sentiments, which I imagine few could resist, who, like me, had experienced, tho' but for a week, the frank, and warm-hearted kindness which so eminently characterised him. It is therefore no slight addition to the reluctance with which, I assure you, I differ from yourself on the subject of the following remarks, to find that I am also opposed to so high, and respected an authority as Bishop HOBART. I refer to that part of your letter in which you mention, and so strongly adopt, the Bishop's opinions respecting the co-operation of members of our Church, with other Denominations, for any religious purpose.

Persuaded however as I am, (and acting as I do upon the persuasion) that a member, and a minister of our Establishment may promote the general spread of religion, in union with christians of other denominations, without violating either consistency, or principle; you will not be surprised that I should be desirous of meeting, at least, some of the more serious charges which you urge against such associations, and their supporters; nor that the authority of the names which maintain these charges, should only increase my anxiety to prove them groundless.

I would beg, in passing, to remark on the connexion in which you introduce this subject in your letter, that the union of different denominations *for religious purposes*, has surely nothing in common with the *separation of Education from religion*; and I am sorry to see two principles of such opposite nature and tendency, thus represented as kindred. That these principles are not in fact generally advocated by the same persons will be sufficiently apparent from a reference to the two institutions which we may

look upon as their grand representatives, the Bible Society, and the University of London: very few indeed of the active friends of the former being found among the supporters of the latter.

Of the three evils,—indifference to religion, the sapped foundations of Christianity, and the multiplied ranks of infidelity—which you say have arisen from the joint operation of these principles, I cannot suppose any reasoning by which the two latter can be attributed to religious associations—nor, indeed, is it at all obvious how even religious indifference should be produced by Societies whose object is the general promotion of religion. If by religious indifference be understood a mitigation of Sectarian jealousy, and an allaying of that sensitive apprehension which sees in every difference of opinion an indication of treacherous hostility, I am happy to believe that such has been one of the effects of the religious co-operation of Churchmen and Dissenters, and I cannot think that any injury has thereby been done to religion.

‘The Bishop deemed the Bible Society objectionable, because having the same objects, it became a sort of rival to the Bible and Prayer-Book Society, and absorbed funds, which, in justice, belonged to the latter.’ As I believe this is an objection which has been sometimes entertained against the Bible Society in England, with relation to the Venerable Society, for Promoting Christian Knowledge, I will here venture to consider it in that relation—The Bible Society then is a rival of the Society for P. C. K. and interferes with its objects and views. But why must it be a rival? Cannot two Societies, as well as two individuals, perform similar acts of benevolence, without rivalry? Or must I forbear to relieve the wants of the destitute, lest I should be considered the rival of a charitable neighbour? And again, when it is said that the Societies interfere, where does this interference appear? Where has it happened that the excellent designs of our Church Society have been thwarted, or impeded by the Bible Society? The latter Society desires, and professes, that its operations should assist, and further, those of all religious institutions; as is declared in the 2d law of the British and Foreign Bible Society’s constitution. ‘This Society shall add its endeavours to those employed by other Societies for circulating the Scriptures.’ Indeed, the origin of this Society may be traced to an undertaking, in effect, auxiliary to the Christian Knowledge Society; for when a very large edition of the Welsh Bible, printed by the Venerable Society, in 1799, was exhausted, so that “the Scriptures became very dear in the principality, in 1802 some pious and benevolent individuals projected a new impression, the circumstances connected with which, eventually led to the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society.”* In Scotland also, the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge, furnished the Bible Society with a copy of a Gaelic translation, as soon as completed; “from which the Bible Society executed their editions in 1807, which

* Horne’s introduction to the Scriptures.

(as the Scottish Society *was unable to supply* the urgent, and very numerous demands for the sacred writings) were purchased, at reduced prices by the poor Highlanders, with the liveliest expressions of gratitude."†

We must remember that the circulation of the Scriptures is only *one* of many valuable objects of the Society for P. C. K. : the greater proportion of her funds is applied, partly in the distribution of Prayer Books, and various religious and moral publications, in accordance with the principles of our Church ; partly in the encouragement of Sunday Schools ; largely in support of Foreign Missions ; and generally in promoting the knowledge of christianity, conformably to Church principles, by any favorable and fitting opportunity. Her means therefore of effecting the circulation of the Scriptures, are comparatively limited. Should it be said, as by BISHOP HOBART, in reference to the Orthodox Society of New-York, that ' if this Society deemed it expedient to circulate a larger proportion of Bibles than had hitherto been done, it was fully in their power to increase their subscription for this express purpose.' I would reply, in the first place, where does the expediency of circulating the Bible stop, short of its possession by every one who can read it ? And in the next place, I should very much question, even supposing such increased subscription made, whether our Society, supported by only one denomination of Christians, could act with such energy and comprehensiveness, as to reach, and supply, the wants of every member, even of our own communion ; whereas, the Bible Society concentrating as it does, the energies of the whole Christian world, on this single point, is necessarily enabled to effect its object in the highest possible degree in which human agency can effect it ; and, accordingly, I doubt not but that thousands belonging to our Church have received the word of God through the Bible Society, who, from their remote and scattered situations would never have been reached through any other channel. Why, then, I think I may fairly ask, in reply to a counter interrogation in your letter, why should a member of our Society be the less zealous in furthering its main designs, because he lends his countenance and support to another Society, which, by effecting on a universal scale, the one common object of distributing the Scriptures, does, in fact, enable the former to apply a greater portion of its funds, in the furtherance of those particular objects which especially belong to it as a Church Society, and in which he, as a Churchman, is especially interested ?

But it is next objected that the Bible Society absorbs funds ' which belong in justice' to the Church Society. To this I would reply, that if a wider diffusion of the Scriptures can be effected by the two Societies, than by the Christian Knowledge Society singly, this argument, were the fact which it assumes, fully established, would be no conclusive objection ; since the quantity of good communicated, and not the channel by which it is conveyed is the first consideration : and therefore even granting that part of

* Horne's introduction to the Scriptures.

the supply of the former channel were diverted into the new one, this would be no just subject of regret, if the divided stream carried fertility through a much wider field, than it did when confined to a single channel.

The fact however which is assumed, namely, that if there were no Bible Society, the subscription of its present Church members would be transferred to the funds of the Society for P. C. K. is by no means to be necessarily inferred, according to general experience; indeed I cannot but take the liberty of applying here, (*mutatis mutandis*) your own observation with respect to two other Societies in the United States, that "no reasoning can be more fallacious than to infer that every thing paid to the one, is an abstraction from the other; for those who after due consideration are convinced that" *their own exclusive* "Society is more in the way of their duty, may still feel that this forms no sufficient excuse for doing nothing for" *more comprehensive Societies*.

The consideration of a few facts will however illustrate this position much better than argument. It is theoretically objected that the Bible Society is a rival to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, interfering with its objects, and absorbing its funds; but the following comparison of the state of the latter Society, before the existence of the former, with its operations, and resources, since, shows that the practical result has been very much otherwise.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was established in 1699; the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804. The former Society, in 1804, after an existence of 104 years, *during which there was no Bible Society*, numbered 2,000 subscribers, the gross receipts were £12,000; the number of Bibles issued was 7,400; of Prayer Books 14,000. In 1810 after the Bible Soc'y had been five years in operation, there was the following increase at the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge: the subscribers were 3,500; income £16,000; Bibles issued 9,500; Prayer Books, 19,000. In 1817 the numbers had swelled to the following: subscribers 12,000; income £60,000; Bibles 33,000; Prayer Books 89,000. In 1828 subscribers were about 14,000; income £68,000; Bibles 58,000; Prayer Books 153,000

When the sudden increase of all these numbers, in 12 years after the formation of the Bible Society, is compared with their small amount during a century previous, it is no violent inference, to attribute this advance to the general religious impulse which was produced by the operations of the Bible Society, and consequently, to believe, that this Society has most effectually promoted, instead of impeding, the progress of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

As to the abstract question of interference, if the mere fact, that the Bible Society pursues an object which forms one branch of the operations of the Society for P. C. K. were a valid objection against the former, it must be equally valid against all others; and its effect should be, that when a So-

fifty had once been formed for the promotion of any religious object, no other Society ought ever to think of promoting the same object: and consequently, not only the Prayer-Book and Homily Society, and the Church Missionary Society, are officious intruders upon the province of the Society for P. C. K.; but this latter Society itself, and the Society for propagating the Gospel in Foreign parts, have been for 130 years guilty of violating the principle of non-interference. I know it may be said that these Societies are exclusively Church Societies, and that the Bible Society is a promiscuous one; but if the argument of interference be worth any thing, it is certainly as applicable to the former, as to the latter. Fortunately, however, this principle has only been partially applied; and the Societies I have mentioned, have proceeded in their Christian labours with an unanimity undisturbed by the community of their objects, and with a success, evidencing, as I believe, the divine blessing on their efforts.

In truth, the world affords an ample field for the exertions not only of all these, but of the Bible Society also, without their coming into any inharmonious collision, or feeling any rivalry, save as to which shall effect the greatest good. And in no portion of this vast universal field, is there more room for such exertions than in British America, where so extensive is the ground, and so few the labourers, that as we cannot hope to have the means of planting our own Church in every remote district, we may cordially bid God speed to other members of Christ's Catholic Church, in their endeavours to teach the knowledge of His name, where ignorance and ungodliness must otherwise grow, and prevail.

But, again, "such a general institution was further to be deprecated, as it could not, in any degree, be under the direction or control of Church people, who, mixed up with many denominations would become a minority; and it was therefore evident that the adversaries of the Church would preserve their ascendancy; & prevent any salutary influence from being exerted on the part of our people, unless subservient to their views." How far this argument may be borne out by the actual circumstances of the Bible S'cy in the United States. I have no present means of judging; but to the Bible Sc'y. in England, it is totally inapplicable. All the business of that Society is conducted by a Committee consisting of "Thirty-six Laymen, six of whom shall be Foreigners resident in London or its vicinity; *half the remainder* shall be members of the Church of England, and the other half members of other denominations of Christians."* When, besides this, it is considered that clerical members of all denominations are entitled to attend, and vote at this committee; and how much more numerous are the Clergy of our Church, than of other denominations; when, it is also considered that the President and thirty-seven Vice-Presidents, who are *all* members of the Church of England, are *ex-officio* members of this Committee, and many of them regular attend-

* Constitution of British and Foreign Bible Society.

ants.* I need not say, that if our Church be endangered by the Bible Society, at least it is not because Church people mixed up with many denominations, form "a minority" in its proceedings.†

If the objection means that the Society is not under the entire control of Church people, this of course is the case; because, were it so under the control of the Church, or any other particular body of Christians, it would cease to be a general Society.

I must here, by the way, venture to avow that I cannot bring myself to consider all who differ from our Church, as therefore, her 'adversaries'.‡ Where the genuine *spirit* of Christianity operates, and its fundamental truths, are held in common, a difference of opinion on some other (and those, it may be, not trifling) points, will make neither individuals, nor Churches, hostile to each other: and hence as our church certainly is not the "adversary" of many Christian communities which dissent from her, so I believe we should wrong a large proportion of those communities, in imputing to them the feelings, and conduct of 'adversaries' towards ourselves. I by no means feel called upon to advocate the motives of all denominations of christians, but in justification of my own readiness to co-operate with them on common Christian ground, I must declare, that I do feel bound to exercise towards them that "real liberality which judges candidly of the motives of others;" and therefore, though I do not, of course, doubt, that all of them, if they are sincere in their opinions, desire the extension of their own communions; still, I cannot believe that the majority of them are influenced by such feelings of hostility as would induce them to associate themselves with professions of general amity, in a Society of such a nature as the Bible Society, for the mere purpose of insidiously acting against our Church. Unfortunately there are those among some denominations whom we cannot by any exertion of charity, doubt to be actuated by a most unchristian spirit of animosity, whilst zeal for religion is only the cloak for designs of a far different character; but these I verily believe to be comparatively few; at all events, whatever may be their hostile dispositions against the Church, the Bible Society is certainly not the field for gratifying them.

* Lord Teignmouth, the President, was for many years, whilst his health permitted, an unremitting coadjutor, and drew up many of the earlier reports. Among others, Lord Bexley is conspicuous for the active interest he has taken in the affairs of the Society ever since its formation; he is one of the most regular attendants at the committee, over whose meetings he constantly presides, when present.

† Out of fifteen speakers at the last anniversary, in May, ten at least were members of our Church, including four Bishops and four Clergymen.

‡ I am happy to find myself countenanced in this avowal, by your appeal (in 'A sermon preached at the Visitation, &c.')

to the generally prevailing "harmony among the various denominations of Christians in Upper Canada," and especially by your expectation of "friendly dispositions towards our establishment" in two prominent and numerous communions which differ from us.

Admitting, however, for the sake of argument, that Dissenters had all the inclination imputed to them, of making the Bible Society an instrument of strengthening their own communions, and weakening ours, and that the Society were capable of being converted to such a purpose; this would be a most forcible reason, why Churchmen should not leave them to execute these designs, without a counteracting influence; for if such be the real object of other denominations, they would surely not pursue it less ardently, or less successfully, in our absence, than in our presence. Suppose, further, that every member of our Church were to refuse all concern in the Bible Society; what would be the effect of such a general manifestation of suspicion and aversion on the part of Church-people towards all the Christian world beside? If it were not equivalent to a declaration of open hostility on our part, certainly nothing could more effectually tend to set all other Christians in united array against us, and to generate a resentful bitterness, not likely to be confined to one side, disgraceful to the name of Christianity, and affording its enemies new occasion for triumph and reproach. As the Society, on the contrary, now exists, supported by all parties, it is the promoter of kindly feelings, and candour amongst them all. The joint pursuit of a laudable, and especially of a charitable object, necessarily produces a good understanding between the parties so associated; and such, though an incidental, is by no means the least, good effect of the Bible Society, in the Christian world. In the midst of prevailing religious jealousies, and repulsiveness, that Society has presented a point of re-union; about which, Christians of every Church have met, as brethren, and where, whilst engaged in the same labour of universal Christian philanthropy, they have forgotten the Shibboleths of party distinction, and only remembered they were servants of the same Lord, and partakers in the same covenant of redemption.

But again, the Bishop used to say, "that the countenance given to the Bible Society by many members of the Church of England, was very detrimental to their own establishment." And why? "Because it lifted the dissenters to an equality with the Church, and enabled them to act in a compact body against her interests: that they made the distribution of the Bible an instrument of influence, for it was notorious that church people were seldom or never employed in this service."—I must own I do not quite understand what is meant by "lifting" Dissenters to an equality with the Church." What is the disadvantageous inequality which it implies they previously laboured under; and from which, by the Bible Society, they are extricated? I can hardly suppose that Bishop HOBART could intend to recognise, or allow of any superiority belonging to our Church because it is the *established* Church; and though I fully appreciate the great religious advantages of an establishment, I cannot conceive how its members lose, or diminish those advantages, by acting in concert with others, in matters where nothing is to be conceded, on one side, or on the other. Is the ine-

quality implied, that of the high ground on which our church stands, as to her apostolic constitution, and ministry? But how do her members diminish this superiority by co-operating with Dissenters at the Bible Society? They are not thereby drawn down into dissent; nor (what is perhaps more immediately to the purpose, tho' scarcely an evil to be depreciated by us) are Dissenters lifted into churchmen: the inequality in this respect still remains; Churchmen are Churchmen still, and Dissenters, I doubt, are Dissenters still.

With regard to the notorious fact, that church people are seldom or never employed by this Society, in the distribution of the Bible, in England, I scarcely know what to understand by distribution, as an instrument of influence. The office of the agents (four foreign, and three domestic) who are employed in promoting the objects of the Society, is not the actual distribution of the Bible; but the reorganization, or encouragement, of existing Societies, in different parts of the world, and the establishment of new ones: these agents, it is to be remembered, are appointed by the committee of management, and I need only again refer to the elements which compose that committee, to make it evident, that they would be very unlikely to appoint any person, in whose integrity of conduct they had not implicit confidence: and it is the fact, that they exercise the most scrupulous caution on this head.

The most general means of circulating the Scriptures in England are Depositories, and of these the only two that I positively recollect, were not in the charge of Dissenters; and I believe that in most villages and country towns, in England, where the Clergyman is a supporter of the Society, either himself, or one of his congregation, acts as Depository. If the Clergyman is opposed to the Bible Society, and has any influence among his flock, it is not to be wondered at, that the Depository should not be a churchman! but it would hardly be fair to attribute this to the machinations of the Dissenters.

And this suggests the more general observation, that if, in the conduct of a Society, which freely invites the co-operation of all Christians, churchmen, as well as Dissenters, the members of our church, in any place, think proper to stand aloof, and take no part in the business, they have surely no right to object to the Society, that it is under the influence of Dissenters; nor to impute to Dissenters the design of acquiring such influence. I beg to be understood as by no means judging the motives of such members of our Church, as do not join the Bible Society, but I protest against their making the effects of their own conduct, an argument against the principles, or practice of that Society.

But you proceed to tell us that, the Bishop charged the Episcopal friends of the Bible Society with a "sickly prostration of all principle," which regards

the worship of God as a matter of no consequence, and rests in perfect indifference to religious truth.—Now if a churchman be fully persuaded of the excellence, and purity of his own form of worship, and be ready on all fitting occasions to maintain this opinion; if he conscientiously adhere to it, and endeavour to recommend it by his life, and deportment; surely he may be guiltless of “prostration of principle,” even though he should not shun all religious intercourse with those who worship God in a different form, or, who do not agree with him in the interpretation of some doctrinal parts of Scripture. Were the members of the Bible Society required to declare that they believed all the interpretations of certain passages by different sects, to be equally sound and pure, they would be justly chargeable with indifference to the true import of Scripture; but they are required to make no such admission, nor is any one considered, as, in any degree, countenancing tenets at variance with his own: it is perfectly understood by all, that the ground of union is, not any sacrifice of opinion, but the simple fact, that however they may differ as to what is the truth, they all believe, and acknowledge it to be contained in the Bible; and therefore they can most cordially join in the common effort of circulating the Bible.

“What (it is exclaimed) shall we assist other denominations in promoting error?” Before we yield to the conclusiveness of this appeal, let us consider how far it is applicable to the operations of the Bible Society. I think it is sufficiently clear from the principles and constitution of the Society, as I have stated them, that its operations are no further instrumental in promoting any particular tenets, than giving the Bible to a person can be said to promote them: and if the mere fact of putting the Scriptures into the hands of any man whatever be a promotion of error, we should be doing good service to religion, could we prevent every one, who was not a churchman, having the Bible at all; for it cannot confirm him less in his error, that the Bible should be given him at the sole cost of a Dissenter, than if the expense were shared by a Churchman. The Bible Society is in fact no more chargeable with promoting dissent, than if it did literally, what it does virtually; place so many copies of the Scripture in the high way, and say to all who passed, ‘whosoever will let him take freely.’

But even granting that the zeal of proselytism should make a dissenting agent of the Society so far abuse his trust, as to endeavour to convert it into a means of insinuating, and propagating his own particular tenets: with whom would he succeed? With those belonging to our communion? This he could not do, unless we suppose a want of proper instruction, and watchfulness, not very creditable to our own church, if it existed in the place: and if it were not in existence, it is surely better that a man should be an active, and pious Christian of any denomination, than that he should live altogether ‘without God in the world,’ and without any participation in religious ordinances. And this is the extent to which, even by

abuse, I could, as a member of the Bible Society, assist other denominations "in promoting error."

But, it is urged, there certainly are some denominations, which the Bible Society admits into membership whose tenets a sincere churchman must believe to be dangerous error, and involving most vital points. True, and for the sake of some weaker brethren, I should not be sorry did no such members belong to the Society, though I think there are great objections against making any restrictions in its constitution. The number of members, however, of persuasions which we cannot but consider as Antichristian, is small; and for this plain reason, that their tenets will not bear a candid examination, by the test of the uncorrupted, and unmutated word of God, that is, by the Bible, as it is circulated by the Bible Society; and in this view, for my own part, I am glad that such denominations are admitted; being persuaded that in proportion as men have free opportunity of consulting for themselves, the pure Scriptures, the less danger must there be, of their becoming confirmed in positively unscriptural error. The disciple of the most perverted doctrine, would be far more likely to discover, and abandon his delusion, with the Bible in his hand, than if left to imbibe without this standard to refer to, the pernicious representations of misguided, or designing teachers. That this is no visionary, or fanciful argument, is sufficiently attested by the attempts of some sectarians to support their tenets by their own translation of the New Testament.

By a rather singular association of objections to the Bible Society, the principle of indifference to religious truth, upon which it is said to be founded, is connected with the charge, that its members 'proclaim their own praises in the public journals,' and 'bandy compliments' with each other at their public meetings. I am not at all disposed to defend the practice of reciprocating compliments at such meetings, which I believe was at one time becoming too prevalent; but not recently, for it was soon corrected by the good sense and proper feeling of the less ardent, but more judicious members; and the spirit of simplicity, and earnestness, which has latterly characterised the generality of addresses at the anniversary meetings of the Society, has not been one of the least gratifying of its features. Had, however, the members indulged in these complimentary addresses to a much greater extent, I can not think this would have formed any serious argument against the Society itself. Again, as to the publicity of the anniversary meetings, the greater, or less degree of public attention, which is attracted by such meetings of charitable Societies, certainly affects not the character of their designs, but it is nevertheless, in every point of view, gratifying and encouraging, when the general interest which is felt in their objects, is evinced by the numbers who attend to hear the periodical reports of their proceedings, and success. Your own expression of the extreme loathsomeness of the Reports of the Bible Society, is a strong one; but I persuade myself is ascribable matter

to previous distaste, than to any thing really so offensive in the matter or style of the Reports, to the generality of sober Christians.*

A person unacquainted with the question, would suppose, from the terms in which the Bible Society is often discussed by its opponents, that it originated with Dissenters, as a scheme to advance themselves at the expense of the Church: that though churchmen are admitted, to save appearances, they are only made to assist in their own subversion, the Society being under the paramount influence of Dissenters who compose the controlling majority. He would be very far from imagining, that it is, in truth, an association to promote no separate views: for that all denominations are alike interested in its operations; and great would be his surprise when he afterwards found, that from its first formation, a nobleman of exemplary piety has been its President; that among its first Vice-Presidents, were four Bishops, including the venerable name of Porteus;† and that it has also en-

* During the first twelve years of the existence of the Bible Society, its Reports were drawn up by the Venerable Nobleman, who is its President; and since that time, till lately, by the Rev. J. Owen, a talented and exemplary Clergyman of our Church, I am not aware who has compiled the Reports of recent years.

† Both Bishop Porteus, and Lord Baxley, have ably defended the object and principles of the Bible Society—the latter in two letters; one of which was addressed to Dr. Marsh, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. From the former, I cannot but quote some observations, both because they shew that the same predictions of evil consequences to the Church, were always made by some persons, as are now made, but which have never been fulfilled; and because it gives me the opportunity of setting against the opinion of the late Bishop of New-York, the opinion of the no less active and distinguished Bishop of London. His Biographer, Dr. Hodgson, remarks that, “he saw instantly that a design of such magnitude, which aimed at nothing less than the dispersion of the Bible over every accessible part of the world, could only be accomplished by the association of men of all religious persuasions. He entertained the hope that it might operate as a bond of union between contending parties, &c.; whilst, therefore, he remained firmly attached to the original Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, whose exertions, as far as its limited sphere allowed, no one ever held in higher estimation,—he gave, at the same time, the sanction of his name, without scruple to the new one: and the more he considered its object, and the longer experience he had of the spirit and principles on which it was conducted, the more deeply he was convinced that it merited all the support which the Church of England could give it.

The Bible Society “is now (says the Bishop himself,) well known, and firmly established, and has completely triumphed over all the attempts made to destroy it. None of those secret dark designs, none of those plots and conspiracies to subvert the established Church, and which were so confidently predicted as the inevitable effect of this Society, have yet been discovered in it.—It is, in fact, much better employed. It goes on quietly and steadily in the prosecution of its great object, and pays no sort of regard to the sneers and cavils of its opponents. At a later date, he says, “I cannot but add in justice to this Society, which has been so much opposed, misrepresented, and traduced, that all the important works in which it has been engaged, have been carried on with the utmost harmony and unanimity, without any difference of opinion—without the slightest symptom of any hostile or treacherous design against the Church, and without any other idea upon their minds, but that of

rolled in the same rank, the names of Liverpool, and Harrowby, and Bexley, and many other statesmen, whose influence has been uniformly, and effectually exerted in support of the Church; and finally, that the members of the Church of England, in its direction, are more numerous than those of all other denominations; whilst not only are its members, who belong to our Church, themselves assisting their own communion, in combining with others; but whatever assistance Churchmen thus render to Dissenters, precisely the same assistance do Dissenters render to the Church.

In the counteracting, and overcoming of infidelity, Christians of all denominations are alike interested, and bound to exert themselves. Infidels; however, belong to no Church; and hence where they are concerned, the universality of the Bible Society's constitution, gives it a decided advantage over Societies connected with any particular denomination, for two reasons; first, because they more especially confine their efforts, each to the comparatively narrow circle of its own communion; whilst the Bible Society

extending as widely as possible, the knowledge of the Christian Scriptures. In fact, all the apprehensions to which this Society has given rise, are now found to be but vain terrors; and all the prophecies of mischief and evil that would result from it, are falsified by facts. It is rising uniformly in reputation and credit, and gaining new accessions of strength and revenue, and attaching to itself, more and more, the approbation and support of every real friend to the Church, and to religion." Such was the opinion of a Prelate, whose memory is deservedly revered by our Church; and who, whilst thus advocating the claims of the Bible Society, was a conscientious and active supporter of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the designs of which his name still promotes, attached to some of the most esteemed works which that Society distributes. It is true that since the time of Porteus, a difference of opinion has arisen among the members, on two points; the first respecting the circulation of the apocrypha, with the canonical books of the Old Testament; the second concerning the exclusion from the Society of all who do not avow their belief in the doctrine of the Trinity. As the Society professes to circulate the Scriptures, which all Christians receive, it was, I think, with great propriety, resolved that the copies circulated by the Society, should not contain the apocryphal books; and this no churchman can think objectionable, inasmuch as the Church does not apply those Books "to establish any doctrine." The same fundamental principle must also exclude the idea of any test for membership; to recognise which, would at once destroy the essential character of the Society, and excite those feelings which it is especially designed to allay. The moving of this question has, however, caused the secession of some members from the original Society, who have formed themselves into another, on partially exclusive principles: though some of the seceders have, on maturer consideration, rejoined the first. Notwithstanding the secession alluded to, the subscriptions to the original Society were larger last year, than the previous; and the harmony and unanimity at the anniversary were complete. I cannot therefore allow your conclusion that "Bishop Hobart's views on this subject are now generally admitted." I should rather conclude from the agitation of these questions, that the Bible Society is not based upon, nor does it engender, that indifference to religious truth which you suppose; though I confess I would rather not have seen *such* proof of the contrary. I am not acquainted with the "extraordinary preface to one of the Foreign Editions of the Bible" to which you allude; but as it is contrary to the Society's constitution, to circulate *any* observations with the Bible, I apprehend the preface you mention was not with the Society's sanction. (See note, Appendix.)

carries the word of God in one broad, and comprehensive stream over the whole moral surface; not only depositing the seed of life on the cultivated fields of various Christian denominations, but also carrying it into the waste corners, and desert tracts of unbelief—and secondly, because the captious infidel is far more likely to receive with respect, that volume, which he is struck by observing, that the whole Christian body unites to press upon his candid examination; than if it had been presented by any one denomination, whose offers he might affect to treat as the bigotted attempts of proselyting to a party. The British and Foreign Bible Society has itself, besides the separate efforts of upwards of sixty Foreign Societies in different parts of the world, circulated more than seven millions of copies of the Scriptures, and it is impossible not to believe that such a vast diffusion of the written revelation of God, must have opposed a powerful barrier to the progress of infidelity; and certainly, Churchmen, as well as Dissenters, are concerned to promote a cause, from which we are justified in expecting such an effect.

But besides this object of common interest, in checking infidelity, and besides the support, to religion generally which all denominations give, by cooperating at the Bible Society; it would not be difficult to adduce many instances of direct benefit accruing to the Church of England, from the Bible Society, and its operations. First might be mentioned, the vast number of translations of the Scriptures into languages of all parts of the world, which this Society has effected. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, as I have before remarked, in consequence of its varied objects, could not undertake the translation of the Scriptures to any great extent; whilst the Bible Society has been able to complete translations, into upwards of a hundred languages, and dialects, which have been attempted by no other Society. In India alone as was stated by the Bishop of Calcutta, at the last Anniversary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, out of 153 dialects spoken through that Empire 104 had been exclusively undertaken by the Bible Society: the inestimable advantage of these translations in forwarding the objects of our missionaries, is too palpable to need insisting on; and is most fully appreciated by the representatives of our Church, in that extensive field.

As another example of the positive advancement of the interests of our Church by the Bible Society, it might be noticed that in several instances, particularly in India, those ministers, who have been primarily employed by that Society, in translating the Scriptures, have subsequently applied their knowledge of the languages, to the translation of our Liturgy, which they have brought into use among the natives. And here I must mention as alike honorable to the candour of the individual and demonstrative of the excellence of our worship, that we are indebted for a Chinese Version of our Liturgy, to a Dissenting Clergyman (Dr. Thompson); who, being desirous of furnishing the natives with a form of Prayer, and meeting with none

which seemed so well adapted, as the Liturgy of the Church of England, translated it for the use of his converts, and his translation has since been printed by our Prayer Book and Homily Society.—Amongst many of our own clergy in India who have been in honored correspondence, at the same time, with the 'Prayer Book and Homily,' the 'Church Missionary,' and the 'Bible' Societies, stands foremost the apostolic Henry Martyn, to whose nam I may add those of the scarcely less devoted Schwartz, and Coloph, Missionaries of the Society for Propagating the Gospel; of Buchanan; and, in the present day, of Archdeacon Corrie.

Another occasion on which our Church experienced direct assistance from the Bible Society, was in its vote of £5000 to Bishop Middleton, on the formation of Bishop's College at Calcutta, in aid of translating the Scriptures, at that Institution; and I think this may be justly adduced, as an instance, in which the Dissenting influence, at the Society, made no obstacle to a liberal donation, which certainly cannot be said to be "subservient to their views" in any party sense, tho' I believe entirely according with their views, as members of the Bible Society, desirous of promoting the diffusion of the Scriptures through all the world.

Surely, Sir, a Society which has been the means of sending the word of God into almost every corner of the Globe, so that there is now, scarcely a known race of men, who have not the Scriptures in a language which they can understand; a Society whose object is so striking, and, by its simple philanthropy, so directly recommends itself to the Christian world, that its counterparts are to be found in every Christian State, in every quarter of the earth: a society which has actually done so much for our own Church, as well as for the general interests of Religion; in whose service so many devoted, and exemplary ministers, of our own, and of other denominations, have laboured, and died, which has numbered amongst its friends, a PORTEUS a MILNER; and a BUCHANAN; in days gone by; and which is, at this moment, countenanced, and supported, by eleven of our Bishops, and by other characters most distinguished, as in station, so in piety and talent,—surely this is not the Society which calls its supporters to 'trifle with the laws of God;' which is founded upon 'total indifference to religious truth'; upon a 'sickly prostration of all principle.'

The question of Religious tract Societies, involves, so much the same general principle, as that of the Bible Society, that it was to be expected, that they should have, in general, the same opponents, and the same friends. I speak with reference to those Tract Societies which, like the Societies of London, and Dublin, disseminate none, but publications which all genuine christians approve of, and receive. To these it is objected, that "by keeping out of view the distinctive principles of our Church, we lead to the belief, that they are of little importance." Now I believe I shall not exceed the truth, in saying, that five out of six ordinary sermons, written, or preached,

essential truths of faith in God thro' Christ, and conduct agreeable thereto; tho' all mention of peculiar tenets be omitted; than is likely to arise, because every sermon preached from our pulpits, does not expressly advocate Episcopacy, or Infant Baptism.

It is both proper, and needful that we should, from time to time, explain, and establish to our hearers, the points which distinguish our Church from all others; but as these points happily bear a small proportion to the points of fundamental importance, on which there is a general agreement, it is not often that the former will come to be specially treated. And so the Churchman, who, in common with other Christians, disseminates the common truths of Christianity, is not thereby precluded from distributing, in his separate character as a member of the Church of England, other tracts, particularly addressed to the explanation and maintenance of our distinctive principles.

The key to Bishop HOBART's opinions, you observe, is to be found in his "not recognising, as a true Church, any body of professing Christians who differed from him in their leading truths, and who had not a separate order of Bishops, Priests & Deacons." If by this it is intended to assert, that no church which does not correspond with ours, as to its ministry, and doctrine, can produce the same authority of Scripture for its practice and principles, I agree in the position: but that, on this account, we ought to denounce all other Churches as false, and therefore their members unfit to be associated with, in promoting any religious design, is an inference, which neither her ablest champions, nor, I think, does our Church herself, countenance.

It can scarcely be questioned that Episcopacy was the government appointed by the apostles wherever they planted a separate, and sufficiently numerous Christian Church; and that the primitive Church whilst yet exempt from uninspired innovation, for centuries followed this apostolic institution—and hence our Church, formed on such a model, and supported by such authority, has every Scriptural argument in its favor, which an institution could have, short of a positive precept; such actual precept however there is not, and in the absence of that, however firmly we may be convinced ourselves, of the superior authority of our Church, we are not warranted in condemning all other forms as absolutely false, nor justified in refusing all religious communion with those who adhere to them. "Such indeed (says Archbishop SECKER) as obstinately deny the fundamental doctrines, or transgress the fundamental precepts of Christianity, ought to be rejected from Christian communion. But to renounce communicating with any others who are willing to admit us to it on lawful terms, is the way to cut off ourselves, not them, from the body of Christ; who we doubt not will allow those on both sides to belong to his Church, who, through pardonable passions and mistakes, will not allow one another to do so." Archbishop WAKE after expressing his conviction of the authority of Episcopacy, and his re-

gret that any Churches should reject it, proceeds to say, "still, far be it from me, to judge so hardly, as to believe, that in consequence of such defect, (the want of Episcopacy) any of them ought to be severed from our communion; or, to pronounce, with some of our furious writers, that they have no true, and valid sacraments, and therefore are scarcely Christians."—Bishop TOMLINE, at a later date, after establishing the apostolic origin, and primitive adoption of Episcopacy, concludes, "yet I readily acknowledge that there is no *precept* in the New Testament, which *commands* that every Church should be governed by Bishops." It cannot be said of the men who made these admissions, that they were disaffected to the Church, or that the desire of "a corrupt and hollow popularity" was their motive. SECKER, and WAKE, and TOMLINE, are not names to which these imputations can attach. They felt, and most ably demonstrated the Scriptural grounds on which our Church is built, but still they hesitated not to acknowledge that those grounds were example, and not precept; and that therefore greatly as we may wonder and lament, that an example, which appears so clear, should not have been universally followed, it becomes not us to pronounce a judgment reprobating all opinions but our own, on a point, which the Holy Ghost has certainly not so expressly decided, as to make all difference of opinion respecting it necessarily sinful.

The feelings of the Church herself towards all other Christian communities are sufficiently deducible from her Liturgy. She instructs her members to declare their belief "in the holy Catholic Church, and in the Communion of Saints." On the latter clause I have already quoted a remark of SECKER'S; and, amongst his observations on the former, is this, "Churches which widely differ from each other in several notions and customs, may notwithstanding, each of them, be truly Catholic churches. The Church of England pretends not indeed absurdly to be the whole Catholic Church, but she is undoubtedly a sound and excellent member of it." Again in the Litany, the Church prays "that it may please God to rule, and govern his holy Church Universal, in the right way," where we may observe, that thro' the 'Church Universal' comprehends many various denominations, it is implied in this petition, that they may all be '*in the right way.*' Similar petitions occur in other parts of the Liturgy, in behalf of the Catholic or Universal Church, in all of which, our Church undoubtedly prays, for the welfare, and spiritual advancement, of every several Church, which by its adherence to the fundamental truths of Christianity, is a part, and member of the Universal Church; whilst it is deserving of note, that the general tenor of these petitions is, that the Body Catholic, may continue 'in unity, and Godly love.' And I cannot doubt that if none of the sons of our Church had ever assumed a haughtier tone, or expressed harsher opinions towards those without her pale, than the example of their venerable mother justifies, much of the feeling of Dissent, if not much of Dissent itself, would never have existed.

Let me not be deemed insensible to the superiority of our Church, nor at

all indisposed to assert it. I am, on the contrary, so convinced of the solidity of her foundations, and of the excellence of her structure, as to believe it perfectly unnecessary to screen her by a wall of prejudices, and offended feelings, from the near approach, and inspection of others; for the more nearly she is contemplated, to the greater advantage will she ever appear. She is, however, often placed, in the predicament of a fair island, whose inhabitants, thro' an excess of apprehension, suspiciously shun all external intercourse, and invest their territory with such bristling demonstrations of repulse to all amicable advances, that it is only regarded from a distance, as an inhospitable, and hostile region; whereas if strangers were encouraged to approach its shores, the nearer prospect might induce some to explore its interior; and these struck with beauties, and advantages which they had never imagined, might determine to adopt it for their home, and thus increase its prosperity, and strength.

I would withdraw no legitimate defences of our Church against hostile attacks, but these defences are intrinsic: in her own purity, and soundness, and integrity, I believe her to be invulnerable: and were she but left to stand fairly upon her own merits, divested of that veil of prejudices with which, but too frequently, repulsive jealousy, on one hand, and consequent irritation, and resentment, on the other, have, in the eyes of those without, enveloped her; the apostolic model of her government, the simple dignity of her expressive, and Scriptural ordinances, the fervent piety of her devotions, with the decent order, and sober consistency which pervade the whole, would present a "beauty of holiness" which must command respect, even where it failed to secure attachment.

With respect to the general principle which I am advocating, I infer that if our Church be so candidly disposed towards other bodies of Christians, as not merely to permit of the interchange of social civilities, but to teach us to pray for their spiritual welfare, as being all included within the pale of Christ's Catholic Church; neither her principles, nor her spirit, preclude her children from making common cause with their brethren of other denominations, in the extension of the universal Church, and in the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness, where such co-operation is effected, not only without compromise, but without collision even, of principle.

Towards the close of your letter, you pay a warm and eloquent tribute, (in which you must carry with you the feelings of all who are acquainted with their labours) to the devoted zeal of our first two Eastern Bishops, and of the late Bishop of New-York; between whom you imagine you perceive many points of resemblance. I think, however, that I discover one point in which the two former differed considerably from the latter, and that is, in the extent to which they carried the principle of avoiding religious communication with other denominations.

I have already mentioned the fact of the British and Foreign Bible Society having voted £5000 to Bishop Middleton, for promoting the designs of the College, which he founded at Calcutta; and it appears, that that learned and devoted prelate, did not consider that he was compromising his Episcopal fidelity, by accepting a grant, given in the spirit of Christian charity, though it was part of a fund raised by the joint exertions, and contributions, of Churchmen and Dissenters.

Of Bishop Heber's opinion, as to the general principle, we have his own statement recorded, in a letter addressed by him to the Church Missionaries in Ceylon, "respecting the propriety of their engaging with Missionaries of other religious sects, in solemn conference on topics connected with their work among the Heathen." "I have first (he proceeds) to express my thankfulness to God, for the brotherly and tolerant spirit, which I have noticed among those, who, with less or greater differences of opinions, and discrepancies of doctrine and discipline, abundantly to be deplored, yet hold, as I am persuaded, the same faith in the cross, and shall be found, as I trust, in the last day, on the same Rock of Salvation." He then adds a caution, that they take care not to level in the eyes of others, or of themselves, the peculiar advantages possessed by the holders of an apostolical commission; and "that both their discussions and prayers should have as their leading object, the success of Missions, and the means where Missions may, with God's blessing, be rendered successful," & concludes "with these precautions, I trust that unmingled good may, through His blessing, who is the God of peace and order, emanate from your religious conferences."* The whole letter is indeed a beautiful specimen of the union of Christian candour, with the most enlightened and firm attachment to that Church, of which the writer was so bright an ornament, and so faithful an overseer.

As an advocate of the Bible Society I cannot but look with satisfaction to the progress of Christianity in the East: there the effects of that Society are too plain to be denied, or depreciated, by any one who has noted the spread of the Scriptures among the idolators of Asia: the value of these effects has been experienced, and appreciated by the representatives of our Church there, as well as of our Government. The present, and the late, Bishops of Calcutta might almost be said to take their public leave of Christian Britain, at anniversaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society; where they dwelt upon the great and obvious assistance which they anticipated in the scene of their future labours, from the precursive exertions of the Society, which had diffused the scriptures, in so many languages of the native Indians; whereby, in fact, the ground was already partially prepared for them, and the seed sown, whose rising fruit it would be part of their care to foster, and train to a healthy maturity.

* Bishop HEBER's Journal, Chap. 27.

The present Bishop of Calcutta especially has ever been so well known, and steady a friend of the Bible Society, that his appointment to the diocese affords a gratifying presumption, that neither the heads of the Church, nor those Venerable Societies with whom our Colonial Bishops are so intimately connected, see such treachery or even such indifference to the interests of their own Church, in the Clerical supporters of the Bible Society, as to consider them unfit to be entrusted with the highest offices of spiritual government.

Before I conclude, I must beg, notwithstanding any observations I may have made on particular opinions, to repeat my unfeigned esteem, and respect, for the memory and character of Bishop Hobart, to whose energy and ability, Episcopacy is under such great and lasting obligations. It is indeed, mainly, (under God) through his exertions, that the Episcopal Church in America has spread to an extent, and now occupies, in spite of the difficulties it has had to contend with, a position of general respect and influence, which are in themselves no mean indirect evidence of the purity of its origin,—I beg also, in closing these remarks, to assure you that they have been prompted by but two motives : first, the wish of vindicating from misapprehension, a society, imperfectly, as I imagine, understood here ; but which I conscientiously believe to have been the instrument of great good in the cause of Religion ; and secondly, the desire, of, at the same time, justifying my own support of that Society. I trust these motives may be my apology for trespassing on your attention ; whilst I am persuaded they will secure me your candid interpretation of what I have advanced. I beg to subscribe myself, Venerable Sir,

Your faithful friend and servant,

JOS. H. HARRIS.

U. C. College, 31st Oct., 1832.

P. S. For several of the facts to which I have adverted, I am indebted to a work called "an Analysis on the Bible Society," of whose existence I was not aware when I began this letter : indeed I had concluded my observations without any book of reference on the subject, except a last year's 'Report,' when I accidentally saw the 'Analysis' lying on a shelf at the Depository. I own I was struck with the coincidence of thus opportunely meeting with such unexpected corroborative evidence.

APPENDIX.

(See Conclusion of Note, page 14.)

Since sending my Letter to the press, I have seen some pamphlets lately published in England, on the subject of the Bible Society; in one of which (written by John Joseph Gurney, a member of the Society of Friends, and well known in the religious and philanthropic world), I find the following notice of a Strasburgh edition of the Bible, which I suppose to be that to which you allude :

“At an early period in the history of the Society, an edition of the German Bible, partly through the aid of our funds, was printed at Strasburgh. Professor HAFNER of that place, without the knowledge of the Committee in London, added to the volume a Preface, which is said to have been of a very objectionable tendency. Whether it was so, or not, (and witnesses vary on the subject) such a proceeding was directly opposed to one of our primary rules. As soon therefore, as the circumstances were made known to the Committee, Lord ΤΕΙΧΝΜΟΥΤΗ, as well as the other officers of the Society, warmly remonstrated, and continued their remonstrances, till the Preface was withdrawn.”

It appears then, not only that this “extraordinary preface”, was without the sanction of the British and Foreign Society, but that that Society so successfully exerted its influence on the occasion, as to procure a large number of Bibles to be disseminated in Germany, without any comment, which, but for its influence, would have been accompanied by an objectionable introduction.

The following statement shows in so striking a light, not only how little there is to apprehend from the admission of Socinians into the Bible Society, and how decided is the feeling of the vast majority of the members respecting their doctrines; but also how plainly the bulk of their own denomination, feels the Society to be opposed to their tenets; that I cannot forbear extracting it,

“A gentleman who has taken great pains to enquire into the subject, computes the number of office-bearers in the Bible Society, and its dependencies throughout Great Britain, at 10,000, of whom *three* are Socinians; the number of members of Committees, including Collectors, at 37,500, of whom *thirty-two* are Socinians: and the entire number of Subscribers at 100,000, of whom not quite *one hundred* are Socinians.” And it is especially worthy of remark, that “*during the twenty-seven years of the Society's existence, not a single Socinian, has ever been chosen on the Committee*” of the Parent Society.