

truth and error in the exercise of our own reason, the Bible would become useless as a law, as a fountain of authority, and we might consistently oppose its free circulation in its simple state. But, if we hold it to be pure and perfect, then it is right to organize a society to circulate it, pure and simple, in the world.

While commentaries, critical works, notes and explanations, are proper and useful in their own place, yet, if any one should maintain that the message of God must not be circulated without a commentary, then he must think the message imperfect. He must think that the words of God require to be supplemented by the words of man. Should any one allege that the Scriptures are so abstruse and obscure that a human accompaniment is necessary to explain them to the people, then, we reply that this is so far from being the case, that their matter and expression are such as to render them singularly accessible to the mind of man in all languages, all countries, and all ages; and, if this were the case, such an opinion would be an attack upon inspiration, for *unsuitableness* is imperfection. Should any one maintain that the Scriptures are suitable for certain classes alone—classes possessing education and intelligence, we reply: *where* and *who* is to draw the line? Moreover, this supposition also is at variance with the claims of inspiration, because contrary to the professions of a book which addresses its message to man as man, and claims for its readers the human race. Moses addressed the whole people: the prophets addressed the whole house of Israel: Jesus spake to the multitude: the apostles, feeling themselves debtors to Jew and Gentile, addressed them indiscriminately in public and in private: and if there were a single book of Scripture to which such a limited view would be applicable, it would be the book of Revelation, which has puzzled all interpreters, but this is the only book to the perusal of which a blessing is expressly attached: "Blessed is he that readeth the words of the prophecy of this book." The circulation of the pure Word of God is a mode of operation that is justified by the claims of an inspired, pure and perfect book, and can only be impugned with consistency by those who are the enemies of the Bible, or those who wish, by means of a commentary, to dictate or becloud the sense, and, in reality, for their own selfish objects, circulate another Bible—a human message with a divine stamp.

By confining its labors to the Word of God alone, the British and Foreign Bible Society secures the co-operation of all Christian denominations. As all build their views upon the Scriptures—as all profess to hold the principles laid down by Chillingworth, that "the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants," they must hold the circulation of the Word of God to

be a general blessing. Should any Christian denomination refuse to co-operate in this work, or discountenance, in the slightest degree, the circulation of the Scriptures, it could take no course more calculated to injure itself and subject its principles to suspicion. Every one would at once infer that some divergence had taken place between the principles of that party and the plain and obvious teachings of the Word of God. What a fine effect is thus, by this Society, produced upon the Christian Church! The sharp spirit of sectarianism is modified, the mutual asperities engendered by denominational rivalry are rubbed down, and Christians are led to cherish kindlier sentiments towards each other. At the meetings of all the Branches of this Society throughout the world—from the banks of the Ganges, onward through Asia, Africa, Europe and America, to the shores of British Columbia—Christian love hursts the barriers by which, at all other times, it is confined, and Christians, feeling its warm tide, rush from their separate provinces, shake hands as brethren, and cry: Let us all combine in circulating that Book which is the test of all our principles, and shall one day purge away the dross, and combine the sons of men in one holy brotherhood, to be perfected in glory.

This is a fine thing, and the advantage of it can only be properly understood by conceiving, in the present divided condition of the Church, a totally different state of things—a state in which the various denominations of Christians would be so wedded to their particular views that they could not be induced to combine for the circulation of the "sincere milk of the Word;" but, on the other hand, were circulating, in reality, bibles of their own—that is, bibles like the Douay, [and even the Baptists have attempted this], wherein, by accompanying notes, a particular interpretation was put upon the text, to suit the views of each. Even in present circumstances, the sectarian spirit of the Churches is characterized by a most lamentable violence; but, in the circumstances we have supposed, there is reason to believe that the Christian world would present a most awful spectacle. Christian denominations would appear like so many different kingdoms, governed by different laws, regulated by a different policy, pursuing totally distinct objects, and moving in a constant rivalry as their natural element. They should have nothing in common, and they would certainly feel that they had nothing in common. Their nominal state would be a state of warfare, and, in the passions of the hour, their common origin, common objects, and common destiny, would be forgotten. Not able to associate in the circulation of the Word of God, they could associate in nothing else. The Christian religion would be a curse, instead of a blessing, to society. No public measure could be carried, and no general in-