

# SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

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### ARTICLE I.

*A Presbyterian Clergyman looking for the Church. By one of three hundred. New York. Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union. 1849.*

This tract, which has recently fallen into our hands, has been before the public for some months, indeed for nearly a whole year, without receiving, that we know of, any notice from any of the *dissenting* reviews. The writer of it has probably been disappointed that this effort of his brain has not produced more commotion among Presbyterians; or perhaps he has concluded, from their silence, that to him belongs the distinction of having produced one of the unanswerable tracts in favour of Episcopacy. An apology might seem to be due to our readers for noticing a publication which others have treated with such sovereign contempt, and which is in itself so little worthy of consideration, if we could make that apology without apparent discourtesy to the courteous and accomplished author. We must disclaim, however, any disposition on our part to contradict the general opinion as to the merits of this tract—an opinion made known by being *not* expressed; and only affirm that it demands some notice on account of the subjects it discusses, whatever may be the moral character and intellectual abilities of the writer of it.

be his eulogy: and as we could not retain him in the flesh, let us cherish him in our memory; as we no longer speak with, let us never forget to speak of him.

Farewell, Turretin, the loved and the lost! most beloved and excellent man! Farewell, thou soul called back to Heaven! We all shall follow thee, each in his own order, as the fatal summons calls us hence.

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### ARTICLE III.

*“Thirty-third Annual Report of the American Bible Society, May, 1849.”*

It is sometimes as much as a man's reputation is worth, to call in question the wisdom or propriety of means, which have, for their object, some truly desirable end. It is so easy to construe any impeachment of the mode or means, into a seeming opposition to the end itself, that many good men prefer a silent acquiescence in things which they do not approve, to the hazard of being placed in a false position of hostility to an object which they earnestly desire. This danger is increased, and with it this reluctance to investigate, in proportion to the excellence of the object, towards which any means are directed. But, if besides aiming at the attainment of the most desirable end, the mode, or means, or movements, to be excepted against, are embraced in the established policy of some extended and powerful organization; then his is, indeed, no enviable task, who feels constrained to call them in question. Though he may do it, in never so modest a form of enquiry or suggestion, yet will he have reason to remember his rash temerity, in having presumed “to move the wing, or open the mouth, or peep;” or else he may bless himself that his obscurity or insignificance has been his protection.

Our age and country rejoices in the existence of certain great national Societies, founded in benevolence, associated in the minds of the pious with the most successful

modes of doing good, and which, by long years of usefulness, have attained to a position of controlling influence and power. They were wise and good men, by whom these institutions were founded. For the most part, they have been wise and good men who have conducted them. But they were men, and being but men, as many things do show, they were not and are not infallible. The wisdom and piety of those now at the head of these institutions, will appear by the manner in which they receive the suggestions of any one who can point out errors or defects, or dangers, either in their organizations or modes of conducting their business. Their position and influence is a sure and sufficient defence against the assaults of the meddlesome or the unfriendly. But let them not presume upon their power, and denounce, without evidence, as unfriendly or as meddlesome, all or any who honestly dissent from their proceedings, and give the reasons for their dissent. To do this, is the birthright of an American citizen, and it is one among the yet higher prerogatives of a citizen of Zion. And though he should be the humblest of all the hosts of Israel, who prompted by his desire, for the glory of God and the good of men, yet ventures also "to show his opinion;" let him not be counted as an enemy; let him not be stricken down by the overwhelming power of popular prejudice, as if he had put forth his hand, profanely, to touch the ark of God; but in the exercise of his right, let him be fairly heard, in publicly setting forth, whatever he conceives to be wrong in institutions which are amenable only to the public.

The magnitude and power of these institutions, render it the more incumbent, freely to canvass their proceedings. Though the creatures of the Church, yet so indirectly responsible to the Church, it is conceivable that they should ultimately acquire an influence which, however perverted in its application, the Church would not be able to withstand. With the capital which they already possess, and with the present ratio of increase to their incomes, how long would it take to render them self-acting and self-sustaining machines? Is it a new thing under the sun, for institutions, waxing strong, to become also arrogant and assuming? Has it not happened before, that agen-

cies which were originally designed only for good, have yet become the instruments of evil? All history shows that it is no disparagement to these institutions, or to those who conduct them, to contemplate this possibility. The possibility, indeed, creates no alarm in us, nor is it suggested to create alarm. But our confidence is based upon the right, and the untrammelled exercise of the right, to hold them amenable for any thing and every thing as far as may be necessary, at the tribunal of the public, the only tribunal at which they can be arraigned.

Now we put in this plea for our rights, because we think we have discovered an extreme sensibility in certain quarters, at any animadversions upon their great institutions. And unless we have mistaken the indications, this sensibility has not always been disconnected from a disposition to employ the *argumentum ad hominem*, in some of its most exceptionable forms. Now any such indications are not only in extremely bad taste, but in the highest degree impolitic. It will always be regarded as an unfavourable augury, when public functionaries are restive and impatient under public scrutiny. This is the very way to excite suspicion, and to provoke a far more rigorous and extended investigation. We easily waive the exercise of a right, which is freely conceded. But whoever, directly or indirectly, calls it in question, thereby gives ground to believe that he has some reason for his resistance. What was before a matter of choice, becomes now an imperative duty, and we give place to any claim to exemption from scrutiny, "no, not for an hour!" Let the agents and officers of our great institutions, then be patient, be courteous. And if their ears are not always regaled with the language of encomium and compliment, let it remind them that they are not *the only men*, neither will "wisdom die with them."

But we are told, "there is danger in raising any objections against the proceedings of these great benevolent Societies; they are so important, so useful; they are doing so excellent a work that we ought not to do any thing which can weaken, in the least, their hold upon the public confidence, lest we hinder their work." And we are *always* told that the *present time* is the most unfortunate of all, for any such animadversions. Since this is just

that crisis, in the state of the world, which requires their utmost efforts and efficiency."

To all this, it is a sufficient answer to say, that no Society ever yet found its usefulness impaired, by objections urged against any of its proceedings, which were right and defensible in themselves. And if they are not right, no contemplated good, however desirable, ought to be their protection. But the Societies of which we speak, have nothing to fear in this respect, unless, indeed, (what we would not insinuate,) their alarm should spring from conscious defects. They are not pigmies of yesterday, struggling for an equivocal existence. They are no new and unknown candidates for popular favour; too modest to assert their own claims, or too weak to survive the least imputation. The great ends which they contemplate, will not be abandoned, because certain reforms may be necessary in the mode of attaining them. The danger here is altogether on the other side. And it is that Societies which have grown powerful, and have gained a firm hold upon the public mind by the excellence of their objects, will become reckless of remonstrance and obstinate in policy, though that remonstrance be never so well founded, or that policy never so exceptionable. What, through their numberless agencies, their unlimited command and use of the press, and their extended patronage, might they not accomplish if disposed, in forming a public sentiment to suit themselves? They are amenable only to the public, and if disposed and successful in gaining over to their interests this only tribunal of appeal, at what other earthly tribunal can they be held, thereafter, responsible for any thing? There is too much squeamishness on this subject altogether. No public institution, sustained by public beneficence, is or ought to be exempt from public scrutiny. Our only security in regard to such institutions, and the best security for the institutions themselves, is in a full and open exhibition of all their affairs and proceedings, and in inviting, rather than repelling, any one who chooses freely and fully to canvass their proceedings.

Let it not be inferred from these remarks, that we have taken up the document before us, with any feelings of unkindness, or even of indifference, to the American Bible

Society, or to its truly noble work. Not the best friend of that institution, can more sincerely desire its success, or rejoice more heartily in its extended operations and usefulness. And whilst penning this article, with the design of freely expressing an opinion on certain points of policy, which we regard as exceptionable, we are actuated also by the hope of commending to the more cordial co-operation of the Churches, the great work of Bible distribution. By whomsoever it was first entertained, it was truly a grand conception which gave birth to a Bible Society; and far beyond any present conceptions, is the good which has been accomplished by these institutions. It is estimated in this report, that the whole number of Bibles now extant in the world, is not far from forty millions.—But of this number, more than three fourths have been issued by Bible Societies. In this work, the American Bible Society has well sustained its part, and within the thirty three years of its existence, has issued nearly one-sixth of the whole number. If the estimate, quoted above, is any where near the truth, it reveals to us a yet immense destitution of the word of God. For great as this number is, compared with that of those days, when copies were only multiplied by the tedious labours of the transcriber,—or yet with the times of the reformers, when only the libraries of the rich and the learned, could boast of their copies; yet when compared with the populations of the globe, for whom the Bible was designed, and who are perishing for lack of vision,—we may even say of the 40,000,000, as the Disciples said of the few loaves and fishes, “What are they among so many?” But withdraw from the circulation of the word of God, the thirty two millions of copies which have been issued by Bible Societies, and we should have a picture of destitution, yet more awfully appalling. Let the six millions, issued by the American Bible Society, be withdrawn from our own country, and it would be the withdrawal of the light of life, from thousands and tens of thousands of families. Without the Bible Society, private enterprize would, doubtless, have done much, and perhaps more than it has done in multiplying copies of the Scriptures, and competition would gradually have done its work in reducing the price. But it is too obvious to be questioned, that

through the instrumentality of this institution, the Bible has been cheapened to all, has been given to multitudes who, otherwise, would never have possessed it, and has been widely scattered in many tongues, on every continent and almost every island of the sea, and on the vast surface of the sea itself.

No well disposed mind can be indifferent to these results; no Christian can fail to rejoice in their attainment. But results, however glorious, only prove that the means have been adequate to the end achieved; not that those means have been the wisest, or even that they have been employed to the best advantage. It is a great thing to cross the broad Atlantic. But the Atlantic has been crossed in a Chinese Junk. No one would thence praise the Junk as a model of naval architecture, or as better suited to ocean navigation, than the splendid packet or the rapid steamer. It is equal folly to argue in favour of any institution, or its peculiar modes of operation, by an appeal to what it has accomplished, without taking into account, at the same time, the labour and capital which it has expended. It is highly gratifying, indeed, to sum up the results of thirty three years' labour of the American Bible Society, in so many millions of Bibles issued. But it would be yet more gratifying, and afford the only data for an intelligent estimate of its operations, if we had summed up for us also, the whole amount of capital and expenditure by which these results have been attained. As it is, we have only one side of the balance sheet, and though that shows a very handsome footing to our credit, yet the suspicion will return of a debit account, by no means so flattering. For aught that appears, we may, after all, have crossed the ocean in a Junk.

And here we take occasion to say, that whilst the report before us is voluminous, and contains much of very interesting information, yet it strikes us as strangely deficient in many important particulars. We find much that might as well have been omitted, and we look in vain for some things which we expected to find, and which we think ought to be there. What is the necessity or the use of printing every year some 70 pages double columns of names, of those who have been and are life members, &c.? In the elegant paper and type in which the reports

are published, and considering the vast number which are circulated, this must add materially to the expenses of a Society, which is every year in debt for paper, and the last year no less than \$31,553 64. If there is any necessity for publishing these lists, certainly, once in five or ten years should be sufficient. An institution that labours under pecuniary embarrassments, and puts forth such urgent appeals for pecuniary aid, ought certainly to study a most rigid economy. Considering the wants of the world, and the pressing need of every dollar, we could ourselves consent to spare, also, the ten to twenty pages of anniversary speeches, which of late years, have come in to swell these annual reports. If the saving in expenses, is not reason enough for pruning such excrescences, yet, by so doing, we should have room for detailed statements of other matters, vastly more important. Perhaps in the space thus occupied, we might have the minutes of the Board of Directors for the year. At least there might be spread out before the Society, many weighty matters of correspondence, and many grave subjects of debate, which have and do come before that Board, and to which there is not found the slightest allusion in the report.

Without intending the least reflection upon any one, we could wish also that the Treasurer's report were somewhat more full and particular. A Society which passes through the hands of its managers, between two and three hundred thousand dollars per annum, might we should say, afford more than one page out of 255 pages, for the annual exhibit of its expenditures and its assets. The grouping together of items, is carried to the last degree of condensation, and the meagre abstract is altogether about as satisfactory as it would have been in the following form :

American Bible Society,		
		In account with its Treasurer.
1849, Cr.	By cash received, - - - - -	\$252,214 84
	Dr. To cash paid, - - - - -	252,134 52
		<hr/>
	Balance to new account, - \$	80 32

If we cannot have sufficient details for estimates and calculations, we may as well have the whole amount in



a single line. Such grouping as this, only provokes whilst it baffles inquiry,—“Thirty travelling agents and salaries, and travelling expenses, and delegates to auxiliaries, \$20,480 96.” Some items run as high as \$70,000 00; and yet there are no specifications of time, quantity or quality of the article purchased. There is no opening for competition, to those who manufacture. There are no given facts upon which to base a calculation, and prove to an opponent that the money has been wisely and honestly expended. So far as their friends are concerned, it may be perfectly satisfactory to fall back upon the known and established character of the managers, as the security that all things have been properly conducted. But this will not satisfy others. This is not the right ground upon which to demand the confidence of the public. It may be said, and it has been said, and that by those who are no enemies to the cause, that in the mechanical and financial arrangements of the Society, there is a want of economy and foresight, which, in any private business, would ensure failure and ruin. To meet and to prevent any such intimations, requires a more full and ample detail of expenditures. Why may we not be informed how much Mr. A. Mr. B. and Mr. C. have received, and for what services performed, or for what material furnished? In a Society so extended, we know that every thing cannot be reported; but all important things can. And in a volume containing more than 150 pages of appendix matter, we confess to some surprise, that so little is.

In this connection, we may notice another point in which we regard the report as defective. It was customary in former years, to give a detailed and tabular view of the number and value of the gratuitous issues of the Society, and as late as 1848, we have the whole number of copies thus issued, distinctly stated, though their value is not given. But in the report before us, no such item appears. We have, indeed, a statement of books granted to seamen and boatmen, to the army, and to different missionary and other societies. But whether this is intended to cover all the gratuitous appropriations, we are not informed. And as the Parent Society proposes to take the work of distribution more into its own hands than form-

erly, we regret that the report of this item should grow less definite and distinct. In the absence of any thing to the contrary, we presume that the above statement covers the whole appropriation for the year. And proceeding upon this assumption, we find, after gathering up from several pages the scattered particulars, that the whole number of Bibles, gratuitously granted the past year, is, 8,147, and of Testaments, 23,717—making a total of 31,864 copies. In addition to this we will add 5,000 copies, to cover possible mistakes in the footing up, and the indefinite expression, “numerous other smaller grants.” We have, then, 36,864 copies, of which more than two thirds are Testaments, as the whole amount of gratuitous appropriation in books. This is less by 22,742 copies, than the same class of issues for the former year, and less by 6,509 copies, than those of 1830, when the receipts of the Society, from all sources, were a little over half their present amount.

We propose, now, to make a small calculation, which, we think, must discover one of two things, viz: either that the American Bible Society is a very expensive mode of supplying the destitute, or else that its reports give a very imperfect exhibition of its operations.

We assume, for the present, that the books *sold* pay for themselves. This is what is ordinarily understood, when an article is said to be sold “*at cost*.” Leaving, then, the receipts from the sales, to balance the expenses of the books sold, we may take the gratuitous receipts to set over against the grants of money and of books, thus:

The whole amount of funds gratuitously received is,	-	-	-	-	-	\$91,804 09
Deduct from this, grants of money,	-	-	-	-	-	11,188 54

Will leave for gratuitous issues,	-	-	-	-	-	\$80,615 55
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That is to say, with all the capital of buildings, engines, plates, presses, &c. which the Society has on hand, it has cost to furnish 36,864 books, of which more than two thirds are Testaments, the sum of \$80,615 55, which would be about \$2 18 per copy.

But it will be said, that all the salaries of agents and officers of the Society, must come out of the donation account. Take out, then, all the salaries reported, and

travelling expenses, amounting to \$29,387 61, this will still leave us \$51,230 94 to publish 36,864 books, or about \$1 37 per copy.

There are two ways by which to escape this conclusion, one is, to suppose that a large part of the donations have gone to increase the stock of books on hand, and the other is, that the books sold are not sold "*at cost.*"— If the first supposition is correct, then the disproportion between the gratuitous receipts and expenditures, would only be occasional, and would fluctuate to both sides of the account. What was added to the stock on hand, one year, would be so much available for distribution the next. But it is found by examining successive reports, that the same thing occurs every year to a greater or less extent. And at this present writing, we are informed that the depository is actually exhausted. We ought then, certainly to expect a report of immensely increased appropriations, for 1850.

That the books sold do not pay cost, may be true. But is cheapening the price the end which is contemplated in donations? Is it according to the expressed policy of the Society? What rule of appropriation is adopted, in deciding how much of the gratuitous receipts shall go to cheapen the article sold, and how much to put it in the hands of the desititute, "without money and without price?"

But adopting either or both of the foregoing suppositions, as the explanation of the disproportion between the gratuitous receipts and expenditures, yet the question still returns, is not this disproportion constantly too great? Let us see how it stands in three several reports, taken up indiscriminately.

1830. Gratuitous receipts,	- - -	\$74,652 86
" Gratuitous issues and grants,	- - -	21,710 48
" Leaving an excess of receipts,		<hr/> \$52,942 38
1840. Gratuitous receipts,	- - -	\$48,030 49
" " issues and grants,	- - -	16,183 17
" Leaving an excess of receipts,		<hr/> \$31,847 32

1843. Gratuitous receipts,	- - - -	\$65,244 80
“ “ issues and grants,	- - - -	26,168 63

“ Leaving an excess of receipts,		\$39,076 17
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The past year would probably show a still greater excess, if we had the value of the gratuitous issues stated as formerly. Now we are greatly mistaken, if it is not generally understood by the donors that the money *given* to this Society is appropriated mainly to the gratuitous supply of the destitute in our own and foreign lands. But does it accord with the object of donation, that less than one half of the money given, is thus appropriated? Is there not some defect, either in the machinery, or in its management, when so large a share of the benevolence of the Church, is consumed in keeping it in motion? With the clear capital of buildings, presses, plates &c. the Society ought to be able, to distance all competition, in the style and prices of their books sold, if they received not another dollar of donation. Put such an establishment as the Bible House, with all its fixtures and property into the hands of the Harpers, for instance, free of cost, and with the same channels of sale, and we venture to say, they would make a comfortable business, of printing the same quantity and quality of books and at the same prices. Whatever may have been necessary at an earlier day, we submit, if it is not reasonable, at least, that, with the present accumulation of capital, the sales department of the concern should support itself. And yet we have seen, that though we charge to the donation account, all the salaries and travelling expenses of agents and secretaries, thus burdening that account, with far more than its share of the general expenses, we should still have a surplus, above the amount of gratuitous appropriations. But we believe it would promote Bible circulation, to make all the expenses of the Society, a tax upon the books sold, and let every dollar which is *given*, purchase a dollar's worth of books for gratuitous distribution, subject only to the expenses of the distribution. Then we should soon see how economically the publishing department is conducted, by a comparison of the Society's books and prices, with those of private enterprize. Then donors would know, that not a fraction, but the

whole of their donations, was appropriated to the supply of the needy and destitute. And indeed, the great demand of our times, is not for Bibles that may be sold cheap, (private enterprize here sometimes outstrips the Society,) but it is for Bibles that may be *given*, to those millions who are too poor; too ignorant, or too indifferent to buy. To be able to carry the word of God to the doors, and put it into the hands of the destitute, without price, to those who will not, or cannot buy; is of much higher consequence, than simply to cheapen its price, as an article of merchandize. Yet the more we study the operations of the American Bible Society, the more we are convinced, that its gratuitous distributions have not kept pace with the increase of its receipts.

We would respectfully offer a remark also, on the facility with which the managers of this, as of some other societies, contract debts. We find by the report of the auditing committee, that besides the obligations due to several auxiliaries, and the interest of which is to be paid in books,\* the Society owed in May last, some \$50,000. A fraction of this (\$8,206 76,) was incurred in the purchase of the Bindery, and may therefore be considered as an extra item. But the great bulk of the debt seems to have come in the ordinary course of business. Now whilst stringent necessity may sometimes justify the Boards of our benevolent Societies, in pushing their operations beyond their means, yet we submit, whether the tendency and disposition to do this, is not becoming altogether too common. It sometimes looks like a matter of policy, as if to coerce the tardy benevolence of the Church. An "open door" is discovered and the Boards say, "we will go forward, and leave the responsibility of making good our indebtedness with the Churches." By especial efforts, the debt is at length paid, but scarcely have we time to rejoice over it, before the same thing is repeated. And we have heard this mode of proceeding justified, "It is the only way to bring out the money" said one, to whom it was complained of as an injurious policy. But is

\* And that, by the way, is an arrangement which we do not quite understand. The constitution expressly requires all auxiliaries, as a condition of becoming such, to pay over all their surplus funds to the parent Society.

the policy which "brings out the money," always the best policy? Is it always right? The expenses of negotiating loans, and the interest upon them, are a heavy tax upon the legitimate income of a Society. Then experience should teach us, that extraordinary and spasmodic efforts are poorly adapted to promote "cheerful giving," and tend to diminish the flow of regular systematic benevolence; we think, moreover, that this policy is questionable in its moral aspect. The income of any Society dependent upon public benevolence, is of necessity liable to many contingencies, and therefore extremely fluctuating. To incur liabilities on the strength of these contingencies, is to run the risk of contracting debts which cannot be met. Again: the Boards of these Societies act not for themselves, but for others; and though appointed to manage and expend the funds which may be put into their hands, yet it may be doubted, if they have the right, to add, to those funds by involving the Society in debt. This question becomes more important, when we consider the property of the Society, as liable for its debts. That property is a trust, of a most sacred character; and no Board has a moral right, or ought to have the power of endangering it, by liabilities assumed on the strength of contingencies. The present debt of the Bible Society, may not give cause of alarm. But the policy to which we have adverted, is capable of indefinite abuse, and the question of principle involved, is certainly worthy of grave consideration.

It is not improbable that some of our previous calculations may be at fault, from the want of sufficient *data*. Should this prove to be the case, we shall not be the last to rejoice in the fact; though that fact will, itself, only illustrate and confirm all that we have said, of the necessity for a more distinct and detailed report of the Society's condition and operations.

We come now, however, to speak on a topic, concerning which, all the facts in the case are but too apparent; and we grieve to say it, that the American Bible Society, as a Society, is a *prayerless Institution*. That the Bible Society never prays at any of its meetings, is a fact which is probably not known to many of its constituents, and will, doubtless, strike many with surprise when it is

announced. And yet it is a fact which might be learned from any of its reports. That it is not more generally known and noticed, is because the opposite is almost universally taken for granted. An intelligent clergyman once rebuked the writer of this article for stating this fact, and would not be convinced that it was so, until he had examined the Reports. "What!" said the Editor of a religious newspaper, "the Bible Society does not pray! surely, you must be mistaken!" Would that we were mistaken! But the whole truth is not yet told. This is not a sin of mere neglect or oversight. The Society not only does not pray, but its managers have *deliberately and formally refused to admit prayer* into their meetings, when asked to introduce it. Once, at an extra meeting in Cincinnati, prayer was had. It is the only instance in thirty-three years, and, as we shall see presently, the managers have determined, as far as they can determine it, that this instance shall be the last. There is presented here a spectacle to the world; the occasion of grief and shame to the christian, but of triumph to the infidel; a Society claiming to be the parent and basis of all the other kindred institutions, and to have a peculiar sanctity, because it has to do with the word of God, and yet, never praying to the God of the word, but deliberately and constantly refusing obedience to one of the first duties which that word enjoins!

The question, of course, will naturally arise here, why is this? What is the reason or reasons assigned, for not only omitting, but refusing to pray in the meetings of this Society? We certainly would not charge it upon the managers, that they wantonly and wilfully exclude prayer, nor would the public believe such a charge if it were made. They, doubtless, have reasons which we are bound to suppose are at least satisfactory to themselves. But inasmuch as they have been pleased to give these reasons, in answer to a remonstrance upon this subject, we are at liberty to examine them, and enquire whether they are also satisfactory to their constituents. That we may do them full justice, they shall speak for themselves, in the following Report, which has appeared in the public papers.

## "REPORT OF COMMITTEE.

*Adopted by the Board of Managers of the American Bible Society, on opening the Meetings with Prayer.*

"The subject referred by the Board, contained in a communication from the Newburgh Bible Society, namely: the opening our anniversary meetings with prayer, was taken up, and the following report is now submitted thereon.

"1st. It appears that the present mode of opening our anniversary meetings, is one which was deliberately adopted by the founders and early friends of the Society, in view of the circumstances in which they were placed, composed, as they were, of various religious denominations, accustomed to different forms of worship. For their successors now to alter the original mode is evidently improper, unless there is in it something intrinsically wrong, or a change is called for by the great body of the Society's constituents.

"2d. While other benevolent Societies, having different objects to accomplish, open their public meetings with prayer, or prayer and music, it seems an appropriate exercise for *this Institution*, whose simple design is to circulate the Holy Scriptures without note or comment, to commence with the devout reading of a portion of that *inspired truth* which they are endeavoring to spread throughout the world.

"That such an exercise is felt to be solemn, reverential and edifying, thousands can from experience testify; they view it, and cannot but view it as acceptable worship; particularly when the portion of Scripture read, as is often the case, abounds with confessions, petitions and thanksgivings.

"3d. While the mode of opening our public meetings has often been a topic of conversation among the friends of the Society, and while it is known that many would have no *personal* objection to add, on the occasion, audible prayer to the reading of the scriptures, yet few individuals have ever advised or expressed a desire, all thing considered, that such an addition should be made.

"The Committee, therefore, in view of the facts and circumstances thus set forth, *recommend* that our anniversary devotional exercise continue as heretofore."

We must suppose that this Report, carefully prepared and formally adopted, presents the case in the very best



aspect which the facts will admit. To think otherwise, would be greatly to disparage the Committee by whom it was prepared, and the Board by whom it was adopted. And yet we confess, that on first perusing it, the expressions came involuntarily to our lips. "Is that *all* that can be said?" "Have the managers no more to offer, in defence of a practice so extraordinary?" If we may judge from its effects upon ourselves, this Report is well adapted to leave the impression, that the cause is desperate, which, with so many and such able counsellors, is yet rested on so feeble a defence.

Before we examine particularly the reasons, (so called) which are here urged as conclusive, we may observe, that the Report speaks only of "anniversary meetings," a style calculated to mislead, as if *these* were the *only* meetings from which prayer was excluded. Whereas, it is objected to the practice of the Society, that *all* its meetings, and the meetings of its Board, and the meetings of its committees, and its sub-committees, are *all* begun, continued and ended, without an audible utterance of prayer. It is, emphatically, a prayerless Institution.

In justification of a practice which warrants this impeachment, three reasons are assigned in the Report.

1. The first is, that the present mode was adopted by the founders and early friends of the Society, and for their successors now to alter it, is said to be "evidently improper, unless there is in it something intrinsically wrong, or a change is called for by the great body of the Society's constituents."

Now, do the managers mean to insinuate here, that "the founders and early friends of the Society" made their practice in this respect, an unalterable rule for the Society? Did they incorporate it into the constitution? If so, in what article is it found?—in what printed document does it appear? But they did no such thing. They acted, "in view of their circumstances," as seemed best to themselves, and they left it to their successors to do the same. Their successors, moreover, *have* made a change, in the solitary instance before alluded to, and that without any call from "the great body of the Society's constituents," notwithstanding the "*evident impro-*

*priety*" alleged. "It appears," then, that the continuance or change of this mode, is entirely optional with the managers. They have taken the responsibility of altering it in one instance, and, without any imputation upon "the founders and early friends of the Society;" they may, for good reasons, alter it again. Their own practice at Cincinnati is the proof, that they so understand it, and the saving clause beginning at "unless," &c. is a formal concession of this point. The whole of their first reason for excluding prayer, amounts then to this—"such has been our practice, and we see no reason to change it." This first argument, therefore, settles nothing. It leaves the question open, as it was before, only devolving upon the friends of prayer the burden of proof, that there is, in the present practice of excluding it, "something intrinsically wrong." We accept the gage, and shall endeavour the proof, having first disposed of the other reasons given in the Report, which we now proceed to examine.

2. The second reason, assigned by the Board in justification of their practice, is somewhat remarkable. We have seldom met with a more illogical, inconclusive paragraph, formally and numerically set forth, as an argument on any subject. The sum of it is this—"it seems to the Board, an appropriate exercise to commence the meeting of a Bible Society by reading a portion of scripture;" "such an exercise is edifying, and may be considered as acceptable worship."

Has any one objected to the reading of the Scriptures at the meetings of the Society? If not, where is the necessity, and what is the force of this plea for that laudable exercise? The question is, ought the Bible Society to *pray* at its meetings? And the answer of the Board is, no! because we devoutly read a portion of Scripture, and find it very edifying!—If any one can appreciate the force of that reasoning, we certainly cannot. Will prayer hinder the reading of the Bible, or make it less devout and edifying? An Apostle has told us that all things are "sanctified by the word of God, *and prayer.*" Is there any precept which requires the separation, in this case, of those two things which God has thus "joined

together?" If, in the reception and use of Providential blessings, we must employ the Scriptures as our rule and warrant, and prayer as our acknowledgment of obligation and dependence, is it not equally necessary to sanctify our efforts to do good, by the devout use of both? But if this second paragraph of the report has any bearing whatever upon the question at issue, it must be understood as implying that the "devout reading of a portion of inspired truth," is equivalent to and may supersede the duty of prayer. Are the managers of the Bible Society prepared to take that ground? Then we have a principle which may be equally applied to the worship of the family, the social circle, and the sanctuary. If this is a correct principle, the neglect of prayer may be justified under almost any circumstances. But is it a correct principle? Does not any child understand that the reading of the Scriptures and prayer, are two distinct exercises,—and that he who discharges the one duty, does not thereby discharge or become excused from the other? In his word, God speaks to us. In prayer, we speak to God; and though the language of Scripture may be used to almost any extent, in our approaches to the Throne of Grace, yet the simple utterance of Scripture language is not, therefore, prayer. The Scriptures are devoutly read in the sanctuary, yet the Minister does not say "let us pray" when he opens the Bible, but when he closes it.—Such an argument, as the one we are considering, could only have been employed by the Board, from the felt necessity of saying something, where there was very little to be said. No one disputes that the devout reading of the Bible, at the meetings of the Society, is "appropriate, solemn, reverential, and edifying." Yet no one will be satisfied with an argument which justifies the neglect of *one* duty, by pleading the practice of *another*. "These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone."

This second argument of the Board, leaves the question then, just where it found it, only, as it reveals to us the scarcity of arguments, and the weakness of the defense, by which the exclusion of prayer is justified.

3d. In the third and last paragraph of the report,

we are informed that "the mode of opening its public meetings has often been a topic of conversation among *the* friends of the society;" but that "few individuals have ever advised, or expressed a desire," that audible prayer should be added to the reading of the Scriptures.

If this statement was designed to leave the impression, that the subject had been under consideration by "the friends of the Society" at large, or by any considerable number of them, and they had decided against a change, it leaves a wrong impression, and does great injustice to "*the* friends of the Society." The conversations referred to, must have been altogether private and confidential, never before to have reached the public ear, always so sensitive to discussions of this sort. To what extent the question has been agitated openly, may be inferred from the facts which we have already given. And it is true beyond all doubt, that even now multitudes of the patrons of this Society, out of the City of New York, and even in that City, will yet have to learn, and will learn it with surprise and grief, that prayer is excluded from the meetings of the Bible Society. Have the managers taken any measures to ascertain the views of their constituents upon this subject? Have the auxiliaries been addressed by them, and have they objected to a change? Until this is done, it goes for nothing, as an argument against the change proposed, that so few have ever advised or expressed a desire for it.

But perhaps we ought to regard this paragraph as an intimation from the Board, that they are waiting for instructions from their constituents, and for the want of these are not prepared to introduce prayer. We are not aware that they have been instructed to *exclude* it, and that is certainly the greater responsibility. But if we are to understand them as waiting for, and ready to carry out the wishes of the Society at large, they will not blame, but thank us for this effort, to promote the expression of public sentiment.

Now, we would respectfully submit it to the friends and patrons of the Bible Society, if the reasons assigned in this report are sufficient to justify the total absence and exclusion of prayer, from the meetings of that Society! Will they consent that this shall be and continue,

a prayerless Institution, because, 1. It has always been so; 2. The scriptures are read at its meetings, and 3. So few have ever advised or expressed a desire for a change?

Having answered these arguments, we might here rest the discussion, until others are advanced. But as we desire to present the question in its true light, we will pause to consider also some other objections, which may perhaps be urged against the introduction of prayer, and then try to redeem our pledge, and show that its omission and exclusion has "in it something intrinsically wrong."

1. Possibly there may be some "strict constructionists," who would plead, that as the "sole object of the Society is the circulation of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment," the introduction of prayer at its meetings would be foreign to its object, and an infringement upon the broad and Catholic plan of its organization. The managers have been careful to remind us, in the above report, of this "simple design" of the Society, and they argue from thence the appropriateness of opening its meetings with the reading of a portion of Scripture. Now, as it seems to us, "the sole object" of the Society is itself a strong argument in favour of prayer. If it was a railroad company or any merely secular association, it would be in keeping with the practice of such associations to proceed in their business with a prayerless disregard of God. But for a Society claiming to be religious, and having for its "simple design" the circulation of the Bible, to restrain and refuse prayer, is an anomaly; it is an incongruity. The very work itself should prompt a public and audible and constant recognition of him, who is the author of the Bible, upon whom, we are dependant for all our success in efforts to do good, and who in his word has so plainly made prayer obligatory upon all. Nor can prayer be justly regarded as the slightest infringement upon the constitution, or original plan of the Society. For the attainment of its "sole object" various means are employed, and in the selection of these means much is left to the discretion of the Society and its managers. Prayer, certainly, is no where prohibited. If the Society are to do nothing but print and circulate Bibles, by what authority do they print reports, circulars

and monthly records; by what authority send delegates all over the country to attend ecclesiastical meetings; by what authority hold anniversaries at all, hear speeches, and print them? These are all regarded as judicious means, for the advancement of the "sole object." But the most efficient, and least objectionable of all means, is prayer!

2. But it is known that the American Bible Society includes among its members the adherents of many and varied forms of religious faith and worship. And difficulties have been anticipated from this source, which constitute, in fact, the main objection to the introduction of prayer at its meetings.

In considering this objection we ought not to lose sight of the general fact, that sectarian peculiarities are less observable in the prayers of men, than in any other form of religious expression; and when prayer has a distinct and definite object, such as the success of a common enterprise, in behalf of which it is offered, there is little danger that these peculiarities would be obtruded. But as this objection is, after all, the grand hinge of the question, we must examine it more particularly.

This Society is composed of those belonging to the great Presbyterian family, in all its branches; of Congregationalists; of Methodists; of Baptists, a few; of Episcopalians; of members of the Society of Friends; of Unitarians; and of Universalists.

Now of these different denominations, the four first mentioned, constituting the great body of the Society, have the same mode of worship, and have always freely united, each with others, at the throne of grace, in behalf of any common object.

The Episcopalians employ forms of devotion, but we have yet to learn that they are bound to the use of forms on all occasions. We certainly have heard some of the most eminent among them freely depart from their use. There is at least no canon, as we suppose, to prevent their hearing, and uniting with others in extempore prayer. Nor do we think that Presbyterians and others would refuse to hear and unite with them in devout petitions, even though they used a form, when called upon to open the meetings of this Society, by prayer. But that their

peculiar mode of worship need be no hindrance to prayer on such occasions, is evident, because it does not prevent their union and cooperation with other Societies in which prayer is had. Some of their most honoured names are found among the members of the Tract, Sunday School, and Seamen's Friend Societies, all of whom open their meetings with prayer. We take up a report of the Tract Society, and find among its officers no less than four Right Reverends of the Episcopal Church, and numerous "other Clergy." We turn to the Constitution of that Society, and find as follows :

"ART. IX. All meetings of the Society, of the Board of Directors, and of the Executive Committee, *shall be opened by prayer.*" This settles the question as it respects the Episcopalians. As to the Friends, the case is very similar. To what extent they are the patrons of the Bible society, we do not know. That they would, to any considerable extent, withdraw their patronage on the introduction of audible prayer at its meetings, we do not believe. They also belong, in many instances, to other Societies in which prayer is had.

There remain then the Unitarians, and the Universalists. If any objection is heard from either of them, it will not be on account of the mode, but the sentiments which may be uttered in prayer. Their peculiar views, however, are not more likely to be controverted in this exercise, than in those which are already had. The doctrine of the Trinity is as clearly recognized, in the Christian doxology, and the apostolic benediction, as it is likely to be in any prayer offered on these occasions. Nor would any such prayer be more at variance with the idea of Universal salvation, than an argument for Bible distribution, drawn from the fearful condition of *perishing souls*. But on the other hand, the peculiar doctrines of these denominations might beget scruples in some minds about uniting with them in prayer. These objectionable doctrines, we should say, were not more apt to appear in a prayer than in a speech. If Dr. Channing, or Hosea Ballou, had been called upon, thus to open a meeting of the Bible Society, it is extremely doubtful if the most orthodox man in the house would have been able to discover, from that exercise, that the one was a

Unitarian, and the other a Universalist. Tender consciences ought to be tenderly regarded. But it might give rise to a question, whether a conscience too susceptible to hear a short prayer, from one who was regarded as heretical, once in the course of several years, at the opening of the Bible Society's meetings, and yet felt no disquiet at *the absence of all prayer* on those occasions, was not tender in the wrong spot. This is on the supposition that members of these unevangelical bodies must of necessity be called upon to officiate in prayer. But whence is there any such necessity? Upon what ground can any man claim to lead the devotions of such a Society, any more than he can claim to act as its Secretary or President? It belongs to the Society to elect its own officers, and through its officers, to determine who shall represent it on public occasions. But let us take the very worst aspect of the case. Suppose it is necessary, in order to retain their connection with the Society, that Unitarians and Universalists should, in turn with others, lead the devotions of the Society, and that it is out of the question for other denominations to unite with them in prayer, what then? Why, then, we are brought, at once, to grapple with the question, whether our platform of unity is not too broad! And the discovery, that those who are united in a religious enterprize cannot unite in one of the first and simplest duties of religion, we think would go far towards settling that question in the affirmative. There is a modern Catholicism whose praises are often "said and sung" in anniversary speeches, which seeks to bring into the most intimate relations those having only the most remote affinities. But if the bonds of such a union are too weak to withstand the breath of prayer, let it not be baptized by the name of Christian Unity; and if its object is the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom, the sooner the flaxen cords are consumed by the flame of devotion, the better it will be. Men may talk of the Bible Society as "*the true Evangelical Alliance*" and "*the embodiment of Christian Union*," but these can only be regarded as "high sounding words of vanity," if that "embodiment" has no tongue to acknowledge God, and invoke his blessing; and if that "Alliance" is rent and broken by the



voice of prayer, as would be a tottering building by the explosion of a bomb.

We do not believe that the introduction of prayer, at the meetings of this Society, would be followed by the withdrawal of any denomination from it. But we maintain that, if such should be the case, Evangelical Christians ought to submit to this result, rather than restrain prayer before God. His favour is of more worth than the contributions which would thus be lost. The exclusion of prayer, we regard as the sacrifice of principle to a worldly policy. And we believe it will be found the sentiment of many, that with respect to religious objects, there is no room for them upon a platform, however broad, if prayer must be crowded off.

This sentiment, of course, implies that there is, in the exclusion of prayer, "something intrinsically wrong."—We come, then, at length, to the proofs of this proposition.

And we argue that such exclusion is wrong, 1st. Because it gives occasion to unbelief for reproach against the Bible itself. This book is circulated not as a system of political or moral philosophy, but as the word of God; a revelation of his will and our duty, and able to make us wise into salvation. But, says the infidel, the book is defective. It fails to teach us the way of an acceptable approach unto God by prayer, and the proof is, that the very Society which circulates this book cannot themselves so agree about this duty as to practise it. It is not necessary this objection should be unanswerable. It is enough, if it is plausible, and it certainly has sufficient force to be among the most effective of the specious sophistries, by which unbelief resists the truth of God. By refusing to pray, the Society thus puts weapons into the hands of the enemies of the Bible itself.

2d. We argue that the practice of the Society is wrong, because it thus throws the whole weight of its influence and example into the scale against prayer in other societies and assembles of men. No Christian can fail to rejoice at any disposition to recognize God and His government among men assembled for merely secular or scientific purposes. It is a gratifying fact, that prayer is so common in literary institutions, in conventions of every sort, and in the halls of legislation. It was a truly sublime

scene, when the venerable Franklin stood up in that convention which framed the Constitution of these United States, and appealing to the Bible for proofs of a superintending Providence, moved that prayers be had in that assembly, invoking the blessing of God upon their labours, and his guidance through the labyrinth of political theories. Prayer was introduced, notwithstanding the diversities of religious sentiment far beyond what can be found in any Bible Society; and to its introduction we owe, perhaps, the fair fabric of our free institutions. Congress and most of the State Legislatures, still open their daily sessions with prayer. And the signs of the times portend that possibly a crisis is at hand, which will call as loudly for help and guidance from on high, as that which drew forth the noble speech of a Franklin. But so far as the example and influence of the Bible Society goes, it it would be found opposed to prayer, and might be urged with tremendous effect, by those small politicians who annually distinguish themselves in our halls of legislation, by their patriotic speeches against prayer. We do not see how grave Senators and Representatives, members and officers of the Bible Society, could answer an appeal to such a precedent, without condemning the prayerless practice of that Society.

3d. Again, the practice of the Society, in this respect, is wrong; because it is the duty of every Society, professing to be guided by the principles of the Bible, and having for its object the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom, to acknowledge God, and invoke His blessing upon its efforts. It is the object and design of the word, to lead us to the God of the word. Truth is in order to holiness, yet the truth is impotent in itself to effect moral changes. The Bible teaches us to "set the Lord always before us." And never should we be more deeply and thoroughly impressed with a sense of his sovereignty and our dependence, than when we seek to bring men to the saving knowledge of the truth. The Bible will do us little good, if we rest in the simple possession of "the letter." It will do little good to others, if not accompanied by the blessing of the Spirit. Though copies were multiplied like the leaves of the forest, and scattered to the four winds of Heaven, yet, without the power and de-

monstration of the Spirit, it would be in vain. But if we truly desire this blessing on the word, the direction is plain: "In every thing by prayer and supplications, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." This command is universal; this duty is obligatory, not only upon individuals, but upon societies and associations, as such. "God will be inquired of for all these things, by the house of Israel, to do it for them."—That private Christians pray, does not exonerate Societies from this duty, any more than it exonerates the Church in her collective capacity. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." But is this precept obeyed when Christians and Christian Ministers assemble, from time to time, to transact business pertaining to the Kingdom of Christ; when hundreds of thousands of dollars are annually expended in printing and circulating Bibles; and thousands are gathered in the house of God to speak and to hear about the Bible and its diffusion; and yet all without one word of audible prayer or thanksgiving to God? Is there not "something intrinsically wrong," in thus excluding Jehovah from any public recognition, in his own appointed way, in that work which is peculiarly his own?

4th. The tendency of this exclusion of prayer, to secularize the whole enterprize, and make it to be regarded, both by those engaged in it and by the public, as a mere matter of business, is another and not the least of the objections against this practice.

But we have already exceeded our limits, and must forbear.

The original error of the American Bible Society, in this respect, is probably to be ascribed to a too close imitation of the British and Foreign Bible Society. And the friends of prayer have cause to regret that the effort made a year ago, in that noble institution, to introduce prayer at its meetings, has not been successful. We trust that effort will not be abandoned, but will ultimately result in the desired change. Let us set the worthy example to our trans-atlantic brethren. Though they have, perhaps, greater difficulties to encounter than we, yet even their faint-hearted will be encouraged, and their strong

men will gird themselves to a new endeavour, under such a provocation to good works. Let the voice of prayer go up from the Bible house, and it will invest, with a new and peculiar interest, that building; and crown, with unwonted success, the councils and labours of its committees. Let the voice of prayer be heard at our Bible anniversaries, and it will give new power to every argument, new urgency to every appeal, new zeal to every effort, and new life and meaning to every pious resolution.

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#### ARTICLE IV.

##### EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

Education is too often considered a mere convenience, a thing which may be possessed or not, without seriously affecting the subject. As we are incapable of appreciating blessings and privileges which we have never enjoyed, so we adapt ourselves, with astonishing facility, to a state of intellectual dearth; unconscious of the sublimer pleasures of those who enjoy the sweets of the inner life. And if we descend to the more material advantages of learning, the same cause precludes the possibility of a right appreciation of the positive wants of our condition. There is a general acknowledgement, that a man is better prepared to discharge the duties of a citizen, when the mind is matured by experience, and enlightened by knowledge, than while it exists merely in a state of uncultivated inactivity. Yet we see men discharging the responsible duties of parents and citizens, without knowing that any qualifications are necessary for these responsibilities; and we have become so habituated to this state of things, that some persons, though I hope but few, whose position and reputation would lead us to expect better things, seriously affirm that "it makes no difference, so long as the persons themselves are unconscious of the difference between knowledge and ignorance, stupidity and wisdom." Nay! it is even intimated that *more* knowledge would